Analysis of the breakthrough of gender equality advertisement on gender stereotypes – Take PROYA's 2021 advertisement film “It’s gender, not border” as an example

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Abstract. This paper adopts text analysis to interpret gender equality advertisements, and selects PROYA 2021 "It's gender, not border" advertisement film as a research case to analyze its breakthrough in gender stereotypes. From the perspective of advertisement creation, the breakthrough of gender stereotypes in this advertisement film can be clearly divided into three stages including insight, questioning and denial, which presents, criticizes and breakthroughs the gender stereotypes layer by layer, which provides the significance of creating advertisements from women's perspectives on the practical level.

1 Introduction

In recent years, women's marketing has become a hot trend. In the advertising industry, many brands have created advertisements from women's perspectives to convey brand attitudes and propositions, such as PROYA's "It's gender, not border", NEIWAI's "No body is nobody", YOUDAO's "Interests are not about gender", and Durex's "Celebration starts from this moment", and so on. The creation and communication of these advertisements break the traditional gender stereotypes to a certain extent and convey the concept of gender equality. The popularity of gender equality advertisements provides a model for the creation of advertisements from a female perspective, as well as case support for the study of gender roles in advertisements.

2 Research question

Gender roles are a set of behavioral norms corresponding to one's gender that an individual acquires through imitative learning during the socialization process. Gender stereotypes refer to the specific expectations, norms, and evaluations that society places on individuals based on their gender, limiting their ability to develop diverse personalities, behaviors, and roles. Gender stereotypes are often manifested in the social division of labor between men and women, the power relationship between men and women, the character traits of men who are strong and women who are soft, the abilities and intelligence of men who are superior and women who are inferior, the consumer relationship between men who earn and women who spend, and the emotional traits of men who are sensible and women who are romantic or fragile, and so on.

Numerous studies have shown that gender stereotypes are reflected in advertisements in the form of stereotyped images of women and men. Women in early advertisements were fixed as gentle and virtuous housewives in the family, male supporters in society, beautiful vases or sex objects, while men were fixed as mature and stable successful men, breadwinners, drinkers and sex addicts, which is the reproduction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes in advertisements, reflecting the concept of gender discrimination. With the awakening of women's consciousness and the improvement of their economic status, gender stereotypes in advertisements have been transmuted, showing the development of gender diversification, which pushes scholars to re-examine gender roles in advertisements out of the traditional critical perspective. Han S and Han Y found that there has been a significant weakening of gender stereotypes in TV advertisements over the past decade of the market economy in China, and the gender roles of both sexes have begun to change, in which the principle of consumerism and the masking of gender identities by the new middle class cannot be denied. Ding L studied the performance, reasons and positive significance of the softening of the male image in TV advertisements, and at the same time pointed out that the excessive softening of the male image should be prevented. The studies of Xu J and Liao J showed that the image of women in China's TV advertisements is being redefined, and the traditional stereotypes of women are beginning to be broken through and disintegrated, and the image of women is becoming more diversified.

Most of the above studies discuss the performance and reasons for the changes produced by the traditional

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gender stereotypes in advertisements, and few scholars explore how to break through the gender stereotypes from the perspective of advertisement creation. Meanwhile, the gender equality advertisements of PROYA, NEIWAI and other brands out of the loop in feminist marketing provide case support for exploring the breakthrough of gender stereotypes in advertisements.

The above clever encounter between academia and industry finds an entry point for this study, which aims to interpret the gender equality advertisement and analyze its breakthrough of gender stereotypes. Specifically, the following questions are examined: What traditional gender stereotypes does the advertisement break through? How is it a breakthrough? What is the inspiration for contemporary advertisement creation from a female perspective?

3 Research method

Text analysis is a research method used by researchers to describe and interpret media messages, focusing on describing the content, structure, and function of the text, explaining the deep underlying meaning, and applying it to the deep reading of case texts thus unearthing the theoretical meaning. The text in this method includes all meaningful symbols that can be recorded, such as words, drawings, videos, and so on. This paper adopts text analysis to interpret gender stereotypes in gender equality advertisements and analyze how they break through traditional gender stereotypes.

This paper selects PROYA's "It's Gender, Not Border" advertisement which was released on Women's Day 2021 as the subject for analysis. There are two reasons why it has been selected. Firstly, unlike many advertisements that are created solely from a female perspective, this advertisement also considers the male perspective, which is typical and inspiring in the creation of gender equality advertisements. Secondly, the advertisement became a benchmark case for communication effectiveness as it was the most forwarded and discussed brand campaign on Women's Day that year, simultaneously sweeping the public welfare, academic, and advertisement circles. Both of these reasons justify the choice of the "It's gender, not border" advertisement film as a case study of gender equality advertisements.

4 Research finding

The breakthrough of gender stereotypes in this advertisement film can be clearly divided into three stages including insight, questioning and denial, which presents, criticizes and breakthroughs the gender stereotypes layer by layer.

4.1 Insight into gender stereotypes goes beyond women

The advertisement is introduced with the question "Under what circumstances would you evaluate a thing by gender", which quickly attracts the audience's attention and triggers them to think about gender stereotypes simultaneously. Afterward, the main characters use several "we say" to state a series of objective gender stereotypes in life and adopt the first and third-person perspectives to present the corresponding images alternately.

Analysis shows that the advertisement has gained insight into gender stereotypes at five levels: ability and intelligence, personality traits, family roles, career choices, and hobbies. In terms of ability and intelligence, "traffic accidents", "female drivers" and "girls can't learn science well" reflect the gender stereotypes of women's poor driving skills and weak logic and abstract thinking. In terms of personality traits, "bold" character is considered "not like a girl", "quiet" and "crying" are considered "not manly", reflecting the gender stereotypes that women are quiet and fragile while men are brave and strong; In terms of family roles, "good women" are considered to "balance family and career" and "emphasize family"; and do not need to "fight for a career" and "read so many books", while "real men" are considered to be "successful in their career" and should not "squat at home" or "act like a woman", reflecting the gender stereotypes of men's roles outside the home and women's roles inside the home. In terms of career choices, women are considered to be "not good at science" and men are considered not to "study nursing", reflecting gender stereotypes of women engaging in careers such as nursing, education, or social work and men engaging in careers such as technology, business or manufacturing; In terms of hobbies, women who "practice boxing" are considered "unmarriageable" and men are considered not to "dance ballet" or "like pink". This reflects the gender stereotypes that women love art, cultural activities, and pink, while men love powerful and intense activities. These are summarized and summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender stereotypes</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ability and intelligence</td>
<td>poor driving skills, weak logic, and abstract thinking</td>
<td>better than women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personality traits</td>
<td>quiet and fragile</td>
<td>brave and strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family roles</td>
<td>inside the home</td>
<td>outside the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career choices</td>
<td>nursing, education, or social work</td>
<td>technology, business, or manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hobbies</td>
<td>art, cultural activities, and pink</td>
<td>powerful and intense activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Questioning about gender stereotypes through the vocalization of gender groups

Based on the insight of gender stereotypes, the advertisement shifts from objective statements to tit-for-tat questions and rhetorical questions, ending the one-sided output of the main character. Next, as shown in Fig 1, it uses the expression of group images and voices, focusing on the close-ups of different people’s mouths and frequently using question words such as "why" and "could it be said that " to further guide the audience to think about the logical confusion and irrationality behind gender stereotypes. "Why is it necessary to evaluate by gender?" , "Why is it required for a powerful woman to act like a man?", and "Why don't men have the right to be vulnerable?". The joint voices of women and men are layered with the background music that gradually increases in tempo, causing the audience's emotions to build up and pushing the advertisement to a climax.

Fig. 1. Advertisements with group images and voices.

The second phase of the advertisement adopts the expression of group images and group voices to ask questions about gender stereotypes, to trigger the audience's resonance, and building up the emotion of criticizing gender prejudice to the peak.

4.3 Denying gender stereotypes and calling for diversity

Different from the traditional gender images in advertisements, this film features several new images, as shown in Fig 2 and 3. The women who skydive, scuba dive, fly a flying machine, practice boxing, and study hard in science, and the men who read a book in a bedroom alone, take care of a sick person, dance ballet, and wear a pink shirt, all these new images show the courageous, independent, strong, powerful, and rational side of women, and the quiet, gentle, fragile, and sensual side of men at the same time. This is an indirect negation of the gender stereotypes and sets the stage for the direct negation that follows.

Fig. 2. Images of women in the advertisement film.

Fig. 3. Images of men in the advertisement film.
The third phase of that advertisement, first breaks and then builds. First of all, it is a direct negation of gender stereotypes in the form of self-answering questions: "Women should be gentle", "How can women balance family and career", "Men should be strong", and "Men should not cry" is "wrong". Before discussing what women or men should do, it should be recognized that both men and women are first and foremost "human beings". The traits and behaviors such as "gentle", "brave", "romantic", "calm", "strong" and "crying" are possessed by humans, rather than unique to women or men. Human beings should be equal and diverse. In the end, the advertisement once again calls for "Let's be gentle, brave, romantic and .......") in a group voice, which leads to the core idea of the advertisement, "It's gender, not border".

The third phase of this advertisement breaks away from traditional gender stereotypes through the double negation of images and language, intending to convey the idea of gender equality and calling on everyone to live diversely.

5 Conclusions

Through the above analysis, the breakthrough of gender stereotypes in the advertisement "It's gender, not border" is divided into three stages: insight, questioning and denial. Firstly, based on the insight into the gender stereotypes in life, it presents the audience with five levels of gender stereotypes: ability and intelligence, personality traits, family roles, career choices, and interests, which triggers the audience to think about them. Secondly, through the expression of the group images and voices, it asks questions about gender stereotypes and accumulates the audience's critical emotions to the peak. Finally, by presenting new images and the double negation of audiovisuals, it breaks through the traditional gender stereotypes and conveys the concept of gender equality.

The advertisement's breakthrough of gender stereotypes brings many inspirations for creating advertisements from women's perspectives. First, in the face of increasingly sensitive gender issues, advertisement creators should enhance gender awareness, maintain gender sensitivity, and be able to recognize gender inequality in gender stereotypes, which include both women and men. Secondly, they should have the courage to break through gender stereotypes and adopt expressive creative techniques to show new images of both genders, which is the way to make advertisement creativity innovative and eye-catching to the audience. Finally, the mass media is also an important source of gender stereotypes, in other words, the mass media has the function of constructing gender meanings or patterns. We should take the initiative to utilize the social value of advertisements, transcending the binary position of men and women to convey the concept of gender equality, contributing to the discussion and development of the issue of gender equality, and thus promoting the formation and maintenance of harmonious gender relations.

References