

Connectivity and Barriers: Cross-cultural Advertising Communication

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Abstract: The world has been connected into a large unified market, forming a global organic economy. Economic globalization has increased the number of multinational companies and transnational projects. Cross-cultural advertising is an indispensable part of the cultural inheritance of the brand's origin country and the cultural exchange with other countries and regions. This paper analyzes the causes of cross-cultural advertising. It explains the issues that should be paid attention to when cross-cultural advertising carries out brand communication through positive and negative examples. Finally, this paper suggests the strategies enterprises should adopt when carrying out cross-cultural advertising communication and analyzes the prospects of cross-cultural advertising.

1. The inevitability of cross-cultural advertising

1.1. The demand brought by economic globalization

In terms of today's foreign trade, technology transfer, capital flow, service delivery, and other activities, the world has been connected into a large unified market, forming a global organic economy. All countries and regions are interconnected and interdependent and play their advantages in the global market to realize the optimal allocation of resources worldwide.

Economic globalization has increased the number of multinational companies and transnational projects. The rational optimal allocation of global market resources is reflected in the project cooperation between different regions and embodied in the establishment of multinational companies and the strategic deployment of brand nationalization.

In international trade, affected by the improvement of living standards worldwide, especially in developed countries, the increase in the proportion of consumer durables expenditures in total expenditures, the continuous increase in prices caused by continuous inflation worldwide, and the general shortening of product life cycles, the non-price competition (refers to: enhance the competitiveness of products and expand the sales of products through improving product quality and performance, increasing varieties and colors, advancing packaging and specifications, pre-sales and after-sales services, providing preferential payment terms, updating trademarks, strengthening advertising and ensuring timely delivery, improving the quality of products, reputation and visibility) of transnational corporations

has gradually replaced the traditional competition means of price competition in order to get the most customers (refers to: through reducing the production cost, enterprises can strike and squeeze out competitors in the foreign market at a lower price than the international market or other similar products of enterprises, so as to expand sales of products). For example, the average retail price of Ice Dew Purified Water produced by Coca-Cola is 1.5 yuan in mainland China, which has once dropped to 0.5 yuan in some regions. The price is the lowest among similar drinks.

1.2. The magic weapon of multinational corporation expansion

According to the article Looking at the Advertising Industry in the Past Year from the Data published in the journal China Advertising in February 2020, we can see Alibaba, Alphabet, Amazon, Booking.com, eBay, Facebook, IAC, Jingdong, Netflix, and Uber are advertisers who spend more than \$1 billion on advertising. Their advertising spending in 2018 reached \$36 billion, a quarter higher than in 2017[1]. Large companies attach great importance to the brand value of commercial advertising. Good advertising can accelerate the spread of brand value and magnify and enhance the product's value. At the same time, it also enhances the brand's value, giving products and brands a sense of quality and value. Additionally, the most outstanding contribution of advertising to the brand, especially the well-known brand, is to help it create added value. The brand can meet the psychological needs of consumers and make them willing to pay higher prices for it, which also gives operators higher premium space.

Meanwhile, how can multinational companies achieve cross-cultural and trans-regional brand

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integration communication while expanding their global market? Therefore, cross-cultural advertising arises at a historic moment.

2.Cases and Strategies of Cross-cultural Advertising Communication

2.1.Cross-cultural Advertising in the Perspective of Communication

Harold Lasswell, an American scholar, is one of the four pioneers of communication studies, put forward the famous mode "Five W,"[2] that is: Who – Says what-In which channel-To whom-With what effects. He analyzed the communication activities of human society with the method of establishing models in his article "the structure and function of communication in society," On the one hand, the "5W" model has a far-reaching impact on the research scope and content of communication. Combined with advertising, the "Five W" is defined as the suppliers of products, services, and brands, namely, the advertiser - the "main body" or "Who," the potential audience of the target country - "Whom," the advertising agency or the mass media – "Which channel," the communication information – "What" and the validity evaluation - "What effect." On the other hand, in the study of cross-cultural advertising communication, according to the description of the social information system in the communication model of "5W," the concept of cross-cultural advertising is divided into five subsystems: advertising manager, advertising information text, information media channels, advertising stakeholders and advertising communication effect. Although the advertising communication effect is the final direction of the whole brand-building activity, the operation of the other four subsystems greatly restricts and affects the realization of the final value effect, so the research on cross-cultural advertising is bound to be refined accordingly.

In the context of global economic integration, the fragmentation of the media makes the audience more dispersed in the region, while the information they receive is homogeneous. John Dewey, the master of American pragmatism, made a famous judgment on the role and significance of communication at this level: "society exists through transmission and communication, as well as directly exists in transmission and communication." In Dewey's view, "communication" is to make people actively participate in the community's public life. Without this kind of public sharing, society is just a symbiosis, not a democratic and human Union. "The public will be eroded until the big society is transformed into a big community, and communication can create a big community." [3] There are various groups in a society or country that are formed according to their interests, beliefs, and goals. They belong to different levels, scales, and sizes of communities. The state or society has become a large community containing these different groups, the so-called "community of communities." Specific individuals may be in different communities, so conflicts often occur between specific

individuals and specific groups. Thus, the problem of cross-cultural advertising is how to coordinate the relationship between groups and individuals, as well as among groups.

Therefore, "To whom" (or audience, whether individual or organization, it is the ultimate object of communication) is particularly vital during cross-cultural advertising. Scholars Denis McQuai and Sven Windah's *On the Mode of Mass Communication* believe that audience behavior is primarily based on individual needs and interests and put forward the concept of audience-centered mode.[4] As a branch of communication science, the audience is placed in a highly significant position. The advertising audience is who receive advertising information, which mainly includes two meanings: firstly, the people contacted by media advertising are the media audience of advertising; secondly, the target audience is the advertisement target audience. The nature of advertising determines that the specific appeal object of an advertising activity must be determined according to the requirements of advertising objectives.

Claude C. Hopkins, a master of modern advertising and godfather of advertising and copywriting, emphasized in his book *Scientific Advertising* that the user's thinking is crucial when developing a planning scheme. The economic and political school of communication has noticed this point for a long time. Dallas Smythe, a political economist, proposed in 1951 that the main product of commercial mass media is the audience's attention: "audience commodity theory." He put forward the article *Communication: The Blind Spot of Western Marxism*, published in 1977. Smythe believes that the products produced by the media with advertising revenue as the primary source of income are not radio and television programs but the audience.[5] Smythe also believes that the commodity produced by the media, whose primary economic source is advertising revenue is not radio and television programs but the particular commodity of the audience. The news, ideas, images, entertainment, speech, and information produced by the mass media are not essential products. They are merely 'free lunches'—"The information, entertainment and "educational" material transmitted to the audience is an inducement (gift, bribe or "free lunch") to recruit potential members of the audience and to maintain their loyal attention. The appropriateness of the analogy to the free lunch in the old-time saloon or cocktail bar is manifest: the free lunch consists of materials that whet the prospective audience members' appetites and thus(1) attract and keep them attending to the program, newspaper, or magazine, and (2) cultivate a mood conducive to favorable reaction to the explicit and implicit advertisers' messages.[6] There is a serious question about the value of artistic offerings carried by the mass communications media and serving directly or indirectly as advertising vehicles. It is beyond dispute that all of them could be provided at a cost to consumers incomparably lower than what they are forced to pay through commercial advertising. [7]

Thus, whether the advertising can achieve the expected effect depends on whether the advertising can

attract the public and move the audience. Therefore, the advertising audience is the core of the advertising campaign and is the aspect that the advertising campaign must consider. Therefore, the effectiveness of advertising planning, advertisers, advertising operators, publishers, and managers should be tested by the advertising audience and conducted with the audience as the center.

It is necessary to consider the audience, as well as the age and environment of the audience. It is a big difference between cross-cultural advertising and ordinary light, which the audience environment is magnified here. Robert Ezra Park, a representative sociologist of the Chicago school, explored the relationships among mass communication, ethnic relations, human ecology, and collective behavior in his works *Groups and the Public*, *Introduction to Sociological Science*, and *The Immigrant Press Control*. He believes that in conducting empirical research on society. Researchers should go deep into reality and obtain first-hand information like journalists. He also advocates that news communication activities should be investigated in the context of the whole society and its role in society and the system. Walter Lippmann put forward the idea of "Stereotype" in his 1922's book *Public Opinion*.²⁰ During the transmission of cross-cultural advertising, it is necessary to reduce as much as possible the stereotyping of audience-to-audience environment and target region, which is also one of the keys to the success of cross-cultural advertising.

"We want consumers to say, 'That is a hell of a product' instead of 'That is a hell of an advertising,'" said David Mackenzie Ogilvy, a great advertising master. How to express the advertising content (says what) and let the audience focus on the product through the advertising content is the content of advertising creativity and expression. In his book, *Public Opinion*²¹, published in 1922, Walter Lippmann, an American communication scholar, and political commentator, put forward the concept of Pseudo Environment. The theory is that the information environment provided by the media is not a "mirror" representation of the natural environment but an environment that is prompted to people after being selected, processed, and restructured. From this point of view, a vital communication research topic - agenda-setting theory has emerged. Advertising agenda setting can be divided into media, public, brand image, and brand issues to convert topics into product selling points.

An interesting phenomenon is that when analyzing advertising works, Chinese scholars rely on the relevant theories of Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Teun van Dijk of the semiotic school of communication. Many documents they studied are based on semiotics to analyze advertising content and certain advertising elements.

2.2. Good case and Bad case

Advertising belongs to a commercial culture, while commercial culture is an essential part of the culture.

Advertising, recording the spiritual creation of human beings as the spirit of all things, is a display of social, economic, and cultural achievements and a reflection of the material culture and spiritual culture created by human beings. Since advertising is a form of culture, it is naturally restricted and restrained by the culture to which it belongs. Advertising uses culture to enhance communication and create a new culture. Globalization has turned advertising into a "global" advertising industry and made advertising communication encounter cross-cultural communication in the era of globalization. When the cultures of different nations are in a period of collision, division, and integration, cross-cultural advertising communication has become an increasingly important way of cultural communication. Culture is not only a prerequisite for the realization of cross-cultural communication. More importantly, cultural marketing has become the deep purpose of cross-cultural communication. At the same time, the reality of cultural differences also has an unprecedented impact on the effect of cross-cultural advertising communication. Therefore, solving the demand differences caused by cultural differences among countries becomes increasingly important. Who knows more about the cultural customs of the target market has become a magic weapon for multinational companies to win.

Huawei mate ten series has advertisements for Finland, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and other countries. For example, in 2018, Huawei p20 launched an AD with Gal Gadot, the "Wonder Woman" in northeast Europe. The perfect combination of characters and scenes, the constant switching of grand scenes, and the near-lifelike special effects give people a beautiful experience, thus highlighting the characteristics of the products. On January 24, 2018, the Communication University of China (CUC) [8] released a series of reports titled "China's International Communication Power" in Beijing, showing that Huawei ranks first in terms of its international communication influence.⁴ This is partly due to the differentiated communication of Huawei mobile phones for different users in different regions in its overseas marketing. In 2017 and 2019, Coca-Cola designed a series of advertisements in China with the theme of "Spend the Chinese New Year together." The slogan "Do as the Romans do" caters to Chinese tradition and has gained a high market share in the Chinese market. In selecting advertising materials, Coca-Cola fully uses China's traditional festivals and customs to create a festive atmosphere to attract more Chinese consumers. In terms of advertising actors' selection, Coca-Cola satisfies modern young people's tastes. It selects popular star idols for advertising promotion because stars can influence the attitude and purchasing behavior of target consumer groups, as well as increase their loyalty and satisfaction towards products.[9] The advertisements extensively use the red colors favored by Chinese people during the Spring Festival, including red lanterns, red window flowers, red clothes, red hats, scarves, Etc., to create and color a warm atmosphere. Regarding content, Coca-Cola's advertisements always convey the themes of "reunion" and "care," closely related to traditional Chinese values.

However, the famous advertisement “Screwed Up” by Dolce & Gabbana in China tells us in another way that there is no good or bad culture. However, the communication of culture has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, in November 2018, the famous Italian luxury brand Dolce & Gabbana released a series of advertisements, “Eat with Chopsticks,” on its official Microblog account. However, they did not expect that the chain reaction triggered by the film would lead to the cancellation of its upcoming Shanghai fashion show, which also made the brand resisted by large-scale consumers.

Why does a small advertisement trigger a series of avalanche effects? What is the root cause of the failure of this cross-cultural advertising communication? In the dissemination of cross-cultural advertising, advertisement creators often take their own culture as the center and incorporate the culture of the recipient country into the evaluation criteria of their cultural system, which leads to cultural and psychological rejection of the recipient country.

For example, Bertelsmann Group’s 21st Century Splendid Chain Bookstore in China’s market Beijing, Murdoch’s News Corporation’s Star TV also settled in Guangdong, and the American Time Warner Media Group bought CETV in Hong Kong with a massive amount of money. Many large multinational media groups used a variety of marketing means to constantly accelerate the pace of entering the Chinese media market, which was no longer a quiet place. We should have a clear understanding of this phenomenon. Armand Matra, a famous French left-wing scholar, pointed out in his book *World Communication and Cultural Hegemony*[10] that the myth of developmentalism makes a financial capital move towards economic globalization, thus blurring the boundary between nation and state. Finally, the new network of transnational information dissemination divides the world according to the production and distribution of economic capital and cultural capital; the global flow of information culture, especially audio-visual culture, causes a crisis of cultural identity and identity. Under the label of commodities, the culture promoted by multinational media groups through industrialization has become a common means of cultural consumption, and “consumer rights” have become the driving force of cultural communication. He made great efforts to observe and criticize a globalization movement initiated by multinational media groups with mighty communication powers to dominate the culture of other nations, regions, or groups utilizing compulsory communication. He believes that the fear of cultural assimilation and the hope of cultural identity have become elements of international relations since the spread of industrialization. However, culture is also affected by social and economic factors. Therefore, cultural issues are economic and political issues. The so-called “modern choice” advocated by multinational media groups seems to attach importance to the rights of information receivers. However, it ignores a more important issue: the fundamental information dissemination should be the interactive dialogue process between the receivers and the communicators.

Therefore, cross-cultural advertising is also an indispensable part of the cultural inheritance of the brand’s origin country and the cultural exchange with other countries and regions.

2.3. Strategies for Cross-cultural Advertising

Suppose an enterprise wants to expand its overseas market and carry out advertising marketing. In that case, the author summarizes the following strategies, hoping to provide a reference for enterprises to carry out cross-cultural communication.

First, understand the differences between cultures and conduct an in-depth market investigation. Before entering a country’s market, enterprises must conduct in-depth research on local market conditions, such as consumers’ preferences, competitors’ details, constraints of policies and regulations, and the overall market environment. It is the premise of cross-cultural communication in advertising. Avoid unconsciously using various standards of their own culture to measure and judge each other’s behavior, and adopt coping strategies according to these cultural differences.

Second, establish a correct communication concept and expand the perspective of cross-cultural advertising communication. Since enterprises want to go abroad, they should broaden their perspectives, broaden their horizons, and operate the creativity, production, release, and other links with global thinking when carrying out cross-cultural advertising. What is more, respect the local language habits: the most obvious obstacle to the spread of cross-cultural advertising is the language gap, so choose the right words.

Third, apply the principle of superior cultural integration. In Tan Yi Lu’s Preface, Mr. Qian Zhongshu said: “The East China Sea and the West China Sea share the same mentality,” which shows that the East and the West share the same mentality and thinking. Any cultural differences will also reflect certain commonalities, which can be used in our cross-cultural advertising communication. For example, love, bravery, and diligence are respected by almost all cultures. Belonging, dependence, and fear are common emotions human beings share.

3. Prospects for the development of cross-cultural advertising

In the media field, economic globalization is reflected in the commercialization and marketization of media organizations, making cross-cultural advertising freer in media delivery. Just as McLuhan predicted the “global village,” “the increasing proportion of cultural output and communication is a major feature of global communication in today’s era.”[11]

Economic globalization and communication globalization, through the changing needs of enterprises under the marketing revolution, cause changes in advertising companies’ global operations. However, advertisers feel the digitalization and fragmentation of media. Consumers’ corresponding information survival

and consumption state more directly and deeply. Therefore, enterprises put forward new and higher service demands for advertising agencies. The emergence of various digital new media has brought about the diversification of information transmission channels, and the contact form of consumer media shows a trend of "fragmentation."

In the context of globalization, taking China as an example, Chinese advertising companies and marketing communication companies are facing competition between local companies and multinational marketing communication groups. According to the Provisions on the Administration of Foreign-Invested Advertising Companies jointly issued by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Commerce on March 2, 2004, China's advertising market will be fully open to foreign investment after December 10, 2005. Subsequently, sizeable multinational advertising groups have started a new round of solid expansion in China's advertising market. They were acquiring local marketing communication companies with expertise and market influence in marketing communication and improving their execution of integrated marketing communication in the Chinese market. In this context, media fragmentation creates a more centralized advertising discourse of large multinational specular groups, like numerous LED lights converging into an intense beam of light.

Another inevitability brought about by economic globalization is the typical feeling of human beings. In the Western cultural context, "community" has been a topic of constant discussion since Aristotle, but its meaning is not clear and definite. Marx and Engels pointed out in German ideology that: "It is only in the community that individuals have the means to develop their abilities in all their aspects, that is to say, it is only in the community that individual freedom is possible... Under the condition of a real community, each gains freedom in his union and through this union." [12] The process of globalization is based on interest association, with economic cooperation as the main body, global governance as the consensus, and cultural community values as the support.

4. Conclusion

Cross-cultural advertising is a helpful bridge connecting the world's culture and economy. The discipline scope involves anthropology, ethnology, folklore, sociology, psychology, regional studies, linguistics, communication, and other social sciences and humanities. Its nature is an applied subject of cultural anthropology, cultural sociology, and communication.

Although advertising is a commercial means, through the commercial purpose of making money, people from different countries enhance mutual understanding through cross-cultural advertising, making the earth smaller and making the fate of humankind share weal and woe. It enables people to have a systematic understanding of the values of other countries and regions in the world and fits well with the vision of

globalization and the concept of building a community of shared future for humankind.

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