A Study Into Marketing Strategies for Promoting Cultural and Creative Products of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum in New Era*

YU Xin
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

China’s booming economy and the growing demand of urban middle class are creating a favorable situation for the development of domestic cultural and creative industry. The consumption pattern has changed and families spend more outlay on cultural products and services. Within this flourishing industry, many museums caught development opportunities and began to get profit through successfully promoting their own cultural and creative products. However, it is unusual that Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum, enjoying high social status and a reputation for world cultural heritage as well as a national 5A level tourist attraction, regretfully, did not achieve noticeable achievements in this area. Therefore, based on STP theory, the purpose of this paper is to study the reasons why this museum fails to fulfill its potential in promising cultural and creative industry and give some suggestions to the development and promotion of its cultural and creative goods.

Keywords: STP, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum, cultural and creative products

Introduction to the Development of Cultural and Creative Products of the Chinese Museums

With regard to development of cultural and creative products of Chinese museums, two factors play the most important role. First, the rapid development of Chinese museums laid a solid foundation for the evolvement of those products. Since museums are the party responsible for the research and development of cultural and creative products, how those products develop is interlocked with how those museums develop. Liu Yuzhu, director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, at the ceremony of the 8th Chinese Museums and Relevant Products and Technologies Exposition, pointed out that

In the past 40 years of reform and opening up, the museum and museum industry in China has flourished, and the number of Chinese museums has increased by 14 times. Now it has more than 5,000, of which the free museums have reached 87.97% of the total. Besides, 855 museums were rated as National Level 2 and 3 Museums. (China Economic Net, 24 November 2018)

Second, the support of national policy for the cultural industries also played a positive role. For instance, since China’s 13th Five-Year Plan proposed the concept of “creative cultural industry” for the first time, other

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YU Xin, bachelor’s degree, South China Business College, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China.
regions also introduced a series of policies to back domestic cultural industry. Then, thanks to the political support, this emerging industry began to rise rapidly and its contribution to the gross domestic production is increasingly noticeable. Furthermore, museums’ cultural and creative products, as a part of this gradually flourishing industry, undoubtedly have great potential and also are able to attract many people. According to “Museum Cultural and Creative Product Market Data in 2019”, the market about museums’ cultural and creative products in China has shown rapid growth. Total market size increased by three times in 2019 compared to 2017. The Alibaba retail platform data also show that the number of consumers who actually purchased museum cultural and creative products in 2019 is nearly nine million, which is three times higher than that in 2017 (Institute of Cultural Economy, Tsinghua University and Tmall, 18 August 2019). Moreover, in this market, Palace Museum has a dominant place and other museums such as Suzhou Museum as well as Shaanxi History Museum also enjoy great popularity and achieve good sales of their products. However, unlike those museums above which realized great success, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum, enjoying high social status and a reputation for world cultural heritage as well as a national 5A level tourist attraction, regrettfully, seems not to make full use of those beneficial development opportunities so it fails to achieve noticeable achievements in this area. This situation indeed made many people stick in bewilderment.

The Status Quo of Cultural and Creative Products of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum

Limited Parties Involved in Designing Its Cultural and Creative Products

Nowadays, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum just involved two parties in its cultural and creative product design. The first party is the museum itself. On the one hand, instead of setting up a specific department to finish this work, this museum acted as an institutional shareholder, establishing Shaanxi Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum Cultural Industry Corporation in 1987 whose business scope includes cultural product design. On the other hand, the museum holds cultural and creative product design competitions by itself for the sake of drawing on people’s wisdom but they just began to appear in recent years. For example, on December 29, 2017, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum held a design competition for the first time whose theme is the Global Shining Qin Dynasty Charm and Crafts, welcoming people with creative design ideas from all over the world. Also, on September 24, 2019, the museum cooperated with Tecent holding another design competition. Then, apart from the museum itself, the second party engaging in product design is some professional design companies such as JIAJOY and Beijing Huaxiayan International Cultural Creative Co., Ltd.

Insufficient Product Types and Unsatisfactory Sales of Its Cultural and Creative Products

In November 2016, National Cultural Heritage Administration issued the “Notice on Promulgating the List of Pilot Units for the Development of Cultural and Creative Products in National Museums”, and approved 92 museums as pilot units for the development of cultural and creative products. The Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum was on the first list. According to the statistics issued by Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee Publicity Department, the Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum has newly listed and sold 295 kinds of 11 categories of cultural and creative products with intellectual property rights, and cooperated with four major e-commerce platforms such as Taobao, Tmall, Jingdong, Amazon to build four major terracotta warriors and e-commerce flagship stores (The People’s Government of Shanxi Province, 16
January 2019). For example, on October 11, 2018, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum opened its first flagship store on Tmall, which is the world’s second biggest e-commerce website, having over 500 million monthly active users. Within this online store, there are only 31 kinds of products sold, which belong to four categories including relics reproduction, daily necessities, stationery, and decoration. Besides, in terms of annual sales, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum’s cultural and creative products reached RMB 13 million in 2018. That sales figure is ordinary and unsatisfactory because some museums have already achieved higher annual sales like Palace Museum, the industry giant, reaching RMB 140 million (The Beijing News, 9 January 2018), Suzhou Museum, reaching RMB 15 million in 2017 (Huashang Network, 24 May 2019), and Shaanxi History Museum, reaching RMB 16.5 million in 2018 (Business People, 17 March 2019).

The Underused Sales Channels of Its Cultural and Creative Products

In general, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum has two kinds of sales channels, online and offline. First, its offline sales channels include the Terracotta Warriors Scenic Area, which has an independent cultural and creative exhibition area, a library, and an overseas exhibition. Second, concerning its online sales channel, the museum has opened its flagship stores in four major e-commerce platforms such as Taobao, Tmall, Jingdong, and Amazon. As a matter of fact, it is well known that nowadays, in comparison with traditional offline advertising channels, leveraging online channels, especially e-commerce well, may be a more important and effective method to boost product sales to a large extent and the earlier it is emphasized, the more sales it can contribute to. Nevertheless, the problem is that the time when Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum cooperated with e-commerce is a little bit late. Taking one of the most famous and popular e-commerce platforms in China, Tmall, as an example, the only flagship store of this museum was opened on Tmall on October 11, 2018. However, in reality, other museums have done the same thing much earlier. For instance, according to “2018 Tmall Museum Wenchuang Data Report”, Palace Museum settled on Tmall on April 8, 2016; National Museum of China opened its first flagship store on Tmall on August 27, 2015; Shaanxi History Museum did it on April 2018 (Alibaba, 19 June 2019). Therefore, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum’s neglect of using those online channels appropriately is a reason why its cultural and creative products are in an awkward situation.

The Reasons Why Cultural and Creative Products of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum Do Not Prosper

Unbalanced Division of Labor in the Field of Product Research and Development

As mentioned above, the design of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum’s cultural and creative products mainly depends on two parties, namely, the museum itself as well as several design companies. In fact, it is clear to see that the efforts that the museum puts into product design are still insufficient because it seems heavily to rely on external design ability.

According to investigation, all design competitions this museum held target external people with great design ideas, rather than internal staff. Generally speaking, although people outside do have creative thinking, internal staff is the one having first-hand experience of appreciating and studying collections so they are most likely to help cultural relics fulfill their potential and apply the cultural connotation of those collections into product design. Internal staff is indispensable for Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum to cover more creative design ideas and also is a good way to improve employees’ motivation of taking part in its
cultural and creative work. In this way, cultural connotations of those collections can be properly and fully exploited.

Moreover, it is short of specific internal departments responsible for the development and research of its own cultural and creative products, which causes that this museum has to seek for help from outside. Although this museum established Shanxi Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum Cultural Industry Corporation in 1987 as an institutional shareholder, which specializes in designing cultural and creative products for this museum, owing to lack of a professional R&D department, it is still difficult to guarantee that internal museum resources can be fully leveraged and product design work can be smoothly conducted. As a result, lack of optimal internal structure created a barrier for this museum to fulfill its potential in product design. Taking the internal structure of Palace Museum as an example, there are four functional departments within its total 38 departments, namely, Department of IT, Imaging, and Digital Media, Cultural Products and Services, The Forbidden City Publishing House and Office of Administrative Supervision, engaging in design and differentiating Palace Museum’s cultural and creative products from others (Yin, 2016).

Therefore, unbalanced division of labor in product research and development will not only influence product design quality, but also, in the long run, will have a negative impact on the cultural and creative work of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum.

Improper Marketing Strategy

Improper marketing strategy is the second problem causing that cultural and creative products of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum failed to occupy a large proportion of market share. This problem is mainly reflected in three aspects, which will be analyzed on the basis of STP strategy.

First, in terms of demographic segmentation, the museum seems to mainly focus on male customers. For instance, taking its products sold in a flagship store in Tmall as an example, nearly all product style tends to cater for male customers because overall, the product design is about the image of soldiers and weapons and is based on heavy color like black, brown, and gold. From this perspective, these product features are clearly more attractive for male consumers instead of female buyers. However, in accordance with “2018 Tmall Museum Wenchuang Data Report”, women are the major consumers to buy museum cultural and creative products (Alibaba, 19 June 2019), so it reflects that they should be the target customer. Therefore, in order to stimulate product sales, it would be better for the museum to define the gender segmentation as women. Moreover, apart from gender in demographic segmentation, although Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum’s overall direction in age segmentation is correct, namely, targeting young and middle-age people, what it did actually fails to arouse their interest. For instance, the museum did make use of social media to engage consumers from various places, but the problem is that it did not make the best use of it. For example, Weibo, which is a famous social networking website in China with 0.337 billion online users among whom 75% are between the ages of 18 and 30 (Sina Weibo, 22 March 2019), is a fabulous online community for young people to share and obtain different ideas and information, and most of their attention will be caught by official accounts of influential celebrities. Thus, having an official account in Weibo does not mean you will be cared about by a large number of online users immediately. Sometimes, there is a need to place emphasis on cooperation with those who have influence so as to be known by more people, then attract their attention, and finally achieve successful product promotion. Some famous museums such as Palace Museum also took this method so it successfully got public attention. However, by contrast, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site
Museum ignored this approach because it seems not to cooperate with those famous people and this account is just like an individual account without too much public exposure, which surely causes unsatisfactory efforts in age segmentation.

Second, concerning the market targeting, the museum mainly takes concentrated marketing strategy because the majority of cultural and creative products in the market belong to stationery. Although this strategy enables this museum to focus its limited resources on serving a certain group of people, it may be difficult for it to achieve long-term development due to the limited product category. And another problem is that even if this museum places emphasis on stationery market currently, it is still not capable enough of competing against other counterparts because stationery sold in its online stores is just printed its own special logo and images, product function is not different from similar products and above all, product price is much more expensive. Furthermore, it is well known that most of time, stationery is bought by students or working people whose purchasing power is not so high and who tend to pay attention to affordable and practical products. From this perspective, solely emphasizing this field may lead to low product sales. Therefore, though it is a good idea that the museum uses concentrated marketing strategy now, it would be better to shift the focus on stationery market to other more potential market.

Third, as this museum just steps in this cultural and creative industry in recent years, it is still not mature in finding a kind of precise marketing positioning for itself. It is still not clear whether the museum positions its cultural and creative products as something useful and attractive or purely good-looking. For instance, now, it mainly sells stationery and decorations online but in these two aspects, the museum makes little noticeable achievement like making these two kinds of products leave an impressive impression on consumers and creating an amazing sales figure. The reason may be those products lacking unique attributes that can be its competitiveness. As mentioned above, except appearance, those products are identical to the rest of similar products especially in terms of function. Besides, considering those target consumers, they actually pursue products with not only good-looking faces, but also practical features, which are something that can really motivate their consumption. Nevertheless, regretfully, what it did seems not reflect this sort of market positioning that meets the needs of target consumers.

**Suggestions to the Improvement of Sales of Cultural and Creative Products of Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum**

**Target Several Domestic Markets and France**

As Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum locates in Xi’an, Shanxi, China, it will be an unattainable goal for it to open as many as physical stores as it can around China and even out of China. However, if it wants to sell products to customers, business needs be done in stores. Instead of making a deal in the physical stores, online stores have become an effective and efficient tool for its products to reach more customers. With the help of flourishing e-commerce, geographic limitation cannot hinder its market expansion too much. Nevertheless, due to limited human and material resources, it is impossible to target every market in the world so the selection of target markets becomes more important.

Rather than solely focusing on domestic market, Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum can take several cities in domestic market and a country in oversea market into consideration at the same time. First, concerning domestic market, this museum mainly needs to promote products towards 10 cities, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Nanjing, Tianjin, Wuhan, and Chongqing because
according to “2018 Tmall Museum Wenchuang Data Report”, the sales in these 10 regions are noticeable and show an upward trend (Alibaba, 19 June 2019). Therefore, it is clear to know that cultural and creative products of museums are highly acceptable and attractive for those local consumers so major product promotion should be conducted there. Second, concerning the oversea market, as it is impossible to cover markets of all foreign countries, the selection of a specific oversea market first becomes more important. According to investigation, France may be a foreign country suitable to be an oversea market for this museum. On September 24, 2019, the “45th Anniversary of Qin Terracotta Warriors and Horses and the 40th Anniversary of the Founding of the Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum” was held. Hou Ningbin, dean of the museum, said, since its opening 40 years ago, this museum has received more than 100 million visitors, including 224 heads of state and government, which directly reflects its great fame beyond the borders (CNR News, 24 September 2019). Moreover, as the data show in Baidu baik, it is found that among those 224 foreign leaders, French presidents are one of groups of statesmen who actively pay visit to this place because until 2018, there have been four French presidents visiting there. Every time they finished their visits, each of them thought highly of Terracotta Army, which in fact is the best publicity and to a large extent, helps to encourage French people to pay more attention to this brilliant cultural heritage. Therefore, the museum should be aware of its great development potential in this local market and enter it as soon as possible so as to realize market expanding and long-term development.

**Target Young and Middle-Aged Consumers With Certain Educational Level**

According to “2018 Tmall Museum Wenchuang Data Report”, female consumers are the major party to buy museum cultural and creative products, who represents 76% of the total consumers, so product promotion should mainly target women. 90% of customers belong to the generation after the 1975s as well as 1990s, thus young and middle-aged market should be valued most (Alibaba, 19 June 2019). Concerning the occupation, that report clearly showed that company employees, students, and the self-employed are the top three consumer groups so this three kinds of occupation clearly reflect that low-income and middle-income groups are the target customers which is the standard of price setting and in general, their educational level is not low, which implies that apart from pretty and cute product appearance, they may also place emphasis on cultural connotation and practical use of products (Alibaba, 19 June 2019). In short, this museum should set a price that is affordable for target consumers and the design of them should cater for the taste of modern young people.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, although Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum Site Museum took action late, with proper product development and an appropriate marketing strategy, it is very likely to help its products to change the embarrassing status quo and even compete against a number of Chinese and even foreign museums. Eventually, it can become a miracle in this booming cultural and creative industry.

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