

Research on the Deep Demand of guesthouse Social Media Marketing for Generation Z

Jingyi Zhao

School of Tourism College, Hainan
Normal University, Haikou, China
Corresponding author:
202217060251@hainnu.edu.cn

Abstract:

Contemporary 'Generation Z' has a consumer demand for personalized experience in the hotel market. The consumption attribute of "pursuing uniqueness, paying attention to experience and preferring to socialize" has already occupied a dominant position in the hotel industry today, which has forced the hotel marketing logic to change accordingly, and narrative communication of new media is one of the ideal ways to adapt to this trend. Therefore, this paper discusses the methods to meet the uniqueness of the Z generation, and finds that there are some shortcomings in the current guesthouse marketing, such as homogenization of content, superficial narration and dislocation of channels. The reason is that it does not pay attention to the unity of the needs of the Z generation in three aspects: "experience+emotion+socialization". Starting from refining the needs of the Z-generation group, this paper proposes to build a "three levels of innovation" in the product and marketing of guesthouse from "deep extraction of cultural symbols-multi-platform narrative matrix-user co-creation precipitation", which is helpful to help guesthouse get rid of the fate of "traffic is king" and realize an advanced "Z-generation business model" whose value is determined by its intrinsic value.

Keywords: Generation z; Guesthouse ; Social media marketing

1. Introduction

Guesthouse has become one of the most talked-about carriers of experience economy and emotional consumption, and has a strong development momentum in the field of international tourism. Guesthouse is a type of accommodation business

that is popular with foreign tourists in Pai, especially the budget traveler or backpackers. Accommodations offer lower prices than other type of accommodations, emphasizing on convenience and simplicity. Guesthouses are type of accommodation that offers basic amenities (Wikipedia, n.d.). According to Institute for Small and Medium Enterprises Development

(ISMED) stated that guesthouses are modified rooms and rooms which are available for travelers. It is superior than service apartments with a compensation. Rooms are usually rented on a daily basis or a month. Sometimes guesthouses are divided into rooms in private houses for foreigners to rent in short-term Institute for (Institute for and Medium Enterprises Development, 2007).

According to the website Hotel.com revealed the Mobile Travel Tracker survey on smartphone and the social media usage behavior of Millennium tourists. It is found that Thai Millennials (18-29 years old) tourists have behaviors such as sharing pictures and travel stories on social media and experiences with groups of friends and groups that they are connected on online media. In addition, the research also found that Millions of 80% Thai tourists often travel with friends while 67% uploading of photos of and 64% 4 check-in to share and show their own travel experiences. The survey also indicated that Millennials, both Thai and foreign tourists increasingly use smartphone applications while traveling. There are three important contents that 94% Millennia travelers often choose to search through online travel agents are hotel reservation, 72% book flights through online. Importantly, it was found that three applications type on smartphones that the Millennials tourists used during the tour were 87.6% social media applications, 70% tourism application groups and 60.8% travel map applications. In terms of social media applications, the 95.8% Millennials most popular as Facebook, 87.6% LINE 87.6% and 76.2% Instagram.[1]

According to the current statistics, the global guesthouse market has reached the scale of 11.6 billion US dollars, and will break through the 30.2 billion US dollars mark in 2028, and its scale will double.

Compared with the current OTA propaganda method which focuses on selling and building a platform, the hotel propaganda once focused on hardware facilities and landscape features such as 'scenery+decoration', ignoring its inherent core attribute of 'humanistic experience', while the high-quality hotel propaganda should return to the comprehensive perspective of 'scenery+decoration+humanity', highlighting its cultural value different from traditional accommodation. Studies have shown that the brand guesthouse that adopts the way of "story communication+emotional connection" can create obvious competitive advantages: Thailand Chiang Rai guesthouse uses the narrative of "Mekong Legend" to increase the repeat patronage rate by 40%; Beijing Huairou Manchu guesthouse has received continuous attention in Tik Tok through the implantation of "intangible experience".

Based on the unique needs of the Z era and the practice cases under the narrative of new media, this paper draws lessons from the successful experience at home and abroad to seek a more effective way, puts forward a new idea of "cultural symbol-channel adaptation-user co-cre-

ation" on the source of the troubles in the development of the hotel industry at present, and can explore a new brand marketing vision under the background of the current experience economy.

2. Theoretical basis and literature review

Generation Z (also known as "digital aborigines") usually refers to the group born between 1997 and 2012. Its growth trajectory is deeply bound with the popularization of Internet and mobile digital technology, forming unique values, behavior patterns and consumption characteristics.

Snyder and Fromkin define "unique demand (NFU)" as people's motivation to distinguish their own purposes based on consumer goods according to their needs, that is, to show other individuals the demand for a unique product according to their personal needs, which makes the subject try to use the selected consumer goods to form a unique self-image and internal characteristics to prevent the feeling of individual subordination, and its essence is that users hope to maintain a distinctive characteristic state through consumption.

If we only look at its demand for NFU, there are three manifestations for generation Z: the demand for scarce experience-the more limited the experience, the scarcer it is; Cultural immersion needs-to learn or understand the inner essence of folk culture with the unique behavior of folk characteristics, rather than a cursory tour; Social identity needs-integrate the elements of folk culture that you are exposed to into all aspects of the hotel, so that guests can feel the atmosphere of folk culture anytime and anywhere during their stay, and gain fans' "like" recognition on Sina Weibo, Tik Tok and other platforms. The complexity of this demand makes its consumption behavior go beyond simple functional satisfaction, and become a multiple carrier of self-image, social connection and cultural value expression. It also provides a clear value anchor for the hotel industry to accurately capture the needs of customers and innovate experience design.

3. Social Media Marketing Strategy of guesthouse Driven by Generation Z Demand

3.1 Evolution and Development of guesthouse Marketing

Guesthouse marketing has evolved with the needs of customer groups and technological changes, and has gone through three stages: in the early stage, it focused on phys-

ical space display, relied on OTA platform to push housing information, and relied on online celebrity to punch in, but the repurchase rate of generation Z was less than 10% due to homogenization; After the popularization of new media, it turned to the transmission of cultural experience. For example, Beijing Huairou Manchu guesthouse set up a paper-cutting workshop, and Yangshuo guesthouse pushed the list of Zhuang experience in Xiaohongshu, with a single note collection of 12,000; At present, Malaysia guesthouse has set up the “Best Story Award”, with UGC accounting for 60% in half a year. Moganshan guesthouse invited guests to build a “cultural advisory group”, marking that marketing has entered a new stage of value symbiosis from one-way communication.

3.2 Content: the shallow application of cultural symbols

At present, most guesthouses have realized the marketing value of cultural elements, but most of them stay at the level of “decorative display”, neither excavating the scarce experience in culture nor constructing the cultural immersion scene, and failing to transform culture into a participatory deep experience. . 80% of the guesthouses in Dali, Yunnan, only focus on static contents such as the appearance of Bai courtyard and taking photos of national costumes, and have not developed such a scarce experience as “a limited number of tie-dyeing workshops”, nor have they transformed the “courtyard blessing ceremony” in the main belief into an immersive interactive project. This shallow presentation leads to Z generation tourists “punching in and leaving”, and the repurchase rate is less than 10%; At the same time, due to the lack of cultural immersion, it is difficult for tourists to form emotional memories, and the willingness to follow up is low, resulting in the continuous loss of potential customers. The core problem is that the development of cultural resources only stays at the level of “visual symbols”, and it is difficult to meet the demand of “deep participation” of generation Z without supporting experience design and service support.

3.3 Preliminary exploration of new media channels

Generation Z is active in various online platforms such as Tik Tok, Xiaohongshu and bilibili, and its content consumption preference shows significant platform specificity. However, due to the “insufficient channel awareness” of some hotel operators, the promotion effect of the hotel is low. If some hotel operators pay too much attention to the operation of WeChat WeChat official account and video number, in fact, Z generation users prefer to browse Tik Tok; Compared with WeChat platform, the average stay time of users in Tik Tok platform is longer, the former (WeChat platform) is about 1-2 minutes, and the latter (Tik

Tok platform) can reach 7-8 minutes. This difference reflects the differentiation of different new media platforms in user stickiness and usage scenarios, and reflects the platform specificity of Z generation groups in information acquisition and content consumption preferences.

Founded in 2015, Earth Warehouse guesthouse is one of the guesthouse brands of Licheng Hotel Group, a subsidiary of Ctrip. In line with the habit of Z-generation fragmented browsing, it has created a strategy of precise platform adaptation, and released the short video of “15-second mobile guesthouse unpacking” of Earth Warehouse guesthouse in Tik Tok, showing hard-core black technologies such as intelligent lifting beds and ecological toilets; Xiaohongshu KOC released the 24-hour experience strategy of the Earth Warehouse guesthouse “Leaving the city without leaving the dust”; Bilibili initiated the topic of # Earth Warehouse Renovation Challenge #, which attracted many netizens to play with the creative stalks of designing “virtual guesthouses” on bilibili, and the number of broadcasts of this topic exceeded one million.[2]

3.4 A preliminary attempt of user co-creation

Some guesthouse operators began to pay attention to the sense of participation of Z generation tourists, but most of them were “shallow interaction”, which did not implant cultural immersion experience or create scarce social currency, resulting in the lack of participation value and communication motivation. Such as lottery or polite comments. WeChat official account, a part of the guesthouse in Moganshan, Zhejiang Province, pushed a lot of content with “boss’s wife’s daily life”, which was less active and attracted less than 0.5% user interaction rate. Tourists’ sense of participation is not strong, which makes the hotel unable to make waves.

From the perspective of demand matching, the social identity needs of Generation Z depend on “unique experience that can be shared”-if the guesthouse only provides shallow interaction, but does not create projects that can be transformed into social assets such as scarce experience and cultural immersion, it will be difficult for tourists to obtain “differentiated self-expression” materials through participation.

Take Guilin Hermit guesthouse as an example, establish a “triple co-creation” system, invite Z generation tourists to become “one-day experience officers” and turn the most sincere feelings into the most readable “What is the experience of being a housekeeper in seclusion” strategy to form a second co-creation; Launched “Guibei Color Tune Adaptation”, and the user-created “guesthouse Color Tune” boarded in bilibili and gained more than 230,000 broadcasts; Set up a “hidden membership group” and hold an online “dialect story meeting” once every period, and the repurchase rate reaches 35%[3].

4. Contradiction between guesthouse Media Marketing and Generation Z Demand

4.1 Content Homogenization: From “Unique” to “Replication”

One of the core consumption characteristics of Generation Z is the strong pursuit of “unique demand (NFU)”. They are eager to show their differences with others through consumption choices and reject standardized and homogeneous experiences. However, at present, most guesthouses are caught in the misunderstanding of “online celebrity elements piling up”, and the combination of “ins wind decoration+online celebrity punching point” appears repeatedly on platforms such as Xiaohongshu, resulting in serious homogenization of content. This kind of homogeneous content is difficult to meet the demand of Z generation for “non-standardized and scarce experience”, but it causes its aesthetic fatigue. According to literature data, 65% of Generation Z think that “the propaganda of guesthouse is inconsistent with the actual experience”, the core reason is the lack of cultural uniqueness and personalized design of the content [4].

4.2 Narrative superficiality: from “emotion” to “flow”

As “digital aborigines”, Generation Z not only pays attention to product functions, but also pays more attention to emotional resonance and cultural immersion in the process of consumption—they tend to choose brands that can convey values and carry stories, rather than simply

“accommodation space”. However, at present, the narrative of guesthouse marketing mostly stays at the level of “superficial story”, such as overemphasizing “the owner’s entrepreneurial experience” but ignoring the emotional connection with the Z generation.

The vibrating audio and video of a hotel in Lijiang, Yunnan Province has long been centered on “boss singing and drinking”. Although it has gained traffic in a short time, it is unable to let Generation Z feel the emotional implication and cultural core of the hotel because of the lack of in-depth narrative of Naxi culture and local lifestyle. This superficial narrative leads to less than 5% of tourists’ retention rate, which confirms the reality that “Z generation customers cannot be precipitated by traffic alone”—what Z generation needs is “cultural narrative that can resonate with emotions”, rather than fragmented traffic gimmicks [5].

4.3 Channel Dislocation: From “Precision” to “Blindness”

As a “digital aborigine”, Generation Z’s platform usage habits show obvious scene characteristics, and the content preferences and interactive logic of different platforms are obviously different. However, the vague understanding of the characteristics of this platform leads to the dislocation of channel selection and content delivery. This kind of blind investment not only wastes marketing resources, but also fails to reach accurate customers. If we ignore this difference, we will fall into the dilemma of “high investment and low conversion”. The following is a comparison table of user preferences of different platforms and misplacement of guesthouse operators.

Table 1. Comparison for Different Platforms

platform	type	performance	Dislocation of delivery
Tik Tok users	15-30 seconds of “visual impact short video”	Pursuing instant and interesting content	The release of a long video of more than 5 minutes in Tik Tok violates its “short, flat and fast” communication characteristics, resulting in a broadcast rate of less than 10%
Xiaohongshu users	Raiders experience notes	Pay attention to practicality and scene sharing	Publish pure promotional content with “hard and wide thinking”; The content is too “filtered” and lacks realism; Ignoring the “scenario strategy”, content fragmentation is illogical.
Bilibili users	Focus on medium and long-term and high-value content.	In-depth culture analyzes creative challenges and emphasizes the professionalism and interactivity of content.	Publishing straightforward “guesthouse promotional advertisements” and ignoring its attribute of “deep content community” is difficult to resonate with Generation Z.

In essence, the core problem of channel dislocation lies in the failure to match the “platform preference” of Generation Z with the “content characteristics” of guesthouse: cultural experience content is more suitable for Station B

and Little Red Book, while scene display content is more suitable for Tik Tok, and only accurate adaptation can improve communication efficiency [6].

4.4 Interaction formalization: from “co-creation” to “onlookers”

As “digital aborigines”, Generation Z’s consumption behavior not only pursues the experience itself, but also attaches great importance to the opportunity of “social identity” and “self-expression” through participation and co-creation—they tend to turn the consumption experience into social currency, and are eager to get feedback and a sense of belonging through interaction. However, at present, the user interaction of most guesthouses still stays in shallow behaviors such as “like, comment and forward”, which fails to build a substantial co-creation mechanism, resulting in a low willingness of Generation Z to participate.

For example, the “guesthouse Story Collection” activity initiated by some village houses only takes “prize collection” as a gimmick, but it has not established a follow-up content screening, display and feedback mechanism: users lack a clear response after submitting content, and excellent works have not been transformed into guesthouse publicity materials or experience projects, and the final participation is only 15% of the expected. This interactive mode of “re-initiating and neglecting operation” weakens the sense of participation of Generation Z—they can neither gain a sense of accomplishment through co-creation nor form an emotional connection with the hotel, and eventually become “onlookers” rather than “co-creators” [7].

5. Innovative marketing path

5.1 The Deep Narration of Cultural Symbols: From “Display” to “Immersion”

Extract scarce content from cultural elements such as intangible cultural heritage, folk custom, legends, etc., for example, Manchu Hotel in Labagoumen, Huairou, Beijing: extract “auspicious patterns” from “Manchu paper-cutting” and make a “paper-cutting workshop”. Social identity empowers tourists to personally participate in the design of the hotel, and the hotel will decorate excellent works in public spaces and mark the names of the creators, so that tourists can feel the sense of accomplishment of “participating in the construction of the hotel”; The ceremony of “crossing the brazier” is extracted from the Manchu marriage custom, and designed as “welcome ceremony for the hotel” to create a scene of cultural immersion. The host of the people will wear traditional costumes to explain the meaning of “crossing the brazier to avoid disaster and pray for good fortune”, invite tourists to cross the brazier symbolizing “purification and rebirth”, and cooperate with shaman drum music to create an atmosphere, so that tourists will be immersed in it because of “identity change” when entering the hotel [8][9].

5.2 Accurate Channel Matrix: From “Full Platform” to “Adaptability”

According to the behavior characteristics of Z generation on different platforms, the channel combination of “drainage-precipitation-transformation” is constructed. Tik Tok specializes in short video of visual impact, and Sichuan Danba Tibetan Village guesthouse released a quick cut video of “Tibetan Dress Dressing+Sunrise in Diaolou”, with the topic of “# Contrast guesthouse #”, with a single broadcast volume exceeding 3 million. Xiaohongshu is mainly engaged in raiders experience notes, and Yangshuo guesthouse launched the “24-hour cultural experience list”, which is not simply a list of attractions, but a deep integration of Zhuang culture and local life. At 6 o’clock in the morning, I followed the boatmen to learn about the “bamboo raft pole in Yulong River” and understand the “Millennium water transport culture supported by a bamboo pole”; In the afternoon, we will participate in the Zhuang Brocade Workshop, where non-genetic inheritors will explain the auspicious meaning of “Wan Ziwen” and “back-shaped pattern”, and visitors can weave coasters by themselves as a gift. In the evening, learn to sing “Zhuang folk songs” in the courtyard of the guesthouse, and the host will teach the classic passage of “love song duet” and explain the folk story of “hydrangea” in the lyrics with local dialect. KOC released “Being a Zhuang Man in Yangshuo for a Day” after actual measurement, with a collection of 12,000. Station B is mainly engaged in in-depth cultural analysis. Anhui Hongcunsu and UP cooperated to shoot the documentary “Hongcunsu and Huizhou Merchants Culture” to analyze the relationship between “guesthouse Architecture and Businessman Spirit”, with a broadcast volume of 870,000. Wechat community is mainly engaged in emotional interaction. Zhejiang Songyang guesthouse has established a “guest group”, regularly shared “villagers’ daily tea planting” and launched a “naming tea trees” activity, with community activity reaching 40%[10].

5.3 Users create ecology together: from “interaction” to “symbiosis”

The owner of Mofan guesthouse actively invites guests to participate in the activity design of the guesthouse. For example, when planning quarterly theme activities, guests will be asked to choose activities of interest through questionnaires and online voting. After selection, guests can further participate in the planning of performance programs and performance forms.

Mofan guesthouse has established a perfect incentive mechanism for User Generated Content (UGC). The guesthouse encourages guests to share their wonderful moments and unique experiences in the guesthouse. For high-quality shared contents, such as wonderful photos

and vivid text stories, they will be displayed on the official platforms of the guesthouse, such as WeChat official account and Xiaohongshu, and the providers will be given certain rewards, such as discount coupons and special souvenirs for the next stay. In the past year, Mofan guesthouse received more than 500 articles shared by guests, and more than 100 articles were screened and displayed on the platform, which attracted the attention of a large number of potential guests, and the number of new reservations obtained by these users increased by 30%[11]. At the same time, privacy protection mechanisms (such as UGC content desensitization) and public opinion response processes are set up to ensure the healthy operation of the community.

Mofan guesthouse invites frequent visitors to join the “Cultural Advisory Group” to jointly explore and inherit local culture. Members of the “Cultural Advisory Group” participated in the selection of “Moganshan Cultural Symbols” and based on these symbols, developed guesthouse hand-holding gifts. For example, everyone jointly selected “Moganshan Bamboo Weaving” as a characteristic cultural symbol, and developed bamboo key chains, bamboo ornaments and other accompanying gifts. These accompanying gifts are not only loved by guests, but also enhance the brand cultural connotation of the hotel. At the same time, the guesthouse will give some rewards according to the contributions of the members of the “Cultural Advisory Group”, such as free accommodation, priority participation in guesthouse activities, etc., which enhances the stickiness between guests and guesthouse, and makes the guests change from simple consumers to brand co-builders [12][13].

6. Conclusion

It can be seen that the special demand in the Z era is a guesthouse marketing direction worth studying in the Z era, and the narrative communication of new media is the medium connecting demand and experience. However, at present, the demand for “culture+emotion+socialization” is mainly divided in guesthouse marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to solve the current problems of hotel marketing through the three-step path of “deep narrative of cultural symbols-accurate channel adaptation-users creating ecology together”: homogenization, tasting, etc. In the future, guesthouses can further take root in local culture, extend “cultural experience” to “lifestyle co-creation”, make Z-generation tourists become “masters” from “experiencers”, and at the same time precipitate long-term emotional connection through community operation, making guesthouses not only an accommodation space, but also a

cultural social carrier recognized by Z-generation groups, and realize the symbiosis of commercial value and cultural value.

References

- [1] Lanchakronmongkon, K. (2020). The influence of social network as a communication process on the online guesthouse reservation decision of generation, the case study of Pai, Mea Hong Son.
- [2] Wu Lei, Zhan Qi, Li Jie. Study on the influencing factors of new media marketing communication effect of Earth Warehouse guesthouse [J]. *Tourism Research*, 2023, Vol.15 (1): 43-55
- [3] Zhang Chaofan, Li Haiping. Guilin characteristic brand hotel marketing and promotion under the background of new media-taking hidden enjoyment as an example [J]. *Time-honored brand marketing*, 2021,(1): 17-18.
- [4] Lam, H.-P., et al. (2025). guesthouse experience and eWOM among Generation Z tourists: The role of guest delight, guest satisfaction, and the need for uniqueness. *Acta Psychologica*, 255, 104980.
- [5] Nindum, K. (2021). Innovative Storytelling to Add Value to guesthouse Tourism. *PSAKU International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 10(1), 13-21.
- [6] Anuar, F. I., & Wang, Q. (2024). Use and Adoption of Website and Social Media Marketing: Insights from guesthouse Business Owners. *Information Management and Business Review*, 16(3), 574-583.
- [7] Von der Au, S., Rauschnabel, P. A., Felix, R., & Hinsch, C. Context in augmented reality marketing: Does the place of use matter? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2023, 51(3): 456-477.
- [8] Kapoor, A. (2023). Threat and vulnerability for Social Media Marketing. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- [9] Qin Zhihong. Research on New Media Marketing Strategy of Villagers in Beijing [J]. *Journal of Beijing Agricultural Vocational College*, 2025, Vol.39 (3): 9-15
- [10] Murat Çakırkaya, Murat Koçyigit. Consumer Involvement in Augmented Reality Applications in the Context of Phygital Marketing Communications. *Journal of Digital Marketing*, 2024, 15(2): 123-145.
- [11] Lao Jia-wen. Research on the marketing strategy of Nanning quality hotel in the new media era [J]. *Marketing*, 2021,(33): 36-38
- [12] Smith, J., & Johnson, A. The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 2023, 18(4): 210-224.
- [13] Sahabuddin, M., et al. (2024). How do perceived and environmental values influence tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and environmental awareness? *Environment, Development and Sustainability*.