

Strategies for the Protection of Shandong Qinshu as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in China from the Perspective of Audience Development

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Abstract

The Chinese traditional oral art of Shandong Qinshu, characterized by its unique storytelling and musical elements, is facing great challenges in the present era due to rapid modernization and changes in the cultural ecosystem. This article conducts in-depth interviews and observations of the audience, practitioners, and cultural administrators of Shandong Qinshu. It analyses the current situation of the art in terms of audience expansion, and highlights the main issues affecting this factor. On this basis, this research proposes a series of targeted audience development strategies, with special emphasis on the synergistic roles of the government, cultural institutions, educational departments, and the media. Finally, this study puts forward specific suggestions for the implementation of the strategy, aiming to provide reference for the inheritance and promotion of Shandong Qinshu.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; Preservation; Shandong Qinshu; Audience engagement; Development strategy

Introduction

With the development of science and technology and new media technology, people's entertainment methods are becoming more diversified, and some traditional art forms are facing the issue of audience shrinkage. Because of the lack of effective dissemination and promotion, some traditional performing arts find it difficult to be widely recognized and appreciated by young audiences in modern society.

Shandong Qinshu is a traditional oral art form popular in China and is a representative intangible cultural heritage of the Shandong Province. Shandong Qinshu has a long history, profound cultural connotation and unique performance form, and is one of the famous cultural brands in Shandong Province. With the rapid change of social and cultural environment, the inheritance of Qinshu in Shandong is facing difficulties (He,2016). Shandong Qinshu has a regular performance venue in Jinan, the 'All Star' Theatre, but it lacks audience attention (Xiao, 2021). Although Master Yao Zhongxian, the national inheritor of Shandong Qinshu, and his apprentices regularly perform at the 'All Star' Theatre for the benefit of the public, they are unable to effectively attract audiences and expand their audience base. This situation is very unsatisfactory and the lack of research on audience expansion directly affects the inheritance and development of performing arts in intangible cultural heritage (Xie, 2012). Based on the above, there is a need to focus on exploring the current situation and problems of audience expansion in Shandong Qinshu, so as to propose targeted audience expansion strategies that will allow the dissemination of Shandong Qinshu to produce greater real-world value.

Firstly, this article provides a literature review of existing studies (Section 2). Secondly, it introduces the research methodology (Section 3). This is followed by an analysis of the current situation of audience development of Shandong Qinshu through participant observation and in-depth interviews (Section 4). The article finally proposes several audience development strategies for Shandong Qinshu with regard to the status quo and problems (Section 5).

Literature Review

Challenges facing Shandong Qinshu in audience development

The impact of modern entertainment has had a greater bearing on audience expansion of Shandong Qinshu. With the development of technology, especially the popularity of the Internet and mobile devices, people have more entertainment choices. The younger generation is more inclined to pursue digital and fast-paced entertainment rather than traditional performing arts, which leads to a gradual decrease in the traditional audience base of Shandong Qinshu (He,2016). Secondly, with the limitation of cultural cognition, Shandong Qinshu has strong regional cultural characteristics, and its language and expression may be out of

touch with modern life, which is not easy to be understood and accepted by foreign audiences. This cultural cognitive limitation restricts the expansion of its audience base (Xiao, 2021). Finally, in order to attract more audiences, Shandong Qinshu needs to be innovative while maintaining its traditional characteristics. However, excessive innovation may change its original artistic style, while conservative inheritance makes it difficult to attract new audiences. It is thus a great challenge to find a balance between inheritance and innovation (Wang, 2019).

In order to meet these challenges, inheritors and promoters of Shandong Qinshu have taken a series of measures, such as combining modern technology with innovative performances, strengthening education and training to cultivate a new generation of inheritors, making use of multimedia platforms for publicity and promotion, as well as exploring reasonable paths of marketization in order to broaden the audience base of Shandong Qinshu and promote its sustainable development.

Audience Development

The concept of ‘audience development’ emerged in the 1980s (Morison & Julie Gordon Dalglish, 1993), but there is still no uniformed definition, while the description of the Arts Council of England has been cited more often by academics and the industry. The Arts Council of England defines it as “Taking a specific action to meet the needs of current and future audiences, and helping arts organizations develop relationships with the audience. It consists of marketing, programming, education, customer care and distribution considerations” (p.423). According to Heather Maitland (2000), audience development is a process that requires detailed planning which can establish a correlation between individuals and the art. This kind of relationship does not emphasize that the art organizations unilaterally carry out special planning to cater for or satisfy the public's needs, and the audience is not a passive recipient or participant, but is more inclined to be ‘a fit between the audience and the organizations in terms of their rights and obligations towards the arts.’ Therefore, the audience relationship should maintain an active and uninterrupted experience process (Zheng,2018).

In the research on audience development strategies, Xiao (2010) notes that the establishment of audience development strategies includes

program arrangement, appreciation environment, ticket price standard, media information, and art popularization and education. Essentially, they should be purposeful, planned and long-term, and that while expanding the audience group, the art appreciation level of the original audience should be improved. Based on this, Liang (2018) classifies audience development strategies into five categories, including arts marketing, program planning, arts education, audience maintenance, and technological tools. Alnasser (2023) further adds to this nine audience development strategies, placing emphasis on the use of digital technology and further segmentation of audiences. In addition, audience development strategies can be used to associate themselves with the cultural vitality of the community by creating and enhancing a positive image of arts or cultural organizations within the community (Mandel, 2018). In a case study of audience development in practice, Xu (2018) makes specific recommendations for audience development strategies for the Guqin, China's intangible cultural heritage, by enriching the performance form, expanding the performance space, and using creativity to attract contemporary audiences. Li (2020) suggests that in order to change the current traditional communication of intangible cultural heritage, it is necessary to improve the process of presenting traditional art to the audience, combined with digital technology, which has become the focus of research in the academic field.

In this research, audience participation constraints are important for analyzing and proposing audience development strategies which constitute the theoretical framework. Arts participation constraints refer to the factors that influence people's subjective reluctance to participate in the art activities. Crawford et al. (1991) explained the three dimensions of motivational factors in terms of facilitators and constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Leisure constraints are categorized as intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints, and structural constraints (Raymore, 2002). 'Intrapersonal constraints' refer to the internal psychological factors that prevent individuals from participating, such as stress, anxiety, beliefs, reference group attitudes, personal appreciation, and subjective attitudes toward the activity, and others. Meanwhile, 'interpersonal constraints' are the result of interpersonal interactions, including the lack of suitable or sufficient peers that affect the individual's ability to participate in the activity. 'Structural constraints' refer to the external factors affecting individuals' participation in activities, such as season, climate, equipment, time, and so on (Xie, 2012). The study concludes that the intervention of leisure constraints prevents

people from realizing their original leisure preferences, and that the three types of constraints have a hierarchical relationship, ranging from intrapersonal to interpersonal to structural constraints, with the three levels of influence being sequential. The purpose of the study of constraints is to “study the factors assumed by Is and/or perceived or experienced by individuals, limiting the formation of preferences and/or inhibiting or preventing participation and leisure enjoyment” (Jackson, 2005). Godbey et al. (2010) argued that this theory is crucial for analyzing leisure behavior. With this theoretical foundation, the current situation of Shandong Qinshu can be studied and corresponding strategies can be derived.

In summary, scholars have put forward many suggestions for audience development, mostly from the macro level, but less from the micro level to analyze the audience development and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage or arts. There is a lack of analysis on the current situation of audience development of intangible cultural heritage, especially for some endangered arts. Therefore, it is necessary to further analyze the current situation and problems in relation to audience engagement of Shandong Qinshu from the micro level and to propose further strategies to mitigate the issue.

Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative approach that focuses on case study research. Data was collected through interview and observation as primary resources and secondary resources were referred to support the study on Shandong Qinshu. This study is divided into two phases: the first is aimed at understanding the current situation of the art. From October 2023 to December 2023, six participant observations of ‘All star’ theatre performances were conducted for a total of 180 minutes to gain an intuitive understanding of the current status of the performances. The second phase focused on the in-depth interviews (January 2024 to March 2024) with different types of audiences of ‘All star’ theatre at the Shandong Qinshu Master’s Studio. The purpose of the interview was to understand the views and attitudes of different groups of people towards the dissemination of Shandong Qinshu. Table 1 shows the total of 15 audiences invited to the interviews. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes and provided constructive suggestions in relation to audience development issues of Shandong Qinshu.

Table 1: Participants' Demography

Node	Gender	Age	Correlation
R1	M	13-18	General audience (occasional participation)
R2	F	13-18	Potential audience
R3	F	13-18	Potential audience
R4	F	19-35	Potential audience
R5	M	19-35	Potential audience
R6	M	19-35	Potential audience
R7	M	19-35	General audience (occasional participation)
R8	F	19-35	Loyal audience (regular participation)
R9	F	36-60	Loyal audience (regular participation)
R10	M	36-60	General audience (occasional participation)
R11	F	36-60	General audience (occasional participation)
R12	F	36-60	General audience (occasional participation)
R13	M	Over 60	Loyal audience (regular participation)
R14	M	Over 60	Loyal audience (regular participation)
R15	M	Over 60	Loyal audience (regular participation)

Firstly, through participant observation, I participated as an observer in the performance, rehearsal, teaching, and related cultural activities of Shandong Qinshu, recording a detailed observation diary. The focus of the observations included the interactive aspects of the

performance, the audience's reactions, the characteristics of the performances of the inheritors, and the cultural atmosphere of the performance. In addition, I focused on the attitudes and perspectives of theatre managers and inheritors with regard to audience outreach, as well as the audience's perceptions and emotional experiences of Shandong Qinshu.

Secondly, the in-depth interviews were able to elicit the audience's views and suggestions on the development of the Shandong Qinshu audience. The interviewees were co-convened from live performances of Shandong Qinshu as well as from social media platforms. The interviews were formulated on the basis of the theory of leisure barriers and in conjunction with the actual development of Shandong Qinshu in 'All Star' Theatre in order to identify the reasons which contribute to the audience development dilemma of Shandong Qinshu. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for subsequent data analysis. Finally, the data was manually coded and thematically analyzed to identify the current situation and key issues in the development of Shandong Qinshu audiences and to propose strategies. Strict ethical guidelines were adhered to during the research process to ensure the privacy of all participants and confidentiality of data. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the methodology, and possible risks, and provided explicit consent prior to participation.

Status and Problems of Audience Development of Shandong Qinshu

In this study, the performances of Shandong Qinshu were mainly concentrated in 'All star' theatre. The 'All star' theatre is a multi-functional performance venue located in the Jinan Municipal Culture Center. It is located on the ground floor of the Jinan Cultural Centre and is mainly used to carry out performances, competitions, and exchanges in a variety of disciplines such as opera, drama, music, and dance. The theatre insists on the operation concept of 'diversified and flexible', and actively explores new modes of market operation and multi-party cooperation. 'All star' theatre is an important place for Shandong Qinshu performances, where different Shandong Qinshu inheritors, apprentices and students come to perform every week, and it is also a fixed place for the performance of Yao Zhongxian, a Chinese national inheritor of intangible cultural heritage. Yao Zhongxian studied under Deng Jiuru, the founder of the northern genre of Shandong Qinshu, and is the only inheritor of the

northern genre of Shandong Qinshu in China. Yao Zhongxian is a Chinese national-level performer, a representative inheritor of the first batch of intangible cultural heritage of Shandong Qinshu at the national level, and a winner of the Peony Award for Chinese traditional oral art. According to the interview, Master Yao has successfully trained more than 30 apprentices since the masterclass started in 2006. Nowadays, some of the best apprentices, such as Yang Po, Luo Xiaojing and Ma Yelei, have also started to recruit their own apprentices and continue to teach Shandong Qinshu performance skills. Through the observation conducted, I was able to study their interaction with the audience members in the theatre, and at the same time understand the whole process of transmission in the theatre scene. The following results were obtained by combining the audience interviews to understand the attitudes, reactions, and problems faced by the audience in the dissemination of Shandong Qinshu.

Lack of Audience Awareness and Participation

With a history of over 200 years, Shandong Qinshu has witnessed the changes of different eras and is very popular among people. However, with the accelerated pace of modern life, young people may not be interested in traditional art forms and prefer modern entertainment, resulting in a lack of participation and awareness. Table 2 contains excerpts of the audience members' awareness and engagement.

Table 2 : Audience Awareness and Engagement

Themes	Question	Transcription	Remark
Audience awareness and engagement	Do you know what Shandong Qinshu is?	"I don't know much about it. I just know it's a kind of traditional oral art" "It is the representative folk art of Shandong province. That's all I can say." "I don't know." "A kind of performing art, both spoken and sung." "I know something about Shandong Qin shu. Shandong Qinshu originated in Heze, there are three genres."	Low audience awareness
	Can the traditional performing art of Shandong Qinshu attract you?	"This kind of performance attracts me" "This kind of performance kind of appeals to me to a certain extent." "Shandong Qinshu is very interesting and appealing to me." "Not really interested." "This kind of art is quite appealing to me, except that there are some dialects that I can't quite understand...."	Low attractiveness
	How often would you like to attend a Shandong Qinshu performance or event?	"Once a year, maybe." "I go when there's an event." "I usually go with my elderly and children, about once a month." "I rarely go." "I'm not sure."	Lower level of engagement
	What are your constraints in attending Shandong Qinshu events?	"Not being very familiar with this performing art." "There are no people of the same age to go with, and it's basically just old people and children watching" "Can't understand the art, it's too profound" "I don't feel I can appreciate it." "The Shandong Qinshu programme was not particularly interesting to me."	Lack of understanding; Lack of organisation

During the interview (as shown in Table 2), the participants were asked *“if they knew about the development of Shandong Qinshu”*. According to the result, eleven (11) people knew about it, and four (4) people only knew about its performance form. This reflects a lack of knowledge about Shandong Qinshu among the majority of the audience, which makes it difficult for potential audience members to understand and appreciate this art form, thus creating a barrier to participation. When the audience was further asked *“whether Shandong Qinshu can attract you”*, ten (10) of the audience members thought that it could. However, when asked if they would come to the theatre to enjoy the performance, half of the audience answered in the negative and the other half were unsure. Notably, those who answered negatively or uncertainly were between twenty and thirty years old. These audience responses are consistent with what Yao Zhongxian, the inheritor of Shandong Qinshu, said in the interview, *“Young audiences are not familiar enough with this folk art to*

understand it, so they lack the motivation to watch it and participate in it". An arts administrator commented on the level of audience participation in the 'All star' theatre, stating that *"the audience is not very participatory nowadays, and they are not very aware of folk arts such as Chinese traditional oral art. For example, when the audience should applaud during the performance and when they should co-operate with the actors to complete the performance together."* In the interviews, many audience members responded to the question of engagement by stating that they may be reluctant to respond to actors because of personal shyness and embarrassment. *"I would feel embarrassed if I applauded at the wrong time"* and *"I don't know when to applaud for fear of interrupting the actors"*. Luo Xiaojing, another inheritor of Shandong Qinshu, mentioned that *"the lack of popularity of knowledge of the traditional oral arts is the reason for this problem."* Because Shandong Qinshu is a folk art, it needs to interact with the audience, but it seems that the young audience does not quite understand the importance of this interactive aspect of the performance art.

Single means of audience development

In the interviews (as shown in Table 3), when the participants were asked *"how they got the information about the theatre performances and Masterclasses"*, five (5) shared that they obtained the information through WeChat, while others listened to the radio, watched TV, or heard their friends mentioning it by chance. However, some young audience members mentioned that they *"don't know where to get information about performances"* or that they *"don't have access to information about Chinese traditional oral art performances through their usual social software or platforms"*. When checking the notifications on WeChat public numbers, I found that there was little content promoting performances, the introduction lacked richness, and there was a lack of performance guide. Additionally, there was also a lack of contents related to traditional oral art performances or art education on Tik-Tok and Damai.com, which are commonly used by young people. *"We usually use mobile phone software to listen to more crosstalk and talk shows, because there are resources for this in many music and storytelling software, but we have never heard the audio of Shandong Qinshu"*. Many young audience members expressed similar views, stating *"we actually want to understand this art"*. This shows that Shandong Qinshu has a single way of dissemination and does not make reasonable use of social media

platforms for publicity. *“The popularization and promotion of the art of Shandong Qinqshu, narration and other methods of audience development have not played a sufficient role”*, according to a senior audience member of Shandong Qinqshu, *“which has led to many audiences finding it difficult to achieve their intended aesthetic objectives from it”*. The interviews conducted also concluded that in today's highly developed new media technology, most of the audience's acceptance of Shandong Qinqshu is still restricted to the traditional media approach.

Table 3 : Approaches to Audience Development

Themes	Question	Transcription	Remark
Audience Development Approaches	Through what channels do you get information about Shandong Qinqshu performances?	"I got it from WeChat's public number." "Listening to the radio, watching TV" "I heard a friend mention that there are discount tickets here." "I don't know where to get performance information." "The commonly used social software or platforms have no access to information related to this performance." "It's hard to get information about performances, I don't know where to get it."	Limited ways of transmitting information
	Has Shandong Qinqshu used social media or online platforms for promotion? If yes, how effective is it?	"I've seen a friend share on social media" "I rarely see it. There is no information about the performance on the commonly used social media platforms." "I've seen articles about the development and history of Shandong Qinqshu, but I haven't seen the promotion of related performances" "I haven't seen any online promotion of Shandong Qinqshu performances." "I usually use mobile phone software to listen to more comedy, because there are resources in many software, but I haven't seen the audio resources of Shandong Qinqshu." "I've seen reports about the inheritors of Shandong Qinqshu, but the effect is average, nothing new, and nothing special compared to the promotion of other traditional performing arts"	Inadequate publicity
	Can you tell me what are the main ways that Shandong Qinqshu is currently using to attract and develop audiences?	"Promoting Shandong Qinqshu through online platforms and social media" "Arranging repertoire that is close to young people's lives" "Organising different kinds of performance activities, but the audience development approach of Shandong Qinqshu has not been effective enough. And many audiences find it difficult to achieve the desired aesthetic goals." "Going into communities, schools and enterprises to perform"	The effect is unsatisfactory

Performance lacks attractiveness

With globalization and modernization, people's lifestyles, values and aesthetic concepts have changed. The traditional performance works of Shandong Qinqshu may find it difficult to resonate with modern audiences if they fail to keep up with the times. Through the interviews with 15 audience members, I obtained information about the audience's attitudes and perceptions of Shandong Qinqshu as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 : Attractiveness of Shandong Qinshu

Themes	Question	Transcription	Remark
Attractiveness of the work	Are you willing to enjoy the traditional works of Shandong Qinshu?	"I'm quite willing." "More willing, because these traditional works are the classics of Shandong Qinshu" "Not very interested, I'm familiar with the stories, I don't really want to listen to them" "I think the values in some traditional works don't quite match the changing times, so they don't really appeal to me" "It feels like it's art that only older people would enjoy watching because it's music from that era, and I prefer to see something fun and visually appealing performed."	Inconsistency with the times
	Do you think the performance works of Shandong Qinshu are attractive to modern audiences? Why?	"Although these works are classic, they have become out of touch with the current public aesthetics and are not very appealing" "The appeal to the audience is not big enough or does not meet the expectations of the audience." "The appeal to the audience is related to the innovation of the works. "	Failed to meet audience expectations
	What do you think is the disconnect between the traditional works of Shandong Qinshu and the aesthetics and interests of modern audiences?	"The traditional repertoire is mostly based on ancient stories and myths and legends, which may be difficult to resonate with young modern audiences." "Modern society is changing rapidly, and audiences are more likely to expect works of art that reflect real life and social issues, while traditional repertoire is more lacking in this regard." "Shandong Qinshu works are performed in a single format, and it takes ten minutes to watch a piece, which is really too long to have that much time."	Disconnect between content and subject matter Disconnect in presentation

For example, the artistic style of Shandong Qinshu is robust and conservative, which is not in line with the modern audience's aesthetic taste for newness and change. They prefer innovative and visually appealing works of art. The programs performed by Shandong Qinshu are mainly based on a select few traditional works, such as "The Descent of Liang Zhu", "The Legend of the White Snake" and "Mother Meng Teaches Her Children". When asked if the interviewees were willing to enjoy these traditional pieces, some of the older audience members were very happy to do so, while some of the younger audience members said, *"These stories are all very familiar and I don't really want to listen to them"*, *"I think the concept of love in Liang Zhu is not quite in line with the changes of the times, so it doesn't really appeal to me"*, and *"I feel that this is an art that only the elderly would like to watch because it is a piece of music from*

that era, and I prefer to watch some interesting and visually appealing performances".

When asked whether the performance works of Shandong Qinshu are attractive to modern audiences, some audience members said, *"They are not attractive enough to me, or have not met my expectations."* Other audience members said, *"Although these works are classic, they are out of touch with the current public aesthetics and are not attractive enough."* One loyal audience member of the traditional oral art believes that *"the appeal to the audience has to do with how innovative the works are."* Additionally, *"We also want to create new works, but it's so difficult and the creation cycle is so long that no one is willing to do it"*. An arts administrator at the 'All Star' Theatre mentioned in an interview that in order to innovate traditional works, increase the participation of young audiences, and broaden the audience base, some inheritors and apprentices try to bring Shandong Qinshu onto the opera stage or combine it with other modern forms of performance as a way of increasing the modernity and attractiveness of the technique. However, one arts administrator suggested that sometimes excessive innovation, divorced from the Shandong Qinshu's own performance form, has the opposite effect.

During the interviews, when I talked to the audience about "what is the disconnect between the traditional works of Shandong Qinshu and the aesthetics and interests of the modern audience", they focused on two issues. On the one hand, there is a disconnect between content and subject matter. One young audience member thought, *"The story content is old-fashioned, and the traditional repertoire is mostly based on ancient stories and myths and legends, which may be difficult to resonate with modern young audiences."* Another young audience member believes that Shandong Qinshu works are rather lacking in realistic relevance. *"Modern society is changing rapidly, and the audience is more looking forward to works of art that can reflect real life and social issues, while the traditional repertoire is more lacking in this regard."* On the other hand, there is a disconnect in the form of expression. According to one audience member, *"This form of performance of Shandong Qinshu. It is relatively single since ancient times and may not be fully accepted by modern audiences."* Another audience member said, *"The rhythm of the Shandong Qinshu is too slow, and a program has to be performed for ten minutes. Even if you listen to it well, you will feel aesthetic fatigue."*

Secondly, I interviewed three more inheritors on related issues, hoping to understand the performers' attitudes towards the audience feedback of Shandong Qinshu. One of the inheritors said, *"We also want to innovate, and hope to bring the audience a different stage performance."* Another inheritor asked, *"How to innovate? Some inheritors and apprentices try to bring the traditional arts to the opera stage or combine them with other modern forms of performance to enhance the modernity and attractiveness of their skills. However, sometimes over-innovation, detached from the performance form of Shandong Qinshu itself, has the opposite effect. The flavour of this art changes."* Another inheritor said, *"The scale of innovation should be grasped. As there are big differences in the aesthetic level of different audiences, for some of the audiences with a weak foundation in traditional culture and lack of aesthetic experience in music and art, the existing Shandong Qinshu works are difficult to meet their aesthetic needs."*

With the change of the times and the evolution of the audience's aesthetics, there is a certain disconnect between traditional arts and modern audiences. Shandong Qinshu, a traditional performing art, may lack attraction in terms of content and form, making it difficult to attract young audiences who seek fresh experiences. Modern art, on the other hand, tends to focus on innovation and experimentation, and is more likely to attract the attention of the younger generation. However, the challenge is how to grasp the scale of innovation, which can ensure the authentic style of the performing art work, but also meet the aesthetic needs of modern audiences and enhance its appeal. In the future, this will require good communication channels between the audience and the inheritors, composers and arts administrators in order to grasp the degree of innovation in the works.

Lack of audience community

In the interviews and observations, I found that Shandong Qinshu, as a traditional performing art form, faces the problem of inadequate audience community organization in modern society. The lack of audience community organization has a direct impact on the audience's participation in Shandong Qinshu (as shown in Table 5). When asked "if they knew about the audience community organization of Shandong Qinshu", it is regrettable that only three (3) out of fifteen (15) interviewees knew about it, while the rest did not know about it. One audience member who knew

about the community said, *"I know, but there are very few people in the community, so I don't really know them"*. Another younger audience member stated, *"I'm in the group, but there's not much interaction and very little conversation."* A senior audience member mentioned during the interview that *"it seems like no one has talked in the group for a long time, and there is no one to manage it. We should learn from theatre performances and have the opportunity to form WeChat groups with offline audience members after each performance, which would allow actors and audience members to directly contact each other and strengthen the connection"*.

Secondly, in the interview process, when asked "what kind of influence does the audience community have on the inheritance and development of Shandong Qinshu", the interviewees gave a lot of answers, mostly focusing on the important influence of the audience community on expanding the influence of Shandong Qinshu. According to a young audience member, *"the audience community helps the audience to interact with each other and with the inheritors, and attracts more audience... People are able to speak freely in the community, expressing their preferences and evaluations of the programme."* A veteran audience member of Shandong Qinshu believes that *"The audience community is well established and can expand the influence of this art. The community can spread the art and culture of Shandong Qinshu more directly, cultivate the audience's artistic literacy, and teach people how to appreciate Shandong Qinshu."* When asked, "How do you think community organizations should attract more audience participation?", some respondents mentioned the importance of modern media and communication channels from the perspective of publicity. *"Strengthen publicity and use multiple channels to widely disseminate information about Shandong Qinshu performances and activities."* *"Often post highlights of Shandong Qinshu on social media platforms, not too much content is needed, but it should be beautifully produced and able to attract people's attention."* In addition, a young audience member suggested *"providing more diversified activities so that audiences of different ages can participate in them"*. He further said, *"There is also a need to focus on the interactivity of the performances, so that we can communicate with the audience or be taught some simple choruses or performance techniques. Use the community to bring everyone closer to the art and the masters."*

Table 5 : Audience’s Community Organization

Themes	Question	Transcription	Remark
Community organisation of the audience	Are you aware of or involved in any Shandong Qinshu audience community organisations?	"I haven't heard about it and there's no official information" "I know, but there are very few people in the community, none of them know each other very well" "I'm in the group, but there's not much interaction and very little to talk about" "I don't know anything about it." "It seems like it's been a long time since anyone talked in the group, no one manages it. There should be opportunities to form WeChat groups with offline audiences after each performance, as theatre performances are learning to do, which can allow actors and audiences to connect directly and strengthen that connection."	Inadequate construction of community organisations
	What impact do you think the audience community has had on the heritage and development of Shandong Qinshu?	"The audience community helps viewers interact with each other and with the inheritors People are able to speak freely in the community and express their preferences and comments on the programme." "Audience communities are well established and can expand the influence of this art. From the community, we can spread the art and culture of Shandong Qinshu more directly, cultivate the audience's artistic literacy, and give people how to appreciate Shandong qinshu."	Expanding the reach of the arts
	How do you think community organisations should engage a wider audience?	"Strengthen publicity, use multiple channels to widely disseminate information about performances and activities of Shandong Qinshu" "Often post highlights of Shandong Qinshu on social media platforms, which don't need to be too informative, but should be beautifully produced and able to attract attention" "Provide more diversified activities so that audiences of different ages can participate in them.....There also needs to be a focus on the interactive nature of the performances, being able to talk more with us in the audience or teach us simple chants or performance techniques. Use the community to bring everyone closer to the art and the masters."	Strengthening multi-channel communication with a focus on interactivity

In summary, the construction of audience community organization of Shandong Qinshu is imperfect, and the audience community has a multifaceted and important impact on the inheritance and development of traditional performing arts. It is necessary to further improve the construction of audience community organization, expand its influence, strengthen multi-channel publicity, and pay attention to the interaction between the community organization and the audience. Future development needs to combine traditional and modern elements, and use multiple media and platforms to enhance its influence and attraction.

Audience Development Strategies for Shandong Qinshu

Based on the collection and analysis of the interview data, the following strategies are provided for the audience development of Shandong Qinshu.

Attracting Potential Audience Strategy

Educating and nurturing a new generation of audience is the primary strategy. Courses or workshops related to Shandong Qinshu are offered in primary schools to universities so that students can be exposed to and learn about this art form from an early age. The education sector and the media should co-operate to promote cultural education and publicity activities. Incorporating Shandong Qinshu into the main content of intangible cultural heritage education is aimed to enhance young people's sense of cultural identity. According to the survey, the population aged between 15 and 59 accounts for 63.6 per cent of the total population. The population aged between 15 and 59 is the mainstay of social production, and its size represents the strength and potential of a region's future development. This includes university students and workers from all walks of life. This group is usually under great pressure from study and work, and needs to relax and relieve pressure through cultural and recreational activities. They are rich and strong, and have both consumption ability and consumption demand, which is the main target group of local Shandong Qinshu's audience development. Therefore, this potential audience can be expanded through activities such as theatre knowledge lectures on weekends and public holidays, and can also be offered a few hours prior to a performance.

Secondly, the theatre should make good use of modern media and technology. Through the interviews, the study found that there is a certain distance between Shandong Qinshu performances and the audience, and that social media platforms have not yet been reasonably utilized for dissemination and promotion. Therefore, it is recommended to create an official account of Jinan 'All star' theatre on all major media platforms, and to regularly release performance clips, backstories, and related knowledge of Shandong Qinshu to attract audience's attention and sharing intent. Secondly, an online teaching video or interactive application of Shandong Qinshu should be created to facilitate people from different regions to learn and experience this art.

Strategy to strengthen and maintain the existing audience groups

Firstly, the most effective way to increase attendance at arts events is not to attract new audiences, but to encourage those who already have a desire to participate in more arts activities (Chen, 2019). Building a loyal

community of audience members and setting up a fan club for Shandong Qinshu provides fans with an exclusive platform for communication, regular events and special opportunities for participation. It helps people to share their performance experiences with each other and increases their motivation to attend performances. The community can also be used to provide regular audience members with offers and privileges, such as discounted tickets, backstage tours, and interactive quizzes.

Secondly, performing arts groups and arts organizations producing outstanding performances are always the most important factor in attracting audiences to the theatre. Performers and creators of Shandong Qinshu need to communicate more with the audience to understand what young audiences expect from Shandong Qinshu productions. Loyal audiences are willing to pay for excellent performances, while excellent performances will attract more consumers to the theatre.

Conclusion

This research has focused on the matter of audience development strategies of Shandong Qinshu under the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection, aiming to provide strategic suggestions for the inheritance and promotion of Shandong Qinshu, a traditional form of Chinese oral art. By systematically combing the history, artistic characteristics and current audience status of Shandong Qinshu, and combining it with the protection of intangible cultural heritage, this research has put forward a series of targeted audience development strategies.

First, the research has found that to effectively broaden the audience for Shandong Qinshu, it is essential to adhere to the principle of balancing preservation and development. This means respecting its traditional essence while actively exploring innovative dissemination methods. Secondly, by integrating modern media technologies, such as internet platforms and social media, the charm of Shandong Qinshu can be spread more widely, attracting the attention of the younger generation. Additionally, organizing various cultural exchange activities and incorporating Shandong Qinshu into the public cultural service system are also effective ways to expand the audience base.

At the educational level, strengthening the intangible cultural heritage content of school education, especially the promotion and popularization of Shandong Qinshu in local education, will help to foster a sense of identity and interest in local culture among students from an early age. At the same time, establishing and improving the inheritance system of Shandong Qinshu, and encouraging and supporting exchanges and co-operation between artists and young apprentices are crucial to ensuring the vitality of the art form.

In summary, the audience development strategy of Shandong Qinshu under the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection should be multi-faceted and multi-level. Through a comprehensive approach of policy support, education and guidance, media dissemination and cultural exchange, not only can we expand the audience base of Shandong Qinshu, but also lay a solid social foundation for its long-term protection and development. Future work should continue to pay attention to the ecological changes of the Shandong Qinshu, flexibly adjust and optimize the development strategy, and ensure that this precious cultural heritage is appropriately inherited and innovatively developed.

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