

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 357: Product Placement

“President Pei!”

Zhu Xiaoce hurried over to greet him.

Others on the crew—including Lu Zhiyao and Zhang Zuting—also noticed Pei Qian and stepped forward to say hello.

Pei Qian smiled and waved his hand. “It’s fine, I’m just looking around. Don’t mind me, carry on.”

After exchanging a few pleasantries with some old acquaintances, Pei Qian casually picked up a prop cup nearby and began to toy with it in his hands, clearly in a good mood.

Zhang Zuting whispered to Zhu Xiaoce, “Director Zhu, don’t you feel like President Pei seems to be in a pretty good mood today?”

Zhu Xiaoce nodded. “Yeah, he does.”

“I think... it might be because he feels reassured.”

“Reassured?” Zhang Zuting asked, a little puzzled.

“Yes, reassured,” Zhu Xiaoce said, watching President Pei strolling around leisurely. “The last time President Pei came, even though he seemed relaxed, he was still clearly paying close attention to what was going on on set.”

“When he noticed that Lu Zhiyao’s acting was starting to feel a bit overdone, President Pei immediately stepped in to point it out.”

“But this time, he’s just watching from the side without saying a word.”

“That means the actors’ performances have met President Pei’s standards.”

“Seeing that everyone’s acting is now completely on point, President Pei finally feels reassured and can relax, only then would he wander around the set in such an easygoing mood.”

Zhang Zuting suddenly understood and nodded. “That makes sense.”

“Both the male and female leads really performed above their usual level today. Earning President Pei’s approval is no small feat.”

“It looks like even though President Pei doesn’t come often, he still places a lot of importance on this movie.”

Zhu Xiaoce smiled. “Of course. To be precise, President Pei values every project, otherwise he wouldn’t have achieved his current level of success...”

“Perfect timing. Since President Pei is here, I should finalize the advertising issue.”

Zhu Xiaoce walked over to Pei Qian, who was wandering around the set, planning to settle a very important matter while preparations were underway.

“President Pei.”

“May I take a few minutes of your time to report on the current status of advertising bids for this film?”

Pei Qian paused for a moment, then nodded. “Of course. Let’s hear it.”

Clearly, the word “*advertising*” struck a sensitive nerve.

As they strolled around the set together, Zhu Xiaoce explained:

“President Pei, as you know, this movie is filled with various advertisements.”

“According to the setting, the future world in the film is one completely saturated with ads—just like when the male lead lives in his capsule, where he spends most of his time surrounded by advertisements.”

“We’ve been thinking for a long time about how to handle these ads specifically.”

“My idea is to look for companies to collaborate with and do product placement.”

“This approach has three main advantages:”

“First, the companies produce the ads themselves and also pay us placement fees. From a financial standpoint, it’s very cost-effective. And since they’re making their own ads, the quality is usually guaranteed.”

“Second, once the film is released, it’s easy to spark trending discussions, which could help with the movie’s exposure.”

“Third, traditional product placement in movies often feels abrupt and awkward, which can easily trigger audience backlash. But placing ads in our movie almost completely avoids this issue, with minimal negative impact.”

“So we also reached out to some manufacturers and companies to ask whether they’d be interested in cooperating.”

Pei Qian immediately became nervous. “How did it go?”

Zhu Xiaoce looked a bit awkward. “Uh... the big companies we contacted basically ignored us. On the other hand, a few lesser-known small companies did approach us proactively, but the ads they produced were way too tacky and didn’t look anything like ads from a future world, so we rejected them.”

In short: there had been zero progress so far.

Pei Qian let out a long sigh of relief and blurted out, “That’s great!”

Zhu Xiaoce froze. “Huh?”

Pei Qian was secretly rejoicing. If they really landed ads, how much less money would they end up spending?

If a few clueless big corporations came in and each threw down hundreds of thousands—or even millions—in advertising fees, wouldn’t he be coughing up blood?

So this absolutely could not be allowed to happen!

Fortunately, Feihuang Studio didn't have much fame in the film industry, and this time they'd approached mostly large corporations, so they'd been shut out repeatedly.

But this issue couldn't be taken lightly, the warning signs had to be stamped out early.

What if Zhu Xiaoce persisted, kept pulling sponsors, and eventually persuaded some rich companies—so that before the movie even premiered, a huge chunk of the production cost was already recouped through advertising?

What then?!

Thinking of this, Pei Qian's expression turned serious.

"The first two points you mentioned are correct, but the third one has problems."

"No matter what, putting real-world brand advertisements into a film will make the audience feel pulled out of the experience."

"Even if our film's subject matter is special, it will still affect the viewing experience."

"Moreover, our movie has very strong satirical elements. Companies that buy ad placements in it will, to some extent, be satirized along with everything else."

"That won't necessarily enhance their brand image. In fact, they may not be happy to do this kind of product placement at all."

“In short, this approach is not advisable.”

Zhu Xiaoce thought it over carefully and quickly nodded. “Yes, President Pei. I understand.”

Seeing President Pei’s grave expression, Zhu Xiaoce couldn’t help feeling a bit shaken.

They’d almost messed things up!

On second thought, President Pei was absolutely right. No matter how you tried to dress it up, product placement was still product placement. Audiences had already bought movie tickets—making them sit through ads on top of that really was hard to justify.

If handled poorly, it would definitely get torn apart online.

Even if they made money, ruining the film’s reputation clearly wasn’t in line with President Pei’s expectations.

Zhu Xiaoce couldn’t help but reflect on himself.

Product placement was obviously against the spirit of Tengda Group.

This lesson had to be remembered.

Now that the current plan had been vetoed by President Pei, there had to be an alternative.

After hesitating briefly, Zhu Xiaoce said, “President Pei, if we can’t use ads from other companies, then the only option left is to shoot them ourselves.”

Pei Qian nodded. “Mm. Of course we should shoot them ourselves!”

How could he possibly pass up such a great opportunity to spend more money?

After thinking for a moment, Pei Qian continued, “In my opinion, these ads are extremely important.”

“They have to look premium, grand, and classy—low-key luxury with depth.”

“I think... uh, why don’t you tell me first how you plan to shoot them?”

Pei Qian had already figured out the general direction, but he suddenly stopped himself.

He remembered his long history of accidentally turning everything he touched into gold. Deciding not to interfere with Zhu Xiaoce’s thinking, he chose to let him freely come up with ideas instead.

Who knew, maybe Zhu Xiaoce would come up with something even better than he himself?

If Zhu Xiaoce’s idea had too high a chance of making money, then he would have no choice but to step in personally.

Zhu Xiaoce thought for a moment. “President Pei, here’s what I’m thinking.”

“We shoot brainwashing ads!”

“I mean the kind where a simple, rhyming slogan is repeated over and over—three or four times, or even more—so that once you hear it, you can never forget it.”

“We can also add some simple melodies to make the ads even more catchy.”

“These kinds of ads were everywhere a few years ago. Although there are fewer of them now, they still exist.”

“If we make ads like that, we can really trigger the audience’s sense of disgust, letting them empathize more deeply with the male protagonist’s suffering and reinforcing the film’s satirical tone!”

After hearing Zhu Xiaoce’s idea, Pei Qian fell silent for a moment.

No, this wouldn’t do. If they followed Zhu Xiaoce’s plan, things could still very easily go wrong!

Pei Qian knew all too well how powerful brainwashing ads could be.

Their defining trait was their bold, aggressive presence, giving off an almost domineering vibe. As long as such ads were done well, a single brand could practically wipe out an entire category, planting the illusion in consumers’ minds that “this brand *is* the number one in this field.”

In short, the reason these ads were so popular and so memorable was precisely because they were extremely effective.

If the movie were filled from start to finish with large amounts of brainwashing ads, it might spark heated discussion among viewers and generate all kinds of bizarre, completely unnecessary hype...

Pei Qian silently sighed.

No way—his subordinates were all far too utilitarian. He couldn't rely on them!

Expecting Zhu Xiaoce to proactively come up with an idea that would cause massive losses? Impossible!

Looks like he had to take matters into his own hands.

After thinking it through, Pei Qian said, "Brainwashing ads also have their problems."

"First of all, technology advances and times move forward."

"Although brainwashing ads are clearly effective, they've also provoked widespread backlash. That's why they've become less and less common."

"The movie is set in the future. The advertising industry should be even more developed, evolving in more elusive and unpredictable directions."

"If we show audiences brainwashing ads again, they'll think: *That's it? That's what future advertising looks like?*"

"It would feel just like people today watching ads from decades ago, strange and completely out of sync with the broader environment."

Zhu Xiaoce nodded. It did seem to make sense.

Pei Qian continued, "Second, this kind of ad risks stealing the spotlight."

"If audiences focus too much on the ads, they won't pay attention to the actors' performances or the deeper meaning of the story."

“So my suggestion is this: shoot ads with grand scale, flashy visuals, and unclear meaning!”

“Ads that play over and over again, that audiences keep watching, yet still feel completely baffled by—unable to understand what they’re even about.”

“That’s what truly aligns with the future direction of advertising.”

“As for the brands in the ads... make them completely fictional.”

“And when shooting these ads, they must be done at the highest standard—top-tier quality. Do you understand?”

Anyway, the ads were definitely going to be made. As for what they would actually end up looking like, even Pei Qian couldn’t say.

All he could do was point them in a direction that was as wrong as possible. After that, everything depended on how Zhu Xiaoce and the others executed it.

After listening to Pei Qian, Zhu Xiaoce fell silent for a long time before finally saying, “President Pei, this is an extremely difficult task.”

“But I’m confident!”