

Original Paper

Effects of Social Media on Branding ——The Rise of Creative Advertising Marketing

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Abstract

In the Web2.0 era, social media has developed into the most compelling area in the global media industry and brought online users a fresher experience and more creative network communication application models. Both its social impact and economic development have become the new engine and growth point of the media industry. More and more brands and companies put their advertising budgets on social media advertising, because social media advertising is not only affordable but also able to accurately target the consumer group. The Internet word of mouth formed by social media is reshaping the relationship between brands and consumers. At the same time, the way audiences receive and disseminate information has undergone tremendous changes, and advertising creative communication is also facing huge challenges. This article will analyze the development process and trends of social media from the perspective of its core technology and communication characteristics, and then explore the social-psychological impact and cultural value of social media brought to brand communication.

Keywords

social media, branding, brand communication, social-psychological impact cultural effect

1. Introduction

Coca-Cola is more than soda. Starbucks is more than just a cup of coffee. Nike is not only a pair of sports shoes. This is the reason for creating a brand. Interacting with these products can provide experiences, and we will keep these experiences in mind when we purchase these products.

When consumers make purchasing decisions, the brand may become the key deciding factor. Nearly 60% of shoppers said that they actively buy products from a brand they know, while 21% of consumers

said that they buy products because they like the brand (global Nielsen survey, 2015).

Branding is the process in which a company creates an effective and positive perception in their customer's minds. The mission of branding is to improve the competitiveness of the brand and build a loyal customer base by combining the visual design, the story, and the marketing message of the brand.

There are over four billion social media users worldwide. In the past year, the scale of users expanded to nearly 500 million, the annual growth rate exceeds more than 13%. Nowadays, the users of social media have exceeded half of the world's population (datareportal, digital, 2020). Therefore, advertisers have transformed from conventional media to social media advertising, and social media has become a channel for brand communication, building the connection with target consumers and corporate advertisers.

Social Media Marketing is a significant part of branding strategies, and branding can change consumer perceptions of the brand, drive new business and increase brand awareness. For marketing purposes, companies create specific messages or content on social media and generate discussion online to attract the attention of consumers, also encourage them to disseminate this marketing content through their social networks. From a business perspective, social media acts as a communicator between brands and customers. At present, in addition to the main traditional advertising channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Google, short video advertisements represented by TikTok, information flow advertising has launched a challenge to traditional social media advertising. For advertisers, advertising on social media can bring the greatest promotion effect to its brand or product. It is necessary to choose a suitable channel for brand exposure according to brand attributes and product attributes to maximize Return On Investment (ROI). For brands, the ultimate goal is to make a profit by selling goods. Through social media, brand companies can reach more potential customers, build consumer goodwill and make purchases, and at the same time use social media to help acquire more customers.

2. Analysis of Social Media

2.1 The Overview of Social Media

The definition of social media is an interactive communication platform based on user content publishing and creation that people use to share their perspectives, personal experience, and insights. It has multimedia functions, including information such as images, audio, video, animation, and movies.

Social media in the web2.0 era has not only changed the way of communication between people but also created a complete user experience and product design, making brands younger and diversified. It is enriching consumers' all-around product experience and shared experience, not only creating countless hot topics that people are discussing in their social lives but also attracting consumers and businesses.

2.2 The Key Enabling Technique

Born in the ear of the participatory network, the essence of social media is Social Networking Services (SNS), a concept that originated from the six-degree separation theory of Stanley Milgram, an American social psychologist. The theory suggests that six nodes in a network can connect any two strangers in the world.

In the field of the Internet, Social Networking Services (SNS) technology can be characterized as a collection of mobile Internet application programs based on user profiles and data. It has technical characteristics such as personal status information, life and works social network, communication mode, and event tracking to meet people's social needs. A typical Social Networking Service (SNS) has four layers of architecture, namely hardware, software, services, and web applications.

Network technology developed from the mid-1990s is changing the construction of information and the development of mankind, which systematically categorizes and intelligently analyzes massive resources and information. The traditional marketing model has been changed, resource sharing and information transparency and intelligence have been realized, and the technology is providing various industries with a vigorously developing strategic core.

Network nodes are connection points within a network that can send, transmit, analyze and save data. It represents a device with a network address such as an Internet Protocol (IP) address where the user can provide some kind of identity to receive access. A computer network that uses a cable modem on a standard cable infrastructure is called broadband and the larger the frequency range, that is, the higher the bandwidth, the greater the data that can be sent. RSS is a technique (also known as aggregated content) that sites use to share content with other sites. Technology that originated from the browser "News Channel" is often used for news and other sequential websites, such as for weblogs (blog).

Social media has become a useful tool for audio-visual propaganda on streaming platforms. However, before Streaming Media Technology emerges, people had to save and download the content from media resources to their local devices, and after a long wait which usually takes longer to download due to bandwidth constraints until they could watch or listen to the content of the media. With the advent of Streaming Media Technology, people no longer have to wait for the media to download completely. The three characteristics of Streaming Media Technology are continuity, real-time, and timing.

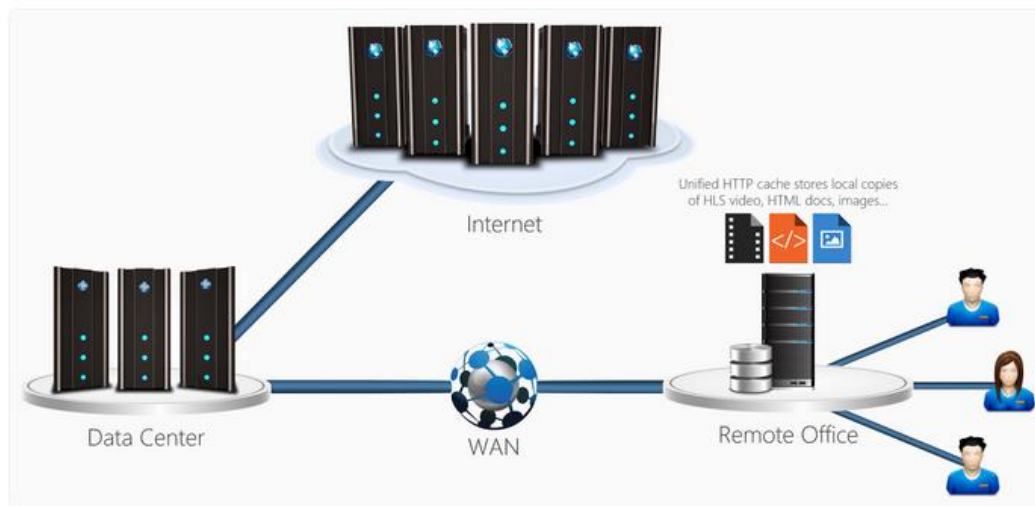


Figure1. The Network Transmission of Modern Streaming Technology

Streaming media technology is a transmission technology that compresses data information of continuous video and audio files. Streaming requires browser support. All web browsers are based on HTTP protocol, and HTTP protocol is built into MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions). Typically, browsers use MIME to recognize a series of simple file formats, and the browsers can mark numerous multimedia file formats on the Internet, including various streaming media formats, with MIME built-in HTTP protocol. As shown in figure 1, modern streaming technology unifies network transmission to HTTP and provides a consistent caching infrastructure to improve the performance of a video, images, documents, and other content.

2.3 The Development History

The development of social media is long-term and continuous, and this process (social media-based messaging) involves all aspects of human social development. In the pre-digital age, the information disseminated relied on shaped or materialized carriers of communication, such as printed paper for newspapers, master tapes for records, tapes for movies, and so on. When it comes to the digital era of information transmission, the process of communication has been changed, and fragmented information exchange has brought infinitely developed media contact points. The telecommunication network supports the continuous advancement of the information age, and real-world information such as text, sound, image, and audio is enriching people's communication and daily life.

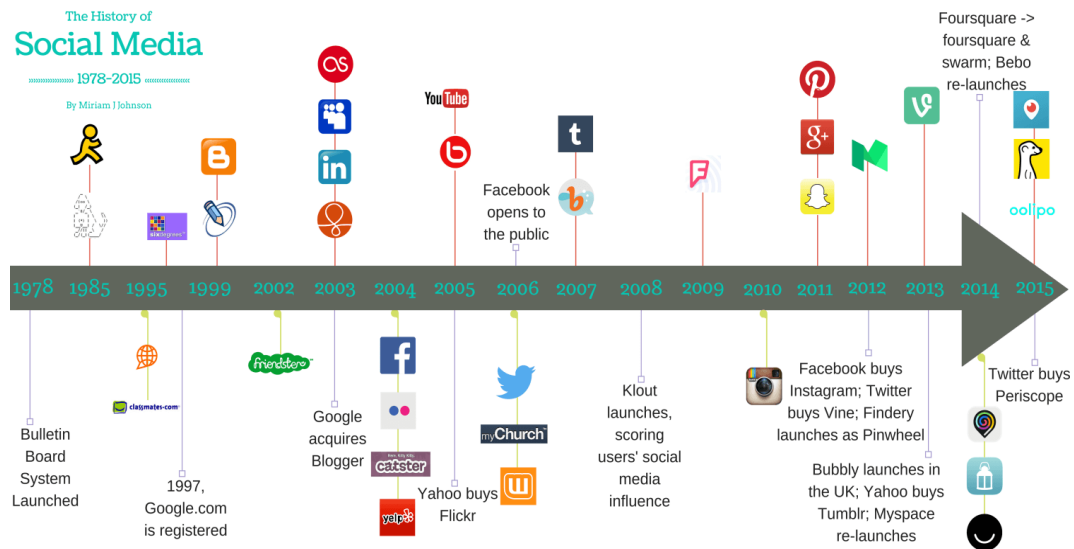


Figure 2. The History of Social Media from 1978 to 2015 (JON ALLEN 2017)

The first social media site goes back to the late 1970s when the University of Illinois has developed the program named Automatic Teaching Operations System (PLATO). The system supports thousands of graphics terminals around the world that can run on nearly ten different networked computers and provides modern multiple access concepts including “forums, message boards, emails, chat rooms, picture languages, instant messaging, remote monitoring and sharing, and multiple users’ video games”.

Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) was one of the earliest formats of social media, it was the first platform to allow users to log in and connect. Then came the social media platform Sixdegrees launched in 1997, where users can create personal or professional profiles, and add friends. It had about one million members at its peak but lasted only four years.



Figure 3. A Tremendous Variety of Social Media Today (WIDSIX Written Word 2019)

The beginning of modern social media was in the early 21st century with the rapid change of technology. Founded in 2002, Friendster represents the first official social media with more than one

million registered users. It provided the function to discover friends, and its core concept is to let users know more friends in the real world.

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn was the first platform used social networks for career and business. It is mainly used for professional networking, allows job seekers to post their Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and interact with employees through personal emails. Users can write posts and articles on the LinkedIn platform, introduce videos and other interactive ways to share with their professional social networks. Established in the same year, MySpace was providing users with an interactive platform that combines dating, personal information sharing, instant messaging, and more. It also provides an internal search engine and an internal e-mail system and became the world's second-largest social networking site.

By 2006, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter both became available and popular all over the world. In 2010, Instagram came out with an entirely creative platform for people to share the pictures capture at any time in a fast, wonderful, and inspiring way. Most of these new social media platforms can be transferred to cross-posting and cross-sharing.

Other social networking sites, such as Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare, and Pinterest, have also emerged in recent years. A tremendous variety of social media and the rapid development of technology are opening up new opportunities for new ideas.

2.4 The New Trends

Mobile Live Streaming in the age of social media is no longer just a single form of information exchange, it has also spawned many functions, new economic models, and cultural phenomena. In mobile live streaming, users build an image of the scene community through viewing and interacting.

The companionship and ritual sense of mobile live broadcast has been paid more and more attention, and the anchor has shaped various cultural ceremonies for its users in the various kinds of information scenes built on the platform. For example, in a Live YouTube video, there's a video section called "study with me" where people live-stream scenes of their reading and learning, and there are many fans who come to watch and interact. In gaze at the host learning process, the user can also obtain psychological satisfaction, thus stimulating the continuation or transformation of their behavior, focusing on their learning or affairs.

Sociologist Bowman once used the term "liquid" to describe the flow of modernity changes, from solid, stable modernity to flow, light modernity, social relations, social institutions, and media forms are affected and changed, mobile broadcasting is no exception. Users expect live content not only to get diverse information, but also to seek emotional recognition and companionship, or innovative experiences of various cultural lifestyles.

With the growing influence of social media, social commerce is becoming an increasingly important channel for online shopping. For more than a decade, consumers have been using social media to learn about and find inspiration for products and brands. Major social media platforms, including Instagram,

Facebook, Pinterest, and Snapchat, have improved their shopping channels in the hope of achieving business value with the rise of social commerce. For example, the short video social application TikTok has started experimenting with social commerce. According to TechCrunch, TikTok has begun allowing some users to add links to e-commerce sites to their profiles and has provided creators with the ability to easily attract their audiences to purchase sites.

According to eMarketer, “more than 55 percent of Generation Z Internet users in the U.S. think their latest fashion shopping has been inspired by social media browsing”. The rise of social commerce is driven by some of the young consumers, especially Generation Z and Millennials who are obsessed with creative, fun, new, and convenient ways to interact and purchase online. As the influence of social media improving, social platforms are further commercializing the channels to make them more attractive and interesting.

2.5 The Communication Characteristics

The five core sorts of social media are social networking, photo sharing, video sharing, interactive media, and intelligent network community. Other than that, the social attributes of platforms such as e-commerce and music are rising rapidly, and the social attributes of platforms such as instant messaging, video or live streaming, news, forum, Online To Offline e-commerce model (O2O), and life services are developing and growing to vary degrees.

Before the advent of social media, people shared ideas and experiences through gatherings. Communication was limited and everyone's interactions were done through language. Since the birth of the Internet, communication tools on social media such as videos, photos, live streams, forums, and so on have flourished, and the way people communicate has changed dramatically. Communication tools influence the way people behave, and human behavior has contributed to the development of tools.

Interaction on social media has always been structured by many factors, and the four critical elements that affect the user's interaction behavior and mental state are user data, network relationships, information flow, and message during sending and receiving. For example, when users fill out their profiles, what they do is a kind of self-presentation, that is, control their image in the minds of others. Sociologist Goffman once suggested that each of us in daily life is constantly acting on different occasions to different people to present a different image.

Information flow is a common way of presenting content on various social media platforms. Compared with other more active interactions (such as comments, retweets), information flow is more passive access to information. The earliest social media platforms, basically in chronological order to arrange content, the latest published content is ranked first. Later, however, most platforms changed to the sorting of algorithmic interventions, which were based upon a variety of factors, such as the frequency of interaction between two people, the popularity of a piece of content, etc., to guess the importance of the content and determine its order. Whether an individual can consciously choose multiple contents,

whether they actively focus on more diverse accounts, and whether they can maintain more heterogeneous social relationships are specific rules of the interactive algorithm. This also demonstrates once again that technical features and the way people are used are interactive.

In the era of multimedia, the Internet has given everyone the right to express their views freely. We-media platform refers to the private, civilian, generalized, autonomous communicators, everyone has a microphone, everyone is a reporter, and everyone is a news communicator. In the current stage of Internet development, users have been deeply involved in the construction of online information and the creation of new media content, their creativity as well as enthusiasm are constantly improving. New media content also presents the characteristics of User Generated Content (UGC) or User-created Content(UCC). Social media such as YouTube and Flickr can be seen as success stories for UGC with the forms of community networks, video sharing, blogs, and podcasts (video sharing).

3. The Socio-psychological Effects of Social Media on Branding

3.1 Transform Consumer Market

Traditional media cannot achieve the two-way effect of information transmission when marketing products and companies cannot acquire customer feedback on products. Social media creates a network platform between businesses and consumers, where consumers can freely express their comments or opinions on products. Through brand communication marketing on social media, companies can recognize and investigate customer satisfaction with products, refer to online feedback information, and then improve product quality and services, optimize products and produce new products that are more connected with consumer needs, thereby achieving the ultimate goal which is to promote product sales. Besides, people can share and exchange user experiences about the product quality and the services of the company through social media, which is invisibly helping companies conduct marketing. People's consumption attitudes are largely susceptible to the influence of other people around them in real life, which in turn has a positive impact on people's consumption decisions and product sales.

The cost of the traditional media marketing approach is high and the speed is slow, such as advertising marketing in radio and television, which would cost tens of millions of dollars in just ten seconds with the marketing effect which may not be satisfying in some cases.

Compared with the traditional media advertising mode, the use of social media is mostly free. Therefore, the use of social media marketing does not require a large amount of capital investment. Brand advertisers can publish information through online media to promote the brand value and brand culture anytime and anywhere. As a result, the product not only gets publicity but also strengthens interaction with customers, which ultimately reduces marketing costs.

In social media, each user can use a personal account to browse or share their favorite information, which shows consumer values and consumption needs. Based on statistical analysis, the company can

observe and figure out the interests and living habits of different consumer groups, and then judge the consumption habits of their target users and understand the consumption behaviors of them.

For example, TikTok's algorithm recommendation is to use the artificial intelligence engine to analyze big data and promote the advertisements with the highest correlation with products to consumers, thereby avoiding the delivery of invalid advertisements.

Nowadays, many companies use social media marketing strategies to make marketing events more targeted, meet increasing customer demand and improve marketing efficiency to the greatest extent, and ultimately promote sales and create benefits.

3.2 Transform the Psychology of Consumer

Conspicuous consumption (Thorstein Veblen, Leisure Class Theory, 1899) refers to the purchase of goods to show off identity and status. The more expensive the price, the more people want to buy. Unfortunately, social media has contributed to this distorted consumer psychology. David Hirshleifer, a professor at the Merage School of Business (UC Irvine) at the University of California, Irvine, said that "visibility bias stems from the way we interact in social situations". He said that "people tend to talk about what they are doing, which means that we will put more emphasis on consumption rather than non-consumption". People spend more and save less because they only see how much others spend, not how much others save, and social media exacerbates this trend.

As contact methods become cheaper and more diverse, visibility bias is increasingly driving social buying trends. The difference in consumption does not lie in the difference in product use-value, but the difference in product symbols (Ma, 2011). In the consumer era, the maximization of the difference in product symbols is the brand. One of the goals of social media advertising is to establish a group's consumption differentiation and to create a "symbol" for this group to make them feel different from the public. And the means to achieve this goal are hints and temptations.

Social media has injected fresh vitality and energy into the brand, especially for Generation Z, it gradually enhances their aesthetic awareness and personality awareness, and makes them increasingly pursue personalized consumption.

As Generation Z who grew up with smartphones and social media has gradually become an emerging group of global consumers, brands are facing new opportunities and challenges. Most of them have the common characteristics of being open-minded, strong in action, capable of independent thinking and communication. At the same time, they can immediately identify advertisements and various untrue propaganda in social media networks.

The attitude of embracing new things, curiosity about the world, and the courage to face the unknown are also reflected in their consumer psychology. Generation Z yearns for diversity, including race, gender, interests, and other aspects. From the perspective of publicity effect, user-generated content(UGC)attract their attention the most, followed by key opinion leaders (KOL)and social media

celebrities, who will also have a profound impact on Generation Z. For the younger generation of consumers, videos and pictures are more memorable than text, and social media channels play a more important role.

The perception of consumers tends to be influenced by repeated thoughts at the time that the more frequently they see advertisements and news from social media, the more likely they are to make purchases. As the most people-friendly platform, social media can repeatedly push product content based on big data and algorithms and find out consumer attitudes toward products by collecting more data of consumer demand.

Social media is good at transforming information into activities or some popular events that consumers are interested in, to attract their attention and interest. When consumers are interested in the product through information disseminated by other consumers, they tend to have a stronger sense of trust, which makes them more decisive in making purchase decisions.

Social media also uses the frequency and schedule of posting to repeat the old content. For example, the duration of a post on Twitter is limited, but Twitter can reuse the content with a good effect, forward the previous content directly to increase the second exposure, or make a second modification according to the current hot spots. Information repeatedly exposed on social media will increase the sense of reality and visibility psychologically, thereby enhancing its influence. Even if participants know that this is not the case, they will subconsciously trust these forwardings and interactions. When the truth is hard to tell, familiarity is an attractive alternative, which will make their consumption behaviors lose rational judgment.

4. The Cultural Effects of Social Media on Branding

4.1 Improve the Creative Competitiveness

In the Web2.0 era, social networks are increasingly incorporating the humane elements of communication, interaction, and sharing, thus injecting a fresher experience into cultural creation. Social media provides a platform for the development of cultural and creative industries. With low-consumption resources and high-tech information platforms, due to its unique mobility, it can support the browsing and release of cultural and creative product information at any time, to achieve rapid product dissemination and allow users to participate in the experience and interaction.

Burberry ran the first luxury Snapchat discover campaign to promote its new Burberry men's fragrance and beauty product line in 2016, it played a short video directed by Steve McQueen on the Snapchat Discover channel, and provided articles and interviews, focusing on tailoring and retouching techniques. 24 hours before the show, users could spy on the new season's products on Snapchat, and the function and coolness of the content burned after reading it was very appetizing for young people. In the beginning, many people thought that the luxury industry was not suitable for marketing on the instant

social platform, because the exquisitely crafted content only had a few seconds of reading time and there was no delay in spreading. But breaking through the traditional market concept, Burberry realized mysterious and private effects to satisfy people's desire for prying, without spoiling the design of the new season before the show.

This creative social media marketing case enhances the brand's creativity and fashion, and at the same time incorporates the aesthetics of movies and the real-time communication characteristics of social platforms.

4.2 Combine Business Values with Cultural and Artistic

The scale of the digital industry market represented by social media has grown rapidly, and its value has made brand marketing and the art industry one of the fastest-growing emerging industries in the world. However, with huge profits, commercialization has also harmed social media art creation. The modular and streamlined commercial operation will reduce the artistic quality of the works, and the humanized creative elements and artistic spirituality in the works will also be reduced.

Some small brand companies do not have their professional creative teams. Due to the shortage of funds, they have to quickly train a group of technical talents to copy excellent works. It takes time and cost savings as considerations and caters to fast-paced social media. The same production method has led to works that lack innovation and flexibility.

Its operation is the continuous copy and repeat process, from production to packaging, and then to the market. Making it difficult for the brand to obtain independent spiritual character and aesthetic significance, and social media is flooded with impetuous and monotonous content.

5. Summary

5.1 The Opportunities for Branding on Social Media

There are three billion people around the world using social media and spending 135 minutes a day checking social media for information (source: GLOBALWEBINDEX, Q3, 2020). It is undeniable that social media offers tremendous opportunities for two-way interaction and communication between products and audiences. The online word-of-mouth that has emerged from social media is reshaping the relationship between brands and consumers, and in the age of social media, individuals and brands have the opportunity to talk on an equal footing.

What's more, enthusiastic consumers can also become the brand's best collaborators. Social media can spread information and turn audiences into paying users. Through social media and interaction with consumers, brands can directly find target consumers, meet the needs of the customers and the users, as well as collecting some creative proposals for the products.

5.2 The Challenges for Branding on Social Media

There are three billion people around the world using social media and spending 135 minutes a day checking social media for information (GLOBALWEBINDEX, Q3, 2020). Social media is changing people's lives. It can connect people and it can also help communication and interaction between them. This is something that no other platform can achieve. The online word-of-mouth that has emerged from social media is reshaping the relationship between brands and consumers, and in the age of social media, individuals and brands have the opportunity to talk on an equal footing.

What's more, enthusiastic consumers can also become the brand's best collaborators. Social media can spread information and turn audiences into paying users. Through social media and interaction with consumers, brands can directly find target consumers, meet the needs of the customers and the users, as well as collecting some creative proposals for the products.

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