New Media of Shanxi Ancient Architecture Tourism Development

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Abstract
The heritage has emerged as a vital subcategory within the tourism industry, playing a significant role in the global economic landscape. Shanxi Province, which boasts the highest number of ancient buildings in China, has faced persistent challenges in the development of its tourism sector. This study critically examines the factors contributing to the delayed progress in the tourism of Shanxi's ancient architectural sites. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the research delves into the interplay between new media and the promotion of Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism. It analyzes how various forms of new media can be harnessed to overcome existing barriers and stimulate tourism growth. The study culminates in the proposition of a detailed knowledge framework aimed at leveraging new media to enhance the visibility and value of Shanxi Province's cultural tourism. This framework serves as a strategic solution to bolster the province's tourism industry and maximize the economic and cultural benefits derived from its ancient architectural heritage.
Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Shanxi, Ancient Building, New Media

Introduction
In the global economy, tourism stands out as one of the most prominent and rapidly expanding sectors. Since the 1960s, the tourism industry has been recognized as a potent engine for developmental growth, prompting numerous countries to bolster their tourism sectors as a strategy to spur economic development (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). This industry is increasingly viewed as a critical economic activity and a driving force for the development of numerous destinations, playing a pivotal role in sustainable socio-economic advancement worldwide (Hwang, 2019). Over the years, the tourism sector has experienced various cycles of growth and decline. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023), the tourism industry contributed 9.1 percent to the global GDP in 2023, marking a 23.2 percent increase from 2022, although still 4.1 percent below the 2019 level. Projections indicate that the global

tourism market will reach USD 16.9 trillion by 2030, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.4 percent during the forecast period from 2022 to 2030 (The Brainy Insights, 2021).

China boasts one of the highest numbers of UNESCO World Heritage Sites globally. Recently, the Chinese government has been grappling with the dual challenge of protecting tangible cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering social and cultural activities to drive economic transition and enhance the cultural quality of life for its citizens. Shanxi Province stands out with its abundant cultural resources, particularly its ancient architecture, temples, and historical sites. The region is renowned for its wooden architecture, which, in conjunction with colored sculpture art, forms an exceptional fusion celebrated as the "treasure trove of ancient Chinese architectural art" and the "Museum of Colored Sculpture Art." According to Yanli et al (2008), the preservation of ancient buildings in Shanxi, a vital component of China's tangible cultural heritage, presents a complex issue, particularly when considered in the context of cultural tourism. The current state of Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism industry reflects a delicate balance between the need for development and the imperative to protect its tangible heritage. This situation places Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism at a crossroads, where development and preservation must be carefully balanced. Additionally, the insufficient promotion of Shanxi's cultural sites has resulted in a lack of recognition and popularity of its representative scenic spots. Despite the province's wealth of ancient architectural resources, promotional efforts have been unfocused and inflexible, rendering these sites less attractive to the younger, more dynamic consumer demographic. There is a pressing need to enhance the visibility and popularity of key scenic spots and to expand the overall influence of Shanxi's tourist attractions from specific points to a broader regional context. Therefore, akin to the principles of sustainable cultural heritage development, the pursuit of sustainable tourism resource development is crucial. This approach offers a viable solution to the current challenges faced by Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism sector, ensuring that both heritage preservation and tourism development can be effectively harmonized.

This study introduces a robust knowledge framework grounded in the analysis of pertinent theories, aiming to catalyze the development of relevant industries and stimulate social advancement, thereby serving governmental objectives while significantly enhancing the tourism experience for visitors. By synergizing new media with traditional heritage, the research actively contributes to the evolution of Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism sector, fostering cultural influence and promoting inclusivity. The delivery of coherent and effective travel guidance, characterized by artistic and cultural visual elements within new media, is essential for empowering government initiatives aimed at achieving economic growth, urban development, and elevated quality of life for the public. From a professional lens, this framework aspires not only to elevate the ideological awareness of tourists but also to deepen the collective public consciousness regarding the preservation of historical edifices, the valorization of distinguished cultural narratives, and the fostering of intercultural respect. For tourists, the information conveyed through new media, particularly through art and cultural visuals, significantly enriches their understanding of China's historical and cultural tapestry. Additionally, the strategic dissemination of historical narratives via new media enables tourists to directly experience the richness and allure of Chinese culture. This methodology not only streamlines travel information but also enhances the overall travel experience,

effectively addressing tourists' emotional needs for meaningful engagement during their explorations.

Background of Study

Heritage tourism, one of the oldest forms of leisure travel, has recently become a vital resource for the tourism industry (Navarrete, 2019). Also known as cultural tourism, this type of travel emphasizes the exploration and experience of a destination's cultural, historical, and natural heritage. It involves visiting sites, landmarks, and attractions that hold historical, architectural, artistic, or cultural significance, including extraordinary objects and places associated with royalty or elites, which often enhance their appeal. Ahmad (2006) defines 'heritage' as encompassing three intersecting forms: tangible heritage, such as buildings, monuments, and artworks; intangible or living heritage, including folklore, cultural memories, celebrations, and traditions; and natural heritage, comprising culturally infused landscapes and areas of significant biodiversity. The international understanding of 'heritage' is encapsulated in two key UNESCO conventions: the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which safeguards cultural, natural, and mixed heritage, and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which focuses on protecting intangible heritage.

In recent years, global heritage tourism has undergone significant changes driven by economic, social, and technological factors. Travelers are increasingly conscious of their environmental impact and seek eco-friendly destinations and activities. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) reports a strong correlation between cultural heritage and sustainable development (Bak et al., 2019). Heritage tourism, which focuses on historical and cultural heritage aspects, provides substantial economic benefits to regions by attracting visitors who spend on accommodations, dining, shopping, and other local attractions. Traditionally, the impact of heritage tourism has been assessed through ecological, economic, cultural, and political lenses.

The tourism industry faces various challenges that can impact its growth and sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from governments, industry stakeholders, and local communities to ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the tourism sector. According to the World Tourism Organization (2022), to maintain tourism's contribution to sustainable development, the UNWTO has established the Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals (T4SDG) platform. This platform aims to emphasize the importance of tourism in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. T4SDG encourages and facilitates collaboration among various stakeholders in the tourism industry to align their practices with the SDGs, promoting a more sustainable future. Additionally, governments and organizations should implement cultural heritage development plans to strengthen the heritage value of traditional culture. These plans are essential for fostering attachment and a sense of belonging to the heritage and its location (Wei et al., 2022). Through these efforts, heritage tourism can continue to thrive while contributing to sustainable development and preserving cultural heritage for future generations.

Materials and Methods

This study primarily employs qualitative methods to explore the pertinent issues, ensuring a multidisciplinary approach (Edhaya, 2023). The qualitative analysis spans various fields, including but not limited to tourism, heritage, art, and new media, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The primary objective of this research is to examine and propose the use of new media as a sustainable development strategy for Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism. By doing so, the study aims to enhance the digitalization and sustainability of tourism related to Shanxi's ancient architecture. This research synthesizes existing findings from diverse knowledge systems and elucidates the relationship between Shanxi's ancient architecture and new media concepts, offering insights into how new media can be leveraged to promote and preserve this cultural heritage.

Phenomenological research, a qualitative approach, serves as the primary methodological framework in this study for addressing research inquiries. This method prioritizes the accurate depiction and interpretation of the experiences under investigation over generalizing findings to broader contexts (Boss et al.). It operates on several underlying assumptions: Firstly, it acknowledges that the generation of new knowledge is an ongoing and inherently incomplete process. Secondly, it recognizes the researcher as an integral part of the research experience, acknowledging that their values and perspectives influence the investigation. Thirdly, it emphasizes the active participation of both the participants and the researchers in the co-creation and sharing of knowledge. Finally, it underscores the significance of common modes of expression, such as language or artistic representations, in capturing and elucidating lived experiences (Grossoehme, 2014).

Results and Discussions

Scope and Area of Research

Aligned with the research topic, this study endeavors to integrate the artistic attributes of new media into the realm of digital heritage tourism focusing on Shanxi's ancient architecture. Furthermore, in the context of developing digital heritage tourism initiatives in Shanxi, new media is envisioned to serve as a conduit for providing informative travel guidance, thereby addressing practical challenges encountered by the government and stakeholders involved in the preservation and promotion of Shanxi's ancient architectural heritage.

Figure 1: Shanxi Province and divisions
(Source by Author)

Situated in the heart of the Yellow River Basin, Shanxi Province is characterized by the imposing presence of the Taihang Mountains, which serve as a natural boundary to the east, bordering Hebei Province. The province governs 11 prefecture-level cities and 117 county-level administrative units, extending from the western and southern regions bisected by the Yellow River, adjacent to Shaanxi and Henan provinces, to the expansive Great Wall in the north, bordering the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (Shanxi Provincial Government, coordinates: 37°42'N, 112°24'E). Its designation as "Shanxi" stems from its geographical location west of the Taihang Mountains. Historically, during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, Shanxi belonged to the territory of the State of Jin, earning the abbreviation "Jin." Subsequently, during the early Warring States period, the state of Jin was partitioned by the states of Han, Zhao, and Wei, leading to Shanxi's alternate designation as the "Three Jin" region. Covering a total area of 156,700 square kilometers, Shanxi Province boasted a permanent population of approximately 34.6599 million by the end of 2023 (refer to Figure 1)

Table 1
Ancient buildings in Shanxi province

Era	Shanxi	China	Proportion (%)
Tang Dynasty	4	4	100.0
Wu	3	4	75.0
Song	34	47	72.34
Liao	3	8	37.50
Jin	120	138	86.95
Yuan	354	427	82.90
Total	518	628	82.48

(Source by Wang, 2023)

Lv (2017), notes that ancient buildings in Shanxi Province constitute over 75 percent of China's total ancient architectural heritage (refer to Table 1), underscoring the region's rich heritage resources in this domain. Against the backdrop of economic transformation and growth, effectively and judiciously leveraging these resources has remained a perennial challenge for the Shanxi Provincial Government (Wang, 2023). Notably, Shanxi Province boasts 80 ancient buildings predating the Song, Liao, and Jin Dynasties, representing half of such structures nationwide (2017). The distinctive characteristics of wooden structure buildings, including their unparalleled stability, durability, and intricate construction techniques, render them unique among architectural forms (refer to Figure 2), yet also present a dilemma between traditional tourism development and preservation efforts. While the development of cultural and tourism initiatives centered around Shanxi's ancient architecture stands as a crucial strategy for the province's economic revitalization, it also serves to enrich the spiritual lives of its inhabitants. Balancing the imperatives of development and preservation poses a significant conundrum. Despite possessing inherent advantages in this realm compared to other provinces in China, Shanxi's progress in this area has been comparatively limited.
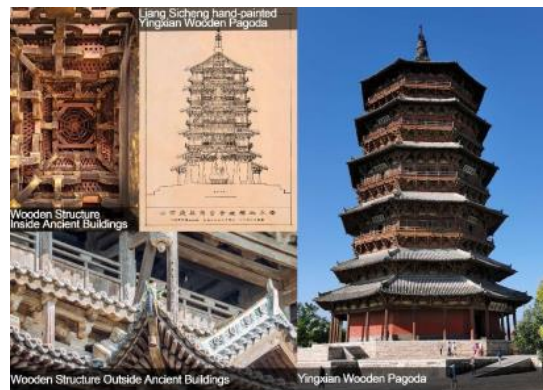
Figure 2: The Wood Structure Details of Shanxi Ancient Architecture
Source by Internet and author

Concept of New Media Evolution

In contemporary times, the concept of "new media," which emerged in the 1960s, has become integral to our understanding of media evolution. This term was first introduced by P. Goldmark, the Director of the Technical Research Institute at Columbia Radio and Television Network (CES) and the inventor of the NTSC television system, in his 1967 proposal for developing electronic video products. Additionally, in 1969, E. Rostow, Chairman of the President's Special Committee on American Communication Policy, utilized the term "new media" in his reports to President Nixon. During this period, "new media" primarily referred to innovative applications within electronic media.

Since the 1980s, with the advancement of computer technology, the concept of "new media" has gained widespread popularity. According to American scholar Lev Manovich in 2001, new media represents the convergence of two distinct historical trajectories: computing and media technology. Both trajectories originated in the 1930s, inspired by Charles Babbage's analytical engine and Louis Daguerre's silver plate photography. The rapid development of computing technology led to the emergence of modern digital computers, which supplanted numerous mechanical tabulators and calculators widely employed by businesses and governments from the late 20th century to the early 21st century. Concurrently, advancements in media technology introduced new material forms for information preservation and dissemination. This historical convergence of computing and media technologies has transformed all existing media into digital data accessible via computers, culminating in the concept of new media.

From a historical perspective, the concept of new media has undergone a continual process of technological evolution, continually reshaping its definition in response to technological advancements. McLuhan (1964) famously argued that the emergence of new media stems from the limitations of traditional media in meeting evolving societal needs (Logan, 2010). As such, "new media" remains a relative term, evolving in contrast to traditional media forms. Throughout the trajectory of digital technology development, media such as paper, television, and radio have each been considered "new media" during their respective epochs (Huang, 2015). Given this dynamic evolution, it becomes impractical to encapsulate all forms of new media across different historical stages with a single, precise definition. Importantly, this definition extends beyond media linked solely to the Internet, acknowledging the inclusion of emerging media forms and interactive devices within the realm of new media. Notably, new

media interactive installation art serves as a compelling example of the fusion of art and technology, exemplifying the evolving synergy between these domains (Wei, 2022). Looking ahead, the development of new media is poised to continue evolving in tandem with societal advancements, further blurring the boundaries between art, technology, and communication.

In the imminent era, the convergence of cutting-edge technologies like 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and man-machine integration is anticipated to usher in a paradigm shift in the realm of new media. These technological advancements promise to elevate the intelligence quotient of new media, heralding a new era characterized by the seamless integration of human elements into digital interfaces, while also infusing information with a more humanized touch. This transformative evolution is expected to introduce a novel dimension of "intelligence" within the realm of new media, where digital platforms and communication channels become increasingly adept at understanding and responding to human behavior and preferences. Peng's (2016) conceptualization of new media as encompassing interactive and integrated forms and platforms, underpinned by digital and network technologies, provides a foundational framework for understanding the evolving landscape of new media. Presently, new media predominantly includes network-based communication channels, mobile platforms, and the fusion of these technologies into the mobile Internet, along with a myriad of other interactive digital media forms. As these technologies continue to mature and intertwine, new opportunities for innovation and exploration within the realm of new media are poised to emerge. From immersive virtual experiences to AI-driven personalized content delivery, the future of new media holds the promise of revolutionizing how we interact, communicate, and engage with digital information.

The Relationship between Shanxi Ancient Architecture Tourism and New Media
Over the past few decades, the tourism industry has undergone a significant transformation, largely driven by advancements in technology. Rueda-Esteban (2019), emphasizes the pivotal role of technology in this evolution, highlighting how it provides a wide array of tools aimed at enhancing visitor experiences and making attractions more accessible and comprehensible. These tools range from interactive maps and audio guides to augmented reality applications, all of which contribute to enriching the overall visitor experience. Moreover, technology enables attractions to be interpreted in a more flexible and personalized manner, catering to the diverse interests and preferences of visitors. For example, visitors can now customize their tours based on their interests, languages, and accessibility needs, thanks to digital platforms and applications. Kontogianni and Alepis (2020), further emphasize the profound impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on the growth of the tourism industry. With the rapid advancement of ICT, the contemporary world is experiencing significant transformations in media and communication. New media platforms, such as social media, mobile apps, and virtual reality experiences, are gaining popularity among modern society.

In the realm of cultural tourism, new media serves as a powerful tool for engaging visitors and enhancing their experiences. Visitors increasingly prefer to use new media as a source of information because it offers innovative ways to interact with cultural and historical sites. For example, virtual reality tours allow visitors to explore ancient ruins or historical landmarks from the comfort of their homes, while interactive mobile apps provide immersive storytelling

experiences. This trend towards the adoption of new media in cultural tourism has democratized access to heritage sites, making them more accessible and interactive for a global audience. By leveraging new media technologies, cultural tourism stakeholders can bridge geographical barriers, attract a wider audience, and offer immersive experiences that foster a deeper appreciation for our cultural heritage.

Indeed, the utilization of new media has become pivotal in promoting and increasing visits to cultural and heritage sites, transcending traditional concepts and applications (Huang, 2015). This paradigm shift has ushered in new opportunities for the exploration and appreciation of diverse cultural heritages and arts, underpinned by the rapid advancement of network digital technology. The integration of new media technologies has brought about profound changes in the transmission of information in modern society, blurring the boundaries between different domains and facilitating continuous innovation and evolution. Pei Jin and Yi Liu (2022), highlight how the modernization of visual media technology has revolutionized visual concepts, transforming the visual experience from a traditional acceptance of images to immersion in a new spectacle world. Moreover, the synergistic combination of cultural heritage and virtual reality has emerged as a major trend, offering solutions to the challenges associated with heritage preservation while simultaneously providing unparalleled opportunities for the dissemination and promotion of cultural heritage. Through immersive experiences enabled by virtual reality, visitors can engage with cultural heritage in unprecedented ways, fostering deeper connections and understanding. The convergence of new media technologies with cultural heritage presents a transformative landscape ripe with possibilities for exploration, preservation, and promotion. As we continue to harness the potential of these technologies, we stand to unlock new dimensions of cultural appreciation and engagement, enriching our collective heritage for generations to come.

Lasswell (1948), a seminal figure in communication studies, posited that "Any (social) process can be examined from the dual frameworks of function and structure" (Rogers, 1994). This assertion underscores the importance of considering both the functional and structural aspects when analyzing social phenomena. In the context of new media research, it is imperative to recognize the profound impact of structural changes in communication modes brought about by new media technologies. While enhancing media functions represents technological progress, it is the structural transformation of information communication modes that truly reflects and embodies the direction of media development. The emergence of new media has ushered in unprecedented opportunities for the advancement of digital creative industries within China's cultural sector, marking a transition from policy-driven to market-driven developmental stages. This structural shift has opened new avenues for the cultural heritage digital creative industry to participate in industrial development and competition through diverse channels and cost-effective means. By leveraging the affordances of new media technologies, cultural heritage preservation efforts can be revitalized, and innovative forms of cultural expression can be cultivated, thereby enriching the cultural landscape, and driving economic growth.

China is renowned for its extensive collection of UNESCO World Heritage sites, yet the government grapples with the dual challenge of conserving tangible cultural heritage while fostering economic growth and enriching cultural experiences. In Shanxi province, ancient buildings stand as emblematic symbols of China's cultural legacy, but their preservation is

fraught with difficulties amid efforts to promote cultural tourism (Yanli et al., 2008). New media emerges as a promising avenue to address these challenges by offering authentic simulations of cultural relics, particularly those at risk of disappearing or imbued with ideological significance. Despite the potential of new media, its application in Chinese cultural tourism, particularly within Shanxi's ancient buildings, remains in its nascent stages. Jianming (2022) critiques this underdeveloped approach, highlighting its limited impact on visitor experiences characterized by superficial engagement, outdated content, and a lack of innovation. Consequently, the current utilization of new media fails to fully capture the rich cultural essence and genetic heritage intrinsic to cultural tourism experiences. To address these shortcomings and fully leverage the potential of new media, further research and development efforts are warranted. Future endeavors should focus on enhancing the authenticity, interactivity, and depth of new media interventions in cultural tourism. This may involve the integration of immersive technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, to provide visitors with engaging and immersive experiences that foster a deeper appreciation for Shanxi's ancient architectural heritage. Additionally, a more nuanced understanding of visitor preferences and behaviors, coupled with innovative storytelling techniques, can help tailor new media experiences to meet the diverse needs and interests of tourists, ultimately enriching their cultural tourism experiences in Shanxi.

Tourism stakeholders are increasingly recognizing that the objective of designing tourism products and services extends beyond merely attracting visitors; it also entails enhancing their overall experience. In recent years, there has been a surge in literature exploring social media as a phenomenon. Through extensive social communication, media culture has exerted a profound and multifaceted influence on various facets of society, including politics, economy, culture, and daily life (McFadden, 2016). Moreover, it plays a significant role in shaping the values and lifestyles of social groups, while also contributing to the construction and dissemination of national cultural images.

Conclusion
Despite the wealth of ancient architectural tourism resources in Shanxi, it is evident that these resources have not been fully utilized to their potential. While they have laid a solid foundation for the culture and tourism market and have offered numerous cultural products and services, consumer feedback has been less than satisfactory. Consequently, the Shanxi provincial government continues to prioritize the development of cultural heritage tourism as a key strategy for economic transformation and reform. The underutilization of tourism resources in Shanxi's ancient buildings has contributed to a perception of "excess" digital cultural products in the cultural and tourism market. This phenomenon stems from the insufficient supply of high-quality cultural products and services that resonate with market demand. As a result, many cultural products and services fail to meet the needs of consumers, resulting in a wastage of resources in the process of digitalizing the cultural industry.

Indeed, digital tourism of ancient buildings in Shanxi appears to be either undeveloped or in its initial stages of exploration. Consequently, researchers are actively delving into related fields to understand and address this gap. Many scholars are striving to integrate the interactive characteristics of media into the experience of ancient architecture. Qi (2022), contends that interactive image media will emerge as a significant communication force in spatial narration, fostering the evolution of communication forms and innovating digital

narrative techniques. This integration will enhance public participation and enable individuals to experience the allure of traditional Chinese culture embodied in the art of "ancient garden architecture." Moreover, the shift in people's digital lifestyles has sparked a demand for digital cultural tourism. Therefore, Shanxi must prioritize the promotion of a modern digital cultural heritage tourism industry to meet these evolving demands and capitalize on its rich cultural heritage resources.
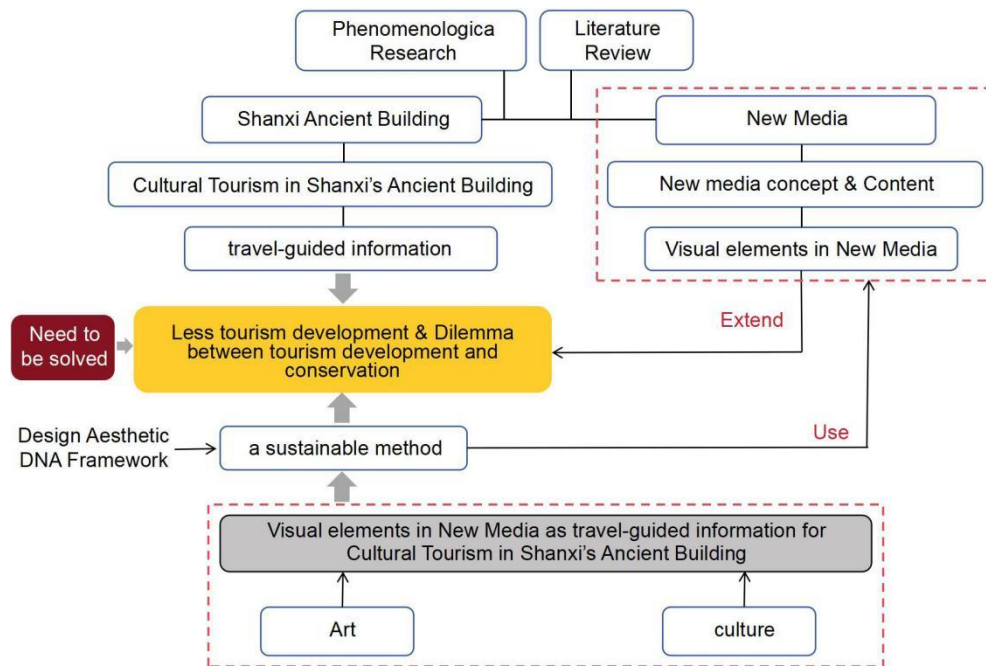

Figure 03: The framework structure for problems and solutions
Source by Internet and author

As illustrated in Figure 03, this study adopts a phenomenological research approach rooted in qualitative methodologies, complemented by insights gleaned from existing literature. The overarching goal is to construct a comprehensive knowledge system that delineates the challenges facing Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism. Concurrently, the study aims to devise sustainable methodologies grounded in pivotal visual elements inherent in new media platforms, as well as in the interconnected artistic and cultural narratives embedded within ancient architectural sites. By capitalizing on the dynamic evolution of new media concepts, the study endeavors to address and mitigate the challenges encountered in the development of Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism. The envisaged solutions leverage the inherent strengths of new media, such as immersive experiences, interactivity, and accessibility, to both compensate for existing deficiencies and propel the growth of the tourism sector. At the core of these proposed methodologies lies the utilization of visual elements to effectively communicate the artistic and cultural nuances encapsulated within Shanxi's ancient architectural heritage. This departure from conventional guided tour information in physical tourism settings aims to foster deeper connections between visitors and the rich cultural tapestry woven into the architectural landscape of Shanxi.

Visual elements indeed occupy a central position in new media interventions within material heritage tourism, serving as the cornerstone of the visitor experience. As the first point of contact, these elements shape tourists' initial impressions, setting the tone for their entire

interaction with the heritage site. Yet, their significance extends far beyond aesthetics. Visual elements serve as potent conduits of information, offering visitors a multifaceted exploration of the heritage site. They provide a comprehensive overview of the scenic area, offering insights into its historical significance and cultural context. Moreover, visual elements offer glimpses into the wisdom and cultural practices of ancient peoples, encapsulated within the architectural relics themselves. Through visual elements, visitors can gain a deeper appreciation of the artistic forms and craftsmanship embedded within ancient architecture. Whether it's the intricate carvings adorning a temple facade or the harmonious proportions of a grand palace, visual elements offer a window into the artistic sensibilities of bygone eras. Overall, visual elements in new media interventions not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of material heritage tourism but also serve as invaluable tools for education, interpretation, and cultural appreciation. They invite visitors to embark on a journey of discovery, unlocking the rich tapestry of history, culture, and artistry woven into each heritage site.

Furthermore, the content conveyed through visual elements directly influences the overall tourist experience. Engaging and dynamic new media forms, coupled with thought-provoking visual elements, have the potential to effectively showcase the ancient architectural art and cultural heritage of Shanxi. By serving as powerful ambassadors, these visual elements act as potent promoters of Shanxi's ancient architectural tourism, elevating its status as a premier destination for cultural enthusiasts and heritage seekers alike. Ultimately, the strategic integration of compelling visual elements into new media interventions holds the key to unlocking the full potential of Shanxi's ancient architectural cultural tourism industry.

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