

# Study on the Transmission Channels of Intangible Cultural Heritage Represented by Traditional Drama — Taking Chaozhou Opera as an Example

Jiahong Wang<sup>1</sup> Yunzi Chen<sup>2</sup> Jiamin Fu<sup>3</sup> Zixin Qin<sup>4</sup> Dingling Wang<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Zhuhai College of Science and Technology, Zhuhai, Guangdong, China

<sup>5</sup> Corresponding author.

## ABSTRACT

With the development of society, new media is playing an increasingly important role in the intangible cultural heritage represented by traditional dramas. In the past, people's understanding of Chaozhou opera was limited to regional single opera performances. This has led to a series of issues such as the declining appeal of Chaozhou opera to contemporary young people and the gradual decline of the drama market. Based on this, this article adopts the survey method for research. To address the above issues, a questionnaire survey and data collection method were used to propose solutions that can promote the dissemination of Chaozhou opera by combining Chaozhou opera with modern emerging media, innovating in form, combining Chaozhou opera culture with the tourism industry in the Chaoshan region, developing various types of digital Chaozhou opera film and multimedia products, and deepening the construction of Chaozhou opera brand official websites. It is hoped to promote the dissemination of Chaozhou opera among young people and promote the better development of traditional drama.

**Keywords:** Chaozhou opera culture, New media, Youth group, Innovation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROPOSAL OF THE QUESTIONS

"Taking history as a mirror, one can know the rise and fall." Intangible cultural heritage is the crystallization of China's 5000 year history and a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, inheriting the cultural genes of the Chinese nation. The inheritance and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage is of great and far-reaching significance for the comprehensive construction of a moderately prosperous society and the construction of a socialist cultural power. Protecting the world's intangible cultural heritage and maintaining human cultural diversity has become a consensus among people around the world, forming an international trend. China has also conducted academic research on this hot phenomenon and related issues, and the deepening of the research has gradually sparked consideration for establishing the discipline of China's intangible cultural heritage. The article will take the intangible cultural heritage of Chaozhou opera as an example to study how to use new media

to inherit and develop intangible cultural heritage projects represented by traditional drama among contemporary young people.

Since the Ming Dynasty, Chaozhou opera has always been favored by people for its rich themes, exquisite performances, diverse performance styles, and characteristics that are close to people's lives. It has a wide audience range, regardless of hierarchy, and can be enjoyed by all people. Whether in ancient or modern times, it is the most direct way to showcase people's thoughts, emotions, and lifestyle, and it is the best choice for people's leisure and entertainment. Nowadays, with the development of the times and the increasing improvement of people's lives, the longing for a better life is deepening. Currently, Chaozhou opera is facing the impact and challenge of diversified entertainment in modern society. People have shifted from single appreciation of traditional opera to multiple choices of entertainment, often ignoring traditional and outdated entertainment methods that are gradually replaced by the era of television and computer networks. At the same time, the performance

market is sluggish, and the economy is plummeting, which has dampened the enthusiasm of workers to engage in the art of traditional Chinese opera, and has brought great constraints to the innovation and arrangement of the purpose of the drama. Due to the pandemic, the troupe disbanded and the genre gradually disappeared, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of performers and audiences. The development of Chaozhou opera has been impacted by various factors and has begun to be limited to the Chaoshan region, staying in the memories of the older generation of locals. The wave of the new era requires a new generation of young people to explore new ways of dissemination and inherit intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, it is urgent to study the transmission channels of intangible cultural heritage projects such as Chaozhou opera among contemporary young people.

Based on the above background, how should effective measures be implemented to address the issue of intangible cultural heritage loss? How to improve people's recognition of intangible cultural heritage? How should researchers move forward in studying the transmission channels of intangible cultural heritage among young people?

Finding the best combination of traditional and modern communication methods is a topic worthy of in-depth research. Chaozhou opera has its unique artistic pattern. Singing, speaking, performing, and fighting, each move has certain norms, but this does not mean that traditional opera can only be inherited on a regular stage. In contemporary society, in order to inherit traditional opera art and make more people love listening, watching, and singing, it is necessary to have a spirit of introspection, reform, openness, innovation, and modern thinking. It must comply with the development of the times and continuously meet the new artistic aesthetic requirements of the audience. On the basis of maintaining the unique charm of traditional Chinese opera art, efforts should be made to align with reality in terms of expression techniques, ideological connotations, stage layout, etc. By using new media methods and combining modern elements, such traditional Chinese opera can have more affinity, sense of the times, vitality, and value.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the 1950s and 1960s, with the further implementation of the "Double Hundred" policy, intangible culture received attention and

development. Around the definition of intangible culture, the current development status of Chaozhou opera represented by traditional drama, and the future reform and innovation of Chaozhou opera, scholars in China and abroad have conducted a lot of research and achieved significant results.

However, as an important intangible cultural property in China, there are many problems with the dissemination and development of traditional intangible cultural heritage. The attractiveness of the thinking mode, media dissemination, and application value of cultural heritage work to young people is gradually weakening, and the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in China is being increasingly impacted. Will the lack of awareness of intangible cultural heritage among young people, who are an important source of inheritance, affect the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage? What measures should be taken to attract more young people to further understand? These issues are worth further exploration and research.

### **2.1 Chaozhou Opera**

At present, there is a unified consensus in the academic community on the definition of the source of Chaozhou opera. In early research, scholars in the academic community speculated that Chaozhou opera belonged to Yiyang opera. Until 2015, Chaozhou opera researchers Wu Guoqin and Lin Chungou proposed that Chaozhou opera was an important branch of southern opera, with unique Chaoshan cultural characteristics, and did not belong to Yiyang opera. At the same time, the view that "Chaozhou opera originates from southern opera" has also broken the situation where "Chaozhou opera has not yet established history". From the 1940s to the present, research on the origin of Chaozhou opera has strongly confirmed that Chaozhou opera originated from southern opera and combined with Chaoshan culture to form a unique local opera with a history of over 580 years.

In the era of the Internet with numerous spiritual and cultural choices, fast food culture has become the best choice for young people. The appeal of traditional singing and traditional stories to young people is minimal. At present, there are numerous development issues in intangible cultural heritage represented by Chaozhou opera, as follows[2]:

Firstly, the aging phenomenon of inheritors is widespread, and the new force of inheritors is

scarce. Nowadays, a large number of outstanding performing artists have gradually faded out of the stage, and the backbone of enriching performing arts has also been transferred from performing groups, which has created a gap in the inheritance and creation of Chaozhou opera art, resulting in a shortage of talents in Chaozhou opera art.

Secondly, due to the limitations of traditional models, there is a lack of innovation and flexibility. Inheritors are limited by inherent thinking and lack flexibility, making it difficult to cater to today's aesthetic tastes and values, deviating from the times, and developing at a slow pace.

Thirdly, in the fast-paced life, people lack a sense of belonging to culture. Currently, people's pace of life is fast and they tend to achieve self-actualization in a short period of time, lacking to some extent identification and belonging to such cultures.

Fourthly, the implementation of relevant protective measures is currently relatively weak. In recent years, although the country has formulated and introduced a series of policies, they have been terminated due to pressure such as insufficient funds and weak protection measures.

In addition to these four major categories of issues, with the development of science and technology, many similar industrial activities are constantly enriched, which to some extent also impacts the development of intangible cultural heritage such as Chaozhou opera. Therefore, it is necessary to innovate the dissemination methods of Chaozhou opera, promote the inheritance and development of Chaozhou opera, enhance the dissemination effect of Chaozhou opera, and thus better leveraging the cultural value of Chaozhou opera.

On the other hand, the "protection", "inheritance", and "development" of Chaozhou opera are another focus of research related to Chaozhou opera. Different opinions have also been raised regarding the dissemination and development of Chaozhou opera. Su Wanlin [3] and others proposed that the inheritance and promotion strategies of Chaozhou opera should be well studied, and all parties should actively promote the culture of Chaozhou opera and enhance the sense of cultural identity. It is a method to combine Chaozhou opera with modern emerging media, and innovate and develop in form. For example, the cartoon Chaozhou Opera launched by Hanshan Normal University is a combination of Chaozhou

opera and popular modern culture. At the same time, in the process of publicity and development, it integrates Chaozhou opera's characteristic culture, strengthens the communication effect of Chaozhou opera, and improves the public's sense of cultural identity. In addition, by combining traditional culture with the development of the tourism industry, and combining Chaozhou opera culture with the tourism industry in the Chaoshan region, more tourists from other places can recognize valuable traditional culture through tourism. Another example is that setting up professional theaters in scenic areas can deepen the impression of tourists, thereby spreading Chaozhou opera culture to the outside world and expanding the existing channels of dissemination. What's more, the Laomagong Stage in the arcade of the Small Park in Shantou City performs during peak tourist seasons, with special booths set up under the stage to participate in performance activities, creating a unique performance and cultural atmosphere, while enhancing tourists' sense of experience and participation.

In terms of government protection of traditional culture, Yang Hua [4] emphasizes from a macro perspective that the government should strengthen its leading role, encourage the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage projects, form and standardize the list management of intangible cultural heritage projects, and have strong demonstration and reference significance for the inheritance and development of Chaozhou opera. At the same time, Zhuang Siting and Zhang Jiangxian [5] proposed the Digital Chaozhou Opera Museum, which utilizes virtual reality technology and network technology to build a virtual museum, breaking the limitations of physical museums and expanding the museum's extended space; In addition, it is necessary to develop various types of digital Chaozhou opera film and multimedia products, deepen the construction of Chaozhou opera brand official websites, keep pace with the trend of the times, and revitalize traditional Chaozhou opera culture.

With the continuous deepening of academic research, the academic community has gained a clearer understanding of the dissemination and development of traditional drama. These research results have reference value for the innovation of the dissemination methods of Chaozhou opera. This study focuses on innovating the dissemination channels of traditional dramas such as Chaozhou opera in the context of the rapid development of

new media, and enhancing the dissemination and development of intangible cultural heritage.

## 2.2 *New Media*

New media is a form of dissemination that utilizes digital technology to provide information and services to users through channels such as computer networks, wireless communication networks, satellites, as well as terminals such as computers, mobile phones, and digital televisions. With the rapid development of the Internet, new media has also become an important way for people to obtain information. New media has advantages such as large information capacity, wide audience, timely and convenient dissemination, strong interactivity, and diverse forms. The emergence of new media has changed the environment, mode, and pattern of information dissemination, affecting people's way of life and communication, and bringing new opportunities for the dissemination of Chaoshan culture. In this context, how can people take advantage of the opportunity of new media to vigorously promote Chaozhou opera and expand its influence?

New media has the advantages of fast dissemination speed, large amount of information, rich content, low cost, and timeliness, bringing certain advantages to the dissemination of Chaozhou opera:

New media has broken through the limitations of time and space in the dissemination of Chaozhou opera. Early Chaozhou opera performances relied on real-life stage performances. However, with the emergence of mass media such as newspapers, radio, magazines, mobile phones, television, and movies, Chaozhou opera tracks were recorded into movies and television, allowing people to watch anytime, anywhere.

New media has accelerated the dissemination speed of Chaozhou opera. Traditional Chaozhou opera performances are influenced by the venue and can only accommodate a small number of people, resulting in slow dissemination speed. The continuous promotion of new media has made it an important way for people to obtain information, and the number of users of new media is increasing. By fully utilizing new media dissemination, the scope of dissemination of Chaozhou opera can be expanded.

New media has enriched the dissemination channels of Chaozhou opera. New media communication methods are diverse, and people

can watch Chaozhou opera through multiple platforms such as mobile phones, televisions, and computers. Through the new channel of new media, the public can be more flexible without being limited by time, space, and location.

While new media brings many advantages to Chaozhou opera, there are also certain limitations: firstly, there are limitations of expanding the audience of Chaozhou opera through new media technology [6]. As is well known, the main audience of traditional Chaozhou opera is almost the older generation over the age of 50, while there are very few young audiences, and the majority of users of new media are young people. However, both domestically and internationally, as the older generation of Chaozhou opera audiences gradually age, teenagers are bound to become the main target audience for Chaozhou opera. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore and pay attention to the audience range of Chaozhou opera in the dissemination of new media. Secondly, it is an inevitable issue in the development process whether the use of new media communication can comprehensively and completely record the performance of Chaozhou opera. Early Chaozhou opera performances were stage performances of real scenes, but now using new media to spread information cannot fully meet the needs of the audience in terms of visual and auditory aspects, resulting in a decrease in the audience's on-site experience.

While fully utilizing the advantages brought by new media, it is important to understand the limitations brought by new media dissemination to Chaozhou opera, and to utilize modern science and technology for reform and innovation. Adapting to internet thinking for content reconstruction, from traditional media to new media, the relationship between the audience and the media has changed from passive to active. Therefore, the production of new media content must start from the audience's psychology, cultivate internet thinking, and carry out content innovation. It is necessary to use social new media to lead cultural communication both domestically and internationally, and improve the targeted nature of communication. At present, the content of Chinese domestic government microblog and WeChat official account is generally too "big". It is not grounded, does not "play cute", and lacks the perspective of cultural communication. Scholars Liu Jianwen and Liu Jianneng [8] proposed that the ability to use government Weibo and WeChat platforms should be improved based on the cultural characteristics of the Chaoshan region. While

spreading Chaoshan culture to Chaoshan people and Chinese in China and foreign countries and regions, the original Chaozhou opera should be reformed and renovated. Not only that, but it is also necessary to further understand the sources of information dissemination for contemporary young people, spread it in a way that young people enjoy, and expand the influence of Chaozhou opera in the young population.

### **3. QUESTIONNAIRE AND DATA ANALYSIS**

In this study, snowball sampling was used for questionnaire survey and Excel was used for data analysis.

#### **3.1 Overall Situation of Survey**

A total of 500 samples were selected for this survey, of which 451 were valid questionnaires. The effective rate of the questionnaire was 90.2%, and the results of the questionnaire were analytically feasible. The survey data was collected online and offline. The online questionnaire was distributed from July to September 2022 through forwarding to WeChat Moments and group chat, targeting mainly college students nationwide. The offline distribution of questionnaires was conducted during the summer vacation of July 2022, targeting popular tourist attractions in Humen, Dongguan, and Chaozhou in Guangdong Province. The survey was mainly aimed at tourists from other places.

The design of the scale is based on psychological measurement theory, using naming scales and equidistant scales, and combining with the current development status of Chaozhou opera.

#### **3.2 Data Analysis**

In the questionnaire data, it was found that the attitudes of Chaozhou opera vary among different groups. Therefore, the data of different groups with different attitudes towards Chaozhou opera were analyzed separately, as follows:

##### **3.2.1 Chaozhou Opera Has a Strong Influence on Local People**

From the statistics of the degree and reasons for their love for Chaozhou opera, it can be seen that 82.52% of the "Love Chaozhou Opera" options are "people who have lived in the Chaoshan area for a long time", and most people's understanding of Chaozhou opera and the reasons for their love for

Chaozhou opera are also inseparable from environmental factors. This shows that the local culture has a strong influence on the local people. The local people wish to carry forward the local drama culture and have a strong sense of cultural identity for the traditional Chaozhou opera. The conclusion is that the local people play a major role in the spread and development of Chaozhou opera, and the subsequent publicity of Chaozhou opera can expand the spread of Chaozhou opera through this group. In addition, Chaozhou opera is also loved by people for its high artistic value, which indicates that it can bring spiritual enjoyment to people, has rich connotations, and can bring people thinking. It also demonstrates the necessity of Chaozhou opera's existence and is one of the measures to promote the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage.

##### **3.2.2 The Influence of Local Language on the Audience Distribution of Chaozhou Opera**

According to statistics on the degree and reasons for their love for Chaozhou opera, the vast majority of people who do not feel or understand Chaozhou opera are non Chaoshan residents. They are limited by language and cannot understand Chaozhou opera, so they do not understand the content that Chaozhou opera is intended to convey. Due to the fact that Chaoshan dialect is a unique dialect in the Chaoshan region, the level of understanding of Chaoshan dialect in other areas is not high, and there are language barriers. Chaozhou opera is a local drama genre developed from the development of southern opera in Chaoshan, with the audience mainly composed of Chaoshan people. Only by reforming to adapt to the aesthetic changes of the audience and meet the aesthetic needs of Chaoshan people while retaining the Chaozhou flavor can Chaozhou opera have a better market [9]. Chaoshan dialect is a unique form of expression in Chaozhou opera. By understanding the solutions taken by other well-known dramas such as Beijing opera and Cantonese opera to address this type of problem, referencing and learning from their methods, and making flexible changes based on the situation of Chaozhou opera, people can find solutions that are suitable for the dissemination of Chaozhou opera, allowing Chaozhou opera to expand beyond the Chaoshan region and have broader development space.

### 3.2.3 *Young People Do Not Have a High Level of Understanding of Chaozhou Opera, and Using New Media to Promote Chaozhou Opera Is More Attractive to Young Audiences*

In a survey on the level of understanding of Chaozhou opera, it was found that only 10% of people expressed a "very good understanding" of Chaozhou opera, while more people only stayed at a "general understanding" of Chaozhou opera. In a survey conducted on Chaoshan people or those who have lived in the Chaoshan area, it was found that the majority of people have a greater understanding of Chaozhou opera from their family environment or traditional customs and habits, with less dissemination of new media. It indicates that people are less proactive in understanding and lack a certain level of interest in Chaozhou opera. As a product of the pre industrial civilization era, classic Chaozhou opera expresses the life content and love concept of the classical society era, creating a gap with the current young and new generation audience. The new generation of viewers has low expectations and a weak desire to watch, making it

even more difficult to resonate with them. As they grow and their interests shift to other aspects, they become the audience that has been lost in trendy dramas. [10] The key to effective dissemination is to identify the unique features of Chaozhou opera, flexibly utilize new media, and promote its dissemination and development. At the same time, it can be concluded that the power of traditional cultural activities cannot be ignored. The effective promotion of Chaozhou opera through the use of new media is currently an important form of communication for Chaozhou opera.

### 3.2.4 *The Innovation of Chaozhou Opera Is Conducive to Promoting the Dissemination of Chaozhou Opera*

To explore whether traditional drama should maintain its original characteristics or engage in innovative development, this study conducted a survey on such issues. The survey data showed that over 90% of respondents believed that Chaozhou opera needed innovation. This group of people chose the areas where Chaozhou opera most needed innovation and shortcomings, as shown in "Figure 1" and "Figure 2".

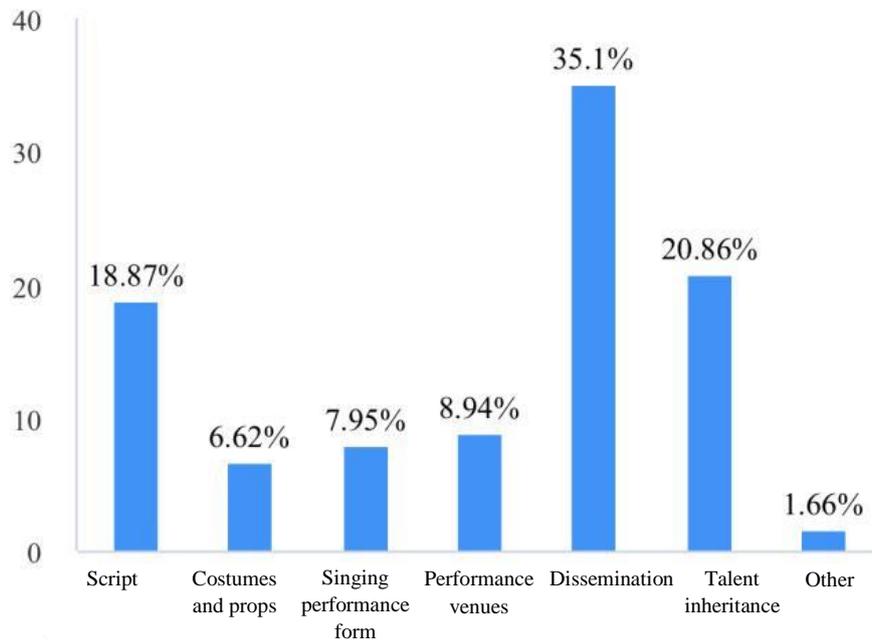


Figure 1 The most important factor for innovation in Chaozhou opera.

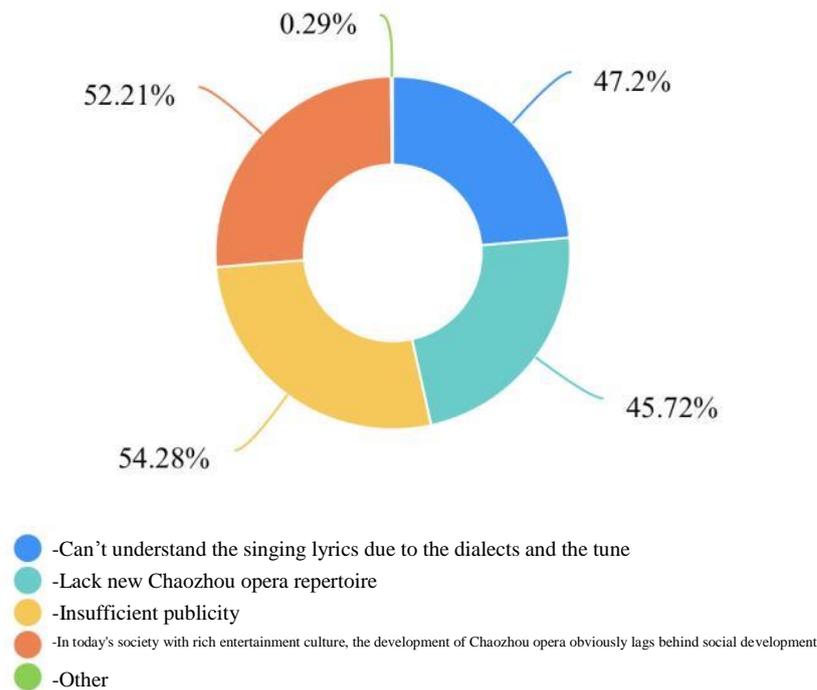


Figure 2 The shortcomings of the current Chaozhou opera in the communication.

To better develop Chaozhou opera, it is necessary to pay attention to the shortcomings of Chaozhou opera and be brave in innovation. In the data analysis of the questionnaire, it was found that the majority of people believe that the problems with Chaozhou opera are mainly reflected in language and communication methods. Firstly, regarding language issues, people can refer to other dramas' solutions to this problem or methods of overseas dissemination, and then make modifications according to the actual situation. At the same time, attention should also be paid to the issue of publicity. Live performances are currently one of the main ways of spreading Chaozhou opera. Although live performances can bring audio-visual enjoyment to the audience and easily resonate with them, this communication method has certain limitations. In addition to limited performance sessions, it also requires a lot of manpower, material resources, and financial resources. In the information age, the rapid development of media communication technology has changed the channels of information dissemination and expanded the space for information dissemination. WeChat, Weibo, Tiktok and other platforms have provided a broader platform for the spread of Chaozhou opera from the emergence of industrial linkage live broadcast to the combination of short video and other communication methods [11]. New

media is currently the most efficient means of communication. It is necessary to find the correct channels and methods of dissemination, let more public groups understand and pay attention to Chaozhou opera, and let Chaozhou opera spread and inherit in non-Chaoshan areas. In the next plan for the dissemination of Chaozhou opera among young people, it is necessary to focus on the obstacles encountered in the dissemination process of Chaozhou opera, how to better disseminate Chaozhou opera, how to innovate, and how to spread the theatrical culture mainly based on Chaozhou opera in different ways, so as to let more people understand traditional culture and promote it.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The dissemination and development of Chaozhou opera require collaboration among relevant departments to promote its effective development. Firstly, the country should formulate and introduce a series of policies to encourage the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage projects, and establish and standardize the directory management of intangible cultural heritage inheritance projects. Secondly, it is a must to break the limitations of traditional models, utilize modern science and technology, and combine contemporary aesthetic tastes and values for

innovation and adaptation. By utilizing virtual reality technology, the limitations of fixed stages in Chaozhou opera can be broken. In addition, there is a necessity to develop various types of digital Chaozhou opera film and multimedia products, deepen the construction of Chaozhou opera brand official websites, keep pace with the trend of the times, and revitalize traditional Chaozhou opera culture. It is also necessary to inject modern elements into Chaozhou opera, enhance their sense of identification with Chaozhou opera in a way that is popular among young people, and their sense of mission in inheriting Chaozhou opera, promoting the creation and inheritance of Chaozhou opera art. Furthermore, there is a must to link various similar industrial activities to achieve coordinated development. For example, in combination with the development of the tourism industry, through the integration of Chaozhou opera culture and the tourism industry in the Chaoshan region, more tourists from other places can learn about valuable traditional culture through tourism, which can enhance the dissemination effect of Chaozhou opera, so as to better leverage its cultural value. Overall, the "protection", "inheritance", and "development" of Chaozhou opera are the focus of research related to Chaozhou opera. The inheritance and promotion strategy of Chaozhou opera should be well studied. All parties should actively promote the culture of Chaozhou opera and enhance the sense of cultural identity.

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