A Comparative Analysis of Mobile Advertising from the Perspective of Visual Grammar

—Take Huawei Mate 30 Series and iPhone 11 for Example

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Abstract

With the development of information, advertising discourse is no longer a single text mode, but is gradually replaced by multimodal discourse which integrates image, text, color, voice and so on. Mobile advertising has become a new favorite of the advertising industry. Because it can not only show the picture in a limited time, but also produce interactive significance, so as to achieve the publicity effect of the enterprise. Huawei Nate 30 series and iPhone 11 were released in the same period. The mobile phones of these two brands are very popular among the public, and their products are often compared. Therefore, this paper will focus on two advertisements from the perspective of visual grammar, and analyze the discourse behind the advertisements.

Subject Areas

Linguistics, Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Keywords

Visual Grammar, Mobile Advertising, Multimodal Discourse

1. Introduction

From the beginning as a daily communication tool for people, mobile phones now carry multi-modal forms such as audio and video animation, and become an indispensable part of people's lives, which have a great impact on our life. Mobile advertising is also a typical multi-modal discourse, a better interpretation of dynamic. In order to achieve its persuasion function, advertising texts make use of various media and become the "best corpus" for multimodal discourse

analysis [1]. This paper will use the analysis framework of visual grammar theory to interpret the construction of the overall meaning of mobile advertising, tap the discourse function behind it and how to establish corporate image through advertising.

Both Huawei Mate 30 series and iPhone 11 were released in September 2019. At that time, many people compared the performance of these two phones, which attracted the attention of many smartphone enthusiasts. Therefore, this paper selects the official promotional videos of Huawei Mate 30 series and iPhone 11 to interpret the advertising discourse behind them.

2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis Theory

2.1. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In recent years, people's research on discourse analysis is no longer a single text modality, but began to turn to discourse analysis composed of text, image, audio and other modes. Multimodal discourse analysis is a new field of discourse analysis. In the late 1970s, Halliday (1975) studied language as a social symbol. The systematic functional grammar theory he created provided a theoretical basis for multimodal discourse analysis. In the 1980s, discourse analysis scholars represented by Kress & Van Leeuwen began to study the effects of various modal symbols including language, intonation, music, visual images and other modal symbols on communication. Since then, discourse analysis research has expanded from static image text to multimodal discourse analysis composed of animation, music, video, etc. [2]. In 1994, O'Toole (1994) first applied Halliday's systemic functional grammar theory to the analysis of multimodal discourse in exhibition art [3]. Baldry, Thibault (2006) analyzed how to use multimodal discourse analysis to assist teaching in an e-learning environment [4]. O'Halloran (2004) applied multimodal discourse analysis to the study of movie clips and TV advertisements, and began to study film and television discourse [5]. In China, Li Zhanzi (2003) introduced the theory of multimodal discourse analysis for the first time in China, and studied the significance of multimodal discourse analysis for English teaching [6]. The domestic research results of multimodal discourse analysis are more prominent, such as Zhang Delu, Feng Dezheng, Hu Zhuanglin, etc. [7]. But generally speaking, the domestic research on multimodal discourse analysis is still relatively late, and has great development space.

2.2. Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar

In the late 1950s, British linguist Halliday put forward the theory of systemic-functional grammar on the basis of Firth's theory. Systemic-functional grammar is systematic and functional. According to Halliday, language has its own functions. It is a way of social interaction. People use language because of its multiple uses. In addition, systematization is used to explain the internal relations of language. Language has levels, and each level has its own corresponding system. It is a social-oriented approach to functional linguistics, with discourse

as the core of research [8]. It regards function as "built in language, the basic principle of language system" [9]. Halliday believes that language has three functions, namely conceptual function, communicative function and textual function. These three functions combine language with the world. The conceptual function is used to convey new information and unknown content to the audience, which is mainly composed of transitivity and voice. The communicative function embodies the speaker's identity, status, attitude, motivation and other functions expressed in language. Textual function refers to the extension of spoken or written discourse into coherent text.

2.3. Kress & Van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar Theory

Visual communication is becoming more and more important in the field of public communication. Visual grammar theory is based on Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics. In 1996, Kress & Van Leeuwen proposed the representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning corresponding to Halliday's three metafunctions of language: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning, and established visual grammar analysis framework with this as the core, which provides theoretical basis and analysis method for multimodal discourse analysis. The meaning of representation can be divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation. Interactive meaning is analyzed from four aspects: visual contact, social distance, attitude and modality. The meaning of composition mainly includes information value, saliency and framing.

3. Comparative Analysis of Mobile Advertising from the Perspective of Visual Grammar

The advertising duration of Huawei Mate 30 series is 65 seconds, which mainly introduces the performance of mobile phones, while iPhone 11 is described in a narrative timeline, and the duration is 123 seconds. It is precisely because the official promotional film can best reflect the performance and advantages of a product, so the advertising of the official announcement, whether it is companies or consumers will attach great importance. Therefore, this paper selects two comparisons published in the same period to interpret the implied advertising discourse through mobile advertising.

3.1. Construction of Representational Meaning

Representational meaning corresponds to the conceptual function of systemic-functional grammar. Representational meaning refers to reproducing the relationship between things in the objective world through images. Representational meaning can be further divided into narrative representation and conceptual representation according to the "vector" formed by the presence or absence of slashes between image elements [9]. Narrative representation is used to describe the changing action and event, as well as the process of psychological

language conversion. Conceptual representation is mainly a process of classification analysis.

Huawei Mate 30 series advertising is a process of conceptual representation. The opening light of the propaganda film slowly shines on the whole mobile phone, and is matched with the words of reconstruction design. Scene 1 is mainly used to reconstruct the design (Figure 1). The lens is given to the side of the mobile phone, and the curvature of text explanation to both sides of the mobile phone screen is 88°. The screen in the picture extends to the frame as if it were a waterfall. The advantage of this design is that the frame of the mobile phone is greatly narrowed. Scene 2 is the reconstruction speed (Figure 2). Here, Huawei Mate 30 series is equipped with the Kirin 990 processor. Kirin 990 also has the world's first SoC version with integrated 5G chip, so the speed is very fast. In addition, the small text mentions that Kirin 990 5G uses 7nm EUV technology, so Huawei Mate 30 series has more excellent endurance due to baseband integration. Scene 3 is reconstructed photography (Figure 3), that is to say, this part mainly introduces the camera lens of mobile phone, mainly including two lenses. One is that Huawei Mate 30 series has added a new movie lens, the other is that the display camera has a dual optical anti-shake design, which is simply to say that it affects the stability.
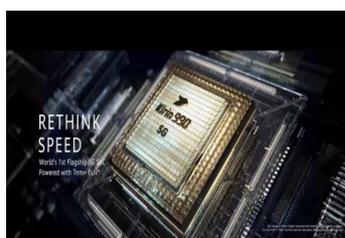

Figure 1. Rethink design.

Figure 2. Rethink speed.

Figure 3. Rethink photography.

Scene 4 is to reconstruct the slow motion, showing the slow motion of the arrow shot by the mobile phone entering the ring. The text part explains that Mate 30 series supports the super slow motion function of 720p at 7680 frames. Generally speaking, it can freeze 7680 moments per second. Scene 5 is to reconstruct the dark image, that is, the image in night mode. The Mate 30 series's camera supports a maximum ISO of 51200 + ultra-high-definition night photography. Scene 6 is the reconstruction control. Which explains the innovation in gesture through demonstration. It can operate gestures in the air. In addition, it also mentions the innovation in sliding. You can touch the edge of the screen to adjust the volume. Scene 7 is to reconstruct the power. Through the explanation of the text and the picture, we know that the Mate 30 series is equipped with a 4500 mAh battery, supports 40 W wired fast charging and 27 W wireless fast charging, and wireless safety super fast charging. Scene 8 is the end of the promotional video, ending with the cover of Huawei mate 30 series reconstruction imagination advertising.

iPhone 11 mobile advertising is a narrative representation. The ads are told on a timeline from day to night. At first, it is brought in by the wake-up ringtone, followed by the heroine appeared in the picture, with a very fuzzy perspective, as shown in Figure 4. The heroine takes out her mobile phone to turn off the ringtone, turns on the light and gets up. Slow motion showed that the mobile phone was put in the pants pocket to start the car out, and the mobile phone slipped on the first officer. Then the second scene is presented. A kitten sees the mobile phone and is attracted to it. As a result, it accidentally drops the mobile phone (Figure 5). Scene 3, the heroine is in a hurry. She runs down the elevator and shakes her cell phone with other items in her bag (Figure 6). Scene 4 shows a
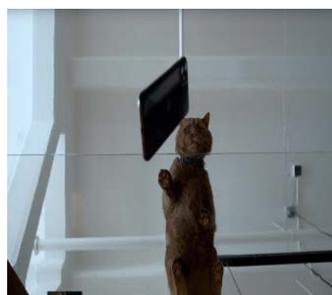

Figure 4. Alarm clock.

Figure 5. Dropping mobile phone.

Figure 6. iPhone 11.

girl taking a picture of another girl in the supermarket, mainly to show a wide-angle picture taken by a double camera. In scene 5, a red iPhone 11 is placed next to the wash basin and stained with water. Scene 6: someone poured coke into the glass. The glass was accidentally knocked over and soaked with green iPhone 11. Then it's still OK to shoot HD video with the mobile phone. Scene 7 shows different people taking selfies on the iPhone 11, we can see their emotion clearly. Scene 8 shows the function of face recognition of different people using iPhone 11, which is very fast. Scene 9 is the effect of different people playing games on iPhone 11. The tenth scene is the day of the night, using the iPhone 11 to take photos of people in the party, showing the effect of the mobile phone in the night mode. Scene 11 shows the effect of different people sliding input one hand. Scene 12 is watching the video on the 6.1-inch iPhone 11. Scene 12 is where different people are using the iPhone 11 to make calls. Scene 13: the heroine puts the mobile phone back on the bedside table. The details show the power consumption of the mobile phone after a day. Scene 14 returns to the ring at the beginning of the advertisement, and a man opens his eyes and gets up.

3.2. Construction of Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning corresponds to the interpersonal function of the systemic-functional grammar. When it comes to interaction, it is usually considered to represent the interaction between people, places and things in the image. But the interaction has another level of significance. It can also represent the interactive relationship between the participants of the image and the viewer. The main purpose of interactive meaning is to attract the viewer's attention to the advertising product. The meaning of interaction is determined by the four factors of visual contact, social distance, attitude and modality.

Visual contact is mainly based on whether the participant and the viewer establish the imaginary eye contact relationship, which can be further divided into providing and requesting. Providing mainly refers to the behavior of not making eye contact, while requesting refers to the imaginary contact relationship between participant and viewer through eye contact. Based on the comprehensive analysis of the two video clips, there is not much interaction between image participants and viewers in the Huawei Mate 30 series of advertisements. There is only less than one second of the character lens, which is far away and has no eye

contact. The time is very short, as shown in Figure 7. Huawei's Mate 30 series mainly displays a large number of lenses in the mobile phone, among which there are many pictures. However, in iPhone 11, there are more interactions between image participants and viewers, and the pictures provided and requested are intersecting. For example, in Figure 8, the eye contact between the girl and the viewer is seen through the mobile phone screen. During the video shooting, the girl kept shaking, suggesting that the mobile phone shooting high-definition video is very good. It is a requesting picture. The children in Figure 9 are experimenting with the face recognition function of the mobile phone, because the children are too young to unlock. This is to show the viewer that the iPhone 11's face recognition technology is fast and belongs to provide pictures.

Social distance is to judge the social relationship between image participants
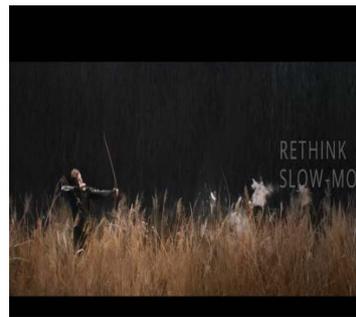

Figure 7. Rethink slow-mo.

Figure 8. Video shooting.

Figure 9. Face recognition.

and viewers by the distance of lens. According to the distance of the lens, it can be divided into close distance, social distance and strange distance.

HUAWEI Mate 30 series mostly adopts close and social distance in advertising. Figure 10 belongs to a close-up lens. The slow motion of the mobile phone captures the movement of the arrow. It has a feeling of shooting into the heart of the person, which will bring a great touch to the viewer. Figure 11 is a lens from strange distance. Looking at the bow and arrow into the ring from afar, it is also interpreting the performance of the mobile phone's reconstruction of slow motion from different angles. Figure 12 is a social distance, using real people to demonstrate the innovation of the mobile phone in gesture operation.

Figure 10. Close-up lens.

Figure 11. Lens from strange distance.

Figure 12. Gesture operation.

The advertising of iPhone 11 is mainly based on close distance and social distance. Most close distances are more attractive to viewers. In Figure 13, a slow motion shot of a glass of Coke accidentally sprayed on a mobile phone belongs to close distance, which is also an image participant in order to show the better waterproof performance of the mobile phone to attract consumers to buy. And Figure 14 belongs to a normal social distance. The picture is a scene of a group of people at a bar party. Although the lighting is relatively dark, the shooting is still very clear. This lens is to introduce the performance of the iPhone 11 night mode shooting to the viewer.

The attitude of the viewer towards the image participants is reflected by the high, low, and medium angle of view, that is, the angle of the lens. Kress and Van Leeuwen summarized three relationships established by vertical angles: looking up, looking down and looking at peace [9]. From a low perspective, the viewer will make the image participants powerful. On the contrary, the high perspective shows that the viewer's rights are higher than the image participants, making the image participants look weak. The medium perspective can show that the relationship between the viewer and the image participants is equal, and it is easier to narrow the distance between the viewer and the image participants. These two mobile phones are used to pay attention to this in advertising. Huawei Mate30 series uses a horizontal perspective to display mobile phones, allowing consumers to integrate this into the video and have a more intuitive feeling together. However, iPhone 11 lens is mostly used in the medium perspective to form an equal relationship with the viewer. But there are also many low-angle lenses. May be in order to highlight its waterproof and other performance, Apple

Figure 13. Waterproofness.

Figure 14. Night mode shooting.

mobile phones allow viewers to appreciate from the perspective of looking down, and it is easier to deepen the impression of the product.

Modality can be divided into high modality, medium modality and low modality. From the perspective of color, the color in the Huawei Mate 30 series of advertisements is relatively simple, mostly black, blue and gray. Perhaps it is mainly to show the performance of mobile phones, make viewers look relatively simple. It belongs to the medium modality. The iPhone 11 is mostly used in colors such as red, yellow, and green. The colors are brighter to highlight the multiple color options of the phone, which belongs to high modality.

3.3. Construction of the Meaning of Composition

The compositional meaning corresponds to the textual function of the systemic-functional grammar, and consists of information value, saliency and framing to form a complete textual meaning.

The information value is reflected by the elements in the image in the layout of the composition, and the composition relationship mainly includes three types: up and down, left and right, and center edge. Distinguish in the vertical direction, the top is the ideal information, and the bottom is the real information; distinguish in the horizontal direction, the left is the known information, and the right is the unknown information; distinguish by the center of the image, the center is the important information, and the edge is the secondary information. In the composition of Huawei Mate 30 series, the main part is used in the center, and some important product information is placed in the center. Many of the pictures are surrounded by only the background color as the matting, and no other things are placed, so that the products can be more prominent. The iPhone 11, as shown in Figure 13, puts the mobile phone at the bottom to tell the viewer that it is true that the mobile phone has waterproof function. But in most pictures, the mobile phone is placed in the center to show the focus of advertising.

The saliency is mainly distinguished by whether the elements in the image are in the background or foreground position. The fixed distance refers to highlighting the image element by the strength of the frame, which is determined by the size of the image component and the division of the boundary. Huawei Mate 30 series has the most foreground when displaying the camera. The lens is zoomed in and centered, occupying more than half of the picture, with the dark background color as the base, and no other elements are placed. It is easy to catch the viewer's eyes and give people a very deep feel. iPhone 11 is based on a scene-based story. It is often placed in the background. The iPhone 11 occupies only a small part of the position. The significance is not strong, and it is easy to distract the viewer's attention.

4. Conclusions

Generally speaking, the official promotion videos of mobile phones are interna-

tionalized, which directly affects consumers' perception of products and brand image. With the advent of 5G, the competition in the mobile phone market is becoming increasingly fierce, so the interpretation of mobile phone advertising is also very necessary. Huawei Mate 30 series of advertisement gives people a more rational impression, it is well organized, easy to understand, and there are many words in the advertisement, so the product advantages are clear at a glance; iPhone 11 is innovative, it tells from a story perspective. In 123 seconds, it describes the day with people take their mobile phones. It shows the performance of the mobile phone was displayed in layers, giving people an emotional enjoyment.

From the perspective of multimodal interpretation of mobile advertising, it can not only help consumers understand the advertising more clearly, but also hope to help advertising planners better design and use a combination of multiple modes in order to achieve better publicity effects.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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