

# Innovative Dissemination of Chinese Traditional Culture in Subcultural Contexts: A Case Study of Museum Archaeological Blind Boxes (Post-print)

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## Abstract

At the end of 2020, the archaeological blind boxes launched by the Henan Museum rapidly gained widespread popularity, leading to a certain degree of dissemination of Central Plains culture. As a novel design form in the contemporary era, archaeological blind boxes possess unique advantages in disseminating traditional culture; seizing the opportunities of the times and developing creative products can effectively facilitate the spread of traditional culture. This article analyzes the dissemination practices of archaeological blind boxes launched by several museums, identifies their advantages and characteristics, summarizes the existing problems in their current process of disseminating traditional culture, proposes corresponding countermeasures, and aims to provide some insights for future archaeological blind boxes in the dissemination and promotion of traditional culture.

## Full Text

### A Study on the Innovative Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture in the Subcultural Context: A Case Study of Museum Archaeological Blind Boxes

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**Abstract:** At the end of 2020, the archaeological blind box launched by Henan Museum rapidly went viral, facilitating the dissemination of Central Plains culture. As a novel design form, archaeological blind boxes possess unique advantages in transmitting traditional culture. Seizing contemporary opportunities to develop creative products can effectively promote traditional cultural transmission. This paper analyzes the communication practices of archaeological blind

boxes introduced by several museums, identifies their strengths and characteristics, summarizes existing problems in their current dissemination of traditional culture, and proposes corresponding countermeasures to provide guidance for future efforts in propagating and promoting traditional culture through archaeological blind boxes.

**Keywords:** Subculture; Traditional Chinese Culture; Innovative Dissemination; Archaeological Blind Boxes

## 1. Research Background

Profound and extensive Chinese culture forms the foundation of our existence, and inheriting and promoting traditional Chinese culture is our mission—a crucial basis for realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. Traditional culture not only radiates its brilliance within China but also showcases unique charm and aesthetic appeal to the world. In recent years, as society has developed vigorously, people’s demand for spiritual and cultural content has grown increasingly strong. Museums, as vital institutions for disseminating traditional Chinese culture, bear significant responsibility in satisfying these cultural needs, making it imperative to explore new forms and methods for cultural transmission.

In terms of policy, the state has issued relevant documents in recent years to guide the development of cultural and museum industries and the creation of cultural and creative products, charting a clear course for their future development. Meanwhile, as China’s economic level continues to rise, the purchasing power of Generation Z consumers has become increasingly prominent. This demographic is characterized by rapid acceptance of new things, high consumption capacity, and distinct subcultural boundaries. Since consumption determines production, these changes in consumption structure have prompted continuous upgrading of the cultural industry, development of cultural and museum undertakings, and innovation in cultural and creative products, leading to the development of diverse product forms. Cultural and creative products not only stimulate cultural confidence and national identity among Chinese people but also enrich audiences’ spiritual worlds, enabling deeper understanding of traditional culture.

Blind boxes originated as a toy from Japan, where purchasers only discover the contents after opening them. These toys are typically sold in different series. Applying this novel format to museum cultural and creative products provides significant impetus for inheriting and promoting Chinese culture. This innovative form of dissemination can substantially enhance both the capacity and reach of traditional Chinese cultural transmission. Innovative communication enables museums to gradually develop distinctive dissemination methods that more effectively attract audiences to genuinely understand the profound depth of traditional Chinese culture.

## 2. Innovative Communication Practices of Archaeological Blind Boxes

### 2.1 Gamified Experience: Novel and Engaging Communication Formats

The gamified experience of archaeological blind boxes attracts audience exploration interest. The inherent uncertainty of blind boxes—where the contents remain unknown until opened—stimulates audience curiosity and the desire to discover, providing consumers with a novel experience. Additionally, blind boxes contain hidden editions that feature more creative designs and higher collectible value, though the probability of obtaining them is extremely low. This gambler’s mentality of hoping to acquire hidden editions further stimulates repeated purchases. Moreover, the archaeological experience offered by museum blind boxes contributes to their popularity. As archaeology has gained increasing attention through films, television series, and documentaries in recent years, archaeological blind boxes package miniature artifacts within soil, allowing consumers to use archaeological tools like “Luoyang shovels” to patiently excavate until the artifact is fully revealed. This simulated archaeological experience enhances audience appreciation for cultural heritage preservation. Beyond the experience itself, museum archaeological blind boxes feature interesting forms. For instance, Henan Museum’s archaeological blind box series includes miniature artifacts such as the Twelve Zodiac Beast Head Seals, silver ingots, tokens, ancient coins, bronze mirrors, ding vessels, and tiger talismans—highly collectible items that effectively disseminate and promote traditional Chinese culture.

### 2.2 Social Media Amplifying Archaeological Blind Box Dissemination

Archaeological blind boxes were first introduced as a cultural and creative product by Henan Museum. At the end of 2020, a consumer shared their purchase experience on the social media platform Douban, triggering widespread attention and causing sales to skyrocket. Subsequently, consumers continuously posted their purchase experiences on social media platforms like Sina Weibo, while Henan Museum’s official account also planned online and offline interactive activities that boosted blind box sales. Meanwhile, news reports about archaeological blind boxes further enhanced their promotional reach, significantly strengthening the dissemination of traditional culture. Through this simulated archaeological “digging” experience, audiences continuously expand their knowledge of cultural artifacts, allowing the essence of historical culture to be transmitted to varying degrees.

### 2.3 Co-branding with Trendy IP Brands

Some archaeological blind box products have chosen to collaborate with trendy IP brands, where the fusion of traditional and popular culture can further expand audience reach and increase user stickiness. A typical example is the “Three Stars Accompanying the Moon” bronze rock blind box co-created by

Sanxingdui Museum and the program *National Treasure*. First, rock music, as a subculture, already possesses a certain fan base, and co-branding with it can enhance the recognition and understanding of archaeological blind boxes. Second, rock culture and Sanxingdui culture exhibit certain complementarities. While rock culture centers on rebellion and critique, Sanxingdui culture represents the crystallization of primitive religious beliefs and sacrificial rituals from the pre-Qin period. The contrast and incongruity between the two more easily capture audience attention, and the collision between rock culture and Sanxingdui culture can create unexpected surprises. The novelty and interest of such product designs also stimulate consumer purchases. This new form of creative expression helps better inherit and promote China's time-honored traditional culture.

#### 2.4 Audience Interaction

Given the numerous artifacts contained in archaeological blind boxes, some products include specialized QR codes to help audiences better understand their discoveries. By scanning these codes, audiences can learn about the origins and history of the artifacts. Furthermore, Henan Museum's cultural and creative team regularly updates "Blind Box Diaries" on their WeChat official account, summarizing archaeological blind box-related events every ten days. This process of interacting with audiences enables deeper understanding of cultural artifacts. To enhance the entertainment value of blind box products, the museum has also launched prize redemption activities, including the publication of cultural research books such as *Appreciation of Central Plains Collections*, which also contributes to the dissemination and promotion of traditional culture.

### 3. Problems in the Archaeological Blind Box Dissemination Process

#### 3.1 Chaotic Copyright Market

After Henan Museum's archaeological blind boxes went viral online, the product experienced supply shortages, leading to the emergence of "scalpers" who drove up prices. Driven by substantial profits, some merchants began producing and imitating archaeological blind boxes with packaging, fonts, and even specific gameplay mechanisms similar or identical to the original products, priced relatively high but with extremely inferior quality. Many consumers, unaware of the differences, purchase these counterfeit products, which over time can severely damage the reputation of museums and their cultural and creative brands. Therefore, archaeological blind boxes launched by museums should protect their copyrights, promptly apply for patents after product launch, and actively defend their rights when discovering imitation products. Only in this way can the cultural dissemination path of archaeological blind boxes become smoother.

### 3.2 Insufficient Excavation of Cultural Connotations

A prevalent problem among currently launched archaeological blind boxes is that their designs remain superficial, with insufficient excavation of inherent traditional cultural connotations, where entertainment value outweighs cultural significance. For example, several blind boxes launched by Sanxingdui Museum merely involve simple visual extraction of excavated artifacts, failing to present the ancient Shu Kingdom rituals behind them. After purchase, the public can only appreciate their exquisite appearance without understanding the connotations of artifacts such as the bronze sacred tree or the large standing figure. Moreover, current archaeological blind box designs tend toward cute aesthetics—small, adorable, and largely similar in form. This homogenized design can cause audience aesthetic fatigue and waning interest, which adversely affects the long-term development of archaeological blind box products and consequently hinders further dissemination of traditional culture.

### 3.3 Weak Dissemination on Short-Video Platforms

In today's era, short-video platforms have become powerful tools for information transmission and social sharing. As cultural and creative products of museums, archaeological blind boxes can disseminate and promote traditional culture to a certain extent, so appropriately releasing videos about them on short-video platforms can effectively enhance their communication power. Observation reveals that many museum cultural and creative brands have posted relatively few videos about archaeological blind boxes on Douyin, with most content focusing on filming and explaining the artifacts themselves and generating low overall viewership. The majority of videos with higher publication and playback volumes are posted by individual buyers, but these are limited to the digging process. In the future, videos about archaeological blind boxes should focus more on the stories behind historical artifacts and present them in novel and interesting forms to attract more audiences to the profound heritage and connotations of traditional culture.

## 4. Optimization Strategies for Future Archaeological Blind Box Dissemination

### 4.1 Persist in Product Innovation

In future archaeological blind box design, emphasizing product innovation can not only enhance market recognition and brand value but also create greater product differentiation and shape a unique brand and cultural image. Taking Henan Museum as an example, focusing product innovation around its distinctive Central Plains culture and utilizing various popular IPs such as the “Tang Palace Night Banquet” dancer figures to disseminate traditional culture enables more audiences to experience the charm of Central Plains culture and appreciate the splendor of traditional culture. Its launched archaeological blind boxes include multiple series such as “Lost Treasures” and “Restoration Masters,”

distinguishing them from blind boxes launched by other museums and demonstrating greater innovation and market competitiveness. Their performance in both product development and traditional culture dissemination is remarkable. Therefore, other museums should also pursue better traditional culture dissemination effects through timely product innovation, creating more products with historical and cultural connotations to support traditional culture transmission.

#### **4.2 Integrate Communication Channels**

Media development has contributed significantly to traditional culture dissemination. Meanwhile, new media platforms continue to emerge, and it is essential to fully utilize these platforms by releasing different content tailored to each platform's characteristics. For instance, on recommendation-oriented platforms like Xiaohongshu, museums can post about archaeological blind box excavation experiences and express feelings about the traditional culture they embody, enhancing blind box communication power and visibility to attract more purchasers. On video platforms like Douyin and Bilibili, museums can release blind box excavation clips presented in novel formats, vividly showcasing the traditional cultural backgrounds or stories behind them to stimulate audience interest in learning about historical culture and achieve effective content dissemination. Leveraging the advantages of different communication platforms for timely cross-media dissemination can continuously increase the reach and influence of traditional culture, achieving desired communication outcomes.

#### **4.3 Actively Interact with Audiences**

In the process of traditional culture dissemination, the design of archaeological blind boxes themselves constitutes an important factor. On the other hand, effectively interacting with audiences and enabling their participation in co-creation and co-dissemination can yield multiplier effects. First, it is essential to recognize the importance of interest-based communities and properly utilize communities centered on traditional culture, historical culture, and archaeological blind boxes. Encouraging these communities to create related works and content can attract more people to traditional culture. During this participatory process, some audiences' sense of achievement is stimulated, leading to continuous content output that contributes to traditional culture dissemination. Second, museum officials can appropriately increase historical artifact knowledge content during interactions, enhancing audience understanding and identification with historical culture while accepting and adopting audience suggestions to further improve products and optimize user experience, thereby elevating traditional culture dissemination effectiveness.

Traditional culture is the soul of the Chinese nation, and its inheritance and promotion hold immense significance. Museums utilize archaeological blind boxes as an innovative dissemination format to popularize and promote artifact knowledge, allowing audiences to discover the beauty of artifacts and experience the profound depth of traditional culture through novel gamified experiences. How-

ever, inevitable problems have emerged during the implementation of archaeological blind boxes, such as copyright disputes damaging museum reputations, difficulties in fully presenting cultural depth, and weak platform dissemination power. These issues should become key focus areas moving forward, with particular emphasis on how to more deeply excavate historical culture and in what forms to present it. In the future, more creative products should be developed to enable more people to discover the essence of traditional culture, appreciate the beauty of Chinese culture, and carry forward traditional culture.

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