

A Comparative Case-Study of Orientation Types and Interpretations of Value Indicators for the Utopic Value*

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Abstract. Everyone pursue the utopic value in decision-making process. The utopic value is universal but the indicators that qualify this value are not always same according to the contexts. This paper is a case-study of the interpretation of those indicators based on orientation type in order to understanding the value-shifting and its contribution for the inter-cultural exchanges of the utopic value. The orientation types have a very important role in interpreting the indicators of the consumption values. In this paper, we attempt to provide an empirical example of the value-shifting based on orientation type in Korean society through observing advertisements of low-involvement products. Furthermore, the comparison of these advertisements between culturally different groups allows understanding cultural collisions in terms of values. To show how the utopic value is differently defined according to the contexts, we observe Korean and Brazilian society with beer advertisements.

Keywords: value-shifting, orientation types, indicators for utopic value, consumption value, decision-making process

1 Introduction

Everyone pursues the utopic value. This is the supreme and ideal value of a given society. But the factors (indicators) that define the utopian value of a given group or society are different from contextual variations. It is the orientation types that decide the values of the indicators. In decision-making process where there is no difference between choices, it will be the orientation type involved in construal domains and their members that play a crucial role to tip the balance in favor of one side. As this process can be in fact considered as the self-persuading process, it can be said that deciding and persuading are share the same properties, namely the consumption values.

In this respect, advertisements can be representative examples because they have the structure that the consumers are persuaded to buy or accept whatever is advertised

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to them by the producer, using persuasive tools. Advertisements are the best concrete example of reflecting the consumers' orientation type and their consumption value. However, an advertisement of a product should be designed differently according to the target classes because the indicators of utopic value are different. If the orientation type of the members who constitute the construal domain are different from one another, the concept or the narrative structure must be changed to maximize the persuasive effect of the advertisements for the same products or ones of the same kind, because the indicators for the utopic value in the domain are changed. If we do not consider the value-shifting of the indicators for the utopic value, we may not convey the meaning or may communicate an incorrect meaning.

Among many others, the advertisements of low-involvement products are worthy of note because they reflect well the relation between the orientation types and the indicators in search of the utopic value. Almost all members of society can access to low-involvement products easily without distinction of sex or age and without the scale of education or economic strength. And the relation of profit and loss by the choice of products is hardly noticeable. Furthermore a comparison of those advertisements between culturally different groups will show how value shifting is useful for the correct translations of the utopic indicators in the course of cultural exchanges. We choose beer as a low-involvement product and Korea versus Brazil as comparative groups in this paper.

2 Orientation Type and Value Shifting

2.1 The general characters of Koreans observed in advertisements

Through the stream of beer advertisements of Korea, the symbolism that beer itself has was magnified at the time that beer was introduced in Korea. The critical value was appealed at the time that beer became accessible to publics and the ludic value seems to be appealed after the beer becomes a major part as a low-involvement product.

Beer is not traditional Korean liquor. It was imported into Korea with different Western cultures in the early 20th Century. In the sociocultural context of the time, every Western culture was recognized as an advanced and better culture. Therefore, beer was accepted as a symbol of that advanced Western culture.

In the 60s to the 70s, Korean society was industrialized and achieved a high level of economic growth. The desire of being upwardly mobile presented strongly in this period with forming new hierarchical social structures in this new economic situation. Beer was one of the symbols of the status hierarchy for those whom have a new dream to achieve success. The beer advertisements, therefore, appealed to the sociable functions that alcohol has in traditional Korean society such as richness, high society, composure, harmony, and utopian value. The reason that these advertisements dominated was that beer was not the popular alcohol everyone could buy and still had the luxurious image of the alcohol for the upper class.

In the 80s, the appealing point was changed into focusing the critical value in a different way to the previous advertisements. At this period, beer took the position of

the common, low-involvement product. The advertisements of low-involvement products usually find the appeal of persuasion for consumers outside the products because the products themselves do not distinguish from the competing products. Nevertheless, the advertisements in this period highlighted critical values like ingredients, taste, degree of aging and a feeling of refreshment. We can find the style of appealing the critical value easily in advertisements after the 90s.

The advertisements before the 90s might be divided widely into the appeal of the utopian value and the appeal of the critical value. The advertisements after the 90s, however, did not show well what kind of value the advertising copy, the image, and the narrative structure had focused. For instance, the copy appealed to the critical value but the image and the narrative structure usually did not correspond with it.

In isolation of the consumption value, the biggest characteristic of Korean advertisements for beer is that they usually depend on celebrities, entertainers and sports players. Particularly the advertisements after the 90s seemed to have the style of making celebrities the sole focus, while the narrative structure of the advertisements themselves was short on substance.

2.2 The orientation type and the value shifting in Korean society

When people talk about the Korean national character, their industry is certainly named as a representative attribute. Traditionally in Korean society, labor is important and the desire of being upwardly mobile is strong. In the *Model of Consumption Value* by Floch (1990), the features related to identity in general can be considered as the indicator for utopian value. However, it is clear that the desire of being upwardly mobile is due to the realization of desire, not the problem of identity. Apart from the desire of being upwardly mobile, the various characters of Koreans like career-oriented thinking and showing off suggest that Koreans and Korean society predominantly show object orientation. If Korean society has the character of object orientation, the interpretation of the indicators of the consumption value is basically practiced in the goal-oriented form.

In the case of the goal-oriented character, the indicators corresponded with the critical and practical values have to be interpreted as belong to the utopian value. On the contrary, the indicators corresponded with the ludic value and the utopian value are interpreted as belong to the ludic value. Therefore, if Korean society has the goal-oriented character, the interpretation of the indicators shows following mutations.

Table 1. Orientation Type and Value Shifting

+ Value Orientation			
Critical/ Practical Value		Ludic/ Utopic Value	
Collectivism	Hierarchical Social Structure High Power Distance Uniformity Authoritarianism	Individualism	Free life style Diversity Freedom from constraints Low Power

			Distance
Goal Achievement	Materialism Aspiration Education Future Oriented Patience Sacrifice	Introspection	Life quality Religious Morality Education Identity
Face	Upward mobile lifestyle Ostentation	Ontologism	Reality Self-satisfaction
+Object Orientation			
Utopic Value		Ludic Value	

As we know well, collectivity is a high priority in Korean society. Therefore, individualistic attitude is considered negatively. There is a great tendency of ignoring individual values for the profit of the collectivity. The individual value is the ludic value while collectivism is the utopian value of the object oriented society because every member considers the collectivism as the most precious value. This collectivity is the indicator of the utopian value in Korean society, which has a strong goal-oriented character.

The indicator that has the greatest weight among others may be the one related to being upwardly mobile in Korean society, which itself has a strong goal-oriented character. As mentioned earlier, being upwardly mobile in Korean society is the feature related to a social success. This feature is the indicator of a manifestation of the practical value in orientation-neutral construal domain; however, its interpretation in the construal domain influenced by the object orientation is suggested in the table above.

The Korean beer advertisements are substantive evidence that reflect the inference of this research most tellingly. As mentioned earlier, the advertisements of the 80s stimulated the entry into a new world, that is, the desire to be upwardly mobile due to a longing for industrialized Western culture, which brings with it an upper class and a materially rich environment. These qualifications are the indicators of the practical value by default; nonetheless, all of them are interpreted by the utopian value in the object-oriented society.

The advertisements after the 80s tried to show value outside the products because the utopian value, in other words, the symbolism related to being upwardly mobile or successful, could not be gifted with beer, unlike during the 70s. In addition to beer, low-involvement product advertisements tried to find an appeal outside the products generally not inside the products because the products themselves were not any different to other competing products in terms of the critical value and the practical value. For this reason, the advertisements depended and still depend, on celebrities. After the 80s, in observing the beer advertisements in which celebrities made an appearance, in the majority of cases, we receive the impression that the narrative

structures are weak and the relationship of responding to copies and images is rough. However, the reason for making this type of advertisement and accepting them in Korean society is due to the existence of obsession with celebrities.

Put simply, the celebrities who make an appearance in advertisements are the objects of admiration to consumers. To consume the beer that these celebrities advertise makes consumers believe that they are in the same position with the celebrities psychologically, through a projection effect or assimilation. Their existence itself in the advertisements in the Korean object-oriented society appeals to the utopian value. The images, copies and narrative structures are thus not very important components because the existence of celebrities has the highest overall weight. This is why the narrative structures are poor in Korean beer advertisements.

3 The exchange of the utopic value in different contexts

The indicators that characterize the Consumption Values are universal. However, the interpretation of those indicators shall be different according to what orientation the construal domain has. For this reason, it is unusual for the consumption value of a society to be accepted in the same way as another society that has a different orientation. We call this the collision of the consumption value. As a representative example, if the culture area is changed, the collision of the consumption value happens because the interpretation of the indicators is different even though the construal domain remains the same. The key to persuasive communication in the global era is to avoid this collision.

Beer advertisements in Brazil show the ludic aspect more than those in Korea. However, it does not mean there is no case for appealing the critical or practical value. In addition, in Brazilian beer advertisements, these factors are expressed with metaphoric form rather than direct expression. In most cases, the advertisements have a tendency to appeal the ludic value - in the model of consumption value by Floch - with a well-organized narrative structure. Such details are related to the Brazilian national character. Brazilians who are influenced by Roman Catholicism and primitive African beliefs are seen to be more adaptable to reality and thus have a tendency to keep at a respectful distance in terms of labor (Buarque(1936: 31-66); DaMatta (2004:13-27); Ferretti(1999)). We therefore consider that, in contrast with Korean society, Brazilian society has the value-oriented character.

We make a choice of putting weight on the utopic value when the result of the choice is not very important. At this time, it is the orientation type that makes us decide what the utopian value is. If the general propensity of Brazilian society or Brazilians is closer to the propensity that is value-oriented through seeing beer advertisements, they might seek the ludic or utopian value. The difference between the orientation type in Korean and Brazilian society can explain the collision of the consumption value in these two cultural areas and can suggest the way to avoid this collision.

Greater expansion in Brazil by Korean companies has extended the market for employing local Brazilians, though consequently, labor disputes have increased. The conflicts caused by the issue of overtime are a representative example. Whilst

overtime is expected in order to maximize productivity and indeed wages within Korean company culture, it is not well accepted in Brazilian company culture. The fundamental cause of problems thus happens because of the collision of the consumption value.

The maximization of profit and productivity is a priority to both workers and entrepreneur. Korean company culture strongly goal-oriented. On the contrary, greater labor demands and goals do not belong to the utopian value sought ultimately in Brazilian company cultures that have a strong value-oriented character. If the company and individual keep an equal distance at the crossroad of choice, it definitely depends on individual propensity as to which one is chosen. The indicators for seeking the utopian value are different to each other according to whether the individual propensity is goal-oriented or value-oriented. The conflict between employers and workers that Korean companies have experienced in Brazil is because the two parties seek different utopian indicators to each other, not just because of cultural misunderstanding.

4 Conclusion

The critical, practical, ludic, and utopic consumption values are universal. The indicators which present these values are also universal. In the case that the construal domain is not influenced by external factors, that is, in extremely ideal cases, the practical indicator decides the practical value and the utopian indicator decides the utopian value. Particularly, in the case where there is no influence by propensity, the indicators are interpreted according to Floch's model of consumption value. However, all construal domains cannot be free from external influence. Before interpreting what consumption value the indicators on the construal domain present, we first need to distinguish between domains that have the propensity to be goal-oriented and domains that have the propensity to be value-oriented. Importantly though, people make a choice to seek the utopian value if there is no difference in the result of their consumer choice. The indicators which make a decision on the utopic value of a given group, society, or individual depends on the orientation type. If there is a prerequisite or propensity to be goal-oriented, then most indicators that present the practical value in the model of consumption value are changed into the utopic value. The analysis of the consumption value based on the oriented type generalizes and explains why the indicators of the consumption value need to be interpreted differently according to different contexts.

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