

## Chapter 6

# Integration of Cultural Retailing With New Technologies and Media: A Case Study of the Suzhou Antique Bookstore

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### ABSTRACT

*Due to rising operational expenses, competition from online booksellers, and the popularity of digital reading, many traditional bookstores in China have closed, while others are desperately upgrading and transforming with contemporary technologies and media. This study uses the Suzhou Antique Bookstore as a traditional bookstore case to illustrate the integration of retailing with new technologies and media in culture-related industries. The authors propose a new framework to combine marketing tactics using holographic projection technology, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), the internet of things, cloud computing, official website designs, and mobile applications. They use the 7P marketing mix strategy and AIDA marketing communication models to assess the case and framework. The framework may significantly boost a bookstore's reputation and brand awareness, maximize long-term commercial value, and enhance customer service offline. Scant studies investigated the application of contemporary technologies in culture-related retailing, especially in Asia.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8574-3.ch006

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1990s, with networking, communication, and information technology breakthroughs, the Internet has exploded in global growth and rapid popularity, leading to widespread e-commerce adoption (Chan & Chiu, 2022; Chiu et al., 2011; Li, Xie, Chiu, & Ho, 2023; Lo et al., 2017). With the gradual understanding and increasing acceptance of online shopping, people's reading habits and desire to purchase physical books have changed, impacting the status of traditional bookstores in book sales (Chan et al., 2022; Ding et al., 2021; Wong & Chiu, 2023; Yu, et al., 2022). Coupled with the unparalleled cost and price advantages of online shopping, the market share of physical bookstores has been heavily eroded and significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Dai & Chiu, 2023; Huang et al., 2021, 2022, 2023; Sung & Chiu, 2022; Tse et al., 2022). Wang (2013) claims that in 2010, e-readers and mobile devices increased by 200 percent, and 61.8 percent of those who read e-books indicated they would no longer buy paper-material books. According to the Beijing Open Book Research Institute, China's traditional booksellers' retail market growth rate declined. The retail book market's annual growth rate decreased from over 4 percent in 2008 to -1.39 percent in 2013 (Xu, 2015). The growth of digital publishing and online bookstores has significantly influenced physical bookstores. As a result, the struggle to keep traditional bookstores alive has acquired significance in contemporary society.

Rapid economic development has facilitated the transformation of China from a production-oriented to a consumption-oriented society (Gong et al., 2017; Ni et al., 2022). People's consumption demands have changed from pursuing material satisfaction to spiritual fulfillment, thus forming a consumer culture characterized by diversity, personalization, and symbolization, promoting the vigorous development of experience design in various lifestyles (Guan, 2022). The prevalence of new consumption culture and the shift in consumer demand provide significant opportunities to save the survival of traditional bookstores. Thus, bookstores can combine physical bookstores with new technology and new media to win the market and consumers again with experiential marketing, like the recent innovation of many cultural organizations (Deng et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2023; Lam et al., 2019; 2023; Tse et al., 2022).

Thus, this study explores the digital innovations of physical bookstores integrated with new technologies and media. More specifically, this study takes the Suzhou Antique Bookstore as a case study of a traditional bookstore and proposes new channels for combining marketing strategies such as holographic projection technology (Xu et al., 2023), virtual reality (VR) (Lo et al., 2019), augmented reality (AR) (Suen et al., 2020), the Internet of Things (Chang et al., 2018), cloud computing (Hui et al., 2013), official website designs, and mobile applications (Fung et al., 2016; Wai et al., 2018; Yip et al., 2021). We propose to optimize business value over the long term while effectively enhancing bookstores' reputation and brand recognition (Chan et al., 2022; Chiu et al., 2009). Additionally, bookstores may better serve customers offline by precisely evaluating their preferences based on their purchasing history and addressing their requirements by sharing ideas on social networking websites (Zhang, 2017).

## **BACKGROUND**

This section introduces our case based on the information on its official Weixin page (Suzhou Antique Bookstore, 2015), an interview (Jiang et al., 2019), and a field visit. Established in 1958 by the merger of eighteen bookstores, including the renowned "Literature Hill Square" and "Lai Qing Ge" in the late Qing Dynasty, the Suzhou Antique Bookstore is a specialized bookseller under Suzhou Xinhua Book-

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