

Presentation Forms and Marketing Strategies of Content-Integrated Advertising in Web-Native Variety Shows: A Case Study of the Comedy Talk Show “Roast!” (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Regardless of the media platform employed for advertising placement, advertising formats that remain disconnected from media content inevitably compromise both user experience and marketing effectiveness. In the mobile internet era, by adopting the integrative thinking emphasized within the internet sphere, highly relevant content information is integrated with advertising information to achieve a holistic presentation of content and advertisement, thereby fulfilling marketing objectives through attention to user experience—this phenomenon has given rise to content-integrated advertising. The American-style comedy talk show “Roast,” jointly produced by Tencent Video and Shanghai Xiaoguo Culture Media Co., Ltd., illustrates through its advertising the manifestation forms and marketing strategies of content-integrated advertising within pure online variety shows.

Full Text

Manifestations and Marketing Strategies of Content-Based Advertising in Pure Online Variety Shows: A Case Study of the Comedy Talk Show *Roast!*

Abstract: Regardless of media platform, advertising disconnected from media content inevitably compromises both user experience and marketing effectiveness. In the mobile internet era, leveraging the integrative thinking emphasized in the digital domain, highly relevant content information is combined with advertising messages to achieve holistic presentation of content and ads, thereby fulfilling marketing objectives through attention to user experience. This gave rise to content-based advertising. The American-style comedy talk show *Roast!*,

jointly produced by Tencent Video and Shanghai Xiaoguo Culture Media Co., Ltd., exemplifies the manifestations and marketing strategies of content-based advertising in pure online variety shows.

Keywords: mobile internet; content-based advertising; manifestation; marketing strategy

Roast! aired on Tencent Video starting January 8, 2017, and after its revision, concluded with a total of 1.38 billion views, with a single episode reaching a peak of 200 million views. The show's two major sponsors were Kyoto Nian Ci'an (the title sponsor) and vivo X9 (the co-sponsor). Kyoto Nian Ci'an engaged in deep cooperation with Tencent Video, attempting to combine the concept of "nourishing the lungs" with the "vocal expression" characteristic of talk shows, thereby injecting fresh vitality into the traditional brand image of this century-old establishment. Advertisers' decision to place ads in video platform-produced programs is closely related to audience information consumption habits in the mobile internet era and the user-centric business model. The revenue generated from advertising depends not only on the media platform's influence but, more importantly, on successful marketing strategies. This paper primarily uses *Roast!* as a case study to illustrate the manifestations and marketing strategies of content-based advertising in pure online variety shows.

1. The Transformation of Advertising Thinking in the Mobile Internet Era: The Rise of Content-Based Advertising

The mobile internet represents the fusion of mobile and internet technologies, inheriting the advantages of mobility (anytime, anywhere, portable) and the internet's characteristics of sharing, openness, and interactivity, thus constituting an "upgraded version" that integrates both strengths. Consequently, the relationship between people and information has changed, shifting from passively receiving information at fixed times and locations to actively selecting information and expressing needs anytime and anywhere. This highlights the user-dominant and experience-first characteristics of the mobile internet era. Driven by these features, the operational mindset of advertising has also evolved, giving rise to content-based advertising. Content-based advertising integrates advertising messages into content that aligns with it in terms of content, form, and value experience, thereby overcoming the previous state where advertising was disconnected from media program content, causing users to skip ad segments and resulting in significantly diminished marketing effectiveness. In *Roast!*, advertisements are integrated into program content through diverse forms, successfully attracting young consumers in ways that align with mobile internet thinking, thus opening new horizons for brand marketing.

2. Manifestations of Content-Based Advertising in *Roast!*

2.1 Non-Aggressive Direct Expression

Traditional advertising employs an unpopular expression method, namely crude and aggressive messaging. Characterized by concentrated placement, slogan-shouting, and cramming-style delivery, this approach forces product advantages into audiences' minds through repeated emphasis within specific time slots to achieve advertising revenue. Such advertising generates resistance among audiences, who view it as an interference source. The practice of using dry language to persuade people to accept product utility without considering user experience has long been criticized. In contrast, *Roast!* features hosts directly delivering oral advertisements and guests promoting products during their speeches, which captures audience attention. First, ad placement is fragmented in time, often appearing when audiences least expect it, eliminating the annoyance caused by concentrated placement. Second, rather than rigidly emphasizing product utility, the advertising conveys product value using internet-savvy language and a teasing tone. In one episode, the comedian Chi Zi humorously remarked, "Without realizing it, you've already listened to six ads. Disgusting, right? Don't rush to answer—here comes the seventh." Such direct expression, paradoxically, leads audiences to accept advertising content amidst laughter, demonstrating consideration for user experience.

2.2 Deconstructing Advertising into Program Content

To effectively convey advertising messages in mobile and fragmented communication scenarios, it is necessary to cater to mobile internet audiences' tastes, deconstruct advertising using language suitable for internet dissemination characteristics, and thereby rebrand the corporate image. The title sponsor Kyoto Nian Ci'an's slogan, "Laughing nourishes the lungs, not laughing is wasteful, the universe's lung-nourishing time-honored brand," cleverly combines the concept of "lung nourishment" with the talk show's "laughter" entertainment spirit, while the word "universe" exemplifies the exaggeration and playfulness of internet language. Such slogans appear more vivid and trendy in form, while seeking integration points between the product and program in content. They highlight both the utility value and emotional appeal of the century-old brand while incorporating the program's entertaining and teasing spirit. The content economy of the mobile internet era has made audiences favor innovative content and personalized thinking. Viewers of *Roast!* not only focus on the guests' roasts but are even more attracted by their humorous language styles and personalized talk show thinking. In episode nine, the guest Jiao Shou Yi Xiaoxing discussed how his scenes were cut from a film, lamenting why he didn't use the vivo X9's soft-light selfie feature, cleverly integrating the advertisement into his personal anecdote.

2.3 Situational Skits Contextualizing Advertisements

Sitcom-style advertising demonstrates creative ingenuity in advertising. For instance, the *Roast!* production team held a planning meeting for the advertiser to discuss enlarging the Kyoto Nian Ci'an logo, achieving a humorously amusing effect through serious presentation. By placing advertisements in nonsensical scenarios and using narrative techniques and humorous language styles, the ads align with the program's rhythm and style, becoming an organic component of the show. The program highlighted the vivo X9's front-facing 20-megapixel dual soft-light camera feature by depicting guests discussing selfies in the *Roast!* production team's WeChat group. By placing the ad in a specific scenario and cleverly combining "group chat" and "WeChat"—elements close to audience life—with the advertised product, the scenario naturally attracted audience attention, bridging the gap between audience and advertisement, and generating goodwill toward this humanized, approachable creative approach. The situational skit format contextualizes advertisements, concretizes product value, and enhances user experience.

3. Marketing Strategies of Content-Based Advertising in *Roast!*

3.1 Integrating Content and Advertising

Professor Yu Guoming has elucidated a new concept in the transformation of advertising content in the mobile internet era—native advertising, which refers to ads whose content style matches the page, whose design is embedded within the page, and which conform to users' behavioral habits on the original page. In online variety shows, this manifests as advertising content aligning with program content, advertising style matching program temperament, and respect for user viewing experience. The advertising in *Roast!* cannot be called native advertising in the strict sense, as many of its manifestations appear somewhat rigid and forced. However, it follows the marketing trend of advertising contentization, linking deconstructed and reorganized advertising content with the program's humorous and teasing content, and merging the value propositions expressed in the ads with the program's advocated spirit of joyful living. This creative approach dilutes commercial overtones, intensifies the impact of diverse forms and creative thinking on audience attention, and simultaneously allows audiences to be unconsciously attracted by the program's unique style.

3.2 Reconstructing Brand Image

The title sponsor, the century-old brand Kyoto Nian Ci'an, participates in the program with a fresh attitude. For century-old brands, reconstructing brand image and promoting brand rejuvenation is a wise move for competing in the mobile internet era. This requires a shift in mindset; old brands cannot rest on their laurels due to their long history and established reputation, but must fully utilize their "good foundation" within the ever-evolving media ecosystem.

Under the premise of adapting to current media changes, they must seek new elements that fit contemporary trends and reform innovatively with critical thinking. The slogan “Laughing nourishes the lungs, not laughing is wasteful” effectively introduces the concept of “lung nourishment,” constructing a new brand image for Nian Ci’an—not only possessing the functional value of dissolving phlegm and relieving coughs but also embodying the emotional value of caring for healthy and joyful living. The design of the cartoon character “An An” in the program further endows the brand with a lively and youthful image through concretization.

3.3 Balancing Multiple Stakeholder Interests

In traditional advertising operations, the relationship among advertisers, program producers, and audiences is fragmented, but from a practical perspective, their interests are interrelated. The irrelevance between advertising content and media program content leads audiences to view ads as interference, resulting in poor advertising returns and wasted resources—a common scenario in traditional media. In the mobile internet era, where users rely on portable mobile terminals to access information and services, traditional advertising marketing models cannot adapt to the competitive landscape of this new domain. Consequently, content-based advertising organically connects the three parties: advertisers, program producers, and audiences. Content-based advertising balances the interests of all three parties, with advertisers and program producers engaging in deep cooperation to seek shared characteristics in content and emotion, forming synergies that leverage respective strengths. Program producers precisely target program audiences to achieve effective marketing results. For audiences, they not only focus on product utility value but also pay attention to product emotional value, emphasizing not only the emotional value derived from the product itself but also the emotional comfort experienced during user interaction.

4. Conclusion

The diverse manifestations of content-based advertising reflect the characteristics of the mobile internet era: user dominance, experience primacy, brand reshaping, and product supremacy. Pure online variety shows and advertisers attempt to use this emerging advertising form to expand communication reach and enhance marketing quality. Currently, content-based advertising is favored by audiences, but it still requires injecting new content elements for successful operation, delving deeply into users’ personalized needs in user service to meet high-level content-based advertising standards.

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