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Advertisement- A Form of Communication

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I. Introduction

Have you ever cared about advertisement? Do you know how it affects us? When you take transportation to work or to school, it usually appears on the newspaper you hold, the flyers you get, and even the car you take. You can also find it along the street as you take a walk. Even when you turn on the television with ease, it pops up again accidentally. It is like our friends always being around us. In addition, it seems that our decisions or minds are somehow unconsciously influenced by it. But do you know how it acts in your lives?

Advertisement seems to be a necessity in our lives. Nowadays, our lives are filled with various types of advertisements from paper to screen ones or more other forms. Even some of them are from other countries. Advertisement has sneakily entered our lives step by step, having become a part of our lives and affects us a lot. Many of us may think that advertisements are just images or sounds that appear commonly, considering them unimportant. But like Kilbourne (2000) has put it, “Although we like to think of advertising as unimportant, it is in fact the most important aspect of the mass media.” If it were suddenly taken from our lives, you might feel like a fish out of water, and even feel a little dull and dreary.

When it comes to advertisement, you can easily call to mind a strip of advertisement. It is maybe that its visual effects that give you a deep impression or the sounds that appeal to you. The ads might just pass in a few seconds or minutes, conveying merely a short message or signal, but they in fact leave you abundant of information, waiting for you to explore or discover. Therefore, corporations and enterprises are always exerting themselves to figure out more creative advertisement to catch our attention to promote the products or deliver the concept. Their purpose is very obvious. As Burnett (1995) once pointed out, advertising tells you where to get it, what it provides for you, and what it will do for you. Thus, there are diverse advertisements. They come in different types. Further, various strategies are used to catch our attention. There might be a superstar endorsing for it or a slogan for you to keep in mind. Did you learn that?

Overall, we have to acknowledge that advertisement has a great power over us, and have been more and more versatile, no matter in what ways. Even Facebook, the hottest website at present, also takes part in it. How could a brief and simple thing
encircle our bodies and emerge in our minds freely? And why does it become popular as a way to approach us? What is its origin? What are the strategies advertisers use to attract us? What are people’s views on advertisements?

Below are the research questions we intended to address in the study:

A. What’s the origin of advertisement?
B. What are the strategies advertisers use to attract viewers?
C. What are people’s views on advertisements?

II. Method

To answer the question mentioned above, we surfed on the Internet firstly to find some information in relation to advertisement. In addition, we went to some libraries to find some books or articles that are helpful and meaningful to our study. Last, we delivered 150 questionnaires to people of different ages and backgrounds to understand how advertisement influences us and the effect it brings to us. It is hoped that the study can help us to understand the magical power that the advertisement possesses.

III. Findings and discussion

A. The origin of advertisement

1. The debut of advertisement

According to the information we found on an online encyclopedia and website related to advertising, the earliest advertisement is in the form of text. It can be traced back to 1550-1080 BC, when Egyptians used papyrus, a thick paper-like material produced from the pith of the papyrus plant, to make sales messages and wall posters. (see Picture 1)

2. The development of advertisement

As time goes by, more developed commercial messages and political campaign
displays have been found in ruins and ancient cities. Another manifestation of an ancient advertising form, which you can find in many parts of Asia, Africa, and South America, is wall or rock painting for commercial advertising. All of the above information tells us that the evolvement of advertising started from out-of-home advertising and billboards.

Table 1. The main types of different times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Ages</td>
<td>Simple signals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1472</td>
<td>Handbill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th century</td>
<td>Classified advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th century</td>
<td>Mail-order advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940~1950s</td>
<td>TV advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(also radio and cinema)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th century</td>
<td>Advertising on Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent years</td>
<td>Guerrilla marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from Table 1, there were more and more advertising forms appearing after the debut of advertisement. While towns and cities in the Middle Ages began to grow, and most people at that time were illiterate, sellers used some simple signals to stand for their commercial services or products, such as a boot, a suit, a hat, and even a bag of flour. The next type of advertisement appearing is handbill printed as an announcement of a prayer book for sale in 1472. When typography and print press developed, and education became more and more important for reading, classified advertisements were appearing in weekly newspapers in England in the 17th century. As economy grew during 19th century, advertising expanded alongside. Mail-order advertising gradually matured in the United States. In the 20th century, new mass media—radio and cinema—became parts of commercial access. The radio stations were usually sponsored by a single business in exchange for a brief mention of the business’ name in the sponsored shows. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s, television’s popularity prevailed over that of radio. Before long, television was viewed as the top-one medium for advertising, which made the modern trend of selling advertising time to sponsors.

Advertising became a major industry in the 20th century. It also invaded into the Internet. Marketing through the Internet opened a new field for advertising. At the turn of the 21st century, a number of websites, the search engine Google included,
started a type called online advertising by emphasizing contextually relevant and unobtrusive ads intending to help instead of overwhelming users. This resulted in plenty of similar endeavor and raising trend of interactive advertising.

Interactive advertising is included in "guerrilla marketing", which uses different methods and ways, such as appearing in public or staging various encounters with people, to convey ideas or messages. Guerrilla marketing reflects an increasing trend of interactive and "embedded" ads, such as inviting consumers to vote through text messages, sneakily letting product hover in the background. The innovative application to the hottest website—Facebook—is also used as a way to invade into self-Internet world. Ad has been expanding to every way.

B. The strategies used to attract viewers

In modern world, every businessman wants great achievement; therefore, in order to catch our attention and outdo others, some of them advertise by themselves, others turn to advertisement makers who are more professional, and still others, who even are majority, do both at the same time. Based on above, different medium result in different strategies. As a result, there are diverse types of ads appearing around us. The following are the types and techniques we concluded.

1. Types of Ads

Virtually, any medium can be a way as advertisement, like billboard, printed flyers, magazines, newspapers, website, you name it! According to our analysis, here are two major types of advertising, one is digital, and the other is physical.

a. Digital advertising

Digital advertising is to use digital media including television, radio, and Internet to publicize their product or brand.

1. Television advertising

Figure 2. Types of Digital advertising
Among the identified medium, the TV commercial is generally viewed as the most effective, mass-market advertising due to its universality. As time goes, almost every home owns a television; therefore, the price of advertisement on television has been growing higher and higher. Take the Super Bowl football game in the United States for example. It has up to US$3 million for just a single thirty-second TV spot during this game. The reason of TV being the mass marketer is its sound effects, as television commercial often uses songs or melody which can make people associate with their product or ideas.

2. Radio advertising

Radio advertising is a kind of business transaction that radio companies sells its sponsorship right to businessman from a station or network in exchange for airing their commercial. The obvious feature of radio advertising is that it is limited in sounds to convey message. You just need to open you ears to receive information instead of wearing out you eyes.

3. Online advertising

The third is online advertising. It uses Internet or World Wide Web to transmit marketing messages to draw customers. There are different forms of online advertising, such as website banner, web popups, contextual ads that appear on search engine results pages, e-mail marketing, including e-mail spam, and the Social network advertising. The hottest social website in recent, Facebook(Picture 3), is used as one of the examples.

b. Physical advertising

Physical advertising is adopted through substantive or visual way to deliver the message. We categorized it into two major types: press advertising and street advertising.

1. Press advertising

Press advertising characterizes advertising in a printed medium, like magazine,
newspaper, journal, and periodical. In the printed surface, there can be classified advertising for individuals or companies to issue something specific, or just displaying their products. As it can be seen and taken commonly, it has a broad readership.

2. Street advertising

Street advertising shows their product or names outdoors or on public to catch our attention and attract us, which includes billboards and displays.

2. Techniques & strategies of attracting customers

There are many advertisements, so in order to outdo the others, advertisers use diverse techniques and strategies to attract or persuade us to buy things. Figure 4 are the techniques and strategies we sorted out, including repetition, hype, emotional appeal, celebrity branding, and scientific authority.

a. Repetition

Repetition is one of the simple ways to advertise. The aim is get their product or brand into our brain by repeating their slogan or the name of the product or appearing frequently. For example, the slogan “Just do it.” of Nike, which appears on television as well as on billboard, is world-widely known. Although it is just a brief sentence and even not a little bit mention of their brand’s name, we still view it as a representative of Nike.

b. Hype
Advertisers usually use color, shape, or exaggeration in words or photos to impress people. Picture 5 is an advertisement for Post-it, the sticky notes we often use. In this advertisement, the sticky note is stuck on a skydiver’s hand to show advantages of the product, but it is highly impossible in real life.

c. Emotional appeal

Everyone has emotion, so advertisers take the use of it to attract us. We are usually subconsciously charmed by the revelation of sex, maternal feelings, or family love. Take one of the advertisements of TC Bank for example. They show a mother disregarding all the difficulties, flying alone abroad just to stew Chinese herbal medicine for her after-childbirth daughter. Although it may be just a situation in real-life or common image, it is its real sentiment that appeals to us.

d. Celebrity branding

Celebrities often have a large influence on people because of their popularity. Therefore, some companies or businessmen will cooperate with these famous stars, asking them to use their society status to promote their products, service, or charity. The most common way of celebrity branding is singers or models representing products. Jolin in Pepsi and Leehom Wang in McDonald’s are the best examples.

e. Scientific authority

Scientific authority is commonly used in advertisement, especially for cosmetics, medicine, or some products for daily use. It usually focuses on the statistics, the research, or the reports they had done to prove their validity.

C. People’s views on advertisements

Why can the ads go into our life? The public’s opinions do matter. The road of advertisement is based on the reaction of the people. As advertisement is ubiquitous in the modern world we live, it can be inferred that the ads has survived in public. They mostly convince or persuade people to accept the idea they deliver; thus, the crucial point is on people’s views. In order to probe people’s opinions on advertisement, we
delivered 150 questionnaires to better understand the impact of ads on people. The followings are the results of our survey.

1. Attractive power of different types of ads

According to our result, digital advertising seems to be more appealing than physical advertising in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, we found that despite the differences of age, most people were attracted by advertisements on TV. From the figure below (Figure 5), it appears that almost 70% of people think that TV is the most attractive media. It symbolizes that the popularity and versatility of TV is a great advantage, and it also shows how influential TV is in advertising world.

![Figure 5. Types of advertisements attracting people](image)

Figure 5. Types of advertisements attracting people

From Figure 5, we also can find that the percentage of the Internet accounts for 14% of the total. Based on this, it can be concluded that the digital world is coming as time goes, and it stands certain part in advertising.

![Figure 6. Strategies used to attract people](image)

Figure 6. Strategies used to attract people
Besides the types, we also surveyed people about the influence of the kinds of strategies in advertisement. From Figure 6 above, the statistics we gathered show that the emotional appeal (43%) stand out from other parts in advertisement. It can be summarized that we are more easily impressed by emotional sentiment than other commercial strategies.

2. The most impressive slogans

Talking of advertisement, many people immediately think of the slogan. Therefore, we list ten slogans we thought the most common ones in our survey, wanting to know which is the most impressive in majority. The result is that the slogans “I'm lovin' it” of McDonalds, “一家烤肉萬家香” of 萬家香, and “有 7-11 真好” of the convenience store 7-11 stand out as the top three. According to the outcome, we found that the three have two things in common. One is that they all have their melody while advertising. The other is that they also appear many times on TV. It can be concluded that we are easy to be impressed by the slogan along with some melody, and that the repetition of its appearance does some effect in our minds.

3. The overall views of people on advertisement

Last but not least, the important thing is the impression of ads in people’s mind. In our study, we also surveyed people about whether they think the effect of ads is positive or negative. Surprisingly, according to the Figures below (Figure 7), up to 76% of people think the effect of ads is mostly positive. The result reveals that despite those controversial advertisements, most people still think the advertisement has positive influence on human being.
IV. Conclusion

Advertisement takes great part in our lives. Wherever you are, some of them can always catch your attention and even stimulate you to do unintended things. In our research, we understood the history of advertisement through the course of searching information, and looked into the different types and strategies of and used in ads. This made us more acquainted with the advertising world.

After knowing the different strategies advertisers used, we realized that different advertisements all have a lure for us. Take the form of common-emotion for example, when we see this type of advertisement, we just receive the view and atmosphere it gives without thinking any further, but we are exactly touched by the emotional feelings it gives.

As time goes by, the advertisement is also developing, and its steps are more and more quickly than ever. There may be more innovative and fantastic advertisements can be expected in the near future. Advertisement will keep its step to scale new heights and its limit is sky.

V. Reference

