

Analysis of the Business Model and Marketing Strategy of Internet Celebrity Tourism Spot: A Case Study of Hongshan Zoo

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Abstract. With the recovery of the economy, the cultural tourism market is developing strongly. People's living standards have improved, and their demands for spiritual life have become richer and richer, resulting in higher requirements for cultural tourism. The development of internet technology has brought about the development of new media, and people have shown stronger trust in UGC (User Generated Content). Coupled with the addition of official forces, a series of internet-famous scenic spots have emerged. By analyzing the business models and marketing strategies of internet-famous scenic spots, we can understand market trends, grasp consumer psychology, provide references for marketing activities, and guide scenic spots in shaping their image, enhancing their popularity and influence, thereby attracting the attention of more potential tourists and increasing visitor flow and revenue. In addition, by spreading positive energy and advocating the concept of civilized tourism, we can promote the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Based on Meyrowitz's theory of media space and the analysis of emotional response behavior, this article employs quantitative analysis and comparative analysis methods to elaborate on the shaping of internet-famous scenic spot images by the internet and new media, as well as how emotional marketing in internet-famous scenic spots captures the emotional pain points of tourists to establish emotional connections with them. It is pointed out that building a comprehensive media matrix and enhancing the sense of public participation, experience, and interaction in the marketing process can better establish emotional connections with them.

Keywords: all-media communication; emotional activities; cultural travel.

1. Introduction

In China, the 14th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development calls for the integration of new media and the tourism industry. Driven by the wave of digitization, internet-famous scenic spots have cleverly utilized new media platforms to spread the beauty and stories of their attractions to everyone's eyes, attracting the attention of a large number of tourists and gradually becoming a new darling of the market. The business model of internet-famous scenic spots focuses on personalization and differentiation, creating unique tourism products by deeply exploring the cultural connotation and characteristics of the attractions. The marketing strategy, on the other hand, emphasizes emotional interaction with tourists, utilizing social media, short videos, and other new media channels to transform their travel experiences into vivid and interesting stories that resonate and gain attention from a wide audience. Additionally, internet-famous scenic spots actively explore deep integration with tourism and non-tourism industries, collaborating with culture, entertainment, and other sectors to provide tourists with a more diverse and enriching travel experience. This innovative business model and marketing strategy not only enhance the popularity and influence of internet-famous scenic spots but also inject new vitality into the overall development of the tourism industry. Therefore, studying the business model and marketing strategy of internet-famous scenic spots is crucial for promoting innovation and development in the tourism industry. The research on internet-famous scenic spots has long emerged. Based on the content analysis of online texts, Wen Jiemin and Yu Ying concluded that unique landscapes and activity experiences are the main reasons for the popularity of scenic spots [1]. Lan Chaoxu summarized that creating a sense of place in scenic spots through new media can bring tourists a higher level of satisfaction in body and mind [2].

During the epidemic, Hongshan Zoo closed for 51 days, resulting in a direct economic loss of more than 13 million yuan. After that, the zoo used network media to broadcast live, tell animal stories, establish cultural and creative products, and launch a series of peripheral products of animal stars to achieve self-rescue. In 2023, the number of zoo visitors reached 6.7 million, an increase of 331% year on year. Based on the case of it, this research analyzes the importance and urgency of building online popular scenic spots from the perspectives of policy and market environments. It expounds on the business models and marketing strategies of online popular scenic spots from three aspects: the all-media matrix, emotional marketing, and expanding the boundaries of the tourism industry. Finally, it provides suggestions for scenic spot marketing.

2. Marketing Environment of the Internet Celebrity Tourism Spot in the Digital Era

2.1. Policy Environment

In March 2022, the 14th Five-Year plan for Tourism Development formulated by the National Development and Reform Commission of China explicitly proposed to strengthen the promotion and dissemination of new media, innovate the domestic tourism promotion and dissemination mechanism, and promote modernized, market-oriented, and professionalized operations [3]. Absolutely, this policy directive underscores the crucial importance of marketing for scenic spots in the digital era. The promotional model of “new media + tourism” has guided tourism promotion efforts in various regions to continuously introduce new ideas, seek innovative methods, and create new highlights [4].

At the same time, local governments, national officials, and central media outlets have all joined in tourism promotion, responding to national policies. The Xiamen government is preparing to shoot a vertical short series as a means of promoting the city. County magistrates from various regions have spoken on behalf of their hometowns, tying their personal IPs to the city IPs. In the spring of 2023, Zibo barbecue became popular, and central media outlets including Xinhua News Agency and People's Daily also focused their cameras on Zibo. National policies have led the new direction of tourism promotion. In the digital era, utilizing new media to create popular scenic spots will become an important lever for tourism promotion.

2.2. Marketing Environment

According to the 52nd “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2023, the number of Chinese internet users has reached 1.079 billion, with 1.026 billion users of short video platforms, representing a user utilization rate of 95.2% [5]. Combined with the continuously expanding coverage of fiber-optic broadband networks, the scaled application of 5G networks, and the professional operation of the new media industry, it can be seen that there are promising prospects for the development of new media. Integrating cultural and tourism promotion into new media and expanding the application of new media to cultural and tourism promotion will inject vitality into both sides [4].

According to the National Data Network, the number of domestic tourists in China reached 4.89 billion in 2023[6]. The increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry has prompted scenic spots to utilize new media for promotion to gain a competitive edge. Additionally, travelers are eager to avoid crowds and seek out lesser-known destinations. The popularity of ecological travel, cultural travel, and vacation travel has skyrocketed, and new trends such as urban night tours, urban food experiences, and Citywalk have become important components of tourism promotion in many cities, with a growing demand for deeper cultural experiences. In the digital era, the way content is produced has been disrupted, and anyone can become a producer of internet content, with every place having the potential to become a source of tourism promotion [7]. Utilizing new media to showcase the cultural connotation of scenic spots from multiple angles through a personal perspective is an effective means of responding to this trend.

2.3. Social Environment

The National Health Insight Report indicates that emotional issues have become the second largest problem plaguing the nation in 2023. The increasing social pressure has led to the spread of anxiety, while social isolation has increased public dependency on the internet. Therefore, the public is more willing to pay a premium for emotional satisfaction, and the social aspect of travel has also greatly enhanced. Ajzen and Driver believe that emotion is an important component of leisure travel experience, while Cohen and Areni regard emotion as an emotional state characterized by intense plots, feelings related to specific references, and inciting specific reactive behaviors [8]. Compared to rational, logical purchases are more based on emotional, sensual impulses. The emotions generated by people during leisure travel will directly affect tourists' consumption behaviors and willingness [8].

3. Marketing Strategies of Internet Celebrity Tourism Spot

3.1. Building a Full-Media Matrix

In "The Disappearance of Geography", Meyrowitz analyzed that electronic media did not affect society through its content, but through changing the geographical scene of social life. Electronic media redefined "geography", which is both the geographical space of physical space and the social space. The content on the internet is not only a simple reproduction of urban space, but also the excavation and creative construction of the meaning network behind urban space [9]. So, in the context of media, the content on the internet constructs, identifies, and disseminates the image of the city.

According to QuestMobile data, as of September 2023, the de-duplicated active user base of the five typical new media platforms--Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, and Weibo, has reached 1.088 billion, with a penetration rate of 88.9%, making them the primary channels for consumers to receive information [10]. Compared to traditional media's forms of tourism promotion through text, images, and promotional videos, new media creates comprehensive and all-angle dissemination through copywriting, photos, short and long videos, and live streaming. Creating different content on different platforms enhances its appeal, dissemination, targeting, and interactivity [7].

The Hongshan Zoo has constructed a comprehensive media matrix encompassing multiple new media platforms to ensure a wide coverage of audience groups. Each platform has its own focus. With the WeChat public account as the mainstay, other platforms serve as extensions or diversifications of the content ideas from the public account. The public account maintains long-term fan relationships with lively, interesting, and accessible content. Given Douyin's attribute as a short-video platform with diverse user demographics, it focuses on animals and shares interesting daily moments at the zoo. Little Red Book, primarily featuring images and texts, focuses on cultural interaction and has launched a column called "Challenge Yourself to Know 3000 Animals". Across all platforms, "Zoo Live" is introduced, providing the public with opportunities to observe animals closely and interact with them directly, enhancing the authenticity and interactivity of the experience.

In essence, the comprehensive media matrix serves as an online platform for dialogue with the public, allowing people to form a general impression of the scenic area before visiting. By creating a specific scenario, a cross-temporal link between the public and the scenic area is achieved, thereby closely bridging the psychological gap between the public and the scenic area before even physically reducing the spatial distance. With culture as the medium and visuals as the driver, the two coexist harmoniously in the multi-sensory relationship of the comprehensive media [4]. Through the selection and processing of the scenic area's unique cultural elements and landscape symbols, the meaning of the scenic symbols is enriched [4]. Under such comprehensive media dissemination, the public has a deeper impression of the scenic area and a stronger desire to visit it.

3.2. Social Pressure and Isolation Prompts Emotional Marketing of Tourism

The National Health Insight Report indicates that emotional issues have become the second largest problem plaguing the nation in 2023. The increasing social pressure has led to the spread of anxiety, while social isolation has increased public dependency on the internet. Therefore, the public is more willing to pay a premium for emotional satisfaction, and the social aspect of travel has also greatly enhanced. Ajzen and Driver believe that emotion is an important component of leisure travel experience, while Cohen and Areni regard emotion as an emotional state characterized by intense plots, feelings related to specific references, and inciting specific reactive behaviors [8]. Compared to rational, logical purchases are more based on emotional, sensual impulses. The emotions generated by people during leisure travel will directly affect tourists' consumption behaviors and willingness [8].

3.2.1. Emotional pain points.

As social pressure increases, people seek self-rescue and outlets for emotional venting. Tourism has become a way for more and more people to relax and release stress, reflecting their pursuit of emotional satisfaction and spiritual tranquility through travel. Therefore, wherever can create an instant emotional and stress vacuum, helping them temporarily escape from the anxiety of reality, is more likely to capture their hearts. Hongshan Zoo provides outdoor experiences and psychological healing for visitors by altering the park design and creating animal stars, accurately targeting the emotional pain points of the public.

The zoo believes that “a zoo is not a place to see animals, but a place to view animals”. The design of the park is not to make it easier for visitors to observe animals, but to restore their living environments as much as possible. As a result, visitors feel like they are really walking in the wild when they tour the zoo, and they can also observe many animals' natural behaviors in the wild. In this way, visitors can temporarily escape from the pressure and competition of modern cities in a relaxed environment, seeking self-identification and belongingness. Additionally, animals bring emotional healing and emotional sustenance to those who feel lonely, demonstrating the overflow of emotional value. Hongshan Zoo assigns unique personalities and stories to each animal, making them more approachable through this personalized approach. When the wolf king retired to the backyard, the sign read: “Latest News, Wolf Retired, Zhuangzhuang Left”. When animals want to strike, it would say, “It's a bit chilly today, I don't want to go out”. Although these are just signs, they allow visitors to hear the voices of the animals themselves. The humanistic care of Hongshan Zoo allows visitors to experience respect for life, conveying a positive attitude and values towards life, deeply connecting with the emotionally repressed and anxious crowd in modern society, which gives Hongshan Zoo a healing function.

3.2.2. Emotional link.

When making a purchase, consumers not only consider quality and price but also take into account emotional factors to achieve emotional satisfaction and psychological identification. Establishing an emotional connection means focusing on the consumer, exploring the humanistic care behind the product, and the underlying logic lies in evoking strong identification and emotional resonance among consumers to move them [11]. Applied to the tourism industry, it means providing visitors with unexpected experiences and emotional value beyond sightseeing and services, thereby constructing individual identity.

As the first zoo in China to abolish animal performances, Hongshan Zoo takes “caring for animals, respecting life, and revering nature” as its spiritual core, practices ESG, and deeply bonds with people who recognize its development philosophy. Hongshan Zoo focuses on animals and uses cultural and creative products as a medium to integrate love for animals into the design of these products. It tells the story of Hongshan's animal protection through these cultural and creative products, raising public awareness of animal protection issues. The zoo also organizes monthly themed events for different animals, conducting science popularization, promotion, and advocacy for the small animals cared for

by the zoo, in order to gain more attention and response to the protection of the natural ecological environment. It transforms boring scientific knowledge into interesting content and cute images, expressing the views of animals from a friend's perspective and human angle, evoking understanding and resonance from visitors, and enhancing audience comprehension and empathy. Hongshan Zoo has truly moved closer to everyone from the level of observation and cognition to the level of psychological and emotional connection, achieving effective communication between the scenic area and visitors. It restructures the physical space of the scenic area and incorporates emotional elements throughout, thereby creating a mediatized emotional space [12]. Originally pure tourist activities have also become emotional activities with richer meanings, thus inspiring tourists to pay for the groups and values they identify with.

3.3. Extension of Tourism Spot Concepts and Innovation in Business Models

With the influx of capital from various sources into the tourism industry, both unique cultures and modern technology have injected new vitality into scenic areas. The revolution in scenarios has made everything related to cultural tourism, and cultural tourism has empowered everything. Consumers' new needs have prompted the emergence of new ways of playing, and new species and new formats have created new cultural tourism. Scenic areas are transforming from success based on scale to success based on innovation.

Consumers are also constantly acknowledging this change. For example, places like museums and art galleries, which used to be infrequently visited, have now become popular choices for cultural tourism consumers. The more obvious change is in shopping malls. In the past, people went to shopping malls mainly for shopping, but now their purpose has shifted to playing, relaxing, and killing time. Some shopping centers have even become tourist destinations. The Grandview Mall in Guangzhou, once the largest commercial complex in Asia, is about to be renamed Grandview Planet. This commercial complex, which attracts 50 million visitors annually, has become a "world-class urban cultural center and cultural tourism destination" and has been recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China as one of the first national-level night cultural tourism consumption clusters.

This roaming-style tourism, which differs from traditional check-in tourism, implies the audience's need to delve deeply into the urban texture, explore every scenic spot, and witness every landscape [13]. This means that in the current era where the audience values the experience, scenic areas have abandoned the previous concept of emphasizing the construction of iconic independent attractions, and instead strive to create three-dimensional and comprehensive landscapes.

4. Suggestions and Insights for Tourism Spot Development

Firstly, use full-media channels. Promoting across different platforms to expand audience coverage. Creating various types and styles of content based on the characteristics of each platform, while also focusing on producing high-quality and refined content for effective promotion. Traditional media should not be overlooked, leveraging their high credibility and convenience to achieve comprehensive audience coverage. Strengthening content marketing by utilizing PGC (Professional Generated Content) and UGC to create travel guides and travel vlogs. Showcasing the unique charm and cultural connotation of scenic spots through story-telling methods to enhance their popularity and reputation.

Secondly, target the intended audience precisely. Dividing tourist groups based on factors such as age, gender, and occupation, and conducting more detailed user profiling can help us more accurately identify user needs and establish deeper emotional connections with them. Additionally, we can utilize big data to analyze tourist behavior and needs and develop personalized promotional strategies accordingly.

Thirdly, plan immersive activities. Holding various scenic area promotional activities to provide immersive experiences for tourists, such as cultural festivals, food festivals, night tours, and inviting NPCs to enhance their sense of participation and experience. Establishing partnerships with related

tourism industries such as hotels and airlines to attract more tourists through promotional activities. Collaborating with other brands to create IP images and enhance synergistic effects.

5. Conclusion

The essence of the innovation in the business model and marketing strategy of popular tourist attractions lies in the deep excavation of tourism resources and the precise transmission of cultural connotation. It is crucial to accurately grasp market demand, cleverly utilize new media platforms, and attract tourists' attention and affection through empathy communication, so as to achieve the purpose of promoting the scenic area.

This research mainly explains the reasons for the emergence of internet-famous scenic spots. However, they also face some challenges. How to maintain long-term popularity and stand out in a fiercely competitive market are issues worthy of deep consideration. In the process of utilizing new media, ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of information and avoiding excessive commercialization are also issues that need to be pondered. Therefore, in future research, while exploring ways for internet-famous scenic spots to enhance their service quality and cultural connotations, it is also necessary to emphasize adhering to professional ethics to attract more tourists and promote the healthy and sustainable development of the cultural and tourism industry.

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