

A Comparative Study of Chinese and English Smartphone Advertising--An Image Construction Perspective

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Abstract: Advertising is crucial for corporate image construction, but the enormous differences caused by high and low context present challenges to the translation of Chinese advertising. To meet this gap, the author first analyzes the cultural differences in phone advertising from language form and content, and the author further proposed three specific instructions for image construction in the English advertising, including information highlight, information exclusion, and information extension. These results cast new light on the advertising translation of Huawei.

Keywords: Advertising translation; High and low context; Corporate Image Construction

1. Introduction:

Recent years have seen the rising importance of corporate image, which refers to target consumers' overall impression and evaluation of the enterprise, reflecting the public's recognition, affection, and support for the enterprise (Liu, Hu & Zhang, 2003). It is composed of "organizational image, personnel image, product image, cultural image, environmental image, community image, and other core elements" (Fan, 2013). Among them, the product image is the most significant one because it is directly associated with consumers' willingness to buy (WTB). Against this background, an appropriate image construction in cross-culture advertising becomes increasingly crucial.

A good advertising design is indispensable for the building of a well-received product image. As a crucial part of image construction, advertising text has various functions, including expressing emotions and transmitting information. The basic principle of advertising is AIDA, that is, how to attract the attention of the audience (Attention), arouse their interest (Interest), make them desire (Desire), and then take action (Action). When consumers think and reason about advertisements based on the common sense of their cultural background, the similarities between different cultures make it easier for them to understand the advertising content of foreign products, while the differences will present challenges.

The gap between cultures has a huge impact on context. It is widely believed that culture is the sum of material and spiritual wealth created by human beings in the course of social and historical development. Hofstede (2010:6) claims that culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. It is the culture that shapes our thinking and determines contextual characteristics, which explains why many well-received Chinese advertisements often fail to achieve the expected publicity effect when they are put into overseas markets. These failures in advertising often lead to inappropriate corporate image, so it is urgent to address this issue. However, there are few comparative studies on advertisements of transnational companies based on high and low contexts. Given the fact that Apple and Huawei are the two biggest phone companies in China and the US respectively, their latest phone advertising is chosen as the data for this study. And then, the author applies Hall's high and low context theory to the advertising analysis as a way to study the role of advertising in image reconstruction.

2. Applicability of High and Low Context Theory to Image Construction in Advertising

E.T. Hall is a professor of anthropology and business consultant on cross-cultural relationships. In *Beyond Culture* published in 1976, Edward Hall first proposed that culture is closely related to a particular context, and he further divided it into high context and low context (Hall, 1976:79). According to Hall, people in different cultures may react differently to complex information, which will finally shape consumer's attitudes towards products. That's how products image comes into being.

Image is the overall impression of a certain thing or person formed in the brain through various sensory organs such as vision, hearing, touch, taste, and so on. In communication science theory, an image is the product of information transmission, which is transmitted to a target audience through certain media, and the audience processes the received information through their existing cognition to form an "image" (John Fiske, 2004: 132). The overseas image of an enterprise is generated by cross-cultural communication, which is based on translation. Ideally, there is not much difference between images constructed in Chinese and English if the translation is objective. Wang Ning (2018) claims that translation is the reconstruction of culture, which reflects the image. That's why image research is the core of translation. It has become a consensus that translation can shape, change, spread, and strengthen cultural images and identity information (Van Doorslaer, L., Flynn, P., & Leerssen, J, 2015: 8). This process is called image reconstruction, which is a concept initially used in physical or life sciences, and it is introduced into advertising transmission. Rebuild and redefining corporate image is not a new topic. Paddison (1993) once studied the use of marketing techniques and found that they have social and political implications, thus influencing corporate image. However, Paddison did not delve into the reasons behind this phenomenon.

To meet this gap, framing theory, which provides invaluable insights into image reconstruction, is used in this study. The concept of “framing” was first proposed by anthropologist Bateson. In his opinion, “framing” refers to the fact that the sender provides the receiver with a specific method to decode original information (Bateson, 1995:39). Later on, Tankard (2001:95) further refines the framing theory, arguing that it creates a cognitive environment through information selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration, and suggests the key point of the topic.

The reason why image reconstruction of advertising is necessary is that the gap between high and low context will lead to confusion. In high-context culture, people place less emphasis on text and they are more sensitive to illocutionary behavior. These illocutionary behaviors are a part of the culture, which is invisible and untouchable. However, what language cannot convey is often contained in social customs and values. The source of one's cultural background is the social environment in which one grows up and collects life experiences. It affects every aspect of our lives. For people living in a high-context society, time, space, body language, and intonation are as significant as words. In contrast, people in low-context societies rely more on content-based communication. They put a lot of emphasis on words and try to express themselves clearly through words. As a result, the message is explicit and it is the word that carries most of the information in a low-context society. These differences are reflected in Chinese and English advertising. To facilitate the conversion between high context and low context for Chinese advertising, the following model is introduced.

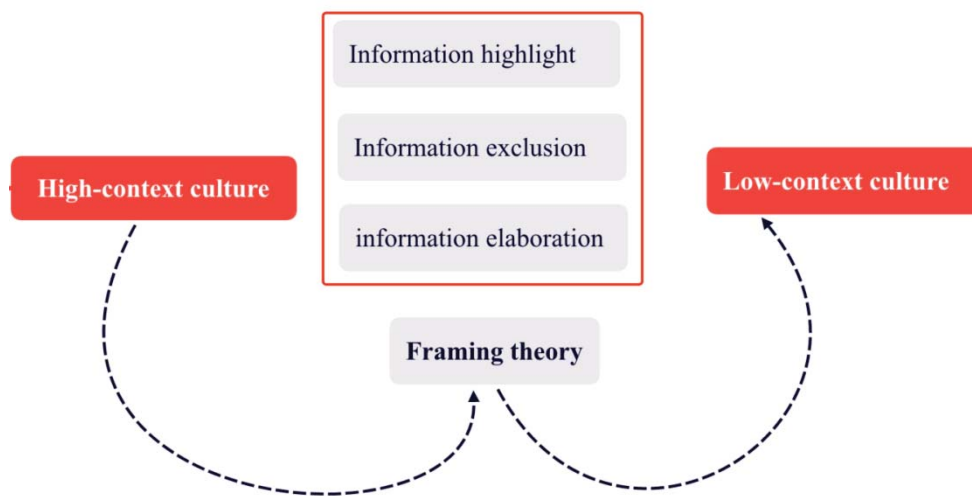


Figure.1 The advertising conversion method between high- and low-context culture

As is shown in Table.1, framing theory, including information highlight, information exclusion, and information extension, serves as a bridge between high- and low-context culture. Information highlight can reorganize complex information and make it simple, thus avoiding confusion; information exclusion contributes to downplaying certain sensitive information; information extension helps convey connotative information that implies attitudes. Chinese and English belong to high and low contexts respectively, as a result, it is clear that localization is an indispensable part when Huawei and Apple go into a foreign market, which means that Apple's Chinese advertisement needs to adapt to the high context in China and Huawei's English advertisement also needs to adapt to the low context in English.

3. Comparative studies between Huawei and Apple’s smartphone advertising

Apple and Huawei's smartphone advertising structure is like a tree, in which each product is given a landmark title to get itself noticed, and then a branch (specific instruction) is used to show the performance and configuration of the product. As the leading title, the role of advertising slogans is to gain consumers' attention, and it is also the first step of the AIDA principle.

3.1 A Comparative Analysis of Advertising Slogans.

Table 1: Huawei’s latest smartphone advertising slogan

Release Date	Brand	English Advertising
03/ 2023	Huawei P60 Pro	Vision Enlightened
03/ 2023	Huawei Mate X3	Unfold a New Horizon
07/ 2021	Huawei P50 Pro	Legend Reborn
02/ 2021	Huawei Mate X2	Imagine What Unfolds

10/2020	Huawei Mate40	Leap Further Ahead
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Table 2: Apple’s latest smartphone advertising slogan

Release Date	Brand	English Advertising
09/ 2022	iPhone 14	Big and bigger
09/ 2021	iPhone 13	Your new superpower
10/ 2020	iPhone 12	Blast past fast
03/ 2020	iPhone SE	lots to love, less to spend
09/ 2019	iPhone X	Say hello to the future
09/ 2018	iPhone XS	Welcome to the Big Screens

There is a K.I.S.S. principle(Keep it simple and stupid) in advertising, it refers to the fact that the simpler the sentence is, the easier it is to remember. In the era of information explosion, saving consumers’ time and attracting users is the most important. From the perspective of content, it is found that the words of Huawei’s advertising slogan are abstract, such as Legend Reborn and Unfold a New Horizon. In these slogans, Huawei’s exploratory spirit is highlighted but its product features can not be deduced from its advertising. As a slogan, it fails to gain attention from consumers who live in the English-speaking world. From the perspective of language form, four-character phrases and end rhymes are often used in Huawei’s advertisements. Above all, rich cultural associations can be found in almost every advertising of Huawei. For example, the Chinese slogan of Huawei P50 Pro is "万象新生" This slogan takes advantage of the homophonic phenomenon of “象” and “像”, so Chinese consumers can associate “象” with images and then deduces that the camera of Huawei P50 Pro is excellent. But this deduction process may not work out for English-speaking consumers who do not share the same culture as Chinese. In a word, advertising of Huawei has a highly appreciable aesthetic value for Chinese consumers, but not for English-speaking customers. Besides, there are not many direct descriptions of its products in its slogan, as a result, customers can not find its outstanding advantages in its technology.

Chinese philosophy inherited the Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist cultures, emphasizing sensibility. Consumers who grow up under the background of Chinese culture have aesthetic appreciation ability and they can understand the deep cultural connotation of the advertising of Huawei. The process of comprehending the connotation requires thinking and time, which can leave consumers with a more shocking effect and strengthen consumers’ purchase willingness.

In contrast, western philosophy emphasizes the scientific nature of thinking. When it comes to the content of Apple’s advertisements, it can be found that Apple focuses on the direct description of product performance, and its sentences are straightforward. Apple pays much attention to customer participation and strives to shorten the interpersonal distance by taking advantage of dialogue and narration. For example, iPhone SE's advertising is "lots to love, less to spend," in which its inexpensive nature is highlighted. Besides, the typical example reflecting its straightforwardness is the advertising of the iPhone 6: *Bigger than Bigger*. This advertising came at a time when its screen size was expanded to 4.7 inches, which was the largest phone screen at that time, so the advertising slogan highlighted this most important feature. In terms of language form, short verbs, and imperative sentences are used in Apple’s English advertisements. These kinds of words are strong in persuasion. To narrow the distance with consumers, Apple also pays attention to the interactive nature of advertising, For example, the iPhone XS’s advertisement is: “ Welcome to the Big Screens.” The use of dialogue makes consumers feel more intimate. The advertising slogan of Apple is in line with the thinking habits of people in English-speaking countries, while Huawei’s advertisements are just the opposite because the elegant and serious Chinese advertising language widens the distance between the company and consumers.

Apart from the slogan, advertising differences between Huawei and Apple are also reflected in several other details, including camera, environment, and privacy protection advertising.

3.2 A comparative analysis of camera advertising.

Table 3: Apple's latest camera advertising

Release Date	Brand	Chinese advertising	English advertising
03/ 2023	Huawei P60 Pro	夜行精彩，暗中登场	Never just call it a night
09/ 2021	Nova9	精彩由我摄定	Be inspired, Be nova
10/ 2020	Huawei Mate40	好戏，不一定在后面	A good story, not necessarily at the back

Table 4: Apple's latest camera advertising

Release Date	Brand	English advertising	Chinese advertising
09/ 2022	iPhone 14 Pro	48MP Main camera. Mind-blowing detail.	4800 万像素主摄，细节大爆发
09/ 2022	iPhone 14	Pro-level camera. Whoa-level pics.	Pro 水准摄像头，拍得人人叫好

In Huawei's advertising, text meanings are often not directly presented and only deduction clues are provided, as a result, consumers need to appreciate the aesthetics of its advertising language by themselves. To achieve this goal, four-character idioms or poems are often rewritten in its camera advertising, such as "A good story, not necessarily at the back," which is the advertising of Huawei Mate40. This slogan takes advantage of Chinese idioms, belonging to typical high context. In a high-context culture, the thinking process is highlighted, so the result is usually presented at the end; while the result is emphasized in low-context culture, so the key part is often put at the opening in English. It's widely recognized that the best story must be at the end in China, so Huawei rewrites this common sense as "a good story, not necessarily at the back". This slogan is designed to show that the front camera can be as good as the back camera. However, this thinking pattern is not familiar to consumers in English-speaking countries, and consumers can not get its connotative meaning from its English translation version. Conversely, product features are directly presented in Apple's camera advertising, such as the advertising of the iPhone 14 pro: *48MP Main camera. Mind-blowing detail*, which directly describes the camera's excellent pixel. Product is the core of Apple's camera advertising, but the company's spirit is the focus of Huawei's camera advertising, which is the gap caused by the difference between high and low context.

3.3 A comparative analysis of privacy protection advertising.

Table 5: Huawei's latest privacy protection advertising

Release Date	Brand	English advertising
03/ 2023	Huawei P60 Pro	No content
03/ 2023	Huawei P60 Pro	No content
03/ 2023	Huawei Mate X3	No content
07/ 2021	Huawei P50 Pro	No content
02/ 2021	Huawei Mate X2	Built for Security
10/ 2020	Huawei Mate40	Content Only You Can View

Table 6: Apple's latest privacy protection advertising

Release Date	Brand	English advertising
09/ 2022	iPhone 14	Privacy. That's iPhone Our apps mind their business. Not yours.
09/ 2021	iPhone 13	Privacy is built in
10/ 2020	iPhone 12	Protects your privacy.

Personal privacy has become a central issue as technology advances, while China is characteristic of a collectivist society, focusing on national and corporate interests. From Huawei's privacy protection advertising, it can be seen that individual interest is often ignored because few privacy protection slogans can be found in its latest smartphones' advertising. Although privacy protection content is highlighted in the advertising of Huawei Mate40 and Huawei Mate X2 which are released in 2020 and 2021 respectively, it was ignored again in later generations. There is no doubt that privacy protection is not on the top agenda of Huawei's promotion strategy, as a result, a corporate image that cares little about consumers' privacy is built. In contrast, privacy protection is always the core of Apple's advertising, and it even becomes an increasingly crucial selling point. Recent years have seen Huawei's business in the US and England in trouble because of data security, so privacy protection advertising is becoming much more crucial to its corporate image construction.

3.4 A comparative analysis of environment protection Advertising

Table 7: Huawei's latest environmental protection advertising

Release Data	Brand	English advertising
03/ 2023	Huawei P60 Pro	No content
03/ 2023	Huawei Mate X3	No content
07/ 2021	Huawei P50 Pro	No content
02/ 2021	Huawei Mate X2	No content
10/2020	Huawei Mate40	No content

Table 8: Apple's latest environment protection advertising

Release Data	Brand	English advertising
09/ 2022	iPhone 14	Recycling, reimagined.
09/ 2021	iPhone 13	Good design is good for the planet.
09/ 2020	iPhone 12	Lighter on the planet.

Currently, the issue of environmental protection and climate change has drawn the public's attention. In COP27, a great number of countries have made clear objectives to bring down their carbon emissions. There is no denying that the production and transportation of smartphone will lead to environmental pollution, so phone producer is responsible for controlling pollution while doing business. Against this background, Apple puts its environmental protection concept into almost every advertisement, such as "Good design is good for the planet" and "Lighter on the planet." These slogans help prove that Apple is not a company that only concern about profit without considering environmental protection. But we can not find any similar slogans in the advertisement of Huawei. As the leading company in the ICT industry, it is Huawei's job to protect the environment and fulfill its corporate social responsibility(CSR). A company that can fulfill its CRS will win more trust from consumers and make them believe that their consumption is helping protect the earth. Therefore, if Huawei wants to gain more overseas market share, it must pay attention to environmental protection and cater to the psychology of the local people.

4. Discussion

As mentioned above, Huawei attaches great importance to arousing the emotional resonance of consumers and the introduction of product features is not the top concern. However, this kind of marketing strategy does not apply to English-speaking consumers. What Huawei desires to do is to attract more consumers from the global market. Therefore, Huawei must study foreign companies' phone advertising. Given the huge differences presented by high and low context, image reconstruction is needed in advertising, which means that the original advertising must be rewritten to a certain extent before translation, and they should be consistent with the international mainstream phone advertising in terms of ideology and theme. Apple enjoys great popularity in the US and Huawei must emulate its advertising strategy and cater to the local aesthetic. To bridge the gap between high and low context, the author proposes specific solutions from the perspective of image construction, namely: information highlight, information exclusion, and information elaboration.

Information highlight helps reorganize complex information and make it simple, thus avoiding confusion. Huawei's advertising is characteristic of four-character phrases and poems, and this information is too complex to understand for English speakers. For example, Harmony OS was introduced in the advertising of Mate X2 and its Chinese advertising is "一生万物，万物归一", which derives from *Tao Te Ching*. But the introduction of Harmony OS is deleted from its English advertising. A possible reason is that the translator thinks that this phrase is too difficult for English consumers to grasp its connotation. However, it is known that Harmony OS is a new generation of the intelligent terminal operating system, which provides a unified programming language for the intelligence, interconnection, and collaboration of different devices, and it is also one of the most significant breakthroughs for Huawei in the past years. It is a landmark that shows Huawei's phone industry is not choked by the blockage and it has strong research ability, which is consistent with the corporate image of high-tech companies. Given this background, the advertising of Harmony OS must be kept. Considering its complexity, information highlight is a feasible way to change it from high context to low context. The core of Harmony OS's advertising is a unified programming language that supports the operation of all application programs. As a result, this information can be highlighted in its English advertising.

Besides, information exclusion is also needed when translating Chinese advertising into English. It contributes to downplaying certain sensitive or unnecessary information. Due to differences between high and low context, information emphasizing personality is often found in Apple's English advertising, while collective interest is usually highlighted in Huawei's English advertising. As a result, Huawei's advertising translation should pay attention to individual interests.

For example, Huawei Mate30 Pro's privacy protection advertisement is: "The isolated secure system has achieved CCEAL 5+". Although many Chinese consumers don't know what CCEAL5+ is, this authoritative news gives them a sense of trust, making them believe that this product is recognized by the majority of this society. However, English-speaking consumers pay more attention to product quality rather than authoritative information in countries dominated by individualism. In contrast, Apple has done a better job of adapting to Chinese culture. For example, the advertising of iPhone 14 is: "Pro-level camera. Whoa-level pics," in which "whoa-level" is replaced by "everyone applauded". This replacement is an appropriate adaptation to Chinese collectivist culture, which makes it more urgent for Huawei to enhance its adaptation ability in advertising translation. It is clearly shown that information exclusion is an effective way to change advertising information between high context and low context.

Information elaboration in advertising is also a crucial part of Huawei's image reconstruction. As mentioned in the above comparative analysis, Huawei's English smartphone advertisements lack publicity of user privacy information and environmental protection information. While these two points are exactly the focus of Apple's advertising, even more important than product quality. Once there is a problem of user privacy leakage, no matter how good the product is, it is difficult to win consumer trust again. In recent years, Huawei has met setbacks because it is accused of data leakage. To clarify itself in publicity, Huawei needs to make a major change in its marketing strategy and put the privacy protection slogan in the most prominent position of advertising to show its determination. In addition, environmental protection, as an important part of corporate social responsibility, has become the consensus of global enterprises. However, Huawei, like many domestic enterprises, has not done a good job in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. In contrast, the slogan of environmental protection and product recycling has been reflected in each Apple smartphone advertisement, so information elaboration about privacy and environmental protection is a must for Huawei's image reconstruction.

5. Conclusion

Through a comparative study, the author finds that advertising of Huawei pays attention to aesthetics, which makes the products described in the advertising not clear. The aesthetic appreciation process requires thinking and reasoning, which can leave Chinese consumers with a more shocking effect and strengthen their purchasing willingness, but this effect does not apply to English-speaking consumers. In addition, it is also found that Huawei's advertising ignores the element of environmental protection and users privacy protection, which are just the focus and selling points of Apple's advertising and contribute to its success. Therefore, Huawei must emphasize the promotion of environmental protection in its advertisement and cater to the psychology of the locals. Conversely, Apple's English advertisements are highly targeted and directly describe the characteristics of products to show consumers the difference among its products.

Based on what has been discussed above, this paper summarizes the following elements that should be included in advertising, as a way to help build a better product image for Huawei, 1) fulfill social responsibility, such as environmental protection; 2) Objective information dissemination, no exaggeration; 4) Respect individualism, emphasize privacy protection. These results cast new light on advertising promotion of Huawei. The advertising text is very special, and it will lose economic benefits if it hinders the spread of information, which means that Huawei needs to choose simple genres with universal values in the initial stage of going global. As a result, it is a must for Huawei to change its advertising from high context to low context as it enters the international market, thus building a good corporate image.

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