



The Influence of advertisements on social media for China's domestic cosmetics

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When speaking of China's cosmetics, Liu, a 20-year-old Chinese college student, got excited and said to us, "I just love them! The products look fancy and are pretty cheap." In fact, there are many other people similar to Liu who are interested in and paying attention to China's newly emerging cosmetics, which has cleverly utilized a kind of innovative marketing strategy---online advertisements.

Background

Online advertisements have become a popular kind of marketing strategy over the recent past few years. Due to its unique attributes, producers have come to sophisticatedly exploit and widely utilize them when marketing their products. In general, there are four main qualities of online ads that contributes to its wide range of influence.(Song Yan, 2018) First, online advertisements influence a large number of people. According to the report in 2018 by We Are Social and Hootsuite, the number of net citizens was 4.388 billion on a global scale. It is also worth noticing that China's population of net citizens was growing at a fast rate---6.7%, only slower than India. In addition, online ads attract more attention than traditional ways of advertising. Second, online advertisements are more specific, targeting the exact type of consumers. Third, space and time do not have an impact on online ads, which means that people are able to view them anywhere and at any time. Lastly, it is relatively cheaper and more convenient to create online ads when compared to conventional advertisements. As a result, producers can advertise their products at a much lower cost and produce more products.

Influence

Online advertisements are much more effective than the traditional ones. According to the survey we conducted, these advertisements attract as much as 49.15% of the participants because of the performance of the makeup product and 41.53% of participants due to the texture of the product. The online advertisements allow customers to see the detailed display of the make-up product. For example,

what the color of the lip stick is on a yellow skin girl, how well the lip stick goes with warm eyeshadows, or whether the lip stick is easy to remove. Customers thus use online advertisements as trustworthy and informative tests of makeup products.

There are mainly two kinds of online advertisements: direct and indirect. While the direct ones refer to those that are stated clearly as advertisements and often use official descriptions, the indirect ones are those that are not explicitly stated as ads and often involve personalized comments. From the survey that we conducted, while 57.63% of the participants accept both kinds of advertisements, the indirect advertisements have more popularity than the direct ones.

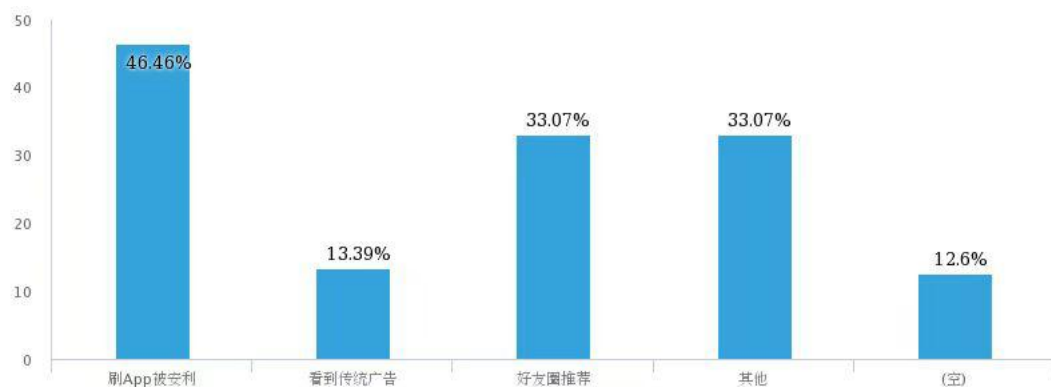
Our survey also shows that indirect ads have more popularity than the direct ones. Counterintuitive as it is at the first sight--why people like those that conceal information from them--the value costumers attach to online ads makes this preference for indirect ads clear. Since indirect ads often appear in posts such as "Monthly Favorites", "Morning Make Up Routines", and posts on specific looks, they are fun to watch. Compared with the "fanciful" official descriptions, customers also trust the "down to earth" comments with less exaggeration more. (Tutaj and Reijmersdal 6) Take advertisements for a foundation as an example. The direct advertisement describes it as "able to give the skin the energy it needs to look fresher and younger". The indirect advertisement in a daily vlog is more realistic, with description as "not thick and stays for a long time".

The current consumers' buying habit is a large contributor to the success of online advertisement, and moreover, the increasing popularity of domestic products. When the age of e-commerce comes, consumers are used to read comments on the Internet and accordingly buy the goods. "Planting grass"(choosing favored goods) on social media while "pulling grass" (buying favored goods) on the e-commerce platform, the "social power supplier" model has gradually become the brand's marketing standard.

RED is an outstanding example as a promotion for the domestic products. RED used to talk about the actual experience with a close friend's voice. Because the comments seem more authentic, it is easy to arouse the consumer's desire to shop. On RED, there are a large number of recommendations of domestic cosmetic brands,

such as "Perfect diary" and "Judy doll", which is popular for its cheap price and high quality. It is remarkable that a few days ago, RED and Taobao have successfully opened up the content. When the merchant edits a product introduction, he can choose to quote the relevant "notes"(the comments of users) of RED. As RED and similar application play a larger role when people make shopping decision, online advertisements become more effective, resulting more sales for the domestic products.

Online advertisement works as a stimulator for the development of domestic cosmetics. Among the online surveys conducted by us, 67% of people have heard of the brand of domestic cosmetics. With the appearance of advertisement of domestic cosmetics online, more and more people start to know Chinese domestic brands and are willing to purchase them. Among the people who heard about it, 47% of them learned about the domestic cosmetics brand on social media application such as RED and Weibo, and 32% of them used chatting application such as WeChat Group to learn about Chinese makeup.



The popularity of social media has given a new platform for the display of Chinese domestics, so that some people who do not touch the domestic products have channels to know it. We investigated whether people have a basic understanding of the brand of domestic make-up. The data shows that there are two brands more renown compared with others: 40% of people know the "Perfect diary", and 27% know "Judy doll", which also happen to be brands with most frequent promotion online. Although many people have heard of the existence of domestic cosmetics, in the cosmetics market dominated by European, Japanese and Korean brands, only 38%

of people will buy Chinese goods. But simultaneously, we can find that most people who buy Chinese makeup have been previously recommended by bloggers on social media. This mode reveals that online advertisement increasingly affect consumers, thus appropriate online advertisements can influence people to buy more domestic makeups.

Concern

In one of our interviews with a makeup lover Vivian, a 17-year-old high school student, she expressed her concern towards domestic cosmetics: “The products are simply not as satisfying as how they appeared in the advertisements! And the quality of products are quite unstable.” According to our interviewee, the showy online ads tend to exaggerate the actual effects of the goods. “The colors are skillfully adjusted in the ads, which are not as appealing in real life. Actually I doubt whether the so-called fans of the brand have ever used its products before!”

To support this argument, our survey results show that over 10% of Chinese cosmetic purchasers complain that the goods they bought are completely different from those shown in ads. Through research, complaints often include eyeshadow fallout, foundation clinging to dry patches, concealer enlarging pores and wrinkles, eyeshadow not blending, and so on. For example, many consumers criticize the foundation of the brand Perfect Diary for being too dry and not lasting on the app RED. Some even say that they will never trust ads of Perfect Diary or but its products any more. Domestic makeup producers should be aware of these user reports because the effect of the ads decreases when consumers consider them as fake news.

Conclusion

In modern society, when we open social media like RED or bilibili, a large amount of indirect advertisements take up the spaces. Various evaluations of domestic cosmetics appear frequently in daily life. Those so-called “down to earth” advertisements have now changed the consumption habits of people. From the

above-mentioned data, we can see the young group in urban city have become the main consumer.

In addition, personal assessment has become a big method of promotion because over half of people hold the opinion that the indirect ads give more comprehensive visual demonstrations that make the advertisements look trustworthy. Increased proportions of personalized comments and reading volume have also pointed out that the online indirect ads will gradually become the mainstream.

When talking about the prospect of indirect ads, Liu laughed and said: “All the current forms of ads are products of the time. As more goods come into view of consumers, it is reasonable for us to believe that the industry will have a brighter future.”

Reference

[1] Song, Yan, (2018, August 27). *The analysis of the influence of development of online advertisement on marketing strategies*. Brand Research

[2] <http://c2cc.cn/news/10002249.html>

[3] Karolina, Tutaj and Eva A. van Reijmersdal. “Effects of online advertising format and persuasion knowledge on audience reactions”, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, vol.18, no.1, 2012, pp.5-18.

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Appendix

Link of the survey: <https://www.wjx.cn/m/43034066.aspx>

Participants of survey: people of all ages and genders who use the Internet and live in Wuxi and other nearby cities

Method of collecting data: online, via website <https://www.wjx.cn/>

Sample number: 127