

Vertical short video advertising marketing strategy in the new media era

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Abstract: *In line with the development of the new media era, vertical short videos were born, ushering in a new way of advertising and marketing - vertical short video advertising. With this significant development opportunity, vertical screen short video advertising has enormous advantages in terms of marketing and aesthetics. However, as with any new creation, it also comes with new challenges. We need to develop and make good use of the advantages of vertical screen short video advertising to meet the needs of the times. Still, we should also be realistic about the benefits and drawbacks of these advantages and be proactive in addressing the difficulties and problems that may arise. This paper aims to study the marketing strategy of vertical short video advertising in terms of its development status, advertising model, communication logic, advantages, and challenges.*

Keywords: *Vertical screen; Short videos; Advertisement; Marketing; Vertical Screen Aesthetics*

1. Introduction

As mobile phones have become essential communication devices, vertical screen browsing has gradually become the primary mode of viewing information. Consequently, vertical screen short video advertising is riding on this trend and experiencing significant development opportunities. So, what is the marketing strategy for this form of advertising? What are its advantages and problems?

2. Current development of vertical screen short video advertising

With the rapid development of technology, mobile devices have quickly become one of the main ways people interact with the world. Given the fast-paced nature of people's lives, fragmented information has become the most widely accepted form of content consumption. In line with these developments, applications adapted to mobile devices that disseminate information in short video fragments have emerged, including apps like ShakeYin, Foton, Tencent News, and WeChat videos, becoming one of the main sources of information for people. China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the 51st Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet, showing that as of December 2022, the size of China's Internet video (including short video) users reached 3.1 billion, up 55.86 million from December 2021, accounting for 96.5% of Internet users as a whole; Among them, the size of short video users reached 1.012 billion, up 77.7 million from December 2021, accounting for 94.8% of Internet users as a whole. As can be seen, vertical short video messages occupy a considerable part of the appeal, which naturally also brings great development opportunities for vertical short video advertising. According to InMobi's China Mobile Video Advertising Research Report 2019, spending on in-app mobile video advertising by brand advertisers experienced a significant surge in 2017 and 2018. The Chinese market, in particular, witnessed an astounding year-on-year growth of 348% in advertising expenditures in 2017.

With the rapid development of vertical screen media, vertical screen short video advertising has significantly impacted advertising effectiveness. Nowadays, people encounter various infomercials whenever they open an app on their phones. These ads subtly influence people before they even have time to react to them. Additionally, vertical short video ads can be found in the content created by netizens, such as "Goodies Share" and "Love List." Video creators have cleverly integrated product advertising into their works, ensuring viewers receive the advertising message while watching the video content. Some ads even go unnoticed by the audience, promoting the products in a more "silent" way. Many businesses, including international brands, have recognized this opportunity and focused their advertising efforts on vertical screens.

In early 2017, Jitterbug cooperated with Chevrolet, Harbin Beer, and Airbnb to pioneer vertical screen advertising. This was the first time an advertiser was willing to try vertical screen short video infomercials. The positioning of the product itself aligned well with the young consumer group of the Jitterbug platform. Combined with Jitterbug's dynamic music and varied editing methods, the ad received positive feedback and attracted a large number of young consumers. Celebrity endorsements also contributed to the success of Jitterbug's first attempt at native infomercials. For example, after releasing the Shake Shack short video ad, Airbnb's brand awareness and engagement increased by more than 200%, and brand favorability increased by 90%, making it four times more effective than traditional travel ads^[3]. This shows that vertical screen short video advertising is gaining momentum in the new media era.

3. Vertical short video advertising model

The main advertising models for vertical short videos include opening screen ads, infomercials, and implant ads. Initially starting as lock screens on Apple devices to address problems like slow-running systems, there was no intention to advertise. Later, with the development of media diversification, advertisers and media discovered the potential of the app's open-screen position. It became a platform for promoting commodities and a realization channel for advertisers. This position replaced the original start page with a well-designed short video ad, capable of grabbing consumers' attention in just a few seconds, with little impact on the user experience and higher acceptance. The open-screen ad has a unique location advantage, appearing in front of the audience's eyes when they open an app, lasting 5-15 seconds. Clicking on it can directly jump to the product purchase page, greatly enhancing product exposure and stimulating consumers' willingness to buy. Frequently, a 'skip' button is provided, usually placed in a hidden corner so the audience is unaware of it. This advertising model takes advantage of the 'first cause effect' since people tend to be most impressed by the first thing they see. Opening screen ads benefit both platforms and advertisers, enriching the content when the app opens and loads. Opening screen advertisements are common in many widely-used software applications, such as Jitterbug, Racer, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, NetEase Cloud, and more.

Infomercials, also known as "the most unlike an ad," combine the style, characteristics, and user habits of different platforms with the video content and integrate them naturally into the platform's infomercials. The key feature of infomercials is their ability to blend in with the audience's viewing environment without appearing condescending. They seamlessly integrate with the content that the audience wants to see, turning the ad content into useful information for viewers. This allows the audience to naturally and actively accept the information in the ad, achieving a "de-advertising" effect. For example, suppose a video portrays two children in a cozy family environment. In that case, it can subtly showcase and recommend children's products like bottles and toys, allowing viewers to receive information about the products while watching the video. Recently, the sorghum syrup "QQ bouncy, tasty, and healthy" became a big hit, generating a strong desire to purchase it. The anchor, Hou Mei, showcased the syrup in an exaggerated manner in her video and shared a purchase link below, leading to monthly sales of 20 million. Although many marketing methods were used, credit must be given to the infomercial. Viewers trust the products featured in the video because they are fans of the video's creator, maximizing the promotional impact of the ad.

Implantable advertising refers to the implantation of brand or product images, logos, product devices, etc., in cultural products such as film, television, games, music, etc., so that they are presented naturally and imperceptibly, with a high degree of entertainment and creativity. For example, "Wang Rong, three children's mother," who has a million followers on the ShakeYin platform, mainly records the process of making rich meals for a family. By creating a lasting impression of the product, it increases the likelihood of customers making a purchase. In the age of short-form video, implantable advertisements are integrated into the short-form video content in a more innovative and clever way, making them appear before the viewer's eyes, minimizing the viewer's rejection of the advertisements, and providing a more 'immersive' experience.

4. Advantages of vertical short video advertising

4.1. From the perspective of viewing mode: vertical screens are more suitable for contemporary audiences

The vertical screen mode is more adapted to the audience's habits in the new media era, where mobile phones have become an inseparable part of people's lives, and the vertical screen has become the

contemporary viewing mode that people are used to. According to some data, the completion rate of vertical video ads on mobile media is nine times higher than horizontal video ads. The visual attention rate is two times higher, and the click rate is 1.44 times higher than the horizontal versions. Furthermore, the interactive effect is 41% higher. Physiologically, the vertical viewing mode is more convenient for mobile phones as users can control all the buttons on the page with one hand, while horizontal screens require two hands to control them all. According to a study by former New York Times video producer Barakat, many people would rather put up with black edges than switch their phones to landscape mode^[2]. So it seems that vertical screens are more suitable for modern audiences.

4.2. From an aesthetic point of view: vertical screens have a unique beauty

In terms of aesthetics, vertical screen advertising with a 16:9 aspect ratio makes better use of vertical screen space and has a stronger impact, especially when people, trees, rivers, and other vertical objects are the main subjects. For example, clothing advertisements often showcase the spokesperson fully clothed in the product, with the entire body occupying the middle of the screen. This makes it easier to capture the audience's attention and achieve effective communication.

The vertical screen space allows scenes to split up the image, giving it a more layered feel and enhancing storytelling. For example, the micro-film advertisements launched by Zhang Yimou's team in collaboration with Buick are shot in a vertical screen mode. The first video, "Meet You," is shot on a train, and the three-story train sleeper bed divides the video into three parts, following the golden ratio of one-third. With the train's motion and the play of light and shadow from the windows, each still and quiet image becomes full of life, bringing the art of composition to the forefront. Even without unnecessary words or music, the storytelling aspect is already evident, creating curiosity about the content of the entire advertisement. This series of short video commercials reflect the humanism that the Buick brand promotes and pursues: affection, empathy, beauty, and kindness. This "silent" advertising and marketing approach highlights the premium and atmospheric nature of the Buick brand.

Landscape aesthetics: The vertical screen advertisements are mostly close-ups or close-ups, giving people an "immersive" viewing experience, allowing them to easily see the full picture of the product and its highlights in a short period of time, and the content is dense with information. The use of close-ups and close-ups makes it easier to bring people closer to the content of the video, making it easier for people to focus on it, reduce horizontal distraction and immerse themselves in it, making it easier for them to feel good about the product or resonate with the content of the ad.

4.3. From the use of technology: more precise placement and closer interaction

According to the white paper on short video marketing by Zhimeng Consulting, nearly 60% of users on vertical short video platforms consume content because they watch vertical short videos^[1]. In this age of "information explosion," various fragmented information floods in, but the audience's attention span is limited, and people will only engage with the content they are interested in. The big data algorithm then highlights its powerful advantages by targeting each person's preferences, the type of bloggers they follow, the style of videos they like, and the content of their favorite videos, etc., to maximize the effectiveness of their advertising.

The "interactivity" of vertical screen short video advertising has always been a prominent advantage. Vertical screen advertising images are more likely to bring viewers closer, making them feel as if they are surrounded, creating a desire to interact with the content, share it with their friends, and like it and add it to the shopping cart. Vertical short video ads can also involve interaction with viewers through buttons, allowing them to participate in the ad. For example, they can design mini-games where viewers can receive certain product giveaways or coupons if they pass the game, etc. This allows viewers to participate actively and enhances their attention to the ad. Interactivity also strengthens the audience's trust in the platform and significantly reduces their rejection of advertising.

5. Analysis of vertical short video advertising marketing based on the 4P theory

Take, for example, the Buick brand's vertical microfilm campaign series with Zhang Yimou's team, which was released on January 21, 2021. Under the influence of the epidemic, everyone's life has been more or less negatively affected. Just in time for the New Year, this series of films is themed on healing, gratitude, and warmth, creating four different stories that take place in different scenes against the backdrop of the New Year: "Meeting You," "Keeping You Company," "Warm You," and "Thank You."

The series of advertisements were released on platforms such as Shake and Quick, which are popular software at the moment, and they triggered an immediate warm response. So far, the Weibo topic has been read by 200 million people and discussed by 294,000 people. The reputation on all major platforms is not bad, and the view count has also surged to the top.

5.1. Vertical short video ad content

Due to the intimacy of the "vertical screen" and the short duration of the "short video," vertical screen short video advertising offers more scenario-based content. The case of "Meet You," which takes place on a spring train, focuses on a young man and woman meeting for the first time. The storyline is vivid, realistic, interesting, engaging and moves the audience, evoking empathy. The audience becomes both consumers and viewers of the product. The film-like content provides an immersive and enjoyable experience, triggering a desire to share and expanding the communication reach.

5.2. Cost of vertical screen short video advertising

Compared to traditional horizontal ads, vertical short video ads have the advantages of lower production costs and accessibility to multiple delivery platforms. All you need is a good idea, a mobile phone, and the necessary people or props to create a short video ad. This not only saves a significant amount of money on equipment and production but is also compared to traditional media platforms. The production cycle is shorter, the production threshold and output are lower, and there is potential for universal participation. The scenes and characters depicted in the videos are lifelike and often feature ordinary people, which also greatly reduces production costs. These stories of ordinary people's everyday lives are particularly moving.

5.3. Vertical short video advertising channels

The microfilm advertisements in the series were disseminated in a "matrix" mode across the entire network, generating widespread attention and enthusiastic responses on all platforms. Viewers actively retweeted the messages that resonated with them, and the messages that were retweeted by people close to them were more likely to be trusted, increasing the effectiveness of the advertisements through social interaction.

5.4. Vertical short video advertising

As a product, it is important to have sufficient quality and distribution channels, as well as promotion and publicity. In the new media era, major websites and platforms play a pivotal role as the main propaganda force. Once released, the microfilm advertisements quickly attracted comments and appreciation from major websites and media platforms such as Sohu.com and Netease, further capturing the audience's attention.

6. The dilemma of vertical short video advertising

With the advent of the mobile media era and the rise of vertical screen short video advertising, there is an opportunity to harness its strong momentum with relatively low investment and potentially high benefits. However, as with any new development, specific challenges and problems need to be addressed. For instance, in the current landscape, video content may include false advertising and misleading information, necessitating increased supervision from relevant authorities. It is imperative to establish relevant policies and regulations to guide the responsible growth and development of these emerging trends rather than allowing them to progress haphazardly.

Secondly, as this publicity method gradually tends to smooth out, the problem of rigid and uniform content planning and lack of innovation has emerged, with the content of advertisements for similar products almost identical, posing a threat to the interests of the originator and also causing aesthetic fatigue among viewers and rejection of short video advertisements, which is extremely detrimental to the development of the industry.

Finally, as revenues continue to rise, the various parts of the split account for more, and there is a risk of small advertisers getting out. According to data obtained by the South China Morning Post, it is known that of the total investment in advertising, the platform takes 60%, and the daedal takes 40%. Advertisers

place orders directly from Startups, and the platform also takes 10%-15% of the service fee, which undoubtedly increases the pressure on advertisers and makes advertisers with smaller budgets face the dilemma of getting out.

7. Conclusions

As a new thing born in response to the times, vertical screen short video advertising is undoubtedly encountering huge development opportunities and has a vast space for development. Facing a large audience and the empowerment of technology are the strengths and pressures of this advertising model, which requires ad makers and marketers to put in more effort and explore more possibilities for development. While focusing on its better development, it should also try to avoid and reduce problems, strictly control the content of the advertisements, protect the rights and interests of the originators, and rationalize the division of interests, so that the whole industry can form a positive and good development environment, which is conducive to more long-term development.

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