

Narration of Female Empowerment in Brand Cross-Cultural Communication: Take Dove Advertising as an Example

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Abstract: Feminism is the core of female empowerment advertisement, which promotes feminist values and female strength to create brand image, so as to support and encourage female appearance. Based on the current situation of gender discrimination and the investigation of women all over the world, Dove put forward and insisted on conveying its brand concept of "simple and true beauty". On the basis of fully obtaining the pre-text of "the other", it strengthened consumers' common understanding of Dove's brand concept by using cross-cultural communication strategies such as homogeneous nonverbal symbols and creating emotional resonance, and constructed a meaningful space between the brand and female consumers in "learning differences" and "constructing similarities".

Keywords: female empowerment; advertisement; Intercultural communication; gender study; media culture.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Birth and Evolution of Feminist Wave

Feminism originated from France and describes the political, cultural and economic movements aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. From the historical stages of feminism, the first wave began at the end of the 18th century and continued to the beginning of the 20th century. The main appeal was that women were equal to men economically, and women in various countries actively strived for political equality and demanded the right to vote. The second wave of feminism began in the 1960's and ended in the late 1980's. It was no longer limited to striving for equal rights for women in a certain aspect, but tried to completely dispel the social concepts and systems under the background of patriarchal culture, and on the basis of clearing up sexism and patriarchal culture, it strived to rebuild new gender relations and a new system of ideological discourse. The third wave began in 1990's, and under the influence of postmodernism, it further strengthened gender pluralism and paid attention to the internal differences among women [1]. Three feminist waves, from focusing on women as a whole, focusing on women as a part of differences, to focusing on

self-experience, provide different levels of paths for female speech. Under the influence of feminist tide and feminist movement, women gradually break away from the traditional role framework of caring for each other, being gentle and virtuous, clearly recognize their own characteristics, participate in social life in a unique way, and affirm and realize their social value and life pursuit [2].

1.2 Literature Review

Driven by the tide of feminism, female empowerment advertisement has become a new trend and phenomenon. female empowerment advertisement is an advertisement in which advertisers focus on promoting female strength (independence, self-confidence, gender equality), convey support, praise and empower women through multidimensional information, images and stories, and aim to benefit the brand and corporate image [2]. Through the HowNet database search, there are abundant achievements in the combination of feminism and advertising. Research topics focus on the impact of female empowerment advertising on consumers' buying behavior, and consumers' cognition of new women images in advertising. Taking SK-II "she finally went to the blind date corner" as a single case study, Ming explores the narrative forms of female empowerment advertising and the ideology conveyed behind it, and points out that advertising mainly conveys positive information and gives affirmation and support to women by expressing the true feelings of advertising characters, thus providing confident, positive and positive messages to the audience and consumers and trying to influence the audience's consciousness. Wang analyzed the advertising media and its market-oriented power structure, and made a critical analysis of the female empowerment advertisement, pointing out that the so-called female empowerment advertisement took the commercialized female consciousness as the cultural package, and persuaded women to internalize the social discipline of their bodies and emotions [3]. In short, at present some achievements have been made in female empowerment advertising in academic circles, but it is rare to study the communication of female empowerment advertising in different countries from the perspective of brand cross-cultural communication. How to overcome the huge differences in cultural backgrounds and

ideologies of different countries and create a common narrative space for female empowerment is a direction worth studying. It is also helpful to provide some narrative strategies and skills for brand owners and advertisement creators, so as to make the cross-cultural communication of the brand achieve better marketing communication effect.

2. The Global Brand Marketing Under Sexual Discrimination Influence

2.1 The Review of Female Appearance in the Context of Global Sexism.

In the report on global beauty and self-confidence, Dove found that about 70% of women in the world have experienced people's praise for their appearance rather than their professional success. According to the survey, only 7% of Japanese teenage girls have confidence in their looks. Among the widespread sexism, the examination of female appearance and the resulting anxiety of female appearance are particularly prominent, and women are frequently told that their value is inseparable from their appearance. In traditional society, men who have fame, wealth and power look at women from a top-down perspective, and women are in an absolutely weak position. To this day, women are still forced to conform to the aesthetic system constructed by men, and even internalize the aesthetic standards of the patriarchal society into self-examination to gain recognition from others.

2.2 "Her Economy" Boom and Female Brand Marketing

In recent years, with the advent of the era of consumption upgrading and the improvement of female economic and social status, the "her economy" market formed by female consumption is growing at a rapid speed, and female consumption has become a new growth and new kinetic energy to boost economic development. According to "2021 female Quality Life Trend Insight Report", the female consumer market has exceeded 10 trillion yuan, and the penetration rate of female users in the comprehensive e-commerce field has reached 84.3%. Under this influence, many brands have formulated marketing strategies for female consumers.

As the first brand of daily chemical products owned by Unilever, a global top 500 enterprise, Dove has always adhered to its distinctive brand concept (simple and true beauty), opposed the social atmosphere of excessively advocating "standardized beauty", and hoped to expand the meaning of beauty, strengthen the diversification of beauty and encourage more women to be proud of their own beauty. Compared with the traditional method of replacing conventional and simple advertising with beautiful actresses and models, Dove links brand advertising with real people, which not only helps the brand to establish contact with customers, but also establishes a unique brand image for Dove. Among them, the advertisement "You are more beautiful than imagined" won the Titanium Lion Grand Prize in Cannes International Creative Festival in 2013, which is an excellent case of enhancing consumers' recognition in

different countries by using resonance strategies.

3. The Analysis of Dove's Cross-Cultural Advertisement of "New Definition of Beauty"

3.1 Case Selection

In this paper, two video advertisements of Dove in Asian countries (India, Japan) and two video advertisements of Dove in European and American countries (America, Britain) are selected for comparative analysis. The four advertising cases not only reflect the cultural background of different countries and the differences of female power and discourse power, but also consistently present Dove's brand concept focusing on the "new definition of beauty" and the narrative strategy of female empowerment advertising.

3.2 Advertising Text Analysis

3.2.1 Dove India Case: *Rewriting personals for women, Appearance discrimination during blind date*

The advertisement presents all kinds of appearance prejudices encountered by Indian women in the blind date process (see Figure 1): being asked to put on tulle to decorate their body shape, appearing on the stage under the crowd of relatives of the man, and finally being commented that the photos are better than myself, being rejected by blind date objects because their hair is curly, and being rejected because they have birthmarks on their faces.



Figure 1. "Stop the Beauty Test" Dove India advertisement.

3.2.2 Dove Japan case: *remake the ID photo for female students, don't lock your true beauty*

When they received the student ID card and saw their photos above, some girls felt why they looked so gloomy, were not satisfied with their facial features, and their expressions were very stiff. Dove approached the campus and re-photographed the Japanese female students on their student documents to help improve their self-affirmation (see Figure 2). Before taking the photos again, the shooting team asked the girls to see what their friends had said about them. The affirmation from friends made these unconfident girls smile from the bottom of their hearts. This also makes the previously dark and stiff photos sunny and confident.



Figure 2. "Self-Esteem Project" Dove Japan advertisement.

3.2.3. *Dove American case: Say for female athletes, don't comment on my chest and ass, but watch my performance!*

When the news media reported on female athletes, the focus was mostly on their appearance and dress, rather than their performance on the field. To cope with this new gender issue, Dove joined hands with Shawn Johnson, a former gymnast, to appeal to the public to bravely question and even challenge the media, hoping that reporting can change gender bias (see Figure 3). The video shows the words of "pointing fingers" at the appearance of female athletes, calling on women to dare to challenge and change the status of sexism.

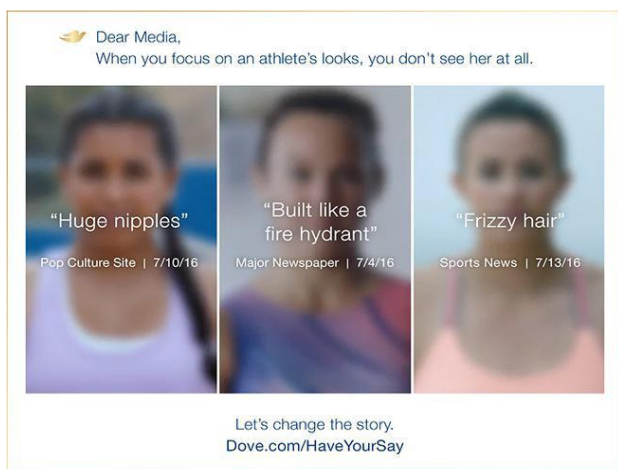


Figure 3. "My Beauty My Say" Dove American advertisement.

3.2.4. *Dove UK case: Please stop talking about the value of the face. I have the final say on my beauty*

Dove begins with a 60-second TVC, and selects nine true stories of women with different experiences. (see Figure 4) From his own perspective, he tells how to regain self-confidence and define his own story in the face of various prejudices. Among the nine people, there is a sweet-looking champion coach Heather Hardy, who once won the UBF and WBC junior world championships; Rain Dove, a neutral model, has gone through the show for men's and female wear, proving that neutrality is also a kind of beauty; Jessica Torres, a plump fashion blogger, broke through the prejudice that "style and fashion only belong to thin people" and

thought that her fashion sense was beyond doubt.



Figure 4. "My Beauty My Say" Dove UK advertisement.

3.3 Advertising Effectiveness

Dove's series of video advertisements have gained high broadcast volume and comment popularity on YouTube, Twitter and other social media platforms, which has caused many women around the world to re-recognize and define "beauty", and has certain social impact on breaking the rigid aesthetic standards inherent in society and helping women improve their self-affirmation. The "Stop The Beauty Test" theme advertisement for Indian consumers was released on February 25, 2021. By mid-June, the video had been viewed more than 190,000 times on YouTube platform, which inspired many female netizens to tell their experiences and stories in the comment area. With the promotion of "My Beauty MY Say" commercials and topics, Dove also set up a collection on the website (<http://www.dovehaveyoursay.com>), which collected many stories and voices of female athletes. They encouraged everyone to support this action and questioned the unfair reports of the media. At present, the video advertisement of Dove UK with the theme of "My Beauty MY Say" has reached more than 10 million views on YouTube platform, and users have expressed similar resonances such as "I was told not to play football because I am a girl", "I am tall and have a strong square chin, but I always like my body" in the comment area.

3.4 Dove's Cross-Cultural Advertising Strategy Analysis

3.4.1 Try to adapt to culture from the perspective of cultural dimension model

Hofstede summed up five dimensions to measure values. Among them, Masculinity and Femininity dimensions measure the degree of recognition of female work roles and men's social role models of success, control and power [4]. In the reports of investigating the equality between men and women all over the world over the years, the gap between men and women in India and Japan continues to widen, while the United States and Britain rank higher in gender equality, while Asian countries and Western countries show a big gap in their masculinity and femininity.

It not only captures the global problem of female discrimination, but also focuses on the differences between cultures. Dove's advertising communication in

India and Japan tends to directly tell the realistic stories of women being discriminated against and women being not confident in their appearance. In America and Britain, the advertising narrative in countries with relatively strong femininity pays attention to the slogan and critical attitude of challenging prejudice.

3.4.2 Borrowing the former texts of other countries to construct cultural context

In order to reduce the barriers of information dissemination caused by heterogeneous context and cultural conflicts, ready-made pre-text is needed in the process of advertising production planning. The pre-text is connected with the pre-existing text, social history, customs and practices, cultural background and context, etc., which can guide the audience to decode the advertising content accurately [5]. The typical scene of "blind date" is selected in Dove's advertising video for Indian consumers. Close-up shots of the man showing disappointment after seeing the appearance of women appear many times in the video, which connects the social reality of India where men are superior to women, easily arouses public resonance, reduces consumers' resistance to advertising, and achieves better advertising transformation. Similarly, Dove, based on the real social event that American media's comments on athletes are discriminatory, takes advantage of advertisements to show the harmfulness of insulting words to female athletes, and provides opportunities for consumers to deepen their understanding of advertisements in the existing cognitive context. It can be seen that Dove's advertisements for female empowerment mostly present phenomenal communication landscape, showing stories and aspirations of women from different countries from a more realistic narrative perspective.

3.4.3 Strengthen the common meaning with homogeneous nonverbal symbols

Symbols flow between different cultures, and they exchange and understand each other through symbolic activities spanning the collection of cultural meta-languages [6]. Non-verbal symbols have the power to cross national boundaries, break through barriers of verbal symbols and realize barrier-free transmission of meaning. Dove's cross-cultural communication for different countries pays attention to the local characteristics of other countries, and at the same time pays attention to the use of homogeneous nonverbal symbols to convey the common brand meaning. Compared with the brand advertising communication in the birthplace (America) and other countries such as India and Japan, Dove consistently focused on the non-verbal symbols such as the appearance, expression and eyes of women from all over the world, such as "fat body" and "birthmark" in India case, "nipple" and "curly hair" in Japan case, "big nose" in UK case. The smiles of different women in UK case uniformly show their self-confidence after changing the traditional concept of "beauty" and accepting the new definition of "beauty", which strengthens the appeal of Dove's advertisement

and the international influence of its brand concept.

3.4.4. Storytelling, grasping emotional appeal and creating resonance

Successful advertisements can resonate emotionally with audiences, arouse their deep memories, and produce unforgettable experiences and feelings. At the same time, advertisements also endow brands with specific connotations and symbolic meanings and establish empathy associations in consumers' minds [7]. Video advertising is the mainstream form of feminist advertising, with obvious storytelling features and rich narrative elements. Under the background of global sexism and internalization of traditional aesthetic standards, Dove did not directly publicize the products in advertisements, but excavated the pain points of the target audience, constructed the common imagination space of the brand and the audience with the narrative strategy of stories, and paid attention to telling the life experiences and feelings of the target consumers who suffered from appearance discrimination and appearance anxiety, thus arousing and stimulating their special feelings in their hearts, spanning the regional and cultural differences, and producing a good resonance effect.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, Dove emphasized breaking gender stereotypes, challenging inherent concepts, continuously affirming, tolerating and inspiring female values, and presenting female stories and strengths from a more realistic perspective. Its cross-cultural strategies promoted its brand communication in different countries and expanded Dove's influence in the international market.

Dove's Success lies in it's cross-cultural communication, which is good at learning from differences and obtaining feminist texts with regional characteristics. Cross-cultural communication of brand needs to face up to cultural differences, understand the cultural context of other countries from the perspective of "the other", respect the customs, religious beliefs and cultural values of different cultures, and obtain cultural passes for brand communication through active cultural adaptation, thus establishing a foundation for the interpretation of common meanings. Dove advertising uses the pre-text familiar to consumers to create a link with the brand concept, creating a phenomenal communication landscape, which is conducive to weakening the advertising Markedness, reducing the burden of users' information identification, and enabling consumers to enhance product acceptance in a subtle way; Dove's cross-cultural communication emphasizes identity and uses cross-cultural communication strategies to build a common female narrative space. The limitation is that while affirming the narrative effect of cross-cultural communication of Dove brand female empowerment advertisement, we should pay attention to the conflict between the goal of commercialization and profit maximization behind female empowerment advertisement and the original intention of feminist

progress. Although Dove has increased the brand's positive depiction of female images in its brand communication, and promoted the society's discussion of a wider definition of beauty, it needs further argumentation whether the true beauty advocated by Dove is a false truth, and whether the movement advocated by Dove to challenge the standard of beauty is the consolidation and strengthening of the beautiful industry.

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