



Marketing Strategies in China's Concert Industry

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Abstract. In recent years, China's concert industry has developed rapidly, with an expanding market size, but it also faces issues of excessive competition. Based on a review of marketing-related literature and the characteristics of the concert industry, this paper summarizes the competitive landscape of China's concert industry. It finds that the industry exhibits a significant "head effect," where concerts by top-tier artists in first-tier cities remain highly popular, while mid-sized and smaller artists struggle to sell out their tickets. Based on these findings, this paper proposes marketing recommendations. First, mid-sized and smaller concerts should adopt differentiated competition strategies, identifying niche customer segments to avoid homogeneous competition. Second, the concert industry should actively embrace digital transformation, leveraging digital platforms for marketing and promotion to enhance consumer experiences. Third, it should explore the potential of cultural and creative products related to concerts to increase peripheral revenue.

Keywords: concerts, marketing, digitalization

1 Introduction

After the pandemic, China's concert industry has entered a period of rapid development, with the market size doubling compared to pre-pandemic levels. Alongside the expansion of the market scale, competition in the concert industry has intensified, making effective marketing a critical issue in this highly competitive landscape.

This paper begins by reviewing the characteristics of the concert industry and foundational literature in marketing. Spatially, concert demand exhibits a "multi-core, highly dispersed" structural pattern. In terms of consumer demographics, concert audiences skew younger. Regarding the competitive landscape, the concert industry is highly competitive.

Existing marketing strategy theories primarily include SWOT and the 7Ps framework, but a key principle of marketing is that product promotion must first consider the product's unique features and market dynamics. Additionally, actively embracing technological advancements, such as digitalization, is a crucial aspect of effective marketing.

The article then analyzes the realities of China's concert industry and proposes marketing recommendations. In 2024, the box office revenue for large-scale concerts

(with audiences of 5,000 or more) in China reached 26 billion yuan, with the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta, and the Chengdu-Chongqing urban agglomeration accounting for approximately 60% of the national total. The booming concert market has attracted a surge of capital, leading to a sharp increase in the number of performance brokerage-related enterprises and intensifying market competition.

The concert industry exhibits a pronounced "head effect," with concerts by top-tier artists in first-tier cities remaining highly popular, while competition in second- and third-tier cities grows fiercer, and tickets for mid- to small-sized artists often fail to sell out. Faced with such intense market competition, promoters and artists need to adopt differentiated competitive strategies. At the same time, they should actively embrace digital transformation, leveraging information technology for promotion, consumer engagement, and the development of cultural and creative merchandise to enhance the consumer experience.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section II summarizes the relevant literature. Section III analyzes the characteristics of China's concert industry and provides marketing strategies. Section IV concludes.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Product Features and Marketing Strategies

The intrinsic features of a product form the foundation for a company's marketing strategy. For manufactured goods, these typically include appearance, quality, functionality, branding, and packaging, while for service-based products, they encompass aspects such as service duration, quality, and delivery format. Product features effectively indicate the extent to which a product meets consumer needs, thereby capturing their attention and driving purchase decisions[1].

The existing marketing strategy theories primarily include the SWOT and 7Ps frameworks. The SWOT theory is primarily used by enterprises to analyze their internal Strengths, Weaknesses, as well as external Opportunities and Threats, facilitating the integration of external environments with internal resources. Specifically, leveraging internal strengths may include advanced management models, innovative services and products, robust resource advantages, and clear market positioning. Overcoming internal weaknesses involves reducing operational costs and promptly addressing management issues. Capitalizing on external opportunities encompasses policy support, expanding market demand, and industry transformation and upgrading. Mitigating external threats includes addressing severe industry homogenization and low brand awareness. The 7Ps theory, on the other hand, extends beyond the supply-side focus on the product itself to also consider consumer demand-side factors. The key elements include, product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, process. This framework is particularly critical for marketing in service-oriented industries [2].

2.2 Marketing Strategies Under Different Market Competition Structures

The market competition structure holds different implications for a company's marketing strategies. In perfectly competitive markets and differentiated competitive markets, corporate marketing strategies vary significantly.

In a perfectly competitive market, products are relatively homogeneous, and the primary competitive strategy is price competition. However, since price competition erodes corporate profits, companies should also focus more on online marketing and establishing a unique brand culture. Online marketing helps businesses expand their online channels and reach consumers more effectively, while brand culture fosters customer loyalty and provides a distinctive product experience amid homogeneous competition.

In a differentiated competitive market, companies must use scientific management methods to further strengthen their market positioning and clarify their development direction. Key approaches include improving production technology, diversifying product offerings, and enhancing product distinctiveness, thereby avoiding homogeneous competition within the industry [3].

2.3 Marketing Strategies in the Information Age

In the information age, the internet and social media have become critical factors influencing corporate marketing management. These platforms not only transform how businesses interact with consumers but also provide brands with a space to showcase themselves and reach potential customers. Social media platforms like Weibo and WeChat have emerged as vital channels for companies to promote their products and services. Internet marketing offers platforms for targeted advertising, enabling businesses to create highly personalized ads based on users' online behaviors and preferences.

At the same time, consumers can now easily share their reviews and feedback about products or services through social media, offering companies a direct channel to understand consumer needs and responses. Additionally, businesses can leverage social media for market research to gain deeper insights into consumer demands and market trends. By analyzing data from these platforms, companies can derive profound insights about their target audience, allowing them to develop more effective marketing strategies.

In the information age, for businesses to secure a competitive edge in the fierce market, they must strengthen marketing management, actively drive innovation and transformation in their marketing approaches, and prioritize adjusting their organizational structures and marketing strategies. Moreover, they must fully utilize modern technologies to enhance marketing efficiency and effectiveness [4].

2.4 Characteristics of the Concert Industry

From the perspective of distribution patterns, the demand for concerts nationwide exhibits a "multi-core, highly dispersed" structural feature. This means that high-demand cities are prominent, with multiple national central cities and economically developed cities in the eastern, central, and western regions serving as core hubs, while less-demand cities are widespread and distributed in a scattered pattern.

Concert demand is concentrated in eastern and central cities, accounting for over 75% of the total demand. Specifically, eastern cities account for 55.86% of concert demand, central cities for 21.58%, western cities for 16.61%, and northeastern cities for 5.96%. The level of concert demand among cities shows a positive gradient distribution across regions, ranked as follows: eastern > central > northeastern > western cities. The average concert demand for these regions is 270,000, 13,400, 73,700, and 73,500, respectively [5]. The demand for the concert industry is also influenced by factors such as population, government investment, residents' income, and the level of service industry development.

- **Population:** The larger the resident population, the greater the potential audience. For instance, densely populated cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Chengdu exhibit high concert demand, while less populated non-central cities in western regions show lower demand. Since concerts are profit-driven events, audience market size is a critical factor in venue selection, prompting organizers to prioritize cities with sufficient audience bases. Thus, population scale plays a dominant role.
- **Government Policies:** Supported policy can diversify concert offerings and energize performers, thereby stimulating demand. Increased fiscal investment improves venues and public infrastructure, enhancing convenience and comfort for audiences. These improvements boost the overall experience, encouraging repeat attendance.
- **Residents' Income:** Higher urban incomes and stronger purchasing power correlate with greater likelihood of concert attendance. Cities with high per capita GDP typically feature vibrant economic activity and robust productivity, enabling governments to allocate more fiscal resources toward public infrastructure. This, in turn, elevates the quality of the performance environment and drives demand growth.
- **Service Industry Development:** Cities with advanced service industries typically offer efficient, convenient, and visitor-friendly comprehensive systems, providing superior service products. Consequently, service industry development is closely tied to concert demand. Additionally, tourism development relies on the "six elements" of travel—food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment. Tourist cities prioritize optimizing local service environments, and concerts, with their strong appeal to fan bases, often attract cross-city attendees. This places demands on the host region's transportation, dining, retail, and lodging sectors, making tourism metrics a significant influencer of concert demand [6].

In summary, these interrelated factors collectively shape the demand dynamics of the concert industry.

The consumption characteristics of concert-goers also directly influence the success of concerts. From the perspective of consumption motivation, audiences typically attend concerts out of admiration or affection for a particular star. For example, the songs of veteran singers may have accompanied a generation's growth, creating a strong nostalgic desire that drives consumption. From the perspective of consumption cognition, concert audiences are predominantly aged 18-35, a demographic that seeks novelty and individuality. These consumers are highly aware of concert-related information, especially regarding their favorite artists. They actively follow updates about these performers, and once concert information spreads within their social circles—particularly for events near their residence—it easily leads to collective consumption. Additionally, this age group is naturally curious and eager to try new experiences. They are straightforward in their preferences and drawn to distinctive personalities, making uniquely charismatic stars a focal point of their attention. Psychologically, they hold a positive and aspirational attitude toward high-engagement experiential products like concerts. They generally perceive concerts as a youth-centric consumption category, exhibiting a strong emotional inclination to spend on such experiences [7].

3 Analysis

3.1 Market Size and Growth

China's performance market has experienced continuous growth since 2010, as shown in Figure 1. Although the growth momentum was interrupted during the three years of the pandemic (2020–2022), it rebounded explosively afterward. By 2024, the total revenue reached 60 billion yuan, with large-scale concerts (those with 5,000 or more attendees) contributing over 26 billion yuan in box office revenue—a year-on-year increase of 78.1%. The number of attendees exceeded 29 million, marking a 45.0% growth, making it the most prominent category in the performance market in terms of box office performance.

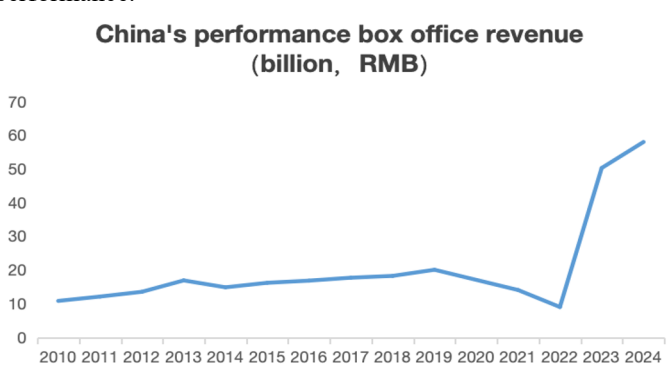


Fig. 1. Total Revenue of China's Performance Box

3.2 Consumption Characteristics

Geographically, in 2024, China's large-scale concerts were primarily concentrated in urban clusters such as Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta, and the Sichuan-Chongqing region. These areas collectively accounted for 63.5% of the nation's total ticket revenue, with the Yangtze River Delta region seeing its ticket revenue increase year-on-year to 31.4%. Provinces and municipalities including Guangdong, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Beijing, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Fujian, and Chongqing each surpassed 1 billion yuan in large-scale concert ticket revenue for the year. At the city level, Shanghai continued to lead the nation in ticket sales. Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Taiyuan performed strongly in 2024, breaking into the top 10 cities for ticket revenue. Concerts also drove population mobility and tourism demand, with cross-city attendance for large-scale concerts reaching 64.2% in 2024. Over 50% of attendees went to concerts with companions, highlighting the social nature of concert-going. In terms of budget, Chinese residents typically allocated between 1,001 and 3,000 yuan for concert-related expenses, with the majority of spending going toward accommodation, dining, and transportation.

From a temporal perspective, the concert market also exhibits distinct seasonal characteristics. Taking 2023 as an example, the popularity of concert-related topics surged rapidly after July 2023. The summer season represents the peak period for the concert market, with sustained high demand making concerts a "traffic magnet" for cultural tourism recovery in host cities. This seasonal pattern provides important insights for the planning and layout of the concert market.

Demographically, the majority of concert audiences are female and under the age of 35. In 2024, women accounted for 66.1% of large-scale concert attendees, while those under 35 made up 78.4% of the audience.

In terms of consumption frequency, 16% of attendees watched large-scale concerts twice within the year, marking a 2.8% year-on-year increase. Those attending three or more concerts accounted for 9.2%, up 2.2% year-on-year. Approximately half of all concert ticket revenue was contributed by attendees who went to two or more concerts.

3.3 Competitive Landscape

The booming concert market has attracted significant capital inflows, leading to a surge in the number of performance brokerage-related enterprises and intensifying market competition. In the first half of 2024 alone, over 3,000 new performance brokerage firms were established nationwide, marking a 40% increase compared to 2013 levels. Amid this fierce competition, the industry exhibits a pronounced "head effect". Top-tier cities and star artists continue to dominate, with their concerts selling out rapidly. Second-tier cities and less prominent artists face more fragmented competition, leading to unsold tickets for less prominent artists.

From the perspective of artists, the competitive landscape of the concert industry reveals a high concentration of performance resources in the hands of a few top-tier artists, resulting in a relatively rigid market structure for large-scale concerts. These headliners, with their massive fan bases and strong market appeal, can effortlessly

attract large audiences and sponsors. This dynamic creates significant challenges for emerging and mid-tier artists, who struggle to secure sufficient performance opportunities and resource support in the highly competitive large-scale concert market. Consequently, their number of shows and box office revenue remain relatively limited.

From the perspective of performance cities, the competitive landscape of the concert industry varies significantly. In first-tier cities, concerts often continue to sell out and remain highly popular due to factors such as signing star artists, a large consumer base of concert-goers, and well-established concert infrastructure. Although the concert market in second- and third-tier cities has enormous potential, it also faces issues of excessive competition. Numerous promoters have flooded these markets, leading to an oversupply of performances, with some concerts struggling to achieve satisfactory attendance rates. For example, in certain second- and third-tier cities, multiple concerts may be held simultaneously during the same period, dispersing the audience. As a result, concerts with lower visibility are forced to attract audiences by lowering ticket prices, thereby squeezing profit margins and even leading to losses.

3.4 Marketing Strategy

In the face of fierce market competition in the concert industry, performers and artists need to adopt differentiated competitive strategies, pay attention to exploring their own characteristics and advantages, create unique performance brands and styles, and avoid homogeneous competition. At the same time, we will strengthen innovation and development, explore new performance forms, content and business models, so as to attract more attention and love from the audience, and improve our own market competitiveness.

With the rapid development of information technology, China's concert industry is gradually entering a new stage of digitalization and intelligence. Informatization has not only changed the publicity method and ticketing channels of the concert, but also reshaped the interaction between the audience and the performance, thus putting forward new challenges and opportunities for the traditional marketing strategy. The wide application of social media platforms has become an important tool for concert marketing. Weibo, WeChat, TikTok, Bilibili and other platforms provide real-time interaction and viral dissemination opportunities for concerts. The organizer can publish artist dynamics, behind-the-scenes tidbits, rehearsal videos and other content through these platforms, which not only improves user stickiness, but also enhances the visibility and topicality of performance activities. For example, some large-scale concerts will release warm-up videos on TikTok a few months in advance to drive the audience to discuss through KOL and form a strong "social fever". The application of big data and artificial intelligence makes concert marketing more accurate and personalized. By analyzing users' interest preferences, consumption behavior, browsing records and other data, the organizer can accurately advertise and push information, thus improving the conversion rate. For example, online ticketing platforms such as Damai.com and Xiudong will recommend performances of similar artists base on users' ticketing records to realize the customized marketing of "thousands of people and thousands of faces". At the same time, AI customer service and intelligent question and answer

system have also improved the audience's ticketing experience and service efficiency. In addition, the online and offline integrated marketing strategy in the information age is also becoming more and more mature. Concerts are no longer limited to live viewing. Many organizers have begun to try online live broadcast, AR/VR interaction, immersive viewing experience and other ways to expand the user group. Especially after the epidemic, the "online + offline" hybrid mode has become a new trend, which not only meets the needs of the audience who cannot be present in person, but also brings new sources of income and brand exposure opportunities for the organizers.

As a cultural phenomenon, the value of concerts is not only limited to the concert itself, but also extends to all aspects of the concert-related value chain. We can actively develop cultural and creative products around the concert, such as special cultural shirts for concerts, fluorescent sticks, etc., to extend the concert value chain and improve the surrounding income driven by the concert.

3.5 The outlook of the Concert Industry

The concert industry may continue to be popular in the future with the change of consumer habit, and the market size will maintain rapid growth. However, as analyzed above, the competition in the concert industry is becoming more and more fierce, and the head effect is gradually obvious. With the intensification of competition, the future concert industry can carry out differentiated competition, digital transformation, and peripheral development to provide high-quality concert products, so as to survive in the fierce market competition.

4 Conclusion

On the basis of summarizing the relevant literature on marketing and concert industry characteristics, this article analyzes the industry characteristics of Chinese concerts and puts forward relevant marketing suggestions. China's concert industry is growing rapidly and showing the characteristics of high concentration. First-tier cities and first-tier artists get the most audience resources, but the attention of small and medium-sized artists' concerts is low. The concert audience is mainly women and young people. At the same time, there are more repeated consumption, that is, most consumers will watch the concert many times, showing strong user stickiness.

Under the characteristics of such industries, I put forward the following marketing suggestions. For concerts of small and medium-sized artists and second- and third-tier cities, differentiated competition should be implemented, grasp their own label characteristics, and avoid homogeneous competition. Concerts should also actively embrace digital transformation, use new media platforms in publicity, sales and other links to improve the popularity of concerts. They can also provide opportunities for real-time interaction and dissemination of concerts through Weibo, WeChat, TikTok, Bilibili and other platforms. In addition to the concert itself, firm can actively develop cultural and creative products around the concert, such as special cultural shirts for the concert,

fluorescent sticks, etc., so as to extend the value chain of the concert and improve the peripheral income driven by the concert.

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