

## Crossover Marketing Strategy Based on the Marketing Theory of 4Is — A Case Study of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle

Chuyao Liang, Wenbei Li\*

School of Foreign Languages, Xinhua College of Sun Yat-sen University Guangzhou, China,  
510520

Email: li.wenbei@hotmail.com.

\*corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, people who were born in the 90s and 00s have become the most competitive consumers because of their strong consume intension and attitude. With the Internet development and the innovation of consume ideas, the crossover marketing with creativity and personality is more and more widely applied by different companies. Based on the 4Is- Interesting, Interests, Interaction and Individuality theory, this article studies the crossover strategy of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle as case example, focusing on two main questions: 1. What are the characteristics of the crossover marketing strategies of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle; 2. What innovation can the 4Is theory bring to Nongfu Spring's crossover marketing. Result finds that the relevance with products and the interests of consumers' spirit and material are effective factors; although the crossover marketing strategy of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle meets the four-I principles, the relevance between advertising copy and brand is low.

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, people who were born in the 90s and 00s have become the most competitive consumers because of their strong consumption intension and attitude [1]. With the speedy development of the Internet and the integration of industries, the traditional marketing turns out to be less effective in stimulating consumers' interests, so crossover marketing with creativity and individuality has been more and more widely applied. One of the marketing buzzwords of recent years, crossover, probably originated in basketball, referring to the "Crossover Dribble." As time goes by, "crossover" is introduced and widely used in the field of marketing communication. Crossover marketing refers to "seeking the potential commonness and connection among different industries, products and consumers on the basis of market research, integrate some seemingly unrelated elements, and create a new consumption demand in the process of providing additional value to consumers, so as to win consumers' favor and achieve a larger market share and a larger customer base" [2]. Crossover marketing is actually highly consistent with the 4Is theory. In the early 1990s, Don E. Schultz proposed the 4Is theory. The theory mainly includes 4 principles: Interesting, Interests, Interaction], and Individuality]. 4Is theory emphasizes the arousing of consumers' interest in an interesting way, guiding them to participate in the interaction of products in a Consumer-friendly way, and inspiring the internal resonance of consumers with novel and individual creativity to achieve marketing purposes. This study takes 4Is theory as the theoretical basis to analyze the crossover marketing case of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle, exploring the characteristics and the relationship between 4Is theory and crossover marketing, and do some basic and systematic work for crossover marketing strategy research of Chinese enterprises[3].

### 2. 4Is theory

The 4Is theory is a transitional development of the three classic marketing theories 4Ps, 4Cs, and 4Rs in the field of marketing. In the Internet era, traditional product marketing concepts are difficult

to adapt to the new media era of information diversification. The 4Is theory put forward in the book *Integrated Marketing Communication*, co-authored by American authors Don E. Schultz and Heidi Schultz, caters to the increasingly "audience centered" communication mode of Internet media. 4Is theory completely starts from the perspective of consumers, and its core contents are four principles, namely, the principle of interest, interest, interaction and individuation. It focuses on attracting consumers in interesting ways, guiding them to participate in the interaction of products and brands in a way that is beneficial to consumers, and arousing the resonance of consumers with novel and individual creativity to achieve the marketing purpose[7].

The principle of interesting refers to adding interesting content to new media marketing to improve users' enthusiasm and initiative in participating in marketing activities. In the age of the Internet, consumers are constantly bombarded by various information. Since ancient times, one of the essential characteristics of human production activities is driven by interests, and for enterprises, the pursuit of interests is the most important goal of marketing. Therefore, crossover marketing activities from the perspective of interests can more accurately grasp the purpose of marketing activities, which may provide different forms of interests such as information, service, psychological satisfaction, material interests to consumers. With the advancement of digital media technology, businesses can allow consumers to easily participate in the interaction of online marketing at a very low cost. Consumers have a good experience in interactive participation, which will deepen their impression of the brand and maintain a long-term focus on the brand. For individuality, it refers to creating a variety of personalized choices, enabling consumers to choose according to their own needs and preferences, forming a psychological satisfaction, and then triggering their participation and interaction to realize and purchase. Therefore, if the brand wants to win more consumers' favour, it must locate and subdivide the consumers, that is, first find out its own core target group, fully tap the core needs of the target group, so that the brand can get more audience's favour, so as to further improve the efficiency of marketing communication [8].

### **3. Analysis of Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle Based on 4Is Theory**

For more than 20 years, the bottled water of Nongfu Spring has maintained the image of health, fun, purity and public welfare, from the well-known slogan "Nongfu Spring is a little sweet" to the "We are just the porters of nature". In recent years, in order to cater to the tastes of young consumers, Nongfu Spring constantly makes innovative attempts. Because of the sudden emergence of the Forbidden City culture and creative industry, the Forbidden City get rid of the reserved image and become the most commonly "discussed" cultural IP in the minds of young people. This has given Nongfu Spring opportunities to attract young consumers by cooperating with the Forbidden City.

#### **3.1 Interesting**

The crossover cooperation between Nongfu Spring and the Forbidden City is interesting. Young consumers are the connection point of this crossover marketing, and the benchmark of crossover marketing should be the complementary in consumer experience. The current marketing focus of enterprises is becoming more single, and it is difficult to meet the diversified needs of consumers. Since consumers pay more attention to experience, the crossover cooperation between Nongfu Spring and the Cultural Service Center of Beijing Palace Museum, combining the interest and creativity, may provide consumers with more diverse experiences.

##### **3.1.1 Interesting bottle design**

The most creative point of the Forbidden City bottle is that for the first time, the characters of the Imperial Palace are put on the bottle, Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, Qianlong and their concubines as the design subject, combined with their ' personal characters, with entertainment and social copywriting. Here are nine different copywriting series, they are integrated the antique image of the Forbidden City and fashion trend, other entertainment and social interaction Copywriting, by means of humor, convey a warm Forbidden City to consumers, deconstruct the culture of the Forbidden

City with a common secular mentality, and obtain emotional connection in the modern interpretation of ancient paintings.

**Pic 3.1** Forbidden City Bottle's Design (1FusionDigital)[9]



### 3.1.2 Interesting user experience

Consumers can scan the bottle to see their “previous life” from the painting with the support of Face ++ face recognition matching technology. This fresh idea has been favored by many young people and has begun to share on Sina Weibo and WeChat, playing a good role in communication, which brings consumers a sense of kindness towards the Forbidden City. Such crossover cooperation makes traditional culture better fit in life, helps consumers get more knowledge and understanding of traditional culture.

### 3.2 Interests

Interests are the best catalyst for stimulating potential users and often help build a stable consumer base. The Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle continued its previous way of touching consumers with emotions. Each ancient painting figure in the bottle is equipped with an inner monologue. The monologues of these emperors and concubines are vivid and substantial.

Before the launching of product, Nongfu Spring pushed articles with exquisite Chinese style product propaganda maps on its official microblog and WeChat official accounts to enhance the cultural heritage of the Forbidden City Bottle. This allows consumers to obtain product information in a timely manner, at the same time makes them feel that the merchants are sincere to them. Regarding service, by observing the official Weibo of Nongfu Spring, it was found that official microblog responded to customers' messages in a positive and timely manner during the marketing activities of Nongfu Spring Forbidden City, which made customers feel that they were valued. The exquisite design of the Forbidden City bottle makes the bottle body have collection value. Consumers can also scan the bottle body QR code to upload their photos to see which historical personage is similar to the Qing Dynasty. The interesting and interactive design has brought a good publicity effect for the Forbidden City bottle. What's more, during the marketing campaign, the selling price of the Forbidden City Bottle on the e-commerce platform was the same as that of the ordinary version, which satisfies its consumers with good quality but low price.

### 3.3 Interaction

Interactivity is an important feature of the media in the Internet age which is different from the traditional media. On the network platform, audience can interact with the media; the ways of interaction are diversified, they may narrow the gap between the media and the audience or the enterprise. In these years, Nongfu Spring carried out various marketing methods on the Internet, by using Face ++ face recognition and matching technology. Via scanning the QR code of the bottle body, consumers can participate in interaction to meet their “previous life”. This interactive method is interesting, and the rich experience enhances consumers' enthusiasm for participation. According to the insights on sales and analysis of user feedback, Nongfu Spring has captured the user's interest in collecting bottles. According to the official Weibo data, as of January 2020 the topic #Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle # has nearly 21 million views, and more than 15,000 people have participated in the discussion. The Weibo event undoubtedly deepened the audience's impression of the product.

### 3.4 Individuality

With the change of consumer attitude from functional consumption to spiritual consumption, consumers are not only concerned about the product itself, but more about the taste and personality behind the product and hoping that the product can be more in line with their own personality. With the great popularity of palace drama, Nongfu Spring was keenly aware that "the palace" became the focus of public opinion. The cooperation between Nongfu Spring and the Forbidden City has made the "Red Bottled Water" into the source of the topic. In terms of content production, Nongfu Spring selected nine paintings of the characters in the collection, connecting the court life with the real work and love life scenes naturally through the interesting words, so as to arouse the emotional resonance of the target consumers.

## Conclusion

Under the 4Is theory, Nongfu Spring's crossover cooperation with the Cultural Service Center of Beijing Palace Museum provides a more diverse experience for consumers with interesting bottle designs, marketing topics, and advertising experiences. Nongfu Spring's crossover marketing meets the target audience's interests including substance, information, function, service, psychological satisfaction, etc. The bottle body design that is full of creativity and combined with the current hotspots realizes the personalized expression of young people, meets their timely social desire, and allows the brand to truly enter the social circle of young people. Thus, the interesting bottle design and the interactive participation of the online social platform make the brand closer to the distance with consumers and get effective publicity at the same time. The Nongfu Spring's Forbidden City Bottle has successfully realized the personalized expression of young people through creativity, which met their timely social desire in the first time and made the brand truly enter the social circle of young people.

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