

Analyzing the NetEase CloudMusic's Marketing Campaign

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Abstract: The Internet's innovation has had a profound impact on NetEase CloudMusic's development and marketing strategy adjustments. This paper examines the 2017 "Music Review Train" campaign, which NetEase CloudMusic and Hangzhou Metro launched, with the goal of identifying the strategic factors that led to its success. Based on the marketing mix theory of 4Is, this paper applies the campaign as a case and employs relevant data and literature. This paper found that the success of the campaign was primarily due to the application of an interesting strategy by selecting interesting music reviews as advertising content. This paper suggests exploring the interests of different audience groups in the future and collaborating with popular film and television intellectual property (IP). The second reason is the application of an interaction strategy, which allows for offline and online interaction with users. It is suggested that in the future, emphasis can be placed on the operation of new media platforms and the opening of offline shops to offer an interactive experience. This paper hoped to provide a reference for upgrading the marketing strategy of NetEase CloudMusic to improve the communication effect and brand image and thus contribute to the brand's future development.

Keywords: NetEase CloudMusic, Marketing Mix Theory, Interesting Strategy, Interaction Strategy

1. Introduction

At present, the Internet is constantly impacting traditional industries. Internet technology (IT) has transformed traditional industries and sparked the emergence of new ones, resulting in an endless supply of internet products. Since 2010, digital music has begun to emerge, and with the popularity of Internet terminals and the 5th Generation Mobile Network (5G), it has rapidly become a major business in the music industry through streaming media, social platforms, mobile phone applications (APPs), and other channels. According to the Statistical Report on the Development of the Internet in China, as of the end of 2016, the scale of China's network music users reached 503 million, an increase of 1.76 million compared with last year, accounting for 68.8% of the overall number of Internet users [1].

Digital music platforms are an important part of the cultural industry's emerging enterprises because they directly connect audiences with suppliers, making them the main distribution channel for digital music. In April 2013, NetEase CloudMusic officially launched its digital music app. Before its launch, NetEase CloudMusic changed the product positioning of previous similar software, "music player," and positioned itself as a "music community." In the first half of 2017, NetEase CloudMusic

made innovative moves by "going up to the sky and going down to the ground," placing content marketing ads in underground carriages and aircraft cabins, which became a hot topic on social platforms. Among them, the launch of the "Music Review Train" campaign with Hangzhou Metro in March received the most enthusiastic response. Until April 2017, NetEase CloudMusic users had exceeded 300 million, accounting for about 60% of the total number of online music users [2].

Feng Ran utilized the content analysis approach to scrutinize the content characteristics of 85 chosen reviews and the variables that contributed to the effective communication of the "music review train" marketing event on NetEase CloudMusic [2]. Zheng conducted personal interviews to investigate interviewees' preferences for online music platforms and their opinions on the "music review train" campaign [3]. The goal was to establish a connection between these preferences and the macro-level social media advertising measurement model [3]. This was done by analyzing individual marketing cases and making a case for the model's applicability in general [3]. Wu Yun analyzed the use of emotional appeal in the "music review train" advertisement [4]. They also provided recommendations on how to enhance the expression of the advertisement's appeal in metro advertisements [4]. Zhang used the content analysis methodology to examine the interactive ceremonial in the "Music Review Train," taking into account the users' collective presence and shared emphasis [5].

In the analysis of the NetEase CloudMusic "music review train," scholars mainly studied and analyzed the communication content features, communication channel characteristics, communication effect feedback, etc. Fewer studies have focused on NetEase CloudMusic's marketing strategies. Therefore, we pose the following question: What were the reasons for the NetEase CloudMusic "Music Review Train" marketing event's success? The purpose of this paper is to investigate NetEase CloudMusic's successful content marketing strategy and make suggestions for its future marketing strategy in order to provide reference for it to further optimize its marketing strategy to promote business improvement, stabilize corporate development, attract more user groups, and enhance overall business value.

To analyze this problem, the study would focus on the following three aspects: First, let's look at the "Music Review Train" marketing effort by NetEase CloudMusic. The precise substance of the "Music Review Train" campaign, as well as its communication effect and subsequent influence on NetEase CloudMusic, are discussed. Second, consider the success aspects of the "Music Review Train" marketing effort. The 4Is marketing mix theory is used to examine the causes for the success of this marketing event, as well as NetEase CloudMusic's content marketing approach. Finally, here are some suggestions for improving NetEase Cloud Music's content marketing strategy. The difficulties with NetEase CloudMusic's content marketing strategy are highlighted, and optimization suggestions are made.

2. Case Description

On April 23, 2013, NetEase launched the "NetEase CloudMusic APP." This digital music app was first launched on the iTunes platform and was quickly developed for iPhone Operating System (iOS) and Android versions within three months. In the first quarter of 2014, NetEase released the "2013-2014 NetEase CloudMusic White Paper," which stated that "NetEase CloudMusic APP has covered seven mainstream platforms, including iOS, Android, personal computers, Windows phones, etc. In July 2015, the number of app users had exceeded 100 million [6]. In the subsequent year, NetEase established Hangzhou NetEase CloudMusic Technology Co., Ltd. as a subsidiary, transforming NetEase CloudMusic from an application software to a digital music platform business.

Facing the white-hot competition in the head market, NetEase CloudMusic first defined its customer group and core business at the beginning of its launch. It targeted the main user group of its products and services, the young under the age of 24, and on top of that, it put forward the idea of the

music community. It created an interactive social ecosystem around the music theme. This system is realized through user-generated content (UGC) in the music community, such as commenting on music and creating and sharing song lists.

NetEase CloudMusic incorporates the UGC model into its content marketing strategy. It uses user-generated music reviews in its advertisements to share user-generated, valuable content with a wider audience.

From March 20 to April 16, 2017, NetEase CloudMusic and Hangzhou Metro released the "Music Review Train" with the theme "Seeing the Power of Music: Let Music Stories Fill Your Line 1 Journey." NetEase Cloud Music selected the 5,000 song reviews with the highest number of likes, manually screened the 85 most exciting ones by the staff with the strongest sensibility and copywriting skills in the team, and printed them in Hangzhou Metro Line 1 carriages and Jiangling Road Metro Station. These music reviews are all original content from the users, presented in a minimalist style with white characters on a red background.

The "Music Review Train's content marketing has achieved an amazing response in terms of communication effect. The metro ad not only attracted widespread attention in Hangzhou but also spread across WeChat, Weibo, and other social media platforms. Nearly 2,000 WeChat public platforms reported on the campaign, with a total readership of 10 million. In particular, the two main texts "Yesterday, NetEase CloudMusic's Tear-Poking Text Brushed the Hangzhou Subway" and "NetEase CloudMusic Printed 5,000 Comments All Over the Subway, Causing Tears to Blur in the Eyes of People Commuting to and from Work..." were published by Creative Music Workshop and Jam Music on March 21st and March 22nd, respectively, with a reading volume of more than 100,000+, five times the usual reading volume [7]. The WeChat index of NetEase CloudMusic doubled 216 times, reaching a peak of 13 million [8].

Aside from the communication effect, the "Music Review Train" campaign has also contributed to NetEase CloudMusic's platform building and user growth. The NetEase CloudMusic App has risen from third to first place in the music category charts in the App Store and from about 35th to 16th place in the free charts [7]. On July 27, 2017, big data monitoring platform Trustdata released the "China Mobile Internet Development Analysis Report for the First Half of 2017" [9]. Trustdata data shows that the monthly retention rate of new users of Kugou Music, QQ Music, and Koowo Music Box has continued to decline, but NetEase CloudMusic has grown against the trend. As of June 2017, NetEase CloudMusic's monthly retention rate of new users has become the first in the industry, far exceeding that of Kugou Music, QQ Music, and Koowo Music Box.

3. Analysis on Problems

3.1. Marketing Mix Theory of 4Is

American scholar Jerome McCarthy proposed the Four Ps of Marketing, from which the Marketing Mix Theory of the 4Is evolved through continuous development [10]. Since its proposal, the marketing mix theory has upgraded its theoretical model based on the interaction pattern between users and media, ultimately evolving from the 4Ps of marketing to the Marketing Mix Theory of the 4Is. Don Schultz, a marketing professor at Northwestern University, proposed the marketing mix theory of the 4Is in the 1990s. Its core is to design a strategy based on corporate goals and dominate various corporate resources to accomplish those goals [11].

The marketing mix theory of the 4Is includes four elements: "interesting," "interests," "interaction," and "individuality." "Interesting" emphasizes building users' perception of the product through interesting content; "Interests" indicates that enterprises should consider users' interests in order to attract users' participation; "Interaction" suggests the application of social networks to establish interaction between users and products; and "Individuality" guides enterprises to provide

users with personalized consumption experiences to satisfy their needs. The marketing mix theory of the 4Is is of guiding significance for the exploration of how to help enterprises innovate in the traditional marketing mode, satisfy consumers' psychological needs through interactive marketing or content marketing strategies, and improve marketing efficiency and the economic and social benefits of enterprises.

3.2. Reasons on Interesting Strategy

NetEase CloudMusic meticulously curates' song evaluations and uses high-quality user-generated content to pique the audience's interest and resonance. As a result, one of the factors contributing to its success is its distinctive strategy.

Instead of selecting reviews at random, NetEase CloudMusic manually chose reviews with a high number of likes and topics that are likely to pique an audience's attention as ad content. For instance, user Egg is Round D commented on Jay Chou's "Sunny Day," stating, "I listened to it in my senior year of high school; that's when I met my children's mother, and then I was so happy down the road." This is one of Sunny Day's most popular reviews, with 650,000 likes [7]. Jay Chou's songs are popular among the post-90s generation, expressing their young recollections; therefore, his music evaluations will pique the target audience's attention. There were also some music critiques that were hilarious and pertinent to everyday life, which drew attention from the crowd. For example, in the music review of the song "Ugly" by Joker Xue, "I want to say to my roommate who woke up early, Ugly, ah ah ah ah, can you not turn on the light?" According to the relevant questionnaire survey, the audience's satisfaction with the advertisement's review content is 3.88, which ranks first in the audience's satisfaction with the advertisement's theme, color, metro carriage form, and overall effect [7].

Marketing can be boosted by interesting strategies. Ma Haonan demonstrated in his paper that, through an interesting strategy, Chinese makeup brand Florasis has successfully created the brand image of "Oriental Beauty Master" and increased brand awareness and recognition [12]. Guo Mingwei demonstrated in his paper that the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics applied an interesting strategy by inviting Wang Meng to commentate, which successfully created explosive topics and raised national attention to the event [13].

3.3. Reasons on Interaction Strategy

NetEase CloudMusic chose the underground as the offline carrier and WeChat as the online communication channel, which fully mobilized the audience's interactivity and participation. Both offline and online audiences focused on music and music reviews, sharing emotional experiences. Information was widely disseminated through interactions. Therefore, their interaction strategy contributes to the success of music review trains.

Firstly, the "Music Review Train" gathered an audience of people who traveled underground in the same place and influenced each other. The audience would transmit its viewing behavior, commenting attitude, and even tearful performance to others in the audience, thereby forming an interaction. Numerous audiences congregated in a specific area, confronting identical information symbols and emotional stimuli. Those emotions served as an internal drive for the ritual interaction between audiences. The audience's spontaneous photo-taking was a typical manifestation of active participation in ritual interaction.

Secondly, NetEase CloudMusic selected WeChat as the primary platform for online marketing communication. Using WeChat's large user base and acquaintance network, the "Music Review Train" metro commercial achieved a screen-level interactive communication effect. The high viscosity of user sharing and sincere music ratings prompted a huge number of people to spontaneously share the commercial. In addition, NetEase CloudMusic launched a marketing

campaign on the WeChat public platform. WeChat's public platform can accurately distribute information and swiftly reach the intended audience at a minimal cost. The reprinting on several public platforms also increased the advertisement's reach. Disseminating textual content can also be beneficial, especially for sharing high-quality stories.

An interaction strategy can promote marketing. Di Jiahui et al. demonstrated that Oreo's interactive strategy attracted massive amounts of traffic to punch in, increasing brand attention and consumption [14]. Wu Haoran demonstrated that WeChat's reading public platform, "Book List is Coming," employed an interaction strategy to successfully achieve deep interaction between users and lay a traffic foundation for the promotion of subsequent campaigns [15].

4. Suggestion

4.1. Suggestion to Interesting Strategy

Currently, the variety and number of songs in the digital music market are rapidly increasing, while related labels are becoming more polished and complex. However, NetEase CloudMusic has not updated its suggestion system in a timely manner and has relied on hugely popular songs to generalize, ignoring the interests of some niche music enthusiasts. Furthermore, because it is an important component of audiovisual entertainment integration, the cinema and television business has a high potential for information output as well as brand promotion. However, in comparison to Tencent Music, NetEase CloudMusic has made fewer links with the film and television industries, with fewer campaigns collaborating with films, TV dramas, and variety programs. Therefore, according to the Interesting Strategy, NetEase CloudMusic should focus its marketing strategy on music and transition into multidimensional communication.

Firstly, as a user of a music platform, the core of the audience's point of interest remains the music itself. However, music has a limited experiential impact in the metro. Pure music reviews also seem single and boring. With digital technology, NetEase CloudMusic can more accurately identify and meet the preferences of the audience. Through big data, it can explore music that is popular with a wide range of people. Marketers can accompany advertisements with music posters, music videos, and QR codes, allowing audiences to actively engage in multi-dimensional communication activities such as listening, reading, commenting, and sharing. In addition, the "code-sweeping lottery" campaign can also be applied to develop new users' download paths.

Next, NetEase CloudMusic can partner with popular film and TV IPs for advertising. TV dramas, films, and variety shows are an important part of audio-visual entertainment in modern society, and they have a huge audience. NetEase CloudMusic can cooperate with them and employ related storylines or characters in advertisements. Interesting content can attract the attention of relevant fan groups.

Collaboration with popular film and TV IPs has been verified to boost consumption. Miniso launched a series of new products with the theme "everything can be pink" in July 2023, before the film Barbie was released, with more than 120 co-branded products online. Only five days after the series' launch, Miniso's official disclosure reveals that nearly half of the categories have sold out across the entire network. A number of offline shops have also announced that popular products are off the market, and a "help to buy" craze has arisen online.

4.2. Suggestion to Interaction Strategy

At the moment, Generation Z relies heavily on digital music platforms, with mobile video and social applications accounting for more than half of their overall Internet time [6]. However, NetEase CloudMusic's online marketing channels are mostly app shops and its own Wechat public platform, with a limited operational time, few activities, and poor fan interest on new media platforms such as

TikTok, Little Red Book, and Weibo. Furthermore, NetEase CloudMusic's expansion of offline contact channels has not left a great impression on customers. Although it has collaborated with Lukin Coffee and Watson's to open offline stores, consumers prefer specialist enterprises and have a poor perception of these "unprofessional" establishments. Thus, based on the interaction strategy, NetEase CloudMusic is recommended to develop new interactive communication techniques both online and offline.

Firstly, NetEase CloudMusic should strengthen its brand operation on social media platforms like TikTok and Little Red Book. Enhancing the quality and frequency of short video output, cooperating with key opinion leaders (KOL) to improve the exposure rate of the account, and cooperating with offline campaigns to do cyclical campaign operations can effectively improve the interactive effect of the brand and the audience in online channels so as to convert potential users.

Secondly, in the offline channel, NetEase CloudMusic's current content marketing does not fully utilize the scene attributes that music has. The following advice should be offered: NetEase CloudMusic can cooperate with libraries or bookstores to make part of the area a NetEase CloudMusic-themed space. The main color of the decoration can be the red of the platform's logo or the colors commonly employed by users in the reading scene, with the addition of song lists, radio stations, singers, and other logo content. In addition, NetEase CloudMusic can also select cinemas, record shops, and other entertainment venues to arrange offline music equipment and provide interactive music entertainment services. Through the reproduction of the music scene, the immersive interactive experience deepens the impression and goodwill of potential users toward the brand, which can promote the number of users.

Marketing through new media platforms has been shown to have a broad reach. NOC (Yili's premium ice cream brand) debuted a special Forbidden City co-branded ice cream and shared related content on all major new media platforms. Every day, dedicated officials oversee each of these platform profiles and respond to comments in the comment box. TikTok videos with the hashtag #NOC Forbidden City Co-Branded Special Edition Ice Cream # have been played 1,008.3 times. The quantity of likes and comments on relevant portions on other platforms is as impressive [14].

The opening of themed spaces in offline shops and the setting of interactive devices were verified to boost consumption. Towards the end of 2022, there was a sudden popularity among tourists to collect stamps. In the end of 2022, JG Cultural and Creative Company opened a dedicated stamp-collecting counter in the Cultural and Creative Shop in the Shanxi Museum, providing 51 different types of stamps for consumers to utilize. After making a purchase, consumers can apply any of the stamps they prefer to put on their stamp books or postcards. The stamping and platooning of the Shanxi Museum have become a hot topic on social media and an important channel to attract traffic to the cultural and creative shop [16].

5. Conclusion

The exponential growth of the Internet and the evolving consumption patterns of Internet users have created a pressing need for digital music platforms to adapt their supply and marketing tactics accordingly. This article scrutinizes NetEase CloudMusic, a digital music platform, and highlights its 2017 "Music Review Train" campaign. The purpose of this study is to investigate the variables that contributed to the success of this marketing event. The essay uses the 4Is marketing mix theory to examine NetEase CloudMusic's marketing tactics in this particular campaign. The paper examines NetEase CloudMusic's choice of captivating material in music reviews using the 4Is marketing mix theory and supporting data. The research asserts that NetEase CloudMusic implemented an engaging strategy. The paper examines both the offline and online communication tactics used by the campaign, and asserts that NetEase CloudMusic has effectively employed an interactive strategy. Furthermore, considering the intriguing strategy and interaction approach, the author proposes enhancements to

NetEase CloudMusic's marketing strategy. These include leveraging technology to thoroughly investigate the audience's interests, collaborating with popular film and TV intellectual property, intensifying efforts on new media platforms, and establishing physical stores to provide an immersive experience. The paper concludes that NetEase CloudMusic employed intriguing ideas and interaction techniques to achieve success with the "Music Review Train".

This paper further confirms the practicality of the marketing mix theory of 4Is in the field of marketing by analyzing relevant cases, collecting data, and combing the literature. The findings of this paper have implications for future adjustments to NetEase CloudMusic's marketing strategies. The limitation of this paper is that it only includes a single case over a certain period of time; thus, the perspective is not macroscopic enough. It is expected that more comprehensive studies and analyses will be conducted in subsequent studies in order to present more big-picture and up-to-date perspectives and recommendations.

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