



Advertising, Symbols, and Culture: A Perspective of Business Anthropology

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ABSTRACT The communication effect of advertising can be precisely measured by advertising symbols, and promotional activities emphasize messages in symbolic ways. Prevailing perspectives regarding such activities tend to be based on the communication disciplines and in consumer research that blends psychological and social scientific perspectives. It probes the relationship between advertising symbols and cultures from a business anthropological perspective. Business anthropology has a significant contribution to make within this context by using semantic perspectives to develop functional models tailored to unique cultural contexts.

INTRODUCTION

As the demand for professional and applied perspectives in the social sciences has been gradually growing in China, the development of business anthropology has increasingly received attention in both the academic and business world. In view of the rapid development of business culture, an increasing number of scholars have made it clear that business anthropology has bright prospects for further development in China (Fang et al. 2019; Tian and Zhou 2013) and have laid stress on the importance of situating business strategies in the fields that combine business management and applied anthropology (Zhang 2015). Even though business anthropology is just at its initial stage in China, it has a high starting and solid landing point with an extensive scope of development. It is being accepted by the business world, which reflects that the development of business anthropology in the Chinese society has involved not only theoretical thinking, but also the feedbacks from practical fields (Tian 2012; Tian et al. 2018).

Currently, scholars in different academic fields have started to pay attention to the study of icons, indicators, and symbols of semiotics, as well as the goals, symbols, and connotations

of advertising from the perspective of business anthropology (Jiang and Tian 2019). Some scholars have advocated for the systematic and theoretical study of the symbolic meanings of brands from the perspectives of sociology, behavioral science, and other disciplines. Some scholars have argued that brand symbolism is a subjective value based on consumers' self-value from the perspectives of the connotation, formation, and carrier of the symbolic meaning of the brand (Hou and Wang 2007). Some scholars use hermeneutics to interpret symbols in advertisements as cultural symbols, believing that expressive elements in advertisements are elements of cultural symbols (He 2016).

Other scholars, from the perspective of anthropology, have unified advertising and culture in a social context in an organic way, and have proposed that advertising is not only an essential part of the cultural industries but also a typical type of the ethnic-cultural industries in the course of development. In anthropology, the most widely used theoretical approaches to study the context of consumer behavior are semiotics and hermeneutics, which are used to interpret the symbolic meaning of brands and services (Sun 2012). However, generally speaking, there has not yet been a definite direction for the research field of advertising symbols from the perspective of business anthropology, and the research path of business ethnography still has yet to be developed in this field.

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As the influence of business anthropology is gradually expanding in China, it has also started to embark on the road of standardizing its academic research system and clarifying the scope and objects of its research. Based on drawing on the studies and applications of advertising, signs, and symbols by scholars both in China and abroad, the authors take the market and consumer behavior as the research field and explore advertising symbols as conjunction points between business administration and applied anthropology. Then, from the perspective of business anthropology and from the angle of otherness, the authors observe the application of advertising symbols in industries, study some cases of business anthropology that adopt the research methods of business ethnography, and then interpret the semantic context and language environment of advertising symbols with the business ethnography under the guidance of business anthropology theory. Furthermore, the functional structure and expressive characteristics of the advertising symbols are summarized in the context of such advertising symbols, so that the writers of advertisements can become proficient in summarizing and interpreting the business ethnography arising in the social environment of Chinese culture based on the functions and expressions of advertising symbols (Tian and Dai 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This research paper is not based on fieldwork data but on a set of secondary data from desktop publication reviews and case analysis. The authors adopted a content-based analysis approach to develop the basic arguments and discussions. Content-based analysis as a research method has been widely applied by social scientists to study cultural and social phenomena. According to Jiang and Tian (2019), content analysis classifies textural material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data, which uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. There is no simple right way to do content analysis; instead, researchers must judge what methods are more appropriate for their unique studies. The content-based analysis approach once was very successfully adopted by anthropologist Ruth

Benedict in her classic studies on Japanese society and culture (Benedict 1989). This anthropological technique has much in common with humanistic methods that seek cultural insights by examining popular culture and is widely adopted by the social science scholars.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Context of Advertising Symbols

An “advertising symbol” is a new concept discovered based on the cultural conjunction point of marketing and anthropology, as well as a new research direction in the field of business anthropology (Zhang 2015). The collaboration between the application of advertising symbols in the business discipline and the understanding of the symbolic meaning of advertising in the field of cultural anthropology has constituted a new synergy in the context of semantics and language. The intersection of such collaboration can be called an advertising symbol. Advertising symbols are established in the complete system radiated by the advertisement and present the form of social value, the social and economic patterns, the orientation of cultural value, and the ideology through various forms of advertisements (Liu 2002).

Any social phenomenon can be interpreted through the lenses of local cultural meanings. Advertising symbols, when placed in different social contexts, may allow the different audiences to have different understandings and reactions. Each social group may be situated in different cultural backgrounds due to the differences in cultural learning, cultural symbols, and cultural attributes, which results in multiple but distinct consumption values and behavior patterns among diverse consumer groups. For this reason, the writers of advertisements will consciously or unconsciously proceed in semantic and linguistic-cultural contexts when they choose certain cultural elements, scenarios, or objects as content for advertisements that are intended to resonate and acquire directive associations for audiences. In this way, advertising symbols can build a bridge to enable the advertiser to have better communications with the audience. In the system of advertising development and management, the purpose of

advertising symbols is to facilitate the advertising to fulfill its mission of delivering accurate information efficiently and to ultimately measure the expressions and functions of advertising symbols through the media applied and the corresponding effects (Peng and Liu 2005).

In the context of modern social and economic transformations, the application of the symbols and symbolic system has become an indispensable component of the modern economic system. People have attached great importance to the value of commodity symbols, which allow the cultural industry that is operated based on symbols and symbolic systems to play a significant role in the economic field. In other words, the use of cultural elements has become an indispensable part of the modern economy (Um et al. 2015), which is particularly prominent in the ethnic culture industry. Furthermore, advertising, as a typical component of the cultural industry, has not only become an essential part of cultural products and the cultural industry but is also embedded in the production process of all cultural products in modern society, and it may even be considered that almost all other cultural industries play the role of advertising media (Hesmondhalgh 2007).

In a general anthropological sense, symbols not only construct the cultural worlds in which people live, but also cut and divide the world based on logical criteria, and thus they have become resources that human beings depend on for their social life (Turner 2006). By these lights, advertising, in a fundamental way, is a means of full expression that involves the use of cultural elements and symbolic signs. In other words, advertising is an economic and industrial activity that is carried out on symbolic systems and utilizing symbols. The correlation between advertising and the ethnic culture industry is formally manifested in the fact that the advertisement enables the resources concerning ethnic culture to be operated in the modern economic system, thereby ultimately achieving the capitalized operation of ethnic culture. The foundation for the use of the symbolic system in advertising lies in the profound tradition and cultural connotation of the nationality within the scope of the ethnic culture industry. In this sense, the advertising is bound to be imprinted with the distinctive features of the ethnic-cultural

value system and reflect the characteristics of the nationality of advertising. Therefore, the inherent characteristics and the most profound foundation of the advertising in the ethnic culture industry lie in the characteristics of the nationality.

Swiggers (1984) indicated that the advertising symbol could be classified into the category of condensed symbols. The functional structure and expression characteristics of advertising symbols can be summarized following the two types of materials, among which one is the localized semantic context that can be excavated from relations among symbols within an advertisement, and the other is the linguistic context that is external to the advertisement. Advertising symbols allow the advertising audience (consumers) to complete the process of receiving the ideas and information conveyed by the writers of advertisements writing in particular semantic and linguistic contexts. It may be considered that the advertising symbols may be involved in localized semantic contexts in case that the advertisement audiences attempt to understand the symbolic content of an advertisement, and take the initiative or are forced to discuss what is conveyed in the advertisement, and they prominently change their attitudes. When an advertisement can be easily understood by the audience and affects the behavior paradigm of the audience by the typical behavior or associative thoughts of the advertisement, it may be believed that the externally observable linguistic context of the advertisement symbols works (Qiu 2011).

Advertising symbols can precisely measure the communication effect of advertising. In the selected social and cultural context, the advertising symbols are pre-set within a framework by the advertisement writers, while the framework is designed to play a harmonious role in the semantic and linguistic contexts. In the case that the operational level of the symbols in an advertisement is taken into account in the measurement of the communication effect of the advertisement, it is necessary to take into account not only the meaning that the writer of the advertisement intends to deliver, but also its divergence from the semantic and linguistic contexts in which audiences perceive the advertisement. The actual effect of the advertising sym-

bol should be judged based on the structural results of the advertising symbol, while the expressive characteristics of the advertising symbol can exert a definite influence on the symbol, which makes it possible to determine the results of observation that is reviewed at the appearance level from the external structure of the advertising symbol (Zhang 2016).

Structural and Expressive Characteristics of Advertising Symbols

In the study of the functional structure and expressive characteristics of the advertising symbols, this paper focuses on the semantic and linguistic contexts of the advertising symbols and makes it clear that the advertising symbol functions as the carrier for communications between the writers and consumers of an advertisement. The structural and expressive characteristics of advertising symbols originate from the characteristics of advertising programs and the context of consumer behavior in marketing. The functional structure of advertising symbols is a means to describe how advertising symbols work. The structure of an advertising symbol is given in its function, and the primary function is determined in large part by the cultural contexts in which the advertisement will be perceived. That is to say, the writers of advertisements, when developing an advertisement, can provide a distinct fundamental key and a definite value for the target and process of advertising development based on the semantic and linguistic contexts.

Advertisements are combined with other cultural products, thus realizing the commercialization strategy of different types of cultural products. Refined products with a commodity nature are primarily sold with a specific idea and values, including the meaning implied by each character, sentence, and image in a cultural product. A variety of texts, which may even be utterly irrelevant with each other, have been mutually used and then derived all types of links, while it has become a common way to deliberately misinterpret the texts, collage, and blend them at the time of creating these cultural products. The use of cultural resources and the display of cultural elements in cultural products are the key to achieve communications in this aspect.

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand that those who are willing to wait in front of the Louis Vuitton store in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong for a long time are not merely trying to scramble for an LV bag, but they are also pursuing the sense of enjoyment and superiority of their association with a luxury trademark. Carpets, which were initially been one of the daily necessities for nomadic people to resist the cold winter, have gradually become a luxury decoration in Western society, connoting exotic customs from the remote Orient. In addition, under the impetus of Chinese national policies, a number of government departments have been striving to develop the tourism industry, and then some well-known cultural brands, including Shaolin Temple, the natural landscapes in Dali (the wind of Xiaguan, the flowers of Shangguan, the snow of Diancang Mountain and the moonlight in the Erhai Lake), Yunnan Impression and so on, have risen accordingly.

From the perspective of culture, the writers of advertisements control the right of discourse in the development of advertising projects and the principles on which the group of the advertising creators formulates the specific content of the advertisement. The principle of discourse right restricts the information that is intended for dissemination and the media used in the development of advertising programs. At present, the influence and control of the mass media by the advertisers have become a significant problem in the building of communication culture in China. Though not always conspicuous to the public, advertisements in mass media exert a constant influence on the state's news communication systems and affect public opinion on the security of industries, the state, and the wider society; it has become a new social problem in the period of social transformation in China (Wang 2012).

Acculturation allows the writers of advertisements and the advertising audience to maintain a common and consistent understanding of the semantic and linguistic contexts and to be proficient in using the semantic and linguistic contexts as the primary support for the advertising symbol to give play to its functions. It means that the writers of advertisements can be immersed in the culture and society where they are situated, and deliver precise information to the advertising audience under their understanding

of the semantic and linguistic contexts (Lin 2007). A system in which the advertiser and consumer of an advertisement are interrelated and interdependent constitutes the foundation of the existence of the advertising symbol. The principles and values of the development of an advertisement have realized the integration and continuation of the advertising symbols when the advertisement abides by the semantic context and the linguistic context in the society and culture where its target group is.

On the other hand, when interpreting the functional structure of advertising symbols in society and culture using context analysis, it may be found that these advertising symbols are extracted from the scenarios in social life. In a cultural system, advertising symbols may combine the cultural system with the semantic context and the linguistic context to present a tree-crown divergent structure, which is also known as multiple structural levels. Due to the sharing, diversity, integration, adaptability, and hierarchy of culture, the advertising symbols should take into account the design of information dissemination and the use of media in the process of information collection and dissemination, such as the generation, evaluation, selection, and execution of advertising information, or the type, tools, and regional distribution of the media, as well as the arrival rate, frequency, and influence of the media, and so forth. It is possible to interpret the material environment and cultural background of the geographical region where an advertisement is located from the perspective of various manifestations of advertising symbols in its multiple structural levels. In the field of anthropology, culture is a summary of all the achievements accumulated by human beings. Each country has its unique culture because of the differences in nationality, history, geographical location, and real life and other aspects. In this regard, each consumer is growing up in a particular cultural environment and living in a particular cultural environment, and thus its ideology is bound to be deeply branded by the ethnic culture (Yan 1999).

The expressive characteristics of the advertising symbols can be concluded from the analysis of the functional structure of those advertising symbols. When the writers of advertisements choose to express something—a scene, a

behavior, a space, or a relationship following the characteristics of consumer goods—it is likely to arouse conscious or unconscious associations among the advertising audience; these associations are the expressive characteristics of advertising symbols. Expressive characteristics of advertising symbols are summarized from the advertising cases created by the writers of advertisements. In this way, it is not difficult to find that the expressive characteristics of advertising symbols are condensed in the coexistence in society and that such characteristics may be performance, sympathy, identity or diversity (Qu 2007).

If an advertisement is regarded as a performance, advertising symbols are the communication point to fulfill the mission of advertising. In a word, the primary expressive characteristic of the advertising symbol can be summarized as some simple performance factors appearing on the stage with sympathy. Moreover, such performance factors have certain preferentiality. Victor Turner once pointed out that a simple symbol can not only present something mandatory but also show what people desire (Turner 2006). Hence, one of the expressive characteristics of advertising symbols is the performance factor, which is placed in a specific social and cultural context and can reflect the whole symbolic system of a particular advertisement for interpretation. Every advertisement has a unique mechanism with simple and sympathetic symbols. However, this mechanism depends on the purpose of advertising, as an advertisement has clear objectives and definite media and corresponding evaluation results, in which the advertising symbol acts as the way to accomplish these objectives.

Secondly, the expressive character of the advertising symbols is simplification. A simple instruction, utterance, logo, scene, or action may be able to comprise the message to be conveyed by an advertisement. Furthermore, the most critical expressive characteristic of the advertising symbol is the empathic expression subjectively selected by the advertisement. Sympathetic characteristics refers to a connection of the qualities of entirely different elements, or a connection between their external or internal objective thinking, which is distributed in all aspects of social life and exists in all kinds of social activities. Advertisers can choose the mode of develop-

ment and evaluation of advertising information, the development space and implementation, the means of creativity, as well as the evaluation mechanism of social responsibility following the expressive characteristics of sympathy (Zhou 2005).

Another characteristic of advertising symbols is identity. The advertising symbols repeatedly appear during the period when an advertisement is created and operated, and the content expressed in the advertisement is identical. It has been based on identical expression in the whole process of advertising development, from the determination of advertising objectives to the preparation of advertising budgets, from the formulation of advertising strategies to the finalization of the development of advertising creativity, which is reflected in the advertising symbols throughout every advertising theme.

An advertising symbol involves a diversity of expressive characteristics, which are not only conveyed by definite descriptions but also by evoking personal emotional needs. Among them, the objective description conforms to the essential requirement of the expressive characteristics of advertising symbols, and it is the norm and value that the advertisement sponsors intend to express. Subjective emotional needs are the descriptions of the social facts, also known as collective representations, with the desires and emotions of the consumer group by the creators according to the semantic and linguistic contexts.

Business Application of Advertising Symbols

Before examining the business ethnography of advertising symbols, stress must be first laid on the vital role of business anthropologists as cultural interpreters of advertising symbols. The context of advertising symbols has made it clear that advertising symbols serve as the carrier of the communications between the writers of advertisements and consumers, and helps to determine the scope of research on advertising symbols and know about the position and role of business anthropologists. Business anthropologists, as cultural translators in the industrial society and social sciences in China, can interpret the expression and function of advertising symbol research accurately. What is more,

the role of business anthropology will significantly improve the efficiency of advertising initiatives, and the vast amount of research done on this aspect can be treated as business ethnography. Business ethnography refers to the study of business cases that are collected, recorded, sorted, and analyzed by the business anthropologists in practice after they absorb and apply knowledge in the field of anthropology. Moreover, business ethnography is a more traditional research method in the field of applied anthropology and a necessary path for business anthropology. Concerning advertising, the process of constructing advertising symbols relies on the rich descriptions and images presented in ethnographies (Tian et al. 2017).

Cultural interpreters, namely business anthropologists, review the appearance of the advertisement to judge how the advertising audience understands advertising symbols in the semantic and linguistic contexts and how the audience evolves its attitudinal characteristics and specific consumption behaviors. The characteristics of the trunk structure guarantee that the advertising symbols can be carried out at the level of local interpretation, while the multiple structure levels represent the operational meaning, which allows the writers of advertisements to process advertising symbols in the specific semantic and linguistic contexts. As can be seen from the performance of advertising symbols in culture and society, the advertising symbol has its unique way of emotional display that has been recognized by the society, which provides a better way for the creators of the advertisement, the audience, and others involved in the review to interpret the context in which advertising symbols act under the influence of the society and culture.

Advertising symbols are one of the conditions for contact and communication among diverse groups, as well as one of the types of cultural acculturation. Advertising is a mechanism of mass communication, while advertising symbols are a process of communication to reach the desired effect. The embodiment of acculturation in advertising symbols requires the cultural interpreters to interpret these symbols in an all-round way. Cultural interpreters need to dig out the contexts with superficial and profound meanings, so that the advertising symbol, as a

medium, can be recognized by the society when it is used and disseminated by the writers of advertisements. It cannot be denied that in the transmission of some advertising symbols, the functional utility may be utterly contrary to the understanding of the actual audience in the case of specific semantic interpretations, thus leading to emotional resistance among the public. For instance, advertising symbols in the early days that were involved in the concepts or behavior relating to homosexuality may be rejected, resisted, or revolted against by some or even most of the audience in a society. So how can business anthropologists explain the contradiction between such interpretations of the meaning and the actual case? As a cultural interpreter, how can we interpret the localization of advertising symbols from a more in-depth and more comprehensive perspective than the writers of advertisements and their audiences?

Business anthropologists should regard an advertisement as a complete and systematic performance as if understanding a peculiar ceremony when applying the knowledge of business and anthropological research methods. In this exceptional performance, business anthropologists need to observe the advertisement's rich cultural background and understand and describe the relationality between its semantic and linguistic contexts. Advertising symbols are an important component of advertising activities as a whole. When it is reflected in the actual circumstances, advertising symbols tend to represent the communication behavior between a specific group and another group. As for the effectiveness of the communication and the ways to enhance it, it depends on the business anthropologists' interpretation of the advertising symbols, as well as their opinions and suggestions. However, it is worth noting that business anthropologists can make a preliminary analysis and understanding of the local environment of the society at which the advertisement is targeted based on their abundant accumulation of disciplinary knowledge, and then draw out their views on this particular society, and finally have a unbiased understanding of the connections and conflicts between the relevant advertising symbols (Tian et al. 2018).

Let us take the periodic commercial advertisements of Solvil et Titus in the 1980s and 1990s

as a case to examine it from the perspective of business anthropology. We analyze the advertisements using network business ethnography and then interprets the expression and function of advertising symbols in Solvil et Titus commercials. In 1887, Paul Ditisheim (1868-1945) founded Solvil et Titus in Switzerland. Eighty-eight years later, in 1975, the Stelux Group (City Chain) in Hong Kong acquired Solvil et Titus and was trying to market it in Asia. In the early 1980s, the Hong Kong market was flooded with a large number of high-end brands, such as Rolex, while the watches of Solvil et Titus were only in the low and middle grades. On September 26, 1984, the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland signed the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong in Beijing, which confirmed that the Government of the People's Republic of China would resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. Advertising symbols of Solvil et Titus also began to pay attention to the critical connotation of Hong Kong culture as an integral part of Chinese culture.

In 1988, Mike Ka Ting Chu tailored a new advertising system for the brand Solvil et Titus took the lead in developing the advertisement through the expressive means of film, which marked the beginning of film-style advertisements. Since then, film-style expression of advertising symbols has been followed and pursued by other writers of advertisements. In the advertisement by Mike Ka Ting Chu, the watch of Solvil et Titus acted as an emotional symbol integrating classical, nostalgic, love, and other emotional elements into the brand. Anita Mui starred in the advertisement "The Yearning," which ingeniously integrated the emotions into the product under the background of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and turned Solvil et Titus into a symbol of emotional expression qua advertisement. In order to better show the emotional description of advertising symbols in the story of the advertisement, Mike Ka Ting Chu selected Nanjing as the location for shooting the stories in the advertisement.

The humanistic environment in Nanjing sets off the contemporary nature of Solvil et Titus as

an emotional symbol. The emotional expression “Do not care about whether they will last forever but only care about the time that they were together” has become the core of the emotional expression of Solvil et Titus as an advertising symbol. The four characters, “Tian Chang Di Jiu” (everlasting), on the back of the Solvil et Titus watch, became a common term at that time in Hong Kong. Public sympathy with the advertising symbols was widespread, which directly led to citizens of Hong Kong purchasing the watches with these four words on the back in the stores of City Chain. In 1990, Dave Wang starred in the advertisement “The Winter,” which was based on the emotional tone created by the background of the wartime in the story of the advertisement, while the same symbol played a sympathetic role of everlasting love in the ending of the love story. Solvil et Titus once again tapped into the emotional values of the Hong Kong market.

In 1991, due to the severe floods in eastern China, the society in Hong Kong was filled with the social-emotional tone involving national-family emotions for the Chinese people. In 1992, Mike Ka Ting CHU sublimated the emotional expression of the symbol of Solvil et Titus once again by tapping into this emotional tone in Hong Kong society. In 1992, the advertisement “The Pilot” featured renowned actors Chow Yun Fat and Wu Qien Lien. In this film-style advertisement, the advertising symbol blends the personal emotional conflict of “The Yearning” with the tragic reality of war conveyed in “The Winter.” The story of “The Pilot” takes place during the air war in Lanzhou in early 1939, in which Chow Yun Fat played a pilot of the Chinese Air Force during the Second Sino-Japanese War and Wu Qien Lien played his lover. Shortly after their marriage, the pilot boarded his fighter plane and flew to the battlefield. In the poster of the advertisement, there is a fragment of an old newspaper, on which there are four mysterious letters, “Lan Shi Kong Zhan” (air war in Lanzhou) (Tang 2018).

In the summary of the advertisement stories, Mike Ka Ting CHU fused the national feelings, such as blood is thicker than water and descendants of the Yan and Huang Emperors, in the social context in China, and further combined the semantic context of personal emotional conflict with the linguistic context of the family-country emotions, thus correctly interpreting the air

war in Lanzhou in 1939. It is the story of Liu Fuhong, then captain of the 10th team of the 8th Air Force Brigade of China acted by Chow Yun Fat, and his wife Chen Yingfan acted by Wu Qien Lien in the semantic and linguistic contexts of the Chinese community, thus highlighting the more noble theme of the advertisement of The Pilot, the unity of the family and the country. In contrast with the previous advertisements, this one did not give an ending for the two characters. It is precisely this lack of an ending that allows the advertising audience to be immersed in the story, and to imagine the ending of the story in various ways.

The advertisement for The Pilot became the most popular and highly rated advertisement among the series of advertisements for the watches of Solvil et Titus. On the premise that the expressive characteristics of the advertising symbol abide by the principle of identity, Mike Ka Ting CHU chose a historical fact that is less known, supplemented by a tragic story, the methods of film shooting, the open-ended conclusion and the vital symbol, namely, the watch with the four characters, “Tian Chang Di Jiu”. Thus, the integration of family-country emotions and Solvil et Titus watches have successfully promoted the brand image of Solvil et Titus. While adding to the value of the brand Solvil et Titus, with an advertising symbol, the writers of advertisements also laid an essential foundation for Solvil et Titus to enter the list of middle and high-end brands. The proficient application of advertising symbols has a positive impact on the advertising audience, which is fully reflected in the substantial increase in the sales volume of the product after it was launched in the local market.

Even to this day, the writers of advertisements have chosen different performers with different semantic contexts and linguistic contexts in different advertisement stories, but the Solvil et Titus watch, as an advertising symbol, always expresses its sympathy and identity. The advertising story of Solvil et Titus is a case of business ethnography that the business anthropologists, from the perspective of otherness, are proficient in the functional structure and the expressive characteristics of the advertising symbols in specific semantic and linguistic contexts.

Taking the case of “the 18 Oddities in Yunnan” as an example since it has been a renowned

brand for Yunnan Province with a long history, and in turn, Yunnan's unique culture has had a substantial impact on wider Chinese society. In the past, the 18 Oddities in Yunnan have been regarded as a sign of regional isolation and cultural backwardness. However, with the deepening of social exchanges, especially those facilitated by the increasing prosperity of ethnic and cultural tourism, this feature of Yunnan culture, with its abundance of multi-cultural connotations, has been adapted to the requirements of the times. The notion of "18 Oddities in Yunnan," which Yunnan residents have historically rejected as condescending, was re-appropriated by Yunnan residents seeking to create a marketable cultural image based on the region's "oddities." In this way, the "18 Oddities in Yunnan" not only forms a complete social system which is involved in climate, natural tourism resources, diet, and ethnic culture but also become a means for several merchants to develop some creative products." In economic activities, the unique elements of cultural value that originate from life are repackaged into cultural products and widely publicized to the consumers; the "oddities" thereby represent rare resources, symbolizing identity and profit (Sun 2012).

CONCLUSION

Advertising symbols represent a process in which the writers of advertisements in commerce encode their intentions of creation into certain local information in the field of a different culture based on the theory of applied anthropology so that the audience can accurately acquire such information. Thus, the advertising symbols can become not only the selective expression of the writers of advertisements for known consumer goods, but also a projection of the relationship between the emotional factors of the advertising audience, arising from local semantic and cultural contexts, and consumer behaviors. When advertising is combined with other cultural products, the strategy of commercialization of different types of cultural products can be realized. Furthermore, cultural products with a commodity nature are mainly sold together with a specific idea and values, including the meaning represented by each element in a cultural product.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the function structure of the advertising symbol and the summary of its expressive characteristics, the writers of advertisements, in the future, should draw on the cultural interpretation of advertising symbols by business anthropologists to set up a reliable and effective communication paradigm with the consumer groups from the perspective of audiences, so that the advertisement can play a better role of cultural identity of sympathy and resonance. Advertising symbols enable the writers of advertisements to make proficient use of the functional structures and expressive characteristics of advertising symbols in the semantic and linguistic contexts of different cultures and to better explain business ethnography in the context of Chinese culture and society.

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