

Strategies of Promotion Copywriting of Female Product Brand Under the Development of Feminist —Taking the Unsuccessful Advertisement of PurCotton as an Example

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ABSTRACT

The author's research paper is based on an unsuccessful advertisement of PurCotton, which was a video that was offensive and disrespectful to women. From this advertisement, we can see that although feminism developed for a long time until now, but there are still lots of companies releasing advertisements that are being gender discrimination. Therefore, in this paper, the author's research topic is the development of feminism as well as why and how should the brands change in their advertisements to meet this trend and gain more customers. In addition, the author wants to speak up for women to make everyone know that this problem is serious. In this research, the author used the failure of the advertisement of Purcotton as a case and analyzed the reasons for its failure. According to the research result, in today's society, female receive education and can go out for work. They gain much more voice and power than before. Women have now the ability and freedom to pay for themselves and become real customers. Under this background, companies, especially those who sell female products, should transform the male gaze in their promotion copywriting into female gaze to meet the favor of their target customers. What is more, they should pay close attention to the advertisement released on social media, because there are many potential customers. An inappropriate advertisement can cause great loss to them.

Keywords: Promotion copywriting, feminism, advertisement, new media, case study

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the development of feminism and the increase in women's education and work participation, women have undergone many changes in self-esteem and self-perception. What is more, women have also gained more voice in public. Therefore, many things that were once accustomed to everyone are now often pointed out as containing sex discrimination. This kind of problem often occurs in the promotion copywriting of feminine products. Failed ad copy often leads to the loss of target customers and lower sales. According to Weibo Data Center, "54.6% of the users are women during the research in 2020" [1]. According to Meihong Liu, "the shopping festival on 3.8 women's day in 2020, 74.84% of the consumption was consumed by women." [2] These are the evidences that women are now playing an important role in the market in China. According to Elva, "according to CBN data, in 2020, the consume

market of women had been over ten trillion RMB" [3]. Therefore, how to avoid gender discrimination and stereotyped in advertising is an issue that every company should study since women are very important and occupy a large part of the market. In this paper, the author selects the advertisement of a Chinese company PurCotton and the resulting public opinion event as an example. Through the analysis of the event and the interpretation of feminist thinking, the author will analyze the reasons for the failure of the advertisement and why women feel offended, and what implications this incident has for other companies. In addition, the author also verified some of her views through an interview. The main purpose of this paper is to show the problems women are still facing now, and what changes in promotion copywriting should the companies selling female products make.

2. REVIEW OD THE INCIDENT

The brand “PurCotton” in this paper is a brand in China, which sells things made from cotton to consumers mostly women, such as clothes, washcloths and sanitary napkins. Its advertisement being analyzed is about their makeup removal, and it talks about a story, saying that a girl was being disturbed by someone at night alone, then she used Purcotton’s make-up removal to remove her makeup, so her face turned into a man’s face in that video which was quite ugly, and the tagger just made sounds like he was going to throw up and stopped disturbing her after seeing her face.

After this video released on the Internet, many netizens stated that they felt offended by this video, especially female netizens. There are mainly two reasons. Firstly, this advertisement indicates that the root of sexual harassment is women's beauty, which is a wrong conception because of the wrong attribution of this kind of crime, which always leads to the blame on the victims. Consequently, people are used to consider that instead of the criminals, the victims should take the primary responsibility in these cases, thus leading to the long-term lack of correct gender education and the neglect of social security problems.

Secondly, this ad criticizes on women's appearance, kind of saying that pretty girls are pretty because of the makeup they putted on, and it is trying to objectify women through showing that men decide whether to like and disturb the girl by her appearance. They are most angry about the ad is that, this company sells things that have women as their main consumers, but they are still making ads that contains gender discrimination.

3. REASONS FOR THE CRITICS ON THIS ADVERTISEMENT

Feminism is a kind of thinking that is encouraging men and women to be equal, and wanting women to show their value in order to develop our society better. According to Ruilin Qiao, “Liberal feminism and radical feminism launched two feminist movements, which played a vital role in the transformation of women's own appearance and their survival and development, the movements also had a certain influence on the local economy and politics, having a start for the social exploration of gender equality” [4]. As can be seen, there were already movements trying to make people think that it is important to be equal to women and men, which is good for the development of women’s thinking. At first, women were forced to obey and support men, and they could not show their opinions. However, feminism is now developing, which is changing how women think and making women to be more important in the society by joining both economy and politics. Besides, through this event, we can see that the action of feminism kind of succeed by making the

company to apologize to the consumers, but there are still difficulties that women are facing. This is a very common problem on social media these days. For example, there are lots of videos telling stories like messy girls putting on lots of makeup or buying many luxuries to look pretty to retrieve their boyfriends. These videos or articles are just talking too much about women’s beauty or ugliness, which will strengthen the gender stereotype of women and the anxiety of women’s appearances.

However, there are also problems during the development, as women are standing up to speak for themselves, there are many men being stimulated and saying bad things about feminism, which stigmatizes women. According to Jintao Zhang, “In the context of new media, the seriousness of female discourse has been eliminated, and even the feminist thought itself has been misunderstood in the network communication” [5]. Also, through our experiences when accessing the Internet, we can see that there are many people saying that women are too overreacted to this. So sometimes in China, the netizens will say that this is “women’s fists” instead of “women’s rights”, since the pronunciations of “fists” and “rights” are the same in Chinese. Maybe sometimes there are women who are too radical and have thinking that are not that appropriate, since they are too sensitive about the things that are related to women’s rights. Because everyone can speak for themselves as the spread of social medias, these people can comment on articles on the Internet that they think are not appropriate, which might stimulate some of the netizens and leave bad impressions of feminism. Nevertheless, this is only a small number of people, which should not be the only consideration of the thinking of women. Women’s rights should still be protected not being affected by these people.

Combining these difficult situations and the advertisement, more serious problems of the society can be shown. The difficulties women are facing are always being an entertainment for people to talk about, and sometimes people are even making fun of the security problems women are facing. These advertisements being made can also show that the company did not think that making fun of the problems, which women are facing, was not appropriate, and no one thought that being disturbed at night when they are walking alone is harmful to girls. Besides, the thinking of women obeying men and not needing as much rights had lasted for a very long time, so people’s thinking is still too generous when it comes to gender discrimination, and sometimes even women cannot realize the things they see are offensive to them, which is a disadvantage of the development of feminism.

Looking back at the development of feminism, that the development was not fast and was not a short period of time, instead, it developed through fighting for it, being confused and reconstructing it over a very long time. Although women’s thinking changed a little over

time, they are not conscious of their rights and their culture was not all identified. Thus, feminism is still developing and should be developing to protect more of women's rights and power.

4. ENLIGHTENMENT OF THIS INCIDENT

At the end, the video was deleted by the company, and the brand apologized to all the consumers. This indicates that now although women do not have the same status and power as men, but they can still realize the discrimination existing in the society, and they are standing up to speak and fight for themselves.

When placing promotion copywriting in the context of feminism, companies should make changes. In the past, even the female products should meet the favor of men, because women did not work, therefore, men were the real buyers of these products. They could refuse to pay for the brand that did not place them in the center. However, today, women work, have income, pay for themselves and become the real buyers of these products. In order to sell products to women, producers of promotional copy should consider whether the copy can please women and attract them. Especially when promotional advertisements appear on new media platforms, where there is a wide range of potential consumers. According to Ricardo Lombardo, promotion copywriting has the ability to turn viewers into actual brand users [6]. When viewers are moved by the content of the advertisement, they will buy the product. On the contrary, inappropriate promotion copywriting will damage the brand image and make the brand lose consumers.

The unsuccessful example of PurCotton suggests that when a company sells products to women, the connotation conveyed by its promotion copywriting should keep in pace with the development of female ideology, rather than conveying backward and untimely content to consumers with progressive ideas. For example, PurCotton's copywriting should not be based on male gaze. On the contrary, they should tell women it is important and proud to be themselves regardless of their characteristics. Wearing makeup or not should depend on whether they want to rather than whether they are told to. It is time for companies to change, show respect to their female customers and put them in the equal place as male customers.

5. OTHER PROBLEMS BEHIND THIS INCIDENT

The author browsed the Weibo that were mostly read with the tag of Purcotton and found there were generally three types of comments on the views of advertisements: The first type of people consider that Purcotton's advertisements offend women. The second category thinks that this advertisement is just ridicule,

not malicious, and female netizens are a little overreacted. The third category believes that women defend their rights in a wrong way; their behavior restricts others' right of expression and infrings on the rights of others. Meanwhile, these netizens always use insulting titles to feminists. The second type of commenters often use female status to prove that the advertisement does not discriminate against women, and not all women feel uncomfortable after watching the advertisement. The third category of commenters consists usually of male according to their online gender identity.

Regarding whether they will buy the products of the Purcotton in the future, many people express their resistance to the brand and they will not buy it again in the future. Many people think that if the brand is aware of its problems and makes an apology, they will still be customer of this brand. Still, a few people value the quality of products more than advertisements and announce they will buy the product as long as the quality is good.

The above phenomenon reflects the following issues: Firstly, there are disagreements among netizens on what is discrimination against women. Many people even use different standards for men and women unconsciously. That is, if the same thing is aimed at men, they think it is an unforgivable insult, but when it comes to women, they will think that women should accept this matter and should not regard it as an insult. This reflects that most people pay more attention to maintaining the dignity of men and feel that the dignity of women is lower than that of men. Therefore, female does not need to maintain their dignity and feelings to the same degree as male. Secondly, some women have relatively low self-esteem. They allow others to insult and offend themselves to a certain extent, and they think it is harmless. This has a lot to do with women who have been in an environment of discrimination for a long time. Finally, many men consciously or unconsciously oppose women's pursuit of equal rights with men. They put women in the secondary position: men or brands can express any perspectives and opinions upon women, while women cannot express their anger and resistance. They do not think the party that makes women angry and feel uncomfortable violates women's rights, while women's expression of anger and resistance is an infringement to the rights of the offender. This is a typical discriminatory thinking.

6. SUGGESTIONS TO THE OTHER COMPANIES

Firstly, companies should change their cognition and attach importance to their female customers. In addition, the content in their advertisement should keep up with the development of feminism. It is suggested the companies do some research before they produce the advertisement and listen to the voice of their

customers. On the other hand, female customers should also refuse to pay for the brands, which stand for gender discrimination. Secondly, the proper gender education should be added to school education, through which people learn the importance of respect each other, especially, how to respect female. It is harmful to consider aggressive behavior and harassment of boys towards girls as kidding. People always neglect the harm of these behavior and believe even without human intervention these boys can learn the right thing by themselves. However, in reality, many women report to experienced sexual harassment and more than one third women report to experienced violence from their male partner. It is proved that without right education and the intervention by parents or school, the wrong behavior will not disappear automatically. Thirdly, people should be more aware of sexual discrimination and be more tolerant, when someone pointing out the improper content even in an inappropriate way. It is the offenders who should be told how to behave and what should do but not the people who feel offended. The public should empower the victims to express their feelings and put forward their requirements instead of keeping them silent.

7. CONCLUSION

Through the development of the feminist movement, women have gained a certain degree of ideological liberation and stood up for more rights and power. However, women also face problems in defending themselves. Because of the long-term existence of sex discrimination, people are accustomed to sex discrimination. Many people do not think that sex discrimination against women is an offense, and even many women themselves are not aware of the existence of discrimination. Therefore, on social media, some men think that feminist views are too extreme and feel offensive. At the same time, there are indeed "radical" feminist remarks, which directly attack males, and therefore lead to differences in feminist views among netizens. In a word, how feminism develops and how women should reasonably express their opinions on the Internet is still a challenging issue that takes time to develop. Finally, based on the analysis of the incident and the interview, the author recommends that the company not imply that women need to cater to the male gaze in promotional copy. Instead, women should be encouraged to be brave enough to be themselves.

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