Young Peoples' Attitudes on Art Infusion Advertising on Social Media:
Focus Groups with Chinese Students

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ABSTRACT

In China, advertisements posted by online influencers on social media platforms have become a new trend of marketing. Through the lenses of art-infusion theory and the entertainment overcoming resistance model, this study focuses on a specific advertisement posted by a Chinese online influencer and explores whether this advertisement appeals to Chinese young people and why. Five focus group sessions were conducted with 29 Asian college students to explore the impact of artwork in advertising on participants’ attitudes toward the ad and the advertised product. The results showed that 1) participants’ attitudes toward the ad were affected by the presence of artwork, and 2) entertainment features such as narrative structure and liking of the author contributed to overcoming resistance to advertising. The findings of the study suggest practical implications for advertising professionals as well as art promoters.
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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Mengzhe Gu, as one of the most popular online influencers with over one million followers on Chinese social media, applies a special advertising tactic in his blog advertisement: he associates background stories of artists or paintings with advertised products. Despite the popularity of these ads, researchers have not yet investigated the effectiveness of these ads or explored the reason why these ads appeal to the audience. This paper thus aims to explore whether Gu’s advertisement appeals to people and why. We conducted five focus group sessions to discuss the impact of artwork and entertainment features in Gu’s advertising with 29 Chinese students. The results showed that 1) participants’ attitudes toward the ad were affected by the presence of artwork, and 2) entertainment features such as narrative structure and liking of the author contributed to overcoming resistance to advertising.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Advertisements have long been recognized as a hot topic of public communication. With increasingly intense competition, various advertising techniques have been explored by marketing practitioners as well as communication scholars (Fam & Grohs, 2007). In China, advertisements posted by online influencers on social media platforms have become a new trend of marketing. According to a report from iResearch Global (2016), online influencers refer to people who attract huge public attention on social media with their unique personal styles. To keep being active on Chinese social media platforms, some influencers post advertisements to publish sponsors’ messages in exchange for support. Meanwhile, the popularity of online influencers can guarantee that the advertising message reaches a significant amount of people. However, posting advertisements is risky for influencers, as they might lose their popularity if the advertisements do not appeal to people. Therefore, a variety of advertising techniques are applied by influencers to overcome such threats.

Mengzhe Gu is one of the online influencers in China. He applies a special advertising tactic in his blog advertisements on social media platforms: he associates background stories of artists or paintings with an advertised product. But the efficiency of his advertising technique remains unexplored.

So far, Gu has posted 37 advertisements on his blog. Some of the brands advertised on his blog include Gucci, Extra, Lincoln, and T-Mall. (see Table 1) Each advertisement could receive a thousand reposts and likes on average. Despite the popularity of these ads, researchers have not yet investigated the effectiveness of these ads or explored the reason why these ads appeal to the audience. However, the need to investigate the efficiency of this type of ad is significant. On the one hand, it may drive implications for innovative advertising strategies. Gu’s blog advertising is innovative as it combines art and advertising together. The audience can not only learn art-related knowledge but also observe world-famous paintings while viewing the ads. On the other hand, it may drive implications for art promotion campaigns. In Gu’s blog, art is not something that can only
be appreciated by professionals, but an interesting topic everyone can comment about. When he ties art and advertising together, it automatically makes art friendlier to ordinary people. Therefore, this paper explores what elements contained in Gu’s blog appeal to the audience and why.

**Background**

Mengzhe Gu, known as “Grandpa Gu” on the Internet, is widely recognized and well received in China by popularizing art knowledge on the Chinese social media platform – Weibo. His profile picture is a comic picture of himself with an Afro hairstyle, whiskers, and sunglasses, which has become an iconic image of “Grandpa Gu.” So far, he has over 1,000,000 followers on weibo and ranks at 50 on the list of most influential online celebrities in China (Pan, 2016).

Gu posted his first blog titled “Renoir - A Happy Artist” on July 30, 2013. Specifically, he introduced some of the models that appear in Renoir’s paintings. For example, the daughter of millionaire Louis — Aileen; one-time successful movie star Jenascia Mary; and Renoir’s wife, Alina. The blog was shown within a graphic. Once the audience opened the graphic, they could view the content by scrolling up and down. “Grandpa Gu” takes the form of a combination of pictures and text, so it is funny and easy for audience members to learn knowledge of art. Meanwhile, readers are provided with opportunities to view many world-famous paintings in his blog. This blog helped Gu gain thousands of followers over one night (Pan, 2016). Since then, Gu’s influence has continued to rise. He is particularly good at expressing ideas through humorous and sarcastic language. For example, he describes famous artist Caravaggio in this way: “a gangster in life (he engages in all kinds of crime, robbery, bully, and murder), but his artworks make him looks like a sissy” (Gu, 2013).

In May 2014, Gu established a culture-transmitting company called “Gu Ye” in Shanghai. The company business involves advertising and creative productions. In particular, this company makes money on advertising to financially support its creations on weibo (Pan, 2016).
Because of Gu’s popularity, the “Gu Ye” company attracts much business attention. Many companies (such as Gucci, Lincoln, and T-Mall) want to leverage the platform of Gu’s blog to advertise their products. Gu’s blog advertisements usually begin by talking about certain artists or paintings and place an advertised product at the end of the blog. Therefore, it is unlikely that readers recognize the persuasive intent of the blog until the advertised product is revealed at the end.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Art Infusion

The Use of Fine Art in Advertising. Advertising and art have different goals. Advertising is about selling pieces of the world, whereas artwork is about showing beauty and ugliness (Varnedoe, 1991). Compared to advertising, art enjoys a relatively higher position in society, such that advertising tends to use elements of art to grant the brand a more favorable image (Hetsroni & Tukachinsky, 2005). However, art’s contribution to advertising received little attention in advertising literature before the 21st century. The exploratory study of Hetsroni and Tukachinsky (2005) thus represents the first systematic research that mapped the appearance of fine art in advertising. Fine art, in their research, refers to the most purely visual form of art — paintings and sculptures that were created throughout history. The findings showed evidence for the widespread use of fine art by ad creatives as a tool. Their study involved a content analysis of printed advertisements and an interview of 45 ad creatives. The results of the content analysis showed that fine art is more likely to be used for promoting a prestigious product. It is clear that marketing practitioners believe that art somehow has the power to influence consumer perceptions. However, there is little evidence to suggest that marketing professionals have been provided with sufficient theoretical bases to use fine art in advertising.

The Art Infusion Theory. The first attempt to provide insight regarding the role of art in advertising was a study conducted by Hagtvedt and Patrick (2008a). Art was found to increase positive response to brand image, such that when the brand was paired with art, consumers perceived brand image more positively. This finding led researchers’ attention to the art infusion phenomenon, which was defined as the influence that the presence of art has on consumer perceptions and evaluations of products with which it is associated (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a). Hagtvedt and Patrick (2008b) further investigated the effects of the art infusion phenomenon with three experimental studies. The re-
sults showed that consumers perceive the product more positively when fine art was used in packaging, advertising, and product design.

In order to understand what drives the art infusion phenomenon, researchers have examined various theoretical perspectives which have been proposed to explain whether the presence of one object spills over onto another object to influence how it is perceived and evaluated. Among the perspectives were the halo effects, which refer to a general feeling carried by one object that can affect a different object (Balzer & Sulsky 1992); the contagion effect, which refer to a mechanism by which contact between two objects can lead to the permanent transfer of properties from the source to the recipient (Argo et al. 2006; Morales & Fitzsimons 2007); and spillover effects, which make the feelings or emotions for external stimuli spill over when evaluating other targets (Gorn, 1982; Spangenberg et al., 1996). Based on previous theoretical perspectives as mentioned, the art infusion theory asserts that a special spillover effect exists in which key properties of art (exclusivity, luxury, and sophistication) spill over onto the product with which it is associated, thus influencing the evaluation of that product (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008b).

**Development of Art Infusion Theory.** Researchers noted that initial studies only examined the art infusion effect on utilitarian products, such as soap dispensers and MP3 players. Expanding on initial research, Moon and Kwark (2010) reviewed the effects of art-infusion advertising on both utilitarian products (such as an oven) and hedonic products (such as cheesecake). Results showed that art-infusion is effective both for the utilitarian products and hedonic products to cause more favorable evaluations.

Kim, Ko, and Lee (2012) also investigated the art infusion effect in a different product type - fashion products (handbags, scarves, and t-shirts). Their study focused on the impact of visual art on a little-known brand to find whether art infusion could positively affect brand image. The authors noticed that fashion products associated with art were evaluated more positively than non-art products.

In addition to product type, researchers are also interested in exploring the art infusion phenomenon on different brands. Hagtvedt and Patrick (2008a) first found that the presence of art has a positive impact on fictitious brand evaluations. Lee, Chen and Wang (2015) investigated the effects of art on luxury brands, exploring whether visual art en-
hances the consumer-perceived prestige of luxury brands. The findings showed that the presence of art enhances consumers’ perceived product prestige. Moreover, the artwork used in their study is less famous or well-known to consumers, compared with artwork by Van Gogh or Picasso, to investigate whether the art infusion effect is consistent in the presence of lesser-known artwork. They found that the phenomenon of art-infusion does not only tie to famous artwork, but to less famous artwork as well.

**Limitations of Art Infusion Effects.** Although the art infusion effect proved to be consistent regardless of product type, brand recognition, and artwork popularity, some research has illustrated some restrictions of the art infusion effect.

In 2011, Hagtvedt and Patrick (2011) demonstrated that art infusion effects may be diminished by contextualizing them or causing them to be processed concretely. In other words, an emphasis on what is depicted in the artwork might influence how an associated object is evaluated. For example, a painting that depicts dinner, with participants talking and drinking wine, has a positive impact on people’s evaluation on alcohol product (such as wine), while a painting of a woman and a child playing with toys may cause an unfavorable product (i.e., wine) evaluation.

Expanding on their research, Lee, Kim, and Yu (2015) conducted an experimental study and found that the congruence between a product and art might affect the effectiveness of art infusion ads; that is, when a fit or match does not exist between the artwork and the product, the efficiency of the advertisement is diminished.

Montorani and Tazoma (2015) also found that the relationship between art infusion and consumers’ evaluation of an advertising message is moderated by the regulatory fit of a message. The regulatory fit is the congruence between an individual’s regulatory focus and his way of achieving these goals (Montorani & Tazoma, 2015). For example, a regulatory fit message is one concerned with growth, advancement, and achievement for consumers who attempt to obtain positive results. Conversely, for consumers who try to avoid negative results, a regulatory fit message concerns the absence of negative results as well. When participants are exposed to advertising messages that are associated with art, their evaluation will be more positive for regulatory fit messages.
Summary. Literature about the art-infusion phenomenon helps to provide an overall understanding of the potential effectiveness of Gu’s blog advertisements, as he put many world-famous paintings in his blog ads. However, the advertisements that appear in Gu’s blog represent a slightly different way of using fine art in advertising. In previous studies, there is usually only one work of art associated with the advertised product when researchers examine art infusion effects. Gu’s advertisements, however, allow the audience to view 10-15 works of art simultaneously within an ad. This paper thus aims to explore whether the tactic of using a large amount of fine art in advertising causes the consumer to have more positive perceptions about an advertised product and brand.

Overcoming Resistance Models

Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model (E-ELM). The original elaboration likelihood model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) is possibly one of the most influential theories in advertising literature. The general framework claims that receivers exposed to a persuasive message are thought to use either a central route or a peripheral route to persuasion. The first route of persuasion occurs as a result of a person’s careful and thoughtful consideration of the information conveyed in the message (central route). The other type of persuasion, however, occurs as a result of some simple cues rather than necessitating scrutiny of the central merits of the information conveyed in the message (peripheral route).

A distinct advantage of the ELM is that it explicitly recognizes several factors in the ELM model that affect motivation to process a message, such as involvement (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979) and personal responsibility (Petty et al., 1980). Among these variables, the most prominent motivational variable is involvement, which refers to the extent to which audiences perceive an issue as personally relevant (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty et al., 1983). It suggests that under relatively high involvement with the persuasive topic, individuals are more likely to engage in central route processing of issue-
relevant arguments. Under low involvement, attitude changes are more likely to be medi-
diated by peripheral cues, such as source credibility or a background scene.

However, several researchers have pointed out that ELM findings may be robust only in the important but narrow domain of traditional advertisement forms with overtly persuasive intent such as TV ads, print ads, as well as Internet banner ads (Chebat et al., 2001; Petty et al., 1983). The Elaboration Likelihood Model cannot explain the fundamental processes underlying advertising messages that are hidden in entertainment pro-
gramming, because the issue of involvement with the persuasive topic does not appear in an entertainment context. In Gu’s blog, for example, the advertised products (i.e., the theme of the issue) are always revealed at the end of the blog, so it is difficult for readers to know whether the product is considered personally relevant to the readers before revealing the advertised product. Thus, the development of an extended model for entertain-
tainment media is necessary to consider the different moderators resulting from the vari-
ous processing goals of the message recipient while retaining the underlying conceptual structure of the ELM.

To this end, the extended elaboration likelihood (E-ELM) model was put forth to explain how engagement instead of involvement influences the message processing (Slater & Rouner, 2002). The E-ELM posits that when viewers are engaged in the entertain-
ment message, the less motivated they are to critically evaluate the embedded persuasive message. As a result, the potential for resistance to the message is weaker. In particular, the E-ELM focuses on the unique ability of entertainment programming to influence atti-
tudes and behavior by reducing message counterarguing, a source of resistance to persuas-
sion characterized by the “generation of thoughts that dispute or are inconsistent with the persuasive argument” (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p.180). According to the E-ELM, trans-
portation and identification are considered two main components of engagement.

In summary, the E-ELM provides a fundamental framework for explaining the processing of innovative advertisements that have implied persuasive intent or withhold persuasive intent until the end. As its core, it posits that engagement with an entertaining message helps to reduce a specific type of resistance to persuasion -- counterarguing. However, counterarguing may not be the only form of resistance. A recent theoretical framework—the entertainment overcoming resistance model (EORM)—was put forth to
consider how entertainment elements other than transportation and identification can overcome various forms of resistance (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

**Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (EORM).** In general, the EORM predicts that the unique features of entertainment programming, including transportation, identification, parasocial interaction, perceived similarity, and liking of the character, can encourage engagement, which, in turn, suppresses various forms of resistance to persuasion (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). In particular, this model was developed for fully understanding a specific type of entertainment programming -- entertainment education. According to the EORM, there are four forms of resistance to entertainment education information: reactance, counterarguing, perceived invulnerability and perceived norm (See Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (Moyer-Gusé, 2008, p. 415)](image)

* Predicted by the Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model
** Predicted by Social Cognitive Theory
This paper, however, aims to explore whether certain elements of the innovative advertisement in Gu’s blog can reduce consumers’ resistance to advertising. Therefore, it is necessary to take a look at three different ways in which consumers resist advertising.

**Reactance.** One of the most prominent forms of resistance is psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). Psychological reactance theory holds that individuals have a basic need for freedom to choose their attitudes and behaviors (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Psychological reactance is defined as “the motivational state that is hypothesized to occur when freedom is eliminated or threatened with elimination” (Brehm & Brehm, 1981, p. 5). Thus, any intent to change others’ attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors can be perceived as a threat to their freedom.

Persuasive communication can often be perceived as a potential threat to one’s freedom, even if it is in the receiver’s best interest. The result of this psychological reactance is a rejection of the recommendation in order to reassert one’s independence. The individual will rebuild that independence in any of five ways: act the opposite of the advocated behavior, attack the source of threat, refuse to acknowledge the existence of the threat, practice a different freedom to regain a sense of control, or increase liking for the risky choice (Brehm, 1966). All of these coping methods can result in no effect or “boomerang effects” of persuasion—when message recipients are motivated to engage in more of the discouraged behavior.

The EORM posits that for entertainment-education programs, reactance can be overcome in three ways. First, the narrative structure, or narrative format, of entertainment-education programs should diminish a viewer’s perception of the message’s persuasive intent (Moyer-Guse, 2008). This is because a narrative television program is perceived as intending to entertain rather than persuade. Indeed, narratives may be described as a more subtle form of persuasion, “allowing a viewer to become ‘sucked in’ to the world in which the drama takes place, reducing viewers’ perception that the message is persuasive in nature. (Moyer-Guse, 2008, p. 415)"

The EORM also posits that entertainment-education programming should minimize reactance through parasocial interaction (PSI), which refers to the seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer. In other words, PSI is the interaction
between an audience member and a media figure such that a pseudo relationship forms (Moyer-Guse, 2008). In the context of entertaining programs, when an audience parasocially interacts with a character, this character is perceived as a peer. Because a peer may be perceived as less authoritative and controlling (Dillard & Pfau, 2002), entertaining messages can effectively minimize reactance.

Lastly, the EORM posits that liking also helps to overcome reactance as it involves an evaluation of a character and some (if even hypothetical) desire for a friendship (Cohen, 2001; Giles, 2002). Liking simply refers to positive evaluations of a character (Cohen, 2001).

**Contesting.** As the E-ELM states, the more individuals are engaged in the entertainment programming, the less motivated and less able they are to engage in message scrutiny (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Message scrutiny refers to the idea that individuals will engage in careful attention and thoughtful elaboration on a message. This can result in counterarguing, or “generation of thoughts that dispute or are inconsistent with the persuasive argument” (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p. 180). In other words, people who engage in counter-arguing scrutinize the arguments presented, and subsequently they try to generate reasons to refute them. The advertising literature has classified counterarguing as a contesting strategy that is often used by consumers to contest the content of advertisements (Fransen et al., 2015).

Besides contesting the content, individuals may also contest the source and the persuasive tactics of the message (Fransen et al., 2015). Contesting the source of the message, also called source derogation, refers to individuals perceiving information from a commercial as untrustworthy. Contesting the persuasive tactics of the message may occur when consumers are suspicious of advertisers’ motives when the ad is repeated too often or features a negative comparison to the competition. These two kinds of contesting both stem from concerns of deception. People do not like to be fooled, so they tend to be defensive. As a result of this defending, people often scrutinize information very carefully (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998).

The E-ELM and the EORM both posit that transportation into a narrative program can be used to reduce contesting (Moyer-Guse, 2008; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Transpor-
Transportation is defined as “a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701). In particular, transportation should reduce motivation and ability to contesting because transportation is an enjoyable and immersive process (Green & Brock, 2000; Green et al., 2004).

Lastly, according to the E-ELM and the EORM, identification with the main characters may also reduce contesting. Identification refers to an emotional and cognitive process whereby a viewer takes on the role of a character in a narrative. The viewer forgets about his own reality and temporarily becomes the character, taking on the character’s perspective (Cohen, 2001). While identifying with a character, a viewer vicariously adopts the perspective, thoughts, and feelings of that character. In this way, E-E programs may reduce viewers’ motivation to generate counterarguments while viewing persuasive messages.

**Cognitive Avoidance.** Cognitive avoidance means not paying attention to a specific message. Individuals may engage in “selective exposure” and “selective attention”; the tendency to avoid or devote less attention to persuasive communication that is likely to contain messages that contradict with existing beliefs or opinions (Freedman & Sears, 1965; Fransen et al., 2015). In other words, people are motivated to seek information that is consonant with their beliefs and attitudes and to avoid information that is dissonant with their beliefs and attitudes.

Cognitive avoidance is grounded in the idea that individuals prefer not to change their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs rather than to change them (Freedman & Sears, 1965). Individuals strive to keep their attitude system in balance and will resist persuasion based on the desire to avoid dissonance. The desire to remain balanced results in cognitive avoidance of arguments that contradict one’s existing beliefs and attitudes. Research on the determinants of avoidance behavior demonstrates that viewers are less inclined to avoid commercial messages that are emotional and entertaining, and more likely to avoid messages that are informational (Olney et al., 1991; Woltman et al., 2003).
**Summary.** In summary, the EORM is a better-integrated framework grounded in the theory of E-ELM. The E-ELM posits that transportation and identification help to reduce a specific type of resistance to persuasion -- counterarguing (Slater & Rouner, 2002). However, counterarguing is not the only form of resistance to persuasion. Also, transportation and identification are not the only two elements in entertainment programming. To this end, the EORM was put forth to explain how other unique features of entertainment programming helps to suppress various forms of resistance (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Reviewing these two models contributes to providing a fundamental framework to explore what elements in Gu’s blog advertisements increase the effectiveness of the ads by overcoming resistance. Specifically, the purpose of the current study is to explore what unique features of the advertisement in Gu’s blog assist in suppressing three forms of resistance to advertising: reactance, contesting, and cognitive avoidance (Fransen et al., 2015).

**Research Questions**

Based on prior research regarding the theory of art infusion and EORM, we raised four research questions:

- **RQ1:** What impact does the artwork presented in Gu’s advertising have on the perception of the advertised product?
- **RQ2:** What impact does the artwork presented in Gu’s advertising have on the evaluation of the advertised product?
- **RQ3:** What impact does the artwork presented in Gu’s advertising have on the attitude towards the advertisement?
- **RQ4:** What elements of the Gu’s advertisement contribute to overcoming resistance to the advertising?
Chapter 3

Methodology

A focus group study approach was chosen because of the exploratory nature of this paper and of the empirical necessity to investigate the artifact within its real-life context. According to Liamputtong (2011), focus group methodology is useful in exploring and examining what people think, how they think, and why they think the way they do about the issues of importance to them without pressuring them into making decisions or reaching a consensus. It is particularly valuable for research when little is known about the phenomenon of interest. In the current paper, focus groups were employed to explore what elements in Gu’s advertising blog appeal to audiences and why.

The current study conducted five focus groups. Each group involved five to six Chinese students. This ensured the quantity as well as the quality of information collected because everyone had the ability to talk for enough time (10 minutes on average) (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983). Five focus groups were conducted in total in order to collect a variety of responses from different participants and to see if the results were consistent (Bernard, 1994; Liamputtong, 2011). Focus group participants gathered in a regular classroom setting where participants engaged in a dynamic discussion for an hour with the help of a moderator. Details of method are presented below.

Recruitment

Twenty-nine Chinese students were recruited from Virginia Tech through snowball recruiting and advertising (Brondani et al., 2008; Salant & Gehlert, 2008). Of the sample, 58.6% (n=17) were male and 41.4% (n=12) female. We anticipated that this specific cultural group would work well for our study because we believed that this group might be more familiar with the social media platform that our material was retrieved from and have a better understanding of the messages (such as Chinese slang) contained in our material. Each focus group interview involved five to six students to discuss a particular advertising blog in a classroom setting for an hour. This number of subjects for each group
ensured the quantity as well as the quality of information collected (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983). Five focus groups were conducted eventually so it ensured the diversity of responses from different participants. Each respondent received a five dollar gift card from the researcher as the reward for their attendance.

Material

The advertisement which received the most “likes” on Gu’s blog (The Monet’s Garden, which received over 14,000 likes) was chosen as the material for focus group discussion. The advertised brand and product in “Monet’s Garden” are Robam and range hood. The advertisement depicts the life of Monet when he lived in Giverny. Gu showed what Monet’s Garden and Monet’s house looked like at the beginning of the advertisement. Next, Gu depicted how Monet decorated his house and what kind of art Monet liked. Near the end, Gu pointed out that Monet did not put any paintings in his kitchen and explained that it was because the smoke in the kitchen could damage paintings. Finally, the advertised product popped up at the end claiming that the product can sock out the smoke. The selected advertisement is shown in Appendix B.

Discussion Questions

Based on the literature review, the researcher generated three major types of questions regarding the entertaining features in the selected ad, resistance to persuasive message, and art infusion effects. In addition, the moderator’s guide contained questions about participants’ perceptions of advertisements in general, overall perceptions and evaluations of the selected material, and questions about respondents’ willingness to view Gu’s blog ads in the future. Details are included in the moderator’s guide (see Appendix A).

The moderator for the focus group sessions was the researcher. The moderator deviated from the moderator’s guide and asked follow-up questions depending on participants’ responses. The moderator’s guide only worked as a guideline.
Procedure

Participants were asked to present their student ID and sign the consent form before entering the discussion classroom. After check in, the moderator announced the start of the session and gave a brief introduction about the discussion topic. Next, participants were asked to introduce themselves to get familiar with each other. Then, the moderator sent out the selected material (e.g., Monet’s Garden advertisement) to all the group members by email and all participants were given five minutes to view the advertisement on their phone (Participants were told to bring their phones in advance). After the participants finished reading, the focus group discussion formally began under the lead of the moderator. All participants communicated with others in Chinese. The moderator led the discussion using the moderator’s guide to frame the discussion. Due to time limitations, all five focus group sessions did not go through with all of the required questions in the moderator’s guide. Gift cards were handed out to all group members after one hour’s discussion.

Data Analysis

Translation. Recordings of the focus group discussion were transcribed and translated into the English. The translation process was rendered by two translators who are proficient speakers of both the Chinese language and English language. One of the translators is the researcher of this study. The process consists of three steps: a) translating Chinese scripts into English by the first translator, b) re-translating the translation documents into Chinese by the second translator, and c) comparing the original Chinese scripts with the translated Chinese scripts to verify the translation process. Four noted discrepant words were re-translated through discussions between the two translators.

Thematic Analysis. This study used Boyatzis’s (1998) thematic analysis method to analyze data. First, each transcript was read and highlighted for statements, anecdotes, or assumptions that could be viewed as a data item. For example, one subject stated that “The artworks presented in the advertising has nothing to do with my evaluations of the
range hood.’’ This comment constituted a data item. A story of how the participants learned to draw pictures at an early age and cultivated an interest in art was also counted as a data item. Then, the researcher read transcripts repeatedly to cluster similar data items to generate initial codes. A table was generated for each code to sort each data item. Coding was undertaken on a sentence-by-sentence basis and 30 codes were generated (see Appendix C). Next, patterns or themes were identified by repeatedly reading the data and interpreting how the data were related to each research question. This process involved sorting different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant data within the themes. Finally, the researcher created a thematic map in relation to all the data and defined the themes for the presentation of the analysis.

To ensure the reliability of this study, the researcher constantly checked and questioned the results during data analysis. Specifically, the researcher constantly used questions suggested by Braun and Clake (2006), such as ‘‘How does your interpretation relate to the research questions?’’ or ‘‘Why do you think the data matches your analysis?’’
Chapter 4

Results

The Impact of the Presence of Art on Perceptions of Advertised Product

The first research question asked participants about the impact of artwork presented in Gu’s advertising on their perceptions of the advertised product. The majority of participants perceived the product as luxurious and high-end. However, most of them denied that the artwork presented in the advertisement had a direct impact on their perceptions. They commented that they perceived the product as luxurious because “the brand of the product is high-end,” or “the appearance of the product looks luxurious.” Several participants admitted that artwork in advertising affects their perceptions. As the presence of artwork is supposed to attract upper-middle-class customers, the product targeting these customers must be luxurious. For instance, one respondent noted:

The title of this advertisement is Monet’s Garden; it obviously attracts those who are curious about Monet. For example, a person who did not know Monet would not choose to read this blog. Also, the artwork in the ad aims to attract those who love art and appreciate art. Since art is appreciated by upper-middle-class, so I guess the product is expensive because it is targeting at upper-middle-class customers.

Another participant echoed that:

I think the artworks indicates that the ad is targeted to people who love art. In my mind, people who love art are commonly petty bourgeoisie who live a wealthy life. I think the product must be suitable for those petty bourgeoisie, so I feel it is luxurious.

Several participants asserted that the artwork presented in advertising has a direct impact on their perception. They claimed that the presence of the artwork disseminates the aura of art to the product. A participant observed that “I feel that the product is artistic because the artwork in the ad makes me think so. It is like the aura of art is contagious.”
Two out of 29 participants said the artwork presented in advertising has a negative impact on their perception of the product. These two participants perceived the product (i.e., the range hood) as cheap and shabby because “the range hood is surrounded by a lot of gorgeous artworks and the product seems incompatible with those beautiful paintings.” Therefore, they stated that the sharp contract elicited negative perceptions of the product.

**The Impact of the Presence of Art on Evaluations of Advertised Product**

The second research question asked about the impact of the artwork presented in Gu’s advertising on the evaluation of the advertised product. Most of the participants noted that the artwork presented in advertising does not have any impact on their evaluation of the product. They posited that one must collect a certain amount of information about a product to give evaluations. However, the advertising failed to provide any information about the advertised product except for the name of the product. As a result, most participants said they could not give assessments based on such little information, let alone talk about what affects their evaluations.

Only two participants gave positive comments on the product, and both of them had a particular interest in art. One of them said: “I started to learn art at an early age and I love to see paintings. I think I like this range hood as well because it is associated with lots of paintings.” Many participants concluded that whether artwork in the ad affects people’s evaluation depends on one’s liking of artwork. In other words, individuals who love art from the bottom of their hearts may give positive evaluations to every product that is associated with art, while people who do not have special feelings for art may not easily evaluate a product that is tied to art.

One participant expressed a strong dislike of the product because of the presence of artwork in the advertisement. This respondent recalled a bad memory of learning art at a young age and noted:

I hate art, especially paintings, I think they are extremely boring and meaningless. Putting a range hood and those paintings together make me hate this product. However, if the author tied the range hood with lots of games, I would like it.
This comment suggests that people who dislike art may give negative evaluations to the advertisement.

In sum, the findings showed that the artwork itself did not appear to have any impact on their evaluations of the advertised product. What influenced participants’ evaluation was how much participants liked the artwork.

The Impact of the Presence of Art on Attitudes to Advertisement

The third research question asked about the impact of artwork presented in Gu’s advertising on attitudes towards the advertisement. Many respondents commented that artwork in advertising enhanced the joyful reading experience while reading the ad. Therefore, participants asserted that artwork has a positive impact on their attitudes toward the advertisement because they feel relaxed and comfortable while viewing beautiful paintings. Consequently, many participants admitted that reading the advertisement becomes a joyful experience. For example, one respondent asserted:

Although I am not an art professional and I do not really understand those paintings, I think they are beautiful. It reminds me of my last experience of going to the concert, I did not understand music, but I like that music. I feel comfortable while listening to music as well as looking at these beautiful paintings. Therefore, I think I like this advertisement because it allows me to see lots of artworks.

This comment suggested that the joyful reading experience caused by the artwork strengthened positive impressions of the ad.

Another way that artwork positively affects participants’ perceptions of the advertisement is similar to how artwork influences perceptions of the product: the artistic sentiment “spills over” to the advertisement. As one respondent noted, “The artwork makes the advertisement looks artistic, it is like watching an artistic movie. So I think this ad is good, at least, the images in this ad are excellent.”

Entertainment Overcoming Resistance
Narrative Structure. The narrative structure of Gu’s advertisement overcomes reactance to persuasion. In the advertisement, Gu depicted the life of Monet when he lived in Giverny. Gu introduced why Monet loves water lilies, what Monet’s Garden looks like, and many other stories about Monet. The narrative structure of the advertising reduces reactance because narratives apparently are perceived as entertaining rather than persuasive. One of the respondents asserted:

I was not discouraged by the persuasive message pop up at the end because I think the purpose of this blog is not persuasion. I believe the real objective of this blog is to introduce us to something about Monet. I guess the author of the blog did not care the sale of the product at all.

The majority of respondents agreed with this comment. For example, a participant noted:

The advertising message did not bother me at all. I have already seen lots of paintings and heard some gossip about Monet, and the advertising message did not become a barrier for me to see artwork and to hear gossip. The author did not mention the advertised brand until the end. So I think the focus of this blog is the story of Monet, not the advertising message.

These comments suggested that participants perceived that Gu’s blog is intending to tell stories instead of selling products. On the other hand, some participants acknowledged that the real purpose of Gu’s blog is persuasion. However, they claimed that the persuasive intention is less intense, such as one participant added:

I think the persuasive intent of this ad seems much less intense to me compares to the regular advertisements. It is not like I have been taken away my time and attention after reading this ad. I learned a lot with this ad. While traditional ads were extremely pushy and I felt that is a waste of time.

Author Believability. Many of the respondents mentioned author believability, which refers to positive evaluations of the author, or liking of the author. According to the focus group responses, author believability appears to overcome resistance to advertising. Many subjects expressed their appreciation of Gu’s creation when they gave
comments on the advertisements. They complimented the author as “smart,” “talented,” “knowledgeable,” and “creative.” For instance, a respondent asserted:

I think the guy who posted this ad was very talented, I can see that he’s quiet professional in the field of art. I think it is totally acceptable for a man with great talent to make a profit through advertising, because I think he deserves the reward.

Another participant echoed:

I like the author as well. I think he knows how to marketing and he’s that kind of person who have a sense of humor. I think it’s okay to see his advertisements on weibo, because you are going to have lots of fun.

Other Entertaining Features

This portion of the results provides exploratory findings of why participants enjoyed reading Gu’s advertisement. However, whether these features contribute to reduce their resistance to advertising messages remains unclear, because only a minority of participants stated that the following features did overcome their resistance.

Entertaining Experience. The entertaining experience assists in reducing cognitive avoidance to persuasion. Most respondents expressed their enjoyment while reading the advertisement. According to the findings, three major features of Gu’s blog contribute to readers’ entertaining experiences: a) humorous language style, b) funny pictures, and c) combining persuasive messages with narrative messages. These three features seemed effective at reducing cognitive avoidance of the advertisement, as they consistently attracted readers’ attention. The first feature of humorous language style led to laughter among the audience. For example, a subject mentioned: The author was visiting Monet’s house during a trip, and he paid a ticket to get in the house, but he said on his blog like he had been invited by Monet, like they are friends or something. It’s pretty funny.” Another subject noted that the author utilized popular lyrics to amuse the audience. “There were lyrics cited from a popular song of Big Bang, that’s a smart citation, and I like it a lot.

The second feature of Gu’s advertisement that contributes to entertainment is funny pictures. Many subjects said they found that the funny pictures that come along with the text evoked comedy. For example, one of the subjects asserted: “I think the comic
image of the author looks amusing, especially that image depicted he lying on the floor, it looks cute and amusing.” Several participants noted that they liked the picture where Monet was speaking Japanese because they found “it’s funny to see a famous European artist speaking Japanese.”

The most entertaining part was where Gu elegantly integrated a persuasive message with the narrative message. The majority of subjects acknowledged that they were surprised by the advertising pop up at the end, and in a good way. They claimed that the advertising message was amusing in the context of Gu’s blog. One focus group member commented:

The author raised a question for the audience to think near the end of the blog, that is, why did not Monet put paintings in his kitchen. I like the question, because it attracted my attention so that I kept reading to know the answer. I was surprised to see the advertisement at the end, but I think it’s very interesting. Because the advertising message answered the question, he raised earlier.

Another group member echoed: “I found it’s very funny because it’s like a brain teaser type of question. We all love brain teasers, right?” These comments demonstrated the impact of entertaining information on overcoming resistance to the advertisement.

**Liking of the Character.** Except for the liking of the author, many respondents expressed their liking of the character (i.e., Monet). The liking of Monet was caused by various factors: a) worship of Monet’s fame, b) appreciation of Monet’s personality, and c) perceived similarity. The first factor, the worship of Monet, is the most common factor that led to the liking of the character in this study. Monet, as the most famous Impressionism artist, is well recognized by the world. In Gu’s advertisement, this popular artist becomes a perfect subject to attract people’s attention (Denvir, 1993). As one participant noted:

Monet as the subject of this blog attracted my attention. Although I know little about art, I heard of Monet for several times because I think he counts as one of the most famous artists in this world. I wanted to keep reading the blog because I want to know more about this famous artist.
Second, several participants expressed their appreciation of Monet’s personality according to Gu’s description. For example, one respondent posited that “now I know that Monet is a crazy fan of Japanese culture, that’s interesting to know. I assume that Monet is a friendly person as he welcomed foreign culture.” Another focus group member agreed with this assumption and added: “he made his wife wearing traditional Japanese dress, so I guess he’s willing to try new things and adventurous. That’s good.”

Some subjects gave positive evaluations to Monet because they perceived similarity with this character. Two subjects claimed that they felt Monet and themselves were alike when they read that Monet covered his walls with paintings. One of them noted: “I like to stuff my desk with various school supplies” whereas one of them recalled: “The wall of my dorm were stuffed with poster back to the time when I lived in campus, I am surprised to know that Monet is the same as me.” Another respondent perceived similarity with Monet as they both love having parties in their house.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Art Infusion Effects in Gu’s Advertisement

First, this study was interested in whether or not the presence of art has a positive impact on participants’ attitudes towards the advertised product. Therefore, we first asked focus group participants questions about whether their perceptions of the advertised product were affected by the presence of art. Only a few participants observed the impact of the paintings presented in the ad affected their feelings, while the majority of participants denied the relationship between the artwork and their perception of the product. However, it is still interesting to see that most of the participants perceived the product in the ad as luxurious and high end. This could be that the presence of art only has a subtle impact on participants’ feelings of the product so that they did not realize that they were affected by the paintings.

Next, we asked participants whether or not the presence of art had any impact on their evaluations of the advertised product. Most of the participants stated they think there’s no relationship between their evaluations of the product and the artwork in the ad. However, the results of this study are interesting in that they suggest that people’s evaluations of advertised products are related to how much they like art to begin with, and that this preexisting interest in art is a more powerful predictor of how much people will evaluate the product positively than the presence of artwork. This is a noteworthy result that potentially suggests an avenue for future research that might be interesting to advertising professionals. The results did not show any direct relationship between the presence of artwork and people’s evaluations of the product; however, preexisting interest in art and liking of the art-infusion product do seem to be related. This result is important because it suggests that different approaches to the application of fine art in advertising might be necessary for groups of people with different levels of preexisting interest in art. Also, results show that preexisting interest in art may be a powerful predictor for how much people will give positive evaluations of the product that is associated with art. Moreover,
these findings on the significant relationship between preexisting interest in art and evaluations of the product offer an important and interesting avenue of research that could be relevant to museum or gallery professionals, art educators, or arts advocates. It could be that encouraging people to cultivate a preexisting interest in art (for example, by educating school children) is more important than trying to offer innovative approaches (such as art-infusion advertising) to art engagement.

In order to further explore the effects of art infusion advertising, the researcher then asked participants whether the artwork in the ad had any impact on their attitudes toward the advertisement. The results showed that most participants acknowledged that the painting presented in the ad made the advertisement seems artistic and made them like the advertisement more. The results suggest that even though the study failed to find a significant relationship between the presence of art and the participants’ attitudes to the product, art-infusion advertising might still be a good way to engage viewers and attract their attention in the first place.

**Entertaining Features in Gu’s Advertisement**

As highlighted earlier, another goal of this study was to explore what elements in Gu’s advertisement contribute to overcoming resistance. The results do show that there were several features of Gu’s advertisement that participants viewed as entertaining. First, the narrative structure of the ad diminished viewers’ perceptions of the message’s persuasive intent, which is in line with the EORM (Moyer-Guse’, 2008). Many participants noted that they think the author’s real intention was not persuasion but to tell stories. Therefore, many of them said they were not bothered by the advertising message when it appeared at the end. Second, some participants observed that their liking of the author made them less resistant to the advertising message. The explanation of this finding may exist in the the ELM theory. In the case of Gu’s advertisement, the author believability may have worked as a peripheral cue and reduced viewers’ motivation to generate counterarguments while viewing persuasive messages. However, an experimental design would be needed to confirm this explanation.
In addition, the results also showed that some entertainment features such as humorous language style, funny pictures, and liking of the character made the audience want to keep reading the material. However, when the study further tried to explore whether these features contribute to overcoming viewers’ resistance to advertising, the answers were not consistent. Thus, it is necessary for future research to determine whether and how these entertainment features help to overcome resistance. Although the EORM suggests that viewers are less inclined to avoid persuasive messages that are entertaining and more likely to avoid messages that are informational (Olney et al., 1991; Woltman et al., 2003), the exploratory findings of this study did not provide a significant relationship between these entertaining messages and reduced avoidance. However, some participants did state that the above features made them less resistant to the advertising message. Future research is required to see if these findings would stay true with a larger amount of subjects.

Limitations

Although this study sheds insight on the role of entertainment and artinfusion features on strategic advertising, the findings should be applied with caution due to its limitations. First, this study examined a particular advertisement posted by an online influencer in China. Thus, the scope of the study constrains the generalizability of the findings. The exploration of what elements in online advertising appeal to the audience only offered a single case to be added to the field of advertising. Future research can adopt the advertising strategies identified in this study to develop systematic quantitative measures and explore art-infusion and entertaining effects in general online advertisements.

Second, the subjects of this focus group study are limited. The responses in this study thus may not be representative regarding the influence of culture, age, and education because all participants were Chinese students. For instance, we do not know how responses may vary in other cultures, such as the American culture. In order to test if the findings of this study remain true, future research is required to engage a larger number of participants. Also, more research can examine to what extent the variable of culture, age, or education can affect viewers’ attitude towards this advertisement.
Another potential limitation of this study is that participants all knew in advance that they were going to see an ad. This might have diminished their resistance to advertising in the first place. A future version of this focus group study might begin by discussing an irrelevant topic, rather than asking about participants’ general thoughts of the advertisement. For example, the moderator might simply ask participants to list their top three favorite bloggers and tell them they are going to see a blog on social media.

Finally, another major limitation of this study is the time limit for each focus group. It was originally thought that each participant would have sufficient time for speaking. However, the researcher did not anticipate that participants would require a large amount of time to process each question. This may be because participants were not familiar with the material they were looking at, or it could be that they were too shy to express their thoughts in front of a group. As a result, all five focus group sessions did not go through all of the required questions in the moderator’s guide. Three out of five focus groups did not cover the questions of reactance, contesting, and cognitive avoidance. All focus groups failed to discuss questions about cognitive avoidance. Therefore, the study failed to provide an in-depth analysis about what entertainment features in Gu’s ad contribute to overcoming resistance and why.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study extends the existing art infusion advertising research and explores the effect of Gu’s online advertising. Such exploration provides strategic implications for advertising practitioners. Based on results of the study, the researcher found that in Gu’s blog advertising, a) the majority of participants denied a positive impact of artwork on the advertised product, while b) most participants acknowledged that their attitudes toward the ad were affected by artwork. First, even though it was expected that the artwork presented in the ad could have an impact on people’s perception as well as evaluation of the product, only a few people observed that the artwork presented in the advertising disseminated the aura of art to the advertisement so that they perceived the ad as artistic. Also, only a few participants asserted that they view artwork as an indicator of luxury. Therefore, they perceived the product that is associated with art as expensive and high-end.

Second, although previous art-infusion research suggested people will evaluate the product more positively when the product is tied to art, this study found no relationship between these two measures. It could be that participants are unconscious about the impact of art-infusion on their evaluations or it could be because participants are too shy to express their real feelings. It is possible that individuals are afraid to posit their true opinions when they are in group conditions.

Another major finding of this study is that several entertaining features contained in Gu’s advertisement contributed to overcoming resistance to persuasion. These features include narrative structure and author believability. Meanwhile, the results also suggested some other features of Gu’s ad perceived as entertaining by participants, such as humorous language style, funny pictures, and liking of the character. However, future research is required to see if and how these features contribute to overcoming resistance to advertising. In sum, the results of this study offer an important and interesting avenue of research that could be relevant to advertising professionals, public relations practitioners, art advocates, or art educators. For art advocates and art educators, it is important for
them to know that encouraging people to cultivate a preexisting interest in art is more important than trying to offer innovative approaches (such as art-infusion advertising) to art engagement. For advertising practitioners, this study suggests that art-infusion advertising might be a good way to engage viewers and attract their attention in the first place.
### TABLE 1: Advertised Brands and Products in Gu’s Blog

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Title</th>
<th>Publish Date</th>
<th>Repost</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Advertised Brand</th>
<th>Advertised Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did they see</td>
<td>7/20/2015</td>
<td>4815</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>5907</td>
<td>Vivo</td>
<td>mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspiracy</td>
<td>8/5/2015</td>
<td>6832</td>
<td>2252</td>
<td>7805</td>
<td>T-Mall</td>
<td>shopping website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft as water</td>
<td>3/20/2015</td>
<td>6469</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>5882</td>
<td>Lancome</td>
<td>cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saggittarius</td>
<td>10/29/2015</td>
<td>2251</td>
<td>1367</td>
<td>3817</td>
<td>Remy Martin</td>
<td>wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn something</td>
<td>12/11/2015</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1578</td>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The secret of Mona Lisa</td>
<td>7/28/2016</td>
<td>1563</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>3849</td>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>social app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby fat</td>
<td>3/23/2016</td>
<td>2688</td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>3687</td>
<td>Gucci</td>
<td>handbag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of style</td>
<td>9/30/2015</td>
<td>7651</td>
<td>3850</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Art</td>
<td>5/19/2016</td>
<td>3696</td>
<td>1063</td>
<td>4453</td>
<td>Lexus</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paethon</td>
<td>3/26/2015</td>
<td>3341</td>
<td>2418</td>
<td>5494</td>
<td>Cadillac</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>11/8/2015</td>
<td>3673</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>4288</td>
<td>Boss</td>
<td>men's clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to become rich</td>
<td>8/18/2015</td>
<td>3444</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>4962</td>
<td>China Pinggan</td>
<td>insurance service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Price 1</td>
<td>Price 2</td>
<td>Price 3</td>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Monet Garden</em></td>
<td>8/12/2015</td>
<td>24000</td>
<td>7325</td>
<td>14000</td>
<td>Robam</td>
<td>ventilator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Paradise</em></td>
<td>6/23/2015</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>3417</td>
<td>7575</td>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>oatmeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pioneer</em></td>
<td>11/26/2015</td>
<td>6182</td>
<td>1695</td>
<td>4533</td>
<td>Mont Blanc</td>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A tooth for a tooth</em></td>
<td>3/31/2015</td>
<td>1614</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>3795</td>
<td>Oral-B</td>
<td>electric toothbrush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The secret of Louvre</em></td>
<td>9/28/2015</td>
<td>14000</td>
<td>4355</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>Bosch</td>
<td>air-condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Masculine</em></td>
<td>4/10/2015</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>3442</td>
<td>Jeep</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Human nature</em></td>
<td>4/7/2015</td>
<td>43000</td>
<td>&gt;14000</td>
<td>8076</td>
<td>Extra</td>
<td>gum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Like a Queen</em></td>
<td>1/12/2015</td>
<td>&gt;13000</td>
<td>3057</td>
<td>6920</td>
<td>Chaumet</td>
<td>jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Why Van Gogh commit suicide</em></td>
<td>12/9/2014</td>
<td>&gt;17000</td>
<td>2916</td>
<td>6275</td>
<td>Alipay</td>
<td>finance app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Freedom!</em></td>
<td>10/23/2015</td>
<td>2212</td>
<td>1174</td>
<td>3487</td>
<td>T-Mall</td>
<td>shopping website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Be pleasant to the eye but of no use</em></td>
<td>9/9/2016</td>
<td>2246</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>Panasonic</td>
<td>air-condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How did Monet become famous</em></td>
<td>11/27/2016</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>Lexus</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The taste in memory</td>
<td>11/9/2016</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Nivea</td>
<td>cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did your mother worry about</td>
<td>2/4/2016</td>
<td>2944</td>
<td>1686</td>
<td>4734</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's talk</td>
<td>1/28/2016</td>
<td>2741</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>3052</td>
<td>Jingdong</td>
<td>shopping website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The catcher in the rye</td>
<td>1/15/2016</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>SPD Bank</td>
<td>credit card service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern art</td>
<td>1/7/2016</td>
<td>4088</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>4716</td>
<td>Surface Pro</td>
<td>tablet computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeze!</td>
<td>12/31/2015</td>
<td>1136</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>Thermos</td>
<td>water bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsome pose</td>
<td>12/23/2015</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>2893</td>
<td>Cadillac</td>
<td>automobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mona Lisa</td>
<td>9/20/2015</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>Chateau de Lamarque</td>
<td>wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>5/27/2015</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>2437</td>
<td>Coca cola</td>
<td>beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichas's dream</td>
<td>2/15/2015</td>
<td>1779</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>4019</td>
<td>Net Ease</td>
<td>news app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time flies</td>
<td>1/16/2015</td>
<td>6114</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>4613</td>
<td>Philips</td>
<td>air purifier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Advertised Brands and Products in Gu’s Blog
APPENDIX A: The Moderator Guide

Sign Up

1. Ask for Proper ID.
2. Ask respondents to read and sign the consent form.
3. Make sure all respondents have their mobile devices with them and ask respondents to check the Internet connection.
4. Ask the respondents to sit wherever they want.
5. Make all respondents feel welcomed.

Introduction

1. Give a warm welcome to all respondents.
   e.g., “Welcome everyone, thank you so much for coming.”
2. Give a self-introduction to respondents.
   e.g., “I am the moderator for today’s discussion, and my name is xxx.”
3. Introduce the topic of discussion.
   e.g., “Today, we are going to talk about an advertisement created by a Chinese online influencer.”
4. Tell respondents about how long the discussion will last,
   e.g., “The discussion will last around an hour, everyone is expected to say whatever they want and be active during the whole process.”
5. Tell respondents about expected behaviors.
   e.g., “During the discussion, you are welcome to posit your opinions according to my questions. You can also give comment on other’s opinions as well. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me or whoever might concerns. I might call your name to ask for your thoughts, don’t be nervous if I do so, you just need to express your real thoughts or feelings. Also, I hope everyone can listen to others carefully and do not interrupt anyone who is speaking.”
6. Tell respondents about the video recording.
e.g., “The discussion will be videotaped only for academic purpose. So you don’t need to be bothered by the camera.”

7. Tell that eating and drinking are allowed.
   e.g., “There are some water and snacks on the desk, please feel free to have some!”

8. Tell respondents when they will be given the gift.
   e.g., “Everyone will be given a thank you gift before leaving!”

Discussion Questions

Warm-up Questions
1. What kind of advertising do you enjoy to see? Examples?
2. What kind of advertising do you hate to see? Examples?

General questions about the selected ad
1. What do you like about this ad?
2. What do you dislike about this ad?
3. When did you realize something was being sold?
   *Optional Questions
   3-1. Did you experience attitude change after you realize something was being sold?
   3-2. Did your evaluation of the material change after you realize something was being sold?
   3-3. Did your impression of the material change after you realize something was being sold?
   3-4. Do you think you are influenced by the ordering of the advertising message?
4. Whom do you think the advertisement is targeting at?
5. What do you think is the main message of the advertised product?
   *Optional Questions
   5-1. What’s your perception and evaluation of the advertised product?
   5-1-1. What’s your overall impression of the advertised product?
   5-1-2. What’s your overall evaluation of the advertised product?
Questions of entertaining features of the selected ad
1. Do you like the story line of this ad?
   *Optional Question: What element of the story makes you like it?
2. Do you like the character of this story (i.e., Monet)?
   *Optional Question: What feature of this character make you like him?
3. Is this ad entertaining? Emotional? Why?
   *Optional Question: What features of this ad make you think it is entertaining? Emotional? Informational?

Questions of Reactance
1. Does the advertising message pop up at the end discourage you? Why?
   *Optional Questions
   1-1. Are you bothered by the advertising message?
   1-2. Any feature of the ad make you less uncomfortable about the advertising message?

Questions of Contesting
1. Are you skeptical about the advertised product?
   *Optional Question: Do you trust the advertised product after reading this ad?
2. Are you skeptical about the author of the advertisement (i.e., Gu)?
   *Optional Question: Do you trust the author of the ad?
3. What tactic do you think this ad has applied? Do you think this tactic works?
   *Optional Question: How will you evaluate the tactic of this ad?
4. Any feature of this ad makes you less skeptical about the product, the author, or the advertising tactic?

Questions of Cognitive Avoidance
1. Whether, at any point, you wanted to stop reading the material? Why?
   *Optional Questions
   1-1. What makes you want to stop reading the material?
   1-2. What makes you want to keep reading the material?
Questions of Art-infusion Phenomenon

1. How does the artwork presented in the ad contribute to your overall impression of the advertised product?
2. How does the artwork presented in the ad contribute to your overall impression of the advertisement?

*Ending Questions (Optional)

1. Will you be interested to see other advertisements in Gu’s blog? Why?
2. Will you consider buying the advertised product in Gu’s blog? Why?
APPENDIX B: Selected Ad

Visiting

Monet’s Garden

Giverny is a small village in western France
43 miles away from Paris

The world’s most famous garden locates in Giverny

Is it large?

No

Well

Is it beautiful

?
Not so much actually......

Personally
I think it is even less beautiful than Suzhou Garden

The reason for its fame
is pretty simple

It is Monet’s garden

The old man had been living in here for 43 years

He was poor when he first moved in
Then he made a fortune out of selling drawings
And he bought an unused land near his house

He also spent some time to fix up this place

So it turns up to become

a *mixed* garden

There are Franch irises

Japanese Taiko flowers
water lilies

This water lily pond might be the most well-known pond of the world because over 200 drawings of Monet are themed by this pond.

Every scene in the drawings could be found in real life.
Why did Monet draw so many water lily pictures?

It’s actually because

unlike most of the artists who represent things by using the techniques of colour and brushwork

Monet utilize a single thing to

represent

the techniques of

colour and brushwork
Water lily happens to be the „thing” that Monet used to represent drawing techniques ...

Furthermore
It is a beautiful thing that close to his house ...

At least Monet think it is beautiful

Personally speaking, the garden looks „messy” ...

However
This is just the style that Monet liked

He liked to put various seasonal plants together so he could always have bloomy flowers in his garden
Moreover

Monet liked to stuff up all the space with objects

he is definitely not a fan of Minimalism

Not only the garden, but also his house reflects this personal preference
There was a tour group from London visiting this place as well.

The crowd filled every room of the house like a party was going on in this house.

I bet Monet would be glad to see so many people.
As mentioned

Monet liked to stuff up all the space
with objects

... ...

So the walls of his house are stuffed with

paintings

You can hardly find any blank wall!

The house decoration is exactly the same
as the way Monet decorated

... ...

These paintings include his own works
as well as his friends’
You may ask:

Are they all authentic works?

(a frequently asked question of visitors)
Well ... The answer is

No

Because of wars and art trades
most authentic works were
scattered all over the world

Most of the paintings in Monet’s house are replicas
fewer of them are original

Here’s a tip for distinguishing replicas
from authentic paintings

To see if it is
framed with glass

In addition to Impressionism artworks
There are lots of
Ukiyoe artworks in Monet’s collection
(which are all original)
These Ukiyoe drawings add an oriental tinge to his house and provide further evidence that

*Monet is a fanatical fan of Japan*

He even asked his wife to wear kinomo when posting

Lots of Japanese like Monet’s artworks as well
Lots of Japanese like Monet’s artworks as well

Having toured around Monet’s house

I found something interesting

There are paintings hanging all over his house

no space escaped

Except the kitchen . . .
Look, no painting at all

Why?

I started to look at some paintings depicting kitchens and found that
nobody put painting
in the kitchen

Is it because of the lack of artistic atmosphere
in the kitchen?

But how to explain the fact that
Monet put paintings in the bathroom?

I couldn’t figure out why at first

But last night

I was having barbecues
with some friends
With a great “ah ha!”

I realized that people never put paintings in kitchen is because of

The smoke will damage the paintings … …

Therefore
all you need to make your kitchen art-filled
is a good **range hood**!
ROBAM 老板
Robam Range Hood !!!
Enjoying Cooking Life

Boom Boom Boom
Let
The Wind
Blow !!!

I bet Monet would be happy
if he had a range hood like this
### APPENDIX C: Thematic Analysis — Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>How Many Data Item</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The brand image affected students’ perceptions of the product</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I perceive this product as very luxurious because I know the brand of the product is very high end. but I think my perception has nothing to do with the paintings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artwork attracts consumers from upper-middle-class people</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I think the artworks indicate that the ad is targeting at people who love art. In my mind, people who love art are commonly petty bourgeoisie who live a wealthy life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artwork attracts consumers from upper-middle-class people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think the artworks makes me think that: how lame is this product. Because the range hood is surrounded by a lot of gorgeous artworks and the product seems incompatible with those beautiful paintings. So I think the sharp contract of artwork and range hood elicited negative perceptions. If he was talking about industrial products at first, such as cars, introducing the history of the car, then pop up a range hood ad at the end, it might feels better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artwork attracts consumers from upper-middle-class people</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I also feel this product is hihh-end, but it’s because of the product itself. It just looks like it’s high end. do you know what I mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students perceived the products as luxurious because of the artwork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can feel that the artworks makes me perceive the product as expensive. i don’t know why, maybe I think art is expensive. I know that the tuitions for art students are expensive because one of my friend is majoring in designing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s no relation between the artwork and students’ perceptions of the product</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I perceive it’s a high-end product. but I think my perception has noting to do with those paintings. I just think there’s no relation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>How Many Data Item</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s no relation between the artwork and students’ perceptions of the product</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>I agree, I feel that the product is artistic because the artworks in the ad make me think so. It is like the aura of art is contagious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students perceived the product as luxurious because they think the artwork attracts consumers from upper-middle-class people</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>I think the the subject of this advertising is designed to attract rich people’s attention. Or it wants to attract those who yearn for high-end life. That’s way I think this product looks quite high-end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students could not evaluate the product based on little information</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>When I gave comments to a product, I must have used it. Especially for a product like range hood, I have to know whether it works, how it works, etc. So I don’t have much thoughts about the product for now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students dislike the product because they dislike art</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>So I hate art, especially paintings, I think they are extremely boring and meaningless. Putting a range hood and those paintings together make me hate this product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluations of the product depend on whether you like art or not</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>I think it depends on how much you like art. As for me, I’m not a fan, so I feel nothing about this range hood. I neither like it or dislike it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students positively evaluated the product because of the brand image of the product</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>Actually, the range hood in my home is the same brand as this one. Robam is a good company, and their product are all with high quality. I believe this range hood is very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students positively evaluated the product because they like art</td>
<td><img src="https://chart-dl.tensorflow.org" alt="" /></td>
<td>Em, I believe it is a range hood with good quality! I don’t know why, maybe because that I have special feelings about art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artwork makes the ad looks artistic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoyed looking at the artwork and thus like the ad more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students perceived similarity between themselves and the character</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students appreciate the personality of the character</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students expressed their familiarity of the character</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students learned a lot interesting stuff about art by reading the ad</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students like the language style of the ad</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Many Data Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, I think those artworks have a positive impact on it. Because they make this ad looks good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, looking at these ad makes me feel relax so that I enjoyed reading this blog a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it’s very interesting when he talks about how did Monet likes to stuff his wall with paintings. Well, The wall of my dorm were stuffed with poster back to the time when I lived in campus, I am surprised to know that Monet is the same as me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I assume that Monet is a friendly person as he welcomed foreign culture. I’d say, he’s pretty cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monet is famous, indeed. I think it is because he is the initiator of Impressionism. Am I right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like they way he to share what he knows about art, and I think it's helpful for my own improvement. I did not really know Monet Garden before. Because… to tell the truth, I do not understand art, I think what he said is both informational and interesting. It broaden my knowledge and also entertains me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically speaking, I think it is because of the language style he used. For example, the author was visiting Monet’s house during a trip, and he paid a ticket to get in the house, but he said on his blog like he had been invited by Monet, like they are friends or something. It’s pretty funny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students like the author of the ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students like the funny pictures in the ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students like to see how a product was combined with the theme of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were not discouraged by the persuasion message because of the narrative structure of the ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were not discouraged by the persuasion message because they like the author of the ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were skeptical of the content of the ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoyed reading the ad but give no specific reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students did not enjoy reading the ad but give no specific reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for further improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digressing responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: IRB Approval

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 4, 2017

TO: Adrienne Holz Ivory

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Art Infusion and Entertainment Effects: A Focus Group Study of Chinese Online Advertising

IRB NUMBER: 17-338

Effective April 4, 2017, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5, 6, 7
Protocol Approval Date: April 4, 2017
Protocol Expiration Date: April 3, 2018
Continuing Review Due Date*: March 20, 2018

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/works statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal/work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.
Bibliography


Colucci, E. (2007). "Focus groups can be fun": The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(10), 1422-1433.


Kitzinger, J. (1994a). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness, 16*(1), 103–121.


