

The Communication Strategy of Xi'an City Image on Douyin based on the SWOT Analysis

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Abstract: With the rapid development of digitalization and globalization, the dissemination of city image has gradually become an important part of urban competitiveness. This article uses the SWOT analysis method to explore Xi'an's city image dissemination strategy on the Douyin platform and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This study points out that Xi'an has significant advantages in city image dissemination with its rich historical and cultural heritage and tourism resources. However, disadvantages such as content homogeneity and insufficient public services restrict the dissemination effect. At the same time, the implementation of new policies and the application of innovative technologies provide Xi'an with opportunities to further enhance its international reputation, but competition from other historical and cultural cities and changes in platform policies also pose potential threats. This article finally suggests that Xi'an should respond to external changes through content innovation, user participation and multi-platform cooperation, continuously optimize the city image dissemination strategy, and establish a more distinctive and attractive Xi'an city image.

Keywords: SWOT analysis, Douyin platform, User participation, Xi'an, City image.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of Internet technology, short video platforms have become an important part of today's social media. With growing popularity of mobile phones, mobile only short video sharing social media applications appeared on the market (Shutsko,2020). These short video platforms have become a new type of city image communication medium with their huge user base and rapid dissemination capabilities. Compared with traditional city image dissemination methods such as TV commercials and newspaper reports, short video platforms are characterized by centralization, user-generated content (UGC) and strong interactivity. The intuitive and vivid dissemination method has opened up a new path for the dissemination of city image. As one of the famous historical and cultural cities in China, Xi'an has rich historical heritage and unique cultural charm. It can be said that short video applications now have a large number of loyal users, and have completely changed people's lifestyle, becoming an important form of social interaction. Douyin app also stands out from all kinds of short video social software (Yaqi et al., 2021). This study selected the Douyin short video platform with the largest number of users in China for research. Douyin is currently the mobile short video platform with the largest number of daily active users and the most short video playbacks. In 2024, Douyin users will have 1 billion and the daily active users will reach 900 million. Douyin short videos provide Xi'an with an opportunity to showcase its history and culture. This study uses SWOT to analyze the dissemination strategy of Xi'an's city image on the Douyin short video platform to explore the fit between platform characteristics and city image dissemination.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communication of City Image

City image is an important form of city branding. city branding can be traced back to the mid-20th century. With the acceleration of globalization, competition among countries, regions and cities has become increasingly fierce. Local governments convey attractive features of their identity to current and potential stakeholders in their cities (De Jong & Lu, 2022). American scholar Kevin Lynch first proposed the accurate concept of city image, and Canadian scholar Jane Jacobs pointed out the importance of diversified urban construction in the 1950s. The media plays a vital role in shaping and disseminating the image of the city. With the development of society and the advancement of science and technology, the media methods of city image communication are also constantly changing. The rise of social media and other digital technologies offers new opportunities to study the perception of urban environments (Huang et al., 2021). In the digital age, the rise of social media platforms has provided new ways and tools for the dissemination of city image. Social media is one form of e-WOM that plays a critical role in the tourism industry (Gosal et al., 2020). The role of short video platforms is extensive and diverse, and can be used to watch, upload, share and comment on various video content. In the dissemination of city image, short video platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for city managers and marketers to showcase the unique charm and cultural resources of the city through dynamic and visual content. For example, Douyin has reached cooperation with Xi'an, Nanjing, Chongqing and other cities since 2018. Through user-generated content and sharing, the city image can be presented more realistically and three-dimensionally.

2.2. City Image in Short Videos

The technological upgrade of mobile Internet has promoted the development and improvement of communication media platforms, especially in the past five years (2019-2024), the rise of short video platforms has become one of the hot topics of academic attention. The growth of online video platforms in recent years has been driven by a multitude of factors, including advancements in technology and the increasing availability of high-speed internet (Christian & Wijaya, 2023). The convenient content creation, powerful social functions and wide user coverage of short video platforms have become an important channel for contemporary information dissemination. In this context, the decentralization and user-generated content (UGC) characteristics of short video platforms have enabled them to show great potential in the dissemination of city image.

Short video platforms are not only tools for information dissemination, but also important media for city image shaping and promotion. In the era of new media, short videos as an innovative means of communication have led to significant changes in the promotion strategies of tourist cities (Chen, 2024). Douyin, with its intuitive, fast and highly interactive characteristics, can quickly attract the attention of the audience and achieve viral dissemination of information through extensive sharing by users. This dissemination mode enables the city image to cover a large number of audiences in a short period of time, thereby enhancing the city's popularity and reputation. Deliver Xi'an's city image through the Douyin platform. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of studies on the application of short video platforms in the dissemination of city image. Douyin has become an important channel for information dissemination, and it also requires the city image dissemination strategy to pay more attention to the audience's sense of participation and interactivity.

2.3. The Uniqueness of Xi'an's City Image

The traditional city image focuses on the city's landscape, tourism resources and economic development, emphasizing the city's external image. Xi'an is given the title of "the ancient capital of 13 dynasties" in China, and is also known as one of the "four ancient capitals" internationally, on par with Rome, Athens and Cairo. This long historical background has given Xi'an an irreplaceable and important position, becoming a unique business card for Xi'an's city image. Xi'an's cultural heritage provides rich materials and unique perspectives for the shaping of Xi'an's city image. As the capital of ancient China, Xi'an has preserved a large number of precious historical and cultural sites, including the Terracotta Warriors and Horses of the Qin Shihuang Mausoleum, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, the Bell and Drum Tower, etc. These heritages are not only a symbol of Chinese culture, but also a common wealth of all mankind, making it a historical and cultural city that combines classical and modern atmospheres. The Qinling Mountains and the Wei River add unique natural landscapes to Xi'an. At the same time, Xi'an has many universities and is also an important center for academic and scientific exchanges across the country and internationally. Xi'an perfectly integrates history and the future to form a unique Xi'an city image. Short video platforms are a platform for multiple subjects to share content autonomously, Douyin has promoted the popularity of Xi'an, and boosted the image building of city brand rapidly (Shan, 2020).

3. Methodology

In order to understand the city image of Xi'an, this study uses the SWOT analysis method. In the SWOT table, we analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to further study the communication strategy about the city image of Xi'an.

3.1. Strengths

S1. Short video platform technology can vividly show the charm of the city. Douyin, with its unique pictures and sound effects, can more vividly show the beauty, humanities and characteristic buildings of Xi'an. Let users intuitively feel the historical monuments such as Terracotta Warriors, Ancient City Walls, and Big Wild Goose Pagoda.

S2. Douyin short video content is concise and enhances its appeal. Douyin content is concise and usually short in length, and can be used through refined storylines and key information. This can better attract the audience's attention and interest.

S3. Strong interactivity enhances communication. Douyin has strong interactivity, and high interactivity allows users to actively participate through likes, comments, and sharing. Xi'an's city image has formed a wider spread and resonance among tourists.

S4. Shared by multiple creators. The vivid content shared by multiple entities on Douyin showcases Xi'an's diverse culture, including historical sites, traditional festivals, and local specialties, becoming a highlight of Xi'an's city image.

S5. Xi'an's superior geographical location and tourist facilities. Xi'an has a complete transportation system, including high-speed rail, trains, highways, and aviation networks and a mature tourism service system. This allows Xi'an to attract tourists from all over the country and even the world more conveniently.

3.2. Weaknesses

W1. The content of city image communication is single. Xi'an's city image communication is mainly focused on historical culture and ancient architecture, but an overly single image may lead to limitations in the outside world's cognition of Xi'an, ignoring its modernization and diversification.

W2. The content lacks systematicity. The quality of user-generated content is difficult to control, which may affect the overall presentation of Xi'an's city image. The lack of a systematic communication method may lead to the scattered use of resources and limited effects.

W3. International visibility is currently relatively low. Compared with internationally renowned Chinese first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Xi'an's national visibility is relatively low. In the face of fierce competition, it is necessary to highlight Xi'an's unique cultural elements and historical background to create a differentiated city image.

W4. Inadequate international communication strategy. Xi'an is currently not sufficient in multilingual communication and cross-cultural communication, which limits the international dissemination of Xi'an's city image and affects Xi'an's attractiveness in the global market.

3.3. Opportunities

O1. Douyin's vivid visual content. As a famous historical and cultural city in China, Xi'an's rich cultural heritage and

unique natural landscape are displayed on short video platforms, leaving a deep impression on the audience. Therefore, Xi'an actively participates in international cultural exchanges and cooperation with the help of Douyin to further enhance the city's international influence.

O2. Support of innovative technology. Douyin displays various tourist attractions, special food and cultural activities in Xi'an. This vivid and easy-to-spread content form can effectively attract more tourists to travel to Xi'an. In addition, Douyin's continuous introduction of new features (such as AR special effects, live shopping, etc.) provides technical support for the innovation of the city's image dissemination method.

O3. Cross-platform media combination. Cooperation with other social media and content platforms can significantly increase the exposure and influence of content through cross-platform promotion and cooperation activities, and also provide opportunities to expand the coverage of Xi'an's city image dissemination.

O4. Encourage and support user participation. Encourage user-generated content (UGC) to promote the dissemination of Xi'an's city image. Douyin can further enrich and diversify the city image content by leveraging the creativity of users and the influence of social networks.

O5. China's transit visa-free policy in 2024. In order to promote the development of tourism, China implemented a 144-hour transit visa-free policy in 2024, which attracted tourists from 53 countries around the world. Xi'an also participated in the implementation of this policy, which provided Xi'an with an opportunity to increase the number of international tourists and created conditions for the dissemination of the city's image.

3.4. Threats

T1. Competition from other cities. Xi'an and cities such as Beijing and Nanjing also have rich historical and cultural

resources, and have strong competitiveness in urban construction, tourism promotion and cultural dissemination. Xi'an needs to continuously innovate and improve its city image dissemination strategy.

T2. Homogenization of short video content. Many videos on Douyin only stay at the display of surface landscapes and popular check-in points, but lack the presentation of deep-level culture, historical stories and lifestyles, so the user's attention and interest will decline.

T3. Insufficient urban public facilities. Xi'an has a large number of tourists every year, and it is even more necessary to improve the level of public services and supporting facilities to ensure the satisfaction of citizens and tourists, otherwise it will have a negative impact on the overall image of the city.

T4. Spread of negative news and content. In an era of rapid online information dissemination, negative news about tourist cities is also a crisis for the city's image, and negative content needs to be responded to and handled in a timely manner.

T5. Rapid changes in user interests and preferences. User interests and preferences change rapidly, which may cause the existing communication strategy to fail, so it is necessary to regularly understand the changing trends of users.

4. Results

In the SWOT analysis of Xi'an's city image communication on Douyin, we found that Xi'an has many advantages in content communication that need to be fully utilized, such as the current 144-hour transit visa-free policy in 2024, which brings new opportunities for Xi'an's tourism industry. As shown in the following chart, in Xi'an's city image communication strategy, we should also pay attention to improving some disadvantages, seizing opportunities and responding to potential threats.

Table 1. SWOT analyses of Xi'an City Image on Douyin

| Positive | | Negative | |
|---------------|--|------------|--|
| Strengths | <p>S1. Short video platform technology can vividly show the charm of the city.</p> <p>S2. Douyin short video content is concise and enhances its appeal.</p> <p>S3. Strong interactivity enhances communication.</p> <p>S4. Shared by multiple creators.</p> <p>S5. Xi'an's superior geographical location and tourist facilities.</p> | Weaknesses | <p>W1. The content of city image communication is single.</p> <p>W2. The content lacks systematicity.</p> <p>W3. International visibility is currently relatively low.</p> <p>W4. Inadequate international communication strategy.</p> |
| Opportunities | <p>O1. Douyin's vivid visual content.</p> <p>O2. Support of innovative technology.</p> <p>O3. Cross-platform media combination.</p> <p>O4. Encourage and support user participation.</p> <p>O5. China's transit visa-free policy in 2024.</p> | Threats | <p>T1. Competition from other cities.</p> <p>T2. Homogenization of short video content.</p> <p>T3. Insufficient urban public facilities.</p> <p>T4. Spread of negative news and content.</p> <p>T5. Rapid changes in user interests and preferences.</p> |

The shaping of the city image not only involves the city's visual image, but also includes the city's cultural connotation, residents' lifestyle and overall atmosphere. Short video platforms have become the new media for city image communication (Wan, 2023). Through visual, sound effects and multi-dimensional experiential communication, Douyin can not only vividly present Xi'an's cultural heritage, natural scenery, etc., but also form a bottom-up communication effect through the extensive participation of user-generated content (UGC), which amplifies the breadth and depth of content dissemination. The fragmented information transmission form adapts to the needs of modern audiences to quickly obtain information, allowing the audience to perceive the core

highlights of the city in a short time. Douyin's interactive function and AI recommendation algorithm have greatly improved the ability to accurately push content. In the digital age, cities around the world are mobilizing various symbolic resources to rebrand their images through social media (Wang & Feng, 2023). From the research and analysis, it can be seen that the opportunities for Xi'an's city image communication are more obvious. We must make full use of our own advantages and seize development opportunities to establish a more distinctive and attractive city image.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Short video is not limited to displaying scenic spots, but can also deeply explore Xi'an's cultural stories and historical heritage through creative content, short plot design, etc., to form more infectious and memorable communication content. In addition, through the application of new technologies such as AR and VR, the user's sense of immersion and participation is further enhanced. Internet users are increasingly becoming self-publishing consumers (Omar & Dequan, 2020). The "decentralized" communication form has greatly expanded the communication dimension of Xi'an's city image.

5.1. Content Strategy: Adjust and Optimize Content to Ensure the Diversity and Attractiveness of the Content Disseminated

Xi'an's city image communication strategy should start with content optimization and control. In communication, we should make full use of the huge user base and diverse content forms on the Douyin platform. Through data analysis and user portraits, accurate positioning of users can improve the accuracy and relevance of content recommendations. In particular, different combinations of everyday objects can be employed to represent a unique scene that is both interesting and understandable (Sun et al., 2020). It is also possible to produce a series of videos with strong continuity, gradually showing Xi'an's culture, history, food and scenery, and maintaining the audience's continuous attention. In addition, using the various content forms on the Douyin platform, including short videos, live broadcasts, and pictures and texts, to attract different types of users by enriching the presentation of content. Cooperate with professional creators, experts and the government to create high-quality city image videos to ensure the professionalism and attractiveness of the content. Establish a data analysis team to adjust and optimize the content strategy to ensure the effective communication of Xi'an's city image.

5.2. User Strategy: Provide Timely Feedback on User Changes to Increase Content Creation and Interaction Methods

In the process of content creation and dissemination, user participation and interaction are key factors. The invention of Web 2.0 in 2004 has veered the Internet users' roles from passive readers to active creators and sharers of content and information (Lo & Yao, 2019). Through Douyin's interactive activities and reward mechanisms, users are encouraged to participate in content creation and interaction. It is also possible to carry out theme challenges and content creation competitions, set activity prizes, and stimulate users' enthusiasm for participation. At the same time, establish a user feedback mechanism to collect and analyze users' opinions and suggestions in a timely manner, and improve content and strategies. By regularly analyzing data such as video performance, user interaction, and viewing time, we can understand user needs and preferences, adjust the direction of content creation, and ensure the continued appeal of short video content related to the city's image.

5.3. Media Strategy: New Features of the Tik Tok Platform and Cross-platform Joint Communication to Leverage the Advantages of Social Media

Xi'an's city image communication strategy should make full use of the new features of the Douyin platform, such as AR special effects and live shopping, to innovate the presentation of content. Short-form video social media shifts away from the traditional media paradigm by telling the audience a dynamic story to attract their attention (Sun et al., 2020). Douyin develops and applies the latest technology to produce content with strong interactivity and outstanding visual effects. At the same time, it combines hot topics and popular trends to create relevant content to attract widespread attention. Cooperate with other social media and content platforms to carry out joint promotion activities to expand the scope of communication of Xi'an's city image. For example, content is released simultaneously on platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu, and cross-platform linkage promotion is carried out to enhance the influence and coverage of content.

5.4. Limitations and Future Work

Overall, this study has some limitations. First, in terms of collection and analysis, time and resources are also limited, the data collected online is limited, and the time span is limited. This study only analyzes the situation of the Douyin short video platform. Secondly, there are limitations in site selection. Due to the wide range of China, Xi'an was selected for research in this study, which is not enough to represent the overall situation of the spread of the city's image on the short video platform. Thirdly, only relevant academic literature in English were collected online, and no academic literature in other languages were analyzed.

In the future communication strategy of Xi'an's city image, Xi'an should focus on content innovation, multi-platform cooperation, user participation and timely response to external changes to ensure its competitive advantage in the era of globalization and digitalization.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the anonymous reviewers and the members of the editorial team who helped to improve this paper through their thorough review.

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