

CREATIVE COMMERCIAL SHORT FILM CONTENT FOCUSING ON EMOTION FOR ONLINE MEDIA IN HAINAN PROVINCE, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Abstract

This research has the following objectives 1) Study the creation of emotional short film content for online media related to products and services. 2) Examine the production processes and strategies used by directors in short films and their impact on conveying the advertised product. 3) Analyze the business models of media production companies that create content appealing to diverse generational audiences. This is a qualitative research study using in-depth interviews with three well-known and reputable advertising directors from Hainan Province, People's Republic of China. The short films were produced in alignment with the principles of creative content creation. The selection of these participants ensures the research is effective and gathers accurate.

The research findings revealed the following 1) Emotional Content Creation: The creation of short films involves incorporating emotional elements. Screenplays are developed to meet the audience's needs and are adapted to be relevant to the current era. The final outcome is dependent on the director and the creator's vision for the work. 2) Content Marketing Adaptation: Content marketing can be adjusted according to the social, economic, and political environment, all of which are variables in production. 3) Business Establishment: The media production industry is highly competitive. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways to create content that is accepted, distinctive, and ultimately memorable. 4) Reaching Diverse Generations: To reach a wide range of generations, it is essential to understand the behaviors of each target group.

Keywords: *Short film, Content marketing, Audience, Online media*

Introduction

The transition to a digital society has profoundly transformed media consumption behavior, particularly consumption via online platforms on mobile devices. This has made "short-form video" the dominant content format for marketing communication, as it is easily accessible, requires minimal viewing time, and stimulates high engagement. This is especially true in the context of China, where digital ecosystems like Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat Channels tightly integrate communication with e-commerce, giving rise to "Commercial Short Films" which blend emotional storytelling to effectively create motivation and business results.

Hainan Province holds high potential as a cultural tourism area and a creative economic zone. Therefore, the region's communication must go beyond providing information and instead create an "emotional experience" that stimulates viewers to feel connected and desire to visit. Various research and theories, such as the Circumplex Model of Affect (Russell, 1980), Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991), ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), and Narrative Transportation Theory (Green & Brock, 2000), all indicate that emotion influences persuasion and purchasing decisions, aligning with audience behavior of consuming media for entertainment, escapism, and social connection.

However, there remains a knowledge gap in the Hainan context, specifically concerning the area's unique characteristics, the vertical media format, the link between emotion and business outcomes, and the integration of these theories. This research is therefore crucial for developing a "Commercial Emotion Model" to serve as a systematic framework for designing commercial short films that connect emotion with marketing results. It will offer practical guidelines for media producers in Hainan, covering everything from setting emotional targets, storytelling, visual and sound design, to measuring business outcomes such as engagement rate and sales conversion.

This research aims to establish an integrated conceptual framework that links emotion with narrative design in short-form videos to elevate Hainan's commercial communication for economic efficiency, reflect local cultural identity, and drive Hainan Province towards becoming a sustainable, high-quality digital media hub in the future.

Research Objectives

1. To study the creation of emotional short film content on online media regarding products and services.
2. To study the production process and various strategies in short films by directors that affect the conveyance through products in the advertising films.
3. To study the business setup models that produce media content for various viewer generations by creating short films aligned with the principles of content creation.

Literature Review

Commercial communication in the digital age has shifted from direct advertising to Emotional Storytelling, which has become the core strategy for online brand building. This is particularly evident in the context of "Commercial Short Films," which seamlessly blend the art of narration with business objectives. The creation of such content is not merely about producing a film to sell a product, but about designing an emotional experience that makes the audience feel connected to the story, the brand, and the values being conveyed.

Concept of Short Commercial Film. A Commercial Short Film refers to a video medium of short duration, typically ranging from 1 – 5 minutes, which features a self-contained story with the goal of communicating a brand or product through the emotions, feelings, and experiences of the characters, rather

than through direct informational presentation. Kotler and Keller's work (2016) noted that "modern marketing is marketing focused on Emotional Value," making the short film an ideal communication format for the social media Era, where audiences have little time but desire meaningful experiences. In China, particularly on platforms like Douyin (TikTok China) and Kuaishou, commercial short films have gained immense popularity as they can reach a vast audience within a short time frame, satisfying consumer behavior that favors short, concise, and emotionally engaging content. Research by Li Jing (2022) indicates that videos eliciting positive emotions, such as warmth, gratitude, and inspiration, are more likely to be shared and remembered than those focused solely on direct sales.

Concept of Emotion in Communication. Emotion is a critical factor in shaping human perception and decision-making. Lazarus's Appraisal Theory (1991) explains that emotions arise from an individual's assessment of a situation based on their experiences and values, while Russell (1980) proposed the Circumplex Model of Affect, which classifies emotions along the dimensions of Arousal and Valence. Applying these theories in advertising allows creators to design emotions that align with communication intent, such as using gratitude to build trust or using happiness to stimulate brand recall. In the dimension of Emotional Marketing, Gobé (2001) suggested that brands capable of forging an "emotional bond" with consumers gain a sustainable competitive advantage, as consumers tend to remember the feeling received from a brand more than just the price or features of the product. The creation of commercial short films therefore focuses on designing narratives that stimulate deep psychological emotions, such as love, dreams, family ties, or pride in one's hometown, enabling the audience to feel integrated into the story.

Emotional Communication in the Chinese Online Media Context. The online media context in China is unique, characterized by a digital ecosystem that tightly integrates communication with e-commerce and local culture. Research by Zhao Ming (2023) found that emotional storytelling on Douyin plays a crucial role in building "Emotional Brand Awareness," particularly for products related to local culture and tourism. Audiences tend to respond more favorably to narratives reflecting the area's identity—such as lifestyle, the warmth of the people, or natural atmosphere—than to purely informational advertising. In the case of Hainan Province, an island province in Southern China with unique geography, culture, and its status as a "Global Free Trade Port," the presentation of commercial short films in this area does not just communicate a brand but also creates an image of the city through emotions such as tranquility, warmth, and natural romance. This aligns with the concept of Experiential Communication, which aims for the audience to "feel" before they "think."

Summary of Key Substance From this entire review, it can be concluded that the creation of commercial short film content in the digital age requires a deep understanding of audience emotions and the design of narratives that can genuinely create psychological transportation. The integration of emotional theories, storytelling, and marketing communication will help media content achieve both emotional and sustainable business impact, especially in the context of Hainan Province, which seeks to use online media as a driving force for creative economy and the communication of its local identity to the international stage.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing Purposive Sampling to select participants. This method was chosen to obtain in-depth information that is highly relevant to the research context. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling selected nine key informants (three from each population group) for in-depth semi-structured interviews. Interview data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through coding and thematic analysis techniques, with member checking and triangulation employed to ensure data quality and credibility. Selection Criteria: Media Creators/Directors/Producers. Key informants were selected from media creators, directors, and producers working at studios and advertising companies in Hainan Province who have produced commercial video content published on platforms such as Douyin, WeChat, Bilibili, etc. The specific selection process for key informants with commercial content in Hainan, People's Republic of China, was based on: Identifying the highest-viewed posts: On May 8, 2025, the accounts of each studio/company were accessed on Douyin, WeChat, and Bilibili to rank their content by popularity/view count. Final Selection: The specific post links demonstrating the absolute highest view/like counts on that particular day were used for final selection (as rankings and view counts are constantly changing). Selected Key Informants (3 Participants) 1. Gao Yingjun: Producer/Production Executive, Hainan Gaohhe Culture Communication Co., Ltd. 2. Liu Yichen: Director/Producer affiliated with: President of the Hainan Province Performing Arts Association, General Manager of Hainan Zhongyi Film Co. and Hainan Mahu Film Co. 3. Wang Zhenyang: Founder/Producer, Haikou Chuan Production Entertainment Co., Ltd.

Data Collection Instrument This study employs a qualitative research design to ensure that data collection directly addresses the research objectives. The researcher utilized In-Depth Interviews as the data gathering method with directors and producers of emotional short films. The purpose of this approach is to truly capture the methods used in conveying media to genuinely reach the audience, thereby collecting information that can be implemented and applied to the future creation of emotional short film content. The questions used in the In-Depth Interview process are anchored in the key concepts and theories supporting the study's objective: to examine how the creation of emotional commercial short film content on online media influences the purchasing decisions of the audience. The In-Depth Interview questions are categorized under the following main theme Main Theme: The Creation of Emotional Short Films on Online Media.

Instrument Quality Assessment To ensure the quality of the research instruments, the researcher prepared the interview protocols, questionnaires, content analysis forms, and observation record forms based on the research conceptual framework and objectives. All instruments were then submitted to three experts. **Validity Testing** The experts evaluated the suitability, comprehensiveness, clarity of the questions, and congruence with the research variables using the Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) form for content validity. The acceptance criterion for the IOC value was set at $IOC \geq 0.50$ **Reliability Testing** The reliability of the instrument was tested by analyzing the reliability value using Cronbach's Alpha statistics.

The overall reliability value obtained was greater than 0.80, which is considered to be at a high level and appropriate for research.

Data Analysis Steps The qualitative data analysis involved the following procedures:

1. **Transcription:** Detailed transcription of all interview recordings from every key informant.
2. **Review and Analysis:** A thorough review of the interview data records was conducted and analyzed to plan the detailed presentation of the gathered information. This analysis was framed by the principles of Content Marketing Theory regarding consumer media consumption patterns. Specifically, the data was used to adjust content creation principles to align with consumer needs, aiming to build a bond between the audience and the product or service owner. This process ultimately leads to understanding the purchase decision-making process in the current era, where online media significantly influences the viewing of short films across various online channels. The collected data will provide clear and concrete insights into this phenomenon.

Research Results

This qualitative research study focuses on "The Creation of Emotional Commercial Short Film Content on Online Media in Hainan Province, People's Republic of China." The researcher structured the data collection process into three main themes for In-Depth Interviewing with directors and media company owners.

In-Depth Interview Themes The data collection was divided into three core themes: 1. **The Creation of Emotional Short Films on Online Media:** Focusing on the artistic and technical process of producing emotionally resonant short films for digital platforms. 2. **Content Marketing:** Discussing the strategy of content marketing as implemented by the interviewees (directors and media company owners). 3. **Problem Solving and Efficiency:** Addressing challenges identified in the research context and finding the most accurate and efficient solutions to improve future work. **Interviewees (Key Informants)** 1. Directors 2. Media Production Company Owners

Summary of Findings: The Creation of Emotional Short Films on Online Media. The study revealed that advertising directors in Hainan Province prioritize "Emotional Conveyance" and "Understanding the Audience's Mindset" as the core elements of creative work. They view commercial films not merely as selling products but as storytelling that embeds identity and emotion through concise scripts, content relevant to real life, and reflection of current social concepts and the era. Therefore, emotional communication is deemed a crucial strategy for generating brand recall and word-of-mouth promotion on online media. In terms of inspiration, many directors are influenced by role models, both domestic and international, such as Steven Spielberg or Chartchagaj Waikavee. They adapt the concepts of these idols to their own context to create unique works that best resonate with the audience. Storytelling is employed as the main tool to build emotional involvement, focusing on presenting content that has value, features a central conflict, and ends impressively, allowing the audience to connect with the brand and remember the story long-term. Directors emphasize a systematic approach to commercial film production, ranging from

research and defining the Premise (core statement), to creating the plot structure, and writing the final screenplay and shooting script. This ensures content accuracy and completeness. Simultaneously, they acknowledge feedback from viewers on online platforms like YouTube or WeChat, incorporating criticisms to improve future work and better meet consumer needs. The approach to creating outstanding work is centered on understanding "humanity" as the audience, using emotion as the tool to connect the story, and creating content that deeply impacts the heart—such as joy, sadness, or gratitude—to achieve wide recognition and Go Viral. Ultimately, the success of a commercial film depends on a balanced collaboration between the "Storyteller – Content – Audience."

Summary of Findings: Content Marketing for Future Advertising Film Production. In the current era, the creation of advertising films is no longer merely the presentation of products for commercial purposes; rather, it is a communication process that relies on both artistry and psychology to reach consumers. Advertising films have thus become a powerful medium influencing widespread audience behavior and attitudes. To make a lasting impression and ensure the brand's message is sustainably recalled by the audience, it is essential to employ storytelling techniques that fundamentally understand the "audience," considering dimensions such as age, gender, society, culture, and the era itself. Several advertising directors concurred that "thinking on behalf of the audience" is the key to successful creative work (Gao Yingjun, 2017). This means that instead of adhering to the creator's personal preferences, the focus should be on the emotions, feelings, and needs of the recipient. A good advertisement is one that can "control the audience's emotions" at every beat. The imagery, sound, and emotion must harmonize perfectly to ensure recall and create psychological value for the viewer. On the other hand, the technique of using humor appeal is considered an important approach that makes commercial films distinctive and easily accessible to consumers. This is particularly relevant in the digital age, where people seek entertainment more than direct sales communication. Advertisements that are funny, entertaining, or feature creative jokes reduce audience resistance, foster a sense of friendliness toward the brand, and lead to widespread sharing (Liu Yichen, 2025). The use of humor is therefore not just for entertainment but a psychological strategy for emotional persuasion, which requires a deep understanding of audience preferences and the appropriateness for the product context. Concurrently, "poignant emotion" or "moving emotion" is another popular approach in the Thai advertising industry. Using real-life stories or relatable events stimulates audience empathy and creates inspiration. An example is the Thai Life Insurance advertisements that communicate the theme of "life opportunity" through characters struggling against obstacles, prompting viewers to realize the value of life and humanity (Gao Yingjun, 2025). This approach not only earns positive brand recognition but also reflects the role of the advertising medium as a tool for social drive.

Research Conclusion Based on the interviews with directors and company owners regarding the creation of emotional commercial short film content on online media, the following conclusions were drawn : The behavior of the audience has changed significantly: they spend time on the internet engaging in multiple activities (Multi-Screen), prefer highly personalized content, follow current news, prioritize convenience, favor novelty, and enjoy spending time on social media. The creation of advertising films must

begin with analyzing audience behavior data to understand their genuine needs. This involves: Utilizing diverse media channels. Avoiding the introduction of the brand directly at the start of the content. Focusing on creating audience engagement. Adapting the content to suit the characteristics of the communication channel, then creatively integrating the brand into the narrative so that the content and the brand become one story. The content should be novel and valuable. It must create an emotional experience for the audience, such as love, care, or happiness, to foster appreciation and an emotional bond with the brand. Advertising films should communicate in Real-Time, allowing for quick and immediate interaction with the audience when they require it (Right-Time). The films should also be used to promote sales, ultimately stimulating the audience to make a purchasing decision for the product or service. The researcher's findings indicate that using sad or humorous emotion in advertising films is beneficial for generating ad recall, fostering a positive attitude towards the advertisement, and, by extension, the advertised product. The researcher suggests the following recommendations to ensure that the findings of this research can be utilized for valuable benefit: Recommendations 1. Emotional Difference and Brand Recall: The difference between sad and humorous emotions in advertising films affects consumer ad recall. It was found that sad emotional advertisements are better at creating brand recall than humorous advertisements. Therefore, advertising producers should consider this difference when choosing an appropriate presentation style for their target audience. 2. Ad Placement and General Recall: Advertisements viewed alongside films that convey either sad or humorous emotions result in consumer recall for both sad and humorous advertisements. Therefore, advertising producers should create advertisements that are interesting and align with the target audience's interests and consider expanding the target audience to other groups to increase sales of goods and services.

Conclusion

Upon analyzing the interview transcripts and research data, the researcher found that the methodology for creating effective emotional short film content requires strong Storytelling. The film's script must be high-quality, valuable, and memorable, combined with tapping into the audience's Emotional responses (feelings and sentiments). This is because the storytelling process serves to connect with the audience's feelings while strategically embedding product information through a good narrative and presentation style. This approach makes the audience favor or like the product or service. When the audience views the content, it generates Awareness and Recall, allowing them to remember the specific brand or service. Once viewed, this often leads to Word-of-Mouth promotion, ultimately stimulating sales or building a positive brand image. The research also found that each director's work naturally contains their unique flair and style, categorized into eight distinct forms (or emotional appeals): Humor, Boredom, Poignancy/Moving, Deception/Prank, Sexual, Astonishment, Awe, and Usefulness. For example, one director may specialize in the comedic genre, while another excels in dramatic work.

The successful creation of emotional short film content on online media requires valuable Storytelling that can subtly connect with the audience's emotions. Effective content must blend "product

information" with the "audience's feelings and emotions" to generate Brand Awareness and stimulate Word of Mouth (WOM), which ultimately leads to a positive brand image and increased sales. Each director often possesses a unique style in conveying emotion, such as comedic, dramatic, poignant, or inspirational, reflecting artistic diversity and creativity. Digital-age commercial short films do not focus on direct product presentation but choose to "Tie-in" the product through concise stories that tap into internal emotions, all within a timeframe of under 10 minutes. The production process for emotional short films begins with Research to ensure understanding and accuracy of the content. This is followed by defining the Premise (core concept), writing the expanded Treatment (plot outline), developing the Screenplay, and finally, the Shooting Script. Each step must be systematic and aligned with the target audience. Good creative work requires understanding humanity, understanding emotion, and communicating simply yet powerfully. Furthermore, evaluating Feedback from the audience via online platforms is essential, as it helps creators adjust their work to better meet consumer needs. Emotional Marketing is thus a strategy that helps brands create valuable interactions with the audience. In conclusion, the creation of emotional short films on online media is a harmonious blend of storytelling artistry and marketing strategy. It uses emotion as the medium to connect the "Storyteller – Content – Audience" to create a lasting impression, strong recall, and a sustainable long-term relationship between the consumer and the brand.

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