
Original Research Article**A study on multimodal symbol interaction in visual narrative of English advertising in the digital age***Fengzhi Yan**Xi'an Fanyi University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 710105, China*

Abstract: This study focuses on the multimodal symbol interaction phenomenon in visual narratives of English advertisements in the digital age. By thoroughly analyzing the constituent elements of visual narratives, the interaction mechanisms of multimodal symbols, and the impact of digital technology, it explores corresponding interactive strategies. The aim is to reveal the intrinsic rules by which English advertisements can effectively narrate and disseminate through multimodal symbols in the digital era, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for advertising creation and research.

Keywords: Digital age; English advertising; Visual narrative; Multimodal symbol interaction

1. Introduction

In the digital age, the rapid development of information technology has profoundly transformed the ecosystem of advertising communication. As an important medium for global business exchange and cultural dissemination, English advertising is becoming increasingly diverse in its forms of expression. Visual storytelling is becoming more prevalent in English advertisements, serving as a key means to capture audience attention and convey advertising messages. Multimodal symbol interaction plays a central role in this process, with different modalities working together and complementing each other to jointly construct the meaning and value of advertisements. A deep study of multimodal symbol interaction in visual storytelling in English advertising in the digital age not only helps improve the quality and effectiveness of ad creation but also provides new perspectives and insights for cross-cultural communication and language research.

2. Multimodal symbol interaction analysis of visual narrative in English advertising in the digital age**2.1. The constituent elements of visual narrative**

The elements of visual narrative are the basis of multimodal symbol interaction. Images occupy a significant position in English advertisements, and they convey rich information through visual features such as color, shape and line^[1]. Color carries strong emotional connotations and cultural significance; different hues can evoke distinct emotional responses from the audience. Warm tones often convey passion and vitality, while cool tones may suggest calmness and professionalism. The selection and combination of shapes can also express specific meanings: a circle may symbolize completeness and harmony, whereas a sharp triangle might convey strength and impact. The thickness and curvature of lines also serve expressive functions; smooth curves give a sense of softness and elegance, while thick straight lines emphasize stability and firmness.

Text is equally indispensable in visual storytelling. Headlines in advertisements are typically concise and powerful, aiming to quickly capture the audience's attention and highlight the ad's theme. Body text provides detailed descriptions of products or services, guiding the audience to delve deeper into the content. The font style, size, and layout also fall under the category of visual storytelling. A unique font style can reflect a brand's

personality, while appropriate font sizes and layouts enhance readability and visual appeal. Spatial arrangement is another crucial factor in visual storytelling. The positioning, proportion, and negative space of elements in an advertisement all influence the overall visual effect and information delivery. Proper spatial layout can guide the viewer's gaze, emphasize key information, and construct an orderly narrative structure.

2.2. The interaction mechanism of multimodal symbols

In English advertising visual storytelling, multimodal symbols achieve interaction in various ways, and complementary relationships are one of the common mechanisms for interaction^[2]. Images can intuitively present the appearance and usage scenarios of products, while text provides precise explanations of product features and advantages. The two complement each other, enabling the audience to form a comprehensive understanding of the ad content. For example, an image showcasing fashionable clothing paired with text describing its material and style details can help consumers better understand the product.

Strengthening relationships is also a significant manifestation of multimodal symbolic interaction. When images and text resonate semantically and emphasize the same information, it enhances the effectiveness of message dissemination. For example, in advertisements, prominent headline text paired with impactful visuals highlights the unique selling points of a product, leaving a deep impression on the audience. Metonymy and metaphor mechanisms play crucial roles in multimodal symbolic interaction as well. Metonymy involves representing or implying one thing through its association with another related thing, such as using a doctor's white coat to symbolize the medical profession. In advertising, this mechanism can leverage the connection between visual elements and textual descriptions to evoke associations in the audience, expanding the meaning space of the advertisement.

2.3. The influence of digital technology on multimodal symbol interaction

Digital technology has brought about revolutionary changes to the multimodal symbolic interaction in English advertising visual narratives. On the creative level, digital tools have greatly expanded the possibilities of symbol creation. Image processing software makes image editing and compositing more convenient and efficient, capable of creating realistic and fantastical visual effects. The production techniques for dynamic images and videos bring visual elements in advertisements to life, enhancing the vividness and appeal of storytelling. Digital typesetting software offers a wide range of options for combining text with other elements, elevating the overall design quality of advertisements.

In terms of dissemination, digital technology has transformed the way advertisements are spread. Social media platforms and mobile applications have enabled ads to reach audiences more broadly and precisely. The interaction of multimodal symbols on these platforms is characterized by immediacy and interactivity. Audiences can participate in the ad dissemination process through likes, comments, and shares, interacting with the ad content. This interaction further influences the transmission path and effectiveness of multimodal symbols. Meanwhile, big data analysis supported by digital technology allows for a deeper understanding of how audiences react to different combinations of multimodal symbols, providing a basis for advertisers to optimize their symbolic interaction strategies.

3. Multimodal symbol interaction strategies of visual narrative in English advertising in the digital age

3.1. Creative strategy

In the digital age, creativity is key for English advertisements to stand out in multimodal symbolic interaction. Ad creatives should fully tap into the potential of multimodal symbols and break free from traditional

mindsets. In terms of symbol selection, innovation^[3] is crucial. Novel image symbols or unique text expressions can be used to spark curiosity and interest among the audience. Elements such as current popular culture and social hotspots can be integrated into multimodal symbols, giving ads a sense of timeliness and relevance. In the combination and arrangement of symbols, creative strategies emphasize building a unique narrative logic. Breaking conventional symbolic interaction patterns, imaginative visual storytelling processes are created. By setting up suspense, twists, and other plot elements, the attention of the audience is captured, guiding them to actively explore the multimodal symbolic information in the ad, thereby deepening their understanding and memory of the content.

3.2. Design strategy

The design strategy revolves around the visual presentation of multimodal symbols. In terms of visual style, a unified and distinct style should be determined based on brand positioning and advertising objectives. Whether it is a minimalist modern, retro classic, or fantastical exaggerated style, consistency in the style of image, text, and other symbolic elements must be ensured to shape the brand image and enhance the recognizability of the advertisement. In interface layout, visual design principles should be followed, with attention to information hierarchy and visual flow. The positions and sizes of various multimodal symbols should be reasonably arranged to highlight important information and guide the audience's gaze along the intended path. Design techniques such as contrast, symmetry, and balance should be used to enhance the visual appeal and stability of the advertisement. At the same time, the characteristics and requirements of different digital platforms should be considered for adaptive design, ensuring that the advertisement presents good visual effects on all terminal devices.

3.3. Communication strategy

The dissemination strategy focuses on the effective diffusion of multimodal symbols in the digital communication environment, leveraging the social attributes of digital platforms to encourage audience participation in advertising creation and dissemination through user-generated content models. For example, organizing creative activities related to advertisements, inviting audiences to engage in secondary creation based on the multimodal symbols in the ads, and sharing^[4] on social media. This not only expands the reach of the advertisement but also enhances the audience's sense of identity and belonging. The dissemination strategy should also emphasize cross-platform integrated communication. Tailored multimodal symbol dissemination plans should be developed according to the user characteristics and communication advantages of different digital platforms. On short video platforms, highlight the visual impact and entertainment value of the advertisement; on professional forums, emphasize the technical information and professional value conveyed by the multimodal symbols. Through coordinated multi-platform communication, maximize the interactive effects of multimodal symbols.

4. Conclusion

The multimodal symbolic interaction in visual storytelling of English advertisements in the digital age is a complex and dynamic research field. The elements that constitute visual storytelling are rich and diverse, with multimodal symbols interacting through mechanisms such as complementarity, reinforcement, metonymy, and metaphor. Digital technology profoundly influences this interactive process at both the creation and dissemination levels. On this basis, strategies for creative, design, and communication in multimodal symbolic interaction provide practical guidance for the development of English advertisements. As digital technology continues to advance and the advertising environment evolves, further in-depth research into new forms and characteristics

of multimodal symbolic interaction in English advertisements is needed to promote innovation and development in the advertising industry, enhancing the global reach and cultural impact of English advertisements.

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