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**CULTURE, PRODUCT CATEGORY AND
ADVERTISING SITUATION:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVERTISING APPEALS IN
WEB AUTOMOBILE ADVERTISEMENTS BETWEEN
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY**

**DEPARTMENT OF CHINESE AND BILINGUAL STUDIES
THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY**

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28 September 2005

ABSTRACT

The study of cross-cultural advertising appeals has been a prevalent topic in recent communication research. Nevertheless, an overview of the studies reveals that a study taking culture, product category, and especially advertising situation as factors in influencing the cross-cultural uses of advertising appeals on the Internet is largely absent. Thus, this study attempts to explore the relationship among culture, product category, advertising situation and the use of advertising appeals in the context of web advertising. To investigate the relationship, the contents of 460 web automobile banner and jump page advertisements from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America (USA) are analyzed in terms of their uses of utilitarian and symbolic appeals. The results of this study indicate that utilitarian appeals are dominant in both the advertisements from PRC and USA. However, more symbolic appeals (particularly product symbol and personalization appeals) are found in the advertisements from PRC while more utilitarian appeals are identified in the advertisements of USA. Besides, the significant cross-cultural differences in the use of value appeals are mainly located in the jump page advertisements. Finally, results of the study and implications for advertising research based on the effects of culture (consumer culture with different developmental stages), product category (the level of

product involvement, product nature and product type) and advertising situation (low-involving versus high-involving advertising situations) on the use of advertising appeals are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate the effects of culture, product category, and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals¹, especially in a cross-cultural context. Specifically, an empirical study of web automobile advertisements from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America (USA) was conducted to investigate the relationship between the three factors and the choice of persuasive appeals in advertising.

This chapter facilitates a preliminary explanation of the variables of interest in this study, indicates the research purposes and significance of this research study, and finally offers an overview of this thesis.

1.1 Research on Advertising Appeals

In the past two decades, there has been a constant scholarly interest in investigating advertising appeals for identifying or reflecting the nature of culture,

¹ Advertising appeals refer to any messages designed to motivate consumers to purchase (Lucas and Bnitt, 1950; Mueller, 1987).

product category and/or advertising medium. In particular, a huge body of research has devoted to suggesting the similarities and differences between cultures with a close examination of appeals in cross-cultural advertisements, indicating the prevalence of analyzing advertising appeals in a cross-cultural setting.

Results of previous empirical studies on advertising appeals in the past two decades suggested that the use of advertising appeals was associated with culture, product category and/or advertising medium. Based on the cultural dimensions proposed by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1980), a large number of studies have suggested that the use of advertising appeals hinges on the national culture, such as individualism and collectivism, and high-context culture and low-context culture (for example., Mueller, 1987; Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996 and Lin, 2001). Several other studies have indicated that consumer culture of a given society is associated with the choice of persuasive appeals in advertisements (for example, Tse, Belk and Zhou, 1989; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Chan and Chan, 2005).

Apart from culture, previous research found product category as another antecedent explaining the use of appeals in advertisements. For example, it was found that the level of product involvement mediated the use of advertising appeals (for

example, Vaughn, 1986; Mueller, 1992 and Tsao, 1997). It was also noted that the use of advertising appeals was related to product types like durable and non-durable products, and imported and joint-venture products (for instance, Cutler and Javalgi, 1992; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Cheng, 1997). In addition, individual product category was also suggested as another source of influencing the use of persuasive appeals in advertising (for example, Chan, 1999; Khairullah and Khairullah, 2002).

Previous advertising and consumer research also tended to indicate that the use of advertising appeals was related to advertising medium/vehicle (such as magazine, newspaper and television). For instance, it was demonstrated that the use of informative appeals in advertisements was associated with the nature of advertising medium, that is, more informative appeals were found when magazine served as the advertising medium, whilst less informative appeals were located in outdoor advertisements (Hong, Muderrisoglu and Zinkhan, 1987; Abernethy and Franke, 1996).

1.2 Research Purposes and Significance of the Study

Although advertising medium was suggested by the previous literature as being associated with the use of advertising appeals, it appears that the previous studies did

not see the relevance of advertising situation, instead of advertising medium, as a mediator for the use of advertising appeals. In the present study, it is argued that advertising situation in lieu of advertising medium provides a more precise explanation for the use of advertising appeals, especially when one notes that even for an advertising medium, advertisements can be placed in low-involving versus high-involving advertising situations with different advertising appeals.

Examining the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals serves as one of the research purposes of the present study as it is expected that besides culture and product category as factors well explaining the use of advertising appeals, an understanding of the effects of advertising situation helps provide an additional dimension to the understanding and interpretation of uses of advertising appeals. This is expected to be particularly important for interpreting results of cross-cultural studies on advertising appeals as cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of advertising appeals are not necessarily attributed to the effects of culture, but to the effects of advertising situation. For example, if no major differences of advertising appeals are located in advertisements of two contrastive national cultures, this may reflect the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals instead of implying that cultures of the two nations are

homogeneous. Findings from Hong et al. (1987) provided a good illustration for this point as their study showed that no major differences in the use of informative appeals were found between American and Japanese advertisements, and they related the result not to the convergence of American and Japanese cultures, but to the use of magazine advertisements as samples (that is, to the advertising situation of magazine advertisements although they did not explain this point explicitly).

Apart from investigating the underestimated effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals, this study is also driven by the lack of research on examining whether and how culture and product category function as antecedents affecting the use of appeals in a new and global form of advertisements — web advertisements. It appears that empirical studies on studying the effects of culture and/or product category on the use of advertising appeals in cross-cultural advertisements have mostly confined to examining print advertisements and television commercials with little attention given to web advertisements (with the exception of Chung and Ahn, 1999; Yoon and Cropp, 1999; Pashupati and Lee, 2003). Thus, another research purpose of this study is to contribute to this body of research by investigating the effects of both culture and product category on the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements.

In summary, research purposes of the present study are primarily two-fold: 1) to investigate the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals, and 2) to examine the effects of culture, product category and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals in the context of web advertising. An empirical study of advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA is attempted to help fulfill the primary research purposes.

The present study is expected to bear significance to advertising research in a number of ways. It is hoped that this study will contribute to research on advertising appeals by exploring the effects of advertising situation (besides the effects of culture and product category as suggested by previous studies) on the use of advertising appeals. This additional perspective for analyzing the use of persuasive appeals in advertising should provide further significant insights for interpreting cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of advertising appeals. Furthermore, this study will contribute to research on advertising by further investigating how culture, product category and advertising situation have influenced the use of advertising appeals in the context of the Internet, a new and global advertising medium.

1.3 Organization of Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction of the thesis which provides background for this research study and specifies its research objectives and significance. Chapter two presents a review of the related literature on advertising appeals and explains the central thesis of this study. Chapter three delineates the methodology of this study, including a description of the research design, coding scheme, coding procedures and data analysis. Findings of the present study are reported in Chapter four. Finally, Chapter five offers a discussion of the findings, implications and limitations of this study, as well as the suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature concerning advertising appeals, the main subject of the present study. The literature review is organized into three sections. The first section presents definitions and categorizations of advertising appeals. The second section is specifically devoted to reviewing studies that examined factor(s) in influencing the use of advertising appeals. The final section of this chapter indicates the gap of the previous research and proposes research questions of this study.

2.1 Defining Advertising Appeals

Advertising appeals refer to any messages designed to motivate consumers to purchase (Lucas and Bnitt, 1950; Mueller, 1987). They serve as a basic motivational or persuasive technique in an advertisement (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill, 2005) used by advertisers to communicate how their products or services satisfy the needs of consumers (Zhang and Gelb, 1996). Advertising appeals function in the way that they attract the attention of consumers and subsequently trigger certain reactions from

them (Burton, 1991) by making the advertised product or service particularly attractive or interesting to consumers (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2003).

Advertising appeals can be broadly classified into two types: utilitarian appeals and symbolic appeals. The classification is made based on the motives of consumers when purchasing products or services. According to Park and Young (1983), the motives of consumers could be categorized as utilitarian motives and value-expressive motives generally. When the motives of consumers were utilitarian in nature, consumers would be highly concerned with the pragmatic qualities of products or services. In contrast, when the motives of consumers were symbolic in nature, consumers would be interested in enhancing self-esteem and group membership (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986) by means of projecting his or her desired images to the outside world with the use of the product or service. Therefore, utilitarian appeals refer to messages that focus on functional features of products or services, while symbolic appeals mean messages that emphasize the social meaning of products or services, and images of the generalized users of the advertised product or service. As Levy (1959) indicated, symbolic appeals were psychological advertising strategies that portrayed 'personal attributes and goals and of social patterns and strivings' (p.119). In other words, utilitarian appeals are product-oriented concerning what the

advertised product or service can do for us, whereas symbolic appeals are consumer-oriented concerning what the advertised product or service means to us. It should be noted that although advertising appeals are categorized as utilitarian and symbolic appeals, they are not mutually exclusive categories as an advertisement can include both utilitarian and symbolic appeals (Puto and Wells, 1984).

It is observed that the classification of utilitarian appeals and symbolic appeals is comparable to that of the informational and transformational appeals, cognitive and affective appeals, as well as hard-sell and soft-sell appeals that previous research suggested (Johar and Sirgy, 1991). Puto and Wells (1984) indicated that informational appeals were characterized by the logical presentation of factual and verifiable information about the advertised product or service, whereas transformational appeals were characterized by the emphasis on transforming the consumption experience of consumers to be richer and more enjoyable with the use of the advertised product or service. Besides, Dube, Chattopadhyay and Letarte (1996) defined cognitive appeals as the messages which stressed on functional benefits and physiological consequences of the advertised product or brand. Meanwhile, they stated that affective appeals emphasized experiences of consumers, and the experiences comprised emotional experiences, social experiences and sensorial experiences. Similarly, hard-sell and

soft-sell appeals focus on the inherent qualities and functional values of the advertised product or service, and the images of consumers associated with the use of the advertised product or service respectively (Snyder and DeBono, 1985; Muller, 1992).

Utilitarian appeals and symbolic appeals can be further divided into four types of advertising strategies as what Leiss et al. (2005) suggested. With reference to Leiss et al. (2005), advertising strategies/appeals could be classified into four types: utility appeals, product symbol appeals, personalization appeals, and lifestyle appeals. While utility appeals represent utilitarian appeals, product symbol appeals, personalization appeals and lifestyle appeals are the constituents of symbolic appeals. Leiss et al. (2005) defined utility appeals as rational and pragmatic advertising strategies that focused on product information, for example, the construction, utility, performance and functional benefits of products. The focus of utility appeals is on the advertised product instead of the user of the product. Examples of utility appeals included appeals about quality and price of the advertised product.

In comparison, product symbol appeals were defined as advertising strategies that emphasized social meaning of products. Leiss et al. (2005) observed that the

focus of product symbol appeals was on the social motivation² instead of the pragmatic considerations as the basis of consumption. Therefore, product symbol appeals are similar to the ‘having’ appeals³ that Belk and Pollay (1985a; 1985b; 1985c; 1985d) found. Appeals like ‘social status’ and ‘modernity’ are examples of product symbol appeals. Comparatively, Leiss et al. (2005) stated that the emphasis of personalization appeals was on the personality, self-identity and interpersonal relationship of consumers. They found that the target results of personalization appeals would be emotional arousal and satisfaction of consumers with the presentation of consumers’ ideal personality and interpersonal relationship. Appeals related to self-transformation and interpersonal attachments exemplify personalization appeals. In other words, personalization appeals are consumer-oriented and similar to the ‘being’ appeals⁴ that Belk and Pollay (1985a; 1985b; 1985c; 1985d) identified. The last type of symbolic appeals was lifestyle appeals. Leiss et al. (2005) explained that lifestyle appeals conveyed social or group identity of consumers through projecting the stereotypical activities appropriate to or typical of the social group that consumers belonged to. Examples of lifestyle appeals included the appeals ‘relaxation’ and ‘friendship’.

² According to Leiss et al. (2005), social motivation derives from social values that carry the features of society’s commitment to status differentiation and hierarchical authority.

³ ‘Having’ appeals stress the pride of ownership of consumers.

⁴ ‘Being’ appeals emphasize what consumers can become with the help of the advertised product.

Finally, the term ‘advertising appeals’ is characterized by its interchangeable use with the term ‘cultural values’. The interchangeable use between ‘advertising appeals’ and ‘cultural values’ is due to the close relationship between the two concepts. According to Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2003), advertisers often referred to core values of consumers when selecting their primary advertising appeals. This parallels with the view of Zhang and Belb (1996), who observed that cultural values, norms and characteristics were the specific elements underlying advertising appeals. Similarly, Muller (1987) stated that advertising appeals must be related to the goals, wants, interests and problems of consumers in order to persuade consumers successfully.

2.2 Studies on Advertising Appeals

A large number of studies have investigated the use of appeals in advertising. They can be broadly categorized into three areas based on the different factors that the studies found on affecting the use of advertising appeals. The three areas are 1) the effects of culture, 2) the effects of product category, and 3) the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals.

2.2.1 Studies on Culture and Advertising Appeals

A huge body of research has devoted to examining the effects of culture on the use of appeals in advertisements. In general, the studies can be classified into three streams with reference to their different conceptions of culture — while the focus of the first stream is on the national culture, the focus of the second and third stream is on consumer culture and sub-culture of a particular social group respectively.

2.2.1.1 National Culture and Advertising Appeals

It is observed that considerable studies analyzed the use of advertising appeals in relation to the dimensions of national culture⁵ proposed by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1980). The cultural dimensions that were involved in the analyses included high-context and low-context cultures (dimension proposed by Hall, 1976), individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity (dimensions suggested by Hofstede, 1980).

A number of studies have observed that the use of appeals in advertisements is related to several cultural dimensions of national culture. For example, Albers-Miller

⁵ National culture refers to the values and beliefs of national groups that are defined by national borders (De Mooij, 2004).

and Gelb (1996) analyzed magazine advertisements of 11 countries⁶ and found that 1) the use of the advertising appeals 'dear', 'ornamental', 'status' and 'vain' was positively correlated to the cultural dimension of power distance, 2) the use of the appeals 'magic', 'untamed' and 'youth' was negatively associated with the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance, and 3) the use of the appeals 'convenient' and 'modest' was positively and negatively related to the cultural dimension of masculinity respectively. Similarly, Zandpour, Campos, Catalano, Chang, Cho, Hoobyar, Jiang, Lin, Madrid, Scheideler and Osborn (1994), and Zandpour and Harich (1996) investigated television commercials of eight countries⁷ and indicated that rational advertising appeals were likely to be employed by low-context cultures, whereas psychological appeals were likely to be used by collective cultures with high power distance.

Some other studies have demonstrated that the cultural dimensions of high-context/low-context cultures and individualism/collectivism affect the use of advertising appeals. Muller (1987) found that soft-sell appeals and status appeals were employed significantly in Japanese magazine advertisements, whereas hard-sell and product-merit appeals were used significantly in American magazine advertisements.

⁶ The sampled countries included USA, Taiwan, Japan, India, South Africa, Israel, France, Finland, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico.

⁷ The eight countries under investigation were USA, Taiwan, Mexico, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and South Korea.

She indicated that these results were associated with the collectivist and high-context Japanese culture, and the individualistic and low-context American culture. Consistently, Lin (2001) showed that hard-sell and product-merit appeals were significantly used more often in television commercials of USA than of PRC due to the low-context American culture versus the high-context Chinese culture. She also noted that while individual/independence appeals appeared more often in American commercials, group consensus appeals were used more often in Chinese commercials. She explained that these results were attributed to the individualistic American culture, and the collectivist Chinese culture respectively. The studies of Jeon, Franke Huhmann and Phelps (1999), and Cho, Kwon, Gentry, Jun and Kropp (1999) exhibited that the common use of emotional appeals in Korean advertisements was related to the high-context Korean culture. In comparison, the prevalent use of rational appeals in American advertisements was due to the individualistic culture of the country as American consumers tended to rely on the given information for making decisions on their own.

The relationship between low-context/high-context cultures and the use of advertising appeals has also been indicated in the studies of Biswas, Olsen and Carlet (1992), Mueller (1992), Lin (1993), and Chung and Ahn (1999). Biswas, Olsen and

Carlet (1992) found that the greater use of informative appeals in American magazine advertisements was associated with the low-context culture of USA, while the greater use of emotional appeals in French magazine advertisements was related to the high-context culture of France. Mueller (1992) observed that soft-sell appeals were common in Japanese magazine advertisements as Japan was a high-context culture. Similar observation was found in the study of Lin (1993), which stated that the greater use of soft-sell appeals in Japanese commercials versus the greater use of hard-sell appeals in American commercials could be understood in terms of the high-context culture of Japan versus the low-context culture of USA. Apart from print and broadcast advertisements, the relationship between low-context/high-context cultures and the use of advertising appeals was also identified in web advertisements. Chung and Ahn (1999) reported that informative appeals were significantly used more often in American web advertisements than in Korean web advertisements. They elaborated that the result reflected the low-context American culture and the high-context Korean culture.

The effects of the cultural dimension individualism-collectivism on the use of advertising appeals were also demonstrated in the studies by Frith and Sengupta (1991), and Frith and Wesson (1991). Frith and Sengupta investigated magazine

advertisements from USA, Great Britain and India and showed that individualistic appeals were used most in the American advertisements but least in the Indian advertisements. They suggested that the cross-cultural difference in the use of individualistic appeals was due to the individualistic orientation of the American culture and the collective orientation of the Indian culture. Similarly, Frith and Wesson (1991) found that individualistic appeals were more common in American magazine advertisements than in British magazine advertisements. They linked the result to the less individualistic orientation of the British culture than of the American culture.

2.2.1.2 Consumer Culture and Advertising Appeals

A considerable number of studies have analyzed the use of advertising appeals in relation to the development of consumer culture⁸ of different societies. Tse et al. (1989) revealed that while newspaper advertisements from Hong Kong emphasized hedonistic appeals, newspaper advertisements from PRC stressed utilitarian appeals, and Taiwanese newspaper advertisements were in the midst and appeared to use hedonistic appeals and utilitarian appeals in a more balanced way. Tse et al. (1989) explained these results in terms of the different economic developments and consumer

⁸ Consumer culture means consumers' aspirations for consumption. The aspirations can generally be utilitarian or symbolic in nature. Changes of the aspirations can be understood as responses to societal developments (for example, economic development) (Leiss et al., 2005).

cultures of the three societies. For example, it was observed that consumers in Hong Kong enjoyed a high level of economic development and thus consumers in Hong Kong were allowed to search for hedonism via consumption. This resulted in the heavy use of hedonistic appeals in the advertisements from Hong Kong. In contrast, the level of economic development of PRC was the lowest among the three societies under investigation, and thus the authors found that consumers in PRC were more pragmatic toward consumption and therefore more utilitarian appeals were used for matching the utilitarian needs of consumers. Rice and Lu (1988) had similar remark on the association between consumer culture and the use of advertising appeals in advertisements from PRC. They indicated that the prevalence of informative appeals in Chinese magazine advertisements was due to the fact that consumers in PRC did not have much disposable income at that time. Thus, Chinese consumers were more utilitarian-oriented and preferred more informative appeals in advertisements in order to ensure that their purchase decisions were correct and their money would not be wasted. Rice and Lu (1988) further predicted that more symbolic appeals would appear in advertisements of PRC as consumer culture was likely to transform with the rapid economic development of the country.

The relationship between the use of symbolic advertising appeals and the development of the consumer culture of PRC has been confirmed by the studies of Cheng and Schweitzer (1996), Cheng (1997), McIntyre and Wei (1998), Chan and Cheng (2002), and Chan and Chan (2005). Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) indicated that the common use of symbolic appeals in Chinese television commercials was related to the fact that the consumer culture of PRC had gone beyond the product information stage. Meanwhile, they implied that the significant use of utilitarian appeals in the American commercials tended to be a reflection of the partial shift of the American consumer culture from being symbolic to being utilitarian. Cheng (1997) also related the greater use of symbolic appeals in television commercials of PRC to the economic boom of the country and the pursuit of hedonism among Chinese consumers. Consistently, McIntyre and Wei (1998) observed an upward trend of using symbolic appeals and a downward trend of using utilitarian appeals in Chinese advertisements of different media. They also associated the results with the political and socio-economic developments of PRC. Besides, Chan and Cheng (2002) reported that while television commercials in PRC commonly used symbolic appeals, more utilitarian appeals were employed in the commercials of Hong Kong. They indicated that the results tended to be related to the differential developments of consumer markets in PRC and Hong Kong. Lastly, Chan and Chan (2005) demonstrated that the

decreasing use of informative appeals in television commercials of PRC was due to the fact that consumption in PRC became more conspicuous with the rapid economic development of the country.

The relationship between the transformation of consumer culture and the use of advertising appeals has also been shown in the studies of Belk and Pollay (1985a; 1985b; 1985c; 1985d), which presented the relationship in the context(s) of American and/or Japanese societies. Belk and Pollay (1985b; 1985c) demonstrated an escalating trend of using luxury and pleasure appeals and a decreasing trend of employing practicality and functionality appeals in both American and Japanese magazine advertisements. They explained the trends in terms of the economic developments of both countries as the developments allowed the growth of conspicuous consumption among American and Japanese consumers. Consistently, Belk and Pollay (1985a; 1985d) documented a downward trend of employing practical and functional appeals and an upward trend of employing luxury and pleasure appeals in analyzing American magazine advertisements with a longitudinal approach. Again, they related these trends to the economic development of USA with the resurgence after First and Second World War.

2.2.1.3 Subculture and Advertising Appeals

Apart from the national culture and consumer culture, it has been found that subculture⁹ also serves as a factor in influencing the use of advertising appeals. Mueller (1992) demonstrated that soft-sell appeals were more common in the women's magazines, whereas hard-sell appeals were more prevalent in the general interest/news magazines. She stated that different groups of target readers of the women's magazines and general interest/news magazines explained their different uses of advertising appeals. Tansey, Hyman and Zinkhan (1990) conducted a cross-cultural study on investigating the use of advertising appeals in American and Brazilian magazine automobile advertisements targeted at business executives. They showed that leisure appeals were used more frequently in the American advertisements, while urban appeals were employed more frequently in the Brazilian advertisements. They explained that the different uses of advertising appeals were due to the different subcultures of business executives of the countries. That is, American business executives tended to value leisure time but Brazilian business executives appeared to treasure an urban environment more. Finally, Zhang and Shavitt (2003) revealed that more individualistic and modern appeals were used in advertisements of lifestyle magazines targeted at the Chinese X-Generation (the rising middle class aged

⁹ Subculture refers to the values and beliefs that bear by a particular social group (De Mooij, 2004).

18-35 with high education and income) than advertisements targeted at the mass audience, indicating the association between subculture of a particular social group and the use of advertising appeals.

2.2.2 Studies on Product Category and Advertising Appeals

Considerable studies have recognized the importance of product category as a factor explaining the use of persuasive appeals in advertisements. It is noted that the influences of product category on advertising appeals can be divided into three aspects: level of product involvement and product nature, product type, and individual product categories.

2.2.2.1 Product Involvement and Product Nature

The level of product involvement¹⁰ and product nature were found to mediate the use of advertising appeals. Vaughn (1980, 1986) proposed a FCB (Foote, Cone and Belding) grid which delineated the different uses of advertising appeals based on the level of product involvement (high-low) and the nature of products/ decision-making of consumers (thinking-feeling) in terms of four quadrants. According to the FCB grid,

¹⁰ Bowen and Chaffee (1974) defined product involvement as ‘a direct outgrowth of the potential benefits or rewards the product holds for the consumer. The more complex the product in terms of its uses and other values, the greater the involvement’ (p.615). Bloch (1981) also suggested that products differ in their tendencies to arouse involvement — the amount of interest evoked by the particular product.

the first quadrant was characterized by the high product involvement and the thinking (pragmatic) nature of decision-making among consumers (with products like cars and houses). Therefore, the use of informative advertising appeals was recommended. In comparison, the second quadrant was featured by the high product involvement and the feeling (expressive) nature of decision-making among consumers (with products like jewelry and cosmetics). Thus, affective advertising appeals should be used. In contrast, the third quadrant was formed by the low product involvement (with products like food and household items) and the thinking nature of decision-making among consumers. In this case, advertising appeals were suggested to function like a reminder and provide brand-name information only. Finally, the fourth quadrant was constituted by the low product involvement (with products like cigarettes and liquors) and the feeling nature of decision-making among consumers. It was recommended that advertising appeals should present the satisfaction of consumers with the use of the advertised product.

Empirical studies by Mueller (1987), Weinberger and Spotts (1991), Mueller (1992), Tsao (1997), Wang, Jaw, Pinkleton and Morton (1997), Yoon and Cropp (1999), and Dahlen and Bergendahl (2001) have also indicated the relationship between levels of product involvement and the use of advertising appeals. Mueller

(1987) found that both American and Japanese magazine advertisements employed different appeals when advertising products of different levels of involvement. While product-merit, hard-sell and status appeals were usually used for advertising high involvement products in the American advertisements, product-merit appeals were used frequently when advertising low involvement products. Similarly, the Japanese advertisements used different appeals for selling products of different levels of involvement. For example, status, individual/independence and product-merit appeals were used when advertising high involvement products, whereas product-merit, soft-sell and status appeals were employed for advertising low involvement products. Mueller (1992) also demonstrated that Japanese magazine advertisements frequently used different appeals when advertising products of different levels of involvement. Additionally, Weinberger and Spotts (1991) showed that both American and British television commercials employed informational appeals when advertising high involvement and thinking products. However, entertaining appeals were used in the commercials of both countries when advertising low involvement and feeling products. Tsao (1997) further confirmed the effects of product involvement levels on using advertising appeals. He showed that both American and Taiwanese magazine advertisements used hard-sell appeals and appeals related to time-saving when advertising high involvement products. Consistently, Wang et al. (1997) noted the

common use of hard-sell appeals for advertising high involvement products in Taiwanese magazine advertisements.

Yoon and Cropp (1999) also exhibited that web advertisements of thinking products employed more informative appeals, whereas web advertisements of feeling products used more emotional appeals. Besides, Dahlen and Bergendahl (2001) found that banner advertisements worked better as transporters to target advertisements for thinking products but they worked better for advertisements of feeling products by enhancing advertisement impressions of consumers. Based on the findings, they suggested that advertisers of thinking products should highlight more informational appeals when advertising on the web, while advertisers of feeling products should employ more emotional appeals when advertising their products online.

2.2.2.2 Product Type

It was observed that product type serves as another factor influencing the use of advertising appeals. It has been indicated by previous literature that product types such as imported and joint-venture products, durable and nondurable products, and shared and personal products have influences on the use of appeals.

Cheng (1994), Cheng and Schweitzer (1996), and Cheng (1997) consistently demonstrated that the use of Western appeals (like the appeals 'individualism', 'modernity' and 'sex') were always associated with the advertisements of imported products and joint-venture products. Besides, Cutler and Javalgi (1992) revealed that the use of visual appeals was related to the durability of the advertised products. They concluded that visual appeals that featured the advertised product and the product's price in bigger sizes were commonly found in the advertisements of durable products in American, British and French magazine advertisements. In contrast, visual appeals that showed the advertised product with photographs only were frequently found in the advertisements of nondurable products. The study of Jeon et al. (1999) also indicated the relationship between the use of advertising appeals and the durability of products. They found that rational appeals were used more in Korean magazine advertisements of durable products than of nondurable products. Consistently, Abernethy and Franke (1996) reported from their meta-analysis of studies on informative appeals that more informative appeals were used in advertisements of durable products than in advertisements of non-durable products. Finally, Han and Shavitt (1994) concluded from their study of American and Korean magazine advertisements that individualistic appeals tended to appear frequently in advertisements of personal products than in advertisements of shared products.

2.2.2.3 Individual Product Category

Finally, it has been noted that the use of advertising appeals also hinges on individual product category. Zandpour, Chang and Catalano (1992) showed that informative appeals were prevalent in American, Taiwanese and French television commercials of personal care products, furniture, appliances, electronics, and household and lawn products. Zandpour et al. (1994) concluded from their content analysis of television commercials from 11 countries that while the commercials of food and beverages commonly employed a dramatic format¹¹ with little visual appeals, the commercials of personal care products and cosmetics were likely to use a drama-lecture format¹² with more visual appeals. Cheng (1994) indicated that the use of advertising appeals tied to individual product categories in magazine advertisements from PRC. For example, the appeals ‘quality’ and ‘economy’ were commonly found in the advertisements of household appliances, and the appeals ‘beauty’, ‘individualism’, ‘social status’, ‘youth’ and ‘sex’ were most often resort to the advertisements of cosmetics and fashion.

Several other studies also identified the impact of product category on the use of advertising appeals. Chan (1995), and Chan and Chan (2005) consistently revealed

¹¹ An Advertising strategy features an unnarrated event with character(s) and a plot.

¹² An Advertising strategy uses narration, plot and/or characters for appealing to the audience.

that informative appeals were mostly located in Chinese television commercials of durables and pharmaceuticals than in the commercials of other product categories. Lin and Salwen (1995) found that the appeals 'quality' and 'safety' commonly appeared in American television commercials of automobiles. Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) found that both Chinese and American television commercials employed different appeals when advertising different products. For example, the appeal 'modernity' was mostly found in Chinese commercials of automobiles, and the appeal 'economy' was used most in American commercials of medicine. Zandpour and Harich (1996) recognized from their content analysis of television commercials from eight countries that a lecture format¹³ was likely in the commercials of automobile, household and lawn products than in the commercials of food, beverage, personal care products, cosmetics and drugs. Chan (1999) concluded from her longitudinal study of newspaper advertisements in Hong Kong that product category was more determinant than time as a factor in explaining the use of advertising appeals in the advertisements. For instance, the appeal 'quality' was frequently identified in the advertisements of beauty products, clothing and household products, and the appeal 'social status' was commonly found in the advertisements of real estate.

¹³ An advertising strategy uses narration without any story and character for appealing to the audience.

Lin (2001) observed that cross-cultural similarities and variations in the use of advertising appeals were partly due to the effects of individual product categories. She noted that the significant differences between Chinese and American television commercials in the use of appeals were only found in the commercials of some product categories. For example, the cross-cultural differences in the use of soft-sell appeals were identified in the commercials of automobiles, beauty/personal products, food/drink, household appliances and medicines only. Chan and Cheng (2002) indicated that different advertising appeals were employed for selling different products in both television commercials from PRC and Hong Kong. Taking the commercials of PRC as examples, the appeal 'modernity' was used most in the commercials of automobiles, whereas the appeal 'family' commonly appeared in the commercials of household appliances. Khairullah and Khairullah (2002) reported that while the appeals 'adventure', 'effectiveness', 'quality' and 'technology' were frequently used in both American and Indian automobile magazine advertisements, the appeals 'adventure', 'enjoyment' and 'natural' were used most in the cigarette advertisements of both countries. Finally, Pashupati and Lee (2003) stated that the prevalent use of emotional appeals was identified mostly in Indian web advertisements of phone cards and online gift shops, while the frequent use of rational appeals was found in Korean web advertisements of health and medical products.

2.2.3 Studies on Advertising Situation and Advertising Appeals

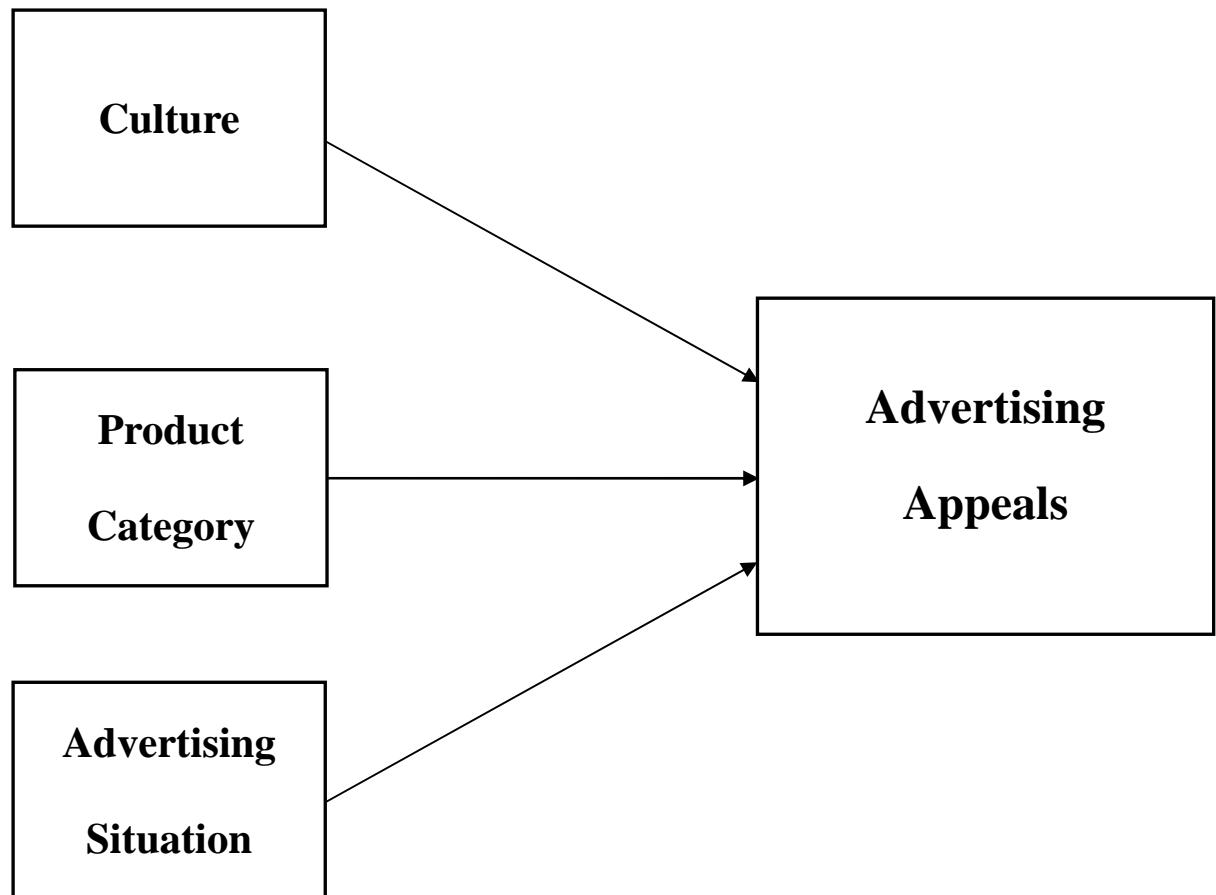
It should be noted that the relationship between advertising situation¹⁴ and advertising appeals was implied by few studies only. Among the studies, some revealed that informative appeals were commonly used in advertisements of the generally high-involving print media than in advertisements of the generally low-involving broadcast media. Abernethy and Franke (1996) concluded from their meta-analysis of studies on informative appeals that print advertisements contained most informational appeals, which were followed by radio advertisements, television commercials, and outdoor advertisements respectively. Consistently, Keown, Jacobs, Schmidt and Ghymn (1992) found that print advertisements contained more informative appeals than broadcast advertisements. Yoon and Cropp (1999) also lent support for the association between the heavy use of informative appeals and advertisements of print media (including internet advertising which was regarded as an extension of print advertising). Similarly, Sissors and Baron (2002) quoted recommendations from DDB Needham Worldwide that print advertisements were the best carriers of informative appeals.

¹⁴ In this study, advertising situation refers to the location where an advertisement is placed, and the expected timing and intentions of the audience when the advertisement is viewed. It is suggested that advertising situation can be high-involving or low-involving in nature in view of the situation's ability to arouse the audience's interest for their subsequent advertisement-viewing behavior.

2.3 Refinement of Previous Research on Advertising Appeals

A review of the existing literature reveal that culture, product category and advertising situation all have roles on affecting the use of advertising appeals. Nevertheless, a study of examining culture, product category and especially advertising situation as factors influencing the use of advertising appeals in the context of the Internet is largely absent. Hence, the present study attempts to contribute to the body of advertising research by exploring the specific effects of culture, product category and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals (see Figure 1). A comparative investigation of advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA was conducted for investigating the effects. It is hoped that the investigation will facilitate a more sophisticated understanding on the mechanism of using advertising appeals, and therefore advance explanations on the similarities and differences in the use of advertising appeals, particularly in a cross-cultural context.

Figure 1 A Proposed Framework for Understanding the Use of Advertising Appeals



2.4 Research Questions

Based on the research purposes of this study, three research questions are posed for examining the effects of culture, product category and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals:

1. What are the similarities and differences of advertising appeals, if any, between web automobile advertisements of PRC and USA? And why?
2. What are the differences of advertising appeals, if any, between automobile

banner advertisements and jump page advertisements? And why?

3. How is an effect of interaction between culture and advertising situation, if any, manifested in the use of advertising appeals in Chinese and American web automobile advertisements?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes research methods of the present study used to answer the research questions put forth in Chapter 2. This chapter first delineates the research design, followed by the characterization of the coding scheme and coding procedures of this study, and finally, the specific data analysis is described.

3.1 Research Design

In this section, the choice of content analysis as the study's research methodology, selection criteria of advertisements and sampling methods are explained.

3.1.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a widely applied research method in communication research to conduct different scientific investigations. It is a research method which involves coding the appearance of certain themes, terms and symbols in a sample of messages selected from media outlet(s), in order to identify the trends and/or patterns of what

has been said and/or how something has been said about certain institution(s), individual(s), event(s) and so forth. This research tool is primarily characterized by its objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). It enables such objective and systematic data analysis that it makes for strict adherence to a clear set of criteria and procedures when conducting research and presenting statistical results. Quantification can be achieved with content analysis by operationalizing the concept(s) concerned in a study on the basis of well-defined theoretical frameworks/typologies, and by defining categories and unit(s) of enumeration for making the coding of the relevant concept(s) viable.

Given the inherent strengths of content analysis, it is envisaged that its use as a research methodology in this present study will expatiate unbiased and systematic quantification of the patterns underlying uses of advertising appeals in the sampled advertisements, and reflect on any associated explanatory variables in terms of culture, product category, and advertising situation.

3.1.2 Selection of Country

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America (USA) were chosen for conducting a cross-cultural comparison on the use of advertising appeals. Two reasons underlie this country selection. First and foremost, PRC and USA were selected for analysis because of their different developments of consumer cultures. In this study, consumer culture is defined as consumers' aspirations for consumption which can generally be utilitarian or symbolic in nature. According to Leiss et al. (2005), there were four different developmental stages of consumer culture in response to diverse societal developments, and each stage was signaled by the distinctive use of utility appeals, product symbol appeals, personalization appeals, or lifestyle appeals respectively. As Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) suggested, PRC and USA were at different stages of developing a consumer culture when PRC was an emerging consumerist society while USA was a mature consumer society. Thus, the two countries were selected for investigating whether and how different stages of consumer cultures influence cross-cultural uses of advertising appeals as what Leiss et al. (2005) proposed.

Second, samples of web advertisements in this cross-cultural study were drawn from PRC and USA in view of the advent of web advertising in both countries. With

respect to profitability of web advertising, PRC and USA have recorded a growth of revenue in the sum of US\$2.4 billion (iResearch, 2005) and US\$9.6 billion (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2005) in 2004 respectively.

3.1.3 Selection of Medium and Advertising Form

The rationale for selecting web advertisements as the samples of this cross-cultural study on advertising appeals is two-fold. First, few advertising studies focus on investigating the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements, particularly in terms of examining the use of utilitarian versus symbolic advertising appeals. As literature review in Chapter 2 contends, most studies of advertising appeals have actually centered on investigating the use of utilitarian and symbolic appeals in traditional advertising media like print advertisements and television commercials. Thus, a study of advertising appeals with web advertisements as the focus seems worth undertaking. Second, the choice of web advertisements is also chiefly concerned with the research purpose of this study. As the present study seeks to investigate the relationship between culture and the use of advertising appeals, web advertisements, a form of global advertising, tend to be particularly suitable data sources in ascertaining and gauging what sort of role that culture plays on the use of advertising appeals on the Internet.

Besides, the selection of banner advertisements¹⁵ and jump page advertisements¹⁶, two advertising forms that represent web advertisements, is based on two considerations. First of all, since one of the aims of the present study is to determine if different advertising situations are associated with different uses of advertising appeals, banner advertisements and jump page advertisements were thus chosen because of their distinctive advertising situations. In this study, advertising situation is defined as a characteristic of the advertising environment, which refers to the location where an advertisement is placed, and the expected timing and intentions of the audience when the advertisement is viewed. Therefore, the advertising situations of banner advertisements and jump page advertisements are different in view of their locations, and the expected timing and purposes of the audience when the advertisements are viewed. Consequently, banner advertisements and jump page advertisements were chosen for analyzing the correlation between advertising situation and uses of advertising strategies.

Another consideration for the selection of banner advertisements and jump page advertisements is that banner advertisements (and thus the inner jump page

¹⁵ Banner advertisements are defined as little billboards with various sizes that spread across the top or bottom of web pages (Arens, 2002). They are exposed when the audience surfs on the web.

¹⁶ Jump page advertisements are defined as micro-sites which are reached via click-throughs from banner advertisements or buttons (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2005). They are viewed when the audience actively looks for more information from the advertisements.

advertisements as banner advertisements are always linked to jump page advertisements) have been prevalent web advertising forms in both PRC and USA. According to the statistics from iResearch (2005), banner advertisements were the most common form of web advertisements in PRC in 2004. Likewise, banner advertisements ranked the second most common form of web advertisements in USA in 2004 (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2005).

3.1.4 Selection of Product Category

The automobile was chosen as the product category under investigation in the present study. Three reasons necessitate this choice. First, it was pointed out that the automobile, as a kind of high involvement product, has more direct linkage to personal values (Lastovicka, 1979; Tansey et al., 1990). In turn, this means that automobile advertisements tend to be appropriate samples as this study seeks to verify the effects of consumer culture — consumers' values for consumption — on the use of advertising appeals. Second, the automobile was selected as the product category under examination because the automobile is regarded as a necessity in USA¹⁷ but a luxury product in PRC¹⁸ (in terms of the different consumption characteristics of the

¹⁷ With reference to the statistics of Census Bureau of the United States (2004), the automobile is a common product for the masses, an affordable item for most American households, and a product primarily functions as a means of transportation in USA.

¹⁸ With reference to the statistics of National Bureau of Statistics of China (2004), the automobile is an expensive product which is owned by the privileged, unaffordable by the masses, and serves as the source of pleasure among consumers in PRC.

automobile in the two countries like prices and types of owners) which helps examine whether different product types result in different uses of advertising appeals. Finally, the automobile was selected for study as it has represented one of the most frequently advertised product categories in web advertising in both PRC and USA (iResearch, 2005; Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2005).

3.1.5 Sampling

A total of 460 web automobile advertisements from PRC (230 advertisements) and USA (230 advertisements) were collected as samples of this study. The web advertisements were collected from popular portals¹⁹ of PRC and USA. They were selected to be data sources because of their functioning as primary hosts of web advertisements (including web automobile advertisements) enjoying main shares of web advertising revenues and web advertisers in both PRC and USA (iResearch, 2004-5; Nielsen//NetRatings, 2004-5). Specifically, three popular portals of each sampled country were selected as the sources of data collection. On the one hand, samples of PRC were collected from the portals of Sina, Sohu and Tom as the portals formed the primary hosts of web automobile advertisements in PRC (iResearch, 2004). On the other hand, samples of USA were drawn from the portals of Yahoo!, MSN and

¹⁹ Portals are defined as web sites that often serve as a starting point for a web user's session. They typically provide various services like search, news and e-mail (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2005).

Netscape, major portals enjoying high revenues of web advertising in USA (Hitwise Search Engine Ratings, 2004-5).

As this study investigates the use of advertising appeals in automobile banner advertisements and jump page advertisements, automobile banner and jump page advertisements from the selected Chinese and American popular portals then formed the sampling universe of the study. In particular, all automobile banner advertisements and their corresponding jump page advertisements appearing in the selected portals of PRC and USA within a six-month period from August 2004 to January 2005 were collected. Any duplicated advertisements and advertisements related to festivals (like Christmas and New Year) were excluded for the sake of preempting any potential bias stemming from these advertisements. This resulted in 296 samples of web automobile advertisements (148 banner advertisements and 148 jump page advertisements) from USA and 230 web automobile advertisements (115 banner advertisements and 115 jump page advertisements) from PRC. In order to maintain comparability of the samples from PRC and USA, 230 advertisements from USA (115 banner advertisements and their 115 corresponding jump page advertisements, which are the same as the Chinese samples) were randomly selected. In sum, this produced the final 460 web automobile advertisements (230 advertisements from PRC and another 230

advertisements from USA) making up the entire sample of the study. This sample size is deemed satisfactory as it is recommended that a sample size of 100 advertisements per country is desirable for conducting cross-cultural advertising research (Sin, Hung and Cheung, 2001).

3.2 Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis of the present study was each banner advertisement and each jump page advertisement. Thus, the coding frame of the present study was designed to measure the use of advertising appeals in the banner and jump page advertisements from PRC and USA. The coding frame was developed based on Pollay's (1983) typology of measuring cultural values in advertising in view of the close relationship between cultural values and advertising appeals as suggested in section 2.1. A pretest of about 10 percent of samples of the current study (12 banner advertisements and 12 jump page advertisements each from PRC and USA) was conducted to test the applicability of Pollay's (1983) framework. This resulted in the final coding frame which comprised 24 advertising appeals. A codebook with operationalizations for each of the 24 advertising appeals was prepared (see Table 1).

The 24 advertising appeals of the coding frame can be further categorized into

two groups: utilitarian appeals and symbolic appeals. As stated in section 2.1, utilitarian appeals refer to messages that focus on functional features of products, which include such appeals as ‘beauty’, ‘convenience’, ‘durability’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘economy’, ‘neatness’, ‘technology’ and ‘safety’. Comparatively, symbolic appeals denote messages that emphasize the social meaning of products, and images of the generalized users of the advertised product. Appeals such as ‘adventure’, ‘affiliation’, ‘community’, ‘distinctiveness’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘family’, ‘freedom’, ‘independence’, ‘maturity’, ‘modernity’, ‘popularity’, ‘relaxation’, ‘self-respect’, ‘social status’, ‘succorance’ and ‘tradition’ are the constituents of symbolic appeals.

Table 1 Operational Definitions of Advertising Appeals

| Appeal | Operational Definitions |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Adventure ^{b, d} | This appeal suggests that the use of the advertised product will reflect the boldness, daring, bravery or thrills of an individual. |
| Affiliation ^{b, e} | This appeal emphasizes that product users are likely to be social and accepted or liked by peers and colleagues. |
| Beauty ^a | The emphasis here is on the beautiful or decorative characteristics of the advertised product and/or its components. |
| Community ^{b, e} | The appeal addresses the national identity of an individual. |
| Convenience ^a | This appeal stresses the versatile or handy nature of the product. |
| Distinctiveness ^{b, d} | This appeal regards an individual as being unique, tasteful or elegant with the use of the advertised product. |
| Durability ^a | The appeal highlights the long-lasting, stable or enduring features of the advertised product. |
| Economy ^a | The economical, inexpensive or cost-saving nature of the advertised product is emphasized. |
| Effectiveness ^a | This appeal focuses on the functional, efficient or powerful |

characteristics of the advertised product.

Table 1 (Continued)

| Appeal | Operational Definitions |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Enjoyment ^{b, e} | This appeal suggests that individuals can have fun and happiness or enjoy sensorial experiences with the use of the advertised product. |
| Family ^{b, d} | The emphasis of this appeal is on the individuals' family life or the companionship of family members. |
| Freedom ^{b, d} | The appeal portrays individuals as being liberal and indulgent. |
| Independence ^{b, d} | The emphasis here is on the autonomy and self-reliance of an individual. |
| Maturity ^{b, d} | This appeal describes an individual as possessing wisdom, and associated insight or mellowness of adults. |
| Modernity ^{b, c} | The new, advanced, improved or stylish nature of the advertised product is emphasized. |
| Neatness ^a | This appeal highlights tidiness, cleanness or being free from dirt as product characteristics or functions. |
| Popularity ^{b, c} | The well-known and universal nature of the advertised product is stressed by this appeal. |
| Relaxation ^{b, e} | This appeal portrays an individual as being laid-back or at ease with the use of the advertised product. |
| Safety ^a | Secure (from external threats) and absence of potential injuries or other risks are described as product features. |
| Self-respect ^{b, d} | The focus here is on the self-satisfaction and pride of an individual. |
| Social Status ^{b, c} | This appeal emphasizes that the advertised product is able to reflect/enhance an individual's social position and prestige. The pride of ownership is also stressed by this appeal. |
| Succorance ^{b, d} | This appeal attempts to let an individual feel deserved, loved or cared by someone else or by the advertiser. |
| Technology ^a | The emphasis here is on the engineered, formulated or manufactured characteristics of the advertised product. This appeal also suggests that the advertised product is a result of science, invention or research. |
| Tradition ^{b, c} | This appeal describes the advertised product as being classic, historical, legendary or time-honored. |

^a Utilitarian appeal; ^b Symbolic appeal; ^c Product symbol appeal; ^d Personalization appeal; ^e Lifestyle appeal

In a bid to conducting a more sophisticated analysis of advertising appeals, the symbolic advertising appeals are further divided into three types of appeals (product symbol appeals, personalization appeals and lifestyle appeals) based on the model of Leiss et al. (2005). As described in section 2.1, product symbol appeals are defined as advertising strategies that emphasize social meaning of products which are symbolic in nature. The product symbol appeals examined in this study comprised the appeals ‘modernity’, ‘popularity’, ‘social status’ and ‘tradition’. In contrast, personalization appeals stress the personality, self-identity and interpersonal relationship of consumers. Personalization appeals investigated in this study include the appeals ‘adventure’, ‘distinctiveness’, ‘family’, ‘freedom’, ‘independence’, ‘maturity’, ‘self-respect’, and ‘succorance’. Similar to personalization appeals, lifestyle appeals are also symbolic in nature but the focus of lifestyle appeals is on the social or group identity of consumers through projecting the stereotypical activities appropriate to or typical of the social groups (for instance, state and class) that consumers belong to. The appeals, ‘affiliation’, ‘community’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘relaxation’, are lifestyle appeals under investigation in this study.

Multiple appeals (instead of the most dominant appeal) appearing in each

sampled advertisement were coded according to the coding frame. It is envisaged that this practice will be conducive to a relatively sophisticated analysis of advertising appeals for examining the specific effects of culture, product category and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals. The coding of the multiple appeals was based on both verbal and visual cues in the sampled advertisements. Additionally, each advertising appeal was coded on a four-point scale, ranging from 'absent use' (coded as 1) to 'weak use' (coded as 2) to 'moderate use' (coded as 3) and 'strong use' (coded as 4). The use of scale in lieu of dichotomy for measuring each advertising appeal was based on the consideration that observed cross-cultural differences in the use of advertising appeals tended to be differences in degree rather than in kind (Mueller, 1987). The four-point scale was developed with reference to the guidelines devised by Pollay (1983) on coding advertising themes. Specifically, a particular advertising appeal was coded as 'strong use' whenever it was emphasized in headings and/or illustrations of the sampled advertisements. Accordingly, an advertising appeal would be coded as 'moderate use' whenever it was clearly and explicitly manifested in body copy of the sampled advertisements. Further, 'weak use' of a particular advertising appeal was coded whenever the appeal was conveyed implicitly either through illustration or body copy of the sampled advertisements. Finally, an advertising appeal would be coded as 'absent use' whenever it was not mentioned in

the sampled advertisements.

3.3 Coding Procedures

Samples in the present study were mainly coded by the author. Two reasons explain the use of this coding strategy. The first reason is that this coding strategy allowed the author to have more hands-on experience in analyzing contents of all samples in this study. This would facilitate seeking out expected and unexpected results on the use of advertising appeals in relation to the factors of culture, product category and advertising situation. The second reason is borne out of the practical concern that it is very difficult, if not entirely impossible, for a graduate student to hire two native graduate students to code over 200 web advertisements each (especially coding the multi-faceted jump page advertisements) due to budget constraints. Nevertheless, native graduate students were still employed for checking the inter-coder reliability of this study to ensure the objectivity of the author's coding.

Specifically, the inter-coder reliability was checked by randomly selecting 10 percent of web advertisements per country (24 web advertisements each from PRC or USA, of which 12 advertisements were banner advertisements and the other 12 advertisements were jump page advertisements) and coded by one Chinese graduate student and one American graduate student who did not know the research questions

of this study. Training sessions were delivered to the native coders in which the author reviewed all conceptual and operational definitions associated with the coding scheme of this study, and briefed coding instructions. The coders were also given about 10 sampled banner and jump page advertisements (other than those selected advertisements for conducting the inter-coder reliability) for practising coding the advertisements according to the coding instructions, and clarifications were made afterwards to enhance coding skills of the coders. After that, the 10 percent selected web advertisements for conducting the inter-coder reliability were coded independently by the native coders and the bilingual author. When the native coders completed their coding, their results were compared item by item with those obtained by the author. Consequently, the coefficient of reliability, which was calculated according to the formula proposed by Holsti (1969) (the ratio of the total coding agreements to the total coding decisions for each measure), between the Chinese coder and the author ranged from 88 percent to 100 percent for the selected Chinese web advertisements, and the coefficient of reliability between the American coder and the author ranged from 86 percent to 100 percent for the selected American web advertisements. These coefficients of reliability met the standard of content analysis in advertising research as Kassirjian (1977) stated that researchers could be quite satisfied with coefficients of reliability that reached 85 percent.

3.4 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform data analysis.

Appropriate statistical tests were applied to analyze data according to the research questions of this study. A review of the research questions seems necessary before delineating specific procedures of data analysis. The research questions are:

1. What are the similarities and differences of advertising appeals, if any, between web automobile advertisements of PRC and USA? And why?
2. What are the differences of advertising appeals, if any, between automobile banner advertisements and jump page advertisements? And why?
3. How is an effect of interaction between culture and advertising situation, if any, manifested in the use of advertising appeals in Chinese and American web automobile advertisements?

Several statistical measures were selected to answer the first research question in which culture (of PRC versus USA) or product category (the automobile as a necessity versus a luxury product) serve(s) as the independent variable(s) while the dependent variable is the use of appeals in the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements. First of all, means of each advertising appeal appearing in the Chinese

and American advertisements were compared with an independent t-test to examine the similarities and differences in the use of individual advertising appeals between the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements. Then, items of each advertising appeal type (eight items of utilitarian appeals, 16 items of symbolic appeals, four items of product symbol appeals, eight items of personalization appeals and four items of lifestyle appeals) were summed up to form the respective indexes of utilitarian appeals, symbolic appeals, product symbol appeals, personalization appeals and lifestyle appeals. Subsequently, with indexes of each type of advertising appeals as the dependent variable, an independent t-test was applied again to further determine if similarities and differences exist in the use of each advertising appeal type between the Chinese and American web advertisements.

To answer the second research question in which advertising situation (of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements) serves as the independent variable whilst the manifestation of advertising appeals in the banner advertisements and jump page advertisements is the dependent variable, an independent t-test was performed to compare the means of using individual appeals between the banner advertisements and jump page advertisements. Additionally, means of advertising appeals per banner advertisement and per jump page advertisement were calculated for further gauging

the differences between the banner advertisements and jump page advertisements in the use of advertising appeals.

Finally, for addressing the third research question in which culture (of PRC versus USA) and advertising situation (of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements) are the independent variables, and uses of advertising appeals in the Chinese and American banner and jump page advertisements are the dependent variables, a two-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was conducted to test the interactive effect between culture and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals. In particular, means of each advertising appeal appearing in the Chinese and American banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements were calculated, followed by the respective performance of t-tests for further comparing and contrasting the use of advertising appeals in the banner advertisements versus in the jump page advertisements from PRC and USA.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As stated in Chapter 3, this study investigates advertising appeals used in web automobile advertisements between PRC and USA. This chapter is organized in relation to the three research questions raised. The focus is on investigating whether and how factors like 1) culture (of PRC versus USA), 2) product category (the automobile as a necessity versus a luxury product), 3) advertising situation (of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements), and 4) the interaction between culture and advertising situation affect advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements.

4.1 Comparison of Advertising Appeals in Chinese and American Web Automobile Advertisements

Tables 2-3 summarize the similarities and differences of advertising appeals between web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA from two aspects: 1) individual advertising appeals, and 2) the overall utilitarian and symbolic appeal

indexes.

4.1.1 Similarities of Advertising Appeals

Similarities of advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA are indicated primarily in their dominant advertising appeals. Table 2 indicates that the dominant advertising appeals between web automobile advertisements of PRC and USA were similar. Specifically, the six most dominant advertising appeals found in Chinese web automobile advertisements were ‘beauty’ (M=2.54), ‘modernity’ (M=2.53), ‘effectiveness’ (M=2.41), ‘economy’ (M=2.40), ‘enjoyment’ (M=2.05) and ‘safety’ (M=1.91). Comparatively, the six most dominant advertising appeals identified in American web automobile advertisements were ‘effectiveness’ (M=2.90), ‘beauty’ (M=2.84), ‘modernity’ (M=2.69), ‘economy’ (M=2.50), ‘safety’ (M=2.29) and ‘convenience’ (M=2.08). Suffice to note that most of the dominant advertising appeals in both American (five out of the six dominant appeals) and Chinese (four out of the six dominant appeals) web automobile advertisements are utilitarian in nature, in which four appeals were commonly used in the advertisements of both countries (including the appeals ‘economy’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘beauty’ and ‘safety’).

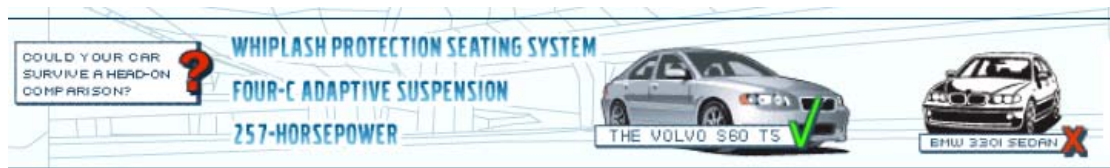
4.1.2 Differences of Advertising Appeals

Differences of advertising appeals in the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements can be found in respect of the significantly different uses of utilitarian and symbolic appeals.

4.1.2.1 Utilitarian and Symbolic Advertising Appeals

Although most of the dominant advertising appeals in the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements are utilitarian in nature, Table 2 exhibits that the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements differed in their uses of utilitarian and symbolic advertising appeals when the means of using these appeals were calculated. In particular, American advertisements scored higher means on all the eight utilitarian appeals than Chinese advertisements, in which six of them indicated significant differences between the two national samples: ‘beauty’ ($t=3.22$, $p<.01$), ‘convenience’ ($t=6.19$, $p<.001$), ‘durability’ ($t=5.69$, $p<.001$), ‘effectiveness’ ($t=3.96$, $p<.001$), ‘neatness’ ($t=4.12$, $p<.001$), and ‘safety’ ($t=3.10$, $p<.01$). Illustration 1 shows the strong use of utilitarian appeals in an American web automobile advertisement.

Illustration 1 Utilitarian Appeals in an American Web Automobile Advertisement



(Volvo)

Comparatively, Chinese web automobile advertisements scored higher means than American web automobile advertisements on seven out of the eight symbolic advertising appeals which showed significant differences between the two national samples. These significantly different symbolic appeals included ‘community’ ($t=-2.18$, $p<.05$), ‘distinctiveness’ ($t=-3.39$, $p<.01$), ‘freedom’ ($t=-2.24$, $p<.05$), ‘independence’ ($t=-2.15$, $p<.05$), ‘maturity’ ($t=-3.59$, $p<.001$), ‘social status’ ($t=-6.26$, $p<.001$), and ‘succorance’ ($t=-4.37$, $p<.001$). The only symbolic appeal, which was used more often for American advertisements and demonstrated a significant difference between the two national samples, was ‘adventure’ ($t=2.48$, $p<.05$). Illustration 2 indicates the distinctive use of symbolic appeals in a Chinese web automobile advertisement.

Illustration 2 Symbolic Appeals in a Chinese Web Automobile Advertisement



(Headline: This New and Magnificent Volvo is Specially Designed for the Minority of

Table 2 Advertising Appeals in Web Automobile Advertisements of

| PRC and USA | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Advertising Appeal | PRC (N=230) | USA (N=230) | t-value |
| | Mean | Mean | df=458 |
| Adventure | 1.02 | 1.10 | 2.48* |
| Affiliation | 1.06 | 1.10 | 0.91 |
| Beauty | 2.54 | 2.84 | 3.22** |
| Community | 1.14 | 1.04 | -2.18* |
| Convenience | 1.47 | 2.08 | 6.19*** |
| Distinctiveness | 1.30 | 1.09 | -3.39** |
| Durability | 1.11 | 1.39 | 5.69*** |
| Economy | 2.40 | 2.50 | 0.77 |
| Effectiveness | 2.41 | 2.90 | 3.96*** |
| Enjoyment | 2.05 | 1.96 | -0.80 |
| Family | 1.29 | 1.30 | 0.06 |
| Freedom | 1.26 | 1.13 | -2.24* |
| Independence | 1.17 | 1.07 | -2.15* |
| Maturity | 1.14 | 1.02 | -3.59*** |
| Modernity | 2.53 | 2.69 | 1.21 |
| Neatness | 1.19 | 1.39 | 4.12*** |
| Popularity | 1.31 | 1.22 | -1.29 |
| Relaxation | 1.83 | 2.01 | 1.71 |
| Safety | 1.91 | 2.29 | 3.10** |
| Self-respect | 1.43 | 1.31 | -1.46 |
| Social Status | 1.46 | 1.05 | -6.26*** |
| Succorance | 1.90 | 1.46 | -4.37*** |
| Technology | 1.69 | 1.83 | 1.53 |
| Tradition | 1.26 | 1.19 | -1.13 |

p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

To clearly compare the overall trend of using utilitarian and symbolic advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements of PRC and USA, eight items of utilitarian

appeals and 16 items of symbolic appeals were first summed up to form the utilitarian appeal indicator or index and the symbolic appeal index respectively. Note that as symbolic appeals can be further categorized into 1) product symbol appeals (4 items), 2) personalization appeals (8 items), and 3) lifestyle appeals (4 items) as described in section 3.2, three more indexes were constructed for these three sub-categories of symbolic appeals. Subsequently, the indexes — utilitarian appeals, symbolic appeals, symbolic-product symbol appeals, symbolic-personalization appeals, and symbolic-lifestyle appeals — were used to further distinguish uses of advertising appeals in Chinese and American web automobile advertisements. As Table 3 suggests, American web automobile advertisements ($M=17.24$) generally employed more utilitarian appeals than Chinese web automobile advertisements did ($M=14.72$). This cross-cultural difference was statistically significant ($t=4.89$, $p<.001$). In comparison, Chinese web automobile advertisements significantly used more symbolic appeals than American web automobile advertisements, both on the general symbolic appeals (PRC- $M=23.13$, USA- $M=21.72$; $t=-3.04$, $p<.01$), and on the specific types of symbolic appeals—the product symbol appeals (PRC- $M=6.56$, USA- $M=6.14$; $t=-2.09$, $p<.05$) and the personalization appeals (PRC- $M=10.50$, USA- $M=9.47$; $t=-4.49$, $p<.001$). Illustrations 3 and 4 demonstrate the outstanding use of product symbol appeals and personalization appeals in the Chinese web automobile

advertisements respectively. The index of lifestyle appeals reported no significant difference between the two national samples.

Illustration 3 Product Symbol Appeals in a Chinese Web Automobile Advertisement



(Headline: Emphasizing One's Nobility — Jaguar New XJ)

Illustration 4 Personalization Appeals in a Chinese Web Automobile Advertisement

| SUNNY 阳光 | 外观 内饰 | 性能 技术/规格 | 安全性 写真馆 |
|---|----------|-------------|------------|
| <p>时尚动力 阳光魅力</p>  <p>优雅时尚的内外造型， 充实的装备， 卓越非凡的动力与性能， 超越同等级的轿车</p> <p>SUNNY 只那些修养高雅、积极向上、充满自信， 内心潜藏热情并不断提升自我感知， 同时懂得享受生活的人们所拥有。</p> | | | |

(Extract of body copy: Only those individuals, who are elegant, ambitious, confident, passionate and value self-actualization and enjoyment, deserve owning this car — Sunny)

**Table 3 The Overall Utilitarian and Symbolic Advertising Appeal
Indexes in Web Automobile Advertisements of PRC and USA**

| Advertising Appeal Index | PRC (N=230) Mean | USA (N=230) Mean | t-value df=458 |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Utilitarian Appeals Index | 14.72 | 17.24 | 4.89*** |
| Symbolic Appeals Index | 23.13 | 21.72 | -3.04** |
| Symbolic-Product Symbol Appeals Index | 6.56 | 6.14 | -2.09* |
| Symbolic-Personalization Appeals Index | 10.50 | 9.47 | -4.49*** |
| Symbolic-Lifestyle Appeals Index | 6.08 | 6.11 | 0.18 |

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

4.2 Comparison of Advertising Appeals between Automobile Banner and Jump

Page Advertisements

Differences between the automobile banner and jump page advertisements in the use of advertising appeals are observed in Tables 4-5. There are two primary differences between the automobile banner advertisements and jump page advertisements: 1) the mean number of advertising appeals per advertisement, and 2) their mean scores on each advertising appeal.

First, it is the mean number of advertising appeals per advertisement that distinguishes the automobile banner advertisements from the automobile jump page

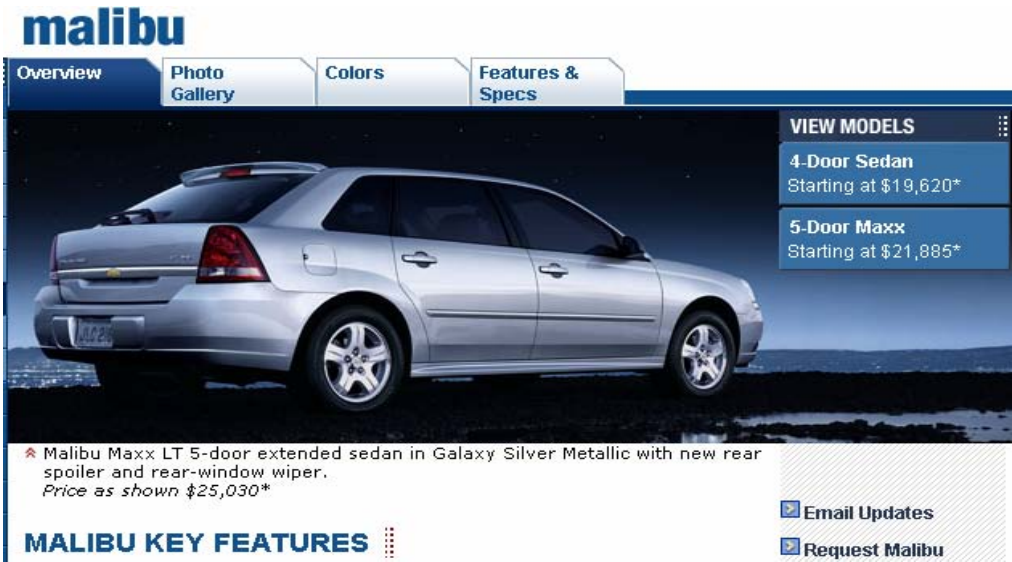
advertisements. As seen in Table 4, much more advertising appeals were employed per jump page advertisement (M=10.17) than per banner advertisement (M=3.43), and a significant difference was thus found ($t=-26.76$, $p<.001$). Illustrations 5 and 6 exhibit different uses of advertising appeals in a banner advertisement versus a jump page advertisement.

Illustration 5 Use of Few Appeals in a Banner Advertisement



(Chevrolet)

Illustration 6 Use of More Appeals in a Jump Page Advertisement



(Chevrolet)

Second, another difference between the automobile banner advertisements and

jump page advertisements is revealed from the means that they scored on each advertising appeal. As shown in Table 5, the jump page advertisements scored much higher means than the banner advertisements on all advertising appeals manifested (except the appeal ‘community’), indicating the higher frequency/degree of using the appeals in the jump page advertisements than in the banner advertisements. The big gap on the mean scores of each advertising appeal between the banner advertisements and the jump page advertisements caused significant differences for most advertising appeals between the two types of advertisements.

Table 4 Mean Number of Advertising Appeals per Advertisement in Automobile Banner Advertisements and Jump Page Advertisements

| Advertising Appeals | Banner Ads (N=230) Mean | Jump Page Ads (N=230) Mean | t-value df=458 |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mean Number of Advertising Appeals per Advertisement | 3.43 | 10.17 | -26.76*** |

*** p<.001

Table 5 Advertising Appeals in Automobile Banner Advertisements and Jump Page Advertisements

| Advertising Appeal | Banner Ads (N=230) Mean | Jump Page Ads (N=230) Mean | t-value df=458 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Adventure | 1.02 | 1.10 | -2.78** |
| Affiliation | 1.03 | 1.12 | -2.28* |
| Beauty | 2.13 | 3.26 | -14.17*** |
| Community | 1.10 | 1.08 | 0.59 |
| Convenience | 1.29 | 2.26 | -10.47*** |

| | | | |
|-----------------|------|------|-----------|
| Distinctiveness | 1.07 | 1.33 | -4.27*** |
| Durability | 1.01 | 1.50 | -10.78*** |

Table 5 (Continued)

| Advertising Appeal | PRC (N=230) Mean | USA (N=230) Mean | t-value df=458 |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Economy | 1.97 | 2.93 | -7.90*** |
| Effectiveness | 2.13 | 3.19 | -9.20*** |
| Enjoyment | 1.48 | 2.53 | -10.84*** |
| Family | 1.10 | 1.49 | -6.00*** |
| Freedom | 1.10 | 1.28 | -2.99** |
| Independence | 1.02 | 1.22 | -4.57*** |
| Maturity | 1.02 | 1.14 | -3.59*** |
| Modernity | 2.55 | 2.67 | -0.94 |
| Neatness | 1.05 | 1.53 | -10.43*** |
| Popularity | 1.10 | 1.43 | -4.86*** |
| Relaxation | 1.24 | 2.60 | -15.65*** |
| Safety | 1.26 | 2.93 | -17.60*** |
| Self-respect | 1.18 | 1.55 | -4.70*** |
| Social Status | 1.13 | 1.38 | -3.63*** |
| Succorance | 1.35 | 2.00 | -6.61*** |
| Technology | 1.15 | 2.37 | -15.44*** |
| Tradition | 1.06 | 1.39 | -5.24*** |

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

4.3 An Effect of Interaction between Culture and Advertising Situation on Advertising Appeals in Web Automobile Advertisements

Tables 6-8 indicate an effect of interaction²⁰ between culture and advertising situation on advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements. The interaction was shown in the advertising appeals found in both the banner and jump page advertisements, and in the individual advertising forms.

²⁰ An effect of interaction between culture and advertising situation was found when a particular appeal was frequently used only for a particular culture in a particular advertising situation.

4.3.1 Advertising Appeals by Culture by Advertising Situation

Table 6 features those advertising appeals in which significant interactive effects between culture and advertising situation were identified. Those advertising appeals included ‘beauty’ ($F=27.41$, $p<.001$), ‘distinctiveness’ ($F=4.71$, $p<.05$), ‘durability’ ($F=45.28$, $p<.001$), ‘economy’ ($F=20.11$, $p<.001$), ‘effectiveness’ ($F=4.14$, $p<.05$), ‘independence’ ($F=4.85$, $p<.05$), ‘maturity’ ($F=5.28$, $p<.05$), ‘neatness’ ($F=18.35$, $p<.001$), ‘popularity’ ($F=5.51$, $p<.05$), ‘safety’ ($F=13.86$, $p<.001$), ‘social status’ ($F=4.71$, $p<.05$), and ‘technology’ ($F=7.14$, $p<.01$). Specific interaction between culture and advertising situation associated with those advertising appeals, in which the significant interactive effects were found, are reported in Tables 7-8 in details.

Table 6 Advertising Appeals in Web Automobile Advertisements by Culture by Advertising Situation

| Advertising Appeals | <u>PRC</u> | | <u>USA</u> | | F-value of Interactive Effect | F-value of Main Effect (Culture) | F-value of Main Effect (Advertising Situation) |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| | <u>Banner</u> | <u>Jump</u> | <u>Banner</u> | <u>Jump</u> | | | |
| | <u>Ads</u> | <u>Page</u> | <u>Ads</u> | <u>Page</u> | | | |
| | (N=115) | (N=115) | (N=115) | (N=115) | | | |
| | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean | | | |
| Adventure | 1.00 | 1.04 | 1.03 | 1.16 | 1.75 | 6.25* | 7.81** |
| Affiliation | 1.03 | 1.10 | 1.04 | 1.15 | 0.21 | 0.83 | 5.21* |
| Beauty | 2.17 | 2.90 | 2.08 | 3.61 | 27.41*** | 15.87*** | 218.88*** |
| Community | 1.15 | 1.13 | 1.06 | 1.03 | 0.40 | 4.75* | 0.35 |
| Convenience | 1.06 | 1.88 | 1.52 | 2.64 | 2.99 | 48.55*** | 121.44*** |
| Distinctiveness | 1.10 | 1.50 | 1.03 | 1.16 | 4.71* | 12.05** | 18.82*** |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Durability | 1.01 | 1.22 | 1.01 | 1.77 | 45.28**** | 45.28**** | 138.68**** |
| Economy | 2.19 | 2.62 | 1.76 | 3.25 | 20.11**** | 0.70 | 64.92**** |

Table 6 (Continued)

| Advertising Appeals | <u>PRC</u> | | <u>USA</u> | | F-value of Interactive Effect | F-value of Main Effect (Culture) | F-value of Main Effect (Advertising Situation) |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| | <u>Banner</u> | <u>Jump</u> | <u>Banner</u> | <u>Jump</u> | | | |
| | <u>Ads</u> | <u>Page</u> | <u>Ads</u> | <u>Page</u> | | | |
| | (N=115) | <u>Ads</u> | (N=115) | <u>Ads</u> | | | |
| | | (N=115) | | (N=115) | | | |
| | Mean | Mean | Mean | Mean | | | |
| Effectiveness | 1.77 | 3.06 | 2.49 | 3.32 | 4.14* | 18.81**** | 88.41**** |
| Enjoyment | 1.57 | 2.53 | 1.39 | 2.53 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 117.30**** |
| Family | 1.11 | 1.47 | 1.08 | 1.51 | 0.35 | 0.00 | 35.82**** |
| Freedom | 1.13 | 1.38 | 1.08 | 1.17 | 1.84 | 5.10* | 9.06** |
| Independence | 1.02 | 1.31 | 1.02 | 1.12 | 4.85* | 4.85* | 21.20**** |
| Maturity | 1.04 | 1.23 | 1.00 | 1.04 | 5.28* | 13.33**** | 13.33**** |
| Modernity | 2.45 | 2.61 | 2.64 | 2.73 | 0.07 | 1.46 | 0.88 |
| Neatness | 1.04 | 1.33 | 1.06 | 1.72 | 18.35**** | 21.92**** | 117.90**** |
| Popularity | 1.06 | 1.56 | 1.13 | 1.30 | 5.51* | 1.78 | 23.86**** |
| Relaxation | 1.21 | 2.45 | 1.28 | 2.75 | 1.72 | 4.48* | 247.26**** |
| Safety | 1.24 | 2.57 | 1.28 | 3.30 | 13.86**** | 16.81**** | 329.20**** |
| Self-respect | 1.19 | 1.66 | 1.17 | 1.44 | 1.63 | 2.24 | 22.21**** |
| Social Status | 1.27 | 1.65 | 1.00 | 1.10 | 4.71* | 40.65**** | 14.43**** |
| Succorance | 1.51 | 2.28 | 1.19 | 1.72 | 1.50 | 20.95**** | 45.59**** |
| Technology | 1.18 | 2.19 | 1.12 | 2.55 | 7.14** | 3.58 | 243.07**** |
| Tradition | 1.03 | 1.49 | 1.08 | 1.30 | 3.40 | 1.35 | 27.62**** |

Note: This table represents a full-model of two-way ANOVA of the main affects of culture and advertising situation, and their interactive effect on uses of advertising appeals.

* p<.05; ** p<.01; **** p<.001

4.3.2 Advertising Appeals by Culture by Banner Advertisements or Jump Page

Advertisements only

Tables 7-8 present advertising appeals either in the Chinese and American

automobile banner advertisements only, or in their jump page advertisements only.

The two tables further elaborate how culture and advertising situation interact with respect to advertising appeals by showing that the advertising appeals (those interactive effects could be identified) were frequently used only for which culture (of PRC versus USA) in which advertising situation (of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements).

Table 7 shows that how the Chinese and American automobile banner advertisements differed in terms of the use of advertising appeals. Whereas the advertising appeals ‘convenience’ ($t=4.16, p<.001$) and ‘effectiveness’ ($t=4.08, p<.001$) were significantly used more often in American automobile banner advertisements, the advertising appeals ‘social status’ ($t=-3.67, p<.001$), ‘succorance’ ($t=-2.86, p<.01$) and ‘economy’ ($t=-2.37, p<.05$) significantly appeared more often in Chinese automobile banner advertisements. Note that those appeals that were significantly employed more often in the American automobile banner advertisements are all utilitarian in nature, while most of the appeals which significantly occurred more often in the Chinese automobile banner advertisements are symbolic in nature. Another finding is that few appeals under investigation indicated significant cross-cultural differences in the banner advertisements (five out of the total 24

advertising appeals).

Table 7 Advertising Appeals in Automobile Banner Advertisements by Culture

| Advertising Appeal | <u>PRC</u> Banner Ads (N=115) Mean | <u>USA</u> Banner Ads (N=115) Mean | Mean Difference | t-value df=228 |
|--------------------|---|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Adventure | 1.00 | 1.03 | 0.03 | 1.65 |
| Affiliation | 1.03 | 1.04 | 0.01 | 0.43 |
| Beauty | 2.17 | 2.08 | 0.09 | -1.01 |
| Community | 1.15 | 1.06 | 0.09 | -1.25 |
| Convenience | 1.06 | 1.52 | 0.46 | 4.16*** |
| Distinctiveness | 1.10 | 1.03 | 0.07 | -1.36 |
| Durability | 1.01 | 1.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Economy | 2.19 | 1.76 | 0.43 | -2.37* |
| Effectiveness | 1.77 | 2.49 | 0.72 | 4.08*** |
| Enjoyment | 1.57 | 1.39 | 0.18 | -1.24 |
| Family | 1.11 | 1.08 | 0.03 | -0.55 |
| Freedom | 1.13 | 1.08 | 0.05 | -0.83 |
| Independence | 1.02 | 1.02 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Maturity | 1.04 | 1.00 | 0.04 | 1.52 |
| Modernity | 2.45 | 2.64 | 0.19 | 0.98 |
| Neatness | 1.04 | 1.06 | 0.02 | 0.36 |
| Popularity | 1.06 | 1.13 | 0.07 | 1.02 |
| Relaxation | 1.21 | 1.28 | 0.07 | 0.72 |
| Safety | 1.24 | 1.28 | 0.04 | 0.32 |
| Self-respect | 1.19 | 1.17 | 0.02 | -0.21 |
| Social Status | 1.27 | 1.00 | 0.27 | -3.67*** |
| Succorance | 1.51 | 1.19 | 0.32 | -2.86** |
| Technology | 1.18 | 1.12 | 0.06 | -0.80 |
| Tradition | 1.03 | 1.08 | 0.05 | 0.83 |

p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

The differences in advertising appeals between the Chinese and American automobile jump page advertisements are reported in Table 8. In particular, the advertising appeals ‘beauty’ ($t=5.86$, $p<.001$), ‘convenience’ ($t=5.60$, $p<.001$), ‘durability’ ($t=6.81$, $p<.001$), ‘economy’ ($t=4.16$, $p<.001$), ‘neatness’ ($t=5.41$, $p<.001$), ‘safety’ ($t=4.87$, $p<.001$), ‘technology’ ($t=2.61$, $p<.05$), ‘adventure’ ($t=2.05$, $p<.05$) and ‘relaxation’ ($t=2.08$, $p<.05$) were significantly employed more often in the American automobile jump page advertisements, while the advertising appeals ‘distinctiveness’ ($t=-3.21$, $p<.01$), ‘freedom’ ($t=-2.15$, $p<.05$), ‘independence’ ($t=-2.25$, $p<.05$), ‘maturity’ ($t=-3.32$, $p<.01$), ‘popularity’ ($t=-2.12$, $p<.05$), ‘social status’ ($t=-5.21$, $p<.001$), and ‘succorance’ ($t=-3.58$, $p<.001$) were significantly used more often in the Chinese automobile jump page advertisements.

The data highlighted in Table 8 give rise to two revelations. First, whereas those advertising appeals that significantly appeared more often in the Chinese automobile jump page advertisements are all symbolic in nature, most of the advertising appeals that were significantly used more often in the American automobile jump page advertisements are utilitarian in nature. Second, most appeals under investigation demonstrated significant cross-cultural differences (16 out of the total 24 advertising

appeals) in the jump page advertisements.

Table 8 Advertising Appeals in Automobile Jump Page Advertisements by Culture

| Advertising Appeal | <u>PRC</u> | <u>USA</u> | Mean | t-value |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|----------|
| | Jump Page Ads (N=115) | Jump Page Ads (N=115) | Difference | |
| | Mean | Mean | | df=228 |
| Adventure | 1.04 | 1.16 | 0.12 | 2.05* |
| Affiliation | 1.10 | 1.15 | 0.05 | 0.81 |
| Beauty | 2.90 | 3.61 | 0.71 | 5.86*** |
| Community | 1.13 | 1.03 | 0.1 | -1.94 |
| Convenience | 1.88 | 2.64 | 0.76 | 5.60*** |
| Distinctiveness | 1.50 | 1.16 | 0.34 | -3.21** |
| Durability | 1.22 | 1.77 | 0.55 | 6.81*** |
| Economy | 2.62 | 3.25 | 0.63 | 4.16*** |
| Effectiveness | 3.06 | 3.32 | 0.26 | 1.84 |
| Enjoyment | 2.53 | 2.53 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Family | 1.47 | 1.51 | 0.04 | 0.37 |
| Freedom | 1.38 | 1.17 | 0.21 | -2.15* |
| Independence | 1.31 | 1.12 | 0.19 | -2.25* |
| Maturity | 1.23 | 1.04 | 0.19 | -3.32** |
| Modernity | 2.61 | 2.73 | 0.12 | 0.72 |
| Neatness | 1.33 | 1.72 | 0.39 | 5.41*** |
| Popularity | 1.56 | 1.30 | 0.26 | -2.12* |
| Relaxation | 2.45 | 2.75 | 0.3 | 2.08* |
| Safety | 2.57 | 3.30 | 0.73 | 4.87*** |
| Self-respect | 1.66 | 1.44 | 0.22 | -1.65 |
| Social Status | 1.65 | 1.10 | 0.55 | -5.21*** |
| Succorance | 2.28 | 1.72 | 0.56 | -3.58*** |
| Technology | 2.19 | 2.55 | 0.36 | 2.61* |
| Tradition | 1.49 | 1.30 | 0.19 | -1.65 |

* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

To conclude the findings from Tables 7-8, the interactive effect between culture

(of PRC versus USA) and advertising situation (of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements) on the use of advertising appeals becomes obvious. The utilitarian advertising appeals ‘beauty’, ‘durability’, ‘economy’, ‘neatness’, ‘safety’ and ‘technology’ were significantly employed more often in the American automobile jump page advertisements, whereas the symbolic advertising appeals ‘distinctiveness’, ‘independence’, ‘maturity’, ‘popularity’ and ‘social status’ were significantly used more often in the Chinese automobile jump page advertisements. Besides, the utilitarian appeal ‘effectiveness’ was used significantly more often in the American automobile banner advertisements.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented three significant results for the research questions in this study. First, it is observed that the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements shared most of the dominant advertising appeals used, while they significantly differed in terms of the use of utilitarian and symbolic advertising appeals. Second, the differences in the use of advertising appeals between the banner advertisements and jump page advertisements were found to lie in the mean number of advertising appeals per advertisement and the mean scores on each advertising appeal. Third, it is indicated that culture and advertising situation interact to influence

advertising appeals employed in the advertisements whereby the significant cross-cultural differences were mostly found in the jump page advertisements.

Possible explanations for the results are brought up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study attempts to fill in the gap in research on advertising appeals by investigating particularly the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals, and examining how culture, product category and advertising situation have influenced the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements from PRC and USA. Research findings of the present study are discussed in details in this chapter, which are followed by the implications and limitations of this study, as well as the suggestions for further research.

5.1 Discussion of Results

The cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of value appeals between the Chinese and American web automobile advertisements can be explained in terms of the effects of product category, culture and advertising situation.

5.1.1 The Effects of Product Category

Results of the present study (see Tables 2-3) indicate that 1) most of the dominant advertising appeals in both Chinese and American web automobile advertisements are utilitarian in nature, and 2) utilitarian appeals were used significantly more in the American web advertisements while symbolic appeals were employed significantly more in the Chinese web advertisements. Effects of product category, which include the effects of the level of product involvement (high, medium or low), the product nature (functional versus expressive) and the product type (necessity versus luxury), help explain the results.

5.1.1.1 Product Involvement and Product Nature

First, it is the high involvement nature of the automobile that exemplifies the dominant use of utilitarian appeals in web automobile advertisements of both PRC and USA. Since the automobile is a type of high involvement product, which people pay higher cost for purchasing it and take higher risk for making wrong decisions (Rice and Lu, 1988; Wang et al., 1997), the audience of web automobile advertisements is thus likely to search for more information actively from the advertisements in order to avoid any potential loss associated with the purchase. This explains why the Chinese and American advertising personnel employed utilitarian appeals as the dominant advertising appeals in their web automobile advertisements.

Paralleling with the findings of this study, the findings from previous studies also supported that the use of utilitarian appeals was associated with the high involvement nature of products (for example, Mueller, 1987; Mueller, 1992; Tsao, 1997).

Second, the functional product nature of automobiles also provides explanations for the dominant use of utilitarian appeals in both the Chinese and American automobile advertisements. In particular, functional products are those products which products' inherent features are important, and consumers of these products are perceived as 'thinkers' (Vaughn, 1980) as their purchase decisions are primarily logical and objective (based on functional facts). Since the automobile is a type of functional product, the rational purchase decisions of consumers can be expected and the dominant use of utilitarian appeals in web automobile advertisements can thus be understood.

Although utilitarian appeals are suggested to be suitable appeals for advertising high involvement and functional products (such as automobiles), it does not mean that only utilitarian advertising appeals should be used for advertising the products with the total absent use of symbolic appeals. As Vaughn (1980) put, advertising appeals in advertisements of high involvement and thinking products should be designed

following the classical hierarchy-of-effects sequence on consumers — awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase (abbreviated to the LEARN-FEEL-DO sequence). In turn, this suggests that the audience of automobile advertisements is likely to be attracted by utilitarian appeals first, which is followed by their interest on symbolic appeals. Thus, it is noteworthy that though utilitarian appeals were employed as the dominant appeals in web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA, utilitarian and symbolic appeals were used in the Chinese and American advertisements in varying degrees in relation to the diverse consumption characteristics of the automobile and consumer cultures in PRC and USA.

5.1.1.2 Product Type

Product type (necessity versus luxury product) serves as another dimension manifesting the effects of product category on the use of value appeals. It is argued that the automobile is considered as a necessity in USA but a luxury item in PRC. This explains the significantly frequent use of utilitarian appeals in American web automobile advertisements, and the significantly distinctive use of symbolic appeals in Chinese web automobile advertisements (particularly product symbol and personalization appeals).

The proposition that the automobile serves as a necessity in USA but as a luxury

item in PRC is made on the basis of the different consumption characteristics of the automobile (in terms of prices, types of owners and product nature) in USA and PRC. Belk (1999) defined luxury products as rare and expensive goods for the privileged few and were characterized by the pleasurable nature. In turn, this implies that necessities are those inexpensive goods which are common and affordable for the masses, and are featured by the 'comfortable' (Scitovsky, 1976, p.106) product nature (that is, consumers buy necessities for comfort).

It is shown that the automobile is a luxury product in PRC which is owned by the privileged (1.36 automobile per 100 households, National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2004), unaffordable by the masses (the average disposable income per individual in PRC was US\$1,086 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2004) but the lowest price for a new car is about US\$3,840), and serves as the source of pleasure (car owners in PRC could feel happy and proud for owning a car for more than a year, and they viewed their cars as a sign of success and the source of confidence, Television Broadcasts Limited, 2004). In contrast, the automobile is regarded as a necessity in USA since the automobile is a common product for the masses (1.28 automobile per household, Census Bureau of the United States, 2004), an affordable item for most American households (as median household income of USA was

US\$41,994 (Census Bureau of the United States, 2004) and the lowest price of a new car is only about US\$10,000), and a product primarily functions as a means of transportation instead of the source of pleasure.

The classification of the automobile as being a necessity in USA and a luxury in PRC is significant because this helps explain the different uses of value appeals in Chinese and American web automobile advertisements. Specifically, the primary function of necessities is to help consumers achieve a state of comfort, whereas the main function of luxuries is to assist consumers in seeking pleasure (Scitovsky, 1976; Campbell, 1987; Belk, 1999). In turn, this suggests that the utilitarian nature of necessities tends to result in the use of utilitarian appeals in advertisements for the purpose of addressing utilitarian values of necessities. In comparison, the pleasure-seeking emphasis of luxuries appears to be related to the distinctive use of symbolic appeals in advertisements as symbolic appeals seem to work better for arousing the feeling of pleasure among the audience by presenting them with the portrayal of ideal images for owning the product instead of the dry functionality of goods. Hence, since the automobile is considered as a necessity in USA, utilitarian appeals thus significantly appeared in American web automobile advertisements. In contrast, symbolic appeals were significantly used more in web automobile

advertisements of PRC when the automobile is regarded as a luxury.

5.1.2 The Effects of Culture

The present study demonstrates that symbolic advertising appeals were significantly employed more often in web automobile advertisements from PRC, whilst the utilitarian advertising appeals were used more often in web automobile advertisements of USA generally (see Tables 2-3). The result can be understood on the basis of different developmental stages of consumer cultures in PRC and USA (the construct of ‘consumer culture’ was explained in the section 3.1.2).

5.1.2.1 Consumer Culture in PRC

It has been suggested by results of this study and previous studies (for example, Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Li, 1998; Chan and Chan, 2005) that consumer culture of PRC has gone beyond the first stage and proceeded to the second and third stages of consumer culture as what Leiss et al.’s (2005) model²¹ suggested whereby uses of symbolic advertising appeals (particularly product symbol and personalization appeals) are distinctive. The socio-economic and cultural backgrounds which underlie the consumer culture of PRC, help provide contexts on understanding the significantly outstanding use of symbolic appeals in the web advertisements from PRC.

²¹ According to Leiss et al.’s (2005) model, there were four different developmental stages of consumer culture in response to diverse societal developments, and each stage was signaled by the distinctive use of utility appeals, product symbol appeals, personalization appeals, or lifestyle appeals respectively.

First and foremost, it is the socio-economic development of PRC that has led to the transformation of the consumer culture and the subsequent significantly frequent use of symbolic appeals in the Chinese advertisements. With the economic development of PRC, Chinese consumers have experienced the transformation from a Wen Bao (enough to eat) society to a Xiao Kang (well-to-do) society (Rice and Lu, 1988; Zhang, 2001; Chan and Chan, 2005) and enjoyed more disposable income spending on consumption. As Levy (1959) suggested, when the economy of a society prospered and the income of people markedly increased, consumers would not be as functionally oriented as they used to be. Consequently, consumers would put more emphasis on the symbolic meaning of products than on the practical attributes of products. Levy's (1959) suggestion seems particularly applicable in PRC as Chinese consumers tend to possess strong face²² consciousness and relate consumption to a strong social connotation (Bao, Zhou & Su, 2003). When Chinese consumers have higher disposable income, they appear to be ready for consuming products not only for the products' functionality, but also for the symbolic meaning that the products carry so as to preserve their face through expressing their social status and self-images via consumption. This explains the significantly frequent use of symbolic appeals

²² Face is defined as 'a sense of favorable social self-worth that a person wanted others to have him or her in a relational and network context' (Bao et al., 2003, p.736).

(especially product symbol and personalization appeals) in the web automobile advertisements from PRC for addressing the new wants of Chinese consumers.

The transition of economic structure from centrally-planned economy to market economy in PRC also helps explain the significantly distinctive use of symbolic appeals (particularly product symbol and personalization appeals) in the Chinese advertisements. Davis (2000) and Yan (2000) pointed out that massified consumption, of which consumers used more or less the same goods receiving from the government's agents, characterized the consumption patterns of PRC under centrally-planned economy. However, with the development of market economy since late 1970s, personal consumption was not suppressed anymore. It could be observed that consumers in PRC, similar to the experience of consumers in transitional economies like Eastern and Central Europe (Belk, 1999), started to consume symbolic meaning of goods to express their social status and individuality — something that they could not enjoy with the prior consumer deprivation and scarcity under the centrally-planned economy.

Finally, the globalization of consumer culture also provides cultural background to account for the significantly frequent use of symbolic appeals in the Chinese advertisements. As Ger, Belk and Lascu (1993), Shultz, Belk and Ger (1994), and

Belk (1999) mentioned, mass media and cultural exchanges helped diffuse good images of the developed Western consumption to consumers in transitional economies (like PRC). It is argued that being influenced by the global consumption images, consumers in PRC have learnt that consumption can be a way for negotiating status (that is, products as symbols) and identity (that is, personalization of products).

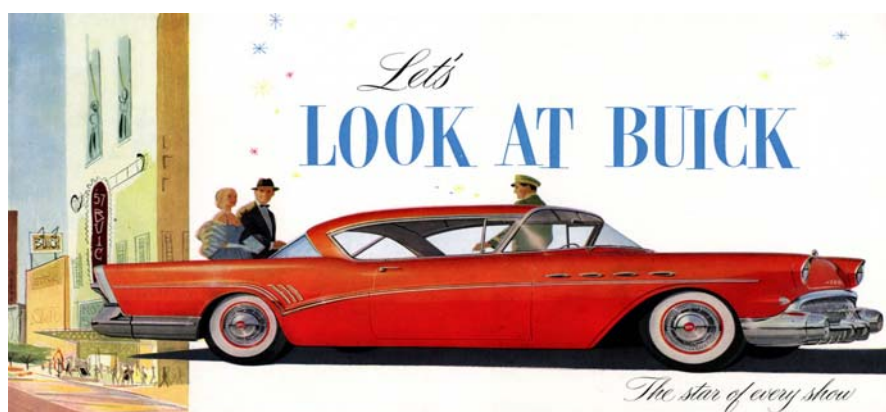
5.1.2.2 Consumer Culture in USA

Results of this study and some former advertising studies (for instance, Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996) have indicated that American society has been back to the first stage of consume culture as what Leiss et al.'s (2005) model suggested whereby utilitarian advertising appeals are prevailing. The maturity of consumer market, which serves as the social background for the American consumer culture, helps provide insights for explaining the significantly frequent use of utilitarian appeals in American web automobile advertisements.

With the maturity or sophistication of American consumer market and the accumulation of consumption experience among consumers, American consumers tend to be more sophisticated and knowledgeable who know how to judge quality and evaluate alternatives of consumer goods (Ger, Belk and Lascu, 1993; Cheng and

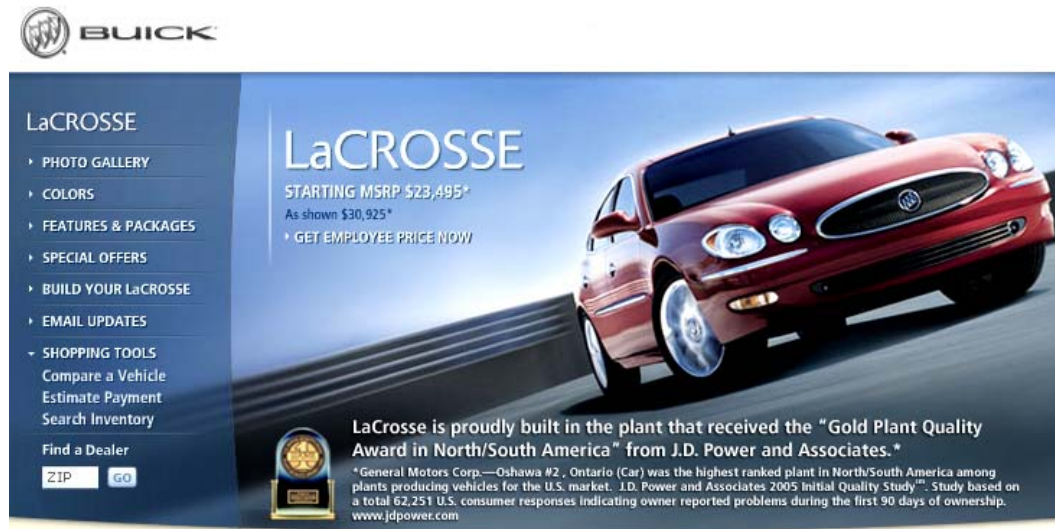
Schweitzer, 1996) primarily based on product information instead of the symbolic meaning of products. In turn, this implies that for achieving the purpose of product or brand differentiation in the highly competitive American market, the advertising personnel in USA appear to see the need to use more utilitarian appeals in advertisements to spell out the true values of a particular brand in order to persuade the mature or sophisticated American consumers successfully. Taking automobile advertisements as an example, the American advertising personnel in the past would put more emphasis on symbolic values of automobiles as seen in Illustration 7. However, in face of the mature or sophisticated American consumers, the advertising personnel now tend to attract the consumers with different utilitarian values of automobiles as seen in Illustration 8. All this provides explanations for the significantly strong use of utilitarian appeals in the web automobile advertisements from USA.

Illustration 7 Use of Symbolic Appeals in an Old American Automobile Advertisement



(Buick)

Illustration 8 Use of Utilitarian Appeals in a Recent American Automobile Advertisement



(Buick)

5.1.3 The Effects of Advertising Situation

The effects of advertising situation appear to provide explanations for the major result in Tables 4 and 5. That is, a larger number of appeals were located per jump page advertisement than per banner advertisement. This result can be understood with reference to the high-involving advertising situation of jump page advertisements versus the low-involving advertising situation of banner advertisements.

As described in the section 3.1.3, advertising situation is a characteristic of the advertising environment, which refers to the location where an advertisement is placed, and the expected timing and intentions of the audience when the

advertisement is viewed. Houston and Rothschild (1978) recognized that situations could be classified as high-involving and low-involving situations based on their different abilities to arouse individuals' interest — a situation is high (low) in involvement when most or all people who interact with the situation develop a high (low) level of concern for their subsequent behavior in the situation. Applying the classification of high-involving and low-involving situations to the context of web advertising, one can postulate that banner advertisements are placed in a low-involving advertising situation. This is because each banner advertisement is a little billboard that is placed in a large web page, and the audience is generally expected to be exposed to the advertisement when they just surf on the web for purposes other than actively searching for information related to certain products from advertisements. In comparison, the advertising situation of jump page advertisements tends to be high-involving as each jump page advertisement is placed in a location where the audience voluntarily clicks to access when they want to search for more information about a particular product from viewing the advertisement.

Given the low-involving versus high-involving advertising situation of banner advertisements versus jump page advertisements, the relationship between advertising situation and the use of advertising appeals can then be explained. Since the

advertising situation of banner advertisements was low-involving, the audience was then expected to be characterized by the ‘attention-limited’ and ‘strategy-limited’ information-processing (Gardner, Mitchell and Russo, 1978) when viewing the advertisements. This explains why the advertising personnel focused on using few advertising appeals (mean 3.43) per banner advertisement in order to attract the lowly-involved audience and to possibly entice them to click for more information. In comparison, the advertising situation of jump page advertisements was high-involving, high psychological arousal and active information-processing of the advertisements among the audience could then be anticipated. Therefore, more advertising appeals (mean 10.17) were used per jump page advertisement in order to provide more information to the highly-involved audience.

5.1.4 The Interactive Effect between Culture and Advertising Situation

Apart from the separate effects of culture, product category and advertising situation, the interactive effect between culture and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals in cross-cultural web advertisements is also noteworthy. The interactive effect between culture and advertising situation was found when a particular appeal was significantly used only for a particular culture in a particular advertising situation. Two significant results of the study (see Table 6) reveal the interaction between culture and advertising situation in respect to advertising appeals.

First, some utilitarian advertising appeals²³ were significantly found only in the American automobile jump page advertisements. Second, several symbolic advertising appeals²⁴ were significantly employed only in the Chinese automobile jump page advertisements.

The effects of culture on the significantly different uses of utilitarian/symbolic appeals in the American/Chinese web advertisements have already been explained in section 5.1.2. Thus, the unsolved question here is why the cross-cultural differences in the use of advertising appeals were evident mostly in the jump page advertisements instead of the banner advertisements. The consideration of an additional variable — the effects of advertising situation — will provide answers for this question. As explained in section 5.1.3, only few advertising appeals were used per banner advertisement while more advertising appeals were employed per jump page advertisement due to the low-involving advertising situation of the banner advertisements versus the high-involving advertising situation of the jump page advertisements. Therefore, the significant cross-cultural differences can be better manifested primarily in the jump page advertisements, that is, in the advertising situation that could accommodate a large number of advertising appeals and allow for

²³ Those appeals included ‘beauty’, ‘durability’, ‘economy’, ‘neatness’, ‘safety’ and ‘technology’.

²⁴ Those appeals comprised ‘distinctiveness’, ‘independence’, ‘maturity’, ‘popularity’ and ‘social status’.

a larger extent of variation in the distribution of the utilitarian and symbolic appeals. As a result, the differences between the American versus the Chinese automobile advertisements in the use of the utilitarian versus symbolic appeals were mostly found in the jump page advertisements.

The revelation of the interaction between culture and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals is significant. It is conjectured that if researchers lose sight of the interactive effect, an inaccurate generalization will be likely. For example, if researchers interpret findings about the cross-cultural uses of advertising appeals in the banner advertisements (see Table 7) based only on the effects of culture, an inaccurate generalization — Chinese and American cultures are converging — is possible in view of the few significant cross-cultural differences found there. Hence, the effects of both culture and advertising situation should be considered when investigating and interpreting cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of advertising appeals in order to make a more accurate generalization.

In conclusion, this study found that the similarities and differences in uses of advertising appeals in web automobile advertisements from PRC and USA were associated with culture (consumer culture with different developmental stages),

product category (the involvement level of products, product nature and product type), and advertising situation (low-involving versus high-involving advertising situations).

5.2 Implications for International Advertising

The findings of the present study primarily bear two implications for international advertising researchers. First, the revelation of the interactive effect between culture and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals indicates that besides culture, the advertising situation (of low-involving or high-involving) serves as an additional empirically-tested variable for understanding and explaining the use of advertising appeals. This variable is expected to be useful also for interpreting the cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of advertising appeals.

Second, the present empirical study validates the effects of culture, product category and advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals in the context of web advertising. In particular, the effects of culture on the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements indicate that although web is a global advertising medium, web advertisements do not necessarily carry global advertising appeals. In other words, the global nature of web advertisements may not override the effects of culture when the

advertising personnel design the appeal strategies for web advertisements. Nevertheless, it is inappropriate to jump to the conclusion that the global nature of web advertisements does not lead to any change or variation in the use of advertising appeals. It is because this study only examined the use of utilitarian and symbolic appeals in web advertisements from PRC and USA, and the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements is likely to be evolving as web advertising is still at its infancy. Thus, the question of whether the global nature of web advertisements influences the use of advertising appeals calls for more attention and closer studies in the future.

5.3 Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. First, this study only analyzed advertising appeals in web advertisements for illustrating the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals. Advertising appeals in other types of media such as magazine, newspaper and television were not examined in this study. Therefore, it should be noted that the results of this study should not be generalized to explain the use of advertising appeals in all types of media.

Second, this study only examined automobile advertisements for examining the effects of product category on the use of advertising appeals despite the fact that the

automobile is regarded as a necessity in USA but a luxury product in PRC. In addition, the sampled Chinese and American web automobile advertisements were not grouped systematically (for example, by prices of the advertised cars) for a more detailed examination on how different product types affect uses of advertising strategies.

Third, due to time and resource constraints, this study could only investigate web advertisements from PRC and USA. Although the development of web advertising in the two countries has kept growing, the analysis from this study does not give a complete picture on the relationship between culture and the use of advertising appeals in the web context.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The first priority for future studies should probably be derived from the limitations of this thesis. First and foremost, as this study serves as a preliminary research investigating the effects of advertising situation on the use of advertising appeals, future research can further explore the specific effects of advertising situation on the use of appeal strategies in other contexts involving different advertising media.

Further research is also suggested to include advertisements of more product categories for further investigating the influences of product category on the use of advertising appeals in web advertisements. It is recommended that if advertisements of various product categories are sampled, the advertisements are better grouped by the level of product involvement and/or product types (for instance, products of high/medium/low prices; necessity versus luxury products) so as to facilitate a more systematic comparison of the use of advertising appeals among advertisements of different product categories.

Apart from involving advertisements of various products as samples, it is suggested that web advertisements from various countries should be sampled for advancing the knowledge on the relationship between culture and the use of advertising appeals in the context of web advertising.

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