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A comparison of multi-ethnic images in U.S. and Taiwanese television commercials

Chi-Lin Kao
San Jose State University

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A COMPARISON OF MULTI-ETHNIC IMAGES IN U.S. AND
TAIWANESE TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of School of Journalism and Mass Communications
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

Chi-Lin Kao

August 2000

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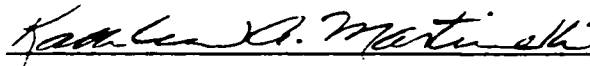
APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS



Dr. Cecelia Baldwin



Dr. William Tillinghast



Dr. Kathleen Martinelli

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



ABSTRACT

A COMPARISON OF IMAGES OF MULTI-ETHNIC GROUPS IN U.S. AND TAIWANESE TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

By Chi-Lin Kao

This study explored whether there are differences between the United States and Taiwan in portrayals of images of multi-ethnic groups in television commercials. The basic assumption behind this study is that cultural differences play important roles in determining how different ethnic groups are portrayed in the two countries. The method of research was content analysis.

The study found that cultural influences appeared in portrayals of multi-ethnic images in both the United States and Taiwan. The differences that appeared to be significant included the number of various ethnic images shown, the roles they played, and the product categories they appeared often. In addition, the brand levels of products influenced the usage of number of ethnic groups in a commercial.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The average American is exposed to more than 1,500 advertisements in a single day, and spends one and half years of her/his life watching television commercials (Arens & Bovee, 1994). Advertisements often signify cultural norms in society and sometimes reflect and/or lead popular culture as it is engrained as a social institution. Advertising, therefore, can be one of the major ways through which we develop our attitudes. The public, including children, are unconsciously educated by the images in advertisements. Given this, advertising can be one of the most powerful forces in societies around the world (Mooij, 1997).

Advertising, like other forms of mass communication, is related to culture. Advertising may alter the cultural environment in which it operates, while culture may affect advertising in terms of expression as well as information content (Chang, 1992). However, the expression and content of advertising differ greatly between cultures. Cultural differences often function as boundaries in international advertising. Therefore, an understanding of cultural

differences affecting advertising in the United States and in other countries is necessary for American companies to operate successfully on both domestic and international levels.

Statement of Problem

Today, advertising is a multi-cultural and transnational industry. Western culture and values are increasingly imported to Asia. Western advertising agencies and multinational corporations long ago entered Asian countries and are expanding their markets. In addition to food products such as McDonald's, T.G.I. Friday's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, Western culture, especially American popular culture, is easily found in Asia through fashion, lifestyle, movies, television, music, etc. For example, in most corners of the world, Mickey Mouse, Walt Disney's most famous creation, was one of the first stars with a global name. Mickey's notability has become a symbol of the influence the United States has on global media, and particularly on television. Flick a remote control almost anywhere on earth, and you will see American products: Hollywood films, the CNN news channel, and television shows such as "Friends" or "The X-Files." Globalization and Americanization have gone hand in hand. But now the media business, and especially television, are becoming

increasingly multinational. As one of the significant tools that reflect sociocultural values, advertising represents the trend.

Today Asia has joined the global village. Most Asian countries have homogeneous ethnic populations, such as Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Chinese. People in each country generally share similar lifestyles, values, and language. But the United States is different, and many ethnic groups live in this country. People with different ethnic heritages living in the United States might still use their mother languages and keep their traditional lifestyles and values, or they might assimilate into American culture. Such culture is local, but the news media and the entertainment industry are increasingly global.

In Taiwan, with the economic success, foreign products and services are available conveniently in its cities and counties. Its mass media are also filled with foreign programs and news. Some international advertising agencies have their branches there, too. Therefore, people in Taiwan are living in an environment with global views. It is necessary for them to understand the change and influence of global communication. Americans are also required to engage in multicultural

communication every day because people of color and people of various ethnic groups are rapidly increasing in number in the United States. The globalization of media underwrites a globalization not merely of American popular culture, but of the many cultures valued by people who are separated by distance from their geographic or ethnic origins.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the images and portrayals of multi-ethnic groups in television commercials in both the United States and Taiwan. The literature review examines the trends in transnational advertising, and multicultural communication and popular culture. Theories of subject/object positioning are discussed. Past studies on ethnic images in media are analyzed, too. Different historical and cultural backgrounds between American and Taiwanese societies that still influence advertising in the two countries are examined.

The researcher use cross-cultural content analysis to analyze the similarities and differences between portrayals of multi-ethnic people in the U. S. and Taiwanese television commercials. Issues to be examined include whether there are more images of different ethnic people appearing in American

television commercials than in Taiwanese commercials because the population of the United States is composed of various ethnic groups. How important the roles of different ethnic groups are portrayed in, and what kinds of product categories are featured in television advertisements in the two countries are compared. This study is a cross-cultural content analysis.

Significance of the Study

This cross-cultural study is important because few studies deal with the cross-country comparison of ethnic roles in advertising. Racial and ethnic images in the media are very important because they keep shaping racial attitudes and self-perceptions. The media is powerful because it is the new frontier in influencing the ideas and minds of the people. As Leslie Steeves (1993) pointed out in her book, one important reason for Americans to study media issues elsewhere is to develop a sense of responsibility for the influences of the United States and other industrialized nations on the rest of the world's media and information systems.

Taiwan is an attractive market for multinational marketers because its people have strong consumption abilities. In order for international advertising agencies to break into Taiwanese

markets, information about Taiwan's current advertising environment and its cultural values must be understood before any promotional strategy is developed. It is also important for Taiwanese people to find out if the trend of communication and operation of Taiwanese mass media is becoming more and more globalized.

It is valuable to study advertisements expressed through television. "The television commercial, a composite of words and pictures, sounds and movements, symbols and slogans, represents a heightened form of human expression" (Chang, 1992, p. 3). The widespread integration of television into our daily lives, and its potential for shaping viewers' opinions as well as behavior, make the television commercial a critical area for mass communication studies.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Transnational Advertising

Advertising and the mass media have built a vital, organic link between production and consumption in the global capitalist system, so that as manufacturing became increasingly multinational, advertising agencies also became transnationalized through networks of foreign subsidiaries and affiliates (Janus, 1981). Transnational advertising imposes foreign ways and alien values by exporting consumer culture and restructuring consumption habits of the people in less industrialized nations. Similarly, Schiller (1989) argues that the advertising industry applies its talent single-mindedly to stimulate consumer demand and serves as an ideological reinforcer of capitalism worldwide. This trend is easily found in many countries, not only in less industrialized countries, but also industrialized countries in Asia, for example, Japan, and the so-called four tigers—Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong. This increasing display of Western values influences people's lifestyles as well as ideology. For example,

Western-style fashion and make-up are becoming the standard of beauty in Asia.

Golding (1977) discusses the transfer of advertising institutions and practices from Western to non-Western contexts. His discussion of "a dominant global culture of media practices and objectives as developed in the media of the advanced industrialized societies" (Golding, 1977, p.293) is quite reasonable in this century. He suggests three mechanisms of such transfers: institutional transfer, diffusion of occupational ideologies, and education and training. The original transfer is caused by education and training processes; many of the managers and creative people employed in advertising agencies received their training in Western countries. Technology, skills, marketing information, and advertising resources are increasingly centralized in international advertising conglomerates. Many of these conglomerates formed through mergers between U.S. agencies and large European groups (Griffin, Viswanath, & Schwarts, 1994). Therefore, Western advertising institutions and practices have expanded their influences globally.

Transnational advertising is becoming more globalized, rather than localized. International advertisers prefer to

have unique images and advertising messages in all their markets. Many multinational companies, such as Nike and Sony, air unified campaigns in which they show the same commercials in all markets, and image campaigns in which they try to build brand awareness (Brauchli, 1993). To transfer unified advertising messages globally, American or Western images, and English language are most persuasive and pervasive in the present world. For example, advertising in Asia is becoming increasingly Western or American. Western models and celebrities, American settings and artifacts, Western-oriented advertising appeals, and English words are indeed commonplace in Asian advertising today. It is not unrealistic for American advertisers to achieve the utilization of standardized messages.

Popular Culture and Multicultural Communication

The drivers of today's rapid globalization are improving methods and systems of international transportation, devising revolutionary and innovative information technologies and services, and dominating international commerce in services and ideas. Their impact affects lifestyles, religion, language, and every other component of culture. The United States dominates this global traffic in information and ideas. U.S.

music, U.S. movies, U.S. television, and U.S. software are so dominant, so sought after, and so visible that they are now available literally everywhere on the Earth. They influence the tastes, lives, and aspirations of virtually every nation, but in some countries, they are viewed as corrupting.

During the 20th century, the United States has become an economic, political, and military world power with interests around the globe. In addition, U.S. popular culture is the most dominant and visible culture in the world. The pervasiveness of its pop culture is especially evident in the entertainment industries. Without a doubt, U.S. popular culture is very attractive, particularly for young people. Michael Jackson's pop songs, Disney's cartoons, and Hollywood's movies provide a variety of excitement and entertainment. Culturally, the new patterns of global communication are creating a new global "Coca-colanized" pop culture of commodity fetishism supported by global advertising and entertainment industries (Tehrani, 1999).

Similarly, Byrd notes that "Popular culture is a phenomenon that affects intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and national relationships. It is the manner in which a majority of peoples in a society acquire, borrow, and pass on cultural objects within

and between groups" (1998, p. 4). Popular culture is important because the way people see themselves and others reflected in popular culture media such as TV, art, films, book, music, and even mythology shapes the way they see themselves and interact with each other. Likewise the absence of a particular image can influence the decisions of ethnic and racial tributary groups. Popular culture can influence self-identity and self-concept because it both mirrors and creates visions of who we are.

Communication is a way to present culture and is closely tied to cultural norms and practices. "Multicultural communication is the creation and sharing of meaning among individuals and groups within a geo-political system" (Byrd, 1998, p. 3). Television is an immensely rich world of popular culture, as nearly everyone watches television. Screen images simultaneously reflect and create stereotypical images in society. Just as images in popular culture can influence self-identity they also can influence multiracial relationships. Multicultural relationships are influenced by the stereotypes presented in popular culture. The conclusion must be that it is essential for scholars and viewers to continue to monitor the effects of popular culture on people's minds (Byrd, 1998).

Subject/Object Position Theory

The meanings of the demographic categories, such as gender, age, and race are socially, symbolically created and charged with political and social import. That is especially true of race. As Rosteck said, "We are not created equally, nor with the same expectations, nor the same prospects, when it comes to race" (1999, p.117). How people are induced to accept racial categorization and valuation is influenced and shaped by the media. For centuries, the identifications of racial groups in the United States have been communicated primarily through rhetorical strategies hidden in the texts of everyday experience. To have a better understanding about how texts construct race, the theory of subject position needs to be explained. In addition, an explanation of racial politics requires further theorizing of how object positions might also be offered rhetorically by texts (Rosteck, 1999).

Subject Position Theory

"A subject position is a stance, role, or perspective one takes in relationship to a text so as to read or engage the text" (Rosteck, 1999, p.118). From that engagement, a specific subjectivity is called up and established in the reader or viewer.

In his book, Rosteck specified three kinds of subject positions that texts offer to readers. First, a reader might take an *identified* subject position. The reader finds characters, themes, or images in the text with which he or she identifies or desires to identify. Second, the reader might take an *implied* subject position. Here, the reader does not identify with a character or image in the text, but is nevertheless called to and constructed as a subject in order to read it. Ironic or satiric texts often encourage this stance. Third, the reader might take a *subversive* subject position, in which a subjectivity is assumed that is at odds with, and often directly opposed to, the call of the text. Subversive subject positions are always intertextual.

Rosteck (1999) writes that subjects are socially created and are defined by their group identities, and that distribution of power among groups makes subject creation a matter of political struggle. Texts are seen more as sites of struggle that generate meanings and positions present in society. "Of the several group identities through which our subjectivities are called into being, race particularly is a discursive, social, ideological creation" (Rosteck, 1999, p.121). The construction of race, and of racially inflected subjectivities through rhetorically

strategic representation, has been a major discursive preoccupation of American culture. Media texts and images are the sites of racial ideological struggle because the media have the ability to contribute the shared elements that define the ethnic situation. "Some subject positions, especially concerning race, are constructed in so damaging and repressive a manner that they are best understood as *object positions*" (Rosteck, 1999, p.122). Whole classes of people may be created for others and for themselves as objects, not as subjects. For example, many studies have noted that Africans are depicted by the media in demeaning and dehumanizing ways (Rosteck, 1999). An understanding of how texts create subjects and objects can also create more awareness of racial identities presented in the media.

A Theoretical Perspective on Subjects and Objects

The characteristics a text needs to call to a subject or object position are authority, anonymity, narration, and noise (Rosteck, 1999). To create a subject position, a text must depict a person or group of people as having authority. A text will call to an identified subject as one having authority if it identifies the subject as an origin of motive, an initiator, a chooser, as

one responsible. Besides, an authorial subject position has a voice that reflects a distinctive verbal and nonverbal style. The opposite of authority, anonymity, supports an object position. One with no name has no authority. The creation of an object position for people involves suppression of voice.

"A text that creates a subject position will provide for the subject a fully realized narration" (Rosteck, 1999, p.131). Narration provides an explanation for the subject position. Subjects are fully realized textual characters. Noise is the opposite of narration. Noise is "in the sense of random, disconnected, disjointed information" (p.131). An object in and of itself is isolated, out of context, and relationship. Another element of noise is that an entity is defined in terms of its strangeness, its lack of place in the story, and its otherness. For instance, African Americans have often been constructed as "the Other," as objects "over there." By showing how texts in the media may be analyzed, the signification of subject and object positions for racial identities will be shown too.

Representation of Ethnic Heritage in the United States Media

The United States is the most representative country to study multicultural communication because its population has a lot of

different ethnic groups. Already, people of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American ancestry account for 28.2% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). The effect of race on consumers' evaluations of advertising messages has received considerable attention, particularly as it relates to consumers' preferences for ads featuring models of one race versus another. The main focus of research has been how consumers evaluate ads featuring models of their own race, as well as models not of their race. According to Green's (1999) analysis, some studies have found that African-American consumers respond more favorably to advertisements featuring black models than they do to ads featuring white models. Similarly, "some findings indicate that white consumers rate advertisements featuring white models more favorably than ads featuring black models. Other findings, however, suggest that white consumers respond just as favorably to advertisements featuring black models as to ads featuring white models" (Green, 1999, p. 58). The variation in findings is due largely to the diversity of measures used, and also, some researchers tested television ads whereas others tested print ads. As television has been suggested to be more compelling than print media, reactions to TV commercials seem to be stronger than reactions to print advertisements.

Findings on the degree of racial integration in advertisements suggest that black models play a minor role when featured with whites in racially integrated settings. Those researchers found that television advertisements in which blacks appeared were overwhelmingly integrated, and blacks were judged to have played either minor or background roles in the majority of the ads analyzed. Bristor, Lee, and Hunt (1995) reported that of the prime-time network television advertisements analyzed in their study, only 17% featured African-Americans as dominant characters and the majority of advertisements featured African-Americans in minor roles.

A study conducted by Taylor and Stern (1997) indicated that Asian male and female models are overrepresented in terms of proportion of the population (3.6%), appearing in 8.4% of the commercials in the United States. However, Asian models are more likely than members of other minority groups to appear in background roles, and Asian women are rarely depicted in major roles. "Asian-Americans are considered a 'model minority' whose premium demographic profile—affluence, high education, and managerial/professional occupations—and rapid growth in number make them an attractive market" (Taylor & Stern, 1997, p.47). The market's size is impressive. Even as a minority,

Asian-Americans represent the fastest-growing and most affluent demographic segment in the United States. As the demographic segment of United States market has become more diverse, the portrayal of various ethnic images on media has become an important issue for media planners involved in efforts to target different ethnic people.

Internationalization of Taiwanese Media

Since the establishment of the first television station, Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV) in 1962, Taiwanese audiences have been exposed to foreign programs. During 1963, TTV presented 18.5 hours of American programs to every 50 hours of operation (Yu, 1974). Since then, more American programs have been broadcast in Taiwan. In the 1990s, the satellite TV system has quickly moved Taiwan into the global village. CNN news channel and MTV music channel have become important sources of international news and entertainment information for Taiwanese.

Since more international programs have been shown in Taiwanese media, advertising strategies for Taiwanese market have been also influenced and changed. While foreign models were rarely found in the magazine ads and television commercials in Taiwan in the 1980s, the number of foreign models increased

rapidly, and in general, almost half of the ads in most Taiwanese magazines use foreign models.

There is a subtle distinction between Western and Eastern culture. Undoubtedly, advertising portrayals are influenced by culture and society. The United States represents a melting pot of predominantly Western cultures. The impact of global communication on international cultural life is perhaps the most visible of its effects (Tehranian, 1999).

Research Questions

Television has a particular impact because it provides strong visual effects and the average American watches 30 hours of programming a week, with especially heavy viewing during prime time (8 to 11 p.m.). Insofar as television portrayals influence attitudes toward different ethnic groups, it is important to investigate the frequency and nature of multi-ethnic appearances in television advertising. This study addresses those issues by framing research questions about representation and role prominence, and using content analysis to answer them. The most basic questions pertain to the frequency and role status of multi-ethnic groups in advertisements. They are followed by questions about social and contextual variables that reveal

ethnic stereotypes in terms of the type of goods/services the models are shown using. The purpose of this study is to elicit information that will contribute to more informed understanding of advertising images of different ethnic people.

Based on the previous literature review, the following research questions have been developed:

1. Is there a significant difference in the number of ethnic groups appearing in commercials presented in the United States and Taiwanese television proportionate to each country's population groups?
2. Are there any differences in roles played by different ethnic people in the United States and Taiwanese television commercials?
3. Is there a significant difference in product categories in terms of the frequency with which certain ethnic images are presented between the United States and Taiwanese commercials?

4. Is there a significant difference in the number of ethnic images shown on the United States and Taiwanese commercials airing in daytime versus prime time television?
5. Do international brand products use a greater variety of ethnic people in a single commercial than domestic or local brands do?

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Selection of the Sampling Method

To address the research questions, television commercials were videotaped from three major national network television stations in both the United States and Taiwan. In order to obtain the approximate number of commercials in both countries, three hours of programs were recorded in the United States and four hours of programs were recorded in Taiwan per day for one constructed week during the month of December 1999. The dates included all seven days of the week. Because all the research questions were related to the images of the ethnic groups appearing in television commercials, only commercials having people shown were counted.

The three television stations representing the United States were ABC, NBC, and CBS, and the three Taiwanese television stations were CTS, CTV, and TTV. ABC, NBC, and CBS reach most of the United States. CTS, CTV, and TTV are the national television stations in Taiwan, and each of them also covers over 96% of TVHH (Standard Rate & Data Service, 1999). So these six

television stations are very representative for public viewing in the two countries. Six households with VCRs helped to record TV commercials in the two countries.

Based on the number of viewers, television time is divided into dayparts for placing commercials. There are different levels of viewing during each daypart. The highest level is prime time (8 to 11 p.m.). Late fringe (11 p.m. to 1 a.m.) ranks fairly high in most markets among adults. Daytime (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and early fringe (4 to 8 p.m.) tend to be viewed most heavily by women. In order to concern the factor of time commercials airing and the factor of amounts of audiences, two periods of television time chosen for comparison were daytime and prime time in this study. The time periods for taping television commercial were from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. and from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m. in the United States, and the time periods for taping Taiwanese television commercials were from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. and from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m. for the seven days.

Selection of the Research Approach

Content analysis was the method used in this cross-cultural study with the goal of understanding the ways in which the portrayals and images of multi-ethnic people in television

advertisements differed between the United States and Taiwan. Content analysis provides a systematic technique to observe and analyze the overt communication behavior of selected communication (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). This particular methodology provides an efficient way to decompose advertisements into objective, separable, and quantitative meaning-units. Content analysis has been used widely in order to understand how culture influences advertising communication strategies.

Operational Definitions

Racial and Ethnic Classifications

Byrd (1998) defined ethnic groups in six major groups. This study used this classification to categorize the images of people appearing in advertisements. Detailed operational definitions of these six categories are shown as follows:

African—origins in the original people of the African continent (Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria), the Caribbean, West Indians, and Haitians. Origins in any black racial group, not of Latino heritage.

Asian/Pacific Islander—origins in any of the original people

of East Asia (China, Japan, Philippines and Korea), Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos), and the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii, etc.).

European—origins in any of the original people of western Eurasia (England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Western Russian, etc.).

Latino—origins in any of the Spanish people who live in South America (including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Costa Rica).

Middle Eastern/South Asian—origins in any of the people of Southeast Asia (where Asia, Africa, and Europe meet) including Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Kuwait, etc., and South Asia (Bangladesh, Burma, India, Pakistan, etc.). The researcher puts them in the same category because they can't be distinguished by skin color.

Native American—origins in people originally inhabiting the continental U.S. and Alaska who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

Categories of Television Commercials

In both the United States and Taiwan, television commercials

are overwhelmingly present in television programming. In this study, television commercials were divided into ten categories: drug, food, cosmetics/toiletries, entertainment, clothing, transportation, banking/financial, electronic/technological products, government/military, and others (Yu, 1974). Basically, these ten categories covered most of products appearing on television commercials.

Any product brand that had sales outside the country was categorized as an international brand, and a product with sales only inside the nation was categorized as a domestic brand. The researcher expected that products of international brands would have more commercials that used more than one ethnic group in a single commercial than domestic brands did because international companies tried to reach people on the global level and wanted to have their messages understood worldwide.

Type of Role

According to Chang (1992), there are three types of roles that categorized characters appearing in a television commercial. The researcher used this categorization to analyze what roles ethnic people play most often in both countries. The point of determining the types of roles in which different ethnic models

appeared was to obtain information about their perceived importance in society.

A major role—The person is a spokesperson being on camera and speaking throughout the commercial, or is the main character in the commercial.

A minor role—The person doesn't speak and plays a supporting role.

A background role—The person doesn't speak and is seen only briefly.

Data Analysis

Pretest

Each commercial was coded by the researcher. A second individual who can speak Mandarin as well as English assisted in coding the commercials. To prevent ambiguous coding categories, a pretest of about 10% of the usable television commercials was conducted with the coders individually prior to the main study. In the pretest, a percentage of agreement was calculated. The percentages ranged between 91% and 100%, were acceptable range for the different research variables.

Coder reliability

A test of reliability by two independent coders was applied to the coding scheme. Three hundred out of 3,151 commercials were analyzed individually to determine the inter-coder reliability. A percentage of agreement between coders was calculated. The result suggested a minimum of observer error and was within the acceptable range, between 89% and 99% for the different research variables.

Basically, cross-tabulation tables for all data included in the study were analyzed for between-country differences by a chi-square test. Whether there were any significant differences between the United States and Taiwan was determined. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Findings

Altogether the researcher examined 3,151 television commercials. The sample from the U.S. television stations was 1,520 and the sample from the Taiwanese television stations was 1,631. Chi-square analysis was performed on the distributions of multi-ethnic images in the different categories.

In the United States, African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descents account for 28.2% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999), but people, other than Asians, only account for less than 2 % of Taiwanese population (SRDS, 1999). To answer the first research question, whether there is a significant difference in the number of ethnic groups appearing in commercials presented in the United States and Taiwanese television, the result revealed that European descent images were shown most often among all ethnic images in the United States television commercials, and Asian descent images were shown most often in Taiwanese commercials. More specifically, 68% of the United States commercials featured European descent images, and 83% of Taiwanese commercials had Asian descent images shown (see

Table 1). Another interesting finding was that more European descent images appeared in Taiwanese commercials (13% of the total commercials) than Asian descent images did in the United States commercials (6%), although there are fewer Europeans in Taiwan than Asians in the United States (Asians account for 3.6% of the U.S. population) (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). It pointed out that transnational advertising and media became more and more globalized.

The difference of presentation of African descent images in commercials between the United States and Taiwan was also significant: 19% in the United States commercials, but only 1% in Taiwanese commercials. The portrayals of Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native American descent images were much less than other ethnic images in both countries' commercials. As displayed in Table 1, a chi-square test revealed a statistically significant relationship between the distribution of multi-ethnic images and the countries in which commercials appeared: $X^2(4)=2388.29, p < .001$.

Table 1

The Distribution of Different Ethnic Images Appeared in
Television Commercials in Taiwan and the United States

Ethnic group	U.S. n = 1,756	Taiwan n = 2,048
African	19%	1%
Asian	6%	83%
European	68%	13%
Latino	6%	1%
Middle Eastern and Native American	1%	2%

$\chi^2(4) = 2388.29, p < .001$

Comparing role portrayals of different ethnic groups in commercials between the United States and Taiwan to answer the second research question, whether there are any differences in types of roles played by different ethnic groups between the two countries, the researcher found that in the United States sample, African descent people played in minor roles (20% of the total minor roles) more often than in major and background roles (16% and 13%, respectively) (see Table 2). European descents played

all three roles much more often than any other ethnic group did. The percentage differences among the three roles played by Asians, Latino, Middle Easterns, and Native Americans descents were only slight. The chi-square indicated that the difference between roles played and ethnic groups was significant: $X^2(8)=16.89, p < .05$.

In Table 3, the results indicated that in Taiwanese commercials sampled, Asian descent images were portrayed as major roles (84% of the total major roles) and minor roles (83%), more frequently than as background roles (63%). By contrast with the United States, the Taiwanese sample showed European descents played only 12% of the major roles, 16% of minor roles, and 20% of background roles. African descents played all three roles about ten times less in Taiwanese commercials than in the United States ones. The chi-square analysis regarding the difference in roles played by those ethnic descent groups in Taiwanese commercials to be significant: $X^2(8)=41.71, p < .001$.

Table 2

The Distribution of Roles Played by Different Ethnic Groups in
the United States Commercials

Ethnic group	Major role n = 1,896	Minor role n = 660	Background role n = 122
African	16%	20%	13%
Asian	5%	3%	4%
European	73%	71%	82%
Latino	5%	5%	1%
Middle Eastern and Native American	1%	1%	0%

$X^2(8) = 16.89, p < .05$

The total percentage of each major, minor, and background role category is 100.

Table 3

The Distribution of Roles Played by Different Ethnic Groups in
Taiwanese Commercials

Ethnic group	Major role n = 1,689	Minor role n = 417	Background role n = 183
African	1%	1%	2%
Asian	84%	83%	63%
European	12%	16%	20%
Latino	1%	0%	1%
Middle Eastern and Native American	2%	0%	14%

$X^2(8) = 41.71, p < .001$

The total percentage of each major, minor, and background role category is 100.

In response to the third research question, whether there is a significant difference in product categories in terms of the frequency with which certain ethnic descent images are shown between the United States and Taiwan, Middle Eastern and Native American descent groups were excluded from the total sample because of their small quantity in both countries' commercials. For the same reason, there were two product categories also excluded: government/military, and others. The result showed that the four ethnic groups, African, Asian, European, and Latino, appeared in similar percentage levels in the eight product categories in the United States commercials (see Table 4). For African descent images, they were shown more often in food (38% of the total commercials they appeared), cosmetics/toiletries (14%), and electronic/technological (14%) products than in other product categories. Asian people appeared more in food (34% of the total commercials they appeared) and electronic/technological (20%) categories. In all European and Latino descent images, both groups were presented more in food, and cosmetics product commercials. The significant difference was $X^2(21)=41.27, p <.01$.

In Table 5, it appeared that in Taiwanese commercials, African descent people were in entertainment (48% of the total commercials they appeared) category most among the all three product categories they showed. Asian descent images were shown more often in food (34% of the total commercials they appeared), and cosmetics (34%) products. Another finding is that comparing to other groups, people of Asian descent had the largest ratio on appearing in electronic and technology products commercials (20% of the commercials they appeared). European descents showed mainly in cosmetics (25% of the total commercials they appeared) and food (20%) categories. And Latino descent people appeared more often in transportation (56% of the total commercials they appeared) and food (34%) products. The researcher found out that the groups of ethnic people were significantly related to the product categories in which they appeared ($p < .001$). Basically, the product categories the four ethnic groups appeared most often were almost the same between the United States and Taiwanese commercials. The difference was the order of product categories in which they appeared most heavily.

Table 4

The Distribution of Different Ethnic Images in Product Categories Presented in the United States Commercials

Product category	African n = 327	Asian n = 97	European n = 1,234	Latino n = 108
Drug	13%	7%	17%	19%
Food	38%	34%	35%	28%
Cosmetic/Toiletries	14%	16%	18%	30%
Entertainment	6%	3%	4%	1%
Clothing	2%	2%	1%	3%
Transportation	7%	9%	9%	7%
Banking	6%	9%	5%	3%
Electronic/Techno	14%	20%	11%	9%

$X^2(21) = 41.27, p < .01$

The total percentage of each ethnic group is 100. The percentages explain the distribution of each ethnic group in different product categories.

Table 5

The Distribution of Different Ethnic Images in Product Categories Presented in Taiwanese Commercials

Product category	African n = 25	Asian n = 1301	European n = 217	Latino n = 18
Drug	0%	13%	16%	0%
Food	24%	34%	20%	34%
Cosmetic/Toiletries	16%	34%	25%	0%
Entertainment	48%	1%	7%	5%
Clothing	0%	3%	15%	0%
Transportation	12%	5%	7%	56%
Banking	0%	3%	2%	0%
Electronic/Techno	0%	7%	8%	5%

$X^2(21) = 388.78, p < .001$

The total percentage of each ethnic group is 100. The percentages explain the distribution of each ethnic group in different product categories.

The fourth research question examined whether there was a significant difference in the number of ethnic images presented in the United States and Taiwanese commercials airing in daytime versus prime time television. As shown in Table 6, there were no significant differences among each ethnic group appearing in the United States commercials airing in daytime versus prime time television (less than two percentage points). However, the chi-square still reached significance: $X^2(4)=10.04, p < .05$. European descent images were shown most among all ethnic groups in both daytime (69% of the total daytime commercials) and prime time (67%) commercials. On the other hand, as Table 7 indicated, there was also no obvious difference in multi-ethnic images presented in Taiwanese commercials airing in daytime versus prime time (less than two percentages). Asian descent images appeared in 82% of daytime commercials, and in 84% of prime time commercials. The difference was reached at the level of $p < .02$.

Table 6

A Comparison of the Number of Different Ethnic Images Shown in
the United States Commercials Airing in Daytime Versus Prime Time
Television

Ethnic group	Daytime n = 1,079	Prime time n = 969
African	18%	20%
Asian	5%	7%
European	69%	67%
Latino	7%	5%
Middle Eastern and Native American	1%	1%

$X^2(4) = 10.04, p < .05$

The total percentages of both daytime and prime time commercial categories are 100.

Table 7

A Comparison of the Number of Different Ethnic Images Shown in
Taiwanese Commercials Airing in Daytime Versus Prime Time
Television

Ethnic group	Daytime n = 888	Prime time n = 868
African	2%	1%
Asian	82%	84%
European	12%	14%
Latino	2%	0%
Middle Eastern and Native American	2%	1%

$X^2(4)=12.35, p < .02$

The total percentages of both daytime and prime time commercial categories are 100.

In response to the fifth research question, whether international brand products use more different ethnic people in one commercial than domestic brand products do, all commercials in both countries were combined and then divided into

two categories—international brand and domestic brand. As displayed in Table 8, international brand commercials (21%) used more multi-ethnic people in a single commercial than domestic brand commercials (16%) did. The chi-square analysis revealed this difference to be significant: $X^2(1)=13.75$, $p < .001$ (see Table 8).

Table 8

A Comparison of Usage of Multi-Ethnic images and Single-Ethnic Images in A Single Commercial in International Brand and Domestic Brand Commercials

Number of ethnic image appeared	International brand n = 1,514	Domestic brand n = 1,637
Multi-ethnic	21%	16%
Single-ethnic	79%	84%

$X^2(1)=13.75$, $p < .001$

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusion

Advertising contains cultural meanings above and beyond the sales message, and it also reflects the culture to which the advertisement is presented (Tawa, 1979). The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of cultural values on portrayals of multi-ethnic images in advertising. The linkage between culture and image portrayals was studied by using a cross-cultural approach.

The two countries chosen were the United States and Taiwan. Compared to the United States, Taiwan is regarded as a highly homogeneous (or undifferentiated) country. In cultural terms, Taiwanese homogeneity is perhaps best illustrated by its ethnic composition and desires for group consensus. As cultural values have a significant influence on advertising, it is logical to expect a significant difference of portrayals of different ethnic images as reflected in the United States and Taiwanese advertisements. Content analysis of television commercials in both countries was employed as the research method.

The results of this study showed that regarding the number of different ethnic groups appearing in television commercials,

the chi-square indicated a significant difference between the United States and Taiwan. The data from the relationship between ethnic groups and roles they played in commercials showed one of the cultural aspects of the two countries. The chi-square examined whether ethnic groups and roles played were related to one another, indicating that the two countries were significantly different. European descents played all three major, minor, and background roles mainly in the United States commercials. On the other hand, Asians played all three roles primarily in Taiwanese commercials. African descents played the three roles much more in the United States commercials than in Taiwanese commercials. Latino descents also appeared more in those roles in the United States commercials than in Taiwanese commercials.

After analyzing the results, the researcher found that there were significant differences between ethnic groups and product categories shown in both the United States and Taiwanese commercials. In the United States, African descents were shown more often in commercials for food, cosmetics, and electronic products, Asian descents were shown more often in food and electronic products, and European and Latino descents were most often featured in food and cosmetics categories. In Taiwanese

commercials, African descents appeared often only in entertainment products, more Asians in food and cosmetics products, more Europeans in food and cosmetics, and finally, more Latinos in transportation and food categories. Even though these ethnic groups might appear often in some same product categories in both countries, the percentages still told the differences. In addition, Africans and Latinos appeared in more categories in the United States commercials than in Taiwanese commercials.

According to the results, some agreement appeared in daytime and prime time commercials in both the United States and Taiwan. In both time frames, Europeans were shown much more than other ethnic groups in the United States commercials. In contrast, Asian descents appeared most in Taiwanese commercials in both daytime and prime time televisions. The percentages of all ethnic groups appearing in either daytime or prime television were similar with the percentages of the total numbers they presented in both countries. Finally, a finding of a significant relationship between the brand level of products and the number of different ethnic images used in one commercial was concluded. International brand commercials presented multi-ethnic images 5% more often than domestic brand commercials did.

In conclusion, this study showed that cultural differences appeared in portrayals of multi-ethnic images in television commercials. Differences between the United States and Taiwanese commercials were found in the number of different ethnic groups appearing, type of role they played, product categories they appeared in most frequently. There was a slight difference in number of multi-ethnic ethnic images portrayed between commercials airing in daytime and prime time television in both countries. The difference of the number of ethnic groups appearing in commercials indeed existed in the difference of countries. In addition, the variance of brand level was also a factor influencing the usage of ethnic images.

Contribution

This study contributed to the research on portrayals of ethnic images in advertising. Although there have been some studies discussing portrayals of ethnic images in advertisements, most of them examined only advertisements from the United States. Consequently, they were not able to account for ethnic images in other countries' advertisements. This cross-cultural study sought to determine whether advertising reflects general differences between two culture's views on the roles of

multi-ethnic images.

This cross-cultural study is also useful in business practice, especially for international advertisers. The role of values in advertising has long been debated. Strong arguments have been made suggesting that advertising both reflects and influences cultural values. The question can be viewed as more than academic. If variation in advertising content is independent of a culture's values, the task of an advertiser facing audiences in multiple cultures is challenging indeed. However, if advertising differences across cultures are predictable at least to some extent, the task of the advertiser is simplified.

Limitations of This Study

Admittedly, this study had limitations. This was a study to investigate the portrayals of cultural differences between the United States and Taiwan on portrayals of multi-ethnic images in television commercials. However, the three television stations in each country sampled do not represent all stations in both countries. Furthermore, there may be certain biases in this study because of the researcher's background, as a native of Taiwan. Mooij (1997) pointed out that most cross-cultural advertising studies had ethnocentrism in assumptions,

hypotheses, and methods.

Direction for Future Research

This study examined portrayals of images of multi-ethnic groups in television commercials in the United States and Taiwan. However, it is possible to examine how images of different ethnic groups are portrayed in other types of media. Furthermore, advertisements from other countries can be analyzed to see the influence of cultural values on portrayals of multi-ethnic images in advertising more fully.

Moreover, further research combining other research methods would be meaningful. For example, case studies of individual companies in both countries would provide a deeper understanding of how advertisers perceive the presentations of different ethnic images related to their products. In addition, similar studies can be conducted to examine whether cultural influences will change over time.

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Appendix

Coding sheet

TVC-US

	TV #1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11
Daytime											
Prime Time											
African											
Asian											
European											
Latin American											
Middle Eastern											
Native American											
Product Category											
Brand Level											

Key 1: Role in Commercial
 1. Major Role
 2. Minor Role
 3. Background Role

Key 2: Product Category
 1. Drug
 2. Food
 3. Cosmetics/Toiletries
 4. Entertainment
 5. Clothing
 6. Transportation
 7. Insurance/Banking/Financial
 8. Electronic/Technological Product
 9. Government/Military
 10. Others

Key 3: Brand Level
 1. International
 2. Domestic

Key 4: Crowd (more than four people)
 = *