

Revitalizing Peking Opera: Bridging Tradition and Modernity through Marketing and Cultural Innovation

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Abstract: Peking Opera is a quintessence of Chinese culture. It has experienced significant challenges in the modern era, since audience demographics is shifting and digital entertainment is rising. This paper explores the history, current challenges, and potential solutions for revitalizing Peking Opera. The author used marketing and consulting strategies. It is based on the “4Ps” (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) and “5Cs” (Customer, Company, Collaborators, Competitors, Context) concepts. The strategies include co-branding with popular consumer brands, adjusting ticket pricing for affordability, promoting via social media, and integrating modern elements such as fan culture and digital marketing. The paper also highlights the importance of inviting international artists to experience and promote Peking Opera globally. By using these strategies, Peking Opera can regain its position in the entertainment market.

Keywords: Peking Opera; market; decline; culture

1. Introduction

Peking Opera, one of the most representative arts of China, was known as “the quintessence of Chinese culture”. Originating from the Qing dynasty, in 1790, Peking Opera absorbed techniques and methods various local operas, notably, the K’un Chu and the Hwei Ban. Peking Opera is divided into traditional opera and modern opera. Each play showcases a wonderful story in real life.

Peking Opera is composed of four typical role types: Sheng, Tan, Jing, and the court jester. Different roles have different characteristics, which represent a specific group of people [1].

Music is a dispensable part of Opera. The three main instruments are the Hu Chin, Erh Hu, and the Big Drum. “The Orchestra is to accompany all the movement of every actor or actress on the stage and the drummer is the conductor of the orchestra” [1].

From a hundred years ago, Peking Opera was open to all the public, across ages and social classes. However, Peking Opera faces challenges from different dimensions now. Generation Z in China barely knows about such art format and the original audience group has aged. Externally, with the development of technology, many allures distract the young generation. They are more willing to spend time on computer games, social media, and shopping. Those relatively low-cost entertainments are easier to enjoy. As people have already adapted to the fast-paced life, they lost the patience to sit down and watch this “old-fashioned” performance. Thus, few people would like to be fully devoted to Peking Opera.

Internally, Peking Opera has deficiencies in performance form. The long and slow tone bores the audience easily. The special pitch is hard for some people to accept. Each normal play is at least one and a half an hour, so

it is a torment for people who don't have any background knowledge of this art.

2. History

Peking Opera has had a high status in Chinese society for centuries. As a traditional art that originated from the 18th century, it was supported by the government and normal people. However, it cannot follow the change of modern society.

The ticket price for Peking Opera is also not affordable to most of the audience, so fewer people walk into the theater for this art. It seemed to be doomed to fade out of the marketplace. It was unable to compete with the popularization of film, television, and diverse forms of pop culture [2].

3. Literature Review

Previous studies show that the government has realized this problem. Several related policies have been enacted. Mass Entrepreneurship and Mass Innovation (MEMI) was established, promoting an entrepreneurial solutionism to exploit market values and to speed up China's long-term goal of developing its economy through technological innovations [3].

Not only does Peking Opera face the problem of declining, but also the film industry. Mingxing Company brought the film industry to Chinese people's sights in the 20th century. It was not established with major investment by powerful industrialists or capitalists but with a small fund raised by its founders and prospective shareholders [4].

Fan culture can bring indispensable income to traditional culture. As audience participation has long been an indispensable component in the development of traditional opera, the contextualized fan culture is not a completely novel form but an extension of the traditional mode situated in the age of information. "The decrease of spatiotemporal restrictions and economic costs would help traditional opera become popular again" [2].

People who were employed in culture enjoy consuming Chinese art and culture. Artists possess more desire than normal audiences to learn Chinese Opera. Thus, NACTA (National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts) should invite more foreign artist coming to China to learn it and then spread it to the world [5].

Some research has been done to find an effective way to spread traditional culture to the world. Relative data analyzing the action of introducing Chinese Opera to foreign artists and normal audiences proves that foreign artists can spread it quickly. This is a more efficient way to popularize Peking Opera globally.

The investment in the diversity of inheritance ways should be strengthened. The government should provide support in system and policy; the Education institution of Peking Opera should have its own characteristic, in order to improve teaching efficiency; sorting out and filing work should be done [6].

According to the data from a ten-year experiment, Chinese Opera is high art, so it's hard to be interpreted by normal audiences, even artists who focus on other arts. Artists possess more desire than normal audiences to learn Chinese Opera. People who were employed in culture like to consume Chinese art and culture [5].

4. Analysis

Peking Opera is worthy to be inherited. It contains the essence of Chinese culture. The story of each show is about Chinese traditional habits and popular stories. It tells audiences meaningful principles. The instrument Opera is special, it contains a hundred years of musicians' wisdom. It is not too late to overcome the temporary difficulties it faces.

Different from most of the previous studies that focus on solving the problems Peking Opera faces through culture studies, this paper is going to discuss them from the aspects of marketing and consulting.

The "4 Ps" marketing strategy, proposed by E. Jerome McCarthy, is the basic logic of solving a marketing dilemma. It's the abbreviation of the four key elements in marketing strategy: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion [7].

To cater to the entertainment market, Peking Opera, as a product that audiences should pay for, should change itself to a more attractive product. Co-branding is a good option. For example, co-branding with Hey

Tea, a popular Boba Tea brand in China, can help young people understand traditional culture when enjoying the drink. The Opera elements are designed on the packing of the cups. If people get boba tea, they will notice the elaborate decoration and may get curious about this culture.

The opera company should divide the ticket prices into different levels. Thus, people with less consumption power can also watch films by buying low-price tickets. This measure helped film art spread quickly. The price of one ticket for a Peking Opera performance is at least 30 dollars now. Many people cannot afford it. The method of Mingxing Company can be adopted.

Beijing, as the origin of Peking Opera, should be the main spot for popularizing this art. The peripheral products should not only be sold at the stores open in the theatre but also sold in normal markets. This helps Peking Opera break the stereotype of “expensive” and “extravagant”.

Now, the ways of promoting Peking Opera are too boring and formalist. The government suggests posting posters on the walls beside the streets. However, the design of those posters is too simple and fails to attract pedestrians. To increase popularity, Peking Opera can open online stores to promote products. Furthermore, adapting the opera singing aria and combining it with pop music is an efficient way to popularize this art.

Fan culture brings commercial value to Peking Opera, driving the revenue for this art. As the main platform of fan culture, the internet is an indispensable way to spread this traditional art to more people around the world. With the development of TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, etc., popular internet celebrities’ salaries are increasing. The income from operating the Peking Opera business is increasing. To be more competitive in the entertainment market, the Opera must be more proactive in advertising on social media and selling proprietary products including opera dolls, bookmarks with opera elements, and desserts that are carved as opera faces.

The five C market strategies focus on fulfilling customers’ requirements. “The central placement of target customers reflects their defining role in the market; the other three entities--the company, its collaborators, and its competitors--aim to create value for these customers.” As customers’ preferences transfer to social media nowadays, the products of Peking Opera should follow this trend.

The government should encourage the set up of new small businesses that operate the industry of traditional opera. More people will start to set up their own cultural businesses, such as small theatres. It promotes Peking Opera to become an affordable production mode. This helps improve the Chinese GDP.

The competitors of traditional opera are what the young generation is addicted to nowadays, computer games, pop music, and social media, for example. Directly competing with them is impossible. Peking Opera should be combined with these modern elements. With these collaborations, Peking Opera can be recognized by more people. Thus, it can have a position in the entertainment market.

Furthermore, to spread Peking Opera globally, relative institutions in China should invite international artists. Watching this art in person helps them feel the deep connotation of it. Thus, NACTA (National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts) should invite more foreign artist coming to China to learn it and then spread it to the world.

5. Conclusion

Peking Opera, faces several challenges during this modern and fast-paced era. Such decline is mainly attributed to the audience demographics shift and the booming of other digital entertainment, like social media and computer games. To help the opera overcome the dilemma, strategic adaptation is essential. The use of marketing strategies such as the “4Ps” and “5Cs” theories builds the bridge for Peking Opera between tradition and modernity. The approaches, like co-branding with popular consumer brands, adjusting ticket prices, varying distribution channels, and being active on social media, can decrease the gap with younger generations. Additionally, utilizing modern elements and combining with them, such as fan culture and digital marketing strategies, can amplify accessibility. Moreover, collaborating with international artists and institutions can spread the notability of Peking Opera globally.

These marketing and consulting strategies help Peking Opera regain its place in the entertainment market. Embracing these changes will not only revitalize Peking Opera but also reinforce its position as a beacon of Chinese cultural heritage for generations to come.

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