

Research on Music Festival Brand Marketing

-- A Case Study of Gapday Foshan Music Festival

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Abstract. With the end of COVID-19, China's music festival market has entered an explosive phase characterized by both "revenge growth" and structural transformation. This period has also exposed deep-seated industry challenges, including intensified homogeneous competition, low brand loyalty, and singular profit models. Taking the Foshan Gapday Music Festival as a typical case study, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of its brand development and marketing pathways through field research methods. The study comprehensively applies the 7Ps theory of service marketing to deconstruct its product portfolio and on-site experience management, employs SWOT analysis to clarify its internal and external competitive landscape, and utilizes integrated marketing theory to evaluate the effectiveness of its online and offline multi-channel communication efforts. The research aims to systematically summarize the successes and shortcomings of the Gapday Music Festival in terms of brand positioning, experience design, and marketing integration. Furthermore, from a long-term development perspective focused on building brand equity, achieving differentiated competition, and fostering cultural-commercial synergy, the study explores how precise brand positioning can transform the Foshan Gapday Music Festival into an enduring brand. Ultimately, this research transcends the scope of a single case study by seeking to illuminate the path and paradigm shift of China's music festival industry—from pursuing short-term traffic dividends to striving for long-term brand value—thereby providing strategic insights for industry practitioners to build core competitiveness in the new consumption era.

Keywords: Music Festival; Brand Positioning; Marketing Strategy; Differentiated Operation.

1. Introduction

After the COVID-19, the experience demands that people had suppressed for a long time were released in a concentrated manner, directly driving the China's live music market into a stage of rapid growth. People relieve stress and temporarily escape from real life by participating in music festivals [1]. Data shows that in 2023, a total of 560 music festivals were held across the country, setting a new record high and doubling compared to 2019, with a cumulative audience of 35 million people. However, market expansion has also brought about problems such as intensified homogeneous competition, insufficient experience innovation, and a focus on traffic while neglecting the content of music festivals [3].

The box office performance of the Gapday music festival hosted by Lu Han in Foshan was outstanding. On the Damai platform, the number of people who "wanted to watch" reached 750,000, setting a new record in recent years. Nearly 80,000 tickets were sold out within two days, driving over 300 million yuan in peripheral consumption. This demonstrates the extremely strong appeal and influence of the Gapday music Festival [4]. This is a typical event where the fan economy exploded driven by a celebrity's personal Intellectual Property(IP). The instant sellout of ticket sales and the high-intensity support consumption have become a phenomenon-level event with a strong short-term explosion. This article takes the Gapday music festival hosted by Lu Han in Foshan as an example to analyze how he carried out differentiated marketing and broke through problems such as homogenization.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Marketing Theory

Philip Kotler (1960), in his seminal work *Marketing Management*, defined marketing as "a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others." [5] Building upon Kotler's foundation, Bernard H. Booms & Mary J. Bitner (1981) proposed the 7Ps Marketing Mix. The framework comprises the following elements. Product: Encompasses both tangible goods and intangible services, including the core product, actual product, and augmented product. Price: Refers to pricing strategies that must consider not only production costs but also target market affordability, competitor pricing, desired brand positioning, and overall marketing objectives. Place: Denotes the entire process through which a product moves from production to consumption, addressing how and where consumers can access the product. Decisions involve channel types (direct, indirect, online, offline), coverage, inventory management, and logistics. Promotion: Comprises all communication activities aimed at informing the target market and persuading purchases. This includes advertising, sales promotions, public relations, brand image campaigns, and direct selling efforts to stimulate demand. People: Includes all individuals involved in service delivery who influence customer perceptions, such as employees, management, and even customers themselves. Process: Refers to the mechanisms, workflows, and procedures through which services are delivered, including customer participation. Physical Evidence: Encompasses all tangible elements within the service environment that make the service perceptible and reinforce its quality. This includes facilities (layout, decor), equipment, signage, promotional materials, and other visual media [6].

This study applies the 7Ps theory to analyze the marketing strategies of Gapday Foshan Music Festival.

2.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a systematic summary of marketing environment analysis. It is used for systematically evaluating the internal conditions and external environment of an organization. This method provides a basis for strategic formulation by sorting out four types of elements: internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats, and conducting matrix cross-analysis.

2.3 Integrated Marketing Communication Theory

Don Schultz (1993) proposed Integrated Marketing in the book *"Integrated Marketing Communications"*, which achieves more efficient market communication and better marketing effects by coordinating multiple marketing methods and channels [7]. This theory emphasizes the synergy among different marketing tools, channels and activities, enabling the overall effect to surpass the sum of the independent operations of each link. The core lies in organically integrating elements such as brand promotion, sales facilitation, and consumer relationship building to construct a unified and consistent brand image, targeting consumers, potential customers, and other internal and external target audiences, and conducting all-round communication with them. The ultimate goal is to establish and maintain a strong brand relationship, build long-term and stable relationships with consumers, and drive the enhancement of brand value [8].

3. Brand Positioning Analysis of the Foshan Music Festival

3.1 Market Positioning: The Three-Dimensional Construction of a "Relaxed Music Utopia"

Gapday Music Festival positions itself around the concept of "relaxation," building a unique operational system centered on emotional resonance, IP integration, and experience enhancement. By closely integrating with Foshan's local cultural resources, it has established a differentiated advantage:

1) Emotional Resonance: The music festival accurately captures the psychological need of contemporary young people to unwind in a fast-paced life. Through music performances, art installations, and social interactions, it creates a temporary haven of belonging. For example, large inflatable art installations themed "Flowers in the Cracks" are set up on-site, conveying the idea of "finding beauty under pressure" through visual language and enhancing participants' emotional connection.

2) IP Integration: The music festival deeply integrates the personal influence of its initiator, Lu Han, with the event brand, leveraging his fan base to transform audience interest in the artist into goodwill toward the music festival and the host city. In terms of lineup organization, it adopts a model of "pairing mainstream idols with emerging musicians," focusing on music genres like Urban and R&B that align with the theme of relaxation. This creates a clear distinction from other music festivals centered on rock or diverse genres, establishing a strong brand identity.

3) Experience Enhancement: Breaking away from the traditional performance-centric model, the music festival creates a composite scene that blends music, art, consumption, and cultural tourism. On the art front, it features themed installations and music performances. For consumption, it collaborates with the local government to offer discounted attraction tickets. In terms of cultural tourism, it partners with scenic spots like the Ancient Nanfeng Kiln, transforming the music festival from a single event into a cross-scene urban cultural experience that aligns with Foshan's goal of developing its cultural tourism industry.

By consistently incorporating the theme of "relaxation" into its performances, visual design, and on-site activities, the Gapday Music Festival successfully creates a romantic and laid-back atmosphere, translating its brand philosophy into a tangible live experience. Its core advantage lies in integrating music, art, urban culture, and emotional value, providing young audiences with a multicultural space where they can relieve stress while fulfilling their social and consumption needs.

3.2 Target Audience and Consumer Behavior Analysis

Xie Wendi and Qin Jiali identified economic foundation, social influence, experience preference, and geographical convenience as key factors influencing consumer participation in music festivals [9]. Based on these dimensions, this article categorizes the core audience of the Gapday Music Festival into the following five distinct groups, which exhibit significant differences in age, spending capacity, and participation motives:

(1) Student Fanbase (aged 18-25, primarily fans of Lu Han)

This group has limited financial resources but ample free time. They actively engage with content and events related to their idol. Their primary motivation for attending the music festival is to get close to the idol, such as securing front-row spots or participating in fan support activities, to gain a sense of emotional belonging and ritual. They are highly active in social interactions, often organizing fan support groups, engaging in collective cheering at the venue, and sharing their experiences on social media platforms.

(2) Urban Youth Music Enthusiasts (aged 23-30, pop music lovers)

With independent financial means, this group values aesthetic quality and experiential excellence. They show a strong interest in emerging musicians and expect high-quality performances and artist presentations. They aim to broaden their musical horizons through the festival and typically attend with friends. They are accustomed to recording live videos and sharing them on social platforms, actively participating in related discussions.

(3) Workplace Stress-Relief Seekers (aged 26-35, no specific music preference)

This group has stable incomes but faces significant work-related stress. Their main motivation for attending the music festival is to seek temporary escape from their work environment and alleviate emotional pressure. They prioritize overall comfort and a relaxing atmosphere at the venue. They usually attend with colleagues or partners and tend to share "therapeutic" scenes from the event on social media.

(4) Local Socializers (aged 20-32, residents of Foshan and surrounding areas)

Benefiting from geographical convenience and low commuting costs, this group views the music festival as an ideal social gathering spot. They emphasize the cost-effectiveness and local characteristics of the event. They often organize group attendance and plan peripheral activities such as dining around the festival. They frequently check in at the event on social media to strengthen their local connections.

(5) Music Trend Explorers (aged 19-28, general entertainment enthusiasts)

Mostly students or early-career professionals, this group has flexible spending power. Their participation is primarily driven by curiosity about trending cultural events and social influence. They attend the festival to gain social talking points and experience diverse entertainment content. They usually join with friends and focus on documenting and sharing their check-in moments.

3.3 Differentiation Analysis: Comparison with the Core Characteristics of Leading music Festivals

Table 1. Differentiation Analysis: Comparison with the Core Characteristics of Leading music Festivals

	Foshan Gapday Music Festival	MIDI Music Festival	Strawberry Music Festival
Market positioning	Emotional Value type: "A music Paradise for Stress Relief"	Trendy culture type: "Diverse Music Life Festival".	Faith-oriented: "The gathering place of rock spirit".
Content Features	Fans aged 18 to 35 and young people who pay attention to the quality of life.	Urban youth aged 20 to 40 and a wide range of music lovers.	Hardcore rock fans and seasoned music enthusiasts aged 25 to 45.
Core customer group	The main focus is on popular idols and emerging artists, with a relatively uniform style.	A diverse mix of rock, folk and electronic music, with a focus on indie music.	The singers are a rock lineup, maintaining the brand's purity.
IP attribute	Personal IP, with the initiator Lu Han at the core, drives brand recognition.	Independent label ips accumulate reputation through long-term content operation.	An industry benchmark IP, it stands firm with the label of "Rock and Roll Pilgrimage".
Urban linkage	Deeply integrate with the local cultural and tourism resources of Foshan to form a strong binding relationship.	It focuses on venue leasing and event execution, and its cooperation with cities is relatively loose.	Emphasizing the construction of the music community itself, deliberately downplaying regional characteristics and highlighting cross-regional brand recognition.

4. SWOT Analysis of Gapday Foshan Music Festival

4.1 Core Advantages

1). The theme positioning is differentiated and in line with social sentiment

The Gapday music festival precisely aligns with the social emotions of modern people. With the acceleration of the pace of life nowadays, rest seems to have become a luxury for contemporary people. Gapday Music Festival takes "interval day" as its core concept. Its theme of "brief escape" directly responds to the stress accumulated by young people in their busy lives. Compared with the positioning of "carnival" of most music festivals, it is significantly different and pays more attention to emotional resonance and lifestyle communication. For instance, the music festival site features a 10th anniversary retrospective exhibition of "Lu Han's Wish Season", art photo spots, trendy toy markets and leisure interactions, etc. It deeply integrates music into art and life scenes, creating an immersive experience atmosphere. Fans freely move around on the green field, jointly forming a relaxing and pleasant temporary leisure space, materializing the concept of "interval day" as a

"temporary paradise". This differentiation strategy makes the music festival stand out among similar events and become an effective channel for young people to relieve stress.

2). The creation of new IPs emphasizes both traffic and diversity

Gapday Music Festival creates a new IP, highly binding traffic and emphasizing a diverse lineup. The Gapday music festival effectively attracted a fan base and ordinary music audiences by introducing influential artists such as Lu Han as initiators. On the Damai platform, the number of people who "want to watch" exceeded 750,000, setting a record related to domestic music festivals. Meanwhile, the music festival also invited singers of different styles such as Wei Chen, Huang Zihongfan, and Gem, taking into account both popularity and emerging talents, to meet the diverse preferences of the audience. This lineup arrangement not only ensures the appeal of the event but also enhances the freshness of the content through new faces. According to statistics, the music festival attracted over 70,000 participants within two days.

3) Government Support and Refined On-Site Services

With multifaceted government support, the Gapday Music Festival achieved high standards in on-site services. The government ensured the event's smooth execution and enhanced audience experience through transportation, security, compassionate services, and cultural tourism integration. First, government-facilitated services reinforced the theme of relaxation. Daily provision of 200 free shuttle buses between Subway station and the venue eliminated commuting concerns for attendees. Nanhuang Town government collaborated with local enterprise Foshan Jinyi Food Co., Ltd. to distribute 3,000 "care packages" (including Nanhuang buns, ginger tea, and snacks) to fans gathered outside the venue, alleviating travel fatigue. Approximately 2,260 security personnel from Chancheng District and 38 urban management officers were deployed to maintain safety and order. Police not only ensured security during the event but also facilitated organized crowd dispersal afterward, creating a secure environment. Furthermore, on-site services demonstrated meticulous refinement: Permitting personal water bottles, providing female-exclusive restrooms with free sanitary products, and distributing ginger tea and blankets during rainy weather. These measures directly addressed common pain points at traditional festivals (e.g., transportation chaos, inflated food prices, neglect of female needs), significantly enhancing comfort and receiving widespread acclaim. The profound experiences created through these refined services accelerated word-of-mouth promotion, amplifying brand influence. Additionally, the festival collaborated with the government to transform "music fans" into "tourists": Free admission to the national 4A-level scenic spot Ancient Nanfeng Kiln with festival tickets. Exclusive discounts at the Ancestral Temple Museum. These initiatives extended the event's impact to a citywide level, injecting new vitality into Foshan.

4) High-Level Visual Design Strengthens Brand Recall

The on-site visual design of the Gapday Music Festival reinforced the "relaxation" theme through distinctive visual symbols. Collaborating with professional designers, the festival featured 14 large-scale inflatable installations themed "Flowers in the Cracks," with the largest spanning 40 meters wide, creating a recognizable visual focal point. These soft, expansive designs conveyed a sense of ease and attracted attendees to photograph and share them, thereby expanding the event's reach.

The stage lighting design was also closely synchronized with performances. For instance, during Lu Han's set, the transition from warm to dynamic lighting intensified the atmosphere and enhanced audience immersion. The overall visual system not only supported the performance quality but also synergized with the art installations, strengthening the music festival's cohesive brand image.

4.2 Threats

1) There is a high reliance on top artists, which poses long-term risks

The core appeal of the Gapday music festival currently mainly relies on Lu Han's personal influence. If Lu Han's participation rate decreases in the future, the music festival may face the risk of a decline in traffic. In addition, the lineup model of "Lu Han leading + diverse singers" may, to a certain extent, also restrict the possibility of the music festival expanding into a wider range of music styles. In the long run, music festivals still need to address challenges such as insufficient experience

accumulation and a single profit structure. In contrast, the Strawberry Music Festival has gradually reduced its reliance on a single top artist by building the "Strawberry Planet" IP matrix and forming multiple style sub-brands. Even when key artists are absent, it can still maintain stable box office receipts.

2) The degree of commercialization is limited and the profit model is relatively single

The profit model of music festivals is single, and it is still necessary to strengthen the exploration of commercial models. At present, the profits of Gapday Music Festival mainly rely on ticket revenue and basic sponsorships, such as the cooperation with Haidilao shuttle buses. However, there are relatively few commercial models such as the development of peripheral derivatives and brand collaborations. Compared with mature IPs like the Strawberry Music Festival that have achieved multi-channel profits through IP licensing, online live streaming revenue sharing and other means, the Gapday Music Festival still needs to accelerate its commercialization pace to support long-term development.

4.3 Development Opportunities

1) Cultural and tourism policy support forms a linkage with urban development

Chancheng District of Foshan City has incorporated the Gapday Music festival into its overall planning of "performing arts + cultural tourism". During the music festival, it has driven over 400 million yuan in accommodation and catering consumption in the surrounding areas. Local governments provide support in aspects such as venue coordination, transportation organization, and public services, laying a solid foundation for the smooth running of the event. In the future, innovative forms such as "music festivals + city Tours" and "music festivals + intangible cultural heritage" can be further explored to enhance the deep integration of music festivals with local cultural and tourism resources and promote the coordinated development of cultural consumption and regional economy.

2) The young consumer group pays attention to experience, and their demand for emotional value is growing

With the rapid development of The Times, modern people's pursuit of "emotional value" provides a market foundation for the Gapday music festival. Today's consumers, especially the younger generation, are increasingly attaching importance to the emotional value and experience brought by consumption. In 2024, large-scale concerts and music festivals saw the most remarkable growth, with box office receipts exceeding 26 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year increase of 78.1%. The number of viewers exceeded 29 million, a year-on-year increase of 45%, making it the most eye-catching consumer category in the performance market. Consumers have also shifted from "paying for the excitement" to "paying for quality", and are more willing to consume for high-quality music festivals with unique lineups and excellent experiences. This has prompted the market to shift from quantitative competition to in-depth qualitative cultivation, achieving differentiated competition and development among different music festivals.

3) The foundation for online dissemination is solid, and there is broad space for IP development

The Gapday music festival IP has great potential and a wide range of online dissemination channels. The Gapday Music Festival has already generated a certain level of popularity on platforms such as bilibili, Douyin, and Weibo. For instance, many live songs have made it onto the QQ Music Soaring Chart, and the daily reading volume on Weibo reached 650 million, demonstrating a strong potential for online dissemination and creating a phenomenon-level spread.

4.4 Challenges and Threats

1) Market Saturation and Intensifying Homogeneous Competition

The current music festival market is characterized by widespread homogenization. Although the Gapday Music Festival has initially carved out a market niche with its differentiated theme, the industry overall faces issues like repetitive lineups and standardized formats. Most festivals offer similar experiences—comparable stages, food areas, and market stalls. If Gapday's core concept remains merely a slogan without translating into a unique, immersive on-site experience, it risks being

imitated or even surpassed by competitors who also emphasize "escape" and "lifestyle." This could dilute its core musical culture and community value, potentially reducing the event to a "one-time social media check-in spot" and hindering the development of brand loyalty.

2) Tighter Regulatory Policies and Rising Operational Costs

Large-scale outdoor music festivals must comply with increasingly stringent regulations in areas such as security, fire safety, and environmental protection, leading to growing compliance costs year by year. While Gapday's collaboration with the government to combat ticket scalping and deploy extensive security forces has enhanced the on-site experience, it has also significantly increased operational expenses. The festival must rely on economies of scale to distribute these costs. Additionally, high-standard investments in visual design, including stage art, installations, and lighting, have further driven up overall costs. Moreover, to stand out in a crowded market, the festival is compelled to bid higher fees to secure a limited pool of top-tier artists. This has led to a continuous rise in artist booking costs as a proportion of the total budget, making profitability exceptionally challenging due to high fixed costs.

3) Uncontrollable Risks and Event Stability Challenges

Outdoor music festivals are vulnerable to disruptions from uncontrollable factors such as weather and public health incidents. Although Gapday proactively responded to rainfall by distributing rain gear and adjusting performance schedules, further improvements in contingency planning are necessary to mitigate the potential impact of such risks on event quality and brand reputation.

5. Analysis of the Brand Marketing Strategy for Gapday Foshan Music Festival

5.1 Product Strategy: Building an "Extended" Content Matrix

5.1.1 Core Performance Products: Focusing on "Relaxation-Oriented, Diversified, High-Quality" Experiences

The content of the Gapday music festival meets the emotional needs of the target group, and the core performances highlight the "relaxation" trait. The music festival takes "Flowers in the Cracks" as its creative theme, precisely meeting the psychological need of modern people to seek a moment of respites in their busy lives. It proposes the concept of Gapday, advocating the life concept of temporarily withdrawing from the daily routine to completely relax. This theme design not only conforms to the psychological needs of young people nowadays. The site was set up with multiple scene sections such as art check-in, trendy toy markets and leisure interactions, enriching the consumption experience of the audience, effectively extending their stay time, and creating an immersive social experience and sharing scene for music fans. Fourteen sets of artistic inflatable installations customized according to the theme were set up on the spot, as shown in Figure 1. The inflatable installation at the entrance welcomed the music fans in the shape of a "rainbow Island", and there were also creative cartoon-shaped inflatable clouds, mechanical gear flower stamens and other elements dotted among them, creating an immersive fairy tale park with a romantic, relaxed and pleasant utopian atmosphere. The air mold devices of different shapes blend together with the blue sky, white clouds and lawn, allowing the audience to take photos and check in. It makes the audience feel as free, light and romantic as balloons, creating a relaxing and entertaining atmosphere like a garden party. In terms of the performance lineup, the music festival is led by Lu Han as the top star, accompanied by well-known singers such as Wei Chen and Da Zhangwei. At the same time, it incorporates several new-generation idol singers like Xi Lin Na Yi Gao, forming a diversified performance lineup. This not only ensures the basic traffic but also provides a fresh experience. The repertoire of the songs transitions from lyrical slow songs to strongly rhythmic music. For instance, singer Xilinaiyi took the stage, transitioning from performing lyrical songs like "How I Wish to Embrace You" and "Why Are Crows Like Writing Desks" to emotionally charged tracks such as "Hot and Spicy" and "Disappear from My World". The structural design of the song enables the audience's emotions to be gradually released, giving people the feeling that the emotions are expressed in a

gentle and unhurried manner, and then gradually become driven by the rhythmic music at the end, echoing the theme of "shake off worries". Among the singers who appeared, the repertoire also included some popular songs that once swept the Internet, such as "You're Everywhere" by the team leader, "Love" and "The Remaining Summer" which evoked collective memories among the post-2000s generation and resonated with the audience, who sang along with them. The overall repertoire type leans towards a popular and youthful pop style, which is generally familiar to the audience and makes them feel physically and mentally comfortable. Immerse yourself in leisure and entertainment. The stage design integrates holographic projection. At night, the lights change light and shadow along with the music through the built-in LED light strips, creating a dreamy flower sea effect, as shown in Figure 2. Dynamic lighting and custom stage design, along with the use of balloon installations combined with local cultural elements of Foshan, create an immersive visual experience, which has been praised as "presenting the debut of the music festival to the standards of a concert". Optimize the audio coverage and solve the problem of sound transmission in areas 300 meters away through delay synchronization technology, ensuring consistent sound effects throughout the venue. While the audience is sitting on the ground or moving freely on the spot, it guarantees auditory consistency, thereby creating a "stress-free listening" atmosphere and meeting the core demand of users for "emotional stress relief".



Figure 1. Music solar term model device

5.1.2 Brand Extension Products: Expand Closely Around "Relaxation Scenarios"

The Gapday music festival focuses on the core products of relaxation and leisure. Around this core, a rich variety of peripheral products have been extended. The "Lu Han Wish Season 10th Anniversary • Lu Han Music and Art Retrospective Exhibition" was held, and the sale of limited-edition charity merchandise for the 10th anniversary special gifts was launched, attracting a large number of visitors, as shown in Figure 3. In addition, the Gapday Music Festival combines tickets with cultural tourism, allowing music fans to enjoy a "one-stop" experience of "watching performances - sightseeing -

consumption". After enjoying the music carnival, music fans can visit the 4A-level scenic spots in Foshan City for free with the tickets of the music festival. After visiting the scenic spots, they can get discounted shopping in the business district. This innovative collaboration breaks the content limitations of traditional music festivals, expanding the brief joy of watching performances into a deep cultural and tourism experience lasting a whole day. From the daytime music revelry to the leisurely strolls in scenic spots and the surprising shopping in business districts, what tourists gain is not only entertainment but also a deep urban memory that integrates auditory, visual and consumption pleasures, truly achieving the dual maximization of travel value and emotional satisfaction.



Figure 2. Stage lighting effects at night

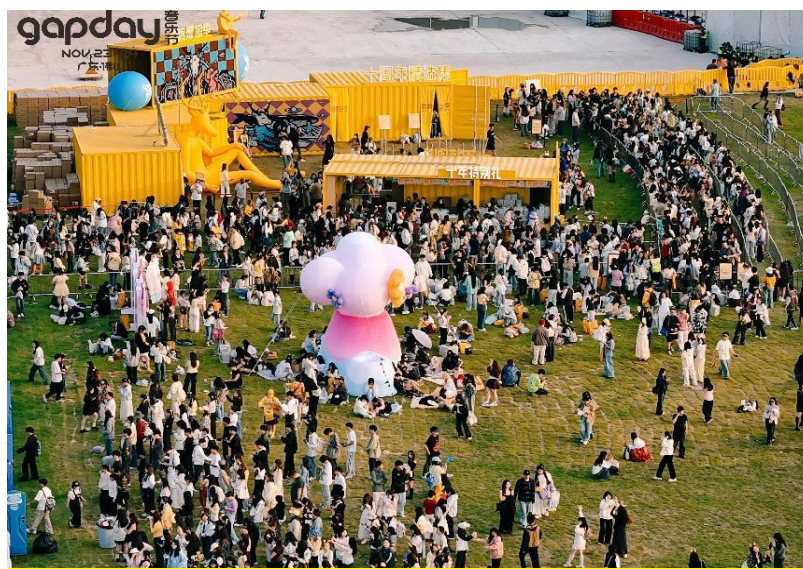


Figure 3. The scene of the "10th Anniversary of Lu Han's Wish Season • Lu Han's Music and Art Retrospective Exhibition"

5.2 Pricing Strategy: Implement a "Multi-dimensional" Value Pricing Strategy

Gapday Music Festival offers early bird tickets (299 yuan), advance tickets (399 yuan for regular tickets/VIP498 yuan), two-day combined tickets (758 yuan for regular tickets/VIP956 yuan), and full-price tickets (499 yuan for regular tickets/VIP698 yuan). The single-day ticket prices range from the lowest pre-sale price of 299 yuan to the highest VIP original price ticket of 698 yuan, forming a clear price gradient. This pricing strategy meets the needs of audiences with different purchasing power. Firstly, early bird tickets are sold in limited quantities and use a time anchor method to stimulate users to make decisions quickly. Secondly, early bird tickets, advance tickets and full-price tickets are released in batches one by one. The earlier the batch, the lower the ticket price. This "first come, first served" discount mechanism not only creates a tense atmosphere for ticket snatching, but also forms secondary dissemination through sharing tickets on social media, playing a very good promotional role. The vip ticket system, on the other hand, caters to the demands of consumers with high purchasing power. This multi-dimensional value pricing not only simplifies users' choices but also enhances their willingness to consume. This pricing strategy not only aligns with the current trend of more rational consumption among audiences but also reduces the market competitiveness caused by excessively high pricing. Compared with the MIDI Music Festival, which is rooted in rock culture and maintains low prices by cutting production costs, the Gapday Music Festival creates top-tier Ips and scene innovations. Although its pricing is higher than that of the MIDI Music Festival, it is more novel and attractive. Compared with the Strawberry Music Festival and the Taihu Bay Music Festival, Gapday is not the lowest in terms of ticket prices in absolute terms. However, its hidden welfare value and government resource investment make it one of the options with the "lowest actual consumption cost" among the music festivals of the same period. Gapday has carved out a unique survival space in the competitive market with its combined strategy of "medium ticket prices + city empowerment".

5.3 Channel Strategy: Building a Diversified Distribution System

The music festival has established a multi-channel distribution matrix. Gapday employs the highly popular and authoritative "Damai" platform as its primary channel, supplemented by official and self-operated media platforms for ticket distribution. Damai.cn is China's leading live entertainment ticketing platform and one-stop service provider, covering almost all categories of live entertainment including concerts, music festivals, theater performances, sports events, exhibitions, and family activities. It possesses the largest database of live entertainment consumers in China, where hundreds of millions of young, high-spending users interested in cultural activities are aggregated. Once the music festival is launched, it can immediately reach these targeted audiences, eliminating the substantial costs associated with building traffic from scratch. Through app launch screen advertisements, homepage banner recommendations, push notifications, and themed campaigns, Damai provides comprehensive exposure for the music festival. The platform also features community and information sections where music fans can check guides, share updates, and form fan groups. This community atmosphere helps to continuously warm up before the music festival starts and maintain the topic's popularity. It is evident that Damai.com is not only a sales channel but also a powerful promotional channel.

Additionally, the channel support from the Chancheng District government of Foshan City has enhanced the music festival's credibility and authority. Through official channels such as the "Southern + Chancheng" channel and the "Chancheng Release" WeChat official account, the Foshan municipal government has published multiple guide articles providing comprehensive guidance for attending music fans covering clothing, dining, accommodation, transportation, and shopping. These official online recommendations and guides essentially serve as a "credit endorsement" from the government, affirming the festival's safety, compliance, and significance. For out-of-town fans attending a large-scale event in an unfamiliar city, practical concerns like safety, transportation, and accommodation are top priorities. The government's official guides directly address these core concerns, significantly reducing decision-making hesitations and uncertainties, thereby enabling audiences to purchase tickets and attend with greater peace of mind. Furthermore, government

channels possess the most authentic understanding of local conditions. Their provided guides on "clothing, food, accommodation, transportation, and shopping" are far from simple map reproductions; instead, they integrate practical information known mainly to locals (such as which alleys hide authentic eateries, peak traffic periods, and "treasure strategies" for avoiding crowds). This provides substantial informational support for combining the music festival with tourism. Thus, official online channel recommendations empower the music festival to boost tourism, offering not only practical information but also serving as a highly valuable form of marketing publicity. Moreover, the diverse purchasing channels have not only established a multi-dimensional online distribution matrix but also enhanced ticket purchasing convenience.

5.4 Promotion Strategy: Carry out "Phased" Integrated Marketing Communication

5.4.1 Preheating Period

Before the start of the Gapday music festival, through systematic content release and cross-border cooperation, it attracted fan groups of different artists and initially attracted traffic through online media. The official team adopted an intensive marketing approach, concentrating on one day to release the artist's official announcement poster with a unified visual system design. The poster design centers around the theme of softness and relaxation, using flowers and elements from nature to give people a natural and fresh feeling, further strengthening the brand's recognition. Maintaining the continuous topic heat enabled the music festival to maintain media exposure for more than two weeks during the entertainment period. This strategy not only reduces the risks that may be faced with a single official announcement, such as the loss of audience who are not interested in a certain artist, but also expands the potential audience of the music festival by attracting the continuous attention of the fan groups of different artists through the release of signals in batches. The music festival collaborates with multiple brands for joint promotion and mutual traffic diversion. For instance, with the tickets for music festivals, one can enjoy discounts at scenic spots, which not only increases the added value of the tickets but also attracts more consumer groups.

5.4.2 Outbreak Period

The Gapday music festival amplifies brand influence by creating emotional connections with the user groups of their respective media platforms. The music festival launched related topic challenges such as #Gapday Music Festival Foshan Officially Announced # on platforms like Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and Weibo, encouraging users to combine the music festival with city landmarks and visit local characteristic scenic spots and delicacies in Foshan on the spot. Inviting users to co-create check-in experiences has sparked intense discussions among netizens on various platforms about the Gapday Music Festival, continuing to generate topics and heat, arousing people's yearning for the music festival in Foshan and their anticipation for the city's delicious food and beautiful scenery. This has achieved a two-way empowerment of the music festival and urban tourism, reaching potential audiences in different circles such as music, fashion, tourism, and food. The music festival showcases its emotional connection with the event by releasing video content, such as behind-the-scenes footage of the artists, highlighting their personalized aspects. Release and expose the process of stage construction and venue arrangement, allowing the audience to feel the professionalism and dedication of the preparatory work. A netizen commented: "I originally just wanted to listen to music, but ended up buying a bunch of souvenirs from Foshan!" "When visiting the dragon kiln that has been passed down for 500 years, music fans exclaimed, "We never thought that we could learn pottery at a music festival." Some tourists have arranged their itinerary as follows: "Visit the ancient stove in the morning, listen to music in the afternoon, and have Shunde cuisine in the evening."

5.4.3 On-site Experience

The festival's interactive design philosophy—"shareable, experiential, immersive"—cultivated a comfortable, relaxing, and warmly engaging atmosphere. A diverse range of interactive touchpoints, spanning from dedicated game zones and exhibition areas at the venue to integrated online activities, formed a multi-dimensional engagement model. These elements, including large-screen interactive

sessions, intimate talking segments between artists and fans, and live interviews, significantly enhanced the sense of belonging and on-site immersion for attendees. Furthermore, state-of-the-art audio technology empowered each performer to deliver their best, providing the audience with an exceptionally powerful and captivating audio-visual experience. The remarkably efficient stage turnover time of just five minutes between acts ensured seamless transitions, maximizing uninterrupted immersion and sustaining the event's energy as a continuous musical celebration. Moreover, thoughtful audience services became a defining feature of the festival experience, generating significant positive word-of-mouth. These considerate arrangements played a crucial role in shaping lasting memories for all participants. IN a thoughtful community initiative, Nanzhuang Town collaborated with local enterprises to distribute 3,000 complimentary "care packages" to music fans gathered outside the venue. These packages contained local specialties including Nanzhuang steamed buns, ginger tea, and light refreshments. The festival further enhanced accessibility through complimentary luggage storage services. Recognizing the significant female attendance, organizers provided not only dedicated women's restrooms but also free sanitary pads—a detail reflecting the event's exceptional attentiveness to attendee needs.

Additional considerate services included on-site express delivery points for mailing purchased merchandise, complimentary fan support materials, clearly marked traffic guidance personnel, and post-event shuttle buses. These comprehensive service design elements effectively mitigated the chaos, crowding, and disorganization often associated with traditional music festivals. Instead, they fostered a pleasant, fairground-like atmosphere where attendees could fully immerse themselves in the celebration with ease and comfort.

5.4.4 Post-Event Continuity

The Gapday Music Festival maintained significant momentum beyond its conclusion. The event garnered attention from over 200 media outlets, with more than 500 coverage instances from state-level media alone. Notably, a video clip of Lu Han on stage leading tens of thousands of fans in thanking the Foshan government became a highly viral PR asset. This content spread rapidly across Douyin within 24 hours, with widespread public praise for the "heartwarming" and "positive" gesture. This not only reinforced Lu Han's image as a socially responsible public figure but also enhanced the credibility and emotional appeal of his personal brand.

A structured content release strategy was implemented: an official highlights reel within 24 hours, individual artist performance clips within 72 hours, and a documentary-style long-form video within one week. This layered, sustained approach catered to diverse fan engagement levels while continuously evoking emotional memories and community resonance, effectively transforming the live experience into lasting content consumption and prolonging brand relevance.

Furthermore, by launching interactive campaigns such as "Behind-the-Scenes Stories" and "Unforgettable Moments," the festival actively incorporated fan feedback and UGC. This turned a one-time offline event into sustainably managed content assets. For example, widely shared footage of Lu Han's surprise encore interaction, where he playfully sprayed water, generated trending topics post-event. A single related Weibo post exceeded 100,000 interactions, reactivating collective emotional memories and solidifying these instances as unforgettable for fans. This further strengthened the emotional bond between Lu Han's IP and his audience, building deeper cultural influence for both the artist and the music festival brand.

5.5 Personnel Strategy: Building a Professionalized Service System

The Gapday Music Festival significantly enhanced on-site audience experience and satisfaction through its professional and meticulous service approach. To ensure service quality, the festival not only provided systematic training for its staff to respond to various needs with efficiency, professionalism, and friendliness but also collaborated closely with the Chancheng District government to integrate public resources, establishing a comprehensive and user-oriented service support system.

Public security departments deployed substantial police and auxiliary forces to effectively maintain venue security and order, while rigorously combating scalping and secondary ticket fraud to protect fan interests. In transportation, the organization dispatched 200 shuttle buses daily, accumulating 1,200 trips over two days, providing free and efficient shuttle services that significantly alleviated departure congestion and garnered widespread audience acclaim.

These government measures not only served as an indispensable component of the festival's services but also became key highlights in its service marketing. Through the deep integration of on-site services and public services, attendees experienced firsthand Foshan's urban warmth and administrative competence. Many fans expressed appreciation for government support on social media: "I'm impressed by how smooth the festival shuttles were—Foshan really cares about details," and "The free shuttles and strict anti-scalping measures are so commendable—I'd love to come back." These human-centered services not only strengthened the music festival's brand equity but also transformed a cultural event into an opportunity for city image promotion. This encouraged extended stays for tourism, effectively prolonging consumption chains and achieving the marketing effect of "building reputation through service, shaping brand through experience."

5.6 Process Strategy: Optimizing Precision Process Management

Gapday Music Festival significantly enhanced audience convenience through systematic and precision-oriented process design. From ticket purchase to departure, every step was designed with the goals of efficiency, time-saving, and ease, effectively reducing feelings of waiting and overcrowding. Firstly, the festival fully implemented an electronic ticketing system. After purchasing tickets via online platforms, attendees only needed to present their ID cards or QR codes for swift verification and entry. This approach substantially reduced queue times and improved entry efficiency. Clearly positioned information screens throughout the venue displayed real-time schedule updates and important notices, allowing the audience to easily access program details, freely plan their movement, and minimize missed performances or rushed transitions. Furthermore, the festival actively collaborated with local service resources. Many attendees visited Foshan specifically for the event and took the opportunity to explore local clothing, dining, accommodation, and transportation options. By providing Foshan travel guides, transportation tips, and accommodation recommendations, the festival helped fans efficiently plan their itineraries, extend their consumption experience, and strengthened the association between the music festival and the city's image. During the departure phase, efficient traffic management and shuttle services effectively alleviated exit pressure, ensuring a safe, orderly, and swift exit for all attendees. This proactive approach prevented the congestion and chaos often seen after large-scale events. Through precision process management, practical inconveniences were resolved, significantly boosting overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth for the event.

5.7 Physical Evidence Strategy: Co-creating an Immersive Environment Design

Gapday Music Festival implemented a systematic physical evidence strategy to transform the entire venue into an immersive environment that blended artistic expression with functional comfort, fully embodying the overarching atmosphere of "relaxation and healing."

The festival grounds were designed around the theme "Flowers in the Cracks," featuring custom artistic installations created by top domestic inflatable sculpture manufacturers. These soft, flowing forms not only provided a visual emphasis on natural, unrestrained beauty but also enhanced physical engagement and emotional ease through their tactile, interactive nature. The main venue was set on 81,000 square meters of open grassland, where the spacious, natural layout significantly boosted comfort and freedom, alleviating crowding-related anxiety and reinforcing the "relaxation" experience.

Functional design also adhered to the themes of comfort, leisure, and relaxation. Clear, stylistically consistent signage was installed at key points such as restrooms, medical stations, and exits. This

unified wayfinding system maintained visual harmony while preventing disruptions to the immersive experience caused by confusion.

Moreover, the festival's Visual Identity System (VIS) consistently reflected the theme—logos, posters, tickets, and materials extensively incorporated natural motifs such as growing plants and entwining vines, using a palette of desaturated greens, pinks, and earth tones to convey gentleness, growth, and tranquility. This visual language suggested an ideal of finding calm within a busy life. The highly consistent visual output not only strengthened brand recognition but also continuously communicated the emotional values of leisure and healing. Through these tangible elements, Gapday successfully translated the abstract theme of "relaxation" into a perceptible, shareable physical and visual reality. This approach enhanced the audience's sense of belonging and brand recall, elevating the festival beyond a mere performance event into a themed leisure space where visitors were happy to linger, experiencing warmth and respite.

6. Optimization Suggestions for Gapday Music Festival's Brand Marketing

With the core brand positioning of "a temporary escape, a free experience," Gapday Music Festival should focus on this identity through systematic content innovation, experience optimization, and long-term investment. The goal is to transition from a one-time event into an enduring IP, establishing Gapday as a brand that offers profound music and cultural experiences while continuously enhancing its sustainable influence.

6.1 Develop an Independent Brand Image

Transform the music festival into an "Urban Wander" series IP, introducing annual themes inspired by different cities' cultures to position Gapday as a long-term brand. Utilize documentaries, artist interviews, and other content formats to convey the brand philosophy of "finding beauty amidst pressure," and reinforce emotional connections through the visual symbol of "Flowers in the Cracks." Additionally, collaborate with environmental organizations to launch the "Green Gapday" initiative, encouraging audience participation in eco-friendly actions. By integrating public welfare concepts into operational processes, the festival can strengthen its social relevance and build long-term positive reputation.

6.2 Commercial Monetization: Expanding Diversified Revenue Models

Gapday should develop diversified commercial collaborations to strengthen its brand. Partnering with automotive brands to create themed shuttle buses transforms a practical transportation solution into a mobile party and social space. These visually striking, music-themed buses address the "last-mile" travel challenge while enhancing brand experience. Additionally, co-branded "festival special drinks" with collectible "Lyrics Cup Competition" can be introduced, where collecting full sets allows redemption of prizes. These limited-edition beverages create distinctive taste experiences, while the Lyrics Cup Competition convert disposable consumption into tangible emotional keepsakes.

Theme buses and specially mixed drinks are excellent materials for taking photos, checking in and sharing, which will prompt the audience to voluntarily spread the word in a viral way on social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin and Instagram. The social value of the increased music festival. The mechanism of "collecting cup sleeves and exchanging for prizes" ingeniously exploits people's collecting addiction and game psychology, encouraging users to repeatedly consume, actively share their collection progress, and even initiate exchange behaviors among users, greatly enhancing the participation of the activity and the popularity of the topic. These activities will inspire marketing content and user stories, which will accumulate as valuable brand assets for Gapday. On-site, brand interaction zones such as eco-friendly handicraft workshops and trendy pop-up stores can be set up to enhance the commercial value of the scene experience. On this basis, it can also be linked with local life service providers such as hotels and restaurants to offer more value-added services to the audience, build a complete consumption ecosystem, provide more diversified services, enhance

the commercial value of the Gapday brand, and upgrade the Gapday music festival from a "functional platform" to a "lifestyle hub". When Gapday successfully built a business ecosystem centered on "music festival experience" by collaborating with brands from various industries, it established a strong competitive barrier. It is very difficult for competitors to replicate such a large and organic cooperative network in a short period of time [10]. Users will choose Gapday because it can offer a more complete and unique experience, not just the ticket prices or traffic, reducing the risks brought by top artists.

6.3 Enhancing User Engagement and Community Connection

The on-site experience can be optimized by improving service quality and post-event support. During intermissions, interactive activities like lyric chain games can be organized, with winners receiving artist autographs or photo opportunities, thereby enhancing the sense of participation. After the event, recap videos can be released alongside satisfaction surveys to continuously gather feedback for improvement. A "Best Live Moment" contest could be launched, offering tickets to the next edition as rewards. This would incentivize the audience to actively become content creators and promoters, generating a massive volume of authentic user-generated content on social media and significantly expanding the festival's reach and impact. Simultaneously, online communities can be established on platforms like Weibo and Xiaohongshu. By regularly sharing behind-the-scenes footage, organizing votes for collaborative artists, and facilitating both online and offline fan interactions, the emotional connection with music fans can be deepened. This approach breaks the temporal and spatial limitations of a one-off event, fostering a sustained and cohesive fan community that transforms "one-time attendees" into "long-term followers." Even during non-performance periods, this strategy helps maintain topical relevance and brand visibility, contributing to long-term brand building.

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