


1993

Cultural reflection of advertising appeals: a content analysis of Taiwanese television commercials

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**Cultural reflection of advertising appeals:
A content analysis of Taiwanese television commercials**

by

Ya-Fen Lo

**A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**Department: Journalism and Mass Communication
Major: Journalism and Mass Communication**

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

**Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa**

1993

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on only one aspect of Taiwanese advertising: the cultural content of Taiwanese television commercials immediately before and after the prime-time evening news. Cultural content was analyzed through both auditory and visual communication.

The rationale for selecting national prime-time TV news commercials for this study, as opposed to other media, is the wide availability and accessibility of television in Taiwan. In 1989, television sets in use numbered more than seven million, and there was an average of 98.8 color TV sets per 100 households in Taiwan (*Republic of China Yearbook*, 1991-92).

National prime-time news commercials are considered reliable samples for research due to their large viewership (Potibut, 1992). According to a survey of Taiwanese television ratings during June and July 1993, almost 58 percent of the population in Taiwan was watching the three national prime-time television news programs (TV program reporting from Rainmaker Industrial Inc., June, 1993). Among them, the percentage of female viewers (53.4 percent) was slightly higher than males (46.6 percent). In regard to each age group, the persons of age 40 to 49 had only slightly higher viewership (76.5 percent) than the persons of 50 and older (76.2 percent) and 15 to 29 years old (61.8 percent). Youth people at the age from 5 to 14 years old had the lowest viewership (19.5 percent). Consequently, the advertisers of a great

variety of products would like to air their commercials during the prime-time news programs.

This study begins with the introduction, which includes the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. To provide an understanding of Taiwan's culture, a review of Taiwan's history is presented in Chapter II. Related studies are briefly discussed in Chapter III. Research questions are stated at the end of the chapter based on the literature review. Chapter IV includes the methodology; specifically, the unit of analysis, the sampling method, category construction, and reliability. Chapter V presents findings and discussion. Finally, Chapter VI states the conclusions of the study and suggestions for future research.

Cultural Values and Advertising

Culture refers to a set of values, ideas, artifacts, and other meaningful symbols that help individuals communicate, interpret, and evaluate the symbols as active members of society. Culture provides people with a sense of identity and an understanding of acceptable behavior within society. Some of the important attitudes and behaviors influenced by culture are the following (Harris & Moran, 1987, as cited in Engel et al., 1993):

1. Sense of self and space
2. Communication and language
3. Dress and appearance
4. Food and feeding habits
5. Time and time consciousness

6. Relationships (family, organizations, government, and etc.)
7. Values and norms
8. Beliefs and attitudes
9. Mental process and learning
10. Work habits and practices (P. 63)

In this study, cultural content in TV commercials primarily focused on advertising appeals which are embedded with cultural values. Values are shared beliefs or group norms internalized by individuals. Cultural values, then, are the organizing principles, or the orienting ideas for thought and action in every society (Srikandath, 1991).

A variety of institutions help in the transmission of cultural values within a society. Traditionally, these have been the family, religious institutions, universities, judicial courts, for example. In the post-industrial age, mass media has evolved into another influential institution that facilitates the transmission of cultural values. An individual who is exposed to a specific culture becomes committed to that culture's style of thinking and feeling; value systems, and attitudes (Hallowell, 1972). Consequently, promotional communications are developed to coincide with the cultural values and norms of a particular society (Hong, Muderrisoglu, & Zinkhan, 1987). As a form of mass media, advertising has emerged as a major institution that is engaging in the portrayal and transmission of cultural values. Through the messages and appeals conveyed in it, advertising plays a significant role in changing habits and affecting the basic patterns and structures in society (Bell, 1976). As Potter says, advertising has "joined the charmed circle of institutions that fix the values and standards of society. . . and it

becomes necessary to consider with special care the extent and nature of its influence, how it extends, and in what way it makes itself felt" (1954, p. 177).

Standardization vs. Non-standardization

International marketers and advertisers are still divided on the advisability of using either standardized or non-standardized global advertising. Advertisers who use the standardized approach assume that consumers all over the world have the same needs and desires and can be persuaded by the same or similar promotional appeals. On the other hand, advertisers who support the non-standardization of commercial messages argue that people differ from country to country and are persuaded by advertising tailored to their countries.

It has been difficult to judge the advisability of using either standardized or non-standardized global advertising, since advertisers appear to have justifiable reasons for their choice. One reason why advertisers differ in their approaches to global advertising is that they may simply have different policy orientations in their international marketing strategies. Thus, firms with an ethnocentric orientation tend to use standardized global advertising, while those with a polycentric orientation tend to employ the non-standardized approach (Wind, Douglas, & Perlmutter, 1973).

The type of product being marketed abroad may be one of the factors that determines what approach should be employed. Buzzell

(1968) and Cranch (1972) point out that products that are already well-known internationally tend to be advertised through the standardized approach. By contrast, the products that are less familiar overseas should be advertised through the non-standardized approach in order to adapt their advertising to the particular countries. Blackwell et al. (1991) suggest that some advertising messages and specific product characteristics tend to be suited for a globalized advertising approach. They summarized the characteristics as follows:

1. The communications message is based on similar lifestyles.
2. The appeals of the ad is to basic human needs and emotions.
3. The product satisfies universal needs and desires (p. 784)

Some other specific reasons for using different approaches to global advertising may be the cost of advertising across national boundaries and consumer attitudes toward a foreign product's country of origin (Marquez, 1980). Cost-conscious advertisers may favor the standardized approach since it is less expensive to run the same advertising campaign in different countries. With concerns to consumer attitudes, a standardized campaign would be workable in countries where the people are friendly toward a product's country of origin.

Advertising theorists who support the specialization of commercial messages suggest that advertising is one of the most difficult marketing elements to standardize, sometimes because of the legal restrictions that require changes in copy or make certain media unavailable, but more often because of cultural differences (Mueller, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

Researchers who support the two different approaches are still in debate and many other factors influencing international advertising have been discussed by them. However, culture has been a neglected area of study (Marquez, 1980). Dichter (1962, 1972) has indicated that an understanding of cultural anthropology will be an important tool in international marketing because the successful marketer of the future will have to think not of a United States customer, nor even of a Western European or Atlantic community customer, but of a “*world customer*.”

Hornik (1980) argues that communication and culture are so closely bound that all human communication is culturally linked. When marketers and advertisers are engaged in international marketing communication, which takes place as a form of cross-national advertising, the sender's cultural background affects message form, while the receiver's cultural background determines message perception.

Hall (1960) points out "no matter how hard man tries, it is impossible for him to divest himself of his own culture, for it has penetrated to the roots of his nervous system and determines how he perceives the world People cannot act or interact at all in any meaningful way except through the medium of culture" (p. 188). Many successful American advertising campaigns failed overseas because of the failure to understand the foreign culture and its social norms (Ricks, Arpan, & Fu, 1974).

Purpose of the Study

Past cross-national research on advertising messages has examined types of appeals and products in national newspapers of the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989); television commercials in the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong (Stewart & Campell, 1988); in U.S. and Japanese print advertisements (Belk & Pollay, 1985; Mueller, 1987); in Japanese television commercials (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1990); in Malaysia and U.K. (Frith & Sengupta, 1991); and advertising strategies in French, Taiwanese and U.S. television commercials (Zandpour, Chang, & Catalano, 1992).

However, the role of culture in the content of Taiwanese television commercials has been given very little attention, while advertising from Japan, China, and other Asian countries has been compared with American advertising. Taiwan has a fast-growing economy but is still in the developmental stage of advertising, and thus can provide a wide range of marketing opportunities to marketers.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of culture in the content of Taiwanese television commercials. Advertising appeals embedded with cultural values, norms, and characteristics are the focus of this analysis. An understanding of advertising appeals in Taiwanese commercials should help the global advertiser to tailor advertising messages to suit the Taiwanese market.

Growth of Taiwanese Advertising Industry

The advertising industry in Taiwan has advanced rapidly in less than a decade. Advertising revenues reached NT\$70 billion (U.S.\$2.8 billion) in 1992. This figure represents a major change from revenues of only NT\$14 billion (U.S.\$560 million) in 1982, a decade ago (Yuan, 1993). In 1988, Taiwan's advertising expenditures were rated in the top 16 in worldwide advertising spending. The growth is mainly attributed to economic development, government support, improvement of the media environment, and the entry of international agencies (Lee & Leu, 1992).

The development of an advertising industry interacts with economic growth (Calhan, 1986). The per capita GNP was U.S.\$10,000 in 1992, and decades of saving has given many people in Taiwan the ability to shop, travel, and consume (Yuan, 1993). Therefore, growing consumer wealth has helped transform Taiwan's advertising industry from a small-scale business to a dynamic and international field.

After understanding the contribution of advertising to its economy, the Taiwanese government made the policies to encourage agency investments and to provide counseling services for management. These policies gave the Taiwanese advertising industry a brighter future, and also they interest more international advertising agencies to invest in the local market (Lee & Leu, 1992).

The improvement of the media environment in Taiwan is another reason for the rapid growth. Over the years, the new concepts and practices introduced to Taiwan by foreign agencies have diversified the

media environment in Taiwan. Sophisticated and diverse media can be used more than ever before (Lee & Leu, 1992).

The fourth reason for the growth stemmed from the influx of international advertising agencies that came to Taiwan in 1985. With their abundant personnel, capital resources, and international experience, the international advertising agencies give an edge over their local counterparts. Despite their professionalism, international advertising agencies sometimes lack an understanding of both Chinese culture and the local community, while many local advertising firms are attracted to the professionalism of international advertising agencies. Thus, by the end of 1988, 16 of the top 20 advertising firms in Taiwan had entered into joint ventures with foreign companies (*Republic of China Yearbook*, 1991-92). In 1992, 24 of the top earning advertising agencies were either foreign branches, joint ventures, or local companies with technical cooperation agreement with foreign agencies (Yuan, 1993).

Among all types of advertising in the media in Taiwan, television is the most influential medium for reaching the public. The obvious and chief advantage of television is that it makes full use of both sight and sound. Through the combination of sight and sound, television advertising can attract the attention and interest of the potential consumers. Print media rely on sight only—the ability of potential consumers to read the advertisement (Dirksen, 1983). The other important advantage of television is its popularity. Of all the Taiwanese

households, 98.8 percent own a television set, and tuning in is the number one pastime in Taiwan (Yuan, 1993).

There are presently three national television networks in Taiwan. The oldest is the Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV), inaugurated on October 10, 1962. The China Television Company (CTV) began operation on October 31, 1969, and the Chinese Television Service (CTS) started telecasting on October 31, 1971. All three networks are private enterprises that rely on advertising to earn profits (*Republic of China Yearbook*, 1991-92). Although television is the most expensive medium for advertisers, thirty seconds on the air during prime time (7:00 PM to 9:00 PM) runs NT\$90,000 (U.S.\$3,600), television advertising still enjoyed a second highest growth rate among all media in 1992(*Republic of China Yearbook*, 1991-92; Yuan, 1993).

CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Taiwan refers both to an island province of China, which is laid at the southeast coast of China, and a nation. The major territory currently is under the control of the nation known officially as the Republic of China. Taipei is its capital. The island has a total area of 13,900 square miles, about the size of Massachusetts. The population is around 20 million (Lee & Leu, 1992).

Early History

Evidence of human life on the island dates to ten thousand years ago. It remains uncertain whether Taiwan's early inhabitants were the ancestors of the present aboriginal population. Most anthropologists believe that the aborigines were from Southeast Asia and related to the Malay people. Little is known about Taiwan prior to a few centuries ago because the aborigines did not keep written records (Copper, 1990).

Before the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 222), Taiwan was known as Yangchow. In AD., 239 the emperor sent 10,000 people to explore the island, but no claim was registered at the time according to Chinese court records. During the Tang dynasty (618-907), Chinese had started to emigrate to Taiwan, which produced meaningful ties between mainland China and Taiwan. However, the island was never clearly identified in Chinese records; it was not until the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) that

Taiwan's exact location was known and the name Taiwan used (Copper, 1990).

Western Colonialism

In 1517 Portuguese vessels sighted Taiwan and named it Ilha Formosa, "beautiful island." The Portuguese did not claim Taiwan, nor did they try to colonize it. Dutch forces came in 1622 and used the Pescadores, the island east of Taiwan, as a base for harassing Portuguese trade between Japan, China, and Philippines. In 1642, Dutch forces defeated the Spanish settlements, who came in 1629, then Taiwan became a Dutch colonial enterprise ruled by the Dutch East India Company (Hsieh, 1964).

In China, meanwhile, the Ming dynasty was threatened from the north by the Manchus, a non-Chinese people who inhabited Manchuria. In 1644, the Manchus defeated the Ming dynasty and establish the Ch'ing dynasty which ruled China until 1911. Cheng Ch'eng-kung, a son of a pirate, brought large numbers of Chinese, mostly refugees fleeing from Manchu rule, to Taiwan. With an army of 100,000 and an armada of 3,000 junks, Cheng fought the Manchus to try to recover the Ming dynasty.

The Dutch, regarding Cheng as a pirate, allowed him to operate out of northern Taiwan. In 1666, having finally abandoned his efforts to reestablish the Ming dynasty, Cheng launched an attack on the Dutch.

After two years of fighting, the Dutch conceded and agreed to evacuate from Taiwan. This ended thirty-eight years of Dutch rule of Taiwan.

Cheng established a Ming-style government on Taiwan, adopting a Chinese legal system, and promoted Chinese culture (Copper, 1990). He also promoted foreign trade with Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the East Indies. Taiwan absorbed cultural influences from these contacts and became cosmopolitan (Hsieh, 1964).

After Cheng's and his son's deaths, Taiwan experienced internal dissension and unrest. The Manchu government took advantage of the situation and destroyed the Cheng government's fleet, ending twenty-two years of Cheng family rule. From 1683 to 1866, Taiwan was ruled by China. Throughout most of this time, it was considered a part of Fukein Province. In 1886, the Ch'ing dynasty made Taiwan a province. Chinese rule became more efficient and enlightened (Copper, 1990).

Part of the Japanese Empire

In 1894, China and Japan were at war, a war China quickly lost, and China ceded Taiwan to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Taiwan became the part of the Japanese Empire.

Japanese colonial policy may be described as beneficial and progressive on the one hand, and discriminatory and predatory on the other (Copper, 1990). Tokyo's first objectives were to establish order and domestic tranquillity to promote economic development, which were seen as enhancing the power and image of Japan. Law and order were

established quickly by harsh means. Tribunals were used rather than civil courts. These methods were to keep order and to prevent any independence movements.

In the economic realm, Japan's first priority was to increase Taiwan agricultural productivity. During the years of Japanese rule, Taiwan was higher than any province of China in food production. Japan also built roads, railroads, and communication systems. All helped to increase Taiwan's foreign and domestic commerce. Although Taiwan experienced impressive economic growth, much of it served the colonial power. Before World War II, 90 percent of Taiwan's exports went to Japan. For Japan, Taiwan's economic growth was proof positive of Japan's enlightened colonial policies. For Taiwan, the progress bore the chains of dependency (Copper, 1990).

The Republic of China

During World War II, the stated policy of the United States and its allies was that Japan could not keep its empire, including Taiwan. At the Cairo Conference in 1941, the United States reached an agreement with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek providing that Taiwan and other territories stolen by Japan would be returned after the war. With Taiwan as part of the surrender terms, the Japanese left Taiwan in the fall of 1945. In early October 1945, Nationalist Chinese authorities assumed political control over Taiwan. Taiwan officially became a part of the Republic of China.

In late 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's forces were defeated by the Communists on the mainland, and he and a large portion of his army and government retreated to Taiwan, where they hoped to counter-attack. In the 1950s, Chiang Kai-shek launched various reforms, the first important one being land reform. It was an outstanding success and became a model for other countries. Both land reform and economic development plans were overseen by U.S. aid advisers. Taiwan became a showcase of U.S. foreign aid (Copper, 1990).

In 1964, U.S. aid to Taiwan stopped. At the same time, Taiwan's economy soared, climbing to become the world's fastest-growing economy. Economic development in Taiwan fostered social changes, including rapid growth of middle class, more openness, and more Western influence. Politics moved in the direction of democracy. In 1980, the Taiwan government allowed competitive elections at the national level. The first two-party election was held in 1986, when the newly formed Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) competed with the Nationalist Party. Younger and Western-educated leaders were also promoted to top positions. In 1987, martial law was abolished, and the political modernization was thus further consolidated (Copper, 1990).

Looking at Taiwan's society, one is led to predict that its consumer culture, cosmopolitanism, Westernization, and a growing middle class are lasting trends. Taiwan will continue to be influenced by Western countries and Japan, and changes will continue to move in the direction of pluralism, capitalism, and democracy (Copper, 1990).

Traditional Chinese Cultural Values and Their Changing Shapes in Taiwan

For the most part, Taiwan's culture has Chinese origins brought by immigrants from China, and reflects to a considerable degree regional variations as well as the national culture in China. Western influence impacted Taiwan more than China because of early missionary activities and a brief colonial period. The Japanese also affected Taiwan's culture, mostly through the Japanese language and educational system imposed on Taiwan (Hsiung, 1981).

After the restoration of political control to the Republic of China in 1945, Chinese influence increased and a Chinese cultural revival began (Copper, 1990). To some extent culture was used for social and political control by the government. Although culture was manipulated by the government, Western ideas were never suppressed. Western words and concepts became part of the language spoken in Taiwan. In fact, Taiwan has been increasingly drawn into the influence of Western culture, especially American, due to the growing contact with the West through trade and other interaction (Hsu, 1981). The expansion of the influence of the public media is also accelerating. Many Chinese in Taiwan find themselves attracted by Western culture, and tend to conform with it.

Besides Westernization, industrialization and urbanization also play important roles in social and cultural changes. Growth in industry accompanied by rapid economic development has created the material culture, and the sudden urbanization has caused social alienation, a

rising crime rate, and the weakening of the family. In his New Year's Day address to the nation in 1990, current president Lee Teng-hui made his call for a return to traditional Chinese culture. What he called social unrest was due to an excessive emphasis on modernization. He pointed out that only if Taiwan returns to traditional Chinese culture by promoting the values advocated by ancient Chinese sages, can the social problems be solved (*China Post Editorial Comments 2*, 1991).

It has been known that what makes Chinese cultural values different from those in Western countries is Confucian culture. After almost two thousand years of immersion in Confucian values and codes of behavior, the Chinese have developed an identifiable cluster of cultural values that dominates their social and cultural life (Smith, 1991). "Every Chinese, educated or illiterate, growing up on the Analects as a text to be studied or as the stuff of daily speech, has felt perhaps as if he lived with Confucius peering over his shoulder." (Mote, 1971, as cited in Smith, 1991; p. 33).

The core of the Confucian value system is a set of hierarchical relationships between people. This hierarchy is traditionally applied to the workplace, to politics, as well as to the family (Chaffee & Chu, 1992). In the workplace, the senior members exercise their prerogatives over the junior members, and the younger generation is expected to show respect to their elders. The children in families, no matter how old, are required to remain loyal to their parents. In society at large, it is required that individuals serve others before themselves. Confucius believes that a harmonious social system can be attained only if

everyone adapts to these complex requirements. The result was a group-dominated society, with the group cemented by the hierarchical relationships among the members. Aggressively individualistic and eccentric behaviors are not exhibited in Confucian culture.

At the level of government, these values helped to produce a system that was based on loyalty and submissiveness. Fairbank (1967) suggested that the relationship the Chinese have with nature also has a fundamental influence on political values. The Chinese believe human behavior is strongly influenced by the spirit of land, wind, and water. In this sense, human life is just one part of nature. If people behave improperly, the harmony between life and nature would be destroyed, and nature would seek revenge on humankind. This could only be prevented by the ruler, who, as the son of Heaven, stood between Heaven and people and maintained the harmony between people and nature. Only by acting appropriately along the lines set by Confucian scholars could the ruler ensure that nature would not seek revenge on mankind.

In addition to the hierarchical relationship between people, Confucian culture also embodies the values such as veneration of learning and devotion to the scholarly tradition. Frugality, diligence, and loyalty are considered virtues that every one in society should pursue (Chafee & Chu, 1992). From Confucian values and codes of behavior, five themes can be drawn as typical characteristics of the Chinese personality, as shown in Table 1. In comparison to Westerners, Chinese

tend to be emotionally more reserved, introverted, and socially overcautious (Wu & Tseng, 1985).

However, Chinese values have been challenged by modernization in Taiwan, as stated previously in the study. According to a longitudinal study from 1969 to 1976, modernization has changed the mentality and behavior of Chinese people in Taiwan (Yang, 1976). The changes are as follows:

Table 1. The dominant characteristics of the Chinese personality and social relationships

-
1. An overriding sense of duty and responsibility to the family as the fundamental unit of society
 2. The development and maintenance of very close bonds between parents and their children
 3. The overwhelming importance of other people and relationships within the social network, as opposed to individualism
 4. The ability to control or hide emotions and feelings, and the cultivation of high moral standards
 5. A strong, almost fanatical emphasis on education and achievement for the children
-

Source: G. C. Chu, 1985, "The Emergence of the New Chinese Culture," pp. 15-28 in Tseng Wen-Shing and D. Y. H. Wu (Eds.), *Chinese Culture and Mental Health* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press), pp. 16-17.

1. Motivation for achievement
2. Concept of "harnessing nature"
3. Sense of "deciding one's own fate"
4. Concept of stressing the importance of the present and the future
5. Adaptability to changes and reforms
6. Emphasis on egalitarian attitudes as opposed to authoritarianism
7. Needs for independence and self-reliance
8. Emphasis on equality in human relations
9. Tolerance of different opinions and creeds (p. 270)

In summary, the Chinese people in Taiwan have experienced some prominent changes in cultural values caused by economic development, political reforms, and urbanization. The hierarchical relationship between people has declined since the function of family has been weakened, and an egalitarian attitude has taken the place of never questioning hierarchical authority. People are becoming more independent. Although frugality is still held in high esteem, people are becoming more materialistic than ever before. As predicted, the Chinese people in Taiwan have possessed fewer their original characteristics, and have headed toward the emergence of a new "world man" (Yang, 1976, p. 269).

CHAPTER III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter briefly examines research relevant to advertising appeals. The first section reviews the studies conducted based on cross-cultural analysis of advertising content. In order to detect cultural differences between the East and West, advertising content from Asian countries and those from America were compared and analyzed in all studies except the last research reported in this section by Ramaprasad and Hasegawa (1990). Though their study is not a cross-cultural analysis, it is included because it examined the advertising appeals in Japanese television commercials which is related to the present study.

Although only a few relevant studies concerning Taiwanese advertising can be found in the literature, the four studies in the second section including a feature report, provide a sketch of Taiwanese advertising in terms of creative styles, strategies, and advertising appeals.

Cross-cultural Analysis of Advertising Appeals

In a study of cross-cultural research and standardized vs. non-standardized global advertising, Marquez (1979) analyzed and compared the cultural contents of advertisements from three countries, the United States, the Philippines, and Thailand. The basic question the study sought to answer was whether advertising could be used interchangeably in these countries.

A total of 2,309 advertisements were analyzed. Of this number, 414 were from the United States, 1,027 from the Philippines, and 918 from Thailand. Eight cultural parameters, derived from conventional variables used in sociology and anthropology for studying culture, were used as the basis for analyzing the cultural contents of advertisements. These parameters were male-female roles, the concept of masculinity and femininity, personality type, family type, social class, ethnocentrism, and the concepts of time and space. A ninth parameter, racial image, was included to identify the races of the models shown in the advertisement.

The findings showed that these advertisements from the three countries portrayed aspects of culture in a strikingly similar manner. The contents show that men and women generally have traditional roles, that the men are more superior than the women, that both are either from the middle or upper class, and that, racially, they are likely to be Caucasian. Moreover, they all belong to a nuclear family, are individualistic in their outlook, and prefer to do things quickly and efficiently. They also appear to have a liking for bigness, roominess, and spaciousness in their surroundings, and are inclined to believe that their country's products are superior to those from abroad. The findings from this study may lead to a generalization that an international advertiser can decide whether to use standardized or non-standardized global advertising by comparing the cultural contents of advertising in his/her home country with the advertising in the target countries.

On the other hand, Marquez discussed why the Philippines and Thailand reflected Western culture rather than their indigenous cultures. The explanation probably is that the Philippines was an American commonwealth for half a century, and Thailand has always welcomed the influence of Western institutions, which means that the two countries have adapted to Western culture superficially, but continue to function in the context of their own indigenous cultures. Therefore, the case of the Philippines and Thailand may not be typical and international advertisers should be wary about using the findings as the sole basis for deciding between standardized and non-standardized global advertising.

Finally, Marquez proposed two steps for international advertisers in deciding whether to use standardized or non-standardized global advertising in a particular country. The first step would be to determine whether the cultural variables used in his home-country advertising are identical to those used in the advertising of the target country, and this calls for comparing the cultural contents of advertising in the two countries. The second step would be to determine whether the cultural variables used in the advertising of the target country reflect its indigenous culture. By going through these two steps, the advertisers may map out which advertising approaches can be applied in the target country.

Individualism, which is considered a cardinal Western value, always contrasts to most non-Western cultures, valuing loyalty to a group over individual accomplishments. An analysis looking at how

advertising reflects culture was conducted by Frith and Sengupta (1991) by contrasting the expression of individualism in advertisements from three diverse nations: the United States, Great Britain, and India. The authors argue that debate over standardized versus specialized advertising campaigns has been fueled by the lack of studying how culture is reflected in advertising. In order to expand on previous work and to explore how cultural values become manifest in advertising, Frith and Sengupta hypothesized that American advertisements would feature single individuals more frequently than would British ads and that Indian advertisements would more often tend to feature people in a group context.

A total of 374 advertisements from weekly general-interest magazines from the three countries was analyzed. The findings of the study suggested that there were significant differences in the use of single individuals in British, American, and Indian advertising. The use of single individuals is most pronounced in advertisements from the United States, and least pronounced in India. This finding is in line with anthropological and sociological understanding of the contrasts between Western/individualistic and Eastern/collective cultures.

In order to examine whether a country's culture is reflected in advertisements, thus requiring advertisers to adapt special messages for foreign audiences, and whether commercial messages for specific product categories are similar among various countries, Mueller (1987) proposed a content analysis scheme to analyze Japanese and American advertisements and determine the existence or absence of advertising

appeals in which cultural values, norms and characteristics are embedded. Two categories of advertising appeals were developed for this study: (1) traditional appeals, and (2) modern and Westernized appeals. Five subcategories: (1) group consensus, (2) soft-sell, (3) veneration of elderly and traditional, (4) status, and (5) oneness with nature appeals were included in the main category of traditional appeals. The other five subcategories: (1) individual and independence, (2) hard-sell, (3) youth and modernity, (4) product merit, and (5) manipulation of nature appeals are under the category of modern and Westernized appeals. The author argued if advertising reflected cultural values and norms, then traditional appeals would be used.

In order to understand the relationships between specific product categories and the utilization of different advertising appeals, Mueller ranged the degree of product involvement in the advertisements from low to high. Low involvement products tend to be package goods of low price which are purchased frequently. High involvement goods are those which tend to be higher in price, purchased relatively infrequently, and that require more information-searching by the consumers. The medium-involvement goods are those in mid-price range and require moderate information-searching. Three product categories were selected to represent the goods in each level of involvement. Products selected to represent the high-involvement category were automobiles, kitchen appliances, and jewelry. Low-involvement products included hair-care products, wine, and food products. The third category of medium level of product involvement

was represented by watches, television sets and cameras (Mueller, 1987).

Mueller found that among the ten appeals, regardless of the product involvement, product merit appeals were the most popular ones in the advertisements from two countries. However, the use of the appeals was considerably higher in American advertising, especially in the advertisements which promoted the high involvement products. The traditional Japanese advertising of soft-sell, elderly and traditional, and status, were more commonly used than its American counterparts. Hard-sell themes were a rarity in Japan. Interestingly, a greater use of individual and independence appeals was found in Japanese advertising than American advertisements, which was considered an indication of Western influence.

For the high involvement products, the most and second most commonly used appeals in Japanese advertisements were status appeals and individual-independence appeals, respectively. In American advertising, the most popular appeals were product merit for high involvement products, followed by status appeals, and hard-sell appeals. The difference between the East and West in promotion of these high involvement products is significant. The status appeals and individuality appeals have been found to be more pleasing to Japanese consumers. The more the advertisements please the Japanese consumers, the more likely it is to move the product. Unlike the Japanese consumers, American consumers tend to relate the higher priced items with the information concerning the product characteristics,

comparison, and recommendations, than with image and entertainment. In the selling of medium involvement products, U.S. advertisers rely on product merit appeals for the majority of their advertisements, while Japanese tend to use a variety of appeal types. For products in low level of involvement, the Japanese depend on product merit, traditional, and elderly appeals. U.S. campaigns of these products rely predominantly on product merit appeals.

Based on the findings, Mueller concluded that although the advertisements in two countries were similar in many ways, some degree of sensitivity to the cultural uniqueness of the particular market was still exhibited. The Japanese long-held value of indirect, implicit, and non-verbal communication forms has led to a greater use of soft-sell appeals in Japanese advertising than U.S. advertising. The custom of showing respect for what has gone before, results in a frequent utilization of veneration of the elderly traditional appeals in Eastern advertisements. Thus, Mueller's primary thesis that advertising tends to reflect the prevailing values of the particular culture, was supported.

However, the secondary hypothesis that the majority of Japanese would use traditional appeals (group consensus, soft-sell, veneration of elderly and traditional, status, oneness with nature) was not entirely substantiated. It has been shown that the group consensus appeals were rare in Japanese advertisements. Instead, individuality and independence appeals were used in many Japanese advertisements. Mueller argued that advertising reflects cultural values only as it is profitable to do so. Japanese advertisers have found it is more lucrative

to focus on the individual. If the advertisers continue to shape cultures in order to fit their needs, a world-class consumer will be developed. More universal themes such as product merit and status will be seen across cultures (Mueller, 1987).

Later, Mueller (1990) conducted another exploratory study to examine Western advertising styles in Japan, and whether their level of Westernization has increased or decreased. The argument was that if Western models and celebrities; American settings and artifacts; Western-oriented advertising appeals; and English words, are commonly used in Japanese advertising, then it may be realistic for American advertisers to standardize their advertising messages.

A sample of 202 advertisements from one news magazine and one women's magazine in Japan from 1978 and 1988 were selected and analyzed. All advertisements were coded for types of appeals which were the same categories as Mueller's last study. For the purpose of discussion, only the use of soft-sell, hard-sell, and product merit was addressed. Advertisements were then coded to reflect the use of Caucasian models and celebrities, and English words. Finally, coders were asked to determine whether American artifacts and settings were employed in the advertisements.

The results showed an increase in the use of at least one nontranslated English word in advertisements, from 77.4 percent of the advertisements in 1978, to 84.3 percent by 1988. Though the increase was not statistically significant, it did suggest that non-translated English words are common in Japanese advertising. Western celebrities were

found in less than one percent of the advertising in Japan, while the use of Caucasian models was somewhat more common—slightly more than one advertisement in ten contained a Caucasian model—and a significant increase was found from 1978 to 1988. Western settings and artifacts were found a rarity in Japanese advertisements in both selected years. The usage of Eastern settings was also rare in Japanese advertising, while Eastern artifacts were more commonly employed.

While the increasing use of English words and Western models suggests that Japanese advertising has become more Western, the use of advertising appeals indicate that more Japanese appeals were used than Western appeals. Soft-sell was the most common appeal in Japanese advertising. The Western appeal of product merit was found in almost half of the advertisements in 1978, but decreased to 40 percent 10 years later. The hard-sell appeals were rarely found in Japanese advertising. Product type was related to the type of appeal used. Among the three types of appeals, soft-sell appeals were most likely to be used for low involvement products. Product merit appeals were common for all product categories, while hard-sell appeals were most popular for high involvement products.

The conclusion suggested that Japanese advertising is still far from being Westernized. In fact, there are indications that it may be becoming increasingly Japanese. The results may serve as a warning for the advertisers who too eagerly adopt the concept of standardized advertising.

Hong, Murderrisoglu, and Zinkhan (1987) also argue that the cultural aspect is particularly important in advertising communications, since communication is so closely tied to cultural norms. A consumer who is exposed to a specific culture becomes committed to that culture's style of thinking and feeling; attitudes and even processes of perception are culturally influenced. Consequently, promotional communications are developed to meet a particular society's cultural norms. In order to investigate advertising expression across cultures, American and Japanese print ads were analyzed. The degree of emotional appeals, informativeness, and comparativeness of advertising were the dimensions studied.

Emotional appeals in an advertisement are "the extent to which advertising relies on building affective or subjective impressions of the intangible aspects of a product" (p. 56). Informativeness of advertising is the extent to which such cues of product-related information are provided to allow the consumer to make intelligent choices among various brands. Comparative advertising refers to a communication pattern where two or more products are compared in terms of product characteristics. Personal and non-personal products were selected product categories for the study because it is possible (within these product categories) to prepare an advertisement with rational appeals as well as one with a lot of emotions.

The findings generally supported the notion that two cultures are producing different advertising content and expressions. As expected, Japanese advertisements were assessed as more emotionally oriented

than their American counterparts regardless of the product type. Japanese advertising appeals resorted to image building, emotional eliciting, and status symbol, while American advertising tried to persuade consumers by directly presenting information, facts and evidence related to product merit, and purchase reasons. Also as expected, Japanese magazines were found to contain fewer comparative advertisements than those investigated in American magazines. The tendency also held across two product categories. The fact that Japanese advertisements are not comparative, however, does not mean that comparative advertising is prohibited in Japan. The Advertising Code says only: "Let us avoid slandering, defaming, and attacking others" (p. 60). However, when the social values of avoiding frontal competition are coupled with this code, comparative advertising practice seems to be self-restrained.

Contrary to expectations, American advertisements were not found to be more informative than Japanese advertisements. One explanation may be the relatively large amount of information typically contained in magazine advertisements. Another possible reason is that the Japanese ads examined for the research generally contained longer copy than their American counterparts. This longer copy resulted in more informational cues.

Another study concerning the use of advertising appeals and the reflection of Western influence was conducted by analyzing 410 prime time television commercials from four Japanese television stations (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1990). The findings of the study shows that

more commercials used emotional appeals than informational appeals at a significant level in Japanese commercials. No significant association existed between type of appeal and levels of product involvement. The products in high, middle, and low level of involvement were likely to employ emotional appeals more than informational appeals, especially for low involvement products.

This finding was inconsistent with the previous studies which indicated that high involvement products tend to use informational appeals in order to let consumers learn about the product. The result in this study is considered as a consequence of the particular behavior of Japanese consumers. It has been suggested that the Japanese consumers do not follow the rational model, "learn-feel-do", which is proposed in consumer behavior. Instead, the Japanese follow a "feel-do-learn" model where how they feel about the product is more important than what they know about the product in their purchase decision. As a result, Japanese television commercials adopt an emotional strategy for all types of product. The assumption is that the consumer will transfer the good feeling created in and through the commercial to the product.

Concerning the presence of Western influence in Japanese commercials, about 18 percent of the commercials that used music employed Western music. English was spoken in 77.8 percent of the commercials, and written English was used in 70.2 percent of the commercials. This finding coincides with Mueller's finding that English words are used prevalently in Japanese advertising. The utilization of Western music was related to the usage of spoken and written English.

The commercials that used Western music tended to use spoken English. Product involvement level was also related to spoken English with more high involvement product commercials using spoken English. The Japanese attach attribution such as value, modernism, and newness with the use of Western symbols.

In keeping the thinking that Western association enhance the product image, Japanese commercials also used Western models frequently. It was concluded that Western influence was evident, but this influence manifests itself more in the commercials' trapping than in strategy.

Related Studies of Taiwanese Advertising

The creative style of Taiwanese advertising can be analyzed according to the following stages of the development of advertising industry in Taiwan (Lee & Leu, 1992): beginning stage (1950s), intermediate stage (1960s), developed stage (1970s), international stage (1980s), and mature stage (1990s).

The major media at the beginning stage in the 1950s were newspapers and radio, and advertising expenditures were low at that time. There were no full-service advertising agencies available and the quality of advertising was poor. At the intermediate stage (1960s), the living standard was low and most consumption remained in the necessity goods category. Therefore, informational advertising became the dominating style in this period. The advertising message focused

mainly on informing consumers of what the products were and where they were available.

Taiwan's economy grew dramatically during the 1970s. More new products and product categories were introduced to the consumers. Meanwhile, the consumers became more well-educated and demanded better quality advertising. The simplistic informative appeals was no longer sufficient. Instead, it had to be "articulate in word usage and presentation" (Lee & Leu, 1992, p. 13). Thus, persuasive advertising dominated this stage.

Since per capita income increased and more imported goods entered the market, the consumption of luxury goods increased greatly during 1980s. Emotional appeals were used frequently to promote non-necessity goods. In this stage, the creativity of advertising tended to be technology-oriented, story-based, simple message, and appealed to more specific targets. After experiencing double-digit annual growth for three decades, the advertising industry in Taiwan is predicted to move into the mature stage during the 1990s. The consumption is expected to be more quality-oriented. Thus, the advertising should be more sophisticated in terms of creativity styles (Lee & Leu, 1992).

It was indicated in a feature report that hard-sell strategy was not very effective for Taiwanese consumers (Yuan, 1993). According to the report, Taiwanese advertising on television or in magazines and newspapers in the early 1980s was reminiscent of U.S. advertisements in the 1950s. The advertising tended to use a direct sales pitch that was high on hype but low on creativity. By the end of 1980s, more effort

was spent on developing the product image and creating a mood became a major trend of Taiwanese advertising. Rather than focusing on durability or reasonable price of the product, many advertisements and commercials sought to make audiences associate the product with the images of friends, beauty, health, and fun.

Results of a longitudinal study of advertising appeals of newspapers advertisements from three Chinese societies—Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan—depict three distinct consumption and cultural values (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989). Though the three societies have a common ethnic heritage and use the same language, differences in levels of economic development, political ideology, and advertising philosophies would likely cause differences in values consumers enact with their purchase and the ways that advertisers choose to communicate with consumers. In each case, Hong Kong is the most vigorous and liberal with the PRC at the other extreme. Taiwan is considered to fall between the two extremes (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989).

Three key elements that may reflect a society's consumption characteristics—the nature of the product advertised, the consumption appeals, and the advertised benefits—were coded. It was found that the Hong Kong samples had the highest percentage of service advertisements, whereas the samples from Taiwan and the PRC were dominated by consumer durables. Among the ten advertising appeals (see Table 2), the PRC advertisements had the highest scores on the products' technological content, product performance, and performance

assurance. Hong Kong advertisements had the highest score of two appeals—hedonism and variety. Taiwan advertisements consistently fell between these two extremes.

Concerning the advertising themes and advertised product's benefit, the result showed the PRC advertisements used utilitarian benefits, and promised a better life. In contrast, Hong Kong advertisements used luxury, Western life-style, and promised an easier life. A closer examination of the trends in advertising appeals suggested that Hong Kong and Taiwan advertisements tend to converge over time.

Table 2. Definitions of consumption appeals

Consumption appeals	Component items
Technology	Technological content of product
Modernity	Modern, future, new
Hedonism	Pretty, luxury, prestige, have fun
Product performance	High quality, performance
Performance assurance	Certified, widely accepted
Ingredients	Product ingredients
Distribution	Service availability, list of shop
Product variety	Variety
Value of purchase	Price, economy, practical
Image	company history, image

Source: D. K. Tse, R. W. Belk, and N. Zhou, 1989, "Becoming a Consumer Society: A Longitudinal and Cross-Cultural Content Analysis of Print Ads from Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(1), pp. 457-72.

Fueled by increasing consumption power, advertising appeals in Taiwan showed a significant transition from utilitarian values to more hedonistic desires. China, presumably anchored by an anti-materialism political ideology, seemed to adopt a different trend. Product performance and product assurance were the dominating appeals and the result showed no indication of convergence toward either Hong Kong or Taiwan.

In a comparative analysis of French, Taiwanese, and U.S. television commercials, the Taiwanese sample was found more likely to make unrealistic promises about the product than the samples from the other two countries in terms of creative strategy (Zandpour, Chang, & Catalano, 1992). Unlike their U.S. counterparts which keep the brand visible, communicating in a friendly conversational tone with the suggestion of loyalty and trustworthiness, Taiwanese commercials tended to provide a subtle presentation linking the product to a place, event, person, or symbol with minimal copy, implicit sales pitch, and less frequent featuring of the product.

In terms of information content of television commercials, the result showed that U.S. commercials were more likely to feature nutritional and safety aspects of the product. French commercials focused on qualities such as engineering, workmanship, and product components, often featuring new ideas and their advantages. Commercials from Taiwan tended to deal with product availability and special offers. Longer commercials tended to provide more information

regardless of country and product. The result also showed a sharp contrast between U.S. and French and Taiwanese advertising forms. U.S. commercials were more likely to directly address the audience while French and Taiwanese commercials dramas unfolded without any awareness of the viewers.

It was concluded that U.S. commercials generally address specific consumer personal needs and problems. They provide data-based arguments together with a clear explanation of why the consumers should buy the product in question. French commercials are more likely to be dramatic, humorous, and entertaining. They seldom use a person to lecture and avoid reasoning or argument in advertising. Taiwanese commercials generally link the product to the consumer's traditional Chinese values such as respect for authority and family relation. They tend to provide subtle presentations through symbols and drama related to family events.

Research Questions

Based on the above review of literature, the following research questions are raised:

- (1) What advertising appeals tend to be used more in Taiwanese television commercials?
- (2) Is there any significant difference in utilization of advertising appeals across product categories?

(3) If yes, what advertising appeals tend to be used more for a specific product than others?

(4) Are levels of product involvement related to the utilization of different advertising appeals in Taiwanese television commercials?

(5) If yes, what advertising appeals are likely to be used for high-involvement products?

(6) If yes, what advertising appeals are likely to be used for low-involvement products?

(7) What cultural values are reflected through the advertising appeals in Taiwanese television commercials—traditional Chinese or Western cultural values?

It is to be noted that this study does not intend to test any hypotheses. The study is done to establish the contours of the cultural values reflected in Taiwanese television advertising.

CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis

Since the study was to examine the content of Taiwanese television commercials, content analysis was the most appropriate research method to employ. Content analysis is one of the most commonly used research techniques in the mass communication field because data on media are readily accessible. Researchers not only can make copies from the printed media, but also can make audio and video tapes from the broadcast media (Singletary & Stone, 1988, as cited in Potibut, 1992).

There are several definitions of content analysis in the mass communication field. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." According to Stempel (1989),

Objectivity is achieved by having the categories of analysis defined so precisely that different persons can apply them to the same content and get the same results, Systematic description means that a set procedure is applied in the same way to all the content being analyzed, and categories are set up so that all relevant content is analyzed (p. 125)

The meaning of quantitative description is the recording of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various defined types of content occur. Finally, manifest content means "the content must be coded as it appears rather than as the content analyst feels it is

intended" (p. 126). The purpose of using content analysis is to "provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts, and a practical guide to action" (Krippendorff, 1980).

Unit of Analysis

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1987), the unit of analysis is the most meaningful but smallest element of a content analysis. In this study, the unit of analysis is a single television commercial immediately before and after prime-time news. Commercials for temporary products such as movies and upcoming programs were not considered.

Sampling

This research employed a multi-stage random sampling method. Two sets of commercials (weekday and weekend) were stratified to obtain representative samples from the population. National prime-time news TV commercials broadcast via three national networks in Taiwan: TTV, CTV, and CTS during five weeks were selected. In order to ensure a balanced distribution in the sampling period, a composite week and channel were constructed. The commercials were videotaped as following: TTV on Monday of the first week, CTV on Tuesday of the second week and CTS on Wednesday of the third week. The channels for the fourth and fifth weeks were selected randomly from the three networks (see Table 3).

Weekend commercials were sampled in the same manner as shown in Table 4. Those broadcast via TTV were taped on the first weekend, CTV on the second weekend, CTS on the third weekend, TTV on the fourth weekend, and CTS on the fifth weekend respectively. All commercials were edited and reruns were excluded from the samples. A total of 238 commercials were obtained.

Table 3. The sampling days of weekday commercials

Week	Date	Day	Channel
1	May 10, 1993	Monday	TTV
2	May 18, 1993	Tuesday	CTV
3	May 26, 1993	Wednesday	CTS
4	June 3, 1993	Thursday	TTV
5	June 11, 1993	Friday	CTS

Table 4. The sampling days of weekend commercials

Week	Date	Channel
1	May 15, 16, 1993	TTV
2	May 22, 23, 1993	CTV
3	May 29, 30, 1993	CTS
4	June 5, 6, 1993	TTV
5	June 12, 13, 1993	CTS

Variables and Category Construction

The independent and dependent variables in this study are both at nominal level. Independent variables, by definition, are variables that cause or have some effects on dependent variables and vary by research situations (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). The independent variable used to answer the research questions are as follows:

1. Level of product involvement

The consumer behavior concept of involvement was introduced in this study to find out the variance in utilization of advertising appeals between high-involvement product and low-involvement product. For this study, involvement is considered to be a function of the attributes of a product (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1990). The more complex the product in terms of use and other value, the greater the involvement.

The categories include:

(1) High involvement: Products that are high in price and purchased relatively infrequently, and that require some pertinent information-searching by the consumer.

(2) Low involvement: Products that tend to be low in price and are purchased frequently by the consumer.

2. Product Category

Previous studies reveal that advertising appeals vary from one product category to another. This variable is thus used to answer the question whether there is any difference in utilization of advertising appeals across all product categories. The categories used in this study

were adapted from Resnik and Stern's study (1977). Modification was made to obtain more exhausted and mutually exclusive subcategories.

The categories include:

- (1) Food and beverages: Food products including seasoning, ingredients; candies; restaurants; and beverages.
- (2) Personal care: Both expensive and inexpensive personal care products, including cosmetics and drugs.
- (3) Furniture, appliances, and electronics
- (4) Household items, cleansers, and laundry: The items for household use and decoration, and products for laundry and cleaning purposes.
- (5) Transportation and car products: Products including automobiles, motorcycles, and car care products.
- (6) Institutions: Institutional public relations and services.
- (7) Hobbies, toys, and recreation
- (8) Clothing

Advertising appeals

In this study, advertising appeal is the only dependent variable. An advertising appeal is defined as any message designed to motivate consumers to purchase. Differing appeals are expected to be used with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on product categories and the level of product involvement.

Two main categories of advertising appeals, traditional appeals, and modern and Westernized appeals, were developed for this study based on Mueller's study (1987) and the literature review of traditional

Chinese cultural values. Five subcategories were included in each main category.

(1) Traditional Appeals: If traditional Chinese culture is reflected, one would expect to find the following traditional appeals.

A. **Group Consensus Appeals**: The individual in relation to others, typically the reference group, is the emphasis of the appeal. The individual in the commercial is depicted as an integral part of the group. References may be made to significant others. Pressure is on consensus and conformity to the group.

B. **Soft-sell Appeals**: Mood and atmosphere are conveyed through a beautiful scene or the development of an emotional story or verse. Human emotional sentiments such as sadness and happiness are emphasized. The music in the commercial may play an important part in building the mood and atmosphere. The tone tends to be low key and the communication style tends to be more suggestive than direct.

C. **Veneration of Elderly and Traditional Appeals**: Wisdom, knowledge, and experience of the elderly and the veneration which is traditional, are stressed. Older group members are depicted being asked for advice, opinions and recommendations. Models in such commercials tend to be older.

D. **Status Appeals**: Commercials suggest that the use of a particular product will improve some inherent quality of the user in the eyes of others. Position and rank within the context of the society are stressed. Celebrity tends to be the model of the commercial. This category also

includes foreign status appeals: use of foreign words, phrases, models and foreign celebrity endorsements.

F. Oneness with Nature Appeals: The emphasis is on the goodness and beauty of nature in relationship with humankind. Interaction and beauty of humankind and nature are stressed. The focus is on the back-to-nature theme.

(2) Modern and Westernized Appeals: If advertising themes are utilized as tools in the development of a global consumer culture, one would expect to find the following modern and Westernized appeals.

A. Individual and Independence Appeals: Emphasis is on the individual as being distinct and unlike others. Individuals are depicted as standing out in a crowd or they are encouraged to have the ability to be self-sufficient. The terms such as nonconformity, originality, and uniqueness are common. Dependency is down-played in the commercial.

B. Hard-sell Appeals: Brand name and product recommendations are stressed based on sales orientation. The product's advantages and performance are described with slogans instead of being described in details. This appeal includes statements such as "number one," "leader," and "your best choice."

C. Youth and Modernity Appeals: Emphasis is on modernity and deification of the younger generation. The models tend to be younger. Contemporariness and youthful benefits of the products are stressed in the commercial.

D. Product Merit Appeals: Focus is on the product and its characteristics. Some aspects or features of the product is described in

depth, often through narration and motion picture. The focus tends to be on facts and information. The benefit to the consumer is implied.

E. Manipulation of Nature Appeals: The theme here is humankind triumphing over the elements of nature. Humankind's superiority over nature is reflected as an emphasis on technological achievement.

The subcategories under the advertising appeals are shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Summary of advertising appeals

Traditional Appeals	Group Consensus Appeals
	Soft-sell Appeals
	Veneration/Elderly Tradition Appeals
	Status Appeals
	Oneness with Nature Appeals
Modern and Westernized Appeals	Individual and Independence Appeals
	Hard-sell Appeals
	Youth and Modernity Appeals
	Product Merit Appeals
	Manipulation of Nature Appeals

Reliability

In order to ensure the reliability of the categorization system, an intercoder reliability test was conducted before the actual coding began. Intercoder reliability is the level of agreement among several coders processing the same communication material. It is the degree of consistency between coders applying the same set of categories to the same content. As a result, the more precise the categories are, the higher the intercoder reliability should be (Kassarjian, 1977).

Two invited coders participated in the reliability test in August 1993. Both of them are Taiwanese graduate students who have studied at Iowa State University more than one year. The author was the third coder. All coders were given a coding sheet and a code book of definitions for level of product involvement, product categories, and ten advertising appeals. After they read the definitions, the author explained how to make coding decisions with concrete examples.

Each commercial was coded for classification by the dominant appeal type. In determining the classification, the auditory and visual expressions in each commercial were examined using the operational definitions of the appeals in order to draw out a single dominant appeal. Following Zandpour, Chang, and Catalano (1992), coders were instructed to view the commercials one at a time and to review the coding definitions after seeing each commercial, but before making their final coding determinations. The coders were allowed to repeat the viewing to complete their coding.

All coders conducted a trial run of coding by actually coding 40 commercials out of the total 238 samples. The remaining 198 commercials were coded by the three coders separately for the reliability test. To calculate a percentage of agreement, Holsti's (1969) coefficient formula was applied:

$$\text{Intercoder agreement} = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

M: Total agreement amount of coding decisions

N1 and N2: Total amount of coding decisions made (number of commercials x number of coding decisions)

The intercoder reliability for this study was calculated as following:

$$\text{Coder 1 \& Coder 2} = 2M/(N+N) = 2 \times 567/(594+594) = 95.5\%$$

$$\text{Coder 2 \& Coder 3} = 2M/(N+N) = 2 \times 560/(594+594) = 94.3\%$$

$$\text{Coder 1 \& Coder 3} = 2M/(N+N) = 2 \times 561/(594+594) = 94.4\%$$

$$N: \text{No. of commercials} \times \text{No. of coding decisions} = 198 \times 3 = 594$$

The result showed a 95.5 percent agreement between coder 1 and coder 2, a 94.3% agreement between coder 2 and coder 3, and a 94.4 percent agreement between coder 1 and coder 3. The degree of agreement regarding specific variables is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of intercoder reliability

	Product Involvement	Product Category	Types of Appeals
Coder 1 & Coder 2	98.9%	95.5%	91.9%
Coder 2 & Coder 3	99.5%	93.9%	89.4%
Coder 1 & Coder 3	98.5%	95.9%	88.9%

The composite reliability coefficient was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Coefficient} = \frac{N(\text{average inter-judge agreement})}{1 + [(N-1) (\text{average inter-judge agreement})]}$$

N: The number of judges

The average inter-judge agreement was computed as:

$$(95.5\% + 94.3\% + 94.4\%)/3 = 94.7\%$$

$$\text{Coefficient} = 3(94.7\%)/1 + [(3-1)94.7\%] = 98.1\%$$

As far as the acceptable level of intercoder reliability is concerned, Berelson (1952) claimed that the range between 66 and 95 percent, with a concentration at about 90 percent, is quite satisfactory. According to Stemple (1981), content analysts would like to see the minimum level above 90 percent. The result shows the coefficient of the intercoder

reliability (98.1 percent) is fairly satisfactory. Thus, the developed categorization system was accepted.

Data Analysis

Frequency and contingency tables were developed to show the overall picture of the results. The methods are considered appropriate since the data are measured primarily on the nominal level. Frequency initially reveals the distribution of the data. A contingency table was employed to make a comparison between two variables. All results were evaluated at a significance level of 0.05.

CHAPTER V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Description of the sample

The length of the commercials studied ranged from 5 to 60 seconds. The twenty-second commercials made up the greatest proportion (28.6 percent) in the sample, followed by 30 seconds (23.5 percent), 15 seconds (18.5 percent), and 10 seconds (18.4 percent). The average length of the sample was 21 seconds. The average length of commercials varied across ten advertising appeals (see Table 7).

Table 7. Average length of commercials by advertising appeals

Types of appeals	No. of commercials	Average length (sec.)
Group Consensus	1	30
Soft-sell	37	24
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional Status	2	25
Oneness with Nature	23	26
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	2	22
Youth and Modernity	57	14
Product Merit	42	21
Manipulation of Nature	72	22
	2	40

The average length of those appeals with frequency of two commercials or fewer were excluded from the discussion to avoid a biased result. The commercials using status appeals were the longest whose length was 26 seconds, closely followed by soft-sell appeals. The shortest commercials were those employing hard-sell appeals which had an average length of only 14 seconds.

There were more commercials for low involvement products (53 percent) in this study while compared with high involvement products (47 percent). Regarding the product category (see Table 8), the most often advertised product categories were food and beverage (33.2 percent), followed by personal care (15.5 percent), and household, cleaners, and laundry (14.7 percent). The product categories were distributed somewhat evenly.

Table 8. Distribution of commercials by product category

Product category	Frequency	
	(N = 238)	(%)
Food, beverages	79	33.2
Personal care	37	15.5
Furniture, appliances, electronics	25	10.5
Household items, cleaners, laundry	35	14.7
Transportation, car products	29	12.2
Institutions	19	7.9
Hobbies, toys, recreation	9	3.8
Clothing	5	2.1

Of the 238 commercials, about 61 percent of them used music. It was unknown whether the music was Western due to the difficulty to distinguish the originality of the music. Unlike the frequent usage of English language in Japanese advertising (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1990; Mueller, 1992), only 33 percent of the commercials used written English, while English language was spoken in only 28 percent of the sample. Among them, approximately 23 percent of the commercials used both spoken and written English. In another words, 38 percent of Taiwanese commercials contained either spoken or written English. Caucasian models were not shown frequently—only 13 percent of the commercials contained at least one Caucasian male or female.

General usage of advertising appeals

In looking at the overall usage of the types of advertising appeals in Taiwanese television commercials, considering all product types and two levels of product involvement, some interesting trends can be seen (see Table 9).

The results show a clear distinction in usage of advertising appeals. For the total sample of 238, only 63 (26.5 percent) Taiwanese commercials used traditional appeals, while 175 (73.5 percent) commercials used modern and Westernized appeals. Product merit was the most frequently used appeal in the sample (30.3 percent), followed by hard-sell (23.9 percent), youth and modernity (17.7 percent), soft-sell (15.6 percent), and status (9.7 percent).

The top three appeals are all under the category of modern and Westernized appeals, which accounted for almost 72 percent of the total sample. The soft-sell and status appeals, the two most popular appeals under the category of traditional appeals, accounted for only 25.3 percent of the total sample. No commercials were found for the oneness with nature appeal. It is obvious that the results show the modern and Westernized appeals prevailed in the Taiwanese television commercials studied.

Table 9. Distribution of commercials by advertising appeals

Types of Appeals	Frequency (N=238)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	1	0.4
Soft-sell	37	15.6
Veneration of Elderly Tradition	2	0.8
Status	23	9.7
Oneness with Nature	0	0
Individual and Independence	2	0.8
Hard-sell	57	23.9
Youth and Modernity	42	17.7
Product Merit	72	30.3
Manipulation of Nature	2	0.8
Traditional	63	26.5
Modern	175	73.5

Some characteristics of the usage of each appeal can be summarized as follows:

Group Consensus Appeals The assumption that the traditional Chinese reverence of the group over the individual would be reflected in the commercials was not seen in this study. Only one commercial (0.4 percent) employed this appeal. One explanation for this phenomenon are the increasing breakdown of the extended-family orientation into nuclear households, particularly in urban areas, and the influence of the Western value emphasizing individuality. Taiwanese advertisers have found it not profitable to stress the slowly declining traditional group orientation.

Individual and Independence Appeals As stated previously, one of the explanations of the rarity of group consensus appeal in the commercial is because of the influence of the Western value—individualism. However, the frequency (only 0.8 percent) showed that the usage of individual and independence appeals was rare as well. The discrepancy can be explained by the nature of advertising. Since the main function of advertising is the promotion of products in order to earn more profits, the advertisers would only reflect cultural values as long as it is lucrative to do so. Though individualism has become an important cultural value in Taiwan, it is unlikely to be stressed to a great extent in commercials because it has been found to be less profitable and cost-effective than the appeals of product merit or youth and modernity.

Though only two commercials used individuality appeals during the period of the study, in fact, the themes in the commercials such as “there is nothing wrong to be different from others” and “do whatever you like as long as you wish” have become very popular in everyday conversation.

Soft-sell Appeals Among the five subcategories of traditional appeals, soft-sell was the most frequently used appeal. The commercials rely on building atmosphere and arousing consumers' emotions associated with the product as it is advertised. Theme songs and background music play an important role in building the atmosphere. Sometimes humor and drama were incorporated in such appeals in order to make the advertising more interesting. Usually, the product or company name was mentioned at the very end of commercial. Little information was provided.

Hard-sell Appeals Contrary to previous studies that found hard-sell appeals are not popular in Eastern advertising (Mueller, 1987, 1992), the result in this study clearly demonstrated the appeals were greatly used by the Taiwanese commercials surveyed, especially for the commercials of high-involvement products.

Because of the sanction against naming the competition, the Taiwanese commercials using hard-sell appeals contained no comparative or competitive statement likely to be presented in American television commercials. The commercials using this appeal were presented in a lecture form which contained no character and plot, but only narration. The narration provided the information, which is

often a “generality,” unsupported by the data. The length of the appeals tended to be shorter than other appeals.

Veneration of Elderly and Traditional Appeals Traditional Chinese hierarchy relationships between people were not born out in this study. Only a minimal number of the commercials contained such appeals. The increasing number of nuclear families caused by sudden urbanization may be one of the explanations for the phenomenon. The elderly no longer live with their children, thus, there is less opportunity provided for them to exercise their prerogative over the junior members of the family.

The other explanation is closely related to the continual decline of the birth rate in Taiwan. Due to the low birth rate, the younger generation has become the focus of the society. Parents give all their efforts to their children for a comfortable life; sometimes they indulge their children. The older generation has lost much of its influence over the younger generation.

Youth and Modernity Appeals Not surprisingly, the use of these appeals was employed greatly. These appeals were the third highest frequency; behind the product merit and hard-sell appeals, found in this study. The advertisers have found the large youth market in Taiwan has a substantial buying power and can be very profitable. The models in the commercial tend to be younger and the communication messages involved the emphasis on modernity appeal and youthful benefits of the product.

Status Appeals It is difficult to judge whether the culture is reflected through status appeals due to the medium usage of the appeals (the fifth commonly used of all appeals) in the study. The celebrity appeals of using movie stars as models in the commercials was employed. If the impression was given that a product was imported, then Caucasian models tended to be used in the commercials. English language tended to be spoken in the commercials or used as brand names in such appeals.

Product Merit Appeals The product merit appeals were found to be the most popular appeals in this study. The explanation may be similar to what Mueller found in 1987, that advertisers have found the necessity to differentiate their product with descriptions of unique product benefits due to the increasing number of branded products being sold.

The other reason may be related to the demands of Taiwanese consumers. Since Taiwanese consumers have become more well-educated (Lee & Leu, 1992), they may demand more information about a product's characteristics and performance in order to make their purchase decisions. Therefore, the commercial emphasizing product characteristics and performance may be more appealing to the consumers than other appeals.

Oneness with Nature Appeals The employment of nature-oriented appeals in the advertising was not found in the commercials studied. The development of industrialization in Taiwan has resulted in great environmental pollution. Poisonous air and tainted water are

particularly serious in some industrial areas, yet environmentalism is only a newly emerging concept for people in Taiwan. The Environmental Protection Administration under the Department of Health was not established until 1987. It seems that Taiwanese people are still enthusiastically engaged in industrialization and economical development. Therefore, the traditional value emphasizing the harmonious relationship between nature and humankind has not been reflected in commercials studied so far.

Manipulation of Nature Appeals In contrast to the result that no frequency was found in oneness with nature appeals, the manipulation of nature appeals were used in two commercials. The low frequency is an indication that technology-oriented appeals are considered appealing to the consumers only for promoting certain products. The products being advertised in the commercials were highly-technical and their technological achievement triumphed, in a sense, over the elements of nature.

Advertising appeals by product involvement level

The result of the chi-square test in Table 10 indicates that there was no significant difference ($P = .975$) between high involvement and low involvement products in the usage of advertising appeals. In looking at each cell under the category of traditional appeals, little difference was found between high and low involvement products in using traditional appeals. The usage of modern and Westernized appeals also indicated no significant difference between low and high

involvement products. When comparing the frequency of two groups of appeals, it is clear that the products of both levels of involvement are likely to use modern and Westernized appeals more often than traditional appeals (see Table 10).

Table 10. Chi-square test of advertising appeals by level of involvement

Product involvement level	Traditional appeals		Modern/Westernized appeals		Total	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
High	30	12.6	82	34.5	112	47.1
Low	33	13.8	93	39.1	126	52.9
Total	63	26.4	175	73.6	238	100

$X^2 = 0.0004$ $df = 1$ $P = .975$

However, Table 11 shows that the usage of advertising appeals of high involvement and low involvement products was significantly different ($P < .001$) when the two main categories were broken down into ten subcategories, and the 20 frequencies were all calculated. The Chi-square was calculated again when oneness with nature appeals were excluded since no commercial was found in this category. The result in Table 12 indicates that the usage of advertising appeals was significantly different between high and low involvement products.

Table 11. Chi-square test of ten advertising appeals by level of involvement

Advertising appeals		Involvement level			
		High (N=112) (%)		Low (N=126) (%)	
Traditional Appeals	Group Consensus	0	0	1	0.4
	Soft-sell	17	7.1	20	8.4
	Veneration/Elderly Status	0	0	2	0.8
	Oneness with Nature	13	5.7	10	4.2
		0	0	0	0
Westernized/ Modern Appeals	Individual/Independence	0	0	2	0.8
	Hard-sell	40	16.8	17	7.1
	Youth/Modernity	6	2.5	36	15.1
	Product Merit	34	14.3	38	16.0
	Manipulation of Nature	2	0.8	0	0

$X^2 = 37.99$ $df = 9$ $P < .001$

Upon closer examinations of each cell, it was found that the significant result derived mainly from the differences in the cells under the categories of hard-sell appeals, and youth and modernity appeals. The differences were not manifest when all ten appeals were grouped into only two main categories. It can be clearly seen that more high involvement products employed hard-sell appeals than did the low involvement products. A distinct difference between high involvement and low involvement products was found in the usage of youth and modernity appeals as well. It clearly shows that low involvement

products used more youth and modernity appeals in this study. Since low involvement goods tend to be low in price, such as food, beverages, and inexpensive personal care products whose market segmentation consists of mainly children and the youth, then it is not surprising that advertisers of those products use youth and modernity themes to appeal to their target consumers.

Table 12. Chi-square test of ten advertising appeals by level of involvement

Advertising appeals		Involvement level			
		High (N=112) (%)		Low (N=126) (%)	
Traditional Appeals	Group Consensus	0	0	1	0.4
	Soft-sell	17	7.1	20	8.4
	Veneration/Elderly	0	0	2	0.8
	Status	13	5.7	10	4.2
Westernized/ Modern Appeals	Individual/Independence	0	0	2	0.8
	Hard-sell	40	16.8	17	7.1
	Youth/Modernity	6	2.5	36	15.1
	Product Merit	34	14.3	38	16.0
	Manipulation of Nature	2	0.8	0	0
X ² = 37.99		df = 8	P < .001		

The products in both levels of involvement used product merit appeals most frequently. Both soft-sell appeals and status appeals were used almost as much for high involvement products as for low involvement products. Group consensus, veneration of the elderly and traditional, and independence appeals were found only for low involvement products, while manipulation of nature appeals were used only by high involvement products.

High involvement products For this level of product involvement, the appeal most commonly used in Taiwanese commercials was the hard-sell appeals (see Table 12). The second and third most commonly used appeals were the product merit and soft-sell appeals.

Unlike the Japanese advertising which uses status appeals most frequently for high involvement products (Mueller, 1987), Taiwanese commercials used hard-sell appeals most commonly for high involvement products. In looking at the commercials employing hard-sell appeals closely, most of them were housing commercials. Though the nature of the product is not temporary, the nature of the product's commercial tended to be temporary because the commercial is only aired during the promotion period. When the house is sold, the commercial will not be shown again on television. Thus, the hard-sell appeals, which strongly emphasized a sale orientation, may be appropriate for promoting this product. The function of the commercial is mainly to inform the consumer about the product's availability and price in a lecture form with the slogans describing the product.

Product merit appeals—the informative types of appeals—were used for the consumers of high involvement products concerning the information on product characteristics, product performance, and recommendations. Status appeals, the third most commonly used appeals, were not found to be as popular in this sample as they were in the Japanese samples for promoting high involvement products. Youth and modernity appeals were used infrequently for high involvement products since younger people are unlikely to be the consumers of high-priced items. The manipulation of nature appeals were used for promoting the high-technology products.

Low involvement products For this level of product involvement, Taiwanese commercials tended to use a variety of appeals (see Table 12). The most popular appeals were product merit appeals, closely followed by youth and modernity, soft-sell, hard-sell, and status appeals. Group consensus, veneration of elderly and traditional, and individuality appeals, which were not found in the level of high involvement products, were also utilized for promoting the low involvement products.

Product merit appeals were used for many new low involvement products introduced to the market. The advertisers found the appeals more effective than others in emphasizing the product characteristics in order to distinguish the product from the other competitive brands. As stated previously, youth and modernity appeals were used in order to target the youth who are the major consumers of low involvement products such as food and beverage.

Soft-sell appeals were slightly more frequently employed by the product in the low level of involvement than in the high level of involvement. The commercials were emotional and suggestive with soft music, soft voices, and beautiful scenery in order to draw an emotional association with the product from the consumer. Hard-sell appeals were much less commonly used for low level involvement than for high involvement products. Manipulation of nature appeals were not found due to the fact that low involvement products seldom emphasize their technological achievement in contrast to nature.

Advertising appeals by product category

The result of chi-square in Table 13 shows no significant difference ($P > .1$) across the product categories in using traditional appeals and modern and Westernized appeals. Each product category employed modern and Westernized appeals more frequently than traditional appeals. Due to a difficulty to make a generalization from the small sample size of the products such as clothing, hobbies, toys, and recreation products, the usage of advertising appeals of these two categories were not discussed in the study.

Food and beverage products The most commonly used appeals were youth and modernity, followed by product merit, and soft-sell appeals (see Table 14). Emphasis on youthful benefits of the product is the characteristic of the commercials for promoting food and beverage products. Product merit appeals were used to provide the information of nutrition and specific benefits to consumers.

Unlike Japanese advertising which used soft-sell appeals greatly for high involvement products, soft-sell appeals were used more often for food and beverage products than any other product categories in Taiwan. The commercials with soft-sell appeals were presented in a story or along with beautiful scenery—usually with soft music—which its function was mainly to build up a pleasant mood from the consumers and entertain them. The advertisers hope the consumers will transfer the pleasant mood into a favorable feeling toward the product being advertised.

Table 13. Chi-square test of advertising appeals by product category

Product category	Traditional appeals		Modern/Westernized appeals	
	(N= 63)	(%)	(N= 175)	(%)
Food, beverages	20	8.4	59	24.8
Personal care	13	5.5	24	10.1
Furniture, appliances, electronics	3	1.3	22	9.2
Household, cleaners, laundry	6	2.5	29	12.1
Transportation, car products	9	3.8	20	8.4
Institutions	7	2.9	12	5.1
Hobbies, toys, recreation	3	1.3	6	2.5
Clothing	2	0.8	3	1.3

$X^2 = 9.69$ $df = 7$ $P > .1$

Table 14. Distribution of advertising appeals of food-beverage products

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 79)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	1	1.3
Soft-sell	14	17.7
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional	1	1.3
Status	4	5.0
Oneness with Nature	0	0
Individual and Independence	2	2.5
Hard-sell	9	11.4
Youth and Modern	29	36.7
Product Merit	19	24.1
Manipulation of Nature	0	0

Personal-care products The result in Table 15 shows that the most popular appeals in this product category were product merit, followed by status, and hard-sell appeals. The reason why status appeals were more frequently used than other by product categories is due to the origins of the product. Because a great number of personal-care products are imported or have foreign origins in the sample, the advertisers employed status appeals in order to give the impression as being highly prestigious products, much more luxurious and better quality than domestic products of comparable quality. The models tended to be Caucasian in promoting the foreign products. Both written and spoken English language were frequently used in the appeals.

Table 15. Distribution of advertising appeals of personal-care products

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 37)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	0	0
Soft-sell	2	5.4
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional	1	2.7
Status	10	27.0
Oneness with Nature	0	0
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	6	16.2
Youth and Modern	4	10.8
Product Merit	14	37.8
Manipulation of Nature	0	0

Furniture, appliance, and electronics products Not surprisingly, product merit appeals were the most frequently used appeals for furniture, appliance, and electronics since these product usually emphasize their practical function and technological level (see Table 16).

Household, cleaners, and laundry products Hard-sell appeals were most frequently used, followed by product merit, and soft-sell appeals (see Table 17). The content of the commercials using hard-sell, and product merit appeals tended to be informational which emphasized product performance, recommendation, and availability.

Table 16. Distribution of advertising appeals of furniture, appliances, and electronic products

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 25)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	0	0
Soft-sell	3	12.0
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional	0	0
Status	0	0
Oneness with Nature	0	0
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	8	32.0
Youth and Modern	1	4.0
Product Merit	12	48.0
Manipulation of Nature	1	4.0

Table 17. Distribution of advertising appeals of household items, cleaners, and laundry products

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 35)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	0	0
Soft-sell	5	14.3
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional	0	0
Status	1	2.9
Oneness with Nature	0	0
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	17	48.6
Youth and Modern	0	0
Product Merit	12	34.2
Manipulation of Nature	0	0

Transportation and car products Table 18 shows that hard-sell appeals were most commonly employed, closely followed by product merit, and soft-sell appeals. No particular trend can be seen from the frequency. It seemed that the commercials of this product category tended to employ a variety of advertising appeals.

Table 18. Distribution of advertising appeals by transportation and car products

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 29)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	0	0
Soft-sell	6	20.7
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional Status	0	0
Oneness with Nature	3	10.4
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	9	31.0
Youth and Modern	2	6.9
Product Merit	8	27.4
Manipulation of Nature	1	3.4

Institutions Product merit appeals were used greatly, closely followed by hard-sell, soft-sell, and status appeals (see Table 19). Like transportation and car product category, it seemed that the commercials of this product category tended to employ a variety of advertising appeals as well. However, a higher percentage of frequency in using

soft-sell appeals was found in this category. Some of the commercials of institute and service in this sample tended to incorporate soft-sell appeals into their public relation advertising. The function of their commercials was to promote the companies' images.

Table 19. Distribution of advertising appeals of institutions

Type of appeal	Frequency (N= 19)	Percentage (%)
Group Consensus	0	0
Soft-sell	4	21.1
Veneration/Elderly and Traditional Status	0	0
Oneness with Nature	3	15.8
Individual and Independence	0	0
Hard-sell	0	0
Youth and Modern	5	26.3
Product Merit	1	5.2
Manipulation of Nature	6	31.6
	0	0

Discussion

As can be seen from the above findings, over two-thirds of Taiwanese commercials used modern and Westernized appeals. The frequency of the three most used appeals—product merit, hard-sell, and youth and modernity appeals—have accounted for 70 percent of the sample. It is apparent that the result of this study has revealed a trend

of using modern and Westernized appeals for Taiwanese television commercials.

The involvement level of the product has an impact on the type of advertising appeals used in Taiwan. Though the results show that both high-and low-involvement products tended to use more modern and Westernized appeals than traditional appeals, distinct differences do exist between two levels of product involvement in the usage of hard-sell, and youth and modernity appeals. Hard-sell appeals were most likely to be utilized for high involvement products, while youth and modernity appeals were much more common for low involvement products. Manipulation of nature appeals are used only for promoting the product in the high level of involvement. Product merit, soft-sell, and status appeals are common for the products in both high and low levels of involvement.

The analysis of the product categories in their usage of advertising appeals provides another insight of how advertising is used in Taiwan. Overall, product merit appeals are used greatly across all product categories. For promoting food and beverage products, Taiwanese advertisers are more likely to employ youth and modernity appeals stressing benefits of the products for youth. Like product merit appeals, hard-sell appeals were utilized across all product categories in this study. Higher percentage of usage in the appeals was found in household items, cleaners, and laundry products. Status appeals were used more frequently for personal-care products than any other categories, in order to give the impression of the imported brands as

being more prestigious than domestic products with comparable price or quality.

Soft-sell appeals seemed to be used by every product category. However, a slightly higher percentage was found in institute category. Since some of the institutions and services use public relations in their commercials to promote their images, it is not surprising to see that soft-sell appeals were used by them. The only two commercials stressing individuality and independence are the advertising promoting food and beverage products. The only commercial employing group consensus appeals in this sample was found in food and beverage category. Regarding to the two commercials using veneration of the elderly and traditional appeals, one was found for selling a food product, while the other was for a personal-care product. Manipulation of nature themes were found for selling an automobile and an electronic product.

Approximately 38 percent of the commercials use either spoken or written English. The appearance of English is not considered prevalent, but English is the most important and popular foreign language in Taiwan. English is a required course for the students from junior high schools through colleges and universities, and learning English is a trend for children and adults in Taiwan. Caucasian models were not commonly seen in this sample—slightly more than one commercial in ten contained at least one Caucasian model.

One finding that is inconsistent with the literature was regarding to the usage of hard-sell appeals. It has been indicated that hard-sell appeals are a rarity in the commercials from the Eastern countries.

According to Yuan (1993), hard-sell strategy is not very effective for Taiwanese consumers. However, the result of this study shows that hard-sell appeals are used greatly in Taiwanese commercials, especially for promoting high involvement products. The plausible explanations of this inconsistency are related to the products being advertised in this sample and the cost of television commercials. Many housing commercials are aired during the period of collecting the sample. Since this type of commercial is likely to be shown only during the promotion period, the sale-oriented strategy such as hard-sell appeals seems more appropriate. The result may be different if another sample was collected during another time period.

The other explanation is concerning the cost of television commercials. Television commercials are the most expensive medium for advertisers. The longer the commercial is, the more it will cost. Thus, some advertisers would like to use hard-sell appeals to save their advertising expenditure since the length of hard-sell appeals tends to be shorter. At the same time, the advertisers may use another type of appeals in advertising appearing in the media other than television, such as newspapers and magazines, to promote the same product. It is plausible that other appeals are used more often than hard-sell appeals by the advertisements in printed media.

Based on the findings of this study, it may be concluded that Western influence is evident in Taiwanese advertising appeals. The frequent appearance of modern and Westernized appeals indicates a cultural change in Taiwan, and the change is that Western values have

become more prevalent than traditional values in Taiwan. However, one may argue that the reflection of Western values in Taiwanese advertising is only an advertising strategy created by advertisers in order to fit their needs. The advertisers and manufacturers use advertising as an important force in teaching people basic values, ideas, and lifestyles to gain profits. Thus, advertising reflects cultural values only as long as it is profitable to do so, and the values reflected in advertising are not necessarily prevalent cultural values in Taiwanese society.

Some researchers, however, proposed that advertising is only a “mediated communication.” In another words, it is a “communication activity through which social change is mediated—and wherein such changes can be witnessed” (Leiss et al., 1986, p. 144). It is argued that social and cultural changes have already existed in a society instead of being created by advertisers. Advertising only serves as a mirror to reflect the changes or, further, to reinforce and accelerate them (Belk & Pollay, 1985). Based on this position, several social and cultural changes in Taiwan can be demonstrated through the reflection of advertising.

✓ First, the strongly held traditional value of veneration of the elderly is rarely reflected in contemporary Taiwanese commercials. Instead, the younger generation has been the focus of the society. The change has to be attributed to the urbanization of Taiwan. The number of nuclear families has increased while the birth rate has slowly declined. Thus, the elderly of the families have lost their influence on

younger generation, while the children and youth has become the central focus of families.

Second, emphasis on equality in human relations and egalitarian attitudes as opposed to authoritarianism has led Chinese people in Taiwan to embrace the cardinal Western value—individualism. Taiwanese commercials encourage the consumer to be different from others and to “do whatever you want.” The will of the individual is more important than the will of the whole group. Although only two commercials were found using the appeals in the sample, the popularity of the commercials indicates a significant influence on the society.

Third, after decades of economic development, Taiwanese society has become more affluent than ever before, and people have the ability to consume. Thus, more brand name products are sold in the market. In order to introduce the new product or distinguish the product from the other competitive brands, the advertisers in Taiwan frequently use product merit appeals stressing information on product characteristics, performance, and unique benefits. The other explanation may be related to the increasingly higher education level of Taiwanese consumers. Since the consumers have become well-educated, they are able to learn and demand more information about products. Thus, the advertisers find using product merit appeals is necessary to appeal to the consumer.

Since the evidence is clear that Taiwan has been increasingly drawn toward the influence of modernization and Western values, it may lead the advertisers to embrace the concept of standardization.

However, Taiwanese commercials still exhibit some degree of sensitivity to the cultural uniqueness of the particular society. Cultural sensitivity is portrayed through the varying usage of the advertising appeals.

Examples of cultural sensitivity are numerous. Although product merit and hard-sell appeals are employed greatly in Taiwanese commercials, the comparative messages are seldom seen in the commercials, or these messages only imply the comparison to a minimum degree. It is unknown whether the comparative advertising practice is self-restrained or prohibited in Taiwan because of the lack of information about local advertising codes. However, this phenomenon can serve as an indication that head-on competition is distasteful in Taiwan.

Taiwanese commercials often use soft-sell appeals to promise some ideals that may be reached through the use of the product. Usually, the ideals such as improving interpersonal relationships, and promoting family values and social harmony, are audience-related and reflect the cultural values subtly. Such ideals, however, are seldom linked to attributes of the product.

Although the traditional value of maintaining the harmony between humankind and nature is not born out in this study, the usage of a back-to-nature theme is expected to emerge since the concept of environmentalism is growing stronger in Taiwan.

In addition to cultural sensitivity reflected in Taiwanese commercials, the infrequent use of English and Western models should be noted by the advertisers who favor the standardized approach. The

result suggests that Western influence is not obviously prevalent through using Western language and Caucasian models. One may argue the influence (Caucasian models and English language) is nothing more than "trappings" in the commercials. However, it cannot be ignored because it might be the first and easiest step for advertisers to determine whether standardized or non-standardized advertising should be applied in the particular culture of Taiwan.

Following the two steps proposed by Marquez (1979) for international advertisers in deciding whether to use standardized or non-standardized global advertising in a particular country, the findings of the study suggest an adaptation instead of a standardization in global advertising is necessary in Taiwan. Although the cultural values reflected in Taiwanese commercials may be identical to those portrayed in the advertiser's home-country, the advertising appeals used in Taiwan still reflect indigenous cultural values. The study should give a pause to the practitioners who advocate complete standardization in global advertising.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The study was designed to examine the role of culture in the content of Taiwanese prime-time television commercials. Advertising appeals embedded with cultural values, norms, and characteristics are the focus of this analysis. The purpose of the study is to provide an understanding of advertising appeals in Taiwanese television commercials in order to help global advertisers to tailor advertising messages to suit the Taiwanese market.

The findings of the study indicate that Taiwanese commercials reflect more Western values than traditional values across both levels of product involvement and all product categories. Themes that are popular in Taiwan such as product merit which describes the product characteristics to the consumers, youth and modernity which emphasize youthful benefits of the product, and status appeals which suggest that the use of a certain product will enhance some inherent quality of the user, are universal and likely to be applied to consumers around the world.

However, there are other themes that are definitely not universal and are unique to Taiwanese society, such as the veneration of the elderly, dislike of head-on competition, and the emphasis on family values and social harmony. The results suggest that Taiwanese advertising is still not completely Westernized, thus a completely

standardized global advertising is not advisable in Taiwan. However, if the advertisers and manufacturers in Taiwan continue to select and reflect the cultural values in advertising to fit their needs, and the unique cultural traits are increasingly replaced or transported to other cultures, we will see the homogenization of all cultures into a world culture. Until then, Taiwanese consumers will be transformed into universal consumers who share the same cultural values and characteristics with consumers in other countries, and standardized advertising can be applied in Taiwan.

The other issue concerning advertising is the role of advertising as a change agent in society. While it is argued that advertising has been used by advertisers and manufacturers to teach people basic values, ideas, and lifestyles in order to fit their needs, it can also be argued that advertising is only a mirror reflecting the prevalent values and changes of culture which have already existed in a particular society. It is not a simple conclusion of the arguments from either side. However, advertising can be probably best be described as “a silkworm that spins silk out of the inside of itself and wraps itself up in it” (Lantos, 1987, p. 106).

Despite the arguments, both friends and foes of advertising agree that advertising possesses strength in reinforcing and accelerating social and cultural change. In the case of Taiwan, it seems particularly true. Since Taiwan is always open to Western influence and the expansion of public media is rapid, the role of advertising in reinforcing social and cultural changes needs to be noted. If the advertisers and

manufacturers continue to promote their products by using Western appeals such as individualism, and the concept of "harnessing nature," the Western values which have already been prevalent in Taiwan will be reinforced and accelerated along with the growing influence of public media. The people in Taiwan will thus be more drawn into the Western values and toward conforming with them. Since, advertising often targets people's unnecessary desires instead of basic needs, it is more difficult for people to resist its persuasion. Therefore, the Western cultural values contained in the commercial message become even more influential.

Certainly, advertising should not take all the responsibility in helping to accelerate cultural and social change since it is only one of the many institutions in society. Other institutions in society can have more impact on transmitting Western cultural values. More studies need to be done to investigate the effect of advertising as a role in shaping culture.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Some limitations must be noted when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the content analysis was conducted by only a few coders who used only one approach for measuring levels of involvement, product category, and advertising appeals in the content of this study. Certainly, these variables are perceived differently from person to person depending on viewer characteristics such as education, social status, sex, age, or occupation. In this regard, the coders participated in

this study do not necessarily represent the general consumers in Taiwan. The other limitation is that the commercials studied in this research were aired immediately before and after prime-time evening news programs. The absence of daytime commercials in the sample limits the generalizability of the results to prime-time news commercials only. Also, the result may be different from the advertising appeals that appear in the printed media. Subsequent investigation might explore whether modern and Westernized appeals are more common for television advertising than printed media.

The focus of the study was only on Taiwanese advertising. It would be interesting to compare these results with advertising appeals from other countries. If the comparison is made with Western countries, the results may reveal the difference between Western and Eastern cultural values. The comparison can be also extended to the other Chinese societies such as Hong Kong, China, or Singapore. It would be interesting to investigate how cultural values differ among societies which have a common ethnic heritage but are divergent in the level of economic development and political ideology.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my major professor, Dr. Jane W. Peterson, for her patient guidance and encouragement throughout the preparation of this thesis. My appreciation is also extended to my committee members, Professor Stephen Coon and Dr. Russell Laczniak, for their help and precious time.

Thanks my coders, Shao-Hsun Keng and Lu-Hsia Yeh, who spent hours with me watching the videotaped commercials and finishing the coding task. Also thanks my younger sisters in Taiwan, Ya-Wen and Chien-Ying, who spent almost two months in collecting the sample for this study. My thesis would not have been done without their help.

Special thanks go to my dear friends, Shih-Che Tang, Mei-Yu Lu, and Andrea Lex. Shih-Che in Austin, Texas, and Mei-Yu in Iowa City, Iowa, helped me to find the books and journals which are not available in Iowa State University and mail them to me. Andrea spent her invaluable time editing my thesis. I could not have finished my thesis in time without their assistance.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dear parents, youngest uncle and aunt, and all the relatives in Taiwan, for their love and support.