

Analysis of Advertising Ethics in the Context of Self-Media



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Abstract: Along with the development of digital media and network technology, the structural form of news communication has undergone drastic changes.

Network media is an innovative structural model in the history of news communication, which has given birth to a new form of information dissemination-self-media communication. Based on the development of self-media news media, the pattern of distribution of communication rights has been broken, and the dissemination of information to the public has changed from one-way communication of traditional media to interactive, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted composite communication. The advertising industry has also been developing at a high speed with the help of self-media development, and the emergence of problems such as exaggerated and distorted information and advertising irregularities has caused people to think about the ethics of advertising in the age of self-media. Based on this phenomenon, this paper analyzes in depth the ethical issues of advertising in the context of self-media.

Keywords: self-media communication; ethical misconduct; ethical issues

With the rapid development of the self-media industry in recent years, the advertising industry has seized the opportunity to continuously refresh the sales records of various traditional shopping and marketing models through interpersonal communication and online marketing. At the same time, we have also seen the emergence of various types of self-media platforms and net celebrities and vloggers. Advertising communication has also exploded, however, as the American scholar Richard Spinello said, "the pace of technology is usually much more rapid than the pace of ethics, and that, in turn, poses some serious threat to all of us". The ethical failure of information dissemination has led to a series of moral and ethical problems, which can't help but trigger people's thinking and discussion. Can there be an ethical bottom line for online information dissemination?

1. Analysis of the current ethical problems of self-media advertising

Some scholars have already conducted research and analysis from the perspectives of Internet ecology, precise advertising based on big data platforms, and commercial media advertising. This paper draws on these theories based on the unique perspective of re-based on the self-media context and puts forward the parallel thinking of two levels of moral governance and rule of law.

Network information dissemination disorder mainly refers to the process of network information dissemination, due to the lack of effective constraints of traditional ethical norms, so new ethical values due to the lack of effective restraint mechanism, resulting in the failure of moral regulation mechanism, ineffective and thus lead to disorderly communication behaviour (Wang, 2019).

1.1 The infinite cycle of "information bombing" mode of self-media advertisements troubled people

Whether it is accurate advertising based on big

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data algorithms or advertising promotion in the self-media environment, the ultimate goal of advertising dissemination and placement is to achieve maximum benefit. There is no excuse for this, but at present, there is a serious homogenization of self-media advertisements that can be seen everywhere, and the proliferation of self-media advertisements has wasted self-media resources and interfered with the audience's information access path. The creators of this platform share personalized goodies by way of blog notes, and enhance user stickiness through continuous updates, eventually achieving obvious advertising benefits and harvesting a large number of fans. However, the ads on this platform are homogeneous, and the "information bombardment" affects the audience's judgment and damages the user experience and reputation of the platform (Chen, 2019).

1.2 The quality of advertising content varies, resulting in bad value orientation

In general, due to the special orientation of advertisements, most familiar and deep-rooted advertisements influence the values, morals, consumption and aesthetics of audiences to a certain extent, and even influence people's lifestyles and value pursuits in a subtle way. Many advertisers who know how to do this make full use of this feature of advertising to further guide the value orientation of the audience through advertising communication and stimulate the desire to buy to achieve their sales goals. At present, the quality of the content of self-media advertisements is uneven, and some advertisements have obviously the wrong value orientation. According to the data, more than half of the users are between 25 and 30 years old. The advertising business of this platform also takes advantage of this data feature to produce bad value guidance to young users through bad ads and negative content (The State Internet Information Office, 2017). Behind this phenomenon, one cannot help but feel saddened that the value deviation of the young generation affects the future style of the whole famous nation.

1.3 The proliferation of false advertisements affects the development of social integrity

With the development of the self-media media,

the emergence of Netflix, V, and famous bloggers, the "Netflix economy" is a new marketing model that uses the media value of Netflix itself to realize the "fan economy" to the Netflix economy through the cooperation of streaming media and brands. The Netflix Economy is a new type of marketing and merchandising model. At the same time, we can also see that, with the flow economy gradually becoming the mainstream consumption mode, many weblebrities are suspected of exaggerating and false propaganda in their live broadcast. The low access threshold of the platform of self-media and the value orientation of the flow economy are factors that cause the lack of industry norms restraint of self-media practitioners at the same time poor professional morality and ethical awareness, and the release of various uncomfortable advertising information seriously affects the construction of social integrity, while disrupting the market order and thus social morale (Wang, 2012).

2. Analysis of the causes of the ethical problems of self-media advertising

2.1 Self-media industry relies on the development of network technology to grow wildly

The rapid development of the self-media industry cannot be separated from the rapid development of Internet technology, and there is no high entry threshold for the self-media industry. Everyone has the right to self-expression and the freedom to share information. Today's Internet media has truly realized the interconnection of all corners of the world, breaking through the restrictions of time and space, so that people can intervene in any corner of the Internet in a legal or illegal capacity, and can even change their identity or role at will. However, there are two sides to everything, the choice of expression, the boundary of free expression, and the standardization of the content of expression lack corresponding supporting norms for restraint and definition, which directly leads to the chaotic situation that we see today, where self-media information is flooded and it is difficult to distinguish true from false (Shen & Bao, 2010).

2.2 Self-media advertising management system is not sound enough

In the China Self-Media Market Analysis and Development Prospects Research Report 2020, it is predicted that the number of self-media practitioners in China will exceed 3.5 million (Yin, 2008). The self-media economy is growing wildly under the wrong value guidance such as "overtaking" and "freedom of wealth", and a large number of users flock to follow the trend of self-media in the hope of getting a share of the self-media economy. However, the ensuing fierce competition in the self-media is still the major teams and big V take up the important weight and most of the media resources.

(1) Lack of clear regulation of self-media advertising management

Advertising in the self-media context is characterized by diversity and complexity, and with the disorderly development of the self-media industry, the management of self-media advertising management has become significantly more difficult. First of all, the quality of practitioners in the self-media industry varies and is not controllable. Traditional advertising law cannot be fully applied in the new media context, and there is a grey vacuum. Secondly, the current self-media advertising management lacks effective control and supervision without strict review procedures. Therefore, it is still a serious issue to improve and perfect the review mechanism in time, eliminate the grey vacuum zone where supervision is ineffective and effectively purify the environment of the self-media advertising industry by enhancing the regulatory scope of the macro regulation of advertising law.

(2) Advertisers enthusiastically join to accelerate the disorderly development of self-media wide

According to the data of Wisdom Research Consulting Platform, the advertising revenue of the self-media industry has reached as high as 89.5 billion yuan as of 2019 (Xiong & Li, 2021), the development of new media technology and the wide application of streaming media has helped the development of the self-media advertising industry, and the economic benefits have surged significantly, so a large number of advertisers and manufacturers are attracted by the vast development space of the self-media advertising industry.

(3) The quality of self-media advertising subjects is uneven

In recent years, the low entry threshold of the self-media industry has given birth to a large number of netizen bloggers. In the background of a flow economy, based on fixed fan resources, the competition among netizens and bloggers has become more and more fierce, so some netizens and bloggers can only go to the wrong side of the road and gain popularity by gaining eyeballs. They disregard the moral and ethical bottom line just to realize the flow of cash. Most bloggers and web celebrities have little legal awareness and are unable to distinguish various violations in a timely manner out of profit-seeking, or are willing to take a chance on the advertising business, leading to a serious problem of moral misconduct in the self-media advertising industry as a whole.

(4) Some advertising audiences lack the ability to distinguish clearly

As most consumers blindly believe in celebrities' recommendations, netizen bloggers and experts' goodies sharing, they lack shopping rationality and often consume impulsively in the Internet environment. Therefore, improving consumers' own consumption cognition, rational consumption, and timely identification of low-quality and homogeneous self-media advertisements to avoid interference by the unfavourable value orientation of self-media is the basis for purifying the self-media advertising industry.

3. Specific measures to improve the moral and ethical problems of self-media advertising

In view of the ethical problems of advertising in the current self-media environment, the author suggests adhering to the concept of the "rule of law" and "moral rule" in parallel and carrying out comprehensive improvement from multiple perspectives, including government macro-regulation, purification of the self-media advertising industry itself, and users and consumers (Jun & Hui, 2014).

3.1 Actively play the role of government macro-regulation to rectify the disorderly phenomenon of self-media advertising.

(1) Parallel rule of law and moral rule, dual-pronged

institutional supervision and public opinion supervision

Actively play the macro-control role of government departments, establish and improve the relevant laws and regulations of the self-media advertising industry as soon as possible, regulate and restrict the freedom of speech in the context of self-media, and increase the punishment for existing violations and illegal acts. The use of a network public platform, brainstorming in the implementation of new regulations and systems in conjunction with the supervision of public opinion to purify the self-media advertising industry to eliminate disorderly chaos.

It can be seen through the documents issued in recent years, such as "Regulations on the Administration of Internet News Information Services" and "Regulations on the Administration of Information Services for Internet Users' Public Accounts", that government departments have actively established a system of public opinion supervision and a censorship system for self-media platforms regarding the main problems in the current management of self-media on the Internet, and gradually implemented the governance concept of parallel public supervision and institutional regulation to realize the standardization and legalization of self-media management.

(2) Improve market supervision and purify the industry

Under the premise of good government macro-control and guidance, the self-media advertising market itself should do a good job of supervision and audit, strictly check the authenticity, value orientation and legal compliance of advertising contents, and severely rectify the disorderly phenomenon of malicious competition such as plagiarism and imitation, exaggerated facts, crude and indiscriminate production and information bombing, so as to create a standardized and orderly benign industry environment.

3.2 Strengthen the regulation and restraint of the advertising industry itself

(1) From the perspective of consumers, avoid bad value guidance

The dissemination of advertising information

needs to be based on consumers' needs, rather than interfering with consumers' values and consumption views through the bad value guidance of advertising, which can subconsciously influence consumers' aesthetics, lifestyles and value choices. Advertisers should not simply consider the immediate economic benefits, but should also pay more attention to consumers' perceptions and needs in the long run, avoiding the chaos of advertising proliferation, similarity, plagiarism and exaggeration, and creating a benign and comfortable online shopping environment for consumers.

(2) Establish professional ethics and social responsibility

The business philosophy of advertisers is mostly based on profit, and they lack professional ethics and social responsibility. Some advertisers exaggerate product efficacy and false propaganda in order to maximize profits, manufacturers cut costs in the production process for profit, copy and imitate, mislead consumers, and lead irrational consumption to irrational competition, which is caused by advertisers' own moral deficiency, lack of commitment and self-discipline.

(3) Honest operation, improve user experience and brand reputation

In the process of self-media advertising, advertisers should balance social responsibility and economic interests, but consumer demand, product quality and brand integrity in the first place, and enhance customer stickiness and brand reputation through honest management.

They should not short-sightedly focus on the current traffic economy model of "consumer fans" to short-term profit-seeking and miss the long-term development of the enterprise.

3.3 Media users and content producers work together to purify the industry

(1) Self-media users work together to purify the self-media industry

Improve the screening and discriminating ability of self-media users themselves, and have the ability to evaluate, discriminate and screen the proliferation and homogenization of self-media advertisements. They should also improve their own moral quality and take

an active role, neither catering to the needs of consumers nor inciting them to mislead them so that they can enjoy the benefits of the traffic economy while establishing responsibility and holding on to the moral bottom line.

(2) Adhere to the bottom line and implement moral governance and autonomy

Advertisers must have their own principles and bottom line for advertising content and form, carefully screen the quality of advertising products, adhere to the integrity of the industry from the perspective of advertising producers, ad content form adhering to objective and truthful, legal compliance can not exaggerate the facts for the sake of profit, plagiarism and imitation of crude, high standards and strict requirements of media producers can gradually create a healthy and virtuous, fair and trustworthy The media producer's high standard and strict requirements can gradually create a healthy, virtuous, fair and trustworthy advertising environment.

(3) Strengthen the concept of the legal system and actively improve the moral quality

In order to thoroughly rectify the current self-media advertising chaos, it is necessary to strengthen and enhance the legal concept of self-media people, constantly improve their moral quality and establish better self-restraint, so as to fundamentally purify and maintain the industry.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the misconduct of network information dissemination not only affects the harmonious development of society but also seriously affects the normal language norms, ethics and moral concepts. In the context of the self-media era, "everyone is a self-media", the loopholes of self-media advertising are caused by the lack of morality and ethics, the lack of social responsibility and sense of responsibility, the short-sighted focus on short-term profit-seeking, and the misguidance of public shopping sentiment and the destruction of the industry ecology through crude and indiscriminate

information bombing ads. Based on this, we should adhere to the concept of parallel rule of law and moral rule, and gradually improve the moral quality of self-media practitioners themselves and the concept of rule of law, encourage the audience to consume rationally and improve their cognitive and discriminatory ability and work together to create a benign self-media development environment.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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