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Influencing Factors on Four Chinese Grand Theaters' Brand Image

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Abstract

The objective of this paper was to investigate influencing factors in building four Chinese grand theaters' brand image. The Grand theaters as research objectives are respectively the National Center for Performing Arts, Shanghai Grand Theater, Guangzhou Opera House, and Shenzhen Grand Theater. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from more than 1000 audiences of each theater and 4025 complete questionnaires retrieved and a quantitative method via SPSS version 23.0 was used to analyze the correlational and regression statistical research outcomes.

Keywords: Chinese Grand Theaters, Brand Image, Influencing Factors, Arts Marketing

1. Introduction

In the year of 1989, Shenzhen Grand Theater as the first grand theater, was contributed by the local government. During the following three decades, there were more than 2000 theaters constructed all over the country. Thus "theater's brand managing" was a realistic problem during its operation and management under the background of reforming and opening up in the industry of culture and art. As the world was changing in every second, theatergoers, arts performances audience were rapidly changing. Experts ranging from economists to cultural historians had all documented a shift in consumer patterns as audiences searching for live entertainment moved from the concert hall and the playhouse to the arena and nightclub. This shift happened because the audience no longer had an interest in the arts. (Tepper, 2012)

As for theaters' marketing, the earliest marketing concept of art products was introduced by Philip Kotler in 1967. (1967) He thought that public libraries, concert halls, museums, theaters, and other cultural institutions that create cultural and art products, though as nonprofit organizations, were facing the similar marketing problems in the process of cultural and art products' creation. The problems were: how to attract the attention of consumers and how to sell the products. It is also an immediate problem after the products produced. **Therefore, to attract audiences by building their own brand image is essential for the management of grand theaters in the future.**

As individuals and customers, they have unique feelings and attachment to some brands. They feel special when they use the brand, and often have a sense of pride in being associated with the brand. Even though there could be many alternatives, there is always a special place for that brand in their heart. These perceptions keep the brand going and make them, as a brand user, keep using or associating with that brand.

Therefore, this paper focused on the following questions:

- 1) How did the audience perceive on the grand theaters' brand image?
- 2) How did the factor of 3Ps+C (respectively Product, Place, Price and Communication) impact the brand image of grand theaters according to the audience' perception?

This paper was conducted to investigate consumers perception of the grand theaters' brand image under the guidance of branding theory and marketing mix theory, and to find out how did marketing mix 3Ps+C influence the grand theaters' brand image. It would be the proposed conceptual framework as the following Figure 1. Based on the proposed conceptual framework, there were 4 hypotheses as follows:

- H1: There is significant relationship between the factor of Products and the theaters brand image.
H2: There is significant relationship between the factor of Price and the theaters brand image.
H3: There is significant relationship between the factor of Place and the theaters brand image.
H4: There is significant relationship between the factor of Communication and the theaters brand image.

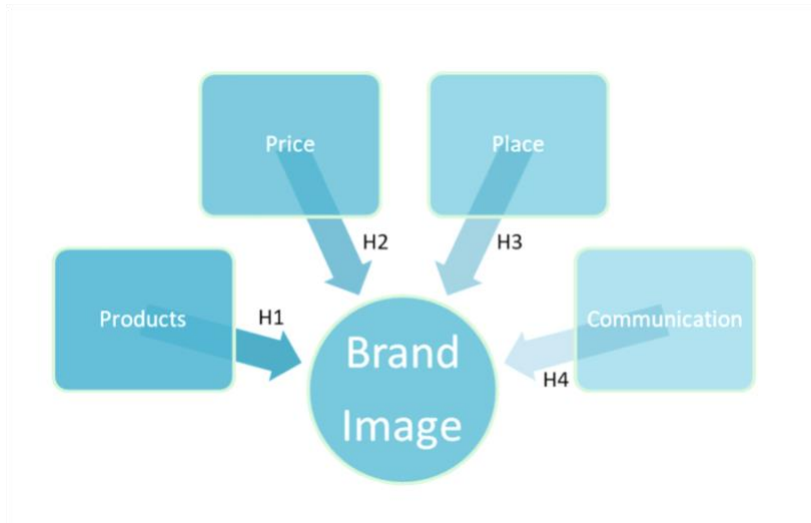


Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework

The paper is organized as follows: Part one is to introduce the research background and the research questions and objectives. Part two is the literature review of theories and correlational researches. Part three is the tool and method to conduct the research. Part four is the research result and discussion, and part five is the conclusion, the research limitations and the future research.

2. Literature Review

Keller believed that exploring consumers' brand perceptions is an important field of marketing and consumer research. (Keller, 2016) As for the concept of "brand image", according to Park et al. (Park et al., 1986, P133-145), the construction and maintenance of the brand image is prerequisite to the brand management.

More important than the concepts, how to measure it became research questions to be develop among the scholars. According to Chinese scholar Yi, most of the scholars believed that the brand image should be measured by the consumers' perception. Some of them stress the quality of the products and services, for example, products advantages, using qualities and also the ideas and emotions people associated with the brand from the very practical features. (Yi,) Some of them discussed on mind share of the brand image. Mind share is discussed in relation to brand positioning, which refers to a product's position in a certain market. Positioning encompasses the majority

of the common meanings of the word position: position as a place, position as a rank, and position as a mental attitude.

As for the marketing disciplines, the art marketing concept is handled under cultural marketing activities by Kotler. Based on the definition of classical marketing, which is to create products that meet the needs and demands of consumers to maximize operate performances. The marketing mix was proposed as the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) by McCarthy (1964), to provide an adequate platform for art performing marketing. The shortcoming of the 4Ps marketing mix framework, some of the scholar come up with 5Vs, 8 components, 4Cs. What's the most important, Chinese scholar Li put up with "3Ps+C", raising communication instead of promotion (Li, 2001).

Bernstein kept working on the major brand elements, such as product, experience, identity, associations, cooptation and so on. (Bernstein, 2017) he believed that each individual event, program, communication strategy and customer service encounter is a crucial element of branding process. Yu studied on the basis of theater evaluation and research variables through a total of 303 valid questionnaires and multidimensional scaling, drew a "brand positioning space map" for eight Taiwan modern theater companies. Hall and et al. contributes to the literate by making recommendations on how to enhance brand resonance thereby increasing attendance. They examined traditionally successful brand resonance concepts of loyalty, attachment, community and engagement (Keller, 2001) specifically for rebuilding and sustaining attendance at the opera in the post-crisis period. Kemp and Poole believed that the impact of the factors on key engagement outcomes, such as perceived value, loyalty, and advocacy. Polegato et al explored audience perceptions on brand dimensions of a cultural product, which are artistic innovation, pride, and for ordinary people/everyone. What's more, they mentioned nice experience overall, high artistic quality in general, ballet for many types of audience, nice building, artistic innovation, ballet for the cultural elite, great art, for many types of audiences, performances for children, opera for the cultural elite, exclusive, knowledge, pride, broad-minded/open, feminine, tourist attraction, enthusiasm, for ordinary people/everyone the element they proposed in their study were quite specific as a reference to the research design of my dissertation. (Polegato et al, 2013) Chen and et al. investigated in an arts festival in Taiwan. The results indicate the respondents' future behavioral intentions are the best explained by two factors: one is emotional experiences, the other is behavioral experience. (Chen and et al, 2018) Li from Taiwan researched on a mix survey both by interviews and questionnaires, to conclude their functional dimension, symbolic dimension, experimental dimension with different index on each level. (Li, 2018)

The researchers conducted the kind of research was to find the way to measure brand image and the factors influencing the brand image.

3. Methodology

The study has followed a quantitative approach and conducted surveys for data collection. The quantitative research was carried out to figure out what the audiences perceived of the brand image of four grand theaters ran by the municipal government by using survey questionnaire to collect data from more than 4000 audience (or target audience). In order to comply with the branding theories and marketing theories on arts, it was necessary to identify the audience's satisfaction with the brand image.

3.1 Population

Population in the research are respectively from where the 4 grand theaters are located and near. They are mainly from the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, and some of them from the rural area of the four cities and cities near them.

3.2 Sample Size

During the research conducted, the author distributed more than 1000 samples nearby each theater and obtained 1025 complete questionnaires for the NCPA (National Center for Performing Arts), 1010 for Shanghai Grand Theater, 1007 for Guangzhou Opera House and 1010 for Shenzhen Grand Theater to analyze the data.

3.3 Sampling

The quantitative research designed using the simple random sampling design. Individuals attending the performances or walking around the theaters were used as study participants in this research. Individuals filled out a survey by scan a QR Code. This was done over the course of the 6-7 performances (in three weeks) in the season.

3.4 Data Collection

Since this research was a quantitative research design, the feedback data concerning perceived brand image from the sample (audience and target audience) was collected through survey questionnaire to measure audience perception of brand image and its four dimension and factors. The measures were developed specifically for this research. Satisfaction with products was measured by the elements of categories, originality, the persons who produce and perform. Satisfaction with price was measured by the elements of ticket, tour, gifts, food & beverage, promotion, and discount. Satisfaction with place was measured by location, area, transportation, public facilities and layout. Satisfaction with communication was measured by the elements of websites, magazines, audience development, public arts education, team sales channels, retailing channels, reservation channels, new media and advertisement.

The brand image was measured by respectively satisfaction on the four dimensions, satisfaction on the brand image as whole. What's more, how do you agree that the brand is a leading brand in the industry would be another question to ask as for the positioning of the theaters. Last but not the least, the association in mind as a first reaction to the brand, would be another important measurement for both the brand image.

The question of "what's the value you gained from the Performances and Services of the Shanghai Grand Theater?" would help us to figure out the marketing strategies for the brand image.

3.5 Questions Design

The researcher used a constructed survey to collect the data from the samples. In the first part, questions like "When is your most recent time of going to the theater?" "Where are you living?" "Who accompany you go to the theaters at the recent time?" "How do you love performing arts?" "Which performing categories do you like?"

In the second part, the questions were related to the brand images as a whole which was variable in the research. "Do you agree that the theaters are the leading brand among the professional theaters?" "In general, the degree of your satisfaction with performances and services from the theaters?"

In the third part, questions with 5-scale options, relating to factors and elements influencing brand image, were with 4 questions matching 4 dimensions of 3Ps+C.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study focuses on brand images and seeks to discover the branding marketing techniques that fall under the purview of various marketing theories and branding theories. In order to discover the brand images and marketing strategies to promote the brand images of the four theaters in China that are operated by the municipal government, the satisfactory data and correlational data of brand images as a whole as well as the four dimensions of brand images are analyzed quantitatively. This allows for the discovery of the brand images and the further researches on marketing strategies to promote the brand images of the grand theaters. In addition to this, SPSS 23.0 is used in the process of doing the correlational analysis on the statistical analyses.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

In this study, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each latent variable, and the coefficient values for four questionnaires were respectively 0.926, 0.926, 0.923, 0.920, respectively. all of the values exceeded the acceptable level of 0.7, indicating a high level of reliability and consistency.

Besides, KMO and Bartlett tests were used to analyze the scale validity. The KMO value respectively reached 0.945, 0.943, 0.942, 0.936, and the significance of Bartlett test was less than 0.001, indicating that the scale had high validity and accuracy.

4.2 Agreement on the Theaters as Leading Brands

With the question asked “do you agree that the theaters are the leading brand among the professional theaters?” With the minimum as 1, the maximum as 5, mean of the four theaters are respectively 3.86, 3.887, 3.47 and 3.47, and standards deviations are 1.027, 1.011. 1.035. 1.033, which means that generally the respondents believe the theaters are leading brands among the professional theaters, with a decrease degree of agreement on Shanghai Grand Theater, to the NCPA, to Shenzhen Grand Theater, the same with Guangzhou Opera House. With similar mean of 3.86 and 3.87 and small different standards deviations of 1.027 and 1.011, which means respondent for NCPA may have more different ideas on this question. Some really agree on its leading role among the professional theaters, some don't agree too much on its leading role. It's the same that, Guangzhou Opera House and Shenzhen Grand theater have the same mean of 3.47 and a nearly identical standards deviation of 1.035 and 1.033, from which we could estimate that in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, the audience all regard the theaters as a somewhat leading brands with a degree of not too high and not too low.

The Theaters	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
NCPA (N=1025)	1	5	3.86	1.027
Shanghai Grand Theatre (N=1010)	1	5	3.87	1.011
Guangzhou Grand Theatre (N=1007)	1	5	3.47	1.035
Shenzhen Grand Theatre (N=1010)	1	5	3.47	1.033

Figure 2: The degree of agreement on the theatres being the leading brand among the professional theaters

4.3 The Audience' Satisfaction with Brand Image

With the question asked “in general, the degree of my satisfaction on performances and services from the theaters? The answer could be chosen are highly satisfactory, satisfaction, partly satisfaction, dissatisfaction, strongly dissatisfaction, refuse to answer/ not sure”. With the minimum of 1, and maximum of 5, the mean of four theaters is respectively 3.82 of Shanghai Grand theater, 3.80 of Shenzhen Grand Theater, 3.78 of the NCPA and 3.42 of the Guangzhou Opera House. We could see that, the data from Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen is approximately, but in Guangzhou, the degree was low than others. As is shown in Figure 3.

Since there are Matrix options with the question asked the performing products or service from the theaters from the respect of categories, originality of the products, professionalism, artistry, the directors, performers and teams they invited.

The Theaters	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
NCPA (N=1025)	1	5	3.78	1.139
Shanghai Grand Theatre (N=1010)	1	5	3.82	1.068
Guangzhou Grand Theatre (N=1007)	1	5	3.42	1.282
Shenzhen Grand Theatre (N=1010)	1	5	3.80	1.084

Figure 3: In general, the degree of satisfaction on performances and services from the theaters

4.4 Correlation Analysis on Variables and Theaters as Leading Brands

4.4.1 About the NCPA

Concerning the NCPA, a positive association exists between the degree to which one is content with the discount for special individuals and the degree to which one is in accord with the leadership role of the brand. Which indicates that, as a national performing arts theater, the audience cares a lot about the various price points, and they care considerably more about the elderly and the students than any other demographic. Because theaters are places where students may be educated, particularly the nation's top-level performance center, a lot of audience members would want to visit and experience there with their families. This is especially true for the theaters that are located in top-tier cities. We were able to discover through correlation analysis that the audience places the most weight on how satisfied they are with the location, their impression of the location, the accessibility of the location, and the internal layout of the architecture when deciding whether or not to consider it a leading brand. Since the degree with a positive correlation degree of .107** and .107** respectively, as shown in figure 4, the NCPA enjoys its reputation as a leading brand, which has been impressed by its broadcasting on the media and by the world's most famous artists, directors, and teams invited to perform there. This has resulted in a degree with a positive correlation degree of .107**, respectively supporting H1 and H4.

On the other hand, the categories of production and public amenities — such as restrooms, rules for the handicapped, parking lot, and so on— as well as the impression on price connect adversely with a leading theater brand in the opinion of the audience (supporting H3 and H2). The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that theatergoers do not even anticipate too many production categories being created by the theater. (supporting H1) As a result of the fact that the NCPA represents the greatest artistic standards of the high arts, the audience would like to witness the performance in an environment that is associated with the high arts. (supporting H1) Because pricing is another benchmark that a theater may use to display its reputation and the quality of the plays it puts on, it is adversely connected to the brand images of the theater. (supporting H2)

From the correlational analysis of the variables of the NCPA, it supported H1, H2, H3 and H4 apparently.

Variables	The degree of agreement on the theaters being the leading brand among the professional theaters
Satisfaction in general	.789***
Satisfaction on categories	-.098**
Satisfaction on the directors, performers, and teams cooperated with	.107**
Satisfaction on discount for special persons	.146***
Satisfaction on location	.133***
Satisfaction on public facilities (Bathrooms, guidelines for the Disabled, Parking Lot and so on)	-.088*
Impression on the pricing	-.087**
Impression on the location, transportation, internal Layout	.149***
Impression on the communication on medias	.107**

(*p < .05, **p < 0.01, ***p < .001)

Figure 4: Variables and Brand Images as a Leading Brand of the NCPA

4.4.2 About Shanghai Grand Theater

When it comes to the Shanghai Grand Theater in figure 5, it demonstrated that people are interested in the uniqueness of the production and its reservation channels more than anything else. (supporting H1 and H4) Shanghai, the most developed and trendy city in China, has its own distinct aesthetic preferences when it comes to art. The patrons of the theater would like it if the brand would stage one of their own productions as part of the

brand value for the venue. When there was a leading show, there would be a leading brand of the theater, and the spectators would race for one precise theater rather than others. But this won't happen until there is a leading production. Reservation channel is an additional factor that contributes positively to Shanghai Grand Theater's leading role. This is because, as members of this generation, people buy everything through their phones, where they would prefer to reserve a seat and purchase a ticket in a manner that is more convenient. The negative connection is about the audience's contentment with the functional position of the area in which it is placed, which indicates that the less of a leading brand it is, the busier and more central of an area it is located in. (supporting H3)

From the correlational analysis of the variables of Shanghai Grand Theater, it H1, H3 and H4 were apparently tested.

Variables	The degree of agreement on the theatres being the leading brand among the professional theaters
Satisfaction in general	.252***
Satisfaction on originality of the products	.063*
Satisfaction on the functional positioning in the city	-.069*
Satisfaction on reservation channels	.079*

(*p < .05, **p < 0.01, ***p < .001)

Figure 5: Variables and Brand Images as a Leading Brand of Shanghai Grand Theater

4.4.3 About Guangzhou Opera House

The correlational variables and Guangzhou Opera House's status as a leading brand were the topics that are discussed in figure 6. An examination of the data revealed that each of the four components had a beneficial impact on the company's brand image. In the same vein as the Shanghai Grand Theater, the audience's perception of the brand image was directly proportional to the degree to which it is communicated about in the media. (supporting H4) The level of pleasure that respondents have about public amenities (with a degree of 0.067*, supporting H3) and the pricing of various additional services (including tours, presents, food and beverage) (with a degree of 0.076*, supporting H2) are the aspects that have the most impact on the brand's image. Guangzhou Opera House is distinct from Shanghai Grand Theater in that there is a positive association between the component of location and the image of the brand in Guangzhou Opera House (supporting H3).

From the correlational analysis of the variables of Guangzhou Opera House, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were tested significantly.

Variables	The degree of agreement on the theatres being the leading brand among the professional theaters
Satisfaction in general	.306***
Satisfaction on price of other service (Tour, Gifts, Food and Beverages)	.076*
Satisfaction on public facilities (Bathrooms, guidelines for the Disabled, Parking Lot and so on)	.067*
Impression on the location, transportation, internal Layout	.064*
Impression on the communication on medias	.093**

(*p < .05, **p < 0.01, ***p < .001)

Figure 6: Variables and Brand Images as a Leading Brand of Guangzhou Opera House

4.4.4 About Shenzhen Grand Theater

Regarding Shenzhen Grand Theater, the data shown in figure 7 revealed that there were five aspects or factors that had a positive correlation to the brand image of the company as a market leader throughout the whole industry. There was a favorable correlation between the leading brand of Shenzhen Grand Theater and the impression on the price (0.099**, supporting H2), communication on medias (0.085**, supporting H4), and goods and services (0.074*, supporting H1). In addition, the pleasure of the audience about public arts education (0.064*, supporting H4) and that regarding the artistry of the production (0.062*, supporting H1) are also essential components that contribute to the success of the theater as a leading brand among all of the professional theaters.

From the correlational analysis of the variables of Shenzhen Grand Theater, it H1, H2 and H4 were apparently tested.

Variables	The degree of agreement on the theatres being the leading brand among the professional theaters
Satisfaction in general	.531***
Satisfaction on artistry	.062*
Satisfaction on public arts education	.064*
Impression on the products or service	.074*
Impression on the pricing	.099**
Impression on the communication on medias	.085**

(*p < .05, **p < 0.01, ***p < .001)

Figure 7: Variables and Brand Images as a Leading Brand of Shenzhen Grand Theater

4.5 Analysis on the terms associated in mind as the brand images

One of the questions that was included in the surveys was worded as follows: "As a brand, what do you immediately think of when you think of these theaters?" possibilities include "high-level artists," "high art," "a wonderful and beautiful building," "the name of the city," "an art festival or activity in it," and "a performance." Attendees of the NCPA are most likely to remember the name of the city (with a percentage of 54.33%) and high-level artists (with a proportion of 45.07%), as shown by the data in figure 4.47. The high arts and magnificent architecture come in second with respective proportions of 39.5% and 38.91%, while one performance and art festival or activity in it comes in third with respective proportions of 32.34% and 23.88%.

The findings of the Shanghai Grand Theater are completely different from those of the NCPA; the high arts come in first place with a score of 75.15%. With a percentage of 53.27 percent, high-level artists come in at number two, although their share is bigger than that of the NCPA. The following components are architecture (42.18 percent), an art event or art activity (34.46 percent), one of the performances (31.09 percent), and the name of the city (26.24 percent) at the conclusion.

As for the Guangzhou Opera House, the first two are respectively the name of the city (76.86%) and an art festival or art activity (53.43%), whereas the Shenzhen Grand Theater has a 54.46% impression on architecture and high art (37.03%), with an average low impression when compared to other theaters.

Through the investigation on the terms associated in mind with the grand theaters' brand image, it almost perfectly met the findings and the data analysis in the section 4.4. This would be significant for the further research on the marketing strategies of the four different grand theaters.

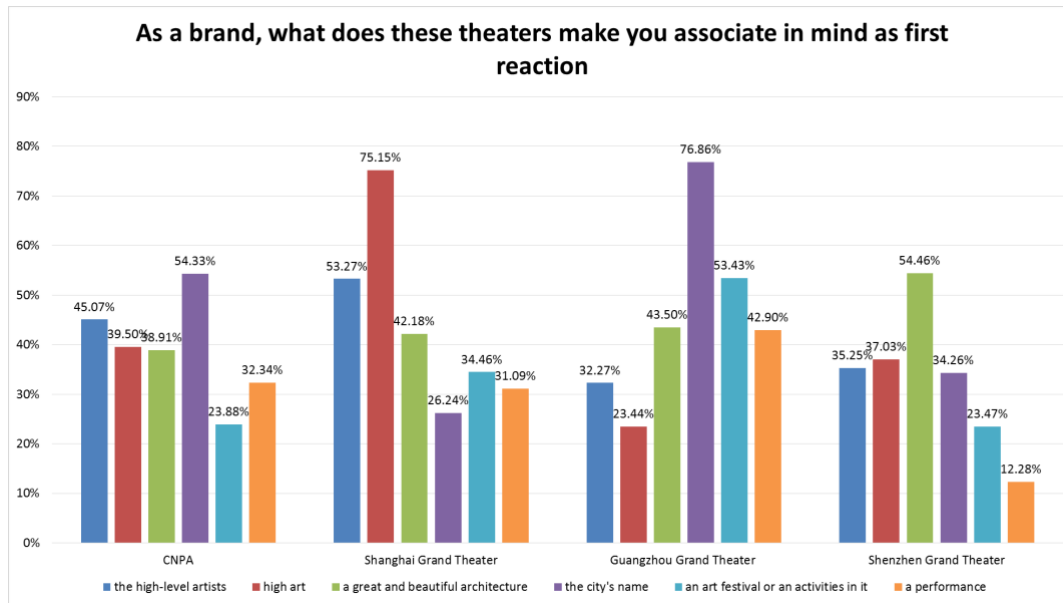


Figure 8: Respondents' Impression on Four Theaters

5. Conclusion

The study in this research demonstrated how audience perceive on brand image of four grand theaters in China. Besides, it studied how did the factors of 3Ps+C influence audience perception on theaters' brand image.

Focusing on the brand image of the four grand theaters, the study tested 4 hypotheses by the statistical analysis. However, the limitations of this paper are mainly self-evaluation method. In the future, multi-source evaluation can be adopted, that is, the evaluation data from the theater managers and directors, together with artists can be collected to reflect the situation to investigate in the marketing strategies for the grand theaters.

Future research should explore the marketing strategies of different grand theaters when they are dedicating to building the brand image. What's more, the investigations on other sort of theater other than grand theater run by the government are significant as well.

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