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## Practical Exploration and Reflection on Marketing and Promotion of Public Libraries in the Converged Media Era: A Case Study of Hangzhou Library (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Objective/Significance] Against the backdrop of the integrated media era, and taking Hangzhou Library's marketing promotion practices as a case study, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the integration of public library marketing promotion with integrated media, aiming to guide public libraries in better carrying out marketing promotion work.

[Method/Process] Employing case study methodology, this research analyzes feasible pathways for marketing promotion based on the case of Hangzhou Library's marketing promotion, and proposes several reflections and recommendations.

[Results/Conclusion] In the integrated media era, public library marketing promotion should fully leverage the advantages of integrated media to explore approaches for further strengthening marketing promotion efforts, thereby facilitating enhanced social recognition of public libraries and better elevating their social status and influence.

### Full Text

### Preamble

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**Exploration and Reflection on Public Library Marketing in the Era of Media Convergence: A Case Study of Hangzhou Library**

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/Significance] Against the backdrop of the media convergence era and using Hangzhou Library’s marketing practices as a case study, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of how public library marketing can integrate with converged media to guide libraries in improving their promotional efforts. [Method/Process] Using a case study approach, this paper analyzes Hangzhou Library’s marketing practices to outline viable pathways and offers several reflections and recommendations. [Result/Conclusion] In the media convergence era, public libraries should fully leverage the advantages of converged media to strengthen marketing efforts, enhance public awareness of libraries, and elevate their social status and influence.

**Keywords:** media convergence; public library; library marketing; Hangzhou Library

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## Introduction

Prior to the 1990s, the concept of “marketing” did not exist in library science theoretical frameworks, with many considering it fundamentally incompatible with the library profession. Even today, experts and scholars continue to debate whether marketing theories should be introduced into library services, whether library science should study library marketing, and whether marketing aligns with library professional values [1]. However, the 2010 IFLA/UNESCO *Public Library Service Guidelines* states: “Public library marketing is not merely advertising, sales, promotion, or publicity. Marketing is a proven, systematic approach that relies on designing services or products based on customer needs and expectations, with customer satisfaction as the goal” [2].

Marketing in libraries has evolved from a question of whether to implement it to how to implement it effectively. In today’s era of media convergence, library marketing can only achieve greater impact through effective integration with converged media. Media convergence refers to the integration of traditional and new media in the internet and mobile internet era—a harmonious, complementary new media model built on fully utilizing the differences and commonalities of various media carriers, guided by the principle of leveraging strengths and eliminating weaknesses through comprehensive integration of human resources, content, and publicity to achieve resource integration, content compatibility, promotional synergy, and shared benefits [3].

The impact of “Internet Plus” and converged media services on all industries, particularly the transformation and upgrading of traditional media, presents both challenges and opportunities for public library marketing. Hu Chun-jian and Zheng Hongyue (2017) published research on university libraries’ dual WeChat official accounts in the context of media convergence [4], while Tian Lanlan (2020) explored strategies for improving reading service quality in university libraries during the media convergence era [5]. He Xiaoqi reviewed the

development status of media convergence in public libraries [6], summarizing overall trends. However, theoretical summaries and systematic research on how libraries, especially public libraries, can utilize media convergence for marketing remain insufficient.

Public library marketing must capitalize on the advantages of media convergence to strengthen promotional efforts, enhance social awareness, and further elevate libraries' social status and influence. Drawing on Hangzhou Library's cases of utilizing both traditional and new media for marketing, this paper examines three primary approaches: reader-centered marketing, information consultation-centered marketing, and industry exchange-centered marketing.

## 1. Reader-Centered Marketing

### 1.1 Marketing for Special User Groups

In June 2020, a message from a migrant worker named Wu Chungui at Dongguan Library went viral on Sina Weibo and other new media platforms, creating significant social impact. The incident stemmed from an official reader response from Dongguan Library—an ordinary daily work reply that precisely demonstrated public libraries' inclusiveness and equality, providing nationwide publicity for modern public library values. Similarly, Lishui Library's decision to remain open for an 84-year-old farmer attracted widespread attention. These cases, like Hangzhou Library's earlier "beggars entering the library" controversy, fully demonstrate public libraries' care and warmth for "special groups." Professor Cheng Huanwen from Sun Yat-sen University noted that Hangzhou Library's "beggars can also enter the library" news event was a milestone in spreading the core public library value of equal rights in China, while Dongguan Library's "Wu Chungui message" incident was a milestone in spreading the core value of equal opportunity [7].

The seemingly ordinary concepts of equality, free access, and barrier-free services are precisely the public topics most likely to trigger media hotspots, reflecting positive social energy and highlighting public libraries' social role and professional value. This suggests that libraries should strengthen publicity around humanistic care.

Public libraries should increase investment in resources and facilities needed for special group services and actively integrate traditional and new media to market and disseminate content about services for special groups—including the elderly, minors, pregnant women, and disadvantaged populations—so more people become aware of them, thereby demonstrating the equality of public library services and allowing the public to experience the warmth and inclusiveness of libraries.

## 1.2 Marketing Through Public Media Cooperation

In recent years, Hangzhou Library has actively cooperated with major news media organizations to conduct special reports on significant library activities and events. For example, during the 2020 “4·23 World Book Day,” Hangzhou Library collaborated with the local media *Youth Times* to launch the “Celebrity Bedside Books” Weibo interactive campaign, featuring five celebrity book recommenders who released video “book riddles” on Weibo and WeChat, inviting netizens to guess book titles. The campaign generated 5.24 million topic engagements, 2.3 million Weibo reads, and 880,000 video views, with Hangzhou Library’s official Weibo account alone receiving 1.08 million views and 3,334 interactions from over 3,000 participants. Such promotional methods represent examples of library-media cooperation with relatively low investment costs but significant social impact.

Public libraries should leverage the credibility and influence of public media to effectively disseminate library services, distinctive brands, and cultural resources, enabling the public to comprehensively understand public library services through multiple dimensions. Libraries should maintain good cooperative and interactive relationships with public media, proactively push library information, and utilize newspapers, journals, television, and radio to reach these media’s audiences, thereby enhancing the dissemination of library information content.

## 1.3 Self-Media Operations and Marketing

Since 2011, while actively utilizing public media communication, Hangzhou Library has incorporated self-media operations into its marketing vision, successively launching Weibo, WeChat official accounts, and Douyin (TikTok), and officially initiating live streaming services during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Hangzhou Library currently has 468,000 Sina Weibo followers, consistently ranking first among domestic public libraries in influence, and was selected in 2018 as one of the “Top Ten Cultural Weibo Accounts” by Sina Weibo and People’s Daily Online Public Opinion Data Center, ranking in the top ten of the culture and tourism list multiple times in 2020. Its WeChat official account has attracted 260,000 followers and has consecutively won the “Popular Reading WeChat Official Account” award for four terms, co-sponsored by the China Press and Publication Media Group and the China National Reading Media Alliance. The Douyin account has released over 100 short videos covering “book recommendations,” “knowledge sharing,” and “online education,” with more than 1 million views and 14,000 likes, and was selected in the third issue of the 2020 “New Media Circle Positive Energy Ranking List” initiated by the Zhejiang Provincial Cyberspace Administration, the Provincial Network Culture Association, and Zhejiang Daily’s Converged Media.

Through nearly a decade of practical exploration, Hangzhou Library has deeply recognized the importance of new media operations and marketing, establish-

ing social media accounts operated by dedicated librarians for content management on platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, Toutiao, and Douyin to vigorously conduct “micro-marketing.” During the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, public libraries must pay greater attention to the impact of 5G technology on new media, such as the development and application of AR/VR, short videos, and live streaming. Libraries should strengthen digital platforms including library websites, digital libraries, TV libraries, and mobile apps, cooperating not only with influential social media platforms but also creating their own self-media to increase attention and influence on new media platforms.

#### **1.4 Marketing Through Current Events and Hot Topics**

In February 2019, the Zhai Tianlin “CNKI incident” triggered a public opinion hotspot on Weibo. Hangzhou Library capitalized on this event to market its digital resources, immediately gaining tens of thousands of reads and attracting news media attention, with multiple media outlets conducting special reports on digital resource services. This significantly increased resource access and represented a successful case of library marketing through current events.

The essence of event marketing is making your planning become news [9]. Public libraries should constantly monitor social and political hotspots, selectively associating them with library service marketing content—especially those reflecting socialist core values and positive energy that can resonate with society—to strengthen positive marketing and disseminate the public welfare, equality, and importance of library services. Libraries can also combine traditional Chinese festivals to conduct online-offline integrated cultural activities, using books, cultural products, and electronic certificates as prizes for appropriate marketing to increase user participation.

#### **1.5 Diversified Online-Offline Integrated Marketing Activities**

Between 2019 and 2020, Hangzhou Library held 4,668 reading promotion activities with 9.736 million participants. Activities such as “Reading for Earth” and the Hangzhou Maker Festival won second prize in the 2019 China Library Society’s second Public Library Innovation and Creativity Collection and Promotion Campaign. Hangzhou Library also brought library services to the 13th Hangzhou Cultural and Creative Industry Expo, allowing citizens and readers to experience various convenient services on-site, receiving widespread praise.

Public libraries should, on the premise of meeting user activity needs, innovate around user experience, activity formats, and participation channels to hold creative and diversified marketing activities. Libraries should actively participate in government-organized cultural and tourism exhibitions such as book fairs, cultural expos, and cultural tourism markets, leveraging these events’ popularity to market diverse library services.

### 1.6 Marketing Through Social Force Engagement

In recent years, Hangzhou Library has actively introduced social forces to jointly build library services, achieving co-construction and sharing in cultural activities, venue construction, and promotional efforts. For example, in themed branch construction, Hangzhou Library collaborated with Li Bai Restaurant to establish the Li Bai Poetry Culture Branch—its first 24-hour themed library created through a culture-tourism integration approach. It also partnered with the Lang Lang Hangzhou Art World to create a piano-themed library, leveraging celebrity studio resources to invite renowned musicians for themed music sharing sessions and master classes, such as Lang Lang’s piano master class, the Yussen Brothers music sharing session, and Lang’s father’s education sharing session. Hangzhou Library has now established 28 themed branches across the city’s urban districts, expanding library service coverage and influence.

These cases demonstrate that introducing social forces into public library marketing represents a future development trend. Public libraries can attract social forces through comprehensive, multi-dimensional cooperation in media platform operations, marketing campaigns, and venue equipment partnerships to enhance marketing scale and impact. Libraries should also strengthen cooperative marketing with district, county, street, and community libraries to expand offline marketing coverage and create a healthy ecosystem for public library marketing.

### 1.7 Marketing Through Cultural and Creative Products

As a government fully-funded institution, Hangzhou Library cannot profit from selling cultural and creative products. However, through designing and producing such products, libraries can export their services and brands to achieve marketing goals. For instance, during the “First China-CEEC Library Alliance Directors’ Forum,” Hangzhou Library designed and customized eco-friendly bags and antique thread-bound notebooks that were well-received by international colleagues and friends.

Public libraries should be encouraged to design cultural and creative products related to services or publicity that reflect library service brands, cultural resources, and social image. For libraries under differential government funding, internet platforms, trade fairs, and physical stores can be used to sell cultural products, thereby driving marketing publicity and increasing exposure of library services.

### 1.8 Marketing Innovation in the Big Data Era

Since 2019, Hangzhou Library has actively cooperated with the Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism to integrate real-time business data such as library visits and borrowing volumes from municipal and district-level libraries into Hangzhou’s “City Brain” culture and tourism system, enabling the display and application of regional library basic business data in the

“City Brain.” This represents Hangzhou Library’s exploration and practice in big data.

With the arrival of the internet big data era, precision marketing models based on reader behavior big data analysis will become one of the marketing models for public libraries to explore during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period. By accessing urban big data smart management platforms, public libraries can comprehensively grasp reader behavior preferences and characteristics, then use big data analysis to identify readers’ personalized needs for multi-angle, multi-level, and multi-category precision marketing.

## 2. Information Consultation-Centered Marketing

### 2.1 Marketing to Party and Government Organizations

During annual Hangzhou Municipal “Two Sessions” (People’s Congress and Political Consultative Conference), Hangzhou Library actively provides information consultation and library services at venues and hotels for delegates and committee members. Since 2019, Hangzhou Library has compiled three themed printed publications for the “Two Sessions”: *Building an Eco-Environmental Protection Iron Army and Clean Eco-Environmental Protection, Enhancing Urban Cultural Soft Power and Increasing Cultural Confidence*, and *“Digital Government” Construction Promoting Intelligent Social Governance*, providing them to delegates and committee members while offering 37 electronic versions for download. The library also provides consultation, document delivery, and e-journal download services, establishes a “credit borrowing” special zone for Two Sessions participants, and equips touch-screen electronic reading devices to assist delegates in reading e-books and newspapers via mobile terminals. Between 2019 and 2020, Hangzhou Library provided 197 pieces of information to the municipal government’s official Weibo and WeChat accounts, with 123 being adopted, marketing library services through official government media channels.

Public libraries should proactively serve local party and government organizations, providing precise literature and information services to relevant government departments to demonstrate their functions and roles. Libraries should strengthen cooperation with party and government units, actively participate in and improve government public opinion information service systems, leverage their own advantages to support government decision-making, and provide information references for major government activities. Simultaneously, libraries should market their services to Two Sessions delegates to support and promote future library development [10].

### 2.2 Strengthening Marketing of Information Consultation and Sci-Tech Novelty Search Platforms

Hangzhou Library provides government information inquiry, reference consultation, and subject consultation services on its official website and has introduced

intelligent robot consultation to answer common reader questions. Between 2019 and 2020, Hangzhou Library conducted 230 high-quality services for user projects, research topics, and thematic information provision, including eight types of decision-making information submitted to the Municipal Party Committee General Office Information Department and the Municipal Decision-Making Consultation Committee. Through the National Reference Consultation Alliance and joint reference consultation platforms, the library completed over 8,000 document delivery services.

In the context of building smart cities and smart libraries, public libraries should actively apply 5G technology to optimize information consultation and sci-tech novelty search services, creating and promoting platforms suitable for mobile internet dissemination. Through extensive publicity and dissemination via library websites, traditional media, and new media, libraries can provide convenient information services for more professional users, enterprise users, and students.

### 3. Industry Exchange-Centered Marketing

#### 3.1 Organizing Internal and Regional Library Industry Exchanges and Training

In recent years, Hangzhou Library has organized national and international industry exchanges such as the “First China-CEEC Library Alliance Forum,” the “Knowledge Innovation Drives Culture-Tourism Development Forum,” and the “2020 Library Marketing Strategy Online Academic Seminar” to expand its social influence. The library has also actively engaged with district and county libraries, providing training for grassroots cultural publicity officers in new media applications, event promotion, photography, and videography, thereby improving their professional service levels.

Marketing management personnel in public libraries should fully communicate and understand requirements, work improvement suggestions, and user needs across departments to create an active and effective communication atmosphere. Public libraries should conduct internal and industry exchanges and training around culture-tourism integration, specialized business, and innovation excellence, particularly strengthening friendly exchanges between international public libraries to establish long-term friendly library mechanisms and expand international visibility and influence.

#### 3.2 Encouraging Libraries to Compile Internal Publications

Hangzhou Library has established an “Editorial and Publishing Department” responsible for document production and publishing, editing internal publications such as *Wenlan*, *Yueling*, and *After School*. The electronic publication *Yueling* is updated monthly and well-loved by readers. *Wenlan* was awarded “Top Ten Internal Publications for Reading Promotion in Chinese Libraries” by the Chinese Library Society in 2014. Internal publications typically cover reader

activities, book recommendations, multicultural content, publishing trends, and special collections, serving as inter-library communication platforms.

Public libraries should further combine their characteristics and resource advantages to compile diverse internal publications and periodically hold excellent internal publication selection or exchange activities.

### **3.3 Utilizing Social Media to Establish or Join Various Professional Social Groups**

Hangzhou Library has always attached great importance to media publicity, establishing publicity and promotion groups within the library to mobilize all staff to actively publicize and market the library. The library has also created national library new media exchange groups on QQ and WeChat, with nearly 500 members discussing and exchanging practical experience in library new media.

Based on Hangzhou Library's practice, public libraries should actively organize publicity teams, establish internal social media promotion groups, and mobilize all staff to actively publicize and market various library business information and reports. Simultaneously, libraries can establish various professional social groups within the industry through social media platforms such as QQ, DingTalk, and WeChat, inviting librarians from all levels of public libraries to join, publish and repost professional information and activities, and facilitate business learning, publicity, and exchange among libraries.

### **3.4 Participating in Various Domestic and International Cultural Industry Awards**

Hangzhou Library has actively participated in domestic and international cultural industry award competitions in recent years, receiving multiple honors. In 2014, its "Discovering Libraries Around Us" case ranked in the top ten for the IFLA Marketing Award. In 2019, its "Reading + Credit" case promoting credit system construction in Hangzhou won the "Xinhua Credit Cup National Excellent Credit Case." In 2020, its environmental protection branch case won the IFLA "Green Library" runner-up award, and its innovative service concept linking borrowing services with personal credit was selected as a China Business Environment Best Practice Case.

By participating in various award competitions organized by domestic and international cultural industry organizations—such as the Chinese Reading Leader Award, Marketing Award, and Green Library Award—public libraries can improve resource utilization and service levels, enhance their social status and recognition [11], and share and showcase excellent domestic public library practice cases and academic achievements for marketing and publicity purposes both within and outside the industry.

## 4. Considerations for Public Library Marketing Organization and Management

### 4.1 Establishing a Dedicated Department to Coordinate Library Marketing

Following the 2020 institutional reform of Hangzhou's public institutions, Hangzhou Library merged with Hangzhou Children's Library to form the new Hangzhou Library, with corresponding adjustments to departmental responsibilities. Hangzhou Library's marketing work is currently undertaken by three departments: (1) the Information Production and Dissemination Center, coordinating new media operations, online activities, and digital resource promotion; (2) the Party and Government Office, coordinating traditional news media and information reporting to higher authorities; and (3) the newly established Information Consultation Department, coordinating marketing to party and government organizations and reference consultation platforms.

Based on Hangzhou Library's experience, public libraries should further optimize organizational guarantee mechanisms during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period by establishing dedicated marketing departments within libraries. Such departments would facilitate internal guidance and external publicity, teach marketing knowledge to librarians, help them master marketing strategies and methods, and enable focused dedication to various library activities to better accomplish marketing tasks. Public libraries should be user-oriented, reconstruct business processes, equip specialized marketing personnel, form marketing teams, incorporate marketing into library strategic planning, refine and decompose objectives, establish quantifiable marketing indicators and plans, and create marketing evaluation standards and systems to adjust marketing strategies based on evaluation results [12].

### 4.2 Shaping Library Distinctive Brand Services

Hangzhou Library has always emphasized distinctive brand services, particularly establishing well-known activity brands such as "Wenlan Lecture Hall," "There's Always a Voice That Moves You," "The Art of Life, Life of Art," "China Reading," "Warm Reading," "Little Ke Mom's Companion Hour," "Reading Pie," and "Children's Red Study Room."

Public libraries should implement distinctive brand development strategies to shape, manage, and market brands, thereby enhancing core competitiveness. Libraries should deepen service brand building, stimulate innovation and creativity in public library services, and continuously improve brand quality and taste through the concept of "brand renewal." Building upon previous "evaluation-driven construction" brand promotion methods, libraries should further improve scientific brand building evaluation systems and create development environments that meet new-era brand building requirements, establishing long-term mechanisms for service brand building and incorporating brand strategy into core library service management.

### 4.3 Increasing Marketing Funding Investment

Hangzhou Library currently has no dedicated marketing budget, with all marketing expenses drawn from office and activity funds. However, considering long-term development and promotional effectiveness, dedicated marketing funding is necessary, particularly for new media platform operations and promotion.

Public libraries should establish special marketing funds with separate service marketing budgets, increasing the proportion of marketing expenditure to form a long-term service marketing funding guarantee mechanism. Libraries should also reasonably allocate marketing funds, conduct advance marketing research and planning, ensure marketing effectiveness, and prevent waste of public financial resources.

### 4.4 Strengthening Marketing Talent Recruitment and Development

Hangzhou Library currently has no dedicated marketing positions or professionals, with staff shortages requiring most marketing work to be part-time. Marketing capabilities have been developed through practice and self-learning, which is challenging. While irregular marketing training has promoted marketing work to some extent, both quantity and quality remain limited.

Therefore, improving the marketing talent guarantee mechanism is urgent. Libraries should strengthen on-the-job training and education, appropriately adding courses in advertising, marketing, and new media marketing theory and practice. Academic conferences on public libraries should also include service marketing themes and training to provide librarians with learning opportunities. During the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, marketing professionals should be included in library recruitment plans, with appropriate hiring of personnel with marketing backgrounds to improve talent structure. Libraries can also actively recruit volunteers with marketing expertise, formulate volunteer team management regulations, and build a library marketing talent team with high comprehensive quality, strong marketing capabilities, and innovation ability to provide deep-level and diversified digital cultural services according to different user needs [13].

### 4.5 Establishing Cross-Institutional Service Marketing Cooperation and Coordination Organizations

Hangzhou Library actively plays its role as a central library, guiding, coordinating, and linking public libraries across Hangzhou’s districts, counties, and cities for common development. It has also joined the Yangtze River Delta region public library service and children’s reading service alliance, as well as the Hangzhou Metropolitan Circle public library service alliance, to comprehensively advance various tasks through alliance synergy. Within the “Hangzhou Folk Reading Alliance,” Hangzhou Library guides and helps folk reading organizations to standardize and improve activity quality, promoting nationwide reading development.

Given limited funding for each public library, large-scale marketing activities are unrealistic. Therefore, public libraries should establish cross-institutional service marketing cooperation and coordination organizations and alliances. Through cross-institutional, cross-system, and cross-industry cooperative innovation, libraries can achieve complementary advantages and collaborative development among partners, such as establishing coordination organizations within the public cultural system that include public libraries, bookstores, publishers, museums, intangible cultural heritage centers, and folk reading promotion organizations to uniformly plan marketing activities and make cooperative marketing a key organizational task.

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