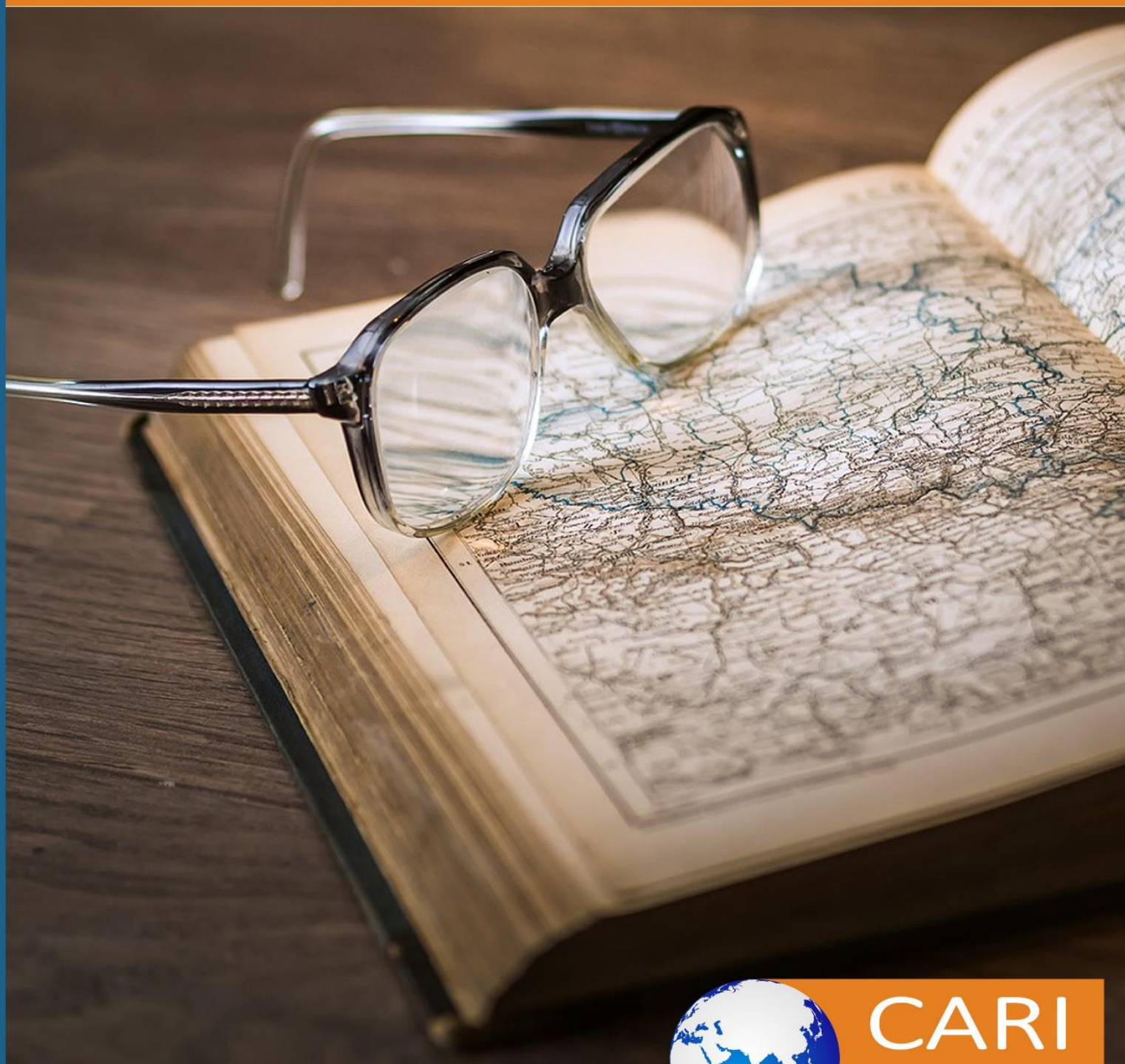


International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences

(IJHSS) **Complex Media Ecology and Transformation of Ethnic
Minority Festival Culture**



CARI
Journals

Complex Media Ecology and Transformation of Ethnic Minority Festival Culture

¹Zeng Jiahao, ^{2*}Dr. Taksina Chai-ittipornwong , ³Assistant Professor Dr. Panom Wannasiri

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Communication Arts, Bangkok Thonburi University

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2783-9732>



Accepted: 4th July, 2026, Received in Revised Form: 24th July, 2026, Published: 9th Aug, 2026

Abstract

Purpose: Objectives of this research were to explore the challenge, analyze the transformation, and study the sustainability of ethnic minority festival culture within the complex media ecology.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews that integrated multidisciplinary perspectives and local voices, including scholars of media ecology and digital communication, experts on Guangxi ethnic minorities, local sages, festival organizers operating across online and offline contexts, and Guangxi residents. Supplementary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with Chinese younger generation. Thematic analysis was conducted, drawing upon theoretical frameworks of complex media ecology and traditional festival transformation, and applied comprehensively across the dataset.

Findings: The findings were that ethnic minority festival culture in Guangxi, have faced three major challenges; originality recognition of new generation, intangible cultural-identity retention, and the youth's participation, complex media ecology has the festivals transformed into unstable festival typology and uneven development between visible forms and cultural meanings, leading to the tendencies in public visibility, ritual-media connection, and local continuity, and that sustainability of the festival culture depends on their efficacy in festive core value continuity, adaptability to the complexity of digital media affordance, and intergenerational participation collaborated.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Understanding of traditional culture transformation over the complex media ecology helps ethnic minority festivals move beyond digital visibility, enabling ethnic identity persistence, strengthening community participation, and enhancing cultural communication policy and strategic planning.

Keywords: *Complex Media Ecology, Festival Culture Transformation, Guangxi Ethnic Minorities*

JEL Codes: F6, O3, Z1

1. INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of digitization and intelligent technology, the contemporary media ecosystem has become highly complex, diversified, and platform-based. The advances in digital media technology involving social media apps, algorithmic recommendation, platform convergence, and transmedia communication have collectively changed the conditions under which cultural content is produced, circulated, interpreted, received, and responded (Couldry & Hepp, 2018; Poell & Van Dijk, 2018). These digital media facilitating UGC (user-generated content), generated-AI (artificial intelligence), VR (virtual reality), and transmedia circulation create new possibilities for traditional festival dissemination and cultural participation, bringing challenges such as information noise, algorithmic bias, content simplification, and the rise of speculation about festival events for entertainment practices in cultural tourism.

In digital age, the technology-based mediation process constructs the real social world, penetrating into the interdependent relationship between social actors through the interactivity structure, consequently, different media environments can shape different cultural forms and social relations (Wu & Xiao, 2024). Within the complexity of digital media ecology, traditional cultures, especially ethnic minority festival culture in China have been facing significant challenges for sustainable retention (Wang, 2022).

Due to the government support and tourism campaigns, Chinese traditional festivals are increasingly presented through short videos, livestreaming, tourism media, platform-based circulation, and other digital devices. These media create more channels for enhancing festival culture in ritual logic, local knowledge, ethnic identity and community memory to be presented, circulated and continued to next generation. A series of policy documents under the 2011 Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2017 Implementation Plan for the Inheritance and Development Project of China's Excellent Traditional Culture emphasizes that ethnic minority festival, which is an important part of intangible cultural heritages, shall be transformed in protection and innovated in development. This means that culture is the soul of a nation, and cultural identity is the foundation of national unity (Zhao & Yun, 2024).

Guangxi is one of the most important ethnic minority regions in China, with a large ethnic minority population and rich festival traditions among Zhuang, Yao, Mulao and other ethnic groups. Their festive traditions are not only local cultural activities, but also important expressions of China's cultural diversity and cultural soft power (Qian, 2023). As an important gateway to ASEAN, Guangxi region has particular significance for China in manifesting the strategic value of regional connectivity and cross-cultural communication over the pillar of globalization. At the same time, the complexity of digital multimedia is not merely an academic concern within media ecology but carries profound cultural and strategic significance, linking the transformation of traditional festivals with digital communication and foregrounding the imperative of sustainable transformation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Complex Media Ecology (CME)

The implication of complex media ecology (CME) is to reconstruct the concept of media towards its features, extending media system by explaining how its basic elements are transformed within a dynamic media ecology (Chai-ittipornwong, 2022). CME provides a media ecology-based perspective for understanding the interaction among platform-based mechanism, content creator, audience, value of culture, and societal environment (Scolari, 2023). Under the CME, channel or media is not simply regarded as neutral channel for transmitting information, but as environment that shape human perception, social relations, cultural experience, and communication practices (Fuchs, 2021). Digital technology establishes a topological relationship among communication elements, reconfiguring the classical components of sender, message, channel, and receiver (SMCR), however, this traditional linear model can no longer fully account for the shifting roles of these elements that foreground the influence of media environments on human behavior and social structures (Chai-ittipornwong, 2022).

Within the CME, five constitutive elements are identified: producer, consumer, platform mechanism, culture, and environment. These elements do not function in isolation; rather, they form interdependent dimensions that generate nonlinear interactions across a dynamic, diverse, and complex digital media system (Scolari, 2023; Napoli, 2019; Couldry & Hepp 2018).

1) Producer

In the CME, ‘producer’ is not limited to traditional content creators but also include algorithm designers, platform operators, and those involved in content moderation and rule-making. Their roles extend beyond simple content generation to include the design of dissemination mechanisms, the definition of censorship and filtering boundaries, and the planning of commercialization paths including advertising embedding and IP-based operations. In digital media environment, producer often shapes the structural biases of information flows through technological architecture thereby subtly influencing life cycle and reproduction pattern of cultural symbols (Burgess & Green, 2018).

2) Consumer

An element of ‘consumer’ has long transcended the one-way role of passively receiving information. In CME context, consumer becomes co-producer of content meaning and agent of recontextualization within a cycle of viewing, feedback, and re-creation. This type of participation manifested in explicit interactive behavior in placing existing content within new narrative structure by clicking like, share, repost, mashups, and emoji-based content, forming a communication path of UGC. Media user is not only passive audience but also active participant in meaning-making and content circulation (Jenkins & Jie, 2024).

3) Platform

In the CME, ‘platform’ mechanism becomes a reflection of value orientation and power relation shaping algorithmic priorities based on the platform rule and commercial interest influencing the visibility and content reproduction as it is digitally-mediated system centered around information distribution algorithms, interface design, and visibility and interaction logics. Unlike the editorial gatekeeping mechanism of traditional media, digital platform relies on recommendation algorithm, search ranking, trending list, and tagging system to embed content in highly personalized and contextualized distribution network (Napoli, 2019)

4) Culture

In the complexity of digital media, ‘culture’ becomes creative content representing symbolic system and social norm that different cultural groups rely on in the production, dissemination, and consumption of information (Couldry & Hepp, 2018). This layer not only focuses on how cultural content is understood but also emphasizes the ongoing interactions among different communities in the construction of identity, the clash of values, and the production of local knowledge. Culture is deemed to shape the decoding of information, consequently, it creates a dynamic tension between localism and cross-cultural communication (Georgiou, 2022).

5) Environment

‘Environment’ in the CME refers to macro and external conditions, including legal policy, economic structure, social movement, and international relation, which set the structural boundaries and possibilities for media production, distribution, and consumption leading to long-term and multidimensional influences such as cultural policy orientation, market capital flow, and international cultural exchange (Mansell & Plantin, 2022).

2.2 Traditional Festival Transformation

Traditional festival is comprehensive cultural phenomena usually refers to celebrations that are rooted in a specific ethnic or regional culture invented with practices to construct community imagination and political power (Boehmer, 2025). Festival culture is therefore a cyclical, ritualistic, collective and specific historical memories, including belief systems, social functions, ethics, art, and economy, created by the collective creation of the nation and passed down from generation to generation (Zhong, 1992 cited in Zhou, 2024). In China, ethnic minority festivals with historical origins traceable to the Han dynasty constitute a distinctive cultural category. The festivals have been retained, reconfigured and adapted in accordance with prevailing modes of life and the broader trajectories of social evolution. These eventually reflect the dual attributes of traditional festivals as carriers of national cultural genes and dynamic social practices (Zhang, 2019). In the 2011 Law of the People's Republic of China, traditional festival was clearly listed as intangible cultural heritage for the protection principles emphasizing continuous participation of communities and groups on community identity and living inheritance.

Cultural study is based on two aspects; tangible and intangible cultures those refer to the various distinctions in every context, especially the way for cultural inheritance and continuity. Tangible

and intangible cultures not only differ in their forms of expression, but also exhibit distinct characteristics in terms of media transmission and the sustainable development of culture (Thakur et al., 2024). Distinction between tangible and intangible culture typically is explained in terms of the forms in which culture exists and the ways in which cultural meaning is expressed. Intangible culture is interpreted in the perspective of cultural meaning and symbolic systems while tangible culture is usually equated with material culture in physical objects. Cultural objects are continually imbued with meaning through social interaction; consequently, material culture is not merely the result of cultural expression but also an integral part of the process of social interaction reflecting social relationships and cultural values (Berta, 2024).

In addition, tangible and intangible culture are viewed as two interrelated dimensions in cultural communication. Tangible culture is more readily presented and disseminated through media technologies, whilst the intangible plays a more central role in cultural heritage and sustainable cultural development (Lai et al., 2025). As such, intangible cultural heritage is typically transmitted across generations through social practices, traditional knowledge and cultural memory (Zhang et al., 2025). Traditional festivals are eventually regarded as significant manifestations of intangible culture as they are not only important forms of cultural expression but also key channels for the dissemination of cultural knowledge and cultural education (Yatim et al., 2025).

With the aggression of digital media technologies and the spread of traditional festival in pluralistic society, the transformation of festival cultures was classified into three levels: native festival, secondary festival, and revitalized festival. Under the CME, the transformation of Chinese ethnic minorities' festival culture is understood through the movement from original (native) to changeable (secondary) and adaptive festivals (revitalized), in which the transformation is determined from community-based ritual practices into platform-mediated and digitally represented cultural practices. With the changes in both content and form including appearance and presentation, reconfiguration of festival meaning, ritual logic, cultural symbols and community memory are regarded as the festival's content value. For the festival form, the changes include channel for festival presentation, participation patterns, and production subjects on appearance or performing with digital expression, such as AI content, VR-based production, and transmedia circulation (Liu et al., 2024).

1) Native Festival

Native festivals have long been established and continued in the native lands are spontaneously organized by specific communities, and the main inheritors are mostly families or local authorities. Their dates are often based on either the ethnic or Chinese calendar. The ritual content is deeply bound to the origin myth regarding human history, farming calendar or religious beliefs. The main function is to maintain community identity and exclude external interference. The festivals are also less reliant on digitally-mediated dissemination. Instead, they are typically rooted in closed social structures and geographical relationships while imbuing themselves with profound cultural significance (Zhang & Dai, 2023). Consequently, native festival can retain their originality with

ethnic elders hosting activities and passing on community-based development.

2) Secondary Festival

Secondary festivals represent the traditional culture that, during the integration of foreign cultures and local values, was gradually replaced or changed from the original identity, either presentation methods or symbolic meaning to the new form. With realizing trend of digital media affordance and commercial interest, the festival's functionality has shifted from a single cultural function to complex goals of economy and tourism, like the internationalization of the Dragon Boat Race during the Dragon Boat Festival causing the characteristic changeable (Zhang & Dai, 2023).

3) Revitalized Festival

Revitalized festivals are based on the combination between original festival retention and the integration into current media and social needs. The festivals have gradually emerged through the absorption and borrowing other ethnic customs with the retention of local characteristics while also incorporating and reshaping elements of foreign cultures enabling the festival to achieve reproduction and diversified development between inheritance and innovation. As such, the revitalized festivals need to seek a balance between the protection of originality and the innovative development in order to maintain the festival foundation (Fang & Jia, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design, drawing on in-depth interviews with five expert groups in the field and complimented by semi-structured interview with Chinese new generation to enrich the findings. To cover significant methodological validity and consistencies, these two approaches differentiated perceptual orientations between the expert groups and the new generation those formally expected to assume substantive roles in continuing the ethnic minorities' festival cultures over the CME environment. In terms of ethnic minority groups examined in this research, Zhuang, Yao, and Mulao were prioritized as they are the majority ethnic populations in Guangxi (Qian, 2023). This study also incorporated twenty-eight festival cultures, activated in local cultural events and circulated through online media: 14 pertaining to the Zhuang (*March 3rd Song, Paolong, Bronze Drum, Maguai, Chili, Agricultural Tools, Huapo, Ox Soul, Medicine King, Changxin, Zhuang, Moyi Dawang, Back-Beating, Tiaolingtou*), and 7 each pertaining to the Yao (*Clothes Drying, Zhuzhu, Shangdeng Zhalong, Yasheng, Panwang, Wind-Banning, Ganba*), and the Mulao (*Yifan, Zoupo, Mulao Year, She, Huapo, Ox Birthday, Insect Eating*).

3.1 In-depth Interview

The study commenced with a series of preliminary in-depth interviews, employing purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of diverse and contextually relevant perspectives. A total of fourteen informants, drawn from five distinct groups, provided multidisciplinary and local insights into the inheritance, challenges, transformation, and sustainability of Guangxi ethnic minority festivals within the CME environment. Coding was applied to both items and responses, aligning

them with the focal themes of the five elements of CME—producer, consumer, platform, culture, and environment—as well as the three categories of traditional festival transformation: Native, Secondary, and Revitalized festivals. The informants comprised two scholars specializing in media ecology and digital communication, two experts in ethnic minority studies, three esteemed local sages from Guangxi, two festival organizers, and five Guangxi residents. The distribution of informants across groups was guided by the principle of data saturation: recruitment ceased once thematic redundancy was observed and no novel insights emerged.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the perceptions, levels of understanding, and significance that China's younger generation attributes to the preservation and transmission of Guangxi ethnic minority festival heritage. The interviews followed a checklist of 28 festivals, each analyzed across two dimensions: (1) festival transformation and (2) the erosion of originality in both content and form. Participants comprised students, teachers, and staff from Beihai University of Art and Design in Guangxi, purposively selected according to three criteria: (a) aged 18–35 years; (b) Chinese citizenship; and (c) demonstrated willingness and availability for 60-minute interview. During the interview process, they received supplementary information and explanations about the 28 festivals through short-form videos and instant images. A total of 50 qualified volunteers participated.

4. FINDINGS

The research results particularly address the influence of CME generating the challenges, transformation pattern, and how-to for sustainability of Guangxi traditional festivals those unavoidable facing globalization and digitization effects.

4.1 Challenges of Ethnic Minority Festival Cultures within CME Environment

The study found that Guangxi ethnic minority festivals have been facing three main challenges; originality of structural characteristics, devaluation of cultural identity, and new generation participation in festival inheritance. The challenges are not limited to the continuation of festivals themselves, but mainly reflected in the recognition of festival originality, the understanding of intangible cultural value, and a necessity for the growing concern from new generation performing a cross-cultural communication as their normal practice.

1) Originality Decline. Guangxi ethnic minority festivals have faced the differentiated continuation rather than simple disappearance. Also, identifying the originality of the festivals proved too difficult for those whose knowledge of the festival background was limited. Particularly, the festival originality is measured not by appearance, but by its living ties to local people, stories, and interpretation of symbolic meanings. The finding showed that the structural characteristics of festivals differed across ethnic groups.

2) Erosion of Cultural Identity. Most informants addressed that intangible value of festivals is

actually located in practices and knowledge that is not immediately visible in images or short videos. Digital media tended to amplify content that was easy to view, edit and share, but intangible meanings were more likely to be simplified or marginalized. It is also possible that festival identity shifts according to interpretations by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds mediated via cross-cultural or online communication. As such, subtitles, contextual storytelling, and explanations of local narratives and rituals were indispensable in fostering a deeper understanding of the festival's intangible.

3) New Generation Participation. New generation participation remains shallow when it is limited to watching, reposting and short-term attention. The challenge is not whether the younger generation is interested in the festivals, but whether their participation needs to be promoted, which possibly attract them with festival images, online interaction and visually interesting activities, even they may not fully understand ritual rules, local history or cultural meaning.

4.2 Transformation of Ethnic Minority Festival Cultures over the CME

The study reveals that youth rationales and multidisciplinary voices align in shaping comparable festival transformations among the three ethnic minority groups.

1) Semi-Structure Interview. In exploring the youth's understanding and recognition of the transformation of festival cultures among Zhuang, Yao, and Mulao ethnic minorities in Guangxi, participants articulated their perceptions and judgments regarding 28 distinct cultural practices. These evaluations were compared before and after the participants received supplementary information and explanations presented through short-form videos and instant images of the festivals.

Table 1: Transformation of Ethnic Minority Festival in View of Chinese Youth

Festival Categories	Transformation	Transformation of Guangxi Ethnic Minority Festival					
		Zhuang		Yao		Mulao	
		Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Native: Original		5	7	3	3	5	6
Secondary: Changeable		8	5	3	1***	2	0
Revitalized: Adaptive		1*	2	1**	3	0	1****
Total (festival)		14	14	7	7	7	7

*: Name of festival

March 3rd Song (Zhuang)*, *Panwang (Yao)*, ****Clothes Drying (Yao)*, *****Zoupo (Mulao)*

The interview outcomes attest that, following the receipt of supplementary information and explanatory elaboration, the youth participants reformulated their justifications. The number of cases in the after-columns shows improvement across every category, and these recalibrated

accounts are borne out in the evidentiary record as shown in Table 1. Zhuang and Mulao cultures were prioritized within the original category, represented in 7 of 14 and 6 of 7 festivals respectively, while Yao demonstrated a similarly moderate presence across both original and adaptive stages. In view of younger generation, Zhaung festivals achieved broader public visibility through cultural events, whereas Yao practices—particularly in their aesthetic forms and performative expressions—reflected adaptive transformations shaped by digital communication. By contrast, Mulao festivals exhibited resilience through its emphasis on local continuity and adaptability.

2) In-depth Interview. Taken together with multidisciplinary insights into the transformation of ethnic minority festivals, the findings indicate that platform-based dissemination, algorithmic distribution, the rise of AI-generated content, and immersive media technologies have propelled these festivals into heightened societal visibility. Ethnic group comparisons further reveal differentiated trajectories: Zhuang festivals are more likely to enter public events and regional imagery; Yao face heightened pressure to explicate ritual meanings for external audiences; and Mulao festivals exhibit weaker external visibility but stronger reliance on local inheritance. The overall effect as presented in Figure 1 was that CME exerted nearly the same effects on Zhuang and Yao, but far less on Mulao.

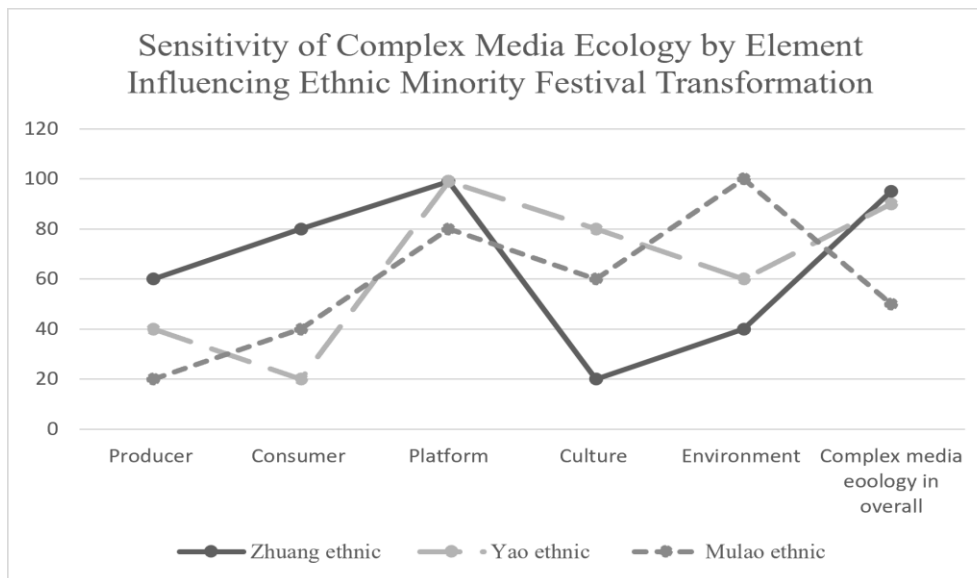


Figure 1: Complex Media Ecology and the Transformation of Festival Culture: Multidisciplinary Perspectives for Zhuang, Yao, and Mulao Ethnic Minorities in Guangxi

As illustrated in Figure 1, which delineated the sensitivity of the five constituent dimensions of CME across multidisciplinary perspectives, analyses of festival culture transformation designated ‘platform’ mechanisms as the principal determinant structuring the transitional trajectories of Zhuang and Yao festivals. By contrast, the festival reconfiguration of Mulao ethnic group was primarily conditioned by societal ‘environment’, with ‘platform’ dynamics operating only as a

subsidiary influence. Within this comparative schema, ‘consumer’ constituted the secondary determinant for the Zuang, whereas ‘environment’ assumed this role for the Yao. Furthermore, the ‘culture’ itself exerted negligible causal agency in the transformation of Zuang festivals; likewise, ‘consumer’ contributed only marginally to the festival shifts observed among the Yao. The role of ‘producer’ in content creation was similarly insubstantial in shaping the festival culture transformation of the Mulao.

Across all informant groups, the in-depth interviews address four key dimensions concerning the influence of CME on festival transformation. First, cultural communication is increasingly mediated by AI and VR algorithms. Second, tensions emerge between the proliferation of UGC and the growing role of AI generated content in local cultural production and representation. Third, while social media platforms are heavily utilized for the circulation of cultural content, the broader social and digital environments in which cultures are viewed, interpreted, and enacted are often undervalued in assessments of transformative effects. Adaptation thus remains largely confined to social media use, rather than reshaping the roles of producers and consumers, even as AI and VR technologies expand in content creation. Finally, concerns about festival culture development highlight the need to bridge social and digital environments.

4.3 How to Sustain Ethnic Minority Festival Culture over CME

Sustaining the festival culture emphasizes three key dimensions: continuity of core festival values, adaptability to transmedia communication, and intergenerational collaboration. This sustainability is vital because such festivals commemorate natural phenomena, mark historical milestones, and embody local myths and talents deeply rooted in community traditions that foster cohesion and bring people together across diverse cultures.

1) Core Value Continuity. The continuity of festival core values can be sustained through platform-based dissemination, algorithmic distribution, AI-GC generation, and the immersive affordances of digital technologies. These triggers operate to bridge festival logic and the uniqueness of content and form with the digital environment, while embedding ritual structures, local beliefs, temporal rhythms, and symbolic meanings within the normative frameworks of contemporary society.

2) Adaptability. The adaptability demanded by today’s CME environment entails navigating transmedia communication, acknowledging the disruptive force of AI within digital environments, and embracing the reinterpretation, reorganization, and re-presentation of festivals in ways that cultivate user engagement. Such practices position participants simultaneously as audiences and content creators within broader circuits of social interaction.

3) Intergeneration Collaborated. Intergenerational collaboration is essential for fostering interactive feedback through likes, comments, shares, reposts, and user-generated video clips. Such engagement integrates festival activities into broader social spheres, sustaining a dynamic process of adjustment and reconstruction. This approach encourages young people not merely to

watch or repost festival content, but to participate actively in preparation, ritual practice, storytelling, learning, and media expression. In doing so, ethnic minority festivals are transformed from exclusively in-person gatherings into hybrid events—broadcast live both on-site and online—thereby enabling cross-cultural communication and exchange.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The transformation and sustainability of ethnic minority festivals, when confronted with the challenges posed by the CME framework, can be conceptualized as follows.

1) Path from Visibility to Recognition in Festival Culture Inheritance. The visibility-to-recognition trajectory is proposed as a means of sustaining ethnic minority festival culture under conditions of globalization and technological change. In the research of Xu et al. (2023), adjusting the communication method along with different social environments is conducive to merging national culture with global market and realizing of cross-cultural communication. This path underscores that continuity cannot be guaranteed by media visibility alone; it requires recognition of the cultural meanings embedded in ritual logic, local norms, ethnic language, symbolic memory, and communal identity. In this way, the challenge of dissemination shifts from mere exposure to cultural comprehension, thereby establishing a firmer basis for safeguarding festival culture as living heritage within the CME environment (Zhang et al., 2025).

2) Form–Content Alignment as the Core of Cultural Transformation. The transformation of ethnic minority festival culture rests upon the alignment between expressive form and symbolic meaning. This logic moves beyond the proliferation of media formats to emphasize a balanced relationship between technological presentation and cultural significance (Lai et al., 2025) as the technology-based mediation process constructs the real social world. This mediation power can penetrate into the interdependent relationship between social actors through the "inter-type" structure (Wu & Xiao, 2024). Such alignment ensures that festival culture remains adaptive within the CME without succumbing to diminished visual performance or fragmented content.

3) Socio-Digital Ecology for Festival Culture Sustainability. A socio-digital pathway integrates value preservation, adaptive media circulation, community knowledge, and intergenerational participation into a unified process of “live” transmission. Sustainability is achieved when digital communication remains anchored in local cultural practice and when community-based knowledge informs media users’ participation (Wang, 2022). In this way, ethnic minority festival culture endures not only as embodied practice but also as communicable cultural knowledge within the broader media ecology. Within complex media environment, a significant correlation between high emotionality and communication intensity has cultural hybridity become a natural result of global cultural interaction and an important driving force for local cultural innovation (Zhao & Yun, 2024).

6. RECOMMENDATION

A policy framework grounded in core value retention, digital governance, and community

participation should be established to ensure that digital dissemination reinforces the continuity of festivals rather than reducing them to mere visual traffic or technological spectacle.

Festival organizers and cultural inheritors must serve as the primary interpreters of tradition in sustainable digital communication. Costumes, songs, dances, ritual scenes, and festive atmospheres should not be presented as fragmented visual artifacts; instead, they must be contextualized within ritual logic, local belief systems, ethnic languages, symbolic meanings, and collective memory.

Future research should strengthen the long-term role of young people in cultural transmission by examining how they transition from online interaction to cultural learning, ritual participation, narrative production, and community collaboration. Such inquiry is essential for assessing whether digital participation can foster sustained cultural engagement across generations.

REFERENCES

- Berta, P. (2024). Why interactions between things and subjects' matter: On the explanatory power of the new material culture studies. *Studia Ethnological Croatica*, (36), 239-266.
- Boehmer, T. M. (2025). Generational memory loss within imperial systems: An archaeological case study from the Roman Empire. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 35(2), 253-263.
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Chai-ittipornwong, T. (2022). *Digital Content Creation: Principle and Communication Practices*. CUPress.
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2018). The continuing lure of the mediated center in times of deep mediatization: Media events and its enduring legacy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(1), 114-117.
- Fang, T., & Jia, X. (2021). Study on the English translation of Chinese ethnic-minority festival terms. *Cultural and Religious Studies*, 9(12), 566-570.
- Fuchs, C. (2021). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Georgiou, M. (2022). Digital (in-) visibilities: Spatializing and visualizing politics of voice. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 15(2), 269-275.
- Jenkins, H., & Jie, Y. (2024). The path from participatory culture to participatory politics: A critical investigation. *Communication and the Public*, 9(1), 11-30.
- Lai, S., Tian, Y., & Zhang, Q. (2025). The impact of AI-generated technologies-driven digital cultural heritage platforms on users' offline cultural participation intentions. *Heritage Science*, 13(1), 574.
- Liu, Z., Tang, Z., & Wang, H. (2024). Path of integrated development of ethnic minority festivals and tourism in Guangxi. *Central Plains Culture and Tourism* (15), 22-24.

- Mansell, R., & Plantin, J. C. (2022). Imagining 5G networks: Infrastructure and public accountability. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 19.
- Napoli, P. (2019). *Social Media and the Public Interest: Media Regulation in the Disinformation Age*. Columbia University Press.
- Poell, T., & Van Dijck, J. (2018). *Social Media and New Protest Movements*. SAGE Publication.
- Qian, Y. (2023). Analysis of the localization communication strategy of international brands from a cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Journalism Research*, 14(06), 28-30.
- Scolari, C. A. (2023). *On the Evolution of Media: Understanding Media Change*. Routledge.
- Thakur, N., Sharma, S., Kumar, K., & Thakur, S. (2024). *Components and Policies of Science, Technology, and Innovation System*. In *Science, Technology and Innovation Ecosystem: An Indian and Global Perspective* (pp. 17-35). Springer Nature Singapore.
- Wang, N. (2022). A study of the cultural meaning of Zhuang's frog festival in Guangxi, China. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(2), ID-260164.
- Wu, D., & Xiao, H. (2024). Spatial flow and relationship reconstruction: The social practice of chat screenshot dissemination under the theory of mediatization. *Shanghai Journalism Review*, (6), 34–47.
- Xu, Y., Jin, S., & Jiang, X. (2023). Festival encounter: The adaptation and enchantment of cultural identity in cross-cultural communication. *International Journalism*, 45(05), 27-48.
- Yatim, H., Jayadi, K., Jamilah, J., Abduh, A., & Prusdianto, P. (2025). Integrating cultural heritage into education: The supportive role of schools in traditional festivals in West Sulawesi. *Discover Education*, 4(1), 379.
- Zhang, X. (2019). Totem: An exploration of the origin of collective consciousness—Centered on Durkheim's the elementary forms of religious life. *Journal of Beihua University (Social Sciences)*, 20(5), 83–89.
- Zhang, J., & Dai, G. (2023). Political trust and festival attachment: Influencing residents' engagement in traditional festivals. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(9), 741.
- Zhang, S., Shi, M., & Liao, J. (2025). Knowledge transfer: The dynamics of intangible heritage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 114, 104015.
- Zhao, Y., & Yun, H. (2024). Cultivating the cultural identity of the Chinese nation through cultural memory. *Journal of Zhengzhou University*, 57(6), 97–103.
- Zhou, X (2024). Systematization of “folklore” and systematization of “folklore studies”: Structural analysis of Chinese folklore textbooks. *Folklore Studies*, (06), 34-52, 154.



2026 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)