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Practical Issues and Targeted Measures in Building a Modern Digital Creative Industrial System

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Abstract
Building a modern digital creative industrial system is a crucial strategy for driving high-quality economic development and shaping new cultural advantages. However, its construction in China currently faces numerous practical constraints: independent innovation capacity in core technologies remains insufficient, with key software and equipment relying on imports; weak synergy exists across industrial chain segments, and the "content-technology-platform-consumption" closed loop is not fully established; there is a scarcity of high-quality original IP, and the conversion efficiency of cultural resources is low; a shortage of interdisciplinary talent adapted to new business models exists; and the market-oriented mechanisms for data factors alongside the intellectual property protection system are inadequate. To address these issues, targeted measures are necessary: first, strengthen technological R&D and integrated application to break through key common technology bottlenecks; second, build a collaborative government-industry-university-research-application ecosystem to optimize industrial chain division of labor and value distribution; third, deepen the cultural digitalization strategy, revitalize cultural heritage, and encourage original IP development; fourth, innovate talent cultivation and introduction mechanisms to bridge the industry talent gap; and fifth, improve the data property rights system and digital regulatory environment to ensure healthy and orderly industry development. Through these measures, the digital creative industry can be effectively propelled towards high-end and international advancement, providing solid support for developing new quality productive forces and strengthening cultural confidence.

Keywords
Digital Creativity; Modern Industrial System; Practical Issues; Targeted Measures

Amid profound shifts in the global economic landscape and the concurrent advancement of technological revolution and industrial transformation, building a modern industrial system driven by innovation and supported by the real economy has become an essential requirement for advancing China's high-quality economic development. The 2025 Government Work Report listed "developing new quality productive forces based on local conditions and accelerating the construction of a modern industrial system" as an annual priority task, reflecting the high-level national emphasis on advancing industrial foundations and modernizing industrial chains. This system emphasizes scientific and technological innovation as the core engine, promotes the deep integration of digital technology and cultural creativity, and facilitates the expansion of emerging industries, the planning of future industries, and the upgrading of traditional sectors. It aims to comprehensively enhance total factor productivity and solidify the industrial foundation for Chinese modernization.

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In this process, the digital creative industry is not only a key component of the modern industrial system but also a crucial vehicle for cultivating new quality productive forces and enhancing cultural soft power. However, it is also necessary to soberly recognize that the industry still faces numerous challenges. Particularly in the area of high-end talent, as a core force driving intelligence and digitalization into deeper waters, interdisciplinary AI talent with cross-disciplinary knowledge structures and innovative capabilities is increasingly becoming a key factor reshaping the production, dissemination, and consumption models of digital content. Although China has already cultivated a relatively large reserve of high-end talent in fields such as artificial intelligence, becoming a significant global source of talent, there remains room for improvement in the aggregation of top-tier experts, structural optimization, and industry-talent collaboration. Further strengthening institutional innovation and ecosystem development is imperative.

1. Practical Challenges in Building China's Modern Digital Creative Industrial System

Currently, China's digital creative industry innovation system still faces several shortcomings that need to be urgently addressed. As the core engine for constructing a modern industrial system, the industrial innovation system relies on technological breakthroughs and factor reconfiguration to provide systematic support for industrial upgrading. It not only significantly enhances total factor productivity but also, by facilitating the efficient flow of innovative elements, promotes the transition of the industrial structure toward the higher end of the value chain. This ultimately leads to profound transformations in quality, efficiency, and driving forces.

With the deepening implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy, China's digital creative industry innovation system is continuously improving, undergoing a historic transition from quantitative accumulation to qualitative enhancement. On one hand, technological innovation capabilities have been consistently strengthening. By the end of 2023, the number of valid invention patents in China had reached 4.991 million, with the number of valid invention patents domestically (excluding Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) exceeding 4.015 million, making China the first country in the world to surpass this milestone. On the other hand, innovation quality has steadily improved, as evidenced by the increase in granted invention patent applications—a more substantive indicator of innovation value—from 207,700 in 2013 to 921,000 in 2023, reflecting structural optimization in innovation outcomes.

However, it must be clearly recognized that although China has achieved significant leaps in both the quantity and quality of innovation within the digital creative field, viewed holistically, the industrial innovation system still faces practical challenges such as weak basic research, inefficient mechanisms, and insufficient R&D investment intensity by enterprises. These issues require targeted measures and focused breakthroughs in future work.

First, basic research and frontier innovation capabilities remain weak.Currently, while China's digital creative industry has achieved remarkable success in market scale and business model application, its innovation system—particularly in basic research and frontier innovation capabilities—still exhibits significant shortcomings, constituting a core constraint on the industry's transition to a high-quality development stage. This weakness is primarily reflected in insufficient supply of foundational innovation, high dependency on key

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technologies, and an immature original theoretical system, urgently calling for heightened attention and systematic policy intervention.

Firstly, from the perspective of R&D investment structure,industrial innovation activities are predominantly concentrated on short-term application development and model iteration, with a severe lack of investment in long-term, high-risk research areas such as underlying technologies, core algorithms, and foundational software toolchains. Data from the first half of 2024 indicates that the proportion of R&D expenditure allocated to basic and applied research by large-scale digital creative enterprises in China is estimated to be less than 15%, significantly lower than the average of over 30% in comparable industries in developed countries. The vast majority of investment flows into product development and market promotion.

Secondly, the degree of self-sufficiency in key core technologies remains low.In core engine areas of digital creativity, such as high-end rendering engines, physical simulation systems, next-generation graphics interfaces, innovative human-computer interaction paradigms, and the underlying models and algorithms for generative AI, dependence on external technology remains significant. The latest Global Digital Creative Technology Patent Analysis Report (2024) points out that Chinese enterprises still face an order-of-magnitude gap in core patent holdings in these cutting-edge fields compared to leading developed nations, indicating room for improvement in the substantive value of innovation.

Furthermore, the capacity for leadership in frontier innovation is relatively weak.The industry lags in defining future business models and pioneering disruptive experience paradigms. For instance, in truly "frontier" domains such as key metaverse components (e.g., real-time high-fidelity avatars, large-scale immersive spatial computing) and the application of brain-computer interfaces in creative expression, China is largely in a phase of following and experimenting, rather than acting as a global path-definer or technology rule-setter.

Second, the technology transfer rate remains relatively low. Technology transfer serves as a critical bridge connecting innovation and the market, acting as the core link for transforming technological potential into industrial strength and cultural value into economic value. However, a prominent weakness currently facing China's digital creative industry innovation system is its low technology transfer rate. A significant number of excellent creative concepts, technological patents, and cultural IPs fail to be effectively translated into market-competitive products, services, and business models, severely constraining the overall enhancement of the industry's innovation efficiency. Multiple industry research findings and phenomena in 2024 starkly reveal the severity and complexity of this issue.

The low technology transfer rate is not a failure of a single link but manifests as multiple "blockages" in the between the innovation chain and the industrial chain.

Firstly, a mismatch between supply and demand is the primary problem. Many research outcomes from universities and research institutes (such as advanced graphics algorithms, interaction technologies, or cultural databases) often prioritize technical sophistication and academic value, resulting in a significant gap with the actual application scenarios and user needs on the market end. A survey conducted in the first half of 2024 targeting researchers in the digital creative field indicated that over 60% of respondents considered the "disconnect between research direction and industry needs" as the primary reason hindering the transfer of their results. On the other hand, enterprises, especially small and medium-sized creative companies, urgently need

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"applicable" technological solutions that can be rapidly integrated, are cost-effective, and directly enhance user experience.

Secondly, there is insufficient support from pilot testing, scaling, and industrialization platforms. A vast "valley of death" exists between laboratory achievements and large-scale mass production, requiring specialized intermediate testing, cost control, and market validation. China exhibits a clear shortfall in common technology pilot platforms and proof-of-concept centers serving the digital creative industry. According to estimates from the 2024 China Cultural Industry Technology Transfer Report, over 70% of laboratory outcomes in the digital creative field stall at the paper or prototype stage due to a lack of pilot testing funding and platform support, a rate far exceeding the average in developed countries.

Furthermore, the professionalism of transfer services and the modes of capital support need optimization. Successful technology transfer requires interdisciplinary professionals (technology managers) proficient in technology, intellectual property, and market dynamics to facilitate the process, but such talent is extremely scarce in the digital creative field. Simultaneously, capital tends to favor investing in mature, visible-return application projects, showing limited willingness to invest in the early-stage, high-risk transfer of frontier outcomes. Venture capital data from the first quarter of 2024 shows that within the digital creative technology sector, the share of seed and angel round funding remained below 15%. This capital preference for the "later stages" of innovation objectively exacerbates the difficulties in the initial phases of technology transfer.

Third, enterprises' R&D intensity remains insufficient. R&D intensity (typically measured by the ratio of a company's R&D expenditure to its main business revenue) is a key indicator for gauging industrial innovation vitality and core competitiveness. However, "insufficient R&D intensity by enterprises" has become one of the core weaknesses constraining China's digital creative industry from moving up the global value chain. This phenomenon profoundly reflects the structural dilemma of innovation motivation within the industry, urgently requiring a synergistic solution from both macro-policy and micro-entity levels.

Currently, the R&D investment by Chinese digital creative enterprises is generally at a relatively low level, severely mismatched with the industry's rapid expansion and transformation/upgrading needs.

Firstly, there is a significant gap in overall investment intensity compared to internationally leading levels. According to a special report released in 2024 by the China Center for Information Industry Development, the average R&D intensity of large-scale enterprises in China's digital creative field is estimated to be only about 2.1%.This figure is not only far below the 5%-8% average for comparable enterprises in developed countries but also falls short of the 3% threshold for recognition as a high-tech enterprise within China. This indicates that the growth model of a large number of enterprises still relies on model replication, scale expansion, and market penetration, rather than being driven by technology and intensive, connotative growth.

Secondly, the investment structure is characterized by being "more 'soft' than 'hard'" and "more application-oriented than basic." The majority of limited R&D funds are directed towards "soft innovation" aspects that yield quick returns, such as user experience optimization, business model iteration, and content production. In contrast, investment in "hard tech" fields like underlying engine development, core algorithm breakthroughs, dedicated chip design, and general-purpose development tool platforms is significantly insufficient. An industry survey in the first half of 2024 indicated that among over 300 respondent digital creative enter-

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prises, more than 75% allocated less than 20% of their total R&D budget to basic technology research.

Furthermore, there is severe polarization among enterprises, with SMEs exhibiting particularly weak R&D capabilities. R&D resources are highly concentrated in leading platform companies. The vast majority of small, medium, and micro creative enterprises, constrained by capital and talent, conduct sporadic and unsystematic R&D activities, often remaining in a state of passive following and technology application, making it difficult to form independent innovation capabilities. This Matthew effect, where "the strong get stronger and the weak get weaker," pulls down the industry's average R&D intensity overall and hinders the formation of a collaborative innovation ecosystem.

Currently, China's digital creative industrial system continues to improve, but there remains room for further optimization of the industrial structure. As an important foundation of the modern industrial system, the advancement and rationalization of the industrial structure can significantly enhance the allocation efficiency of resources and factors. This not only promotes the transformation and upgrading of traditional formats but also accelerates the incubation and cultivation of new formats, injecting sustained momentum for comprehensively improving Total Factor Productivity. Especially against the backdrop of the accelerating restructuring of global industrial and value chains, industrial structure adjustment guided by digitalization and intelligence will not only help cultivate new economic growth points but also significantly enhance the resilience and risk resistance of China's industries in international competition, providing dynamic support and a sustainable pathway for building a modern industrial system that is autonomous, controllable, secure, and reliable.

For a period following the 2008 international financial crisis, China experienced signs of "de-industrialization," characterized by a premature and overly rapid decline in the manufacturing sector's share of the economy. Encouragingly, since 2020, positive progress has been made in economic restructuring. The share of value-added of the secondary industry in GDP has stabilized within the range of 38% to 39%, indicating a continuously consolidating foundation of the real economy. However, it must be clearly recognized that China's industrial structure still faces numerous challenges. In particular, obstacles remain in the digital transformation process of traditional industries, the support system for emerging industries needs strengthening, and the core competitiveness in some key areas still lags behind international advanced levels. Moving forward, it is necessary to persistently deepen supply-side structural reforms, promote the deep integration of digital technology and the real economy, and continuously enhance the endogenous drivers and international competitiveness of China's industrial development.

Firstly, the digital-intelligent transformation of the industry faces difficulties.

This challenge is initially reflected in the insufficient depth of technology application. Many enterprises, especially small and medium-sized creative agencies, still understand cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing only at the level of tool-based application. They lack the strategic capability and technical reserves to deeply integrate these technologies into content creation, production processes, and business model restructuring, leading to the widespread phenomenon of "having digitalization, but lacking intelligence."

Secondly, transformation costs and uncertainty pose significant obstacles. Digital-intelligent upgrading requires continuous investment in high software/hardware costs and personnel training expenses, while the

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return on investment is characterized by lag and uncertainty, causing many traditional cultural and creative enterprises to hesitate before transformation. Furthermore, the industry lacks intensive, inclusive common technology platforms, leading to redundant construction, resource waste, and difficulty in achieving scaled transformation effects.

A deeper issue lies in the dual deficiency of talent and data as key production factors. There is a severe shortage of interdisciplinary talent proficient in both digital technology and the creative industries. Simultaneously, issues such as unclear definition of data property rights, lack of standardization, and data silos hinder the smooth flow and value release of data, a core production factor, making it difficult to form a closed loop for the digital-intelligent transformation. Removing these structural and functional obstacles has become an urgent task for promoting industrial upgrading.

Secondly, industrial support is insufficient.The lack of industrial support is first evident in the weak supply of common technologies. Public technology service platforms for the industry, such as high-precision rendering centers, large-scale motion capture facilities, and general-purpose AI training databases, remain scarce. This makes it difficult for the vast number of SMEs to bear the R&D and usage costs of cutting-edge technologies, keeping the innovation threshold high.

Secondly, there is a gap in specialized financial services. Digital creative enterprises mostly operate with light assets, their core value lying in intellectual property and human capital, which conflicts with the prudent principles of traditional credit models that emphasize collateral and cash flow. Although venture capital is active in some areas, the supply of "patient capital" targeting the early and mid-stages of projects, especially those focused on the technology R&D phase, remains severely insufficient, causing many innovative ideas to fail due to broken funding chains.

Finally, the development of high-end talent echelons and adaptive regulations and standards lags. There is an extreme shortage of interdisciplinary strategic talent combining technical foresight, artistic expression, and business acumen. Concurrently, the construction of institutional systems for areas like data property rights definition, digital asset trading, and regulation of new business models is not yet mature, failing to provide clear and secure regulatory safeguards for the industry's rapid innovation and cross-border integration, which to some extent suppresses market vitality. Building a solid, balanced, and appropriately forward-looking industrial support system has become crucial for propelling the digital creative industry towards connotative growth.

Thirdly, structural issues within the industry are gradually emerging.

The primary problem is the unbalanced regional structure. Industrial resources and innovation activities are highly concentrated in a few developed coastal cities and key parks, while the central and western regions and small/medium-sized cities suffer from a weak industrial base and serious brain drain, making it difficult to form effective regional synergy and complementary division of labor. This prevents the potential and resilience of the national unified market from being fully unleashed.

Secondly, internal coordination within the industrial chain is weak. The connections between the content creation end, technology R&D end, platform distribution end, and derivative operation end are inefficient,

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leading to low value transmission efficiency. "Content homogenization" coexists with "technology hollowing-out." Some segments are stuck in low-level repetitive competition, while dominance in high value-added segments like key core technologies, high-end IP incubation, and international brand operation remains insufficient, constraining the improvement of the industry's overall added value.

Furthermore, the allocation of factors within the industrial ecosystem remains suboptimal. Capital is heavily concentrated in business model iteration and traffic competition, while investment in long-term, foundational areas like underlying technology, original IP cultivation, and talent cultivation is still insufficient. Simultaneously, the ecosystem for integrated development of large, medium, and small enterprises is not yet sound. The leading role of major enterprises is limited, and a large number of SMEs and micro-enterprises face development difficulties such as difficulty accessing innovation resources and weak risk resistance.

2. Implementing Targeted Measures to Advance the Construction of China's Modern Digital Creative Industrial System

2.1 Proactively Optimizing the Talent Ecosystem

Talent is the core element driving the high-quality development of the digital creative industry. Currently, China's digital creative field still faces deep-seated issues such as a shortage of high-end original talent, a lack of interdisciplinary professionals combining technical and managerial skills, and regional imbalances in talent structure. There is an urgent need to build an attractive and competitive talent ecosystem through systematic, multi-level policy guidance and market mechanism innovation.

The primary task is to construct a collaborative talent cultivation system deeply integrated with industry and education. Encouraging universities, vocational institutions, leading enterprises, and key laboratories to jointly establish digital creative colleges, industrial innovation centers, and practical training bases will facilitate the timely introduction of the latest industry technologies, projects, and standards into teaching. Promoting the dynamic updating of curriculum systems and certification standards, while strengthening the cultivation of interdisciplinary abilities in artificial intelligence, virtual reality, narrative design, and IP operation, is essential to alleviating the structural mismatch between talent supply and industry demand at its source.

The key lies in implementing precise and flexible policies for attracting and incentivizing high-end talent. In the face of global talent competition, efforts should focus on critical areas such as rendering engine development, generative AI, and immersive storytelling. Establishing databases of top overseas experts and young talents, and employing "one-person, one-policy" approaches to attract international leading figures are crucial. Simultaneously, improving mid-to-long-term incentive mechanisms involving equity, stock options, and profit-sharing from technology transfer, alongside encouraging enterprises to establish roles like "Chief Creative Officer" and "Innovation Studios," will grant talent greater decision-making power over technical pathways and a share in the benefits of their achievements.

Furthermore, it is vital to foster an industrial cultural environment that is open, inclusive, and respectful of creativity. Promoting the establishment of specialized honor systems for digital creative talent and increasing support for young creators and independent studios are important steps. Planning for low-cost creative spaces

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within urban renewal projects, supporting high-level industry exhibitions, technology competitions, and creative festivals will facilitate talent interaction and spark inspiration. Breaking down traditional evaluation barriers based solely on academic credentials and professional titles, and establishing a multi-dimensional talent assessment mechanism centered on project contribution, market value, and industry recognition are necessary reforms.

2.2 Strengthen and Improve the Construction of the Industrial Innovation System

Building a modern digital creative industrial system necessitates placing innovation at its core, focusing on dismantling the institutional and systemic barriers within the current innovation chain. The goal is to create an innovation ecosystem where enterprises are the main actors, the market guides the direction, and industry, academia, research, and application depth, thereby systematically enhancing fundamental industrial capabilities and core competitiveness.

The primary imperative is to strengthen independent R&D in key and core technologies. National major science and technology programs should be organized and implemented, focusing on cutting-edge fields such as rendering engines, AI-Generated Content (AGC), next-generation graphics interfaces, and immersive human-computer interaction. Mechanisms like "unveiling the list and appointing the best" and "parallel competing tracks" should be utilized to encourage leading enterprises and new types of R&D institutions to lead the formation of innovation consortiums. Concentrated efforts are needed to break through bottlenecks in high-end software tools, core algorithms, and chips, thereby solidifying the technological foundation for industrial innovation and development.

The key lies in establishing highly efficient and synergistic technology transfer mechanisms integrating industry, academia, research, and application. Proactive efforts are needed to accelerate the market translation of creative theoretical research and cutting-edge technologies from universities and research institutes by establishing pilot testing bases, proof-of-concept centers, and shared technology platforms. Encouraging enterprises and universities to jointly build laboratories and exploring systems for the mutual appointment of "industry professors" will facilitate the two-way, unobstructed flow of innovative factors like talent, knowledge, technology, and data, effectively solving the "last mile" problem in technology transfer.

Concurrently, it is crucial to vigorously improve innovation infrastructure and the service environment. This involves the coordinated planning and opening of high-performance computing centers, open datasets, and testing/certification platforms to lower the technological innovation threshold for SMEs. Actively developing specialized services like technology consulting, technology transfer, and intellectual property operation, while improving fault-tolerant and relief mechanisms for failed innovation projects, will foster an innovation atmosphere that encourages exploration and breakthroughs.

Finally, the innovation-driving role of data as a production factor must be fully leveraged. Efforts to establish foundational systems for data resource property rights, transaction circulation, cross-border transmission, and security protection should be accelerated. This will promote the orderly flow and efficient utilization of data factors, deeply empowering innovation across the entire chain of creative generation, production, distribution, and consumption experience.

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2.3 Continuously Resolve Structural Imbalances within the Industry

Currently, China's digital creative industry is in a critical phase of transition from scale expansion to quality enhancement. However, it still faces structural contradictions such as unbalanced regional development, poor linkage within the industrial chain, and a suboptimal enterprise. Targeted measures are needed to promote optimized resource allocation and enhance systemic efficiency, achieving higher-level, integrated industrial development.

The primary focus lies on optimizing the regional industrial layout to resolve the imbalance between resource concentration and diffusion. Aligned with national regional development strategies, guidance should be provided to foster complementarity between the technological, capital, and brand advantages of the eastern regions and the cultural resources and application scenarios of the central and western regions. Support should be given for building digital creative industrial clusters in key cities, encouraging the exploration of "enclave economy" models, jointly built R&D platforms, and remote incubation schemes. This will promote the cross-regional flow of innovation factors, forming a multi-layered, gradient-based, and functionally complementary spatial network for the industry.

The core objective is to strengthen industrial chain synergy, unclogging key blockages in the innovation and value chains. Leading enterprises should be encouraged to open their technology platforms, distribution channels, and IP resources, while guiding SMEs and micro-enterprises to develop towards becoming "specialized, refined, unique, and innovative" entities, embedding them into global innovation and supply chains. Efforts should be made to establish collaborative development mechanisms centered around creative IP, spanning literature, animation, film and television, games, and derivatives. This facilitates multi-format content generation, multi-channel distribution, and multi-scenario monetization, enhancing overall industrial chain operation and value diffusion capabilities.

Concurrently, there is a need to actively cultivate an enterprise ecosystem characterized by integrated development. State-owned cultural enterprises should leverage their role as stabilizers in providing positive guidance and foundational investment, while the vitality, flexibility, and innovative drive of private enterprises must be stimulated. Platforms for integrated enterprise innovation need to be established and improved, promoting the sharing of data, co-creation of technology, and joint market expansion among large, medium, and small enterprises. This aims to build a new type of industrial organization system featuring innovation collaboration, production capacity sharing, and interconnected supply chains.

Furthermore, deeper integration between digital creativity and traditional industries should be promoted. Accelerating the pervasive empowerment of digital technologies across sectors like cultural manufacturing, cultural tourism experiences, publishing media, and cultural creative consumption is crucial. This involves creating a batch of benchmark digital transformation scenarios and cross-border integrated products. While enhancing the added value of traditional industries, this also expands a broader application hinterland and market space for the digital creative industry itself.

3. Conclusion

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Building a modern digital creative industrial system is a strategic choice for the global wave of digital civilization and forging new competitive advantages for the nation. Currently, China still faces multiple practical challenges in constructing this system, including an underdeveloped innovation ecosystem, prominent structural industrial imbalances, constraints in key core technologies, and inefficient technology transfer mechanisms. Looking ahead, it is imperative to adhere to systems thinking and a targeted policy approach. Comprehensive efforts across multiple dimensions—optimizing the talent ecosystem, strengthening technological breakthroughs, promoting chain-wide collaboration, and deepening institutional innovation—are essential to effectively bridge the transformation pathway from scientific and technological strength to industrial strength and cultural influence. Only through deepening reforms of institutional mechanisms and the continuous optimization of policy supply can we effectively dismantle development barriers, stimulate the endogenous drivers of the industry, and propel China's digital creative industry into a new stage characterized by high-end development, internationalization, and sustainability. This will provide solid support for achieving the goals of building a leading cultural nation and a Digital China.

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