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2018 Chinese New Year Special Events Planning for Casino Resorts in Las Vegas

by

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2014

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of the requirements for the

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PART ONE

Introduction

Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is the most important holiday in the Chinese culture and is celebrated at the beginning of the Lunar Calendar each year. Not only does the festival have significant impact in China, it is also widely celebrated in Asia as a whole. Due to the fact that about 80 percent of Las Vegas' biggest whales are from Asia, most of them baccarat players from China and Hong Kong (Rivlin, 2007), the Chinese New Year is also one of the most influential events on the Strip. Although the games and promotions offered by the casinos are the core value that Chinese customers seek when they visit a casino, a warm, comfortable, and intimate service will enhance their gaming experience as well (Han, 2011).

Chinese New Year originated with the legend that Chinese ancestors defeated the "Nian" monster and celebrated their victory. Nowadays it is a festival for families to get together and celebrate the New Year. In China, it is mandatory for companies to give their employees at least seven-day paid leave. Some companies even award their staff up to 20 days paid leave. Therefore, it is the best time to go travel abroad. There is a popular belief that a person has their best monetary luck in the first few days of Lunar Calendar, which consequently made it a favorable time to go gambling. The casinos profit from the madness and make huge revenues on Chinese New Year. Almost all casinos who have heavy Asian clientele take advantage this time of the year to attract Asian customers by offering special events to celebrate Chinese New Year.

The literature review starts with the origin of Chinese New Year in Las Vegas and how it evolved to be such an impactful time. It will then discuss the efforts made by the casino resorts on the Las Vegas Strip to attract more customers on the Chinese New Year. It will also reflect what are the potential opportunities for future Chinese New Year's and what issues might be out of control, for example, China is restricting the amount of money a person can carry overseas per

year to \$50,000 – the average of some whale’s bets. Finally, this professional paper will develop a series of special events for Chinese New Year that reflects the traditional culture. The plan will be based on current trends in China, such as what would attract the high rollers and what would resonate to more millennial customers.

Purpose

The purpose of this professional paper is to design a special events plan for the 2018 Chinese New Year, the year of dog, for casino resorts in Las Vegas.

Statement of Objective

The objective of this paper is to learn from past events, summarize those that most resemble what people celebrate in China, and plan for the coming Chinese New Year that will include the newest trends. The plan will be applicable for the Las Vegas Casino Resort Market and provide insights to the special events’ teams.

Justifications

Because Chinese customers represent big portions of casino incomes, a deeper understanding of their culture will create significant impacts for casino resorts in Las Vegas. The Chinese New Year special event plan in this professional paper would be applicable to the Las Vegas casino resort market. The casinos can understand more about the culture of Chinese New Year and the customs that people do during this period of time. Although the paper will be focused on Year 2018, the year of dog, the customs are the same across all years. Therefore the plan would be useful for all future planning. Understanding important Chinese culture factors such as superstitions, traditional customs, and taboos, can help casino employees enhance the service quality they are able to provide to Chinese customers, thereby increasing satisfaction and retention (Han, 2011).

Limitations

Although most of the mega casinos in Las Vegas such as MGM Resorts International, Wynn Las Vegas, and Caesar's Entertainment are public companies and all their SEC filings can be found online, there are several limitations that are foreseeable in this professional paper.

First, the author will have difficulties getting access to internal data from all the casinos mentioned. Although these companies publish their data for their earning calls and 10-Ks, they will not publish day-to-day operational data that reflect the daily revenues or profits. Therefore, it would be impossible to identify a specific special event that contributes most to the revenue.

Second, the most watched sporting event, the Super Bowl, falls in the same month with the Chinese New Year. Because the Super Bowl also attracts major bets and thus could spike the revenues generated, it would be hard to definitively state which event actually causes the revenue increase and customer attraction.

PART TWO

Literature Review

Chinese New Year is no doubt the oldest and most important traditional holiday in China. The festival has a far-spanning history of over 3,800 years (Sutter, 2006). Although nowadays many people from across the world are familiar with Chinese New Year and most of the casino resorts in Las Vegas, such as MGM Grand and Caesar's Palace, hold special events to celebrate the Chinese New Year, few people are aware of the legendary origin behind this traditional holiday. Understanding the origin and story of Chinese New Year will help a person to understand many customs and why the festival is celebrated in the modern-day society. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a holistic interpretation of Chinese New Year and its significance to the Las Vegas casino resorts. First it explores the Chinese New Year cultural background including the origin, the traditional ways of celebration, and the newest trends. Then it explains why the Chinese New Year is gaining increased attention among the Las Vegas casino resorts. Followed by a section describing several policies that may bring opportunities and threats to these resorts. And lastly, part of the literature review discloses the efforts and strategies that Casinos on the Strip are making in order to attract more Chinese customers.

Chinese New Year Culture Background

The background of Chinese New Year in this literature review will enable readers to have a more profound understanding of the importance of this festival and why the customs today. The original of Chinese New Year will explain the legend behind this holiday, the Chinese New Year celebration will cover the most popular customs among the Chinese households today, the Chinese New Year Décor will focus on the must have decorations for the Spring Festival and the

Newest Trend section will talk about a new custom that has shift away from the traditional way of celebrating the holiday.

The Origin of Chinese New Year

The origin of Chinese New Year is based on an ancient legend. According to the legend, there was a ferocious and ruthless monster called Nian 3,800 years ago in the Shang Dynasty (Tang, 2017). Nian was known for having the sharpest teeth and horns. On the first day of each year in the lunar calendar, the monster would emerge itself from the dark sea and go onshore to hunt people and livestock. For a very long time, people would escape from their villages and head to remote areas in the mountains to hide away from the monster (Tang, 2017).

The villagers lived in fear for many years and thought they could never conquer the beast. That is until one day, an old strange man with long silver hair and beard came to the village when everyone was fleeing. The old man asked to stay for the village for one night because he was too tired to travel any further. During the chaos, no one bothered talking to the old man, because they were all busy packing and leaving. A kind old lady who was too old to leave agreed to let the old man stay for one night. Because she was incapable of moving fast, she gave up her life and was waiting for Nian to end her life. She warned the old man of Nian and tried to persuade him to escape before it was too late, however, the old man told her not to worry (Tang, 2017).

When the night fell, Nian broke into the village. Only this time, the monster noticed that there were lights coming out from one house. As Nian approached, he suddenly started squealing and trembling, because the door and windows were pasted with red papers and there were red candles inside the house. All of a sudden, there were loud cracking sound bursts in the backyard, so loud that Nian was horrified and fled into the dark (Tang, 2017).

From then on, all the villagers learned to put red papers on their doors and windows as well as burn bamboo to create a cracking sound before the beginning of the lunar year to scare away Nian. This tradition is passed on to this day and red has become the most popular color during the Chinese New Year festival. The Chinese say “Guo Nian” which is translated as “surviving Nian”, which is a triumph they worship in regard to their ancestors for conquering the beast (Stutz, 2008).

Chinese New Year celebration

The celebration of Chinese New Year runs from the night before the first day of the lunar calendar, Chinese New Year’s Eve, to the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the first lunar month (Prince, 2017). There are many traditions when it comes to Chinese New Year. Although nowadays most people in China are not superstitious, almost everyone still follows these traditional customs and taboos on every Chinese New Year hoping to earn a good start of the New Year. Among all the traditions, there are three most important ones that can be easily applied into casino resorts in Las Vegas – red envelopes, dumplings and the lion dance.

The red envelopes. Red envelopes, also often referred to as “Red Pockets”, are the small, delicate, red envelopes that contain cash and are given out as gifts on Chinese New Year (Stutz, 2008). Receiving red envelopes is no doubt the most exciting thing for kids and teenagers in China. During all 16 days of the Chinese New Year celebration, unmarried young people who greet their elders are handed red envelopes as gifts (Sutter, 2006). Traditionally, Chinese New Year’s Eve is the night when all the families reunite; have dinner; and the watch the Spring Festival Gala, a special show for Chinese New Year. Because the majority of the family members will be present during the Chinese New Year’s Eve dinner, most of the red envelopes are handed out during this time (Jones, 2017).

Although giving cash to others is not a popular gesture in many cultures, giving red pockets to young people during Chinese New Year is considered a blessing for both the giver and the receiver. That is why the money in the red envelope is often referred to as “Lucky Money”. When receiving a red envelope, it is proper etiquette for the receiver to say, “Kong Xi Fa Chai” to the giver, which means: wish you great happiness and prosperity (Fernandez, 2017). The lucky money inside the red pocket should not be spent immediately because it is believed that the money will bring good luck and wellness in the new year.

The dumplings. A current trend for a healthy diet in China is: eat breakfast like a king, Lunch like a prince, and dinner like a beggar. In China a lot of families follow this rule when having their everyday meals. However, one major exception is on Chinese New Year’s Eve when almost all families cook abundant dishes and have dinner later than normal. There are strict rules about dishes on the eve of Chinese New Year’s. First, the total numbers of dishes must be an even number except for four, as the number four has the same pronunciation as “death” which is a taboo word to say during Chinese New Year (Lu, 2016). Second, after everyone has finished eating, there must be some left overs on the table. As a proverb goes, “Nian Nian You Yu” and “Yu” means left overs. The literal translation of this proverb means: your luck and wealth will overflow and extend to the next year. The third rule is that everyone must have dumplings on Chinese New Year (Lu, 2016).

There are many explanations why the Chinese people eat dumplings on Chinese New Year, and most of them have some credibility. However, the main reason why nowadays all families must have dumplings on Chinese New Year is because it is the most typical Chinese Food around the world and it is a time-consuming process thus it is an ideal family activity (Kee, 2005). A common game many family do is to put a copper coin in one of the dumplings. That

specific dumpling would be called the “Lucky Dumpling” and whoever eats it will have a wealthy year.

Lion Dance. The lion dance originated in the Tang Dynasty. A legend states that an emperor in the Tang Dynasty was sick for a long time, but one night in his dream a strange looking animal expelled the devils and saved his life. He woke up the next day and felt much better from then on. The emperor believed what he dreamed about resembled a lion, and thus the lion became a symbol of good luck and this concept has been passed down from generation to generation (Kee, 2005). A lively, noisy lion dance was believed to scare the evil spirits away and bring good omens to the people watching it.

Today, lion dance is just a popular performance in various occasions including Chinese New Year, grand openings of venues, traditional weddings, and all kinds of other festivals (Sutter, 2006). A lion dance performance usually includes multiple “lions” acted by individuals. Each lion is formed of a team of two, with one controlling the oversized, colorful head and one performing the tail and aiding the person in the front (Sutter, 2006). A team of drummers is also required for Lion dances, because the loud drum beats are believed to be the heartbeat of the lion, as well as the loud sound expels the evil spirit.

Chinese New Year Décor

Couplet. A couplet is a type of Chinese poem with only two lines. In Chinese it is translated as “Chun Lian”. During the Spring Festival, every household will hang a couplet split into two ribbons on the sides of front door as a decoration. The first line is hung on the right side of the door while the second line is hung on the left side (Indah, 2011). The couplets are blessing messages that describe the beautiful spring, and wish every member of the family good luck.

The upside-down “FU” Character. Besides the couplets, the character “FU” is also a must-have decoration during the Chinese New Year. In China, FU means good fortune, happiness, or blessing (Indah, 2011). The character FU is usually written in the center of a red diamond shape paper with gold ink. It is always displayed in the center of the front door and most often hung upside down. The rationale behind this is that in Chinese, “upside down” is pronounced the same as “arrive”, thus, by hanging FU upside down, it symbolized that the arrival of luck and fortune (Fernandez, 2017)

The Newest Trend in Chinese New Year

Although handing out the lucky money with a red envelope is still a custom, this tradition has been given a new meaning ever since the flourishing of the smartphone application, WeChat. WeChat is a free application developed by the biggest media company in China, TenCent. As of 2016, WeChat had 768 million daily users, which represented a 35% year-over-year growth (Lewis, 2017). WeChat is a mixture of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Facetime.

In January 2014, WeChat launched a Red Envelope function within the application. Different from the traditional way of handing red envelopes, the WeChat envelope enables users to send red pockets to individual and group messages. This includes a level of excitement of competition, because whoever clicks on the red envelope first will get the money. This function proved to be one of the best strategies the company has ever had. In 2014, about 16 million red envelopes containing money were sent and received on Chinese New Year’s Eve. In 2015, the number of grew to 500 million; and during Chinese New Year 2016, 8 billion red envelopes were sent and received (Lewis, 2017). See Figure1.

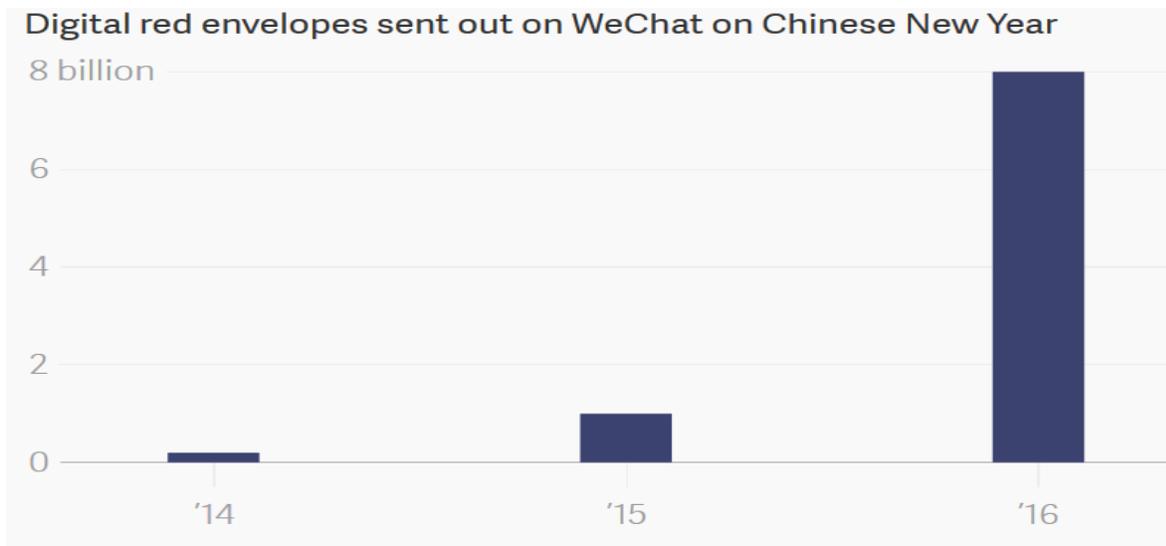


Figure 1: Digital red envelopes sent out on WeChat on Chinese New Year. Adapt from “Over 8 billion “red envelopes” were sent over WeChat during Chinese New Year” by Josh Horwitz, 2016, Quartz Media LLC.

The Chinese Market

In order to understand why Chinese customers are becoming increasingly important for the casino resorts in Las Vegas, one needs to look at the macro factors such as the economic condition in China as well as the travelers data of Chinese people.

China’s Economic Condition

Outsiders find it intriguing how fast China has emerged as a modern, economic powerhouse. The past 150 years of development in the United States has essentially occurred 5 times faster in China (Solomon, 2015). With the 2015 Chinese Stock Market turbulence, many global investors now hold negative sentiment with the Chinese economy. True, there are still many economic issues and challenges China is facing currently such as the depreciation of Chinese currency, a wide gap of wealth, and high capital outflow. Still, although Macro-economic factors are crucial, the micro-economic dynamics of the new economy in China are profound as well (Solomon, 2015).

China currently represents Apple's largest market and is continuously experiencing strong growth. Uber raised \$1.2 billion for its China effort in 2015 and announced that China is their fastest growing market. Google, after leaving China for five years, has also reportedly planned to re-enter the Chinese Market (Waddell, 2016). Thus, it is not hard to assume that as long as the Chinese consumers stay in the game, China's economy will continue to thrive and flourish.

Chinese Travelers Data

Chinese outbound travel is a global powerhouse because of the sheer number of travelers and their rapid increase of spending power (Boykoff, 2014). Since 2014, China has surpassed the U.S. as the largest source of international travel spending. 120 million Chinese people traveled overseas in 2015, and experts predict the number will grow to 200 million annually by 2020 (Lyu, 2017). The total spending of Chinese travelers during international trips has increased to \$292 billion in 2015 according to the World Tourism Organization (Peltier, 2016). According to Hotels.com, among all the tourist destinations, Since 2015, Las Vegas has ranked as the most popular U.S. destination for Chinese travelers, surpassing New York and Los Angeles (Prince, 2017).

Chinese tourists are showing more interest in gambling and fine dining than any other overseas visitors and are also growing an interest for shows (Boykoff, 2014). In 2016, Hainan Airline, one of the largest airline companies in China, launched a direct flight between Beijing and Las Vegas, fulfilling the increasing travel demands for Chinese tourists to Las Vegas (Pan, 2016).

Chinese Political Influences

There are two most important policies in China that most affect the profitability of Las Vegas casino resorts when it comes to Chinese customers, the paid-time-off policy and the currency policy. The paid-time-off policy is an opportunity while the currency policy posts a huge threat that might affect the profitability of some casinos that rely heavily on Chinese customers.

Chinese New Year Paid-Time-Off policies

Chinese New Year is the longest Paid-Time-Off holiday for employees in China. According to China Employment Law, companies are mandated to provide Paid-Time-Off for a week for all employees. In 2017, the Chinese New Year break started on January 27, the first day of the Lunar Calendar, to February 2nd (Colman, 2017). However, different companies have different time off policies, and many provide more generous amounts of Paid-Time-Off.

Most Chinese families nowadays only celebrate the New Year's Eve and sometimes the first day of the New Year, the rest of the break is the best time of the year to travel abroad. The Chinese New Year is morphing as rising income and an expanding network of international flights, prompts more people to go abroad (Lyu, 2017). The Spring Festival is an international peak for the Chinese airline industry and has become the biggest human "migration" of people. A Bloomberg analyst stated that traveling overseas is an outcome of the Chinese government's generations-long policy limiting most families to one child, because a more affluent younger generation has the resources and opportunities to see the world (Cano, 2017).

Currency Policies in China

An estimated \$762 billion in Chinese currency flowed out of China in 2016. At risk of Capital flight as well as aiming to close loopholes exploited for the purpose of money laundering

and illegal money channeling, the Chinese government is now restricting the amount that Chinese citizens can convert from RMB, the Chinese currency, into foreign currencies. Each person is only allowed to convert \$50,000 worth of RMB each year. Meanwhile, the government added on extra disclosure requirements starting from Jan 1st, 2017.

Banks now require their customers to give more specific accounts of the purpose of the funds converted; such as overseas study, family visits, business travel, and merchandise trade (McDonald, 2017). Also, customers must confirm compliance with restrictions on money laundering and underground bank dealings. Violators of foreign exchange rules will be added to the currency regulator's watch list, denied the foreign-exchange allowance for three years, and subjected to anti-money laundering investigations (Chen, 2017).

The capital control has proven effective and have relieved pressure on China's foreign currency reserves (Chen, 2017). Net outflow of RMB slowed down to \$5.5 billion in February, a significant drop from a record of \$44.7 billion in September (Chen & Lee, 2017).

While the effect of currency control is promising to the Chinese government, it significantly impacted the profit of large casino resorts, which relied heavily on Chinese customers. Among all the casinos, Wynn Resorts and Las Vegas Sands Corp have the highest amounts derived from Chinese market. Approximately 70% of Wynn's revenue and around 45% of Las Vegas Sands Corp's revenues come from China (McDonald, 2017), which makes the two companies very volatile to any change of the Chinese currency.

Casino Strategies

To attract Chinese customers, the casino resorts on the Las Vegas Strip spent heavily on preparing for the Chinese New Year and allure the customers into their own properties. These casinos, especially the ones that are relying heavily on Chinese high rollers, all understand the

importance of this festival to their quarter performance and hoping to use their décor and special events to acquire new customers while retaining existing Chinese whales.

Importance of Chinese New Year to Las Vegas

The Chinese New Year celebration has a special meaning to the Las Vegas casinos—big money in the high-end baccarat rooms (Stutz, 2008). 2017's Spring Festival had greater importance on the local economy since Hainan Airlines had launched their first non-stop line from Beijing to Las Vegas.

Steve Wynn, Chief Executive Officer of Wynn Resorts, stressed the importance of the 2017 Chinese New Year, “Year of the Rooster” in Chinese Zodiac Culture, to the revenue of the first quarter of Las Vegas resorts, as well as ordering Wynn Las Vegas to place more than 100 tangerine trees, a symbol of luck in Chinese culture, around the hotel in addition to a rooster statue (Prince, 2017).

The Nevada Gaming Control Board posted a total gaming revenue across the State of \$1.04 billion and a growth rate of 12% in January 2017, which is the best month in since 2013 (Coleman, 2017). The January growth has been spurred by baccarat tables as well as early schedule of celebration for Chinese New Year in 2017 (Cano, 2017). In one month, the Las Vegas Strip generated \$609 million, while Downtown Las Vegas generated \$55 million, representing a 26% and 32% growth respectively. This also led to the rise of the stock price of the large casino resorts on the strip, Wynn Resorts up 7.12%, Las Vegas Sands up 4.31% and MGM Resort up 2.28% (Colman, 2017).

Because the exact date of Chinese New Year each year varies based on the Lunar Calendar, it causes drastic year-to-year changes on the earning of January and February. In January 2013, Strip casinos were frustrated to report a combined revenue of only \$507 million,

which is over \$100 million less than that of January 2012. However, February 2013 showed all-time high earnings of \$696 million. Analysts hold that this was due to Chinese New Year celebrations that took place on the strip on and around February 10th that year (Glionna, 2013).

Special Events and Casino Decoration

In order to attract more customers to patronize the property, most mega resorts on the Strip put in effort to display décor that represents the Chinese New Year. When it comes to holiday decorations, the Bellagio's conservatory is the first thing that most people think of. The display is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without any charge to see. This year Bellagio also put in a lot of effort to celebrate the Chinese New Year and created a most glorious visual display at the Conservatory and Botanical Garden. It took 125 horticulture and engineering professionals six days working around the clock to assemble the decorations (Prince, 2017). Bellagio only decorates the conservatory five times a year, the four seasons and the Chinese New Year. Which further indicates the importance of this festival to the casino. The display consisted of 22,000 flowers. In the East Bed, visitors take a walkway past giant roses that are made from lentils before they pass through a 16-foot-tall Moon Gate (Jones, 2017). In the South Bed are two kids composed of hundreds of flowers standing on both side of the bridge.

The Venetian and Palazzo also created stunning displays to honor the holiday. A 15-foot-tall fire rooster was placed at the center of the Palazzo's Waterfall Atrium Garden. Near by a colorful dragon rose from a pond of water. Eight smaller hand painted roosters are also displayed in different areas throughout the property. The concept of dragons was also utilized in the Forum Shoppes at Caesar's Palaces. A 22-foot-long dragon sits at the entrance of the mall. The dragon boasts 30,000 red and amber lights (Jones, 2017). It is impossible to walk by without noticing it.

The most pervasive special event among all casino resorts in Las Vegas during Chinese New Year is no doubt the Lion and Dragon Dance. The vibrant dance and loud music successfully attracted many tourists on the street and led them into the casino floor. However, most of these properties do not have further performances that are available for the public. Of all the casino resorts, the Linq has the most attractive and diverse special events available for free. At the Linq, a professional local dancer performed every day at 6pm from January 27th to January 30th (Bornfeld, 2017). In addition, the property also invited the Sichuan Troupe from the local Chinese community to perform a traditional Chinese dance on the Promenade Fountain Stage. Linq's Higher Roller observation wheel also glowed red and gold, the two most popular colors during Chinese New Year, in honor of the holiday. The travelers were also offered Chinese New Year picture frames for their souvenir photos.

Summary

The increasing number in Chinese travelers and their affluent wallets have made these Chinese customers more appealing than ever to the casinos. Thus, it seems an essential task for the casino resorts to have a deep understanding of the Chinese culture and honor their most important holiday, the Chinese New Year, in order to win the patronage of these consumers. However, despite the fact that there are undeniable efforts in the input of casino décor, the lack of diversity in special events makes it disappointing. To better differentiate themselves from others, more innovative ideas that not only display traditional Chinese culture but also blend in novelty elements are necessary in the future.

PART THREE

Special Events Planning

The purpose of this section is to explain the special event plan for 2018 Chinese New Year in detail. This plan will be based on the current situation of the casino resorts on the Las Vegas Strip and aim to attract more Chinese customers to visit these properties during the holiday season. Not only will the special event planning work for 2018, it will provide reference for future Chinese New Year celebrations as well.

Methodology

The methodology of this plan will follow the structure of a marketing plan. First, the Chinese New Year special event plan will discuss a series of potential events that can be held in the casino resorts in Las Vegas. Second, it will talk about the suggestions on the casino decoration and activities that can be held along the line. Then, the writer will briefly cover the pricing strategies and place of these special events. Last but not the least, the plan will develop a detailed integrated communications promotional strategy.

Results

In order to attract more Chinese customers to casino resorts, the properties need to design a series of tempting special events as well as promotions to accomplish the goal. A common misunderstanding is that when Chinese travelers visit the U.S., they want to see things that they have not seen in China and they are only attracted to the western culture. As a matter of fact, most Chinese travelers would prefer to see a combination of Asian and Western cultural elements. Especially during Chinese New Year, they are more inclined to patronize the companies that truly understand the Chinese culture and capable of adding value on top of it.

Special Events

The goal of special events during Chinese New Year is to encourage more existing customers and potential customers to engage and participate. In order to fulfill this purpose, all the special events need to be exciting, lively, and joyful.

Chinese New Year Gala. Many of the casino resorts in Las Vegas already have the Chinese New Year Gala special event during the spring festival. The gala is not an event that is open to the general public and only high rollers are invited. The casino Chinese New Year Gala can get the inspiration from the CCTV Chinese New Year Gala.

There are three most common and popular types of performances in a Chinese New Year Gala. First, Xiaopin, similar to comedy sketches, are the most important parts in the Chinese New Year Gala. In a Xiaopin, the actors act out a comedy that is around 10 minutes long and the goal is to enable the audiences to laugh out loud. Examples of this could be seen in the works of comedic actors are Zhao Ben Shan, Xiao Shen Yang and Song Dan Dan. The comedies created by these actors have proven very successful throughout the years.

Second, magic shows are another crucial element in a Chinese New Year Gala. However, in recent years, a lot of grand magic shows involved in some dangerous content such as “cutting” a person in half or “drowning” the magician in a tank of water. Though incredible, these relatively scary forms of magic are not appropriate to be performed on Chinese New Year. Chinese people want to see everything that has a symbol of luck during the spring festival and therefore, the audiences would love to see magic tricks that are both exciting and lucky. The most popular magician in China is Qian Liu. His magic tricks during the Chinese New Year Gala are very often the peak point in viewer rate.

Third, besides singing and dancing, Kung-Fu shows are very popular during Chinese New Year. The famous Shaolin 18 bronze men are the most widely known team of Kung-Fu celebrities. All of them paint themselves in bronze and look like the statues in the temple. Each of the 18-bronze man has their own specialty, for example, one of them is famous for his “iron head” that he can break 10 bricks in a row whereas another bronze man is trained to be the best Qing-Gong (light body skill) master and able to vault over walls. Because these actors are always invited to the CCTV Gala on Chinese New Year’s Eve, it is important to have the Chinese New Year Gala in the casino resorts to be scheduled at another time.

Lion Dance plus Dog dance. Although cliché, the lion and dragon dance is a must for the Chinese New Year. Without the lion dance, people will feel that the celebration is incomplete. However, this does not necessarily mean that the dance is unalterable. As a matter of fact, in recent years, increasing numbers of Millennials are starting to perform “dog dance” to add a sense of humor to the lion dance. The dog dance originated in a college dorm with 4 guys who could not afford to buy the expensive lion dance outfits. Thus, they used a husky-face-pillow and a gray blanket to substitute the lion dance outfits. The dog dance follows exactly the same performance procedures as the lion dance. They posted it on YouTube and became famous overnight. Since then dog dance has been a very popular dance for informal parties or comedy shows.

Because 2018 is the year of dog according to the Chinese zodiac, it would be a great opportunity to add dog dance to the traditional but cliché lion dance. Casinos can also consider to have amateur performers or even local students to conduct the dog dances. This will not only make the viewers feel like home, but also enable them to laugh and see that the casino is able to keep up with the trend.

Co-hosted Events. To attract more visitors to Las Vegas not only during the coming Chinese New Year, but also for the future, it would be strategic for casino resorts to co-host events with the various forms of Chinese Media and introduce shows that are attractive to both American and Chinese audiences.

During Chinese New Year, dancing is an element that cannot be missed. Therefore, a dance competition between American and Chinese dancers can be an interesting event. In 2015, MGM hosted the first Chinese and American dancing competition, *So You Think You Can Dance*, in Grand Garden Arena. This show was broadcasted on China Central Television (CCTV). CCTV covers 98% of Chinese population and represented the largest television audience within China. Ten performers from each country either danced solo or paired up with a partner and demonstrated their best dancing skills in front of hundreds of thousands of spectators, both in the arena and watching on television around the world. The competition last for 2 hours. During the competition, dancers from the two countries competed with each other and also demonstrated the cultural differences between the U.S. and Chinese dancing styles. The American way of dancing is more passionate and enthusiastic while the Chinese style could be characterized as soft and poetic. Despite the differences and maybe some language barriers, the dancers were able to communicate with each other through dancing and find a bridge between the two cultures.

This show received rave reviews in China and MGM gained a lot of recognition among the Chinese people. Audiences not only enjoyed the show, but also learned the difference between the two cultures. Till this day, *So You Think You Can Dance* is still a very popular show in China. It would be beneficial for any casino resort in Las Vegas to host another Chinese and American dance competition during the Chinese New Year and have it broadcast in China

and around the world. A good time to host this event is after the Chinese New Year Gala and around the third or fourth day after Chinese New Year's Eve to attract the most customers.

The Running Man. One of the most watched variety entertainment show in China in the last four years is the Running Man. Learned from the Koreans, the Running Man is a team of 7 most popular celebrities doing scavenger hunts under a certain scenario. Each season consist of 12 episodes and in each episode, the team will be taken to a new location that has a strong theme such as an old castle, a giant ferry, a modernized museum, etc. Each member will be given some form of clues and they need to compete with one another by using the clues to solve encrypted problems and get to their final target. Because a lot of casino resorts in Las Vegas have clear themes, they would be ideal location to host an episode of the Running Man during the Chinese New Year. In addition, it would be ideal for popular American celebrities to enter the show to add more excitement. Because the Running Man is a highly interactive and exciting show, hosting it would help the casino to not only have higher brand recognition but also entice more Millennials to the property.

Co-filmed Movies. The best way to lure a person to a city is to first show them what can possibly be done within it. The movie Hangover I inspired many travelers to go crazier on their journey in the Sin City and experiences things under the premise that "What Happened in Vegas, Stays in Vegas". Besides the Hangover, a handful of movies that involves a city proved effective for the traveler rates. After the movie, "Beijing Meets Seattle" was filmed, Seattle became a popular travel destination and many Chinese travelers visit Seattle mainly for the sake of taking pictures in the places where the movie was filmed and pretend to be the actor and actress.

Although in the recent years, plenty of movies have been filmed, or partially filmed, in Las Vegas, hardly any of them are Chinese movies or has anything to do with China. Given a lot

of Chinese people still prefer to watch movies in their native language rather than English, filming a Chinese movie with a great plot and popular cast in Las Vegas would definitely bring higher exposure to the Chinese population and encourage more people to visit the Strip.

Chinese film authorities maintain a strict control that only 34 foreign movies are allowed to be screened in China each year. However, if the movie is co-filmed with Chinese filming companies, the movie will be exempt from this rule. Because a movie usually takes a few months to a few years to produce, this would not necessarily be a means of attract customers for the 2018 Chinese New Year. However, the success of the movie will for sure be beneficial for the future and have a long-lasting impact.

Casino Decoration

Besides the special events hosted in the casino resorts in Las Vegas, the Chinese New Year decorations will still be a major attraction for the travelers. Most of the mega resorts on the strip such as MGM Grand, Caesar's Palace and Wynn Las Vegas already spend big money decorating their properties accordance with the holiday. However, most of these decorations are similar to each other and therefore would not help customers distinguish them from one another.

Couplet Writing Competition. People will appreciate décor when it is about their culture, nevertheless, they will appreciate it more if allowed to participate in the process. Among the Chinese visitors and residents in Las Vegas, a lot of them are great at Chinese tradition calligraphy, which is writing with a long brush dipped with dark ink. Like mentioned in the literature review section, couplets are must haves in regards to the decor for Chinese New Year. Although, most people purchase their couplets nowadays, some calligraphers still write their own couplets each year. It would be great fun if a casino can host a calligraphy writing competition and invite all people who are willing to participate to compete. The most beautifully written

couplet will be hanged in the property during the Chinese New Year. In addition, the casino can offer the top ten winners a small prize and the top winner a big award. This will entice more individuals to participate and build loyalty to the property unconsciously. Similarly, a competition of writing the character “FU” can also be held in the same fashion.

Dog Mascot. Because 2018 is the year of dog in Chinese Zodiac, the decoration should, at least in some way, add in the elements of dogs. Each year in China, artists will conduct paper cutting into the vivid zodiac animals of that year. Therefore, it would be great to have large and delicate paper cutting masterpieces in the shape of dogs as decoration.

Price

In order to attract the most customers effectively, a combination of free events and charged events is essential. Of course, most decorations will be displayed in public areas and therefore are naturally free of charge. On the other hand, most the shows should be paid events and ticket prices depend on the location of the seats. The Chinese New Year Gala should have the most expensive ticket price because all the performers would be well known celebrities, and thus require significant compensation. High rollers can be invited to these paid-events free of charge as comps based on their average theoretical loss or actual loss.

Place

All special events, competitions, and decorations displayed should be located in mega casino resorts in Las Vegas. The shows such as the Chinese and American dancing competition, So You Think You Can Dance, and Chinese New Year Gala should be hosted in large event centers, such as T-Mobile Arena, Garden Grand Arena, etc that can hold a large group of individuals and that can charge to get in. While the couplet writing competition, Lion Dance, and Chinese New Year decoration displays should be located in public areas where all visitors

can easily access them. The movie and Running Man show would require locking down areas temporarily in order to ensure the safety of the celebrities in the face of overzealous fans.

Promotion

No special event would be considered successful if few people knew about it. Therefore, a critical step of planning involved is determining how to promote the special events. That would enable more people, even those who have never visited Las Vegas before, to know the existence of these events.

Advertisement. The advertisements of the special events in Las Vegas casino resorts needs to start at least four to five months before Chinese New Year to ensure travelers have time to plan for their trips, get their visas and get their tickets and hotels. Effective advertisement means including TV commercials, social media such as WeChat and Sina Weibo (the Chinese “Twitter”).

TV commercials are the most expensive of all but will convey the message in the most vivid way. These advertisements should be placed in between TV shows that either involve traveling or are watched by audiences who are interested in experiencing international journey, some good examples are: The Running Man, World Travelers, Flower and Teens, etc.

WeChat is likely the most convenient method for Chinese customers to receive the message nowadays. It is highly recommended that each casino resort have a team of Mandarin speaking customer service staff focusing on WeChat promotions and write mobile phone compatible blogs to publish events going on in Las Vegas. Then, these casino resorts can pay other public accounts that are viewed by large numbers of individuals to forward their messages to WeChat users. Ideally, WeChat users would be able to directly contact customer service representatives to reserve rooms and tickets to other special events. If a customer refers a new

customer or helps promote the advertisement on their own WeChat page, similar to Facebook front page, a special award or promotion could be given to them.

Besides WeChat, Sina Weibo is also a social media platform that is widely used in China, especially among Millennials. Sina Weibo functions as Twitter where people post a few sentences, pictures or short videos to share their most recent life. In order for an advertisement to reach the most people, there are some strategies that can be followed. First, it is very effective to cooperate with celebrities that have high volume of Weibo followers to post the advertisements on his or her page. A few popular celebrities are: Angelababy, Bingbing Fan, Mi Yang and Na Xie, all these celebrities have over 70 million followers on their Sina Weibo. The second strategy is to make it on the hot search topic board. Every day, Sina Weibo has a list of the 20 hottest topic searches by the most people. The list is updated every 10 minutes but usually a hot topic will remain on the list for at least 24 hours. It is the habit of most Sina Weibo users to look at the list of hot topics and click into each of them every day during their lunch break, while on the bus, or other spare time. Having popular celebrity's posting the advertisements definitely helps in reaching the goal of hitting the hot topic list. The marketing department of the casino resort should frequently post updates of any big events that occurred on the properties to Sina Weibo in order to get more exposure and brand recognition.

Sales Promotions. In addition to advertisement, sales promotions are also effective to get customers into the door. A few common promotions include quick loss, discount, and free play. Despite the number of Chinese travelers visiting Macau and Las Vegas each year, the majority of the Chinese population are not familiar with the way casino comps works. For these people, they are very inclined to think that gambling means you lose everything. Therefore, in order to encourage potential customers to enter the properties, it is necessary to familiarize them with the

sales promotions going on in the casino floor and enable them to know, the more they gamble, the more they are worth, and the more comps they would get. See Figure 2 for full event list.

2018 Chinese New Year Special Event List (Mock)	
The Running Man Shooting	November 1 st , 2017
<i>The shooting of this episode will last for one day. The show will be screened on Zhejiang TV in China on Saturday, February 10th, 2018 which is a week before Chinese New Year.</i>	
Couplet and FU Writing Competition	February 3 rd , 2018
<i>The winner of the couplet and Fu writing completion will be invite to write a large couplet for the property and will be displayed throughout Chinese New Year.</i>	
Lion, Dragon and Dog dance	February 16-19, 2018
<i>The dance will take place in multiple locations in Las Vegas and last 15minutes each.</i>	
Chinese New Year Gala	February 18, 2018
<i>The Chinese New Year Gala will last for 3 hours and all high roller will be invited to the celebration. There will be a lucky draw by the end of the gala and grand prizes will be given to winner.</i>	
<u>So You Think You Can Dance</u>	February 20 st , 2018
<i>The Chinese and American so you think you can dance will take place in an arena. Tickets are required for entrance.</i>	
Chinese New Year Decoration Display	February 10– 28, 2018
<i>The display is located at the main entrance of the properties and accessible to all visitors free of charge.</i>	
All events will be advertised on WeChat and Sina Webo. The Sina Webo ambassador is <u>Angelababy, Mi Yang and Chao Deng.</u>	

Figure 2. Full event list

Conclusion

In summary, although casino resorts in Las Vegas have been putting efforts in the Chinese New Year, most of them offered the same special events and could not differentiate themselves. Because customers might not want to see the same events more than once, the casino would lose the opportunity to acquire new patrons. To better attract and serve new Chinese customers and retain existing ones, it is a very worthwhile for casino resorts in Las Vegas to add in new elements in the special events and make the customers feel the mix of Asian and Western culture. Designing a captive plan of special events as well as selecting the right method of advertising and promotions can achieve this goal. The special events and promotion methods mentioned in this article can be applied in to future events planning. Because each casino in Las Vegas have its own theme and style, the company should choose the events and decoration that could most represent the theme of the property or even modify somewhat to create the best atmosphere.

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