

Utilizing Museum Marketing Strategies to Help Xianyang Museum to Attract Visitors

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ABSTRACT

The majority of the medium and small-sized museums in China trapped within a traditional management system that lacks the essence of innovation, which hinders their efforts to make positive changes to their marketing concepts. As the concept of marketing has gradually crept its way into museums, it provides the necessary push to transform their management to adapt to the market environment. In order to promote cultural development, museums must market themselves in such a way that solidifies their social service status, which is their primary objective. The purpose of the research on how museum marketing strategies can be utilized to help smaller-sized local museums attract audiences. Xianyang Museum will be researched as an example to consider the reasons for using museum marketing strategies to help museums extend their appeal to the general public.

Keywords: *Marketing strategies, Xianyang Museum, 7Ps marketing mode, visitor-oriented, museum's appeal*

1. INTRODUCTION

In China, the cultural industry is currently enjoying a period of positive growth, and visiting museums has become a popular pastime. These museums perform a vital role in educating people, promoting cultural communication, and helping people understand their unique national culture. There are thousands of museums in China, yet the public remain unfamiliar with the majority of them. Each museum attempts to extend their appeal and accessibility to attract the attention of citizens, but the returns have been limited due to the public perception that these museums cannot deliver during the actual visit.

Compared with big famous museums, the undeveloped of the smaller, Chinese museums could be attributed to inherently flawed marketing strategies that do not change with the times, which is embodied in losing professional arts managers to improve management system, and not focusing in the right direction to connect with the public in a meaningful way, so that leading them to fail in achieving their mission [1]. In comparison, marketing strategies have been successfully employed in other art fields that use mature theories and practices to win over audiences, embodied in the idea that the public would enjoy museum visits as they find them interesting and a good place to study. With respect to the museums,

each museum is constantly changing and innovating their subjects and exhibitions. Since the museums themselves provide value, the purpose of this article is to consider how museum marketing strategies can improve the management of Chinese medium and small sized museums and extend their appeal, while improving their approach to the public.

The purpose of using museum marketing strategies goes beyond improving a museum's accessibility and helping it fulfil its educational mission. Marketing strategies can be used to promote cultural diversity by encouraging people to explore and discover cultures. By practicing marketing strategies designed for the arts, Chinese museums can expect healthy growth as well as improved development of the cultural industry in China.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In the Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee in 2011, the government proposed a strategy to invigorate China through culture, which covered all public cultural services, in an effort to build a strong nation of socialist culture. With this cultural strategy, the government hopes to establish a system that allows them to entrust China's traditional culture to future generations and to promote the continued development and prosperity of socialist culture. Cultural industries

have become a pillar of the national economy, greatly enriching the cultural environment of the masses and enhancing the cultural soft power of China, with various types of museums appearing in public life.

This boom can be seen in the Shaanxi Province, which had more than 300 museums with a total of 7.74 million pieces of cultural relics by the end of April 2018, the second largest number on the provincial level in the country [2]. However, with the exception of some large, well-known museums that remain busy and enjoy a large amount of footfall, many medium and small-sized museums, often local, find themselves deserted and in a state of lethargy, simply waiting for a few visitors to come by. Xianyang Museum is a typical example under this background of Shaanxi Province.

Museum marketing is, in fact, a bridge connecting the organization with its audiences. Employing marketing strategies in museum operations can provide the organization with a process for identifying the needs of the audience, adopting suitable measures to attract visitors, and thus satisfying the audiences' needs as much as possible. Museum marketing also gives the organization an opportunity to realize their own value, while they communicate and interact with their audiences, allowing them to distinguish their mission. The vitality of the sustainable development of museums can be significantly stimulated depending on how well they are able to use marketing to express themselves and strengthen their affinity and influence with the public.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In researching how arts marketing strategies can be utilised to help medium and small-sized museums in China to attract visitors, the author will focus on the four research concepts to provide the foundation for the overall study.

3.1. Arts Managers Help Museum Marketing

The article *Arts Management: A New Discipline Entering the Millennium* which was written by Evard and Colbert [3] discusses the importance of art management as a part of the managing discipline and how this affects different aspects of an arts organization. Marketing is determined as one of these important aspects. According to Evard and Colbert [2], it is possible for arts managers to optimize the reception of their offerings via marketing. Cultural consumption is regarded as a sign that an organization's marketing has been effective and has resonated with consumers on an emotional level as well as their intrinsic motivation. This interaction builds a stronger relationship with consumers [3]. Arts managers can test their marketing strategies by researching consumer behavior.

In the article *Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Marketing the Arts*, Colbert [4] presents the idea that arts organizations must use their cultural management system to identify and promote opportunities for entrepreneurship and leadership. Since each arts product has its own unique qualities, the techniques used in arts marketing are conceptually different from other fields of creative work [4]. The cultural sector is a decentralized but competitive market, so there are overwhelming and diverse categories for potential clients to choose from. For an arts organization that wishes to achieve success in a hyper-competitive environment, there must be a capable arts manager to play a decisive role in leading the organization beyond its current limits.

3.2. Using Arts Marketing to Extend Museum's Appeal

The article *Museum Marketing, Tendencies and Perspectives* which was written by Gherghina [5] discusses how marketing concepts have changed and examines the relationship between museum marketing thought and practice. He refers to Kotler and Levy [6] and their book *Broadening the concept of Marketing* that suggests that marketing can be applied to products, people, nonprofit organizations, service and anything else that can be regarded as an activity. McLean [7] views marketing as a process of building a connection between organizations and people, whether the objective is profit, to meet an organization's needs, or attract new audiences.

In the article *Museum marketing as a tool for survival and creativity: the mining museum perspective*, Cole [8] explores the contributions and applications of marketing. Marketing strategies should be closely related to the museum's mission while providing a collective action frame, allowing them to complete their core activities but still work within the public funding system. Cole [8] also refers to Rentschler's [9] ideas to support his views. A museum that is suffering financially cannot simply remedy this by holding free entry exhibitions to attract visitors. To continue to survive, museums have to attract new audiences as well as retain established ones [9].

Kotler et al. [10], in their book *Museum Marketing and Strategy*, propose that it is the competitive pressures that push museums into employing marketing strategies in an effort to survive in today's society. These significant competitive pressures make it apparent that museums must struggle to obtain and maintain their presence in the social space and their environment no longer offers a comfort zone as it has done in the past.

3.3. The Types of Marketing Strategies

One of the commonly recommended models that are practiced in the museum field is the traditional 4Ps model, which is widely used in the commercial field by McLean in 1941. This model uses four different factors in tandem,

which include Product, Promotion, Place and Price, to improve museum marketing strategies. In 1981, Booms and Biters presented an alternative 7Ps model for museum marketing that added three more factors defined as People, Process, and Physical Evidence. McLean [7] also argued that the theory of marketing services cannot be indiscriminately applied to all services, especially not to museums. Rentschler, in 2002, contributed an eighth P - Persistence, which recommended audience research to evaluate how organizations can encourage audiences to visit more regularly [8]. In comparison, Kotler et al. [10] advocated 5Ps that built on the traditional 4Ps model to improve museum marketing and motivate arts managers to carry out multifaceted research by adding a people factor. Regardless of the number of factors that influence museum marketing, all of the authors agree on how important it is for museums to utilize and manage the entire marketing mix while offering better services and improving the visitor experience as the visitors can also act as messengers.

3.4. Detection and Analysis Marketing Strategies

Gherghina [5], in his article Museum Marketing. Tendencies and Perspectives presents six states of demand, which were identified by Kotler and Andreasen [11] in their book Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations, for organizations to consider when developing their marketing strategies. These are the “Absence of demand - consumers are not interested or are indifferent to the product; Latent demand - consumer need is not satisfied with any item; Demand swing - cyclically, the institution is facing a decline in demand for one or more products; Irregular demand - depending on the season, hours or days; Satisfactory demand; Excessive demand [5].” This helps establish that there are two main aspects that affect an organization’s marketing, namely consumer needs for culture and fulfilling the organization’s mission. The ideal solution would be for museum managers to seek a balance of both aspects for

the most efficient combination. Depending on the state of demand, managers can attempt to perform both detection and analysis, and recommend that arts organization develop their marketing strategies to the point where both they and their audiences can be satisfied.

4. RESEARCH METHOD AND STRUCTURE

This article will do the research by using the literature review as a theoretical framework, and the function of marketing in the museum management process was investigated through the concepts of museum marketing and the strategies presented. These were also used to observe how marketing strategies affect museum in the cultural market, which is based in a competitive social environment. Furthermore, the “case study” will be used in research intended to improve the arguments. By combining the two research methods and presenting museum practices in marketing, it is possible to gain insight into the status of Xianyang Museum. The primary objective of the research is to help Xianyang Museum and their managers develop a better understanding on the cultural market as well as to offer a feasible proposal based on a valuable theoretical framework on the potential opportunities and threats in the cultural and entertainment environment.

5. GATHER THE DATA

This article uses the 7Ps model to demonstrate each objective of Xianyang Museum regarding their marketing sector and conducts a SWOT analysis to present Xianyang Museum’s current situation. The two research methods aid in conducting competitive analysis while providing suggestions for the organization.

5.1. 7Ps Marketing Model of Xianyang Museum

Table 1 7Ps Marketing Model of Xianyang Museum

Category	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Product	Abundant heritage; Good protect	Not establish a clear brand	Old, changeless exhibitions
Promotion	WeChat push (aperiodic, about once a month)	Brochures; Propagandas posters	Aperiodic festival activity; Theme activities 'the great history and culture go to the school.'
Place	Remote from downtown	Public transport access	Surrounded by busy little stores
Price	Ticket free	No gift shop; No store/shop	No consumption item
People	No professional marketing team	Few explainers per day	Few visitors
Process	Introduce professional managers	Building a new construction for museum;	Measuring and evaluation system does not perfect

		Designing new exhibitions	
Physical Evidence	Ancient building	Great landscaping	Exhibition hall does not have a connection with each other

According to P. Kotler, museum marketing is visitor-oriented. The museum is constantly explored, discovered, and innovated in terms of its various functions and services according to the needs of the society as well as the visitors to ensure a win-win situation, which is essentially different with the sales and promotion of the merchants to maximize profits. In Xianyang Museum, attracting the public by only relying on the display exhibition is difficult, particularly because their exhibitions are old and have not been changed. Moreover, its display also has problems as its exhibits are seldom changed, and the display is presented in an attractive manner. Thus, the museum must increase its social and brand competitiveness through marketing as it is unable to achieve museum development and address visitor demand.

Although the ticket is free to encourage more people to visit the museum, there is neither a store where people can buy water or food nor a gift shop where visitors can buy souvenirs. This means that there are no consumption opportunities for people, the museum loses the opportunity of receiving economic contribution. The goal of museum marketing is to provide better cultural products and services for visitors and to fulfil its social value while obtaining economic efficiency to support their future. Therefore, the development of museum marketing does not exclude its public nature but enhances its inherent values while serving the public.

Xianyang Museum has few commentators and service staff that work on a daily basis and does not have a professional marketing team. Further, commentators do not like serving people unless a big organisation or a special person comes to visit. Some people also think that commentators are waitstaff who should serve the public, which results in the commentators feeling disrespected. Apart from explaining, commentators have almost no other work and thus often sit around in the office, which is a waste of the resource.

The theme event in Xianyang Museum –“the great history and culture go to the school”, the process of planning and practicing demonstrates that the museum’s managers do not effectively pursue social activity and do not have sufficient professional knowledge regarding marketing research. First, as the staff is introduced at a slower pace than the time practiced, there is no control over the activity time. Second, the museum lacks the professional tools necessary to assemble and transport cultural relics. Though the staff uses replicas for display, they still are valuable and must be carefully protected as students are sometimes found touching the replicas without any protective measure. Finally, the staff’s work efficiency is inadequate. When the volunteer failed to

send the PPT and speech draft on time, managers were unable to check the content.

In the recent years, the practice and research of marketing in the field of museums in China has resulted in marketing becoming a platform to disseminate museum culture, participate in a social competition, and create significant and comprehensive benefits. This also helps museums realize their mission of communicating and interacting with the public. Thus, marketing is a way for museums to realize its value as a vision that focuses on sustainable development and humanistic care for the public so that visitors can study more, gain more, and enjoy more in the museum. Gradually, people are beginning to understand that museum marketing is not a common commercial activity but the expansion and extension of museum’s functions such as social education and cultural service, which is a cultural activity embodying high culture and humanistic feelings.

5.2. Xianyang Museum SWOT analysis

5.2.1 Strengths:

Currently, Xianyang Museum has begun using the market-oriented means flexibly and marketing strategy rationally to transform the work centrality from being ‘material-focused’ to ‘centred on the needs of the visitor’, and strive to satisfy the demands of various viewers from various aspects. Such a change results in certain repercussions in society and leads to good social benefits. Xianyang Museum not only has a stable, professional, and young management team that can independently develop business but also has an efficient, decisive leadership that can grasp market opportunities. The museum also maintains a clear division of labour among various departments, organic integration, and coordination in their construction work. As a means of publicity for urban culture, the museum has a certain degree of social credibility that is widely supported by different sectors of society. There is relatively high attention and acceptance of the museum by the public, which aids the museum in better establishing its brand image.

5.2.2 Weaknesses:

Xianyang Museum’s management ideas do not seem to have fully kept pace with the times. Although they have confirmed the marketing concept of being ‘visitor-centred’, certain old administrative management systems remain that have not been truly integrated into the market. The museum has failed to truly establish the image of being ‘people-friendly’. The museum has also not completely integrated itself into the community and

people's lives. This suggests that the managers of Xianyang Museum have not truly understood museum marketing because of which the museum has become diffident and overcautious in terms of their marketing. Xianyang Museum's marketing strategies lack long-term strategic planning. The museum does not determine its brand strategy for brand marketing promotion. As it loses an omnidirectional packing to its brand image, its brand does not have core competitions among hundreds of museums in Shaanxi province.

5.2.3. Opportunities:

As a public comprehensive historical museum in Xianyang city, there is a group of visitors for the museum that is in great demand. The level of economic development and education in Xianyang city are constantly progressing, resulting in consequent improvement in the consumption capacity of urban and rural residents. Thus, the museum has become an attractive place for people to go for leisure and entertainment, with the ever-growing cultural and spiritual needs of the public making the museum a growing culture. After Xianyang Museum was opened to the public for free, there was a significant increase in the number of visitors. There also was a change in the types of visitors with an increase in the number of students and people from low-income groups. The free entry for the museum became a good mass basis for the development. Xianyang Museum, as a government-sponsored museum, continues to dominate the museum market for visitors and has a relatively relaxed growing environment. Various factors provide opportunities for developing Xianyang Museum.

5.2.4. Threats:

The threat to Xianyang Museum is its financial gaps, that is, its insufficient funds. Being a non-profit organisation, Xianyang Museum's funding in large parts comes from government grants. In the past, museums rarely received attention from the government which allocated them fewer funds. Further, the museum's environmental facilities are also imperfect. Some parts of the facilities are unable to keep up with the requirements of modern museums, and the lack of sufficient funds also makes the museum's infrastructure look out-dated. The management is influenced by an ideological administrative system. As the managing team fails to realize the importance of marketing, efficiency, and competition, as well as lacks an incentive mechanism, the museum's service level barely meets the public's needs. The works that Xianyang Museum presents is out of touch with the society; it does not address the relationship between the organization and the society and fails to play its role of serving the public fully. This results in the museum's acceptance by the society being relatively low and average social evaluation.

6. EXPLAIN THE DATA

Considering the characteristics of contemporary museums and the above comprehensive analysis of Xianyang Museum, the museum's marketing strategy can be based on the museum visitor as its core and using it to measure the internal managing system and develop a marketing strategy, especially to understand and analyse the visitor's psychology and behaviour to understand the 'products' and 'services' that the visitor needs and provide more opportunities for viewers to participate in the museum's activities. This is accomplished by strengthening the communication between the organization and the public to develop the museum into an unusual cultural publicity and experience institution.

6.1. Market Segmentation, Target Market Visitor

The first step of museum marketing is to analyse, realize, and fulfil the needs and desires of their visitors. For Xianyang Museum, visitors who are casual and willing to learn are the main visitors. The majority of the learning visitors are school students with different learning abilities and forming different opinions after visiting the museum. The interested visitors should be regarded as a loyal group of museum visitors, for who marketing will be relatively easily successful. For the casual visitor, the deepening visiting process results in them not being satisfied with novelty, excitement, stimulation, or pleasure, and become more interested in the static or dynamic, imitation or symbolic, or demonstrated or participation-related displays in the museum's exhibition, and consciously or unconsciously become aware of and appreciate the scientific knowledge and cultural connotations. At this point, their initial entertainment needs are satisfied, and the accidental infiltration of knowledge, exploration, and other educational behaviours transform their original motivation into educational results. Thus, the learning-oriented visitors and the sightseeing and leisure viewers are similar to an extent. Hence, the managers of Xianyang Museum can consider their visitors as learning-oriented visitors.

6.2. Exhibition Planning and Design Based on Visitor Demand

Guided by the visitor's needs, the exhibition planning and design is important for the museum's integrated marketing. Each museum has its unique resource advantages, and innovation is the key to turning resources into marketing advantages. First, Xianyang Museum's managers should innovate the concept of exhibition. Introducing the 'people-oriented' approach in the exhibition design, by completely considering the interests of visitors and establishing the design philosophy of 'exhibition for the visitors'. It is important to update the

understanding of the position of the exhibition and expand its functions. The reoriented exhibition will integrate the visitors' aesthetic needs and infuse it with entertainment and leisure elements that are connected to the theme. Moreover, museum must strive to innovate the technique of expression that highlights individualization and diversification of the exhibition. The new performance techniques can skilfully use modern, scientific, and technological methods and various forms including scenario simulation, visitor participation, and exhibition interaction to make the exhibition realistic, scenic, three-dimensional, and multi-dimensional, which can seem refreshing and impressive to the visitors.

6.3. Unitizing the Museum Resources to Effectively Introduce Exhibitions

In case of insufficient resources, using external resources such as enterprises and media to better publicise exhibitions can help museums get out of the predicament. Long-term investigation and management and attracting sponsorship using the museum's mission and positive image is necessary for developing social resources. The partnership and cooperation are based on the recognition of ideas and not to gain short-term profit. Thus, to establish long-term cooperation, the image assets of the museum can be protected from depreciation. Although the museum's collection is definite, the demand of the cultural market can be changed. Museum managers must consider the difficult problem of how 'invariability' and 'change' can be balanced. One of the effective ways to address this problem is by mutually exchanging the necessary products and establishing partnerships with other museums in the same area. A local museum's exhibit may become an obsolete 'product' over time and lose the market, but for another local museum, it may become an innovative product that can stimulate new markets.

6.4. Building the Museum Gift Shop

The museum store is an important means of museum marketing. It is recommended that Xianyang Museum build a gift shop for marketing as it can promote the museum's image. The museum store can meet the visitor's needs for shopping, function as a marketing tool and an extended educational tool, and can be a strategy for museum profits that are tangible as well as intangible. Thus, museum managers must prioritise museum stores. The gift shop is in a dominant position for showcasing the museum's characteristics. The store and its products are flexible and diverse in terms of the expressions and can thus display the museum collection and provide a novel experience to visitors. Not only is it beneficial for a museum to build its brand, but it is also conducive to the improvement of their social image. When a visitor purchases particular goods from the store which represents a regional culture, they will recall the museum,

and thus, the museum products become carriers of cultural communication.

6.5. Reform of the Internal Organization Structure and the Operation Mechanism of the Museum

First, it is important to reform the institutional setting of Xianyang Museum by changing the display that presented the exhibition as the focus into an institutional setting in which the targeted market and the visitors demands are highlighted. The museum must establish a marketing department that focuses on developing exhibition projects and market planning and marketing, and change the original exhibition department into the display and collection department, to ensure the exhibition's renewal request of expanding the appeal of collecting the social diaspora's cultural relics. Accordingly, other institutional departments must also be adjusted.

Second, improving work efficiency and enhancing the enthusiasm, initiative, and consciousness of staff in the museum is crucial. To accomplish this, an appointment system should be implemented for the staff and scientific research personnel. There are flexible mechanisms that can help encourage and mobilize the staff's motivation to work and enhance their performance in the museum.

Third, it is necessary to establish an attractive external image for the brand of Xianyang Museum. The appearance and attire, language specifications, and workflow must be comprehensive rectified and regulated, for which experts can be invited as guest-lecturers and etiquette training can be provided.

7. CONCLUSION

There has been a growing trend in the correlation between museums and society. As there is an unprecedented upsurge in the society's demand for a museum and museums' need for society, museums must significantly immerse into society, which has become the basic trend of national museums in the future. Considering a complex society, diversified demands, and fierce competition, museum marketing is undoubtedly an effective way to promote museums to ensure their survival and development. Museum marketing cannot only consolidate the existence of museums but also avoid them being marginalized.

Chinese museum-marketing began late. In the process of continuous learning and summarizing the advanced experiences at home and abroad, several theories and methods have guided museum marketing and have had a positive impact on its development. Chinese museum marketing has thus far not established an overall pattern as only a few museums actively explore and practice and become vibrant while the majority of the medium and

small-sized museums remain self-sufficient and become stagnant. It is also seen that museums empirically adopt effective marketing strategies from each other that are beneficial to learning. The narrow marketing target, the lack of assessment in museum marketing, and not establishing a systematic theoretical system are not detrimental to the overall development of the museum.

Based on the marketing status of Xianyang Museum, this paper determined the concretization and individualization of the museum's marketing theory. It is clear that it highlights the marketing link, strengthens the general marketing, and completely reveals the overall process of museum marketing. This also benefits further development of the museum's marketing and encourages the society to rationally understand museum marketing. Moreover, the proposed marketing strategies aid in the museum being widely accepted and adopted regarding their operations as well as and promotes marketing to turn into practice. Establishing the marketing system of Xianyang Museum is a new trend of museum research that will lead to substantial prosperity and progress.

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