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Cultural Value Differences in Advertising Narration-Taking FIRMUS and Mead Johnson's Infant Milk Powder Advertisements as Examples

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Abstract. Under the background of global healthy communication, infant milk powder advertisement is an important carrier of cross-cultural value transmission. Based on Hall's cultural theory of high and low context, this paper uses comparative cases and text analysis methods to compare the cultural values of FIRMUS and Mead Johnson's infant milk powder advertisements from three dimensions: family concept, emotional expression and cultural symbols. It is found that FIRMUS adheres to collectivism family standard, implicit warmth expression and Chinese traditional symbols, which is in line with China's high-context culture. Mead Johnson insists on individualistic independent narration, straightforward rational persuasion and modern western scientific symbols, which is in line with western low-context culture. The difference between them stems from the different historical and cultural traditions and consumer trust modes between the East and the West, and directly affects consumers' resonance, brand identity and purchase decision. Based on this, this paper puts forward three optimization strategies: strengthening identity based on the core of local culture; Balance international standards and localized expressions; Constructing emotional and rational dual-track narrative provides theoretical reference and practical path for cross-cultural communication of Chinese and foreign milk powder brands.

Keywords: Cultural Value Differences, Advertising Narration, FIRMUS, Mead Johnson

1. Introduction

In the context of the continuous expansion of the global infant health product market and the increasingly fierce cross-cultural brand competition, advertising not only undertakes the function of product information dissemination but also becomes a key medium for the construction of cultural values, social concepts and consumer trust. Infant milk powder is a highly sensitive and trusted product, and its advertising narrative is often deeply embedded in the cultural logic, family structure and parenting concept of the target market. In the China market, the local brands represented by FIRMUS and the international brands represented by Mead Johnson show a distinct narrative division: FIRMUS emphasizes family warmth, local adaptation and emotional resonance, while Mead Johnson emphasizes scientific evidence, global standards and rational evidence. The

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difference between them essentially reflects the deep differences between the eastern and western cultural systems, communication modes and consumption decision logic.

The existing literature has been extensively discussed from the perspectives of cross-cultural communication, advertising symbols and consumer behavior. Zhuang & Luo [1] pointed out that the integration of local cultural elements can significantly enhance consumers' sense of cultural belonging and brand identity. Based on Hall's high-low context theory, [2, 3] systematically explained that high-context culture is biased towards situation, relationship and implicit expression, while low-context culture is biased towards fact, logic and direct expression, providing a core theoretical framework for the study of advertising cultural differences [4]. proposed that the success or failure of cross-cultural communication of international brands depends on the ability of localized translation, and cultural adaptation directly affects the communication effect and market acceptance.

In the field of infant milk powder, [5] research shows that after the implementation of the new national standard, consumers' attention to scientific formula, safety evidence and professional endorsement has increased significantly, and the weight of rational factors in decision-making has continued to rise. At the international level, [6] confirmed through empirical research in many countries that formula milk marketing will deeply affect family feeding choices, and it is highly dependent on local cultural context.As noted in a commissioned multi-country report by the World Health Organization, such marketing practices are prevalent across various countries [7, 8] further pointed out that cultural values profoundly shape the concept of parenting, parent-child relationship and nutritional cognition, and directly project them into the narrative structure of advertisements.

At the same time, from the perspective of cross-cultural advertising sensitivity, [9] proposed that high-context culture relies on emotion and situation to convey meaning, while low-context culture relies on data and logic to build trust [10] emphasized that formula milk marketing is a systematic strategy integrating scientific discourse, family values and social norms. The research of [11] proves that digital marketing that does not meet cultural expectations will significantly reduce consumer trust and interfere with the decision-making process.

Although the existing research has revealed the relationship between culture and advertising, there are still obvious shortcomings: first, there is a lack of systematic comparative research on the advertising narrative of representative milk powder brands at home and abroad; Secondly, the application of high-low context theory in milk powder advertising stays at the surface description and lacks mechanism explanation. Third, it is not clear how cultural differences affect the transmission path of resonance, trust, identity and purchase behavior. Based on this, this study takes FIRMUS and Mead Johnson's advertisements as the research object, and uses comparative case analysis and text analysis to analyze narrative differences from three dimensions: family concept, emotional expression and cultural symbols, to explore the role of historical and cultural traditions and consumer trust model in shaping advertising strategies, to evaluate the influence of cultural adaptability on communication effects, and to put forward operable cross-cultural optimization strategies. This study aims to enrich the application of cross-cultural advertising theory in the field of health communication and provide academic reference and practical guidance for brand globalization communication.

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2. The differences in cultural values between FIRMUS and Mead Johnson's advertising narrative

2.1. Differences in family values: collectivism family narrative and individualism independent narrative

Family value is the core dimension of cultural system, and it is also the most recognizable source of difference in advertising narrative. China belongs to a typical high-context collectivism culture, emphasizing the overall interests of the family, intergenerational connection, family responsibility and harmonious relationship; Western society tends to be low context-individualistic culture, and attaches importance to individual independence, independent development, self-realization and rational boundary [2, 3]. This cultural division directly shapes the advertising narrative logic of the two major brands.

FIRMUS advertisement has long been centered on the collectivist family narrative, with frequent scenes such as it runs in the family, family companionship, mother-infant interaction and elder care, which put the baby's growth in the family scene and highlight its role as the core of family happiness and emotional bond [1]. Advertising narrative revolves around the family community, emphasizing guardianship, companionship, affection and belonging. Information transmission is highly dependent on situations and relationships, which conforms to the communication characteristics of high-context culture that attaches importance to relationship networks, hidden meaning and emotional atmosphere [9]. FIRMUS strengthens the local orientation of "more suitable for China baby's physique" through family narration and realizes the cultural identity and emotional binding.

Mead Johnson's advertisement presents a clear narrative of individualism and independence, and the picture focuses more on the baby's own development, growth, exploration and performance, emphasizing individual potential, scientific support and personalized nutrition [9]. Its narrative centers on information and function, regards children as the subject of independent development, and parents appear more as rational supporters than as the leading constructors of family relations and emotional atmosphere. This narrative is in line with the communication habit of low-context culture, which focuses on the transmission of facts, attaches importance to individual value and emphasizes clear logic [2].

The essential differences between the two narratives are as follows: the flying crane takes the family as the center and emphasizes that the individual is embedded in the family; Mead Johnson is individual-centered, emphasizing family support for individuals [8].

2.2. Emotional expression differences: implicit warmth narrative and straightforward rational narrative

Emotional expression is the most intuitive difference between high and low context cultures: high context culture tends to be implicit, indirect, situational and nonverbal; Low-context culture tends to be straightforward, clear, explicit and linguistically expressed [2, 3]. The emotional expression of FIRMUS and Mead Johnson completely follows this cultural logic.

The flying crane adopts an implicit and tender narrative, and its emotional transmission is euphemistic and delicate. It does not rely on direct reasoning or slogan expression, but realizes subtle resonance through living scenes, detailed interaction, warm colors and soft atmosphere [12]. Advertising pays less attention to data evidence and relies more on cultural common sense to arouse understanding and recognition, which is a typical high-context information coding method: meaning is hidden in context and feeling is more important than statement [4].

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Mead Johnson uses straightforward and rational narration, and the information transmission is direct, clear and verifiable, and highly relies on scientific data, formula ingredients, clinical evidence, expert endorsement and international certification [5]. Advertising almost does not render atmosphere, but conveys product advantages in objective, professional and concise language, which accords with the preference of low-context culture for clear information, empirical support and rational persuasion [9].

In short, FIRMUS build connections with emotion, and Mead Johnson builds trust with reason [1].

2.3. Cultural symbol differences: Chinese traditional elements and western modern symbols

Cultural symbols are the visual externalization of advertising narrative values, and the symbol system directly reflects the positioning and communication intention of brand culture [4]. The choice of symbols between FIRMUS and Mead Johnson presents a clear opposition between local tradition and western modernity.

FIRMUS advertisements use a large number of traditional Chinese visual symbols, including red, Chinese family scenes, Chinese character vision, traditional patterns and cultural images, to strengthen local identity and cultural affinity [1]. Red symbolizes auspiciousness, health and warmth; Family scenes evoke family memories; "More suitable for China baby's physique" directly anchors local adaptability cognition and enhances consumers' trust and sense of belonging [12].

Mead Johnson's advertising system uses scientific modern symbols, such as laboratories, scientific research instruments, data charts, international professional scenes, professional images and simple visual styles, to create a scientific, professional and global standard brand image [9]. Laboratory symbols represent rigor and authority; Internationalization elements convey global quality; Modern style conforms to rational aesthetics and builds professional and credible brand cognition together.

From the perspective of cultural significance, FIRMUS emphasizes cultural roots and local ownership, while Mead Johnson emphasizes scientific rationality and global vision [8].

3. The causes and effects of cultural value differences

3.1. The root causes of cultural value differences

3.1.1. East and west have different historical and cultural traditions

China culture has been shaped by Confucianism, farming civilization and family ethics for a long time, forming a high-context cultural feature of collectivism, family-oriented, relationship-oriented and reserved [2, 3]. Individual value is realized in family and community, and communication emphasizes harmony, euphemism and situational significance. Therefore, FIRMUS advertisement naturally favors family, family, emotion and local culture.

Influenced by the rational spirit of ancient Greece, the Enlightenment and the tradition of individualism, western culture has formed a low-context cultural model with rationality first, individual first, direct expression and evidence orientation [9]. Communication emphasizes clarity, logic, facts and verifiability. Therefore, Mead Johnson's advertisements tend to be scientific, data, empirical and global standards. The difference of historical and cultural traditions is the core source of the division of advertising narrative [8].

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3.1.2. Consumer trust foundation is different from social psychology

China consumers' trust in infant milk powder is based on local adaptation, emotional identity, family experience and cultural familiarity [1, 12].The long-term industry environment makes consumers pay more attention to the emotional commitment of "knowing China baby" and "being close to China family" and are more easily moved by warm narration.

The trust of western consumers depends on scientific evidence, clinical verification, professional endorsement and transparent information [5, 10]. Rationalism and scientific culture make its decision-making more dependent on data, standards and authoritative conclusions. The difference of consumer trust structure further strengthens the differentiation of advertising narrative [6].

3.2. Cultural value differences on the impact of advertising

Impact on consumer emotional resonance. The warm narration of FIRMUS can quickly arouse the sense of cultural belonging and family emotion, and enhance brand closeness [1]. Mead Johnson's rational narration can quickly establish scientific identity and professional trust [9]. However, in the cross-cultural context, there are obstacles to the adaptation of the two narratives: FIRMUS's implicit emotional narrative is easily regarded as vague information and lack of empirical support in the western low-context market; Mead Johnson's straightforward and rational style is easily regarded as lack of emotional temperature and humanistic care in the China market [4, 3].

Impact on brand identity and loyalty. Culturally adapted advertisements can significantly enhance brand identity and loyalty [1]. FIRMUS rely on local culture to form a highly sticky user group [11]. Mead Johnson relies on scientific discourse to establish a stable market position [9]. Cultural dislocation will reduce brand identity, weaken consumer trust, and even cause psychological conflict [11, 8].

Influence on brand trust and purchase decision. FIRMUS indirectly build trust through emotional resonance and promote emotional-driven decision-making; Mead Johnson directly builds trust through scientific evidence and promotes rational-driven decision-making. Many studies have confirmed that there is a significant positive correlation between advertising cultural adaptability and purchase intention; Communication that does not meet cultural expectations will reduce trust and hinder final decision-making [11, 6] .

4. Cross-cultural advertising narrative optimization strategy

Based on the core of local culture, strengthen cultural identity and emotional connection. Brand cross-cultural communication must deeply understand the cultural logic of the target market and respect local values, communication habits and consumer psychology [4, 1]. Local brands should appropriately weaken excessive cultural symbols, enhance empirical expression, and reduce the barriers to understanding caused by high-context culture with more straightforward and clear information; When international brands enter China, they should be appropriately integrated into family warmth and emotional narrative, close to Chinese parenting scenes and emotional needs, enhance cultural closeness and affinity, eliminate the sense of distance brought by rational expression, and realize smoother cultural communication and value transmission [8, 4].

Respect cultural differences and achieve a balance between internationalization and localization. Brands should strike a balance between the standardization of core values and the localization of narrative expression and flexibly adapt to the local cultural context while maintaining the global unity of brands [4, 3]. Mead Johnson can integrate humanistic care and family warmth into scientific

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expression to make professional rationality warmer; FIRMUS can supplement scientific evidence, safety certification and formula advantages in emotional narration, enhance persuasiveness with rational support, and realize the efficient communication of "global brand + local discourse" [9]. At the same time, cultural stereotypes and symbolic superficial expressions should be avoided, the real parenting needs and social psychology in different markets should be respected, and the communication adaptability should be improved [8, 6].

Give consideration to emotional value and rational value, and construct multiple advertising narratives. Efficient cross-cultural advertising should adopt emotional + rational dual-track narrative, taking into account the two core needs of cultural resonance and consumer trust [1, 9]. The high-context market is dominated by emotion and supplemented by rationality, and it impresses the audience with warm scenes and cultural identity; Low-context market focuses on rationality, supplemented by emotion, builds trust with data, demonstration and expert endorsement, meets the needs of emotional resonance and rational decision-making, and comprehensively improves the persuasiveness and communication effect of advertisements [12, 5]. Through the dynamic balance between emotion and rationality, advertising can establish stable trust in different cultural contexts and promote the long-term development of brands.

5. Conclusions

Based on the high-low context theory, this study systematically compares the cultural differences, formation mechanism and communication effect of advertising narratives between FIRMUS and Mead Johnson. The findings are as follows: firstly, there are significant differences between the two brands in family concept, emotional expression and cultural symbols, and the essence is the structural differences between high-context and low-context cultures; Second, historical and cultural traditions and consumer trust model jointly shape the advertising narrative path; Thirdly, cultural adaptability directly determines consumers' resonance, brand identity, trust construction and purchase intention; Fourth, cross-cultural advertising should adhere to the dual-track drive of localization translation, global balance and emotional rationality.

This study expands the application of cross-cultural advertising theory in the field of health communication and infant products and provides operational strategies for the globalization of Chinese and foreign milk powder brands. Future research can expand the sample size of advertisements, test the influence of cultural differences on decision-making by quantitative or experimental methods, and further explore the new characteristics and new paths of cross-cultural advertisements in the digital media environment

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