

Advertising Appeals and Cultural Values of Video Advertising in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Thailand videos advertising is generally known as the leading producer of weep-worthy viral videos in the world. Reasons for Thailand advertisements to stand out from the rest is said to be because of its commonly used advertising appeals, and cultural values focused in majority of Thailand advertisements. This research aims to study advertising appeals and cultural values in Thailand video advertisements. Specifically, the research investigates the reflection of cultural value through advertising appeal through the executional framework in Thailand video advertisements. This exploratory research employs primarily the method of ethnography in order to understand how cultural values are reflected through the advertising appeals in video advertisements from Thailand. The result shows that the most commonly used advertising appeal are Family Appeal, followed by Health Appeal and Effective Appeal. In terms of cultural values, the result shows the Thailand's advertisements are skewed slightly higher towards collectivism and femininity. Majority of the Thailand video advertisements are using executional framework of storytelling.

Keyword: Advertising, Appeal, Cultural Value, Thailand, Video Advertising

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INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a visual or audio form of tools for marketing communication to promote commercial products or services to customers. In recent years, following the growth of technology, media has also undergone revolution from traditional media like printed magazines, newspapers to new media like television and the internet. According to the statistic by Capstone report in 2011, there is a decline in print circulation over the past few years (Rajendran & Thesinghraj, 2014). Since 1995, the number of internet users has been increased, the so-called "Year of Internet" (Rajendran & Thesinghraj, 2014). This has led to the emerging of video advertising, where marketers spot the potential of advertising their product through television commercials, YouTube and other social media.

To design a good storyline of video advertisement in marketing, the advertising appeal and cultural values cannot be overlooked. The influence of culture is particularly important in delivering the advertising strategy across countries because in each market, the patterns of communication are closely related to the cultural norms (Hong *et al.* as cited in Young & Chan, 2004). Particularly in Asia, there are many multi-cultural countries. The cultural values of these countries often being reflected in their advertisements. For instance, Thailand's advertisement managed to wisely imply the cultural values through different advertising appeals in the past decade. The ranking of Thailand's advertising in recent years continues to surprise many.

Thailand's advertising is gradually standing out as major Asia's hub for its creative advertising recently. As cited in Escolar (2019), the Gunn Report of 2007, a publication that annually collects above 60 advertising awards shows results all over the world. Overall, Thailand has its highest finish ever placed, ranked No. 4, after placing No. 6 in 2005 and No. 5 in 2006. Today, every of the top 10 agencies has their offices well-established in Thailand. Most of them choose Thailand as their regional base for Indochina or Southeast Asia region.

The underlying motivations and reasons for Thailand advertisements achieving great performance incite the curiosity of many. Discussions about the advertising appeals and cultural values of Thailand advertisements started to rise, whether the appeals used are reflecting the cultural values that are most salient in Thailand. Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) mentioned that strong discussion has been going on suggesting Thailand advertisements both influence and reflect cultural values. Thus, this research aims to investigate advertising appeals and cultural values in Thailand's

video advertisements. One of the best ways to study this is to carry out qualitative research as it gives insights to this issue and help develop hypotheses which are potential for quantitative research. Besides, qualitative research also helps dig deeper into Thailand advertising industry, besides uncovering trends in opinions and ideas in order to learn more about this issue.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall question of this study is about the advertising appeals and cultural values used in Thailand Video Advertising.

The specific questions of this study include:

1. What are the major advertising appeals that are commonly used in most of Thailand video advertising?
2. What are the cultural values that are commonly instilled in Thailand video advertising?
3. How do the cultural values being reflected through the advertising appeal in Thailand video advertising?

MATERIALS & METHODS

The 30 selected Thailand video advertisements are selected through a probability sampling method whereby a systematic random sampling method in which, every 4th video advertisement in YouTube will be selected using the keyword "Thailand Advertisement". In this research, qualitative research, which primarily is ethnography research was carried out to analyse the chosen video advertisements where the researcher will observe and analyse the cultural values reflected through advertising appeals and interpret the results based on the observation. The data analysis was divided into four sections, (1) Structural Information of Video Advertisements, (2) Differentiation of Advertising Appeals according to Alber-Millers and Gelb (1996) and Pollay (1983), (3) Emotional/ Rational Involvement Rate and (4) Effectiveness of Dimensions of Cultural Values. For the measurement of the emotional/ rational involvement, a likert scale rating will be used to analyse the video advertisement. whereby 1 is high rational involvement, 2 is slight rational involvement, 3 is neutral or equal emphasis on rational and emotional involvement, 4 is slight emotional involvement and lastly 5 is high emotional involvement, as refer to Table 4 in Appendix.

Formula below was used to calculate the average rating value for each dimension of cultural value following the scale in Table 1.

$$\text{Mean} = \text{Sum of all rating value of each dimension of cultural value} \div 30$$

The advertisements were selected based on these criteria:

- (i) The video must be a Thailand advertisement
- (ii) The video must be with English subtitle
- (iii) Selection of advertisement cannot repeat with previous chosen advertisement.
- (iv) The advertisement only contains one advertisement, not a compilation of few or more advertisements.

RESULTS

The structural information of video advertisements like name, product category, brand, target audience, message strategy and executional framework are present in detail in Supplementary Table 1.

According to Table 2, the advertising appeals that has the highest frequency is family appeal, with the frequency of 11, used in the video advertisement number 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 18, 20, 21, 28, 30. It is followed by healthy appeal and effective appeal, with the frequency of 7, whereby healthy appeal is used in the video advertisement number 4, 6, 16, 20, 22, 26, 29 and effective appeal is used in video advertisement number 4, 6, 13, 15, 16, 19, 29.

Table 1. Scale of Each Dimension of Cultural Values

Scale/ Cultural value	1	2	3	4	5
Uncertainty avoidance	Highly uncertainty tolerant	slightly uncertainty tolerant	Neutral	Slightly threatened by uncertainty	Highly threatened by uncertainty
Power Distance	Very justice and equal distribution of power	Slightly justice and the distribution of power is equal	Neutral	Slightly injustice and the distribution of power is unequal	Very injustice and the distribution of power unequal
Individualism vs Collectivism	Highly Individualistic	Individualistic	Equal emphasis on Individualistic and Collectivistic	Collectivistic	Highly Collectivistic
Masculinity vs Femininity	High dominant value focus on assertiveness/rigor and earns money and other material goods	Slight dominant values focus on assertiveness/rigor and earns money and other material goods	Focus on relationship of human being and assertiveness/rigor at the same time	Slight dominant values focus on human being relationship	High dominant values focus on human being relationship

Table 2. Advertising Appeal that is used in selected Thailand video advertisement. The advertising appeal was based on Alber-Millers and Gelb (1996) and Pollay (1983).

Advertising Appeal	Frequency	Number of Video Advertisement*
Family Appeal Nurturance within the family, having a home, being at home, family privacy, companionship of siblings, kinship, getting married	11	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 18, 20, 21, 28, 30
Healthy Appeal Fitness, vim, vigour, vitality, strength, heartiness, to be active, athletic, robust, peppy, free from disease, illness, infection, or addiction	7	4, 6, 16, 20, 22, 26, 29
Effective Appeal Feasible, workable, useful, pragmatic, appropriate, functional, consistent, efficient, helpful, comfortable (clothes), tasty (food), strength, longevity of effect	7	4, 6, 13, 15, 16, 19, 29
Adventure Appeal Boldness, daring, bravery, courage, seeking adventure, thrills, or excitement	6	12, 17, 23, 24, 25, 29
Frail Appeal Delicate, frail, dainty, sensitive, tender, susceptible, vulnerable, soft, gentle	5	2, 3, 7, 14, 27
Enjoyment Appeal To have fun, laugh, be happy, celebrate, to enjoy games, parties, feasts and festivities, to participate	4	4, 11, 12, 30
Affiliation Appeal To be accepted, liked by peers, colleagues and community at large, to associate or gather with, to be social, to join, unite or otherwise bond in friendship, fellowship, companionship, co-operation, reciprocity, to conform to social customs, have manners, social graces and decorum, tact and finesse	3	4, 14, 28

Table 2. Cont...

Advertising Appeal	Frequency	Number of Video Advertisement*
Distinctive Appeal Rare, unique, unusual, scarce, infrequent, exclusive, tasteful, elegant, subtle, esoteric, hand-crafted	3	4, 27, 30
Nurturance Appeal To give gifts, especially sympathy, help love, charity, support, comfort, protection, nursing, consolation, or otherwise care for the weak, disabled, inexperienced, tried, young, elderly, etc.	3	2, 8, 14
Durable Appeal Long-lasting, permanent, stable, enduring, strong, powerful, hearty, tough	3	14, 27, 28
Community Appeal Relating to community, state, national publics, public spiritedness, group unity, national identity, society, patriotism, civic and community organisations or other social organisations	2	2, 4
Humility Appeal Unaffected, unassuming, unobtrusive, patient, fate-accepting, resigned, meek, plain-folk, down-to earth	2	2, 8
Independence Appeal Self-sufficiency, self-reliance, autonomy, unattached, to-do-it yourself, to do your own thing, original, unconventional, singular, nonconformist	2	7, 14
Convenient Appeal Handy, time-saving, quick, easy, suitable, accessible, versatile	2	10, 29
Relaxation Appeal Rest, retire, retreat, loaf, contentment, be at ease, be laid-back, vacations, holiday, to observe	2	11, 12
Modesty Appeal Being modest, naïve, demure, innocent, inhibited, bashful, reserved, timid, coy, virtuous, pure, shy, Virginal	1	2
Morality Appeal Humane, just, fair, honest, ethical, reputable, principled, religious, devoted, spiritual	1	2
Succorance Appeal To receive expressions of love (all expressions except sexuality), gratitude, pats on the back, to feel deserving	1	2
Youth Appeal Being young or rejuvenated, children, kids, immature, underdeveloped, junior, adolescent generation is shown through	1	4
Magic Appeal Miracles, magic, mysticism, mystery, witchcraft, wizardry, superstitions, occult sciences, mythic characters, to mesmerise, astonish, bewitch, fill with wonder	1	6
Maturity Appeal Being adult, grown-up, middle aged, senior, elderly, having associated insight, wisdom, mellowness, adjustment, references to ageing, death, retirement, or age related disabilities or compensations.	1	8
Wisdom Appeal Knowledge, education, awareness, intelligence, curiosity, satisfaction, comprehension, sagacity, expertise, judgement, experience	1	8
Freedom Appeal Spontaneous, carefree, abandoned, indulgent, at liberty, uninhibited, passionate	1	12

Table 2. Cont...

Advertising Appeal	Frequency	Number of Video Advertisement*
Natural Appeal References to the elements, animals, vegetables, minerals, farming, unadulterated, purity (of product), organic, grown, nutritious	1	16
Untamed Appeal Primitive, untamed, fierce, course, rowdy, ribald, obscene, voracious, gluttonous, frenzied, uncontrolled, unreliable, corrupt, obscene, deceitful, savage	1	17
Cheap Appeal Economical, inexpensive, bargain, cut-rate, penny pinching, discounted, at cost, undervalued, a good value	1	23
Sexuality Appeal romance, intense sensuality, feeling sexual, erotic behaviour, lust, earthiness, indecency, attractiveness of clearly sexual nature	1	26
Neat Appeal Orderly, neat, precise, tidy, clean, spotless, unsoiled, sweet-smelling, bright, free from dirt, refuse, pests, vermin, stains and smells, sanitary	1	27

According to Table 3, it shows that 11 of the Thailand video advertisements are rated 4, which is slight emotional involvement. Besides, 19 of the video advertisement are rated 5, which is highly emotional involvement. However, none of the video advertisement are rated 3 which is neutral or equal emphasis on emotional and rational involvement, and 4, which is slight rational involvement, and lastly 5, which is highly rational involvement.

Table 4 shows the mean of cultural values. The mean of uncertainty avoidance is 3.27, which shows that the uncertainty avoidance of Thailand video advertisement is slightly high. Besides, in term of power distance, the mean is 3.13, which also shows that the power distance in Thailand video advertisement is slightly high. For individualism/collectivism, the mean is 3.50, which is slightly more to collectivism, and lastly, the mean for masculinity/femininity is 3.43, which is also slightly more to femininity.

Table 3. Emotional/ Rational Involvement Rate

Emotional/ Rational Involvement	Rating				
	1	2	3	4	5
Frequency	0	0	0	11	19

Table 4. Mean of Each Dimension of Cultural Values.

Cultural Value	Mean
Uncertainty Avoidance	3.27
Power Distance	3.13
Individualism/ Collectivism	3.50
Masculinity/ Femininity	3.43

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the major advertising appeals that are commonly used in most of Thailand video advertising?

The finding has shown that the advertising appeals that are most commonly used are Family, followed by Healthy Appeal and Effective Appeal, and then Frail Appeal. For the family appeal, the product category of Insurance received the highest frequency compared to other product categories. This means that in Thailand video advertisement, most of the video advertisement of insurance used the advertising appeal of family appeal. The reason behind this is because the portrayals of families, family type, family roles and relationships, as well as the activities and the sense of happiness as well as the bonding in the advertisements will influence the expectation, perceptions, relationships and sense of happiness of the audience (Aqueel, n.d.). Hence, it is becoming more important that nowadays, the portrayals of families elements in the advertisement in order to capture the audience. Besides, products are present as an integral part of expressing loves and cares for others. The closer the advertiser can tie a product with positive emotions and natural, the advertisement is said to be more successful.

For the healthy appeal and effective appeal, the product category of Beverage is the highest frequency compared to other product category. This means that in Thailand's video advertisements, most of the video advertisement of beverage used the healthy and effective advertising appeals. This is because in recent years, regardless of whether it is goods or beverages, consumer behavior was slowly switching to become more health conscious. People started to get attracted by food and drink advertisement that promotes health benefits and more prone to buy the product. For example, a content analysis showing the comparison of nutrient content claims and types of health in prime-time Spanish and English-Language television advertisement whereby they targeted women in the age of 18-35 years in US. They realized that the Spanish- language broadcasted food advertisements contained significantly more information of the nutrition and 'good for health' claims. Effectiveness appeals also carry the meaning of feasible, workable, useful and functional (Alber-Millers & Gelb, 1996). Hence, along with healthy appeal, effectiveness appeal can improve the audience's response to purchase the food and drink by increasing their desire and interest to try the product.

For emotional/rational involvement, most of the video advertisements are highly emotional involvement followed by slightly emotional involvement. None of the video advertisement are neutral or slight rational or very rational involvement. This does not mean that all of the Thailand video advertisements are in emotional involvement, as the result did not represent all of the Thailand video advertisement. However, it can be said that most of the Thailand video advertisement are emotional involvement. This is because the emotional advertisement will have an impact that is substantial upon the consumer attitudes and their purchase intentions (Williams, 2000).

Research Question 2: What are the cultural values that are commonly instilled in Thailand's video advertising?

The finding of this research according to the scale listed in Table 1 has shown that the uncertainty avoidance of Thailand video advertisement is slight high uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is the reflection of the extent to which individuals in a society are threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity where they feel comfortable or uncomfortable in the unpredicted situation (Hofstede, 2011). The results show a slight high of uncertainty avoidance in Thailand video advertisement explains that why stability and structure are more valued in Thailand culture (Swain & Tanabe, 2009). In Thailand, the subordinates used to not get involved in the process of decision making, they tend to avoid any confrontation with superiors or even the same level employees as the involvement in the process of decision making may causes unwanted responsibilities to the subordinates.

Besides, in term of power distance, the result indicated that the power distance in Thailand video advertisement is slight high. According to Hofstede (2006) cited in Harada and Coetzee (2017), the Power Distance Index of Thailand is ranked above the middle, which is 34-36th among 74 regions and countries. In Thailand, most of them believe there should be a place rank in people in a hierarchy. Therefore, it can be seen that Thailand is a very hierarchical society where they are very respectful to the one at higher authority like their parents, the monks, and the Thai King. In the office, the employees should pay respect to their superiors, and the superiors will give guidance to the employees in return.

For individualism/collectivism, the finding shown that Thailand video advertisement are slightly more toward collective cultural values. In the culture of collectivist, within their in-groups, people are interdependent to each other (family, tribe, nation, etc.), they put priority to the in-groups' goals, behave in a communal way, and on the basis of in-group norms they shape their behaviour. Collectivists are especially concerned with relationships. For instance, it is shown the collectivist are mainly concerned with keeping their relationships with others in conflict situations, while individualists mainly concerned with pursuing justice. In Thailand, it scores in 20 individualism, which is relatively low (Swain & Tanabe, 2009). This is shown in the culture where the Thais like live within a group and share things together. For example, the Thais like to share their food, whether to the monks or to dine with their friends (Swain & Tanabe, 2009).

Lastly, for masculinity/ femininity, the result shown is slightly more toward the feminine cultural values. Femininity refer to the extent to which the society's dominant values focus on the human beings' relationship and life quality (Syed & Kramar, 2017). In Thailand, it scores 34 in masculinity, which is relatively low, whereby the society is higher in femininity. According to Swain and Tanabe (2009), the culture of Thailand emphasis on the femininity value of androgynous behaviour, the nurturing traits, interdependence, as well as the gender equality, which is more apparent than the masculine society. Besides, they also tend to focus more on building relationship with customer in business, instead of directly enter to the business topic. In company management, the Thais expect to maintain the relationship among subordinates and the boss rather than their individual decision.

Research Question 3: How does the cultural values being reflected through the advertising appeal in Thailand's video advertising?

According to Supplementary Table 1, 24 of them which is 80% of the selected video advertisements are using the executional framework of storytelling. According to Baack and Clow (2016), storytelling is the newest type of executional framework. It does not involve an encounter where a brand solves the consumer's problem, instead, it presents a story or movie of a product. This type of executional framework of advertisement let the audience draw own conclusion on the product, instead of using the "hard-sell" approach which directly inform the benefits of the brand to the audience. This is one of the benefit of storytelling executional framework whereby it triggers the audience to actively pondering on the message of the benefits of the brand, instead of instil the benefits coercively to the mind of the audience.

In recent years, heart-warming, heart-rending advertising landscape has become more popular with the tear-jerking storytelling framework. Nowadays, advertisers are desperate for the audience to be emotional, to let them know that they care about bigger things in life and want the audience to be emotionally invested by it (Davidson, 2015). As a consequence, a feel-good ad, a good cry over a bitter-sweet, a pulling at the heartstrings of the most hardened cynics, has now becoming the ultimate recipe for explosive of sharing in the social. This is called by the marketers meaningful marketing. Others named it the trend of *Sadvertising*, whereby after the idea of sadness, as well as stronger feelings generally, can be utilized to associate the audience with brands on a higher profound level (Davidson, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research is to help the researcher to have a better in-depth understanding on Thailand video advertisement, in term of the advertising appeals and the cultural values. The study of this research helps the researcher to understand what are the advertising appeal that are most commonly used in Thailand's video advertisement. The result shows that Family appeal is the most commonly used, followed by Healthy appeal, and next Effective appeal, based on the Pollay 42's Advertising Appeals. For the cultural values, the result of the research shows that not all of the Thailand video advertisement emphasis or exhibit all the cultural values, but the overall results do reveal what are the cultural values that Thailand video advertisement are incline to. The result shows that most of the Thailand video advertisement reflects a slight high uncertainty avoidance, which means the Thailand society is slightly threatened by uncertainty. Also, the results indicate a slight high of power distance which reflects slightly injustice and unequal power distribution in Thailand. In term of individualism/ collectivism, most of the Thailand video advertisement reflects that Thailand society is collectivists where they prefer to be in groups. Moreover, a slight dominant value focus on human being relationship is observed from most of the Thailand video advertisement, which shows that Thailand society is higher in femininity. Through the result of this research, an in-depth general understanding on the advertising appeals and cultural values of Thailand video advertisement can be obtained and more useful information for future research can be rooted based on the outcomes of this research.

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