

Reading Culture in Arab Television Advertising

A Content Analysis of Egyptian Advertising

By

Dr. Nagwa El Gazzar

Lecturer

Faculty of Mass Communication

MISR International University

Cairo- Egypt

Most people think that there is too much advertising, that it makes us materialistic, that it perpetuates stereotypes, that it plays on our fears of not being socially acceptable, that it lies, exploits children and generally corrupts society. While most of these criticisms are not altogether true, there is some truth to all of them.

As an Arab society, we are embedded in a “Culture of Consumption”. This term expresses the psychological thoughts behind the increasing consumption patterns, not only in the Arab society but on the international level as well. Advertising and mass media in general play a great role beside the family in creating this form of unified culture through presenting specific identities and marketing it by advertisers (Shudson, 1983). Advertising helps in creating a large world of choices and possibilities, driving the consumer to compare himself to others or images of others, since people use consumer products as a guide in their complex world where they need to find an identity for themselves. (Leiss, 1976).

Advertising plays a great cultural role in our society. It is much more than giving us information about products and services, it tells us what products signify and mean. It does this by marrying aspects of the product to aspects of the culture. The products we consume express who we are, they are cultural signifiers: the type of watch we wear, the brand of athletic shoes, or the kind of car we drive tell others a lot about us. So, advertising not only tells us about products we consume but it also tells us what those products signify in our culture (Stern, 1992).

In order to comprehend the impact of all this advertising on society, we must learn how to see through ads, for they are not just messages about goods and services but social and cultural texts about ourselves.

Advertising is considered the mirror of the society in that it affects and is affected by the cultural values of the society (Cohen, 1972). Advertising is a powerful tool that promotes social and cultural change in the society.

The main purpose of this paper is to present an exploratory study of critically reading the cultural content of advertising. The study is applied on the Egyptian television advertising in order to discover the cultural values it reflects and the ideological messages these ads attempt to convey beside the sales messages.

This study attempts to be an introduction to a cross-cultural research that clarifies how culture is manifested in advertising across different cultures.

Despite the fact that analyzing the content of television advertising is more difficult when compared to analyzing print ads, yet, having both visual and sound elements can enrich the analysis since some of cultural values are transferred through non-verbal elements of culture.

Before discussing the issue of cultural values in advertising, we need first to define the term “culture”. Hall, defined 'culture' as " the means and values which arise among distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationship, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence" (Hall, 1987).

Another view of culture, focuses of culture as the integrated sum total of learned behavioral traits that are manifest and shared by members of society (Hoebel, 1960).

Hofstede (1991, p.5) has referred to culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from those of another”.

Yet, we can say that most definitions of culture revealed some commonalties: it is not inherent or innate, but rather is learned; it is also shared by members of a group.

In the context of this paper, we will adopt the definition of culture as the shared set of attributes of any group, by which this group organizes its living together, its environment and its solutions to the questions of the society and pass it down through generations. These attributes are dynamic and changing over time.

In analyzing the cultural content of advertising, we will apply two major themes of analysis. Each theme concentrates on specific elements of culture to be traced in advertising. The first theme is provided by Barbara Mueller in her book “International Advertising”. She stated the major elements that distinct one culture from another as follows: (Mueller, 1996).

Verbal language: Since culture influences the specific language spoken by a group, it can be demonstrated by examining the vocabulary it employs. Languages differ in their levels of formality since certain languages depend on the gender and status of the speaker and listener as well as the context of the conversation.

In Egypt - as in most traditional societies- language plays a great cultural role. We tend to use more formal language when compared to other

cultures. The new generations started to form their own vocabulary, changing this type of formal language, and reflecting change in the society.

Nonverbal communication: such as facial expressions, eye contact and gaze, body movement such as hand gestures and posture, touching, smell. There are a number of classification systems of non-verbal language. The most important non-verbal elements are:

- **Touch:** Humans touch for a variety of reasons, and each culture has a well defined system of meaning for different forms of touches. The way humans touch each other in the ad expressing their feelings, and the way they touch the product being advertised can differ from one culture to another. Some cultures are known as low touch cultures as Americans and the English, while Middle Eastern, French and Italians belong to high touch cultures. However, care must be taken not to overgeneralize since each culture –whether considered to be high or low touch- defines for its members whom they can touch, as well as when and where they can touch them. As for the Middle East, inappropriate use of touch in advertising may cause problems.
- **Space usage:** which is how humans use space. Hall suggests that each person has around him an invisible bubble of space which expands and contracts depending on his relationship to those around him, his emotional state and the activity he is performing. It is categorized as intimate- that is used for personal contact, comforting and protecting, personal- which is the invisible space separating people from others, social- which is used by acquaintances and strangers in business meetings and classrooms- and public distance- where recognition of others is not mandatory. (Hall, 1987 p.12)
- **Time symbolism :**our use of time is influenced by culture. A culture's concept of time refers to the relative importance it places on time. Each culture may be defined as either monochronic or polychronic. Monochronic time means paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time, where schedules often take priority over everything else and are treated as sacred and unalterable. Individuals raised in M-time systems constantly check their calendars and watches, worry about being prompt for appointments. Polychronic time means being involved with many things at once. It is characterized by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and by a much greater involvement with people. In P-time systems, schedules and agendas mean very little and appointments are often forgotten or rearranged at the last minute. Middle Eastern and Latin American cultures often exhibit P-time behaviors.

Nonverbal communication regulates human interaction in several important ways: it sends messages about our attitudes and feelings, it elaborates on our verbal messages, it governs the timing and turn-taking between communicators.

Needs and values: Maslow's hierarchy of needs is highly applied in advertising across cultures, since the needs that dominate a particular culture are closely tied to that country's level of development. The more the society is developed, the greater the proportion of goods devoted to filling social and esteem needs as opposed to physiological needs.

A number of different classifications of value systems have been outlined for assessing the dominant values of a culture. Rokeach identified eighteen terminal values that concern desired end states of existence and worth striving for, and eighteen instrumental values that relate to desired modes of conduct and represent beliefs that are socially and personally preferable (Rokeach, 1973). Another classification of values is VALS, which combines values and life styles (Solomon, 1992, pp.498-499).

Researchers use several ways to identify and measure cultural values. Pollay identified 42 advertising appeals, which researchers use as dimensions for cultural values. These appeals are used for identifying wordings of verbal communication in each ad. (Albers- Miller and Gelb - 1996).

One of the basic dimensions in the construct of culture is the values placed on individualism versus collectivism. Individualism simply means giving priority to personal goals over the goals of the group. In individualistic cultures individuals prefer independent relationships to each other and individual goals that take precedence over group goals, while in collective societies people have an interdependent relationship with one another. The U.S. as well as European societies are known for their rugged individualism, the belief that each person is an entity separate from others and the group. Each individual controls his or her own destiny without help from others. (Spence, 1985).

Hofstede developed a model that consists of four major dimensions of culture: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. He explained that individualism reflects the way people live together. In a traditional society where collectivism prevails, this dimension may be seen as selfish. Individualism is highly associated with independence as a societal norm; everyone is expected to take care of themselves. Also related to individualism is the belief in individual decision making; everyone is entitled to his own opinion (Hofstede, 1991).

Using Hofstede dimension, one study found a positive relationship between individualism and individual decision making and self respect. The study also related collectivism to group decision making, belonging and family appeals. (Albers- Miller and Gelb -1996).

However, most cross-cultural researches in advertising classified values into Eastern and Western, or modern and traditional, appointing to the major characteristics of traditional societies -as the Middle East- when compared to Westernized cultures as Europe and The United States of America (See Frith 1990, Mueller, 1987). This classification is the most appropriate to our study since we can consider Egypt as a traditional society that has its own distinct norms when compared to other societies.

Cultural values can be also divided into two groups: utilitarian and symbolic (Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996). By utilitarian values, we refer to those emphasizing product features or qualities, such as “convenience”, “economy”, and “effectiveness”. By symbolic values, we mean those suggesting human emotions such as “enjoyment” and “social status”.

Researchers also classified advertising appeals using product use conditions or what the product mean to the consumer: whether it is used in public(as a car) or in private(as toothpaste). The toothpaste needn't reflect the prevailing collectivist societal value the way a car would in a collectivistic culture. Therefore, the appeal that emphasizes individual benefits (individualistic appeal) may be better in promoting the toothpaste in a collectivistic culture, and the opposite is true- the appeal that highlights the social benefits of a product (collectivistic appeal) may work well for promoting the car in an individualistic society. (Zhang and Gelb, 1996).

As we attempt to clarify the broad changes in advertising's patterns of representation through which people and products are brought into a “meaningful relationship”, researchers provide us with a framework which help us make sense of ads (Leiss; Kline and Jhally, 1990). Ads are presented as ideal types to represent the prototypical formats within which the person-product relationship is constituted. The person-product relationship was forged within advertising's system of meaning into four basic communicative formats which help us understand the basic patterns of integration between the semiological codes and the textual and visual modes of representation.

The first format is the product-information format, where the product is the center of attention and the focus of all elements in the ad. The ad contains visuals that emphasize the effectiveness of the product or rational arguments pointing out the benefits of use, but it doesn't make extensive reference to the user. It may appeal to the efficiency of the product, to the price, to the way the product is manufactured or the objective of usage of the product. This format was the dominant type around the turn of the century but has been declining steadily since then.

The second format is the product-image format, where the product is given special qualities by means of a symbolic relationship that it has to some more abstract and less pragmatic domain of significance than mere utility. The product is situated in a symbolic context that imparts meaning to the product beyond its constituent elements or benefits. Therefore, this format works by fusing two composite systems of signs, or two codes within the framework of a single message- the product code and a setting code. These codes are not necessarily synthesized by causal or logical linkages, but the symbolic association brings the product into a meaningful relationship with abstract values and ideas signified by a natural or social setting such as a landscape, the workplace, a cluster of artifacts of daily life, a historic moment or a tradition.

The third format is the personalized format, where concentration is on the direct relationship between a product and the human personality. While in the product-image format people sometimes appear as part of a social setting that transfers abstract symbolic qualities to products, in this format people are explicitly and directly interpreted in their relationship to the world of the product. This format relies heavily on the way an individual or a culture identifies similarities and differences between persons and groups. This process of social judgment assumes an "identity matrix"- a frame of reference for personality categories.

The last format is the lifestyle format, where aspects of product image and personalized format are combined. This format expands the identity matrix of the individual into a framework of judgment for social beings in a social context. Here, stereotypes are used rather than prototypes. A prototype is based on attributions about the personality or characteristics of a person (friendly, warm, intelligent). A stereotype is based on inferences about the relationship of the individual to the group (class, status, race), and the notion of group identity is implicit in judgments about the individual.

The former advertising formats provide a good framework for social analysis of advertising, since they represent the historical development of

advertising techniques, where product-information format prevailed at the beginning, then with the advancement in technology it was developed into product-image, personalized and lifestyle formats. In a traditional society as Egypt we expect to find differences in the use of these formats when advertising different categories of products.

The second theme of analyzing the cultural content of advertising is the framework presented by Frith (Frith, 1997). She stresses the importance of examining the whole advertising message not merely the surface or sales message. This form of deeper analysis allows us to discover the broader social and cultural implications of these seemingly simple messages. By analyzing both the foreground and background of the ad-as-text, it is possible to reveal the secondary social or cultural messages in which the primary sales message is embedded. This means that the background of the ad is as important as the foreground because it creates the context without which there can be no meaning. So, we need to analyze both verbal and visual aspects of the advertising text.

Frith suggests that there are three stages of reading ad:

- Reading the surface of the ad, which consists of the overall impression that a reader might get from quickly studying the ad.
- The advertiser's intended meaning, which is the sales message that the advertiser is trying to get across. Some may call it the strategy behind the ad or the expected meaning that a reader might get from the ad; the meaning that the advertiser intends for the reader to take with him. This meaning could be directly about the product or it could be also about a lifestyle.
- The cultural or ideological meaning, which relies on the cultural knowledge and background of the reader. This is how we relate ads to our culture and to the shared belief systems held in common by most people. Under this ideological meaning of the ad falls stereotyping since it is based on cultural beliefs. Most sales messages are built upon shared cultural or ideological beliefs, which advertisers rely upon when creating ads.

In order to analyze the ideology or cultural beliefs in ads, Frith suggests that we need to look at the power and control relationships being depicted between the people featured in the ad. We must ask questions about the roles people play in our society: who is in charge? Who holds the power? Who is weak? Who is dominant and who is subordinate? Who appears to have power or control in the story? How is power expressed? Does one person have power over another?. These types of questions

allow us to begin to see the deeper social structures that are circulated in advertising and are unnoticed.

As we go deeper in ideology and culture, we find that advertising has always been attacked by women organizations. They say that the advertised woman is male-identified; she often desperately competes with other females for male attention. This appears in the large percentage of the announcers on the ads, even for female products. (Lont,1995, pp.121-164). Adding a category that detects the dominant voice in the ad to the analysis of ideology can explore the ways power and control is expressed in advertising messages.

Social power is considered a key theme within cultural studies. This is not to say that cultural studies merely reduces culture to power, nor does it reduce meaning to ideology, but rather that it sharply refutes the dominant theoretical traditions which have kept culture immune from questions of power. Culture embodied in social institutions and practices, shapes subjectivity and social relations. Social relations are “always already” the embodiment of power relations. (Corner et al., p.54)

The first and second stages of “Frith” analysis of culture in advertising are covered through detecting the verbal, non-verbal elements of advertising, values used in the ad as well as the different formats of the ad. However, the third stage that concentrates on power relationships adds richness, deeper analysis of ideology and complements the elements of culture provided by Mueller. Therefore, this study attempts to use the elements of culture in addition to the power and control relationships being depicted between people in the ad.

Sample collection:

Television commercials from the first and second channels of the Egyptian television constitute the sampling universe. Two weeks’ worth of television advertising is videotaped simultaneously during the period of January 15- February 1st , 2000. This period is selected because there were no important holidays during this time, so we believe that they are quite representative of the average commercials on air in Egypt.

Unit of analysis:

The unit of analysis is each complete television commercial. Any duplicate commercials for the same brand were excluded from sample in order to eliminate any redundancies which may have skewed the results(Cheng et al., 1996). Fixed ads (text on the screen and voice-over reading), as well as ads of films, tapes of singers and theater plays will be excluded.

A pretest of about 10% of the usable commercials in the database was conducted to test the applicability of the categories of analysis.

Coding:

Intercoder reliability will be measured by an assistant to assure that coded data are assigned to categories in the same way (Priest, 1996,pp.99-100)

Research questions:

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the different types of verbal communication used in television advertising?
- What are non verbal elements of culture that appear in our TV ads?
- What are the cultural values disseminated in advertising? What type of values prevail: the traditional or the modern?
- Is there a relationship between the product use conditions and the product category?
- Is there a relationship between the values displayed in advertising and advertising format?
- What is the relationship between the persons in the ad? Who is power and in control? How power is expressed?

Conceptual and operational definitions:

Term	Conceptual definition	Operational definition
Product category	These are the different classifications of products and services mostly being advertised in TV.	Products and services will be classified into 8 categories: auto, beauty, food and drink, household appliances, detergents, housing, services, mobiles, other
Product use conditions	It is the way the product is used in the ad. This variable is directly matched to the characteristics of the culture since collectivist societies elicits more positive responses to socially visible products and the opposite is true for individualistic societies (see Zhang and Gelb, 1996)	The advertiser may select to show the product in a <i>private setting</i> where the user alone appears and enjoy the benefits of the product, or he can select a <i>socially visible setting</i> .
Verbal Communication	It is the type of vocabulary employed in the ad	It will be classified into <i>formal</i> language that enhances the status of the speaker and listener, <i>informal</i> that use plain Arabic or new vocabulary, or the <i>use of a foreign language</i> to indicate that the product is foreign and used in different countries or is used by high class people.
Non-verbal Communication	It is that type of communication that doesn't use spoken language such as: touch, space usage, time symbolism. Frith referred to time symbolism as precise reckoning of time (Frith, 1990) She states that traditional societies consider time a "gift of God", while Western societies consider it a commodity that can be sold.	In this category, we will consider the following three areas as the most important elements of non-verbal communication: <u>Touch:</u> Touch will be categorized into: <i>high touch</i> - which express close touches between persons or between persons and products- or <i>low touch</i> expressing the opposite. <u>Space usage:</u> Because of difficulty in specifically measuring the distance between people in the ad, we will combine the four categories into two: 1. <i>intimate and personal distance:</i> from body contact to 4 feet, this is used for personal contact, comforting and protecting. This is the highest expression of thermal sensations and express close relationships. 2. <i>Social and public distance:</i> from 4 to 25 feet, this is used by acquaintances and strangers in business meetings and classrooms. Larger distance indicates that recognition of others is not mandatory. <u>Time symbolism:</u> it will have two categories: <i>Monochronic time</i> , which can be detected in

		<p>advertising when Schedules take priority over everything, checking the calendars and watches, worry about being prompt for appointments.</p> <p><i>Polychronic</i>: which is expressed by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and by a much greater involvement with people. Here, schedules and agendas mean very little, and appointments are often forgotten or rearranged at the last minute.</p>
Values in the ad	Which is the dominant cultural value used in the ad	Values will be classified into traditional and modern. Traditional values include: group collectivism, harmony with nature, respect for elderly, formality, other traditional values. Modern values include: individualism, control over nature, fun and enjoyment in life, informality, other modern values. (see Frith 1990, Mueller,1987).
Product information format	The product is the center of attention and the focus of all elements in the ad. The ad contains visuals that emphasize the effectiveness of the product or rational arguments pointing out the benefits of use, but it doesn't make extensive reference to the user.	This format may manifest the idea of the power of the product through the use of different appeals. Some of these appeals may deal with efficiency of the product, some may deal with the price, appeals that deal with the manufacturing of the product, or deal with the objective of using the product.
Product image format	The product is given special qualities by means of a symbolic relationship that is has to some more abstract and less pragmatic domain of significance than mere utility.	The symbolic settings could be either "natural"- through a beautiful natural setting which may help us imagine a moment when we might use the product and transfer the qualities that we associate with this natural setting – or it could be "social"- through the representation of a social setting that helps us interpret the abstract connection between the product and specific social qualities.
The personalized format	Concentration is on the direct relationship between a product and the human personality. While in the product-image format people sometimes appear as part of a social setting that transfers abstract symbolic qualities to products, in this format people are explicitly and directly interpreted in their relationship to the	This format has a number of variants. One is the testimonial in which the person's relationship to the product is based on experience with use or consumption. In the second variant, the connection between the person and the product is made on symbolic grounds rather through use or consumption-as in Marlboro man who associates masculinity with the product according to the personal prototype he represents. The third variant is the transformation ad, where people change and make themselves better through the

	world of the product. This format relies heavily on the way an individual or a culture identifies similarities and differences between persons and groups.	possession or use of the product. Consumers may be invited to imagine themselves in some more idealized state. The fourth variant places the product at the very center of social interaction where the product is woven firmly into the web of human social interaction through romance, friendship, social status and the family. An example is considering a product a member of the family.
The lifestyle format	The aspects of product image and personalized format are combined. This format expands the identity matrix of the individual into a framework of judgment for social beings in a social context. Here, stereotypes are used rather than prototypes. A prototype is based on attributions about the personality or characteristics of a person (friendly, warm, intelligent). A stereotype is based on inferences about the relationship of the individual to the group (class, status, race), and the notion of group identity is implicit in judgments about the individual.	In one variant of lifestyle advertising, the idea of social identity is conveyed through the display of the product in a social context. People, products and settings of consumption are harmonized around a unified impression. The other variant synthesizes the component codes through a primary reference to an activity (as leisure activities) rather than directly to a consumption style, where the activity becomes the central cue for relating the person, product and setting codes.
Background of the ad	These are the secondary messages that add meaning to the concept of the ad such as social class of the ad, number of people in the ad, target audience	The following categories will be analyzed: <i>Social class</i> : which represents the coder judgement of the socio-economic status of either people or background of the ad. It will be divided into high, medium or low socio-economic class. <i>Number of people in the ad</i> : which is the number of persons who actually appeared in the ad, whether they are groups of separate persons. <i>Target audience</i> : or to whom is the ad message directed to. It is classified into: female, male, both, child.
Power and control relationships	Which is the relationship between people featured in the ad. It clarifies the different roles people play	It will be classified according to the following questions: <i>Who is in charge of the ad</i> ; which means the strong and dominant personality in the ad: the

	in a society.	<p>male, the female, or both.</p> <p><i>Who is the dominant voice and/or the voice-over in the ad; is it the male, the female or both.</i></p> <p><i>How power is expressed; is it expressed socially as for example willingness to satisfy the opposite sex, or is it expressed physically.</i></p>
--	---------------	--

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

1. Name of product being advertised (serial number)

2. **Product category:** automobile, beauty and personal care, food and drink, household appliances, detergents, housing, others.

3. **Product use conditions:** socially visible use, private setting.

4. Elements of culture:

- Verbal language: - formal , -informal, -use of foreign language.
- Non-verbal communication:
 - Touch: high or low
 - Space usage: intimate and personal distance, social and public distance.
 - Time symbolism: monochronic, polychronic.

5. The dominant value in the ad:

- Traditional values: group collectivism, harmony with nature, respect for elderly, formality, other.
- Modern values: individualism, control over nature, fun and enjoyment in life, informality, other.

6. Format used in the ad:

- The product-information format:
 - Appeals that deal with efficiency of the product such as: effective, durable, convenient, healthy, neat, other.
 - Appeals that deal with price: cheap, expensive, other.
 - Appeals that deal with manufacturing of the product: natural or technological, other.
 - Appeals that deal with the objective of using the product: youth, safety, independence, family, community, other.

- The product-image format:
 - Social appeals such as: accepted by others, status, sex, modern, traditional, popular, distinctive, other.
 - Personal and natural appeals such as: freedom, beautiful, adventure, mature, enjoyment, relaxation, achievement, other.
- The personalized format:
 - Testimonial
 - Symbolic relationship between the product and the person
 - Social interaction.
- The lifestyle format:
 - Social
 - Reference to activity
 - Other

7. The background of the ad:

- Social status of the ad: high - medium - low
- Number of people depicted in the ad: no personalities, one – two , three-four, more than four.
- The target audience of the ad: female - male - both- child

8. The ideological message in the ad:

- Who is in charge: the female, the male or both
- Who is the dominant voice: the female, the male or both
- How the power is expressed: physically, socially

Data analysis:

The study was conducted on 115 advertisements that were displayed in the first and second channels of the Egyptian Television during the period of January 15 till February 1st, 2000. Duplicated ads were not counted. The categories of the advertised products were distributed as follows:

Table (1)

Product categories included in the sample

Product	Frequency	Percentage
Beauty care products	29	25%
Food and drink	55	48%
Household appliances	6	5%
Detergents	9	8%
Housing	3	3%
Others	13	11%
Total	105	100%

X² 205.48 D.F 8 Significance .0008

Product categories were set according to products widely appear in TV ads. However, some products' campaigns were not included in the sample during the period of data collection. The researcher had to combine some categories that had less than 2 advertisements in the category of others. Examples of products included in "Others" category is auto (one ad), mobiles (one ad), medicine (2ads).

Product use conditions in advertising:

79% of the ads- 91 ads displayed the product while used in a visible condition, while only 21% of the sample- 24 ads displayed the product in a private setting. This result coincide with the literature that proved that traditional societies as Egypt tend to show some product categories in a visible use condition to influence consumers.

Table (2)

Product use conditions in different product categories

Product category	Visible use	Private use	Total
Beauty care	20	9	29
Food & drink	49	6	55
Appliance	4	2	6
Detergents	7	2	9
Housing	3		3
Other	8	5	13
Total	91	24	115
	79%	21%	100%

X² 15.60 D.F 16 Significance .4810

Results indicated that almost all product categories prefer to display the product in a visible or social setting. However, some of beauty care products- 31% displayed the product in a private setting. This relates mainly to the traditions of our culture since there are ethical restrictions to the display of certain products as body care products in front of others.

Verbal element of culture:

Which shows the type of vocabulary used in ads. 95 ads- 83% used plain Arabic referred to as informal language, while 16 ads- 14% used the formal Arabic language. Only 4 ads in the sample used English in parts of their script to indicate that the product is foreign or is used by high class people. Results are represented in the following table:

Table (3)

The use of verbal element in communication

Verbal language	Frequency	Percentages
Formal language	16	14%
Informal language	95	83%
Use of a foreign language	4	3%
Total	115	100%

X² 127.53

D.F. 2

Significance.0000

Non-verbal elements of culture:

As a traditional society, the literature expected to show Egypt as a high touch culture that use close touches as kisses for greeting each other, and expressing their love, when compared to low touch cultures as Germans who exhibit very limited tactile contact in public. However, results didn't show that, since high/low touch elements in the ads were almost used equally in the sample. 59 ads- 51% used high touch elements, while 56 ads- 49% used low touch elements.

Results also indicated that the large percentage of the sample showed social and public relationships between people in the ad – 60%, 69 ads, when compared to percentage of ads that used intimate and personal relationships – 40%, 46 ads. This clarifies the type of social distance between individuals that is likely to exist in our society. Distance between characters in the ad asserts one of the traditional values of the society-formality. Traditional societies tend to exhibit more formal relationships with others when compared to modern societies.

As for time symbolism or the reference to the importance of time in the ad, results showed that 82% of the ads- 94 ads didn't give any indication to time, while only 18% of the sample- 21 ads indicated clues of time

passing. This result proves one of the characteristics of a traditional society as a polychronic rather than monochronic society.

Values in the ad:

This variable is considered among the major elements of culture in a society. Social values were classified as traditional and modern. The results appear in the following table:

Table (4)
The dominant values in advertising

Values	Frequency	Total
<u>Traditional values:</u>		38
Group collectivism	8	33%
Harmony with nature	15	
Respect for elderly	8	
Formality	4	
Other traditional values	3	
<u>Modern values:</u>		77
Individualism	44	67%
Control over nature	6	
Fun and enjoyment in life	23	
Informality	2	
Other modern values	2	
Total	115	100%

X² 136.04 D.F 9 Significance .0000

Results show that modern values prevail in the Egyptian TV ads. The most widely used value was individualism- used in 44 ads, which concentrates on separate individuals and gives priority to personal goals over the group goals. The second most widely used value was fun and enjoyment in life- used in 23 ads, which focuses on youth and their spirit of achieving enjoyment in life through dancing, singing and wearing casual cloths. The third most widely used value was a traditional one: harmony with nature, which was used in 15 ads. This type of ads makes the natural environment- which appear in the background- an integral part of the ad. This value may also focus on the natural ingredients of the products. Most dairy products use this appeal to show that the product is made of natural and pure milk. This appears in particular in the product-information format when the visual and verbal elements focus on the manufacturing process of the product and how it is made of natural ingredients. Concentration on nature also appear in product image formats where it joins between a natural view and the use of the product.

Formats used in advertising:

Concerning the use of different formats in the ads, frequency tables showed that:

Product- information format was used in 77 ads: 21 ads appealed to the efficiency of the product, 20 ads focused on price as the basic appeal, 14 ads appealed to the way the product is manufactured- whether it is made of natural ingredients or based on high technology, 22 ads appealed to the objectives of usage.

Product- image format was used in 22 ads: 13 focused on creating the image through a social setting, 9 ads focused on a natural setting to create the image.

Personalized format was used in 38 ads: 24 ads used the connection between the person and the product on symbolic grounds rather than the use or consumption , 7 ads were testimonial using the experiences of users of the product, 7 ads used transformational appeals where people change and make themselves better through the use of the product.

Lifestyle format was used in 27 ads: 15 ads referred to social lifestyle, while 12 ads referred to specific activity as part of a certain lifestyle.

The background of the ad:

Analyzing the background of the ad tells us about the culture of the country that displays this ad. Several elements were detected here:

- the social class of the ad-which is judged through the socio-economic status of the people in the ad and the background of the ad,
- number of people in the ad which indicate the presence of certain values as individualism and group collectivism,
- the dominant personality in the ad-whether it is a male or a female,
- the dominant voice in the ad that includes the voice/over. This measures the credibility of the female/male voices.
- The way the dominant personality express power over other personalities of the ad, whether in a social way where others try to satisfy him and win his/her love or in a physical way where his physical presence is of major importance to the story or he/she expresses physical power over others.

Table (5)

Social class depicted in advertising

Social class	Frequency	Percentage
High social class	53	46%
Medium social class	55	48%
Low social class	7	6%
Total	115	100%

X² 38.47

D.F 2

Significance .000

Quantitative analysis of ads may reveal some facts we used to take the opposite of it for granted. Advertising has always been attacked by sociologists that it makes people disappointed through portraying the ideal life and focusing on standards of life they can't reach. However, numbers indicate that both high and medium classed were almost used equally in ads. By medium social class in this research, we mean the average B/C class person who is educated, live in a decent and clean place but not necessarily rich. Low social class were considered lower C and D classes who are characterized by lower educational level, inability or unwillingness to acquire certain products as a mobile or full automatic washing machine. This lower class represented only 6% of the sample.

As for number of people in the ad, the results were as follows:

Table (6)

Number of people appearing in advertisements

Number of people	Frequency	Percentage
No personalities	8	7%
One- two persons	47	41%
Three- four persons	28	24%
More than four persons	32	28%
Total	115	100%

X² 21.12

Significance .0008

The largest percentage of ads- 41% focused on one to two persons. This finding comes in consistence with the prevalence of the value of individualism. The second largest percentage focused on groups or more than four persons, followed by smaller groups of three to four persons- 24%, indicating the presence of group collectivism value.

The following categories indicate power and control relationships between the male and the female, reflecting their cultural role in the society.

Table (7)

The dominant personality in the ad

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Female	40	35%
Male	70	61%
Both	5	4%
Total	115	100%

X² 55.22

D.F 2

Significance .0000

Results indicated that the male is the dominant personality in advertising – 61%. A very small percentage of ads- 4% focused on both the male and the female. Advertising has been criticized of concentrating on women and using them in ads. Quantitative results indicated the opposite. However, this doesn't mean that women were not used in these ads, but they were of less importance or they were not the major focus of the ad. The following category will give more explanation to the phenomena.

Table (8)
The dominant voice in the ad

Dominant voice	Frequency	Percentage
Female	31	27%
Male	82	71%
Both	2	2%
Total	115	100%

X² 85.58 D.F 2 Significance .0000

The past table indicated the sex of the dominant voice in the ad or the voice who had done most of the audio work. Results show that the male voice was widely used- either inside the ad or as a voice/over. This means that in our society we consider the male voice as the most credible voice, when compared to the female voice. The following cross table will tell us which product category used male/female voice.

Table (9)
The relationship between the dominant voice and product category

Product category	Female voice	Male voice	Both voices
Beauty	6	22	1
Food and drink	16	38	1
Appliances	3	3	
Detergents	4	5	
Housing		3	
Other	2	10	
Total	31	82	2

X² 10.74 Significance .8253

The table stresses that the male voice was used in most product categories, when compared to the female voice. What is unexpected is that in beauty care products – which is mainly directed toward women- the voice who is heard in most of the ad is the male voice. This result could be explained as a part of our ideology, where the male is a

dominant character in society and the female always try to attract his attention and win his acceptance. However, male/female voice was equally used in certain product categories as home appliances and detergents.

The following table will tell us how this type of power relationship was expressed.

Table (10)

The expression of power relationship between the characters in the ad

Expression of power	frequency	Percentage
Physically	43	38%
Socially	62	55%
Not/ applicable	10	7%
Total	115	100%

X² 36.12 D.F 2 Significance .000

This category of analysis was hard to detect. However, the researcher tried to put a precise operational definition for it. In some ads, you can't say that there was an expression of any form of power, therefore, the category "not applicable" was created. The physical expression of power is counted when the physical presence of the character is important in the story, or when he/she shows physical power. The social expression of power is counted when the story of the ad centers on satisfying the dominant personality.

55% of the ads used the social expression of power, while 38% used the physical power. This indicates that our society don't prefer violence or physical expression of power.

Conclusion:

This research was an attempt to read culture through advertising. Results indicated that food and drink, beauty care products constitute over than two thirds of product categories that mostly use television advertising.

As for product use conditions in advertising, almost 80% of ads displayed the product in a visible condition, compared to a small percentage who displayed the use of the product in a private setting. However, the research found a relationship between product use conditions and product category since almost half of the beauty care products preferred to display their product in a private setting.

As for the verbal element of communication- which is the language used in advertising, 83% of the sample used plain Arabic rather than formal Arabic. A very limited number of ads used a foreign language to indicate prestige or to show that the product is foreign.

Non verbal elements of culture included touch, space usage and time symbolism. Unexpectedly, content analysis revealed that Egypt is not a culture that can be classified as high touch. Advertising displayed equally the elements of high/low touch. Results also indicated that intimate and personal space between characters in advertising is not the most widely used space in advertising, but social and public distance prevailed. This finding coincides with the literature suggesting that traditional societies prefer formal relationships, in opposite to modern societies who perform informal relationships. As for time symbolism, 82% of ads didn't show any reference or importance of time. This classified Egypt as a polychronic society.

The dominant value in advertising was found to show modern rather than traditional values. The most widely used values were individualism, fun and enjoyment in life –considered to be modern values, followed by harmony with nature, group collectivism and respect for elderly which were classified as traditional values.

Results also found that product-information format was used in 67% of the sample. This format concentrates on price, efficiency of the product and the ingredients or the way of manufacturing of the product. The second format used was the personalized format which connected between the persons and the product on symbolic grounds, as the character of Madame Nazifa in one of detergent ads.

Despite the fact that high social class constitute a small percentage of the Egyptian public when compared to middle and lower classes, the background of the ad displayed the same amount of high and medium social classes. The representation of lower social class was only 6% of the sample. The usage of high socio-economic status as the background of the ad can be explained in terms of “trickle –down theory”, where advertisers use high class connotations to be as a reference for lower classes to imitate and have the feeling that the product will transfer them to a higher class in the society (Wafai, 1989). This theory works well in traditional societies where there is several invisible social classes that distinguish each person. In other societies, as USA, the above middle class constitute the majority and most ads are show this class.

Consistent with the prevalence of individualism value in advertising, 41% of ads used one to two persons. Groups of more than four persons as friends and family appeared in 28% of ads, indicating the preference of advertisers to use group collectivism appeals to attract the consumer.

In reading ideological messages through power and control relationships between personalities in advertising, results found that 61% of the ad used the male as the dominant personality in the ad story, compared to 35% of ads that used the female as the dominant personality. That finding was confirmed with prevalence of the male voice in the ad when compared to the existence of the female voice. More than two thirds of the ads used the male voice as the voice/over during and at the end of the ad. This expresses the high status and high credibility of males in our society when compared to the status of women. This finding forms an evidence of discrimination against women despite their success in gaining more social rights in the last few decades.

Finally, the expression of the male power over the female came mostly in a social form, where the woman tries to get his acceptance or attract his attention.

Limitations of the study:

This study provides a framework for reading culture through advertising. Many other categories could be added to enrich the analysis depending on the operational definition of each category.

However, this study could have strong implications when used in cross-cultural comparisons among different countries. This type of researches is expected to be of great importance in the twenty- first century where borders between nations fade and the world will become one unified market. Advertisers will face the challenge of dealing with variety of cultures at the same time.

The research is more of a qualitative rather than quantitative nature. Using frequencies and percentages allows us to know the extent of presence of each element being tested.

One of the major limitations of this study is the small number of the sample –115 ads, due to the limited time of data gathering (two weeks) and the high frequency of duplicated ads during this period. This is mainly due to the nature of Egyptian advertisers to concentrate their campaigns in certain months of the year and stop advertising at all in other months. Despite the fact that some product categories were spread during the past few months (e.g. housing and mobiles), they represented very limited number in this study that couldn't form a separate category. The research needs to be done on a larger sample and extend to a longer period of time in order to find out the correlation among the different cultural variables.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Albers-Miller, Nancy D. and Betsy D. Gelb “Business Advertising Appeals as a Mirror of Cultural Dimensions: A Study of Eleven Countries”, *Journal of Advertising*, Vol.XXV, No.4, 1996.

Baudot, Barbara S.(1989). *International Advertising Handbook: A User's Guide to Rules and Regulations*. Lexington and Toronto: Lexington Books.

Cheng, Hong and Schweitzer, John C.(1996). “Cultural values reflected in Chinese and U.S. Television Commercials”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, May-June,27-45.

Cohen, Dorothy “*Advertising*”, Toronto: John Wiley Sons, 1972. Pp. 149-150.

Corner, John; Schlesinger, Philip and Roger Silverstone “*International Media Research – A Critical Survey*”, Routledge, 1997.

Curran, James and Michael Gurevitch (1996).”*Mass Media and Society*”, 2nd ed., Arnold-Hodder Headline Group, London, pp. 120-137.

Dahl, Stephan, *Communications and Culture Transformation*, Globalization and Cultural Convergence, Project presented to the European University, Barcelona, June 1998.

Domzal, Tera J., and Jerome B. Kernan, “Reading Advertising: The What and How of Product Meaning”, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol.9, No.3, 1992, pp.48-64.

Frith, Kathrine, “*Eastern and Western Cultural Values in Advertising*”, paper presented at the 1990 International Association for Mass Communication Research in Bled, Yugoslavia, August 1990.

Frith, Katherine T. “*Undressing the Ad: Reading Culture in Advertising*”, Peter Lang, New York, 1997, pp. 1-18.

Hall, Edward T., and Mildred Reed Hall, “*Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese*”,New York: Anchor Books, 1987.

Hoebel, Adamson, M., *Culture and Society*, New York: Oxford University Press),P. 168.

Hofstede, Geert “*Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*”, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Leiss, William “*The Limits to Satisfaction*”, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, pp.61-63.

Leiss, William; Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally “*Social Communication in Advertising*”, Second edition, Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., NY, 1990, pp.236-262.

Lont, Cynthia M “*Women and Media*”, Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995.

Mueller, Barbara (1987). “Reflections of Culture: An Analysis of Japanese and American Advertising Appeals.” *Journal of Advertising Research*, 27,3:51-59.

Mueller, Barbara (1992). “Standardization Vs. Specialization: An Examination of Westernization in Japanese Advertising.” *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32,1 15-24.

Mueller, Barbara (1996). “*International Advertising: Communicating Across Cultures*”, Wadsworth Publishing Company, International Thomson Publishing.

Priest, Susanna Hornig “*Doing Media Research- An Introduction*”, Sage Publications, 1996.

Rokeach, Milton “*The Nature of Human Values*”, The Free Press, New York, 1973.

Schudson, Michael “Historical roots of Consumer Culture”, in Roxanne Hovland and Gray B. Wilcox, “*Advertising in Society*”, NTC Business Books, 1983, pp.42-72.

Solomon, Michael R. “*Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having and Being*”, Allyn and Bacon, 1992.

Spence, Janet T. “Achievement American Style: The Rewards and Costs of Individualism”, *American Psychologist*, 40(12), 1985, Pp.1285-1295.

Tansey, Richard, Michael R. Hyman, and George M. Zinkhan (1990), "Cultural Themes in Brazilian and U.S. Auto Ads: A Cross-Cultural Comparison," *Journal of Advertising*, 19 (2), 30-39.

Wafai, Mohamed "*Advertising*", Al Anglo publishing, Cairo, Egypt, 1989, p. 174

Zhang, Yong and Betsy D. Gelb "Matching Advertising Appeals to Culture: The Influence of Products' Use Conditions", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, 1996.

