Informativeness of advertising: A cross-cultural analysis of the U.S. & Thai prime-time TV commercials

by

Supaporn Potibut

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Journalism & Mass Communication

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This study primarily focuses on only one aspect of advertising, informative content of national Thai and American prime-time TV commercials. Based on the conceptual framework to be used, informativeness is viewed through both audio and visual communication. Creativity and technical performance, the important elements of advertising, are not the main concern in this study.

The rationale given for selecting national prime-time TV commercials is the wide availability and accessibility of television in the U.S. and most parts of Thailand. Television also has some advantages over other media in terms of high ability to capture the attention of an audience through audio-visual combination and the lack of literacy requirement. National prime-time commercials are considered reliable samples due to heavy viewing and reach. To study only the national prime-time samples will also make the comparison more accurate and consistent for the two countries which have inconsistent broadcast hours but share the prime-time: from 7.00 P.M.- 10.00 P.M. (Midwest prime-time in the U.S.).

This study begins with the introduction, theoretical perspective, statement of problem, purpose of study and rationales for using samples from Thailand to compare them

with U.S. counterparts. Relevant previous studies are briefly discussed in Chapter II. Research questions and hypotheses are then stated at the end of the chapter based on the literature review.

Chapter III includes the methodology; namely, the unit of analysis, the sampling method, data collection, operationalization, category construction and reliability. Chapters IV and V present findings from statistical analyses and discussion respectively. The final chapter which concludes the study, addresses limitations of the present study and provides suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Perspective

Media institutions are found to function differently across societies. They are usually constrained by distinctive domestic, political, and socio-economic pressures and the expectation of their audiences. The normative theories, fundamentally dealing with the links between mass media and society, describe specific criteria to guide practice or to help assess how media actually do their work in practice. One, but pertaining to this study, under the normative theories, is the social responsibility principle. It is commonly observed that the more developed the media, technologically and commercially, the lower the standards of performance in meeting the informational, social and moral

needs of society (Mcquail 1987). Therefore, concerns about such failures started growing, especially in modern large-scale societies.

According to the social responsibility theory, media are obligated to be responsible mainly in terms of professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance. The obligations are due not only to their consumers and shareholders but also to society at large. In applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions (Mcquail 1987).

As a commercial media practice, advertising is also expected to fall along these obligation lines. Its direct functions are to inform and to persuade. The two functions are integrated since one cannot persuade without giving some type of audience-relevant information (Hunt 1976). Desired results are the increases in public awareness and, ultimately, in sales of the products being advertised. Therefore, effective advertising, from the advertising practitioners' standpoint, should basically involve useful information that will help consumers rank the brands by their utility and/or reduce risk associated with the purchase decision (Nelson 1974). In addition, the persuasive, creative, aesthetic, and technical manner in which information is presented should also be given much attention (Tom et al. 1984).

Similarly, advertising, from the consumer's viewpoint, is a device to evaluate alternatives in the marketplace prior to purchase (Leiss 1986). Consumers should be informed about alternative products and brands when they feel "need" for a particular product. To Stigler (1961), advertising is an important source of information, providing the consumer with "search service" when such a need is felt. Nelson (1974) suggests that without perfect information about goods, the consumer tends to rely on past consumption experiences, the advice of friends and relatives, consumer reports and, of course, advertising.

Statement of Problem

Theoretically and practically speaking, informative content is mutually agreed by advertising practitioners and consumers as a basic essential function of advertising. The question arises whether or not advertising today conveys sufficient useful information for a typical consumer to make a better purchasing choice. To be more specific, do TV commercials, as a type of advertising that can make the best use of the widely accessible audio-visual medium, tend to focus on entertainment and celebrities without providing enough useful information about the products?

In the U.S., TV commercial content has been of interest among researchers, critics and public policy makers. The

usefulness of information communicated through advertising on TV has become a main concern since television is the most pervasive medium due to its high potential for shaping viewers' behavior and the vast integration of TV into Americans' daily life (Krugman 1965).

Whether or not the persuasive aspect of advertising is taken into account, TV commercials have been vigorously attacked as being materialistic, manipulative, deceptive, in poor taste, intrusive, the source of entry barriers supportive of bad programming and, non-informative (Aaker 1984).

Regarding the informative aspect, the benchmark study was initiated by Resnik and Stern in 1977. Since then, a fair amount of relevant research has been conducted, replicating their methodology. The informative value of commercials was judged based on their operational definition and constructed evaluative criteria.

Over the past decade, a slight improvement in the informativeness of American TV commercials was found (Resnik and Stern 1977; Tom et al. 1984; Weinberger and Spotts 1989). However, the level of information was unsatisfactory since about slightly over half of the TV commercials sampled were deemed informative on one evaluative cue.

There are also a few studies in this area focusing on a cross-cultural analysis. Among this rare effort, commercials from some developed countries; namely, the United Kingdom,

Australia and Canada were analyzed and compared to the U.S. relevant findings. The only less-developed country in which a cross-cultural study on TV commercial informativeness has been conducted is Ecuador.

Most cross-cultural studies indicate that different informative levels of commercials across countries are explained by the nature of the audience, diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Dowling 1980; Pollay et al. 1980; Weinberger and Spotts 1989). Product categories as well as the product life-cycle, generally determined by the levels of economic development, is also related to different information levels presented in TV commercials in those countries (Renforth and Raveed 1983).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is thus to contribute to these discussions by examining the role of one particular advertising aspect, informative content, in two countries: the United States and Thailand, which are totally different in terms of socio-cultural structure and the level of economic development. In so doing, the yielded results can be generalized to add more dimensions to the area of cross-cultural studies.

The research, hopefully, will be helpful for advertisers in both countries. International advertisers who consider

transferring products across cultures will particularly be provided some insights about overseas markets and how advertising functions in Thailand.

But Why Thailand?

In addition to generalizing the results to the cross-cultural studies on advertising informativeness, TV advertising in Thailand should be assessed in terms of informative performance for the following reasons:

1. <u>The increasing significance of advertising as a basic consumer information source</u>

Advertising in Thailand has been growing steadily since World War II. In 1988, the industry consistently registered 30% in growth and reached $275.7 million in billing, a 13.4% increase over 1987 (Hamid and Girdwood 1989). Since the introduction of television by the end of the 1960s, advertising on TV has assumed a more important role in providing information for a better consumer choice.

Although no research has ever been done to evaluate informativeness of advertising in Thailand, there was a relevant survey regarding general predisposition towards advertising conducted by Thorelli and Sentell in 1982. They found a strong and highly significant tendency for the more urban consumer to be less favorable toward advertising in

general than the village consumers. More than 59% of the combined samples (from Bangkok, municipal areas and upcountry) agreed that advertising is essential, while only 20% disagreed. The general agreement when questions regarding the advertising persuasive aspect were asked was "advertising often persuades people to buy things they should not buy."

In sum, more urban-educated consumers had negative feelings towards advertising in terms of a perceived lack of accuracy, truthfulness and excessive emphasis on persuasion. Only 26% of the combined samples agreed that advertising results in better products, while 40% did not. Nonetheless, most urban respondents, particularly from Bangkok, were more inclined to agree that advertising was a viable source of information than were village or municipal respondents.

Research designed to test the informativeness of advertising is thus likely to be helpful in verifying whether such negative predisposition is caused by inadequate useful information provided in Thai advertising, particularly TV commercials.

2. <u>The dominance of U.S. advertising agencies in Thailand</u>

Dominantly influenced by American agencies such as Lintas, Ogilvy & Mather, Leo Burnett, J. Walter Thompson, McCann Erickson, etc., Thai advertising should be studied in parallel with U.S. counterparts to find out whether American

agency operation or environmental factors, such as culture and economy, shape its informativeness.

3. The influx of foreign investments in Thailand

Overwhelmed by foreign investments led by Taiwan, Japan and the U.S. in the late 1980s (Hamid and Girdwood 1989), Thailand has become a marketplace for international advertising. International advertisers need to understand the environmental factors in order to utilize appropriate and effective advertising. The research on informativeness of Thai commercials might enable investors to gain better understanding of the level of economic development and the market situation in Thailand.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As far as the informative measurement of advertising is concerned, studies in the area were mainly conducted along two lines: content analysis and the consumer-based approach. The difference between the two approaches is that for the latter, the advertising informative value is judged from the consumers' viewpoint. Besides, a relatively greater variety of research techniques is involved.

This chapter briefly examines available relevant research by categorizing it based on the approach used in each study. Finally, the cross-cultural studies are separately discussed regardless of the approach and methodology used.

The content of the literature review thus includes:

1. Research using content analysis
2. Research using the consumer-based approach
3. Cross-cultural analysis

Content Analysis

One major problem researchers using this approach encounter is the difficulty of constructing a definition that is objective and representative (Resnik and Stern 1977). The benchmark study, however, was conducted by Resnik and Stern in 1977. They established an operational definition of informative value and 14 evaluative cues to judge 378 national

American ads on TV. A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select original commercials, viewing days and time in this study. Eventually, an equal number of commercials from the three major networks -ABC, CBS and NBC- were viewed during the weekdays and weekends, and during morning (8.00 A.M.-12.00 A.M. on weekdays and 7.00 A.M.-12.00 A.M. on weekends), afternoon (12.00 A.M.-4.00 P.M.) and evening (7.00 P.M.-11.00 P.M.) time periods in a portion of April 1975.

Based on the criteria shown in Table 1, a given commercial was evaluated for informative value by asking researchers, "does this advertisement communicate any of these cues about the product, service or institution?" A commercial needed to communicate at least one of the 14 informative cues to be considered "informative."

It was found that less than one half of the ads (49.2%) were deemed informative on one criterion, 16% on two criteria and only 1% on three criteria. The non-informative ads

Table 1. Evaluative criteria

1. Price or value	8. Packaging or shape
2. Quality	9. Guarantees or warranties
3. Performance	10. Safety
4. Components or contents	11. Nutrition
5. Availability	12. Independent research
6. Special offers	13. Company-sponsored research
7. Taste	14. New ideas

Source: Resnik and Stern 1977

predominantly appeared to be those broadcast during the weekday afternoons and the weekend mornings. For these time period, 33.3% and 34.9% were informative respectively. Sixty percent of weekday morning and evening commercials proved to be informative.

There was also a relationship between the nature of the products and differences in the quality and quantity of information communicated. Less than 50% of ads for food (45.8%), personal care (39.8%), laundry & household products (46.2%) were informative. However, the fact that only 89 (23.5%) of the total 378 commercials analyzed were in the informative product categories should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

To Resnik and Stern, failure to provide sufficient information in advertising would become self-destructive for advertisers. Non-informative ads would be less effective in persuading increasingly better educated, more aware, and more skeptical consumers who might try to seek relevant product information and would purchase only those products that can show real benefits over existing alternatives.

Notably, the heaviest use of non-informative appeals fell on the broadcast periods in which the largest proportion of the audience is children who might have less resistance to advertising persuasion than adults. Resnik and Stern, in their study, called for different types of government

intervention and/or industry self-policing to protect this group of audience.

Some of these findings were confirmed in Reid and Rotfeld's study (1981) on informative content of advertisements during children's TV shows. Three hundred and twenty-four Saturday morning network commercials, considered the main broadcast day part for children-oriented TV advertising, were taped and evaluated by replicating Resnik and Stern's operational definition and 14 consumer cues.

The research results indicated that less than half of the TV ads for children (42.3%) were classified as informative. These data supported Resnik and Stern's findings. However, the informative level found in this study was higher than that of the previous study, 42.3% versus 34.9%, for Saturday morning versus weekend morning ads.

This research also agreed with Resnik and Stern that TV commercials have room for improvement in providing information cues to the consuming public. Nonetheless, the conclusion that the informative value of commercials diminished as television programming shifted to children was not supported. Saturday morning network commercials were not found less informative than those broadcast in other day parts.

Tom et al. (1984) operationally replicated the sampling and experimental procedures of the Resnik and Stern study in their update analysis of information content in TV

advertising. Three hundred and forty-eight commercials during portions of October and November 1981 were analyzed.

Their findings also supported the two earlier studies, revealing that the information content of TV advertisements had not much improved in the five years since Resnik and Stern's study. Only 52.8% of the commercials were informative. Broadcast times and product categories were found related to informative value of commercials along the trend similar to Resnik and Stern's findings.

The gloomy picture of U.S. TV advertising information was significantly improved in Weinberger and Spotts' study in 1989 (discussed later in the cross-cultural section). The trend of the informativeness of U.S. TV ads during the 10-year-period is shown in Table 2.

The Consumer-Based Approach

The audience perception-based approach became appealing for researchers for several reasons. Advertising perceived as informative can play a role in consumer information programs in which the end objective is to enhance an image or to improve consumer satisfaction. To study what is considered informative in the consumers' eyes also helps improve advertising effectiveness because consumers attend to advertising to gain useful information. Therefore,

Table 2. Percentage of informative U.S. TV ads from 1975-1985

Year Researcher	Total # evaluated	Total %	Informative TV ads :1 cue	 :2 cues	 :3 cues
1975 Resnik, Stern	378	49.2	32.2	16.0	1.0
1981 Tom et al.	348	52.8	35.9	14.2	2.7
1985 Weinberger	566	65.3	38.1	16.8	10.4

Notes: Reid and Rotfeld's study (1981) is not included in the table due to incomparable samples (only Saturday morning ads). However, the figures are also along the line of the studies shown above: only 42.3% of American TV commercials on Saturday morning were deemed informative. Also, the years specified in Table 2 are when the sample commercials were aired, not the years the research was completed and published.

commercials which can generate information will also, more or less, generate attention.

As far as the audience perception-based measures are concerned, Bauer and Greyser's study (1968) found that less than 5.8% of American TV commercials were perceived as being informative. However, the trend was found to positively change in Aaker and Norris's study in 1982.

Based upon the data from a BRC (Bruzzone Research Company) mail survey of 1,000 household samples drawn from the Donnelly population, Aaker and Norris's analysis revealed that the percentage of viewers describing a commercial as informative exceeded 30% for 10% of the commercials and exceeded 20% for 40%. In this study, the questionnaire

regarding commercial recognition, interest and brand-name recognition was used to test the respondents' opinions in those aspects by asking them to check any of selected 20 alphabetically listed adjectives that they feel describe the commercial. The adjectives involved are informative, convincing, worth remembering, effective, imaginative, amusing, etc.

The study revealed that a sizable percentage of 524 prime-time TV commercials was perceived as being informative by a substantial audience group.

This level of commercial informativeness was found far higher than in the Bauer and Greyser result and those using content analysis. Nearly half of the respondents considered prime-time TV commercials to have one of the five positive characteristics (informative, convincing, worth remembering, effective, interesting).

With regard to product classes and categories that might affect the commercial informativeness one way or another, it was found that two product categories, food and beverages, were perceived as substantially less informative than others. Excepting food and beverage commercials, there is much less variation between product classes. Durable goods were unexpectedly found lower in informativeness than frequently purchased products and services such as drug and personal care products. An average informative value of the commercials was

28 while automobile commercials, accounting for 58% of durable products advertised, have only an average informative value of 21.7.

When analyzing the adjective tests that were used to describe how an audience perceived a particular ad, it was found that there was a large positive correlation between "informative" and the other personal relevance adjectives. An informative advertisement tended to be worth remembering, convincing, effective and interesting. The high correlation of "interesting" and "informative" suggested that one reason an advertisement is interesting is because of its information content. The percent checked having at least one of the five personal relevance adjectives exceeded 45 for half of the commercials.

Another study using a different scale to provide additional consumer perspective was conducted by Aaker in 1984. In this study, an advertisement could be perceived as informative because it contained interesting information that had nothing to do with the consumer's purchase and use of the product.

Besides consumers' opinion, the judgments from independent product experts were also taken into account with the rationale that experts could identify consumer information of which consumers were unaware.

A set of drug and automobile commercials was evaluated by 213 consumers and 318 independent product experts (146 California registered pharmacists and 22 editors of automobile magazines and 83 car dealers) for comparisons. If they were in agreement, the assumption could be made that the consumers were capable of making a judgment about informativeness.

Twenty-eight drug commercials and 28 automobile commercials were evaluated. It was found that a substantial portion of the consumers felt that the average automobile and drug TV commercial contained useful information. A total of 47.5% of the respondents agreed that the average automobile commercial was useful either in buying or in using the product and 65.2% perceived drug commercials informative. Drug commercials were described more "complete" and to a somewhat lesser extent more "easily understood" and more "worthwhile" than automobile commercials which scored higher on the "not well known" dimension.

As for the experts' view, they had sharply lower opinions of the informativeness of the commercials than did the consumers. Only 32.1% of the car dealers and 25.4% of automobile writers agreed that the average automobile commercial was useful in purchasing or using the product. Compared to consumers, the figures are 50% lower in the case of the car dealers and 90% lower for automobile writers. A total of 29.4% of the pharmacists considered the

average drug commercial contained useful information. The comparable consumer percentage of 65.2% was 120% higher. The gap between the pharmacists and the consumers was much greater than that between the car experts and the consumers.

In comparison, the car dealers differed from the consumers with respect to how worthwhile the information was. The automobile writers differed with respect to how complete and easily understood the information was. However, experts' bias against television ads for their product due to professional snobbery or a consumerist orientation should be taken into account when determining whether the expert analysis was standardized.

Optimistically, although the experts' evaluation of commercial informativeness was much lower than that of consumers', it was noted that the figures were far from zero. The percent of experts who felt an average commercial contained useful consumer information ranged from 25 to 32.

In conclusion, drug and automobile TV commercials were perceived by consumers as being informative. Well over half of the consumers felt that the average drug and automobile commercial helped them either to buy or to use the product. This figure was much higher than that found in other studies, but the difference can be largely explained by the difference in the scale used to measure informativeness.

The ability of consumers to evaluate the informativeness of commercials differed markedly by product. When judging by the correlations across commercials between experts and consumers and by the size of the consumer bias in evaluating commercial informativeness, a reasonable conclusion is that consumers are really not competent to judge the informativeness of drug advertising. On the other hand, their judgments of automobile advertisements, although biased, do seem valid enough to provide useful estimates of informative.

The Cross-Cultural Analysis

Cross-cultural research in this area has mostly dealt with two problems: the decision of whether to standardize advertising worldwide (Marquez 1979), and the effect of cultural and economic differences on informativeness of advertisements. Further, if a worldwide advertising campaign is standardized, the extent of standardization must also be determined; should only the basic appeal be maintained in each country with changes in copy to account for local differences, or should the entire campaign be standardized (Renforth and Raveed 1983).

Such cross-cultural studies have been conducted in three countries, ranging from developing (Ecuador by Renforth and Raveed 1983), newly developed (Australia by Dowling 1980; Canada by Pollay et al. 1980), and fully developed (the U.K.

by Weinberger and Spotts 1989) economic status. These studies are next mentioned chronologically in order to illustrate the development of cross-cultural research in the past decade.

All of the studies duplicated Resnik and Stern's sampling and experimental procedures for making a comparison with relevant U.S. findings. However, the study in Australia focused on "regional ads" rather than "national ads" since Australian TV commercials were not broadcast on a national basis.

In Dowling's study (1980), three judges separately content analyzed a total of 163 different commercials, aired during the week of April 10-16, 1978. The analysis revealed that 74% of the Australian commercials satisfied one or more of the evaluative criteria.

The ratio of informative to non-informative ads declined from a high of 7:1 in the morning to 4:1 in the afternoon to a low of 2:1 in the evening. This was a direct contrast to Resnik and Stern's findings that the ads are more informative in "predominantly mixed adult viewing times," (Stern, Resnik and Grubb 1977; 360).

Dowling also pointed out that such a ratio was accounted for by the fact that as the TV audience becomes more heterogeneous, the ad content becomes more entertaining. The advertising communication material changes from a product-related theme (price, quality, etc.) to an audience-related

theme (lifestyle, ideal, self-image, etc.) in order to position a product in a particular market segment.

As for weekday versus weekend broadcasts, the ratio of informative to non-informative ads remained approximately equal, 3.2:1 versus 2.6:1. When the composition of the viewing audience became more heterogeneous (weekend viewing), it was also found that there was a slight tendency for the ads to become more entertaining, 31% non-informative during weekdays versus 40% non-informative on weekends.

The relative levels in informativeness for the product categories in both countries illustrated the same direction. Sixty percent of commercials for food, institutional and personal care products, which accounted for 38% of the total sample, were deemed informative. The remaining product classes, 62% of the sample, were informative at an even higher rate, 83%.

The reason why Australian commercials were different, as suggested by Dowling, was because of different environments in which advertising agencies operated and both government and self-regulation.

In short, Australian self-regulatory authorities were likely to be more powerful than their counterparts in the U.S. The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) has a policy of previewing every advertisement before it is broadcast.

Such a conclusion, however, was argued in the study of Pollay et al. (1980). Adding five more informative cues to Resnik and Stern's original set,[1] Pollay et al. content analyzed 884 commercials from the U.S. and Canada, aired during 1971-1977. They found that the sampled ads from both countries presented an average of 1.72 informative cues. There was no significant difference between American and Canadian commercials in terms of informative value.

It is notable that ads on children's programs were found less informative (with an average of 1.9 informative cues) than other regular programs except public service and charity ads. As expected, capital goods including appliances, motor vehicles and major durables showed the highest volume of information followed by personal care, health care and laundry products. At the low end, food & beverage products showed an average of about 1.3 informative cues per ad.

In comparison, this study gave TV advertising more credit for being informative than did the previous studies. With more liberal and dimensional criteria, only 16% of the ads were judged non-informative. However, no significant results were found longitudinally or cross-culturally.

As suggested by Pollay et al., the low level of information on TV ads was not a sensitive function of the

---

[1] The five additional criteria are convenience, contents promotional, product variations, directions and competitive advantage.

cultural or regulatory environment of advertising but the nature of television and television audiences. The way in which an ad was presented also affected its informativeness. The more sophisticated the advertisement, the less likely it was to be informative.

The study concluded that extensive efforts in regulating advertising performance in the 1970s by the Federal Trade Commission and its Canadian counterpart, the Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, have obviously had a slight impact on the informativeness of TV advertising. Such efforts may have reduced deception but did little to improve the informative function of advertising.

In a study on consumer information cues in Ecuadorian television advertising conducted by Renforth and Raveed (1983), Ecuadorian commercial patterns were found to follow the Australian commercial informativeness according to broadcast time. Two judges separately content analyzed a total of 108 commercials broadcast by stations in Ecuador at the same time period randomly selected for evaluation in Resnik and Stern's and Dowling's studies. Eighty two point four percent of the Latin American TV commercials were deemed informative.

Apparently in Ecuador and Australia, as audiences become more heterogeneous in the later viewing hours, advertising shifted from a specific product-related theme to a general

audience-related theme. Many of the advertisements broadcast at these later times portrayed an "image" designed to position the product in the market. Thus, by using the restrictive definition of "informative" adopted in this study, these lifestyle advertisements, aimed primarily at the broadcast later hour viewing audience, were classified as non-informative.

The percentage of informative commercials and the ratios of informative to non-informative ads from different viewing time in the three countries can be summed up in Table 3.

Table 3. Informative vs. non-informative ratios by country

Country	# of ads	% of informative :1 cue	Ratios of inform-non morning	afternoon	evening
U.S.	348	49.2	.8:1	.67:1	5:1
Australia	239	74	7:1	4:1	2:1
Ecuador	108	82.4	6:1	5.8:1	3.3:1

Notes: Canadian versus American commercials are not included in the table since the ratios of informative to non-informative ads were not given. The mean numbers of informative cues range from 1.58 to 1.95 for different viewing time. The commercials aired in the afternoon were highest in informativeness followed by those in the evening (1.78), the morning (1.64) and the prime-time.

However, the product categories did not account for significant differences in the informativeness of Ecuadorian commercials. The sampled commercials were grouped into six relatively homogeneous product classifications: food,

institutional, personal care, laundry & household, hobbies, toys & transportation, and others. The same, overall high proportion of informative commercials existed across all product types with a slight, but not significant, tendency for a greater proportion of non-informative ads found in the personal care and institutional areas. This is in contrast with other studies in the U.S., Australia and Canada, in which significant association between the informativeness of the ads and the type of product advertised was found to run in the same direction. That is, commercials for low-involvement products such as food, personal care, and laundry & household categories were less informative than high-involvement ones.

Notably, Ecuadorian advertisements for laundry & household products, food, and others seemed to be comparatively more informative than their American and Australian counterparts.

The product life-cycle was given much attention in explaining why advertisements in a country like Ecuador were more informative than in the U.S. and Australia. The products depicted in the Ecuadorian commercials were classified by stage in the product life-cycle: introduction, growth and maturity (Kotler 1987).

Commercials for the products in the introduction stage tend to be most informative, while the opposite is true for those in the maturity stage. This is because newer products

need to create an awareness of their existence among the audience while for well-known products, such information is of less significance than top-of-the mind positioning.

Sixty-four out of 108 (59%) products in Ecuador were in the introduction or growth stage but only 23 of 234 (10%) products in the U.S. were classified in the early stage of life-cycle. This also implies that there is a greater proportion of early stage products in a developing economic environment such as Ecuador to which a promotion strategy emphasizing information was applied. The greater proportion of new products is, in turn, likely to account for the greater observed frequency of informative commercials in Ecuador.

This explanation is in sharp contrast with Dowling's conclusion. It is, however, consistent with Pollay et al.'s in a sense that advertising regulation had little to do with informativeness. In Ecuador, advertising activities are even substantially less restricted than in Australia and the U.S.

In sum, the point was made that many products which have reached maturity in highly developed economies may yet be innovations or growth products in lesser developed economies. The proportion of mature products in an economy is likely to increase directly with the stage of economic development. Products in the earlier stages of the product life-cycle more frequently use informative promotional programs. Commercials in a less developed country were thus found more informative.

The information content of U.K. ads studied by Weinberger and Spotts in 1989 was slightly different. The study utilized both Resnik and Stern's 14 cues and the FCB (Foote, Cone and Belding) planning matrix to judge 867 ads (566 U.S. and 301 U.K. ads). The FCB model cross-classifies product decision-making situations along two dimensions: high/low-involvement and thinking/feeling. It is an updated benchmark of whether U.S. commercials have changed over the past decade in terms of information content. The FCB framework was used to subdivide advertising for a better understanding of possible information content differences between product categories.

The FCB model embraces both the involvement and rational/emotional dimensions to classify decision-making situations for products. Cell 1 consisting of thinking and high-involvement, emphasizes rationality and is characterized by economic motives. This typically includes automobiles, large appliances and insurance. Feeling and high-involvement distinguish cell 2, which is associated best with such products as cosmetics, jewelry and fashion clothing. Products such as gasoline, paper products and household cleaner are representatives of cell 3, which involves the low involvement/thinking dimensions. Finally, cell 4 is made up of the low-involvement and feeling dimensions which are reserved for items of personal taste, "life' s little pleasures," such as alcohol, cigarettes and candy (Weinberger

and Spotts, 1989; 90). The comparison made between the two countries, which are similar in terms of being highly developed industrial consumer societies and hence the same life-cycle of products, is interesting.

The U.K. system of regulating TV advertising has also been considered superior to the U.S. approach. The study was aimed at finding out whether or not the "superior" U.K. regulatory system resulted in more information content.

However, it was expected that differences in the information content of U.S. and U.K. commercials were based on different cultural assumptions rather than regulatory systems. U.S. ads were viewed as much more "hard-sell" oriented and grounded in the inflexible hierarchy of effects model while the British and European model was based on a metaphor of myth and ritual (holistic cultural) dominated by a softer sell with understated humor and highly visual (in contrast to verbal) content (Carey 1975). The expectation was that U.K. ads would have less information content than U.S. ads.

The findings confirmed that the informativeness of U.S. commercials had increased significantly since 1977. Of the full sample of 566 ads, the majority of ads (65.3% unadjusted, 63.9% adjusted) were informative, with an average number of cues per ad 1.05/1.00 (unadjusted/adjusted) compared to 49.7% informative level and .68 average number of cues found in Resnik and Stern's study.

Tests of the proportions of ads with one or more cues showed that each of the two rational cells (cells 1 and 3) have significantly more information than the emotional/low-involvement cell (cell 4) and the emotional/high-involvement cell (cell 2). The information content was found to vary systematically among cells of the FCB matrix.

The outcome from the analysis further pointed out that the two countries differed in the amount of advertising information content at the .05 level of significance. The British ads had fewer cues per ad and a lower proportion of ads with information content than did the U.S. ads. The consistent results were found in all four cells.

In the U.S., 64.5% of the commercials were informative (based on a reduced sample of 450 ads with a mean number of .98 cues per ad whereas the adjusted and reduced British samples contained an average of .75 cues with 53.6% informative). The greatest difference between the U.S. and U.K. commercials was in cell 4 (emotional/low-involvement), where only 37% of British ads were informative versus 52% in the U.S. and cell 1 (rational/high-involvement), where 75% of the U.S. ads versus 61% of the U.K. ads were informative. In both samples, cell 4 was the least informative and cell 1 and 3 were the most informative with large and significant differences in the proportions between cell 1 and 4 ($P<.01$) for both the U.S. and U.K.

Although the information content for the British ads was lower, similar differences between FCB cells were found. This led to further support that the amount of information is often provided in ads according to the decision-making situation.

The relatively low informativeness of British commercials contributed to the common belief in the U.K. that the U.S. commercials were more "hard-sell." However, it was unclear from the data whether the U.S./U.K. difference was due to the cultural dichotomy or whether the British public simply would not tolerate advertisements that take themselves too seriously and were stylistically more "hard-sell."

The findings also called into question the relationship between tight regulation and informativeness of TV commercials as suggested by Dowling because the better regulatory system in the U.K. did not lead to higher informative levels of ads. One might conclude from these findings that tighter regulation leads to less objective information content to avoid claim substantiation issues (Huang and Hou 1987).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This research is thus primarily aimed at answering the following questions:

R1 A: What is the percentage of informative versus non-informative weekday and weekend Thai prime-time TV commercials?

R1 B: What is the percentage of informative versus non-informative weekday and weekend U.S. prime-time TV commercials?

R2: How do the product categories affect the level of commercial informativeness in both countries? Do some products provide more information in their television ads than others?

Based on the previous studies on the informativeness of TV commercials, Thailand is similar to Ecuador in terms of their economic development. The following hypotheses are thus stated assuming the same trend of informative value of TV commercials found in the country socio-economically comparable to Thailand.

H1: Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to be more informative than their U.S. counterparts.

Sub H1 A: The overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than that of their U.S. counterparts.

Sub H1 B: Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than their U.S. counterparts.

Product high/low-involvement is also a crucial indicator for the level of informativeness as found in Weinberger and Spotts' study (1982). The following hypotheses presume a similar pattern and correlation between TV commercial informativeness and the level of involvement of the products being advertised.

H2: In both countries, prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products are likely to be more informative than those for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 A: The overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products is likely to be higher than that for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 B: Thai prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than those for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 C: The overall percentage of informative U.S. prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products is likely to be higher than that for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 D: U.S. prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than those for low-involvement ones.

Another aspect which should be taken into account when determining factors contributing to different levels of TV commercial informativeness is the length of commercials. Long commercials are likely to provide relatively more information than short ones since more time is allowed for presentation.

The third hypothesis is thus stated as follows:

H3: In both countries, length of commercials is a meaningful variable of the level of information presented: long commercials are likely to present more information than short ones.

Sub H3 A: The overall percentage of long informative Thai prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than that for short ones.

Sub H3 B: Long Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than short ones.

Sub H3 C: The overall percentage of long informative U.S. prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than that for short ones.

Sub H3 D: Long U.S. prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than short ones.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

This study is primarily aimed at making comparisons between national prime-time TV commercials from two distinct countries, Thailand and the U.S., in terms of their informative value. In addition, the trend of informativeness of American TV advertising since the 1977 benchmark study can be revealed through the up-to-date data.

Since the study focuses on the content of TV advertising, informative aspect in particular, content analysis is a sound research method and was used to achieve the mentioned purposes. Content analysis is one of the commonly used research techniques for media and journalistic studies (Johnson and Shocket 1976). It has gained popularity because data on media are readily accessible. Researchers can have access to copies of the print media and to audio and videotapes of the broadcast media (Singletary and Stone 1988). Up to 21% (27 out of 128) of research studies on broadcasting communications published in the Journal of Broadcasting from 1969-1976 applied the content analysis approach (Wimmer and Haynes 1978 as cited in Tse 1990).

Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Fearing (1954) suggested that latent content as well as manifest

content may be examined by content analysis, a series of judgments or descriptions made under specifically defined conditions by judges trained in the use of objectively defined criteria. Paisley (1969) referred to content analysis as a phase of information processing in which communication content is transformed through objective and systematic application of categorization rules into data that can be summarized and compared. Krippendorf (1980) described content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context." In conclusion, the agreement on the key characteristics of content analysis is to study, analyze and measure variables in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner (Kassarjian 1977).

Unit of Analysis

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1987), the unit of analysis is the most meaningful but smallest element of a content analysis. It is the unit that we have information on and is actually counted. In this study, the unit of analysis is a single national prime-time TV commercial from the countries selected.

National prime-time TV commercials are defined as those advertising national brands and institutions during the sample broadcast hours. Commercials for temporary products such as movies and upcoming programs were not considered.

Sampling

This research employed a multi-stage random sampling method. Two sets of commercials (weekday and weekend) from each country were first stratified to obtain representative samples from the relevant population. National prime-time TV commercials broadcast via the three major American networks: ABC (channel 5, WOI affiliate), CBS (channel 8, KCCI affiliate) and NBC (Channel 13, WHO affiliate) in Ames, Iowa during June and a portion of July 1991 were arbitrarily selected. In order to ensure a balanced distribution in the sampling period, a composite week and channel were constructed. Prime-time commercials of these affiliates were then videotaped on the following days: channel 5 (ABC) on Monday of the first week, channel 8 (CBS) on Tuesday of the second week and channel 13 (NBC) on Wednesday of the third week. A random combination of commercials from the three channels were taped on Thursday of the fourth week and Friday of the fifth week (2 hours per channel).

Weekend commercials were sampled in the same manner. Those broadcast via channel 5 were videotaped on the first weekend of June, channel 8 on the second weekend and channel 13 on the third weekend. A combination of commercials from the three channels was taped on the fourth weekend (1 hour per channel on both Saturday and Sunday).

As for Thai samples, Thai prime-time TV commercials were simultaneously videotaped off channels 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Bangkok, Thailand. The sampling stratification was similar to their American counterparts. TV commercials aired via channel 3 were videotaped on Monday of the first week of June, channel 5 on Tuesday of the second week, channel 7 on Wednesday of the third week, channel 9 on Thursday of the fourth week, and a random combination from the four channels on Friday of the fifth week (1 hour per channel).

Weekend commercials were also selected along these guidelines. Commercials on channel 3 were taped on the first weekend of the month, channel 5 on the second weekend, channel 7 on the third weekend and channel 9 on the fourth weekend respectively.

All videotaped commercials were then edited and reruns were excluded from the original set of samples. A total of 100 weekday and 50 weekend commercials were obtained from each sample country using the random table. All selected commercials were videotaped again for later review.

Independent vs. Dependent Variables

Independent variables, by definition, are variables that cause or have some effects on dependent variables and vary by research situations (Wimmer and Dominick 1987). In this

study, the independent variable used to answer research question 1 and test hypothesis 1 is

1. Country

Since this study is primarily concerned about cross-cultural analysis, country is the most important independent variable in this regard. Two sets of samples were to be compared cross-culturally. The results can be used to either support or reject hypothesis 1.

As for research question 2 and hypothesis 2, product category and the level of product involvement are the independent variables.

2. Product category

Previous studies revealed that the level of commercial informativeness varies from one product category to another. This independent variable is thus justified for the analysis. The result yielded will help explain whether there is any significant difference in informative value across product categories in both countries.

3. Level of involvement

In order to find out the significant difference accounted for by a variable more sophisticated than the product category, a consumer behavior concept of involvement was

introduced to the analysis. Products advertised in the sample commercials were grouped into "high" versus "low" involvement subcategories. Each group was tested to detect its contribution to significant difference in informative value of commercials. The level of involvement became an interesting independent variable due to the significant results obtained in the previous study done by Weinberger and Spotts when the level of involvement was taken into account.

Length of commercials is the only independent variable used to test hypothesis 3.

4. Length of commercials

Standard length of commercials was treated as an independent variable. The difference in commercial length is likely to be related to its informative value in a positive direction. The longer the commercial is, the greater the informative value is likely to be presented since relatively more time is allowed to provide information.

The only **dependent variable** in this study is **"the informative value of national Thai and American prime-time TV commercials."** It is the key variable used to test all three hypotheses. Its relationship with those mentioned independent variables or the different levels of informativeness caused by any independent variable will add more aspects to the study.

Operationalization and Category Construction

Category construction is the heart of content analysis. However, using a category that has been used in other studies has some advantages since it ensures functionality of the system (Tse 1990). Based on the hypotheses stated at the end of the last chapter and the independent versus dependent variables described earlier, the following five categories were constructed.

1. Country

Two country subcategories are 1. Thailand, 2. the U.S.

2. Length of commercials

Since the majority of samples lasts either 15 or 30 seconds, two subcategories were constructed to represent "long" and "short" commercials as follows:

1. 15-29 second commercials (short)
2. 30 or more second commercials (long).

3. Product Categories

The categories used in this study were also adapted from previous studies for comparable results. Six commercial subcategories from Resnik and Stern's study were used as an original frame. Modifications were made to obtain more

clear-cut, exhaustive and mutually exclusive subcategories as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Product categories

Category	Products included
1. Food	Food and edible food-related items: seasoning, ingredients, snacks, beverages and candies, restaurants and fast-food places
2. Personal care	Both expensive and inexpensive personal care products
3. Laundry, cleaners & household items	All products for laundry and cleaning purposes, both expensive and inexpensive items for household use and decoration
4. Hobbies, toys & recreations	Both expensive and inexpensive hobbies, toys and recreations
5. Transportation & appliances	Automobile, airlines and any other means of transportation, appliances
6. Institute	Institutional public relations and services
7. Others	Unclassified products and services

4. Level of involvement

In this study, the sample commercials were also categorized by the level of involvement of the product being advertised. The criteria for the high/low-involvement classification were developed based on the concept popularized by Krugman in 1965.

Involvement is defined as a reflection of motivation in the form of high/low level of perceived personal product relevance invoked by a stimulus (or stimuli) within a specific

situation. It is considered a function of person, object and situation: an individual's underlying motivations are reflected through needs and values which, in turn, are his self-concept. Involvement is activated when the object is perceived as being instrumental in meeting important needs, goals and values. The situation makes the perceived need-satisfying significance vary. These three elements interrelate and determine an individual's level of involvement in a particular product in a specific context (Engel et al. 1990).

Extensive research on involvement agrees on the three major factors that basically determine an individual's level of involvement:

1. Personal factors Involvement is the basic function of need and drive. The more the product or service is perceived as enhancing self-image, the higher the level of involvement is.

2. Product factors How consumers respond to products will determine their level of involvement. Involvement is greater for products that fulfill important needs and values, and high perceived risk in purchase and use. The perceived risk can take many forms including physical (risk of bodily harm), psychological (especially a negative effect on self-image), performance (fear that the product will not perform as

expected, and financial (risk that outcomes will lead to loss of earning).

3. Situational factors Situational involvement changes over time. It can increase when social pressures are felt.

In addition, this study partially adopted FCB model developed by Vaughn (1980, 1986) and others (Berger 1981) at Foote, Cone and Belding. The FCB matrix cross-classifies product decision-making situations along two dimensions: high/low-involvement and thinking and feeling (Weinberger and Spotts 1989). Table 5 illustrates how high/low-involvement products were classified in this study when thinking and feeling aspects were taken into consideration.

Therefore, all product categories in the sample commercials were classified as either in the high or low-involvement group based on Table 5. Social and institutional

Table 5. High/low product involvement based on FCB model

	Thinking	Feeling
High	-Automobile -Appliances	-Jewelry, Cosmetics -Fashion clothing -Exercise devices -Furniture -Hobby, recreation, toy
Low	-Laundry, cleaners -Household items -Gasoline -Over-counter drugs	-Food, beverage, candies -Inexpensive personal care -Cigarettes

advertising was labeled low-involvement in this study since its objective is more of public awareness or public relations than selling a particular product and thus decreases the level of involvement. In sum, the subcategories under the product involvement are:

1. Low-involvement
2. High-involvement

5. Informative value

This study operationally replicated previous studies as far as the informative value is concerned. The operational definitions, informative criteria and experimental procedures developed by Resnik and Stern (1977) were adopted. In this study, the informative value focuses on the face value of commercials. An informative commercial should, therefore, permit a typical viewer to make a more intelligent buying decision after seeing the commercial than before seeing it by providing cues that enable viewers to better achieve their own personal sets of purchase objectives.

Such informative cues can be transmitted either through audio or visual stimuli. In order to be informative, a commercial needs to convey at least one of the following criteria (Table 6):

Table 6. Evaluative criteria and their operational definition

Evaluative criteria	Operational definitions
1. Price-value	a. What does the product cost? b. What is the need satisfaction capability/dollars? c. What is its value retention capability?
2. Quality	Product characteristics which distinguish a particular product from competing products based upon an objective evaluation of workmanship, engineering, durability, excellence of materials, structural superiority superiority of personnel, attention to detail, or special services?
3. Performance	what does the product do and how well does it do, what is it designed to do in comparison to alternative purchases?
4. Components/content	a. What is the product composed of? b. What ingredients does it contain? c. What ancillary items are included with the product?
5. Availability	a. Where can the product be purchased? b. When will the product be available for purchase?
6. Special offers	What limited-time, nonprice deals are available with a particular purchase?
7. Taste	Is evidence presented that the taste of a particular product is perceived as superior in taste by a sample of potential customers? The opinion of the advertiser is inadequate.
8. Nutrition	Are specific data given concerning the nutritional content of a particular product? Is a direct specific comparison made with other products?

Table 6. (continued)

9. Packaging or shape	a. What package is the product available in which makes it more desirable than alternatives?
10. Guarantees/warranties	What post-purchase assurances accompany the product?
11. Safety	What safety features are available in a particular product compared to alternative choices?
12. Independent research	Are results of research gathered by an "independent" research firm presented?
13. Company research	Are data gathered by a company to compare their product with a competitor's presented?
14. New ideas	a. Is a totally new concept introduced during the commercial? b. Are its advantages presented?

Reliability

In order to ensure the reliability of the categorization system, an intercoder reliability test was first conducted before the actual coding started. Intercoder reliability is the level of agreement among several coders processing the same communication material. It is the degree of consistency between coders applying the same set of categories to the same content. As a result, the more precise the category is, the higher the intercoder reliability should be (Kassarjian 1977).

Four coders participated in the reliability test. To eliminate language barriers, two native speakers from each

country were the coders for commercials from their own countries. One English major graduate and one Electrical Engineering undergraduate American student from Iowa State University were invited to separately code American commercials. Two graduate Thai students in Electrical Engineering and Industrial Engineering at Iowa State University were the coders for Thai commercials. The author was the third coder for both sample sets.

Ten weekday and five weekend commercials from each country, which accounted for 10% of the total 150 commercials, were coded to test the intercoder reliability. All coders were given a coding sheet (appendix) and told to follow the category classification for the coding. After they read the instructions and description, the author again explained clearly with concrete examples how to decide whether a commercial conveys any of the informative criteria.

To assure that the degree of intercoder reliability is acceptable, Scott's conservative estimate was applied:

$$PI = \frac{\%\ Observed\ agreement - \%\ Expected\ agreement}{1 - \%\ Expected\ agreement}$$

According to this formula, the observed percentage of agreement refers to the percentage of judgments on which the two coders agree when coding the same data independently. The expected percentage of agreement is the percentage of agreement to be expected by chance. PI is the ratio of the

actual difference between the obtained and the chance agreement to the maximum difference between the obtained and the chance agreement. PI can be interpreted as the extent to which the coding reliability exceeds chance. Scott's formula is conservative by taking the chance into account (Holsti 1969; Stempel 1981).

The expected agreement is determined by finding the proportion of items falling into each category of a category set, and then summing the square of those proportions. The expected agreement for the three pairs of coders was 0.1652. Scott's PI for each pair of all coders was shown in Table 7.

Table 7. PI using Scott's formula

Country	Coder 1:2	Coder 1:3	Coder 2:3
Thailand	.84	.84	.87
U.S.	.83	.76	.76

A composite reliability coefficient was computed according to the following formula:

$$Coefficient = \frac{N(Average\ inter\text{-}judge\ agreement)}{1+[(N-1)(Average\ inter\text{-}judge\ agreement)]}$$

Where N is the number of judges (Holsti 1969), the average inter-judge agreement for each country was

Thailand (.84 + .84 + .87)/3 = .85

U.S. (.83 + .76 + .76)/3 = .78

Therefore, the composite reliability coefficient was

Thailand $\frac{3(.85)}{1+(3-1)(.85)} = .94$

The U.S. $\frac{3(.78)}{1+(3-1)(.78)} = .91$

As far as the acceptable level of intercoder reliability is concerned, Berelson (1952) claimed that the range between 66 and 95% with a concentration at about 90% is quite satisfactory. According to Stempel (1981), content analysts would like to see the minimum level above 90%. Disagreement among coders is likely to be accounted for by inadequate definition of category, failure of coders to achieve a common name of reference and oversights (Tse 1990).

Nonetheless, the research context and the type of information coded usually determine the minimum level of acceptable intercoder reliability. When little coder judgment is needed to place units into categories, and coding becomes a mechanical or clerical task, one could expect a fairly high degree of reliability. On the contrary, if a certain amount of interpretation is involved, reliability estimates are typically lower. In general, the greater the amount of judgmental leeway given to coders, the lower the reliability coefficients will be (Wimmer and Dominick 1987).

Since coding in this study required a fairly high amount of coders' interpretation of broadcast content, the degree of reliability was likely to be comparatively lower than typical published content analyses or those involving little coder judgment. The coders were instructed to use the criteria as a guideline but could also interpret the content of commercials in the same liberal manner as in previous studies. Therefore, over 90% composite reliability derived from Scott's formula is fairly satisfactory. It can be said that the category system in this study functioned and the coders were able to achieve a common understanding of the category system.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The coding process for a total sample of 300 commercials from Thailand and the U.S. was completed by Mid-October 1991. The SPSSX (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program was then selected for statistical computer analyses. As a comprehensive system for managing, analyzing, and displaying data, the SPSSX was found a very effective tool to obtain reliable statistical results (Norusis 1983).

Frequency, Crosstabulation and Difference of Means T-test were the major statistical methods used in this study. The mentioned methods were considered most appropriate since the data were primarily measured on the nominal level. Frequency initially reveals the distribution of the data. Crosstabulation is a sound statistical method when both independent and dependent variables are on the nominal level and the primary objective is to make a comparison between two variables. Difference of Means T-test is also an effective statistical tool to test whether the two sample means are equal when the dependent variable is on the interval scale.

In order to be eligible for T-test runs, the nominal level data in this study needed transformation. The dependent variable "informative value" was transformed using the following computer command during the statistic procedures:

COMPUTE INFOVALU = SUM(PRICE TO NEWIDEAS)

In so doing, each evaluative criterion with "yes" answer was given a score which was later added up to create the total score of the variable "informative value" for every single commercial. The scores could range from 0 to 14.

However, Crosstabulation and Difference of Means T-test could not be utilized for all parts of the study due to insufficiency of the samples in some categories or various goals to be achieved. In those cases, other statistical methods including Oneway Anova and Scheffe test were introduced for more feasible and reliable analyses. This will be discussed in detail when this report moves on to those particular research questions or hypotheses.

The important findings are summarized as follows:

Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1

Since research question 1 and hypothesis 1 were aimed at testing the same aspect of the research: the different levels of TV commercial informativeness determined by the same independent variable, country, the integrated results were to be described together. The research question 1 is

R 1 A: What is the percentage of informative versus non-informative weekday and weekend Thai prime-time TV commercials?

R 1 B: What is the percentage of informative versus non-informative weekday and weekend U.S. prime-time TV commercials?

From the frequency table (8), it was found that the overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials was 77.3% compared to 81.4% for the U.S. samples. The weekday commercials in both countries were almost similar in terms of being informative (53.9%:54%).

However, the informativeness of weekend prime-time commercials was slightly different. The U.S. samples were deemed more informative for 4% (23.4%:27.4%).

Table 8. Informative value: Number of cues by country

Country	Period	1 cue	2 cues	3-4 cues	Total
Thailand	Weekday	53 (35.3%)	23 (15.3%)	5 (3.3%)	81 (53.9%)
	Weekend	30 (20%)	4 (2.7%)	1 (0.7%)	35 (23.4%)
U.S.	Weekday	54 (36%)	21 (14%)	6 (4%)	81 (54 %)
	Weekend	31 (20.7%)	7 (4.7%)	3 (2%)	41 (27.4%)

The average informative cues per ad for Thai and American weekday commercials were found almost identical (1.15:1.16). In contrast, the mean cue for American weekend commercials was comparatively much higher (0.82:1.08), resulting in higher overall mean cue per ad for American samples (1.047:1.127). The average informative cues per ad for both weekday and

weekend prime-time commercials from both countries were calculated as shown in Table 9.

Since the difference of mean informative cues per ad for Thai weekday and weekend commercials was quite apparent, Difference of Means T-tests were tried to detect any significant difference between the means of weekday and weekend commercials within the country samples.

Table 9. Average informative cue per ad: Thailand vs. U.S.

Country	Period	Mean of cue per ad	Overall mean
Thailand	Weekday	1.16	1.047
	Weekend	0.82	
U.S.	Weekday	1.15	1.127
	Weekend	1.08	

A significant result was found only in the case of Thailand. Weekday commercials were significantly greater in information than those for weekends. The mean cue of 1.16 for weekday commercials was higher than the weekend commercials' mean cue of 0.82 at the .05 significance level as shown in Table 10.

The U.S. samples showed no significant result as demonstrated in Table 11.

Table 10. T-test: Mean cue per ad, weekday vs. weekend Thai samples

Period	# of cases	Mean	F value	2-tail prob	Separate variance T	DF	2-tailed
Weekday	100	1.1600	1.61	.067	2.71	120.8	.008
Weekend	50	.8200					

1-tailed probability = .004

Table 11. T-test: Mean cue per ad, weekday vs. weekend U.S. samples

Period	# of cases	Mean	F value	2-tail prob	Pooled variance T	DF	2-tailed
Weekday	100	1.1500	1.19	.497	.51	148	.614
Weekend	50	1.0800					

1-tailed probability = .307

Hypothesis 1 was tested next as follows:

H1: Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to be more informative than their U.S. counterparts.

Sub H1 A: The overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than their U.S. counterparts.

Sub H1 B: Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than their U.S. counterparts.

Despite the opposite results yielded by the frequency runs, Crosstabulations and Difference of Means T-tests were also conducted to detect any possible significant results for hypothesis 1. From the Crosstabulation results obtained (Table 12), it could be concluded that although the overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time commercials was not higher than their U.S. counterparts, the difference was not found significant at the .05 level. The independent variable, country, could not predict the difference in the dependent variable, informative value (Lambda = .00000).

Consistent outcomes were derived from the T-test run. The mean cue per ad of Thai and American samples was not significantly different as shown in Table 13.

Table 12. Crosstabulation: Informative value by country

	Informative cue		
Country	None	At least 1	Row total
Thailand	34 (22.7)	116 (77.3)	150 (50.0)
U.S.	28 (18.7)	122 (81.3)	150 (50.0)
Column total	62 (20.7)	238 (79.3)	300 (100.0)

Chi-square = .73191

Significance = .39227

Lambda = .00000

Table 13. T-test: Mean cue per ad, Thai vs. U.S. samples

Country	# of cases	Mean	F value	2-tail prob	Pooled variance T	DF	2-tailed
Thailand	150	1.0467	1.00	.996	-.87	298	.385
U.S.	150	1.1267					

1-tailed probability = .1925

As a result, subhypothesis 1 A and 1 B were rejected, as was hypothesis 1. Thai prime-time TV commercials were not greater in informative value than their U.S. counterparts for both overall percentage and the mean cue per ad. However, no significant result was found as far as the difference of informative value is concerned.

Research Question 2

R2: How do the product categories affect the level of commercial informativeness in both countries? Do some products provide more information in their television ads than others?

Frequency distribution showed that both Thailand and the U.S. have a comparable numbers of commercial samples representing each product category. Only the food & food-related and personal care categories were apparently more different in number than the rest. There were more American

food & food-related commercials than Thai counterparts while the pattern reversed in the personal care category (43:59 for food & food-related; 40:30 for personal care).

The frequency results are summarized in Tables 14 (both countries), 15 (Thai samples) and 16 (U.S. samples).

Table 14. Percentage of TV commercials by product category, Thai vs. U.S. Samples

Product category	Thailand	U.S.
1. Food & food-related, restaurant	43 (28.7%)	59 (39.3%)
2. Personal care	40 (26.7%)	30 (20.0%)
3. Laundry & household items	16 (10.7%)	11 (11.3%)
5. Transportation & appliances	17 (11.3%)	16 (10.7%)
6. Institute	9 (6%)	6 (4%)
7. Others	25 (16.7%)	27 (18.7%)

The fourth product category was dropped from the analysis since there was no sample representing this category. The most highly informative product category for Thai prime-time TV commercials was transportation & appliances (100%), followed by laundry & household (87.6%).

The next three categories were slightly different in informative value. They were food & food-related (76.7%),

others (76%) and personal care (75%) respectively. Institutional commercials seemed to provide the least information as only 33.3% of the samples was deemed informative.

Table 15. Informative value: Number of cues by product category, Thai samples

Product category	Total	1 cue	2 cues	3-4 cues
1. Food & food-related, restaurants	43	26 (60.5%)	5 (11.6%)	2 (2.6%)
2. Personal care	40	23 (57.5%)	7 (17.5%)	0
3. Laundry & household items	16	9 (56.3%)	2 (12.5%)	3 (18.8%)
5. Transportation & appliances	17	9 (52.9%)	7 (41.2%)	1 (5.9%)
6. Institute	9	3 (33.3%)	0	0
7. Others	25	13 (52.0%)	6 (24%)	0

As for the American samples, the first two most highly informative commercials reversed the Thai pattern. The product categories 3 and 5 presented most information (laundry & household-100% and transportation & appliances-93.8%), followed by personal care (86.6%).

Unclassified products, like the Thai samples, ranked fourth (78.6%) while the food & food-related category was

Table 16. Informative value: Number of cues by product category, U.S. samples

Product category	Total	1 cue	2 cues	3-4 cues
1. Food & food-related, restaurants	59	31 (52.5%)	11 (18.6%)	3 (5.1%)
2. Personal care	30	22 (73.3%)	3 (10.0%)	1 (3.3%)
3. Laundry & household	11	9 (81.8%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)
5. Transportation & appliances	16	7 (43.8%)	8 (50%)	0
6. Institute	6	2 (33.3%)	0	1 (16.7%)
7. Others	28	14 (50%)	5 (17.9%)	3 (10.7%)

slightly behind (76.2%). Also, the category with least information was the sixth, institutional commercials (50%).

Since 58.3% of the cells for the Thai samples and 54.2% of the U.S. samples had expected frequencies of less than five, Crosstabulations could not be legally run. Difference of Means T-test can be employed when only two means are to be compared. Therefore, Oneway Anova and Scheffe test were substituted to answer research question 2.

Oneway Anova is considered an appropriate statistical method since it is a multiple comparison test for more than two sample means. The Scheffe test was also called for only in the case that Oneway results show significant differences

in at least one pair of sample means. The Scheffe method is conservative of pairwise comparisons of means requiring larger differences between means for significance than most of the other methods (Norusis 1983).

As for the Thai samples, the Oneway Anova test showed that at least one pair of sample means was significantly different (F probability = .0017). The Scheffe test also revealed that group means of product categories 3 and 5 (laundry & household and transportation & appliances) were significantly different from the mean of the sixth group (institute) at the .05 level. In other words, the former groups provided more information than the latter since their group means were higher at the .05 significance level.

Since the Oneway Anova table for American samples showed no significant result (F probability = .4323), the Scheffe test was automatically suppressed. The U.S. prime-time TV commercial samples were not significantly different in terms of informative value across product categories.

The Oneway Anova results for both countries are summarized in the Tables 17 and 18.

Hypothesis 2

H2: In both countries, prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products is likely to be more informative than those for low-involvement ones.

Table 17. Oneway Anova: Mean cue per ad by product category, Thai samples

Source	DF.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between groups	5	11.7255	2.3451	4.0712	.0017
Within groups	144	82.9478	.5760		
Total	149	94.6733			

Table 18. Oneway Anova: Mean cue per ad by product category, U.S. samples

Source	DF.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between groups	5	3.1123	.6625	.9798	.4323
Within groups	144	91.4811	.6353		
Total	149	94.5933			

Sub H2 A: The overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products is likely to be higher than those for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 C: The overall percentage of informative U.S. prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products is likely to be higher than those for low-involvement ones.

Frequency distribution revealed a comparable number of low and high-involvement commercials in Thailand and the U.S. (Table 19). In both countries, low-involvement commercials accounted for approximately 77% of the total sample. Crosstabulation was used to test subhypothesis 2 A. No

statistically significant result was found. The distribution of informative versus non-informative Thai prime-time commercials by the level of product involvement (high/low) is summed up in Table 20.

Table 19. Informative value by product high/low-involvement

Country	Involve	Total	1 Cue	2 Cues	3-4 Cues
Thailand	Low	116	68 (58.6%)	19 (16.4%)	3 (2.6%)
	High	34	15 (44.1%)	8 (23.5%)	3 (8.8%)
U.S.	Low	113	67 (59.3%)	17 (15%)	5 (4.4%)
	High	37	18 (48.6%)	11 (29.7%)	4 (10.8%)

Table 20. Crosstabulation: Informative value by product high/low-involvement, Thai samples

	Informative value		
Involvement	None	At least 1	Row total
Low	26 (22.4)	90 (77.6)	116 (77.3)
High	8 (23.5)	26 (76.5)	34 (22.7)
Column total	34 (22.7)	116 (77.3)	150 (100.0)

Chi-square = .01867

Significance = .89132

Lambda = .00000

As for the U.S. samples, the frequency run revealed that one cell would have had the expected frequency of less than 5 if Crosstabulation had been conducted. To collapse the table in order to legally run a Chi-square test was also impossible since the cell with less than 5 expected frequencies was in the non-informative group. The only way to increase frequency in this cell was then to increase the sample size.

Therefore, only subhypothesis 2 A was rejected while subhypothesis 2C was pending. The overall percentage of informative Thai prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products was not significantly higher than that for low-involvement ones.

From the frequency results, however, the U.S. prime-time TV commercials (sub H2 c) for high-involvement products tended to be greater in informative value than those for low-involvement products at a somewhat significant level (89.1%:78.7%).

Such an assumption, however, was not conclusive since Crosstabulation could not be legally run. As a result, Difference of Means T-test was the only mean used to test the U.S. samples as to be further discussed.

The average cues per ad of both sample sets were thus compared using Difference of Means T-test in order to test the following part of hypothesis 2.

Sub H2 B: Thai prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than those for low-involvement ones.

Sub H2 D: U.S. prime-time TV commercials for high-involvement products are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than those for low-involvement ones.

As expected, a statistically significant result was obtained only in the case of the U.S. samples. The average of informative cues per ad for American prime-time high-involvement commercials was statistically higher than that of the low-involvement ones at the .05 significance level (1-tailed probability was .007) as illustrated in Table 21.

The outcomes from the T-test for Thai commercials confirmed the results yielded by the Crosstabulation run. The means of cues per ad for high/low-involvement products advertised via Thai prime-time TV were not significantly different at the .05 level (1-tailed probability was .131).

Subhypothesis 2 B was rejected while subhypothesis 2 D was supported. One can conclude that the high/low product involvement is a crucial determinant for the level of information presented in a U.S. prime-time TV commercial.

The high-involvement products provided relatively more information in their commercials than the low-involvement ones. No such an effect was found in the case of Thailand. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was also rejected.

Table 21. T-test: Mean cue per ad by involvement, U.S. samples

Involve	Nos.	Mean	F value 2-tailed prob.	Pooled variance T value DF 2-tailed
Low	113	1.0354	1.18 .513	-2.49 148 .014
High	37	1.4054		

Table 22. T-test: Mean cue per ad by involvement, Thai samples

Involve	Nos.	Mean	F value 2-tailed prob.	Separate variance T value DF 2-tailed
Low	116	1.0000	1.77 .028	-1.14 44.46 .262
High	34	1.2059		

Hypothesis 3

H3: In both countries, length of commercials is a meaningful variable of the level of information presented: long commercials are likely to present more information than short ones.

Sub H3 A: The overall percentage of long informative Thai prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than that for short ones.

Sub H3 C: The overall percentage of long informative Thai prime-time TV commercials is likely to be higher than that for short ones.

Frequency distribution revealed that the Thai sample relatively had a more comparable number of commercials in both

time categories than their U.S. counterparts. There were 87 Thai ads falling in the "short" category and 63 ads in the "long" one. The U.S. sample, on the contrary, had 36 short ads and 114 long ads. The distribution is shown in Table 23.

Table 23. Informative value: Number of cues by length of commercials

Country	Length	1 cue	2 cues	3-4 cues	Total
Thailand	Short 15-29	49 (56.3%)	15 (17.2%)	3 (3.4%)	67 (86.9%)
	Long 30 OR >	34 (54.0%)	12 (19.0%)	3 (4.8%)	49 (77.8%)
U.S.	Short 15-29	25 (69.4%)	4 (11.1%)	1 (2.8%)	30 (83.3%)
	Long 30 OR >	60 (52.6%)	24 (21.1%)	8 (7.0%)	92 (80.7%)

Surprisingly, the percentage of informative short commercials was found to be higher than that of long commercials (86.9%:77.8% in Thailand and 83.3%:80.7% in the U.S.). However, no significant result was derived when using Crosstabulations to test both subhypotheses.

Therefore, subhypotheses 3 A and 3 C were rejected. The overall percentage of long informative Thai and U.S. prime-time TV commercials is not higher than that for short ones. Nonetheless, the difference was not found statistically significant at the .05 level in both countries. Crosstabulation results are shown in Tables 24 and 25.

Table 24. Crosstabulation: Informative value by length of commercials, Thai samples

	Informative value		
Length	None	At least 1	Row total
Short	20 (23.0)	67 (77.0)	87 (58.0)
Long	14 (22.2)	49 (77.8)	63 (42.0)
Column total	34 (22.7)	116 (77.3)	150 (100.0)

Chi-square = .01224

Significance = .91190

Lambda = .00000

Table 25. Crosstabulation: informative value by length of commercials, U.S. samples

	Informative value		
Length	None	At least 1	Row total
Short	6 (16.7)	30 (83.3)	36 (24.0)
Long	22 (19.3)	92 (80.7)	114 (76.0)
Column total	28 (18.7)	122 (81.3)	150 (100.0)

Chi-square = .12480

Significance = .72389

Lambda = .00000

Difference of Mean T-tests were run to test subhypotheses 3 B and 3 D:

Sub H3 B: Long Thai prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than short ones.

Sub H3 D: Long U.S. prime-time TV commercials are likely to have a higher average of informative cues per ad than short ones.

It was found out that long commercials presented a higher average of informative cues per ad than their short counterparts in both countries (1.0794:1.0230 for Thai samples and 1.1579:1.0278 for American samples). Nonetheless, the differences were not statistically significant at the .05 level. The 1-tailed probabilities were .335 and .1975 for Thailand and the U.S. respectively. The T-test results are summed up in Tables 26 and 27.

Table 26. T-test: Mean cue per ad by length of commercials, Thai samples

Length	Nos.	Mean	F value	2-tailed prob.	Pooled variance T value	DF	2-tailed
Short	87	1.0230	1.14	.576	-.43	148	.670
Long	63	1.0794					

1-Tailed probability = .335

Table 27. T-test mean cue per ad by length of commercials, U.S. samples

Length	Nos.	Mean	F value	2-tailed prob.	Pooled variance T value	DF	2-tailed
Short	36	1.0278	1.23	.495	-.85	148	.395
Long	114	1.1579					

1-Tailed probability = .1975

As a result, subhypotheses 3 B and 3 D were rejected. This also caused us to reject hypothesis 3. Length of commercials was not found to be one of the variables that differentiate the level of information presented in prime-time TV commercials in Thailand and the U.S.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The findings discussed earlier showed discrepancies between the previous research in Ecuador and this updated study. The likelihood for a commercial to be highly informative as suggested by Renforth and Raveed's concept of linkages among the level of economic development, product life-cycle and TV advertising informativeness is rather small in the case of Thailand. Since the product life-cycle is one of the aspects beyond the scope of this study, its relationship with the stage of economic development is obscure.

The only conclusion that could be drawn is that commercials in a less developed country like Thailand do not necessarily use "hard-sell" to present much information to make the public aware of the product existence.

The factor most likely to help explain why the level of information in Thai prime-time commercials, while fairly satisfactory (77.3%), was not as high as expected and even slightly lower than their American counterparts (81.4%) is the socio-cultural background of the audience.

Successful advertisements need to be planned, designed and implemented in a fashion that draws the target audience's attention purposely. Therefore, the target market's lifestyles and values should be well researched and

advertising should be planned accordingly (Schultz 1987). One of the most prevalent Thai values is sanuk (fun). Almost every facet of life activities should contain a sense of pleasure or fun. Shopping and buying habits are not exceptional. For example, shopping is not considered only a business transaction but also a combination of sociable activity and price bargaining. Such a unique buying behavior is very common in the marketplace nationwide excluding large shopping malls carrying merchandise with fixed price tags. Price bargaining is a reflection of economic constraints plus pleasure. Haggling over prices usually makes selling more fun, especially in the open market and retail stores.

Since the ultimate goal of advertising is also to sell, an assumption can be made regarding the way Thai advertisements are presented through mass media. Based on the Thai value of "sanuk", Thai advertising rather uses a "soft-sell" approach to attract the fun-loving audience. This also makes the advertisements more memorable. Unfortunately, "soft-sell" advertising focuses more on entertaining the audience and avoids direct information on the products. Thai advertising, TV commercials in particular, might thus provide more of "indirect or implied information" and entertaining elements that would be deemed non-informative when being measured against the fourteen rigorous evaluative criteria.

This assumption is consistent with the earlier research conducted by Thorelli and Sentell in Thailand (1982). In that study, 59% of 1,000 Thai respondents from Bangkok, municipality and rural areas, agreed on the essential of advertising as a viable source of consumer information. However, there is an agreement on untruthfulness and excessive emphasis on persuasion of advertising. Above all, they agreed that advertising does not necessarily result in better products and purchases. This is probably why TV commercials in Thailand were not found highly informative when being measured against the criteria that restrict them to only useful information for wiser future purchase.

Due to limited sources on media laws and advertising self-regulation in Thailand, an assumption cannot be made regarding the possible relationship between law enforcement and the level of information presented in Thai advertisements. Generally speaking, an authoritative unit was established to screen TV commercials prior to nationwide broadcasts. Any misleading, overclaiming and sexually oriented advertisements are censored. Only improved versions or replacements are allowed on TV. Advertising censorship in Thailand probably is concerned less about the level of information of the product advertised than the aspects just mentioned. However, this comment is not conclusive because of inaccessibility to proper references.

With regard to their U.S. counterparts, a favorable trend was found for TV advertising informativeness. Table 28 illustrates the trend since the 1977 benchmark study by Resnik and Stern.

Table 28. Percentage of informative U.S. TV ads from 1975-1991

Year	Total %	Informative TV ads		
		:1 cue	:2 cues	:3-4 cues
1975	49.2	32.2	16.0	1.0
1981	52.8	35.9	14.2	2.7
1985	65.3	38.1	16.8	10.4
1991	81.4	55.3	18.0	4.0

The percentage of informative commercials from the first decade (1975-1985) is not quite comparable to that of the latest one. The figures were the overall percentage from the three blocks of time when on-air commercials were randomly selected while the current study concentrated on prime-time commercials. When compared to the evening time block, which was closest to the prime-time, however, American commercials registered an even more consistently apparent improving trend.

Resnik and Stern's study in 1975 showed 60.3% informative weekday and weekend evening commercials. Tom et al.'s research pointed out that 63.6% of the weekday and 58.3% of the weekend commercials were informative. Weinberger and

Spotts' results (1985) were not categorized by broadcast time. The evening commercials, nevertheless, were found comparatively higher in informativeness than the other two day parts (morning and afternoon) in the first two studies. Therefore, one can presume improving figures for the evening commercials in Weinberger and Spotts' study due to their higher overall percentage of informative commercials. Vice versa, if the current study had taken other day part commercials into account, the overall figure for informative commercials would have been lower than 81.4%.

In short, U.S. TV commercial informativeness has been improving over the past decade. The figures showed consistent and reasonable improvement as mentioned.

When considering the product categories from which the level of informativeness in prime-time TV commercials differs in both countries, the reverse pattern was found in the case of American samples. In the two preceding research studies, the highly informative product categories were institutional, toy, hobby & transportation and others. The rest was in the less informative group. The present study, in contrast, showed that the highly informative group contained laundry & household, transportation & appliances and personal care. Institutional advertisements, turned to be the least informative group.

Nevertheless, such reverse findings were congruous with the significance results found when testing the different levels of information determined by high/low product involvement. In the U.S., commercials for high-involvement products were greater in informative value than those for low-involvement at the .05 significance level. The highly informative product categories also dominate the high-involvement group. Transportation & appliance purchases, for example, entail financial risk, and personal care can help improve individual self-image. Therefore, the reverse pattern of highly informative versus less informative product categories is plausible, given the significance of support from the test of high/low product involvement.

Despite no similar significant difference between high/low product involvement groups, the significant results from a multi-comparison across Thai product categories pointed out something interesting. The transportation & appliance category is almost always in the highly informative group regardless of the country studied. American, Australian and British transportation commercials were found highly informative. However, Thai commercials have a mixed pattern of informative versus non-informative product categories.

Their highly informative categories are transportation as in these developed countries and laundry & household as well as food & food-related as in Ecuador.

The reasons for this combination remain unclear. Nonetheless, this is the answer to why high versus low-involvement Thai commercials were not significantly different in informative value. The highly informative product categories were not in the high-involvement groups for Thai TV advertisements.

With regard to the length of commercials, it had been hypothesized that length could differentiate degrees of informativeness in TV advertising. The nonsignificant results found, however, are not surprising. The majority of the sample commercials last between 15-30 seconds. Only a few of them last longer and thus were dropped from the analysis since, as an outsider, they would merely have biased the results. Since the remaining time categories were limited to only two adjacent length, the difference in information presented might not be substantial enough to be detected at the .05 significance level. Consequently, it can be concluded that length of commercials does not differentiate the level of information provided in a TV ad in both countries. However, one must also keep in mind that only two different length categories were taken into account. Had more categories been analyzed, the results might have been something different.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

It can be said that the socio-cultural environments rather than the level of economic development or transfer of advertising operations from the U.S. determine how much information was provided in Thai television commercials. While their U.S. counterparts have enjoyed a consistently improving informativeness over the past decade, Thai commercials also presented a fairly high amount of information. Their level of informative value, however, was not found statistically different at the .05 significance level.

Product high/low-involvement appeared to be a predictor for high versus less informative commercials in the U.S. whereas Thai TV commercials had a combined pattern of highly informative product categories. The reasons for that are still clouded. However, an interesting point is transportation & appliance is always a highly informative product category in almost every country selected. This finding is consonant with the significant association of the product high/low-involvement and the level of information in American TV commercials since transportation & appliance is classified as a high-involvement group.

Length of commercials did not predict high/low level of information in both Thai and American television ads.

However, the fact that only two adjacent time categories, where data were available, were analyzed needs to be taken into account.

The limitations in this study apparently are the distance and unavailability of updated sources on Thai TV advertising and related data about Thailand. The research also overlooks the effects of the product life-cycle on the level of TV advertising informativeness. Besides, to use objective criteria to judge the sample commercials, even in the most liberal manner, measures only the researcher's viewpoint. Consumers, who directly benefit from the information in TV ads, might evaluate non-informative aspects such as emotional appeals very informative for them. If so, the figures of informative commercials from Thailand and the U.S. might be understated.

Since this study points out that the socio-cultural aspect is most likely to shape informative level in different countries, the future research might try to focus on countries with parallel socio-economic and cultural environments when making a comparison. The future results might also help explain in-depth whether the advertising format actually is a function of socio-cultural context of the target market it is aiming at. Finally, more cross-cultural studies are needed before generalization can be made globally.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aaker, David A. "Measuring the Information Content of Television Advertising." In Current Issues & Research in Advertising, Vol 1 Original Research and Theoretical Contributions, eds. J.H. Leigh & C.R. Martin Jr., 93-108. Ann Arbor: Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Michigan, 1984.

Aaker, David A. and Donald Norris. "Characteristics of TV Commercials Perceived as Informative." Journal of Advertising Research 22 (April/May 1982): 61-70.

Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finley. Statistical Methods for Social Sciences San Francisco: Dellen Publishing Company, 1986.

Bauer, Raymond A. and Stephen A. Greyser. Advertising in America: The Consumer View. Boston: Harvard University, 1968.

Berelson, B. Content Analysis in Communications Research. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952.

Berger, David. "A Retrospective: FCB Recall Study." Advertising Age 26 (October 1981): 36-8.

Carey, James W. "Communication and Culture." Communications Research 2 (April, 1975): 173-91.

Dowling, Grahame R. "Information Content in U.S. and Australian Television Advertising." Journal of Marketing 44 (Fall 1980): 34-37.

Engel, James F., Roger D. Blackwell and Paul W. Miniard. Consumer Behavior. Chicago: The Dryden Press, 1990.

Fearing, F. "Towards a Psychological Theory of Human Communication." Journal of Personality 22 (1953) 71-88.

Hamid, Faridah and Sue Girdwood. "Thailand." Asian Advertising and Marketing (April 1989): 57-66.

Holsti, Ole R. Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969.

Huang, Jen-Hung and Juei Hou. "The Effects of Regulation on the Level of Information Content of Television Advertising." In AMA Educators' Proceedings, Series 53, ed. S. Douglas et al., 93-6. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1987.

Hunt, Shelby D. "Informational VS. Persuasive Advertising: An Appraisal," Journal of Advertising 5 (Summer 1976): 5-8.

Kassarjian, Harold H. "Content Analysis in Consumer Research." Journal of Consumer Research 4 (June 1977): 8-18.

Kotler, Philip and Gary Armstrong. Marketing: An Introduction Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1987.

Krippendorf, Klans. Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980.

Krugman, Herbert E. "The Impact of Television Advertising: Learning without Involvement." The Public Opinion Quarterly 29 (fall 1965): 349-56.

Leiss, William, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally. Social Communication in Advertising, Persons, Products & Images of Well-being. New York: Methuen Publications, 1986.

Marquez, F.T. "Cross-Cultural Research: a Decision Factor in Standardized versus Non-standardized Global Advertising." Gazette 25 (1979): 150-62.

Mcquail, Denis. Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction. London: Sage Publications, 1989.

Mueller, Arbara. "Reflections of Culture: An Analysis of Japanese and American Advertising Appeals." Journal of Advertising Research (June/July 1987): 51-9.

Nelson, Philip. "Advertising as Informative." Journal of Political Economy 82 (1974): 729-54.

Norusis, Marija J. SPSSX Introductory Statistics Guide. Chicago: Semline, Inc., 1983.

Paisley, W.J. "Studying Style as Deviation from Encoding Norms." In The Analysis of Communications Content: Developments in Scientific Theories and Computer Technologies, eds. G. Gerbner et al., 133-46. New York: Wiley, 1969.

Pollay, Richard W., Judy Zaichkowsky, and Christina Fryer. "Regulation Hasn't Changed TV. Ads Much!" Journalism Quarterly 57 (1980): 438-46.

Reid, Leonard N. and Hebert J. Rotfeld. "How Informative Are Ads on Children's TV Shows?" Journalism Quarterly 60 (1981): 108-11.

Renforth, William and Sion Raveed. "Consumer Information Cues in Television Advertising: A Cross Country Analysis." Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 11 (Summer 1983): 216-25.

Resnik, Alan J. and Bruce L. Stern. "An Analysis of Information Content in Television Advertising." Journal of Marketing 41 (January 1977): 50-3.

Schultz, Don E., Dennis Martin and William P. Brown. Strategic Advertising Campaigns, Second Edition. Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1987.

Scott, William A. "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding." Public Opinion Quarterly 19 No.3 (Fall 1955): 321-25.

Singletary, Michael W. and Gerald Stone. Communication Theory and Research Applications. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1988.

Smith, Barbara L., Karl F. Johnson, David W. Paulsen and Frances Shocket. Political Research Methods: Foundation and Techniques. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967.

Stempel, III, Guido H. "Statistical Designs for Content Analysis." In Research Methods in Mass Communication. Edited by Guido H. Stempel III and Bruce H. Westley. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1981.

Stern, Bruce L., Alan J. Resnik and Edward L. Grubb. "An Analysis of Information Content in Television Advertising." In Contemporary Marketing Thought, ed. B.A. Greenberg & D.M. Bellenger. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1977.

Stigler, Goerge. "The Economics of Information." Journal of Political Economy 69 (1961): 222.

Thorelli, Hans B. and Gerald D. Sentell. Consumer Emancipation and Economic Development: The Case of Thailand. Greenwich: Jai Press Inc., 1982.

Tom, Gail, Stephen Calvert, Rita Goolkatsian and Arlene Zumsteg. "An Analysis of Information Content in Television Advertising: An Update." In Current Issue & Research in Advertising, Vol 1 Original Research and Theoretical Contributions, eds. J.H. Leigh & C.R. Martin Jr., 159-165. Ann Arbor: Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Michigan, 1984.

Tse, Eric Hing-Tat. "Is Bad News a Criterion of News Selection by the Local Newscasts in Ames/Des Moines, Iowa? Masters Thesis, Iowa State University, 1991.

Vaughn, Richard. "How Advertising Works: A Planning Model." Journal of Advertising 20 (5), 27-33.

Vaughn, Richard. "How Advertising Works: A Planning Model Revisited." Journal of Advertising Research 26(1), 57-66.

Weinberger, Marc G. and Harlan E. Spotts. "A Situational View of Information Content in TV Advertising in the U.S. and UK." Journal of Marketing 53 (January 1989): 89-94.

Wimmer, Roger D. and Joseph R. Dominick. Mass Media Research, An Introduction. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987.

Wimmer, Roger D. and Richard B. Haynes. "Statistical Analyses in the Journal of Broadcasting, 1970-76." Journal of Broadcasting 22, 2 (Spring, 1978): 241-248.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my wholehearted thanks to my major professor, Prof. Karl Friederich, whose kindness, patience and constant guidance has contributed a great deal to the completion of my thesis. Special thanks go to my committee members, Prof. Kim Smith and Prof. Carol David for their helpful suggestions and their precious time.

My appreciation is also extended to Prof. Wally Niebauer and Prof. Eric Abbott who spent their valuable time advising me on the statistical and computer analyses.

Thanks to Sutthira Thanyavanich and Somsak Wongkittikriwon as well as Rebecca Fisher and Alan Kordick for being my coders. Without their help, this thesis would have been a very difficult task.

Thank you all my friends in the U.S. for being here and for making this vast wintery land a warm, more bearable place to be in. Among all, special thanks are for Maew, Ni, Jan, Kay, Na, Gee and Pao whose understanding and encouragement have helped me go through hard times for all these years.

I am also indebted to my best friends in Thailand; Pom (including Fei and her aunt), Ann, Nui and Fon for their help and existence. With them, I am certain that there is always somebody for me to turn to, either with joy or tears.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to my beloved "Pa On," whose love and dedication to my life has made today's success of mine possible. I am also thankful to Mom and Dad who have consistently been a support to me for higher education.

APPENDIX

CODING SHEET

ID NOS._____

COUNTRY 1. Thailand 2. USA

BROADCAST DAY 1. Weekday 2. Weekend

TIME 1. 15-29 secs 2. 30 secs or more

PRODUCT CATEGORY

1. Food, food-related, snack, beverage, restaurant

2. Personal care
   a. Inexpensive (identify)_____
   b. Expensive (identify)_____

3. Laundry, cleaners, household items
   a. Inexpensive (identify)_____
   b. Expensive (identify)_____

4. Hobby, toy, recreation
   (identify)_____

5. Transportation, appliance
   (identify)_____

6. Institute (identify)_____

7. Others (identify)_____

INFORMATIVE CUE PRESENTED

1. Price/value
2. Quality
3. Performance
4. Components/contents
5. Availability
6. Special offer
7. Taste
8. Nutrition
9. Packaging/shape
10. Guarantees
11. Safety
12. Independent research
13. Company research
14. New ideas

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

1. High 2. Low