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New Approaches to City Marketing and Image Promotion in Luoyang within the Context of New Media

Weiwei Han

Wuhan Polytechnic University, Wuhan, Hubei, 430000, China

Abstract: Currently, as the influence of the pandemic gradually diminishes, there is a growing demand for cultural tourism. The establishment of urban image and city branding has an increasingly significant role in the development of a city's spiritual civilization and material prosperity. This article begins with the concept of urban marketing and, in conjunction with the case of Luoyang's online sensation, explores the evolution of urban marketing and the construction and dissemination of urban image, as well as the issues it exposes.

Keywords: Urban Marketing; Urban Image; New Media Context; Cultural Tourism Consumption.

1. Introduction

Urban marketing is the scientific and effective management of urban development based on market marketing concepts. Its core objective is to establish a unique and attractive urban position and image, promoting economic development, enhancing cultural significance, and conveying the city's identity. The formation of a city's brand effect through mass communication plays a crucial role in recognizing city services and increasing visibility.

According to sociologist Lewis Mumford, the urban image is the subjective impression people have of a city, shaped by mass media, personal experiences, interpersonal communication, skills, and the environment. The construction of the urban image is intertwined with media, existing in people's consciousness and tangible elements such as historical monuments, infrastructure, and local customs. Shaping the urban image involves using media to showcase specific aspects of urban construction and spiritual civilization, forming an accepted impression or symbolic image.

With China's rapid internet growth – an internet penetration rate over 75.6%, 1.067 billion netizens, and 1.012 billion short video users – new media has eliminated geographical and cultural boundaries. Governments and corporations utilize intelligent mobile media tools with mobility, personalized services, and vertical content to facilitate the co-creation of urban marketing. This shift from a single official discourse construction to a collaborative approach involving citizens transforms the dissemination of the urban image.

2. Communication of Luoyang's Urban Image in the New Media Environment: The Empowerment of Discourse

With the widespread application of new media and mobile short video platforms, people's utilization of internet technology has not only expanded and enhanced the dissemination range and effectiveness of city brands but has also exerted a certain influence on existing urban brand marketing strategies. [1] As an ancient capital in the Central Plains, Luoyang possesses a profound historical and cultural heritage and is renowned for its reputation as "The Millennium Commercial Hub" and "The Ancient City with a Three-Thousand-Year Civilization". It has rich historical and cultural resources. With a plethora of cultural celebrations and events, Luoyang has consistently utilized the media's functions in providing information and promoting social heritage transmission in recent years, thereby expanding public culture recognition and acceptance of Luoyang and providing an inexhaustible driving force for the city's development.

2.1. Utilizing the Integrated Media Matrix to Establish a Public Opinion Platform through "Culture and Tourism+"

The digital era has brought about more diverse channels of urban communication, with language that is more suitable for the participation of the general public. Every individual in society has gained a relatively equal right to expression. Based on this foundation, the constructed urban impression will be more balanced and authentic. [2]

The diversity and wide reach of tourism promotional channels are important factors in attracting visitors. In modern society, which is highly information-oriented, people have increasingly diverse and complex ways of accessing information. [3] In the early stages, Luoyang's construction of its urban image was relatively simplistic and, in fact, could not even be considered as construction. It mainly revolved around the dissemination of city development data and the promotion of tourist attractions. In recent years, Luoyang's urban image dissemination and construction have reached a nationwide audience through more authoritative newspapers and magazines. With the popularization of the internet, traditional media has also gone digital, with newspapers and other traditional media outlets opening official WeChat accounts to directly engage with users from different regions and even overseas. Unlike traditional media such as newspapers and films, which can only passively wait for the audience to gather relevant information, WeChat's push notification feature allows for the immediate delivery of relevant information to the audience. Local official media outlets such as "Luoyang Net," "Luoyang Daily," and "Luoyang Evening News" have all launched official WeChat accounts, providing timely updates on the latest news about Luoyang. This shift in content has moved away from focusing solely on governmental achievements to addressing audience

agendas and creating content centered around relevant hot topics. During the 2020 CCTV Mid-Autumn Gala, Luoyang Net's official WeChat account utilized an H5 format to release invitation messages, interact with the public, and break down barriers between audiences and public opinion, providing a broader platform for the dissemination of Luoyang's urban image.

Simultaneously, short-video social media platforms have seen an increasing presence across various social media outlets, forming a new trend in online communication. The popularity of short-video content represents another interpretation of current internet culture and public psychology. With the rapid development of viral IPs and the influencer economy, short videos have gradually entered the realms of content and brand marketing, becoming increasingly significant in urban marketing and the dissemination of urban images. For example, Luoyang Daily's official account on the Douyin platform, "Luovid", during the Mid-Autumn Gala, released short videos showcasing behind-the-scenes footage of the gala, presenting more backstage content as foreground content. This satisfied the audience's curiosity and attracted a large number of users to watch and discuss Luoyang's "Mid-Autumn Gala", effectively conveying the visual appeal and cultural significance of Luoyang to the public. Additionally, it utilized the short-video platform to establish a channel for communication with the public.

2.2. Active Dissemination Actors and an Encouraging Environment for Re-creation

Firstly, leverage the global influence of the Henan culture, focus on promotion, packaging, and cultural connotation, to establish a strong city brand for Luoyang and enhance its cultural influence. [4] The prevalence of smartphones and the development of mobile internet have provided opportunities for the creation and dissemination of short videos. With the ongoing development and popularity of short videos, users have expanded from the younger generation to the middle-aged and elderly population. Internet users span multiple age groups, resulting in increased overall activity and a diverse range of disseminating actors, with the characteristic of low platform entry barriers, low usage costs, and decentralized creative rights. This also activates the communication potential of ordinary users, allowing everyone to participate in the production and dissemination of short videos.

3. Building Urban Image under the Supportive Environment of New Cultural and Tourism Development: Rational Integration of Resources

3.1. Aggregating Multiple Resources to Create a New City Calling Card

According to the 2022 National Communication Index of Prefecture-level Cities, Luoyang ranked fourth among the top 100 cities and first among the cities in the province. In the era of mobile internet, the cultural and tourism economy operates on traffic. Luoyang City adapts to the communication rules of the digital age by prioritizing mobile platforms and video content, enhancing interactive communication, and leveraging creativity to excel in cultural and tourism marketing, effectively narrating the stories of Luoyang in a youthful language.

3.1.1. Internally, Luoyang Enjoys a Unique Advantage in Building a Strong Intellectual Property Around its Rich Chinese Cultural Heritage.

From breakout hits like "Tang Palace Banquet" and "Dengchangleluoyang" to the TV series "Wind from the Luoyang" that set a city on fire, multiple cultural sensations have thrust Luoyang into the spotlight, fostering cultural symbolisms that are distinctly Luoyang, continuously propelling the city's urban temperament towards a more youthful and dynamic direction.

"Dengchangleluoyang" is a variety show set in Luoyang. This program graciously presents a multitude of beautiful landscapes, exquisite cuisines, cultural heritage, and more, offering great convenience for the creation and promotion of Luoyang's urban intellectual property. Firstly, through the show's introduction, the audience becomes acquainted with Luoyang's unique charm as an ancient capital and a city of peonies, igniting strong interest and curiosity, thus laying a solid foundation for the city's intellectual property. Secondly, "Dengchangleluoyang" promotes Luoyang's urban image across various media channels: after the program is broadcasted, it undergoes comprehensive, multi-channel promotion across television, the internet, mobile platforms, and more, allowing a wider audience to explore and learn about Luoyang and actively engage in discussions pertaining to "Dengchangleluoyang." This comprehensive marketing strategy provides robust support for the promotion of Luoyang's urban image. Additionally, through the interactions between celebrities, internet influencers, audience members, and hosts, the show creates a platform for communication and interaction. Through this platform, both local and external celebrities and internet influencers explore Luoyang's splendid scenery, delectable cuisine, and rich history and culture. This unconventional approach to publicity captivates the attention of more young people, fostering a livelier atmosphere for Luoyang's urban marketing. The showcasing of Luoyang's urban charm in the program breathes new life into the promotion of the city's urban image and the development of the tourism industry, while simultaneously providing more opportunities and challenges for the industry's sustainable growth.

Revisiting the communication path of "Dengchangleluoyang," what sustains its high-quality content and efficient communication is the ability of "Dengchangleluoyang" to aggregate multiple resources through ongoing operations. Official media, local cultural and tourism departments, enterprises, and platforms such as iQiyi, altogether exert significant influence in propelling the popularity of Luoyang's urban cultural heritage intellectual property. In alignment with this, the IP program created through the collaboration of multiple resources generates value and benefits for all parties involved. For viewers, the program enriches their experiences and meets their demand for high-quality content consumption. For cultural and tourism organizations and brand enterprises, it brings remarkable exposure and development opportunities. For iQiyi, it undoubtedly represents yet another instance of their deep focus on urban content and their pursuit of the "new knowledge track." Most importantly, this IP program, centered around urban content, emphasizes the profound exploration of Luoyang's unique genes, creating a new calling card that aligns with contemporary understanding and greatly contributes to the self-promotion of the city, accumulating strength to drive urban development.

Taking the example of the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City, one of the two cultural and tourist ancient cities in Luoyang, it has established a multidimensional "culture and tourism+" promotional matrix. There are a total of eight official short video accounts with high-frequency operation, covering various aspects such as scenic area activities, study trips, and historical culture. During important festivals and major events, the promotional matrix speaks with a unified voice, leveraging a coordinated effect to generate a widespread dissemination influence.

If city marketing and promotion solely rely on official media departments, the efficiency of marketing is difficult to improve. It is only when everyone possesses a marketing mindset that we can truly excel in pre-sales and after-sales tourist services. Starting from 2021, the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City initiated "all-staff marketing". From tour guides to performers, from operation and maintenance personnel to security and cleaning staff, everyone picks up their smartphones and captures their personal vision of the flourishing Sui and Tang era in Luoyang. By sharing their firsthand experiences on various platforms, the aim is to achieve secondary dissemination. Each individual evolves from being a storyteller to being a performer within the city's backdrop, thus incorporating a more vibrant visual representation of the city's image, attracting a new wave of tourists and achieving a viral dissemination effect. This approach reflects the construction of a city image communication model led by citizens, with government-enterprise cooperation and government guidance. Employees interact with netizens through comments, understanding the needs of the public and enhancing the corresponding services to improve tourist satisfaction with offline travel. The number of video releases and views of each account has steadily increased monthly, with some popular accounts even updating daily during important periods. With the joint effort of all staff members, the exposure of the Luoyang scenic area on Douyin has increased from 80 million to 480 million impressions.

In early 2022, the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City rewarded participants with cash prizes and organized a one-month-long #LoveFilmingSuiTangCity# video contest. During the event, numerous internet short video influencers, as well as ordinary citizens, netizens, and tourists actively participated in the topic. The cumulative view count on WeChat public accounts, Douyin, and Bilibili platforms reached 15 million, garnering sustained attention from mainstream media. Through this initiative, Luoyang City strengthened its internet mindset, focused on mobile platform dissemination, and promoted collaborative planning and teamwork among mobile platform actors. They carried out targeted, personalized, and systematic promotion, resulting in frequent appearances on hot search lists and a surge in popularity for Luoyang City.

3.1.2. Externally, Integrate and Utilize International Resources to Achieve the "Going Global" of the He Luo Culture

According to the "2022 Report on the Construction of Overseas Network Communication Strength of Chinese Cities" jointly released by the Beijing Normal University New Media Communication Research Center and other media, Luoyang ranks 34th in the list of overseas network communication strength among China's 337 cities and enters the top 10 among Chinese prefecture-level cities.

The He Luo culture centered around Luoyang is the root culture of the Chinese nation, and the city's image as an ancient capital for thousands of years is an exemplary representative of Chinese cultural image, with irreplaceable international communication value. It plays an indispensable role in the rise of the entire Yellow River civilization. As a sub-central city in the Central Plains and an important node city on the Asian-European "Belt and Road," promoting the economic and cultural development of Luoyang is a significant national development strategy.

The cultural calling cards of Luoyang's city image, such as Empress Wu Zetian, peonies, Xuanzang, Longmen Grottoes, and White Horse Temple, have global influence and high online attention. They have unique value in shaping the global emotional space and allocating global cultural resources of the Chinese nation. Meanwhile, in the international communication of He Luo culture from ancient times to the present, it reflects both extensive sharing and interaction, as well as the full acceptance of the collision of diverse world cultures, thus promoting innovative development opportunities and momentum for Chinese culture. These factors lay a solid audience foundation for the international communication of Luoyang's city image in today's new media environment, making it easier to break through international communication barriers and achieve the large-scale dissemination of Chinese culture.

When CCTV recorded the Mid-Autumn Festival Gala in Luoyang, the large-scale immersive hand-painted animation scroll "Di Renjie: The God Capital Lunar Probe" was broadcasted worldwide, vividly depicting the changes of Luoyang's past and present. The related TikTok topic had over 600 million views, and the Weibo topic had over 6 billion readings. Luoyang actively tells its stories through new media by using the "short video + live streaming" approach to enhance its city image. At the same time, with the official promotion and media support, the 2021 He Luo Cultural Tourism Festival and the Central Plains International Cultural Tourism Industry Expo were held, and videos like "Luoshen Water Ode" were produced for dissemination across the internet, exploring the path of international cooperation in the Chinese cultural industry and telling good stories about China. The trailer of the Chinese animated film "Peony" was broadcasted on the big screen at Times Square in New York, marking the first appearance of a Chinese animated film on a global new media platform, gradually expanding the influence of Luoyang's peony cultural element worldwide. [5]

In summary, by effectively utilizing both the international and domestic markets, integrating resources from various parties, and leveraging new media platforms, Luoyang's city image is expected to step onto the center stage of international communication.

3.2. Innovation-driven Development Brings Unique Benefits

Today's tourism has transitioned from a resource-based economy to a creative economy. A uniform approach has no future, and identical content lacks prospects. Only by disrupting expectations, opening new possibilities, and reinforcing the creation of cultural and tourism products, event organization, and promotional marketing, can unexpected creativity bring unforeseen benefits. Innovation is not just limited to cultural and tourism activities but also encompasses novel approaches to promotion. By embracing a mobile-first strategy, Luoyang has achieved outstanding city image promotion results in today's urban marketing.

In the era of mobile connectivity, short videos are rapidly

transforming cities. Since April 2023, with unique events such as the Chinese-style time-travel festival and the Chinese-style talent parade, the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City Scenic Area has gained significant attention, generating 28 trending topics and appearing on the hot charts 15 times, with an exposure reach exceeding 820 million views. During this year's Peony Culture Festival, Luoyang broke tradition by forgoing traditional press conferences and focusing on online promotions. Through video production, topic generation, and pre-event coverage, it attracted a substantial influx of traffic, establishing itself as a bona fide internet-famous city. The remarkable online performance of Luoyang's city image is a testament to its innovative communication path in urban marketing, gradually shifting towards mobile platforms.

4. Existing Issues in Luoyang's City Marketing

4.1. Difficulty in Monetization

Monetizing traffic is a priority and a significant challenge for all cities in their marketing efforts. In terms of operations, some scenic areas in Luoyang have yet to develop a complete operational mindset, lacking operational capabilities and a well-established industry chain. This results in inadequate promotion and an inability to fully exploit the potential of the visitor traffic. In terms of cultural output, while certain museums have experienced a surge in popularity, the development of creative and innovative cultural products lags behind, lacking attractiveness to visitors and failing to convert creativity into tangible benefits. The issue of insufficient consumption still persists. During the May Day holiday, tourists in Luoyang spent an average of 822 yuan per person, significantly lower than the average spending of 1,199 yuan per person in Suzhou and 1,200 yuan per person in Nanjing. There is an urgent need to improve the ability to monetize traffic.

4.2. Uneven Distribution of Popularity Periods

Currently, Luoyang's city marketing mainly focuses on the Peony Festival and short-term holidays. Despite the assistance of online dissemination, the phenomenon of tourism seasonality and resource fluctuations in Luoyang cannot be effectively avoided. Maintaining the city's image requires long-term efforts and the cooperation of multiple parties, both online and offline. The sustainability of being an "internet sensation" is not only crucial for the gains of cultural and tourism activities but also for maintaining the interest of capital in the cultural and tourism industry.

4.3. Mismatch between Popularity and Reputation

In the era of new cultural tourism, greater emphasis is placed on the enjoyable travel experience, and the upgrade of reputation dissemination is essential. Currently, in Luoyang, while new forms of cultural and tourism activities continue to emerge, there remains a problem of the reputation not aligning with the physical experience. The overall service experience needs to be optimized and enhanced comprehensively to provide a one-stop, all-encompassing improvement.

5. Conclusion

As a representative of a culturally rich ancient city, Luoyang needs to constantly expand its influence and focus on building a sustainable and high-quality urban brand. It should consistently project its city's strength to the outside world, seize the window of opportunity in internet city marketing, familiarize itself with content delivery methods on short video platforms, master the key to traffic in city marketing, and construct a multi-dimensional and profound city image. Efforts should be made to create new consumption scenarios in cultural and tourism sectors, enhance the capacity to provide cultural and tourism services, continuously improve the city's friendliness towards young people, accelerate the transformation and development of the cultural and tourism industry, and transform it into a new opportunity to build and disseminate the city's image. By leveraging new media platforms, Luoyang needs to innovate its concepts and approaches to city image communication, striving to forge a unique path for new cultural and tourism development imbued with Luoyang's distinctive characteristics.

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