

Research on the Efficiency Enhancement Strategy of Non-State-Owned Museums in Shenzhen

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Abstract: Based on the current situation and development goals of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen, this article analyzes their main challenges and proposes multiple strategies to improve their efficiency. Based on the experience of improving the efficiency of museums locally and internationally, a model for improving the efficiency of non-state-owned museums has been constructed, covering multiple factors such as public participation, museum self-innovation, and government policy support. Through a multidimensional analytical framework, this article provides a theoretical basis for improving the efficiency of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen and practical guidance for the reform and development of other non-state-owned cultural institutions in China.

Keywords: Shenzhen non-state-owned museum; Efficiency improvement; Independent improvement; Public participation; Policy support

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1. Introduction

With the increasing demand for globalization and cultural consumption, museums, as key places for cultural inheritance and innovation, have become increasingly prominent in social development. The cultural system reform in China in recent years has brought tremendous opportunities for the museum industry. In particular, the “14th Five Year Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development” and the “14th Five Year Plan for Cultural, Sports and Tourism Development in Shenzhen” clearly state the need to strengthen the development of non-state-owned museums and promote their social and economic benefits. As one of the cities with the largest number of non-state-owned museums in China, Shenzhen is important in promoting cultural innovation and socialist core values. According to the “Report on the Development of Museum Industry in Guangdong Province in 2023,” as of the end of 2023, there are 61 museums in Shenzhen, of which 42 are non-state-owned, accounting for nearly 70%, reflecting the uniqueness and importance of non-state-owned museums in the cultural field. However, non-state-owned museums still face many challenges in funding, management mechanisms, and market-oriented

operations, which is a necessary background and motivation for research. To provide a theoretical basis and practical reference for the efficiency improvement of Shenzhen Museum from the aspects of management mechanism innovation and social participation enhancement, and to provide systematic strategic suggestions for managers and policy makers of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen, helps them play a more active role in the development of Shenzhen's cultural industry.

2. Overview of related research

2.1. Research on enhancing museum efficiency locally and internationally

The improvement of museum efficiency involves interdisciplinary research, covering areas such as public cultural services, management, economics, and more. Domestic and foreign scholars generally focus on two core issues in the research of improving museum efficiency: the reform of the museum system and mechanism and the role of public cultural participation.

Foreign research mainly focuses on the concept of "New Museology," advocating that museums should not only be institutions for cultural preservation, but also active platforms for promoting cultural dissemination and social development. For example, Peter Vergo, a representative of the "New Museology" in the United Kingdom (UK), pointed out in 2021 that museums should shift towards service-oriented institutions and achieve their cultural and educational functions by enhancing the cultural experience and knowledge acquisition of visitors. Developed cultural countries such as the United States and France have also explored the market-oriented operation path of non-state-owned museums, emphasizing the development of creative cultural products, interactive experiential exhibitions, and the use of digital technology to enhance the operational efficiency of museums.

Domestic scholars have gradually realized the importance of improving the efficiency of museums. In recent years, China's cultural industry policies have been frequent, and museums in various regions, especially non-state-owned museums, have gradually moved towards market-oriented operations. However, academic research has mostly focused on the institutional reform of state-owned museums, with less attention paid to the actual operational issues of non-state-owned museums. Most existing research is limited to the public cultural service function of museums and there is insufficient attention paid to the economic benefits and marketization path of non-state-owned museums, which urgently requires in-depth analysis and discussion.

2.2. Development difficulties of non-state-owned museums in China

Compared to state-owned museums, non-state-owned museums face more difficulties in their operation process. According to the research of scholars such as Li and Song, non-state-owned museums generally face problems such as funding shortages, unclear legal status, and low audience participation^[1]. Meanwhile, due to the lack of sufficient government support for non-state-owned museums, their management and market operation capabilities urgently need to be improved. Researchers generally believe that non-state-owned museums need to actively participate in urban cultural construction, enrich exhibition forms, and strengthen interaction with communities to enhance their cultural value and social influence.

3. The development status and challenges of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

3.1. Development history of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

As a window and innovative city for China's reform and opening up, Shenzhen's non-state-owned museums are

in a leading position nationwide. Since the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in the 1980s, cultural construction has gradually become an important component of urban development. The non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen initially focused on individual collections and local cultural exhibitions, and went through an initial development from individualization and looseness, gradually transitioning to a more institutionalized and market-oriented model.

In recent years, the Shenzhen Municipal Government has promoted the vigorous development of non-state-owned museums through policy support. The 14th Five Year Plan for the Development of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in Shenzhen and the Five Year Plan for the Development of Museum Industry in Shenzhen (2018–2023) clearly states that by 2035, the number of museums in the city will reach about 150. These policies not only promote the increase in the number of non-state-owned museums but also provide them with diversified development opportunities. However, despite progress in policy and quantity, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen still face a series of unique challenges in their actual operation.

3.2. Main problems faced by non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

While non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen are rapidly developing, they face significant challenges due to limitations in funding, management, audience demand, and the specific economic environment of the city. The following are the five major issues faced by non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen, each closely related to the local characteristics of Shenzhen.

3.2.1. The source of funds is overly dependent on the market, and there is insufficient financial support

Although the Shenzhen Municipal Government has vigorously promoted the development of museums in policies, the financial support for non-state-owned museums is still relatively limited. As a highly market-oriented city, Shenzhen's local government's financial resources are mostly used to support high-tech industries and infrastructure construction, while the financial investment in the cultural field, especially non-state-owned museums, is relatively small ^[2]. Non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen rely on ticket revenue, corporate sponsorship, and social donations to maintain operations, which puts them under pressure of funding shortages in their long-term development.

The economy of Shenzhen is highly dependent on market-driven development. Although this market-oriented characteristic has promoted innovation and diversified development of the cultural industry to some extent, it lacks stable financial support and a clear long-term funding guarantee for non-state-owned museums. This makes it difficult for many museums to operate in high-cost cities for the long term, especially when faced with high land and property rents, often resulting in economic difficulties. In contrast, non-state-owned museums in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai can receive more direct financial support from local governments, and Shenzhen's market-driven model poses unique funding challenges for local museums.

3.2.2. The lack of coordination between management and planning brought about by rapid urban development

The rapid urban development in Shenzhen has resulted in inadequate coordination between museum construction and overall urban planning and management mechanisms. Many non-state-owned museums lack close integration with urban development in the early stages of planning, resulting in their location, positioning, and exhibition content not fully matching Shenzhen's cultural and commercial ecology. Non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

often encounter the practical problem of difficult long-term preservation of museum land during the rapid expansion of the city. The rapid development of cities has led to a surge in demand for commercial real estate, resulting in museums competing with other high-return industries in spatial resource allocation. Some non-state-owned museums are gradually relocating from the city center to remote areas due to the inability to bear the continuously rising rent, resulting in a decrease in their attractiveness and public influence. The inconsistency between museums and urban planning stems from Shenzhen's excessive focus on maximizing commercial value while neglecting the long-term planning and positioning of cultural facilities.

3.2.3. The urban composition dominated by the migrant population leads to low audience participation

As an immigrant city, the majority of Shenzhen's population consists of new residents. Due to high population mobility, residents have a weak sense of belonging and identification with local culture, resulting in overall low audience participation in non-state-owned museums. Many new Shenzhen residents are more focused on business, technology, and career development, and have a lower interest in historical and cultural museums. The limitations of this cultural demand directly affect the number of visitors to non-state-owned museums and the effectiveness of cultural dissemination. In addition, due to the high concentration of migrant population in Shenzhen among the middle-aged and young population, their cultural consumption behavior tends to be more inclined towards entertainment and technological innovation, while their attention to traditional history and art museums is not high. The low level of audience participation has led to unsustainable ticket revenue and cultural benefits for museums. This is closely related to the highly market-oriented urban characteristics of Shenzhen, where there is a mismatch between the cultural consumption market and the actual needs of the urban population.

3.2.4. Lack of deep integration with Shenzhen's technology industry and insufficient innovation

As the center of technological innovation in China, Shenzhen's high-tech industry is extremely developed. However, non-state-owned museums still lag behind in their integration with the technology industry. Although some museums have begun to introduce technologies such as augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) for exhibition and display, the overall level of technological application still does not match the positioning of Shenzhen as a technology city, and cannot fully utilize Shenzhen's technological advantages to enhance the audience experience and museum operation efficiency. Non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen should have leveraged the resources of high-tech enterprises within the city to deeply integrate modern technology with cultural content, such as optimizing exhibition design through data analysis and enhancing exhibition interactivity through artificial intelligence (AI) technology. However, currently, this cross-border cooperation is relatively limited, and many museums still use traditional exhibition models, failing to utilize technological means for comprehensive digital transformation and innovative exhibition design. This not only limits the attractiveness of museums but also fails to fully showcase the urban characteristics of Shenzhen's "technology + culture."

3.2.5. The contradiction between cultural diversity and the inheritance of local culture

The cultural diversity in Shenzhen stems from its diverse immigrant composition, which is both an advantage and a challenge. There is a certain tension between the influx of a large number of foreign cultures and local cultures in Shenzhen, such as Hakka culture and Guangfu culture^[2]. Non-state-owned museums often struggle to balance the display needs of local and foreign cultures in their exhibition content design. On the one hand, new Shenzhen residents lack interest in local culture, while on the other hand, residents hope to enhance their cultural

identity and inherit cultural heritage through museums. The contradiction between cultural diversity and local cultural heritage poses a dilemma for museums in terms of curation and content selection. For example, some museums tend to display more modern and international content to cater to the new immigrant community but to some extent weaken the inheritance and protection of local historical and cultural heritage. Meanwhile, how to creatively showcase Shenzhen's unique cultural identity in a multicultural context remains an unresolved issue for many non-state-owned museums in exhibition planning.

Through the in-depth analysis of the five major issues above, it can be seen that the challenges faced by non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen are not only universal but also unique challenges under the characteristics of Shenzhen city. The emergence of these problems stems from Shenzhen's highly market-oriented, immigrant city characteristics, and rapidly developing urban planning. In the future, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen need to actively address these challenges and achieve sustainable development by better integrating urban characteristics, innovating management mechanisms, and exhibition content.

4. Strategies for enhancing the efficiency of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

Based on the analysis of the current development status of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen and their unique urban background and policy environment, this article proposes several efficiency improvement strategies with local characteristics of Shenzhen. These strategies combine the economic, cultural, and social development characteristics of Shenzhen, aiming to achieve innovative development and continuous improvement of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen through diverse means.

4.1. Strategies for enhancing public participation

As a window of China's reform and opening up, Shenzhen has a highly internationalized and diversified population structure and a high level of cultural consumption. Therefore, when enhancing public participation, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen should fully consider this unique social background and adopt strategies with local characteristics to meet the cultural needs of different cultural backgrounds and social classes.

4.1.1. Integrate cultural resources of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and deepen cross-regional cooperation

Shenzhen is located in the core area of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, adjacent to Hong Kong and Macau, and has natural advantages in cultural exchange and integration. Non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen can attract cultural enthusiasts and tourists from Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau through cross-regional cooperation. For example, Shenzhen Museum can collaborate with museums in Hong Kong and Macau to plan exhibitions, organize cross-regional cultural exchange activities, and attract different cultural groups within the region to participate. Through such cooperation, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen can leverage the resources and international background of the Greater Bay Area to enhance their cultural influence and public participation.

4.1.2. Launch customized exhibitions and activities targeting the new Shenzhen population

Shenzhen is one of the cities with the highest number of immigrants in China, and the "new Shenzhen people" constitute the main body of Shenzhen society^[4]. This group has diverse and personalized demands for museums. Therefore, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen can conduct research and analysis on the cultural preferences

of this group, and launch targeted customized exhibitions. For example, museums can design exhibitions and interactive experiences around themes such as urban changes, immigrant culture, and entrepreneurial history that new Shenzhen residents are concerned about, enhancing their sense of identity and belonging to the city's history. At the same time, a combination of online and offline cultural promotion activities can be carried out, using social media platforms to attract more young people to participate.

4.1.3. Fully utilize Shenzhen's high-tech advantages and develop smart museums

Shenzhen is the capital of technological innovation in China, with leading advantages in the field of information technology. Shenzhen non-state-owned museums can leverage this advantage to develop "smart museums" and create a new exhibition experience by introducing technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and 5G. For example, using AR/VR technology, museums can provide visitors with an immersive exhibition experience. Through big data analysis, it is possible to accurately understand the cultural consumption habits of the audience, thereby optimizing exhibition content and services. Additionally, museums can also collaborate with high-tech enterprises in Shenzhen to develop interactive cultural applications (apps) to enhance visitors' cultural experience.

4.2. Museum self-improvement strategies

As a national economic special zone, Shenzhen has a market-oriented business environment and abundant social resources. Non-state-owned museums should actively explore ways to improve themselves, especially in terms of management mechanisms and innovation capabilities, based on the market-oriented operation characteristics of Shenzhen. Shenzhen's non-state-owned museums should be at the forefront of the country.

4.2.1. Utilize Shenzhen's market-oriented advantages to promote the enterprise operation of museums

As a city with a highly developed market economy, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen can take advantage of this market environment and actively introduce enterprise management models. For example, museums can achieve professional and market-oriented operations in management by introducing social capital. During this process, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen can learn from the lean management model of high-tech enterprises in Shenzhen and enhance their market competitiveness by optimizing internal processes, improving service quality, and reducing operating costs. Simultaneously, museums can introduce performance management mechanisms to evaluate performance based on audience feedback and economic benefits of exhibitions, to continuously optimize exhibition content and operational strategies.

4.2.2. Combining Shenzhen's entrepreneurial culture to promote the development of cultural and creative products and entrepreneurial incubation

Shenzhen is the city of entrepreneurship in China, known for innovation and entrepreneurship, with a large number of makers and startups ^[5]. Non-state-owned museums can leverage this unique entrepreneurial culture to promote the development of cultural and creative products and the incubation of cultural entrepreneurship. For example, museums can establish "cultural and creative entrepreneurship incubators" to provide exhibition and marketing platforms for young cultural creators. By collaborating with maker spaces and innovation bases in Shenzhen, museums can regularly hold cultural and creative product design competitions or incubation camps, explore cultural and creative products and designers with market potential, and provide them with entrepreneurial

support and commercial promotion opportunities.

4.2.3. Build a brand image centered around the local culture of Shenzhen

Shenzhen has a relatively short urban history, and its urban culture has strong openness and innovation. Non-state-owned museums can fully utilize this characteristic to create a brand image centered on local culture in Shenzhen. For example, museums can design exhibitions and creative cultural products around themes such as modern technology culture, immigrant culture, and innovative culture in Shenzhen. By strengthening local cultural elements, museums can enhance their recognition and brand influence. By collaborating with local design companies and cultural creative teams in Shenzhen, we develop products with local characteristics, such as Shenzhen city landmark models, Shenzhen historical and cultural brochures, and many more, to attract the attention of local citizens and tourists.

4.3. Government policy optimization strategies

As a special economic zone in China, Shenzhen's government policies have strong flexibility and innovation. Therefore, the Shenzhen government can play a market guiding role in supporting the development of non-state-owned museums, as well as promote the efficiency improvement of non-state-owned museums through policy innovation.

4.3.1. Establish a special support fund for non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen

To further support the development of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen, the government can establish a special support fund. This fund can be used to support the operation, exhibition planning, technology application, and other aspects of museums, especially for those museums that have outstanding performance in innovative exhibitions and cultural dissemination. The government should increase funding to stimulate their innovative development. Moreover, the government can also attract more social capital to participate in the operation and management of museums through financial guidance, promoting the formation of a diversified museum operation model supported by the government and involving social capital.

4.3.2. Promote the “museum + technology” model and create a smart museum city

As the center of China's technological innovation, Shenzhen can encourage non-state-owned museums to actively explore the “museum + technology” model. Through policy guidance and financial support, the government can promote cooperation between non-state-owned museums and local high-tech enterprises and research institutions to develop exhibition forms and cultural experience projects centered on technology. For example, the government can establish relevant policies to encourage museums to introduce technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality, enhance exhibition interactivity and participation, and promote the construction of smart museum cities. Furthermore, the government can introduce incentive policies to encourage non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen to enhance cultural dissemination through innovative technological means.

4.3.3. Promote the integration and development of non-state-owned museums and urban cultural industries

The cultural industry in Shenzhen is developing rapidly, and the government can promote the integration and development of non-state-owned museums, cultural and creative industries, and tourism through policy guidance. By establishing a “culture + tourism” policy, the government can encourage non-state-owned museums to develop cultural tourism products and promote the integration of cultural resources with the tourism market. For

example, the government can support museums to develop tourism routes with Shenzhen's history and culture as the theme, combining museum resources with surrounding tourist attractions and commercial areas to create a comprehensive cultural tourism experience. Likewise, the government can also promote cooperation between non-state-owned museums, cultural and creative enterprises, and film and television companies in Shenzhen through policy support, develop cultural derivatives, and enhance the market influence of museums.

5. The impact mechanism of improving the efficiency of non-state-owned museums

Through an in-depth analysis of the current situation of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen, this study proposes a series of targeted efficiency improvement strategies. These strategies combine Shenzhen's regional characteristics, cultural resources, and policy advantages, aiming to promote the sustainable development of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen through diversified means. The efficiency improvement of non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen not only relies on market-oriented operational strategies but also requires extensive participation from the general public and strong support from government policies. These three factors jointly construct the impact mechanism for the efficiency improvement of non-state-owned museums in China.

5.1. Social public participation mechanism

The participation of the general public is the foundation for enhancing the effectiveness of non-state-owned museums. The cultural needs, aesthetic level, and willingness of the public to participate directly affect the exhibition effectiveness and social influence of museums. In Shenzhen, cultural consumption has gradually become a new form of consumption, especially with the promotion of cultural and creative products, the cultural dissemination ability of non-state-owned museums has been greatly improved. Through a survey of the cultural consumption market in Shenzhen, it can be seen that the interest of Shenzhen citizens in museum exhibitions is gradually increasing, but the overall level of cultural consumption still needs to be improved ^[6]. Non-state-owned museums should enhance audience participation and a sense of belonging by organizing diverse cultural activities and strengthening interaction with the public. Meanwhile, utilizing modern information technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can provide audiences with more diverse cultural experiences, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm for participation ^[7].

5.2. Museum self-improvement mechanism

The self-improvement ability of museums is the fundamental driving force for their efficiency improvement. In the context of the development of modern cultural industries, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen must enhance their self-innovation capabilities to adapt to the rapidly changing cultural market and audience demands ^[8]. The self-improvement mechanism of museums includes institutional reform, improvement of management capabilities, and development of cultural and creative products. On the one hand, non-state-owned museums need to innovate their management systems ^[9]. The traditional museum operation mode focuses on collection and display, and the audience's participation is low. This single mode can no longer meet the needs of the contemporary cultural consumer market ^[10]. Therefore, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen must break the binary thinking of "career" and "industry," construct a mixed operation system and introduce market mechanisms into the daily operation of museums. On the other hand, the improvement of management level is one of the important ways for the development of museums. Currently, many non-state-owned museums are facing problems of poor management and low resource utilization efficiency, which prevent them from fully

realizing the economic benefits of cultural resources. Therefore, non-state-owned museums should learn from the management model of enterprises, introduce professional management talents, and improve overall operational efficiency^[11]. On top of that, in the development of cultural and creative products, museums can collaborate with design companies, cultural enterprises, and the like, to develop products with unique cultural connotations, further enriching the museum's revenue sources.

5.3. Government policy support mechanism

Government policy support plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of non-state-owned museums. In recent years, the Shenzhen Municipal Government has introduced a series of policies aimed at supporting the development of non-state-owned museums, such as tax reductions and special subsidies^[12]. However, the actual implementation effect of policies varies significantly among different museums, and many museums still face the problem of insufficient funding. Therefore, how to effectively utilize government resources and promote further implementation of policies is an important aspect of enhancing the efficiency of non-state-owned museums. Government support can be divided into two categories: one is financial support, which helps museums solve funding problems through direct appropriations or special funds. The second is institutional support, which clarifies the legal status of non-state-owned museums and regulates their market operation behavior through the introduction of relevant regulations. In terms of financial support, the government should establish a museum performance evaluation system and allocate more resources to non-state-owned museums with innovative capabilities and market potential^[13].

In the future, with the acceleration of the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the further development of Shenzhen's cultural industry, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen will face more opportunities and challenges^[14]. Through continuous innovation and exploration, non-state-owned museums in Shenzhen will be able to play a greater role in promoting urban cultural construction and enhancing the level of urban civilization.

6. Conclusion

Non-governmental museums in Shenzhen face various challenges in their development, including funding shortages, inadequate management mechanisms, low public engagement, and misalignment with urban planning. However, these museums hold significant growth potential given Shenzhen's unique market-oriented advantages and innovative environment. To enhance their effectiveness, addressing these issues through a multi-dimensional strategy is recommended, focusing on increasing public participation, promoting self-innovation and market-oriented operations, and strengthening government support in terms of policies and funding. Particularly, leveraging Shenzhen's technological advantages to develop "smart museums" will help improve visitor experiences and operational efficiency. By implementing these strategies, non-governmental museums in Shenzhen will not only enhance their social and cultural impact but also play a more prominent role in the cultural industry, providing valuable insights for the development of non-governmental museums nationwide.

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