

Techniques of Constructing ‘Pseudo-Relevance’ Between Goods and Demand in the Commercial Marketing Process and Its Impact Analysis

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Abstract: This paper discusses that in the process of commercial marketing, enterprises influence consumers' purchasing behaviors by constructing “pseudo-relevance”, to make consumers misunderstand and then go to spend money. The paper analyses several common techniques of constructing pseudo-relevance, and with the help of specific case studies, the study analyses the application of these strategies in advertisements and their impact on consumers' decision-making. Through analyzing the techniques used by enterprises for “pseudo-relevance”, and linking them with life cases, the paper further shows the far-reaching impact of “pseudo-relevance” on consumers. It is found that firms have successfully enhanced consumers' identification with their products through these tactics, even though the product's function may be unrelated to the advertised effect. This is followed by some suggestions and approaches for consumers to recognize and cope with the effects of “pseudo-relevance” in their daily lives. The paper concludes by presenting the limitations of the paper and a vision for future research in the area of “pseudo-relevance”.

Keywords: Pseudo-relevance, Consumerism, Causality, Advertising Strategy.

1. Introduction

In commercial marketing, companies influence consumers' perceptions and purchasing decisions by creating links that appear to be relevant but actually lack causality. In the consumer environment, the construction of pseudo-relevance is not only dependent on the techniques of advertising and promotional language but is also heavily influenced by the way big data is presented. For example, adverts often show groups of people getting together to drink Coke and celebrate festivals. These adverts suggest that drinking Coke makes people more social and popular, even though there is no real causal relationship between Coke and popularity. This pseudo-relevance exploits consumers' emotional and social identities rather than the product effect. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the techniques of constructing pseudo-relevance and its impact on consumer behavior, to help companies optimize their marketing strategies, avoid ethical risks, and improve consumers' ability to recognize pseudo-relevance.

This paper adopts a research method that combines literature analysis and case study. Analyzing the literature in related fields, it summarizes the common definitions of pseudo-relevance in commercial marketing and its construction methods. At the same time, this paper selects three

representative marketing cases from different industries and analyses how they influence consumer decision-making by constructing pseudo-relevance. Through in-depth analyses of the advertisement copy, market performance and consumer feedback of these cases, the specific applications of pseudo-relevance and its potential impact are discussed.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Explanation of Consumerism and Consumer Psychology

Consumerism emphasizes the demonstration of identity and status through the act of consumption rather than the value of the product itself. In this process, consumers' psychology determines how they interpret brands, advertisements, and product information. According to "Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being Consumer often rely on social identity and self-concept, driven by emotional appeals and cognitive biases in advertisements, rather than solely by the product's functional attributes. product's functional attributes.". In "Thinking, Fast and Slow", it is stated that "System 1 often relies on heuristics and is influenced by emotional reactions, leading to decisions that do not involve complexity and complexity. leading to decisions that do not involve complex analysis [1]." It can be learned from this that emotional appeals and visual presentation in advertisements to satisfy consumers' psychology play a significant role in consumers' decision-making.

2.2. The Concept of 'Pseudo-Correlation' and Macro-Applications

Pseudo-correlation, where two products with no actual causal relationship are misleadingly perceived to be specifically correlated in some way, is widely used in advertising. For example, "Advertisers often present two unrelated factors as correlated to influence consumer perception, leveraging emotional or statistical misrepresentations to create a sense of connection [2]." When consumers have a low judgment in advertisements, they are more likely to rely on the information given in the advertisements rather than rationally analyzing the actual effects of the product. For example, Chanel's perfume adverts usually convey the message that the use of perfume enhances personal glamour and attractiveness. Although perfume may make people feel confident, the adverts often imply that spraying perfume immediately attracts attention and affection from others, a causal relationship that does not hold. Chanel has succeeded in creating a brand image through this pseudo-relevance, convincing consumers that perfume is a necessity to enhance personal glamour.

2.3. Misleading Use of Causation

Causality is heavily and misleadingly used in advertising. Merchants convince consumers that there is a direct link between a product and a specific effect, either by direct or indirect implication. As "Causality is often exaggerated or implied in advertising, leading consumers to believe that a product will directly cause a specific result, even if there are many other contributing factors [3]", when consumers see causal hints in advertisements, they tend to make purchasing decisions based on superficial causal associations rather than in-depth analyses of causal relationships. in-depth analyses. For example, Emergent-C's advertisements claimed that regular intake of its Vitamin C could help enhance immunity and prevent colds. Although vitamin C has a role in immune health, the advertisements create a pseudo-causality by suggesting that use of their products directly prevents disease, prompting consumers to purchase them.

3. Case Studies Based on ‘Pseudo-Relevance’

Analyzed as a practical example, it can be seen in many yogurt advertisements that businesses tie yogurt to health. However, most of the yogurts on the market have nothing to do with health. By summarizing other people's research on the ingredient lists of most yogurts on the market, the data clearly shows that yogurts on the market contain a lot of sugar and other additives, which do not have any health benefits. However, businesses market yogurt as containing beneficial flora, so that potential buyers will form a pseudo-correlation between yogurt and health, thus expanding sales. Data shows that “China's yogurt industry (including lactobacilli drinks) reached its sales peak in 2014, and has gradually declined since then, with yogurt sales of 17.87 million tons in 2023, a year-on-year decline of 0.40%, and yogurt sales of 119.1 billion yuan in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 5.30% [4].”

Popular in recent years, fitness bracelets are often marketed as a way to quickly improve fitness and achieve goals. Merchants describe fitness bracelets as helping to achieve fitness faster and better. However, the main purpose of a fitness bracelet is to monitor physiological states such as heart rate and blood pressure, and by showing physiological indices that can be achieved quickly in a short period of time, it makes the thing that has accomplished fitness goals. This type of motivation will not make people reach their goals in a short period of time but is just one of the means to maintain enthusiasm for fitness. However, this marketing tool has made fitness bracelets very popular. E-commerce platform data show that the shaft, rowing machine, yoga mat, and treadmill have become the essential artifacts of young people's fitness and sports, only the foam shaft in the first half of the year achieved a year-on-year growth of 316.1 percent, the rowing machine heat year-on-year growth of 150.27 percent. In addition, fitness equipment such as fitness rings and fitness mirrors are also slowly releasing their consumption potential, with the former's consumption heating 952.41% year-on-year and fitness ring heating up 30.68% year-on-year.

Besides, the most representative examples are ‘520’ and flowers. As ‘520’ is pronounced the same as ‘I love you’ in Chinese, many merchants treat this day as Valentine's Day and sell flowers and other products at high prices. During this year's ‘520’ period (May 19 to May 20, hereinafter), the number of flower orders on takeaway platforms increased by about 100% compared to the previous month, accounting for 22% of China's flower orders. During the ‘520’ period, takeaway searches for ‘520 flowers’, ‘520 gifts’ and ‘520 cakes’ all increased by approximately 100% week-over-week. The number of searches for ‘520 flowers’, ‘520 gifts’ and ‘520 cakes’ increased about 10 times week-on-week. ‘On the morning of 520, searches for ‘flowers’, ‘roses and other flowers dominated the top 10 search lists on takeaway platforms.

4. Techniques for Building ‘Pseudo-Relevance’ in the Commercial Marketing

4.1. Emotional Drive

Emotional drive is one of the most common means of building pseudo-relevance. “Emotionally driven advertisements can quickly establish connections with consumers, making them feel an association with the brand on an emotional level, thus overlooking the actual functionality of the product [5].”, advertisers prompt consumers to associate the brand with a specific emotion through the use of images and storylines.

Pseudo-relevance in advertisements is also often presented through misleading data and statistics that give consumers a false perception of the product. For example, companies may use complex statistics or charts in advertisements to demonstrate the superiority of a product, even though the data lacks sound scientific support. As: “Consumers often perceive charts and statistics as authoritative, assuming the information is reliable, even though the data may simply be selectively presented [2].”

In this way, companies succeed in packaging pseudo-relevance as fact, enhancing consumers' trust in their products.

4.2. Materialization

Materialization can be used in commercial marketing to construct 'pseudo-relevance' by associating a product with a particular lifestyle, success or sense of well-being. For example, an advertisement may show a successful person using a particular brand of watch, suggesting that owning the product will lead to the same success and recognition. This technique exploits the psychology of the consumer and makes them aspire to the product, even if the product itself does not directly bring about these positive experiences.

4.3. Force Contact

Forced contact is also a common technique in commercial marketing. The most famous example is diamonds and love; in the early 1900s, De Beers used advertising and marketing strategies to associate diamonds with emotions such as courtship and eternal love, a notion that was further reinforced in the 1950s with the introduction of their advertising slogan, 'Diamonds are forever', which made diamonds a symbol of engagement and marriage. By forcing this connection, the brand made consumers believe that buying a diamond was a necessary way to express their love, which drove the world to associate diamonds with love.

5. Analysis of Techniques for Dealing with 'Pseudo-Relevance' on Consumer

5.1. Set Expectations

Setting expectations can help consumers to deal with 'pseudo-relevance', as it enables them to view products from a more rational perspective, thus reducing misunderstandings arising from marketing campaigns. For example, when consumers know the actual value of a low-priced product, they will not have high expectations and will be less likely to be confused by the desirable effects implied by advertisements. Through clear expectation management, consumers are better able to identify untenable causal relationships between products and lifestyles, emotions, etc., and thus make more rational purchasing decisions.

5.2. Analyzing the Actual Content of Goods

Most of the research will choose to use some big data models for causality analysis. However, big data is influenced by a large number of public opinions on the Internet and cannot give rational judgment. For example, for the relationship between yogurt and health, the big data model 'Wenxin Yiyan' concluded that 'yogurt has many health benefits, but should be consumed in moderation according to individual physique and needs'. From the above shows the data model cannot define cause and effect clearly.

Causal logic can move non-causal correlations with low impact toward causality and from temporary suppression of bias towards resolution of bias. However, in the field of business marketing, the analysis of causality is still in a blank stage. So, when people want to determine the true or false relevance of things, it is suggested that more need to use causal analysis programs (e.g. GitHub) to build causal logic chains.

6. Conclusion

This paper analyses in depth the techniques of constructing ‘pseudo-relevance’ in business marketing and their impact. In the marketplace, companies use a variety of strategies to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, even to convince them that a product can achieve a certain effect without a direct causal relationship. Through case studies and theoretical support, this paper reveals the importance of ‘pseudo-relevance’ in modern marketing and the potential conflicts it can bring. For companies, it is important to maintain integrity while increasing sales. In the future of marketing, as consumers' critical thinking increases and regulatory policies are strengthened, companies need to pay more attention to marketing transparency in order to build long-lasting brand trust.

Although this paper discusses in depth the techniques of constructing ‘pseudo-relevance’ in the process of commercial marketing and its impact on consumer behavior, it still has some limitations. Firstly, the analyses in this paper are mainly based on existing literature and theoretical models and lack the support of empirical studies. Although the literature review provides a solid foundation for the theory, no actual market research or consumer behavioral experiments have been conducted to verify the specific effects of pseudo-relevance in different contexts. Second, the case studies in this paper are more limited, focusing mainly on food and fitness, and failing to comprehensively cover the application of pseudo-correlation in other industries, which may lead to the restricted applicability of the findings in different domains. In addition, the discussion of consumers' strategies for coping with pseudo-relevance, while providing several suggestions, fails to delve into the actual effectiveness and potential challenges for consumers in real-world contexts. Therefore, future research could further test the widespread use of pseudo-relevance and consumers' ability to cope with it through more empirical analyses and cross-industry studies.

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