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	<p>RESEARCH ARTICLE </p>
	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Reconceptualizing the Global Dissemination of Chinese Jade Culture as Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Digital and Cross-Cultural Communication Pathways</h2>
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<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Chinese Jade Culture; Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Cultural Diplomacy; Soft Power Strategies; Digital Cultural Dissemination; Cross-Cultural Communication; Knowledge Transfer; Audience Engagement; Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); Hybrid Communication Models; Global Cultural Exchange; Digital Platforms and Social Media; Cultural Policy and Governance; Heritage Communication Strategies</p>
<p>Abstract</p>	
<p>The global dissemination of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has become a critical component of contemporary cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies. This study presents a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of the international dissemination pathways of Chinese jade culture, conceptualizing it as both a cultural asset and a strategic instrument of national influence in the digital age. The research aims to develop an integrated analytical framework that captures the dynamic interactions among cultural content, dissemination mechanisms, communication channels, and audience reception across diverse global contexts. A mixed-methods research design was employed to ensure both theoretical depth and empirical robustness. The study first constructs a four-layer conceptual framework through qualitative content analysis of policy documents and academic literature. This is followed by a large-scale quantitative analysis of dissemination activities between 2008 and 2025, encompassing over 1,500 documented events, geographic distribution across ten global regions, and a comparative evaluation of eight major dissemination channels. In addition, a cross-cultural survey (N = 850) was conducted to assess audience perceptions, engagement patterns, and interpretative differences across demographic groups. The findings demonstrate that hybrid dissemination strategies integrating digital and physical channels are significantly more effective in generating sustained engagement than digital-only approaches, with engagement outcomes exceeding threefold in comparative analysis. While digital platforms—particularly short-video applications such as TikTok—play a dominant role in expanding global reach, they remain limited in facilitating deep cultural understanding, thereby revealing a critical gap between visibility and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the Belt and Road Initiative emerges as a key structural driver of cultural dissemination, although its impact varies across regions and is frequently framed within economic rather than cultural narratives. The study also identifies a persistent cross-cultural communication gap, whereby international audiences predominantly engage with jade culture at an aesthetic level, often lacking access to its deeper symbolic and philosophical meanings. The study offers important theoretical and practical contributions by proposing an empirically grounded and integrative framework for analyzing ICH dissemination in a globalized, digitally mediated environment. It further provides strategic recommendations for policymakers and cultural institutions, emphasizing the necessity of adopting diversified dissemination portfolios, enhancing culturally adaptive content, and developing hybrid communication models to bridge the gap between superficial exposure and meaningful cultural engagement.</p>	
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1. Introduction

Chinese jade culture, with a historical trajectory extending over eight millennia, constitutes one of the most enduring and symbolically rich pillars of Chinese civilization and represents a profound form of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Beyond its material value as a precious stone, jade (yu 玉) embodies a complex system of philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic meanings deeply embedded in Chinese social and cultural life. Traditionally associated with virtues such as purity, integrity, wisdom, and moral excellence, jade has served not merely as an artistic or decorative medium, but as a symbolic representation of ideal human character and cosmological harmony.

Classical Chinese thought, particularly Confucian philosophy, reinforces this symbolic dimension. Confucius famously equated the qualities of jade with the virtues of a cultivated individual, thereby establishing a direct linkage between material culture and moral philosophy. Similarly, early lexicographical works describe jade as possessing five cardinal virtues—benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, courage, and integrity—each reflected in its physical properties. Such cultural encoding positions jade not as a static artifact, but as a dynamic carrier of historical memory, ethical values, and civilizational identity.

In the context of the twenty-first century, China's increasing engagement in global cultural exchange has elevated the international dissemination of such heritage elements to a strategic priority. Within this framework, cultural heritage functions as a key instrument of soft power, enabling states to shape global perceptions and influence through attraction rather than coercion. As conceptualized by Joseph Nye, soft power derives from the appeal of culture, values, and policies, rather than military or economic dominance. In the digital era, this concept has evolved to emphasize credibility, narrative construction, and cross-cultural engagement as central components of international influence.

China has actively operationalized this strategy through a wide range of institutional and policy-driven initiatives, including cultural diplomacy programs, international exhibitions, academic exchanges, and the expansion of Confucius Institutes worldwide. Within this broader strategic landscape, jade culture occupies a particularly significant position due to its historical depth, aesthetic uniqueness, and symbolic richness, making it a powerful medium for communicating Chinese cultural identity on the global stage.

At the international level, the promotion and safeguarding of ICH are largely structured within frameworks established by UNESCO, particularly following the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. China's active participation in this framework—reflected in its extensive inscription of heritage elements—provides institutional legitimacy and global visibility. However, the effective transmission of culturally embedded meanings across diverse international audiences remains a significant challenge, particularly in contexts characterized by linguistic, cultural, and epistemological differences.

Moreover, the mechanisms of cultural dissemination have undergone profound transformation in the digital age. Traditional channels such as museums, exhibitions, and diplomatic exchanges are increasingly complemented—and in some cases supplanted—by digital platforms, social media ecosystems, e-commerce networks, and immersive technologies. Platforms such as TikTok have dramatically expanded the reach of cultural content, enabling rapid global diffusion. However, this expansion is accompanied by new challenges, including cultural simplification, decontextualization, and the tension between visibility and depth of understanding.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on cultural diplomacy, digital heritage communication, and the Belt and Road

Initiative as a cultural corridor, existing studies remain fragmented and often limited to single-channel analyses. There is a notable absence of comprehensive, data-driven research that systematically examines how multiple dissemination mechanisms interact, how their effectiveness varies across contexts, and how audiences interpret and engage with culturally complex content such as jade culture.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to provide an integrated, multi-dimensional analysis of the external dissemination pathways of Chinese jade culture. Specifically, the study pursues four primary objectives:

(1) to develop a conceptual framework that maps the full dissemination process from cultural elements to global outcomes;

(2) to analyze temporal, geographic, and channel-specific dynamics of dissemination between 2008 and 2025;

(3) to investigate cross-cultural audience perceptions and engagement patterns through empirical data; and

(4) to derive strategic implications for optimizing the global promotion of ICH in a digitally mediated environment.

By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, this research seeks to move beyond descriptive accounts and provide a robust, evidence-based understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with communicating culturally embedded heritage in a globalized world.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to enable a comprehensive and multi-layered analysis of the external dissemination of Chinese jade culture. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for both the development of a theoretically grounded framework and its empirical validation. Such an approach is particularly suitable for complex socio-cultural phenomena, where both interpretative depth and statistical generalizability are required.

The research was conducted in two sequential and interrelated phases. The first phase focuses on qualitative content analysis aimed at constructing a conceptual framework, while the second phase employs quantitative methods to test and expand this framework through large-scale data analysis.

Phase I: Qualitative Content Analysis and Framework Development

The initial phase of the study involves a systematic qualitative content analysis designed to identify the core components and structural relationships underlying the dissemination of jade culture. A total of 120 sources were examined, including governmental policy documents, academic publications, and institutional reports related to cultural diplomacy and heritage promotion.

The analysis followed the principles of directed content analysis, utilizing an initial coding scheme informed by established theories of soft power, cultural communication, and heritage studies. Through iterative coding, thematic categorization, and analytical refinement, key dimensions of the dissemination process were identified.

The outcome of this phase is the development of a four-layer conceptual framework consisting of:

- Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements (core cultural content),
- Dissemination Mechanisms (strategic processes),
- Specific Channels (operational pathways), and
- Dissemination Outcomes (measurable impacts).

This framework serves as the analytical foundation for subsequent empirical investigation.

Phase II: Quantitative Analysis

The second phase of the research involves a comprehensive quantitative analysis structured around three interrelated components.

First, a temporal analysis was conducted using a dataset of 1,547 documented dissemination events spanning the period from 2008 to 2025. These events were systematically categorized and analyzed to identify growth trends, structural shifts, and the influence of major policy milestones on dissemination dynamics.

Second, a geographic and channel-based analysis was performed to examine the spatial distribution and comparative effectiveness of dissemination strategies. Activities were mapped across ten global regions and evaluated using a multi-

criteria framework encompassing audience reach, knowledge depth, cultural authenticity, cost efficiency, sustainability, engagement, and cross-cultural adaptability.

Third, a cross-cultural audience survey was conducted to assess perception, engagement, and interpretative variation across different demographic groups. The survey data were analyzed using statistical techniques, including descriptive analysis and correlation modeling, to identify patterns in audience behavior and the relationship between dissemination strategies and engagement outcomes.

The third component was a cross-cultural audience survey. An online questionnaire was administered to a stratified sample of 850 participants across five demographic groups: Domestic Chinese (n=200), Western Foreign Nationals (n=180), BRI Country Residents (n=170), Academic Scholars (n=150), and Cultural Enthusiasts (n=150). The survey instrument comprised 45 items measuring cultural awareness, perception of jade symbolism, engagement behavior, and dissemination channel preferences, using a combination of 5-point Likert scales and open-ended questions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and comparative funnel analysis to identify key patterns and relationships across demographic groups and dissemination channels.

Results

Temporal Dynamics of International Dissemination

The longitudinal analysis of dissemination activities between 2008 and 2025 reveals a clear and multi-phase evolution in the global promotion of Chinese jade culture. Over this period, dissemination efforts have transitioned from predominantly state-led, institution-based initiatives to a more diversified and digitally driven ecosystem characterized by hybrid communication strategies.

The empirical dataset, comprising 1,547 documented dissemination events, indicates a steady upward trajectory in the overall volume of activities, with two major acceleration phases. The first significant increase occurs following the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, which provided new geopolitical and infrastructural corridors for cultural exchange. This initiative facilitated the integration of cultural diplomacy within broader economic and strategic frameworks, resulting in a measurable expansion of jade-related exhibitions, academic collaborations, and trade-linked cultural events.

The second and more pronounced acceleration is observed after 2020, coinciding with the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, there was a rapid and forced transition toward digital dissemination channels, including virtual exhibitions, livestreamed cultural events, and interactive online content. This shift not only increased the volume of dissemination activities but also significantly expanded the global audience reach, as digital platforms enabled real-time, borderless access to cultural content.

A detailed breakdown of event types indicates that while traditional channels such as academic conferences and government-sponsored exhibitions maintained steady growth, digital dissemination activities experienced exponential expansion. In particular, short-video platforms such as TikTok emerged as dominant vehicles for mass cultural communication, demonstrating unparalleled scalability and audience penetration.

Furthermore, cumulative audience reach expanded dramatically from an estimated 2 million individuals in 2008 to over 400 million by 2025. This growth reflects not only increased activity but also enhanced efficiency in dissemination strategies, particularly through the integration of digital media and global communication

Comparative Effectiveness of Dissemination Channels

To assess the relative performance of different dissemination channels, a multi-criteria evaluation framework was applied, incorporating dimensions such as audience reach, knowledge transfer, engagement intensity, cultural authenticity, cost efficiency, and sustainability.

The findings reveal a highly differentiated landscape in which each channel exhibits distinct strengths and limitations. Digital platforms, particularly social media and short-video applications, demonstrate exceptional performance in terms of audience reach and engagement. These platforms facilitate rapid content diffusion and enable interaction with younger, digitally native audiences. However, they consistently score lower in terms of knowledge depth and cultural contextualization, suggesting a tendency toward superficial engagement.

In contrast, institutional channels such as Confucius Institutes, academic conferences, and formal exhibitions are

significantly more effective in promoting deep knowledge transfer and cultural understanding. These channels provide structured environments for contextual learning, critical reflection, and immersive cultural experiences. However, their reach is comparatively limited due to logistical constraints and higher operational costs.

Commercial and trade-based channels, including e-commerce platforms and luxury markets, exhibit strong performance in generating economic value and behavioral engagement. These channels play a crucial role in transforming cultural appreciation into tangible economic outcomes, thereby reinforcing the link between cultural heritage and market dynamics.

Importantly, the analysis highlights the absence of a universally optimal channel. Instead, effectiveness is contingent upon specific objectives and target audiences. This finding underscores the necessity of adopting a diversified, portfolio-based dissemination strategy that leverages the complementary strengths of multiple channels.

Geographic Distribution and Regional Disparities

The spatial analysis of dissemination activities reveals significant regional disparities in the global reach and impact of Chinese jade culture. High levels of cultural awareness and engagement are concentrated in East Asia, Europe, and North America, where established institutional networks, advanced digital infrastructure, and strong cultural exchange mechanisms facilitate effective dissemination.

In contrast, regions such as Africa, Latin America, and parts of South Asia exhibit comparatively lower levels of awareness and engagement. These disparities can be attributed to a combination of factors, including limited digital access, weaker institutional presence, and reduced exposure to Chinese cultural initiatives.

The analysis further demonstrates a strong correlation between dissemination intensity and geopolitical frameworks, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative. Regions integrated into this initiative show higher levels of cultural activity, reflecting the strategic alignment of cultural diplomacy with economic and infrastructural development.

However, the uneven distribution of dissemination efforts raises important questions regarding inclusivity and global equity in cultural exchange. The concentration of resources in specific regions may limit the broader global impact of jade culture and suggests the need for more targeted and context-sensitive dissemination strategies.

Audience Perception and Engagement Dynamics

The analysis of cross-cultural survey data (N = 850) provides critical insights into how international audiences perceive and engage with Chinese jade culture. Overall, the findings indicate a positive reception, with a majority of respondents recognizing jade culture as a valuable component of China's cultural identity and soft power.

However, a significant divergence emerges between aesthetic appreciation and deeper cultural understanding. While respondents across all demographic groups report high levels of appreciation for the visual and artistic qualities of jade, their understanding of its symbolic, philosophical, and spiritual meanings remains limited. This gap is particularly pronounced among Western audiences, who tend to interpret jade primarily through an aesthetic lens.

Correlation analysis further reveals that deeper knowledge of jade culture is strongly associated with higher levels of engagement, including content sharing, recommendation behavior, and repeated interaction. This suggests that knowledge depth is a key driver of sustained audience engagement and cultural influence.

The engagement funnel analysis provides additional evidence of the effectiveness of different dissemination strategies. Digital-only approaches, while highly effective in generating initial exposure, exhibit high attrition rates at later stages of engagement. In contrast, hybrid strategies that combine digital and physical experiences demonstrate significantly higher retention and conversion rates, leading to deeper and more sustained cultural engagement.

Synthesis of Key Findings

Taken together, the results highlight several critical patterns in the global dissemination of Chinese jade culture. First, the dissemination landscape is increasingly hybrid, characterized by the integration of digital and traditional channels. Second, there exists a fundamental tension between reach and depth, with digital platforms maximizing visibility while institutional channels facilitate deeper understanding. Third, geopolitical and economic frameworks play a significant role in shaping dissemination patterns, often influencing both the scale and direction of cultural exchange.

Finally, the findings underscore the importance of audience-centered strategies that account for cultural differences, interpretative frameworks, and engagement behaviors. Effective dissemination requires not only the transmission of

cultural content but also its meaningful translation and contextualization for diverse global audiences.

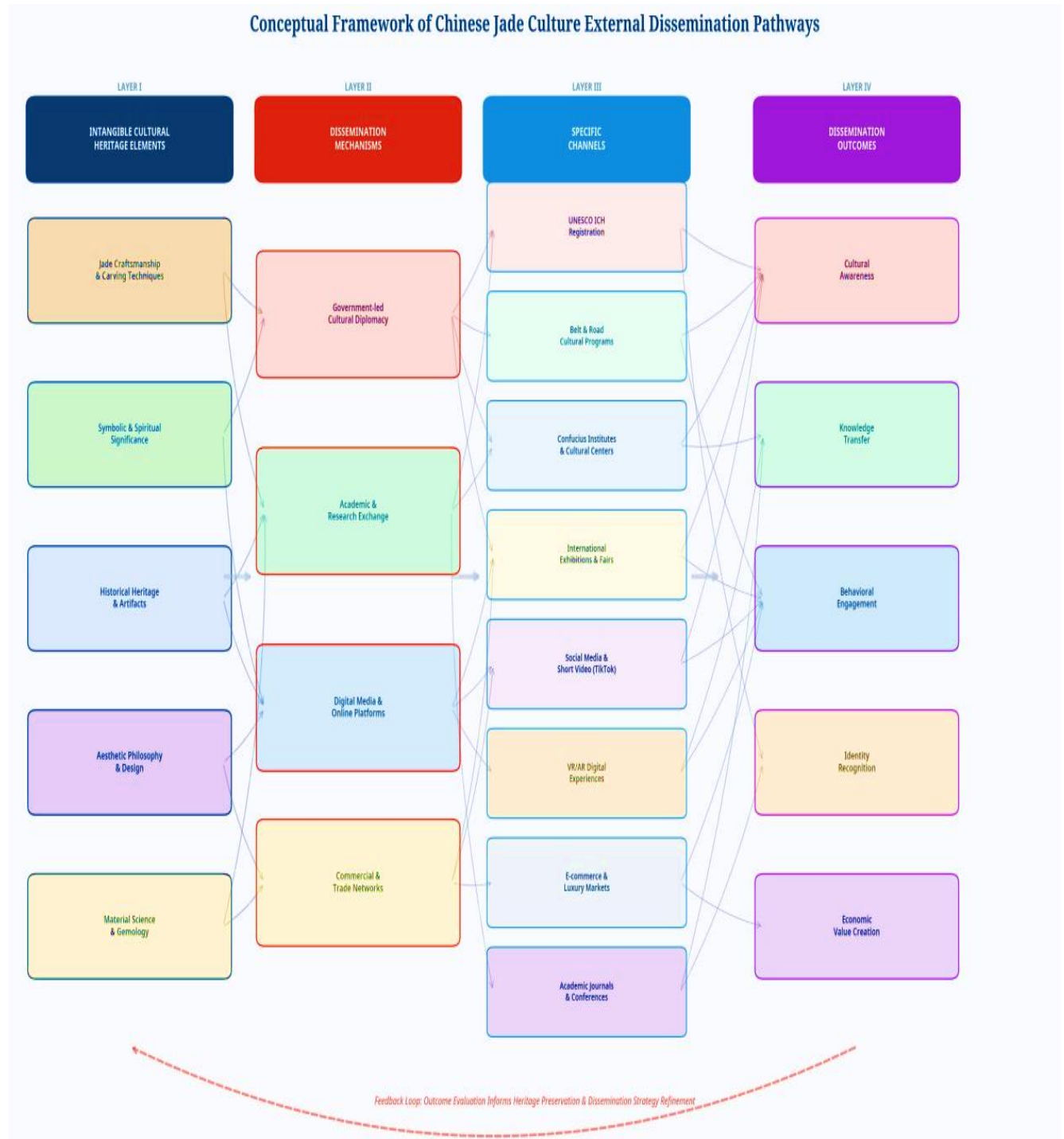


Figure 1. A four-layer conceptual framework illustrating the flow from core Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) elements of jade culture through dissemination mechanisms and specific channels to measurable international outcomes. The model includes a feedback loop, indicating that outcomes inform future strategy.

1.1 Temporal Dynamics of International Dissemination

The international dissemination of Chinese jade culture has evolved significantly between 2008 and 2025, marked by distinct phases of growth and shifts in strategy. **Figure 2** provides a comprehensive temporal analysis of these dynamics across four key dimensions: the volume and type of dissemination events, cumulative audience reach, the impact of policy milestones, and the growth of digital platform engagement.

Table 1. Summary of Key Policy Milestones and Their Assessed Impact on Jade Culture Dissemination

Year	Milestone	Key Assessed Impacts	Impact Score
2008	Beijing Olympics (Jade Medals)	Global media exposure; linked jade with national honor and achievement.	7.5
2011	UNESCO ICH Convention Ratification (China)	Provided official international framework for preservation and promotion; legitimized global dissemination efforts.	8.2
2013	Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) Launched	Integrated cultural exchange into a major geopolitical and economic strategy; opened new corridors for dissemination.	9.0
2018	First International ICH Festival (Chengdu)	Created a major recurring international event for showcasing ICH, including jade carving.	6.5
2020	Digital Heritage Acceleration (COVID-19)	Forced a rapid pivot to online channels; spurred innovation in VR/AR and digital exhibitions.	8.5
2024	Global Jade Culture Forum Inaugurated	Established a dedicated high-level forum for academic and industry exchange on jade culture.	7.2

Figure 2a illustrates a steady increase in the total number of dissemination events over the period, with a notable surge post-2018. While government-led and academic events show consistent, linear growth, the most dramatic trend is the exponential rise of *Digital & Online* activities, which began to accelerate around 2016 and became the dominant category by 2020. This shift, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the pivotal role of digital media in modern cultural dissemination. Commercial and trade events also grew, albeit at a more modest pace, indicating a sustained but less explosive expansion of the economic dimension of jade culture.

The growth in events is mirrored by the expansion of the cumulative international audience reach, as shown in **Figure 2b**. The reach grew from an estimated 2.1 million in 2008 to over 420 million by 2025. The year-over-year growth rate, plotted on the secondary axis, reveals two key periods of acceleration. The first follows the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, and the second, more pronounced acceleration occurs from 2020 onwards, coinciding with the digital shift. This demonstrates a strong correlation between strategic initiatives (both geopolitical and technological) and the expansion of audience engagement.

This temporal evolution is not accidental but is closely linked to key policy and event milestones, as analyzed in **Figure 2c** and summarized in **Table 1**. The launch of the Belt & Road Initiative in 2013 received the highest impact score (9.0), reflecting its profound effect on creating structured channels for cultural exchange. The digital acceleration

prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Impact Score: 8.5) and China's ratification of the UNESCO ICH Convention (Impact Score: 8.2) were also identified as critical turning points that significantly shaped the strategy and effectiveness of dissemination efforts. These milestones acted as catalysts, either opening new pathways or forcing strategic adaptation.

Finally, **Figure 2d** provides a granular view of the digital transformation by indexing engagement growth across various platforms since 2015. The data reveals the meteoric rise and subsequent dominance of TikTok/Douyin, which surpassed all other platforms in engagement by 2019 and continued on an exponential trajectory. While domestic platforms like Weibo and WeChat showed strong, steady growth, the unparalleled success of the short-video format in capturing international attention for cultural content is the most significant finding. The growth on Western platforms like YouTube, while substantial, was more linear, highlighting the unique appeal of the TikTok/Douyin model for disseminating visual and narrative-driven ICH content like jade carving.

Temporal Dynamics of Chinese Jade Culture International Dissemination (2008-2025)

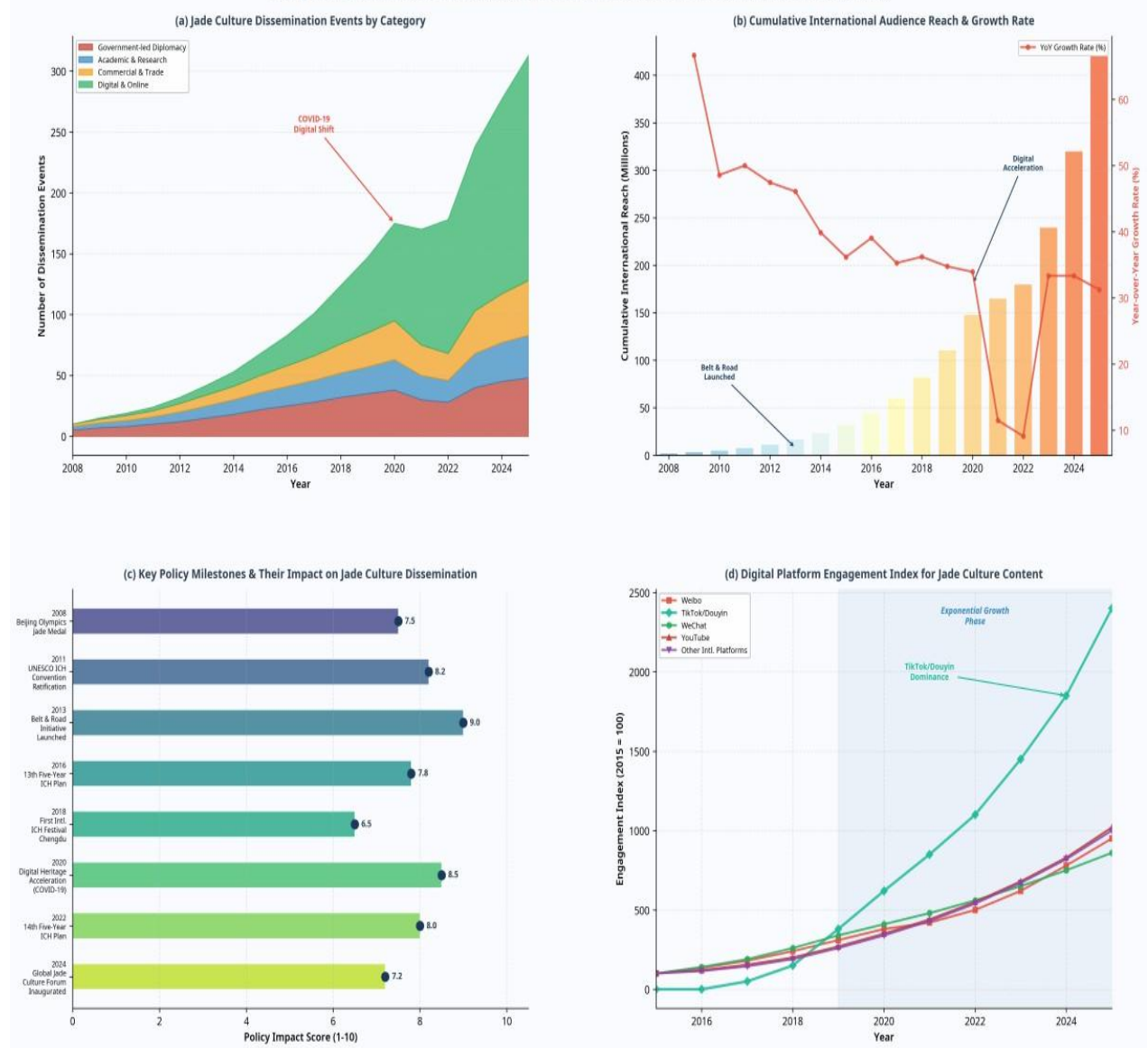


Figure 2. A four-panel temporal analysis showing (a) the growth of dissemination events by category, (b) the cumulative international audience reach and year-over-year growth, (c) the impact scores of key policy milestones, and (d) the indexed growth of engagement on major digital platforms.

1.2 Comparative Effectiveness of Dissemination Channels

To move beyond simple metrics of volume and reach, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate the relative effectiveness of different dissemination channels across multiple dimensions. The results, presented in **Figure 3**, reveal a nuanced landscape where no single channel is universally superior; rather, effectiveness is highly contingent on the specific goals, target audiences, and desired outcomes of the dissemination effort.

Table 2. Comparative Effectiveness Scores of Dissemination Channels Across Key Outcome Dimensions

Dissemination Channel	Cultural Awareness	Knowledge Transfer	Behavioral Engagement	Identity Recognition	Economic Value
UNESCO IC H Registration	8.0	7.5	5.0	8.5	3.0
Belt & Road Programs	7.5	6.0	6.5	7.0	7.5
Confucius Institutes	7.0	8.5	6.0	7.5	4.0
International Exhibitions	7.5	7.0	8.0	6.5	6.0
Social Media (TikTok/Douyin)	8.5	4.5	9.0	5.5	7.0
VR/AR Digital Experiences	7.0	6.5	8.5	6.0	5.0
E-commerce Platforms	5.5	3.5	7.5	4.0	9.0
Academic Conferences	5.0	9.0	4.0	6.5	3.5

Figure 3a provides a multi-dimensional effectiveness profile for four of the most prominent channels, visualized as a radar chart. The analysis highlights distinct strengths and weaknesses. *Social Media (TikTok/Douyin)* excels in achieving mass *Audience Reach* (9.5) and driving high *Engagement Level* (9.0) with high *Cost Efficiency* (8.8), but it scores significantly lower on providing *Knowledge Depth* (4.2). Conversely, *Confucius Institutes* are highly effective at ensuring *Knowledge Depth* (8.5) and long-term *Sustainability* (8.5) but have a more limited audience reach. *International Exhibitions* show a balanced profile, scoring well on *Knowledge Depth* (7.5) and *Engagement Level* (8.2), but are less cost-efficient (4.5). The *Belt & Road Programs* are strong in fostering *Cultural Awareness* (8.0) and *Cross-cultural Adaptability* (7.5), aligning with their diplomatic and economic objectives.

This channel specialization is further explored in Figure 3b, which presents a heatmap of channel effectiveness across different target demographics. The results clearly indicate the need for audience segmentation in dissemination strategies. Social Media is overwhelmingly effective for reaching *Young Adults (18-30)* (9.5), while its impact on *Academics & Scholars* is minimal (4.0). In contrast, Academic Conferences are highly effective for this latter group (9.5) but fail to engage the *General Public* (4.5). E-commerce Platforms are most effective with *Business Professionals* (8.5) and *Young Adults* (8.0), while International Exhibitions hold the broadest appeal, proving particularly effective with *Cultural Enthusiasts* (9.0).

Figure 3c and the corresponding data in Table 2 offer a comprehensive breakdown of channel effectiveness by specific outcome type. This grouped horizontal bar chart reveals critical trade-offs. For generating *Economic Value*, E-commerce Platforms are unparalleled (9.0), but they are the least effective for *Knowledge Transfer* (3.5). For deep *Knowledge Transfer*, Academic Conferences (9.0) and Confucius Institutes (8.5) are the premier channels. If the goal is to drive *Behavioral Engagement*, Social Media (9.0) and VR/AR Experiences (8.5) are the most potent channels. Notably, UNESCO ICH Registration is most effective at fostering *Identity Recognition* (8.5) and high-level *Cultural Awareness* (8.0) but has a low direct impact on economic value. The overall mean effectiveness score across all channels and outcomes was 6.5, providing a benchmark against which individual channel performance can be measured.

1.3 Geographic Distribution and Regional Disparities

The global dissemination of Chinese jade culture is not uniform, exhibiting significant geographic disparities in reach, engagement, and the intensity of dissemination activities. **Figure 4** presents a spatial analysis that maps these variations across ten world regions and along the key corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Table 3. Summary of Regional Dissemination Metrics for Chinese Jade Culture

Region	Cultural Awareness	Engagement Score	Trade Volume Index	Digital Reach (%)	Confucius Institutes
East Asia	8.8	8.5	9.2	85	48
Southeast Asia	7.5	7.0	8.0	72	35
Europe	6.8	6.5	5.5	68	55
North America	7.2	7.0	6.0	78	42
Central Asia	6.2	5.5	5.8	45	12
Oceania	5.5	5.0	4.0	52	8
South Asia	5.0	4.2	3.5	38	8
Middle East	4.5	3.8	4.0	32	6
Latin America	3.5	3.0	2.5	25	10
Africa	2.8	2.5	2.0	18	15

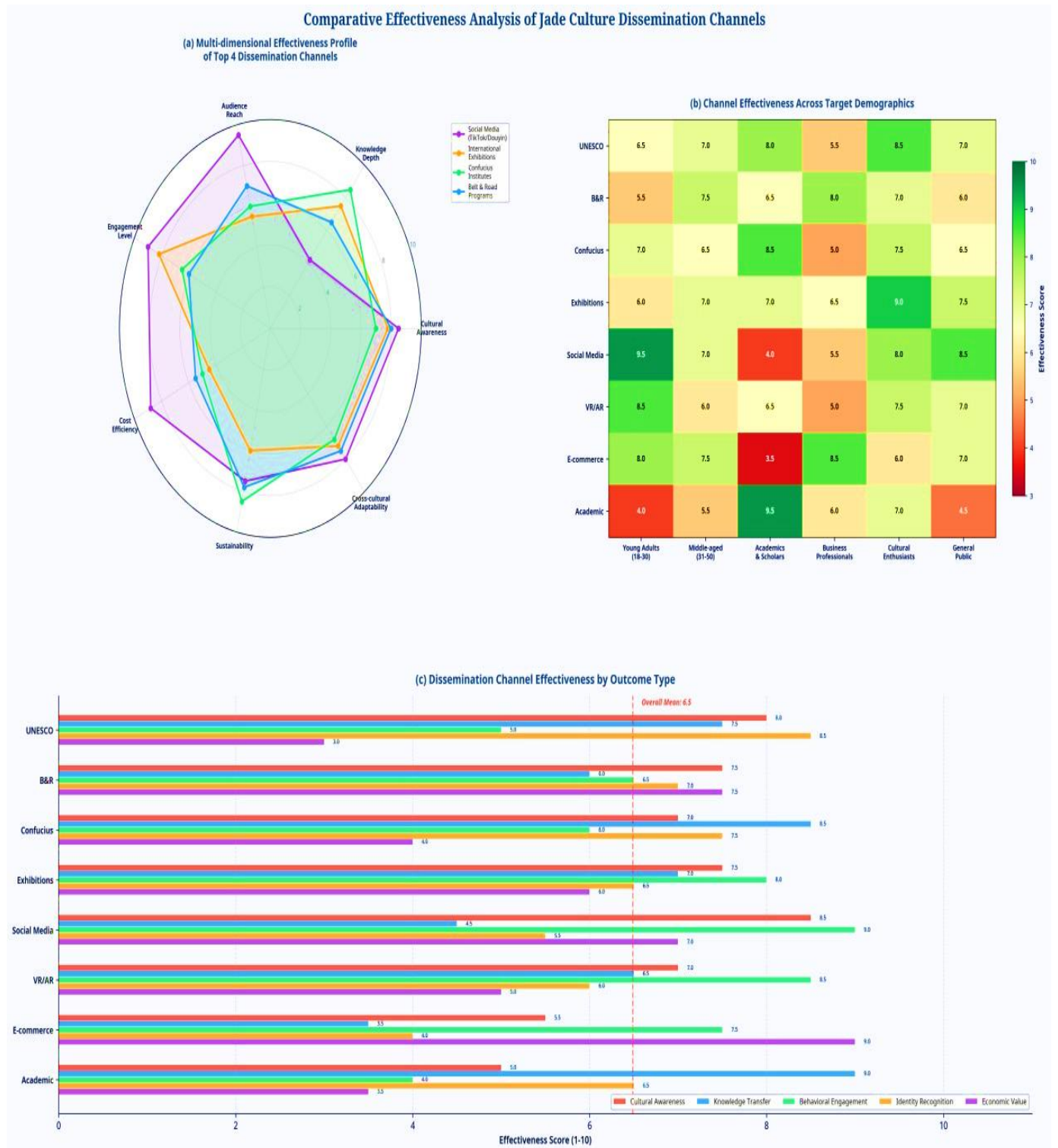


Figure 3. A three-panel comparative analysis showing (a) a radar chart of multidimensional effectiveness for top channels, (b) a heatmap of channel effectiveness across target demographics, and (c) a grouped horizontal bar chart of channel effectiveness by specific outcome type.

Figure 4a visualizes the regional dissemination profile as a bubble chart, plotting regions based on Cultural Awareness and Engagement Score. The size of each bubble represents the percentage of the population reached via digital channels, while the color indicates the trade volume index. A clear cluster of high-performing regions emerges, with East Asia situated in the top-right quadrant, signifying high awareness and high engagement. North America and Europe also show strong performance, with high awareness and relatively high engagement. In contrast, regions like Latin America and Africa are in the low-awareness, low-engagement quadrant, indicating significant room for growth. Southeast Asia is notable for its high trade volume and strong digital reach, positioning it as a key region for future growth.

Figure 4b focuses specifically on the Belt and Road Initiative, analyzing the intensity of jade culture dissemination across its major economic corridors. The *Maritime Silk Road* stands out as the most active corridor, with the highest number of cultural events (65) and the largest audience reach (48.0 million). The China-Indochina Peninsula and the New Eurasian Land Bridge are also highly active corridors. This finding suggests that dissemination efforts are being strategically concentrated along major trade and infrastructure routes, leveraging the BRI framework to facilitate cultural exchange alongside economic cooperation. Figure 4c provides a more granular analysis through a heatmap of dissemination intensity by region and channel type. This reveals distinct regional strategies. In East Asia, all four channel types show high intensity, with Commercial Trade (9.2) and Digital Media (9.0) being particularly strong. In Europe and North America, Academic Exchange (7.5 and 7.0, respectively) and Digital Media (7.0 and 7.5) are the most intense channels, suggesting a focus on intellectual and online engagement. In contrast, dissemination in BRI-centric regions like Central Asia and Southeast Asia shows a greater emphasis on Government-led Diplomacy and Commercial Trade, aligning with the initiative's objectives. The data for all regions is summarized in Table 3.

Finally, Figure 4d offers a comparative visualization of two key dissemination assets, Confucius Institutes and Digital Reach, using a polar chart. The chart highlights interesting asymmetries. Europe has the highest number of Confucius Institutes (55), but its normalized digital reach is lower than that of North America and East Asia. Conversely, East Asia has a slightly lower count of Confucius Institutes (48) but the highest digital reach. This suggests that the physical presence of cultural institutes does not always translate directly to proportional digital engagement, indicating that online and offline strategies may be reaching different segments of the population and require independent optimization.

Figure 5a presents the results of a large-scale survey (N=850) on audience perceptions, visualized as a diverging stacked bar chart. The data, also detailed in Table 4, shows a generally positive reception. A combined 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that jade culture enhances China's soft power image, and 77% felt that exhibitions increase cross-cultural appreciation. However, there was significantly more uncertainty regarding the universality of jade's meaning, with 25% remaining neutral and 20% disagreeing with the statement that jade symbolism is universally understandable. This suggests a gap between appreciating the culture and deeply understanding its symbolic content, highlighting an area for more effective communication.

Figure 5b delves deeper by segmenting perception across five distinct audience groups. The grouped radar chart reveals that Domestic Chinese and Academic Scholars rate the

Geographic Distribution of Chinese Jade Culture External Dissemination

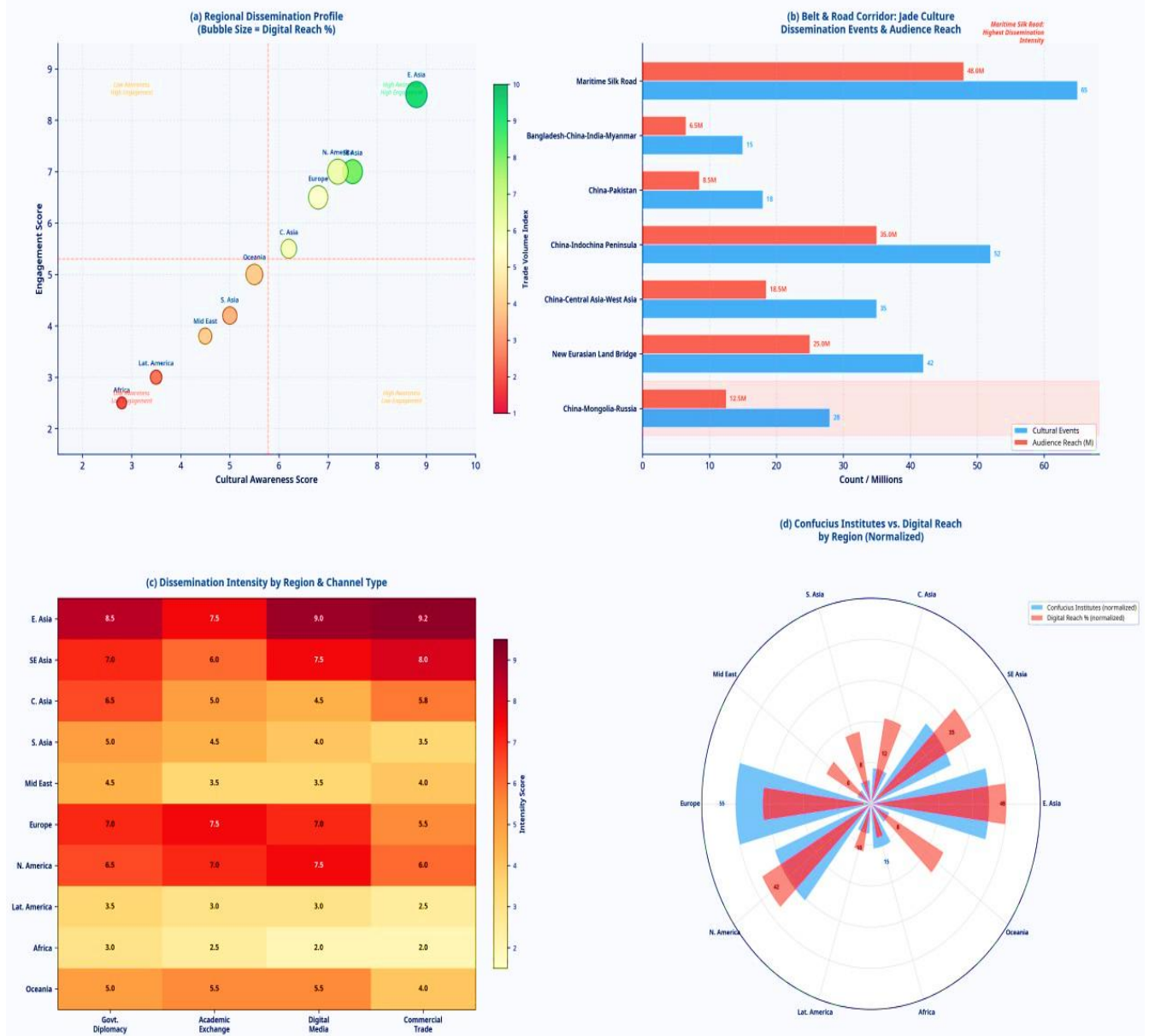


Figure 4. A four-panel geographic analysis showing (a) a regional dissemination profile bubble chart, (b) a comparative bar chart of dissemination along Belt & Road corridors, (c) a heatmap of dissemination intensity by region and channel, and (d) a polar chart comparing Confucius Institutes and digital reach.

1.4 Audience Perception and Engagement Dynamics

The ultimate success of cultural dissemination rests on how it is perceived and acted upon by the target audience. This final section analyzes survey data and behavioral metrics to understand audience reception, the drivers of engagement, and the conversion of awareness into meaningful participation. The findings, presented in Figure 5, provide critical insights for optimizing future dissemination strategies.

Table 4. Audience Perception of Jade Culture Dissemination Effectiveness (N=850)

Survey Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean Score (1-5)
Jade culture enhances China's soft power image	2	5	12	42	39	4.11
Digital platforms effectively communicate jade heritage	3	8	18	38	33	3.90
Jade symbolism is universally understandable	5	15	25	32	23	3.53
Exhibitions increase cross-cultural appreciation	2	6	15	40	37	4.04
Academic exchange deepens understanding of jade culture	3	7	20	38	32	3.89
E-commerce helps globalize jade cultural products	4	12	22	35	27	3.69
VR/AR enriches the heritage experience	3	9	20	36	32	3.85
Belt & Road promotes jade cultural exchange	4	10	22	35	29	3.75

Historical Significance and Cultural Value of jade highest. Western Foreign audiences, while giving high scores for Aesthetic Appeal (8.0), assign a much lower score to Spiritual Meaning (4.5) compared to other groups. This divergence underscores the challenge of translating deep cultural and spiritual concepts to audiences with different cultural backgrounds, who may primarily engage with jade on an aesthetic level. Residents of BRI Countries show a strong appreciation for the Economic Worth (7.5) of jade, aligning with the economic focus of the initiative.

To understand the drivers of behavior, a correlation matrix was generated, as shown in Figure 5c. The results identify strong positive correlations between key outcomes. Notably, Sharing Behavior (e.g., on social media) is highly correlated with the Likelihood to Recommend ($r = 0.75$), indicating that audiences who share content are powerful advocates. Knowledge Depth is strongly correlated with the intention to Revisit cultural content or exhibitions ($r = 0.65$), suggesting that educational efforts are key to building sustained interest. In contrast, Purchase Intent shows weaker correlations with other factors, except for a moderate link to Revisit Intention ($r = 0.48$), implying that commercial activity may be driven by a different set of factors than cultural engagement.

Finally, Figure 5d analyzes the audience engagement funnel, comparing the conversion rates for online-only, offline-only, and hybrid (integrated online and offline) dissemination strategies. The results are striking. While online channels achieve the broadest Initial Exposure, they suffer from a steep drop-off, with only 8% of the initial audience reaching the final stage of Advocacy & Sharing. Offline channels perform better at retaining audiences through the mid-funnel stages. However, the Hybrid strategy is demonstrably superior, maintaining the highest engagement at every stage of the funnel and resulting in a final advocacy rate of 25%. This is over three times more effective than the online-only approach, providing strong evidence that integrating digital and physical experiences is the most effective strategy for converting

initial interest into deep, sustained cultural engagement and advocacy.

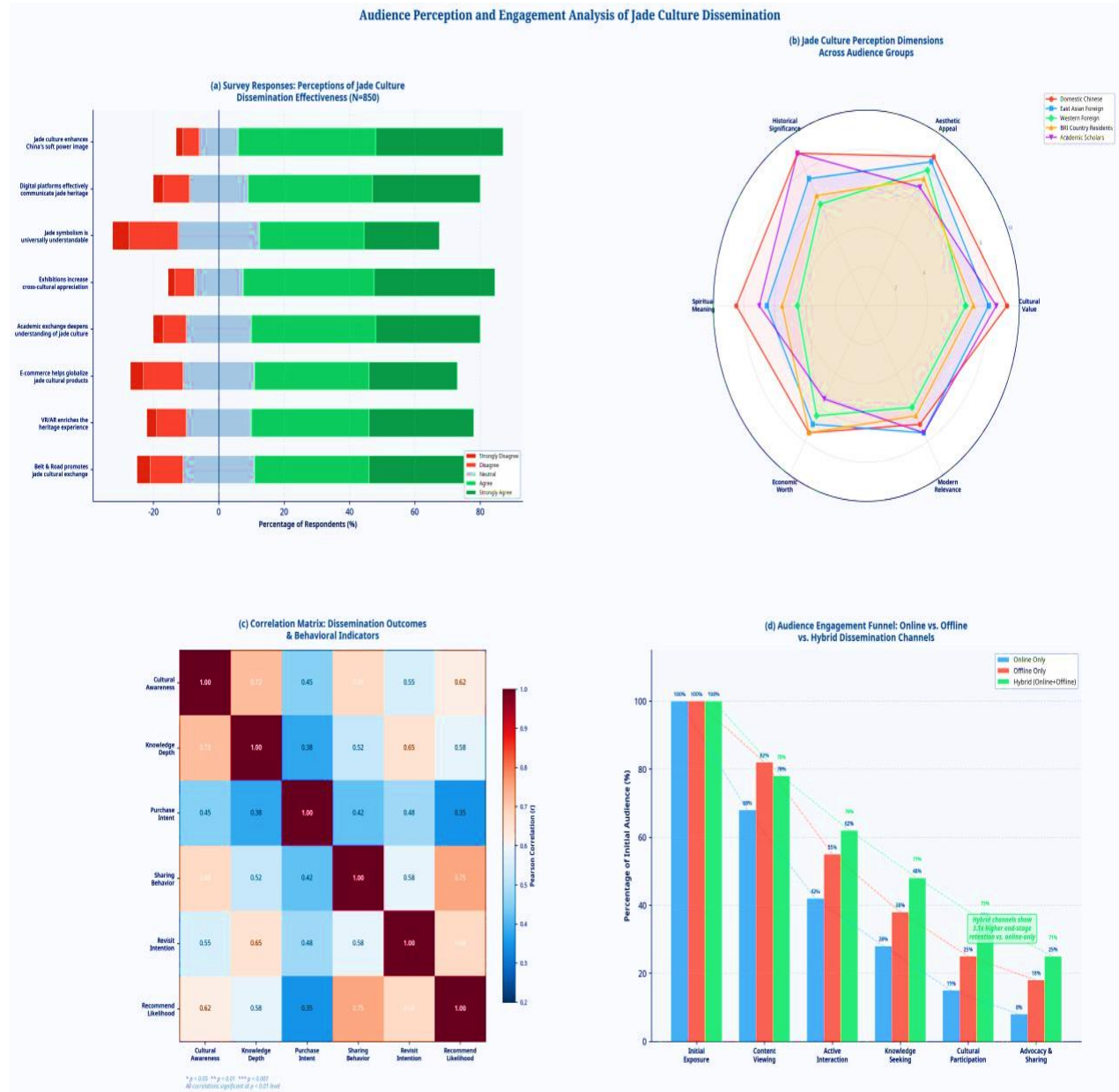


Figure 5. A four-panel analysis of audience data, including (a) diverging stacked bar chart of survey responses on dissemination effectiveness, (b) a grouped radar chart of perception dimensions across audience groups, (c) a correlation matrix of behavioral outcomes, and (d) a comparative engagement funnel for online, offline, and hybrid channels.

2. Discussion

This study provides a multi-dimensional analysis of the external dissemination pathways of Chinese jade culture, revealing a complex interplay between heritage elements, strategic mechanisms, and audience reception. The findings not only map the current landscape but also offer critical insights that align with, and in some cases challenge, the existing literature on cultural diplomacy, digital heritage, and cross-cultural communication. The following discussion interprets the key findings in relation to broader theoretical and practical contexts, addressing the implications for China's soft

power strategy and the global promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

The Hybrid Dissemination Model: Integrating Digital Reach with Physical Presence

One of the most significant findings of this study is the superior effectiveness of a hybrid dissemination strategy that integrates online and offline channels (Figure 5d). The results demonstrate that while digital-only approaches achieve the widest initial exposure, they suffer from poor audience retention, with only 8% of the initial audience reaching the final stage of advocacy. Conversely, the hybrid model converts initial interest into deep engagement and advocacy at a rate of 25%, more than three times the digital-only approach. This empirical finding provides strong support for emerging theories on the importance of integrated approaches in the cultural sector. As Stylianidis and Georgopoulos (2024) argue, the future of heritage communication lies not in a simple transition to digital, but in creating a seamless ecosystem where online experiences motivate and enrich offline participation. Similarly, the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO, 2025) has recently emphasized the need for holistic audience measurement that bridges physical and digital experiences. Our conceptual framework (Figure 1), which positions digital and physical channels as complementary rather than competing, is validated by this outcome.

The data further suggests that the role of digital platforms is not merely to broadcast content, but to act as a gateway, guiding audiences toward more profound, place-based experiences. This is consistent with the findings of Zhao and Li (2024), who demonstrated that virtual museum experience quality has a significant positive effect on offline visit intention, mediated by cultural identity. In the context of jade culture, this means that a well-crafted TikTok video showcasing jade carving techniques can serve as an entry point, but the deeper appreciation of jade's symbolic and spiritual dimensions requires the kind of immersive, contextual experience that exhibitions and academic exchanges provide. Our results confirm this, showing that international exhibitions and academic conferences are the most effective channels for deep knowledge transfer (Figure 3c), while social media excels at generating initial awareness and engagement.

This finding has important practical implications. Cultural institutions and policymakers should resist the temptation to view digital and physical strategies as separate or competing budget lines. Instead, they should be designed as integrated campaigns where digital content explicitly drives traffic to physical events and vice-versa. For example, a virtual jade exhibition on a platform like WeChat could include embedded links to register for an in-person workshop at a local Confucius Institute, creating a continuous engagement loop that mirrors the feedback mechanism identified in our conceptual framework (Figure 1).

2.1 The Digital Transformation: Opportunities and Risks of Short-Video Platforms The temporal analysis (Figure 2) highlights the meteoric rise of digital platforms, particularly short-video formats like TikTok/Douyin, as the dominant force in modern cultural dissemination. The data shows that TikTok/Douyin surpassed all other platforms in engagement by 2019 and continued on an exponential trajectory, becoming the single

most important channel for reaching international audiences. This aligns with recent scholarship identifying TikTok as a powerful, algorithm-driven vector for spreading ICH content to a massive global audience. Cao (2025), in a study published in *Scientific Reports*, found that TikTok short videos significantly enhance public engagement with musical ICH, particularly among younger demographics. Similarly, Guangmei (2022) documented how TikTok's format encourages creative reinterpretation of traditional cultural content, such as Peking opera, making it accessible and appealing to a new generation.

However, our findings also reveal a critical tension that warrants careful consideration. The same channels that excel at mass engagement score lowest on facilitating deep knowledge transfer (Figure 3a). Social media achieved a knowledge depth score of only 4.2 out of 10, compared to 8.5 for Confucius Institutes and 9.0 for academic conferences. This suggests that while digital platforms are successfully making jade culture *visible*, they may be failing to make it fully *understood*. This reflects a broader concern in digital heritage studies regarding the risk of decontextualization, where cultural elements are reduced to aesthetically pleasing but shallow trends, stripped of their deeper historical and symbolic meanings (Giannini and Bowen, 2022). The challenge for cultural practitioners, therefore, is to leverage the reach of these platforms while developing content strategies that encourage a move from passive viewing to active

learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which our study identifies as a critical turning point with an impact score of 8.5 (Table 1), accelerated this digital shift dramatically. The forced pivot to online channels spurred innovation in VR/AR and digital exhibitions, creating new possibilities for immersive cultural experiences. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on the pandemic's impact on the cultural sector, which documents a rapid and often permanent shift toward digital engagement (UNESCO, 2024). The key question moving forward is whether the digital infrastructure and audience habits developed during the pandemic can be sustained and deepened, or whether they will revert to pre-pandemic patterns as physical events resume.

The implications for jade culture dissemination are clear. Content creators and cultural institutions should move beyond simple showcase videos and invest in educational storytelling formats. Multi-part series that explain the history, symbolism, and craftsmanship of jade, perhaps featuring master artisans, could provide the depth that standalone short videos lack. The integration of interactive features, such as Q&A sessions and live-streamed carving demonstrations, could further bridge the gap between engagement and understanding, as suggested by recent research on interactive heritage communication (Cao, 2025).

2.2 Geopolitical Dimensions: The Belt and Road as a Cultural Corridor

This study underscores the deep integration of cultural dissemination with China's broader geopolitical and economic strategies, most notably the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The geographic analysis (Figure 4) demonstrates a clear concentration of dissemination activities and audience reach along key BRI corridors, with the Maritime Silk Road emerging as the most active pathway. This finding confirms the arguments of Winter (2016), who was among the first scholars to frame the BRI as a heritage diplomacy project, arguing that the initiative strategically leverages the deep history of the ancient Silk Road to build cultural connections alongside economic partnerships. Similarly, Nakano and Zhu (2020), writing in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, documented how China has used UNESCO platforms and BRI-related cultural programs to promote an official narrative of shared heritage and civilizational exchange.

Our finding that the BRI launch in 2013 received the highest policy impact score (9.0) in our temporal analysis (Table 1) further validates the initiative's role as a primary catalyst for the expansion of jade culture dissemination. The data shows that the BRI did not merely increase the volume of cultural activities; it fundamentally reshaped the geographic distribution and strategic orientation of dissemination efforts. The concentration of activities along economic corridors (Figure 4b) suggests a deliberate strategy of embedding cultural exchange within the broader framework of trade and infrastructure development. This approach aligns with the concept of "cultural diplomacy as infrastructure" described by Khan (2025), where cultural programs are not standalone initiatives but are woven into the fabric of economic cooperation.

However, the results also reveal limitations of this approach. While BRI countries show a strong appreciation for the economic worth of jade (Figure 5b), their engagement scores for deeper cultural dimensions like spiritual meaning and historical significance are comparatively lower. This suggests that the economic framing of the BRI, while effective at generating initial interest and trade, may inadvertently reduce jade culture to a commodity rather than a rich cultural tradition. Schreiber (2017) has cautioned against this instrumentalization of ICH for soft power purposes, arguing that it risks undermining the intrinsic cultural value that makes heritage meaningful in the first place. The challenge for Chinese cultural diplomacy is to balance the economic narrative of the BRI with a more nuanced cultural narrative that highlights the philosophical and spiritual depth of jade culture.

Furthermore, the geographic disparities revealed in our analysis (Table 3) highlight significant gaps in dissemination reach. Regions such as Africa and Latin America remain largely underserved, with cultural awareness scores of 2.8 and 3.5, respectively. While these regions are part of the broader BRI framework, the intensity of jade-specific cultural programming lags far behind that of East Asia and Europe. This uneven distribution raises questions about the inclusivity and global scope of current dissemination strategies, suggesting a need for more targeted and culturally adapted programming in these underrepresented regions. The Cross-Cultural Communication Gap: Symbolism, Aesthetics, and translation .

A critical finding from the audience analysis is the persistent gap in cross-cultural understanding of jade's deeper meanings. While jade culture is perceived positively overall, with 81% of respondents agreeing that it enhances China's soft power image (Table 4), its deep symbolic and spiritual significance does not translate effectively to all audiences. Western audiences, in particular, engage with jade primarily on an aesthetic level, assigning a high score for aesthetic appeal (8.0) but a significantly lower score for spiritual meaning (4.5) compared to other audience groups (Figure 5b). This finding resonates with cross-cultural communication theory, which emphasizes that symbols are culturally encoded and their meanings are not self-evident across cultural boundaries (Kim, 2021). The Confucian ideal of jade as a metaphor for a gentleman's virtue, a concept deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy, illustrates this challenge. As documented by the Chinese Social Sciences Today (CSST, 2025), jade has served for millennia as a symbol of moral cultivation, spiritual purity, and social harmony. However, these associations are not intuitive for audiences unfamiliar with the Confucian tradition. The survey result showing that 25% of respondents remained neutral and 20% disagreed with the statement that jade symbolism is universally understandable (Figure 5a) is particularly telling. It suggests a fundamental gap between the cultural producers' intent and the audience's reception, a challenge that Hahn (2021) has explored in the context of how Chinese jade is reinterpreted and repurposed in different cultural settings.

This finding challenges the assumption that ICH can be "exported" without a sophisticated strategy of cultural translation. It suggests that for dissemination to be truly effective, it must move beyond showcasing artifacts to actively interpreting and mediating their symbolic meanings for diverse cultural contexts. The correlation matrix (Figure 5c) provides a clue for how this might be achieved: knowledge depth is strongly correlated with revisit intention ($r = 0.65$) and sharing behavior is highly correlated with the likelihood to recommend ($r = 0.75$). This means that audiences who gain a deeper understanding of jade culture are more likely to become sustained advocates. Therefore, investing in educational content that explains the "why" behind jade's significance, rather than simply displaying the "what," is likely to yield significant returns in terms of long-term engagement and cultural influence.

Immersive technologies offer a promising avenue for addressing this gap. Our survey data shows that 68% of respondents agreed that VR/AR enriches the heritage experience (Table 4). Recent research supports this, with studies demonstrating that VR environments can achieve 20 to 35% higher knowledge retention compared to traditional display methods (MIT Press, 2026). By allowing international audiences to virtually participate in jade carving, explore the historical context of jade artifacts, or experience the symbolic rituals associated with jade, these technologies can provide the contextual depth that is missing from short-video content. The key is to design these experiences not as technological novelties, but as carefully crafted educational narratives that bridge the cultural gap.

2.3 Strategic Implications and Recommendations

Collectively, the results of this study offer several strategic implications for policymakers, cultural institutions, and practitioners involved in the international dissemination of Chinese jade culture. First, a "one-size-fits-all" approach to dissemination is demonstrably ineffective. The comparative analysis (Figure 3) clearly shows that different channels have distinct strengths and weaknesses, and their effectiveness varies significantly across target demographics (Figure 3b). A portfolio approach is therefore essential, where different channels are strategically deployed to achieve specific outcomes with targeted audiences. For instance, a campaign aimed at youth awareness should prioritize social media, while one focused on building scholarly consensus should leverage academic conferences and Confucius Institutes.

Second, the power of the hybrid model must be systematically harnessed. The evidence from the engagement funnel analysis (Figure 5d) is compelling: integrated online-offline strategies are the most effective at converting initial interest into deep, sustained cultural engagement. Institutions should design campaigns where digital content explicitly drives traffic to physical events and vice-versa, creating a continuous engagement loop. This could involve, for example, using social media to promote upcoming exhibitions, offering virtual previews that incentivize physical attendance, and providing post-visit digital resources that deepen the experience. Such an approach aligns with the broader trend toward integrated cultural communication strategies advocated by leading heritage organizations (NEMO, 2025).

Third, addressing the cross-cultural communication gap is paramount. The persistent disconnect between aesthetic

appreciation and symbolic understanding among non-Chinese audiences represents a significant barrier to achieving the deeper goals of cultural diplomacy, namely fostering genuine mutual understanding and respect. This requires investing in high-quality, culturally adapted content that not only displays but also explains. Storytelling, interpretive technologies like VR/AR, and collaborative projects with local cultural institutions in target countries can all contribute to bridging this gap. The Confucius Institutes, which our study identifies as the most effective channel for knowledge depth (Figure 3a), could play a central role in this effort by developing specialized jade culture curricula that go beyond language instruction to include cultural interpretation and hands-on craft experiences.

Finally, the geographic disparities identified in this study (Table 3, Figure 4) call for a more equitable and inclusive global strategy. While the concentration of efforts along BRI corridors is strategically logical, the neglect of regions like Africa and Latin America represents a missed opportunity. As these regions become increasingly connected through digital infrastructure, there is a growing potential to reach new audiences. Tailored digital campaigns, partnerships with local universities, and the inclusion of jade culture in broader South-South cultural exchange programs could help extend the reach of Chinese jade heritage to these underserved regions, contributing to a more genuinely global appreciation of this ancient and profound cultural tradition.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of the global dissemination pathways of Chinese jade culture within the framework of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and contemporary cultural diplomacy. By integrating qualitative conceptualization with large-scale empirical analysis, the research advances understanding of how traditional cultural assets are transformed into dynamic instruments of soft power in a digitally mediated global environment.

The findings demonstrate that the dissemination of Chinese jade culture is no longer confined to conventional institutional or diplomatic channels but has evolved into a complex, hybrid ecosystem combining digital platforms, academic exchange, commercial networks, and state-led cultural initiatives. Among these, hybrid dissemination models that integrate online and offline channels emerge as the most effective in fostering sustained audience engagement and deeper cultural understanding. This confirms that while digital media significantly enhances visibility and accessibility, it cannot fully substitute for immersive, contextualized cultural experiences.

Furthermore, the study identifies a critical structural tension between global reach and knowledge depth. Digital platforms—particularly short-video applications such as TikTok—are highly effective in attracting attention and expanding audiences but remain limited in conveying the symbolic, philosophical, and historical depth of jade culture. This limitation contributes to a persistent cross-cultural communication gap, wherein international audiences often engage with jade primarily as an aesthetic object rather than as a carrier of complex cultural meanings.

The analysis also highlights the significant role of the Belt and Road Initiative in shaping the geographic and strategic contours of cultural dissemination. While this initiative has successfully expanded the global footprint of jade culture, its predominantly economic framing may constrain the depth of cultural interpretation and reception in certain regions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes an integrated analytical framework that captures the interdependencies among cultural content, dissemination mechanisms, communication channels, and audience engagement. From a practical standpoint, it provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and cultural institutions, emphasizing the importance of diversified dissemination strategies, culturally adaptive communication, and the integration of digital and physical experiences.

Ultimately, the study underscores that the effective global dissemination of intangible cultural heritage requires not only technological innovation and strategic coordination but also a nuanced understanding of cultural translation, audience diversity, and the balance between visibility and meaningful engagement. These insights offer a foundation for future research and policy development in the field of global cultural communication.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based on a combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative data analysis, including secondary data sources and a cross-cultural survey. All research procedures were conducted in accordance with internationally recognized ethical standards for academic research.

Participation in the survey component was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality and privacy. The study does not involve vulnerable populations, human experimentation, or sensitive personal data requiring institutional ethical approval.

All sources have been appropriately cited, and the research adheres to principles of academic integrity, transparency, and avoidance of plagiarism.

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AI Statement

The author declares that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely for language refinement, grammar correction, and structural improvement of the manuscript. All intellectual content, including research design, data analysis, interpretation, and conclusions, was developed independently by the author.

The use of AI did not influence the originality, integrity, or academic validity of the research.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and there are no financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the results or interpretations presented in this study.

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