

Advertising Message Strategies on Oman TV: An Application of Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the message strategies in television advertising based on Taylor's Six Segment Strategy Wheel (SSSW). The study examined (118) commercials broadcasted on *OmanTV*. The study indicated that combination strategies were mainly employed on *OmanTV* commercials with a focus on social segment. The study also examined if other considerations of: organizational orientation, advertising function, product type and industry sector affect the choice of advertising message strategy. It is recommended for international advertisers to focus on social segment and advertisers should develop different versions of commercials that severally focuses on one advertising function. In addition to message strategies, the conducted content analysis resulted in other valuable insights on the general television advertising scene.

Keywords: *Message Strategy, Creative Strategy, Television Advertising, Content Analysis, Taylor's Six Segment Strategy Wheel, Oman TV, Oman, Commercials.*

Introduction

Television is considered as one of the commonly used mediums for advertising (Gerber et Al., 2014) and prioritized among other media because of its capability to utilize audio and visual effects in the advertising message (Heath and Stipp, 2011). Despite the competition from online and mobile delivery of videos on such as YouTube, Hulu and Netflix, television still enjoys high levels of viewing in Australia, UK, and the USA, where audiences view for 3, 2, 4 and 5 hours per day, respectively (Beal et al., 2018). In Oman, television accounted for 8% of the advertising expenditure among other advertising mediums in the year 2018 (IPSOS, 2018). *OmanTV* is the official television station in the country, managed by the Ministry of Information (MOI). *OmanTV* was viewed by an average of 61.8% among other mediums through the years 2015 to 2019 (IPSOS, 2019). It scored a total of 244,400 million views on YouTube and had 638,200K followers on Twitter (MOI, 2022). It was also rated by 41% of Omani citizens as their favorite channel, with the most favored programs being news and entertainment programs (National Research Centre for Statistics and Information, 2015). According to the MOI (2019), 85% of the channel's audience are aged between 18 and 44 years. During the years 2019 and 2020, a total of 370 commercials were aired on *OmanTV*. The commercials varied in their advertising objectives and came from different industry sectors, including profit and non-profit organisations with different goods or services products.

In light of the popularity of *OmanTV* and the huge expenditure on television advertising, it is important that these commercials use effective message strategies. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to explore the message strategies of *Oman TV* television commercials. In addition, the study aims to examine if other considerations, namely, organization orientation, type of product, industry sector, advertising function, have an effect on the choice of message strategies.

During 2019 and 2020, a total of 370 commercials were aired on the channel. After excluding repeated versions and sponsorship credits (5 seconds logos), 118 commercials remained for assessment by the study. Commercials were content analyzed based on Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (SSSW) model.

The current study is the first exploratory study that provides empirical investigation of television advertising in the Oman context, within the perspective of television message strategy. Advertising research studies within unexplored areas such as Africa, South America, and the Middle East (Barger *et. al*, 2016) are needed to cover more specific topics in advertising and to bring theories into practice of everyday work (Sinclair, 2012). When practitioners have the required knowledge of different theories in advertising it helps with decision-making and problem solving in their everyday work (Nyilasy and Reid, 2007). Many studies noted the lack of research on advertising message strategies and their relation to consumer engagement (Renner, 2020; Rodgers and Thorson, 2018), as well as to certain behaviors evoked by these messages (Poels and Dewitte, 2019; Chang, 2017).

Specifically, this paper aims to (1) explore the main message strategies used in television advertising in Oman, (2) identify the commonly used strategies of the six-segment wheel as employed in this advertising, (3) investigate the effect of other considerations, namely, organisational orientation, product type, industry sector and advertising functions, on message strategy selection. The study begins with reviewing related literature on advertising and message strategy. After that, the study explains Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (SSSW). Then, the methodology is illustrated. Finally, the study presents the results, discussion, recommendations, and limitations.

Literature Review

Within this section, the study reviews the literature in order to define the concept of advertising message strategy and its importance for advertising effectiveness. Also, the development history of message strategy typologies is traced back through the literature. The study explains Taylor's Six-Segment strategy and mentions some of the studies that have applied this model.

Advertising Message Strategy

Message strategy is the "guiding approach to a company's or institution's promotional communication efforts for its products, its services, or itself" (Taylor, 1999, p. 7). It is also referred to as the "appeal", which is the overall approach adopted in the advertisement (Mortimer, 2008) and involves "creative strategy", that is, what to say and how it is said. "What to say" is the message content such as price, quality, performance, availability, components, special offers, taste, packaging, guarantees, safety, or new ideas in the ads and "How to say it" is the message format or execution, e.g. usage of pictures, words, or both, selection of media and ad timing (Laskey et al., 1989, as cited in Leung et al., 2017).

Tracing back the literature history regarding message strategy, it is found that the terms "message strategy" and "creative strategy" have been used interchangeably. Although the terms differ, one of two basic message strategies can be applied based on whether the appeal focuses on product attributes or on the creation of brand image (Laskey et al., 1995). Hence, Aaker and Norris (1982) used the terms informational/rational/cognitive and image/feeling/emotional messages. Also, Vaughn (1980) defined message strategies as thinking and feeling. Puto and Well (1984) then categorised advertisement strategies into two main types: informational and transformational. Informational advertisement strategy aims to provide consumers with facts and data about the brand in a logical manner. In contrast, transformational strategy is used to provide consumers with a sense of the experience of using the brand. Furthermore, Johar and Sirgy (1991) added utilitarian and value-expressive messages. Besides these two broad typologies that align into product attributes or brand image, other authors have proposed multi-category typologies. For example, Simon (1971) provided a ten category typology; Frazer (1983) proposed seven categories; Laskey (1989) provided eleven categories; and Taylor (1999) presented six categories (Frazer 1983, as cited in Laskey et al., 1994). Hence, as perceived in literature, advertising message strategies could be

classified within two main categories: informational and transformational. Scholars added subcategories based on the extent to which ration or emotions are applied for the purpose of attaining advertising effectiveness.

Many studies focused on the importance of message strategy for advertising and the development of typologies for message strategies (Leung et al., 2017). The effect of message strategy is greater than the effect of advertising expenditure (Putte, 2009) and despite the importance of brand positioning, creative solutions, choice of media, timing, and intensity of communication in advertising, message strategy is the element which is responsible for attracting consumers' attention, influences their perception among other advertised brands and leads to purchase intention (Jovanovic et al., 2016). Moreover, drawing the attention of the target audience can be achieved only through creative designs (Yurttas and Ozkock, 2020); creativity in advertising leads to advertising efficiency (Sameti and Khalili 2017), which makes it one of the most important concepts for effective design (Baack et al., 2016).

Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel

Taylor (1999) revisited the literature on building message strategy and developed the comprehensive model known as the Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (SSSW). The model distinguishes between the two broad advertising strategies: informational and transformational, provided by Well and Puto (1984). Based on Taylor's SSSW, messages can be classified into the two main categories of informational and transformational and then into three segments under each of them. The informational category involves ration, acute need, and routine, representing the tendency toward focusing on logic and the need to present information. The ration strategy is used when there is a need to provide information about the product and consumers are willing to spend time to gain such information. The second category addresses the acute need, when the consumer's sudden need for the product outweighs the need to gather information. The third category is routine, exemplified by habitual purchases that consumers make without spending time on searching for the product attributes. Within the transformational view are the ego, social and emotional subcategories which represent the need to focus on emotions rather than presenting information. The ego strategy represents products that address the needs of the consumer's ego or reflect their status by building emotional

attachment to the brand. The social category reflects the consumers' buying behaviour to fit a certain social group, such as friends, family, or coworkers. The last segment under the transformational view is sensory that reflects the product's appeal to all or any of the consumer's five senses (Taylor, 1999).

Taylor's model combines the existing literature into one model that can be easily applied by professionals (Yurttas and Ozkocak, 2020). SSSW is mainly based on social sciences and theories of consumer behaviour, as reflected in the addition of three segments under both the informational and transformational view (Tsourvakas et al., 2017). Kim et al. (2005) stated that the importance of SSSW derives from the model's linkage between how people make purchasing decisions and how advertisement operates. Also, the model pays equal attention to both informational and transformational views and provides sophisticated reasoning for defining sub segments. Taylor's SSSW model was widely employed by authors as a theoretical framework for analyzing message strategies used in various communication channels or events. For instance, Golan and Zaidner (2008) analyzed the "Creative Strategies in Viral Advertising"; Lee et al. (2011) studied the "Changes in Advertising Strategies During an Economic Crisis"; Yurttas and Ozkocak (2020) conducted analysis of the "Creative Strategies on Turkish Television Advertising"; Deng et al. (2020) studied "Global COVID-19 Advertisements: Use of Informational, Transformational and Narrative Advertising Strategies"; Kim et al. (2005) conducted a study of "Strategies for the Super Bowl of Advertising"; and Tsourvakas et al. (2017) produced research on "Advertising awards: A message strategy analysis of digital ads".

Table (1) provides a summary of Taylor's SSSW, and Figure (2) explains the concepts of the wheel and shows that emotional importance increases when moving from sensory to ego, and logic increases when moving from routine to ration.

Table 1 Summary of Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel

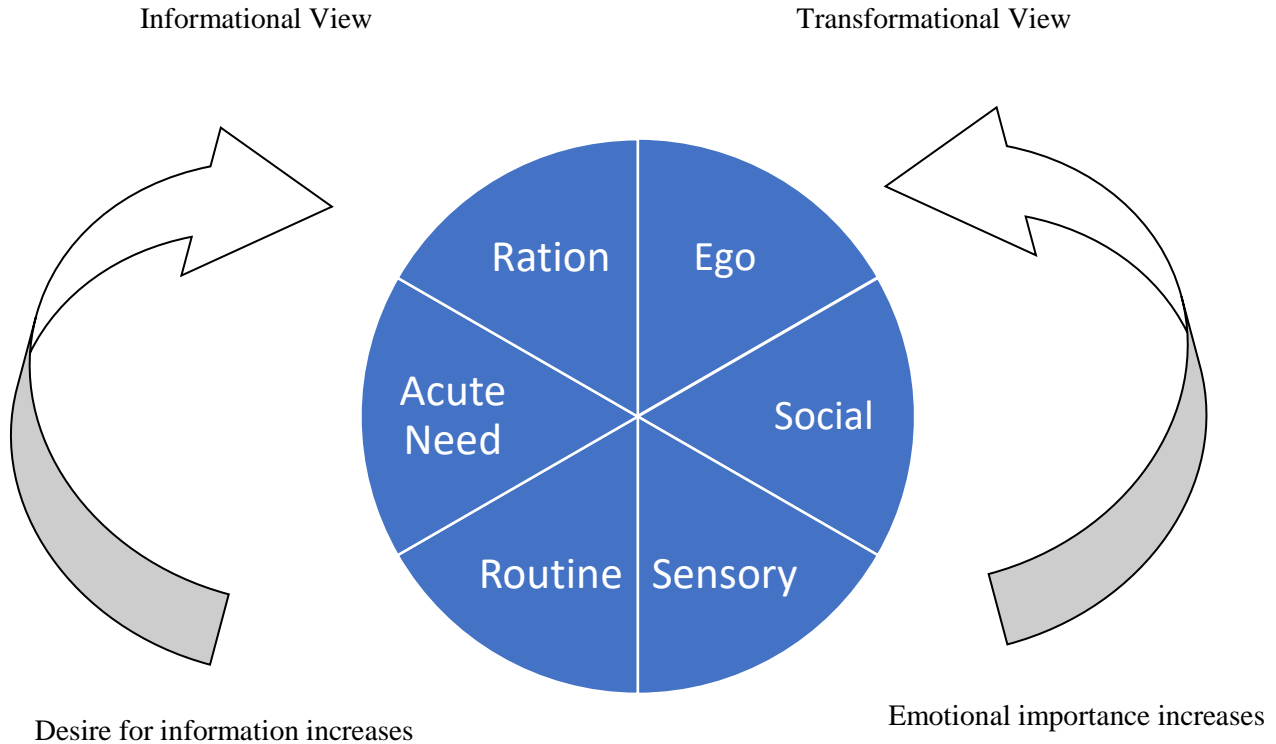
Taylor Segments	Original Model	Consumer Needs	Characteristics of products/ services	Nature of Purchase decision	Appeals Used	Strategies	Advertising role
Segment 1 : Ego	Freudian Psychoanalytic Model	Emotional need to make a statement about who he/she is.	Ego-related products	Decision highly based on emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ego-related •Vanity •Self-actualisation •“I Am Me” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •User image •Ego-related occasion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To show how the product fits within consumer definition of who he/she is.
Segment 2 : Social	Veblenian Social-Psychological Model	Emotional need to make a statement to others	Products visible to others “Prestige-seeking”	Decision based on conspicuous consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Being noticed •Gaining social approval •Engaging in socially correct behaviour •Recalling and reliving social experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social use-occasions •social user-image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To create the appropriate social situation within advertising that motivates the consumer •To transform the product into appropriate emotions

					through product consumption		such as love, affection, affiliation, noticing or administration
Segment 3 : Sensory	Cyrenaics philosophy	Emotional need to feel pleasure	Products provide consumers with “moments of pleasure” based on any of the five senses: Taste, sight, hearing, touch, or smell.	Decision based on emotions	Sensory appeal	Moment of pleasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To transform the product into a pleasurable moment by showing how use of the product produces sensory pleasure
Segment 4: Routine	Pavlovian Learning Model	Rational need for routine products	Routine use products	Decision is based on Rational buying with little time deliberation and buying is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenience • Ease of use • Product efficacy 	Hyperbole strategy (an untestable claim of superiority based on attribute or benefit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a “cue” to how consumer needs can be satisfied by introductory brand and establish habit

				according to habit.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remind the consumer to continue buying so that the habit does not become extinguished.
Segment 5 : Acute need	Acute need	Consumers have to buy a product or a product part.	Products of familiar brands	Decision is based on what is available, familiar, lowest price or the one with demonstrable advantage.	“Known and Trusted”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product distribution • Point of purchase information • Store personnel recommendation 	To build brand familiarity and recognition so that the brand is known and trusted at the time the consumer’s acute need arises
Segment 6: Ration	Marshallian Economic Model	Rational need for product information is high		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rational • Conscious • Calculating • Deliberative 	Information and logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic • Preemptive • USP • Positioning 	To inform and persuade

Note. Reproduced from “A Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel”, Taylor (1999), Journal of Advertising Research, p. 7-17.

Figure 1 Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel



Note: Reproduced from “Creative Strategies in Turkish Television Advertising” Yurttas and Ozkocak (2020), *Stratejik ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, p.4.

Based on the presented literature; the study raises the following questions:

RQ1 What are the main message strategies used in Oman Television advertising?

RQ2 What are the segments of SSSW employed within these message strategies?

RQ3 Does the organizational orientation affect choice of SSSW?

RQ4 Does the type of the product (goods or service) affect choice of SSSW?

RQ5 Does the advertising function affect the choice of SSSW?

RQ6 Does the advertising sector affect the choice of SSSW?

Methods

To better understand the strategies that were used in television advertising, the study conducted a quantitative content analysis of 118 commercials. Content analysis has gained wide popularity in mass communication research and media studies (Allen, 2017) because it can be used for analyzing how message creators used message content such as cues, symbols and strategies (Krippendorff, 2004). It is frequently used in identifying message strategies in different advertising forms, including television advertising (Clayton et al., 2012), by coding textual data into categories or schemes in alignment with the research objectives (Gaur and Kumar, 2018).

Sampling

The sample included all commercials that were run on *OmanTV* during January 2019 to December 2020. To obtain a unique commercials sample, the study excluded repeated versions, until 118 remained for analysis. Also, the study excluded the sponsorship credits to ensure including only commercials within the study. This sample was derived from purposive sampling, to better match the sample with the research objectives and thereby improve the accuracy of the study and trustworthiness of data and results (Campbell et al., 2020). The selection rationale for the studied years was that 2019 and 2020 were the last economically stable years before the worldwide Covid-19 health pandemic that affected the volume of advertising on the global level. The sample was also based on 2020 and 2021 MOI financial reports on Oman television. *OmanTV* was selected for the study as it is the most viewed channel based on 2015 to 2019 media studies. The collection and viewing within the analysis process were facilitated by the broadcasting system in the Ministry of Information Digital Studios.

Coding Procedure

“A code in a qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, essence capturing, and/ or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Wicks, 2017, p. 3). Many content analysis studies do not create their own coding scheme, but they follow prior researchers (White and Marsh, 2006). Likewise, the study

follows codes provided in studies that applied Taylor's model. Commercials in the sample were coded and analyzed under the following variables:

Main Strategy: Three main strategies: Informational, Transformational, or Combination.

Strategy Segments Six Segments of message strategies: Ration, Acute Need, Routine, Ego, Social and Sensory. (Table 1 was used a guide for coding segments).

Organization Orientation: Two organizational orientations: Profit or Non-profit Organizations

Type of Products: Two types: Goods and Services

Ad Function Three objectives of advertising: Branding, Providing Information or Call to Action.

Industry Sectors: The sector of industry in which the advertiser belongs, based on IPSOS media reports: Automotive, Aviation, Banking, Cosmetics, Education, Electricity, Entertainment, FMCG, Health, Hospitality, Oil and Gas, Real Estate, SMEs, Technical, and Telecommunications.

Data Analysis and Intercoder Reliability

Frequencies and descriptive analysis were calculated for the variables of the study using IBM SPSS. To ensure the quality of data collection methods, the intercoder reliability (IRR) test was performed for 11 commercials by a second coder by percent of agreement method. The resulting IRR was 0.78, representing a good value.

Results

The first question related to the main message strategies of television advertising. The results indicated that combination strategy was employed by 36.6%, informational by 27.6% and transformational was found in 31.7% of the sample.

The second question focused on use of the six-segment message strategies. Results indicated that ration and social strategies were each used in 34.4% of television advertising. Sensory was incorporated in 15.2% of the sample and 11.4% of the sample used Ego strategy. Routine strategy was used by 7.1% and the least used strategy was acute need at 1.4%.

The third question explored whether the organizational orientation affected the choice of advertising strategies. Results showed that within profit-oriented originations the segments used were: Ration (47%), Acute Need (1%), Routine (4%), Ego (14%), Social (22%) and Sensory (11%). Meanwhile, the segments used by non-profit organizations were: Ration (52%), Acute Need (0%), Routine (5%), Ego (7%), Social (26%) and Sensory (10%).

Question four examined whether the type of product, goods or services, affected the choice of SSSW. The results indicated that commercials advertising goods used: Ration (18%), Acute Need (3%), Routine (16%), Ego (10%), Social (34%) and Sensory (18%). The commercials advertising services used Ration (39%), Acute Need (1%), Routine (3%), Ego (12%), Social (32%) and Sensory (14%).

In terms of how advertising functions influenced SSSW selection (Table 6), the results for the branding function were: Ration (18%), Acute Need (4%), Routine (4%), Ego (13%), Social (40%) and Sensory (19%). Results on advertising for providing information indicated: Ration (61%), Acute Need (2%), Routine (0%), Ego (12%), Social (20%) and Sensory (6%). Finally, the results for call to action function were: Ration (44%), Acute Need (0%), Routine (4%), Ego (7%), Social (30%) and Sensory (15%).

Sector-wise, it was found that combination strategy was the most used strategy in most of the industry sectors: Banking (43%), Automotive (60%), Electricity (56%), FMCG (89%), Food (55%), Real Estate (80%) and Technical (67%). While informational message strategy was mainly incorporated within the Servicing sector (40%), Entertainment sector (100%) and Health sector (75%). Results also indicated that transformational strategy was used in all commercials in the Apparel and Telecommunication sectors (100%) and in the majority of Oil and Gas sector commercials (75%).

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the importance of message strategy for advertising effectiveness and the lack of research within the region, besides the national popularity of *OmanTV*, the study aimed to explore the message strategies of commercials on Omani Television. In addition to shedding light on message strategies, the conducted content analysis resulted in other valuable insights on the general television advertising scene.

The current paper is the first empirical study that focuses on analyzing TV advertising message strategies in Oman based on Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (SSSW). In addition, the study investigates the influence on selection of message strategies of other considerations of organizational orientation, product type, advertising function and the advertised industry sector. The study indicated that combination strategies were mainly employed in *OmanTV* commercials, with a focus on social segment. Most of the advertisers were from profit-oriented organizations and services products were often advertised. Furthermore, commercials more often focused on branding objectives. The majority of TV advertisers were from the banking sector. No difference was found in strategies preference regarding the organizational orientation, as both profit and non-profit organizations focused on ration strategy.

However, differences were found regarding the type of product, with goods advertisers mostly using the social segment, whereas ration was most dominant in services advertising. In the case of advertising functions, branding objectives were generally focused on the social segment, while providing information and call to action objectives made more use of ration strategy. Across the industry sectors, advertisers in telecommunications and oil and gas sectors preferred using transformational strategy, whereas the entertainment sector used only informational strategy.

Regarding RQ1 and RQ2, most of the commercials employed combination message strategy (36.6%) as advertisers combined both logic and emotion within the same commercial to attract the audience. On the other hand, 31.7% of commercials used transformational and 27.6% used informational message strategies. Advertisers implemented social cues in commercials to represent the local culture that values family gatherings, national and religious occasions. In addition, advertisers incorporated ration by providing information on launching new goods/services, explaining how to use them, and some of the companies presented their roles,

mission, vision, and achievements through ration strategy. Based on Taylor's SSSW, social (34.4%) and ration (32.4%) segments were mostly employed. Sensory segment was used in 15.2% of cases within commercials that showed how the usage of product makes the consumer feel in relation to the five senses. The ego segment appeared in 11.4 % of commercials where advertisers were attempting to create an attachment to their product by featuring a certain statement. The least preferred segments by advertisers were routine (7.1%), which was used for habitual purchases such as food and groceries, while acute need (1.4%) was used for detergent products. These results on Omani television commercials conflict with those in a study of Turkish television commercials by Yurttas and Özkocak (2020) that found the informational view was mainly adopted along with the ration segment.

The advertisers' tendency toward social strategy is attributed to the nature of the Omani society as a social culture. As advertising reflects society's needs (Tsourvakas et al., 2017), most commercials appealed to interest in family, occasion gatherings and concern about social responsibility. The influence of cultural differences upon the choice of advertising strategies in different countries has been extensively highlighted in research (e.g. Han and Shavitt, 1994; Tsao, 1994; Kalliny and Gentry, 1997; Alozie, 2010; Raza et al., 2018). From the economic perspective, stimulating consumer emotions through such as social strategy is appropriate based on the country's economic stability indicators. Hence, purchasing power affects the message strategy choice, as when the purchasing power is high, the need to appeal to the emotions increases, but when the purchasing power is low, there is increased need to use ration to appeal to the consumer's logic (Lee et al., 2011).

The findings for RQ3 showed that both profit and non-profit oriented organizations mainly used ration strategy, scoring 47% and 52%, respectively. Accordingly, this indicates that organizational orientation has no influence on the choice of message strategy. Regarding RQ4, it was found that in commercials for tangible products (goods), social strategy was mostly used (34%). On the other hand, in commercials for intangible products (services), ration strategy was more often used (39%), because the intangible nature of the service means that consumers need more information about it. The findings agreed with the suggestion by Mortimer (2008) that advertising should use documentation and advertisers must show facts and figures about the performance and the price of the service. On whether the advertising function affected the choice of strategy (RQ5), branding objectives were mainly concentrated on social strategy

(40%). This could be attributed to advertisers seeking to create emotional attachment with the brand by focusing on transformational appeals through such as social strategy. In the case of call-to-action objectives, ration strategy was mainly used (44%) in preference to other strategies. Influencing the audience to adopt a certain behavior could be attained through using logic and rational appeals. In addition, ration strategy was dominant in providing information (61%) because the original objective was to provide information.

Findings on RQ6, relating to strategies used across different advertising sectors, were relatively mixed. However, all commercials (100%) in the telecommunications sector used the transformational view, which could be understood on the basis that telecommunications services seek to increase socialization by appealing to people's emotions. Furthermore, a majority (75%) of companies in the Oil and Gas sectors used transformational strategy as well. These companies attempt to build and enhance their brand image by featuring their social responsibility initiatives to the country and its people. Looking into the entertainment sector, all commercials (100%) used informational message strategy to present some musical and theatre performances details. This was in contrast to the SSSW, in which entertainment products come within the transformational and sensory segments and the role of advertising is to transform the product into a pleasurable moment (Taylor, 1999). However, advertisers within the entertainment sector could benefit from using combination strategies, involving both ration and sensory, to ensure delivering information to stimulate audiences' senses.

In conclusion, the study indicated that combination message strategy is mainly used in television advertising in Oman, with a focus on the social segment. This can be attributed to the social nature of the culture that is reflected in advertising. There was no effect found from organizational orientation on the strategy used in advertising. Furthermore, service advertising provided more information than product advertising. Based on advertising functions, branding used emotional appeals, but the providing information and call to action functions used informational appeals. The advertising sectors in telecommunications and oil and gas focused on transformational strategies, in contrast to the entertainment sector which used only informational appeals.

Some managerial implications could be drawn from the study. First, it is recommended that international advertisers in Oman use social strategies to match the prevailing content and gain

cultural acceptance. Second, to achieve their branding objective, advertisers should focus on creating effective emotional attachment with the brand by using transformational rather than informational strategies. Accordingly, each brand should develop different versions of commercials that focus on one particular objective and use the appropriate strategy. In other words, companies may benefit from using message strategies more effectively through developing advertising campaigns with a series of advertisements that focus severally on one advertising function of branding, providing information and call to action.

Limitations and Future Research

The study includes commercials from a two-year period, which provided a limited sample for analysis. Also, as *OmanTV* is an official channel, advertising is subject to censorship regulations that could restrict the advertiser's freedom in creative content selection. Future studies could cover a larger sample involving other advertising mediums, such as radio, newspapers, and digital media, to spot similarities and differences in message strategies used by different mediums. Finally, studies are encouraged to investigate the engagement level between each segment within Taylor's SSSW and users of interactive platforms such as social media, as these platforms provide instant indicators of viewing and impressions figures.

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