

**Message Strategies, Informativeness and Value Appeals**  
**in Chinese Television Advertising:**  
**An Empirical Study**

**Abstract of the dissertation**

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## **Abstract**

Based on the long-lasting standardization versus adaptation debate in international advertising, the issue of differences in advertising content has been widely investigated and results of studies have usually led to suggestions of the appropriateness of a contingency approach to developing advertising content. However, previous studies have principally focused on advertising from Western countries or culture. In addition to the lack of research on Chinese advertising, those extant studies on Chinese advertising, nevertheless, have inherent limitations that their analytical framework originated from Western countries. In order to address these gaps in the literature, this dissertation examines in detail the characteristics of Chinese advertising in terms of three aspects of advertising content: message strategy, informativeness, and value appeals.

Based on systematically collected sample commercials from Chinese Central Television station (CCTV) and three delicately modified frameworks, I conduct three content analysis studies on each topic respectively. Findings based on statistical analysis are demonstrated and discussed.

Regarding advertising message strategy (Chapter 4), I first concentrate on the improvement of the extant typologies. Using the modified typology, this dissertation content analyzes message strategies manifest in Chinese TV commercials. Results show that affective message strategy (82.3%) is most frequently used, followed by cognitive message strategy (54.1%), and conative strategy is least frequently used (12%). Furthermore, around one third of commercials use both affective and cognitive strategies simultaneously. In regard to brand origin, commercials for foreign brands use more cognitive message strategy. Comparison between goods and services ads indicates

that goods ads contain significantly more cognitive strategy whereas services ads contain more conative strategy. Furthermore, most of the hypotheses are supported. Product category is proved to be an important factor influencing the usage of advertising message strategy. Under FCB grid model, results indicate that as for low involvement products use more affective and conative strategies than those for high involvement while ads for think products use more cognitive but less affective message strategies than those for feel products.

As far as information content is concerned (Chapter 5), I extensively reviewed extant studies on this topic and formulated hypotheses. Using an expanded framework of Resnik and Stern (1977), I conduct content analysis and findings are demonstrated. In general, results show that the informative level is significantly higher than Chan and Chan's (2005) findings and prediction as 76.3% of ads contain at least one information cue and 1.6 cues are used on average in each Chinese TV commercial. The most frequently used information cues are performance, variety, and components/contents. In terms of brand origin, ads for foreign brands use more information cues than those for local brands. Furthermore, goods ads use more information cues than services ads. Hypotheses related to product involvement and durability are not supported since ads for high involvement as well as durable products use no more information cues than those for low involvement as well as non-durable products respectively. On the other hand, ads for think products contain more information content than those for feel products. In addition, results also validate that product category influences the usage of information content.

Concerning value appeals (Chapter 6), I also supplemented the extant frameworks through incorporating more Chinese traditional value appeals. Using the newly

modified scheme, I conducted content analysis. Results show that the most frequently used value appeals are enjoyment/leisure, effectiveness, quality, and trustworthiness. Because of high context communication and collectivism of Chinese culture, symbolic as well as Eastern value appeals are significantly used more frequently than utilitarian as well as Western value appeals respectively. Furthermore, ads for domestic brands use more Eastern appeals whereas ads for foreign brands use more Western appeals. In regard to the FCB grid model, ads for high involvement products contain more utilitarian and less symbolic appeals than those for low involvement products while ads for think products contain more utilitarian appeals than those for feel products. In addition, concerning differences between goods and services, ads for goods contain more utilitarian as well as Western appeals while ads for services contain more symbolic as well as Eastern appeals. Consistent with the above findings, results indicate that value appeals vary across product categories.

In conclusion, this study has examined the influence of brand origin, product category, product involvement and product type on advertising content in terms of the three main research topics addressed in this dissertation (i.e., message strategies, informativeness, and value appeals). Findings tend to demonstrate consistency in respect to the influence of brand origin and product category. However, the two dimensions of the FCB grid model show inconsistent influence on the use of the three topics in Chinese television commercials. Furthermore, the characteristics of Chinese television commercials as well as their implications in terms of each of the three topics are discussed in detail in Chapter 4-6.

Findings of his dissertation are useful for both practitioners and academics. While this study focuses on advertising in a single country, its findings nevertheless allow

international advertising practitioners who are to develop their advertising strategy in the Chinese market, to compare the characteristics of Chinese television advertising with those of their home market or the global market. Therefore, this dissertation is believed to assist practitioners in deciding whether to standardize advertising strategy or to adapt to the particularities of the Chinese market. The study also modifies the extant analytical frameworks in terms of three topics and makes important contributions to an increased understanding of the nature of advertising in China, and thus is of interest to academic researchers.

