

Exploration of the Path of Creating An Urban Cultural IP: A Case Study of “ZUI Xi’an” City Marketing Campaigns

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Abstract: As an ancient city with a history and culture of over thousands of years, Xi’an is frequently exposed on various media recently, as the Xi’an government constantly creates new cultural IPs with characteristics of Xi’an, such as Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional, World Xi’an Entrepreneurs Convention, Global Hard & Core Technology Innovation Conference, City of Music, City of Museum, City of Literati, characteristic town, Global Programmers’ Festival, Xi’an International Marathon, and New First-Tier City. Creating new IPs enables Xi’an to continuously improve its ranking among Chinese cities in terms of cultural, commercial and technological charm. The IP-originated city marketing of the “Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional” makes use of one of traditional Chinese festivals-Spring Festival to advertise the charm of Xi’an to overseas, boost China’s cultural confidence, and strengthen the influence of overseas propagation. The author takes IP marketing event as an example and sorts out the marketing model of the new IP of urban culture of Xi’an.

1. Introduction

2017 China Urban Operation Forum formally proposed the concept of urban IP, and in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping made a major judgement that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, during this significant historical period, there is a growing need for a good life, and creating an urban IP and making urban life more beautiful are exactly a symbol of China’s urban operation entering a new era. As the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, Xi’an is endowed with the new role as the bellwether in the construction of Silk Road Economic Belt. Creating a new tag of the city of Xi’an is not only people’s need for urban culture propagation, but also the call of the times.

Urban IP is soft IP, which originated from the English legal term “intellectual property”, which means “ownership of intellectual property”. Born in Europe, the concept of soft IP was first proposed in European Patent Forum, Munich, Germany, in 2007, and international explanations of soft IP are more in the fields of intellectual property and refer to copyright, trademark right and other rights regarding to art and other work-related concepts. Figuratively speaking, soft IP focuses more on the realms of culture and art, including film and television, literature, art and pictograph.

In recent years, many cities have created their own soft IPs, such as Qingdao Beer Festival, Wuzhen Theatre Festival, Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, Tour of Qinghai Lake, Xuyi Lobster Festival and so forth, the most successful one is none other than “Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional” in 2018.

2. City marketing creates a unique tag-like IP

The 1st Global Hard & Core Technology Innovation Conference labels Xi’an as fashionable, modern and technological, which is a successful move of city image. For Xi’an, these labels are not only a new name card for the city, but more importantly, they are a new track and overtaking line for chasing and surpassing. Where do these city labels come from? These are inseparable from the urban IP created by city marketing campaign “The Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and

Traditional”.

Based on profound historical and cultural deposits of this ancient city, “The Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional” was initiated by Xi’an municipal Party committee and municipal government. Based on the Spring Festival, a traditional Chinese festival, they planned and conducted a series of city marketing campaigns. Undoubtedly, this marketing created the new IP of this city and let us see the results of this marketing with several sets of data.

2.1 Various data as a tourist city reached historical high

According to media report, Xi’an received 126.949 million tourists in total during the Spring Festival vacation in 2018, with a year-on-year growth of 66.56%, with a tourist income of 10.315 billion yuan, with a year-on-year growth of 137.08%; Ctrip.com and Qunar recently co-released “2017 China Tourism Reputation Ranking”, where Xi’an surpassed very competitive cities like Chengdu and Hangzhou, ranking third behind Shanghai and Beijing. According to Report on Spring Festival Travel in the Year of Dog released by Lvmama.com, Xi’an ranked fourth among top 10 long-distance tourist destination cities in China. Both the number of tourists and tourist income increased significantly.

2.2 Old and new media make concerted efforts, media exposure is increased quickly

During the vacation, programs like CCTV’ Xinwen Lianbo reported about events such as Great Tang All Day Mall “Modern Chinatown” of Xi’an, and Tang Paradise Lantern Show for 15 times successively. The propagation is on all dimensions. Paper media, TV, internet, brochure, LED screen and other media are made full use of to implement promotion mix. Xi’an TV Station, Xi’an Daily, Xi’an Evening News, Xi’an Release and other WeChat official accounts of the city at all levels, Weibo new media, NetEase app, Toutiao.com and so on continuously pushed the publicity themed on “The Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional”, and compiled and published 100,000 brochures titled 2018 The Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional— Xi’an Chinese New Year Gala & Folk Culture in the New Era Exhibition, which were put in starred hotels, visitor centers of different levels, farmhouses, homestays and commercial complexes. Special attention is paid to the influence of Weibo KOLs and internet celebrities, successfully planned and organized hundreds of Weibo KOLs and internet celebrities to attend a Chinese New Year event in Xi’an, and they were pleasantly surprised and could not stop taking photos and posting. As of 3 pm on February 21, Weibo topic “I spent Chinese New Year in Xi’an” initiated by Xi’an Tourism Development Committee had over 84 million views, among the top three in national tourism ranking.

Of course, the success of this urban IP cannot do without orchestration and operation. The secret of the city marketing of Xi’an is to make full use of its exceptional historical and cultural resources and brand, precisely grasp the Spring Festival, the oldest festival of the Chinese nation, and making ingenious use of various kinds of communication means.

3. Analysis of the path of creating IP through city marketing

This marketing took the following steps:

3.1 Send cordial invitations

Wang Yongkang, secretary of Standing Committee of CPC Provincial Committee and municipal Party committee, sent out invitations to the domestic and the overseas, inviting Chinese and foreign tourists to come to Xi’an to celebrate the Spring Festival. According to the WeChat official account “Xi’an Release”, you can see secretary Yongkang was present in the event “The Spring Festival in Xi’an, Most Cultural and Traditional” almost every day from Chinese New Year’s Eve to January 6 of the lunar calendar. All districts and counties, development areas and municipal departments in the city collaborated and made concerted efforts to plan and introduces more than 180 activities in 18 categories and implement lighting project and city beautification project simultaneously. This is the fundamental organizational guarantee for the success of this city

marketing campaign.

3.2 All departments make joint efforts

Since January 8, 2018, led by the Xi'an Tourism Development Committee, in collaboration with Qujiang New District, Xi'an Tourism Group, Hancheng Lake Scenic Area and other departments, promotion event for "2018 Xi'an Chinese New Year Gala & Folk Culture in the New Era Exhibition" was conducted in big cities successively; advertising themed on "Come to Xi'an to spend Chinese New Year" was published on 12 newspapers, namely Beijing Evening News, Xinmin Evening News of Shanghai, Southern Metropolis Daily of Guangzhou, Chongqing Daily, Yanzhao Metropolis Daily of Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan Evening News, Jinan Daily, Xiaoxiang Morning News of Changsha, Chutian Metropolis Daily of Wuhan, Zhengzhou Evening News, Xiamen Evening News, Nanjing Daily, and earnestly invited all the people in China to Xi'an during the Spring Festival, to feel the atmosphere of ancient capital and experience the most traditional and the most festive "Spring Festival in Xi'an". This is the forceful tool and crucial means to make this marketing campaign a success.

3.3 Tell culture with "culture"

This campaign revolves around the core connotation of "The Spring Festival in Xi'an, Most Cultural and Traditional", digs deep into festival culture in Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties, propriety and music culture, and combines with internationalized elements, focuses on carrying out cultural activities represented by Great Tang All Day Mall, Tang Paradise, Tang Temple of Heaven and Yongxingfang, and over 30 cultural activities in various forms with rich connotations, including Daming Palace National Heritage Park, Louguandao Culture Scenic Area, City Wall Scenic Area, and Spring Festival Fair of Lintong Tang Huaqing City among ten greatest scenic spots.

3.4 Hard technology label wins applause

The light show of 300 unmanned aerial vehicles presented by the Tang Paradise is a perfect combination of modern technology and traditional culture, pushes the event to a new high and wins much applause. This is the root to gain popularity and attract traffic. It gives play to natural historical and cultural advantages of Xi'an, intensively demonstrates the whole new image of Xi'an in the new era, improves the urban vitality, fashionableness and glamor, interprets the quintessence of Chinese culture, leads the new festival trend, and rejuvenates the construction of Xi'an. Besides this city marketing, Xi'an has inherent characteristics of cultural IP, which can be dug deeply and utilized.

4. Xi'an tells about millennial cultural IP itself

4.1 Static presentation of cultural IPs of urban architecture

The buildings of a city are the epitome of Xi'an, and this ancient city is exactly a treasure of cultural IPs. How to explore this treasure and invigorate the culture embodied in architecture to let it become the symbol of Xi'an and attractive and valuable IP of this city is an urgent problem to be solved. Its traffic and tourist routes are the best paths to link cultural IPs of these buildings. "One Station, One Scene" of Xi'an Metro Line 3 reproduces historical and cultural IPs.

The characteristic of "one station, one scene" of Xi'an Metro Line 3, the third line operating in Xi'an, is the best exploitation of its architectural, cultural and historical IPs as well as the best interpretation of the symbol of "Silk Road Culture". For example:

Yuhuazhai Station Xi'an Metro Line 3

Yuhuazhai, the legend of a fish changing into a dragon, dragon-shaped pattern is abstract and simplified. Since the Tang dynasty, candidates heading to the capital city for the imperial examination would come here to worship, praying for their success in the exam like "a fish leaping over the dragon gate". The design uses the combination of propitiousness of carp turning into a dragon and modern urban development to display the vigorous modern cultural ambience represented by this historical place.

Yuhuazhai—Italy (Roma) Theme: Silk Road Beauty

Design description: The work shows traditional costumes of major countries and ethnic groups along the Silk Road, to display abundant material and cultural wealth brought by the ancient trade route world-famous for silk trade to people of all nationalities along the Road. Daming Palace on the background shows full support and outstanding contribution of a powerful country to the Silk Road.

Zhangbabeilu Station Xi'an Metro Line 3

Lines are used to present a busy and fast-growing city, and the pattern in blue and white check reflects rapid development of technology over time.

Zhangbabeilu—Greece Theme: Silk Road and Peace

Design description: The work takes sports as the main contents, and publicizes the Olympic spirit with station culture. The picture takes five interlocked rings and Parthenon Temple that stand for Olympics as the background, and chief elements are extracted from figures in ancient Greece vase paintings and combine with modern sports, displaying the spirit of modern civilization of friendship, solidarity, fair competition.

Yanpingmen Station Xi'an Metro Line 3

It takes displaying Tang style as the design thought and reflects gracefulness, generosity and diversity of the glorious age of the Tang Dynasty. Abstract graphics and geometric curves are used to demonstrate morbidezza, fullness and luxury of the Tang style. A combination of ancient and modern elements is throughout the design of Line 3.

Yanpingmen—Russia Theme: Friend in North

Design description: This work focuses on showing characteristic cultural heritages of Russia, including Moscow Kremlin, Saint Basil's Cathedral, Moscow State University, matryoshka doll and ballet, and combines with Russia's advantages in aerospace and energy, reproducing its modern development with several key points. A speeding train in the front embodies friendly relations and cooperation between China and Russia in the "Silk Road Economic Belt".

For cultural IPs of Xi'an, besides static presentation of urban architecture, the cultural and creative industries also thrive. The city of Chang'an used to be the capital of emperors and city of commoners, and as the starting point of the Silk Road, thousands of years of sediments and deposits of the Chinese nation are continued here. Such historical depth is precisely the historical and cultural value of the urban IP of Xi'an. Reasonable exploitation of these historical and cultural IPs helps form a cultural and creative industry chain and successfully realize, and it is another important path to create urban IP of Xi'an.

4.2 Dynamic interpretation of cultural IP in the cultural and creative industries

Tourist attractions such as Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, Zhonggulou, Huaqing Hot Spring and Tang Paradise reproducing the scene of the Tang dynasty all have conducted secondary development of IP asset on the basis of the exploration of historical and cultural IPs of the original architecture and reached realization. The specific method is to use existing historical and cultural IPs to develop plays and successfully realize them. For example: historic show Qin of the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor Theatre; Everlasting Regret of the Huaqing Hot Spring; the play Dreaming Back to Tang Dynasty of the Tang Paradise is all the secondary development of such IPs. Without doubt, realization in this way made a contribution to tourist GDP of Xi'an.

Meanwhile, some films and television IP in Xi'an in recent years contributed to the symbolization of the city. For example, movie and television IPs such as White Deer Plain and The Qin Empire III were widely acclaimed after broadcasted, which further interiorized the symbolization of the city of Xi'an. In 2017, The Qin Empire III produced by Qujiang Qin Empire Pictures Investment Co., Ltd. was broadcasted during prime time on CCTV and the audience commented that "this serious historical TV series demonstrates the natural greatness of a soul". In the first half of 2017, TV series White Deer Plain invested by Qujiang Film and Television Investment (Group) Co., Ltd. was aired on Jiangsu TV and Anhui Satellite TV. The TV series brought Shaanxi style into fashion on screen, with a high ranking on Douban.com and a constantly

rising audience rating, and it is considered as a conscientious production by the audience. While another TV series *Nothing Gold Can Stay* produced by Qujiang Film and Television Investment (Group) Co., Ltd. was broadcast on Dragon TV and Jiangsu TV, then as a legend, this TV series first displayed uprightness and honesty of Shanxi businessmen on screen, becoming the “king” on screen. These TV series brought Xi’an new labels, such as city of culture and historical city, and residents living in this city are also labelled as enthusiastic, upright, generous and hospitable.

5. Summary

A scholar once believed: “City is like a book without page numbers that one is able to feel free to read, but often forgets how to read. There is an interesting relationship between urban attribute and IP attribute. City wants resources, namely contents, IP produces assets; city wants vitality, IP is about popularity; Where is the market of so-called urban IP? Who are consumers of urban IP? All these can operate and create an urban IP by means of creative design, and it may be embodied as a public space, or infrastructure, or software.”[6] Every city has its own story, and how to be a city that can tell the story is exactly the objective of the city of Xi’an at this stage. Meanwhile, it is the ultimate goal for Xi’an to constantly create new IPs about its urban culture.

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