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<thead>
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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Asian advertising : where to?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Takayoshi Matsuzaka</td>
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<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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"Asian Advertising: Where To?"

by Takayoshi Matsuzaka
Final
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Asian Media International Communication

(Start cassette tape “Bungawan Solo” by Heticos Endang)

I first heard this beautiful voice in Jakarta 6 years ago. I was a speaker on “Creative Localization in Advertising” at a conference held by PPPI, the Indonesian Advertising Association, which took place as TV commercials were being reintroduced into that country. After the conference, I extended my stay and visited Jogjakharta and Bali. I enjoyed my trip very much and was particularly struck by the passion of Indonesians, young and old, for this song, “Bungawan Solo”. I asked at a music shop for all possible versions of it and discovered three: one by Gesang, one by Sriyono, and one by this heavenly voice. Do any of you know the name of the singer? Yes! Her name is Heticos Endang. She, an inheritor of the cultural legacies of Indonesian music, is one of the leading practitioners of Keronchon. I believe she married a Malaysian gentleman (how I envy him!) and now lives here with her family.

We now live in the most peaceful era in the history of Asia. Although tensions still exist in certain places, there are no major wars. In fact, ASEAN is near to completing its efforts to establish a community that embodies peace and cooperative relationships.

In one of his books, Prime Minister Mahatir makes these three points:

1. We must strive to achieve eternal peace full of warmth and cooperation through realistic acts of friendship, mutual understanding, mutual trust and goodwill.
2. We must maintain our dynamic economic growth in accordance with the belief that “when our neighbors become rich, we become rich, too.”
3. Social righteousness, such as equality for all, must be realized in every country.
I like what your prime minister says. It is a very well integrated and balanced diagnosis. I believe he was a medical doctor before he became a politician, and I am sure he was a physician of high reputation. Thus, we can appreciate his diagnosis on politics, economy, society and culture.

Well, how can we advertising people help to realize the ideal community envisaged by the prime minister?

Advertising is concerned with almost all aspects of our daily lives: leisure and recreation; travel, both domestic and international; sports and culture; governmental public relations in areas such as health promotion and long-term economic policy; and so on. In short, advertising is a trendsetter in the culture of daily life. Advertising functions to create new values in culture, the base of which can be glimpsed through the way people live their lives.

Well, let us see how the cultural base of Asia is changing.

(Changing ways of living – Cultural base in Asia)

The results of a recent lifestyle study in Asia have been plotted against two axes. The horizontal axis represents SENSIBILITIES and the vertical axis CHALLENGES.

Let's follow the change from older to younger generation. As age falls, the average scores on both axes move upwards in the direction of one o'clock.

There is no doubt that for both advertising creators (yourselves) and for recipients (consumers) the direction in our region is upwards towards one o'clock. This is the first answer to the question “Asian advertising: Where to?”

This change suggests that the creation and replacement of cultural values will occur more frequently and more dynamically in the near future.
As communications professionals, many here might be interested in a comparative study of Asian and Western values.

(THE CONTINUED INFUSION OF FOREIGN CULTURES)

Let us start with a comparative analysis summarized by Prof. Felix Stravens in his book, "Advertising in Asia." I hope I have the professor's permission.

I appreciate this analysis very much. Recently, we also conducted a comparative lifestyle survey called GLOBAL COMPASS and discovered three major common factors: strong family ties, respect for education, and a positive attitude to consumption. The third of these is the exact opposite of "thrift" in the Good Asian Values column in the professor's table, but it does imply the importance of the same general subject.

People tend to think, "Why don't we learn to take only the good values from each other and combine them to create better values for both." But all societies have something of an allergic reaction when confronted with new culture coming in from outside. Advertising people sometimes come across situations where a new piece of creative work - a TV commercial, for example - has to be revised after being rejected by local authorities.

Let me give an example from China. Some colleagues of mine were conducting creative research in order to devise an advertising strategy for a brand of body shampoo. It was discovered that excessive exposure to women's naked bodies caused negative effects on purchasing intention. Our creative people produced their first commercial accordingly and it was approved by the authorities in Shanghai.

To our surprise, however, the same film was rejected in Beijing and had to be revised. Now, would you like to see the difference between the two commercials?
Did you notice the difference between the two?

Anyway, the commercials were aired in each area as scheduled. Afterward, I asked several people in the two areas for their reactions to both of them. Men's reactions didn't vary: "Not bad. No problems with either." But I did notice a subtle difference in the responses of women in Shanghai and those of women in Beijing. The latter were slightly more conservative. This difference must be rooted in the different cultural values of the two cities.

Terpstra and David (1985) define culture as a learned, shared, and compelling interrelated set of symbols that provides a set of orientations for a society. This is an exact definition of culture that I can appreciate.

My own definition of culture is this:

Culture is a form or style, visible or invisible, expressing our joys, hopes and aspirations for peace.
In order to be able to express joy or hope, we must be healthy first.

I think this is an easier way of understanding what culture is. You can see the value of culture and the importance of health to us all.

Having defined "culture" in this way, I would like to show you a comparative study on lifestyles in our region. What do we live for? What do we need and what do we want? How do we want to be?

Human beings are the leading players in cultural activities, so the quality of culture is a reflection of people's needs and desires in society.

Individuals were asked to examine a card containing various statements on
lifestyle attitudes and then to choose up to three that seemed closest to their own.

The needs and wants of human beings tend to move to higher stages as they grow satisfied or increase their accomplishments. People in their late teens had virtually identical score totals.

With experience of many lifestyle surveys, both within and outside Japan, I believe there are several higher stages beyond that which Abraham Maslow termed stage 5, or “self-realization.” We may label these, stages 6, 7 and 8.

These upper three stages help explain the reason for such questions as the following, expressed by the Japanese calligraphy master

“While I have so many things,  
There is this anxiety inside me that says  
It’s not enough  
It’s not enough  
Why is that?”

Let’s take a look at lifestyle attitudes in some neighboring countries.

(Lifestyle attitudes – Indonesia)  
These look similar to those of Malaysia.

(Lifestyle attitudes – Singapore)  
Those in their late teens have different attitudes, reflecting an upward shift in their needs and wants.

(Lifestyle attitudes – Hong Kong)  
The difference in attitudes between those in their late teens and the overall population is more marked than in Singapore.

(Lifestyle attitudes – China)  
Similar to Hong Kong.
As you can clearly see, the younger generation's wants and needs lie in higher stages, such as 5, 6 and above. This trend has emerged most clearly in Hong Kong, China and Singapore.

As for Malaysia and Indonesia, the needs and wants patterns do not differ greatly between generations. This suggests that traditional cultural values in these two countries have been passed on to the younger generation.

These new values of the younger generation chart the course of Asian lifestyles and indicate the future direction of Asian advertising.

Language and religion are the main pillars of culture. For example, in Japan the majority of people are Buddhists who believe that nirvana (or Buddhahood) can be attained, not only by human beings, but by all creatures, and even manifestations of nature such as mountains, rivers, and trees.

Shintoism also places importance on nature and the natural world.

I was once told by a German medical doctor, "Animism has been prevailing in Japan, and that is not good."

It is not bad to respect and love nature as well as people, and to be warm, moderate and sincere to nature.

Tolerance, or forgiveness of others, is also an Asian characteristic. I was taught that Muslims in Asia share this with Buddhists. Confucianism stresses the importance of the family and also has a sincere admiration for nature.

Looked at in this way, it may seem that Asian values are excellent and quite universal. But, how about the future direction of Asian values and the vectors of SENSIBILITIES and CHALLENGES that imply higher stages of needs and wants such as SELF-REALIZATION? Can we say that Asian values are ideal for human beings in the 21st century? Is it true that Asian values are universal?
Perhaps we should pause for a moment.

What will be our main concerns at the beginning of the 21st century? What will be the role of advertising in the 21st century, and what problems and opportunities will it face?

I have personally been involved in many marketing research projects in Asia. The continent contains many different lifestyles and various stages of economic and political development.

Despite this diversity, however, I would identity four common concerns we have in Asia.

1. HEALTH
2. THE ENVIRONMENT
3. EMPLOYMENT
4. PEACE.

These concerns are probably not limited to Asia. Personally, I believe it is the responsibility of my generation to keep both the Earth and humans healthy. Human beings, however, cannot be healthy unless the earth is healthy. There is therefore a very strong link between the two topics that have emerged as the most important concerns in Asia – health and the environment.

Having said that, I have to ask myself once again: Is it true that Asian values are appropriate for the 21st century?

Industrialization in Japan was accompanied by terrible pollution. Korea had a similar experience, and now China and the countries of ASEAN are confronting the same kind of problem.

If environmental pollution in our own region is overlooked for the sake of rapid economic growth, doesn’t that perhaps imply that Asian values lack something essential?
Propelled by the forces of industry and government, rapid growth may sacrifice the citizen's right to a safe and comfortable life. This is what happened in Japan.

In regard to the rights of citizens to be informed, to be safe, to choose, and to have their will reflected by the government, Western values provide a firm base with democracy and the rule of law. In this sense, Western values may be more practical than Asian values.

The general public, the ordinary people, must become stronger in Asia. As a practitioner in the communication industry, I feel that nothing less than a communications renaissance will occur in the near future. With the boom in foreign travel, and new information technologies such as multimedia, the Internet and e-mail becoming an accepted part of daily life, ordinary people are gaining access to an ocean of information.

Although there is a danger some people may drown in that ocean, I am sure that the majority will be able to build their own ships, set their own course, and enjoy a comfortable cruise.

Exchanges amongst ordinary people transcending nationalities and cultural differences must bring about UNIVERSAL values; not Western, but not Asian either. This is what I call the communication renaissance.

How do we communications professionals fit in?

Advertising people are fortunate in that they occupy a central position between public, business, industry, government and the media.

We should generate new forms of communication that echo the new UNIVERSAL VALUES emerging from the younger generation.

The only asset of advertising people is their "creative power", which basically has no limitations and is not restricted by nationality. It is however, influenced by cultural identities, which nevertheless have a common basis in UNIVERSAL values.
Sharing a base of UNIVERSAL values, we would compete with each other to heighten the quality of individual cultural values in each society.

This quality competition of cultural values is the very area advertising people should explore in the 21st century.

With Asia's role in the creation of these new UNIVERSAL values, communication challenges in Asian advertising can contribute to making the whole world one, while upkeeping the variety of Asian cultural values, its "many voices".

"ONE WORLD with MANY VOICES" is the direction Asian advertising is moving.

_________(Chinese)

Now you are about to see a selection of TV commercials that were produced at DENTSU INC in 1995 and 1996. I hope the commercials will illustrate the points I have made. They were chosen according to the following criteria:

1. They won prizes at international or domestic contests.
2. They were popular with ordinary consumers.
3. They helped to increase sales.
4. They represent a variety of approaches to advertising expression.

Thank you very much. I wish all you a prosperous future.

AMIC (Asian Media Information and Communication Centre) and KUMPULAN UTSUSAN.
TAKAYOSHI MATSUZAKA
Regional Marketing Director
Dentsu Inc.

Mr. Matsuzaka has been Regional Marketing Director at Dentsu since January, 1997. He assumes responsibility for developing overseas businesses of Dentsu especially in Asia.

Mr. Matsuzaka joined Dentsu in 1964 and worked in its Marketing Division until 1973. He was responsible for research and strategic planning and consumer insights of international accounts.

In 1973, Mr. Matsuzaka joined Dentsu London Office and became General Manager in 1977. During his last three years in United Kingdom, he was responsible for various marketing / communication business related to export / import marketing, sports events like Wimbledon and Match Play etc.

In 1980, Mr. Matsuzaka returned to Tokyo Head Office, where he assumed a position as Marketing Director in Marketing Division. Since then he works for both domestic and international accounts in Japan.

Mr. Matsuzaka was born in 1940 and graduated from Tokyo University in 1964.

He is member of:
  Japan Marketing Association
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