

EFFECTS OF DISLIKED EXECUTIONAL TECHNIQUES IN ADVERTISING: A FIVE-COUNTRY COMPARISON

**Kim-Shyan Fam, Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)
Reinhard Grohs, University of Innsbruck (Austria) David S. Waller,
University of Technology, Sydney (Australia)**

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Asian consumers' attitudes towards disliked television commercials to provide an insight into the construct of advertising dislikeability. *Dislikeability is an important concept because if certain attributes of an advertisement are disliked, this can lead to potential customers disliking the brand, being dissatisfied with the advertiser, complaining about the advertisement, and/or refusing to purchase the advertised product.*

A total of 1,000 people were questioned in five Asian cities (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai) using telephone interviews. The study reveals seven dislike attributes: bad style of the ad, meaningless storyline, ugly or stupid characters, exaggerating product effectiveness, irresponsible or misleading content, scary or violent characters/settings, and hard-sell approaches. Findings from this study show that there is a close relationship between disliking television advertising and purchase intention. Additionally, the importance of the seven dislikeability dimensions differs between cities and product categories. Managerial implications are offered for organizations advertising in Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers' dislike of television advertising has been observed for years by several researchers (see Alwitt and Prabhaker 1992; Andrews 1989; Bartos 1981; Bartos and Dunn 1974; Bauer and Greyser 1968; Bush, Smith and Martin 1999; James and Kover 1992; Jozsa et al. 2010; Keane and

Fam 2005; Zanot 1981). According to Alwitt and Prabhaker (1994), the dislike of television advertising cuts across demographic boundaries, with it more often than not being perceived to be an unwelcome intrusion, and regarded by many consumers as a constant source of irritation and dissatisfaction with the notion of "free television programs." With the increasing proliferation of media vehicles and subsequent messages, consumers have become extremely "ad-literate", thereby developing cynical attitudes towards television advertising. In addition, the generic concept of television advertising can be off-putting to the average consumer, and many consumers often make a conscious effort to avoid such advertising communications. As a result they are inclined to 'switch-off' before the first advertisement appears, watch non-commercial television stations if they are available, or download ad-free television programs online. In fact, both academics and practitioners contend it has become second nature for consumers to 'zap' television channels or buy programs on DVD, or use the internet to avoid watching advertisements (Postman 1986; Reeves and Nass 1996; Livingstone 2002; Cho and Cheon 2004). However, it is a rare occurrence for people to tune out because of an individual advertisement, as the concept of television advertising is disliked more than individual advertisements (Biel and Bridgwater 1990; Hollis 1995).

If consumers decide to watch television commercials, the research focus shifts to the effectiveness of specific advertisements. One important concept for determining how consumers respond to advertisements is 'ad likeability'. Prior to the

1980s, the literature rarely took any notice of the potential influence consumer attitudes towards advertisements could have on brand attitudes. MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) and MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) discovered through laboratory experiments that attitude towards the advertisement (Aad) has an influence on brand attitude. Haley and Baldinger (1991) identified and emphasized the role of 'liking' a commercial as an important evaluative measurement. Since then several other studies showed the positive effects of advertising likeability (e.g., Aaker and Stayman 1990; Biel and Bridgewater 1990; Du Plessis 1994; Walker and Dubitsky 1994; Fam and Waller 2006; Smit, van Meurs and Neijens 2006; Fam 2008). Biel and Bridgewater (1990) and Fam (2008) explored the components of ad likeability and identify six main likeable dimensions labeled as: *entertaining, energetic or stimulating, relevant, empathetic, familiar and irritating* in a review by Smit, van Meurs and Neijens (2006). Another finding of these studies is that the overall contribution each of these dimensions makes towards explaining ad likeability differs from one product category to another. On an aggregate level, however, the authors show that liked ads are more effective as they lead to higher preferences and purchase intentions (Kennedy and Sharp 1998; Smit, van Meurs and Neijens 2006).

While there have been numerous studies on ad likeability, there has been less on ad dislikeability. However, dislikeability is an important concept because if certain attributes of an advertisement are disliked, this can lead to potential customers disliking the brand, being dissatisfied with the advertiser, complaining about the advertisement, and/or refusing to purchase the advertised product.

To help fill this gap the research project described in this article focuses on uncovering consumers' attitudes towards disliked television commercials in five heavily populated Asian cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai. The aims of the study are to (1) investigate

the 'ad dislikeability' construct and identify construct categories that contribute to ad dislikeability; (2) empirically assess how the dislikeability dimensions affect purchase intentions; and (3) test whether importance of the dislikeability categories and effects on purchase intentions differ across product categories and the five cities. Results from this study will add to the body of knowledge as, even though prior studies have established the various dimensions of ad likeability and indicated the presence of a relationship between ad likeability and performance, few have examined disliked advertisements. Further, according to Alwitt and Prabhaker (1994), for advertisers to be successful, marketers need to identify the appropriate reasons for the dislike of advertisements and address the reasons accordingly. The findings will enable a better theoretical understanding of ad dislikeability, its facets and consequences, as well as the managerial implications for international advertisers, particularly in Asia.

BACKGROUND

Ad Dislikeability

According to Biel and Bridgewater (1990) ad likeability is defined as a favorable response to a particular advertisement. In contrast to liked television advertisements, a disliked television commercial is likely to lower consumers' positive attitudes towards an advertised brand (Alwitt and Prabhaker 1994). However, this does not mean that liked and disliked advertisements are at opposite ends of a spectrum. Existing studies have been concerned with belief indicators that drive the attitude towards advertising in general, which follow "general attitude theory" (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Authors suggest that the perception of advertising relates to underlying beliefs about several facets, and focusing on the disliked drivers of advertising, these studies identify falsehood and deception (Ford, Smith and Swasy 1990; Muehling 1987), materialism (Larkin 1977),

value corruption (Pollay and Mittal 1993), and no sense (Bauer and Greyser 1968) as being associated with an overall negative perception of advertising.

Therefore, ad likeability studies provide evidence for a negative factor that reduces ad likeability and this factor identifies whether the advertisement possesses negative characteristics. Authors use different terms to describe this negative factor, such as *irritating*, *rubs the wrong way*, *alienating*, *tasteless*, or *confusing* (Aaker and Stayman 1990; Biel and Bridgwater 1990; Franzen 1994; Smit, van Meurs and Neijens 2006). Still, few studies have explored the different components of the negative factor (Jozsa et al. 2010). Negative attitudes towards specific ads can be caused by perceptions such as an over-used thus worn-out message; familiar, phony or illogical reasoning. If arguments are unrealistic or exaggerated, consumers may consider them to be an insult to their intelligence, and consequently the advertisement receives a negative response, as it is disliked. Further, if the advertisement is disliked then credibility may be lost as negative connotations develop, which can be a long-term problem for the advertiser. Collett (1994) finds a strong connection between disliking an ad and persuasion. Therefore, if consumers dislike a commercial, their brand attitude is adversely affected, especially when emotional appeals are involved.

Due to the observed influence on consumers' brand attitudes, this study will investigate the construct of ad dislikeability, its dimensions and its effect on consumer response to advertising. While a number of studies have identified the components of ad likeability (e.g. Biel and Bridgwater 1990; Fam 2008), little is known about the construct ad dislikeability and its dimensions. For academics it would be helpful to discover the underlying attributes for disliking an advertisement, while for practitioners it would be useful if these attributes could be identified in order to alter consumers' beliefs about an

advertisement. To obtain this information, the study's first research question is:

RQ1: What are the dimensions that constitute ad dislikeability? (i.e., identify categories of disliked execution techniques in advertising.)

Culture and Ad Dislikeability

Culture is basically a society's personality, and exists to satisfy the needs of the people within a society, offering order and guidance, in the form of standards and rules, by providing known methods of satisfying personal and social needs (Bednall and Kanuk 1997; Schiffman et al. 1997). This includes customs that consist of routine or everyday behaviors, such as what we eat, what we say, what we like and dislike, what we buy, or who we want to be associated with. Culture is learned, and at an early age people begin to acquire a set of beliefs, values and customs from the social environment that constitute their culture. In any culture, the core beliefs and values are inherited by children from their parents and are emphasized by social institutions such as schools, religious groups, businesses and government. For marketers, de Mooij (1998, p. 61) claims:

'Understanding the concept of culture and the consequences of cultural differences will make marketing and advertising people realise that one message, whether verbal or visual, can never reach one global audience, because there is not one global culture comprised of people with identical values. Worldwide, there is a great variety of values.'

Scholars have frequently observed that the salience of values varies from culture to culture (e.g., Hofstede 1980; Lynn 1991; Triandis 1989). Consequently, some authors hold that one would expect differences in advertising strategies and execution styles across countries (e.g., Albers-Miller and

Stafford 1999; Tai 1997). Researchers indeed generally have found differences in advertising content, style and strategy across countries (Aaker and Norris 1982; Cheng and Schweitzer 1996; Madden, Caballero and Matsukubo 1986; Rice and Lu 1988; Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Zandpour, Chang and Catalano 1992; Lepkowska-White, Brashear and Weinberger 2003). Not surprisingly, a number of studies show that advertisements that reflect some local cultural values are more persuasive than those that ignore them (Gregory and Munch 1997; Han and Shavitt 1994; Hong, Muderrisoglu and Zinkhan 1987; Madden, Caballero and Matsukubo 1986; Taylor, Miracle and Wilson 1997).

Differences in the salience of values logically should reveal differences in the perception of whether an ad is disliked. Additionally, the facets that constitute disliking may differ among cultures. Therefore, this study aims to investigate differences in the degree and composition of dislikeability between residents with varied cultural values and religions. Accordingly, the second research question we address is:

RQ 2: Do the disliked execution techniques differ between the five cities that are culturally different?

Product Types and Ad Dislikeability

Jones (2000) reports that, although consumers in each continent share similar needs, they vary in the way they characterize products that can satisfy these needs. Furthermore, Lepkowska-White, Brashear and Weinberger (2003) claim that advertising appeals should be matched with product types. This is because the type of 'information search' carried out by consumers is closely related to the types of needs the product satisfies. For instance, Ratchford (1987) claims that informative products, such as homes, large appliances and cars, are very

important to consumers and satisfy utilitarian

needs of consumption, and so information on quality and price are valued. For affective goods such as sports cars, jewellery and fashion clothing, which fulfil ego-gratification, self-expression and social motives of consumption, emotional information is often sought by consumers. In the case of habit-forming products (e.g. beauty-aids and over-the-counter drugs) and self-satisfactory goods (e.g. snack foods, cigarettes, and soft drinks), Ratchford (1987) suggests providing heuristic information, as these types of goods are of low importance to consumers.

Laskey, Fox and Crask (1994) find that executional style impacts on commercial effectiveness, but the effective style tends to differ by product involvement. For instance, Johar and Sirgy (1991) and Sirgy and Johar (1992) show that for consumers who are highly involved with a product, utilitarian information is more effective, and for those who are not involved with a product, value expressive advertisements are more persuasive. Fam and Grohs (2007) show that the effectiveness of different liked execution techniques depends on product category, for example, when advertising services the entertainment characteristics of the advertisement are particularly important. On the other hand, respondents are more likely to buy more clothing and accessories if they perceive an advertisement to be trendy, and personal care items are bought more if advertisements are entertaining and emphasize the relevance of the brand for the user.

In relation to disliked execution styles, this research aims to explore the ad dislikeability construct and its components across product categories. The aim is to identify whether the composition of ad dislikeability depends on product category, and so the research question is:

RQ 3: Do the disliked execution techniques differ between different product categories?

across countries (e.g., Albers-Miller and

Purchase Intention

Previous studies on ad likeability (e.g., Smit, van Meurs and Neijens 2006) show that a) the construct consists of several facets or dimensions; b) it has a positive impact on brand attitude and purchase intentions; and c) this impact depends on product category and, to a lesser degree, on cultural values. With regard to ad dislikeability it is known from a number of studies that ad dislikeability is a negative belief facet of the ad likeability construct; and negatively affects brand attitude. Additionally, ad dislikeability depends on the particular products being disliked when advertised, such as feminine hygiene products (e.g., Rehman and Brooks 1987; Rickard 1994). However, no study to date has examined how ad dislikeability affects purchase intentions. To determine the effects of specific disliked execution techniques on purchase intentions and whether they vary across cultures and with product type, the following research questions were developed:

RQ 4: Do the disliked execution techniques in advertising have an effect on purchase intention?

RQ 5: Do the disliked execution techniques in advertising have differential effects on purchase intention across the five cities that are culturally different?

RQ 6: Do the disliked execution techniques in advertising have differential effects on purchase intention across different product categories?

METHODOLOGY

Country/City Selection

To address the six research questions, information on the three dimensions of

different product categories, and different countries was required. The questionnaire used was part of a larger study (Jozsa et al. 2010) and was constructed to provide information on the first two dimensions; namely different executional techniques and product categories.

Data was collected by telephone interviews with consumers living in five cosmopolitan Asian cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta, Bangkok and Mumbai. These cities represent four countries (i.e., China, Indonesia, Thailand and India), although it is noted that Hong Kong is part of China, its status as a world city, and its long history of Western influence, culture, heritage and economic development, warrants a *city state* treatment. Consequently, Hong Kong will be referred to as a 'country' for the purposes of this study.

These five cities were chosen for this study because they represent diverse cultural values, especially in terms of politics, economic status, and religion. While Hall (1976) claims that Asia is a high-context society, there are, in fact, degrees of difference. to Hofstede (1980), India is relatively more individualist compared with Hong Kong, Indonesia and Thailand. Indonesians strongly believe that there should be inequality in status, but this view is not strongly accepted by the people of Hong Kong, Thailand and India. In relation to uncertainty avoidance, Thais feel more threatened by unclear, unstructured or unpredictable situations relative to the people of Hong Kong, Indonesia and India. Finally, the people of Hong Kong are more masculine and have a more long-term orientation than their counterparts in the other countries.

Politically, China is a communist country under one-party control whereby its president is elected by communist party 'delegates' for a five-year term. Hong Kong has been a special administrative region of China since 1997, and its chief executive, as head of the territory, governs an 800-member electoral committee appointed by the Chinese

liberal democracy in the world, with a parliamentary system that has a president as head of state. Thailand is currently being ruled by a military junta after a coup in September 2006, and has a constitutional monarchy as its head of state. The Republic of Indonesia is a nation of 17,508 islands consisting of numerous distinct ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, and its president is directly voted for by the people for a five-year term (CIA World Fact Book 2011).

Among the five countries, Hong Kong is the richest in terms of per capita income. It has a GNI (Gross National Income) per capita of US\$27,670, followed by Thailand (US\$2,750), China (US\$1,740), Indonesia (US\$1,280) and India (US\$730) (World Bank 2007). Hong Kong is an important centre for international finance and trade. It is a highly-developed capitalist economy built on a policy of free market enterprise with low taxation and no government intervention. In contrast, although China now enjoys a market-oriented economy, it operates within a rigid political framework under communist party control. The economies of Thailand and Indonesia are market-based with the government playing a significant role. In the case of India, the economy encompasses traditional village farming and modern agriculture, with services, such as IT and business process outsourcing, are its major source of economic growth, accounting for more than 60% of India's output (CIA World Fact Book 2011).

In terms of religion, the majority of the Hong Kong population practices Buddhism and Taoism, with Christians representing 10% of its total population (World Bank 2007). Confucianism also has a profound influence (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2007). The People's Republic of China is officially secular and atheist, however, Buddhism and Taoism, together with an underlying Confucian morality, are the dominant religions of China, the world's most populous country with over 1.3 billion different disliked execution techniques,

inhabitants (World Bank 2007). India is the

Government. India is the most populous

world's second most populous country with Hinduism being the most practiced religion, followed by Islam and Christianity (World Bank 2007). Thailand is considered to be the Buddhist kingdom, while ancestor worshipping and a strong sense of hospitality and generosity are also an essential part of Thai spiritual practice. Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country and the most populous Muslim-majority nation.

The total main mass media (television, newspapers and magazines) spending in the five countries in 2005 was US\$48.84 billion (Nielsen Media 2005). Television dominated the main media spending at 66%, followed by newspapers (29%) and magazines (5%). In terms of major market spend within the five countries, China's main media accounted for 56% of main media spend measured followed by Hong Kong (7%), India (4%), Indonesia (4%) and Thailand (3%) (Nielsen Media 2005).

Finally a point worth noting is that with the inclusion in this study of China, India and Indonesia, three of the world's most populous countries, the findings will be of significant value to international advertisers seeking a market share in these emerging economies. Given the diversity of cultural values among the five cities, it will be useful to explore the effectiveness of different ad appeals among the urban young adults who live there.

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The relevant ad dislikeability dimensions were derived directly from consumer perceptions. In a telephone survey respondents recollected television advertisements they disliked and explained why they disliked them. Specifically, respondents were asked to nominate three advertisements that they disliked, and asked to give as many key reasons as possible why they disliked the advertisements. Then respondents indicated whether they bought the brand/product in the advertisements more

or less often, or if their purchase decisions

remained the same after exposure to the advertisements. Additionally, respondents provided demographic information about themselves, including gender, age, personal income, education, and religion.

This study followed the strategy of matched samples (Hofstede 1991), so that rather than trying to draw representative samples from the populations of the five countries involved, it surveyed well-defined, homogeneous samples which differed in nationality but were alike in as many aspects as possible. Therefore, the criteria used to select the 200 young adults in each city for the telephone interview were as follows: every third person listed in the local telephone directory aged between 25 and 35-years-old who spent at least five hours or more on average watching television each week, and who fitted into class A, B, or C+. Class C+ was equivalent to having a personal gross income per annum of HK\$84,000 in Hong Kong, RMB38,000 in China; Rupiahs 45 million in Indonesia; Baht 165,000 in Thailand; and Rupees 210,000 in India (Lowe Advertising, 2005). In essence, these urban young adults were selected because they had the economic ability to purchase the advertised brands. A checklist was given to each interviewer to ensure that the selected respondents met the criteria set out for each city. To ensure an even split of males/females and age groups (25-30; 31-35 years), interviewers were instructed to stop interviewing respondents once their quota was met.

A professional research agency with local subsidiaries in each of the five cities was engaged to carry out the research project, which was sponsored by Lowe Advertising (HK) Ltd. The first author of this article worked closely with the project sponsor in designing, developing and piloting the semi-structured questionnaire. Pre-testing feedback from interviewers suggested that the interview should last about 25 minutes without respondents tiring. Telephone interviewing was deemed to be the most suitable method for this study because it allowed respondents

to offer interviewers their top-of-mind thoughts about the advertisement/s that they disliked. The respondents' thoughts relating to the advertisements were elicited with these questions:

"I would like you to think about advertisements you have seen recently on TV which you disliked (i.e., find disagreeable, feeling of not liking, feeling against – Oxford Dictionary)"

"Could you please describe for me the first advertisement that comes to mind that you dislike?"

"Just briefly tell me what it is about?"

"Now, think of the next advertisement that comes to mind that you dislike, could you please tell me what it is about?"

"Thanks. Is there any other advertisement that you dislike? Please tell me what it is about?"

For product category and purchase intention, these questions were asked:

"Now, thinking about the first (second and third) advertisement that you mentioned, can you remember the name of the product/service that was being advertised?"

"Did you buy more, less or the same amount after seeing the advertisement?"

These questions were translated into local language (Cantonese for Hong Kong; Mandarin for Shanghai; Bahasa Indonesia for Jakarta; Hindi for Mumbai; and Thai for Bangkok) by the research agency's locally-trained interviewers. Utilizing short, concise statements with simple language, it was felt that these questions were less likely to be misinterpreted by respondents from different countries. Back translation was carried out by the manager of each subsidiary and checked by the first author of this article (who speaks

four languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia and English) and the advertising agency's director of strategic planning. Additionally, the first author had a sample of the television commercials from each city. This meant a cross check was made of the respondents' descriptions of the advertisements and reasons for disliking them against the sample. The results showed that the descriptions provided by the respondents matched the sample commercials and the English translations appeared to correctly describe the advertisements. Hence, the responses were considered to be sufficient enough for conclusions to be drawn about the population in relation to the study's purpose.

Ad Dislikeability Dimensions and Differences among Cities and Product Categories

The 1,000 (200 per city) young adults interviewed by telephone were asked to nominate up to three advertisements that they disliked and provide as many 'dislikeable' reasons as they wished. This format produced 890 advertisements in total. From this list the product/brand duplications mentioned by each respondent were deleted to eliminate any bias a respondent had towards a particular product category (see Biel and Bridgwater 1990).

This procedure resulted in 660 nominated advertisements and 952 dislikeable reasons from the five cities' respondents. Five independent judges (graduate students of Marketing, English and Economics) were recruited and employed to develop product categories from the 660 nominated advertisements. After being introduced to the coding scheme they were divided into two groups, with the first author leading one of the groups. The eventual agreement between the two groups ranged between 90% and 92% for the five cities and resulted in seven product categories. Any differences were discussed and reconciled with the help of the first author. The final categories were: *services*, *durables*, *clothing and accessories*, *personal care*, *drinks*, *foods*, and *addictive products*.

In order to develop dislikeability dimensions from the data (RQ 1), the judges then coded the 'dislikeable reasons' into attribute categories, i.e., disliked execution techniques. The same five judges were trained by the first author. Training sessions began with an overview of content analysis, judge responsibilities and the coding scheme (1=present, 0=absent). Judges were then given sample reasons and asked to 'create' as many adjectives as they wished. Examples of these adjectives included ad is 'boring', 'looks stupid', 'scary', 'violent', to name a few. In applying the coding scheme, the judges were instructed to make a decision about which one attribute should be allocated to be the one best 'reason' for disliking the advertisement. If the 'reason' was allocated to a particular attribute, it received a '1' score for that attribute and a '0' score in all the others. For instance, if the reason given by the respondents was related to *style*, it was nominated as '1', if not it was assigned a '0'. After the judges confirmed they were comfortable with the coding scheme and procedure, they again gathered into two groups and then categorized all the dislikeable 'reasons'. Disagreements between the two groups were discussed and reconciled, and the 952 'reasons' were reduced to seven attributes categories. The final inter-judge reliabilities between the two groups exceeded the suggested guideline of 85% (Kassarjian 1977) for the cities of interest.

RESULTS

Once the coding procedure was complete, seven 'dislikeable' attributes categories were identified:

- 1. Style:** the ad is old-fashioned, repetitive, boring or annoying.
- 2. Meaningless:** the ad is irrelevant to the product, does not have a storyline or is difficult to understand.
- 3. Character:** characters have bad appearances or look stupid/ugly.

4. Exaggerating: the ad is exaggerated (ad content/characters' facial expressions), exaggerates the product effectiveness, or is irrational/unrealistic.

5. Irresponsible: the ad has an unhealthy concept, misleads youngsters/people, or denigrates the female image.

6. Scary/Indecent/Violent: the ad (character/setting) is scary, violent, indecent, or contains a pornographic element.

7. Hard-sell: the ad/slogan makes people feel bad/resentful towards it, too hard sell, or too directly criticized their competitor.

Most of the total 952 dislikeability reasons related to *style* (33.6%), followed by *meaningless* (18.2%), *exaggerating* (15.7%), *character* (10.8%), *irresponsible* (10.6%), *hard-sell* (6.9%), and *scary/indecent/violent* (4.2%). **RQ 1 has now been answered.**

To address **RQ 2**, a city-by-city breakdown of results shows that the likelihood of mentioning negative attributes with regard to TV advertisements differs considerably between the five cities (see Table 1). Overall, people from Shanghai were most likely to mention at least one disliked execution technique (82%), followed by Jakarta (78%), Hong Kong (71%), Mumbai (57%), and Bangkok (43%). Adjusted for sample size in each city, the average number of disliked execution techniques per respondent was calculated. Respondents from Hong Kong mentioned on average the largest number of negative attributes (1.56 per respondent), followed by Shanghai (1.55), Jakarta (1.46), Mumbai (1.32) and Bangkok (1.18). ANOVAs with Tukey's post hoc tests were used to identify significant differences between the five countries with regard to the seven

dislikeability reasons (see Table 1). *Style* of advertisements was identified by a high proportion of respondents from Shanghai (43.9%), Jakarta (37.6%) and Hong Kong (32.6%) as their primary reason for disliking the ads. In contrast, respondents from Bangkok were more likely to dislike ads that were *exaggerating* (28.0%). *Irresponsible* ads were particularly disliked in Mumbai (20.0%); *scary/indecent/violent* ads were disliked in Hong Kong (13.1%) significantly more than in the other four cities. *Scary/indecent/violent* ads were only of minor concern in Mumbai (1.3%), Shanghai (0.8%) and Jakarta (0.4%). *Hard-sell* was a problem in Mumbai (14.7%) and Shanghai (12.2%), but significantly less so in Jakarta (4.4%), Bangkok (2.0%) and Hong Kong (0.5%).

To address **RQ 3**, mentions of disliked execution techniques were analyzed across the seven product categories (see Table 2). On average, mentions of dislikeability attributes were highest for durables (1.59), followed by personal care (1.54), addictives (1.47), clothing (1.42), services (1.38), drinks (1.31) and foods (1.22). ANOVAs with Tukey's post hoc tests were used to identify significant differences between the seven product categories with regard to the seven dislikeability reasons (see Table 2). *Style* was identified by a high proportion of respondents to be a primary reason for disliking the ads in the product categories of clothing (42.0%), personal care (41.0%) and durables (39.5%). *Meaningless* ads were particularly likely to cause an aversion among respondents for addictives (29.8%), durables (27.9%) and services (27.4%). *Irresponsible* ads were disliked especially for addictives (19.1%), *scary/indecent/violent* ads for services (18.9%), and *hard-sell* ads for drinks (16.7%).

Table 1**Reasons for Disliking the Commercials across Cities
(net number of mentions)**

Attributes	Total	HK	SH	JA	BK	MB	F-values (ANOVA)
	952 (%)	221 (%)	255 (%)	226 (%)	100 (%)	150 (%)	
Style	320 (33.6)	72 ^a (32.6)	112 ^a (43.9)	85 ^a (37.6)	19 ^b (19.0)	32 ^b (21.3)	10.16**
Meaningless	173 (18.2)	38 ^a (17.2)	33 ^a (12.9)	43 ^a (19.0)	27 ^a (27.0)	32 ^a (21.3)	1.01
Character	103 (10.8)	31 ^b (14.0)	20 ^{ab} (7.8)	32 ^b (14.2)	6 ^a (6.0)	14 ^{ab} (9.3)	3.46**
Exaggerating	149 (15.7)	27 ^b (12.2)	48 ^{ab} (18.8)	28 ^b (12.4)	28 ^a (28.0)	18 ^b (12.0)	3.81**
Irresponsible	101 (10.6)	23 ^{ab} (10.4)	9 ^a (3.5)	27 ^{ab} (11.9)	12 ^a (12.0)	30 ^b (20.0)	5.92**
Scary/Indecent/Violent	40 (4.2)	29 ^a (13.1)	2 ^b (0.8)	1 ^b (0.4)	6 ^b (6.0)	2 ^b (1.3)	17.37**
Hard-sell	66 (6.9)	1 ^a (0.5)	31 ^b (12.2)	10 ^a (4.4)	2 ^a (2.0)	22 ^b (14.7)	11.63**
Sample size	660	142	164	155	85	114	
<u>Attributes per respondent</u>	<u>1.44</u>	<u>1.56</u>	<u>1.55</u>	<u>1.46</u>	<u>1.18</u>	<u>1.32</u>	

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; HK = Hong Kong, SH = Shanghai, JA = Jakarta, BK = Bangkok, MB = Mumbai. Percentages for each city may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

^{a, b} Different alphabetical superscripts indicate significant differences between percentages in each row ($p < 0.05$).

**Table 2: Reasons for Disliking the Commercials across Product Categories
(net number of mentions)**

Attributes	Total	Services	Durables	Clothing	Pers. Care	Drinks	Foods	Addictives	F-values (ANOVA)
	952 (%)	95 (%)	43 (%)	119 (%)	415 (%)	114 (%)	72 (%)	94 (%)	
Style	320 (33.6)	18 ^a (18.9)	17 ^b (39.5)	50 ^{ab} (42.0)	170 ^b (41.0)	25 ^{ab} (21.9)	18 ^{ab} (25.0)	22 ^{ab} (23.4)	6.59**
Meaningless	173 (18.2)	26 ^a (27.4)	12 ^a (27.9)	11 ^b (9.2)	58 ^{ab} (14.0)	26 ^{ab} (22.8)	12 ^{ab} (16.7)	28 ^a (29.8)	4.47**
Character	103 (10.8)	7 ^a (7.4)	6 ^a (14.0)	16 ^a (13.4)	41 ^a (9.9)	10 ^a (8.8)	13 ^a (18.1)	10 ^a (10.6)	0.99
Exaggerating	149 (15.7)	11 ^a (11.6)	4 ^a (9.3)	22 ^a (18.5)	70 ^a (16.9)	13 ^a (11.4)	19 ^a (26.4)	10 ^a (10.6)	2.12*
Irresponsible	101 (10.6)	13 ^{ab} (13.7)	3 ^{ab} (7.0)	12 ^{ab} (10.1)	34 ^{ab} (8.2)	17 ^{ab} (14.9)	4 ^a (5.6)	18 ^b (19.1)	2.52*
Scary/Indecent/Violent	40 (4.2)	18 ^a (18.9)	1 ^b (2.3)	3 ^b (2.5)	8 ^b (1.9)	4 ^b (3.5)	3 ^b (4.2)	3 ^b (3.2)	8.86**
Hard-sell	66 (6.9)	2 ^a (2.1)	0 ^a (0.0)	5 ^a (4.2)	34 ^{ab} (8.2)	19 ^b (16.7)	3 ^a (4.2)	3 ^a (3.2)	4.43**
Sample size	660	69	27	84	270	87	59	64	
<u>Attributes per respondent</u>	<u>1.44</u>	<u>1.38</u>	<u>1.59</u>	<u>1.42</u>	<u>1.54</u>	<u>1.31</u>	<u>1.22</u>	<u>1.47</u>	

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Percentages for each product category may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

^{a, b} Different alphabetical superscripts indicate significant differences between percentages in each row ($p < 0.05$).

Effects of Ad Dislikeability on Purchase Intentions

For each advertisement recalled, mentions of disliked executional techniques were counted and the resulting values were inserted into the data file. The ads were assigned to one of the seven product categories, constituting one product category variable in the data file. A country variable was included to reflect the Asian cities the respondents came from. One variable indicated whether the respondents had used the brand in the disliked ad before; another variable was used to indicate whether the respondents bought the respective brand less often, more often, or as often after viewing the ad. This data file provided the starting point from which to explore **RQs 4 to 6**.

Individuals who had not bought the brand in the disliked ad before were eliminated from further analysis. This was necessary because the research team was only interested in the impact of disliked attributes on the probability of buying less: buying less is obviously not an option if the brand has not been used before. Next, respondents who did not mention a single dislikeability attribute were deleted from the database: if no dislikeability attribute was mentioned, the effect of different disliked execution techniques on behavior could not be tested. In a validity check it was confirmed that people who did not mention a single disliked attribute were more likely to buy the same or more after seeing the ad ($p < 0.05$). This winnowing procedure resulted in 449 eligible people remaining in the database.

To simplify interpretation of the results, the purchase categories were then collapsed into buying the same/more and

buying less after seeing the advertisement. From a conceptual point of view, it was expected that disliked execution techniques would explain the shift from buying the same to buying less, and not from buying more to buying the same. Statistically, this assumption was confirmed with a multinomial logistic regression. All disliked execution techniques, except for the *irresponsible* category, were found to significantly affect people so that they bought less (compared with buying the same), while *irresponsible* was the only attribute that affected respondents' probability of buying the same (compared with buying more). The observation that perceptions of irresponsibility does not shift people from buying the same to buying less, but rather from buying more to buying the same is interesting and deserves further examination.

In line with the research questions, the effects of all seven disliked execution techniques on purchase intention of the advertised brand were assessed. For each ad, i , the probability of a respondent buying less after seeing the ad (as opposed to continuing to buy the same or buying more) was estimated as a function of the seven dislikeability dimensions (*style, meaningless, character, exaggerating, irresponsible, scary/indecent/violent, hard-sell*). Note that for each attribute category a respondent might have zero, one, two or more mentions, depending on the number of stated reasons and how they were coded. One general model across all countries and product categories was investigated first. In formal terms, a binary logistic regression was tested and a linear structure for the log odds specified:

$$\log \frac{P(\text{buy less})_i}{P(\text{same})_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{STYLE} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{MEANING} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{CHARACTER} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{EXAGG} + \beta_5 \cdot \text{IRRES} + \beta_6 \cdot \text{VIOLENT} + \beta_7 \cdot \text{HARDS} \quad (1)$$

In a second step, variables for the five Asian cities were added to find out (1) whether the main effects of the execution techniques were stable, and (2) whether there were significant differences in the strength of

the effects among the five cities. To test the city influence the general model was modified and included dummy variables CD_j for the cities j ($j = 1, \dots, 5$):

$$\log \frac{P(\text{buy less})_i}{P(\text{same})_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{STYLE} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{MEANING} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{CHARACTER} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{EXAGG} + \beta_5 \cdot \text{IRRES} + \beta_6 \cdot \text{VIOLENT} + \beta_7 \cdot \text{HARDS} + \sum_{j=1}^{J-1} \gamma_j \cdot CD_j \quad (2)$$

Similarly, effects of the seven product categories were analyzed. To test the influence of product type the general model

was modified and included dummy variables PD_k for the product categories k ($k = 1, \dots, 7$):

$$\log \frac{P(\text{buy less})_i}{P(\text{same})_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{STYLE} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{MEANING} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{CHARACTER} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{EXAGG} + \beta_5 \cdot \text{IRRES} + \beta_6 \cdot \text{VIOLENT} + \beta_7 \cdot \text{HARDS} + \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \delta_k \cdot PD_k \quad (3)$$

Finally, a model was estimated including both city dummies CD_j and product category dummies PD_k to test the stability of the findings across the five Asian cities and

the seven product types. Formally, the following model was estimated:

$$\log \frac{P(\text{buy less})_i}{P(\text{same})_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{STYLE} + \beta_2 \cdot \text{MEANING} + \beta_3 \cdot \text{CHARACTER} + \beta_4 \cdot \text{EXAGG} + \beta_5 \cdot \text{IRRES} + \beta_6 \cdot \text{VIOLENT} + \beta_7 \cdot \text{HARDS} + \sum_{j=1}^{J-1} \gamma_j \cdot CD_j + \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \delta_k \cdot PD_k \quad (4)$$

Outcomes

Table 3 shows the effects of the seven disliked execution techniques on purchase intention (**RQs 4, 5 and 6**). The first two columns identify the independent variables, i.e., the seven dislikeability dimensions, the city and the product category dummies. The next two columns indicate the results for the general model (Eq. (1)). The other columns present the results for the general model with dummy variables for the different cities (Eq. (2)), product categories (Eq. (3)), and cities and product categories (Eq. (4)).

The p-value for overall model fit is smaller than 0.001 for all models, indicating a good fit. Nagelkerke's R^2 ranges from 0.105 for the general model to 0.138 for the general model with city and product type dummy variables. Introducing dummy variables increases Nagelkerke's R^2 . Although not very high, these values are reasonable, particularly as purchase intention is influenced by many other factors aside from disliked execution techniques in advertisements.

The main effects of the seven disliked execution techniques are virtually identical in the four models. For further interpretation the study focused on the richest model with both city and product category dummies. Six of the seven disliked execution techniques have a significant impact on the probability of buying less of the advertised brand (*style, meaningless, character, exaggerating,*

scary/indecent/violent, hard-sell). The negative signs indicate that respondents who mentioned more negative attributes in each category were less likely to buy the advertised product again. The city dummies are not significant, i.e., the effects of the seven dislikeability dimensions on purchase intentions do not differ between the five Asian cities. The product type dummies indicate that the effects of the execution techniques are significantly different for services compared with the baseline category durables ($p < 0.05$). Further analysis with services as the reference category also shows a significant difference between services compared with clothing and accessories ($p < 0.05$). Apart from these observations, the effects of disliked execution techniques on purchase intention are not significantly different among product categories. The negative signs for the product category dummies indicate that for durables and clothing, the negative effect of disliked execution techniques on purchase intentions is weakest, while for services it is strongest.

The results point to three important conclusions: (1) disliked execution techniques have a significant negative impact on purchase intention; (2) these findings do not vary across the five Asian cities; and (3) these findings do not vary much across product categories, with a slightly stronger effect for services, and a slightly weaker effect for durables and clothing.

Table 3: Effects of Disliked Execution Techniques on Purchase Intentions

		<i>General Model</i>		<i>Model with City Dummies</i>		<i>Model with Product Category Dummies</i>		<i>Model with City and Product Dummies</i>	
		B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
<i>Disliked Execution Techniques</i>	Style	-0.89	p<0.01	-0.96	p<0.01	-0.98	p<0.01	-1.05	p<0.01
	Meaningless	-0.97	p<0.01	-0.98	p<0.01	-1.01	p<0.01	-1.00	p<0.01
	Character	-0.76	p=0.03	-0.78	p=0.03	-0.88	p=0.01	-0.92	p=0.01
	Exaggerating	-0.90	p<0.01	-0.97	p<0.01	-0.98	p<0.01	-1.04	p<0.01
	Irresponsible	-0.48	p=0.25	-0.52	p=0.21	-0.52	p=0.21	-0.55	p=0.19
	Scary/Indecent/Violent	-1.48	p<0.01	-1.35	p=0.01	-1.30	p=0.01	-1.31	p=0.01
	Hard-sell	-0.93	p=0.01	-1.08	p<0.01	-0.94	p=0.01	-1.04	p<0.01
<i>City¹</i>	CD _{Hong Kong}			0.25	p=0.61			0.47	p=0.35
	CD _{Shanghai}			0.69	p=0.16			0.70	p=0.17
	CD _{Jakarta}			0.75	p=0.12			0.69	p=0.16
	CD _{Mumbai}			0.51	p=0.30			0.37	p=0.47
<i>Product Category²</i>	PD _{Services}					-1.83	p=0.03	-1.85	p=0.04
	PD _{Clothing}					-0.75	p=0.39	-0.75	p=0.39
	PD _{PersCare}					-1.09	p=0.18	-1.18	p=0.16
	PD _{Drinks}					-1.45	p=0.09	-1.39	p=0.11
	PD _{Foods}					-0.93	p=0.31	-0.98	p=0.29
	PD _{Addictives}					-1.04	p=0.23	-1.16	p=0.19
<i>Overall model (N=449)</i>		p < 0.01		p < 0.01		p < 0.01		p < 0.01	
<i>Nagelkerke's R²</i>		0.105		0.117		0.131		0.138	

¹ Reference category: Bangkok² Reference category: Durables

DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research suggest that, within similar demographic groups (age, gender, income, and occupation), consumers have different reasons for disliking television commercials. Of the five cities, respondents from Hong Kong and Shanghai were most likely to mention disliked execution techniques, which are attributed to the level of economic development. Respondents from Hong Kong and Shanghai live in a fast-paced, highly competitive business environment, so they are more likely to experience and be able to compare commercials from many different countries either through travels or access to global television networks. For the less-developed economies, like Bangkok and Mumbai, where entertainment establishments are either out of reach or there are few of them, television commercials might become an entertainment per se. This may explain the low number of disliked ads as well as dislikeable execution techniques recorded for the respondents from these two cities.

The differences in the composition of ad dislikeability among the five cities could be attributed to the different cultural values and religious backgrounds of the respondents. Overall, *style* is the dominant attribute that drives disliking certain television commercials, which could be due to the 'homogeneity' of the respondents in each city. Given that the majority of the respondents are professionals (white-collar workers), they are less likely to tolerate commercials that are old fashioned, repetitive, boring or annoying. In addition, these professionals might have some exposure to Western media and commercials in their daily work and as such they are more likely to be able to distinguish an innovative advertisement from an old-fashioned ad or a good-taste ad from a bad taste ad. It was found that the Mumbai respondents disliked commercials that were *irresponsible* particularly those that tended to mislead youngsters, as these commercials go against the conventional protocol of children obeying

their parents and/or children's proper place and position in society. According to Abdi (2002), India is still a very conservative country and advertising in India must take into account local sensitivities. For instance, competitive individualism is severely frowned upon in Indian society as it can disrupt relationships by hurting others' feelings (Roland 1988). The respondents in Bangkok on the other hand disliked *meaningless* and *exaggerating* commercials, particularly those containing misleading information about product effectiveness. This may be due to the Buddhist teachings that it is not right to self-indulge, be materialistic or exploit others.

The analysis of ad dislikeability across product categories offers additional explanations for the differences in the composition of dislikeability. *Style* was identified as a primary reason for disliking ads in the product categories of clothing (42.0%), personal care (41.0%) and durables (39.5%). This again indicates that consumers do not want to be connected with brands that are perceived to be old-fashioned, boring or annoying. *Meaningless* ads promoting addictives, durables and services were particularly likely to cause aversion among the respondents. This is likely to be because consumers are generally more serious about making these purchase decisions (these are likely to be more high-involvement purchases), so they do not want irrelevant information or images in the ads. *Exaggerating* ads were disliked, especially ads for foods, which may be because unrealistic puffery can cause a feeling that the ads are not telling the truth about the product. Service products rely a great deal on the service provider, so ads that were *scary/indecent/violent* were likely to cause concern about the quality of the services. Finally, addictive products, such as alcohol and gambling, must be consumed responsibly otherwise this can lead to problems like alcoholism or gambling addiction, so consumers particularly disliked any connection between addictive products and *irresponsible* image.

An important issue is that a higher number of negative mentions did not translate directly into negative effects on purchase intentions, i.e., the effects of disliked execution techniques were not related to the number of mentions or to cultural differences between the cities. This study finds that disliked executional techniques have a significant negative impact on purchase intention, meaning that when respondents disliked commercials, they either did not buy the product or bought it less often. It was established that all of the disliked executional techniques, except for the *irresponsible* category, significantly affected people so that they bought less (compared with buying the same or more). With regard to product categories, purchase intention for services was negatively affected by disliked techniques. This could be because services are dependent on interaction and personal contact with the service provider. Being highly variable and intangible, an advertisement for a service would reflect physical evidence of quality that could not be observed or judged beforehand. For durables and clothing, because their physical product features are more relevant and directly observable, purchase intention is less dependent on disliked execution techniques in advertising.

For marketers in Asia, the results of this study are relevant in a number of ways. In Asia, preserving the traditional aesthetic values (e.g., adults showing exemplary behavior to children, educational ads, good-natured ads, etc.) is paramount and hence advertisers and creative directors should be aware of Asian values. Culture and religion play a significant role in shaping the behavior of these consumers. Asia is a multi-faith group of societies imbued with various traditions and customs. Respondents' dislike of some commercials may be due to their cultural upbringing as from a very young age, most Asian children are taught the 'right' approach to behave in public and in front of adults.

Clearly not all Asian markets are the same and this study indicates the executional techniques that are particularly disliked in specific Asian countries and for specific product types. This could help companies to focus on the 'right' messages for specific products in certain regions. Additionally, all seven ad dislikeability dimensions have the potential to influence consumers' purchase decisions in Asia. Hence, even though certain values are more salient in some cities, all disliked execution techniques are relevant in all Asian markets. Understanding the seven disliked execution techniques when developing advertising campaigns for any Asian market may help companies to avoid potential minefields, like antagonising or offending local cultural values, customs and traditions, and religious beliefs.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the ad dislikeability construct and its dimensions in five Asian cities and across seven product categories. Its findings show that there are major differences in the composition of ad dislikeability, and that disliked execution techniques have similar effects on purchase intentions. Seven dislikeable television commercial attributes were identified, namely: bad style of the ad, meaningless storyline, ugly or stupid characters, exaggerating product effectiveness, irresponsible or misleading content, scary or violent characters or settings, and hard-sell approaches. Six disliked attributes (*style, meaningless, character, exaggerating, scary/indecent/violent, hard-sell*) were found to make people buy less (compared with buying the same or more), while for one execution technique (*irresponsible*) respondents indicated that they were buying the same amount of the advertised brand instead of buying more after seeing the disliked ad.

Since Asia is both a potential minefield, with many values and religious

beliefs, and a honey pot, as it is largely an untapped market, this research is important in that it provides international marketers with the capability to determine what potential customers dislike in their TV advertisements, and the factors that could potentially turn customers off the product or brand and make the advertising message totally ineffective.

Of course, this study does have limitations. Its focus only on the Asian market and perceptions of dislikeability may differ in other cultures. Further research could address this issue by examining the dimensions of ad dislikeability in other areas of the world, such as in Western or Arab countries. Another limitation stems from the use of advertisement recall and verbal descriptions from consumers. As the true amount of disliked execution techniques is unknown, it is not certain whether participants from the five cities differed with regard to their perceptions of the ads or whether the ads were actually different, i.e., contained different execution techniques. This does not affect the influence of the dislikeability dimensions on purchase intentions, but it relates to the descriptive dislikeability mentions in each attribute category. A similar issue arises with the dislikeability mentions in the seven product categories. It is not known for sure whether in specific product categories, specific techniques were really more disliked or whether they were actually used more in these ads and, therefore, mentioned more often. Future research should validate this study's findings by taking into account the actual content of ads in the respective cities and product categories.

Future research could also build on this study's findings and develop a scale to measure ad dislikeability based on the seven dislikeability dimensions identified. Such an attempt would increase understanding of the different facets of ad dislikeability and help to examine the position of the ad dislikeability construct in a nomological network of consumer responses to advertising. This would provide researchers and advertisers with an instrument that could be used to

assess ad dislikeability, its dimensions and consequences in a structured way across countries and product categories.

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Send correspondence regarding this article to:

Kim-Shyan Fam
School of Marketing and International Business
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600, Wellington
New Zealand
Email: kim.fam@vuw.ac.nz
