Digital Revitalization of Museums: An Analysis of the Digital Marketing Strategy of the Sanxingdui Museum

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Abstract: In the modern era, museums are undergoing a significant transformation propelled by digital advancements. This paper delves into the realm of digital revitalization within museums, focusing specifically on the Sanxingdui Museum's digital marketing strategy. Situated at the heart of China's cultural landscape, the Sanxingdui Museum offers a unique lens into the Bronze Age civilization. Through a meticulous analysis, this study scrutinizes the museum's digital initiatives, encompassing online platforms, social media engagement, virtual exhibitions, and digital storytelling. By evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing visitor experiences, expanding audience reach, and promoting cultural heritage, this research aims to provide actionable insights for museums worldwide seeking to navigate the digital frontier.The Sanxingdui Museum's digital marketing strategy serves as a compelling case study, It underscores the importance of leveraging digital tools to cultivate meaningful connections with diverse audiences and foster a deeper appreciation for cultural heritage. Through this analysis, we can gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with digital revitalization, ultimately guiding strategic decision-making and driving innovation in museum practices.

Keywords: digital revitalization, museums, digital marketing strategy, cultural heritage

1. Introduction

In late March 2021, a batch of ancient relics was unearthed at the Sanxingdui site in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, China. Bronze sacred trees, giant bronze masks, fragments of gold masks, and other artifacts emerged successively. The Sanxingdui ruins is an important representative of the world's Bronze Age civilization from the 16th century BC to the 14th century BC, it occupies a crucial position in the history of human civilization development. Its discovery has provided unique physical evidence for the vanished ancient *Shu(the ancient name of Sichuan province)* state, advancing the civilization history of the Sichuan region by more than 2,000 years. Statistics show that from March 20th to 23rd, 25 related topics on *Weibo (Chinese social media app)* made it to the trending list, with a total reading volume of 2.14 billion. Subsequently, modern and innovative "peripheral" products such as documentaries, live broadcasts, cultural and creative products, and online exhibitions related to Sanxingdui gained widespread recognition among the youth audience through efforts from official media and spontaneous grassroots dissemination.

The museum showcased the ancient *Shu* civilization that had been dormant for thousands of years, bringing the rich history of Chinese civilization behind these artifacts vividly to life. Traditionally,

museum culture has been considered niche due to its specialized nature, Many heritage enterprises have neglected the task of managing their brand to keep in pace with the times and therefore face the embarrassing situation of decline or even failure[1]. However, contemporary museums, as a form of "spatial media", are leveraging digital technology to seek new ways of expression and presentation, aligning with mainstream culture. This allows excellent traditional Chinese culture to be more widely disseminated in a manner that is appealing to modern societal aesthetics and entertainment needs. This paper takes the Sanxingdui Museum's digital marketing strategy as a case study to deeply explore how museums are adapting to communication in the digital age, assuming the responsibility of heritage preservation and education.

Figure 1: The Bronze figure unearthed from the Sanxingdui ruins.

2. Data:"Datafication" as the Foundation of Modernization in Museums

With the rapid development of digital technologies such as big data and cloud computing, "datafication" plays a crucial role in the modernization transformation of museums. Platform-based analysis built on data pools is a key aspect of digital marketing. The Sanxingdui Museum has accumulated data from various sources to construct its own data pool. For instance, it established a membership system in its flagship stores on *Taobao(Chinese online shopping app)* and *WeChat(Famous social app in China)*, collecting consumer data systematically. Additionally, the museum opened accounts on social media platforms like *Weibo* and *TikTok*, where user interactions such as attitudes, opinions, and viewpoints contribute as second-party data sources to the data pool. Unlike traditional fragmented analyses, digital marketing is realized through platformization. For example, the collaboration between the Sichuan Cultural Relics Bureau and Tencent's Digital Cultural Lab led to the establishment of a digital archive for Sanxingdui archaeological research, promoting the digitization and interpretation of the archaeological findings at the Sanxingdui site. Leveraging data pools and platform-based analysis, Sanxingdui has been able to implement automated marketing.

Datafication transforms museum information from static to dynamic, enhancing the longevity of artifact preservation and providing a solid hardware foundation for digital marketing. Museums can now reach diverse audiences, breaking physical limitations to create a "virtual museum" that explores, accommodates, and disseminates a wealth of content limitlessly.It have displayed notable application prospects and development potential through new technolo gies[2].

3. Touchpoints: Co-building Digital Media Interfaces with New and Traditional Media

3.1. Changing the conventional content paradigm

Sanxingdui Museum maximizes the connectivity and flexibility of digital media touchpoints to expand its reach in the era of new media.

"To harness the power of digital media and use it to achieve the utmost success in business, now and in the future[3]." The museum has transformed its conventional content paradigm on owned touchpoints, making online media touchpoints an extension of offline content. For example, the museum live-streamed archaeological processes on *Bilibili(Chinese famous video app)*, enabling them to share content that was difficult to present externally, reaching a wider audience through new media formats. Additionally, the museum has converted its official public account media into channels for online virtual tours. Through the *Sichuan Sanxingdui Museum* public account, audiences can access the Sanxingdui virtual exhibition hall in VR to experience the physical museum virtually. The museum also uses 3D technology to display bronze human sculptures comprehensively, interprets stories behind artifacts like the grand human attire and the Sanxingdui eye through short videos, and links viewers to live videos of exhibition scenes, episodes of the documentary series *If National Treasures Could Speak*, and various interactive educational animations related to Sanxingdui. This immersive approach not only extends online content touchpoints but also enriches the museum's presentation format, attracting a broader audience and providing a more immersive experience than physical visits. By transforming simple online content touchpoints into extensions of offline content, Sanxingdui Museum enhances its inherent experiential channels, overcomes physical limitations, and enriches its presentation forms using the creativity of new media, thereby expanding its appeal and reaching a larger audience.

3.2. Utilize the characteristics of media

The museum pairs new media touchpoints with traditional media, leveraging their unique characteristics and strengths to achieve promotional and exhibition objectives. In a collaborative event with *CCTV(China Central Television)*, the museum employed large-scale cloud rendering technology for the first time, launching the immersive digital interactive space called Fantasy Journey of Sanxingdui. During the event, China Central Television and *CCTV*'s new media platform broadcasted a special program *New Discoveries at Sanxingdui* at 13:00, allowing viewers to scan QR codes during the live broadcast to enter the digital interactive space *Fantasy Journey of Sanxingdui*. This action marked the first-time traditional television media initiated an off-screen interaction, turning conventional media touchpoints into gateways to a larger interactive space and synchronously engaging viewers with media content. This collaboration enabled Sanxingdui Museum to reach a broader audience through *CCTV*, convert viewers, break down barriers between traditional and new media, facilitate media interactivity, and expand content reach and diversity. Furthermore, the museum developed an HTML5 advertisement titled *Elegance Through the Millennia* to enrich its digital communication system.Hence it could increase the interest of other social media user to follow on the campaign[4].

In the rapidly evolving landscape of entertainment today, could TV programs regain prominence due to their rigor, educational value, and cultural significance that traditional media uniquely possess? This poses a significant challenge for the format and content of cultural TV programs. Since the flourishing development of TV programs in 2012 followed by a period of exponential viewership growth, many programs have faced increasingly negative evaluations due to issues like homogeneity, sensationalism, and hype, leading to viewer fatigue and stagnation in the TV program industry.

However, Sanxingdui strategically combines the strengths of traditional and new media to develop itself, creating several quality cultural TV programs such as *Shining Chinese Civilization* and *Into the Sanxingdui Pit* (upcoming) that are rich in cultural significance and highlight the stories of Sanxingdui. These programs differ from entertainment variety shows or stereotypical educational programs by adopting a more conversational approach toward culture, integrating fashion and innovation, accompanied by elegant music, beautiful visuals, and a slow-paced narrative style that presents content rich in cultural essence, garnering high levels of support.For instance, the program *Shining Chinese Civilization* starts its exploration journey at Sanxingdui, using the popular "mystery-solving" format to interpret Sanxingdui, bridging the gap between the audience and artifacts, bringing the dormant relics back to life in the viewers' eyes. Notably, the program not only breaks stereotypical impressions of traditional artifacts and showcases profound cultural knowledge but also incorporates exquisite special effects, comic CG animation, and other artistic forms, blending technology with art, matching form with content to present an exquisitely attractive program.

These distinctive traditional cultural TV programs have injected "new vitality" into the dissemination of Sanxingdui artifacts, enabling Sanxingdui to leverage both the rapid expansion facilitated by new media and the enduring appeal of traditional media while actively integrating features of mass cultural consumption, reflecting the profound cultural heritage behind the artifacts.

4. Content: Youthful Branding and Diversified Communication Shape Digital Museums

4.1. Youthful Transformation of Traditional Cultural Brands and Trendy Ancient Museum Culture Content

The concept of "content rejuvenation" extends beyond the cultural content delivered to younger consumers; it signifies brands keeping pace with consumer trends and meeting the demands of contemporary consumption patterns. Sanxingdui Museum recognizes the deep-seated psychological needs of young individuals, employing electronic music promotional videos, internet memes, animated content, and more to combine ancient Shu historical culture for digital marketing, offering consumers novel experiences.

On March 20, Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, and Sanxingdui Museum jointly produced a special feature titled *Why Am I So Handsome* music video. This promotional video integrates ancient Shu artifacts with electronic music and cyberpunk visual effects, blending serious ancient museum content with catchy new media platforms, making the splendid ancient *Shu* civilization more contemporary for consumers.

In today's rapidly developing internet landscape, the cultural dissemination role of internet memes should not be underestimated. Collaborating with various designers, Sanxingdui Museum leveraged Sichuan regional dialects to design a series of static and dynamic meme stickers featuring elements extracted from Sanxingdui artifacts like bronze human figures, masks, and attire. These stickers were then shared across social media platforms, integrating the cultural imagery and essence of Sanxingdui artifacts into daily conversations using popular internet language, thus serving as an excellent avenue for promoting and inheriting outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

Furthermore, Sanxingdui Museum employs animation to disseminate its rich cultural resources. For example, in collaboration with a team of ancient history experts and a renowned voice acting studio, the museum produced an original animated short film titled *Sanxing Chronicles*, unveiling prehistoric history through a blend of archaeology and animation. After broadcasting 3D animated films like Sanxingdui: *Awakening of Glory* and the animated feature film *Crazy! Guibao's Sanxing Treasure Hunt*, the museum received positive feedback.

Figure 2: The animated feature film: *Crazy! Guibao's Sanxing Treasure Hunt*.

4.2. Aggregation of Brand Symbol Elements and Diversification of Content Formats

Collections and artifacts, as the core content of museums, play a pivotal role in marketing, branding, and differentiation. "When considering specific digital marketing tactics," they noted, "content marketing emerge as the most highly esteemed strategies.[5]" In the digital age, museums can highlight the most favored artifacts based on online metrics or audience surveys to establish recognizable brand elements, reinforce brand associations, and shape the museum's brand personality. Sanxingdui Museum has taken steps in this direction.

In various marketing and communication activities, the Sanxingdui Museum has utilized brand symbols such as "Sanxingdui masks, human figures, and bronze birds." Through diversification of content formats and the aggregation of overt communication symbols, the museum has forged strong associations with these symbols, transitioning the brand image of "Sanxingdui Museum" from abstract to concrete. As a result, Sanxingdui Museum has successfully positioned itself as one of the prominent and vibrant museums. This trend is evident in several cases, showcasing the diversification of content formats and aggregation of brand symbol elements within Sanxingdui's communication strategy.

4.2.1. Brand Extension

In the digital era, museum brand marketing often transcends the museum's self-brand and extends to encompass various partnerships. Internet marketing utilizes the power of electronic commerce to sell and market products[6]. Museum brand extension rooted in the museum itself, combined effectively with the museum brand, establishes a form of "museum+" that promotes diversified communication.

4.2.2. Museum+Cultural and Creative Products

Sanxingdui Museum has developed a rich product matrix of cultural and creative products[7], including figurine blind boxes, makeup products, educational items (e.g., building blocks), tea bags, jade articles, jewelry, etc., fully exploring the possibilities of cultural and creative products.

4.2.3. Museum+Film and Television Variety Shows

The fusion of "museum+film and television variety shows" distinguishes itself from the solemn and dignified image typically associated with traditional museums. By combining with entertainment and variety show formats, museums can convey their concepts and culture in an entertaining manner, making them more accessible to audiences.

4.2.4. Museum+Brand Collaboration

Brand collaborations cater to the diverse needs of the audience, bringing enhanced identity reinforcement and extension through the combined personality traits of collaborating brands. In numerous collaborative cases, Sanxingdui's symbol elements exhibit a high degree of aggregation.

4.2.5. Digital Collections

Digital collections, unique digital credentials generated for specific works or artworks to protect their digital rights, enable digital distribution, purchase, collection, and use, have become a hot topic in recent years. There are a large number of bronze figures unearthed in Sanxingdui, with different sizes and shapes[8]. Sanxingdui Museum, by utilizing familiar cultural artifact imagery, enhances the recognition and market penetration of its brand symbol elements.

However, initial developments in digital collections primarily replicate the imagery of artifacts and have yet to activate the true digital potential of these collections—an issue prevalent in many museums developing digital collections. Capital and HR are crucial factors in digital product and service innovation development.[9]. In response, Sanxingdui Museum publicly solicited digital creative project partners, setting restrictions on launching creative projects based solely on replicas of artifacts, aiming to prevent low-quality digital replicas of artifacts from entering the market.

5.   Conclusion

Sanxingdui Museum serves as a significant gateway for disseminating ancient Shu civilization and outstanding traditional Chinese culture, with digital marketing enhancing its attractiveness, influence, and broader communication power. Leveraging the data pool it has built, Sanxingdui has accumulated digital archives and gradually implemented marketing automation. By integrating new and traditional media touchpoints to seek continuous breakthroughs, the museum has expanded its reach through diverse and youthful content, striving to bridge the gap between different cultural groups and segments. In the information age, museum culture no longer solely relies on historical artifacts and their descriptions but is empowered by digital technology, offering new marketing models that visualize the museum through digital mediums. Thus, museums are now more closely connected to society, the era, and the youth audience. The emergence and operation of Sanxingdui Museum align with and respond to the digital age, showcasing the convergence trend of various marketing elements such as data, users, media platforms, and content production. Evolving technological environments demand marketing and communication activities to stay current, with digital cultural museums becoming a distinct form from traditional museums.

Acknowledgements

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