The effectiveness of metaphors in Chinese video

advertisements for depression: An experimental study

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ABSTRACT：

This study investigates the effectiveness of metaphors in Chinese video advertisements for depression-related products, a domain where the impact of metaphors has been underexplored. Through an experimental survey involving 299 participants and semi-structured interviews with 29, we examined the influence of metaphors on perceived complexity, cognitive and affective elaboration, attitudes towards the advertisement, and purchase intentions. The study employed a 3x2 design, contrasting feature-highlighting, needs-highlighting metaphors with literal expressions across search and experience product types. Results indicate that needs-highlighting metaphors significantly enhance cognitive and affective elaboration, attitudes, and purchase intentions, regardless of product type. For experience products, feature-highlighting metaphors were particularly effective, while for search products, they were less so. Metaphors were found to activate mental images, elicit diverse emotions, and mediate the persuasive power of ads, yet they could also trigger negative perceptions if associated with reinforced negative appeals. The findings contribute to metaphor theory and inclusive advertising, emphasizing the importance of aligning metaphors with viewers' personal experiences for effective communication.

Keywords: Metaphor, Video Advertisements, Depression, Cognitive Elaboration, Affective Elaboration, Purchase Intention

SUMMARY：The study titled "The effectiveness of metaphors in Chinese video advertisements for depression: An experimental study" by Molly Xie Pan and Dennis Tay delves into the persuasive power of metaphors in video advertisements, particularly those related to depression treatment products in China. The research is motivated by the increasing attention on mental health and the need for more inclusive media representation of depression.

The study employed an experimental design involving 299 participants who were surveyed and 29 participants who were interviewed. Advertisements were created with different metaphor uses and product types, including feature-highlighting metaphors, needs-highlighting metaphors, and literal expressions for both search products and experience products.

The findings indicated that needs-highlighting metaphors were more effective in enhancing cognitive and affective elaboration, attitudes towards the advertisement, and purchase intentions, irrespective of the product type. For experience products, feature-highlighting metaphors were particularly effective, while for search products, they were less so. Interviews revealed that metaphors could activate mental images, elicit diverse emotions, and mediate the persuasive power of ads. However, metaphors that reinforced negative appeals might lead to negative perceptions.

The study contributes to the understanding of metaphors in video advertisements, showing that they can influence viewers differently based on the type of product being advertised. It also suggests that advertisers should carefully select metaphors to align with viewers' personal experiences and knowledge to ensure positive responses. The research has implications for the design of more inclusive and effective advertising strategies, especially in the context of mental health.

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