Marketing Strategy of Commercial Micro-Movie Advertising: A Case Study of Laodu

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Abstract: With the development of new media and the change in consumer taste, consumers' interest in traditional advertising has decreased. The form of advertising has undergone tremendous changes. This paper highlights the importance of Micro-Movie in contemporary advertising and marketing and presents a case study of the marketing strategy used in LaoDu. Combining cinematic techniques and advertising campaigns, micro-movie advertising provides a condensed but powerful storytelling experience that can evoke emotional resonance and build brand image. However, only some companies can succeed with micro-movie advertising, as it requires balancing commercial objectives with artistic and educational values. The analysis of LaoDu demonstrates the effectiveness of its placement channel selection, narrative strategy, emotional marketing, senior marketing, and word-of-mouth marketing, offering inspiration and guidance for other brands' marketing efforts.

Keywords: marketing strategy, commercial micro-movie advertising, Laodu

1.   Introduction

With the development of new media and the change in consumer taste, consumers' interest in traditional advertising has decreased. The form of advertising has undergone tremendous changes. Micro-movie, combining advertising and film, has become an essential form of advertising for many large enterprises. For example, The Hire, produced by BMW in 2001. Three Minutes introduced Apple iPhone X, directed by Chen Kexin, in 2018, and What is Pappa Pig which became popular in 2019.

Considering the advantages of micro-movie, they can not only achieve the purpose of promoting the company's products but also forms an emotional connection with the lives of our audience and a good brand image. In addition, micro-movie has good integrity of the plot with rich emotion, which is more attractive to consumers influenced by the Fast-Food Culture on the internet [1]. What's more, compared with traditional advertising, with the combination of film techniques, this new artistic expression has a more significant potential for development in advertising.

In the new media environment, the advantages of micro-movie become obvious and provide advertisers with more choices. Many companies have produced their micro-movie in recent years to attract customers, but only some companies have obtained good publicity. Some crude productions'

promotion is not as efficient as traditional advertising. This makes the micro-movie advertising industry encounter a bottleneck period in recent years. A successful micro-movie requires a great script, an excellent production team, and adequate publicity.

Successful micro-film advertising can not only meet the requirements of commercial attributes, take the main product as the focus of the whole film, but also maintain the balance between art and commerce, arouse the audience's emotional needs, and have educational purposes [2]. At this point, it is necessary to analyze the impact of micro-movie marketing on brand marketing and image. Enterprises need to find marketing methods suitable for their advantages.

This paper analyzes a recent excellent micro-movie advertisement Lao Duas a case study, to evaluate its marketing methods, summarize the successful experience, and then make further suggestions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Impact of Micro-movie Advertising Marketing on Consumers

The plot of the micro-movie advertisement is short, but the story is complete. Cui et al. believe the micro-movie can stimulate the audience's inner emotional resonance. At the same time, Chen et al. think it can promote correct values, build brand trust, establish a brand image, and has more prolonged spread effectiveness [3-7].

The effects on the consumers are in several ways. The first is the narrative quality of commercial micro-films. The better the integration of goods and movie plots, the more favorable consumers will be [8]. Ysn et al. believe that different advertisements affect different types of consumers. The higher the similarity between consumers and micro-movie protagonists, the more likely they are to empathize [9]. Wu et al. believe that the parallel here includes personal psychological and essential characteristics [10]. On the other hand, Zong believes that impression of consumers on traditional advertising is that "marketing is a strategy adopted by merchants to make high profits or hide product quality problems"[11]. Geng et al. believe this negatively impacts consumers' willingness to buy [12].

2.2. Marketing Bottlenecks for Micro-movie Advertising

The marketing strategy for content and creativity has reached a bottleneck period in the current market. First, Sun et al. believe that micro-movie quality is difficult to guarantee, especially under the pressure of short videos. The market positioning is fuzzy, and the publicity model is straightforward [13-19]. In addition, Lincang believes that the cost of making a micro-movie is higher than that of traditional advertising. And it takes more time and effort to produce good quality works, which most companies are unwilling or unable to do [18]. Zhang believes that although micro-movie advertisements will sometimes form hot spots in a short period, they are primarily carnivals and abuses of netizens. It is challenging to initiate positive brand and product marketing [19].

3. Case Study

3.1. Case Description

Xiaodu is an artificial intelligence assistant owned by Baidu company. Xiaodu has a built-in DuerOS conversational artificial intelligence system, which allows users to use the daily expression to realize the operation of more than 800 functions such as audio and video entertainment, information query, life services, and travel conditions. And it can understand customer preferences and provide personalized services through constant communication with users.

This 12-minute touching and imaginative micro-movie Laodu tells the story of Laodu, who is already passed away in heaven. Because he promised to dance with his wife at the annual dance party and make osmanthus cakes, he bribed the supervisor in heaven to return to the real world for one day. Laodu found that his wife had started a new life with new friends and a robot called Xiaodu. And even the recipe for osmanthus cakes had changed into a version with less sugar. Xiaodu replaced Laodu to accompany his wife. If his wife calls, Xiaodu will respond. Xiaodu can remember her grandmother's preferences, such as the recipe for osmanthus cakes and how many times the music has been played, helping her live a boring solitary life. After the dance party ended, his wife put on a red dress alone and played the song she would dance to with Laodu every year in the yard. Laodu and his wife finally danced together again. After the song ends, they will still miss each other year after year. The story ended with images of Laodu and his wife when they were young, which is moving.

Laodu focuses on the demand for a companion among the elderly in the form of a micro-movie and subtly highlights the function of Xiaodu, providing life services and accompanying the elderly. Laodu is full of humanity and humor and target advertising on bilibili and Weibo platforms. This advertising micro-movie has aroused young people's attention to the companionship needs of the elderly. As of January 2023, Laodu has been played more than 8 million times on bilibili, retweeted 160,000 times, and included in the 185th weekly must-see directory of bilibili.

3.2. Marketing Strategy

3.2.1. Placement Channels

The marketing strategy of Laodu can be further discussed in depth on how it uses the placement channels and audience features to improve the marketing effect. Placement channel refers to the track or medium used to convey advertising or promotional information. In advertising and marketing, common placement channels include but are not limited to TV, newspapers, magazines, outdoor billboards, the Internet, social media, search engine, email marketing, etc. Selecting the proper placement channel can help companies convey their promotional messages to the right target users, hitting users' pain points and improving marketing results.

The ad was placed on bilibili and Weibo Hashtag. Most netizens on these platforms are mainly young and have elders at home who are the same age as the two older adults in Laodu, so these groups can resonate more. At the same time, the promotion team also took advantage of the features that young people like to share and discuss their own stories to develop creative and exciting Weibo topics, encouraging users to share their own stories and experiences to enhance their participation. These strategies fully reflected Baidu's brand concept and Xiaodu's product features and successfully increased the media coverage and the user conversion rate. In addition, the publicity team utilized the feature of bilibili, which is suited for long videos to retain the integrity of Laodu, which further improved users' viewing experience and expressed the brand concept to the audience. Meanwhile, through the bullet chatting and comment of Bilibili, users spontaneously shared their stories in the comment section, which enhanced user interaction and increased user participation.

3.2.2. Content Marketing

Content marketing is a strategy to attract and retain target audiences by producing and distributing valuable and meaningful content for brand promotion and sales growth. Although Laodu is a 12-minute commercial, its plot is simple and complete, and its emotions are genuine. Laodu's experience of returning to reality to see his wife shows a story about life and humanity, which highly touches the audience's heart. The design of the paradise office at the beginning can also quickly arouse their curiosity so that the audience will not be defensive and conflicted.

The director can tell a simple and moving story while still managing to do a lot of Easter eggs in the plot. For example, the osmanthus cake as the whole film clues to link the account; in heaven, the child became the leader of heaven to approve the Laodu back to earth; the puppy can "psychic" see others cannot see the Laodu and so on. These elements not only enrich the connotation of the film but also can arouse the audience's thinking, thus increasing the fun of the movie-going experience. Secondly, the filters and backgrounds of the film are well-designed. Both the atmosphere of paradise and Laodu's home are appropriate, and at the same time, enhance the film's emotion and increase the advertisement's attractiveness. The production process of Laodu lasted for two years, during which the production team kept polishing the content and form of the movie, pursuing perfect quality. The publicity and pre-heating during the production process attracted more audience attention and participation and made more people get to know the product image of Xiaodu.

3.2.3. Emotion Marketing

Emotional marketing establishes an emotional connection with users by leveraging brand image, stimulating emotions, and understanding consumers' needs to promote products or achieve business goals. Emotion marketing plays a crucial role in "Laodu". The commercial conveys to the audience that family companionship can never be replaced. Still, the significance of Xiaodu's birth is to use the power of technology to make companionship one more possibility. This emphasizes the positive role of Xiaodu technology in society. This emotional marketing is conveyed to young people, stressing the importance of family and the value of technology in our lives. The plot of Laodu is designed with laughing and crying points and is close to real life, causing emotional resonance to the audience and further conveying the core of romantic love of the older generation, whose romantic view of love also arouses the curiosity of the young audience and increases the click-through rate of the advertisement. Laodu also implicitly points out a widespread problem nowadays, namely the companionship of the elderly. By showing the lonely life of the elderly living alone, the ad draws viewers' attention to the challenges faced by the elderly and offers consumers the company's social responsibility, increasing brand favorability.

3.2.4. Aged Marketing

To target the senior Chinese market, the promotional team of Laodu chose to place the video during the Chongyang Festival period. Chongyang Festival is one of the traditional Chinese festivals and an essential symbol of honoring and caring for the elderly. Placing it during this particular time of the day can make the elderly feel cared for and respected. It enhances the brand's affinity and recognition of the elderly group. In addition, in the context of aging in China nowadays, the elderly population is increasing, and the potential of the elderly market is getting increasingly important to companies. Therefore, Baidu Inc. provides targeted products and services, such as AI companionship, for the elderly to gain more market share and customer loyalty from the elderly. Moreover, Laodu cleverly demonstrates the integration of technology and life through Xiaodu, an AI assistant. With the increasing acceptance of technology among the elderly, Baidu Inc. has captured many elderly users through the movie's performance of Xiaodu meeting the needs of the elderly, which has increased its huge market competitiveness.

3.2.5. Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is a strategy that emphasizes building a good brand image through positive consumer sharing. Companies must provide high-quality products or services that enhance consumer engagement to maximize marketing results. Word-of-mouth marketing is also an essential part of Laodu's marketing strategy, which increases brand recognition and reputation through users'

spontaneous spreading of brand information. First, the image of the brand product was portrayed appropriately. As an AI product, Xiaodu was cleverly integrated into the plot and played a crucial role in linking the whole movie, which not only reflected technological innovation but also connected with family love and other emotional elements and did not deliberately exaggerate its product strength, giving the audience a natural and realistic feeling. The short movie does not induce purchasing from the beginning to the end but only inserts Xiaodu into the plot and becomes an emotional anchor point. Such a marketing approach will not cause disgust and boredom among viewers, increase the credibility and affinity of the brand, and improve the brand's reputation.

3.3. Suggestion

By analyzing the marketing strategy of Laodu, it can be suggested to strengthen the interactivity in social media. For example, through user comments and interactions to increase user participation and sharing, and by asking viewers who have seen the movie to do a 30-second survey to understand better user satisfaction, which can help companies improve their products and further expand the word-of-mouth effect of the film. Furthermore, it can enhance publicity and promotion specifically for senior users, for example, by promoting the movie at community events for the elderly and playing it in nursing homes, hospitals, etc. This will help senior citizens recognize and get to know Laodu and increase their trust in Xiaodu as a product. In terms of improving the movie proposal, it is suggested to add more displays and introductions of technology products and intelligent homes, as well as more scenes and case demonstrations to deepen users' impression and understanding of Xiaodu.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the marketing strategy of Laodu, the success of this micro-movie advertisement can be found in the following aspects.

Both bilibili and Weibo are platforms where young people gather, with high discussion and exposure, which can effectively convey the brand message and further promote the story content.

Laodu is a tear-jerker short film with true feelings, which makes the audience appreciate the importance of family companionship, which cannot be replaced. In terms of emotional marketing, the appearance of Xiaodu successfully shows the ability of technology to solve the problem of friendship for the elderly and profoundly arouses the audience to think about integrating technology into their lives.

Placing the video on the Chongyang Festival successfully connects the elderly with the brand. At the same time, the display of China's aging background and the companionship problem of the elderly made the audience pay more attention to the elderly group, which was beneficial to the brand image.

Through the penetration of Xiaodu AI and the deepening of emotional value in the video, the audience has a deep impression of Xiaodu. At the same time, the absence of induced purchases can better increase the brand's trust.

The above key findings and research results can provide inspiration and reference for the future marketing strategies of other brands in a similar field, i.e., precisely adopting diversified placement channels, filming ads that strike a chord and resonate with people, targeting user groups to deliver marketing at the right timing, and naturally promoting products to improve word of mouth.

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