

Operation Pilot of Chinese Museum Night Exhibition and Its Significance

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Abstract—The European and American national museum's night exhibition operation mode has been relatively perfect. Chinese museums are piloting night exhibition operations. Many museums in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan and other places have tried to extend the opening hours and develop unique night-time activities, which are very popular among the visitors. The significance of the museum night-time operation pilot is to meet the cultural needs of the visitors' night tour to museum, to explore innovative museum operation modes, to enhance the influence of the museum, and to promote the economic development of the museum.

Keywords—museum; night exhibition; pilot; significance

I. INTRODUCTION

Since consciously taking on the historical mission of educating the people, the museum has opened up to the visitors and tried to attract the visitors to enter the museum, approach the cultural relics, and enter history, which has become one of the topics of museum development and operation. With the changes in modern lifestyles, people are coming up with new requirements for museum opening. In order to meet the cultural needs of the visitors, the museum actively tries to develop night service in addition to the collection, season, and audience needs during the normal opening hours, in order to enhance the museum image and better assume the responsibility of the museum as a city cultural living room.

II. CHINESE MUSEUMS IN MULTI-PLACES PILOT THE OPERATION OF NIGHT EXHIBITION

The so-called museum night exhibition operation refers to the museum extending the opening hours of the day to a certain time in the evening. During the period, the museum will selectively organize exhibitions, and organize reports, lectures, audience experiences and other activities with the personality or characteristics of the museum to meet the individual needs of the visitors. The pioneering work of the museum night exhibition is originated in Europe. In 1997, the first museum long night was held in Berlin. In 1999, such events were held in France and other places. Since then, the museum night exhibition has been popular. At present, Europe and the United States have formed a relatively mature night exhibition mode. For example, cities such as Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and Amsterdam regularly hold

"Museum Nights". The visiting time of the French Louvre Museum will be extended to 21:45 every Wednesday and Friday, and the visiting time of the British Museum will be extended to 20:30 every Friday. The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art will extend its opening hours to 8:30 pm on Fridays and Saturdays. According to statistics, more than 2,000 museums across Europe will provide millions of visitors with free night-time activities to provide the public with an "art carnival" in the evening.¹ In contrast, the night-time opening of Chinese museums is still in the trial stage.

A. The First Attempt of Night Exhibition

There are two main situations in the night-time opening of Chinese museums: the first is the annual 5.18 International Museum Day. Most of the museums will develop attractive special events for museum publicity; the second is to take care of the visitor's viewing requirements. Night exhibitions will be added to the more important exhibitions in the museum. In 2000, the Nanjing Taiping Heavenly Kingdom History Museum launched the "Night Taiping Museum" event. From 6 pm to 8:30 pm, the visitors can enjoy the night view of the Taiping museum and enjoy the singing and dancing performances. In 2002, the Shanghai Museum was opened overnight because of the "Exhibition of National Treasures of the Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties". The precious works of 72 pieces of Chinese art history have attracted thousands of visitors. From sunrise to the moon, the people in the museum contend to appreciate the "Along the River During the Qingming Festival", which makes them praise that it is like the renaissance of arts and the representation of the prosperity.² In August 2005, the Wenzhou Museum adjusted its original opening hours from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm to 3 pm to 10 pm. Only the adjustment of time not only allows the museum to taste the sweetness of actively catering to the people's living habits and cultural needs — in just 6 days, the number of visitors has exceeded 1,500, which is several times higher than the number of receptions before the adjustment, but also finds a new way of cultural leisure for the citizens in the long summer night.³ On

¹ Museum Night Exhibition, Do You Dare to Trial? [J]. Appreciation, 2015, 04.

² How Far Is the Museum from the Night Exhibition? [N]. Economic Daily, 2014-07-20.

³ The Audience of the Museum "Night Exhibition" Has Soared [N]. Wenzhou Daily, 2005-08-04.

December 15, 2007, the Ningbo Tianyi Pavilion Museum was open to visitors for two consecutive nights, each time up to 3 hours. From February 11th to February 15th, 2009, the Chengdu Jinsha Site Museum held the "Night Tour to Jinsha Theme Week", and the opening hours lasted from 8:00 am to 9:30 pm; In 2010, the Shanghai Astronomical Museum was opened free of charge during the "Saturn's Opposition", allowing the public to observe at night.

B. The Scope of the Pilot Is Expanded

In 2011, the Sichuan Museum became the first museum in China to institutionalize nighttime opening. Visitors can visit for free on Saturdays and Saturdays from 6:30 to 8:30 on the first week of each month. In 2012, the Palace Museum launched the added night exhibition in the Wednesday and Friday nights of the main exhibition hall. The closing time has been extended by two hours until 20:30 in the evening. On May 18, 2013, "Museum Day", 30 museums in Shanghai extended the opening hours to nighttime. This is the first "Museum Night" organized by Shanghai. In 2013, the 100th museum in Xi'an, Yuanhao Huazang Museum was officially opened, and one of its flagship propaganda flags was "the first museum in China that will still open at night".⁴ On the May 1st International Labor Day in 2016, the Qingdao Museum opened the night exhibition to a specific visitor group, and invited more than 150 sanitation workers from Laoshan District to visit the museum to honor these most beautiful workers. At the time, the director of the museum, Sui Yongqi, also promised that "for all the new citizens' collective visitors who have the need to visit, the museum will be waiting for you 24 hours a day, as long as you make an appointment in advance!"⁵

C. The Night Exhibition Has Gradually Become a Trend

At present, many museums in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan have joined the operation of the night exhibition. For example, in 2019, from July 28th, the Chinese National Museum will extend its opening hours to 9:00 pm on Sundays during the summer vacation. Shanghai implemented the "Implementation Plan for Further Optimizing Supply to Promote Consumption Growth" and launched a pilot project for the night-time opening of 14 museums during the period from July to September. The Shanghai Museum will open the night-time exhibition on August 9th (Friday) and August 23rd (Friday), with late opening hours of 18:00-21:00. The Shanghai History Museum Night Stadium and the Shanghai World Expo Museum are also open every Friday from July to September, with an extended opening time of 17:00-20:00. Guangzhou, starting from August 1st, every Friday, Saturday, Sunday or important time node, major traditional festivals, the opening time of the 8 Museums (Memorial Hall) of Memorial Hall of the Third National Congress of the Communist Party of China in the center of Guangzhou, the Memorial Hall of Comrade Mao Zedong Hosting the Peasant Movement

Workshop, Guangzhou Uprising Memorial Hall, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Guangzhou Museum (Zhenhai Building), Western Han Dynasty Museum of Nanyue King, the Nanyue Royal Palace Museum and the Guangzhou Art Museum will be extended to 21 o'clock. The three museums, including the Memorial Hall of the Whampoa Military Academy, the Memorial Hall of the Revolution of 1911, and the Guangdong Folk Craft Museum (Chen's Family Ancestral Hall), will not be closed until 18:30 every day due to traffic, lighting and other reasons.⁶ From August 17th to October 31st, Wuhan Science and Technology Museum, Wuhan Art Museum, Jianghuan Museum, and the Communist Party of Chinese Discipline Construction History Exhibition Hall will extend their opening time to 21 o'clock on Saturdays, Sundays, important time node, and statutory holiday. With so many museums piloting the night exhibition, it is clear that night-time operations are becoming the trend.

III. REASONS FOR THE PILOT OPERATION OF THE CHINESE MUSEUM NIGHT EXHIBITION

Although the Chinese museum industry is still in the pilot stage in operation of night exhibition, it is a great improvement from the night exhibition of individual museums to the numerous museums in several places. The main reasons for this are:

A. The Integration of Culture and Tourism Is the Background of the Era of the Operation of Museum Night Exhibition

As a public welfare educational institution that provides knowledge, education and appreciation to the public, the museum is one of the important cultural and leisure places for people. With the prosperity of Chinese tourism market, museums have become the ties of the integration of culture and tourism and have received the attention of the tourism and cultural circles. The theme of the "International Museum Day" event held on May 18, 2018 opened a new prelude with "Super Connected Museum: New Method, New Justice". As a hub connecting the history, humanities and technology of the region, the museum plays a vital role in connecting the society and the public.⁷ "The first thing needs to do when visiting a city is to visit its museums" has become the first choice for many travelers. The museum is therefore also seen as a symbol of a city's public cultural architecture. How to play the role of museums in cultural communication and tourism is a new topic and new challenge for the museum.

B. The Growing Cultural Requirements of the Visitors Are the Realistic Basis for the Pilot Operation of the Museum's Night Exhibition

Since the opening of the Chinese Museum to the public, in terms of opening hours, in the public impression, the museum workday opened at 10am and closed at 5pm. This

⁴ <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/p/2013-05-18/014127155947.shtm>

⁵ City Museum Opened Its First-time Night Exhibition to Invite More than 150 Sanitation Workers to Visit [N]. Peninsula Metropolis News, 2016-05-02.

⁶ Wang Zhongyao, Let the Night-visit Time Museum Become the "Spiritual Harbor" of the City [N]. Guangming Daily, 2019-08-14.

⁷ Liu Bo, Discussion on the Innovation Concept of Museum Public Service Under the Integration of Culture and Tourism [J]. Technology and Economic Guide, 2018, 33.

kind of visit schedule is convenient for non-workers and the elderly, but basically excludes office workers. It invisibly shut out some potential visitors. As the media showed, many people said that because they were busy, they didn't have time during the day and wouldn't think of visiting the museum.⁸ The operation of the night exhibition is an effective way for museums to respond to visitors' needs. And this way of operation is welcomed by the visitors. For example, at 7pm on July 15th, 2014, the Beijing Museum of Nature ushered in the first visitors of the summer night show. 2,000 seats of the night show on the first day were already booked a few days ago, and one day a day. The "Light and Shadow Show", which was limited to 150 spectators every day, was ordered on the same day that the reservation system was launched.⁹ The Liaoning Museum of the Imperial Palace of "Manchukuo" has held the "International Museum Night" for the sixth consecutive year since 2009. In 2014, nearly 40,000 visitors experienced the museum night. On April 26, 2014, the Chinese National Museum extended the opening hours of the closed hall at 5pm to 8pm for the first time, and stopped selling at 7pm. The night exhibition was open to "famous museums, famous artists, masterpieces — to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France." On the same day, the special exhibition received a total of 4,700 visitors, including 1,150 visitors after 4 pm, accounting for 24% of the total number of visitors throughout the day.¹⁰ The Chinese National Museum adopted a time-delayed opening measure during the summer holiday of 2019, during which time it was closed until 21:00 on Sundays. 2,000 tickets of night exhibition were sailed in 15 minutes. In 2017, the exhibition of 100 Objects from the British Museum was held in the Shanghai Museum. The 97-day exhibition was also unprecedented, setting the most of the number of visitors to Shanghai Museum. During the period, 29 night exhibitions were opened, and the number of night-time visitors reached 36,000.¹¹

C. *The Development of the Museum Business Is the Realistic Basis for the Operation of the Night Exhibition*

In recent years, the Chinese museum industry has developed rapidly, and the "museum fever" is becoming a new fashion of Chinese social culture. The museum has become an important part of the people's longing for a better life. By the end of 2018, there were 5,354 national museums, an increase of 218 over the previous year. The number of free museums is 4,743, accounting for 88.6% of the total number of museums. In 2018, the museums all over the country had held 26,000 exhibitions, nearly 260,000 educational activities, and the visitors reached 1.126 billion, an increase of more than 100 million people over the previous year. In the past five years, nearly 500 cultural

relics' inbound and outbound exhibitions have been held. The museums have become the "national living room" that display Chinese national image, promote mutual understanding and mutual understanding of the world civilization, and enhance mutual understanding and recognition.¹² The increase in the number of museums has attracted many visitors into the museum. There are many visitors and the demand is diversified. The attempts on the operation of night exhibition are not only extending the opening hours, but also being able to fully explore museum resources, carry out various forms of targeted service activities, draw closer to museums and spectators, and play the educational role of museum cultural resources.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PILOT OPERATION OF THE CHINESE MUSEUM'S NIGHT EXHIBITION

Night is the main time for people's cultural leisure. How people spend the night, to a certain extent, characterizes the degree of civilization of a society. In modern society, the operating mode that is open during the day in the history of the museum, as people's lifestyles and cultural needs change, is required to be innovated to cope with the society's hopes for museums. The significance of the pilot exploration of the operation of the museum's night exhibition is:

A. *Effectively Meeting the Needs of Different Visitors*

As the people's living standards continue to improve and cultural needs continue to increase, museums are increasingly moving towards the public as a cultural center. According to estimates by the Chinese Tourism Research Institute, during the Spring Festival of 2019, the total number of national tourist receptions was 415 million, of which 40.5% were visitors to the museums. The museums are open during the day to facilitate non-working people and seniors. The museum's night exhibition is dominated by a variety of themed events, including catering, wine parties, concerts, performances and lectures, in order to attract more visitors, especially young people. "The museum's opening of night exhibition can give the public a cultural place to go, and the city has a little more cultural taste. This is a must for the cultural benefit. Opening the night exhibition will allow more people to enter the museum, understand history, acquire more knowledge, and cultivate sentiment, which will greatly benefit the public cultural and artistic accomplishment."¹³ On the National Museum's first night exhibition of the year on July 28, 2019, nearly 4,000 people made a special appointment to visit National Museum during the extended opening hours. Superimposing the detained visitors in the daytime in the hall, the number of visitors during the extended opening hours had reached more than 16,000 people. A total of more than 40,000 people were received the whole day. In order to enhance the experience of visiting, the National Museum was equipped with professional explanations in the six exhibitions where the visitors were most concentrated. Under the guidance of the

⁸ <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-08-04/11286610504s.shtml>

⁹ Museum Night Exhibition, Do You Dare to Swim? [J]. *Appreciation*, 2015, 04.

¹⁰ "Fantastic Night at the Museum": the Opening of the Night Exhibition Is Gradually Becoming a Trend

¹¹ https://news.dzwww.com/shehuixinwen/201907/t20190713_18940592.htm

¹² http://www.sach.gov.cn/art/2019/5/18/art_1027_155130.html

¹³ Wu Xuean, The Opening of Night Exhibition of the Museum Is a Must for the Cultural Benefit [N]. *China Tourism News*, 2019-07-29.

lecturers, the visitors not only appreciated the beauty of the cultural relics, but also learned the story behind the cultural relics.¹⁴ The public has a demand for culture, and the museum has taken the initiative to use modern technology to meet the needs of society. This is progress.

B. Exploring and Innovating the Museum Operation Modes

"The night exhibition is a 'new business'. It is not possible to open the door like it in the daytime to welcome the visitors, but to have more planning activities to attract people into the museum at night."¹⁵ The value of the night museum's existence seems to be that it is different from the museum's "strict and solemn" appearance during the daytime, which portrays a relaxed, lively, diverse and inclusive cultural scene for the people. The key to the "Fantastic Night at the Museum" lies in the word "fantastic", which uses whimsy to open up the possibilities of connecting people to museums and works of art. In the development of the collection resources, the museum that tried the night exhibition planned a series of activities such as academic reports, lectures, performances, and the interactive part of the visitors in the exhibition hall. The purpose is to give the visitors an experience that is different from the daytime visit. The "Museum Regulations" promulgated in 2015 require museums to be free to the public, and encourages museums to use modern information technology to carry out various forms of lively social education and service activities according to their own characteristics and conditions, and participate in community cultural construction and foreign cultural exchanges and cooperation. After all, evaluating a museum depends not only on what resources it has, but also on what it does for the public. The trial of museum's night exhibition in China has increased the supply of services and broadened the form of service, which should be the direction of museum development.¹⁶

C. Promoting the Economic Development of the Place That the Museum Located in

On July 30, 2019, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Relics announced the "Notice on Advocating Museums' Opening at Night and Helping to Prosper the Night Economy". It claims and encourages museums throughout the city to choose an appropriate time to open or open a museum night exhibition. The State Council executive meeting on July 31 identified measures to promote cultural and tourism consumption, including the development of cultural and tourist venues for evening dining, shopping, and cultural performances. Encouraged and protected by the policy, the opening of night exhibition of the museum not only provides more choices for night cultural consumption, but also has a certain pulling effect on the night economy. The British Museum has hosted more than 8,000 night-time activities throughout the year. The

¹⁴ http://www.chnmuseum.cn/zx/gbxw/201908/t20190801_138713.shtml

¹⁵ https://news.dzwww.com/shehuixinwen/201907/t20190713_18940592.htm

¹⁶ Press "Like" for the Opening of the Museum Night Exhibition [J]. Folklore Collection, 2016, 07.

consumption of catering, transportation, performances, and peripheral services will not be underestimated.¹⁷ According to a report published by the Culture 24, the ticket income of museums and art galleries night exhibition has reached nearly 10 million pounds per year, which has become a new source of museum revenue and has brought new visitor groups to the museum.¹⁸ The museum's concentrated night exhibition can stimulate the depth, breadth and diversity of citizens' cultural consumption, enhance the vitality of citizens' night consumption, and play a good role in gathering and absorbing the transportation activities including transportation, shopping and catering. The museum has become an important channel for shaping the image of the city and attracting tourists to generate income. The enthusiasm for opening museums everywhere is higher.

V. CONCLUSION

The opening of night exhibition of the museum is an inevitable trend in the future development of the Chinese museum. "As a non-profit organization for social services, how to understand, respect, and care for the wishes and rights of special people, and to reflect more humanistic care, is a problem that museum people should think about."¹⁹ However, night-time visit operations are a challenge to the museum's personnel, safety, and equipment. The museum should sum up the pilot experience in a timely manner, solve the problems existing in the operation in a timely manner, and strive to realize the normalization and institutionalization of the museum night-time visit operation.

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¹⁷ <http://sh.sina.com.cn/news/k/2019-07-13/detail-ihytcerm3312725-p2.shtml>

¹⁸ Is It Feasible to Open the Night Exhibition at the Museum? [N]. Taiyuan Daily, 2018-08-03.

¹⁹ Where Is the Future of the Museum? [N]. Guangming Daily, 2019-04-26.

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