

Analysis of Information Flow Advertising Text in Social Media from the Perspective of Semiotics: A Case Study of Tiktok App

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Abstract

In view of the development trend of Internet technology, information flow advertising has gradually attracted more scholars' attention based on better communication effect and user experience. Tiktok platform has high user stickiness and strong media potential. Therefore, this paper mainly applies the semiotics theory to the analysis of Tiktok information flow advertising text to explore the transformation and conflict of advertising narrative, deconstruction of advertising visual performance and other aspects.

Keywords

Information Flow Advertisement; Social Media; Text Analysis.

1. Introduction

With the development of Internet technology and the change of mobile consumer search engines, information flow advertising which possesses the characteristics of bringing users better experience and strong interactivity has gradually attracted more scholars' attention in the "multimodal" media environment.

Information flow advertisement is an advertisement inserted with the flow of media information, which can provide users with valuable content. The advertising content must be integrated with the media environment, and the advertisement is the content [1]. Through literature reading, social media is an important platform for information flow advertising communication, and there is a natural fit between information flow advertising and social media. Information flow advertising first appeared on famous foreign social platforms Facebook and Twitter, and then were adopted by social platforms such as Instragram and entered Chinese social platforms. In the past, scholars at home and abroad mostly focused on in-depth research on the types and characteristics of information flow advertising. Since 2016, the research dimensions have been gradually enriched, including quantitative research based on advertising acceptance, avoidance behavior and advertising effect influencing factors. However, the existing researches have not paid enough attention to text narration and symbol analysis which are crucial to a deep understanding of information flow advertising, and most of them take WeChat moments as an example, which remains to be further expanded.

As a head short video platform, Tiktok announced the start of the road to commercialization in 2017, in order to take advantage of the traffic, it pioneered the launch of native information flow advertising. Subsequently, with its own business realization ability and the technical support of the platform, a variety of native information flow advertising models have evolved[2]. All of these make Tiktok an important case to study information flow advertising. Therefore, the author believes that the application of semiotics theory to the analysis of Douyin information flow advertising will bring a lot of harvest and inspiration.

2. Advertising and Semiotics

Discourse analysis is an important part of generalized semiotics, and it takes semiotics as its overall academic background, linguistics and philolinguistic cultural exploration as its main research field, and interdisciplinary comprehensiveness as its basic methodological characteristics. The discourse analysis of mass media is a field that applies discourse analysis theory to the study of mass communication, and it has two theoretical dimensions: linguistic semiotics and cultural semiotics. The former mainly focuses on the research of the surface structure, discourse behavior, and rhetorical strategies of advertising texts, while the latter focuses on the research of media text ideas and the "deep structure" of text [3].

Advertising has a natural association with symbols. From the perspective of communication studies, advertising is essentially an interactive process of symbols. The communicator encodes a predetermined message into advertising text, thereby transmitting content information about the product or service. The audience receives and extracts information through decoding [4]. In this process, information goes through the cycle of coding and decoding, and the meaning of advertising is generated. Symbol is an important means of communication. The main purpose of historical semiotics research is to find the social and cultural values it expresses, and explore the driving reasons behind it.

Advertising semiotics is a compound research subject of advertising theory. Its analysis of the text and meaning of advertising can not only reveal the connotation of advertising, but also be applied to the practical operation level of advertising. Advertising semiotics regards an advertising text as a powerful symbol system, and analyzes the role of this system in the media and the emotional experience it gives users. This paper takes semiotics as the basic academic theory, and uses other marginal theories such as structuralism, narratology, psychosociology to analyze the text of social media advertising. It studies the narrative mode of information flow advertising spread through Tiktok, how to shape consumers' psychological characteristics as well as the social and cultural meanings implied in the advertising text [5].

3. Overview of Information Flow Advertising

With the advent of the Internet era and the rapid advancement of information technology, the focus of the media ecosystem has shifted to mobile devices, and information dissemination, content distribution, and advertising forms have also undergone changes. Information flow is a form of content display originating from mobile phones, which is widely used in social information and video application platforms. Information flow advertising derived from it has shown great commercialization potential in recent years, and the market scale has grown rapidly [6].

The founder of Facebook first noticed the opportunity to create new types of advertising, and based on the user data brought by product features, it perfectly achieved a transition from PC to mobile. In 2015, the National Interactive Advertising Bureau redefined the definition of information flow advertising as "promotional activities based on the standard editing method of a specific media platform, and appeared on the general message board of the platform with obvious advertising labels". Compared with traditional advertising, information flow advertising has obvious advantages. On the one hand, the platform's built-in traffic allows ads to reach a larger audience. On the other hand, the precise recommendation mechanism has significantly increased the conversion rate of advertisements.

The characteristics of information flow advertising can be summarized in one sentence, that is advertising disguises itself as a form similar to the surrounding content [7], its main operating mechanism is to intelligently push by collecting the preferences and characteristics of different user groups on social media [8]. Firstly, information flow advertising is embedded in the social

platform based on the active browsing behavior of users, making the advertising form indistinguishable from the user form. Hiding advertising attributes not only improves the user experience, but also improves the advertising effect. Secondly, it uses the profiling function of platform data to achieve intelligent and personalized advertising push based on audience preferences and needs, and achieves accurate delivery under the huge engine of Tiktok. Finally, with the help of network technology, it expands advertising content and implements user purchasing behavior by designing landing pages [9]. The jump behavior brought about by advertising page links can help advertisers monitor, track and obtain data, understand ad click through rates and conversion rates, and then prepare for later analysis and positioning of strong intention users.

4. Analysis of Information Flow Advertising Text on Tiktok Platform

4.1. Audiovisual Symbols

Any meaningful object in advertising text is a symbol [10], therefore, when interpreting advertising cases, the first step is to identify the symbol system in the text and analyze its connotation. Most of the Tiktok information flow advertisements are in vertical screen format, covering the entire terminal interface, which not only brings a fresh visual experience, but also conforms to the user's daily habit of using mobile devices, saving the user's time cost. Secondly, Tiktok short video is characterized by "short, smooth and fragmentation", so the shooting subject mostly appears on the screen in the form of close-up or close shot [11], which achieves the focus of the subject in the scene. Finally, the construction of the narrative scene in the video follows the principle of life, recalls and presents daily experience, creates an equal communication environment, and strengthens the persuasive role of advertising by arousing the audience's empathy and brand association. Tiktok focuses on "music plus short video", which gives more emotional appeal to image narration. Users are familiar with the music on the platform and have a high degree of singing. Therefore, information flow ads often use songs or accompaniments with strong sense of rhythm that are popular in the platform in the near future to cooperate with the advertising display, highlight the differentiated features of the content, and optimize the advertising effect.

For example, in the summer of 2019, when OPPO launched its new phone, the brand partner and Tiktok combined the information flow resources, and introduced co-creation events and music marketing to form a phenomenon brand communication event. In this advertising campaign, OPPO invited Tiktok musicians to create customized brand songs with fresh summer style and catchy chorus melody. In order to trigger the participation of users, OPPO invited a number of Internet celebrities to release the theme label of the event, shoot videos with customized songs as bgm, and accurately deliver them to 3C crowd through the information flow. According to the data released by Douyin, 654,000 people participated in the marketing campaign, the total interaction volume of topic videos exceeded 200 million, and the pre-order volume of OPPO's new phone exceeded 20 million.

4.2. Narrative Symbols

When analyzing information flow advertising text, it is necessary to summarize the story clues, main body and sub content of advertising, and understand the progressive and evolution of advertising content [12]. Tiktok information flow advertising follows the principle of "ensuring the accurate transmission of brand information within a limited advertising duration" in advertising narrative. In order to quickly attract users' attention, it often uses episodic dramatic conflicts, combining montage techniques and special camera movements to create unexpected visual impact, while combining the characteristics of products or services with dramatic conflicts to achieve the effect of strengthening brand awareness. At the same time, scene is an

important narrative symbol of information flow advertising. In order to enhance user stickiness and improve communication effect, information flow advertising often integrates geographical location, spatial layout, behavioral and other elements into it to create a concrete and perceptive consumption scene, so that users can be immersed in it, resonate with it, and finally trigger consumption behavior [13].

For example, Tiktok once collaborated with Happy Lemon Milk Tea shop to promote new products. The brand owner cooperated with experts in dance, lifestyle, sports and fitness fields from all over the country to carry out information flow advertising promotion. The video of Internet celebrities' shop visit not only presented specific social scenes of life, but also highlighted the eye-catching interactive reward "Shoot video, send positioning, win gift package", which stimulated the regional users' desire to shop. Offline, 210 stores have been set up as "time-clocking shrines", with youthful decor and interactive decorations attracting crowds of young people to take photos.

5. Conclusion

Applying the basic principles of semiotics to the analysis of information flow advertising text in social media can help people to have a more comprehensive understanding of the essence and construction process of social and cultural significance embodied in advertising text. Besides, it can help users to have a deeper understanding of the significance and purpose of internet commercialization. At the same time, the principle of semiotics also puts forward a basic idea for the advertising coding method and process, thus promoting the future Internet advertising production to better realize the multi-dimensional meaning transmission of vision and hearing within a specific effective time.

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