

Thai Advertising in China: Re-invention of Media Production in the Process of Transnational Borders

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Abstract

This study is qualitative research that aims to investigate the communication phenomenon of Thai advertising in Chinese cyberspace. The research focuses on the process of creating new media content in cross-border contexts. With the increasing use of internet technology in China, Thai advertising has gained popularity among Chinese internet users. Originally intended for a Thai audience, the introduction of Thai advertising to China requires crossing cultural boundaries and undergoing re-invention to be accepted and consumed by Chinese audiences. This re-invention of media production can be categorized into four types: subtitling, shortening, and merging, decoding, and remaking. These changes have led to social transformations, creating new production relationships, spaces, and ways of expressing self-identity in the context of Thai advertising in China. The study finds that the introduction of Thai advertising to China requires crossing cultural boundaries and undergoing re-invention to be accepted and consumed by Chinese audiences. These changes have led to social transformations, creating new production relationships, spaces, and ways of expressing self-identity in the context of Thai advertising in China. This study provides new academic insights and perspectives on the re-invention of media production in trans-border processes.

Keywords: *Thai Advertising in China, Re-invention of Media Production, Media Culture, Transnational Borders.*

Introduction

The success of Thai advertising in China can be attributed to its ability to resonate with Chinese consumers on an emotional level. The storytelling approach used in Thai advertising creates a strong connection with the audience, making the content more memorable and impactful. This emotional connection has helped Thai advertising stand out in a crowded market and gain a loyal following among Chinese consumers. In addition to its storytelling techniques, Thai advertising also incorporates elements of Thai culture and aesthetics, which appeal to Chinese consumers who are interested in exploring different cultures. This cultural exchange through advertising has helped to bridge the gap between Thailand and China, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's traditions and values. Thai advertising has made a significant impact on China's advertising industry, offering a fresh and innovative approach that resonates with Chinese consumers.

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As the trend continues to grow, it is likely that Thai advertising will play an even larger role in shaping the future of advertising in China.

After the reform and opening of the country China has entered an era of rapid development in politics, economics, and culture, and the Chinese government's policies promote foreign exchange, as well as the increasing cultural needs of the people. This creates the possibility of spreading Thai media production in China. Moreover, the dissemination of Thai advertising in China is also related to the process of new media development in China. Especially publishing short videos. Thai advertising developed rapidly after 1995 and became a rising star in the international advertising industry. Thai advertising is creative and emotionally impactful in their expressive content. Thai advertising publishing has gone through various stages, from websites to blogs to shorts. Smartphone video, such as WeChat, Sina Weibo, TikTok, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu are the most popular new media in China. It has become the main communication platform for Thai advertising.

Thai advertising is produced as media production in the country of origin (Thailand). When entering China, it must undergo reinvention again first, to be appropriate and consistent with Chinese media consumption tastes. This research is the issue about re-invention of media production in trans-border processes. What happens when media products go trans-borders? How is media culture invented after trans-borders? How does media culture influence social life and how people perceive themselves and others? In response to this issue, this research investigates it through Thai advertising in China. This study has sparked theoretical exploration, which helps us gain new academic insights and perspectives.

Research Methodology

This study is a basic study using qualitative research methodology, taking the communication practice of Thai advertising in Chinese new media as the research object. Two main groups of data were collected: data from Chinese new media platforms and literature data from research and other papers. The researcher collected data on Wechat, SinaWeibo, Bilibili, Tiktok and Xiaohongshu in China through observation, participant observation, general interviews, and key informant interviews. Literature data mainly comes from paper documents and Internet systems. Data synthesis was conducted based on the research framework, that is, information about the re-invention of Thai advertising in Chinese new media. The research results are presented with a descriptive analysis under the main concepts: "Re-invention" from the book of "The Invention of Tradition" by Hobsbawm(1983).

Research results

Part 1: Historical Development of Thai Advertising in China

1.1 The Emergence and Expansion of New Media in China

Chinese scholars Fang Xingdong, Zhong Xiangming, and Peng Xiaojun have identified five stages in the development of China's Internet (Fang Xingdong, 2019). The first stage is the ideological enlightenment stage of the information society (1980-1989). During this stage, the Internet had not yet gained significant traction in China, but various ideas related to the Internet emerged in the context of reform, opening, and ideological emancipation. The second stage is the Web1.0 stage (1990-1999), during which netizens began to browse information online, websites released information to the society, and BBS (Bulletin Board Systems) developed. The third stage is the Web2.0 stage (2000-2009), characterized by the exchange of information and the publication of opinions to society through blogs. The fourth stage is the mobile Internet stage (2010-2019), which utilized

smartphones as the entry point to further promote the interconnection and interoperability between China and the world. The fifth stage is the intelligent Internet of Things stage (2020-), where almost all aspects of social life can be connected to the Internet. With the widespread use of mobile phones as a medium in China, Chinese society is becoming fully networked.

According to the 38th survey report of the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2016, the number of mobile Internet users in China reached 656 million, and the proportion of Internet users accessing the Internet through mobile phones was 92.5%. Mobile phones dominate as the primary Internet devices.

In 2014, China Mobile's network infrastructure construction began to accelerate. In 2016, short videos ushered in a real explosion. As of June 2020, short videos have surpassed instant messaging with an average usage time of 110 minutes per person in a single day. (People.cn.2020) Short videos have become a powerful tool for users to "kill" time, and the average daily usage time per person has increased significantly. Short videos have not only become a platform for users' leisure and entertainment, but also occupy an increasingly higher proportion in the way users obtain information. At present, the most popular short video platforms in China include WeChat, Sina Weibo, Tiktok, Bilibili and Xiaohongshu.

1.2 The situation of Thai advertising media in the country of origin (Thailand)

Since 1995, Thai film and television advertising has won numerous awards at major advertising festivals around the world with its sharp creativity and international standard production. No matter One Show, Cannes, Clio Awards, New York, London and other international advertising festivals, or Asia Pacific Advertising Festival, we can see excellent Thai advertising works win awards frequently. (Zheng Xiaojun, 2012)

Consider the top advertising festivals in the world: In 1997, Ogilvy & Mather Thailand won the Silver Lion award at Cannes. Results Advertising Agency from Bangkok won the Bronze Lion at Cannes. (Li Chen. 2019) The two commercials also won the One Show award. Thailand won 5 awards at the 41st New York Advertising Festival in 1998. Even one winning entry for Hong Kong advertising agency Saatchi was produced by Film Factory, a Thai company. At the 42nd New York Advertising Festival in 1999, two Film & TV advertising from Thailand won the awards. In the 46th Cannes Advertising Festival in the same year, Film & TV advertising created by Thailand won the Cannes Silver Lion Award. BBDO, advertising agency of Thailand won the Bronze Lion. In this year's Cannes Festival, in addition to the Hong Kong BBDO won the Silver Lion award, is the Thai AD man won a silver and a bronze. Thais won 3 film and television awards at the London International Advertising Awards in 2000 (Sun Jing. 2012). In 2000, The Creole advertising competition, Asian countries won 7 awards, among which the Thai performance is extraordinary accounted for 4 awards. It is not easy for Thai people to become the winners of the international advertising festival, which is based on western aesthetic norms and English language standards as the "rules of the game". Compared with the blank and failure of Chinese advertising in Cannes and other international advertising festivals at that time, the excellence of Thai advertising has been increasingly highlighted. The rise of Thai advertising has shocked Asians and even the world. French "The Night of the Adeaters" founder of Boursicot said: "I think The most creative advertising in recent years countries in southeast Asia" refers to Thailand. (Su Xia, 2009). The fact that Thai advertising has received such awards, plays an important role in the emergence and expansion of Thai advertising media in China.

1.3 The situation of Thai advertising media in destination country (China)

1) When Thai advertising won international awards, Chinese advertisers were the first to encounter Thai advertising. At that time, the Internet was not yet popular in China. Advertisers mainly obtained Thai advertising through advertising yearbooks, advertising

magazines and portfolios, such as "Advertising Archives", "Long Yin Bang", "SHOTS", etc. (Digitaling,2023). The easiest to see Thai advertising are graphic works, such as some advertising works from BANGKOK. These magazines often come with CDs that contain some of the latest outstanding film and television advertising works, which are very valuable learning materials for Chinese advertisers.

In 1983, Xiamen University established the advertising major, starting the development process of advertising education in China (Yangtse Evening Post,2023). with frequent exchanges with the advertising industry, Thai advertising has naturally entered the vision of advertising majors in colleges and universities. In advertising classroom teaching in some universities, teachers first recommend Thai advertising to students as a case study to expand students' professional horizons. In addition, some universities' advertising majors purchase professional advertising magazines, books, film, and television resources, etc., and even upload Thai advertising videos to their school's FTP server (File Transfer Protocol Server) so that teachers and students can check and study at any time. In the initial stage of Thai advertising entering China, communication mainly occurred among the so-called "elite groups" (Zheng Hui & Li Lulu, 2009) including professionals and university teachers. The main purpose of Thai advertising being consumed was learning and sharing. This stage mainly occurs in real society.

2) The development of new media has naturally had a great impact on the advertising industry. Advertisers have become one of the earlier people to actively embrace the Internet. Similarly, the network construction of colleges and universities started earlier, but in the 1990s it was mainly focused on the campus network. With the further popularization of the Internet and computers, the college and university students and faculty groups also became an important part of the early Internet population. Their Internet access is no longer limited to scientific research but has become a fashionable lifestyle. Early examples of excellent advertising were shared on the Internet for the first time, which included the award-winning advertising from Thailand.

3)After 2010, the spread of Thai advertising in China mainly relies on online media, and the channels of dissemination are more extensive. Thai advertising videos are spontaneously uploaded by netizens on major video website platforms. Youku, iQIYI, Tencent Video and Sina Weibo are the main channels for Thai advertising (Zhou Yuwei Chu Guangzhi,2017). In 2012, the size of China's mobile Internet users surpassed that of PCs for the first time, marking the beginning of China's mobile Internet era (CNNIC,2012).

In 2016, TikTok was born, and short-video fervor in China reached a climax. The concentrated inflow of traffic prompted more people to invest in media content production. Thai ads are also increasingly being shared. WeChat, Sina Weibo, TikTok, Bilibili, Xiaohongshu, etc. alone have become the main distribution channels for Thai ads in recent years. The phenomenon is consistent with China's media development policy. It doesn't happen for unknown reasons. This means, in terms of the Chinese market is aggressive but at the same time it is open to the ideology of knowledge from outside, whether intentional or not.

Part 2: Thai Advertising in China: Re-invention of Media Production

2.1 Situation of Re-invention of Thai Production

When Thai advertising is disseminated in China, they are interfered by language and writing differences, religious beliefs, and differences in ways of thinking. When Thai advertising is produced in Thailand, they have already incorporated the culture, values, ideology, and other information of the original producers. They processed and produced the advertising messages and diverse cultures to form the product form of advertising. When Thai advertising enter China, they are invented by Chinese translators, content producers and publishers and audiences.

This is one of the most common ways Thai advertisements are culturally re-invention on the Chinese Internet. In the early days, when Thai advertising was shared as industry examples, they were simply broadcast on the Chinese Internet, and some works were not even subtitled. With the popularity of the Internet and the increase in the number of netizens, Thai advertising has entered the sight of more people. Some Chinese who study or work in Thailand, as the main body of understanding and familiarity with the Chinese social context, take the initiative to undertake the task of translating Thai advertising with Chinese subtitles and then post them on the Chinese Internet so that more Chinese netizens can see them.

In this process, the translator integrates elements such as Chinese social life, traditional culture, and online culture into the context of the work, following the basic principles of translation and adding some Re-invention that is in line with the context and cultural characteristics of the Chinese audience, so that the Chinese audience can have a comprehensive experience in accepting it.

Some sentences come from social life, transforming the lines in Thai advertising into the social context of China. For example, 'Laughing at you big headed ghost' is often used between friends and acquaintances and is usually a catchphrase with a playful emotional tone, not used in formal occasions. In the advertisement, what the coach says to the students is a friendly expression of relationship. "WeChat" is the most widely used instant messaging social software with the highest coverage in China. In the advertising, the female lead asks her mother-in-law to send her a shopping list through the communication software, and the translator uses "WeChat" instead of the original "line". In the Chinese social context, the audience is more familiar with the functions of WeChat and can instantly understand the meaning of the advertising. The phrase "my father is Li Gang" originated from a well-known social event in China in 2010, and later became a popular term to satirize the domineering "second generation of officials". The bad guy in the advertisement originally said, 'my father is a politician', but changed it to 'my father is Li Gang' to express the mockery well and be better understood by the audience.

Some translation come from common sayings or idioms in traditional Chinese culture, which are concise and precise in expression. For example: "God knows not and ghosts are not aware" means that things are done very secretly, and no one is aware of them. It is very appropriate for a criminal to describe his method of committing a crime in an advertisement. "Too many monks and not enough porridge" describes that there are too many people and not enough things to distribute. In the advertising, the female owner said that there were too many interviewees and too few posts, so her expression was more concise. "Smelling its fragrance, hearing its beautiful sound and feeling the shade of a tree" is a way for students to express their gratitude to their teacher by singing. The translation into Chinese poetry here not only does not affect the original meaning, but also enhances the beauty of the rhyme and the artistic concept. Using the context of traditional Chinese culture in translation makes it easier for the audience to accept and understand the mother tongue culture.

Some translation come from the context of Chinese internet culture. For example, in popular online slang, "blue skinny, shiitake mushrooms" means "uncomfortable, wanting to cry", "female ticket" means "girlfriend", and "shrimp" means "what", all of which are common online expressions. Thai advertising is broadcast in Chinese cyberspace, and the audience is very familiar with and involved in Internet culture. They can understand these slogans immediately and accurately. For those who do not surf the Internet often, these catchphrases cause great confusion. In the translation process of Thai advertising, the text that was originally in the Thai context was reproduced by combining Chinese social life, traditional culture, and online culture.

Since short videos have become popular in China, many users have started to produce many short video works. Thai advertising has become an effective means of attracting

traffic for many users because of their unique creativity. They add their own unique visual symbols to the material of Thai ads to form a series of videos with a unified style. For example, on short video platforms such as WeChat and TikTok, Thai advertising is processed into a vertical screen to adapt to the viewing habits of cell phones. and The advertising is in the middle of the screen, with a uniformly colorful background above and below, and is usually accompanied by an appealing title, such as "Kindness blossoms - do good deeds, don't ask questions". But do good deeds, do not ask for the future", etc., and the bottom is usually accompanied by Chinese subtitles or their own logos, words to guide attention, etc.

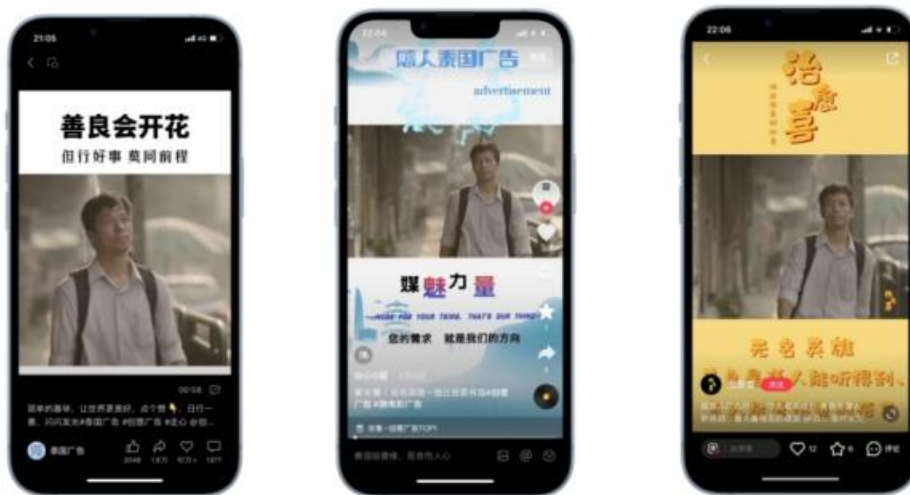


Figure 1: Different visual styles of the same advertising

Source: Screenshots by the author (July 25, 2023)

From the above, when Thai advertising is disseminated online in China, subtitling is an important form of re-invention, transforming the Thai context into the Chinese context without losing the original meaning, which is a kind of subjective and positive creation.

2) Shortening and Merging

The second form of Re-invention is to shorten or merge Thai advertising appropriately without changing the original context. When short videos first became popular in China, some platforms limited the duration of works to more than ten seconds, and later allowed for longer periods. Some Thai advertising can last for several minutes, which imposes certain restrictions on short video platforms. The producer will re-edit and shorten the original material of the advertising work, or break down an advertising into 2-3 short videos, with subtitles and explanations.

On the contrary, some producers merge Thai commercials of the same or similar type into a collection. For example, "Collection of Thai hilarious advertising", "Taking stock of those warm and healing scenes, it must still be Thai public service advertising.", "Thai Retrograde Insurance Advertising", "Thai Inspirational Tear-jerking Advertising", etc., so that the audience can search for the types they are interested in while watching.

Whether it is shortening or merging, in order not to affect the audience's understanding of the original work, the producer introduces the work in their own way. Therefore, these shortened or merged works are humorous, either plain or lively, presenting the unique personality and style of the producer.

3) Decoding

The third form of Re-invention is for producers to decode Thai advertising. The content produced by these audiences themselves has the characteristic of decentralization. Some

articles on interpretation are quite professional, including the shooting and production level, ideological content level, and commercial operation level of Thai advertising, as well as the analysis of the reasons for the success of Thai advertising worldwide, and so on. In the early days, this interpretation took the form of articles, such as forum posts, official account articles on WeChat, and column articles on Bilibili, and later it mainly took the form of short videos. This is in line with the development of the Chinese internet.

For example, WeChat netizen "决明" believes that the humor and human touch of Thai advertising dilute the commercial flavor, and each advertising does not make people guess the end, which is absurd but does not deviate from the product. Xiaohongshu netizen "小慌不方" analysis that Thai advertising mainly have characteristics of extreme emotions, civilian scenes, and ups and downs of the plot. This benefits from Thailand's economic and cultural background, inclusive attitude under the influence of Buddhism, and international advertising production models and processes. This viewpoint is widely recognized by most netizens and resonates with them. Words such as "touching, think outside the box, huge room for imagination, small person, truth, and good human nature" have the highest frequency of occurrence, giving rise to new characteristic symbols.

WeChat netizen "真新小茂" thinks that "Thai advertising that combines creativity and humanistic care is like a balance between the Western and Buddhist spirits." He also puts forward his own different view: "Many netizens, after watching Thai advertising, unconsciously follow it as a standard and use it to belittle their own country's advertising. In fact, this is not fair, because the real difficulty is not copying Thai advertising creativity but getting through this business model."

4) Remake

The fourth form of Re-invention is short videos or print works that mimic the style of Thai advertising. Producers have fully utilized their initiative and creativity, forming new cultural Re-invention symbols. For example, the WeChat personal media accounts "GQ Lab" redesigned the domestic brand ads into Thai advertising style and made them into a series of pictures and texts, with more than 100000 readers. The Xiaohongshu account "肖宇航" imitated the differences in advertising between "China, Japan, and Thailand" and received 200000 likes. The Xiaohongshu account "秀啊" imitates the differences in advertising creativity between China and Thailand, with a likes volume of 95000. WeChat user "Liu Kang" taught netizens how to make the color of Thai advertising style in his official account. Bilibili netizen "KN Heichai" adapted Thai advertising into the popular auto-tune remix-themed content on Bilibili. These works have received likes and reposts from netizens.



Figure 2: The Remake of Thai Advertising

Source: Screenshots by the author (July 25, 2023)

The authors found an interesting phenomenon that the interaction in Chinese cyberspace also affects the production of advertising industry works. Some Chinese brands are trying to shoot "Thai style" advertising works, or directly collaborate with Thai director teams to launch in the Thai market or attract the attention of Chinese audiences. For example, in 2018, Tmall and SUNING took out Thai style ads at the same time, causing hot online discussions. This phenomenon precisely indicates that Thai advertising has become a popular, creative, and dramatic cultural symbol in the minds of Chinese netizens.



Figure 3: Thai style advertising from Tmall

Source: Screenshots by the author .(July 25, 2023)

2.2 Changes Arising from the Re-invention of Thai Advertising in China

1) Changes in the media industry

The emergence of fan subgroups

Based on the difference in engagement in online interactions, the fan base of Thai advertising includes three levels. One is those heavy fans who continue to output content. The second is those moderate fans who output content on Thai advertising of interest. The third is those mild fans who are in a fully accepted position. They jointly constructed a new cultural form, which belongs to themselves with its symbols.

Jenkins defines the active interpretation of works by fans as "textual poachers" and believes that fans are on the margins of culture and socially disadvantaged, using other people's materials in other people's territories to construct their own new ideas, they form a culture. This culture transforms the results of media consumption into new texts and even new culture. (Jenkins,1992)

In fact, this kind of "poaching" behavior still exists among today's fan groups, but new changes have taken place. The dissemination of Thai advertising on the Chinese Internet has created several "fan subs". Fans' interpretation and reproduction of Thai advertising not only give meaning to Thai advertising to a certain extent, but also participate in the reproduction and create their own texts through interaction in cyberspace.

In this process, anyone who can make subtitles quickly and can touch the audience first will be popular. If fans master how to use the software, they can quickly create videos and gain positive attention and feedback from the fan group's mutual viewing. Thus, fans were elevated to an active position during the dissemination of Thai advertising. The number of views will increase as well. It is a sudden change in the production system because there is no need to wait for the process from a famous company like in the past, but it can be done by anyone who has the ability. "Everyone can be a media person."

The emergence of new production "experts"

After the emergence of the fan subgroups above, the status of fans has been improved by participating in cultural reproduction. They fully utilize their subjective creativity, not only gaining group identity, but also being able to profit from it. This has to some extent led to the so-called new production "experts".

The production of video and audio is no longer the exclusive right of professional film and television companies but has become a creative tool that ordinary people can also master. These "experts" spend more time and energy producing high-quality works that are accepted by the audience. For example, the professional decoding of Thai advertising mentioned earlier, or the highly imitative text of Thai advertising style.

Their goals include entertainment, expanding their own popularity, increasing the number of fans to obtain economic returns, and so on. They maintain a high frequency of continuous output, and as they attract more fans, they will receive rewards from the platform or opportunities for investors. After attracting enough fans, some "experts" began selling Thai related products, such as food, cosmetics, latex pillows, tourism products, service consulting, and even real estate.

2) Social change

Refers to changes found among consumers at both loyal fans and general interest levels. These consumers will talk and express their opinions in various channels. that published Thai advertising. Which makes those channels become the space for expressing various aspects as follows.

Space to exchange knowledge and experience

When the audience watches Thai advertising, more knowledge is being exchanged. For example, Thai culture, advertising culture, and popular culture. As mentioned earlier, people who have experience living in Thailand or have some research on Thai culture will share their views on Thai advertising, as well as Thai customs, social culture, and so on.

“Seeing the scene of hanging bananas, many Thai people are really like this, they will hang a lot of fruits on your door.” (from netizen on WeChat “Kang Kaili”)

“The female lead in the advertising is from ‘A Little Thing Called Love’.” (from netizen on Bilibili “Nickname Review Failed”)

“BGM is an interlude from the Thai movie ‘แฟนฉัน ’ (PS: I personally think this movie is worth watching!)” (from netizen on Bilibili “Mercury Resident Mumuzi”)

On the contrary, some audiences will share their experiences from China. some netizens from southern China found similarities between Thai and Chinese dialects and discussed with each other.

“Why does it feel like the Thai language is a dialect from somewhere in China?” (from netizen on Bilibili “Pu Yuan”)

“Cantonese, right? I also think” (from netizen on Bilibili “Fresh Dried Fish Line up Collection Point”)

“There is also something like Chaoshan dialect and Guangxi dialect” (from netizen on Bilibili “Wei Xiaodie”)

“As a Zhuang from Guangxi, I can understand many sentences” (from netizen on Xiaohongshu “Cat”)

“Thai is somewhat similar to Zhuang dialect in Chongzuo, Guangxi, and some words are pronounced the same way” (from netizen on Xiaohongshu “Banana Flavored Milkshake”)

“It's like Hainan dialect. I can understand it without looking at the subtitles” (from netizen on Bilibili “The Story of the Middle Finger”)

Space to express oneself

Thai advertising has also become a space for audiences to express themselves. In the past era of Old media, the mode of communication was one-way, and only the mainstream media monopolized the source of information dissemination. The information

dissemination methods in the internet era have broken this situation. The audience places themselves in different roles such as viewers or reviewers, and more and more people are making their voices heard through the online space. Currently, the audience is no longer a passive recipient of information, but a subject with strong critical thinking ability. They have obvious group characteristics, boldly express their views, actively point out when they see flaws in the plot or production, and actively explore the cultural connotation behind the advertising. "Although the creativity is good, it is not as efficient as the repetitive advertising in China. Creative things may only make people remember the creativity in the end, and advertising should be the most profitable under the state of constant repetition." (from netizen on Bilibili "This Big Fish").

"Too violent, adverse to the promotion of the product, it can be warmer, there are improvements." (from netizen on Bilibili "De Xiaofu"). "Thai advertising is thought-provoking! Today, we will learn to play games with the Big data algorithm that controls you behind, and not be affected by Big data to your independent thinking... Big data will keep you trapped in your mind." (from netizen on Xiaohongshu "Tianya Yaya")

Space of Hope

When watching Thai advertising, the audience developed new hope.

"A small advertisement perfectly blends love, emotion, and responsibility together! I hope our advertising is not too impatient. Although going straight to the theme and highlighting the key points are the core, they lack warmth "(from netizen on TikTok" Hao").

"Why are Thai advertising so meaningful? Every time I watch Thai advertising, I feel like I'm crying. When can China produce such meaningful public service advertising without the need for so-called celebrities? Warm, meaningful, and grounded." (from netizen on WeChat "Cody Min").

"I hope more responsible people can use bags made of cotton and hemp to weigh, bring a fresh-keeping box, tableware, straws, and cups, and put them in canvas bags. Refusing disposable plastic is the first step, I want to start doing it! (from netizen on Xiaohongshu "User Logged Out").

"I really want to go to Thailand." (from netizen on Sina Microblog "Fanzai Business Department").

Part 3:

Cai Zhouzhou: Producer and Media Production of Transnational Borders

The identity of "Cai Zhouzhou" is diversified. She is not only a content producer, publisher, consumer, but also a translator. She was an early translator and producer of Thai advertising, and her media experience is closely related to the popularity of Thai advertising. Her multiple identities, as well as her media experiences, make her a mirror that maps the development of Thai advertising on the Internet in China. Therefore, it is very typical to use her media content as a case study. Of all Cai Zhouzhou's platform accounts, the content of her Sina Weibo is the most comprehensive and the longest, so the researcher mainly develops the analysis from her Sina Weibo content.

Cai Zhouzhou studied in college as a Thai language major. "The first time I saw Thai advertising was when we were studying Thai as a Thai language major, and our teacher would take some shorter advertising for us to practice listening. At that time, I felt that they had an extraordinarily open mind." Now Cai Zhouzhou can't recall what the first Thai commercial she saw was, but she still remembers the shock it gave her when she first saw it.

In her third year of college, she traveled to Thailand with her classmates for a six-month exchange program. The experience was deeply unforgettable and planted a seed that quickly took root in her later life trajectory.

1) Thai Advertising: the Beginning of Short Video Practice

"The reason why I chose Thai ads, that's because I learned Thai, so I did that, and fewer people did that at that time." The time she's talking about was before 2015, when Thai ads on the internet were still mainly in Thai or with English subtitles. Taking advantage of her Thai language major, coupled with her love for Thai culture and her deep impression of Thai advertising, made her choose Thai advertising for her video production in the first place.

"I started as an advertising translator, and I just wanted to make an account in the beginning. I started this account back in August 2015, when I didn't know much about self-publishing, it was simply that I thought that I would translate Thai ads that should be read by a lot of people. And then just translated an extraordinary number of Thai ads in the years from 2015 to 2018."

Below are the statistics of the number of Thai advertisings published by Cai Zhouzhou each year.

Table 1 Number of Thai advertisings published annually for Cai Zhouzhou

year	Quantity (bars)
2015	30
2016	75
2017	212
2018	98
2019	37
2020	21
2021	36
2022	11
2023	3

From 2015 to 2018, it was a highly productive period for Cai Zhouzhou translating Thai advertising. She posted a total of 30 after August 2015, and then it all went downhill from there.

2) Re-invention: a Distinctive Personal Style

When Cai Zhouzhou was making the Thai advertising video, they were also thinking about how to make the video more likely to be noticed. First, it is in the selection of Thai advertising. In the beginning, Cai Zhouzhou released advertising with two main categories, one is the funny category, where the plot has a great reversal at the end. The second is the warm and emotional category, the number of which is relatively small. Based on observation and feedback, she gradually summarized the more popular types.

"Chinese audiences prefer a couple of types. The first one is the type of youth series, Thai ads that tell stories of youth are very popular with the younger generation. There are also short, funny ones that are more popular with male fans. There are a few characteristics of Thai commercials, the first one is very touching, the second one is especially funny, and the third one is with a reversal. When I was looking for themes, I went towards these three aspects, and basically the audience is very popular." In the choice of subject matter, Cai

Zhouzhou adjusts according to the audience's preferences, and emotion, humor and reversal of the plot are her selection criteria for the content aspect of Thai advertising.

The process of production of Cai Zhouzhou is the process of re-invention of Thai advertising. First up is making subtitles. Cai Zhouzhou has a strong personal touch when it comes to translating Thai advertising.

"When I translate, I don't like to translate everything word for word, I like to add some stems that are suitable for my domestic friends to understand, and sometimes I'm told that the translation is wrong in a big way. But those who like my translations will enjoy reading them."

For example, "fizzy drinks" translates to "Happy Fat House Water", a word that refers to Coca-Cola among young Chinese. In the commercial, for example, the girl's mother doesn't attend the school's Mother's Day event because of her homosexuality, so her grandmother attends every year. The grandmother asks the girl, "Want a hug?" Cai Zhouzhou translates to, "Want a loving hug?" This is also a popular phrase on the Internet, and when said by a serious grandmother, it has a comedic effect. When you're trying to do good things, but people comment on you....." in a public service announcement. In the PSA "When you're trying to do good things, but people comment on you ", the word "people" is directly translated as "keyboard warrior", which is also an Internet buzzword with a vivid image.

Cai Zhouzhou not only achieves accuracy when translating, but also considers how to use the daily language that young Chinese netizens are accustomed to, which is closer to the audience's cultural habits and language use habits, and thus easier to be understood and accepted by the audience. It expresses the original meaning more authentically and naturally, avoids hard or jarring translations, and better integrates into the Chinese context.

Cai Zhouzhou sometimes adds her own comments in parentheses in the subtitles. For example, when the advertising says, "monthly salary of more than 90,000 baht," she writes in parentheses: (about 18,000 RMB), so that the Chinese audience will have a concrete idea at once.

All in all, both the subtitles and the text accompanying the release reflect Cai Zhouzhou's individuality, vividness, flexibility and recognizability.

Secondly, shortening and consolidation, Cai Zhouzhou has shortened and consolidated its video works to fit the needs of different platforms, Cai Zhouzhou chooses Thai advertising that are usually between 1 and 5 minutes long, so that they do not affect the integrity of the video when played on Weibo platform. The TikTok platform has a limit on the length of videos that can be uploaded, according to the official announcement, the length of a single video is limited to 1 to 3 minutes. For Thai advertising that are longer than this, Cai Zhouzhou divides them into three series and edits them separately before posting them on Tiktok. For example, in this insecticide advertising, the left picture is the complete video released in Weibo, and the right picture is divided into three short videos, with the three covers spelling out a complete picture, so that the audience will understand briefly that these three videos are the same advertising divided into three consecutive ones.



Figure 4: Different interfaces of pesticide advertising in Weibo and Tiktok

Source: Screenshots by the author (January 6, 2024)

Once again, decoding. Cai Zhouzhou, after translating a lot of Thai advertising, has come up with some of her own. She made a video titled "Why Thai Ads are popular all over the World". In the video, she analyzed Thai advertising in detail. She believes that the success of Thai advertising is due to the unexpected creativity of the advertising plot, and Thai advertising take creativity to the extreme after the theme of the advertising is clearly defined. Humor and sensationalism are the consensus of Thai advertising. She pointed out that the development of Thai advertising has an important connection with the national mentality, and that everything is a source of creativity. Grounding is also another reason for the success of Thai advertising, showing the truth, goodness, and beauty of small people through a cozier lifestyle, using unknown vegetarian actors and actresses, and presenting sentimental and interesting features. The reason why Thai advertising can impress the audience is because they have the feeling of catching up with the drama when they watch them. Cai Zhouzhou mentioned that she often pays attention to Thai small fresh advertising, including a series of advertising called "I like this kind of you", although it is an acne product, the advertising is integrated into the drama, so watching the advertising has the feeling of watching a TV drama, which makes people have a deep impression of the product.

Cai Zhouzhou has been emphasizing two keywords: Thailand and translation. The word "Thailand" emphasizes her geographical advantage and lets the audience know that she is in Thailand. The word "translator" is to emphasize her professionalism and proficiency in Thai. Together, the two keywords create a personal image of her as a professional living in Thailand and therefore someone to call for any business related to Thailand.

3) Thai people: Consumption of Otherness

Beginning with the Thailand advertising, Cai Zhouzhou continued to update its video works, soon adding videos of different content such as daily life, movies and entertainment, and travel. The daily sharing of news and information occupies an absolute advantage in the content of Cai Zhouzhou's Weibo. When she initially signed up, she just took Weibo as a place to record and share her daily life and mood, and a place to communicate with friends and more people. When she started to bring goods on Weibo, she began to treat the account as a window for the public, where she could show and shape her image, sell products, collaborate on promotions, and share user experiences. She needs to update her content from time to time to keep the attention of her fans. This puts higher demands on her, and she constantly strives to improve the quality of her content and her interactive ability.

In addition to sharing daily life insights, Cai Zhouzhou also provides diversified content, including entertaining videos, educational content, practical travel, and life experiences, and more. This diversified content can attract fans from different interest groups. Overall, sharing-enjoyed blogger Cai Zhouzhou builds a strong bond with her fans through

authenticity, expertise, positive attitudes, and diverse content that fulfills their consumption needs.



Figure 5: Cai Zhouzhou's travel short video

source: Screenshots by the author (January 6, 2024)

Cai Zhouzhou shares her daily life, travel, food, and cultural insights in Thailand through her short video works as well as her social media accounts, enabling audiences to learn about Thai customs, cultural activities, and other aspects of information, and to feel and consume Thainess. People can access, understand, and consume Thai culture more readily in their online lives, which facilitates cultural exchanges and multicultural integration. They constructed their daily imagination(Benedict Anderson.2006) of Thailand through consumption.

The study also emphasizes that the re-invention of Thai advertising in China has influenced the way Thai people perceive themselves and their culture. It has sparked a sense of pride and confidence in Thai creativity and storytelling abilities. This has led to a renewed interest in Thai culture and has encouraged Thai media producers to continue to innovate and create content that resonates with both Thai and Chinese audiences. The re-invention of Thai advertising in China has had a significant impact on Thai society, media production, and cultural exchange between Thailand and China. It has created new opportunities for Thai media producers to reach a wider audience and has enhanced the image of Thailand as a creative and innovative country. The study suggests that the re-invention of Thai advertising in China has the potential to further strengthen the cultural ties between the two countries and promote mutual understanding and appreciation.

Conclusion

Thai media products were introduced to China and were reinvented through new media as a medium and background, resulting in a series of impacts. In the past, users unilaterally received media products produced by companies in the advertising and media industry in China. However, with the reinvention, users now participate in media production and have an influence on it. They can even change their roles and become creators themselves. This reinvention has also created new spaces or communities where people can shift from receiving unilaterally to being able to produce themselves. They can explore and convey their voices to producers through new media, allowing them to understand their needs and produce works that respond to their needs in the next round of production. This has led to the formation of various forums and groups, which are new social spaces or communities.

This new space and new community have created a new way to showcase self-identity. For example, Cai Zhuzhou shaped herself as a Thai expert, which would not have been possible

without such a community and people's attention in the past. These three aspects – the new production relationship, new production space, and new ways of self-identity display - all generate the power of new media. The more the power of new media develops, the more difficult it becomes to understand and control. However, during this period, people are no longer able to resist and leave the power of new media. Therefore, further thinking is needed on how to control, understand, and guide the power of new media to have a positive and constructive impact on society. In addition, there are many types of inventions, the first of which is the traditional type. Inventions may change the past into the present, or they may change ethnic minorities into modernity. These are all traditional inventions.

Furthermore, cultural exchange between one place and another is not natural, nor can it be naturally accepted and consumed. Different cultures have different consumption tendencies or preferences. Therefore, culture needs to be reinvented when transgressing boundaries to meet the needs of others. The media products discussed in this research in Thailand were reinvented during the trans-border process and adapted to the needs of China. Compared with the old Thai advertising, this new product has a different production process and does not require filming, directing teams, actors, cameras, etc. The results are also different, and the products produced have new appearances and forms. This new media product has led to consumption and a series of phenomena. This conclusion can also be used to understand other similar phenomena. Whether it is media, products, or culture, when it crosses borders, it will not be naturally accepted for consumption. It must undergo artificial adjustments to adapt to the cultural needs of the other group. Therefore, in this process, reinvention always continues to occur.

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