Online Marketing of Cultural Tourism: A Case Study of a 5A Ancient Town

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Abstract: For Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), the use of social media marketing has become their most important marketing tool.This paper discusses the online marketing process of cultural tourism through the thematic analysis method, and reveals the online marketing content of cultural tourism from three stages: pre-tour marketing, in-tour marketing and post-tour marketing.Research shows that the marketing of cultural tourism on social media is mainly through the self-established IP of tourism-related stakeholders and tourists to automatically generate or forward high-quality cultural tourism content, generate certain influence and attract a group of fans, from which trust can be built by interacting with uploaders. The results imply that the high quality cultural tourism content is the key to the success of online marketing, therefore, both the tourism destination organizations and the tourism enterprises should do a good job in the content generation.

Keywords: Cultural tourism experience; Online marketing; Thematic analysis;Tik Tok

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid developments in the Internet services as well as information and communication technologies (ICT) can dramatically change the manner in which the tourism industry and tourism organisations conduct business [6]. Network and social media analytics are promising avenues for new methods of online marketing and sales [8] The main advantage of social media data is that it is shared voluntarily and is often freely accessible online, free of legal restrictions on reuse. It is usually available in real time and can be processed at a relatively low cost [12].

Most marketing for cultural attractions have started to use social media in some manner, although social media still tends to be used more for marketing more than for analysis and for input into impact assessments. Still, many cultural tourism destinations have expressed interest in making greater use of social media data for analysis and planning in the future [1]. Moreover, cultural attractions are aggressively using different social media platforms in their future plans [11].

Tourism was the sector hit particularly hard by the Covid-19 crisis, and feedback from cultural tourism experts and the regions surveyed indicated that the development of cultural tourism destinations required more attention [8]. Therefore, the government and tourism managers need to understand, in a timely manner, the relevant information of cultural tourism departments, tourism enterprises, and tourists in order to develop policy tools. All of these make the application of open and big data in cultural tourism management more attractive. User-generated big data from social media, web searches, and website visits constitute another promising source of data for monitoring and planning cultural tourism. The data can be used both to analyse tourist flows and to understand how visitors perceive and use tourist attractions. As big data is generally public, available in real time, and freely available online, the barriers to use of this data source are low in terms of access and legal restrictions. Numerous studies have shown that the quality and reliability of the data approach official tourism statistics, is creating a method to replace expensive tourist surveys through analyzing people's online behaviour at a lower cost with less time [12][6][1]. Therefore, the use of Internet and social media data to monitor and assess

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travel has become mainstream.

Based on the importance of online data marketing to cultural tourism, this paper takes the successful online marketing case of Qingyan Ancient Town' Da Ming Zhi events on the social media platform -Tik Tok in 2020 as an example to explore the online marketing process of cultural tourism destinations through theme analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) offers a broad definition of "cultural tourism", arguing that "cultural tourism includes all aspects of tourism, from which tourists can learn the history and heritage of others, as well as their contemporary life and thoughts…" [14]. At the same time, it also provides a narrower definition, that is, "the movement of people for cultural motivation, such as research travel, performing arts, cultural travel, visiting historical sites, nature research, folk and art, religious pilgrimage travel, travel to festivals and other cultural events" [14].To realize special cultural feelings, that is, tourists travel for cultural motivation. In this process, tourists observe, feel, and experience foreign or heterogeneous cultures, or have in-depth experience of the cultural connotation of tourism resources, to obtain all-round spiritual and cultural enjoyment [15] .

From a cultural tourism perspective, user-generated data and content are a promising source for collecting macro flow statistics on travel destinations, as well as for understanding (and potentially predicting) flow patterns associated with specific cultural attractions and events. In addition, Kalvet et al [8].comment that text data posted by visitors as comments on Twitter messages or photos shared on platforms, such as Flickr, can help enterprises analyse people's emotions and engagement with specific points of interest, reveal visitors'interests, and help understand the activities that visitors engage in at different sites. Such information may assist in the development of management and marketing strategies around existing cultural tourist attractions, but can also reveal new interests for new attractions and activities, all of which can be derived much quicker than any official statistic report can grasp the same trends.

2.2 Online experience marketing

At the tourism planning and decision-making stage, the relationship between tourists and representatives of destinations is communicated online and bidirectional through multiple official and unofficial platforms. The interactions that take place on these online platforms (such as blogs, social media, and websites) form the so-called "pre-experience" associated with the destination, which is believed to be the basis for generating tourists' motivation to travel [3]. Among the official platforms used for online destination promotion, the destination's website and its social media accounts stand out. To be successful and to distinguish themselves from any possible competitors, destination brands must deliver the promise of a memorable destination experience [7]. Following this line of thought, authors have identified that destinations have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction, willingness to revisit, loyalty, and future word-of-mouth recommendations [3][9]. Recently, however, the development of information and communication technology has enabled tourists to have direct contact with the culture, heritage, and tourism services as well as the scenery of their destinations through multimedia. As such, destination platforms are a key element in providing a destination brand online experience that encourages potential visitors to visit or interact with a destination. Through the means of seeing, listening, using, and participating, experiential marketing can fully stimulate and mobilize consumers' senses, emotions, thinking, actions, associations, and other emotional and rational factors [5]. Brakus discussed the dimensions of experiential marketing from the perspective of brand cognition and proposed four dimensions of experiential marketing. In his opinion, brand experience can be divided into Sensory Experience, Affective Experience, Intellectual Experience, and Behavioral Experience.

2.3 Social media technology

Social media technologies (SMTs) include a wide range of Internet-based applications, including software designed primarily to support collaborative communication, interaction, and synchronous or asynchronous networks, such as social networking sites, content repositories, video games, and virtual reality. SMTs are considered to be an important channel for tourism branding and marketing [9]. Moreover, SMTs constitutes a low-cost technology that can be cheaply maintained through existing free platforms [10][5] .

Social media platforms are considered to be the most important destination marketing communication tool in the information age. Short video platforms are used for creation and dissemination, which has achieved good social effects and created new social values. Large travel companies aggressively market and promote their travel activities through social media reviews, reading reviews, opinions, photos, and videos (including corporate websites), often capturing a significant share of the local and international tourist market compared to smaller companies that rarely use such platforms [4]. As a result, social media technology is indispensable to the online visibility and accessibility of small travel businesses. The continued awareness and visibility of newly launched travel brands depends on the continued aggressive marketing and promotion of these products and services through interactive platforms, such as SMTs. Kalvet [8] praised the communication and transactional power of social media, especially their ability to reach new audiences and strengthen the connection between enterprises and their existing customers.
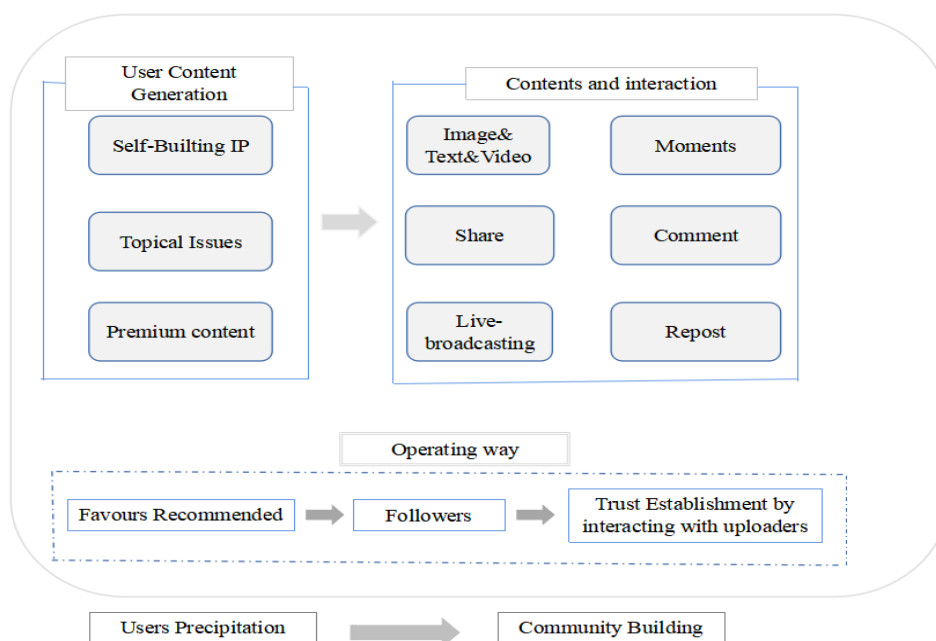

Figure 1.   The deep construction process of social media platform content and experience

The social media technology in this study is Tik Tok, which is a social software for short videos of music creativity incubated by Toutiao. The software was launched on September 20, 2016 and is a community platform for all ages. Users can choose images, text and videos, and form their own contents through this software.What's more, users can repost, share and comment on the premium content they like. Under the personalized recommendation mechanism, Tik Tok users can see their own personalized videos in their personalized recommendation pages.This is in line with the user's personal and unique short video watching needs.Users do not need to filter the contents they do not like artificially. The platform and algorithm have replaced users by packaging their social networking, location, work, habits, interests and other data, removing the videos that do not conform to users'taste, and only recommending the videos that users may like to watch.

In order to build Tik Tok into a popular media platform and show its responsible attitude, Tik Tok has been

working hard in government affairs and the media industry since 2018. By inviting and guiding government organs and media organizations to builting official IP on Tik Tok, Tik Tok's media platform positioning and content diversification have been realized [17].

Now,Tik Tok has become an important method of online marketing for many travel destinations. By August 2020, Tik Tok's daily active users exceeded 600 million, and by December 2020, the average daily video search times of Tik Tok exceeded 400 million. In 2020, Tik Tok will help the online economy, and it helps Hubei Province to restore Jiangsu Province. 42,779 merchants in Hubei Province will have 4.1 billion yuan worth of Tik Tok, Kuaishou, B and other new traffic platforms to build content and experience in the circle by means of depth, realizing the growth of both user scale and usage time, and continuously improving the commercial value. The cultural tourism poverty alleviation plan of Tik Tok, for example, promotes the popularity of characteristic tourist attractions in poor areas through the form of short videos, and makes a large number of previously "unattractive" scenic spots popular, such as Daocheng Yading in Garze Prefecture and Hefeng County in Enshi City, Hubei Province, which promotes the rapid development of local economy [17].

Through the study, it is found that Tik Tok has such a large data influence mainly due to its following characteristics:

- **Content experience marketing**

Authoritative user content production, increasing trust mechanism; Content diversity enhances the user experience.

Tik Tok has been polishing its content products since its launch. After a year, Tik Tok greatly increased its resources. Once it was put into the market, it was quickly upgraded to Toutiao strategic product, which directed all kinds of stars' promotion resources to Tik Tok. At the same time, Toutiao's core algorithm advantage is used to add an algorithm recommendation model to Tik Tok products to ensure the efficiency of content distribution. In addition, seven museum, the Beijing municipal public security bureau of anti-terrorism, special police corps and the communist youth league central institutions, as well as the central enterprises group to join, add a lot to trill platform is ability, authoritative content, in entertainment, funny, beautiful singing and dancing show as the main content of short video field to bring a clean, under the guidance of the government, many spread the content of socialist core values began to pop up on the short video platform.

- **LINK marketing**

Link marketing is a marketing model that matches the original content of Tik Tok with the marketing demands of customers. There are two modes. The first mode is conventional link, which reaches target groups based on a reasonable match between Tik Tok's native video traffic and brand marketing appeals. Tik Tok also makes use of the advantages of big data algorithms. It sends everyone what each individual user is interested in and wants to see, presenting the effect of "echo wall"and strengthening users' attention to the platform through displaying their own interest points to them. The other is function link, based on brand marketing preferences, to provide its own video content (talent video, star video, etc.) to add components, driving the transformation [17].

- **Broadcast content is extensive, short, practical and interesting**

Tik Tok's use of live streaming is more conducive to improving user engagement and exploring commercial boundaries (advertising, delivery, e-commerce and games). Tik Tok's live streaming has already broken through the single dimension, including more diversified and rich content. The current live streaming content on Tik Tok includes live teaching of makeup and musical instrument performance. More local folk customs are able to be shown live, online classes power closed is not suspended, while videos can be used to help sell goods which can support farmers, for example, as well as public welfare, the arts, humanities, education, and nature. In the face of live their own iteration, can grasp the product dynamic keen, influential platform can truly leverage amplification products value. The expansion of different content dimensions levered

the social promotion effect of Tik Tok and live broadcasting. The Greenpeace South Pole Live is another attempt by Tik Tok to break the content boundary on the basis of "Live Plus". The power of Tik Tok lies in its "short, flat" entertainment that is satisfying and fills up a lot of fragmented user time [17].

3. METHODS

The study data analyzed by qualitative content analysis included actual interviews with 26 offline tourists and 586 comments from Tik Tok platform.The questions in the offline interview include:

- Where did you get the information of "Da Ming Zhi" Cultural Activities?
- How do you feel if you get information from social platforms?
- Did you share it on social media when you participated in the "Da ming zhi "? Why share?
- What's your feeling after attending the "Da Ming Zhi"?

According to Schreier [13], thematic analysis is data or text driven and aims to identify hidden patterns. So an inductive thematic analysis method used. In the analysis phase, researchers search for differences and similarities in data collected through online and offline surveys, and then describe them at different levels of abstraction in the topic. Therefore, a study can achieve theoretical understanding from data. In other words, researchers can convert concrete textual information into abstract general concepts or knowledge. Thematic analysis has been used frequently in tourism research [11][16] .Therefore, we hope to understand the process of online marketing of cultural tourism destinations through the method of theme analysis.

We generated initial codes and subject classification for the data. These included "content experience", "culture", and "stakeholders". Finally, according to the different stages of the data, the presentation states of different themes are divided into three stages: pre-tour marketing, in-tour marketing, and post-tour marketing.

4. RESULTS

Thematic analysis reveals the online marketing process of the cultural tourism experience of Qingyan Ancient Town on social media, specifically Tik Tok.

4.1 Brief introduction of the case

Qingyan Ancient Town is located in the southern suburb of Guiyang City, Guizhou Province, China. It is the first national 5A tourist attraction in Guiyang City,National AAAAA (5A) scenic spots are scenic spots classified by the quality of tourist attractions in China. There are five levels, and 5A is the highest level of China's tourist attractions, representing the country's world-class boutique tourist attractions [376]. Qingyan has a history of more than 600 years, with profound cultural and historical background and charming regional characteristics. It was first built in the 11th year of Hongwu in the Ming Dynasty (1378 AD). It is a mountain military city evolved from the military city defence and is known as the "Southern Gate" of Guiyang. The "Da Ming Zhi" event is a series of immersive activities of ancient Chinese culture held by Qingyan Ancient Town to attract tourists, including a series of performances of Generals'orders, Etiquette, Mid-Autumn Festival reunion and so on. During the cultural activities of "Da Ming Zhi", Spread through the Tik Tok platform,only from 18:00 to 21:00 in August,2020, the number of visitors reached 155,238, an increase of 52.1% compared with July, which brought a large amount of direct income for the cultural and tourism industry of the scenic spot. Especially during the National Day period of "Da Ming Zhi·Etiquette Forever", Qingyan Ancient Town Scenic Spot received 235,500 tourists and achieved a comprehensive income of 28.2297 million yuan [20].

4.2 Online marketing process

The online marketing process of Qingyan Ancient Town's cultural tourism experience activities on Tik Tok platform is mainly divided into three stages.

4.2.1   Pre-tour marketing

Culture setting: in the early stage of the marketing, based on the analysis of the scenic spot in the research, through culture mining, made for the construction of the ancient city of the Ming dynasty, Qingyan ancient town, witnessed war years, your tender feelings, such as unique trait, lets visitors back to the Ming dynasty set a unique life stories, to a security guard, Da Ming town, army general, hanfu cruise, han culture immersion performance and so on into the tourism experience, to show performance form. At the same time, there are also many web celebrity small punch points in the scenic area, such as the Ming barracks, tea shops, wine shops, Dingguang ferry, and the rain pavilion. Through the theme of the Ming Dynasty and the multi-depth interaction with tourists and businesses, the cultural theme atmosphere of the whole scenic area is constructed in a static and three-dimensional way.

Various stakeholders joint participation: innovation "Da Ming Zhi" series theme night, online forms to participate in,Official departments, such as the government and scenic spot management companies, established IP through Tik Tok platform and actively produced and forwarded promotional videos related to "Da Ming Zhi"in the early stage of "Da Ming Zhi". Qingyan party committee government take the lead in wearing ancient costume, playing ancient instruments, making momentum,,Organizing and holding merchant meetings, publicizing and guiding merchants in ancient towns to participate in the atmosphere building spontaneously in the scenic spot. Industry authorities timely coordinate relevant sites and give maximum support to the event. Merchants actively cooperate with the night atmosphere, extend the business hours of shops, learn the etiquette culture of the Ming Dynasty, and take multiple measures to promote the diversification of industrial forms in ancient towns.

After the theme of the cultural activity was determined, Tik Tok's short video presented a strong cultural experience to tourists and created great influence in a very short time. In one day, 5,565 thumb ups, 880 comments and 578 reposts were created [19].

Figure 2.   Tik Tok short video for pre-tour publicity

4.2.2. In-tour marketing

Content Experience Marketing: Through the "Da Ming Zhi·Etiquette Forever", visitors will be able to revisit the excellent etiquette of ancient China. Some characters and various interactive performances are used to bring visitors directly into the theme atmosphere with the main line of "Da Ming Zhi ·General Order", through

the Ming Dynasty military tents, soldiers, golden clothes and bodyguards and other elements. The Double Seventh Festival falls on August 25. Therefore, with the Ming Dynasty as the background, 77 pairs of single men and women, spend a fantasy Tanabata Festival, which hand in hand successfully two teams, to promote a beautiful love story.

In addition, to carry forward the Chinese traditional culture, ancient civilization, the ancient town of all crowded punch points, arranged for a variety of excellent performances of traditional art, vivid, puppet show, play the shaoxing opera performances, guzheng lusheng ensemble, skills of acrobatics, allowing visitors to feel the quintessence and the charm of traditional art.

Through the matrix rapid spread of Tik Tok platform, the "Da Ming Zhi"series of activities in Qingyan became a hot spot that quickly gathered popularity and continued to attract attention. During the one-month activity, there were tens of millions of person-times of the whole network traffic, among which, CCTV news reported once and live broadcast once. The communication benefits of web celebrity cannot be underestimated. Through the launch of "Da Ming Zhi"series of activities in Qingyan ancient town, the scenic spot has injected new vitality and brought new traffic, and also explored the innovative business model brought by "network content marketing and grand tourism" to the tourism industry, realizing the double harvest of economic benefits and web celebrity communication benefits. During the activity, CCTV financial channel (China central television (CCTV - 2), radio and television stations, guiyang in guizhou radio and television stations in major media outlets are reporting on "Da Ming Zhi" lies in the emphasis, the network media, WeChat, short video platform, since the media platforms are a large number of foreign communication,the number of topics to discuss activities aggregate exposure of more than 2380, 12 games during the live broadcast of the number up to more than 20, accumulative total of more than 1700 watch, greatly improving the "reason" of reputation and visibility [19]. Tourists present their own travel experience (user-generated content) through Tik Tok live broadcast during travel, forming their own experience circle. Therefore, the activity features an immersive and deep experience tour with a strong sense of immersion, so that tourists who come to Qingyan Ancient Town and are attracted by the novel attractions they see online. After feeling the charm of the new tour of the ancient town, users will actively generate content to help the scenic spot to promote during the tour.

Tourists 1: *"Da Ming Zhi"activities are so interesting, I got the knowledge from shortvideo of Tik Tok, there is a soldier tour, theatrical performances and the etiquette activities, etc., are attracted to the scenic spot to attend in person, a lot of landmarks are show ancient culture.So I came here and participated in these activities.That's very impressive...*

Tourists 2: *I saw this activity on Tik Tok, and it was so close to me. After coming here, I found that everywhere in the scenic spot, I could feel the traces of the Ming Dynasty culture, as if I had travelled back to the Ming Dynasty. As a loyal fan of Tik Tok, I must let everyone feel the charm of our Chinese culture with me...*

Tourists 3: *It says on Tik Tok that tourists can enter the scenic area for free if they wear Hanfu, so I came here wearing Hanfu. There are many tourists in the scenic area wearing Hanfu as well. It feels like ancient times...*

Tourists 4:*By Ming dynasty chancellorsville, soldiers, the scene element such as security, I feel back to the Ming dynasty, at the same time, through the scene saw all kinds of interactive performance, I know the Qingyan ancient Ming dynasty built station troops and historical background, it's great for the experience of this form, I also took a lot of video on the trill, recommend to my friend's trill, hope everybody can be in such a way to learn about Chinese ancient culture...*

Tourists 5: *It's worth it. You can go to Qingyan to feel the atmosphere of Ming Dynasty. It's very meaningful to hold this activity in Qingyan ancient town. I took my children to participate in the activities of*

reciting classics. Three Character Scripts and Disciple Gui are all enlightenment books for children's etiquette. Children can participate in learning through this way, and our children like it very much…

In tourism marketing, the scenic spot innovatively uses Tik Tok platform to support and promote effective interaction between S2T (scenic spot to tourist) and T2T (tourist to tourist) to jointly create its online marketing

cultural content. Tourists share their experiences of cultural events through Douyin and use it as a social online link with other tourists to co-create their cultural experiences.

Figure 3. The experience shared online by tourists during the tour

4.2.3 Post-tour marketing

The 100-day immersive theme experience of "Da Ming Zhi" in Qingyan Ancient Town 2020 is finished. According to the comments on Tik Tok, tourists are still enjoying the experience and are looking forward to a richer cultural experience.

The attempt of "Da Ming Zhi" cultural activity is not only of profound significance in boosting the night-time economic development of the ancient town and promoting the recovery and upgrading of consumption, but also in adjusting the depressed psychological state of people during the epidemic through such immersive cultural experiences.

Therefore, Tik Tok platform used its data influence to help the online marketing of Qingyan Ancient Town in a very short period of time, and promoted the smooth progress of the"Da Ming Zhi" cultural experience activities.

5. CONCLISION AND DISCUSSION

The marketing strategies and methods of this case study can be used for reference by marketers, destination management agencies, tourism policy makers, and tourism service providers in the management, promotion, planning and development of cultural tourism destinations.

2020 of Qingyan ancient town, "Da Ming Zhi" activities, through offline culture setting, interactive experience culture, the promotion of online social media, content marketing, tourist experience content independently generated (live), and other methods to build the shock condition, development of night tour Qingyan ancient town, the town economy, promoting the regional tourism recovery at night.

First, Through content marketing, "Da Ming Zhi" attracts many followers. Relying on social media technology, it builds an online interactive platform and integrates online and offline with data-driven integration,

thus arousing emotional resonance and relationship identification of tourists and realizing group interaction and meaning sharing.

Secondly, in the overall marketing process, the local government organizations, industry authorities, and merchants of the scenic spot participates in the online marketing process by actively building official IP, reposting and sharing campaign videos.Through these active assistance and participation, as well as the high-quality content shared online in real time by tourists during the experience, the "Da Ming Zhi" cultural activity quickly attracted many followers on the Internet and generated huge influence.

Finally,As mentioned in the interview materials, the deep immersive experience of cultural activities in Qingyan Ancient Town is deeply loved and recognized by tourists. The results imply that the high quality cultural tourism content is the key to the success of online marketing, therefore, both the tourism destination organizations and the tourism enterprises should do a good job in the content generation. The online marketing strategies of the "Da Ming Zhi" cultural activities can help manage tourism enterprises and assist marketing efforts of target destinations.

Research, of course, also have some disadvantages, for example, in the field of culture and experience marketing, just choose a social media platform to do the research, however, a lot of tourist destination will choose different social media platforms while they doing marketing, but different social media platforms have different effects on how they interact with users. Therefore, future research should choose a variety of social media platforms to study the differences in the effective communication of their brand value.

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