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Huawei's Coherence and Localization in Marketing

A few years ago, many people around the world might not have heard about Huawei, and many Chinese just viewed it as a domestic little brand. Fast forward to today, Huawei is globally recognized as a giant in the mobile industry, ranking No.3 among smartphone makers, behind Apple and Samsung. Huawei's success in both China and international markets comes with its effective advertising campaigns. As Carolyn A. Lin has found out in her article, "Cultural Values Reflected in Chinese and American Television Advertising", Chinese and American advertising campaigns are interestingly distinct due to different cultural values, and Huawei is no exception. More interestingly, not only does Huawei have localized strategies catering for targets in different cultures, but it also maintains the internal coherence in the advertisement home and abroad as a typical Chinese brand. Analyzing two videos and one picture from Chinese and U.S. market respectively, this paper will focus on Huawei's consistency of emotional factors in commercials and the localized advertising in different countries based on the cultural values factors behind and the customers intended. I would like to particularly invest myself in Huawei's flexible application of hard-sell, soft-sell, product merits, youth, family and status appeals.

Although Lin asserts in her article that "U.S. commercials will have a higher ratio of hard-sell to soft-sell appeals than will their Chinese counterparts" (86), I would like to argue that we cannot neglect the soft-sell advertisements shot for U.S. To make it clearer, quoting several other experts, Lin defines soft-sell appeals as "where mood and atmosphere are conveyed through a

beautiful scene or the development of an emotional story or verse, and human emotional sentiments are emphasized over clear-cut product-related appeals” (94). From my point of view, the distinction in the use of hard-sell and soft-sell appeals is embodied in where the company is from rather than where the advertisement is to be run. As a Chinese company, Huawei maintains the embedded Chinese-style characteristic – coherence in using pathos in advertising – consistently in both Chinese and U.S. market.

Huawei shot a touching commercials for U.S. market, *Dream It Possible*, when Huawei Mate 8 was launched. (see Fig.1) It tells a story that a girl left her hometown to pursue her piano dream. Faced with many obstacles, she never gave up and eventually gave a successful performance in a concert. She used her phone to give a live video of her performance to her grandpa, who had initiated her into piano and was in his last gasp at that time. The familiar circumstances, when the girl struggled in the big city, missed her family and finally her unremitting efforts yielded sweet fruits, resonate with many young people in metropolises like me and move them to tears, unwittingly leaving a deep impression on them. This motivational story is also an epitome of Huawei’s development from grassroot to giant through countless difficulties, where the girl’s leaving for big city in pursuit of dream symbolizes Huawei’s entering international markets to expand business and the girl’s diligence and perseverance mirror Huawei’s “Make-It-Possible” slogan. Huawei conveys its brand spirits effectively to American customers through this soft-sell appeals, increasing the brand awareness and gaining popularity.

In China, Huawei posted an advertising video for Mothers’ Day. (see Fig.2) In the beginning of the video, a question “are mothers only mothers?” arrests viewers’ attention. It tries to convey a message that our mothers watch us growing up and know everything about us, but most of us only view them as housewives, neglecting their own colorful hobbies and dreams. It is

through Huawei's new lens on phone that the impressive sides of mothers are captured and frozen, thus showing the excellent camera of the smartphone, which can rival with the professional camera lens. Spurring the reflection on relationship with our mothers and family, this video causes heated discussion in society and calls for care and concern for mothers. This soft sell does not press viewers with the product merits, but most of the viewers will automatically remember the outstanding photography feature after watching it, thus achieving Huawei's marketing goal in a gentle and easily-acceptable way. According to Lin's article that "Asian company prefers a subtle display of selling intent" (84), this subtlety in conveying message is typical in Chinese commercials, which results in the wide use of emotional appeals.

In terms of the two advertising videos mentioned above, both "Dream It Possible" and Mothers' Day video adopt soft-sell appeals, no matter whether it aims at U.S. market or Chinese market, which serves as a compelling evidence that Huawei maintains its Chinese-style coherence in using emotional appeals. As Lin have found, Chinese culture is a high-context culture where less information is contained in advertisements (86), this rooted characteristic leaves a deep influence on Huawei's marketing strategy. Stealing customers' heart by moving stories, Huawei's consistent use of soft-sell appeals shows the politeness and implicitness as a typical Chinese company.

Be that as it may, there still exist subtle differences between the two seemingly similar soft-sell appeals, showing different cultural values in China and in U.S. Quoting Pan and colleagues' summary, Lin points out that U.S. culture values the individual personality, oriented toward future and dreams, whereas traditional Chinese culture weighs heavily the vertical interpersonal relationships, especially the bond in family and clan (84). Similar as the two videos are in being heart-touching soft-sell appeals, the video Dream It Possible places its stress on the girl's pursuing

her dream and realizing it after never-give-up fighting, indicating the respect of enterprise and dreaming big as well as the extol of fortitude and endeavor in American culture. In the meanwhile, the video of Mothers' Day demonstrates the traditional veneration of the elderly - mothers in particular, promoting the respect and care for mothers and calling for filial duty of sons and daughters, which caters for Chinese consumers who value family bond and love their family deeply. From this analysis, it can be inferred that Huawei had researched deeply into the markets and consumers in both China and U.S. to find the differences in cultural values and design a best-fit advertisement respectively for different customers. That is, the localized advertising campaigns.

To some extent, Lin's argument corresponds with Huawei's advertising strategy in U.S. that U.S. commercials will "have a higher ratio of hard-sell to soft-sell appeals" and "use more product merit appeals than will their Chinese counterparts" (86). To make it clearer, according to the definition in Lin's article, "hard-sell appeals involve emphasizing sales orientation as well as stressing brand name and product recommendation; moreover, product merit appeals mean describing some aspect or feature of the product in depth" (94). On the launch of Huawei Mate 10 pro, Huawei posted a video on the global website to show its distinguished performance and newly-developed functions. (see Fig.3) The dazzling special effects and keyed-up background music excite its viewers, spurring potential customers' impulse to purchase. The gears in the background, which frequently appear in many advertisements of electronic products, add a sense of high technology, indicating the precision in manufacturing, the elaboration in designing and the satisfactory users' experience. The video displays some technological breakthroughs of the new cellphone, such as the lens, the fast processor, the dust and water resistance and such product merit appeals. It also emphasizes that the new product has 'ultimate performance' and possesses the 'world first kirin AI processor', which is a typical present of hard-sell appeals.

Also talking about one of the new phone's characteristics, water proof, Huawei runs a different advertisement in China. (see Fig.4) This, however, is a representative soft-sell appeal. This video tells its audience a touching story. A fire fighter called his family to report safety after putting out a fire, dusty and sweaty. His little daughter held the phone under the tap, saying 'daddy, your face is dirty, let me clean your face'. The video ends with an impressive sentence, 'She may not know many things, except loving you; ai in waterproofness', where 'ai' has the same pronunciation as 'love' in Chinese and acts as an indication of its AI processor. This short but moving video not only shows the artless love in a family through snug dialogues, but also indicates the waterproofness of the product through the little girl's naïve but warm act. After the release of this advertisement, Huawei caused a sensation and touched masses of audience in China through its humanistic care, successfully applying soft-sell appeals to Chinese customers.

The above hypothesis that Huawei has different orientation also works in static advertisements. In U.S. commercials, future, dreams and possibilities are emphasized more, just as Lin found in her article that "U.S. culture is oriented toward the future" (84). There is a series of posters for IFA Berlin with a main theme of 'Unlock Possibilities'. (see Fig.5) Featuring an energetic character in the center of the picture, the title of each are 'Live for Your Passion', 'Live for the Courage', 'Live for the Celebration', 'Live for Adventure', etc. In front of a dark background, the brightly colored character captures viewers' focus at their first sight, bringing intense visual impact. Utilizing a cool and fashionable figure with ebullient motion and choosing the words 'possibilities', 'passion', 'courage', 'celebration', 'adventure' and suchlike, these advertisements are very appealing to the youth, corresponding with Huawei's consistent advertising strategies in U.S.

As for Chinese market, though Lin does not think status appeals are typical Chinese characteristics of commercials (91), Huawei does employ it to attract its potential consumers, the white-collar. (see Fig.6) According to Lin's definition, "status appeals suggest that the use of a particular product will improve some inherent quality of the user in the eyes of the others and position and rank within the context of the group are stressed" (94). Set in a vast background of the seaside, the main character of the poster is looking far ahead with a thoughtful and profound expression, holding the smartphone. It seems that he is a successful businessman who has it all in life. The title "Jazz Life" and the slogan "Live once, Live life" make it a high-end product, showing that the user of the phone is considered to be successful and have high quality of life.

To dive deeper, these subtle differences occur in many of Huawei's advertising campaigns, intending for different target consumers in different cultures. Using hard sell to demonstrate its advanced technology, displaying product merits in a cool way and emphasizing encouraging factors such as 'future' and 'dreams', Huawei shows an obvious orientation towards the youth in U.S. market, who are fond of technology and have big dreams. In the meantime, employing soft sell to show brand's humanistic care, involving family or other emotional factors to create a warm atmosphere and showing pleasant using experience, Huawei attempts to engross the middle-aged in China who have family and tend to be emotional and sensitive. What's more, displaying the elegance and dignity of its products, Huawei also targets the white-collar elite businessman who are in pursuit of the high-end lifestyle. With its clear market positioning, Huawei smartly chooses different advertising strategies catering for different audience to make its localized advertising campaigns more effective, thus capturing consumers' heart and boosting sales.

Huawei's success in global marketing lies in both its localized advertising and the adherence to Chinese characteristic advertising. Growing from a domestic company into a

transnational one, Huawei localize its advertising strategies in targeted countries and conform to the local cultural values, which helps it enter the international markets and win customers' heart. On one hand, for its young targets in America, Huawei adopts product-merits appeals and future-oriented appeals to manifest its advanced technology and inspire the youth to chase their dreams. On the other hand, for its middle-aged white-collar targets in China, Huawei employs family appeals and status appeals to strike a chord among the consumers and call for the concern in family bond. Moreover, it is rare and commendable that Huawei inherits the typical Chinese style to appeal to the audience implicitly but successfully with the product merits by presenting emotional stories, making itself distinctive and stand out from the competitive mobile market. There is a saying goes "advertising is both an art and a science". From my point of view, localizing and specifying advertisements is a science whereas maintaining internal coherence and providing creative appeals is an art. Undoubtedly, Huawei's advertising strategy is a good example that worth analyzing.



Fig.1 The poster of Dream It possible 2016.11



Fig.2 Advertisement for Mothers' Day 2017.5



Fig.3 Advertisement for Mate 10 on global website 2017.10



Fig.4 Advertisement for Mate 10 for Chinese market 2017.10

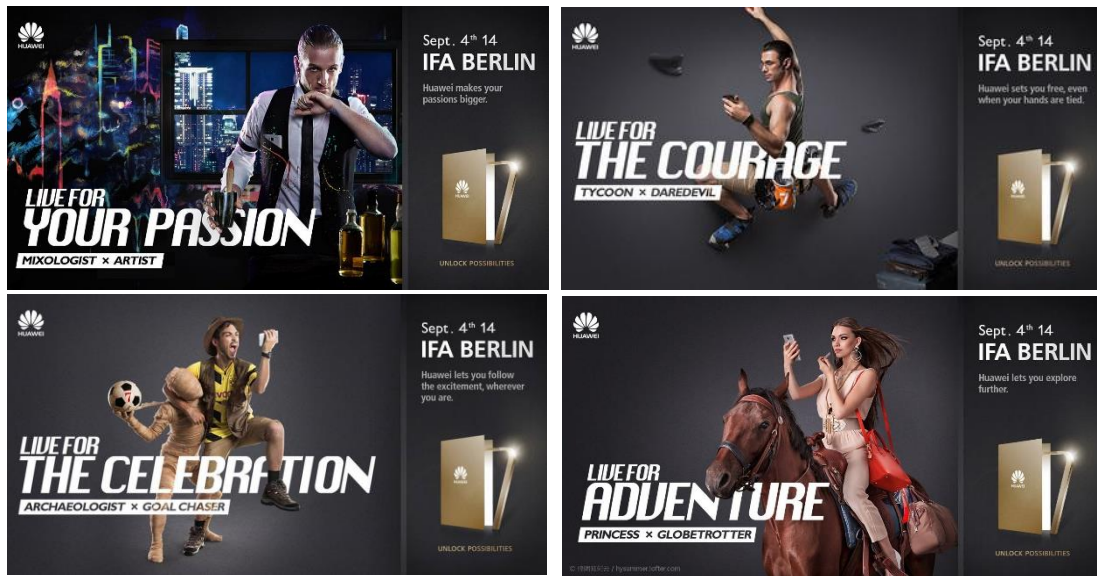


Fig.5 Advertisement for IFA Berlin for global market 2014.9



Fig.6 Advertisement for Mate 7 for Chinese market 2014.9

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