

DOCTORAL THESIS

Cultural values in Hong Kong newspaper advertisements, 1949-1998

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**Cultural Values
in Hong Kong Newspaper Advertisements:
1949 – 1998**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Advertising is not merely an economic tool with the aim of selling; it is also an important cultural archive that records the spending patterns and values of its contemporaries. In this thesis, the "reflection hypothesis" is proposed to review the history and development of newspaper advertisements and cultural values manifested in them over the past fifty years, from 1949 to 1998. The contextual environment of Hong Kong during the past fifty years was outlined to provide supplementary data to aid understanding of the advertising content. Four different newspapers targeted at different segments of society were analysed and both quantitative and qualitative research were conducted. A modified "Cheng & Schweitzer cultural values framework" was adopted. A total of 4,080 "foodstuff" and "clothing" advertisements were analysed. The results indicate that there was a significant change in product nature and values conveyed in the advertisements found in newspapers over different time spans. Significant differences were observed in different product advertisements and different newspapers catering for different target audiences. Both the social and economic conditions of the particular time periods were significantly associated with the cultural values manifested in the advertisements. The impact of political conditions, however, was found to be limited. Hence, the "reconstructed reality" in newspaper advertisements did appear to reflect product nature and the evolution of cultural values over time and across different market segments in Hong Kong during the past fifty years.

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