

Revitalization Practices of World Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of Yungang Grottoes

Liran Yang¹, Supachai Singyabuth^{2*}

Abstract

In contemporary society, the consumption of symbols and meanings has become the core of postmodern society, and engaging with cultural heritage has become an important way for people to seek connections with society and represent their own identities. Under the influence of consumerism, cultural heritage has been packaged as consumable goods, transforming into a public history belonging to the market economy. Public history enhances communication across all levels of society and cultural heritage, thereby generating diverse social needs. This process leads to new developments in cultural heritage, transforming the value of existing art, culture, history, and other aspects into economic value for consumption. This is a new social phenomenon that combines art and sociology, and it is also a popular trend in contemporary society. This study takes the Yungang Grottoes as a case, employing field investigation, observation, and literature analysis among qualitative research methods to study the historical consumption forms of World Cultural Heritage in the context of modern society. The study found that World Cultural Heritage contains unique cultural values, and under the influence of historical consumerism, the value system of the heritage is expanded. The rational utilization of heritage becomes the key direction for sustainable development of heritage, enriching the forms of historical consumption of cultural heritage is the key force for the revitalization of cultural heritage. The study has universality and provides important reference value for the revitalization of cultural heritage in other regions of the world.

Keywords: *Yungang Grottoes, World Cultural Heritage Revitalization, Public History, Consumerism.*

Introduction

As a representative of the second flourishing period of Buddhist art in the world and a monument to the cultural exchange between the East and West in the 5th century, the Yungang Grottoes hold significant value in the history of world civilization (Zhang, 2011). This rich heritage has a tremendous appeal to visitors (De Groot, 2009) Influenced by consumerism, people's consumption objects have shifted from material to spiritual culture, thus, cultural heritage that bears witness to human civilization has become a new target for consumption in contemporary society. This study takes the Yungang Grottoes as a case to explore the revitalization practices of world cultural heritage. The Yungang Grottoes are a 5A-level tourist attraction in China, and by 2024, the annual number of visitors has exceeded 3 million. This is the result of the Yungang Grottoes management department's innovation in historical consumption forms to attract tourists over the years, and it also demonstrates the modern society's demand for cultural heritage consumption. The protection and dissemination of cultural heritage, as well as the economic and employment benefits for local residents, are significant. Therefore, the study of the consumption forms of the Yungang Grottoes has important scientific research and social value.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs qualitative research methods, using the Yungang Grottoes as a case study, to explore the relationship between historical consumption and the revitalization of World Cultural Heritage. The qualitative part adopts methods such as observation, interviews, field surveys, and literature analysis to sort out the updated forms of historical consumption of World Cultural Heritage in the contemporary context.

¹ Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham 44150, Thailand, Email: ylr898902@gmail.com

² Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham 44150, Thailand, Email: upachaisingyabuth@gmail.com, (Corresponding Author)

It also discusses the impact of these historical consumption phenomena on the revitalization of cultural heritage, which is a popular social dynamic in the context of globalization and has significant research value.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data analysis in this study is primarily divided into a literature review analysis of the research concept, namely historical consumption, relevant government policy documents on cultural heritage revitalization, and the classification and organization of historical consumption patterns. The literature collection includes internet data and databases from archives, libraries, etc. The main locations for field research are within the Yungang Grottoes scenic area and multimedia interactive platforms. The main purpose of data collection and analysis is to clarify the interaction mechanisms among relevant organizations, governments, and tourists of world cultural heritage, and to explore the cultural narrative methods of cultural heritage in modern society.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

During the field research and interviews, this study strictly adhered to ethical norms, ensuring that the privacy of participants was fully protected and that their informed consent was obtained prior to the research. Due to the multidisciplinary perspectives involved in historical consumption and cultural heritage revitalization, and the enormous workload of field research, there may be a one-sidedness in descriptive analysis. However, the research framework of the article has strong universality and is of significant benefit to the study of world cultural heritage revitalization.

Research Results

Theoretical Framework of Historical Consumption

The Rise of Historical Consumerism: The Birth of Public History

Since humans became aware of the use and consumption of goods, consumer activities have also emerged. The definition of "consumption" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica is "the final use and disposal of goods and services." The explanation of "consumption" in the Chinese Dictionary is "the consumption of material wealth for production and living." (Zhang, 2020). The consumer subject and the object of consumption establish a connection through "consumption," which represents certain social relationships that people exhibit in consumer activities, such as identity, status, and economic capacity. The concept of "consumption" has also shifted from an economic meaning to a social and cultural significance.

The changes in consumption patterns are often the result of a combination of various factors, including economic development, social orientation, and changes in the consumer's perspective (Peng, 2023). After the end of World War II, economic recovery and social reconstruction on a global scale led to a modernized social environment. Traditional societies have gradually become industrialized and urbanized, which has brought about a convergence of values and lifestyles around the world, a phenomenon known as "globalization."

The development of globalization and technological progress have greatly enriched the content and forms of consumption, evolving from the traditional "physical goods" to new "symbolic meanings," which reflect current social relationships and social consciousness, thus giving rise to "consumerism." The symbolic value and meaning of objects have become the purest representation of evolution in modern society, where everything is displayable, and the world has become a text to be displayed, with various spectacles constituting the essence of the world (Debord, 1967). Consumption is not only a reflection of social change but also a significant force influencing modern society (Grant, 1987).

Jean Baudrillard(1970) proposed in *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* that consumption has become a core feature of postmodern society. Cultural consumption is no longer just about the purchase of goods but also about the consumption of symbols and meanings. In Baudrillard's theoretical framework,

the consumer society is a society inundated with symbols and images, where people construct and express their identities through consumption. History is symbolized in this process, becoming part of the objects of consumption. This consumption involves not only material products but also the consumption of historical events and narratives.

American literary theorist and cultural critic Fredric Jameson (1983) delivered a lecture titled Postmodernism and Consumer Society at the Whitney Museum of American Art, discussing the deep connection between capital expansion and cultural production. He posits that against the backdrop of globalization and late capitalism, the acceleration of urbanization, industrialization, and globalization has shattered traditional modes of spatial perception, leading to a loss of clear understanding of the overall society and history. This loss of spatial sense makes it difficult for individuals to locate themselves within complex social and economic structures. Subsequently, in his work *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, he introduced the concept of "Cognitive Mapping" to understand the spatial and social relationships of postmodernism. In the context of postmodernism, society's demand for "tradition" and the "past" increases, with heritage seen as a vital link connecting the past and the future, allowing people to find a sense of stability through heritage.

Fred Davis (1979), in *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, posits that the emotion of nostalgia can provide psychological stability, allowing individuals to find coherence and familiarity in a rapidly changing society. David Lowenthal (1985), in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, suggests that we need a stable past to verify traditions, confirm our identities, and understand the present; flaunting history is a common result of recognizing history, labeling artifacts can affirm their historical significance, and displaying them can enhance their appeal. David Harvey (1989), in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, points out that the capitalist system packages history as a commodity, meeting market demands through nostalgic consumption, and also drives the continuous reproduction of nostalgic goods. Through nostalgic consumption, individuals can express identification with a cultural tradition and maintain and reinforce their cultural identity by consuming these cultural symbols. The history of human development is the most representative component of nostalgic consumption.

Therefore, information related to the past has become a currency (De Groot, 2009). The emergence of historical consumption is the result of the combined effects of individual emotional needs and social, cultural, and economic factors. As people's demand for historical consumption increases, history is no longer the domain of historians alone but belongs to the general public. The market's drive and technological advancements have also accelerated the expansion of nostalgic consumption and the commodification of history. Robert Kelley, the founder of public history, defines public history as follows: In simple terms, public history refers to the employment of historians and the use of historical methods outside the academic system—such as in government departments, private enterprises, media, local historical societies and museums, and even in other private sectors (Kelley, 1978). The general audience has engaged and understood the importance of historical representation, recognizing "history in the making," not only seeing themselves as spectators of history but also as participants and judges (Sobchack, 2014).

Therefore, the core of public history is to bring historical knowledge out of the academic field and apply it to a broader public setting. It encompasses various fields such as historical preservation, museology, cultural heritage management, oral history, history education, and digital history (Lyon, Nix, & Shrum, 2017). The development of public history has made history more popular and socialized. It creates history as cultural heritage, monuments, museums, tourist attractions, etc., for consumption by visitors through a highly commercialized form. While conveying historical knowledge, it creates diverse experiences for the consumption of history, thereby enhancing the public's understanding of history.

Cultural Heritage Has Become a Popular Site for Historical Consumption

As the economy recovers, people's living standards have generally improved, and their interest in culture and history has gradually increased. Museums, historical sites, and ancient buildings have become tourist hotspots, and historical and cultural heritage has been redefined as an important social resource. The value system of cultural heritage has rapidly expanded under the influence of historical consumerism.

Overview of the Concept of Cultural Heritage

The concept of "cultural heritage" is a developmental process that has gained widespread recognition or acceptance since the term was used by UNESCO. UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972. The concept of "cultural heritage" is more localized, subjective, relative, and artistic, creative, and diverse (Silverman & Ruggles, 2007). According to the convention, "World Heritage" is defined as: the cultural and natural heritage that is recognized by UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee as rare and irreplaceable treasures of humanity, which are universally recognized as having outstanding significance and universal value, including monuments, buildings, and natural landscapes (Shan, 2016).

In 1998, UNESCO proposed the "Plan for the Development of Cultural Policies" at the Stockholm Conference, emphasizing the need to distinguish cultural products and services from other commodities, fully recognizing their cultural value, and understanding that cultural products and services are different from any commercial goods, but rather serve as expressions of identity, values, and meaning. In 2001, the 31st session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted the "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," which highlighted cultural diversity as a driving force for sustainable economic and social development. It helps to stimulate innovation and creativity, offering new perspectives to address challenges in the context of globalization. As of July 2024, the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage has 195 contracting parties, with a total of 1,223 World Heritage sites, including 952 cultural heritage sites, 231 natural heritage sites, and 40 mixed heritage sites (www.unesco.org).

The Transformation of Cultural Heritage Value

From a historical perspective, the value of cultural heritage is primarily reflected in the historical, artistic, cultural, and scientific values it embodies. These values represent and embody the civilization and wisdom of humanity from the past and are the core values for inclusion in the cultural heritage list. These values are scrutinized by the world, thereby generating economic, social, and spiritual values. These values represent humanity's identification with its own culture and identity and the re-creation of history, symbolizing the shaping of human identity and culture and the aspirations for sustainable social development. Therefore, cultural heritage reflects the significance of advancing human civilization, and the revitalization of cultural heritage is a means to actively promote social development and the progress of human civilization by consuming history.

Based on the analysis of the criteria and core elements for the inscription of World Heritage by UNESCO, cultural heritage must not only meet the selection criteria, but also sustainable development based on good conservation and management is an important principle for selection. In 1972, the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage for the first time listed the display and identification, preservation, protection, restoration, and transmission to future generations of world cultural and natural heritage as national responsibilities. Countries are expected to make every effort for this purpose, to make the best use of their own resources, and to enhance the people's appreciation and respect for heritage (Lin, 2012).

By organizing the discussions on the value of heritage in the World Heritage policies, it can be found that the world's understanding of heritage value has shifted from initially focusing solely on intrinsic values towards the direction of rational utilization of heritage. The social, cultural, and economic values of heritage have become important evaluation dimensions for heritage revitalization, see Table 1.

Table 1. Perception Changes in World Heritage Value

Time	Department	Document	Value evaluation content
1972	UNESCO	The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural	Cultural heritage is the common wealth, authenticity, integrity and

		and Natural Heritage	uniqueness of mankind.
1985	China's NPC Standing Committee	The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics:	Historical value, cultural significance and scientific research significance, to promote the rational utilization and inheritance.
1994	ICOMOS ³	The Nara Document on Authenticity)	Cultural diversity and historical authenticity, the importance of local cultural uniqueness and social memory.
2011	The UK Department of Local Government Affairs	National Planning Policy Framework	Balanced protection and development promote public understanding of historical heritage and enhance the community's participation and belonging in culture.
2013	UNESCO	Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies	Cultural heritage is the core of sustainable development, which not only promotes social and economic development, but also enhances cultural identity and pride, and balances the relationship between protection and innovation.
2017	ICOMOS	Principles for Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development	Combine cultural heritage with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the educational, social cohesion and economic development functions of historical heritage.
2017	The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China	Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation and Management of National Archaeological Site Parks	Promote the rational utilization of cultural heritage.
2018	UNESCO	The Kigali Call to Action on World Heritage Cities and Sustainable Development	It emphasizes the role of urban cultural heritage in the sustainable development, and proposes to protect the historical buildings while promoting the urbanization process and community development.
2023	UNESCO	World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Policy	It emphasizes the impact of tourism on heritage sites, and proposes to achieve a balance between protection and development through sustainable tourism, and promote local economic and cultural exchanges.

Source: Researcher, 2024

² ICOMOS stands for International Council on Monuments and Sites. It advises on heritage conservation, supports UNESCO, and promotes cultural and historical preservation globally.

To promote the deep integration of cultural and tourism industries, and to use culture and tourism as mutually reinforcing bidirectional drivers, China has proposed a strategy for the integration of culture and tourism. This strategy aims to revitalize World Cultural Heritage sites by integrating them with tourism consumption, aiding the tourism market platform in spreading and protecting cultural resources. By 2024, out of China's 44 World Cultural Heritage sites, 33 have been established as national 5A-level tourist attractions. The value of cultural heritage has become enriched within the development of the tourism industry, and the economic benefits generated by cultural tourism are also a major support for the sustainable development of World Cultural Heritage sites.

Yungang Grottoes: Revitalization Practices of World Cultural Heritage

Introduction to the Yungang Grottoes

The Yungang Grottoes were carved out in the 5th century AD, located 16 kilometers west of Datong city on the southern slope of Wuzhou Mountain. The grottoes stretch for about 1 kilometer from east to west, with 45 main caves and 209 additional caves remaining today. The carved area covers more than 18,000 square meters, and there are over 59,000 statues of various sizes (China National Cultural Heritage Administration, 2000).

Yungang Grottoes were inscribed on the World Heritage List as China's 28th "World Cultural Heritage" site due to their rich historical, scientific, and artistic values. In 2001, due to its early representation of Chinese Buddhist art and its significant importance, reflecting the cultural integration of the Northern Wei period (Chin-Yin, 2020), it was inscribed on the World Heritage List as China's 28th "World Cultural Heritage" site, meeting the criteria of authenticity and integrity, as well as standards of good protection and management in accordance with the World Heritage standards I, II, III, and IV. This recognition signifies the global and national acknowledgment of the value of the Yungang Grottoes and demonstrates the practice of the "value-protection-development" system for cultural heritage by the world and China. As a historical space of the past, the Yungang Grottoes have become a place for public sightseeing and consumption. Traditional history has transformed into public history guided by social needs, bringing economic benefits to cultural heritage and contributing to the sustainable development of cultural heritage.

People visit the Yungang Grottoes to consume the symbolic value of "World Cultural Heritage". Being listed as a World Cultural Heritage site signifies that the location has global value. This international recognition turns these heritage sites into popular destinations for global tourists, who come to personally experience these recognized outstanding cultural achievements. As tourists gaze upon them, the value of the Yungang Grottoes gradually becomes richer, and the forms of historical consumption also diversify. In this process, the World Cultural Heritage site of Yungang Grottoes achieves an identity crossover from historical and cultural heritage to a commercial consumption space. This is a phenomenon of "cultural commodification" under the prevalence of consumerism, and it also provides a guarantee for the sustainable development of World Cultural Heritage, thereby realizing the revitalization of World Cultural Heritage.

Against the backdrop of the boom in heritage tourism, an increasing number of World Heritage sites are being heavily invested in as tourism cards, becoming an important support for building market appeal and brand effects for tourism destinations. The Yungang Grottoes management department markets the "World Cultural Heritage" as a symbol, shaping the value of the symbol through construction and promotion, using the uniqueness of meaning and value as a distinction from other tourist attractions, thereby attracting tourists and achieving the dissemination of cultural value and the enhancement of regional economic value. Through tourism activities, tourists pursue visual, emotional, and cultural enjoyment, obtaining a tourism experience of cultural difference. Therefore, the relevant management agencies and tourists together become the main body of historical consumption at the Yungang Grottoes, playing an important role in the revitalization of the Yungang Grottoes.

Historical Consumption Practices at the Yungang Grottoes in the Context of World Cultural Heritage Revitalization

When history is no longer a profound discipline monopolized by a minority of professional historians, but becomes a social and cultural construct and a mass-consumed entity, the forms of consuming history need to diversify to meet the public's demands.

The consumption of history is more like an interactive form between people and history, where people experience and interpret history by visiting cultural heritage sites for "gazing" and purchasing history-related goods and services, such as buying souvenirs, watching historical reenactment events, or engaging in cultural heritage tourism; "historical consumption" also reflects the "borrowing" of "history," borrowing history to achieve the dissemination of culture and ideas or to achieve certain purposes, such as scholars constructing their identity as archaeologists through the consumption of history, and museum exhibitions achieving visitors' understanding and identification with history through the display and interpretation of history. History is reproduced and becomes a form of consumption that interests tourists, to enhance their cognition and interaction with cultural heritage.

Strengthening Historical Symbols: Visually Demonstrating the Uniqueness and Richness of History

In the Yungang Grottoes scenic area, there are many instances where symbols are extracted and reinterpreted to create new landscape features. This not only revives the religious connotations of the Yungang Grottoes but also allows visitors to experience the profound meanings of Buddhist culture through these symbols. For example, the Tanyao Square and the Pilgrimage Avenue are both examples where sculptures, patterns, and historical symbols from the Yungang Grottoes have been materialized into new scenic attractions. These symbols are not just decorations in the scenic area; they often become the visual focal points or the core of experiential activities that attract visitors. Extracting and placing these symbols into the landscape is, in fact, a form of symbolic consumption. In this way, the scenic area endows the landscape with specific meanings through symbols, and these symbols also become part of the consumption for visitors. By viewing, experiencing, or purchasing souvenirs with these symbols, visitors further strengthen their memory and emotional connection to the culture of the scenic area.

There are many more examples of regenerative cultural symbols, which are not only reflected in the construction of the Yungang Grottoes scenic area but also in daily publicity, film and television production, dance and song performances, and more. These symbols carry the memories of history and culture, enhance the interaction between visitors and history, and also strengthen visitors' recognition of history and cultural symbols.

Environmental Improvement: Re-creating a Historical and Cultural Consumption Landscape

Improving the environment can enhance the quality of the park's landscape facilities and the environment, as well as the visitor's experience and sense of participation, creating an educational and entertaining environment for tourists.

The Yungang Grottoes scenic area has undergone more humanized adjustments, integrating cultural tourism with natural sightseeing, and adopting a narrative spatial structure to guide visitors in understanding the historical culture of Yungang. The historical clues from the Northern Wei Dynasty to the Ming and Qing border forts run through the landscape design. The scenic area is divided into a historical interpretation zone, a cultural and entertainment interactive zone, a leisure and touring zone, and a public service zone. The historical interpretation zone showcases the Tuoba capital construction and the grotto culture; the cultural and entertainment interactive zone offers a variety of entertainment activities to enhance the visitor's immersion; the leisure and touring zone provides a relaxation space for tourists, equipped with characteristic landscapes and facilities; the public service zone meets the basic needs of tourists, improving operational efficiency, visitor experience, and economic benefits.

The Yungang Grottoes management department has combined the concepts of "environmental protection" and "development," integrating the symbols of "historical and cultural landscapes" and "coal resources

landscapes." By utilizing a large amount of abandoned mine waste, railway sleepers, old chimney stones, and other waste materials, they have transformed them into unique buildings and landscapes, becoming the first case in the country to use solid waste to create a scenic area at a World Heritage site (Yan, 2021). This approach not only promotes green development but also innovates the historical consumption space for ecological civilization and conservation.



Figure 1. Views of the Yungang Grottoes

Source: Yungang Grottoes Official Website, 2024.

New Venue Construction: Expanding the Historical Consumption Awareness Space of the Yungang Grottoes

To deepen visitors' understanding of the history of Yungang and provide diverse experiences, extending the time visitors spend at the Yungang Grottoes, new venues such as the Yungang Museum, Premier Zhou Enlai Memorial Room, followed by the Yungang Scripture Writing Academy, Yungang Art Museum, Yungang History Museum, Yungang Sketching Base, Xiaoyi Shadow Puppetry and Puppet Performance Hall, Northern Wei Archery Field, etc., have been constructed.

The Yungang History Museum showcases the research process and conservation achievements of the Yungang Grottoes, using a wealth of materials and modern technological means to display the restoration history from the Northern Wei dynasty to the present, highlighting China's achievements in the field of cultural heritage protection. The Yungang Museum is an important part of the Yungang Grottoes cultural industry, displaying related artifacts, illustrated texts, paintings, and models of the Yungang Grottoes, emphasizing the cultural connotations of the site, with exhibits including exquisite stone carving fragments from the Northern Wei caves and daily utensils from the Yungang temple, enriching visitors' historical experience.

By constructing these cultural venues, the Yungang Grottoes have not only enhanced the cultural experience for visitors but also promoted the development of the cultural industry. They have deeply explored resources such as Buddhist culture, frontier nomadic culture, music, and sculptural arts, creating a Yungang Grottoes cultural and artistic tourism cluster, making the scenic area more influential and providing visitors with a richer experience.

Cultural Creation: Enriching Historical Consumption Experiences and Forms

Dance performances transform static history into a feast for the senses. Research has found that among the 24 caves at the Yungang Grottoes, there are carvings of musical imagery in 28 types of instruments, over 500 pieces, and more than 60 groups of musical ensembles (Zhao, 2014). Many of these showcase regional musical and dance traditions, reflecting the mutual influence of Buddhist ceremonies, secular life, and the court culture of the Northern Wei dynasty. They are representative symbols of the ethnic integration

culture at the Yungang Grottoes. In recent years, the Yungang Grottoes have hosted numerous performances, transforming historical and religious cultures such as the flying celestial musicians and Buddhist culture from "past heritage" into contemporary cultural products through music and dance. In a way that is easily acceptable to modern audiences, these performances allow viewers to "consume" the memories of historical culture, enhancing their understanding of the cultural value of the Yungang Grottoes. This cultural experience is no longer solely reliant on the carvings and murals within the grottoes but is given new life through performing arts, making history more tangible and interactive. This approach attracts younger audiences and international tourists, providing a more immersive experience and expanding the influence of cultural heritage. In addition to specific stages, the Yungang Grottoes have also brought the performance stage into the caves themselves, achieving a visual collision between regenerated culture and authentic culture, and allowing visitors to more clearly experience the charm of Yungang art.



Figure 2. The regenerative historical consumption form of Yungang Grottoes.

Source: Yungang Grottoes Official Website, The China Central Radio and Television Station, 2024.

In recent years, the dance and song activities at the Yungang Grottoes are not only a revival of historical culture but also a typical embodiment of historical consumption. By rejuvenating historical culture, it promotes the modern revitalization and industrial operation of cultural heritage, enriching tourists' cultural consumption experience and showcasing the diversity of historical consumption. Compared to traditional museum-style exhibitions, this form of performance is more appealing and moving, driving the dissemination and development of historical culture, and also enhancing the economic income of the heritage site. Under this influence, tourists have begun to imitate, engaging in role-playing and taking photo shoots, as if traveling back a thousand years to personally experience the cultural scenes within the Yungang Grottoes, see Figure 2.

Cultural and creative commodities achieve the purpose of taking history away. According to the latest data from the global cultural and museum industry, the income from cultural and creative products of advanced museums can cover about 30% of their daily operating expenses. For instance, the annual revenue from cultural and creative products at the British Museum is as high as \$300 million (Walsh, 1992), and the Palace Museum in China has over 6,000 types of cultural and creative products, with sales exceeding 1 billion yuan in the past three years (Wang, 2022). In recent years, the Yungang Grottoes have enhanced the service capabilities of cultural and museum units by relying on cultural and heritage resources, encouraging and guiding social forces to participate, and actively developing various cultural and creative products. This has enriched the local cultural tourism industry and achieved the organic unity of social benefits and economic benefits. The Yungang Grottoes' tourism cultural and creative products extract representative symbols of the grottoes and present them in forms that meet consumer preferences, realizing the purpose of taking Yungang culture away. These cultural and creative products not only allow tourists to "take away" a part of history but also push the grotto culture into a broader market, promoting cultural dissemination. On one hand, these cultural and creative products meet the consumption needs of tourists, and on the other hand, they promote the commercial operation of the Yungang Grottoes cultural heritage, enhancing both its economic benefits and cultural influence.

Publicity and Promotion: Expanding the Historical Experience Realm

Since 2000, the local government has been enhancing the tourism development of the Yungang Grottoes by hosting the "Yungang Cultural Tourism Season" annually from July to October (www.gov.cn, 2024). This event attracts tourists through a diverse range of historical consumption activities, promoting historical culture. In addition, the Yungang Grottoes have produced multilingual promotional videos in conjunction with traditional and new media, showcasing the artistic and historical charm of the grottoes in a cross-cultural manner. For example, they have collaborated with China Central Television and BBC to produce documentaries such as *The Legend of Yungang Grottoes*, *Yungang Grottoes: A Thousand Years of Witness*, *All Things China: New Scenery of Yungang*, and *Memory of Humanity, China's World Heritage*, which have been broadcast multiple times on CCTV International, Documentary Channel, and Science and Education Channel. The Yungang Grottoes highlight the contemporary demand for cross-industry cooperation and comprehensive integration with social media, using the historical culture within the grottoes as a script to expand the realm of historical consumption.

Establish A Media Matrix to Create a Community-Based Historical Consumption Cluster

Yungang Grottoes have also established a mobile media matrix, collaborating with various social platforms such as TikTok, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, and Dianping, creating social media accounts. Users can quickly integrate content in various forms such as text, images, audio, and video, making the presentation of information richer and more intuitive, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of information dissemination. In this process, the information publisher plays a leading role, consuming the history of Yungang Grottoes and building their identity and social network on social platforms.

On the internet, tourists' emphasis on the evaluation system of scenic spots and others' comments, as well as the sharing of travel experiences, reflects the process of mutual gazing among tourists. Tourists share their photos or videos taken at the heritage site, along with their feelings, experiences, or evaluations, to online social platforms, gaining views or comments from others on the platform. This is a process of displaying symbols to others to present one's self-image, as well as a process of cultural consumption. In this process, tourists consume the heritage site to produce photos or videos, in order to achieve spiritual satisfaction, thus forming the construction of individual symbolic and identity meanings. They classify themselves through the act of travel and also classify themselves.

In order to gain others' attention, tourists often beautify their photos or videos, which also enhances the image of the heritage site. As more participants join in, the forms and content of check-ins have become increasingly bizarre, creating an internet celebrity effect, and heritage sites have also become internet celebrity heritage sites. During the process of checking in, the tourist group also establishes connections with others, thereby gaining a sense of belonging and identification with the social group. Therefore, the media matrix becomes an important historical consumption space for the Yungang Grottoes, reflecting the embodiment of communal historical consumption forms.

Immersive Experience Theater

On July 20, 2024, a 360° large-scale immersive digital theater made its debut at the Yungang Grottoes, where "Phantom Yungang," created by a well-known domestic contemporary digital art production team, was presented to the public. The production team reinterprets the aesthetic symbols of the Yungang Grottoes through contemporary digital art, combining music production, sound design, computer graphics, computer engine algorithms, and artificial intelligence art to vividly showcase the unique charm of the millennium-old Yungang (www.gov.cn, 2024). This immersive experience allows the audience to be placed in the environment, as if traversing through time and space, to feel the historical and cultural allure of the Yungang Grottoes (www.gov.cn, 2024). Under the influence of modern consumerism, the Yungang Grottoes, as a World Cultural Heritage site, have gained the favor of global tourists through various forms of historical consumption. Cultural heritage has been rationally utilized within the market economy, achieving multidimensional dissemination pathways and revitalizing the World Cultural Heritage.

Conclusion

In the context of its status as a World Cultural Heritage site, the Yungang Grottoes have become one of the popular tourist destinations for visitors from other regions. This has created significant economic value for the Yungang Grottoes, provided economic support for their preservation, created pathways for the dissemination of their culture, and enriched the value system of World Cultural Heritage sites. The government and scenic spots have implemented a series of measures and activities to promote the historical, artistic, and cultural value of the Yungang Grottoes, transforming it into a space for the interpretation and display of new cultural heritage, thereby achieving the cultural, economic, and social revitalization of world cultural heritage. The popularity of the Yungang Grottoes as a tourist attraction provides a platform for cultural exchange. Visitors can learn about the site's rich history, exquisite art, and profound cultural significance. The stories contained within the grottoes are vividly presented, promoting a deep understanding of their historical and artistic value. The government and the management of the Yungang Grottoes have implemented a series of innovative measures and activities to enhance the site's appeal while ensuring its sustainability. The government and the Yungang Grottoes management department have implemented a series of innovative measures and activities to enhance the site's appeal while ensuring its sustainability. This form of cultural consumption highlights the transformative potential of heritage tourism in spreading awareness and understanding of our shared human history. It demonstrates the importance of history in human civilization and the strong desire of the public to actively engage with history, which is significant for the revitalization of world cultural heritage.

In summary, the Yungang Grottoes are a powerful example of how World Cultural Heritage can achieve cultural, economic, and social revitalization. Through proper utilization, cultural dissemination, and public participation, this site has not only preserved its historical essence but also adapted to contemporary needs and expectations. This process underscores the critical importance of history in shaping human identity and highlights the immense value of promoting public interaction with World Cultural Heritage.

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