

[This document contains the author's accepted manuscript. For the publisher's version, see the link in the header of this document.]

Paper citation:

Zhang, Y. B., Song, Y., & Carver, L. (2008). Cultural values and aging in Chinese television commercials. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18, 210-225.

Abstract:

This study examined commercials ($N = 141$) featuring older adult(s) shown on three Chinese TV stations (i.e., national, provincial, and local) in the fall of 2005 to uncover the dominant value themes, the major product categories, and the association between value themes and product categories. Content analysis results revealed that three dominant value themes (i.e., health/life, product effectiveness, and family) appeared frequently in the Chinese television commercials featuring older adults, in which some major product categories such as food/drink, food/health supplements, and medicine were promoted. Results also indicated that the value of health/life was presented frequently in commercials for medicine and food/health supplements and that the family value appeared frequently in food/drinks commercials. Altogether these results demonstrated the importance of health and a lack of emphasis of modern values in Chinese television commercials which feature older adults, indicating a mixed view of aging (i.e., passive and negative). Findings are discussed in the context of the Chinese culture, aging, and television advertising.

Key Words: Values, Chinese Television Commercials, Older Adults, Aging

Text of paper:

Cultural values and aging in Chinese television commercials

Yan Bing Zhang

Yi Song

Leilani Jensen Carver

Department of Communication Studies

102 Bailey Hall, 1440 Jayhawk Blvd.

University of Kansas

Lawrence, KS 66045-7574

Phone: 785-864-9678 (Zhang)

E-mail: ybzhang@ku.edu (Zhang)

songyi@ku.edu (Song)

lcarver@ku.edu (Carver)

Fax: 785-864-5203

Author Note. Yan Bing Zhang (Ph.D., University of Kansas) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas. Yi Song and Leilani Carver are graduate students in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas.

In the last two decades, the demographic growth of the older population in almost every nation and an increasing humanistic concern for older adults' mental and physical health have propelled scholars to examine aging issues in various communication contexts, including the world of advertising

(e.g., Robinson, 1998; Roy & Harwood, 1997; Swayne & Greco, 1987). Motivated by a pragmatic concern for the success of multinational firms in foreign markets and a concern for advertising's socio-cultural effects, a few studies have examined the core value themes in the world of Chinese advertising (Chan & Cheng, 2002; Mueller, 1992; Zhang & Harwood, 2004). To those scholars, cultural values are the core message of advertising. Extending previous research, the current study examined the dominant value themes in Chinese television commercials that featured older adults.

Values in Chinese Television Commercials

China has experienced more economic growth than any other large country in the last twenty years (Chan & Cheng, 2002; Ji & McNeal, 2001). Part of this growth is because China has transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a free market one (Chan, 1995). This transition and the corresponding millions of potential new consumers with increasing purchasing power have attracted the attention of transnational corporations (McIntyre & Wei, 1998). Consequently, the increasing number of joint ventures and foreign products being sold in the Chinese market has influenced the way products are advertised, perceived, and consumed in China (Chan, 1995). In an age of globalization and modernization, Chinese consumers have undergone major new life style changes, which are the outward manifestations of their internal value systems. Hence, some Western scholars consider advertising in China a "total reversal of value judgment" which may foster "materialistic fever" and jeopardize traditional values (Pollay, Tse, & Wang, 1990, pp. 85-86; Stross, 1990). Gerbner's Cultivation theory supports this idea by arguing that television is the dominant force in shaping modern society (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980). Prior research has established that television viewers often align their perceptions of the world to those depicted by TV as opposed to real-world data (Rubin, Perse, & Taylor, 1988).

According to Sillars (1991), effective arguments are warranted by stated or implied values held by receivers. Hence, in order to motivate consumer action, advertisers have to target the consumers' shared interests, wants, goals, and problems, which often reflect their cultural values (Mueller, 1987; Pollay & Gallagher, 1990). That said, some of our cultural values are reinforced far more frequently than others in advertising (Pollay, 1986). Consequently, television advertisers are not only capable of reinforcing the traditional societal values, but also are capable of promoting modern values that can be readily understood and accepted by the intended audience. Thus television commercials may influence the values of viewers. This is of great concern especially in China because China is now the world's biggest television market with 1.1 billion viewers (Lin, 2004). While this perspective on globalization is common, it is also possible that shifts in values are more subtle (Zhang & Harwood, 2004).

Advertising influences and communicates cultural values due to its pervasiveness in many forms of media, its repetitive nature, and its development by professionals with sophisticated methods of persuasion (Pollay, 1986). Research exploring the relationship between advertising and culture is not a new phenomenon. This research began in the early 1960s (Cheng, 1994). In the 1980s cultural values came to the forefront when Pollay (1983) developed a foundational coding framework of 42 cultural values that are prevalent in advertisements.

Cultural values are defined as "the governing ideas and guiding principles for thought and action" in a particular culture (Srikandath, 1991, p. 166). Cultural values fluctuate in strength and valence depending on the culture (Chan & Cheng, 2002). For example, cultural values (such as collectivism, respect for elders, and tradition) are more strongly associated with Eastern cultures whereas cultural values of individualism, youth, and modernity are more demonstrative of Western cultures (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987).

Previous studies have analyzed the cultural values reflected in Chinese commercials and how those values have changed over time. In 1996, Cheng and Schweitzer, conducted a content analysis of 489 Chinese TV commercials and identified a list of dominant value themes that included modernity, youth, family, technology, and tradition. Cheng and Schweitzer's (1996) study showed that the world of Chinese advertising is a melting pot of Eastern and Western cultural values. In 1997, Cheng further analyzed the dominant value themes in 483 Chinese TV commercials broadcasted in 1990 and 1995 and found that modernity and technology were the dominant values in this period. Some Western values appeared more frequently in 1995 than they did in 1990 (i.e. enjoyment and individualism) while values emphasizing product performance decreased significantly. Cheng (1997) pointed out that only a portion of traditional Chinese cultural values have survived in advertising.

Another longitudinal study examining cultural values in advertising was conducted by McIntyre and Wei (1998). They investigated 1,154 national award-winning advertisements in China from 1979 to 1995. Information was the predominant cultural value at the early stage of the period (28.2% in 1979), but decreased significantly in frequency over time (17% in 1995). So did other utilitarian ads reflecting the values of convenience, economy, quality, or effectiveness. Meanwhile, ads with Western values such as competition, individualism, modernity, or sex increased in frequency. In a similar vein, Lin (2001) conducted a content analysis of 401 commercials (195 were Chinese) to examine cultural values reflected in US and Chinese television advertising appeals. Results indicated that the portrayal of traditional Chinese cultural values remained relatively stable. However, subtle changes in cultural values and advertising strategies were visible. In particular, the youth and modernity appeals that were presented in Western advertising (e.g., Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996) were frequently presented in Chinese television advertising. Also, Chinese commercials displayed greater use of veneration of elderly appeals (see also Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996).

More recent studies have confirmed that Western values are increasing in the world of Chinese advertising. For example, Chan and Cheng (2002) conducted a content analysis of 1,387 television commercials in China and Hong Kong from 1993 to 1998. They used Cheng and Schweitzer's (1996) coding scheme of cultural values. Results showed that five cultural values dominated Chinese television advertising (i.e., modernity, family, tradition, technology, and collectivism). More recently, Zhang and Harwood (2004) analyzed 496 commercials shown on 3 Chinese TV stations in the summer of 2000 and identified 13 dominant value themes such as quality/effectiveness, family, modernity, beauty/youth, and pleasure. In general, previous content analysis indicated the prevalence of utilitarian values and the coexistence of both traditional and modern values in the world of Chinese advertising albeit some previously dominant conventional themes, such as family, and collectivism, gradually shrank in proportion while modern themes gradually edged in with increasing prevalence. The current study addressed whether those dominant value themes found in previous literature in Chinese television advertising remained the same in commercials featuring older characters.

Aging Issues and Chinese Television Advertising

China is the world's biggest television market with 1.1 billion viewers (Lin, 2004). In 1999, China's population made up 21 percent of the world's population and 22 percent of the world's people aged 60 or over (Poston & Duan, 2000). In 2005, the estimated population of Chinese over the age of 60 reached over 142 million or over 10 percent of the total Chinese population (Dickerson & Johnson, 2005). In 2050, China is projected to have over 516 million citizens over the age of 60 (Poston & Duan, 2000). Not only is this group a significant portion of the world's population, the purchasing power of Chinese individuals is growing with the booming economy. The significant numbers of television viewers, the size of the elderly population and the rising economic power of China make it important for both advertisers and researchers to consider the portrayal of older adults in television commercials.

As television has become a transmitter of cultural values, Gerbner's cultivation theory has been widely applied to address the effects of media on attitudes, beliefs and values (Gerbner et al., 1980). From the cultivation perspective, values presented in television commercials featuring older characters are capable of influencing or shaping viewers' perceptions of older adults. The increasing concern of television's ability to influence and shape perceptions and attitudes has propelled research to examine the presence and portrayal of one age cohort, older adults who are 60 years old or above (Robinson, 1998; Roy & Harwood, 1997; Swayne & Greco, 1987). Studies in this area have converged in a growing body of literature concerning the invisibility/under-representation and stereotypical portrayal of older adults in television commercials.

Using a "twisted mirror" metaphor, Mueller (1987) argues that advertisers often associate modernity with the depiction of young models and symbolize tradition with older adults in advertising. In a similar vein, a recent study by Zhang and Agard (2004) indicated that only a limited number of value themes (e.g., health, utilitarian values, economy, enjoyment, and family) were manifested in U.S. television commercials featuring older adults. The most prevalent value themes presented in commercials targeting all consumers such as modernity, youth, independence, and achievement were either absent or appeared with very low frequency in commercials featuring older adults. In addition, older adults mainly appeared in commercials that promoted service, medicine, food/drink, and home improvement products (Zhang, & Agard, 2004). The authors concluded that the twisted mirror reflected "a combined effect of the materialistic nature of advertising, product characteristics, and stereotypical views of aging existed in society" (p. 12). Supporting Zhang and Agard (2004) findings, Zhang, Lien and Song (2006) found that the theme of health/life was promoted in 10.3% of the Taiwanese commercials targeted younger adults, whereas the health theme was emphasized in 33.6% of the commercials featured older adults. In addition, the same study found that medicine and health supplements were significantly more prevalent in commercials featuring older adults than in commercials featuring

younger adults. Those findings in general support our claim that younger people are not featured to the same degree in ads for health products.

The majority of the studies on cultural values in television commercials and aging issues have been conducted in the Western cultural context. The current study attempted to develop research on aging in advertising in China by exploring the overall cultural value themes presented in the commercials featuring older adults. The major research questions are informed by prior research on cultural values and aging issues in television commercials.

RQ 1: What are the cultural values presented in Chinese television commercials featuring older adults?

RQ 2. What are the major product categories in Chinese television commercials featuring older adults?

RQ 3. How are the cultural values presented in Chinese television commercials featuring older adults associated with product categories?

Method

Sample

Approximately 32 hours of television programs shown on each of the three television stations¹ (i.e., CCTV, SDTV, and YTTV) were taped in a one-week period in August of 2005. Following similar procedures in prior research (e.g., Robinson, 1998; Harris & Feinberg, 1977; Swayne & Greco, 1987),

¹ Three Chinese television channels were selected for this analysis: Channel One from China Central Television (CCTV), Shandong Television (SDTV), and Yantai Television (YTTV). CCTV is a State-run national network and is available 24 hours a day. SDTV mainly serves the viewers in Shandong province (population: 86.4 million) where the economic development and living standards are above average in the nation. YTTV broadcasts to Yantai district (population: 6.35 million) from Yantai city, a coastal city in Shandong that was one of the first 14 cities opened to international business in early 1980's.

two-hour blocks of programs were recorded between 10am-12pm, 12pm-2pm, 2pm-4pm, 4pm-6pm, 6pm-8pm, 8pm-10pm, and 10pm-12am on each of the randomly selected seven days. Television stations were assigned to time slots on a random and rotating basis in an attempt to cover all types of programming, times, and audience demographics. This resulted in approximately 98 hours of television programming (day time and prime time), which yielded 1,146 commercials, of which 141 (i.e., 12.30%) featured older adults (44 were shown on CCTV, 50 on SDTV, and 47 on YTTV). The repeated commercials for the same product were included in the sample for two main reasons. First, commercials are repeatedly broadcasted on television and hence the inclusion of the duplicated commercials represents audience's viewing reality (see also Roy & Harwood, 1997; Swayne & Greco, 1987). Second, the inclusion of the duplicated commercials supports Gerbner et al. (1980) in that it is the continual repetition of patterns of ideologies and relationships presented on television that cultivates or instantiates its underlying cultural values.

Since the examination of values in television commercials featuring older adults was one of the main interests in the current study, commercials without the presence of individuals over the age of 60 were not analyzed. A list of criteria were used in determining whether each commercial had at least one older person who was 60 years or older: 1) extensive gray hair 2) wrinkling of the skin, 3) use of ambulatory aids, 4) reference of being grandmother or grandfather (including being shown with grandchildren), and 5) direct mention of chronological age (Swayne & Greco, 1987; Robinson, 1998; Roy & Harwood, 1997). A character possessing the majority of the above characteristics was coded as an older character.

Coding Schemes, Procedures, and Reliability Checks

Coding practice. The 13 value categories used in Zhang and Harwood's (2004) research were modified to fit the current sample. Before the main analysis was conducted, two coders (the first and

the second authors) conducted a preliminary coding of 30 randomly selected commercials (i.e., 10 from each station) to identify the major value theme/appeal by focusing on the overall or the *Gestalt* impression of each commercial (see also Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Mueller, 1987; Pollay, 1983). The product category was also coded.

Preliminary analysis of the 30 randomly chosen commercials indicated that certain value categories used in Zhang and Harwood (2004) (i.e., social status/success, beauty/youth, materialism, and environmentalism) were absent and that only nine value themes were found applicable in the current sample (see Table 1). Operational definitions of the nine values were developed based on previous research (i.e., Zhang & Harwood, 2004) and discussion between the coders (see Table 1). Preliminary coding of these commercials revealed seven major product categories, including food/drink, medicine, household appliance, personal care products, and household cleaning products, and food/health supplements commercials. These categories were used in the main analysis. Six of these categories are very obvious and straightforward. Unlike the food/drink category, which included food and drinks that consumers' use in their regular diet, the Food/health Supplements included vitamins, energy pills, and body enhancement products. Those 30 commercials used for the preliminary analysis were included in the main analysis, but were not used for any inter-coder reliability checks.

Reliability check. Two coders analyzed 45 randomly selected commercials independently for the dominant value themes (approximately 31.9% of the total sample and 15 from each television station) and product categories, and reached satisfactory inter-coder reliabilities (Scott's Pi = .94 for value themes; Scott's Pi = .96 for product categories). Differences were resolved through discussion. The 45 commercials used for reliability check did not contain any repeats and were not used for any coding practice. When a commercial could not be coded into any of the value categories (e.g., a simple mention of a brand name or when a spokesperson does not provide any product information but only calls for

audience to inquire more about the product/service being advertised), it was categorized as "other".

The first coder (i.e., the main coder) coded the remaining commercials (i.e., 96)² after the satisfactory reliability check.

Results

Value Themes

Research question 1 examined cultural values presented in television commercials featuring older adults. Table 2 presents the frequencies of the value themes in television commercials featuring at least one older person (7 commercials in the "other" category were not analyzed further). As shown in Table 2, health/life was most frequent in the commercials (44.0%; $n = 62$), followed by the product effectiveness value (14.9%; $n = 21$) and the family value (14.2%; $n = 20$). While tradition appeared in 5.7% ($n = 8$) of the commercials, education and pleasure were used in 5% of the commercials ($n = 7$). The least frequent value themes manifested in the commercials included patriotism (3.5%; $n = 5$), modernity/technology (2.1%; $n = 3$) and filial piety (1.4%; $n = 2$).

Product Categories

Research question 2 examined the major product categories in television commercials featuring older adults. Table 3 presents the frequencies of the 7 product categories promoted in television commercials featuring at least one older person (6 commercials in the "other" category were not analyzed further). As shown in Table 3, food/drink was most frequently promoted in the commercials (30.5%; $n = 43$), followed by food/health supplement commercials (19.1%; $n = 27$), and medicine (16.3%; $n = 23$). While household appliance was advertised in 12.1% ($n = 17$) of the commercials, personal care

² In order to avoid the coder drift problem, the two coders randomly selected 10 commercials from the remaining pool after the first coder (i.e., main coder) finished analyzing 50 of the 96 commercials. They reached 100% agreement on both coding variables – value themes and product categories.

products and house hold cleaning products appeared in 7.8% of the commercials ($n = 11$). Service commercials were the least frequent (2.1%; $n = 3$).

Value Themes Coded by Product Category

Research question 3 examined the association between values themes and product categories in television commercials featuring older adults. As shown in Table 4, health was most common in commercials for medicine, food/health supplements, and personal care products. The value of family was promoted in commercials for food/drinks; filial piety and modernity were major appeals in commercials for household appliance.

Discussion

This study showed that the traditional values as a group appeared in 73.8% of the commercials featuring older characters, of which health/life was the most frequent (i.e., 44.0%) followed by family (i.e., 14.2%). While the utilitarian values had a fair presence (14.9%), the modern values appeared with very low frequency (i.e., 6.4%). Examination of the product categories in the current sample revealed that Chinese television commercials featuring older adults predominantly promoted products such as food/drink, food/health supplements, medicine, personal care, and home improvement. These results reveal challenges in the world of advertising that have central significance to older adults' health. The specific patterns with which these values appeared are discussed below in the context of tradition, modernity and aging. Results are also compared with Zhang and Agard's (2004) study of values in television commercials featuring older adults in the American context. Before the discussion on these themes, implications of the prevalence of utilitarian values in Chinese TV advertising are addressed.

Utilitarian Values in Chinese TV Advertising

As a category, the utilitarian values were not frequently used values (14.9%, $n = 131$) in comparison with the symbolic values (80.2% = modern values + traditional values) in this sample. It is generally believed that the Chinese culture is a high context culture that emphasizes indirect and implicit messages (Hall, 1977). Several studies on advertising have supported this theory. Lin's (2001) cross cultural comparison of cultural values reflected in Chinese and American television advertising revealed that the "hard-sell and product merit are traditional U.S. -style commercial appeals" (p. 90; see also De Mooij, 1998), whereas Chinese advertisers tend to motivate consumer action through symbolic appeals. Another preferred explanation of the heavy use of symbolic values in Chinese advertising might be a reflection the current stage of Chinese television advertising in general. Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990) suggested that the early stage of advertising in the United States emphasized product information and later stages focused on symbolic functions of the products (image orientation and lifestyle). As China has been enjoying its market economy in the new millennium, Chinese television advertising has also approached the levels of sophistication found in the West (Zhang & Gelb, 1996). It has to be noted that this study also revealed that effectiveness as a single value ranked second on the list across all the values indicating that Chinese television commercials still emphasize basic product features which is a core advertising component that will never vanish (see also Ji & McNeal, 2001). In other words, promoting effectiveness is innately good for selling purposes and has been found pervasive in the literature across time, product, the demographics of audience and culture (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Zhang & Harwood, 2004).

Tradition, Modernity and Aging

This distorted mirror hypothesis states that 'advertising reflects culture, but the mirror is distorted because advertising reflects only certain attitudes, behaviors and values (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990, p 360). Values are chosen to serve sellers' best interest. Mueller (1987) agrees with Pollay and Gallagher (1990) in that advertising reflects cultural values as long as it provides a profit.

Although certain traditional values (i.e., health/life, family) were pervasive in television commercials featuring older adults, many other traditional Confucian values (e.g., humility, patience, thrift) as represented by the CVS (Chinese Cultural Connection, 1987) and a series of modern values (e.g., independence, success, competitiveness) were not used, despite being highly upheld by Chinese people, including older adults (Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagum, 2004). From this perspective, these results indicate that if television advertising is a mirror of the Chinese society, "it is only a distorted one" (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990, p. 370). One explanation is that the very nature of advertising featuring older adults is to create needs and wants in the audience that are consistent with the cultural representations and stereotypes of older adults and certain values, especially modern values, may contradict this very nature. For example, "Confucianism preaches being contented with one's position in life, having few desires, and keeping oneself disinterested and pure – not ideal bases to use for selling products" in general (Zhang & Harwood, 2004).

On the other hand, family, a traditional value, was the third most frequently used value and was mostly associated with food/drink commercials. The importance of this value to Chinese society has been noted in previous research (Chu & Ju, 1993). Family has been consistently used in Chinese television advertising targeted all consumers (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Zhang & Harwood, 2004). Our favored explanation is that family is such a basic and fundamental unit in the social structure in China and is regarded as essential for maintaining social integration and stability (Chu & Ju, 1993). From this regard, the use of the family value in television commercials results in both economic profits and positive social influence. Other traditional values (e.g., tradition, patriotism, filial piety, education), especially modern values (e.g., youth, pleasure, independence, success, competitiveness) that might seem more amenable to advertising in general were also not particularly common in advertising featuring older adults.

Health, as a cultural value, is universal and is also one of the values that consistently, but infrequently (e.g., around 6 or 7%) appeared in television advertising in the United States and China in contrast with other values (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Pollay, 1986; Zhang & Harwood, 2004). However, the value of health is one of the most frequent value themes in commercials featuring older adults across cultures (see also Zhang & Agard, 2004). An explanation of the frequent use of health in the commercials featuring older adults could be attributed to the distorted mirror hypothesis, which is the combined effect of the materialistic nature of advertising, product characteristics, and stereotypical views of aging existed in the Chinese society. First of all, aging has been associated with negative connotations of being physically weak or incompetent (e.g., sick, feeble and fragile) in both the Western and Eastern contexts albeit positive perceptions also exist (Kite, Deaux, & Miele, 1991; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994; Zhang, Hummert, & Garstka, 2002). Obviously, advertisers cross-culturally have adapted to this stereotypical group trait by using health appeals to promote medicine, health supplements, and personal care products. Appealing to the value of health/life in commercials featuring older adults in the Chinese cultural context might be especially profitable due to the cultural norm of filial piety, which states that older adults should be respected and cared for (Zhang & Hummert, 2001). To a large extent, the Chinese society gauges young adults' filial piety to their elders through how much they care for their elders and the longevity of their elders' lives. Certainly, the commercials promoting medicine, personal care products, and health supplements with a health theme not only make logical sense but also attract both older and young consumers. From the older consumers' perspective, these commercials persuade them that they need to be free from disease, stay fit, and maintain their energy to enjoy life. These commercials also convince/educate young consumers to buy such products for their elders (e.g., medicine or vitamins) so that their elders will be healthy and can live longer. While these reasons contributed to the prevalent appeal for health and good life in the current sample, which might have positive effects in perceptions of the importance of maintaining a healthy

body in later life, the underlying negative stereotypical views that older adults are sick and unhealthy embedded in these commercials are of concern as well.

On the one hand, this negative view of aging influences the way older adults behave and how others interact with them. If older individuals associate old age with bad health, they will act as if they are unhealthy (e.g., become increasingly dependent) based on the self-fulfilling prophecy. On the other hand, if young individuals associate old age with health problems such as hearing impairment and fragile body, they will then modify their ways of communication with older adults (e.g., using louder voice, simpler vocabulary, or avoid communication) or perceive older adults as a burden (Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci & Henwood, 1986). In the long run these negative stereotypes will foster false perceptions of aging and lead to decline of older adults' physical and psychological well being (Ryan et al., 1986).

Given that modernity is a common theme in Chinese television advertising, which mirrors current political and economic reality (e.g., Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Pollay, 1986; Zhang & Harwood, 2004), advertisers do not consider modernity as a good selling point in commercials featuring older adults. This finding is a clear indication that in determining the nature of advertising appeals to use in commercials featuring older characters, advertisers are predominantly motivated by the cultural stereotypes of aging. That said, findings in this study further support the notion that perceived cultural values held by the target audience is the core of all advertising messages.

Conclusions

Findings in this study suggest that Chinese television commercials featuring older adults are not functioning to represent new directions for society but to maintain the status quo. In other words, current television commercials featuring older characters do not reflect the coexistence of traditional and modern values in Chinese society (Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagum, 2004) and in the world of Chinese television advertising (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Zhang & Harwood, 2004). The value themes

uncovered in this study communicate a clear message that older characters are most useful in promoting certain traditional values of health and family within a limited range of products. In general, older adults may still be the family core, as knowledge providers and tradition protectors, but they are not used to preach modern values in Chinese television advertising.

References

- Chan, K. (1995). Information Content of Television Advertising in China. *International Journal of Advertising* 14, 365-373.
- Chan, K., & Cheng, H. (2002). One country, two systems: Cultural values reflected in Chinese and Hong Kong television commercials. *Gazette*, 64, 385-400.
- Cheng, H. (1994). Reflections of cultural values: A content analysis of Chinese magazine advertisements from 1982 and 1992. *International Journal of Advertising*, 13(2), 167-83.
- Cheng, H. (1997). Toward an understanding of cultural values manifested in advertising. A content analysis of Chinese television commercials in 1990 and 1995. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 773-796.
- Cheng, H., & Schweitzer, J. C. (1996). Cultural values reflected in Chinese and U.S. television commercials. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36, 27-45.
- Chinese Culture Connection. (1987). Chinese values and the search for culture-free dimensions of culture. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 18(2), 143-164.
- Chu, G. C., & Ju, Y. N. (1993). *The great wall in ruins: Communication and cultural change in China*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- De Mooij, Marieke (1998) *Global Marketing and Advertising. Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Dickerson, P. & Johnson, P. (2005). U.S. Census Bureau International Database.
- Retrieved December 19, 2005 from <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbsum.pl?cty=CH>.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (1980). Aging with television:

Images on television drama and conceptions of social reality. *Journal of Communication*, 30, 37-47.

Hall, E. T. (1977). *Beyond culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

Harris, A. J., Feinberg, J. F. (1977). Television and aging: Is what you see what you get?

The Gerontologist, 17, 464-468.

Hummert, M. L., Garstka, T. A., Shaner, J. L., Strahm, S. (1994). Stereotypes of the elderly held by young, middle-aged, and elderly adults. *Journal of Gerontology*,

49, 240-249.

Ji, M. F., & McNeal, J. U. (2001). How Chinese children's commercials differ from those of the United States: A content analysis. *Journal of Advertising*, 3, 79-92.

Kite, M. E., Deaux, K., & Miele, M. (1991). Stereotypes of old and young: Does age outweigh gender?

Psychology and Aging, 6, 19-27.

Leiss, W., Kline, S., & Jhally, S. (1990). *Social communication in advertising: Persons,*

products and images of well-being (2nd ed.). Ontario: Nelson Canada.

Lin, C. A. (2001). Cultural values reflected in Chinese and American television advertising. *Journal of*

Advertising, 3, 83-94.

Lin, M. (2004). Changes and Consistency: China's media market after WTO entry.

Journal of Media Economics, 17(3), 177-192.

- McIntyre, B. T., & Wei, R. (1998). Value changes in Chinese advertisements from 1979 to 1995: A Longitudinal Study. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 8, 18-40.
- Mueller, B. (1987). Reflections of culture: An analysis of Japanese and American advertising appeals. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 27, 3, 51-59.
- Mueller, B. (1992). Standardization vs. specialization: An examination of Westernization in Japanese advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32, 15-24.
- Pollay, R. W. (1983). Measuring the cultural values manifest in advertising. In J. H. Leigh & C. R. Martin, Jr. (Eds.). *Current issues and research in advertising* (pp. 71-91). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Graduate School of Business Division Research.
- Pollay, R. W. (1986). The distorted mirror: Reflections on the unintended consequences of advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 50, 18-36.
- Pollay, R. W., & Gallagher, K. (1990). Advertising and cultural values: Reflections in the distorted mirror. *International Journal of Advertising*, 9, 359-372.
- Pollay, R., Tse, D. K., & Wang, Z. Y. (1990). Advertising, propaganda, and value change in economic development: The new cultural revolution in China and attitudes toward advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 20, 83-95.
- Poston, D. L. & Duan, C. C. (2000). The current and projected distribution of the elderly and elderly care in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Family Issues*, 21, 714-722.
- Robinson, T. E. (1998). *Portraying older people in advertising*. New York: Garland

Publishing.

Roy, A., & Harwood, J. (1997). Underrepresented, positively portrayed: Older adults in television commercials. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 25, 35-56.

Rubin, A. M., & Perse, E. M., & Taylor, D.S. (1988). A methodological examination of cultivation. *Communication Research*, 15(2), pp.107-134.

Ryan, E.B., Giles, H., Bartolucci, G., & Henwood, K. (1986). Psycholinguistic and social psychological components of communication by and with the elderly. *Language & Communication*, 6, 1-24.

Sillars, M. O. (1991). Value analysis: Understanding culture in value systems. In M. O. Sillars. *Messages, meanings, and culture: Approaches to communication criticism* (pp. 128-148). New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Srikandath, S. (1991). Cultural values depicted in Indian television advertising. *Gazette*, 48, 166-172.

Stross, R. (1990). The Return of Advertising in China: A Survey of the Ideological

Reversal. *China Quarterly*, 123, 485-502.

Swayne, L. E., & Greco, A. J. (1987). The portrayal of older Americans in television commercials. *Journal of Advertising*, 16, 47-54.

Zhang, Y., & Gelb, B. D. (1996). Matching advertising appeal to cultures: The influence of product's use conditions. *Journal of Advertising*, 25(Fall), 29 - 46.

Zhang, Y.B., & Harwood, J. (2004). Modernization of tradition in an age of

globalization: Cultural values in Chinese television commercials. *Journal of Communication*, 54, 156-172.

Zhang, Y. B., & Agard, A. (2004). Cultural values in U. S. television commercials featuring older adults. *Hallym International Journal of Aging*, 6, 167-183.

Zhang, Y. B., & Hummert, M. L. (2001). Harmonies and tensions in Chinese intergenerational communication: Younger and older adults' accounts. *Journal of Asia Pacific Communication*, 11, 203-230.

Zhang, Y. B., Hummert, M. L., & Garstka, T. A. (2002). Stereotype traits of older adults generated by young, middle-aged, and older Chinese participants. *Hallym International Journal of Aging*, 4, 119-140.

Zhang, Y. B., Hummert, M. L., & Savundranayagam, M. (2004, November). Perceptions of aging in the Chinese culture: Exploring the agegroup and cultural effects. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America. Washington, DC.

Zhang, Y. B., Lien, S.C., & Song, Y. (2006, June). Communicating aging in Taiwanese television commercials. Paper presented in the 10th International Conference on Language and Social Psychology, Bonn, Germany.

Table 1

Definitions of the Identified Values in Chinese Commercials

Education: The product improves knowledge or wisdom, including improved school

performance.

Effectiveness/quality: The excellence, durability or effectiveness of the product is emphasized.

Enjoyment/Pleasure: The commercial promotes the idea that the product will provide pleasure, joy, fun or happiness to individuals.

Family: The product is good for the family (e.g., enjoying product with other family members).

Filial piety: Commercial presents a positive model of old age, and/or suggests that the product should be purchased for elders to show love and respect.

Health: Use of the product will make individuals free from disease or enhance physical vitality.

Modernity: Emphasis is placed on the product being new, contemporary, or up-to-date. The commercial may present the sophisticated technology used in manufacturing.

Patriotism: The product is associated with love of, or loyalty to China as a country.

Tradition: The product is historical, time-honored, and legendary; the commercial suggests nostalgia, respect for the past, customs, and conventions.

Zhang, Y. B., Song, Y., & Carver, L. (2008). Cultural values and aging in Chinese television commercials. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18, 210-225. Publisher's official version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/japc.18.2.06zha>, Open Access version: <http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/>.

Table 2

Frequencies of Value Themes in Chinese Television Commercials Featuring Older Adults

Value Themes	Frequency (N = 141) ^a	%
Traditional Values		
Health/Life	62	44.0
Family	20	14.2
Tradition	8	5.7
Education	7	5.0
Patriotism	5	3.5
Filial Piety	2	1.4
	SUBTOTAL	104
		73.8
Modern Values		
Enjoyment/Pleasure	7	5.0
Modernity/Technology	2	1.4
	SUBTOTAL	9
		6.4
Utilitarian Values		
Effectiveness/quality	21	14.9
Other	7	5.0

Total	141	100
-------	-----	-----

^a Seven commercials (5.0%) could not be coded into any of the values categories and were included in the “other” category. Those seven commercials were not considered further.

Table 3

Frequencies of Product Categories in Chinese Television Commercials Featuring Older Adults

Product Categories	Frequency (<i>N</i> = 141) ^a	%
Food/drink	43	30.5
Food/health Supplements	27	19.1
Medicine	23	16.3
Household Appliance	17	12.1
Personal Care	11	7.8
Household Cleaning	11	7.8
Service	3	2.1
Others	6	4.3
Total	141	100

^a Six commercials (i.e., 4.3%) targeted at the older market could not be coded into any of the product categories and was included in the “other” category. Those six commercials were not considered further.

Table 4

Percentages of Value Themes Coded by Product Categories (n =128)^a

Product Category (%)	FD	HA	MC	PC	SE	HC	FHS
Health/Life	9.3	.0	95.7	90.9	.0	.0	100
Effectiveness/Quality	7.0	35.7	4.3	9.1	.0	100	.0
Family	41.9	14.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Tradition	18.6	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Education	.0	21.4	.0	.0	100	.0	.0
Enjoyment/Pleasure	11.6	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Patriotism	11.6	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Modernity/Technology	.0	14.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Filial Piety	.0	14.3	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
Total count	43	14	23	11	2	9	26
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

^a The "other" category in value themes (7) and product categories (6) were not included in this analysis.

^b Food/Drink = FD, Household Appliance = HA, Medicine = MC, Personal Care Products = PC, SE = Service, Household Cleaning = HC, and Food/Health Supplements = FHS