# 摘 要

广告，简单的解释是"广而告之"，其目的是为了招徕顾客，沟通生产与消费之间的关系，使供求渠道更为通畅。事实上，广告无处不在，是经济全球化和信息时代一个重要的社会现象，成为现代生活的一个重要组成部分。

鉴于广告的重要作用，越来越多的专家、学者给予广告日益密切的关注。语言学家们一直对广告语篇表现出浓厚的兴趣。现今对于广告的研究大多数都着眼于文体，翻译以及文化这三个方面。

作为商品经济发展的产物，广告讲究的是其影响力，即如何在有限的资源内达到较强的效力。在公众看来，广告本身就已经是一种最简化的言语，它本身就体现了语言的省力性。

本文试图从美国语言学家 George Kingsley Zipf 所提出的省力原则的角度分析广告，尝试从广告人出发来观察广告这一本来就相对经济的言语中的省力与不省力，试图确认省力原则在广告人与受众之间的适用性。省力原则，就是在语言的使用中花最少的力气获得最大的认知效果。在语言领域，Zipf 承认有两股互相矛盾的力量。一股是"统一力量"（the force of unification），以简化为目标。另一股是"分化力量"（the force of diversification），以反歧义为目标。（姜望琪，2005）Zipf 认为所谓的省力只是一种概率，是一种平均量，人们在交际时只有在上述两股力量或两种原则之间达成妥协，达成一种平衡，才能真正的省力。但本文发现在大多数情况下，由于广告这一文体的特殊性，省力的平衡点都倾向于广告的受众即潜在的消费者。

全文共分为五章。第一章简要介绍了商业广告的定义功能，前人的研究方向与成果；第二章对省力原则的来龙去脉给予了详尽的介绍，并且对与之相关的语言学理论作了简要的说明；第三章阐述了省力原则之于广告的适用性；第四章是通篇的核心，论证省力原则与商业广告策划的关系，提出本文的研究方法和资料搜集方式，分析了广告策划中有可能会碰到的问题以及广告策略的重要性，主要通过理论分析和广告例证从心理，文化以及传播途径三方面进行论证；第五章得出论证的结论，并指出研究的局限性，提出相应的研究建议。

关键词：商业广告策划，省力原则，策略

# Abstract

Advertising is an important social phenomenon in the global-economic time and the information age. In fact, advertisements are permeable and they become an inseparable part of modern life.

Due to their importance, advertisements have been attracting more and more experts and scholars' attention. Linguists at first mainly showed their concern on the manifested linguistic features. Later on they turned to semiotics, semantics and pragmatics. Admittedly they have made great contributions to the study of advertising discourse, but few studies have been undertaken in terms of the Principle of Least Effort.

The Principle of Least Effort (PLE) was put forward by American linguist George Kingsley Zipf. He held that in the realm of language, there are two contradictory forces: one is the force of unification, and the other is the force of diversification.(Jiang ,2005) The Principle wants to convey two concepts —— Least Effort and Best Effect, and makes sure that the so-called Least Effort is just a kind of probability and balance. Here in this thesis, the author wants to test the applicability of the PLE in the commercial advertisement planning. It has been found that the balance point lies in the recipient owing to the special interactive relation between the designer and the audience, i.e. the target consumers are supposed to cost least effort in most of the situations.

The whole thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter 1 first presents a brief introduction to the definitions and functions of commercial advertisement, and then reviews some of the previous researches on commercial advertisement. Chapter 2 discusses PLE and its development. Chapter 3 states the applicability of PLE in the field of advertising. Chapter 4, the key part of the whole thesis, illustrates and analyzes the ways in which PLE is applied in the field of advertising planning at three levels : psychology, culture and communication channel. Chapter 5 is the conclusion, in which the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are also pointed out.

Key words: Commercial Advertisement Planning , PLE, Strategies

# 前 言

广告，简单的解释是"广而告之"，其目的是为了招徕顾客，沟通生产与消费之间的关系，使供求渠道更为通畅。事实上，广告无处不在，是经济全球化和信息时代一个重要的社会现象，是现代生活的一个重要组成部分，国家经济、企业发展、市场开发、对外贸易、人民日常生活无一不和广告密切相关。

鉴于广告的重要作用，越来越多的专家、学者给予广告日益密切的关注。其中语言学家们从不同的角度对广告中最重要的交际因素———广告语言进行研究，旨在探索广告语言的基本规律和理论指导，从而使广告语言设计方案更科学，最终帮助广告实现其应有的目的。就广告这个课题，大多数研究者都只着眼于文体，翻译以及文化三方面进行探讨，透视广告语体的特点，列举大量实例分析了广告语言的词汇特点，语句特点和修辞特点，讨论广告翻译中的音韵美，形象美，简约美和语言艺术美，或者是从语言层次和社会文化两方面探讨广告在英汉互译中所产生的一些语用失误。

本文试图从美国语言学家 George Kingsley Zipf 所提出的省力原则的角度分析广告，尝试从广告人出发来观察广告这一本来就相对经济的言语中的省力与不省力，试图确认省力原则在广告人与受众之间的适用性。省力原则，就是在语言的使用中花最少的力气获得最大的认知效果。在语言领域，Zipf 承认有两股互相矛盾的力量：一股是"统一力量"（the force of unification），以简化为目标；另一股是"分化力量"（the force of diversification），以反歧义为目标的。（姜望琪，2005）Zipf 认为所谓的省力只是一种概率，是一种平均量，人们在交际时只有在上述两股力量之间达成妥协，达成一种平衡的情况下，才能真正的省力。但本文发现在大多数情况下，由于广告这一文体的特殊性，省力的平衡点都倾向于广告的受众即潜在的消费者。

文章共分为五章。首先在第一章回顾了广告的多种定义及功能，指出广告是需要借助一定的媒介征服潜在消费者的信息传播活动，并且简要说明了广告的六大功能：交际功能，信息功能，表达功能，表达功能，情感功能，语境功能以及指示功能。在此基础上，文章对先前国内外学者对广告的研究成果作了简要的说明，代表人物有 G Leech (1996), T. Vestergarrd, K. Schroder (1985), K. Tanaka (1994), Huang Guowen (1997)，Chen Xinren (1998)以及 Wang Zijuan(1995)。

第二章对省力原则的来龙去脉给予了详尽的介绍。不仅从 Zipf 创建 Zipf' Law 到正式

提出省力原则，较为详细地阐释说明了省力原则本身，而且还涉及了一些相关的哲学思想和语言学理论。比如"奥卡姆剃刀原理"，"格式塔理论"，法国语言学家 André Martinet 提出的经济原则，美国语用学家 Laurence Horn 的 Q 原则和 R 原则，以及 Dan Sperber 和 Deirdre Wilson 在 1986 正式提出的关联理论等等。

第三章从广告策划的两方参与者（广告设计者与广告受众）之间的相对关系，广告设计者的主导地位以及广告形式的简洁性三方面入手引出了广告策划中省力原则的适用性问题。

第四章是通篇的核心。开头首先介绍了本文的研究方法和数据收集方法。整个论证将会把注意力放在广告设计者身上，意在找出省力原则如何在广告设计中得到运用，广告策划如何使受众少费力且达到较好的效果。说明了有关例证的收集方法，包括收集的内容和所限定的媒体范围，将广告的范围限定为女性用品。从广告的说服性这一终极目标入手，由 Nida 划分的广告的五要素（广告商品，参与者，说服模式，话语代码和传递信息）来说明广告策划过程的复杂性，指出这一过程中所要解决的主要问题。接着论述了广告策略的重要性，由马斯洛的理论开始展开论述如何吸引受众的注意力。在广义的心理层面上对心理过程在感知，意识，理解，说服以及记忆上分层次给予了理论阐释，主要从心理，文化以及传播途径三方面进行论证并进行了例证。在心理层面上主要从理性诉求与感性诉求，泛化目标与具体目标两个方面四个概念进行论证，并辅以具体的例证；在文化层面上从同一地区的文化认同感进行阐释；在传播途径上从传播学中的两种传播模式入手，针对广告传播的特殊性，指出媒体选择对于省力与否的影响。另外，在这章最后补充了一些与省力有关的广告设计典型方案，比如：广告的播放时间和重复率，广告的视觉效果以及广告中的明星效应。以上所述都反映了广告人费力，受众省力的情况，本章最后进一步补充提出了广告中也会出现受众认知不省力的情况等等。

第五章得出全文的结论——广告的设计同样适用省力原则，并且具有其特殊性，即：在整个信息传播过程中，广告活动中涉及到的各方的地位是相对衡定的，广告受众在大多数情况下就是省力的一方，并没有与设计者进行相互转换。在最后指出本文研究的一些局限性，由于省力原则原本是基于数字分析而来，提出对于广告省力的后续研究可以采用将定性分析与定量分析相结合的方法。

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Definitions and Functions of Advertising

A picture of our commercialized society would be incomplete without commercial advertising. Commercial advertisements appear everywhere, on radio and television, in newspapers and magazines, on billboards along the highway or the city streets, on the sides of buses and other means of transportation, and in almost any place imaginable. It is not exaggerated when somebody says that we are bombarded by advertisements almost everyday and everywhere.

Today in China, while our economic structure is shifting from the entirely planned economy to the socialist market economy system, commercial advertising is becoming more and more active and sophisticated. From different perspectives or purposes, the definitions might also vary. In English, the word "advertise" has its origin in "advertere" in Latin, meaning "to inform somebody of something", "to bring into notice" or "to draw attention to something", etc.

Encyclopedia Britannia defines advertising as "...the techniques used to bring products, services, opinions or cause to public notice for the purpose of persuading the public to respond in a certain way towards what is advertised. Most advertising involves promoting a good that is for sale, but similar methods are used to encourage people to drive safely, to support various charities, advertising is the most important source of income for media (eg: newspapers, magazines, or television stations) through which it is conducted."(*Encyclopedia Britannia*. 1907, Vol-1)

Another definition of commercial advertisement made by American Marketing Association is commonly accepted by public recently. "Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in return about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various medium.[1]"

Today, a widely quoted working definition of commercial advertising was put

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[1] http://www.wsu.edu:8080/-taflinge/addefine.html, A Definition of Advertising by,Richard F. Taglinger. Dec.28, 2005

forward by Coutland L.Bovee and William F. Arens(1982, 1986): advertising is the non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods or services) or ideas by identified sponsors through various medium.

To summarize, we would get the idea that firstly commercial advertising is a communication process. Secondly, at least a medium is used. Thirdly, this communication process has a definite purpose to convince the target audience. The above three characteristics show that commercial advertising is closely connected with the society, interconnecting with potential consumers and guiding their buying habits.

After the discussion of the definition, let's move to the function of advertising. As we all know, language possesses the following functions: phatic function, informative function, expressive function, evocative function, contextual function and directive function. Since commercial advertising language is a kind of communication, it uses language as the most important means for the intercourse. Commercial advertisement is provided with all the basic functions of language with special emphasis on informative, directive, evocative and expressive functions. In order to persuade consumers to buy the products of a certain brand, designers will give information about the products to consumers, arouse their good feelings towards the brand, and finally motivate them to buy their products. The process of persuasion in an advertisement is described as to attract attention, arouse interest, stimulate desire, create conviction and get action. A designer's main purpose is to present and exhibit product or service, and to spread the influence and coverage of which to the extent that the potential purchasing population becomes real and actual. Simply put designers try by the various means at their disposal to get people to buy the product or service advertised. Moreover, designers want potential purchasers to consider what is advertised to the exclusion of all other similar products or services. They attempt to construct a commercial advertisement that will fully attract the attention of the potential purchaser and which will have a persuasive effect. Therefore designers thus create a semiotic world in order to persuade their audience of the essential "rightness"

of purchasing the product or service advertised.

## 1.2 Previous Research on Commercial Advertisement

As the product of the modern commercialized society, commercial advertisements have drawn more and more attention. Many researches have been done on commercial advertisements from different perspectives. After the review of related literature, the author found that studies on commercial advertisements in the past are mainly focused on three aspects: linguistic features, fuzzy expressions, and cultural or rhetorical insights into commercial advertisements.

Some researchers have provided good linguistic description of commercial advertising language by analyzing the linguistic forms of different levels in detail. The researches of G .Leech (1996), T. Vestergarrd and K. Schroder (1985), and K. Tanaka (1994) represented the development of advertising studies abroad. Leech's main contribution lied in his finding out of the functions of the most frequently-used adjectives in English commercial advertisements, such as new, good, free, delicious, etc. The first serious study of commercial advertising language was also conducted by Leech (1968), who collected 617 television ads broadcasted in Britain and made a comprehensive study on the linguistic features of the language used in commercial advertisements. However, he mainly concentrated on the sentence structure and rhetoric devices due to the limitation of the development of linguistics at that time. T. Vestergarrd and K. Schronder related advertising language structure to its functions and adopted linguistic strategies to achieve communicative aims. G. Cook contributed a lot to the discourse analysis of commercial advertising language and demonstrated that language can change people's thoughts and influence the marketing. Keiko Tanaka, a Japanese female author, finished and published *Advertising Language: A Pragmatic Approach to Advertisements in Britain and Japan* in 1994, which is a recent work in this field. She thought that surprisingly few studies have been undertaken in linguistics (Tanaka, 1994) although the language used in commercial advertisement has been the subject of studies in many other disciplines. Therefore the main purpose of her study is claimed to give an adequate analysis of the language

of written commercial advertisements in Britain and Japan within the framework of pragmatics, and to explain how communication occurs between the designers and the audience. Tanaka applied Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986) to the analysis. Relevance theory is linguistic and cognitive in nature, stressing the importance of audience context, inference and disposition (Davidson, 1992). In Tanaka's work *Advertising Language* (1994), she agreed with Sperber and Wilson that Grice's Conversation Maxims should be reduced to a single principle, that of Relevance.

Many scholars at home keep working at the descriptive level of commercial advertising language including linguistic features, rhetorical features and conversational implicature etc. Zhao Jing, Ni Baoyuan and Huang Guowen. are the typical representatives. It is found that the previous studies are mainly divided into the following categories. Stylistic approach: Zhang Jian (1995). He stressed on linguistic features of English commercial advertisements from several levels of language including phonetics, lexicon, syntax, rhetoric, etc; Pragmatic approach: Huang Guowen (1997) and Chen Xinren (1998). Huang argued the designer's violation of Gricean Cooperative Principle, while Chen found that state-oriented presupposition accounted for most of the commercial advertisement cases; Sociolinguistics approach: Wang Zijuan(1995). Wang Zijuan's findings clearly indicated that although women's social and economic status has been improved over the last few decades, both China and US are still male-dominated societies. She discussed the differences of images, personification and identity of males and females reflected in commercial advertisements and showed that, in order to make commercial ads more effective and reliable, designers should build their creation on audience psychology.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

Through the review discussed above, it is known to all that commercial advertising language has been a subject of study in different aspects , but few studies have been undertaken in terms of the Principle of Least Effort . That is the reason why this study focuses on this topic. In this chapter, let's get a comprehensive understanding of Zipf's PLE and its development.

## 2.1 Zipf's Principle of Least Effort

Before the emergence of the PLE, Harvard linguistic professor George Kingsley Zipf (1902-1950) found that the frequency (f) of occurrence of a word within a suitable long text multiplied by the rank (r) (ranked by the frequency) is a constant (c). Its formula is $r \times f = c$. The reasoning about r and f is called " Zipf's Law".(Jiang, 2005:88)

Apart from language, Zipf also applied his findings in other fields. In 1949, among enormous irrelevant phenomenon, he put forward a basic principle —— the Principle of Least Effort, which guides human behaviors in his book *Human Behavior and the Principl of Least Effort*. Firstly in that book Zipf clarified the literal meaning of PLE in two aspects. The first one: it is just a balance. "We can readily understand how the least work solution to one of his problems may lead to results that will inevitably increase the amount of work that he must expend in solving his subsequent problems. In other words, the minimizing of work in soluting today's problems may lead to results that will increase tomorrow's work beyond what would have been necessary if today's work had not been completely minimized. Conversely, by expending more work than necessary today, one may thereby save still more work tomorrow."(Zipf, 1949:5-6) The second one: it is just a probability. "It is the person's average rate of work-expenditure over time that is minimized in his behavior, and not just his work-expenditure at any moment or in any one isolated problem, without any reference to his future problems." (Zipf, 1949:5-6)

His formal argument begun with the words, for he held that "the study of words

offers a key to an understanding of the entire speech process". (Zipf, 1949:19) Zipf probed into it from two kinds of viewpoints. From the viewpoint of speaker(the speaker's economy) who has the job of selecting not only the meaning to be conveyed but also the words that will convey them, there would doubtless exist an important latent economy in a vocabulary that consisted exclusively of one single word — a single word that would mean whatever the speaker wanted it to mean. Thus, if there were $m$ different meanings to be verbalized, this word would have $m$ different meanings. For by having a single-word vocabulary the speaker would be spared the effort that is necessary to acquire and maintain a large vocabulary and to select particular words with particular meanings from this vocabulary. But from the viewpoint of the auditor (the auditor's economy), a single-word vocabulary would represent the acme of verbal labour, since he would be faced by the impossible task of determining the particular meaning to which the single word in given situation might refer. Indeed, from the viewpoint of the auditor, who has the job of deciphering the speaker's meanings, the important internal economy of speech would be found rather in vocabulary of such size that it possessed a distinctly different word for each different meaning to be verbalized. Thus if there were $m$ different meanings, there would be $m$ different words, with one meaning per word. This one-to-one correspondence between different words and different meanings, which represents the auditor's economy, would save effort for the auditor in his attempt to determine the particular meaning to which a given spoken word referred.

As far as the problem of words and meanings is concerned, the presence of far-reaching contradictory economies relate in each case to the number of different meanings that a word may have. Thus, if there are an $m$ number of different distinctive meanings to be verbalized, there will be: 1) a speaker's economy in possessing a vocabulary of one word which will refer to all the distinctive meanings; and there will also be; 2) an opposing auditor's economy in possessing a vocabulary of $m$ different words with one distinctive meaning for each word. Obviously the two opposing economies are in extreme conflict.

Any given stream of speech is subject to two "opposing forces". The one "force"

(the speaker's economy) will tend to reduce the size of the vocabulary to a single word by unifying all meanings behind a single word. It is the "force of unification". Opposed to it is a second "force" (the auditor's economy) that will increase the size of a vocabulary to a point where there will be a distinctly different word for each different meaning. It is the "force of diversification". In the language of these two economies or forces, the vocabulary of a given stream of speech is constantly subject of the opposing forces of unification and diversification which will determine both the $n$ number of actual words in the vocabulary, and also the meaning of those words.

People do in fact always act with a maximum economy of effort, and therefore in the process of speaking-listening they will automatically minimize the expenditure of effort by seeking the balance between the economy of a small wieldy vocabulary of more general reference on the one hand, and the economy of a larger one of more precise reference on the other. (Zipf ,1949:20-22)

To put it simply, there are the force of unification( speaker's economy) and the force of diversification( auditor's economy) in the course of communication. The Principle of Least Effort wants to convey two concepts —— least effort and best effect, and makes sure that so-called least effort is just a kind of probability and balance.


## 2.2 The Development of PLE

Zipf's theory has something in common with some important ideas, among which the famous two are the Gestalt theory and Occam's Razor. Gestalt theory is a school of psychology founded in the 20th century that provided the foundation for the modern study of perception. In the field of linguistics ,Gestalt Theory holds that the human perception possesses the characteristics of Gestalt. Gestalt theory emphasizes that the whole of anything is greater than its parts. That is, the attributes of the whole are not deducible from analysis of the parts in isolation[2]. The Gestalt phenomenon comes into being in the two-way interaction between the information imbedded in the

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[2] http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9036624

stimulating signals and notion structure stored in memory. Let's look at an example. Even if only a part of a sphere is shown to the observer, he can still recognize the sphere. The Gestalt knowledge about the sphere object can automatically help the observer figure out the rest part of the sphere. The notions initiated in the course of pragmatical inference are far more than the notions interpreted by ears and eyes. The speaker always obey the Principle of the Least Effort in encoding, that is to use the minimum effort in encoding and transmit the maximum amount of information. ( Jiang Yong & Ma Yulei,2003)

Occam's Razor , is also called Law of Economy, or Law of Parsimony, stated by William Ockham (1285–1347/49), a scholastic. Its gist reads like that "Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate" ——"Plurality should not be posited without necessity." The principle gives precedence to simplicity; of two competing theories, the simplest explanation of an entity is to be preferred. The principle is also expressed "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily."[3]

Apart from philosophy ideas, PLE also has been represented in the field of linguistics. At that time ,French linguist André Martinet advanced the same view. Compared with Zipf, he called " the principle of least effort" to be " economy principle" , the " force of unification" to be "the principle of least effort", and "the force of diversification" "the requirements of communication". Though he had a different diction, Martinet shared a lot of common with Zipf. In 1955, Martinet published a book named *Économie des Changements Phonétiques*, with the purpose to study the economy principle of phonology changes. He also affirmed Zipf'theory in his book *A Functional View of Language*(1962). Otherwise, he adhered to that though no language doesn't have economical form, it doesn't mean redundancy doesn't exist.

"Economy principle is the basic principle in the evolution of language. There're two kinds of forces that promote language to develop people's need to communicate and express feelings and people's natural laziness in mentality and psychology.The above two forces are mutually confronted and this confrontation should reach a state

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[3] http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9056716/Ockhams-razor

of balance."(Martinet, 1955:16) Martinet also believed that "when observing economy principle of language, the following factors should be taken into consideration: physically speaking, the recognizable sounds produced by human's vocal organs, the ability of recognizing sounds and human's limited memorizing ability; practically speaking, language, as a tool for human communication and understanding the whole world, is to be used conveniently. Generally speaking, people are not willing to, and also it's not necessary to make it more complicated." (Martinet, 1955:24) Martinet (1962) described a primary mechanism of language change as coming from the interaction of two factors: "first, the requirements of communication, the need for the speaker to convey his message, and second, the principle of least effort, which makes him restrict his output of energy, both mental and physical, to the minimum compatible with achieving his ends." (Martinet, 1962:139) Economy principle aims to use less words to express complete meanings in the process of language usage in order to save time and space. In simple words, it is to use simple rules and convenient methods to deal with the complicated language phenomena.

American linguist Whitney has already known the functions of economy principle in the development and change of language. He pointed out "human beings always manage, in most cases, unconsciously to make things easy for their organs of speech to economize time and efforts in the words of expression. People's pursuit of order, economy and betterness is an important evidence to promote the ability of language". (whitney 1991) In the year 1992, Chomsky put the economy principle into the use of generative grammar, leading it to the formation of his minimalist program. Grice (1978) proposed a modified Occam's Razor , which clearly shows the connection between his theory and that of Zipf's. British linguist Leech, in his book *Principles of Pragmatics*, also put forward economy principle, which is "to use relatively few sentences, words or syllables to express meanings on the basis of avoiding ambiguity. Its due result is that one of the features of modern English lexicon is the simple use of words,leading words into the development of monosyllabism." (Leech,1983:202)

Horn (1984) combined the Principle of Least Effort with Grice's Conversational Maxims , and argued for a two-principle model : the hearer-based Q-principle and the speaker-based R-principle. In his latest work, Larry Horn (2005) reiterated the position he has maintained since his important and influential paper in1984, according to which, apart from the Quality (truthfulness) Maxims, which he considered essential and unreducible, the Gricean Maxims should be reduced to two general principles. These are the Q-Principle and the R-Principle, the first of which is oriented to the *interests of the hearer and the second to the interests of the speaker*. He invoked a number of forerunners to this position, including Zipf (1949) and Martinet (1962). In a sense , Relevance Theory originated with Sperber and Wilson (1986/ 1995) is also concerned with the Principle of Least Effort , which talked about the achievement of greater effect at the cost of less effort .(Jiang, 2005:95)

# Chapter 3 Applicability of PLE in Advertising Language

As far as the advertisement is concerned, three kinds of persons will be involved in the planning course: the designer(planner), the advertiser(sponsor) and the recipient(consumer). The designer is the very one that creates the ads. The advertiser is the economic entity that provides some products or service; and the recipient is the potential consumer. Accordingly, three kinds of relationships emerge: designer and advertiser, advertiser and recipient, designer and consumer. The first two are the purely commercial practice, and have nothing to do with the advertising language. The designer create the ad according to the advertiser's demands and it is a commercial contract that links the two sides. In the advertising, the relationship between advertiser and consumer is indirect though the purpose of ad is to make the direct deal happen. Only the third one—— the relationship between designer and consumer will pay lots of attention to the advertising language.

The PLE introduced in the previous chapter is also concerned with language, especially the two parts involved in a conversation. It claims that the speaker's economy and auditor's economy will seek the balance during the intercommunication. The commercial advertising planning is a kind of intercommunication too, and the difference just lies in that advertising planning is non-personal and not a face-to-face communication. In designer's view, he would be spared the efforts to make his work a success by having a stable advertising model; from the viewpoint of the consumer, he has the job of decoding the various ad models, so he hopes every advertising model is distinctive and easy to understand. At this point, we can say that advertisement planning accords with PLE to a certain extent.

As commercial advertisement is by nature used to make more profits, the purpose of all commercial advertisements includes communicating, informing and persuading. Crystal and Davy (1975) once stated that there were two main functions of advertising: informing and persuading. However, these two functions are not of equal importance in that information is subordinated to persuasion. (Rein, 1982:4) A designer does not inform for the sake of improving his readers' knowledge, but only to sell a product.

The ultimate purpose of the advertisement is to influence uninterested readers and to stimulate them to buy product or service. In order to realize the purpose, designers have to both inform and entertain the readers. Designers first have their audience recognize the product or service, then go further to arouse their interest and persuade them to buy the product or service. In the advertising, special emphasis is laid on the designer owing to the special relationship between the designer and the recipient. The designers are the ones that really act the active roles and the recipients the passive roles. This situation is the same as that represented in the PLE. If the speakers want to save efforts, they will intend to unify any words they uttered. If the auditors want to save efforts, they will hope the speaker use different expressions as many as possible. Pay special attention here. In either situation, the speaker is the one side that really does something.

Besides, a successful commercial advertisement is often a good combination of words, pictures and sometimes sound element. In the realm of language, advertisement language is the most economical one. Let's take some advertisement slogans for example: the Korean electronic products LG "Life is Good"; Nestle Coffee " The taste is great"; Nike sports series " JUST DO IT". All of them share the characteristics of brevity and concision. It seems that advertisement has already cost least effort. But it is on the surface that it is the most concise one and actually it demands enormous efforts behind the story. On the surface, several words or a film less than 15 seconds can be understood easily by consumers, but the formation of several words or a film less than 15 seconds is not an easy job. Apparently, in the course of planning ,the designers should take everything into consideration and rack their brain to create a wonderful ad which can achieve the expected effect. This is the reason why the author focuses on the designers in this thesis.

In this chapter, the author compares the advertisement planning with the verbal communication. The ad planning reflects the nature of PLE. It is found that the PLE is applicable in the field of advertising in theory. But, how the designers apply the PLE consciously and subconsciously during the planning period. Let's move to the next chapter.

# Chapter 4 The Principle of Least Effort

# and Commercial Advertisement

## 4.1 Research Methodology and Data Collection

In developing an ecological account of human behaviour quite generally, Zipf emphasized the fundamental role played by the Principle of Least Effort: "the primary principle that governs our entire individual and collective behaviour of all sorts, including the behaviour of our language."(Zipf, 1949: vii) In the realm of linguistic behaviour, he distinguished the opposing pressures exerted by the speaker's and the hearer's economies of effort, the one oriented toward minimal linguistic articulation, the other toward maximal explicitness. (Carston 2005)

In the field of advertising, PLE seems to have a little bit change in application. The balance between designer and reader is not interactive and dynamic, but one-way, i.e, the designer is always the one side consuming lots of efforts to plan the advertisement and make the maximal explicitness in advertising; the reader with a knowledge of common sense can understand the message conveyed in the ads easily and quickly.

By examining selected commercial advertisements, the paper wants to focus on the designer and try to find out how the PLE is applied in the advertising and how the advertising strategies make the recipient cost least effort and achieve the best effect.

Most of the selected examples are the commercial advertisement copies, among which several selected examples are with visual and verbal factors. Visual elements cannot afford to be overlooked in the study of commercial advertisements in this study due to the fact that written and visual elements are inseparable in modern commercial advertising. They are mostly from commercial adverting textbooks, and some visual advertisements are from internet. Otherwise, the collected examples are confined to the field of woman consumption. That can certainly help narrow down the range of material selection and make it convenient to carry out the thesis.

## 4.2 Problems in Advertisement Planning

In advertising, the communication between designer and audience can be regarded as an implicit conversation. Despite the absence of the designer in the ad broadcasting, we may reasonably assume that the designers initiate this conversation with the intended addressees and try to persuade the addressees to follow them.

The message of the conversation conveyed by the verbal and non-verbal signs consists of two different aspects: the signal and the content. The signal includes all the formal features of the message, and the content is the meaning of the signal. For the signal and the content to be transferred effectively, an appropriate channel is essential. From Nida's theory, five elements are of the utmost relevance to commercial advertisements. They are:

1. the subject matter, or the referents;

2. the participants who take part in the communication;

3. the speech act or the process of writing;

4. the code used, namely, the language, including all the symbols an arrangements;

5. the message, that is the particular way in which the subject matter is encoded into specific symbols and arrangements.      (Nida, 1993: 70).

The five points mentioned above by Nida are the main problems necessary for the designer to solve during the course of advertisement planning. The subject matter is the product or the service advertised in ads. Here in this thesis, woman consumption is chosen as the subject matter. The participants are the designers and the target audience. The speech act or the process of copy-writing, is the technique by which the advertisement employs to persuade the potential consumers. The code here is the language shared by both participants. But in the case of international commercial advertising, when a product is to be introduced into a foreign market, in which another language is spoken, the code has to be translated to convey the same idea without confronting the culture norms. The message is the way that the product or service is arranged to achieve the goal of promoting sales.

Among the five, the third element " the speech act or the process of writing" is the

most important one, for the right speech act can achieve the aim of making least effort and creating best effect.

## 4.3 The Significance of Advertising Strategies in terms of PLE

How to choose the proper speech act? Here the suitable strategies for persuading potential consumers are required. First of all, let's make the significance of advertising strategies in terms of PLE clear.

According to Maslow's theory, once a society has reached a stage where a reasonably large part of its population live above subsistence level, as industry develops so rapidly, commercial advertising is definitely inevitable (Vestergarrd, 1985: 7). Up to now more products bring more advertisements, which we meet everywhere everyday. It is the same story when we are on the Internet, doing research, or enjoying an attractive movie, many commercial advertisements will jump in front of us, and we will feel so annoyed. The designers have to think out effective ways to catch audience's eyes.

The designers have to be persuasive in commercial advertisement planning in order to win more customers. For more persuasiveness in commercial advertisement to influence readers, instead of selling their product or service directly, advertisers may sell us an attitude towards a product or a corporation. Furthermore, usually most of commercial advertisements have a concise form. Lots of information has been stuffed into several words, which apparently breaks the Principle of Least Effort. Actually, it is not. The more time is consumed, the more efforts will be made; the more efforts is made, the more effective the ad will be. Advertising itself is a kind of commercial behavior. The planning course is time-consuming and efforts-consuming, but the result is usually simple, even just a slogan.

"People's limited capacity for memory, especially for short-time memory, as well as the short-time storage of information really has a great impact on the use of language. When a sentence is too long or contains too many self-embedding sentences, far beyond the ability of short-time memory, it is quite difficult for people to handle."

(McGaugh, 1973:35) According to the statistics, only one third of ads seen by audience can make impression on them. Furthermore, within that 1/3, only 1/2 can be understood correctly, and only 5% can be stored in memory within 24 hours. As a result, if the designers want to make the recipients understand the advertisements easily and quickly, they need to make great efforts to do some pre-works. In the advertisement communication the mutual status of ad designer and reader is totally unequal, or we can say it is not compulsory for the potential readers to read any ad if they have no interest, not to mention to persuade them to buy something; on the other hand, the designers are supposed to exert themselves more to plan the ad in order to achieve the expected aim, and they have to take many factors into consideration. Through their skillful use of language in commercial advertising, the designers try to change consumers' thoughts and behavior. Such advertisements are aiming at establishing some relationship between the situation constructed and the product advertised. Thus in communication, it is acceptable to use all kinds of language strategies to achieve efficiency.

## 4.4 Strategies of Commercial Advertisement Planning

### 4.4.1 The Psychology of the Target Reader

The study of advertising psychology is the prerequisite of applying strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of commercial advertisements, by stimulating the audience's desire of owning, and then purchasing commodities or services. For more effective and persuasive presentation, designers have to know some theories and strategies of presentation. The appropriate application of the psychology strategies can save more efforts in advertising to a large extent. Consumers' psychological behavior includes trying to find selling-point, seeking ways to get it, and finally benefiting from owning the product or service.(Ruan, 1995: 132) As a result, it is extremely necessary to make the whole psychology process clear, which in a macro scope, contains the following process: perception, awareness (representation), understanding, persuasion (planning) and retention (memory). (Rein, 1982: 26)

Perception is the first step to attract the attention of the target group. Here the message is exposed through certain media to the public, which accomplishes the minimum requirement for the message. After the target audience read or hear the message, naturally they have two decisions: continue reading or listening or simply stop it. If one reads on, the message reception process continues; if one refuses, the process stops at once and the designer's attempt fails. For achieving a successful ad, the first task the designesr need to do is to attract the potential audience's attention and let them finish a complete message transmission. For example, in terms of a television advertisement, music, sound effect or visual interesting scenes might be combined to keep the audience's minds engaged and focused.

Awareness not only means the message has made an impression on the readers, but also the readers could subsequently identify it when they meet the similar ad next time. As far as the designers are concerned, the objective is awareness of the product, not the advertisement. For instance, a commercial might attract our attention because of the music or the sound effect purposely included in an ad, but once all these scenes disappear, what left on our minds is none except some eye-catching or funny scenes. Under such circumstance, what the whole commercial advertisement is driving at often remains vague and unclear. The failure of the commercial advertisement lies in the misconception that the awareness of the product equals the awareness of the advertisement.

In this stage of psychological process, four factors are of utmost importance: attention, relevance, interest and involvement. Attention means an ad should have preoccupying position when competing with other products in the same media. Likewise, readers would only pay attention to the ads that speak their personal concerns and interests. So an ad relevant to our everyday life by providing information about work, hobbies, rules and relationship and the like, would consequently invites audience's awareness. Then, different types of relevance will bring about different types of interest. If a message applies to any of these interests, then it will affect the audience personally and will be called to have personal relevance. Lastly, involvement refers to the intensity of the consumer's interest in a

product, medium, or message. The four elements combine to create a real awareness of the product or the service but not only the awareness of the advertisement.

Understanding is important especially for those ads presenting lots of information about the product such as brand, prize, size, how the product works, when and where to use it. By this way ad becomes one form of teaching, learning and knowing. And the language of ad used should be simple yet convincing. At the same time, figures of speech like metaphor are used to make connections in the consumer's mind, to link the product with something one aspires to, respects, values or appreciates by presenting a pleasant experience or specific lifestyle and the like.

Persuasion simply means the process of persuading people to believe or do something. The functions of persuasion vary a great deal in real commercial advertising, including the attempts to establish, reinforce or change an attitude, build an argument, touch an emotion, etc. But all in all, the effort is focused on making the advertisement copy believable. Among the techniques employed to achieve believability, psychological appeal is widely used, for it caters to the consumer's desire or wish for security, esteem, fear, sex, sensory pleasure and the like.

We could say that the process of understanding and persuasion is equal to the process of planning. Consumers will buy their products only if they understand and persuade themselves. The whole psychology process is a complete unit, and even when the consumers respond well to the perception, awareness, understanding and persuasion, it does not necessarily mean that the whole unit would be successful. There are two types of memory: recognition and recall. Recognition means that we can remember having seen something before, which is not enough for the product or service advertised. Recall means that we can not only remember having seen something before, but the information within.

How to achieve the effect of recall? In the following sections several strategies will be discussed one by one.

### 4.4.2 Psychological Strategies

The main purpose of commercial advertising is to persuade audience to follow designers' idea and finally buy the promoted products or services, so that designers and companies can increase profits (Myer, 1999). The designers make audience think about themselves and transfer their feelings to the advertised product. To sell commodities or services to prospective customers, a designer has to offer an interesting topic, assess the relationship between him and consumers, and choose the effective mode of advertisement copy, which all contribute to the persuasiveness of commercial advertising language. Consumers may be waken to buy merchandise so long as they realize the commodity is related to their needs. One of the most important tasks of commercial advertisement is that helping consumers to confirm their psychological or physical needs which merchandize can meet their needs.(Qu Shaobing, 1997) Consequently, "calling for consumers' response" is always the most important factor.

But, how to call for consumer's response? How to cost least effort to get good effect? Roughly there are two kinds of classifications: hard-sell and soft-sell; general consumer and specific consumer. The first pair is divided according to the reason appeal and emotional appeal or we can say the nature of the advertised things; the second pair is formed by distinguishing different target recipients.

### 4.4.2.1 Hard-sell and Soft-sell

"Hard selling makes a direct appeal. The prototype of a hard-sell advertisement involves talking loudly and directly to the audience about low cost, limited available and guaranteed reliability. In this section, planning is the most important factor to design hard-sell advertisement. Due to the difficult control of range of consumers and their geographical area, face-to-face communication and talking loudly are the perfect ways to sell their products. But this kind of advertisement is seldom in visual or written form, it is always in verbal. Therefore planning contents and structure of the verbal advertisement is the key task for designers." (Cook, 1992:10) This kind of advertising requires the ability to deal with things as the changing circumstances

demand. The Tides commercial film played by the famous comedian Guo Donglin can demonstrate the advantage of this kind of advertising. Different housewife has different need. The character went to each housewife's house in person and tested the effect of the washing powder on the spot. The language they used is casual and amiable, so it is welcomed by most of housewives who are industrious and thrifty in running a household. This kind of  model is very simple, applicable and low-cost. What' more, it can strengthen the intercommunication and sense of fact. The designers needn't make more efforts to think about the idea of ad copy.

"Soft selling relies more on mood than on exhortation, and on the implication that life will be better with the product. Hence it is more attractive and more skillful in persuasion." (Cook, 1992:10) The designers of soft-sell advertisement should use the beautiful and simply words to sell their points, and easy-remembering contents and structure could not be neglected. The consumer's psychology is subject to two motives—need and desire. The "need" means the basic material requirements for maintaining the standard living level, such as water and food; the "desire" is more advantageous than the "need", and it stands for the wish, which aims at keeping a certain social status or others, such as auto and watch. As a result, consumer's psychology is a kind of emotional thinking, subtle and sensitive, changeable and unstable. Therefore, there is a big room for designers to bring their creativities into full play. For example, the DiaoPai toothpaste(see Appendix 1)adopted a method of telling a family story, touching a real-life topic—the harmony between the stepmother and stepdaughter. The whole commercial film is permeated with the spirit of love, and impressed the audience a lot. Through this idea, DiaoPai successfully set up a good brand image of humanity and care.

Under the framework of PLE, we should add a parameter between the designer and the recipients. That is the nature of the products or service waiting to be advertised. The designers should take on the task of nature-measuring, and then design the different models according to the different natures. Out of natural instincts, they are inclined to choose one model to present different goods, but unfortunately, they have to yield to the pressure from the sales volume of the advertised goods. Therefore, the

designers have to give up the dream of simplification and saving efforts. On the other side, the recipients with dream of diversification want to see different ads of different goods. It is better that each goods has a certain kind of ad. Based on the psychology of the consumers and the nature of goods, the designers can come up with an idea to make the ad more successful. In a word, hard-sell advertisements suggest motives for purchase. Soft-sell advertisements, on the other hand, appeal to emotion, humor and mood. In the course of planning an ad for the living necessity, it is much better to choose the hard-sell model. As for the luxurious goods, soft-sell is a good choice. Therefore, if the designers can fully catch the special nature of the goods and then choose the either model, it is certain that they have realized how to save efforts to achieve the anticipated goal. Of course it is not absolute. Sometimes the mixed way or the reversed way can get good effect too.

### 4.4.2.2 General Consumers and Specific Consumers

when the author applies the PLE in this category, it is found that the target consumers are playing a more and more important role in the course of ad planning. Advertising language shares some general features with the language used in daily communication. When people speak or write, they use language to project themselves as certain kind of persons, a different kind in different circumstances. They also project themselves as engaged in certain kind of activities, a different kind in different circumstances. Otherwise, the information receivers cannot make sense of what they have said, written, or done. For the same reasons, some advertisements are designed for all readers, but some for a set of readers.

Here is the second classification—general consumer and specific consumer. There is no ad that doesn't need to accord with the general psychological process mentioned above. The whole ad planning should be based on the psychology law. Several points should be paid more attention. Firstly, attract consumers' attention, which is the prerequisite of information process. Attention is a kind of brain tension, through which the information get processed. Secondly, the ad copy should be recognized

easily. In daily life, when you talk with a person with accent, it is natural that you don't try to catch his words but avoid talking with him; when you read an obscure article, you will not make efforts to get it through and put it aside instead. In a word, when more efforts should be made on listening and reading, people will obey the cognition principle of least effort automatically. Usually people are passive in the advertisement cognition. They don't expect to get something from the ads, and listen, read and see the ads owing to the attraction of the ads or other reasons. Thirdly, the content of the ad should be understood easily. Within limited space and time, if the ad is too difficult, the children, even the adult, will choose to transfer their attention and refuse to continue the cognition activity. Finally, the message should be easy to memory. It is known to all that usually the ad can't lead to the purchasing activity directly. There is a period since the first contact between recipients and ads to the purchasing behavior. The memory will play a key role during this period. The four points are applicable to every consumer. Both the form and the content of the ad ideas are required to meet the four mentioned above.

In addition, some products or service have the specific target consumers. Therefore, the designers compose advertisements, more or less successfully, for the people who intend to read them. An advertisement is not necessary to sell a product or service to everyone, but to target the most likely group of consumers for its product. Not all designers address all audience all the time, and the audience, although they engage in a reception process, may not consider themselves to be addressed by all the advertisements they saw. So they can be in and out of the position of the "target audience" as considering who they are, where they are, and what they might do. Some advertisements directly mention its target audience.

Nowadays, the consumption created by women has been the mainstream. As a result, the target readers of most of cosmetics ads are supposed to be the woman. They are totally different from the man. As a group with special characteristics, the woman treasure beauty, love tenderness, and especially pay much more attention to the appearance. It is their nature. Suppose there are two ladies. Things are completely different if their ages are different. The young lady likes to be sunny and energetic,

and she will show much concern on the make-up (see Example 1); on the other hand the elderly lady wants to be more young, and skin-care (see Example 2).

**Example 1**

> Let's talk
>
> About the
>
> Perfect way to
>
> Wear makeup
>
> Invisibly      (Avon)

<div align="right">(Qi Yunfang, 2003:191)</div>

**Example 2**

> Wake up to younger---looking skin
>
> (Lancome Primordiale Intense Night)

<div align="right">( ibid.:192)</div>

On the PLE basis, it is without doubt that the designers probed deeply into the psychology possessed by the young lady, and they caught two key points: the first one is that most young ladies like to use makeup; the second one is that they hope their makeup couldn't be discovered. This kind of psychological process is apparent, and the most difficult thing for the designers is to come up with a distinctive idea to cater to the psychological need of the young ladies. It is reasonable to take the Example 1 as a conversation between the designer and a young lady. The words seem to be a secret talk between ladies, which makes the young lady accept it easily.

We also can study the consumption psychology possessed by the woman playing the role of mother. Usually their reactions to the ads are as follows: firstly, what good will the product do me? Am I interested in it? Secondly, does the situation represented in the ad accord with the real life? Finally, do I want to get it? When the advertised products are helpful to the house-keeping, when there are some pictures about hard-working housewives, and when the content of an ad can show the intimacy between mother and children, the traditional mother before the TV will react to it ardently. They will think that " this ad is like my real life" and " I just hope my baby can grow like that". (see Appendix 2) Similarly, if in an ad a husband is helping his

wife to do some housework, if an independent woman appears, or if the advertised goods can reduce the house-working time greatly, the modern mother's attention will be attracted completely. Let's take Appendix 3 as an example. In that ad, the heroine can do well in cooking with the help of stainless steel pan though apparently she is a career woman and has not much time to cook. And for the woman with more fancy and imagination, the Picture 1 can cater to their tastes.

**Picture 1**



This mobile phone ad used a fairy tale as its original source. The lady walked into an elevator and looked at herself through the mirror on the wall. Then she said " magic mirror, magic mirror, tell me..." Here the mirror screen is the selling-point. The designers wanted to emphasize the outer screen which can be used as a mirror. The outstanding characteristic of LG 6360 mobile phone has been represented clearly. It conforms to woman's psychology completely.

In conclusion, psychological strategy is the key method for designers to make least effort to create a wonderful ad. As long as the designers get hold of consumers' psychology, they can adopt the right way to get a better idea and avoid taking a roundabout course.

Under the guidance of PLE, it is found that the psychological situation of the target recipients is easy to be made clear, and the real key point is how to adopt the right strategy to get a better idea. By employing lots of encyclopedia knowledge, multimedia technology and some different modes of thinking, the designers try their best to catch the audience's eyes and to save audience's efforts at great cost.

## 4.4.3 Cultural Strategy

### 4.4.3.1 Culture as Background

Culture is a large and evasive concept. Scholars have all tried to define culture in a satisfactory manner, but each is dissatisfied with the other's definitions. As a result, we now have over 150 different definitions as reviewed by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) in their book *Culture, A Critical Review of Concept and Definition.*

In the theories of Wells, Burnett and Moriaty (1998), culture includes a complex of tangible items (art, literature, building, furniture, clothing and music) called material culture, along with intangible concepts (knowledge, laws, morals and customs) that together define a group of people or a way of life. The concepts, values, and behaviors that make up a culture are learned and passed on from one generation to the next.

Culture is a concept that appears simple but actually broad and complex in reality. It includes many aspects from trifle things in everyday life to cognitive and social structures. For this reason it is linked to the concept of socialization. In this broad sense, culture then refers to communities, which have different attitudes towards political and social issues, different cultural practices and references in their private lives, different social background, etc.

From these definitions, we can conclude that the word "culture" does not only confine to the way we think but also the way we act. These individual thoughts are formed at a very early stage in our growth process in a certain environment. The culture to which we are exposed would help create our patterns of thought, the way we see and experience the world, the way we interact with other people from the same or other cultures.

We are familiar with the importance of the family atmosphere where the children are brought up. The family's attitude towards certain things will influence the children's belief and judgment in later life. The same is true of the relationship between culture and commercial advertisement. From children we are being told what is right and wrong, so in adulthood we would behave naturally according to such principles, but when we suddenly moved into a different environment, we might be confronted with quite different principles, thus feeling at a loss. Likewise, when the advertisement produced for the western world is brought into China market, the ideas expressed might also be misunderstood by Chinese citizens. This contrast shows that culture is always the creation background of commercial advertising.

Commercial advertising stages "a powerful social drama" that conveys symbols and ideas, and bands together images of individual and products. It offers us information to choose from different brands and helps us know more about the products. When it comes to a cultural artifact, commercial advertising serves more as a mirror for "deeper cultural tendencies" and possesses profound relationship with the society. Accordingly, some commercial advertising language mirrors, directly or indirectly, the happenings in the society and, to some extent, commercial advertising language can be a kind of special social history.

Language and context are both based on the culture and the sign systems in which the commercial advertisement was created. Language here becomes a cultural vehicle that reflects the society and its values in which a communicative event takes place. Non-linguistic sign determines the cultural framework in which linguistic sign functions, for the transfer of the message could only be accomplished by using signs or codes.

### 4.4.3.2 Cultural Strategy

Because of its importance in analyzing commercial advertising as a social phenomenon, it is necessary to explain the characteristics of culture for discussing the interconnection between commercial advertisements and culture.

We all know the importance of culture has become more and more recognizable

within the field of marketing during the past decades. Since this is the case, commercial advertising as marketing tool has to pay special attention to the cultures of consumers.

People and commercial advertisements communicating within the same culture share a common pool of experience, frames of reference and cultural perspectives. Within the same cultural communities, the characteristics of an entire culture are as follows: 1.A sense of belonging; 2. Excitement; 3. Fun and enjoyment; 4. Warm relationships; 5. Self-fulfillment; 6. Respect from others; 7. A sense of accomplishment; 8. Security; 9. Self-respect (Well, Burnett & Moriaty, 1998). These nine characteristics function as guide for the copywriters to create convincing advertisements. But if an advertisement is translated from one culture into another culture and language, cultural gaps will surface. Therefore, the most important thing is to erase the sense of distance and strangeness. For instance, in the course of introducing a new brand of a cosmetic, the designer might use the accepted aesthetic standard to stress the sense of belonging to a certain community to create the echo within the target audience. How to let the people feel belonging somewhere when they read the advertisement? Planning factor should be taken into consideration in this stage. Many factors will affect readers' responses to ad message. The culture is one and the individual understanding towards things like age, income, sex, education is another one. So it becomes very clear that copywriters should try to cover the widest audience possible and cater to their needs.

Members of a society share a basic cultural orientation, but cultures are made up of individuals who constantly negotiate and remold aspects of their inherited culture. The result is that each individual is in a sense a culture maker who inherits resources from dominant cultural patterns as well as from non-dominant groups but who adapts and transforms them to fit his or her personal reality. Often effective advertisements contribute to these changes.

All in all, commercial advertising is not just a business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving some merchandise off the store shelves, but is rather an integral part of modern culture. Its creations transform a vast range of symbols and ideas; its

unsurpassed communicative powers recycle culture models and references back through the networks of social interactions.

It is well known that in the west tan is the healthy complexion for women. As a result, the whitening series is not popular, and they just use the sun block during the sun-bath at most. But, when some cosmetic giants decided to enter the market of Southeast Asia, they have to reconsider their product structure. Why? Most of people in Southeast Asia, especially in China, Korean and Japan, have shaped the same taste standard——being white is the endless pursuit to all the women. It is a kind of culture, which determines the orientation of production and advertising.

Commercial advertisement does reflect the culture we are unconsciously in and the realities we are facing everyday. But this simple fact also suggests that culture build up an unnoticeable barrier between different communities, which presents difficulties especially in commercial advertisement. Culture cognition does good to some giant companies, which can effectively help then avoid the culture shock and some unnecessary troubles.

According to the PLE, any ad relating to culture cognition will cost designer's efforts more than the ordinary one. It is the first step to get to know the cultural traits of the target places, or everything will go in vain. Even if the idea is fabulous, the effect of ad will not be called good, because the audience will deny it at the first sight. As long as the ad is based on the culture cognition, it can achieve the expected effect by employing lots of techniques.

## 4.4.4 Communication Channel

If commercial advertisement derives its inspiration from psychology and culture, the whole selling work is only half finished. It still requires a channel to be built, thus to reflect the commercial advertising content and eventually finish the selling process. This channel or link is the communication process, another sociological feature of commercial advertising. In the following, a detailed analysis is presented to show how commercial advertisement is realized through the communication process.

Communication is derived from the Latin word "communis", which means common. Communication is the process of commonness of thought between a sender and a receiver of a message. Two models are presented to clarify advertising as a communication process.
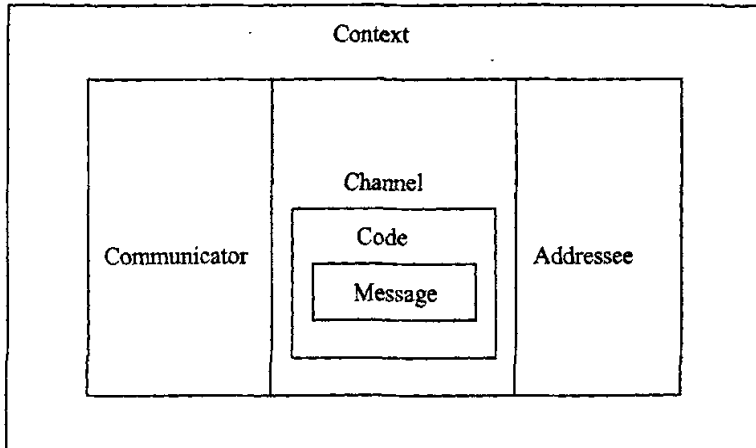
**Table 1.     James A Anderson's Communication Model**

(Adapted from Charles Forceville, Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising. Routledge, London and New York 1996: 65)
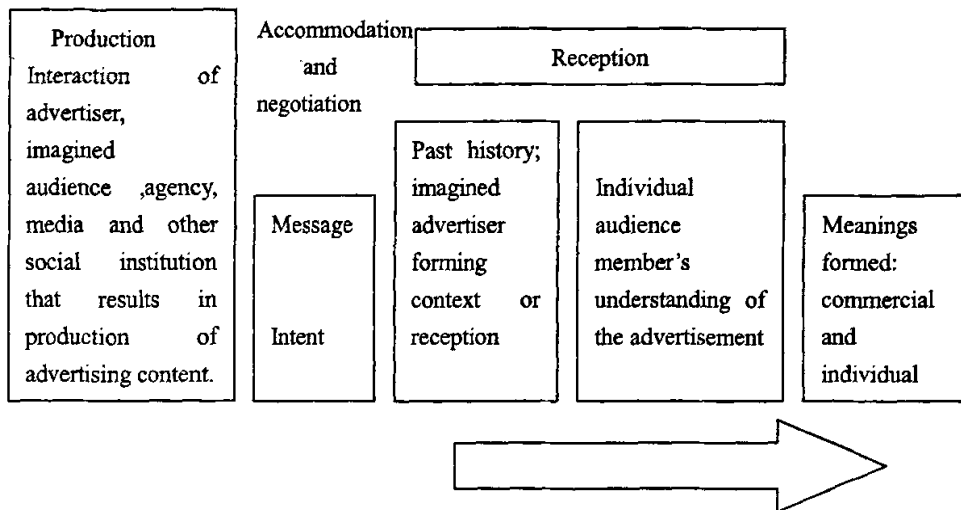


The model of James A Anderson shows the communication as a process of interacting individual and institutions. It has two major components: production and reception, each of which represents an independent process. The model is the production process, where the content of any mass communication is produced. An advertisement, like other forms of mass communication, is the product of institutions interacting to produce content. The institutions here can refer to corporations, commercial advertising agencies and networks. The content these institutions produce would be the final advertising message appeared in magazines, newspaper, TV, etc.

**Table 2. Jakobson's Communication Model**

(Adapted from James A Anderson and tmothy P.Meyre.Mediated communication: A

social Perspective. Newbury Park. Calif: SAGE. 1998:41)



From table 2 Jakobon's Communication Model we see the communication reception process. Within the reception process, individual members of the audience interpret an ad according to a set of factors. These factors can be linked to their surroundings for instance, their families, friends, peers, previous experience, and motivations. This is where the ad is driving at. The designer can largely determine what to be included in the creation of content, but what the audience make of the ad is the meaning each individual gives it. Here the content and meaning are not synonymous. For example, two individuals would hold quite different ideas even they are reading the same piece of material.

What's more, the production and reception process are partially independent items because the producers of the message cannot control or even closely monitor the actual reception and the interpretation of the content. And the audience would respond to the ad with intent, which means they are selective in commercial advertising and they are also influenced by their own rule.

Compared with the first communication model, Jakobson's model is simple and can be applied to a more general field, thus is also inviting more interpretations. In terms of commercial advertising, the communicators refer to the designer who try to get

their selling ideas across to the target audience. And the addressees are the intended audience the designers want to cover. The message here is equivalent to the message in the first model, namely, also the intended selling points. This channel, as its name suggests, equals to the "accommodation and negotiation". One advantage of the Jakobson's model over the Anderson's model is that it presents the idea of code (sometimes the term "signs" is used), which is a very crucial factor in discussing commercial advertisement. These two communication models, to a great extent, are all based upon the oral communication. But in terms of commercial advertising, these communication models take on a different look, which would be summarized in the following three characteristics.

Firstly, in a non-face-to-face communication, the communicator and the addressee are not co-present in a certain situation. Furthermore, in a communication process, reference is determined by the situation of discourse, which provides the ultimate reference of all discourse. Within print advertising, there is no longer a situation common to the writer and the reader, and the conditions of the act of recognizing no longer exist. One result of this non-co-presence is that a quick feedback of the advertisement message is made impossible if the readers encounter some difficulties in comprehending the message. Therefore it will cost more efforts, and inevitably some ads will end up in vain. Under the framework of PLE, the designers must cost more efforts—it means that they should take all possibilities into consideration and find out a more comprehensive way to solve the problems.

Secondly, in the face-to-face communication, the number of the communicator involved is limited, often only two or more. But in commercial advertising, as in many forms of mass communication a single communicator addresses a large audience whose number is hard to count; though in theory the communicator believe the audience could be narrowed down to the designer's target group. It is more challenging for the designers to cater to everyone's taste.

Thirdly, unlike the co-present communication, the commercial advertising no longer only dwells upon verbal utterance. Rather, advertising is a mixture of verbal and pictorial information. Here the verbal information refers to the written message of

the advertising no matter whether it is the headline or the body, while the pictorial or the non-verbal message refers to the illustration appeared in the complete advertising copy. The variable forms of advertising can challenge reader's reception from different angles: someone favors the beautiful words; someone likes the eye-catching pictorial; someone has interests in commercial film; and someone prefers the humor tone. Or we can say it means the designer have to choose more techniques for an idea, and apparently they will cost more efforts during the medium-selection.

Among all mentioned above, the designers should ponder on the medium-selection, which is a real hard course. From the medium side, magazine, internet and advertising textbooks are the main media used in this thesis; for consumer elements, men, women, children, the aged, the rich etc should be all concerned by designers; for geographic area, international, national, regional and local are related to the designer's idea. The designers should concern in what way to publicize their advertisement; they also should concern for whom to publicize, i.e. the consumer choosing. But as soon as this work is done, it will save more efforts. Medium-selection is a major step to achieve the goal of saving efforts.

Here comes another concept: positioning. It aims at locating the suitable target consumers. This method strives for making the special characteristic of advertised product or service clear and meeting the demands of the target consumers to a large extent. Towards the special consumers-that could be men, women, the rich etc, designers of industrial or trade advertisement could make the range of their prospective readers clear; they could also choose the right medium(magazine, internet, television) to propagandize their advertisement according to the different favors of different people.

The giants all have strived to reach the top of the whole cosmetic market by many ways, among which P& G put forward to the grand-brand strategy, L' oreal drove the Multibrand strategy, and Avon the Multilevel Marketing. With the different strategies, they apparently need the suitable medium. The medium choosing should match the brand image. For example, the cosmetic ad on TV mostly serve for enhancing the popularity and consolidation of the fixed consumers. The typical example is P&G

Though its commercial films are mostly formulized, P&G has covered the large part of the market shares. Luxurious brand usually will choose the top-class fashion book as its medium, for those books have paid more attention to the quality, and their potential readers are the elite not the public.

## 4.4.5 Typical Strategies

Psychology, culture and media are the three major advertising strategies mentioned above in a macro way, all of which have applied the PLE visibly and invisibly. In this section, there are some typical strategies frequently used at present. It is a little bit difficult to classify them according to the three categories strictly, for two or three ways are combined in a typical strategy.

### 4.4.5.1 Repetition and Time

Psychologists hold the view that for a message to cross the stage of perception and enter into memory, people need to be exposed to it at least for three times or even more. This explains why some designers use slogans in their advertisements to repeat the message and to reinforce memory. The typical example is the Heng Yuanxiang Wool Product, which put the three pieces of same contents together and made it more effective. Except for the sound effects, visually attracting pictures could also play the same role.

Usually the length of a commercial film is within 15 seconds, or it will cost more. The suitable time for a commercial film to be broadcasted should be studied carefully. If a cosmetic commercial film will be displayed on TV, at first the designer should think about a question---at the show time, what are the potential audience doing? The time around 8 pm has been called "the golden time". It is reasonable, for it is the very time that most of women including housewives, office ladies, girls are sitting in front of the TV set. This is the reason why many companies will stage a severe bidding war for the most advantageous time in CCTV. Furthermore, the previous commercial film and succeeded one should be in harmony with the cosmetic one, or it will make audience uncomfortable.

Actually, this specific method contains all the three major strategies. If the designer put the commercial film on the screen and deal well with the practice of the repetition and time, they will get twice the result with half the effort.

### 4.4.5.2 Visual Effect

As we have observed the meaning of the message cannot be transmitted in the abstract and, hence, must be coded (Vestergarrd, 1985). In terms of print commercial advertising, these codes are the verbal and the pictorial ones.

Visual communication differs from verbal communication in that the different codes open up other possibilities. Assumedly, some things can be "said" only visually while other can be said only verbally and, most definitely, even when something can be "said" both visually and verbally, the way in which it will be said is different. As the message in print advertisements is created by pictorial and verbal means, furthermore one could expect a strong interaction between the different codes.

Let's see a picture of eye black made by Lancome (see Picture 2). On the picture, there is no other word except the name of brand, but apparently it conveys lots of information. This idea is impressive and memory factor will play a good example in this kind of commercial advertisement.

**Picture 2**
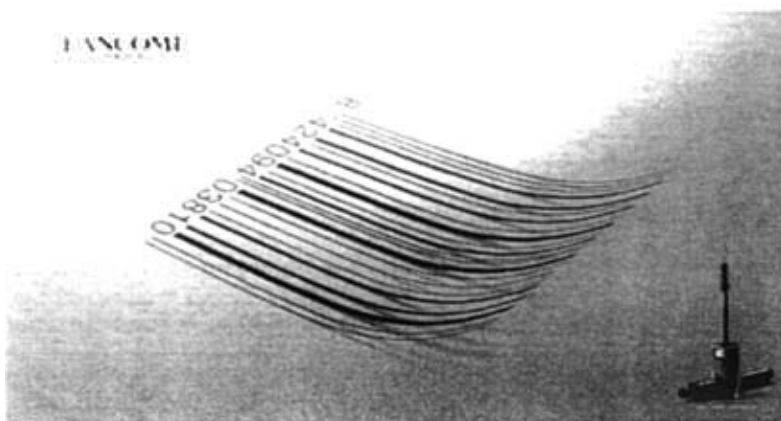


Giffarine once had an interesting commercial film, and its main idea reads as

follows: there are many girls learning to bake bread in a kitchen. Among them, a young girl has been always teased by her peers for her unskillfulness at bakery. As soon as she failed, another girl next to her will press her head on the dough, and then the whole kitchen burst into laughter. It was really a great shame to the poor girl. At that time, the camera lens focused on the distorted facial expression of others. The same situation went round and round. And the next scene is that the other girls present have become the old ladies. The poor girl still can't master the skill. Others laughed at her all the time, though most of them are so old that some teeth were dropped out and the facial skin was wrinkled. At the same time, the climax of the whole commercial film entered on the stage. The poor lady raised her head from the dough, showing others her gorgeous face, poreless, lineless. She was an eye-catching princess among a group of depressed women. The unscrupulous laughter came to a sudden end. At last came the key sentence "we accidentally discovered that yeast lessen your age." It is an interesting commercial film designed for "Giffarine Repairy Treatment with yeast extract". The whole film is composed with many visual elements, even a complete story plot. The visual means can not only achieve the expected aim, but also add some flavor and make it more impressive, which can beyond any word.

The visual and verbal communication were used in this advertisement, and we will be impressed by the motion pictures and language with sense of humor. This kind of commercial advertisement becomes so popular in overseas and in China. Why do audiences welcome them? As the writer's viewpoint, the motion pictures can attract people's attention, for they can bring consumers a good mood even a smile when the audience see it, and at the mean time remember the advertisement.

In a world beset by economic challenges and competition, some tools in the marketing arsenal become significantly more valuable to the copy writer. The need to optimize the impact of commercial advertising messages in the market place at lower cost is thereby helped, if the input generates a much greater leverage in the medium of the message. It is therefore recommended that designers make good use of visual pictures in their advertisements to gain greater impact on consumers.

At last, the ultimate purpose of commercial advertisement is that let the consumers

buy it. So we can see that a large number of commercial advertisements are attached the telephone number, sales address and email or web site. This kind of design is also related to the planning and memory factors. With the attachment after the main body of advertisement, it can let readers remember their contact way, it can also give deep impression of their works in this way. DHC is a typical example in this regard. ( see Picture 3)

**Picture 3**



### 4.4.5.3 Brand and Star Effect

In order to arouse consumers' interest further more and set up their trust, building image and authority of the merchandise is also very important to commercial advertising language. International and national advertising aims at gaining and maintaining group loyalty to one brand and usually employs the soft-sell technique frequently. The designers have always favored the celebrity. With the help of influence and charisma of famous people, ad can recommend the product to the public much easier. Based on the fame of the celebrity, it can construct the communication platform, create the added value, and reduce the resistance. Owing to so many advantages, the cosmetic company will employ some superstars to be the representatives of their products. In the consumer's opinion, a celebrity stands for the fashion and trend, so the designers can save their efforts for thinking out a good idea.

## 4.5 Supplements

Most forms of ads are simple and concise, but it doesn't mean redundancy doesn't

exist in reality. As long as there is a principle, it is inevitable that there is an exception. Some ads don't go to the point directly, and beat about the bush instead. Olay once had an interesting commercial film. In the first part of commercial film, no one can guess what's going on. There are only two characters in it: one is a lady consumer, lying on her chest in a massage room, and the other one is a massagist preparing something before her work. The audience can't understand it until the massagist slipped from the guest's back. This is a bodywash commercial film, and the guest'back is so smooth that the massagist fell from her. To the audience, they may not catch the meaning until the end of the commercial film. Therefore, the economical form of advertisement is not absolute.

Till now, the whole argument seems to focus on woman's consumption, and the cited examples are woman-oriented. It may bring us a misunderstanding that only woman's advertisement can represent the PLE. Actually it is wrong. This principle is suitable to men's and even all other goods, though there are some differences according to different goods. For example: if a piece of auto advertisement wants to reach the anticipated aim, it is useful to arouse consumers' reason appeal and emotion appeal too; and the only slight difference lies in that auto ad will pay much more attention to the male consumers.

# Chapter 5 Conclusion

## 5.1 Major Findings

In designers' view, whether they make least effort depends on the following three major aspects. The first one is the psychological strategy, which can make the designers shoot the arrow at the target and use limited space and time to conquer the target consumers. Secondly, the culture strategy should be adopted when some multinational companies want to enter the overseas market. It is really an effective way to master the cultural nature of the local people and create a good idea to win the larger part of the market. And then comes the third one—communication channel, which is a crucial step for the wide spread among the audience. In the course of composing a good ad idea, it is inevitable to make more efforts for the designers, but the outcome usually demands good effort and needs least efforts. For example, the written forms of ad copies are usually short and simple, and most of the commercial films are less than 15 seconds. Furthermore, the most important thing is that all the effect created by the ads mentioned above are great. Lots of products or service had benefited greatly from the advertisement. In a word, to designers, the prework is time-consuming and energy-consuming, and after that the ad copy is in an economical way and the ad can receive a better effect. Compared with the designer, the audience is usually the side that needn't make more efforts. The recipient will not make the subjective efforts to go through the cognition activities about commercials.

The two parts—the speaker and the auditor are involved in the PLE, and there are two parts—the designer and the recipient in the advertising too. The application of PLE shares something special in the field of ads for seller-buyer interaction. Generally speaking, owing to the special status in the interaction, the recipients always make least effort, for the advertisers and the designers have to cater to their tastes and publicize products at the expense of money and energy respectively. The sellers all play a role of shouldering more tasks and burden; the buyers just choose whatever they are interested in.

## 5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

It is certain that there are many limitations in this thesis. At a macro-level, the argument is not so precise, some classifications are not so clear, and some concepts overlap others. At a micro-level, the quoted examples are all international brands, which may lack the popularity. Therefore, it opens to modification all the time. This thesis aims at leading a qualitative study under the perspective of PLE. In the chapter4, the author sets up and quotes some theories at first, and then exemplifies them. This model is easy to operate but can't dig deeply. The combined form of qualitative and quantitive research may create something different. Basically speaking, Zipf's PLE is based on the Zipf's quantitive finding: the frequency $(f)$ of occurrence of a word within a suitable long text multiplied by the rank $(r)$ (ranked by the frequency) is a constant $(c)$. If the research focuses on quantifying and analyzing ads on the foundation of theory, something important may be found in ads.

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# Appendices

1.

**2.**

3.