SJIF Impact Factor (2026): 8.863| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 11 | Issue: 4 | April 2026 - Peer Reviewed Journal

THEORETICAL LOGIC AND MODEL CONSTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE CULTURE INHERITANCE AND INNOVATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VALUE CO-CREATION

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra26982
DOI No: 10.36713/epra26982

ABSTRACT

Driven jointly by digital communication and the strategy of building a culturally strong nation, the inheritance of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture is shifting from the traditional one-way model of dissemination and instruction toward a new stage characterized by multi-actor participation and multi-dimensional value symbiosis. Value co-creation theory offers a new theoretical perspective for addressing the current practical dilemmas of TCM cultural inheritance, including insufficient excavation of cultural connotations, monotonous communication forms, inadequate coordination among stakeholders, and weak public participation. Based on the core values of TCM culture and contemporary inheritance practices, and drawing on relevant studies on value co-creation, cultural communication, and digital-intelligent empowerment, this paper elucidates the connotations and core features of value co-creation in TCM culture, analyzes its theoretical logic, deconstructs its generative mechanism from the dimensions of actors, content, media, and fields, and constructs a systematic model of inheritance and innovation centered on "multi-actor collaboration—co-creation of content symbols—digital-intelligent media empowerment—institutional and procedural support." The aim is to provide theoretical reference and practical pathways for promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of TCM culture.

KEYWORDS: *Value Co-Creation; Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture; Inheritance and Innovation; Theoretical Logic; Model Construction; Cultural Communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

As an important component of fine traditional Chinese culture, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture embodies core concepts such as the unity of nature and humanity, harmony and balance, preventive treatment of disease, and the ethical ideal of great physicians possessing sincerity and compassion. It is not only a distinctive health resource and scientific resource, but also an excellent cultural and ecological resource. With the in-depth advancement of the Healthy China initiative and the formation of an all-media communication landscape, the inheritance and innovation of TCM culture has risen to become an important component of the national cultural strategy. In practice, however, TCM culture still faces a number of challenges, including superficial interpretation of cultural content, formulaic communication methods, passive audience participation, and fragmented collaboration among diverse actors. The traditional one-way model of "government leadership–institutional supply–public reception" can no longer meet the needs of cultural development in the new era.

Value co-creation theory emphasizes a shift from value production by a single actor to value creation through the joint participation of multiple actors, achieving value enhancement through interactive engagement, shared meaning-making, and experiential sharing. This perspective is highly consistent with the direction of making TCM culture more embedded in everyday life, more widely disseminated, and more accessible to the general public. Existing studies have shown that in fields such as cultural variety programs, documentaries, micro-short dramas, cultural tourism projects, and museum communication, a paradigm shift from cultural transmission to value co-creation has already emerged. Multi-actor participation, decentralized communication, and immersive experience have become important trends in cultural inheritance and innovation. In her study of the international communication of panda symbols, Luo Yang [1] pointed out that value co-creation can transcend cultural barriers and transform cultural symbols into connective carriers that evoke emotional resonance, thereby forming a new paradigm characterized by decentralized communication subjects, diversified media carriers, and a co-creative value system. Du Cuiye [2] proposed that artificial intelligence has driven the evolution of communication subjects from a single form to the distributed participation of multiple actors, while content production has shifted from linear narration to interactive narration, thus providing technical support for cultural value co-creation. Taking museum publicity and promotion as an example, Zhou Sai et al. [3] revealed a transformational path from traditional public instruction to public cultural co-creation, offering a useful paradigm for the symbiotic creation of public cultural value.

Overall, although value co-creation has generated rich research achievements in fields such as red culture, regional culture, intangible cultural heritage, and the integration of culture and tourism, theoretical research that systematically applies value co-

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creation to the inheritance and innovation of TCM culture remains relatively weak. Against this background, this paper adopts value co-creation as its theoretical perspective to explore the internal theoretical logic and practical operational mechanism of TCM cultural inheritance and innovation, and to construct a localized and operable model of value co-creation, thereby providing academic support for the high-quality inheritance and development of TCM culture in the new era.

2. OBJECTIVES

(1) To elucidate the connotation and core characteristics of value co-creation in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture.
(2) To analyze the theoretical logic of value co-creation in TCM culture.
(3) To deconstruct the multidimensional composition of value co-creation in TCM culture.
(4) To construct a four-in-one model of value co-creation in TCM culture.

3. METHODOLOGY

Grounded in the core values of TCM culture and contemporary practices of cultural inheritance, this study draws upon relevant research on value co-creation, cultural communication, and digital-intelligent empowerment. By employing a combination of theoretical analysis and literature review, it systematically explicates the connotations, core characteristics, theoretical logic, multidimensional composition, and model construction of value co-creation in TCM culture, with a view to providing theoretical references and practical pathways for the creative transformation and innovative development of TCM culture.

4. CONNOTATION AND CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF VALUE CO-CREATION IN TCM CULTURE

4.1 Core Connotation

Value co-creation in TCM culture refers to a dynamic process in which multiple actors—including government agencies, medical institutions, research institutes, pharmaceutical enterprises, media platforms, the general public, overseas audiences, and cultural and creative institutions—under the guidance of TCM theories and core cultural values, jointly explore the cultural connotations of TCM, innovate its forms of cultural expression, expand its communication scenarios, and deepen the construction of cultural identity through interactive participation, content co-creation, shared experiences, and joint meaning-making, thereby ultimately realizing the coordinated enhancement of cultural, social, health, and industrial values.

Its essence lies in breaking away from the "supply-led" model of TCM cultural transmission and transforming the public from passive recipients into value participants, meaning producers, and cultural co-builders. In this way, TCM culture evolves from a culture rooted primarily in classical texts and professional discourse into a culture embedded in everyday life and popular experience, thus achieving an organic integration of inheritance and dissemination, professionalism and popularization, as well as tradition and modernity.

4.2 Core Characteristics

4.2.1 Multiplicity and Synergy of Actors

Value co-creation transcends the limitations of a single-actor model and fosters a collaborative structure characterized by government guidance, institutional support, market participation, and public co-creation. In their study of Qilu culture-themed documentaries, Kang Minggang et al. [4] pointed out that, in the context of digitalization, cultural communication has shifted from one-way transmission to a new ecology marked by deep audience participation, with the involvement of multiple actors becoming crucial to value realization. Likewise, value co-creation in TCM culture depends on the coordinated interaction of government, industry, media, and the public, thereby forming a distributed participatory structure.

4.2.2 Interactivity and Participatory Process

Value co-creation in TCM culture emphasizes interactivity and experiential engagement, stimulating the vitality of various actors through participatory creation, immersive experiences, and interactive communication. Zhao Yuanzhen [5] argued that cultural content interaction should shift from one-way transmission to collaborative creation, while public participation should evolve from preliminary interest-based interaction to higher-level emotional resonance. This logic is equally applicable to scenarios such as science popularization, health-preservation experiences, and cultural and creative development related to TCM culture.

4.2.3 Holistic and Symbiotic Value

Value co-creation in TCM culture is not confined to the production of cultural value alone; rather, it seeks the integrated symbiosis of cultural, health, educational, industrial, and international communication values. Xiu Yuwei [6] maintained that cultural communication should move beyond value chains and value networks toward a value ecology characterized by openness, dynamism, and inclusiveness. Value co-creation in TCM culture is precisely an important pathway toward constructing such a value ecology.

4.2.4 Rootedness in Tradition and Innovation in the Contemporary Era

Value co-creation is rooted in the core values of TCM culture, upholding concepts such as benevolence, harmony, precision, sincerity, and preventive treatment, while also employing digital-intelligent technologies, new media expressions, and cultural-creative transformation to realize contemporary forms of expression. Tian Ye et al. [7] proposed a communication approach based on civilizational mutual learning and local reconstruction. Similarly, value co-creation in TCM culture emphasizes symbolic

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translation and contemporary innovation on the basis of preserving its authentic cultural foundations.

5. THEORETICAL LOGIC OF VALUE CO-CREATION IN TCM CULTURE

5.1 Logic of Paradigm Transformation: From One-Way Communication to Multi-Actor Co-Creation

Traditional inheritance of TCM culture has been primarily characterized by institutional instruction and knowledge transmission, exhibiting features of centralization, unidirectionality, and professionalization. In the context of all-media communication and digital-intelligent development, the paradigm of cultural inheritance has undergone a systemic transformation. Guo Yuxia [8] points out that, in the new media environment, cultural communication must achieve multidimensional innovation in concepts, content, forms, channels, and actors so as to overcome such bottlenecks as rigid content and separation among communicative subjects. Value co-creation has promoted a shift in TCM culture from "institutional communication" to "social co-creation," and from "knowledge popularization" to "joint meaning-making," which accords with the transformation logic of contemporary cultural communication.

5.2 Logic of Actor Empowerment: The Mechanism of Value Generation Through Public Participation

TCM culture possesses a distinct orientation toward everyday life, and its vitality is rooted in the daily practices of the public. Value co-creation theory endows the public with the rights of participation, expression, and creation, enabling them to become co-creators of cultural value. In her study of cultural variety programs, Liu Ziling [9] argues that cultural participants realize the reproduction of cultural narratives and meanings through creative expression. Likewise, value co-creation in TCM culture enables the reproduction and recirculation of health-preservation knowledge, health concepts, and cultural symbols through public participation.

5.3 Logic of Technological Empowerment: The Expansion of Co-Creation Scenarios Driven by Digital Intelligence

Technologies such as artificial intelligence, short videos, and virtual reality provide the underlying support for value co-creation in TCM culture. Du Cuiye [2] argues that AI has transformed cultural communication scenarios from centralized modes to immersive and interactive modes, while shifting content production from linear narration to multisensory integration. Taking integrated media practice as an example, Shi Xuehong [10] proposes a model of "technology + content + service," which drives communication actors to transform from information transmitters into value co-creators. By breaking temporal and spatial constraints, digital-intelligent technologies make possible experiential co-creation, content co-creation, and communication co-creation in TCM culture.

5.4 Logic of Cultural Identity: Realizing the Internalization of Value Through Emotional Resonance

The ultimate goal of inheriting TCM culture is to enhance cultural confidence and cultural identity. Wang Zixuan et al. [11] contend that cultural products can generate emotional resonance through value co-creation, thereby facilitating the construction of cultural identity. Through health-preservation practices, interactive health engagement, symbolic co-creation, and integration into everyday life, value co-creation in TCM culture transforms abstract cultural concepts into lifestyles that are perceptible, experiential, and participatory, thus realizing a progressive movement from cognition to emotion and then to identity.

5.5 Logic of the Systemic Ecology: Value Synergy Through the Integration of Multiple Fields

The inheritance of TCM culture involves multiple fields, including healthcare, education, cultural tourism, industry, and communication, and it is difficult for any single dimension to achieve sustainable development on its own. In her research on the "cultural tourism + archives" model, Zhang Ping [12] proposes a systemic innovation path guided by value co-creation. Similarly, TCM culture needs to construct a cross-field ecological system so as to realize value linkage across healthcare, education, communication, everyday life, and industry.

6. MULTIDIMENSIONAL COMPOSITION OF VALUE CO-CREATION IN TCM CULTURE

6.1 Actor Co-Creation: A Participatory System of Multi-Actor Collaboration

The actors involved in value co-creation in TCM culture include core actors, supporting actors, and participating actors.

（1）Core actors: TCM universities, medical institutions, and research institutes, which are responsible for excavating the cultural core and providing professional support;

（2）Guiding actors: governments and administrative departments, which are responsible for policy support, resource coordination, and strategic guidance;

（3）Communicative actors: media platforms, integrated media centers, and cultural and creative institutions, which are responsible for content transformation and channel expansion;

（4）Participating actors: the public, communities, health-preservation enthusiasts, and overseas users, who constitute a key force in cultural co-creation and dissemination;

（5）Market actors: pharmaceutical enterprises, cultural tourism institutions, and wellness platforms, which promote the transformation of cultural value into industrial value.

Through division of labor, resource complementarity, and interactive participation, these multiple actors form a distributed pattern of co-creation.

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6.2 Content Co-Creation: The Reproduction of Cultural Symbols and Health Concepts

Content co-creation lies at the core of value co-creation in TCM culture, encompassing the interpretation of concepts, the transformation of symbols, and the popularization of health-preservation knowledge.

（1）Co-creation of core concepts: contemporary reinterpretation of such ideas as the unity of nature and humanity, the balance of yin and yang, preventive treatment, and the ethical principle of great physicians possessing sincerity and compassion;

（2）Co-creation of cultural symbols: symbolic innovation regarding TCM artifacts, imagery, allusions, seasonal health-preservation practices, meridians, and acupoints;

（3）Co-creation of health knowledge: development of everyday health-preservation content in response to public needs, thereby promoting concepts such as food and medicine sharing the same origin, regular daily routines, and emotional regulation;

（4）Co-creation of narrative forms: transition from professional narratives to popular, story-based, and experiential narratives so as to enhance accessibility and acceptability.

6.3 Media Co-Creation: A Digital-Intelligence-Empowered All-Media Communication Ecology

Media co-creation relies on new media and digital-intelligent technologies to construct an interactive communication system. In her study of the international communication of micro-short dramas, Luo Yang [1] proposes building a participatory communication ecology centered on audiences in order to achieve effective communication. TCM culture can make use of short videos, livestreaming, interactive experiences, digital museums, and AI-based popular science communication to realize the decentralization of communication actors, the immersion of communication scenarios, and the interactivity of communication content, thereby forming a media co-creation system in which the general public can broadly participate.

6.4 Field Co-Creation: A Practice Ecology of Multi-Scenario Integration

Field co-creation covers such scenarios as healthcare, health preservation, education, cultural tourism, everyday life, and international communication.

（1）Everyday-life field: integrating TCM health-preservation practices into daily behaviors such as diet, daily routines, exercise, and emotional regulation;

（2）Cultural-tourism field: combining TCM museums, wellness bases, and cultural-tourism destinations to realize experiential co-creation;

（3）Educational field: promoting TCM culture in schools, communities, and families so as to realize co-created science popularization;

（4）International field: advancing overseas co-created communication of TCM culture through civilizational mutual learning and localized expression.

7. MODEL CONSTRUCTION OF VALUE CO-CREATION IN TCM CULTURE

Based on the foregoing theoretical logic and practical demands, this study proposes a four-in-one model of value co-creation in TCM culture, encompassing a mechanism of multi-actor collaboration, a mechanism of content and symbolic co-creation, a mechanism of digital-intelligent media empowerment, and a mechanism of institutional support and sustained operation.

7.1 Mechanism of Multi-Actor Collaboration

（1）To build a collaborative network featuring government guidance, professional support, market operation, and public participation;

（2）To clarify the rights and responsibilities of different actors, thereby forming a division-of-labor system characterized by professional gatekeeping, public participation, and market empowerment;

（3）To establish interactive platforms for relevant actors and promote dialogue and collaboration between institutions and the public, professionals and non-professionals, and domestic and international participants.

In her study of the international communication of urban culture, Zhu Ping [13] proposed a collaborative development model based on the participation of multiple actors, which offers useful insights for enhancing actor collaboration in TCM culture.

7.2 Mechanism of Content and Symbolic Co-Creation

（1）To further excavate the core values of TCM culture and promote the popularization of classical concepts and the integration of professional knowledge into everyday life;

（2）To develop co-created content related to TCM cultural and creative products, health-preservation experiences, seasonal health-popularization activities, and exercise-based wellness practices;

（3）To encourage the public to participate in secondary creation, experience sharing, and storytelling so as to realize the reproduction of content;

（4）To remain rooted in the cultural essence of TCM and prevent the superficialization and homogenization of cultural symbols.

Tian Ye et al. [7] point out that cross-cultural communication should avoid the homogenization of cultural symbols. Likewise, content co-creation in TCM culture must pay close attention to depth of connotation and value guidance.

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7.3 Mechanism of Digital-Intelligent Media Empowerment

（1）To employ technologies such as AI, short videos, livestreaming, and VR/AR to construct immersive experiential scenarios;
（2）To create interactive, participatory, and experience-oriented communication products so as to enhance public engagement;
（3）To build an all-media communication matrix that facilitates coordinated online and offline co-creation;
（4）To strengthen the ethical regulation of technology and guard against emotional alienation and value dilution.
Du Cuiye [2] emphasizes that AI-empowered cultural communication requires a comprehensive approach integrating actor collaboration, content governance, and technological regulation, which provides important guidance for digital-intelligent co-creation in TCM culture.

7.4 Mechanism of Institutional Support and Sustained Operation

（1）To improve the policy support system by incorporating TCM cultural co-creation into cultural inheritance and development planning;
（2）To establish resource-integration platforms that promote the convergence of such fields as cultural tourism, archives, education, and healthcare;
（3）To construct an evaluation mechanism for assessing co-creation outcomes from the perspectives of participation, identity, communicative influence, and health transformation;
（4）To cultivate volunteer communities and broader social co-creation forces so as to promote widespread public participation.
Zhou Sai et al. [3] propose a path toward public cultural co-creation and brand operation in museums, which can also serve as a valuable reference for building long-term mechanisms for TCM culture.

8. SUGGESTIONS

A collaborative network should be established that integrates government guidance, professional support, market operation, and public participation. The core values of TCM culture should be further excavated so as to promote the popularization of classical concepts and the incorporation of professional knowledge into everyday life. Technologies such as AI, short videos, livestreaming, and VR/AR should be employed to construct immersive experiential scenarios and build an all-media communication matrix. In addition, the policy support system should be improved, and resource-integration platforms together with evaluation mechanisms should be established to promote the long-term operation of value co-creation in TCM culture.

9. CONCLUSION

The inheritance and innovation of TCM culture constitute an important component of the Healthy China initiative and the strategy of building a culturally strong nation. Against the backdrop of digital-intelligent communication and cultural transformation, the traditional one-way model of cultural inheritance can no longer meet the demands of the times. Value co-creation therefore provides a new theoretical paradigm and practical pathway for preserving fundamental principles while fostering innovation in TCM culture. Value co-creation in TCM culture is characterized by multiplicity of actors, process interactivity, value symbiosis, and innovation oriented toward the contemporary era. Its internal logic encompasses paradigm transformation, public empowerment, technological empowerment, identity construction, and systemic ecology.

The four-in-one model constructed in this study—comprising actor collaboration, content co-creation, media empowerment, and institutional support—can effectively integrate diverse resources, stimulate social vitality, and enhance cultural identity, thereby promoting a shift in TCM culture from the popularization of professional knowledge to value co-creation by the wider public. Future research may further focus on empirical analysis and conduct quantitative assessments of co-creation effects across different fields and among different actors, thereby refining the theory of value co-creation in TCM culture and providing sustained academic support for its creative transformation and innovative development.

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