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Advertising appeals and cultural values in television commercials

A comparison of Hong Kong and Korea

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Received March 2003
Revised July 2003
Accepted July 2003

Abstract

Purpose – The objective of this study is to investigate to what extent advertising appeals in Hong Kong and Korea are different, and whether the differences between the two countries can be attributed to the differences in nations' cultural characteristics. Hypotheses are drawn in relation to the two dimensions of Hofstede's framework – uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity.

Design/methodology/approach – A sample of 803 prime-time television commercials from the two countries was analyzed using Cheng and Schweitzer's classification of advertising appeals.

Findings – The results show that femininity is an important variable for explaining differences in advertising between Hong Kong and Korea. Both Hong Kong and Korean advertising show no difference in values of high uncertainty avoidance, although an appeal of high uncertainty avoidance was used more often in Korean advertising. However, values of low uncertainty avoidance are more prevalent in television commercials in Korea, a country of high uncertainty avoidance, than Hong Kong, a country of low uncertainty avoidance. It is also found that the correlation between product categories and cultural values is society-based.

Originality/value – This study reveals that Hofstede's framework does explain cross-cultural differences between Hong Kong and Korea and provides empirical evidences for the impact of value paradoxes on advertising in both countries, suggesting that Hofstede's framework and the value paradoxes provide a possible theory for testing the relationship of the society and its advertising content within a culture as well as across cultures.

Keywords Advertising, Hong Kong, South Korea, National cultures

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Since the early 1960s proponents of globalization have assumed that economic development would lead to converging needs and tastes of consumers, and facilitate standardization of marketing and advertising. Meanwhile critics have indicated that markets would become more diverse and their cultural differences would prevent successful standardization (Agrawal, 1995; De Mooij, 2000). The influence of culture is particularly important in transferring advertising strategy across the borders, because communication patterns are closely linked to cultural norms in each market



(cf. Hong *et al.*, 1987). And thus, if advertising differences across cultures can be predictable, the task of the advertiser in multiple cultures can be much simplified (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996).

Today Asian markets are the most rapidly growing, aggressive and promising throughout the world (cf. Shao *et al.*, 1999). Asia is also the major growth market for multinational corporations and many multinationals view Asian countries as a single regional market. In this vein, the transfer of international advertising strategies to the Asian market is becoming popular under the assumptions of the rising living standards and the growing similarity of consumer tastes in the region (Tai, 1997). Some researchers and practitioners observe that there are more and more homogenous cross-cultural groups with similar needs, which can be approached in the same way in Asian countries. For example, Javalgi *et al.* (1994), in their content analysis of print advertisements from Japan, Taiwan and Korea, indicated advertising appeals that are effective in Japan would also be effective in Taiwan and Korea and further suggested that Pacific Basin countries including Hong Kong and Singapore (Kefalas, 1990) hold the potential for regional standardization.

Asia is really a series of localized markets with their own characteristics including different economic and cultural settings due to historical effects. They have their own unique aspects of history, culture and consumption patterns including variations in consumer tastes and requirements that could differentially affect advertising content (Tai, 1997). In addition, many countries in Asia have been rapidly industrialized during the past few decades and may struggle with how to reconcile conflict between traditional values and new values within a culture. Therefore, it should be noted how and to what extent the changing nature of cultural values affects advertising effectiveness in one country as well as among countries in this region.

In international marketing and advertising practices, understanding a country's core cultural values is important and these core values have a powerful influence on a country's characteristics and consumer behavior (Watson *et al.*, 2002). Research efforts were made to develop universal values that characterize and distinguish cultures (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Schwartz, 1992) and among those, Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions provided the first empirically and conceptually based set of value dimensions to compare cultures (Watson *et al.*, 2002). Since in the beginning of 1990s, Hofstede's typology has been used to understand differences in consumption values and motivations in marketing and advertising across cultures and to predict what reflects culture and what fits with a particular culture (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996; De Mooij, 1998; Taylor *et al.*, 1997). Although there are questions of validity and generalizability of the cultural dimensions (cf. Cutler *et al.*, 1997; La Ferle *et al.*, 2002), recent replications in European countries have demonstrated that Hofstede's typology is still valid and there is a need of further applications in other countries such as Asia. Hofstede's (1991) own application to intercultural management has also proven itself just as effective in Asian cultures as in European ones (De Mooij, 1998, 2000).

Given this background, this study extends application of Hofstede's framework to the Asian cultural context to investigate how the society's culture is related with its advertising content. This study compares advertising appeals in television commercials in the two major advertising markets, Hong Kong and Korea. Although both countries seem to have similar cultural background of Confucianism

especially from the Westerners' point of view, the two countries show large differences in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, especially in the two dimensions, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Therefore, it can be expected that the differences in value systems of national cultures may account for the differences in advertising appeals between the two countries.

Both Hong Kong and Korea, in the beginning of 1990s, progressed from the status of developing nations to newly industrialized countries and became major influences in trade and development in the economies of other countries (Javalgi *et al.*, 1994). Hong Kong is now the regional advertising capital in Asia with the largest number of multinational regional headquarters (Pae *et al.*, 2002). Korea is also a major growth market for multinationals and multinational advertising agencies showed a rapid growth in their market share from 7.6 percent in 1998 to 36 percent in 2001 (*Advertising Age*, 2002). Recently, both countries have gained worldwide attention because of repatriation (Hong Kong) and a rapid recovery of economic crisis (Korea). Since Hong Kong and Korea have unique strategic positions in business and information in the region as well as in the world, more in-depth studies of advertising in these markets have appeared important and necessary.

Cultural dimensions and advertising appeals

There have been research efforts to develop universal values that characterize and distinguish cultures over the past four decades (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Schwartz, 1992) and various dimensions have been proposed and used in the content analysis of advertising across cultures (cf. Cheng, 1994, 1997; Cho *et al.*, 1999). Among those, a widely accepted framework is Hofstede's (1980, 1983) typology of four cultural dimensions, which was developed for comparing work-related values: individualism/collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity. Since the beginning of 1990s, several researchers in marketing and advertising recognized the potential applicability of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The typology also proves to be useful for comparing cultures with respect to consumption-related values and can explain the variety of values and motivations used in advertising content across cultures (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996; De Mooij, 1998; Milner and Collins, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 1997).

Frith and Sengupta (1991) illustrated how country index scores on Hofstede's "individualism" dimension could explain cross-country differences in advertising technique. They chose to investigate the individualism concept by measuring the number of people portrayed in each print advertisement and found that a high score on the individualism index should correlate with a large percentage of advertisements containing only a single person, while a low score implied primarily group portrayal and infrequent portrayal of a person alone. They analyzed advertisements from the US, the UK and India and the results showed the data in the rank order to accord with Hofstede's indices.

Alden *et al.* (1993) also analyzed television commercials from the US, Germany, Thailand and South Korea and provided supporting data for the concept of using Hofstede's individualism index to predict the portrayal of single persons in the advertisement. The authors reported that advertisements from Thailand and South Korea had a smaller percentage of "fewer than three people", while advertisements from the US and Germany had a greater percentage of such characteristics.

Cutler *et al.* (1997) examined advertisements from eight different countries and, contrary to previous studies, found the measure of multiple persons in the advertisement to have a weak relationship to the individualism index. They concluded cultural dimension of individualism to be at best only a minor factor in explaining cross-cultural differences in advertisements. They also argued advertising is designed to communicate to readers one-at-a-time, rather than in group's settings and the distinction between highly individualistic countries versus collectivistic countries is meaningless.

Zandpour *et al.* (1994) combined three cultural dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance) with advertising-industry-related factors including advertising expenditure per capita, presence of American companies, the level of government regulation, the existence of commercial breaks during programs, and the degree of advertising personnel shortages and developed a global model that provides specific directions for selecting advertising creative strategies, levels of informativeness and styles that are most likely to fit cultures and market environments in 23 countries. However, the masculinity/femininity dimension was not used in this study, thus, which is unfortunate because it is such an important variable for explaining differences in advertising between American and European cultures (De Mooij, 1998).

Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996) attempted to relate advertising appeals to four cultural dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity). The core question in this study was not whether culture is reflected in advertising, but whether the appeals that are most commonly used actually relate to the values that are most salient in a particular culture. They defined a number of relationships between advertising appeals and the four dimensions and analyzed 1,807 advertisements in business publications from 11 countries using a coding scheme developed by Pollay (1983). The results of correlation analysis supported the culture-reflecting quality of advertising for 10 of 30 hypothesized relationships. In this study, it was found that Hofstede's cultural model offers a tool for anticipating differences in advertising content with respect to cultural values.

Regarding the results of Albers-Miller and Gelb's (1996) study, De Mooij (1998) indicated the description of each cluster of appeals include a variety of appeals fitting more than one dimension and some appeals could be expected to fit better with other dimensions or a configuration of dimensions than the ones hypothesized. She also pointed that the authors derived a number of hypotheses with respect to the appeals from American literature in which, for example, femininity values were rarely discussed and the effects of the value paradoxes were not considered.

Some other studies show that Hofstede's cultural dimensions were partially supported to predict cultural values manifest in advertising (Cho *et al.*, 1999; Taylor *et al.*, 1994). Milner and Collins (2000) also support the notion that a country's gender as ranked on Hofstede's Masculinity continuum, can be linked to depictions of commercial characters. They, in a cross-cultural research using the data obtained from 1996 to 1998 from four countries (Sweden, Russia, United States and Japan), found strong evidence that when feminine values have a dominant influence on a culture, the influence is reflected in television commercials.

Although Hofstede's typology provides a rationale for cross-cultural differences in advertising, its application to advertising research is a recent innovation and is subject to trial and error. The typology was based on the data in early 1970s and some researchers questioned the validity and generalizability of the cultural dimensions, thus, care should be taken in regard to avoiding a strict application of the indices to specific countries (cf. Cutler *et al.*, 1997; La Ferle *et al.*, 2002). Some others confirmed the existence of the cultural dimensions across populations and time periods (De Mooij, 2000; Sondergaard, 1994) and replications in Europe also have demonstrated that Hofstede's country scores are still valid (EMS, 1995/1996/1997/1999). Recently, relevant studies put more focus on European countries and further research should be extended to other regions (De Mooij, 1998, 2000).

Hypotheses

Hofstede's cultural dimensions provide a conceptual framework for the hypotheses testing. Among the four dimensions, Hong Kong and Korea differed in the two dimensions, uncertainly avoidance (UA index score: Hong Kong 29, Korea 85) and masculinity/femininity (masculinity index score: Hong Kong 57, Korea 39). However, the two countries shared similar scores in the other two dimensions, individualism/collectivism and power distance (individualism index score: Hong Kong 25, Korea 18; power distance index: Hong Kong 68, Korea 60). According to Hofstede (1980), the variation on the individualism and power distance scores are associated with variation in other national indices. Individualism scores are positively related to economic wealth and latitude and negatively related to population growth rate, whereas power distance scores are negatively related to economic wealth and latitude and positively related to population size and growth rate. Also, previous research (Cutler *et al.*, 1997) indicated the individualism dimension as only a minor factor in explaining cross-cultural differences in advertising content and suggested the use of Hofstede's other indices in an advertising setting.

This study focuses on the uncertainty avoidance and masculinity dimensions in which the two countries show larger differences and it can be expected that the differences in the two dimensions will differentially affect the use of advertising appeals in the two countries. That is, Hong Kong is a society of low uncertainty avoidance and masculinity, whereas Korea is a society of high uncertainty avoidance and femininity.

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

- H1a.* Advertising appeals in Korean television commercials will contain more values of high uncertainty avoidance.
- H1b.* Advertising appeals in Hong Kong television commercials will contain more values of low uncertainty avoidance.
- H2a.* Advertising appeals in Hong Kong television commercials will contain more values of masculinity.
- H2b.* Advertising appeals in Korean television commercials will contain more values of femininity.

Method

Sampling

The Hong Kong sample was obtained from the commercials of prime-time programming broadcast on the two free-to-air Chinese-language terrestrial channels (TVB-Jade, and ATV-home) during the two weeks in mid-November and the two weeks in early December 2001. Cable television was not selected, as the amount of subscribers and advertising volume was still low. Thirty-six broadcasting hours were videotaped and 406 unduplicated commercials were selected. The Korean sample was obtained from the commercials of prime-time programming broadcast on the three free-to-air terrestrial channels (KBS2, MBC, SBS) in Seoul during the two weeks in November 2001. Fifty broadcasting hours were videotaped and 397 unduplicated commercials were selected. Public service advertisements were included in both samples, however, station identification and promotional messages were excluded from the analysis. The samples were collected just after the US tragedy of September 11. However, there is no evidence that commercial content in Hong Kong and Korea was altered by the event.

Coding scheme

The coding scheme is Cheng and Schweitzer's (1996) framework, largely originated from the studies of Pollay (1983) and Mueller (1987, 1992). The operational definition of 32 advertising appeals is presented in Table I. In identifying advertising appeals that are related to the cultural dimensions, we made references to previous studies (Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; De Mooij, 1998; Ji and McNeal, 2001; Shao *et al.*, 1999) and classified 22 appeals into the four dimensions.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to anxiety, need for security, dependence on experts and the application of information (Hofstede 1980, 1991), thus, "safety", "technology" and "tradition" appeals are related to high uncertainty avoidance while "adventure", "magic" and "youth" appeals are related to low uncertainty avoidance. While masculinity stands for a preference in society for achievement, heroism, and material success, while femininity refers to a preference for personal and family relationships, modesty, and caring for the weak (Hofstede, 1983, 1998; De Mooij, 1998). Therefore, "competition", "wealth", "effectiveness" and "work" are related to masculinity, while "courtesy", "family" and "nurturance" are related to femininity. Individualism refers to the self-sufficiency and distinctiveness, product's benefit of one's appearance or robustness of the body, thus, "individualism", "uniqueness", "beauty" and "health" are related to individualism. Meanwhile, a collective society places high value on the group decision-making, and emphasize belonging (Hofstede, 1980), thus, "collectivism", "popularity" and "patriotism" are related to collectivism. Power distance explains how different societies have addressed basic human inequalities in social status and prestige, wealth, and sources of power (Hofstede, 1980). Societies with high scores on the power distance dimension use symbols of status acquired through conspicuous consumption to show power and also honors the elderly for their high status through the possession of experience, therefore, "social status" and "respect for elderly" are positively related to high power distance.

Coding procedure

A Chinese female and a Chinese male university graduate coded the Hong Kong sample independently. Two Korean female graduate students code the Korean sample.

Adventure	This suggests boldness, daring, bravery, courage, or thrill
Beauty	This suggests that the use of a product will enhance the loveliness, attractiveness or elegance of an individual
Collectivism	The emphasis here is on the individual in relation to others typically in the reference group. Individuals are depicted as integral parts of the group
Competition	The emphasis here is on distinguishing a product from its counterparts by aggressive comparisons. While explicit comparisons may mention the competitor's name, implicit comparisons may use such words as "number one" or "leader"
Convenience	A product is suggested to be handy and easy to use
Courtesy	Politeness and friendship toward the consumer are shown through the use of polished and affable language
Economy	The inexpensive, affordable, and cost-saving nature of a product is emphasized
Effectiveness	A product is suggested to be powerful and capable of achieving certain ends
Enjoyment	This suggests that a product will make its user wild with joy
Family	The emphasis here is on the family life and family members. The commercial stresses family scenes: getting married, companionship of siblings, kinship, being at home, and suggests that a certain product is good for the whole family
Health	This value commends that the use of a product will enhance or improve the vitality, soundness, strength, and robust of the body
Individualism	The emphasis here is on the self-sufficiency and self-reliance of an individual or on the individual as being distinct and unlike others
Leisure	This suggests that the use of a product will bring one comfort or relaxation
Magic	The emphasis here is on the miraculous effect and nature of a product, e.g. "Bewitch your man . . ."; "Heals like magic"
Modernity	The notion of being new, contemporary, up-to-date, and ahead of time is emphasized
Natural	This suggests spiritual harmony between man and nature by making references to the elements, animals, vegetables, or minerals
Neatness	The notion of being clean and tidy is stressed.
Nurturance	This stresses giving charity, help, protection, support, or sympathy to the weak, disabled, young, or elderly
Patriotism	The love of and the loyalty to one's own nation inherent in the nature or in the use of a product are suggested here
Popularity	The focus here is on the universal recognition and acceptance of a certain product by consumers, e.g. "Best seller"; "Well-known worldwide"
Quality	The emphasis here is on the excellence and durability of a product, which is usually claimed to be a winner of medals or certificates awarded by a government for its high grade or is demonstrated by the product's excellent performance
Respect for the elderly	The commercial displays a respect for older people by using a model of old age or asking for the opinions, recommendations, and advice of the elders
Safety	The reliable and secure nature of a product is emphasized
Sex	The advertisement uses glamorous and sensual models or has a background of lovers holding hands, embracing, or kissing to promote a product
Social status	The use of a product is claimed to be able to elevate the position or rank of the user in the eyes of others. The idea of prestige, trend-setting, and pride in the use of a product is conveyed

Table I.
Operational definitions of
32 advertising appeals

(continued)

Technology	Here, the advanced and sophisticated technical skills to engineer and manufacture a particular product are emphasized
Tradition	The experience of the past, customs, and conventions are respected. The qualities of being historical, time-honored, and legendary are venerated, e.g. "With eighty years of manufacturing experience"; "It's adapted from ancient Chinese prescriptions"
Uniqueness	The unrivaled, incomparable, and unparalleled nature of a product is emphasized, e.g. "We're the only one that offers you the product"
Wealth	This conveys the idea that being affluent, prosperous, and rich should be encouraged and suggests that a certain product or service will make the user well-off
Wisdom	This shows respect for knowledge, education, intelligence, expertise, or experience
Work	This value shows respect for diligence and dedication of one's labor and skills. A typical example is that a medication has regained a desperate patient his or her ability to work
Youth	The worship of the younger generation is shown through the depiction of younger models. The rejuvenating benefits of the product are stressed, e.g. "Feel young again!"

Table I.

After pretesting about 10 percent of each sample commercials, the coders identified a product category and a main appeal of each commercial, which was decided mainly by the overall impression or the key elements in the visual or audio messages. All disagreements between the two coders were solved through discussion. Intercoder reliability of the main appeal was determined as the percentage of agreement between the pair of judges. Using Perreault and Leigh's (1989) measure, the intercoder reliability of the Hong Kong sample was 0.94 and that of the Korean sample was 0.98. The reliability indices of both samples exceeded the critical value of 0.80, as suggested by Perreault and Leigh (1989); therefore, the coding reached the satisfactory requirement.

Results

Table II shows the dominant advertising appeals in the sampled commercials. The five appeals most frequently found in Hong Kong commercials were "enjoyment" (15.8 percent), "economy" (10.6 percent), "effectiveness" (8.9 percent), "quality" (7.6 percent), and "beauty" (6.7 percent). The five appeals most frequently found in Korean commercials were "effectiveness" (13.1 percent), "enjoyment" (10.3 percent), "quality" (9.6 percent), "family" (9.1 percent), and "individualism" (5.5 percent). The two samples shared three common dominant appeals (i.e. "effectiveness", "enjoyment" and "quality").

The Hong Kong sample contained mostly commercials for household goods (28.1 percent), food and beverages (20.4 percent), leisure (12.8 percent) and public services advertisements (10.6 percent), while the Korean sample contained mostly commercials for household goods (29.2 percent), food and beverages (25.2 percent), services and finance (20.9 percent). Both samples had a high share of commercials for household goods, and food and beverages. However, the Hong Kong sample had a higher proportion of leisure and retail advertising, and public service announcements.

Appeal	Hong Kong		Korea	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Adventure	3	0.7	9	2.3
Beauty	27	6.7	10	2.5
Collectivism	2	0.5	6	1.5
Competition	7	1.7	6	1.5
Convenience	12	3.0	13	3.3
Courtesy	4	1.0	15	3.8
Economy	43	10.6	17	4.3
Effectiveness	36	8.9	52	13.1
Enjoyment	64	15.8	41	10.3
Family	19	4.7	36	9.1
Health	23	5.7	20	5.0
Individualism	7	1.7	22	5.5
Leisure	12	3.0	0	0
Magic	2	0.5	3	0.8
Modernity	23	5.7	2	0.5
Natural	4	1.0	13	3.3
Neatness	7	1.7	10	2.5
Nurturance	4	1.0	5	1.3
Patriotism	3	0.7	3	0.8
Popularity	8	2.0	14	3.5
Quality	31	7.6	38	9.6
Respect for elderly	0	0	0	0
Safety	22	5.4	4	1.0
Sex	8	2.0	8	2.0
Social status	7	1.7	5	1.3
Technology	3	0.7	11	2.8
Tradition	2	0.5	6	1.5
Uniqueness	1	0.2	15	3.8
Wealth	2	0.5	2	0.5
Wisdom	13	3.2	3	0.8
Work	4	1.0	0	0
Youth	3	0.7	8	2.0
Total	406	100.0	397	100.0

Table II.
Frequencies of
advertising appeals in
Hong Kong and Korean
commercials

The Korean sample had a higher proportion of automotives, computers and accessories, and clothing commercials (Table III).

Cultural dimensions

The cultural value most frequently found in the Hong Kong sample was individualism (14.3 percent), followed by masculinity (12.1 percent), femininity (6.7 percent) and high uncertainty avoidance (6.7 percent), collectivism (3.2 percent), low uncertainty avoidance (2.0 percent), and high power distance (1.7 percent). The cultural value most frequently found in the Korean sample was individualism (16.9 percent), followed by masculinity (15.1 percent), femininity (14.1 percent), collectivism (5.8 percent), high uncertainty avoidance (5.3 percent), low uncertainty avoidance (5.0 percent), and high power distance (1.3 percent). Therefore, values related to individualism and masculinity were found most prevalent in both samples and feminine values were also prevalent in the Korean sample.

Product category	Hong Kong		Korea	
	<i>N</i>	Percentage	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Household goods	114	28.1	116	29.2
Food and beverages	83	20.4	100	25.2
Leisure	52	12.8	7	1.8
Public service announcement	43	10.6	6	1.5
Retail	33	8.1	14	3.5
Services	28	6.9	42	10.6
Finance	28	6.9	41	10.3
Real estates	12	3.0	10	2.5
Computers and accessories	7	1.7	21	5.3
Clothing	4	1.0	15	3.8
Automotives	2	0.5	17	4.3
Others	0	0	8	2.0
Total	406	100.0	397	100.0

Table III.
Product profile of
Hong Kong and Korean
samples

Table IV shows the results of the chi-square statistics of the cultural dimensions and advertising appeals. Both samples did not show a significant difference in the level of high uncertainty avoidance (chi-square = 0.6, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$), therefore, *H1a* was not supported. However, among the three appeals of high uncertainty avoidance, significant differences were found in the two appeals, “technology” and “safety”. The Korean sample used “technology” appeal more frequently than the Hong Kong sample, while the Hong Kong sample used “safety” appeal more frequently than the Korean sample.

A significant difference was found between the two samples in the level of low uncertainty avoidance (chi-square = 5.6, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$). However, contrary to the relationship hypothesized, the value of low uncertainty avoidance was found more in the Korean sample than the Hong Kong sample, although the occurrences of the three appeals related to the dimension were not significantly different between the two samples. Therefore, *H1b* was not supported.

There was no significant difference in the masculinity value between the two samples (Chi-square = 1.6, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$), therefore, *H2a* was not supported. Among the four appeals related to the masculinity dimension, only “work” appeal was used more frequently in the Hong Kong sample than the Korean sample.

Significant difference was found in the femininity value between the two samples (chi-square = 12.0, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$). Korean commercials presented higher level of femininity than Hong Kong commercials, therefore, *H2b* was supported. Among the three appeals of the femininity dimension, “courtesy” and “family” appeals were used more frequently in the Korean sample than the Hong Kong sample.

Meanwhile, there were no significant differences in the levels of both individualism and collectivism contained in the television commercials between the two countries ($p > 0.05$). However, among the four appeals related to the individualism dimension, “individualism” and “uniqueness” were used more frequently in the Korean sample, while “beauty” appeal was used more frequently in the Hong Kong sample.

Advertising appeals related to the power distance dimension were seldom used in both samples. There was no significant difference “social status” appeal between the two samples. “Respect for elderly” appeal was not used at all in both samples.

	Hong Kong (percent) <i>N</i> = 406	Korea (percent) <i>N</i> = 397	Chi-square statistics
<i>Cultural dimension</i>			
High Uncertainty avoidance	6.7	5.3	0.6
Low uncertainty avoidance	2.0	5.0	5.6*
Masculinity	12.1	15.1	1.6
Femininity	6.7	14.1	12.0***
Individualism	14.3	16.9	1.0
Collectivism	3.2	5.8	3.1
High power distance	1.7	1.3	0.3
<i>Appeal</i>			
Technology	0.7	2.8	4.8*
Safety	5.4	1.0	12.5***
Tradition	0.5	1.5	2.1
Adventure	0.7	2.3	3.2
Magic	0.5	0.8	0.2
Youth	0.7	2.0	2.4
Competition	1.7	1.5	0.1
Effectiveness	8.9	13.1	3.7
Wealth	0.5	0.5	0.0
Work	1.0	0.0	3.9*
Courtesy	1.0	3.8	6.8**
Family	4.7	9.1	5.5*
Nurturance	1.0	1.3	0.1
Individualism	1.7	5.5	8.4**
Uniqueness	0.2	3.8	12.8***
Beauty	6.7	2.5	7.8**
Health	5.7	5.0	0.2
Collectivism	0.5	1.5	2.1
Popularity	2.0	3.5	1.8
Patriotism	0.7	0.8	0.0
Social status	1.7	1.3	0.3
Respect for elderly	0.0	0.0	NA

Table IV.
Cultural dimensions and
advertising appeals

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Product categories

Two-way ANOVA *F*-tests were conducted to determine the individual as well as the combined effects of product category and society on the appeals related to the four cultural dimensions. Partial *F*-values were compiled for the interaction of society and product category, the main effect of society alone, the main effect of product category alone, and the combined full model. The full model refers to an additive effect of the two main effects and the interaction effect. Three cultural dimensions (uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism/collectivism) showed significant partial *F*-values by product category, and only one (masculinity/femininity) showed significant partial *F*-values by society (Table V).

Uncertainty avoidance dimension was mainly affected by the product category alone. The interaction of product category and society as well as society alone had no significant effect on the advertising appeals. This indicates that the occurrence of the

Cultural dimension	Relative frequency of occurrence (percent)	Significance of interaction of society and product	Significance of society	Significance of product category	Significance level	Full model R^2 (percent)
Uncertainty avoidance	2.5	0.052	0.178	0.02	0.001	3.7
Masculinity/femininity	3.3	0.0001	0.001	0.0001	0.0001	15.4
Individualism/collectivism	11.1	0.01	0.281	0.0001	0.0001	5.5
Power distance	1.5	0.52	0.730	0.07	0.06	2.4

Notes: Relative occurrence of appeals related to the uncertainty avoidance dimension=percentage occurrence of technology + safety + tradition – adventure – magic – youth. Full model is an additive model of the main effects of society and product category, and their interaction

Table V.
Two-way ANOVA of
effects of society and
product category

appeals related to uncertainty avoidance mainly depended on product category and did not depend on the society. The masculinity dimension showed significant interaction F -statistics, significant partial F -statistics for the product category as well as the society variable. This indicates that the product category, society, and their interaction all contributed to the occurrence of the appeals related to masculinity/femininity.

A close examination of the data found finance commercials in Korea often used “courtesy” appeal of femininity, while finance commercials in Hong Kong often used “safety” appeal of high uncertainty avoidance (see Appendix). However, a masculine appeal “effectiveness”, one of the common dominant appeals, was used frequently in household good commercials in both countries. Public service advertising also showed difference between the two countries. Korean advertisements were mostly for children and disabled people care that often stressed “nurturance”. Hong Kong advertisements were mostly for public health, safe driving, environment and occupational safety that often stressed “safety”.

The individualism dimension showed significant interaction F -statistic and significant partial F -statistic for the product category alone. The result indicates that individualistic appeals were used differently among different product categories in different societies. For example, food and beverages commercials in Korea often used “enjoyment”, “uniqueness” and “health”, while food and beverages commercials in Hong Kong used “enjoyment” as a dominant appeal. The power distance dimension was not affected by either the product category or the society, i.e. the appeal of high power distance was used to similar extent in both societies.

Discussion

The objective of this study is to investigate to what extent advertising appeals in Hong Kong and Korean television commercials are different, and whether the differences between the two countries, if any, can be attributed to the differences in nations’ cultural characteristics. Based on the previous cross-national studies, it was hypothesized that differences in advertising appeals are related with the two cultural characteristics of society – uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity.

A look at the results from the current study reveals that femininity is an important variable for explaining differences in advertising between Hong Kong and Korea and the appeals related to the masculinity/femininity dimension showed more differences. For example, television advertising in Hong Kong, a masculine society, uses more masculine appeal (“work”), while television advertising in Korea, a feminine society, uses more feminine appeals (“courtesy” and “family”). Both Hong Kong and Korean advertising show no difference in values of high uncertainty avoidance, although an appeal of high uncertainty avoidance (“technology”) was used more often in Korean advertising. However, contrary to what was expected, values of low uncertainty avoidance are more prevalent in television commercials in Korea, a country of high uncertainty avoidance, than Hong Kong, a country of low uncertainty avoidance.

While the hypothesis supporting data indicate that Hofstede’s framework does explain cross-cultural differences between the two countries, the results that were contrary to those hypothesized provide empirical evidences for the impact of value paradoxes on advertising in both Hong Kong and Korea. Advertising appeals may represent two opposing statements about values. De Mooij (1998) notes paradoxical values are found within many cultures and such value paradoxes are often represented

in advertising. She stresses the distinction between the “desired” which is related to individual choice and the “desirable” which is linked more closely to social norms. Since the role of advertising is to appeal to the individual in the context of individual choice, it should not be surprising that advertising often portrays that which is desired as much, or even more than which is desirable at a societal level. It should also be noted that countries that have undergone remarkable economic developments are likely to be especially susceptible to value paradoxes (Shao *et al.*, 1999).

The concept of the value paradox would suggest that advertising appeals that are congruent with the society’s cultural dimensions (i.e. desirable values) may not be dominant, whereas advertising appeals that are opposite to the society’s cultural dimensions (i.e. desired values) may be more prevalent in the countries like Hong Kong and Korea, which have experienced drastic changes politically and economically during the recent years. And the findings of the current study prove that value paradoxes are represented in television advertising between and within the two countries.

In Hong Kong, a country of low in uncertainty avoidance, advertising appeals in television commercials present more values of high uncertainty avoidance than low uncertainty avoidance (6.7 vs 2.0 percent) and put more emphasis on “safety” appeal (5.4 percent). In Korea, a country of high uncertainty avoidance, advertising appeals present more values of low uncertainty avoidance than in Hong Kong, while carrying values of high and low uncertainty avoidance in a similar manner (5.3 vs 5.0 percent). Although Korea is a feminine country, its television advertising keeps a balance of masculine and feminine values (15.1 vs 14.1 percent). Particularly, two dominant appeals are a masculine appeal, “effectiveness” (13.1 percent), and a feminine appeal, “family” (9.1 percent). While both Hong Kong and Korea are collectivistic countries, individualistic values are more prevalent in television advertising than collectivistic values (Hong Kong: 14.3 vs 3.2 percent; Korea: 16.9 vs 4.8 percent). In specific, Hong Kong advertising stresses “beauty” (6.7 percent) and “health” (5.7 percent), whereas Korean advertising stresses “individualism” (5.5 percent) and “health” (5.0 percent). Advertising appeals related to high power distance are seldom used in television commercials, although both societies are high in the power distance dimension.

While product categories moderate the cultural values portrayed in advertising, this study found that the correlation between product categories and cultural values is society-based and thus suggests that international advertisers should be sensitive to the effects of product categories on the advertising appeals as well as country difference. Individualistic values in food and beverage commercials are interesting examples to compare with. Hong Kong commercials use “enjoyment” as a dominant appeal to demonstrate the sensory-satisfying experience of consumers, while Korean commercials frequently sell on the “uniqueness” and “health” which portray self-images of target consumers. As another example, finance commercials in Hong Kong often employ “safety” of high uncertainty avoidance to demonstrate how to prepare for unpredictable future. It is not sure whether this has any relevance with the repatriation. However, the new government is more eager to use mass media campaigns for public education of desirable behavior and the higher percentage of PSAs is about educating the public how to avoid health and occupational risks such as driving safety and occupational health issues. Meanwhile, finance commercials in Korea seldom use “safety”, but often stress feminine appeals such as “courtesy” and

“family” to put an emphasis on company’s customer services, especially after the financial crisis.

Limitations and conclusion

While this study revealed some interesting differences in Hong Kong and Korean advertising, it had some limitations. This study only examined television commercials during one time period and the findings may not be applicable to the advertising in other media and time span. There is a question of whether the use of 32 advertising appeals (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996) appropriately captures the cultural aspects of nations. Only 22 appeals were classified into the four cultural dimensions. Some dominant appeals such as “quality” and “economy” were not related to specific dimensions and some others relevant might be omitted from the coding scheme. Finally, as indicated in earlier studies, the use of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in advertising research is subject to trial and error and care should be taken in interpreting the results of the study.

The goal of the study was to apply Hofstede’s framework of cultural values to explain cross-cultural differences in advertising appeals between Hong Kong and Korea. The findings suggest that Hofstede’s framework and the value paradoxes provide a possible theory for testing the relationship of the society and its advertising content within a culture as well as across cultures. Previous research on cultural values in international advertising often used Western or Eastern dichotomy for differentiating across countries and showed that the West-East paradoxes are strongest and seemingly obvious (cf. De Mooij, 1998). The current study also found there is a variety of paradoxes within the region. Given the differences in value paradoxes, multinational advertisers will experience difficulties in deciding how to prepare advertising concepts that are congruent to consumption values deemed to be appropriate in the countries in this region. In particular, since there are substantial differences in consumption values between Hong Kong and Korea, multinationals should revise their marketing programs and advertising contents differentially if they were to be transferred to Hong Kong or Korea.

In future research, it may be necessary to extend the analysis to a larger number of Asian countries of diverging scores on the cultural dimensions for a more complete test of the Hofstede’s applicability. Further research is also needed to determine whether the appeals that are most commonly used in a culture are the most effective for that culture. For example, audience survey or experiment can be conducted to compare the effectiveness of advertising campaigns using appeals that are in congruent to the society’s cultural dimensions (i.e. desirable values) versus using appeals that are opposite to the society’s cultural dimensions (i.e. desired values).

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Appendix follows overleaf.

Appendix

Appeals	AU (percent)	FB (percent)	HG (percent)	CL (percent)	CA (percent)	FI (percent)	LS (percent)	RE (percent)	RT (percent)	SE (percent)
<i>Hong Kong commercials</i>										
Adventure	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	5.8	0	0	0
Beauty	0	2.4	20.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.6
Collectivism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competition	0	3.6	0	0	14.3	3.6	1.9	0	3.0	0
Convenience	0	2.4	1.8	0	0	7.1	0	16.7	0	10.7
Courtesy	0	0	0	0	0	3.6	1.9	0	3.0	0
Economy	0	9.6	1.8	0	0	10.7	19.2	8.3	48.5	10.7
Effectiveness	0	1.2	29.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enjoyment	50.0	32.5	0	0	14.3	3.6	40.4	8.3	21.2	14.3
Family	0	7.2	3.5	0	0	0	1.9	8.3	3.0	7.1
Health	0	9.6	7.9	0	0	0	1.9	0	0	0
Individualism	0	0	1.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.6
Leisure	0	2.4	1.8	0	0	17.9	3.8	0	0	3.6
Magic	0	1.2	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Modernity	50.0	2.4	4.4	0	14.3	3.6	13.5	0	15.2	3.6
Natural	0	3.6	0	0	0	0	0	8.3	0	0
Neatness	0	0	5.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nurturance	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patriotism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Popularity	0	0	1.8	0	14.3	0	3.8	0	0	0
Quality	0	12.0	7.0	50.0	28.6	0	3.8	8.3	6.1	14.3
Safety	0	0	2.6	25.0	0	21.4	0	0	0	14.3
Sex	0	3.6	1.8	0	0	0	14.3	8.3	0	3.6
Social status	0	0	1.8	0	0	3.6	0	33.3	0	0
Technology	0	0	2.6	0	0	0	1.9	0	0	0
Tradition	0	0	1.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Uniqueness	0	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wealth	0	0	0	0	0	7.1	0	0	0	0
Wisdom	0	4.8	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	0	3.6
Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.1
Youth	0	0	0.9	0	14.3	3.6	0	0	0	0

(continued)

Table A1.
Frequencies of advertising appeals by product categories

Appeals	AU (percent)	FB (percent)	HG (percent)	CL (percent)	CA (percent)	FI (percent)	LS (percent)	RE (percent)	RT (percent)	SE (percent)
<i>Korean commercials</i>										
Adventure	0	1.0	0	13.3	4.8	2.4	0	0	0	7.1
Beauty	0	1.0	6.9	0	0	0	0	10.0	0	0
Collectivism	0	1.0	0.9	0	9.5	0	0	0	7.1	2.4
Competition	5.9	3.0	1.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Convenience	0	0	2.6	0	19.0	9.8	0	0	7.1	2.4
Courtesy	0	1.0	0	0	0	22.0	0	0	0	2.4
Economy	0	0	0.9	20.0	0	19.5	0	0	14.3	7.1
Effectiveness	17.6	5.0	31.9	0	4.8	0	0	10.0	0	11.9
Employment	5.9	16.0	4.3	13.3	14.3	2.4	57.1	10.0	28.6	9.5
Family	5.9	14.0	3.4	0	4.8	17.1	0	40.0	21.4	2.4
Health	0	12.0	4.3	0	9.5	0	0	0	0	0
Individualism	23.5	4.0	2.6	26.7	4.8	7.3	0	0	0	7.1
Leisure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Magic	0	0	1.7	0	0	0	0	0	7.1	0
Modernity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.8
Natural	0	8.0	3.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neatness	0	2.0	6.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nurturance	0	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patriotism	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.8
Popularity	0	3.0	4.3	0	0	7.3	0	0	0	4.8
Quality	5.9	10.0	10.3	13.3	9.5	4.9	14.3	20.0	7.1	14.3
Safety	11.8	1.0	0	0	0	2.4	0	0	0	0
Sex	0	0	4.3	6.7	4.8	0	14.3	0	0	0
Social status	5.9	1.0	0.9	0	0	0	0	10.0	0	2.4
Technology	5.9	1.0	4.3	0	9.5	0	14.3	0	0	2.4
Tradition	0	2.0	1.7	0	0	2.4	0	0	0	0
Uniqueness	11.8	10.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.8
Wealth	0	0	0.9	0	0	2.4	0	0	0	0
Wisdom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.1
Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Youth	0	3.0	0.9	6.7	4.8	0	0	0	7.1	2.4

Notes: AU: automotives; FB: food and beverages; HG: household goods; CL: clothing; CA: computer and accessories; FI: finance; LS: leisure; RE: real estate; RT: retailing; SE: services