

SỰ THỂ HIỆN CÁC GIÁ TRỊ CÁ NHÂN VÀ TẬP THỂ TRONG QUẢNG CÁO CỦA MỸ VÀ VIỆT NAM THÔNG QUA CÁC CHIẾN THUẬT SÁNG TẠO

Phạm Thị Tâm*

Quảng cáo đã và đang len lỏi vào đời sống của con người, tác động đến họ để đưa ra lựa chọn sử dụng sản phẩm mọi lúc mọi nơi. Một trong số cách hiệu quả để thu hút khách hàng thông qua quảng cáo là tích hợp yếu tố văn hóa trong các chiến thuật sáng tạo. Trong phạm vi nghiên cứu này, tác giả tập trung vào việc tìm hiểu các chiến thuật sáng tạo thể hiện giá trị cá nhân và tập thể và chỉ ra sự giống nhau và khác nhau trong việc thể hiện của những giá trị này trong hai bộ dữ liệu quảng cáo: 131 quảng cáo trên tạp chí của Mỹ và 123 quảng cáo trên tạp chí Việt Nam. Để làm được điều này, phương pháp so sánh đối chiếu văn hóa dựa trên phân tích nội dung được sử dụng. Kết quả chính của nghiên cứu cho thấy những chiến thuật sáng tạo phản ánh giá trị cá nhân được tìm thấy nhiều hơn trong quảng cáo của Mỹ; trong khi đó, các chiến thuật sáng tạo thể hiện giá trị tập thể được tìm thấy nhiều hơn trong quảng cáo của Việt Nam bên cạnh sự thể hiện khác nhau trong từng chiến thuật này. Nghiên cứu có ý nghĩa về học thuật và thực tiễn, giúp cho các nhà quảng cáo có nhìn nhận khách quan hơn về những chiến thuật quảng cáo nổi trội trong từng loại hình quảng cáo, từ đó xây dựng được quảng cáo phù hợp hơn với khách hàng cần hướng đến.

Từ khóa: quảng cáo, chiến thuật sáng tạo, tính cá nhân, tính tập thể.

Advertising has been creeping into people's lives and affecting their behaviors. One of the effective strategies to attract customers is to incorporate cultural elements in advertising. This study focuses on examining creative tactics for expressing individualist and collectivist values to point out the similarities and differences in the representation of these values. A cross-cultural comparative method based on the content analysis approach was employed to analyze two datasets, including 131 selected American and 123 selected Vietnamese magazine advertisements. The results show that creative tactics for individualist values are found more in American advertisements, while those for collectivist values are used more in Vietnamese advertisements. This study has both academic and practical implications, helping advertisers have a more objective view of the outstanding advertising tactics in each data set, thereby creating more appropriate advertisements for their target customers.

Keywords: advertisement, creative tactics, individualism, collectivism, values.

* ThS., Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Học viện Tài chính

Email: tampham2373@gmail.com

THE REPRESENTATION OF INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST VALUES IN AMERICAN AND VIETNAMESE ADVERTISEMENTS THROUGH CREATIVE TACTICS

1. Introduction

Among scholars focusing on cultural values in advertising, many think that for an advertisement to be successful in a country, it must appeal to the values and tastes of the target market (Kitirattarkarn, et al., 2019). The values that constitute a society are not immediately apparent (e.g., Schwartz, 1994a), but inferred from a range of cultural products defined as “tangible, public representations of culture such as advertising or popular texts” (Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008, p. 199). Cultural values are likely to be used and manifested in not only what is said (i.e., the central message or advertising theme), but also how it is said (i.e., the way the central message is presented using creative tactics) (Zhang, 2004). Investigation into creative tactics in advertising which represent individualist and collectivist values is therefore an interesting idea. However, up to the present time, adequate attention on this issue has not been paid by scholars in the context of Vietnam. This study is therefore a fresh take on this issue when it focussed on the creative tactics representing individualist and collectivist values in American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements.

2. Literature review

2.1. Individualism and collectivism

The claim made by GudyKunst et al. (1996) that communicative styles “vary

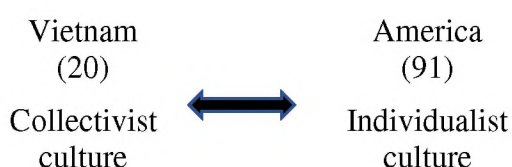
across cultures and within cultures” (1996, p. 511) is supported by researchers (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2002). Individualism-Collectivism Dimension (I-CD), one of the national cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2001) and House et al. (2002) is one way to explain these variations. Of these, the cultural dimension put forth by Hofstede (2001) is regarded as having the most sway. I-CD, which is a societal rather than an individual trait, “is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups” (Hofstede, 2015, p. 11). This dimension deals with the question of “whether people's self-image is defined in terms of “I” or “we” (Hofstede, 2015, p. 11). The individualist culture, in which “relationships between people are loose and everyone is expected to get along,” (Hofstede, 2015, p. 11) is on the periphery of the scale.

Using Hofstede's (2001, 56) individualism dimension to compare America with Vietnam, it is discovered that:

America, with a score of 91, is regarded as one of the most individualistic countries in the world. Society is “loosely knit, in which the expectation is that people should look after themselves and their immediate families only and should not rely on authorities for support.”

With a score of 20, Vietnam is classified as a collectivist society, characterized by a strong sense of long-term loyalty to the member "group," which could be a family, an extended family, or other extended relationships.

In a nutshell, America and Vietnam are positioned at the extreme ends of the I-CD scale, according to Hofstede (2001).



Several academics have discussed the connection between I-CD and communication styles (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Hofstede, 2015). The term "communicative style" refers to the numerous patterns of interaction that people learn when they communicate with others, based on "the norms, rules, and values of their culture" (Gudykunst et al.,

1996, p. 510), which Hofstede (2015) refers to as the "software of communication" (2015, p. 1). According to Gudykunst et al. (1996, p. 511) the study's definition of communicative style is related to (a) the verbal and nonverbal ways of interaction, and (b) "expectations about what is considered the proper or logical way to organize the presentation of ideas" (Lustig & Koester, 2003, p. 243).

As seen in Table 1, Hofstede (2015, p. 5) compared the communicative styles used in individualist and collectivist societies. The former is marked by references to independent self and distinctive personality, coding verbally direct explicit messages - a key characteristic of low-context cultures; the latter are marked by references to interdependent self, in-group membership, and seeking harmony, coding verbally indirect, implicit messages - a key characteristic.

Table 1. *I-CD in relation to communication styles (Hofstede, 2015, p.5)*

Individualist societies	Collectivist societies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I", independent self / Unique personality - Direct, personal, verbal - An honest person speaks his/her mind - Low-context communication: everything should be explicit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "We", interdependent self /Member of in-group - Indirect, visual, metaphorical - Harmony should be preserved, direct confrontations avoided - High-context communication: many things are implicit

Individualist low-context culture members are more focused on facts, explanations, and rhetoric, whereas members of collectivist high-context

cultures are expected to employ symbols, signs, and indirect communication (de Mooij, 2014, p. 229).

In this study, the expectations about what is considered the proper or logical way to organize the presentation of ideas revealing individualist and collectivist values in American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements are investigated for comparing and contrasting similarities and differences in the two datasets. The aim of the study is to support a correspondence between culture and communication styles in advertisements in exploring culture- based issues based on Hofstede's view (2015) about individualist and collectivist cultures.

Advertising and creative tactics in advertising

According to Kerr and Richards (2020), advertising is “paid, owned, and earned mediated communication, activated by an identifiable brand and intent on persuading the consumer to make some cognitive, affective, or behavioral change, now or in the future” (p. 16). For consumers to make cognitive, affective, or behavioral changes, it is advisable to adapt the cultural value which includes the integration of individualism- collectivism dimension (Hornikx & de Groot, 2017). Advertising strategy and advertising tactics or execution are two major elements in advertising content (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1992). In this regard, Zhang (2004) viewed creative tactics as the ways to present the central messages of advertising originally and unusually to attract consumers. From the above arguments, it is concluded that for an

advertisement to be successful in persuading consumers, it is necessary to integrate cultural factors into advertising content containing creative tactics.

2.2. Individualist and collectivist values represented through creative tactics in advertising in previous studies

The ways to organize the central message in advertising, known as advertising creative tactics representing individualist and collectivist values are deeply exploited by academicians (Al-Olayan & Karande, 2000; Butt, et al., 2017; Lin, 2001; Zhang, 2004). Among the creative tactics investigated by these scholars, five creative tactics have been under thoughtful exploration, namely hard-sell tactics, soft- sell tactics, imitation, argument, and comparative claims.

Hard-sell tactics and soft- sell tactics

The general ideas behind hard-sell and soft-sell tactics, which academicians have occasionally referred to as emotional / rational and informational / transformational tactics, date back to 1911 (Beard, 2004). The definitions of these two ideas have been consistent over the years (Mueller, 1987). A soft-sell tactic is one in which "image and atmosphere are conveyed through a beautiful scene or the development of an emotional story of verse", Mueller (1987, p. 53). Clear product-related solicitations are overemphasized in favor of human emotional responses. Soft-sell tactics typically use a more indirect approach than

hard-sell ones. Mueller (1987, p. 53) considers hard-sell tactics as “Sales orientation is emphasized here, specifying brand name and product recommendations. Explicit mention may be made of competitive products, sometimes by name, and the product advantage depends on performance”.

Among the studies carried out to pinpoint the presence of hard sell and soft sell tactics in advertisements, some showed that hard sell tactics are found to be more dominant in individualist cultures whereas soft-sell tactics are shown to be more prevalent in collectivist cultures. (Butt, et al., 2017; Mueller, 1987; Zhang, 2004)

Argument and imitation

Argument is defined as an advertising creative tactic that provides “product-related information as evidence or justification for the purchase or use of the product and emphasizes the communication content and logical reasoning” (Zhang, 2004, p. 95). Meanwhile imitation is regarded as an advertising creative tactic providing “testimonials by a celebrity, an expert, or an average consumer whom the viewer’s perceive as credible, attractive, or familiar” and emphasizing “the communication source as a justification for the purchase or use of the product” (Zhang, 2004, p. 95). Argument is found more prevailing in advertisements in individualist cultures while imitation is more predominant in collectivist cultures (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Zhang, 2004).

Comparative claims

Comparative claims, which involve direct and indirect ones (Barry, 1993), refer to “brand superiority over competing brands or products (either named or unnamed)” or comparing “implicitly by saying the product is the best or outstanding” (Zhang, 2004, p. 95). Al-Olayan and Karande (2000), Lin (2001), Muller (1987), and Zhang (2004) conclude more comparative claims are found in advertisements of the individualist cultures than advertisements in collectivist cultures.

The main aim of this study was to consolidate the representation of individualist and collectivist values in advertising through creative tactics. It focused on the level at which those tactics are shown and the similarities as well as the differences in the representation of individualist and collectivist values through those creative tactics in selected American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements. To fulfill this aim, the framework proposed by Zhang (2004, p. 95) was considered suitable for application because of the following reasons. First, this framework was built with much care based on theoretical grounds of famous scholars (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Lin, 2001). Second, it contains the most creative tactics separately analyzed in previous or later studies (Muller, 1987; Butt, et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research questions

The aim of this study is to pinpoint the

level at which creative tactics, consisting of imitation, argument, soft- sell, hard- sell and comparative claims showing individualist and collectivist values, are represented. It also aims at pointing out the similarities and differences in this representation of these creative tactics in selected American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements. To fulfill these aims, the following research questions were formulated:

1. At which levels, imitation, argument, soft- sell, hard- sell and comparative claims creative tactics are represented in selected American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements?

2. What are the similarities and differences in the representation of individualist and collectivist values in the American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements through those creative tactics?

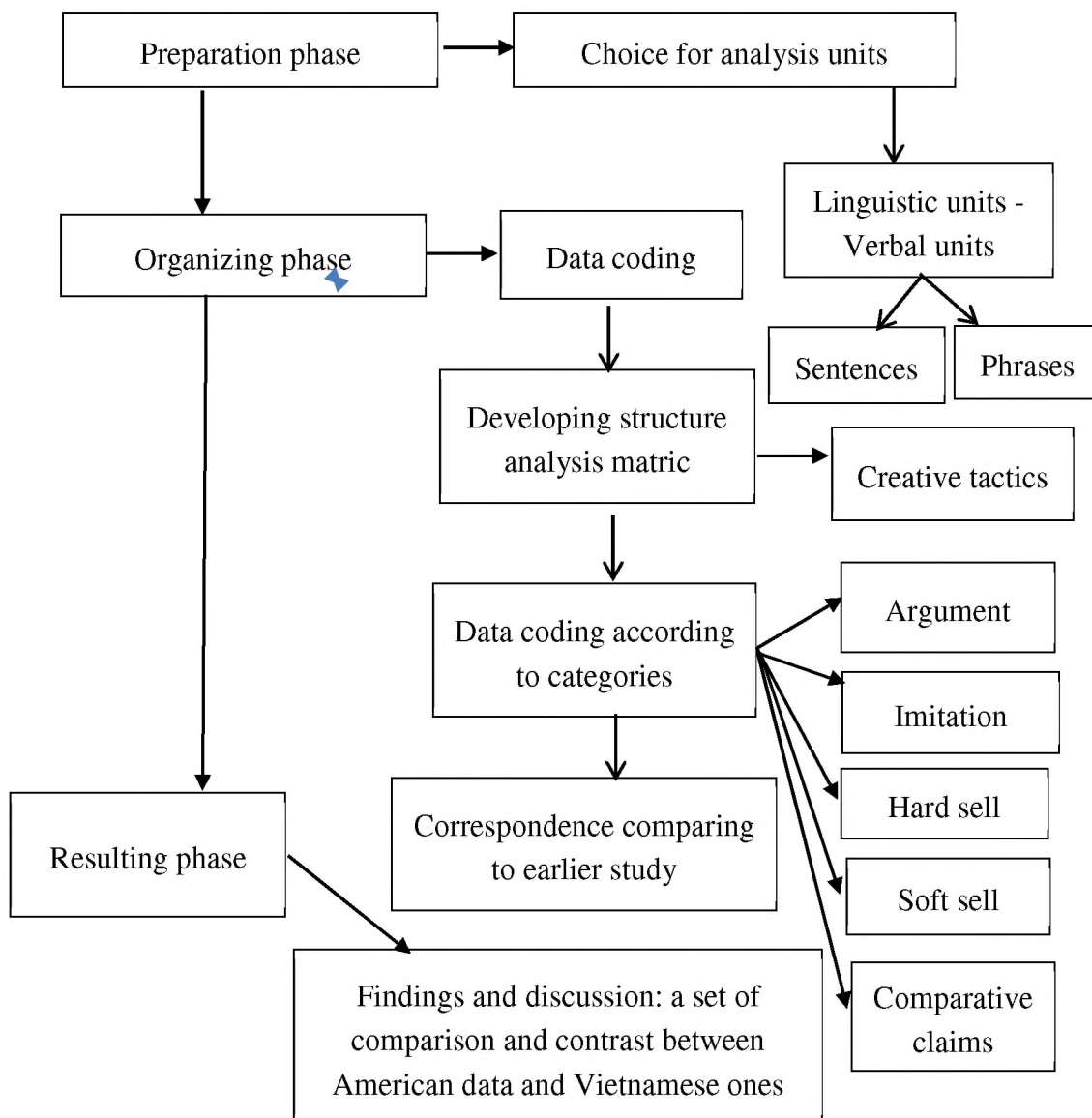
3.2. Research data and research methods

One hundred thirty- one full-page colored American advertisements and 123 full-page colored Vietnamese advertisements were randomly chosen as the data for this study. The selected

magazines for American dataset were Forbes, U.S, Women's Health, and Readers' Digest, while three chosen Vietnamese magazines were Forbes, Vietnam, Women's World, and Marketing and Family. These magazines were published from April to July in the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The magazine categories, the timeframe and advertisement types were chosen like above to ensure the comparability and reliability of the selected data for the reliability of the results found in the study.

Content analysis has been of great interest for those studies comparing cultural values in advertising when researchers (Lin, 2001; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Zhang, 2004) chose it to conduct their research in the related field. Comparative content analysis enables unobtrusive observation of social processes in real time and external validity is improved by obtaining and analyzing media messages in their natural state (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Content analysis is therefore suitably applied to this study with the research phases adapted from Elo and Kyngas (2008) as follows:

Figure 1. The phases of content analysis in this study
(adapted from Elo & Kyngas, 2008)



3.3.3. Data coding

The coding process in this study is described as follows.

First, each English and Vietnamese advertisement was put into a table. This table had three columns: one was for original phrase or sentence in the advertisements, one was for creative tactics

and the rest was for counting these tactics for the next stage of research, pointing out the levels at which the creative tactics were represented in two datasets. Next, the frameworks proposed by Zhang (2004) with five creative tactics were applied to code the data.

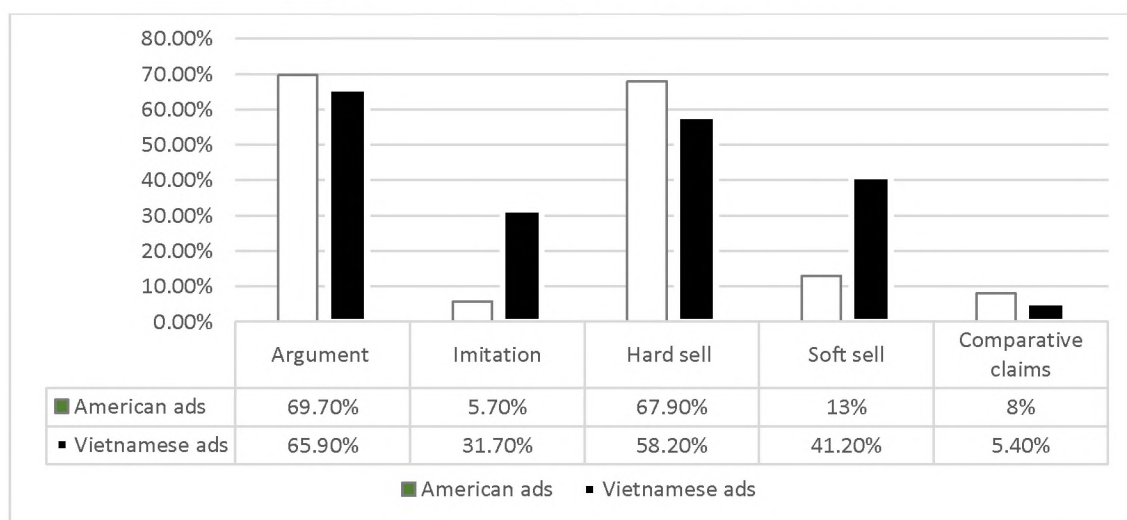
The units of analysis for coding creative tactics were sentences and phrases in 131 American advertisements and 123 Vietnamese ones. The number of sentences in American data was 601, while that number of Vietnamese data was 466. Besides the sentences, all the phrases independently presented in the advertisements were also used for coding creative tactics. The number of phrases in American ads was 137 while that number of Vietnamese advertisements was 116. Each sentence or phrase in the advertisements was coded to pinpoint the creative tactic likely present in it. Each sentence or phrase might contain one or more than one creative tactics. After coding all the advertisements to pinpoint the creative tactics, each creative tactic was counted manually and then divided the total result by the total number of sentences and

phrases of each dataset to quantify these figures for comparing each creative tactic in both datasets from three coders coding at the same time. The differences among three coders ranged from 0.5% to 4% for each creative tactic. These differences were then discussed and agreed upon for the last results presented in the findings and discussion below.

4. Findings and discussion

After the coding process, the coding results were grouped into five categories including argument, imitation, hard- sell, soft- sell and comparative claims. These categories were then quantified and presented in Figure 2 to answer the first research question about the level at which creative tactics are represented in selected American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements.

Figure 2. The levels of creative tactics revealing individualist and collectivist values in American and Vietnamese advertisements



As can be seen in Figure 2, argument is the tactic used the most frequently in two datasets, making up nearly 70% in American ads and about 66% in

Vietnamese ads. This result indicates that the most popular tactic in both datasets is argument. The second most popular tactic in both datasets is hard- sell with approximately 68% found in American data, and around 58% in Vietnamese data respectively. The third most popular tactic in both dataset is soft-sell with 13% shown in American ads, but more than 41% reflected in Vietnamese ads. The fourth popular one is imitation. Five point seven percent of this tactic is available in American data, however, six times of that percentage (31.7%) is present in Vietnamese data. The least popular tactic in both datasets is comparative claims. Eight percent of this tactic is found in American ads, while that percentage of Vietnamese data is 5.4%.

After coding and quantifying the figures related to the creative tactics shown in both datasets, the following similarities and differences in the representation of individualist and collectivist values in American and Vietnamese advertisements are found to answer the second research question: What are the similarities and differences in the representation of individualist and collectivist values in the American and Vietnamese magazine advertisements through those creative tactics?

First, all creative tactics in the framework are found in both datasets even though they are reflected at different levels in both datasets. From this finding, the study provides further support for all

creative tactics whether they represent individualist or collectivist values to be successful across markets. Second, argument and hard- sell tactics are found to be much more dominant than imitation and soft- sell tactics in both American and Vietnamese datasets. These results are consistent with those of other studies (Perrien et al., 2013) and suggest that the perceived effectiveness of selected advertisements increases according to their factual content. As a result, ads in any culture need to provide product- related information so that they can consolidate their reliability with their customers. Product-related information is therefore very important in each ad. This is the reason why both American and Vietnamese ads provide lots of product-related information through argument and hard sell tactics. The differences between the two sets of data in these tactics are quite minor. However, these tactics are still more dominant in American ads than in Vietnamese ads. This finding is in line with what was identified previously by Butt et al. (2017), and Zhang (2004). This finding shows that whether creative tactics representing individualist and collectivist values, if they serve the benefits of the advertisers to persuade others to buy the products, they should be paid much attention to. Besides, this finding also suggests that Vietnamese advertisements, considered carrying more creative tactics representing collectivist values, consist of more creative tactics representing

individualist values, and use them at high extent.

Third, tactics representing individualist values are shown to be more prevailing in American data than in Vietnamese data, whereas tactics revealing collectivist values are found to be much more prevalent in Vietnamese dataset than they are in American one. The result of this study for soft- sell tactics and imitation consolidates what Mueller (1987) and Zhang (2004) found out previously. This finding suggests that although creative tactics representing individualist values are used at high levels, the creative tactics representing collectivist values remain their importance and high extent in Vietnamese dataset. This indicates the original theories regarding individualism and collectivism dimension remain valuable. The theories differ Vietnamese, collectivist culture with American, an individualist culture. From the finding and discussion, it is advisable that Hofstede (2001)'s cultural dimension should be applied under non-essentialist view of culture, "focuses on the complexity of culture as a fluid, creative social force which binds different groupings and aspects of behavior in different ways, both constructing and constructed by people in a piecemeal fashion to produce myriad combinations and configurations." (Holliday et al., 2021, p.2)

Fourth, there are much bigger gaps in the use of creative tactics representing collectivist values than those of creative

tactics representing individualist values in both datasets. The gaps between these two sets of data in imitation and soft-sell tactics are substantial. The percentage of imitation in American ads is 5.7% in comparison with 31.7% in Vietnamese ads. There is a gap of 6 times between the two sets of data in imitation tactic while a gap of more than 3 times in soft sell tactic (13% of American ads and 41.2 % of Vietnamese ads using soft- sell tactics). As mentioned above, product-related information is important in any ads, so it is understandable that there is a small gap between the two sets of data in argument and hard sell tactics. However, it is not the same in imitation and soft- sell tactics. Americans, according to Jewett (2005), believe in freedom of choice, their control over nature and situation, and consider their success, rewards, confidence, and promotion the result of their hard work. Americans consider themselves as separate individuals and the idea of depending on another or having someone depending on them is not acceptable (Jewett, 2005). They therefore make their purchase decisions on their own. This is the reason why testimonials by a celebrity, an expert, or an average consumer whom the viewer's perceive as credible, attractive, or familiar and the communication source as a justification for the purchase or use of the product cannot be good ideas to attract Americans. Imitation tactics and soft- sell tactics are not convincing tactics for American, they are therefore rarely used in American ads. However, Vietnamese

usually show their collective spirit expressed in the spirit of doing everything together (Them, 2016). Collective spirit shows a high level of cohesion between individuals and other individuals, between individuals and groups through forms such as collective responsibility, identity, and tradition of collective leadership and group activities. To attract Vietnamese, advertisers therefore should provide testimonials by a celebrity, an expert, or an average consumer. This finding is in alignment with what Hofstede (2001) clarified the level of the cohesion between the individuals and individuals, individuals and groups in individualist and collectivist cultures.

Finally, comparative claims are reported to be more dominant in individualist culture than in collectivist culture by Al-Olayan and Karande (2000), Lin (2001), Muller (1987), and Zhang (2004) when they compared comparative claims in American advertisements with Japanese advertisements, Chinese advertisements, and Arabic advertisements. The result of this study is not an exception in the mainstream of research pinpointing comparative claims as a creative tactic representing individualist values and are more prevalent in advertisements in individualist cultures. In this study, direct comparative claims are hardly found in both datasets when there is only 0.05 % of this direct tactic available in American data, but none of them can be found in Vietnamese data.

5. Conclusion, limitation, and suggestions for further research

Firstly, this study shows that Vietnamese advertisements do indeed transmit and integrate individualist values into local markets with quite prominent levels, while American advertisements also impose the use of collectivist values with quite high levels. This study lends more credence to the idea that creative tactics have a good chance of succeeding in a variety of marketplaces. Hence, it provides advertisers with insights into creative tactics prominent of the advertisements in the two datasets, which may benefit them from designing advertisements better.

The findings of the study also show that in the case of Vietnam, despite the increasing presence of Western cultural values, traditional culture has been maintained at least in commercial communications. They also confirm that collectivist values are of greater importance in constructing the selected American advertisements. This conclusion provides empirical evidence for the Westernization and localization arguments, and establishes a premise for future research testing cultural and persuasive effects and uncovering the mechanisms under which the observed Westernization and localization tendencies occur in the Vietnamese ads and in other ads in general through investigating into creative tactics. There should be a study which confirms the change in the use of these creative tactics resulted from the change in cultural values

possessed by Vietnamese and the individualist scale proposed by Hofstede (2005). At the same time, it also needs confirming whether there is westernization and if yes, at which level the westernization goes in Vietnamese advertisements. One more study should also be carried out to investigate whether the change in the use of those creative tactics representing individualist and collectivist values suits the public interest.

Moreover, these findings of this study also contribute to the clearer understanding of the implementation of non-essentialist views of cultures into cultural value research. This should be the right orientation, especially in the global integration world as the result of changes in cultures when there are cultural collisions; nevertheless, what belongs to the tradition in cultural values are still available to make the unique features in national cultures.

The number of 131 advertisements in American magazines and 123 advertisements in Vietnamese magazines with the limited range of magazine categories may constrain the generality of the findings. There should be studies related to this issue in other contexts with bigger datasets and wider ranges of magazine categories for better consolidating the results. is quite small.

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