

Content Analysis on the Use of Calligraphic Art in Print Advertisements in Taiwan

Yang, Chao-Ming¹ & Hsu, Tzu-Fan²

Abstract

Calligraphic art features its unique beauty and history in the Chinese society and has frequently been used as a tool of persuasion in advertisements made by Taiwanese firms in recent years. Calligraphic art is not only used to connect to contemporary culture but also to attract audience's attention to the advertisements. This study sampled 960 calligraphic advertisements within the period between 2007 and 2014 from two Taiwanese newspapers, namely, Liberty Times and United Daily News. Content analysis was conducted to interpret and code the data. This study found that of the five calligraphic typefaces, the regular and creative scripts were the most frequently used of the five calligraphic types in calligraphic advertisements. Regarding the picture-headline interactive relation, the methods of picture-headline assistance and continuation were most commonly used. In addition, a large number of calligraphic advertisements adopted the rational and cultural appeal and reflected the cultural values of openness to change and self-enhancement. Overall, the Chinese calligraphy has pictorial beauty and the function of message delivery. The advertisements featuring the beauty of oriental traditional art can easily connect the advertised products with culture and produce the effect of persuasion in soft-sell advertising.

Keywords: Calligraphic art, Content analysis, Print advertisements, Chinese calligraphy

1. Introduction

Chinese calligraphy is an art expression established based on Confucian and Taoist philosophies. It has a long history and differs from the art form in Western culture. Calligraphy originated from the culture of Han Chinese, which is not only a tool for communication but also a spiritual symbol of Chinese culture (Dong, 2008). According to Taliaferro (1999), art is a product of the times; people living in different times have dissimilar aesthetic standards, and the manifestations of art creation also vary with times. From the perspective of 21st century, Chinese calligraphy has not been limited to traditional art but has been applied to diverse aspects in modern society including dance (Gerdes, 2010), craft creations (Mahoney, 1982), product design (Chang & Hsu, 2011), and visual design (Zhang et al., 2010). Barrass (2002) contended that with the increasingly frequent exchange between Western and Eastern culture and the emergence of postmodernism that emphasizes cultural diversity, calligraphy has not only been used in the conventional aspect of writing, but has gradually developed into modern calligraphy representing Eastern aesthetics.

Advertising plays a vital role in modern industrial and commercial society, which has high economic development; the delivery and presentation of information are inevitably related to the life experience and cultural knowledge of the public (Yang, Hsu, & Chen, 2014). Numerous scholars have contended that an effective advertisement should be integrated with the social and cultural values to stimulate audience's motivation to pay attention to the information.

¹ Associate Professor of Department of Visual Communication Design, Ming Chi University of Technology, New Taipei City, Taiwan.

² Corresponding author, Assistant Professor of Department of Commercial Design, Chung Yuan Christian University, Taoyuan City, Taiwan.

Therefore, from the social and cultural perspective, advertising reflects not only people's lifestyles in modern society but also their attitude and values toward the material culture (Nishimura, Nevgi, & Tella, 2009). Srikandath (1991) argued that advertisements have subtly changed audience's living habits and influenced the basic pattern and structure of the society. However, the changes are in a form of gradual wriggle and therefore cannot be discerned easily. The content of an effective advertisement is always related to the contemporary culture the public are familiar with or at least does not conflict with the cultural values inherited by the modern society (Lin, 2001) to ensure that the delivery of advertising messages can be persuasive to the audience in the familiar cultural context. The layout and design of text in print advertisements influence the overall visual aesthetics and efficiency of information delivery of the advertisement (Hirschman, 1986). Chinese calligraphy has often been used as a tool of persuasion in advertisements because of its special construction and unique aesthetics based on the Chinese culture.

It is not only connected to the background of contemporary culture but also attracts the audience's attention to the advertising information (Ahn, Shin, & Chung, 2016). According to Iezzi (2013), when calligraphy is used as a visual element in a print advertisement, it can enable the advertisement to show the vitality of traditional culture and the appeal of contemporary culture and therefore boost consumers' attitude toward advertising and their purchase intention. Calligraphy is a "crystallized" product in Chinese culture; its graphic nature, unique composition, aesthetic value, and cultural meaning have crucial significance in Eastern culture. It reflects not only the public's artistic and aesthetic values but also the value of cultural identity in contemporary times (Chiang, 1973). Therefore, this study focused on print advertisements and investigated the use of calligraphy in advertisements in Taiwan and analyzed the characteristics of advertising and the cultural values embedded in advertisements in the contemporary Taiwanese society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese calligraphy styles

Barrass (2002) stated that the calligraphy styles, compared with typefaces used in computers, demonstrate the characteristics of culture, artistry, uniqueness, history, and values. From its evolution along the history, calligraphy styles basically involve four types, namely seal, clerical, regular, and cursive scripts, which are described as follows (Chiang, 1973):

1. Seal script: Seal script is divided into Great Seal and Small Seal scripts. The Great Seal script has relatively complete stroke lines that are even and soft; its regular structure of strokes is a crucial basis for Chinese characters. The Small Seal script has relatively long and narrow shape with rounded and uniform stroke lines. The spatial layout between strokes is well-proportioned; therefore, the Small Seal script has the beauty of soft and rigid (Fig. 1).
2. Clerical script: Clerical script evolved from and is a simplified version of seal script. It was dominant in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) and was called Han-clerical script. The shape of the clerical script is portrayed as having a silkworm-like head and a swallow-like tail as well as a left-falling stroke, a right-falling stroke, or a flat stroke. Generally, clerical script is highly artistic and decorative (Fig. 2).



Figure 1: Seal Script



Figure 2: Clerical Script



Figure 3: Regular Script

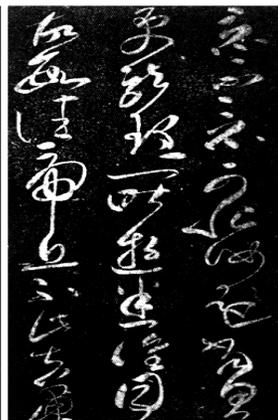


Figure 4: Cursive Script

3. Regular script: Regular script evolved from the clerical script and gradually replaced the clerical script in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420). It has square structure and straight strokes that are combined evenly. The regular script can be written conveniently and has been the most prevalent script style in Chinese-speaking societies until now (Fig. 3).
4. Cursive script: Cursive script was created to increase writing efficiency. Cursive script emphasizes fast writing and is therefore written in a flowing manner without a break. Cursive script is the most artistic style but sometimes may be difficult to read (Fig. 4).

2.2 The application of calligraphy in advertising designs

Advertising designs in Taiwan and China in recent years have shown a trend of increasing use of traditional calligraphy. This implicates that calligraphic art tends to be favored by consumers in the market of advertising and marketing in the East (Allen, 2008). According to Amouzadeh and Tavangar (2004), in contemporary advertising design, although the application of traditional calligraphy has increased, its message persuasion potential and marketing effect have not been fully explored. In fact, the popularity of the Chinese style worldwide in recent years is highly related to the innovative design of calligraphy (Fig. 5). This indicates that incorporating the element of traditional calligraphy into advertising designs not only creates distinctive Chinese styles but also presents Chinese ethnic and historical characteristics. Such method can also resonate with consumers and elevate their attention to the advertised content (Weiming, 2008).

Moreover, Chinese elements have gradually been explored and applied by advertising designers because of their distinctive cultural meanings and appealing visual expressions (Iezzi, 2012). Considering that advertising is a tool of communication and persuasion, how to use special graphic designs to attract the public's attention and enhance their memory is a common goal for advertisers and advertising designers (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). The use of calligraphic art certainly can achieve this goal (Fig. 6). Iezzi (2013) mentioned that after the consumer market became a part of the information society, Chinese calligraphy is no longer used solely in physical books; rather, it has been adopted by advertisers as a design component or a form of advertising appeal. In contemporary advertising design, calligraphic art incarnates the unique oriental romantic charm, and its strokes incorporate peculiar visual art, which injects humanistic atmosphere and cultural taste into advertising messages and creates a distinct personality for the advertised products (services) (Iezzi, 2013).

Examples of advertising design that successfully incorporate calligraphic art are numerous. For example, in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the design of the emblem was inspired by calligraphy. The designer skillfully integrated the seal script, the Chinese character of jing (京), a human shape, and a seal to design the emblem that amazed the International Olympic Committee (Fig. 7). From the perspective of advertisement marketing, calligraphic art enhances the expression and appeal of advertising design. Using advertising as an activity of creativity and persuasion in the consumer market requires not only constant innovations but also the ability to capture the audience' attention. The application of calligraphic art to graphic design is a method for effectively creating market opportunities (Bartal, 2013).

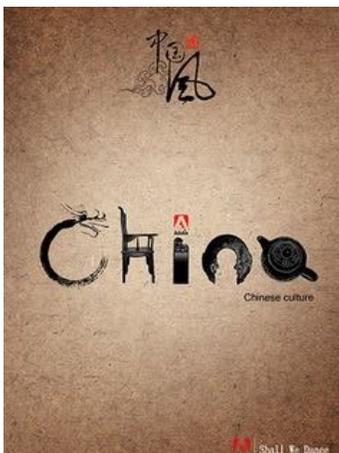


Figure 5: Advertisement of Chinese style



Figure 6: Visual art of Chinese calligraphy



Figure 7: Symbol design for Beijing Olympic Games

3. Methodology

3.1 Research framework

On the basis of relevant literature, this study constructed main categories and sub-categories for print advertisements that involved calligraphic art with Chinese characters. The first main category was calligraphic typeface types, which comprised seal, clerical, regular, cursive, and creative scripts (Chiang, 1973; Lynskey, 1988). Moreover, the main category of picture-headline interactive relation involved the sub-categories of picture-headline repetition, picture-headline substitution, picture-headline continuation, and picture-headline assistance (Lutz & Lutz, 1977). The category of cultural values consisted of self-enhancement, self-transcendence, conservation, and openness to change (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000). The category of advertising appeal types comprised rational, emotional, humorous, cultural, and ethical appeals (Clow & Baack, 2010). Advertisement samples were collected according to these main categories and sub-categories. This study conducted a content analysis to analyze sample data, defined categories, and developed a coding sheet according to related theories and studies as well as the mutual exclusion, independence, single categorization, and operability of the categories (Krippendorff, 2004). The development and definition of the categories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Category development and definition

Main categories	Sub-categories	Definition of categories
Calligraphic typefaces types	Seal Script	Seal script has relatively long and narrow shape with rounded and uniform stroke lines. The spatial layout between strokes is well-proportioned; therefore, it has the beauty of both softness and rigidity.
	Clerical Script	Clerical script is highly artistic and decorative, which is characterized by its silk worm-like head and swallow-like tail as well as left-falling stroke, right-falling stroke, and flat shape.
	Regular Script	Regular script has square structure and straight strokes that are combined evenly. It can be written conveniently and is similar to modern-day Chinese characters.
	Cursive Script	Cursive script emphasizes fast writing and therefore is written in a flowing manner without a break. It is highly artistic but cannot be easily recognized.
	Creative Script	Creative script is human designed and integrates creative elements. The traditional rule of writing is changed. Therefore, it cannot be categorized under any typefaces.
Picture-headline interactive relation	Picture-headline repetition	The information of picture and headline are simultaneously placed in the advertisement image; therefore, the audience repetitively receives the same information at the same time.
	Picture-headline substitution	Picture and headline are combined together; therefore, the advertisement image is viewed as that "picture is the headline, and the headline constitutes the picture."
	Picture-headline continuation	Picture and headline separately take on 50% of persuasiveness. Thus, the audience must read the two to put together the information to understand the message that is being advertised.
	Picture-headline assistance	The conceptual association between the picture and headline produces a special atmosphere for the advertisement image.
Cultural values	Self-enhancement	The advertising message shows a person's authority and influence regarding his/her social status and his/her capabilities, conditions, and advantages.
	Self-transcendence	The advertising message conveys moral meanings such as maintaining world peace, social justice, and environmental protection.
	Conservation	The advertising message presents the information of respect for the elderly, the loving relationship between family members, or self-practice for achieving a particular goal.
	Openness to change	The advertising message exhibits challenges, novelties, and changes and makes the audience excited and curious about everything.
Advertising appeal types	Rational appeal	The advertisement compares the advantages and disadvantages of the products and analyzes the benefits the product can bring to consumers. It persuades consumers through reasoning.
	Emotional appeal	The advertisement content appeals to emotions, targeting consumers' feelings and personal needs. It persuades consumers through provoking their emotions.
	Humorous appeal	The advertisement is displayed interestingly and humorously; therefore, consumers naturally and unconsciously receive the message about the product with laughter.
	Cultural appeal	The advertisement content focuses on the features of Eastern culture, connecting cultural symbols and visual images to the product or service.
	Ethical appeal	The advertisement content appeals to people's sense of morality and conveys message from the values of right and wrong to promote the image of the product or service.

3.2 Sampling method and sample size

Despite the prosperity of online media, newspaper is still a crucial source of information for the public. Therefore, the samples in this study comprised advertisements on newspapers, which were collected from the Taiwanese newspaper Liberty Times and United Daily News between January 2007 and December 2014.

In other words, advertisement samples within an eight-year period were collected. From the perspective of readers reading newspaper advertisements, advertisements with a size smaller than a quarter of the entire newspaper page are easily overlooked. Therefore, this study selected only advertisements with a size larger than a quarter of a newspaper page (i.e., larger than the size of 18cm×26cm). Interval sampling was performed to sample the advertisements. The sampling process was divided into three steps. The first, second, and third step determined the month, week, and weekday in which the samples were selected, respectively. For the first sample, advertisements on the two newspapers on the odd days of the week (i.e., Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday) in odd months were collected. To maintain favorable balance, for the second sample, advertisements on the even days of the week (i.e., Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) in even months were obtained. Subsequently, the samplings were conducted according to the alternation of the two methods. Consequently, this study sampled 3,403 advertisements (the number of advertisements from Liberty Times and United Daily News was 2,360 and 1,043, respectively). In addition, the number of advertisements that contained the images of Chinese character calligraphy was 1,786, which consisted of 1,025 and 761 images from Liberty Times and United Daily News, respectively. However, because this study used quantitative research method for content analysis, the number of samples for the two newspapers should be identical. Thus, a total of 960 advertisements were randomly sampled for content analysis (480 advertisements for both Liberty Times and United Daily News).

3.3 Inter-coder reliability testing

Three experts with professional backgrounds in advertising design and advertisement marketing were invited to be the coders. To ensure the consistency of sample interpretation among the coders, educational training was provided using slideshows for the coders before they interpreted the samples. Therefore, the coders understood the definition of the categories and the interpretation process, and the errors of advertisement interpretation were reduced. Before the formal coding, pretest was conducted using 30 advertisements to test the reliability of the coders. The equation for reliability analysis is as follows (Krippendorff, 2004):

$$\text{Level of agreement between two coders} = 2 \times M \div (N_1 + N_2)$$

$$\text{Coefficient of reliability} = n \times \text{average level of agreement} \div \{1 + [(n-1) \times \text{average level of agreement}]\}$$

Notes:

M = the number of all judges complete agreement
 N_1 = the number of the first judge agreement
 N_2 = the number of the second judge agreement
 n = the number of judges

The levels of agreement between the three coders were calculated using the stated equations and are as follows: A – B = 0.71; B – C = 0.74; and C – A = 0.69. The average level of agreement was 0.71 and the reliability coefficient was 0.88, which has reached the standard reliability coefficient of 0.80 (Kassarjuan, 1977) (Table 1). Therefore, the coders can formally interpret and code advertisement samples.

Table 1: Testing of level of agreement for the pretest of coders

Judges	A	B	C
A	1.00	0.71	0.74
B	0.71	1.00	0.69
C	0.74	0.69	1.00

4. Data Analysis

4.1 The appearance frequency of calligraphy in advertisements

Among the Liberty Times samples collected from the eight years, 2014 had the highest number of calligraphy-containing advertisements ($N = 67$), followed by 2013 ($N = 66$); 2008 had the lowest number of such advertisements ($N = 52$).

Moreover, among the samples collected for the different months, May, 2013 ($N = 12$) had the highest number of calligraphy-containing advertisements, followed by April, 2010 ($N = 11$); December, 2009 ($N = 1$) had the lowest number of such advertisements.

Regarding United Daily News, among the samples collected from the eight years, 2013 ($N = 69$) had the highest number of calligraphy-containing advertisements, followed by 2012 and 2014 ($N = 66$, respectively); 2011 had the lowest number of such advertisements ($N = 51$). Furthermore, among the United Daily News samples collected for the different months, December, 2008 ($N = 12$) had the highest number of calligraphic advertisements, followed by May, 2013 ($N = 11$). Only one advertisement appeared in October, 2007 (Table 2).

Overall, the appearance frequency of the calligraphic advertisements in Liberty Times and United Daily News had two peaks, namely the years of 2008 and 2013 and gradually increased from the year of 2011 onwards. This result implicates that the calligraphic art has not been abandoned by print advertisements in Taiwan; instead, it has been favored in the advertising and marketing market in recent years.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the advertisement samples from 2007 to 2014

Time	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	LT	UDN														
Jan.	4	8	4	2	5	4	2	3	4	4	4	8	5	3	6	2
Feb.	2	6	3	6	3	3	3	6	6	6	3	10	6	4	2	9
Mar.	9	5	7	3	4	3	5	9	4	4	4	2	5	7	8	3
Apr.	9	6	4	9	3	5	11	2	8	6	3	6	8	8	2	5
May	4	5	4	4	3	3	10	4	8	2	6	7	12	11	9	7
Jun.	4	6	3	5	6	7	4	2	6	3	3	6	4	2	3	6
Jul.	6	8	9	7	3	6	5	2	6	7	3	6	8	6	7	6
Aug.	4	2	4	3	4	9	5	5	2	3	2	9	4	4	3	8
Sep.	3	3	3	12	2	4	7	4	3	4	9	4	3	10	9	5
Oct.	3	1	9	2	8	5	5	6	4	3	6	3	3	6	10	3
Nov.	5	4	8	7	10	4	4	7	3	4	9	3	5	3	3	5
Dec.	2	2	6	3	1	2	3	4	2	5	4	2	3	5	5	7
Total	55	56	64	63	52	55	64	54	56	51	56	66	66	69	67	66

Notes: LT= Liberty Times, UDN= United Daily News

4.2 The appearance frequency of the categories

In this study, the advertisement samples were coded by the three coders; each of the coders was required to interpret the 960 advertisements collected from Liberty Times and United Daily News. Therefore, each category in this study had three interpretation data. Subsequently, the interpretation results produced by the three coders were input into SPSS to calculate the number of times each category appeared, which was then averaged to determine the final appearance frequency for each category. Table 3 shows the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and percentage of the frequency for each category.

According to Table 3, regular script was used for 560.67 times in the sample advertisements, which was the most frequently used typeface and accounted for 58.41% of the five typefaces, followed by creative script, which was used for 198.67 times (20.69%). Regarding the picture-headline interactive relation, picture-headline assistance was most frequently used ($f = 376$), accounting for 39.17% of the four sub-categories, followed by picture-headline continuation ($f = 268.33$; 27.95%). Among the four sub-categories of cultural values, openness to change had the highest frequency ($f = 452.67$; 47.15%), followed by self-enhancement ($f = 214.33$; 22.33%). Among the five sub-categories of advertising appeal types, rational appeal was most frequently used ($f = 371.67$; 38.72%), followed by cultural appeal ($f = 243.33$; 25.37%).

Table 3: The mean, standard deviation and percentage for the frequency of the sub-categories

Main categories	Sub-categories	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Frequency Percentage</i>	<i>Cumulative Percentage</i>
Calligraphic typefaces types	Seal Script	23.67	3.50	2.47	2.47
	Clerical Script	162.66	5.58	16.94	19.41
	Regular Script	560.67	9.01	58.41	77.82
	Cursive Script	14.33	3.23	1.49	79.31
	Creative Script	198.67	6.65	20.69	100.00
Picture-headline interactive relation	Picture-headline repetition	192.67	3.60	20.07	20.07
	Picture-headline substitution	123.00	4.36	12.81	32.88
	Picture-headline continuation	268.33	5.14	27.95	60.83
	Picture-headline assistance	376.00	7.16	39.17	100.00
Cultural values	Self-transcendence	145.00	7.26	15.10	15.10
	Self-enhancement	214.33	4.01	22.33	37.43
	Conservation	148.00	3.52	15.42	52.85
	Openness to change	452.67	9.69	47.15	100.00
Advertising appeal types	Rational appeal	371.67	9.63	38.72	38.72
	Emotional appeal	132.67	5.53	13.82	52.54
	Humorous appeal	105.00	4.26	10.94	63.48
	Cultural appeal	243.33	5.87	25.37	88.85
	Ethical appeal	107.33	3.42	11.15	100.00

4.3 Comparison of the use of sub-categories

To understand the difference between the sub-categories, the three coders' coding results ($N = 2880$) were used for the chi-square test for homogeneity. The results are as follows (Table 4):

Table 4: Chi-square test for homogeneity for the frequency of the sub-categories

Main categories	Sub-categories	<i>N</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.(2-sided)</i>	<i>Post-hoc test</i>
Calligraphic typefaces types	Seal Script (A)	2880	6416.84	4	.000***	C (58.41%) > E (20.69%) > B (16.91%) > A (2.47%) > D (1.49%)
	Clerical Script (B)					
	Regular Script (C)					
	Cursive Script (D)					
	Creative Script (E)					
Picture-headline interactive relation	Picture-headline repetition (A)	2880	154.05	3	.023**	D (39.17%) > C (27.95%) > A (20.07%) > B (12.81%)
	Picture-headline substitution (B)					
	Picture-headline continuation (C)					
	Picture-headline assistance (D)					
Cultural values	Self-transcendence (A)	2880	4421.69	3	.001**	D (47.15%) > B (22.33%) > C (15.42%) > A (15.10%)
	Self-enhancement (B)					
	Conservation (C)					
	Openness to change (D)					
Advertising appeal types	Rational appeal (A)	2880	9039.16	4	.000***	A (38.72%) > D (25.37%) > B (13.82%) > E (11.15%) > C (10.94%)
	Emotional appeal (B)					
	Humorous appeal (C)					
	Cultural appeal (D)					
	Ethical appeal (E)					

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

1. Regarding the main category of calligraphic typefaces types, when $\chi^2(4) = 6416.84$, $p = .000$ ($p < .001$), achieving significant level. The result of post hoc comparison is as follows: regular script (58.41%) > creative script (20.69%) > clerical script (16.91%) > seal script (2.47%) > cursive script (1.49%).
2. For the main category of picture-headline interactive relation, when $\chi^2(3) = 154.05$, $p = .023$ ($p < .05$), achieving significant level. The post hoc comparison showed that picture-headline assistance (39.17%) > picture-headline continuation (27.95%) > picture-headline repetition (20.07%) > picture-headline substitution (12.81%).
3. For cultural values, when $\chi^2(3) = 4421.69$, $p = .001$ ($p < .01$), achieving significant level. The post hoc comparison showed that openness to change (47.15%) > self-enhancement (22.33%) > conservation (15.42%) > self-transcendence (15.10%).
4. Regarding the advertising appeal types, when $\chi^2(4) = 9903.16$, $p = .000$ ($p < .001$), achieving significant level. The result of post hoc comparison is as follows: rational appeal (38.72%) > cultural appeal (25.37%) > emotional appeal (13.82%) > humorous appeal (11.15%) > ethical appeal (10.94%).

5. Discussion

5.1 The use of calligraphic typefaces

This study found that the regular script was most frequently used in the advertisements, followed by the creative script. Although the cursive script was the most artistic script, it was used least frequently. The Chinese calligraphic typeface has a long history, and the structure of Chinese characters has been passed through numerous dynasties and had numerous changes and therefore does not have a fixed form. In recent years, the cultural and creative industries have become prosperous; designers tend to incorporate ancient art elements into their design work, and calligraphy is an element regularly used by designers. Among all the calligraphic typefaces, regular script has most standardized and intact structure, which is advantageous for disseminating advertising messages and simultaneously has cultural meanings. Thus, regular script tends to be favored by advertisers. Furthermore, in recent years, a large number of personalized products have emerged in the consumer market in Taiwan, and the primary consumer group is young people. Therefore, advertisers frequently use the creative script to meet such market need. Although the cursive script is artistic, it cannot be identified easily and therefore cannot efficiently convey advertising messages. Thus, it was not frequently used.

5.2 The use of picture-headline interactive relation

This study found that picture-headline assistance was used in the highest proportion in the advertisements, followed by picture-headline continuation, whereas picture-headline substitution was used in the lowest proportion in the advertisements. In the print advertisements, picture-headline assistance is to connect the picture message with the headline message; the two together engender a special atmosphere for the advertisement content and enable consumers to understand the messages, thereby achieving the goal of effective persuasion. Thus, picture-headline assistance is frequently used by the advertisers. In addition, the method of picture-headline continuation is similar to riddle games, in which the picture and headline separately take on 50% of the responsibility of conveying messages. Consumers have to understand both the picture and headline messages to know the advertisement content. This corresponds to the process of mutual communication between advertisers and audience. Consumers are invited to participate in the delivery of advertising messages; therefore, their memory for the advertisements can be enhanced. By comparison, picture-headline substitution was least frequently used, possibly because this method is to repeatedly convey the same message (i.e., "picture is the headline, and the headline constitutes the picture"), and such repeated message disclosure easily causes the advertisement to be overly cultural and traditional. The advertisers tend to avoid such atmosphere and therefore rarely use this method.

5.3 The use of cultural values

This study found that the sub-category of openness to change most frequently appeared in the sample advertisements, followed by self-enhancement. Conservation and self-transcendence both had low frequency of appearance in the advertisements; however, the frequency difference between the two sub-categories was no significant. According to Schwartz and Sagie (2000), countries with a high level of economic development and democracy have high a level of openness to change and self-enhancement. By contrast, countries with a low level of economic development and democracy have a high level of conservation and self-transcendence.

Concerning Taiwan, it has achieved a certain level of economic development and has a democracy level higher than many other Asian countries; thus, the research finding regarding cultural values in this study is consistent with the result of Schwartz and Sagie (2000). Moreover, Hall (1976) argued that the social and cultural values can reflect a hidden phenomenon, namely, “culture is communication and communication is culture.” Levy et al. (1997) maintained that people’s communication with each other and how they perceive the delivered messages are influenced by the culture, customs, and habits of where they live. Thus, this study inferred that the current cultural values of Taiwan have the tendency toward openness to change and self-enhancement, which affects the trend of advertisement production.

5.4 The use of advertising appeals

This study found that rational appeal was used in the highest proportion in the advertisements. Emotional, ethical, and humorous appeals were used in a relatively low proportion in the advertisements; however, the frequency difference between the three sub-categories was no significant. For advertising design, the approach of rational appeal follows the six stages in the hierarchy of effects model (awareness → knowledge → liking → preference → conviction → purchase) (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). It focuses on stating the advantages of the advertised products and uses arguments and persuasive evidence to enable consumers to see clearly the essence of the products and to make decisions through logical reasoning. From the perspective of calligraphic advertisements, advertisers make an analogy between the main objects and carriers using the interests of products. Studies have reported that the method of rational appeal is effective in prompting consumers to believe in advertisements in countries with high-context cultures. Such message delivery method is regarded as one that features linear-active culture (Lewis, 2005). In the past few years in Taiwan, young people have actively participated in social movements and political activities, leading to an increasingly prominent linear-active culture. Advertisers inevitably make changes according to the environment and adopt the type of advertising appeal that can be widely accepted by the Taiwanese public.

6. Conclusion

In recent years, the consumer market in Taiwan and China has shown a trend of using cultural and creative elements, in which calligraphic art is a frequently used theme. The same trend has also been observed in the market of advertising and marketing. Chinese calligraphy is an art form unique to Chinese characters among the thousands of writing systems in the world. Chinese characters derive from pictographs and therefore feature the aesthetics of pictorial resemblance. With the combination of brush, ink, and paper that produces unique artistic expression; calligraphers create a form of art made up of lines. For the majority of consumers, the advertisements featuring the beauty of traditional art easily connect the advertised products (services) with culture and constitute soft-sell advertising (Okazaki & Taylor, 2010). Pictures and text are the two most crucial elements in print advertisements. An advertisement without pictures and text cannot achieve its objectives of communication and persuasion.

During the entire process of data collection, this study found that numerous advertisers preferred the use of calligraphic typefaces for headlines. This is possibly because the calligraphic art has cultural and historical characteristics, which may reflect consumers’ personal emotions. In addition, the distinctive beauty of calligraphic typefaces can play the role of message delivery and further evoke consumers’ perception of the messages to finally achieve the goals of communication and persuasion. Other Chinese typefaces do not have such advantage. However, calligraphic typefaces are not suitable for all products; they should be used according to the characteristics of the products or the targeted consumers. The misuse of calligraphic typefaces may cause the products to have negative images of being old-fashioned, conservative, and traditionalistic. Thus, advertisers must carefully use the calligraphic typefaces.

This study had several research limitations that should be raised here for the improvement of subsequent studies. First, although the time span for the samples was eight years, data collection and sample analysis cost a considerable amount of effort and money because of the overly large amount of data available. Therefore, this study was unable to code all the advertisement samples. Future studies can narrow the scope of the topic to collect and analyze all the samples and thereby obtain findings that can be generalized. Second, although the three coders in this study had the professional background of advertising design or advertisement marketing, they only received one educational training before the formal work of coding.

Therefore, sometimes the three coders had considerably different opinions toward the samples, which may influence the research conclusion. This study suggested that future scholars who intend to adopt the same research method should give more educational training for coders to ensure the reliability and validity of the research.

Finally, this study used the main categories of calligraphic typeface types, picture-headline interactive relation, cultural values, and advertising appeal types to analyze the content of the print advertisements containing calligraphic characters. However, the advertising design techniques are diverse today; the aforementioned categories were unable to encompass all the categories and arguments proposed by previous studies. Thus, the research conclusion in this study still leaves room for further investigation. In the future, we have planned to compare the use of calligraphic advertisements between Taiwan and China and investigate the cultural values hidden behind the advertisements in the two countries from the cross-cultural and online advertising perspective. Through such research, we hope to establish a comprehensive research results for the topic of calligraphic advertisement.

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