

Research on the Spatial Reproduction of Guangdong Revolutionary Sites and the Construction of Youth Identity Empowered by Digital Media

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Abstract: In the context of a deeply digitized media environment, the communication logic of revolutionary sites is shifting from “venue exhibition” to a composite model of “platform connection—scene expansion—interactive participation”. Guangdong, with its comprehensive revolutionary site resource system, mature urban media conditions, and large youth population, provides a typical sample for observing how digital media reshapes the communication of Red culture. Based on spatial production theory, the spatialization of media research, and the perspective of youth cultural communication, this paper analyzes the specific mechanisms through which digital media promotes the spatial reproduction of revolutionary sites and the construction of youth identity. This analysis is combined with public cases such as the Guangdong Red Map, Online Red Exhibition Hall, the WeChat mini-program “Check-in Guangdong Red”, the AR metaverse project of the Memorial of the Site of the Third National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Shaoguan Long March Digital Experience Base, the immersive stage play themed on the Whampoa Military Academy, and the “Heroic Flowers Blooming in a Heroic City” campaign. The study concludes that digital media is not merely adding a technological shell to physical sites; rather, through digital mapping, scene reconstruction, interactive participation, and community diffusion, it transforms the way Red culture enters the life world of youth, turning revolutionary sites from mere “destinations” into “public cultural interfaces accessible at any time.” However, concurrently, there are issues such as technological showboating overshadowing historical interpretation, unbalanced regional platform construction, and data evaluations overly biased toward traffic metrics while neglecting deep-seated identity. The digital communication of Guangdong revolutionary sites should adhere to a content-based approach, youth co-creation, cross-platform synergy, and ethical governance, enhancing ideological depth, historical richness, and value-guiding power while increasing visibility.

Keywords: Digital Media; Guangdong Revolutionary Sites; Spatial Reproduction; Youth Identity; Red Culture Communication

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1. Introduction

With the widespread penetration of the mobile Internet, short videos, virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and social platforms, the production methods of cultural memory are undergoing significant changes. Traditional memorial hall communication relies more on physical visits and on-site explanations, whereas digital media enables historical spaces to

break through geographical boundaries and transform into explorable, interactive, shareable, and recreatable network cultural resources. For revolutionary sites, this means that their communication method is shifting from “static preservation” to “dynamic connection,” extending from unitary venue education to an online-offline integrated public cultural action.

Guangdong possesses typical conditions for examining this transformation. First, it has a large stock and multiple types of revolutionary sites. Following the announcement of the second batch of revolutionary cultural relics in 2023, there are 1,530 immovable and 4,952 pieces/sets of movable revolutionary cultural relics listed in the Guangdong Provincial List of Revolutionary Cultural Relics ^[2-3]. Second, it has a solid foundation in digital communication. During the advancement of culturally strong province construction, Guangdong launched the “Guangdong Red Map” and the “Online Red Exhibition Hall,” with the “Check-in Guangdong Red” WeChat mini-program generating over 1.3 billion clicks ^[1]. Third, Guangdong features high urbanization and youth agglomeration. Youth groups in cities like Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, and Zhuhai exhibit high sensitivity to mobile media, social platforms, and immersive cultural consumption. This makes the digital communication of Red culture not merely an issue of technological upgrade, but a matter of youth identity construction.

Existing studies have yielded considerable results regarding the revitalization, digital protection, immersive experiences, and rural utilization of revolutionary cultural relics ^[8-12]. However, two shortcomings remain: first, there is insufficient analysis of how digital media alters the “spatial attributes” of revolutionary sites—technology is often viewed merely as an exhibition tool without fully revealing its role in spatial reproduction and the reorganization of social relations; second, discussions on youth identity often remain at the level of effectiveness judgment, rarely revealing how digital media influences youths’ perception pathways of Red culture through interactive mechanisms, emotional narratives, and social diffusion. Based on this, this paper intends to answer two questions: How does digital media promote the spatial reproduction of Guangdong revolutionary sites? And how does this process influence the historical cognition and value identity of youth groups?

2. Theoretical Basis and Analytical Model

2.1 Spatial Reproduction: From Physical Presence to Platformized Existence

Henri Lefebvre argued that space is jointly constituted by spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces ^[4]. This theory implies that a revolutionary site is not just a physical location, but also encompasses institutional planning, media narratives, public experiences, and everyday use. The intervention of digital media transforms revolutionary sites from “places requiring physical presence” into “platformized spaces that can be continuously visited, forwarded, and re-narrated.” Edward Soja’s concept of “Thirdspace” suggests that real locations and imagined spaces are not separated from each other ^[5]; when young people watch site stories in short videos, plan Red routes via map products, and appear in the “same frame” as historical figures through AR interfaces, revolutionary sites enter a new spatial form where reality and imagination overlap.

Media geography research points out that the development of media technologies continuously reshapes people’s perception of place, distance, and presence ^[6-7]. For Guangdong revolutionary sites, this reshaping is manifested in at least three ways: first, digital mapping transforms scattered sites into searchable, navigable, and relatable network nodes; second, digital narratives transform historical events from static displays into visual, temporal, and personalized content streams; third, social media ensures that visitation behaviors do not stop at individual experiences but are transformed into public events capable of community diffusion. Consequently, both the communication radius and the impact mechanisms of revolutionary sites have changed significantly.

2.2 The Communication Logic of Youth Identity Construction

Youth identity is not a mechanical acceptance of existing values, but rather gradually formed through media exposure, emotional resonance, peer interaction, and practical experience. Especially in a platform society, youths’ acceptance of public cultural content often follows a pathway of “initial interest triggering, subsequent participative experience, and final value precipitation.” Therefore, for revolutionary sites to enter the youth’s field of vision, they cannot merely offer one-way preaching; they need to establish connections in terms of narrative style, visual expression, and interactive mechanisms.

From the perspective of visual rhetoric, digital scenes do not eliminate rhetoric; instead, they embed rhetoric within interface design, camera language, interactive choices, and user-generated content ^[18]. If revolutionary history is to establish an

effective dialogue with the youth, it needs to strike a balance between “solemnity” and “accessibility”: Red culture must not be trivialized or entertained, nor should it remain at a lofty narrative level detached from youths’ life experiences. Based on this, this paper proposes an analytical model of “Digital Mapping—Scene Reconstruction—Interactive Participation—Identity Precipitation”: digital mapping resolves the issue of visibility, scene reconstruction enhances perceptual intensity, interactive participation drives emotional investment, and identity precipitation relies on educational activities, social diffusion, and institutional transformation.

3. The Practical Landscape of the Digital Transformation of Guangdong Revolutionary Sites

3.1 Platform Construction: From Resource Aggregation to Entrance Recreation

Guangdong formed a platformized layout for the digital communication of Red culture relatively early. According to releases regarding Guangdong’s advancement of culturally strong province construction in 2022, the province launched the “Guangdong Red Map” and the “Online Red Exhibition Hall,” with the “Check-in Guangdong Red” WeChat mini-program surpassing 1.3 billion clicks ^[1]. The significance of these platforms lies not in the simple aggregation of information, but in providing a unified entrance for scattered revolutionary sites, enabling the public—especially the youth—to enter Red cultural spaces through searching, navigating, checking in, and sharing. Post-platformization, revolutionary sites are no longer merely geographical coordinates, but continuous digital nodes. This entrance recreation significantly lowers the threshold for youth to access Red culture and provides the infrastructure for subsequent route design, study tour organization, urban roaming, and short video dissemination.

3.2 Memorial of the Site of the Third National Congress of the CPC: Superposition of Digital Exhibition and Metaverse Projects

Following its expansion and renovation, the Memorial of the Site of the Third National Congress of the CPC significantly enhanced its communication capacity through richer cultural relic displays and more advanced digital exhibition methods. Public reports indicate that within a year of its reopening, the venue welcomed approximately 300,000 visitors, hosting a total of 331 online and offline activities ^[13]. Subsequently, the venue launched a series of micro-videos, thematic exhibitions, and debuted AR metaverse experience projects such as Time Travel 1923: I Have a Date with the Third National Congress ^[14]. This case demonstrates that the digitalization of revolutionary sites does not mean replacing offline experiences with online ones; rather, it uses AR, short videos, and interactive exhibits to extend historical events across different media interfaces. For youth audiences, this “multi-entrance” structure helps transform a one-time visit into sustained attention.

3.3 Shaoguan Long March Digital Experience Base: Digital Supplementation of County-Level Red Spaces

Compared to central cities, county-level and rural revolutionary sites are often disadvantaged in terms of transportation, exhibition capabilities, and brand communication. The construction of the Shaoguan Long March Digital Experience Base offers an alternative approach. Public reports show that while restoring the original old granary and preserving its historical architectural style, the project plans to build a digital live-streaming base, innovatively develop digital avatar IPs, and form a Red culture cluster with the Red Army Long March Guangdong North Memorial Hall ^[15]. This implies that digital media serves not only “exhibition” purposes but also directly participates in local spatial industrial linkage and cultural renewal. It grants previously limited-reach county-level sites visibility to a broader public and provides youth groups with a composite experience route of “Red + Green + Ancient Village.” Thus, digitalization in Guangdong is not restricted to core venues in major cities but is becoming a crucial means for grassroots revolutionary sites to achieve communication breakthroughs.

3.4 Immersive Performance Themed on the Whampoa Military Academy: Reorganization of Peripheral Site Spaces

The immersive stage play Whampoa! Whampoa! and the themed cultural tourism block formed around the Whampoa Military Academy site represent a typical case of spatial reproduction driven by digital media. Reports indicate that the play utilizes holographic projection, virtual interaction, landscape restoration, virtual reality, and multimedia sound and light technologies to recreate the century-long turbulent history and martyr stories of the Whampoa Military Academy ^[16]. What is

most noteworthy here is that digital media is not confined within the exhibition hall; it extends the Red narrative into theaters, blocks, commercial spaces, and nighttime consumption scenes. Youth audiences might not enter these spaces with the motivation of “receiving education,” but during their viewing and strolling, they still encounter the Whampoa spirit through theatrical narratives, spatial symbols, and emotional atmospheres. In other words, digital technology grants revolutionary sites cross-scene communication capabilities, integrating Red culture into the youths’ daily cultural consumption chain.

3.5 “Heroic Flowers Blooming in a Heroic City”: Mobile Exhibition Halls and City-Level Brand Communication

Guangzhou’s “Heroic Flowers Blooming in a Heroic City” campaign showcases an even larger-scale spatial reproduction method. According to 2025 reports, since its launch in 2023, the campaign has held over 20,000 thematic activities over two years, with 150 million online and offline participants; through diverse means such as ten boutique routes, thirty core venues, mobile exhibition halls, digital art exhibitions, AR metaverse projects, and AIGC videos, it has formed a Red culture communication network covering the entire city^[17]. This demonstrates that the role of digital media is not merely to “make a single venue look better,” but to connect multiple revolutionary venues, public squares, parks, and mobile spaces into a city-level memory system. In such a system, youth identity is no longer triggered solely by a single visit, but gradually precipitated through continuous participation in urban festivals, social dissemination, route experiences, and public activities.

4. Mechanisms of Digital Media Promoting Spatial Reproduction and Youth Identity Construction

4.1 Digital Mapping: Transforming Revolutionary Sites from “Distant Locations” to “Close Entrances”

In the traditional communication logic, revolutionary sites often required school organizations, corporate activities, or dedicated trips to enter the public agenda; digital maps, mini-programs, and cloud exhibition halls have changed this. Youths can check site locations, historical introductions, opening information, and thematic routes via their smartphones, thereby transforming originally distant and scattered Red resources into readily accessible cultural entrances. Digital mapping primarily solves the “visibility” issue, but its deeper transformation lies in reconfiguring the youths’ sense of distance from historical spaces: revolutionary sites are no longer special spaces outside daily life, but are integrated into daily information flows.

4.2 Scene Reconstruction: Granting Historical Narratives Perceptual Intensity

Having an entrance alone is not enough to form identity; abstract history must be transformed into perceivable contexts. AR, VR, immersive projection, stage plays, and digital art exhibitions are all crucial methods of scene reconstruction. By employing sound, light, imagery, and interaction, they reconstruct the temporal sense, interpersonal relationships, and emotional atmospheres of historical events, helping youths cross knowledge barriers and enter historical scenes. It is worth emphasizing that scene reconstruction should not equate to technological piling. Only when digital technologies serve core historical facts and character narratives can they genuinely enhance youth understanding rather than creating transient novelty. In other words, digital scenes still need to follow the semantic organization principles of visual rhetoric, presenting value information clearly and hierarchically through lenses, interfaces, colors, and spatial rhythms^[18].

4.3 Interactive Participation: Transforming Youths from Viewers to Co-Producers

The key to the formation of youth identity lies in whether they can transition from “receiving information” to “participating in production.” Through mechanisms such as “Check-in Guangdong Red,” short video sharing, city route challenges, volunteer guiding, theater viewing feedback, and study tour check-ins, youths are no longer passive audiences; they bring Red cultural content into their own social networks via filming, commenting, forwarding, and recreating. At this point, the subjects of meaning production for revolutionary sites have expanded: official institutions provide the content framework, while youth users complete the secondary communication through user-generated content, community diffusion, and peer interaction. As long as this participation maintains historical boundaries and core values, it can significantly enhance the sustainable communication power of Red culture among youth groups.

4.4 Identity Precipitation: From Instantaneous Traffic to Long-Term Value

Digital media easily brings traffic peaks, but youth identity does not automatically form as click-through rates grow. True

identity precipitation requires the integration of digital communication with offline education, course practice, urban public cultural activities, and community experiences. On the one hand, school study tours, city brand activities, and memorial day ceremonies can transform the interest youths acquire on platforms into more stable public memory; on the other hand, if revolutionary sites can establish a dialogue with youth concerns such as urban development, career ideals, national responsibility, and technological innovation, the transition from “knowing” to “believing” is more easily achieved. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of digital communication should not merely rely on click-through rates, page views, and check-in numbers, but must focus on the depth of participation, revisit rates, curricular integration, and the stability of value expression.

5. Practical Dilemmas and Risk Reflection

5.1 Technological Showboating May Overshadow Historical Interpretation

In the wave of digitalization, some revolutionary sites exhibit a tendency to treat technology as the goal itself, easily leading to the problem of “many screens, shallow content.” Particularly when AR, VR, and holographic projections are viewed as core selling points to attract traffic, historical complexity may be compressed into a few fragmented plotlines and visual spectacles. The digitalization of revolutionary sites should serve factual interpretation, character molding, and problem consciousness, rather than substituting historical understanding with dazzling effects.

5.2 Unbalanced Regional Platform Construction and Content Supply

Landmark venues in Guangdong’s central cities hold obvious advantages in funding, technical teams, and media resources. Conversely, even if some grassroots sites complete basic digitalization, they often lack the capacity for continuous updates and high-quality content supply. The result is a Matthew effect at the platform level, where “the strong get stronger”; youths are more likely to focus on a few star venues, leaving many small sites in a state of being “unseen, poorly told, and unspread.” This not only affects the balanced presentation of Guangdong’s overall Red resource landscape but is also detrimental to the preservation and communication of grassroots historical memory.

5.3 Overemphasis on Traffic Evaluation with Insufficient Measurement of Deep Identity

Currently, effectiveness evaluations of many digital communication projects rely primarily on metrics such as click-through rates, page views, user numbers, and activity sessions. While these data points are important, they only indicate “how many people were reached” and cannot adequately explain “what has changed.” Especially considering that the formation of youth identity is long-term and situational, it cannot be judged simply by a single view or check-in. Therefore, the digital communication of revolutionary sites requires the establishment of a more nuanced evaluation system, incorporating composite indicators such as participation duration, secondary forwarding rates, course integration degree, volunteer service conversion rates, and youth value expressions.

6. Optimization Paths: High-Quality Digital Communication Oriented towards Youth Identity

6.1 Adhering to a Content-Based Approach and Constructing Problem-Oriented Digital Narratives

Digitalization must first answer “what to tell” rather than “what technology to use to tell it.” The digital content of revolutionary sites should revolve around key historical events, typical character destinies, and major value choices, establishing connections with contemporary youth issues. For example, embedding questions like “why choose revolution,” “what is sacrifice,” “what is generational responsibility,” and “how to understand the reform spirit” into exhibits and short video narratives turns history from merely an object of knowledge into a trigger for value reflection.

6.2 Strengthening Youth Co-creation and Forming a Segmented Expression System

Youths are not passive targets of Red culture communication but should become important co-creators. Initiatives such as youth docent programs, Red short video creation camps, urban roaming design challenges, digital cultural creation solicitations, and campus cooperation projects can be established to deepen their understanding through creation. Simultaneously, differentiated language styles and participation methods should be designed for specific groups such as high school students, college students, youth tourists, and youths from Hong Kong and Macau, thereby enhancing the precision

and effectiveness of communication.

6.3 Promoting Regional Synergy and Building a Provincial Red Digital Network

Building upon existing platforms, Guangdong should further integrate the revolutionary site resources at the provincial, municipal, and county levels to establish a unified standard data foundation and content-sharing mechanism. Core venues can assume content sourcing and technical support functions, driving grassroots sites to achieve digital map integration, cloud exhibition hall infrastructure, route linkage, and course sharing. Through thematic routes, mobile exhibitions, co-built databases, and cross-regional study activities, scattered sites can be connected into a perceivable, navigable, and learnable provincial Red digital network.

6.4 Improving Evaluation and Ethical Governance to Guard Historical Boundaries

The more digital communication relies on algorithmic recommendations and platform diffusion, the more it necessitates explicit historical boundaries and ethical rules. Regarding the depiction of revolutionary figures, the restoration of historical scenes, and AI-generated content, necessary review and annotation mechanisms should be established to prevent misinterpretation, parody, or excessive entertainment. Simultaneously, traffic metrics should be combined with educational effectiveness, social feedback, and youth participation quality, forging a three-in-one evaluation framework of “communication effectiveness—educational value—ethical norms.”

7. Conclusion

Digital media has provided unprecedented expansion capabilities for the communication of Guangdong revolutionary sites and reshaped the ways Red culture enters the life world of youths. From the “Guangdong Red Map” and “Online Red Exhibition Hall” to AR metaverse projects, immersive performances, mobile exhibition halls, and city-level brand activities, Guangdong revolutionary sites are transforming from relatively closed memorial spaces into cross-platform, cross-scene, and cross-community public cultural interfaces. Their core significance is not just that “more people are looking,” but that revolutionary history has been reorganized into a space where youths can search, experience, share, discuss, and continuously participate.

However, digitalization does not naturally equate to high-quality communication. Only by adhering to a content-based approach, highlighting historical depth, emphasizing youth co-creation, promoting regional synergy, and strengthening ethical governance can the spatial reproduction of revolutionary sites empowered by digital media truly translate into the solid construction of youth identity. For Guangdong, this pertains not only to the contemporary expression of Red culture but also to how to sustainably shape an urban cultural spirit characterized by a sense of history, publicness, and a future-oriented outlook in the digital age.

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