
Synergizing Intangible Cultural Heritage for Creative Advertisement

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Content conceptualization and promotion in the new normal conditions of the pandemic

It has long been the Korea Tourism Organization's strategy to produce sleek promotional videos featuring internationally famous Korean celebrities such as EXO, Song Joongki, Lee Jong-suk, and Yoona. However, in the pandemic era, there has been huge growth in digital traffic, and there arose the need to go beyond the limited reach of celebrity fandom-based marketing, with more creative viral¹⁾ content to reach a wider audience. Thus, the "Feel the Rhythm of Korea" campaign was born, an unprecedented attempt featuring the unique charm of fusion Korean traditional music (gugak) and dance in a series of "premium B grade (B+)" videos, aimed at capturing the attention of people around the world, so that they, while unable to visit Korea in the circumstances of the pandemic, would choose Korea as the first place to visit when the situation improves. (#Cheer up the world #Meet you later)

1) Marketing strategy that uses word-of-mouth to spread promotional information among consumers like a virus.

In general, videos from the public sector tend to be more conservatively produced due to strategic context. Going with a B-grade aesthetic would be more likely to draw criticism from the public that it is a waste of taxpayers' money. Thus, it has been a challenge for public institutions to take the risk and make videos that break away from the norm. However, the Korea Tourism Organization decided on a premium B grade strategy, to align with the needs and preferences of its target audience, millennials and gen Z viewers around the world, while maintaining a level of quality in production. The two axioms of advertising, "Tread the line without crossing it" and "most advanced, yet acceptable", were the guiding principles in the production of these groundbreaking promotional videos.

Creative strategy

Everything about Korea can be hallyu and media content.

Since the beginning of the Korean wave or hallyu in the early 90s to recent years, the Korea Tourism Organization had focused mainly on Korean dramas and K-pop in tourism marketing. However, the new Korean wave of the 21st century has expanded into all aspects of Korean culture, including food, hanbok, hangul, performing arts and lifestyle. Moreover, with the advancement of digital technologies, consumers can themselves become media content. In this new environment, KTO needed to turn to brand journalism (Douglas Holt) marketing, in which content catering to the consumers' interests is continuously generated, distributed and managed, to keep loyal fans interested in Korea. Selling Korean tourism is equivalent to promoting the country's sociocultural aspects and charms, making it a kind of cultural branding strategy. Ultimately,

everything about Korea can become media. “Everything is Media. Every Moment is Media and Every Person is Media.” In other words, the country’s pandemic management, mask designs, the making of its promotional videos, package delivery people, and even puppies can be media. This was the strategy for this special project to turn the Korea Tourism Organization’s YouTube channel “Imagine Your Korea” into the prime choice for Korean tourism videos.

Pulling in global internet users with viral videos

As a short term strategy in the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic era, the KTO brand marketing team developed the slogan “Our hearts are always open” and made special videos related to the pandemic. Following that, they made 6 unique and creative videos designed to go viral, featuring band LEENALCHI and Ambiguous Dance Company, in a pull strategy to draw global internet traffic to the KTO YouTube channel (Imagine your Korea). These videos, filmed in the 5 tourism hub cities designated by the government and Seoul, were uploaded to YouTube in 2020 to stunning response, with internet users coining new phrases such as ‘one beam a day’ and ‘the video you can’t just watch once’ to describe the phenomenon. There have been analysis videos, response videos and memes based on them. With a larger audience of internet users drawn to the KTO channel through these viral videos, KTO launched a follow up hyper-personalized marketing campaign targeted at Southeast Asia, featuring the K-pop group ITZY. Finally, in early November 2020, it launched a global online cover dance campaign in continuation of the theme “Feel the Rhythm of Korea”, using the music from the viral video (Beom naeryeonda (Tiger is Coming)), and culminating in a global event streamed live from a virtual studio connecting the 5 hub cities, to judge the cover dances submitted by internet users around the world.

Feel the Rhythm of Korea Season 2

After the success of Feel the Rhythm of Korea Season 1, KTO released Season 2 of the viral marketing campaign in 2021, comprising 8 videos filmed in 10 cities—Gyeongju/Andong, Daegu, Suncheon, Seosan, Busan/Tongyeong, Yangyang/Gangneung, and Seoul. These videos showcase the traditional and modern charms of these regions set against the musical backdrop of K-hiphop fused with Korean folk song (minyo) choruses. The videos, 1 minute 30 seconds long each, were uploaded on “ImagineYourKorea”, the official YouTube channel of the Korea Tourism Organization on Sep 3, 2021.

Concept for Feel the Rhythm of Korea Season 2

Key Concept	- Regional promotional videos showcasing the unique culture and lifestyles in the respective regions (hot places, young artists etc.) with a trendy and youthful energy expressed through hip hop music - Korean folk songs (minyo) used as a motif or chorus
Benchmark cities	- Portland, Berlin, Austin, Basel
Content	- Hip culture and neighborhoods in each city (art, startups, streets, local culture etc.) ex) Culture and lifestyle of local creators such as surfing in Gangneung, Nambu Market in Jeonju
Method of expression	- 8 to 10 neighborhoods (streets/alleys) in each city, video with rap (hip hop) music

We created storyboards for promotional videos based on differentiated tourism attractions (culture, trend, everyday life) in the various regions of Korea designed to go viral. We chose a method of expression popular in online media, targeted at a global audience to raise awareness and preference for tourism to the various regions of Korea.

Direction and Focus

1) L. [Local Branding] Ultimate goal of K-tourism is local branding, the survival strategy for small cities

Korea has the lowest birthrate in the OECD, with demographic projections predicting that the last citizen of Seoul will be born in 2700. Population decline leads to the dissolution of smaller cities and local economies. Portland in the United States became famous, not for any special landmarks or tourism destinations, but for its community of young creatives and the publication of the lifestyle and trends magazine, Kinfolk. Berlin established itself as a city of art through an effective policy drive to support young artists.

Smaller cities now have to establish themselves as adjectives, in other words, to have a strong image associated with them in the public consciousness, to survive. This is also true for the various small cities in Korea. For small cities to leave strong impressions in people's minds, they need to adopt active local branding measures. Just as Korea's response to the pandemic boosted the national brand, local branding showcases the various regions of Korea to a global audience, ultimately contributing to the national brand as well. This is the beginning of the era of local branding.

2) C & C. [Collaboration & Customer experience] Enhancing customer experience (CX) through collaboration

Consumers these days appreciate brands that combine technology, services and products to cover all of their interests, lifestyles and needs. To respond effectively to this new consumer expectation, many companies choose to collaborate with other companies to raise their own value and usefulness. To 'be exponential', businesses can choose between two different paths- to promote

their products and services on new channels (3rd party company), or to enhance them by offering consumers mutually complementary experiences through collaborations. The market is headed towards convergence and integration centered around consumer needs. Thus, several companies are implementing business partnerships that generate synergy through open innovation, with co-creation and collaborations with competitors.

Global online companies such as Amazon, Alibaba and Apple are creating stores and spaces in the real world to enhance communication with consumers. The central keyword is seamlessness, integrating all channels organically, with no distinction between online, offline and mobile interfaces, to provide the best customer experience (CX). Ultimately, the focus is always the customer. Thus, the Korea Tourism Organization's strategy is to enhance customer experience in all areas with the new Korean tourism mascots, Kingdom Friends, unveiled in 2020, as well as the 'Feel the Rhythm of Korea' Season 1 and Season 2 campaigns. It collaborated with Korea's largest local SPA brand Top Ten to produce and sell t-shirts and other merchandise bearing the mascots, and organized a global artwork competition based on images of the tourism hub cities from Season 1, to co-create merchandise with consumers that will be sold and promoted in physical stores, providing a whole new customer experience. Additionally, the mascots will also be used in joint marketing campaigns with Merli, the mascot of the Singapore Tourism Board, a competing nation in the global tourism market.

Going further, there will be collaborations with companies in various industry sectors such as EBS (Pengsoo etc.), Amore Pacific (Innisfree etc.), Coupang and game companies to present new products and services to customers worldwide, as well as produce and promote fresh viral content, in the great digital transformation of the "Living With Coronavirus" era.