

Advertising Strategies of Social Media Creators and Attitudes of Fans

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Abstract. Nowadays, the social media advertising market has been continuously expanding, and advertising revenue has become a key source of income for social media creators. However, excessive product placement can erode follower experience, thus striking a balance between commercial monetization and fan relationship maintenance has been a major challenge. Employing an online questionnaire survey and multiple linear regression, this study explores how advertising strategies, content relevance and follower type affect advertising tolerance. The results show that core fans have higher advertising tolerance than ordinary fans and place more emphasis on the "sincere communication" strategy; "authentic interaction" helps alleviate the negative impact of heavy ad load; the impact of the relevance between advertising content and the creator's original content exists but the effect is unstable. The findings provide empirical evidence for optimizing advertising strategies and sustaining fan relationships, recommending honest dialogue, proactive fan care and multi-dimensional ad evaluation to safeguard creative stability.

Keywords: Social media content creators, advertising tolerance, sincere communication, fan relationship, multiple regression analysis

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the vigorous development of the self-media industry, social media advertising has become one of the dominant forms of advertising, while creators earning income by undertaking commercial advertising has evolved into a core business model [1]. Yet the creators often find themselves in a dilemma: too many or crudely inserted product placements can alienate followers and even spark mass unfollows; while insufficient revenue makes it difficult to sustain the production of high-quality content, which is also detrimental to long-term development. Clarifying the influencing factors of followers' advertising tolerance and proposing practical balancing strategies are essential for safeguarding creators' profits, preserving fan relationships, and fostering a healthy platform ecosystem. This study focuses on how advertising strategy, content relevance, and fan type jointly influence advertising tolerance. The ultimate goal is to verify the key role of "sincere communication" strategy and core-follower identification in mitigating the negative effects of advertising, and to provide creators with a systematic approach for advertising integration. To this end, an online survey questionnaire was designed to collect samples, and multiple linear regression

analysis was used to empirically test the hypotheses. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to accurately quantify the effects of each variable.

2. Literature review

"Advertising avoidance" was first proposed by Cho & Cheon in 2004, referring to users' conscious act of ignoring or blocking advertising information [2]. Subsequently, the academic community has explained the underlying mechanism from two main streams: the "perceived intrusiveness-psychological reactance" pathway and the "persuasion knowledge model (PKM)" [3,4]. Recent studies have shifted the scene to social media and found that creative and interactive advertising features can alleviate avoidance, but the independent effect of "communication strategy" itself has not been discussed [5]. Using Instagram data, Choi & Lee confirmed that stronger parasocial relationships (PSR) reduce advertisement avoidance; however, they treated "PSR" as a continuous variable and did not distinguish the identity differences between core and general followers.

Domestic researchers mainly introduce the frameworks of "advertising avoidance" and "native advertising" to verify the impact of creativity, interactivity, and reward on advertising attitudes [6]. At the creator level, Dai Xiaoyun focused on a single advertising format through product-placement ads in Bilibili vlogs to confirm the significant effect of "content-product matching" on purchase intention, yet did not test how "matching" varies with fan identity; Yi Yating further pointed out that "narrative authenticity" can enhance consumer loyalty under the brand's direct sales model [7,8]. However, the aforementioned studies still treat "followers" as a homogeneous group, fail to examine the differences between "core" and "ordinary" identities, and did not incorporate "communication strategy" as an independent variable into the model. Consequently, they cannot explain why the same ad is tolerated by some users while driving others to unfollow.

The above-stated literature collectively indicates that both advertising characteristics and user traits indeed influence advertising attitudes. However, there are two common limitations: First, followers are treated as an undifferentiated group without systematical comparison of the differences in the formation mechanism of advertising tolerance between core fans and ordinary fans, and overlooking the variations in the strength of emotional connections. Second, researches have focused on "what the advertisement says" rather than "how the creator says it," leaving the strategy of "sincere communication" unquantified and under-examined. Therefore, these studies offer limited explanatory power for the phenomenon of "why some people tolerate the same advertisement while others unfollow" in social media is insufficient.

This paper extends prior work by simultaneously introducing follower identity (core and casual) and an authentic-communication strategy into a multiple-regression framework. It tests both main and interaction effects on advertising tolerance and, after controlling for classic variables such as ad density and content relevance, quantifies whether authentic communication can buffer the negative impact brought by high-density, low-relevance placements.

Through the above supplements, the study delves into the macro "advertising attitude" research into the micro context of the creator-follower relationship, providing empirical evidence and strategic recommendations for platform governance and sustainable monetization of creators.

3. Research design and methods

3.1. Data collection methods

Given that online questionnaires can efficiently collect data and facilitate quantitative statistical analysis, this study adopts an online survey for data collection, with the questionnaire design strictly following scientific research procedures. Due to the strong symbiotic relationship between followers and creators, the information behavior of followers can directly and inversely affect the subsequent content production of creators, while ordinary users lack such interaction depth and emotional investment. At the same time, whereas advertising density, advertising content, and advertising insertion form are commonly discussed features of embedded advertising by social media users in daily life, it is difficult to judge the impact of a single factor on fan advertising tolerance from a daily observation perspective. Therefore, this questionnaire is structured into four parts: "fan identity recognition - advertising density perception - advertising content and form - advertising attitude and tolerance evaluation", with attention detection questions and slide bar scales inserted [9]. The questionnaire was distributed mainly through online communities and social media interest groups with a total of 70 questionnaires collected. After screening with attention detection questions, 67 valid questionnaires were remained. To visually demonstrate the data structure, Table 1 lists 9 representative records from the dataset.

Table 1. Representative raw data sample (core variables, n=67, photocredit: original)

Number	Core fans or not	advertising density	fan tolerance	sincere communication level	Do these ads match the creator's usual content theme?
4	yes	0.05	1	5	comparative matching
6	no	0.63	0.23	5	comparative matching
10	no	0.18	0.5	5	comparative matching
24	yes	0.38	0.7	4	comparative matching
33	no	0.05	0.1	3	Very mismatched
39	yes	0.38	0.38	1	Very mismatched
44	no	0.18	0.59	4	Moderately matched
61	no	0.88	0.63	1	Moderately matched
66	yes	0.88	1	4	Highly matched

3.2. Analysis methods

The core data analysis method employed in this study is multiple linear regression. This technique allows multiple independent variables to be entered simultaneously into a single model and predict a continuous dependent variable, which in this study is fan advertising tolerance. Compared with simple correlation analysis or t-tests, regression analysis effectively controls for the influence of other variables, thereby isolating the independent contribution of each predictor (regression coefficient) and its statistical significance (p-value).

4. Results and analysis

4.1. Data description

A total of 67 valid responses is involved. Respondents range in age from 16 to 60, including both genders, representing diverse occupations and covering users with different platform usage habits. In

terms of follower identity, participants are classified by following duration, fan-related behaviors and psychological identification. Core fans account for 74.6% (n = 50) and casual fans for 25.4% (n = 17), providing a sufficient basis for between-group comparisons.

4.2. Research results

In the full-sample comprehensive regression model, the standardized regression coefficient of the "sincere communication" variable is 0.091, and its significance P-value reaches 0.006 (far below the statistical standard of 0.05) [10] (Table 2). This indicates that, after controlling for variables such as advertising density, content relevance and fan identity, the use of sincere communication strategies by creators still exerts a positive effect on fans' advertising tolerance. The "sincere communication" strategy is an effective tool for improving fans' advertising tolerance, with its effect remaining independent and significant. The finding also suggests that what fans dislike may not be the advertisement itself, but the feeling of being deceived or perfunctory. A candid statement such as "Thanks to our sponsor for making this video possible" or "Although this is a paid placement, I've been using the product myself for months" may reduce the commercial sense of the advertisement and transform it into a trust-based recommendation, instantly shortening the psychological distance between creator and followers.

Table 2. Coefficient and significance of sincere communication (photocredit: original)

	Coefficients	Standard error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower limit 95.0%	Upper limit 95.0%
Intercept	-0.041572065	0.120560295	-0.344823847	0.731432636	-0.282728559	0.19958443	-0.282728559	0.19958443
0.36	0.13091912	0.093270708	1.403646686	0.165578726	-0.055650074	0.317488313	-0.055650074	0.317488313
0.18	0.034184325	0.273306628	0.125076824	0.900880865	-0.512510327	0.580878978	-0.512510327	0.580878978
4	0.091452655	0.032323666	2.829278598	0.006335409	0.026795697	0.156109613	0.026795697	0.156109613

To clarify the attitude differences across fan groups and explore the attitudes of core fan groups in depth, this study conducted separated regression analysis on the data of core fans (n=50) and ordinary fans (n=17). The results show that, in the core fan group, the regression coefficients of both "ad density" and "authentic communication" obtain highly significant regression coefficients (both $p < 0.001$). In contrast, in the general fan group neither "ad density" nor "authentic communication" reached conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.987$ and $p = 0.289$ respectively) (Tables 3 and 4). This indicates that core fans are the main response group for the "sincere communication" strategy, demonstrating unique inclusiveness towards high advertising density. This may be directed by the deeper emotional bond established by core fans with creators, thus they understand better the necessity of commercialization for continuous content production. Maintaining strong ties with core fans thus stabilizes creators' creative stability and benefit their long-term development.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression coefficients for ordinary fans (photocredit: original)

	Coefficients	Standard error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower limit 95.0%	Upper limit 95.0%
Intercept	0.640359517	0.24253604	2.640265408	0.026902071	0.091704877	1.189014158	0.091704877	1.189014158
0.18	-0.004084271	0.248543378	-0.016432828	0.987247616	-0.566328453	0.558159912	-0.566328453	0.558159912
4	-0.061131152	0.054279329	-1.126232634	0.289200405	-0.183919526	0.061657222	-0.183919526	0.061657222

Table 4. Hierarchical regression coefficients for core fans (photocredit: original)

	Coefficients	Standard error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower limit 95.0%	Upper limit 95.0%
Intercept	-0.058104724	0.0946888	-0.613638829	0.542476763	-0.248703392	0.132493944	-0.248703392	0.132493944
0.18	0.47613432	0.138062088	3.448697088	0.001215791	0.198229751	0.754038889	0.198229751	0.754038889
4	0.085786153	0.024069836	3.564052219	0.000864264	0.037336086	0.134236221	0.037336086	0.134236221

In the comprehensive regression model, the coefficient for “content relevance” is positive (0.056) but its p-value equals 0.108, which has not reached the significance level (Table 5). Although creative content is an important foundation, relying solely on "targeted advertising" cannot guarantee the support of fans. This may remind creators that "domain relevance" should not be the most important "advertising" criterion, as presentation and communication is equally important. A highly relevant but crudely produced and rigidly inserted advertisement may well underperform a moderately relevant but genuinely communicated and well-crafted advertisement.

Table 5. Coefficient and significance of content relevance (photocredit: original)

	Coefficients	Standard error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower limit 95.0%	Upper limit 95.0%
Intercept	0.136692844	0.118151736	1.156926249	0.251887859	-0.099645815	0.373031504	-0.099645815	0.373031504
0.36	0.054177486	0.116613576	0.464589866	0.643906719	-0.179084396	0.287439367	-0.179084396	0.287439367
0.18	0.047032943	0.472308542	0.09958097	0.921008979	-0.897724805	0.99179069	-0.897724805	0.99179069
2	0.056313265	0.034491218	1.632684142	0.107773089	-0.012679444	0.125305973	-0.012679444	0.125305973

5. Discussion

The findings of this study deepen our understanding of the mechanisms underlying fans’ tolerance of advertising. The tolerance of followers is not determined by a single factor, but is influenced by multiple factors such as creator attitude, fan–creator relationships, and content fit. Among them, "sincere communication" plays a crucial role. As this study and prior research have pointed out, the key to the success of social media advertising lies in "unfolding around consumers' emotional identification" and enhancing emotional connections through "personalized and humanized construction" [8]. Moreover, "first person narrative and unstructured narrative" can promote "audience identification with the protagonist's emotions and experiences", thereby eliciting a "more positive brand attitude" [11]. The “authentic communication” strategy can effectively cushion the impact of other potential negative factors such as high ad density or low content relevance. This shows that when creators adopt sincere communication, they are essentially following the universal rule of building trust with their audience in the new media environment. At the same time, the study reveals the unique value of the core fan group and corrects the simplistic perception of unconditional tolerance of core fans. Dedicated fans do support the commercialization of their favorite creators, but also hold higher expectations for emotional feedback and content quality.

Based on the above conclusions, the following specific suggestions can be proposed for social media creators: Firstly, shift from excessive focus on "what ads to take " to "how to present ads", and use "sincere communication" as a standardized process for campaign placement, actively communicating with fans about the necessity of commercial cooperation. Secondly, prioritize fan stewardship: devote more effort to the operation and maintenance of core fan communities, and deepen emotional connections through high-quality content and genuine interactions. Third, evaluate

campaigns comprehensively: when assessing business cooperation, weigh brand tone and creative space as important decision-making dimensions apart from content relevance.

6. Conclusion

The research results of this study demonstrate that core fans exhibit significantly higher advertising tolerance than casual fans, and that the "sincere communication" strategy effectively mitigates the negative impact caused by excessive advertising, while the positive effect of advertising content relevance on tolerance is unstable. Therefore, it can be further concluded that the interaction between follower type and communication strategy is the key determinant of advertising tolerance. Creators should shift their focus from "screening ads" to "optimizing communication methods," and use the core-fan community as the breakthrough point for a win-win balance of revenue and relationships.

This study offers valuable reference for future research in this area: On the one hand, incorporating "sincere communication" into the theoretical framework of advertising avoidance enriches the intersectional research on persuasive communication and fan identification in social-media contexts. On the other hand, it furnishes both platforms and creators with actionable advertising operation insights, which helps foster a healthier content ecosystem.

Future research should delve deeper into the following directions for in-depth exploration: First, employ multi-stage random sampling with a larger sample size to enhance validity. Second, conduct long-term tracking experiments to verify the temporal causality and lag effects of communication strategies. Third, segment different vertical fields such as knowledge-sharing, beauty and gaming to identify domain-specific differences in fans' ad expectations and the effectiveness of communication strategies, thereby offering more targeted and customized recommendations.

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