

The Rise of Moon Village: Implications for Brand Marketing in Rural Areas

Zuo Wang^{1, a}

¹School of Tourism and Culture Industry, Chengdu University, Chengdu, 616106, China

^aEmail: wwzuo@163.com

Abstract

Moon Village is a remote village in Chengdu, China. Before 2012, the economic development was backward and the farmers lived in poverty. The village has vigorously developed cultural creativity and rural tourism, and adopted a unique marketing strategy. In the past decade, great changes have taken place, and it has rapidly risen to become a well-known rural brand in China, and local farmers have also embarked on the road to prosperity. This paper studies the brand development process and brand marketing strategy of Moon Village, and also reflects on the shortcomings, aiming to serve as a reference for brand marketing for other rural areas with similar resources.

Keywords

Moon Village; Brand marketing; Rural areas.

1. Introduction

Moon Village is a remote village in the southwest of Chengdu, China, located in Ganxi Town, Pujiang County. The natural scenery of the village is not very distinctive, but it has a tradition of firing pottery, and one of the old kilns for firing pottery has a history of more than 300 years. Before 2012, the economic development of Moon Village was lagging behind, and the farmers lived very poor. Beginning in 2013, the village started brand building and created the "Moon Kiln" characteristic creative ceramic brand. Based on this, it plans to build the Moon International Ceramic Art Village to drive rural tourism with cultural and creative industries. In June 2014, the Moon International Ceramics Village brand was officially unveiled.

This village has gradually attracted the interest of the cultural and art circles, and the personal studios of some culturalists and artists have gradually settled in Moon Village. Farmers transfer their idle farm houses to these literary and art workers, agreeing that they can carry out personalized transformation on the basis of not changing the original house structure. One after another cultural and creative courtyards were born. With the implementation of a batch of cultural and creative projects in the early stage, demonstration and radiation effects have been formed. More and more potters, collectors, writers, designers, painters and entrepreneurs have come to this remote village and have become a newcomer in Moon Village. They not only brought capital, technology and creativity, but also drove the renewal of ideas and skills of old villagers, creating new employment opportunities. Based on the growth of the new villagers' personal brand and the development of the project brand, the brand awareness of Moon International Ceramic Art Village has increased rapidly. Moon Village has carried out a comprehensive brand building and adopted an effective marketing strategy. The number of tourists has increased significantly, and the brand reputation has also increased.

Moon Village is a rural brand developed by relying on cultural creativity and tourism industry. This article hopes to solve two problems: First, what is the brand development history of Moon

Village? Second, what brand marketing strategy has Moon Village adopted? It is hoped that this study can provide a reference for brand marketing in other rural areas with similar resources.

2. Literature Review

There are few studies on Chinese rural cultural brands and tourism brands. Rural cultural brands should dig deep into rural cultural resources and use the local attributes of the countryside as the internal motivation and basis to find brand genes (Tian Jin, 2021). Rural cultural brands should start from their own reality, formulate appropriate brand positioning, clarify the cultural content and channels of communication, and realize the diversification of communication (Bai Lin, 2021). Ma Qingfeng discussed the direction of rural tourism brand image communication in terms of the relationship between new media and rural tourism brand image communication, and the application of new media dynamic and emotional communication (Ma Qingfeng, 2020). The research angles of typical rural cases are more diverse. Taking the "romantic mountains and rivers" of Shanchuan Township in Anji County as an example, Lu Yun analyzed how rural ecological cultural brands integrate resources with brands and create value with culture (Lu Yun, 2015). Taking the Qianduo Cauliflower Festival in Xinghua City as an example, Shen Ruiyan proposed a specific integrated marketing communication plan (Shen Ruiyan, 2020). Yang Anning and others discussed how to use integrated media communication to create a unique brand of rural tourism cultural festival based on the problems in the brand building of the Canola Flower Cultural Festival in X Township (Yang Anning et al., 2021). Shen Gai studied the composition and communication points of rural brands, and pointed out that the process of rural brand building is also a process of continuous improvement of the cultural literacy of local residents (Shen Gai, 2020).

In general, most of the research on rural brands is to think about brand communication in combination with the characteristics of the media, and lack a comprehensive analysis of brand marketing. The literatures on Moon Village mainly includes three research directions: cultural and creative intervention, community building, and ecological protection, ignoring brand marketing. Therefore, the author tries to fill this gap and pays attention to the brand development process and brand marketing strategy of Moon Village.

3. Brand Development of Moon Village

The brand development of Moon Village can be roughly divided into three stages.

The first stage, from 2012 to 2014, is the birth period of the brand. In 2012, Li Min, a ceramic artist from Jingdezhen, discovered the Moon old kiln. The local government realized the development opportunity and started the planning and construction of Moon International Ceramic Art Village.

The second stage, from 2015 to 2020, is the initial stage of the brand. Since 2015, Moon Village has successively introduced various cultural tourism projects, and the number has reached more than 50. The scale effect is prominent. The rural vitality stimulated by cultural creativity has driven the rapid growth of tourists. By 2020, the overall tourism income of Moon Village has reached 33 million RMB. Moon Village has successively won a number of honors at the national, provincial and municipal levels, becoming the first batch of key villages for rural tourism in the country, and its brand awareness and reputation have been greatly improved.

The third stage, from 2021 to the present, is the brand maturity period. Moon Village carries out brand marketing in all directions and through multiple channels, forming a brand image and personality full of literary and artistic temperament. Moon Village was awarded the first

batch of rural cultural revitalization model villages in Sichuan Province. Moon Yuanjia, a life aesthetics complex covering an area of 13.5 mu in the core area of the village, opened and created a wave of publicity through intensive marketing activities and further expanding the brand influence of Moon Village.

Today, as a fast-growing rural brand, the brand system of Moon International Ceramic Art Village is mainly supported by three parts. Its core is a pottery brand developed by relying on the ancient Moon Kiln; next are other workshop brands born following the ancient and traditional handicraft culture, such as grass and wood dyeing workshop, seal carving workshop, etc.; its periphery includes two types of brands: First, the natural aesthetics education institutions and life aesthetics space brands based on the rural natural and cultural atmosphere, such as Le Maojia, Moon Yuanjia, etc. The second is to provide various catering and accommodation brands supporting tourism services, such as the artistic You Duoyun Cafe, Sakura Garden Homestay, and Stay Hotel. These cultural tourism sub-brands scattered in the village are independent and cooperate with each other, forming a rich ecosystem, providing tourists with a variety of choices, and jointly promoting the development of the main brand of Moon International Ceramic Art Village.

4. Brand Marketing Strategy Analysis

4.1. Brand Symbol Strategy

The formation of a brand is inseparable from the unique symbolic image, which constitutes the brand identity and differentiates it from other brands. The brand symbol system of Moon Village can be divided into three aspects: text symbols, visual symbols and auditory symbols. The key word for the text symbol is "ideal". Pastoral life has always been the representative of poetic ideals in Chinese culture. With the brand slogan "Moon Village Ideal Village", it aims to arouse people's romantic imagination of ideal life in Moon Village. The visual symbol image includes two aspects, the first is the Moon Ancient Kiln, the key cultural element of the Moon Village brand; the second is the green pastoral, which represents the large bamboo forest and tea fields of Moon Village's natural scenery. In the various communication works of Moon Village, these two visual symbols are always prominently presented, conveying the heaviness of history and the tranquility of the paradise. The auditory symbol is the brand theme song "Moon Ganxi". This village song was created in 2017. The tune is fresh and tactful, and the lyrics are full of poetic and picturesque. In 2021, after this song was made into a music TV, it will have a wider spread, making Moon Village known and longed for in hearing.

4.2. Brand Narrative Strategy

As a rural brand, if you want to stand out in many similar villages, you have to tell a good brand story. From the brand story communication of Moon Village, we can see a clear narrative logic. First of all, the main narrative line is to interpret the brand slogan and brand value of Moon Village - ideal life. What does an ideal life look like? Moon Village gave an exploratory answer: enjoy music, embrace poetry and get close to nature. As a result, this has become three auxiliary narrative lines. Moon Village has planned and held a series of festivals with the theme of music, poetry and nature, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival Poetry Concert, International Friendship City Youth Music Week, and Spring Bamboo Art Festival. etc.. At the same time, Moon Village has also developed rural greenways, pastoral homestays, agricultural activities, etc., to shorten the distance between people and their ideal life.

Secondly, the main body of the brand narrative is the new villagers. The new villagers are the intellectuals, artists, entrepreneurs, etc. who have settled in Moon Village with the settlement of cultural tourism projects. They tell the past and present life of Moon Village from their own

unique perspectives. These new villagers are all from the cities, so their struggle experiences, feelings and expressions are easily understood and accepted by urban tourists, which is conducive to resonating. The brand narrative spreads through the media resources of the new villagers, which can further stimulate the curiosity and association of urban tourists to Moon Village.

Third, the narrative style is refined and fresh. The style and tonality presented by Moon Village in the brand narrative is unified. Whether it is text or pictures, graphic works or film and television works, the narrative always pursues delicacy and freshness. For example, in CCTV's news report on Moon Village at the end of 2021, it focused on a freshly ground coffee shop in the village, so that the image of the village is not only the original rural beauty and the innovative vitality of the new villagers, but also a little more familiar to urbanites. The elements that represent exquisite life and literary style.

4.3. Brand Communication Strategy

As far as the communication path of the brand is concerned, the communication channels of Moon Village are very diverse, and the communication characteristics are in line with the brand narrative style.

First of all, Moon Village continued to spread through its self-built media platform. In 2015, the official WeChat account was established. In 2017, the new and old villagers jointly created the poetry collection "Moon Collection" and published the village magazine "Moon Village". Its WeChat official account publishes several articles and videos of village news, event previews, wonderful reviews, and life experiences every week. Each information push is planned by a professional team, so that the image of Moon Village always remain vibrant and constantly enriched.

Secondly, Moon Village makes full use of various Internet celebrity media platforms to create a holy place for urban tourists to check in for vacation and leisure. In addition to the traditional communication channels such as creating entries in Baidu Encyclopedia, uploading information on various tourism websites, and publishing news articles in mainstream media, Moon Village has also adopted other communication methods. For example, recommendations are made through opinion leaders on Xiaohongshu and Zhihu, and interviews and reports are conducted through the well-known self-media "One Article". Moon Village has become the "most beautiful village" and "Internet celebrity check-in place" in the hearts of young people with a warm and friendly image.

Third, through planning exhibitions and experience activities, Moon Village has gathered popularity and enhanced social media communication. In addition to the annual Spring Bamboo Art Festival and poetry concerts, Moon Village also uses public cultural spaces to hold literary and artistic exhibitions and performances, such as the Moon International Ceramics Exhibition, the Plant Dyeing Art Exhibition, Yang Feiduo Photography Exhibition, Immersion Style drama "When the rabbit is good" and so on. These activities strengthened the cultural appeal of Moon Village and attracted many tourists who love literature and art. At the same time, experience activities such as picking tea, digging bamboo shoots, dyeing plants and trees, pottery, seal carving, and nature education continue throughout the year. Tourists who participated in the event were happy to share their feelings by taking pictures or recording small videos, which kept the image of Moon Village active on social media.

Fourth, the official communication of Moon Village and the communication advantages of various cultural tourism projects in the village complement each other to form a synergy. Almost all projects in the village have their own WeChat public accounts, and have settled on consumer platforms such as Ctrip, Meituan, and Dianping. The official communication platform, which represents the overall brand image of Moon Village, makes use of its integration advantages to package and push the activities of various cultural and tourism projects in a

unified manner, so that the communication resources can exert an aggregation effect. For example, an official tweet before the Spring Festival in 2022 focused on the activities of all cultural tourism projects in the village during the Spring Festival. This method is not only convenient for tourists to inquire, but also renders the strong New Year flavor in Moon Village. In addition, the founders of cultural tourism projects in the village often have a certain influence in the field of culture and art. They used their social circles and participation in public activities to promote the project, which also brought Moon Village into the public eye. For example, Moon Village's new villager Ning Yuan, a writer, fashion designer, and TV host, has increased exposure for Moon Village by inviting Xu Zhiyuan, a well-known self-media celebrity, to visit.

5. Conclusion

After nearly ten years of development, the brand Moon Village has gone through the birth period, start-up period, and entered the mature period, forming a relatively complete brand system. This research analyzes the marketing strategy of Moon Village from three aspects: the brand's symbol strategy, narrative strategy and communication strategy. Although Moon Village's brand marketing has achieved remarkable results, there are still shortcomings. In 2020, Moon Village established an official Tik Tok account, but only a handful of information was released and the number of fans attracted was very small. Moon Village also did not create an official Weibo, and lost the opportunity to communicate with more audiences. It can be seen that the communication channels of Moon Village still need to be broadened.

This study is a qualitative research, examining the case of Moon Village from the perspective of brand marketing, focusing on the rural brand with cultural creativity and tourism industry as the driving force. In future studies, quantitative analysis needs to be strengthened. Brand development in rural areas is based on the original resources in the village and the new coming projects. Therefore, future research needs to pay more attention to the interaction between the village brand and projects brand.

References

- [1] Anand V V, Renganathan R, Srinivasakumar V, et al. A study on consumer brand preference with reference to DTH in rural area[J]. Indian Journal of Science and Technology, 2016, 9(27).
- [2] Bai Lin, Wu Linhua, Zhang Xi, et al. Communication Strategies of Rural Cultural Brands [J]. Compiled, 2021,(02): 128-129.
- [3] Lu Yun. The Building and Dissemination of Rural Ecological Culture Brands——A Case Study of "Romantic Mountains and Rivers" in Shanchuan Township, Anji County. Journal of Huzhou Normal University, 2015,37(11): 26-30.
- [4] Ma Qingfeng. Research on the communication strategy of rural tourism brand image from the perspective of new media [J]. China National Expo, 2020,(08): 238-239.
- [5] Majeed S. Brand awareness in rural area: A case study of fast moving consumer goods in Pulwama district of J&K state[J]. International Journal of Business and Management Invention, 2014, 3(5): 50-53.
- [6] Shen Gai. Practice and Thinking of Rural Cultural Tourism Brand Communication——Taking Mingyue Village, Pujiang County, Sichuan Province as an Example [J]. Culture Industry. 2020,(32): 131-133.

- [7] Shen Ruiyan. Research on the Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy of Rural Tourism Brands——Taking the Qianduo Cauliflower Festival in Xinghua City as an Example [J]. Modern Business, 2020,(19): 46-47.
- [8] Tian Jin. Research on the Construction of Omni-media Communication Mode of Rural Cultural Brand Information [J]. Popular Literature and Art, 2021,(11): 119-121.
- [9] Wheeler F, Frost W, Weiler B. Destination brand identity, values, and community: A case study from rural Victoria, Australia[J]. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 2011, 28(1): 13-26.
- [10] Yang Anning, Liao Zhiyi, Xiong Jianshu. A New Path for Brand Building and Communication of Rural Tourism Cultural Festival in the Age of Convergence: Taking the Rape Flower Cultural Festival in X Township as an Example [J]. Journal of News Research, 2021,12(11): 73-74.