

# Analysis of Communication Strategy of Xi'an Urban Tourism Industry in the Background of New Media --Based on the Perspective of Integrated Marketing

Haoyuan Xue\*

University College London

**Abstract:** Xi'an is among the ancient Chinese cities with rich culture and geographical sites. Technological development promises Xi'an a significant breakthrough in communicating the unique traits of a fact that boosts revenues from urban tourism. Most research on marketing strategy focuses on the impacts of an advertisement on brand reputation but does not narrow it down to a specific marketing strategy. The research reports the finding of meta-analysis and case studies whose focus is to determine how the network media and new media have contributed to Xi'an's tourism by spreading a positive image of the city. The research proposed that integrated marketing on new media presents business entities as a platform for developing the required brand awareness. The findings of this research indicated that Integrated marketing on new media is the future of marketing since it incorporates various media forms in one platform. Even though new media bears some setbacks on the tourism docket, the benefits associated with integrated marketing promotion in the new media have boosted Xi'an's tourism industry, as evident in the upsurge of tourists from 2018 to date.

## 1. Introduction & Research Background

The development of the Xi'an tourist industry formed its background in 2009 when State Council commissioned the Guanzhong Economic Zone Development Plan [1]. The plan focused on five priorities, including boosting the Xi'an tourism sector. Despite the motives embraced by the State Council to boost Xi'an's tourism docket, constraints such as construction facilities, monuments, and tourist culture image have not been ideal in Xi'an. The most effective strategy for boosting Xian's tourism docket is embracing effective marketing. This does not mean Xi'an's administration does not employ an effective marketing strategy. Adopting a marketing strategy whose scope is wide enough to reach potential local and international customers promises Xian's tourism docket. In addition to exposing Xi'an's tourism docket to the potential market, an effective marketing strategy should enable the region to address intense competition in the tourism docket.

Technological advances display notable changes in almost every docket of human life. The marketing docket is among the most notable in reaping technology's benefits. Changes in modern-day communication strategy have defined a new form of media where business entities and people can create personal and official websites to market their products and services. Unlike in the past, where marketers employed a single communication strategy, the popularity of electronic communication platforms (new

media) has seen businesses employ integrated marketing strategies. According to [2], new media includes various forms of media -blogs, traditional newspapers and magazines, radio, and television, among others- a business entity employs to reach its target audience. Combining various media forms to market a business entity results in integrated marketing. Integrated marketing entails communicating a unified message about products or services using different marketing channels [3]. Apart from using different marketing channels, integrated marketing enables marketers to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a marketing strategy for continuous improvement.

The benefits associated with integrated marketing explain why giant companies -Domino, Apple, Ford, and Nike- use the strategy to reach their target customers. Apart from benefiting individual companies, integrated marketing can also be used to promote regional tourism, as indicated in Xi'an social media campaign. Despite facing many hurdles while trying to boost its urban tourism docket, the Xi'an tourism sector took a different turn in 2018 when the region embraced TikTok and other digital platforms to market its local tourism docket. Integrated marketing played a pivotal role in assisting Xi'an in rising to the status of the most popular city in China. The intended research focuses on developing Xi'an tourism through integrated marketing by analyzing the region's strategy for communicating its urban tourism sector. The 5Ms (Manpower, materials, machinery, minutes, and money) of marketing will be employed to depict the problems and drawbacks of the Xi'an tourism

\*Haoyuan20010819@163.com

industry and offer recommendations to improve the current situation. Additionally, the 5Ms will be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of integrated marketing. The meta-analysis study will employ a triadic influence theoretical framework supported by case studies to illustrate the impacts of integrated marketing on Xian's urban tourism docket.

## 2. Literature Review

A business entity's ability to maintain a competitive advantage over its rivals depends on building a good relationship with its consumers. Changes in customer preferences and tastes in the current era are among the most notable challenges marketers face. The latter problem arises from customers' exposure to the product information on social media platforms and other marketing channels in new media. The triadic influence theory presents marketers with a steppingstone toward understanding customers' behaviors by proposing seven tiers of behavior causes. These tiers include but are not limited to environmental or cultural awareness, intrapersonal influences, and social situation. The theory is vital in explaining the impacts of integrated marketing on customers' perception because customers' exposure to product details lures them towards purchasing a product, which boosts the organization's profit. According to [4], the relationship between customers and a business entity is cumulative and depends on the timely delivery of product information. This implies that maintaining customer contact is the foundation through which a business entity can boost its sales.

Damayanti [3] notes that integrated marketing enhances a clear understanding of brand opinions and timely delivery dialogues and presents customers with adequate insights regarding product traits. Integrated marketing provides customers consistent messages by linking effectiveness in marketing communication management and campaigns with brand equity. The overall impacts of the explained situation are brand functionality in presenting customers with adequate and consistent data about products or services. Unlike traditional marketing strategies, where marketers cannot maintain a personal touch with the target customers, integrated marketing generates responses and feedback. The resultant implication is a situation where a marketer using integrated marketing maintains stakeholders' relationships and leverages them to their advantage. Integrated marketing allows a marketer to coordinate predefined sources of messages such that the setbacks in one communication channel do not lend a marketing strategy to total failure.

[5] illustrate the impacts of integrated marketing on Xi'an urban tourism with findings that hospitality is likely to perform better when marketers embrace and integrate their marketing message. Xi'an's urban tourism struggled for decades until 2018 when the region embraced social media marketing. According to [6], the region indicated 36.73% and 56.42% growth in visitor arrival and income from tourism. The latter ideology arose from the consistency of marketing messages and the fusion

between the travel and tourism sectors with new media technology. [7] and [8] and [9] acknowledges the positive impacts of integrated marketing on the tourism docket with arguments the implementation of integrated marketing bears positive and immediate impacts on market performance. The integration marketing model enables marketers to coordinate myriad sources of messages, allowing room for assessing the effectiveness of a precise media channel. Under the explained situation, a channel whose benefits do not meet predefined key performance indicators is shunned in favor of the best-performing media channel.

A marketing strategy's success depends on meeting its customers' needs. Diversity in modern-day society challenges marketers in defining an inclusive marketing campaign. Integrated marketing communication combats the latter challenge of complex technology it employs and enables marketers to capture empirical behavioral information about customers. The gained insights are vital in differentiating customers according to their economic criteria. In addition to helping a business entity better understand its customers, integrated marketing communication is vital in achieving the interactions between its target customers and the brand.

Contrary to the traditional marketing strategy, integrated marketing, especially one run on social media platforms and the company's website, allows consumers to comment on a product or service. [10] found that implementing integrated marketing on functional levels realizes client-centered focus and allows a business entity to benefit from customer databases. Moreover, integrated marketing incorporates different forms of product promotion in one pool. Integrated marketing exploits are better positioned to exploit the benefits of various forms of product promotion -personal selling, public relations, direct selling, and sponsorship. The result is a realization of engaged communication between customers and the organization's administration.

The benefits of integrated marketing and new media exposure have substituted traditional media as the principal vehicle for promoting the tourism docket. The applicability of new media in boosting the tourism industry is established because communication in marketing aims at convincing target customers towards a product and sharing the benefits associated with a product. Under the explained situation, communication is represented as an agent for ensuring the distribution channel is collective and unique. Integrated marketing communication is pivotal in boosting organizations' required information on the target audience and boosting sales. The development in communication over the last few decades has been a primary force in boosting the applicability of integrated marketing communication. [11] found that integrated marketing communication must be viewed as a new paradigm for overseeing marketing campaigns. Baker and Mitchell [12] supported the latter findings with the argument that integrated marketing focuses on the construction and exploitation of target customers and their relationships with the products an organization offers. Besides enabling a business entity to build an upright relationship with its target customers, integrated marketing gives it a superior market advantage.

The integrated marketing approach allows marketers to monitor, control and recreate messages sent to individuals through interactive dialogues. Dialogue between an organization and its target customers nurtures the business relationship with customers and other stakeholders. The benefits associated with integrated marketing, as provided by new media, explain why Xi'an urban industry has displayed positive growth since the introduction of integrated marketing. Integrated marketing increases tourism attraction in Xi'an and ensures cultural diversity by exposing the ancient city to the world. For instance, live streaming and short video allow target customers to experience real-time events in Xi'an. The merger of cultural and tourism bureaus in Xian was the steppingstone through which the city employed new media to promote urban tourism. Even though new media will likely introduce new challenges in the tourism docket, the benefits of new media and integrated marketing outweigh the adverse impacts. This is because integrated marketing is more than a tool for executing functional and progressive messaging but also mode business entities can employ to ensure consistency in their brands.

### 3. Meta-analysis & Case Study

The rapid development of mobile internet and social media is the foundation through which new media has impacted Xi'an's urban tourism docket. New media (Facebook, WeChat, TikTok, and microblogging, among others) allow marketers to include short videos to spread Xi'an's city image [13]. Marketers exploit the special effects provided by the new media to create appealing presentations of their city through short but informative videos. For instance, short videos depicting Xian's culture, songs, and historical buildings have played a vital role in shunning the community members' old-fashioned stereotypes of Xi'an. Compared to traditional advertising platforms, the new media is not only cheap but achieves a better presentation of ordinary community members. Moreover, the age of technology allows citizens to define the image of their cities, unlike in the past, when the government was responsible for shaping a region's image. Social media users act as receivers and disseminators of information. The applicability of the new media in promoting Xi'an urban tourism rests on their synchronous transmission of sound and picture. Incorporating background music with a strong sense of rhythm boosts the appeal of content transmission. This allows ordinary citizens to participate in the development of content and will also enhance the sense of identity of a product in this consideration of Xi'an's tourism industry.

Xi'an is among the major city in western China to embrace the benefits of integrated marketing. The city embraced the opportunities provided by integrated marketing through various social media platforms. A major breakthrough in Xi'an's tourism industry was the popularity of short videos on Tiktok in 2019. Many individual bloggers came to Xi'an to record personal videos and release them on social platforms, with videos of famous tourist attractions in Xi'an as the video

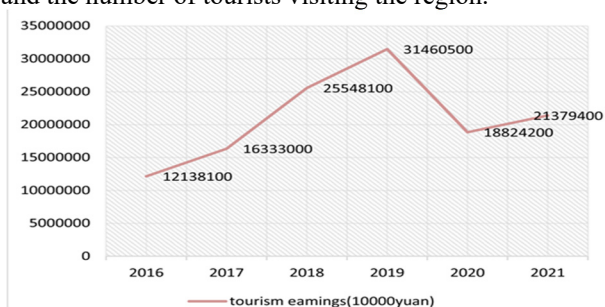
background [13]. Irrespective of the benefits associated with integrated marketing, Xi'an city did not make the necessary follow-ups, which led to declining popularity in the particular media platforms. Apart from TikTok and other new media platforms, Xi'an has embraced marketing its tourism docket, including Baidu Baike, Microblog, Wechat, TikTok, and government websites. Table 1 illustrates the presence of new media in Xi'an's tourism since 2019.

**Table 1.** Data flow in Xian's social media, Source at: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=16017>

2019 Xi'an Social Media data flow channel	Type	Data
The microblog of "Xi'an culture and Tourism Bureau."	Users Information content	1,530,000 4680
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" WeChat	Information content	1212
"Xi'an tourism information consultation guide"	Information content Readers number	1112 743,719
Baidu Baijia number of "Xi'an culture and Tourism Bureau."	Readers number	33000000
2020 Xi'an Social Media data flow channel	Type	Data
The microblog of "Xi'an culture and Tourism Bureau."	Users Information content	1,541,660 4701
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" WeChat	Information content	3279
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" TikTok	Information content New users Likes number	210 125,000 916,000
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" lead news number	Information content New users Readers number	249 15,933 4,589,000
Baidu Baijia number of "Xi'an culture and Tourism Bureau."	Information content Readers number	4033 76096000
2021 Xi'an Social Media data flow channel	Type	Data
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" Tiktok	Information content New users Likes number	405 134,000 1,803,000
"Voice of Xi'an Cultural Tourism" WeChat	Broadcast Lives number Readers number Broadcast Lives watching number Likes number	11 1,783,000 95,000 55,000
"Xi'an tourism wisdom service platform" official account	Information content Followers' number	150 37,000

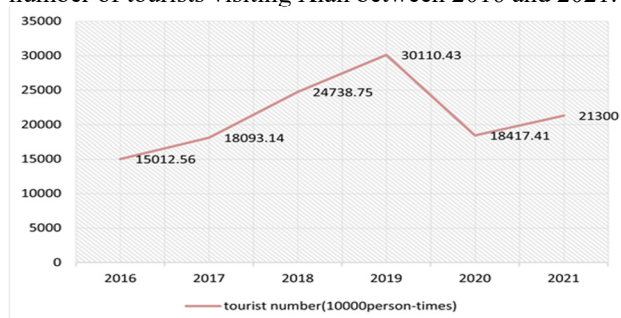
Table 1 illustrates that WeChat, Baidu Baijia, TikTok, and Microblog are the significant new media marketing channels Xi'an city employs to market its tourism. In 2019, Baidu Baijia attracted the highest number of customers, followed by microblogs. Baidu's contribution to Xi'an's marketing changed in 2020 when TikTok new users and

numbers hit 916,000 users. The fact that TikTok and WeChat are used by almost 100% of Chinese makes them ideal platforms for communicating brand awareness. The empirical evidence shows that the new media has increased the publicity of Xi'an urban tourism docket. This is because of their ability to combine audio and video files in one platform and their accessibility to a broader scope audience. The presence of social media platforms and their accessibility in boosting Xi'an's urban tourism docket is revealed in the region's earnings from tourism and the number of tourists visiting the region.



**Figure 1.** Xi'an tourism earnings, Source at: <https://html.scrip.org/file/2-2122282x3.png?20220321085551380>

Besides boosting tourism revenue, new media has also exposed Xi'an to the outside world, attracting many international tourists. Figure 2 shows a gradual rise in the number of tourists visiting Xian between 2016 and 2021.



**Figure 2.** Xian tourist number, source at: <https://html.scrip.org/file/2-2122282x3.png?20220321085551380>

Results from Table 1 and Figures 1 & 2 show how the integrated marketing on the face of the media has transformed the direction of Xi'an's tourism docket. The primary reason Xi'an's tourism docket is gradually improving forms its foundation of integrated marketing ability to reach a broad scope of target audience and flexibility. As mentioned in the introduction, the report will evaluate the applicability of integrated marketing using the 5Ms model. The first M (workforce) refers to human resources an organization employs to tap into a new market or exploit the existing market. Integrated marketing does not require a business entity to invest many human resources like the traditional marketing strategy. On the other hand, the second and the third Ms denote the materials and machinery required to develop an effective marketing plan [14]. Even though Xi'an has the required materials to exploit the benefits of new media and integrated marketing, it falls short of current hardware and software. This does not mean that the region is not benefiting from integrated marketing. The fact that integrated marketing attracts customers from different

regions globally cuts the costs the organization incurs while planning its marketing moves. Lastly, Xi'an urban tourism benefits from the efficiency it realizes by using integrated marketing because the social media employed to communicate a message reaches many people in a short span.

## 4. Findings & Recommendation

Data from Xi'an city's case study and meta-analysis of the region's social media presence reveals a notable relationship between integrated marketing and improved urban tourism. Integrated marketing communication has enabled Xi'an's urban tourism industry to reach global markets, which has boosted the region's revenue. The major themes from the literature review and meta-analysis revolve around reducing the costs of adverts, flexibility, and the ability to combine visual and audio aspects in short videos. The following section is an outline of major themes arising from the research.

### 4.1. Flexible use of new media marketing channels

The new media features a distinct trait that allows users to combine information from different sources while designing a marketing campaign. For instance, TikTok enables a marketer to use a trending song as the background music while showcasing scenes likely to attract local and international tourists. For example, Xi'an Bureau of Culture and Tourism can consider using the melody of Chang'an Twelve Hour Theme Song, supplemented by Chang'an Never Night City and other scenic spots. The main purpose of integrating the melody into the scenic spots is to attract fans of the film and TV series to experience the unique tourist attractions that Xi'an can provide [6].

### 4.2. New Media allow markers reasonable control of short videos

A short and well-organized video achieves twice the result of the effort employed in developing the video. A study report from research Market in 2020 revealed that videos less than one and a half minutes are more popular than long videos [13]. This research also pointed out that the first 8 seconds of a short video are vital in capturing the prime time from an audience. By allowing users to have anonymity over the content of their adverts, integrated marketing makes it possible for marketers to target a key point and thus show the most compelling tourist attraction site. The explained ideology is evident in Chongqing's short TikTok videos showcasing subways and Hongya cave. The latter videos achieve intuitive feelings that, in turn, attract potential tourists.

### 4.3. Promotes market diversification

New media's principal trait is its ability to spread quickly and reach a wider target audience. The introduction of TikTok and other social media marketing platforms in

2018 transformed the publicity of many Chinese cities to the world. A city such as Xi'an, whose reputation had not reached many world parts, is currently in the limelight. International tourists can know to explore the rich culture of the Chinese. As more tourist's flock to Xi'an, they introduce their cultural values into the city, leading to market diversification [13].

#### **4.4. Setbacks of New Media**

Even though integrated marketing over new media has enabled Xian to exploit the potential of its urban industry, it suffered a major setback in enhancing the difficulties of crisis management. New media users can publish any information without considering their actions' consequences. If a user publishes bad news, it spreads quickly to vast numbers of customers. Correcting the impacts of bad news bears adverse impacts on international tourists whose major source of information is online media.

### **5. Recommendations**

#### **5.1. Reviewing New Media short video contents**

Xi'an's tourist and culture bureau should be gatekeepers in monitoring the content of short videos posted on digital marketing platforms. Embracing the latter move does not imply that the government should censor the information on digital communication channels [15].

#### **5.2. Invest in community-based education**

Xi'an's administration should acknowledge that the general public holds the required strength to shape how the world perceives Xi'an. Under the explained situation, the government should invest in measures to educate the general public on the proper use of digital media platforms. Likewise, effective strategies should be devised to supervise public opinions over social media platforms [16].

#### **5.3. Invest in modern and advanced technology**

Even though Xi'an has been on the front line in embracing new media communication channels in its marketing strategy, a review of the current application of new media using the 5Ms model revealed that the region is lagging behind modern technology. According to [5], the WeChat public account does not provide users with new ideas because its updates ceased in December 2018. This implies that potential tourists do not access up-to-date data about significant development in Xian's tourism industry. The government should thus consider updating the current hardware and software.

### **6. Conclusion**

Meta-analysis and case studies on Xian's city tourism and the literature analysis leave no doubt that new media has

been a vibrant tool in boosting the region's tourism industry. The introduction of digital marketing channels in Xi'an's tourism industry as the primary channels for marketing strategy has seen to it a gradual maturity trend and positive impacts -an increased number of tourists annually- since 2017. Were it not for the COVID-19 outbreak, Xi'an tourism docket would have shot and attained a global presence more than most of its major competitors in regional and local tourist destinations. The benefits of new media and integrated marketing arise from its ability to incorporate various types of media in one advert and send consistent messages over different marketing channels. Unlike traditional marketing and communication, New media communication allows marketers to manipulate their marketing ideas by focusing on precise areas that attract potential customers' attention.

Even though new media suffers a major draw in enhancing the challenges in managing a crisis of miscommunication, the fact that new media allows users to post user-generated information implies that members of the Xi'an community can share negative information regarding the city. Under the explained situation, it would take time for the city's administrators to convince potential tourists. Likewise, Xi'an is suffering a major setback in exploring the full potential of integrated marketing. Irrespective of the shortcomings of new media and Xi'an's city defective technology, short video adverts facilitated on digital platforms are currently advantageous because they reach out to a wider scope of potential customers. Moreover, TikTok and other short video applications allow marketers to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a marketing strategy. Besides the identified advantages, short video adverts' power in building positive relationships between a brand and potential customers cannot be ignored.

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