

Research on Brand Communication Methods of Public Cultural Institutions

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Abstract: This article explores the branding communication methods of public cultural institutions, analyzing the roles and impacts of traditional media, new media communication, event promotion, collaborative communication, and word-of-mouth marketing. Through case studies, the article illustrates how to enhance the social influence and cultural outreach of public cultural institutions. For small to medium-sized public cultural institutions, the article proposes communication strategies based on brand positioning, resource integration, and cross-industry collaboration, aiming to provide a theoretical foundation and practical guidance for improving brand communication effectiveness.

Keywords: Public cultural institutions; Brand communication; Communication methods; Cross-industry collaboration

Introduction

Public cultural institutions are cultural facilities established and operated by governments or other public organizations, aimed at providing cultural, educational, entertainment, and informational services to the public. These institutions include libraries, museums, cultural centers, and art galleries, with the primary functions of promoting cultural heritage, enriching the public's cultural life, enhancing social cultural literacy, and advancing social civilization. Public cultural institutions typically prioritize public interest, utilizing extensive services and activities to meet the cultural needs of diverse groups, thereby strengthening the cultural cohesion and vitality of society.

Brand communication refers to the process through which enterprises or organizations convey brand information to target audiences using various communication methods and strategies, with the goals of establishing and maintaining brand image, and enhancing brand awareness and reputation. Brand communication encompasses aspects such as brand positioning, communication content design, channel selection, and effect evaluation, aiming to strengthen market competitiveness and consumer loyalty through effective communication. It involves not only the use of traditional and new media but also various forms like event marketing, collaborative promotions, and word-of-mouth communication to maximize brand value.

Public cultural institutions play a crucial role in the dissemination and preservation of culture, yet they face challenges posed by information technology and globalization. Technological advancements drive changes in communication methods, necessitating that institutions adapt to new digital tools to enhance their communication effectiveness.

1. Importance of Brand Communication for Public Cultural Institutions

Brand communication holds significance for public cultural institutions not only in conveying cultural information but also in shaping their unique cultural identity, thereby expanding their social influence and attracting more audiences and resources. Specifically, the importance of brand communication for public cultural institutions can be reflected in the following aspects:

1.1 Enhancing Social Recognition and Reputation

Through brand communication, public cultural institutions can effectively convey their cultural mission, vision, and values, enhancing public recognition of their cultural identity. For example, the

Palace Museum has significantly increased its social recognition and reputation through a series of innovative brand communication methods, such as the documentary "I Repair Cultural Relics at the Palace Museum." These documentaries not only showcase the restoration work but also deepen the public's understanding and appreciation of the museum's culture through detailed cultural explanations and underlying stories. According to relevant survey data, after the documentary aired, the social attention towards the Palace Museum increased by approximately 30%, while the number of followers on its official social media platforms grew by 40%. This diverse communication strategy not only allows the public to better understand the museum's historical culture but also embeds its cultural image more deeply in public consciousness^[1].

1.2 Strengthening Cultural Influence and Outreach

Brand communication helps public cultural institutions expand their cultural influence, promoting the breadth and depth of cultural outreach. For instance, the National Library has increased brand awareness and cultural reach through literary awards, publication exhibitions, and knowledge dissemination activities. The "Chinese Ancient Books Protection Project" of the National Library successfully disseminates the concept of ancient book preservation to a wider audience through a series of lectures, exhibitions, and digital projects, ensuring the transmission and promotion of traditional culture. Research indicates that the coverage of these activities has expanded by about 50%, receiving positive feedback from audiences, effectively enhancing the National Library's visibility and cultural influence among the public. Through strategic brand communication, public cultural institutions can achieve broad dissemination of cultural resources, further increasing the societal impact of cultural value. The diversification and precision of communication methods play a crucial role in enhancing cultural outreach^[2].

1.3 Attracting Social Resources and Collaboration Opportunities

Effective brand communication creates more opportunities for public cultural institutions to attract social resources and cross-industry collaborations. In today's increasingly competitive cultural landscape, cultural institutions must not only rely on their resources but also actively seek external support and partnerships. For example, the Guangzhou Museum collaborated with a technology company to launch a series of cultural creative products themed around its collections, thereby expanding the museum's influence through brand communication and attracting more social resources and funding, promoting diversified brand development. This collaboration not only enhances the museum's market visibility but also increases its revenue sources, achieving effective resource integration. Specifically, this partnership led to a 20% increase in the museum's annual revenue and notable achievements in the cultural creative product sector. The resource integration brought about by this collaboration not only deepens brand communication but also provides a new path for sustainable development of cultural institutions^[3].

1.4 Promoting Cultural Identity and Public Participation

Brand communication also plays a significant role in cultural identity and public participation. Effective brand communication can convey cultural information while fostering a sense of cultural identity and pride among the public. For instance, the Xi'an Museum has enhanced community residents' sense of cultural identity and participation through various cultural interaction projects in collaboration with local communities, including traditional handicraft experiences, cultural lectures, and community celebrations. Survey data indicate that these projects have increased community residents' satisfaction with the museum to 85%, significantly enhancing their cultural participation. By promoting cultural identity, brand communication facilitates interaction and connection between the public and cultural institutions, thereby advancing the transmission and protection of culture.

2. Current Status and Issues of Brand Communication in Public Cultural Institutions

With the increasing societal demand for cultural consumption, brand communication in public cultural institutions has gradually become an important aspect of their cultural services. However, while the brand communication of these institutions is rapidly developing, it also faces many challenges and issues. These problems primarily manifest in communication content, communication channels, communication effectiveness, and the institutions' own brand positioning.

2.1 Serious Homogenization of Communication Content

Many public cultural institutions focus on showcasing cultural resources in their brand communication but lack personalized and differentiated brand connotations, resulting in serious homogenization of communication content. This homogenization not only reduces the uniqueness and attractiveness of the brand but also makes it difficult for the public to form a deep memory of a specific cultural institution. For instance, many museums emphasize the historical and artistic value of their collections but neglect personalized brand expression, making it hard for the brand to stand out. This phenomenon is particularly evident in smaller or local public cultural institutions^[4].

2.2 Limited Effectiveness of New Media Communication and Blurred Brand Positioning

Although public cultural institutions are gradually recognizing the importance of new media communication and have made attempts on social media and short video platforms, their communication effectiveness still has certain limitations. Many institutions lack professional operational teams, leading to a singular quality and form of communication content that struggles to attract and retain audiences. For example, the content updates on museums' WeChat and Weibo accounts are infrequent, and interactivity is poor, resulting in less than ideal brand communication effects. Furthermore, blurred brand positioning is a key factor affecting the success of brand communication. Many institutions have not clarified their brand positioning in brand building, causing communication content to lack core value and clear direction. To cater to popular cultural demands, some institutions overly focus on market-driven communication, such as certain museums excessively pursuing popular culture in their brand communication while neglecting the depth and uniqueness of their own culture, leading to insufficient brand image strength.

2.3 Lack of Integration in Communication Channels

Currently, many public cultural institutions' brand communication channels exhibit fragmentation, with a lack of effective integration and collaborative operation among different channels. Traditional media, new media, and offline activities often operate independently, lacking a unified brand communication strategy, which prevents communication content from forming a cohesive force, thereby affecting communication effectiveness. This issue is particularly prominent in small to medium-sized cultural institutions, which, due to limited resources, find it challenging to implement systematic integrated communication plans^[5].

2.4 Low Public Participation

Although some public cultural institutions have begun to emphasize public participation in brand communication, overall public engagement remains low. Many brand communication activities lack interactivity and engagement, making it difficult to attract public participation, especially from younger demographics. For example, while brand communication activities in museums and art galleries are diverse, they often become overly academic or formalized, failing to adequately consider the public's experiential and interactive needs, resulting in low enthusiasm for participation. This weakens the effectiveness of brand communication in public cultural institutions, making it challenging to achieve deep interaction with the public.

3. Brand Communication Methods of Public Cultural Institutions

The brand communication methods of public cultural institutions have become increasingly diverse, encompassing various traditional and modern communication means, gradually forming a multidimensional communication system. With the diversification of the communication environment, brand communication has expanded beyond the one-way information delivery of traditional media to include a variety of channels and forms. By integrating media, activities, and collaborative models, the interaction between public cultural institutions and their audiences has deepened, resulting in a closer emotional connection.

In this context, public cultural institutions can flexibly select suitable brand communication methods based on their characteristics and audience needs to achieve optimal communication effects. Currently, five main brand communication methods are prevalent in public cultural institutions: traditional media communication, new media communication, event communication, collaborative

communication, and word-of-mouth communication. Each method has its unique characteristics and can leverage its strengths in different communication environments, forming a complementary effect that enhances brand communication outcomes.

3.1 Traditional Media Communication

Despite the arrival of the digital age altering the communication landscape, traditional media remains a foundational strategy for brand building in public cultural institutions. Traditional media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, transmits cultural information to a broader audience through authority and extensive coverage. For instance, the National Centre for the Performing Arts has utilized television to promote its performances, enhancing public recognition of its brand through news segments and special programs. However, the high costs and singularity of traditional media's communication forms limit its flexibility and interactivity, resulting in relatively delayed communication effects in some cases^[6].

3.2 New Media Communication

The rise of new media has introduced a novel communication method for public cultural institutions, characterized by speed, strong interactivity, and lower costs. Social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin provide public cultural institutions with greater flexibility, enabling rapid content dissemination, particularly among younger audiences. For example, the Palace Museum regularly shares content about artifacts and exhibitions on Weibo and WeChat, quickly attracting substantial attention from young audiences.

3.3 Event Communication

Planning cultural events is an effective way for public cultural institutions to attract public participation and establish brand recognition. Through exhibitions, lectures, cultural festivals, and other formats, institutions can combine cultural resources with public interaction, enhancing the depth of brand communication. For instance, the Shanghai Museum's regular "Night of Cultural Relics" events not only showcase precious artifacts but also create opportunities for deep public engagement, fostering a strong sense of cultural identity. However, event communication involves high costs and requires substantial human and material resources for planning and execution, posing a significant challenge for small and medium-sized public cultural institutions^[7].

3.4 Collaborative Communication

Collaborative communication expands brand influence through partnerships with commercial brands, other cultural institutions, or media. This approach allows public cultural institutions to leverage the resources and influence of their partners to reach a broader audience. For example, the British Museum has collaborated with several well-known brands to launch cultural-themed products, enhancing the museum's visibility, particularly in commercial markets. The advantage of collaborative communication lies in utilizing the channels and resources of other brands or institutions, but the choice of partners and cultural compatibility are critical factors determining success.

3.5 Word-of-Mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication is a method through which information is spontaneously spread by the public, characterized by high credibility and natural dissemination. By improving audience participation experiences and service quality, public cultural institutions can encourage audiences to actively share brand information. For instance, the Hong Kong Museum of Art enhanced audience participation by improving the exhibition experience, leading many visitors to share their feelings on social media after their visit, thereby attracting new visitors. Although word-of-mouth communication is low-cost and yields lasting effects, its outcomes are difficult to control and depend on audience spontaneity and subjective evaluations^[8].

4. Strategies for Brand Communication in Public Cultural Institutions

To address the challenges faced by public cultural institutions in brand communication, the

following strategies are proposed to enhance communication effectiveness and optimize methods.

4.1 Develop Differentiated Brand Communication Strategies

Public cultural institutions should formulate differentiated brand communication strategies based on their cultural characteristics and target audiences to avoid content homogenization. Theoretically, brand differentiation strategies are rooted in market positioning theory (Porter, 1985), which emphasizes standing out in the market by identifying and highlighting unique value propositions. For example, the Palace Museum showcases its unique status in Ming and Qing court culture through the themed exhibition "Night of the Forbidden City," using high-tech means to recreate historical scenes and establish a distinctive brand identity.

4.2 Strengthen Interactivity in New Media Communication

Public cultural institutions should enhance the interactivity of new media communication, increasing opportunities for audience engagement. Interactive communication theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) underscores the importance of two-way interaction in the communication process for effective information reception and dissemination. For instance, the Guangzhou Museum conducted the interactive campaign "#GuangzhouMuseum Celebrates Dragon Boat Festival#" on Weibo, utilizing live streaming and user-generated content (UGC) to boost audience interaction and participation. This highly interactive new media strategy not only increased audience engagement but also effectively expanded the brand's reach.

4.3 Achieve Integration of Communication Channels

Public cultural institutions should integrate traditional and new media communication channels to create synergistic effects. According to Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory, coordinating information across different communication channels can enhance brand transmission effectiveness. Taking the Shanghai Museum as an example, the institution successfully promoted the "Shanghai Museum Collection Exhibition" by integrating television advertisements, WeChat pushes, and the official website. A unified promotional theme and content planning ensured information consistency and communication effectiveness. This channel integration approach effectively enhanced the overall brand communication impact, maximizing resource utilization^[9].

4.4 Clarify Brand Positioning and Core Values

Public cultural institutions should clarify their brand positioning and core values to avoid ambiguous brand images. By thoroughly understanding their cultural characteristics and target audiences, institutions can formulate clear brand strategies and communication plans. For example, museums can conduct market research and audience analysis to establish brand positioning, developing corresponding communication strategies and content based on that positioning. Clear brand positioning enhances the precision and effectiveness of brand communication, making the brand image clearer and more powerful. The Natural History Museum in London recently repositioned itself as an "Earth Protector," focusing its core values on ecological conservation and sustainable development. By collaborating with environmental organizations, the museum launched a series of exhibitions related to climate change and natural conservation, and hosted the "Earth Guardians" campaign to raise public awareness of environmental issues. This positioning not only aligns the museum with contemporary environmental concerns but also establishes a distinct image within the cultural sector, gaining broad recognition among the public.

4.5 Enhance Public Participation and Experience

Public cultural institutions should prioritize public participation experiences, enhancing engagement through rich interactive activities and experiential communication. For example, museums can organize community cultural events and creative workshops to increase public involvement and identification with the institution. Enhanced public participation and experience not only improve brand communication effectiveness but also strengthen audience loyalty and sense of identity. The "Public Science Day" event at the Shanghai Natural History Museum serves as an open day aimed at family audiences, designed to boost public interest in science through interactive experiences. This immersive participation format not only fosters greater public interest in science but also lays a foundation for the

museum's brand communication^[10].

5. Conclusion

Public cultural institutions face challenges in brand communication, including content homogenization, limitations in new media communication, insufficient channel integration, unclear brand positioning, and low public participation. To address these challenges, several solutions are proposed: implementing differentiated communication strategies, enhancing interactivity in new media, integrating communication channels, clarifying brand positioning, and increasing public participation. The implementation of these strategies can enhance brand communication effectiveness, strengthen cultural influence, and promote the widespread dissemination and deep recognition of cultural resources.

The research underscores the necessity for continuous innovation in brand communication strategies and suggests that future studies explore how to leverage technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics to optimize communication strategies, while also considering issues of cultural uniqueness within the contexts of cross-cultural communication and globalization. This approach will provide new perspectives for brand communication in public cultural institutions and further facilitate the protection and inheritance of cultural resources.

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