

Analysis of Apple's Classic Ads - Strengths and Weaknesses

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Abstract. Advertising and marketing are one of the key topics of research today. For the company and research, it is important to learn from the past excellent advertising and marketing cases and analyze the shortcomings of the predecessors to improve themselves. The researcher found that there is a good research space for Apple's advertising and marketing cases, and there is still a research gap in the analysis of Apple's classic advertising cases. This study explores the effectiveness of four major Apple Inc. advertising campaigns, understanding their impact on brand image and market positioning. Through comprehensive literature analysis, the study dissects the advantages and shortcomings of the "Macintosh's Introduction in 1984," "Think Different," "Silhouette Campaign," and "Shot on iPhone" campaigns. While these campaigns have been instrumental in creating a distinct brand image, they have exhibited limitations in providing comprehensive product information and broad audience appeal. The study concludes that the emphasis on user engagement, transparency in content selection, and a holistic portrayal of product capabilities could bolster the effectiveness of such campaigns. This article is crucial for devising impactful advertising strategies in technology markets.

Keywords: Apple inc., advertising, commercial, technology markets, brand image.

1. Introduction

Apple's commercials are always a hit. While browsing YouTube recently and seeing the new Apple ads, it brought people back to the time that McIntosh's first appear. The unique creativity, the unparalleled language of the ads, and the fact that these great ads have turned Apple around and gained a higher market share, which is a very important node for the Apple company. This essay used cause study to explore a few examples of great Apple advertisements at different times.

From its pioneering "1984" Super Bowl commercial to the simplistic yet sophisticated "Think Different" campaign, Apple Inc. has consistently positioned itself as a beacon of creativity and innovation in the realm of advertising. It have done more than just promote products; they have shaped perceptions, triggered emotions, and created a culture that transcends technology. These advertisements, notable for their creativity, innovation, and ability to connect with consumers on a deeper level, have effectively contributed to Apple's development and success.

Apple's ad campaigns have been nothing short of revolutionary, setting new standards for advertising in the tech industry. By focusing on emotional storytelling rather than solely product features, they have managed to create a strong connection with their audience. The carefully chosen advertising language, with its concise and expressive vocabulary, instantly captivates viewers and sparks curiosity about their products. "Shot on iPhone" campaign, Apple consistently showcases the uniqueness of their products in a compelling and relatable way. By staying ahead of the curve and aligning their ads with societal trends, they have not only boosted sales but also cultivated a brand image of sophistication and innovation. Apple's ads go beyond mere marketing; they have become cultural phenomena and a testament to the power of compelling storytelling in advertising.

This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the power of effective advertising, specifically within the tech industry, and offers valuable insights for marketing professionals, students, and anyone with an interest in brand strategy and consumer behavior.

Some scholars or people who want to understand the role of advertising in the development of Apple can get a lot of interesting information through this article. It can also be used as a reference to recognize and understand the characteristics and advantages of Apple's advertising and how these advantages and characteristics have contributed to the development of the company and the sales of

its products. Scholars who want to learn more about great company's advertising, this article may be able to give a lot about the excellent advertising strategies and styles.

There is very little research on the topic of Apple advertising case studies, including little literature and analysis on summarizing Apple's early advertising cases. In the study of Apple's excellent advertising case study is a big research gap, its article aim to fill up this gap.

This paper mainly analyzes the four classic cases of Apple in three different periods, which are the four case advertisements for Apple to make constant progress and development. But the most classic advertisements may also have deficiencies, by studying the deficiencies of the case advertisements and making research suggestions to further analyze the advertisement cases.

2. Background Information of Apple Inc.

2.1. Company Background

Apple Inc. is an American multinational technology company that was co-founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne on April 1, 1976, in Cupertino, California.

Apple Inc. is a multinational corporation that operates globally. The company's primary business involves the design, production, and sale of electronics and related software. Its products include the iPhone smartphone, iPad tablet computer, Mac personal computer, iPod portable media player, Apple Watch smartwatch, Apple TV digital media player, as well as a range of related software, services, accessories, solutions, and applications.

2.2. Brief History of the Company

Apple was founded on April 1, 1976, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne, with its first product being the Apple 1 personal computer. This device was replaced in 1977 by the Apple II, which, with its graphical user interface and open architecture, achieved considerable success in the personal computer market of the 1980s.

In 1984, Apple introduced the Macintosh, the first personal computer to be widely adopted that used a graphical user interface and a mouse. However, in the early 1990s, due to increased market competition and internal management issues, Apple's market position began to decline. In 1997, Jobs returned to Apple and served as interim CEO, where he began to lead a revival in product development and marketing.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Apple introduced the iPod, iPhone, and iPad. With their innovative design and technology, these products significantly reshaped industries such as music, mobile phones, and personal computers. Meanwhile, Apple's digital content sale platforms like the iTunes Store, App Store, and iBooks Store also succeeded enormously.

Jobs resigned as CEO in 2011 and passed away the same year. His successor, Tim Cook, continued to lead the company. Under Cook's leadership, Apple launched the Apple Watch and expanded into services, including Apple Music, iCloud, Apple Pay, among others. As of now, Apple has become one of the largest companies in the world by market value.

2.3. Apple's Development History

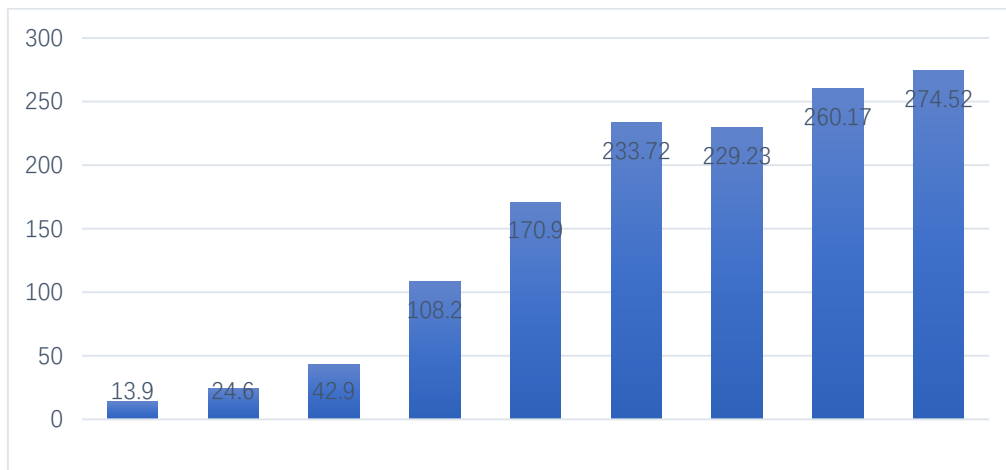


Figure 1 Global revenue of Apple from 2005 to 2021(in billion U.S. dollars) [1]

Over the past decades, Apple has grown in size and revenue, and this growth has accelerated significantly especially after 2005. This progress is not only a testament to Apple's strong market presence, but also reflects the company's strengths in product design, innovation, and marketing strategies.

During this period, Apple has launched a series of innovative products, and through successful design and marketing, Apple has established itself as a leader in the technology sector. At the same time, they have crafted a strong brand image that has earned consumer loyalty and trust with their excellent user experience and high-quality products. By selling those high-quality products, apple's maximum monthly return of 21.63% in 2020, generates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the company [2].

On the other hand, Apple is also known for its innovative and engaging advertising strategies. With their creative visual presentation, precise messaging, and deep insights into users' emotions, these advertisements have successfully triggered consumers' emotional responses and enhanced the appeal of the Apple brand.

At the same time, as shown in Figure 1, Apple's global revenue has been growing steadily. This growth is fueled by the sales of their products, as well as the services associated with those products, such as iCloud, Apple Music, and the App Store. These services not only generate a consistent stream of revenue for Apple, but also help them to build a strong ecosystem where consumers are more inclined to invest more in Apple's devices and services [1].

2.4. Apple's Advertising Style and Characteristic

Apple's ads are usually very simple, showing only the product and a small amount of text. This simplicity of design style makes people immediately recognize Apple's advertisements.

Rich Innovation Factor: Apple's Rich Innovation Factor lies in its unique advertising strategy that blends creativity and relatability to create a powerful visual impact. Apple does not just advertise products; it showcases experiences, presenting its innovations in a varied and appealing manner that is tied to everyday scenarios. Each campaign offers a fresh perspective, avoiding repetitive messaging and instead, highlighting the ways Apple's products enrich consumer lives. This innovative and close-to-consumer approach leaves a lasting impression, creating an association between Apple's brand and a lifestyle of modern convenience, efficiency, and quality.

Humanization: The principle of Humanization deeply influences Apple's advertising approach, emphasizing the tangible impact of their products on people's lives rather than focusing solely on technical specifications. Through scenarios reflecting everyday experiences, Apple highlights how their devices integrate seamlessly into various lifestyles, meeting an array of needs. Whether it is an iPad assisting with education, an iPhone capturing precious moments, or an Apple Watch encouraging a healthier lifestyle, Apple effectively communicates the personal benefits of its technology. This

approach does not just sell products; it cultivates a connection with consumers, positioning Apple as a brand in tune with its customers' aspirations and lifestyles [3].

Emotional Connection: Apple's ads often try to establish an emotional connection with the viewer. They use a compelling story to show the features of their product.

High Quality Production: Apple's advertisements are always professionally produced with high quality. Their ads often use high quality photography and video, as well as professional sound and music.

Fine music: Music has a strong appeal in Apple's advertisements. Apple's approach to advertising is grounded in simplicity. From the onset, Apple understood that connecting with customers wasn't about flamboyant marketing, but about streamlining their decision-making journey. Hence, the company maintains a minimalist, easy-to-understand messaging and aesthetic in its advertisements. Now, many other companies are adopting this method, shifting from enumerating the specifics like features, prices, or unique aspects of their products to sharing the basic narratives of why their products exist [4, 5].

Apple never just shows the great performance of their products during their advertisements. Apple will use a crafty way that tells a story that what apple's products have positively influence on some condition or problem which close with user's personal life, and many other companies have adopted this strategy [6].

3. Apple's Classical AD

"1984 Apple releases the Macintosh computer"

In a seemingly totalitarian society, people are forced to wear the same uniform and listen to a leader on a big screen without expression. This image of the leader represents IBM, the dominant player in the personal computer market at the time. suddenly, a young woman in a t-shirt appears with a sledgehammer and throws it at the screen, breaking the image of the leader and bringing a bright light. The woman represents Apple's Macintosh computer, symbolizing innovation and anti-conformity.

"Think Different"

"Here is to the Crazy Ones" is a cornerstone piece of Apple's "Think Different" advertising campaign. The commercial begins in black and white with a voice-over that states, this is a salute to those who are unique, disrupt norms, and view things from a unique perspective. They don't favor rules and don't uphold the existing order. This narration aims to align Apple with individuals who are dissatisfied with the status quo, always innovating, and propelling the world forward. Following this, a series of historic figures are presented, all of whom are known for their innovative thinking and tremendous impact on the world. Figures include Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr., among others.

Here, Apple positions its brand as embodying this spirit of innovation and rebellion, encouraging audiences to associate Apple products with a lifestyle of uniqueness and innovation [7].

The primary goal of this ad was to transform public perception of Apple while also establishing it as an innovator. Under Steve Jobs' leadership, Apple not only achieved this but also created an iconic brand image that continues to influence its products and marketing strategies even today.

"Silhouette Campaign"

Apple's famous series of iPod advertisements are popularly known as the Silhouette Campaign. These ads began running in 2003 and continued for several years. The Silhouette Campaign featured a black silhouette of a character with a brightly colored background, holding an iPod in his hand and wearing the iconic white headphones on his ears, an image that made a strong visual impact on consumers. The characters in the ads usually dance to background music in a variety of forms, including rock, pop, electronic and other music styles. These ads successfully emphasize the association between iPod and music, as well as the fashion, energy and uniqueness of the Apple brand.

And through the bright colors and dynamic music, they brought wide recognition and great commercial success to Apple's iPod product line.

"Shot on iPhone"

"Shot on iPhone" is an advertising campaign launched by Apple Inc. It primarily aims to showcase the quality and capabilities of photos and videos taken with the iPhone. This campaign was initiated in 2015 and has received wide recognition worldwide. The goal of the campaign is to demonstrate the capabilities of the iPhone's camera and use user-generated content for marketing purposes. Apple collects photos and videos taken by users with iPhones from all over the world and showcases these works in their global advertisements. The selected works are displayed on Apple's online platforms, in physical stores, on billboards, and in TV commercials, providing high exposure for the creators [8].

The "Shot on iPhone" campaign often includes challenges or competitions, encouraging users to use their iPhones to capture photos and videos in innovative and unique ways. The campaign has been very successful because it shows consumers the actual performance of the iPhone's camera and involves more people in promoting the Apple brand through user-generated content.

4. Cause Analysis

4.1. "Think Different"

4.1.1 Advantage

"Here is to the Crazy Ones" was a part of Apple's "Think Different" campaign in 1997, a pivotal time for the company. Apple, previously struggling with financial crisis in the early '90s, started recovering with Steve Jobs's return in 1997. This campaign was unique as it did not explicitly promote any product but emphasized the emotional and psychological value of the brand. This strategy differentiated Apple from competitors, aligning with its "Think Different" brand message and reinforcing its image. The ad successfully altered public perception of Apple, crafting a brand image characterized by innovation, rebellion, and challenge to the status quo. This helped Apple stand out among tech brands and appealed to consumers seeking innovation and a distinctive lifestyle [7].

4.1.2 Disadvantage

Although in this advertisement, Apple did succeed in building a great brand image, and the language of their advertisement and the image they created was very much in line with Apple's fans at the time. But this did not lead to a significant increase in Apple's market share. From the launch of the product in 1994 to 2001 Apple's market share stayed at around four percent [9].

In this series of ads, Apple has created great communities for their target users. Apple has fostered a corporate narrative that has cultivated a dedicated and loyal fan base. This mythos is evident in various media, including Apple's shareholder meetings, advertisements, news coverage, and promotional materials [10].

Despite the ingenuity of Apple's "Think Different" campaign, it did have a notable omission: the fight for a larger audience. The ads were highly effective in nurturing a loyal community of Apple enthusiasts but fell short in expanding their appeal to a broader demographic.

More importantly, these ads lacked explicit emphasis on the products' unique features and benefits. For consumers in the 1990s, critical factors in their purchasing decisions included the product's performance and pricing. These factors were not sufficiently addressed in Apple's narrative-driven campaign. This disconnect was evident in the sales of the McIntosh computers. While the campaign successfully carved out a distinct brand image and connected with a niche audience, it did not result in a significant uptick in McIntosh sales. The ads, while emotionally engaging and memorable, failed to provide the pragmatic information sought by potential consumers [10].

4.1.3 Suggestions

Although this series of advertisements builds up a good brand image, if some introduction to the product or brand can be added to the series of advertisements, this will enable consumers to learn more about the product and brand through this classic advertisement, thus increasing the sales of McIntosh. Coupling the product introduction with the captivating brand narrative would not only educate but also inspire the consumers. The customers would not only understand the technicalities of the product but also associate these features with the broader Apple ethos of thinking differently. This could create a deeper, more personal connection between the consumer and the product, ultimately driving increased sales of products such as the McIntosh.

4.2. "Shot on iPhone"

4.2.1 Advantage

Those strong advertisement enhanced user loyalty on Apple's products. This activity allows more ordinary users to participate in this activity, to enhance the user's sense of participation, participation which makes Apple's user community become more powerful, user loyalty in which to be enhanced. Apple could gain huge exposure of their advertisements from this activity. Ordinary users can show their talents through the "Shot on iPhone" campaign, and may also win good prizes, Apple uses such excellent photos to publicize its products, the "Shot on iPhone" campaign also get high exposure, which is a win-win situation for both Apple and users.

The campaign was so well publicized on the Internet that it became a very famous meme all over the world. This activity could gain consumers a strong feel of iPhone can improve their photo technique. Users may think that when they use the iPhone, they can also use a simple device to take high-quality excellent photos, they will be more willing to buy the iPhone. This campaign and encourage users to go to shoot more things, when they use the iPhone will also deepen the user's impression of the excellence of Apple's products.

Through the "Shot on iPhone" campaign, Apple subconsciously told consumers that the iPhone in their hands has excellent shooting ability and technology and did not use a very blunt way to tell consumers the advantages of their products, which makes their publicity more credible and easier to be accepted by consumers. This strategy enhances Apple's brand image and emphasizes its leadership in technology and design.

4.2.2 Disadvantages

The fallout for the average user: Most of the users who participated in the "Shot on iPhone" campaign have professional qualities and professional equipment, such as tripod lenses or some auxiliary equipment, and they can travel around the world to take pictures of beautiful landscapes. However, for ordinary users, it is very difficult for them to have high shooting ability and good auxiliary equipment, and it is also difficult for them to have good scenery around them. When there is a gap between the photos they take and the beautiful photos on the advertisement, they will have doubts about the quality of the product, which will bring a side effect to the image of the product.

Selection bias: Since the selection process of "Shot on iPhone" may have a selective bias, i.e., only the best photos are shown, consumers may misunderstand the general performance of the iPhone's photographic capabilities. Finally, the success of the campaign relied heavily on user-generated content. If users are less motivated to submit photos and videos, or if the content they submit is of low quality, the effectiveness of this marketing strategy may suffer.

4.2.3 Suggestions

Make more common but meaningful moments in the ads, and fewer professional, hard-to-imitate photos in the ads, so that users can easily imitate the same photos. Also, Apple could offer free online photography courses or tutorials to help users improve their photography skills and better utilize the iPhone's shooting capabilities. The selection process more open and transparent so that users

understand what kind of work is more likely to be selected, encouraging them to submit more high-quality content.

4.3. “Silhouette Campaign”

4.3.1 Strong visual impact

The use of bright background colors and black silhouettes creates a strong visual impact that makes the ads very recognizable and memorable. The design and colors of the ads make it easy for consumers to remember Apple and the iPod, thus creating a lasting impression in the consumer's perception. In addition, the advertisement clearly shows the iPod and the iconic white headphones, making Apple's brand image and product unmistakable.

4.3.2 The music element played a key role in the advertisement

The use of popular music of the time as a backdrop in the advertisement was intended to emphasize the iPod's function as a music player, and also inadvertently enhanced the appeal of the advertisement. The music in the advertisement, as well as the silhouetted characters dancing to the music, creates a positive and energetic atmosphere, so that people can feel happy and excited while watching the advertisement, thus creating an emotional connection with the brand [8, 11].

4.3.3 The simple design of the advertisement

Fully reflects the core value of the Apple brand - simplicity and ease of use. The images and messages in the ads are very simple, highlighting the iPod and headphones in an easy-to-understand way, without involving too many complicated product details and technical explanations. The design style of the ads coincides with Apple's product design philosophy of creating a user-friendly experience. However, the campaign is not perfect and has some drawbacks. The advertisements do not clearly present the technical specifications of the iPod, such as memory size, battery life, etc., which may confuse or disappoint consumers who are interested in the details of the product. The design and music selection of the advertisements may be skewed towards a younger demographic. It may not appeal to older consumers or those who are not interested in music. The music and dancing silhouettes of the advertisements, while appealing to a portion of the population, will not be appreciated by everyone. Advertising's reliance on music can be double-edged. While popular music can appeal to some consumers, if consumers do not like or are unfamiliar with the music in the advertisement, then the advertisement may not have the desired effect.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of three key Apple advertising campaigns: "Think Different," "Shot on iPhone," and "Silhouette Campaign." Widely recognized for their uniqueness and impact, these campaigns showcase Apple's innovative marketing strategies and make a significant contribution to its positioning as a pioneering and rebellious technology brand.

The 'Think Different' campaign was emotionally and narratively driven and succeeded in developing a loyal Apple fan base. However, the campaign did not have a significant impact on Apple's market share, highlighting the gap between compelling brand storytelling and product sales. The 'iPhone Shot' campaign, while brilliantly showcasing the iPhone's photographic capabilities, risked creating unrealistic expectations amongst casual users due to the professional-quality nature of the photographs and videos on display. iPod's 'Silhouette Ads', while visually intriguing, it has potential limitations in terms of demographic appeal and lack of detailed product information.

These campaigns not only shaped Apple's iconic brand image, but also provided important lessons for marketing strategy. Emphasizing product features and creating relatable content has the potential to increase the effectiveness of such marketing campaigns and close the gap between brand perception and product understanding. In addition, these campaigns illustrate the value of user engagement in marketing, inspiring a shift toward more user-centered marketing strategies.

While this study provides valuable insights into Apple's marketing strategy, its scope is inherently limited. It focuses on three specific marketing activities and therefore may not fully summarize the multifaceted nature of Apple's marketing approach. Future research could further explore the impact of Apple's other advertising strategies, promotional campaigns and public relations tactics on its overall brand image and market position.

This research is significant for companies looking to establish a strong brand presence in the marketplace. By dissecting Apple's advertising strategy and identifying potential areas for improvement, this study provides a roadmap for effective brand storytelling combined with product-centered advertising. It emphasizes the importance of aligning marketing strategies with core brand values and the realistic expectations and capabilities of target customers, ultimately driving brand loyalty and product sales.

Because there is very little extant literature on early Apple sales, there is very little data available. In the future if Apple can publish more sales data before 2001, there can be better data support.

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