

**An Exploratory Study Examining Fear Appeals in Print Advertisements:
A Comparison between China and Canada**

Weiluo Hu

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By: Weiluo Hu

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

 Dr. David Newton Chair

 Dr. Michèle Paulin Examiner

 Dr. Kamila Sobol Examiner

 Dr. Michel Laroche Supervisor

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean of Faculty

Date _____ 2015 _____

ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Study Examining Fear Appeals in Print Advertisements: A Comparison between China and Canada

Weiluo Hu

This thesis compares the fear appeal usage frequency differences between Chinese and Canadian magazine advertisements. Through comparing the Canadian and Chinese fear appeal magazine ads, the author wants to try to find some features for academic fear appeal research and for marketing practice, such as, to which kind of industries the fear appeals are intensively applied, which types of fear appeals (social, physical, economy, and self-esteem) are mostly used in each country, and what kind of the information is most often used in each country. It is surprising to realize that “text” is the most frequent fear appeal, perceived threat, rewards, efficiency and cost carrier in these two countries’ magazine ads. The second half of the research questions and hypotheses are proposed based on the Protection Motivation Model. The paper discusses the different use frequency of perceived threat, perceived rewards, perceived efficiency and perceived costs found in Chinese and Canadian magazine ads. The findings reveal Canadian fear appeal ads use more both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards; Chinese and Canadian ads both focus on expressing protective behavior in two perceived rewards.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
What is Fear Appeal?	3
National Culture	4
<i>Collectivist v.s. Individualist</i>	4
<i>High-context vs. Low-context</i>	6
<i>Pictographic v.s. Phonetic Language</i>	7
Fear Appeal Has Been Used in Many Industries	8
Humor May Influence the Degree of Fear Appeal	9
Inspiration from Protection Motivation Theory	11
<i>Perceived Threat/ Severity</i>	12
<i>Perceived Efficacy</i>	13
<i>Perceived Rewards and Costs</i>	16
Research Methodology	22
Procedure	22
<i>Sampling Ads</i>	22
<i>Ads screening</i>	23
<i>Coding ads</i>	24
Findings and Discussion	25
Inter-Judge Reliability	25
General Fear Appeal	26
Fear Appeal Delivery Media	27

Which Industry Fear Appeal Shows Up More Often	29
The Influence of Humor in Fear Appeal Ads	31
Findings based on the Protection Motivation Theory	32
<i>Perceived Severity</i>	32
<i>The way of Perceived Efficacy express</i>	33
<i>Perceived rewards and costs</i>	35
Discussion	39
Theoretical Implications	40
Managerial Implications	41
Limitations.....	42
Future Study.....	43
Reference.....	44
Appendix	51
Appendix A: Coding Instructions	51
Appendix B: Fear Appeal Coding Questionnaire	63

Introduction

Fear appeal is a marketing approach to arouse an intention for some specific behavior through a negative emotional reaction to an external threat (Glascoff, 2000; Williams, 2012). Marketers have widely used fear appeals in advertising to influence consumers' behavior. According to previous scholars, fear has been used to influence people's behavior by giving them the protective approach, for instance "drunk driving may greatly increase the risk of a car accident," or prevention approach, for instance "using this kind of suntan oil can prevent sunburn." These two approaches have been proved very effective in influencing consumers' behavior (Rogers, 1975; Tanner *et al.*, 1991). Marketers can make use of fear appeal to simulate the consumers' emotional response, which leads to their behavior to the direction they plan to achieve. Meanwhile, fear appeal has also been broadly used in different industries, like cigarettes, medicine, drinking and driving, and so on, where the researcher wants to find the different usage frequency in these industries.

With the development of globalization, advertisements are increasingly important in influencing consumer's choice in today's global market. China, whose GDP size ranked second in the world (GDP 2013) is one of the fastest growing markets in the world. It has been a very popular study subject in recent marketing research since it has various industries and a large number of consumers. Fear appeal studies were conducted for Chinese cigarette consumption (Laroche *et al.* 2001). Canada is the second largest market in North America and fear appeals has

been widely used in the Canadian market, like beauty and personal products, medicines, automobiles and so on. There are also distinct cultural differences between China and Canada, such as the national culture, national personality, cultural contexts, and language differences (Chinese as pictographic v.s. English as phonetic). As China is a very typical collectivist, fast growing country and Canada is a very typical individualist, western country, it is very valuable to do a cross-cultural fear appeal research in these two countries. Some researchers have worked on this topic in some specific industry, for example, Laroche *et al.* (2001) studied the persuasive effect of fear appeal messages in cigarette advertising, and compared the differences of such effects under these two distinct contexts, which meaningfully provided a great inspiration for this study. For instance, their study only proved that Chinese subjects show greater change in attitude towards smoking after viewing social threat ads and Anglo subjects would express higher behavioral intentions to stop smoking after being exposed to physical threat ads. These findings not only give the possibility to study fear appeal ads under different types (like: social, and physical) and different cultural backgrounds (like: Chinese, and Anglo), but also inspired the researcher to conduct a more general research across different industries.

MacDonell *et al.* (2013) conducted a tobacco research among Chinese Youth based on a Protective Motivation Theory (PMT) scale. This research linked fear appeal with PMT central constructs model (see Figure 1) and looked at the inner relationships among the variables. They found that perceived threat and its two constructs (severity and vulnerability) are negatively related to smoking intentions, while perceived rewards and its two constructs (intrinsic and

extrinsic rewards) are positively related to smoking intentions. Higher self-efficacy and higher response efficacy are negatively related to intentions to smoke, and higher Response Cost is positively related to intentions to smoke. These findings are very useful for fear appeal and PMT research, and they also give many useful implications for cigarette marketers and regulators. Thus, in this research, comparing these seven constructs within a more general ad sample and finding out the usage frequency differences will be also valuable for future fear appeal and PMT research and provide some implications to industry.

Generally speaking, the researcher will do a content analysis of fear appeal ads to examine the usage frequency differences in China and Canada. The comparison will be based on all the variables mentioned above, national culture differences, the seven constructs of the PMT model, and what is the usage frequency of fear appeal in applied industries.

Literature Review

What is Fear Appeal?

A fear appeal posits the risks of using and not using a specific product, service, or idea, such that if you do not “buy”, some particular dire consequences will happen. The advertisers use fear appeal to expose the negative effects of developing unhealthy or bad behavior, and to present the disadvantages of not using the target product. There is more than one definition of what ‘fear appeal’ is. Here are some descriptions of what is fear appeal: Communications using fear appeals are designed to stimulate anxiety in an audience with the expectation that the audience will

attempt to reduce this anxiety by adopting, continuing, discontinuing or avoiding a specified course of thought or action (Berkowitz & Cottingham, 1960); a fear appeal is a persuasive message that attempts to arouse fear in order to divert behavior through the threat of impending danger or harm (Struckman *et al.*, 1996); a fear appeal presents a risk, presents the vulnerability to the risk, and then describes a suggested form of protective action (Rutter, 1987). Basically, all fear appeals in advertising involve the following steps: they create a fearful situation to activate a person's sense of risk and vulnerability, to depict a danger in a serious manner to warrant attention and to provide a solution as a means of fear reduction.

National Culture

Collectivist v.s. Individualist

Based on Hofstede's (1982) cultural dimension framework, China is defined as a collectivist country and Canada is defined as an individualist country. From Hofstede Centre's (2015) cultural dimension index, China, as a collectivist country, has a relatively high power distance index (80 comparing to Canada, 39). According to Triandis (1995), Chinese consumers would be influenced more easily by social pressure, like peer pressure, and they care more about how they evaluate themselves and how they behave in the public area (Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998). However, Canadian consumers, as individualists, care more about themselves, their own financial and physical profits or benefits (Sanyal, 2005).

According to previous national cultural studies and fear appeal research, physical fear appeals and social fear appeals are two principal types of fear appeals in China and Canada

exploratory research (Hofstede, 1980; Laroche, Toffoli, Zhang, & Pons, 2001; Maddux & Rogers, 1983). Physical fear appeal is designed to stimulate anxiety and vulnerability to physical danger, threat or harm, for example, if you smoke, you will have a high risk of getting lung cancer. Social fear appeal is intended to arouse anxiety and tension related to violations of social norms, regulations or law, for instance, if you speak loudly in the quiet library, you will be thought as very impolite. It is a kind of feeling more about how others think about you. It has been shown that Chinese are more easily influenced by social factors, like social pressure; if your friends think smoking is cool, you will smoke too (Tang, Sun, Wang, & Yang, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1981). However, Canadians live in an individualist culture (like their American neighbors) are more likely influenced by physical threat ads (Stangor & Ceandall, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1981). There are other researchers who have discussed some other types of fear appeals. Some of them include 'Economic' as an influence factor for fear appeals, which is designed to stimulate anxiety related to economic conditions, such as loss of income, job or social security, for example, credit card insurance can protect you from credit card loss or fraud (Ray & Wilkie, 1970; Loewenstein, Read, & Baumeister, 2003). Robberson and Rogers (1988) discussed the negative and positive persuasive appeals to self-esteem. Based on their discussion, self-esteem fear appeal is also defined as a socially related fear appeal. It relates the fear of damage to the social image of the self, such as the fear to encounter embarrassing situation in social relationships, for instance, a specific brand of gum can make your mouth smell better and avoid any embarrassment when speaking with others. It is a kind of feeling of how you think about yourself. In this research, we

use these four types of fear appeals, social, physical, economic, and self-esteem.

For the first two types of fear appeal, we can draw clear-directed hypotheses:

***H1a:** Compared to Canadian ads, Chinese ads would express more frequently social fear appeals.*

***H1b:** Compared to Chinese ads, Canadian ads would express more frequently physical fear appeals.*

Based on Bellah *et al.*'s (2007) study, an individualist is easily influenced by economic reasons and care about more about their personal financial issues. As discussed above, a collectivist is easily influenced by social factors. So we propose the two followed hypotheses:

***H1c:** Compared to Canadian ads, Chinese ads would express more frequently self-esteem fear appeals.*

***H1d:** Compared to Chinese ads, Canadian ads would express more frequently economic fear appeals.*

High-context vs. Low-context

As Kim, Pan, and Park (1998) pointed out, China is a high-context country. The Chinese prefer to express the information by leaving part of it unsaid. So, in this situation, it need more interpretation by the interlocutor who has the same cultural background. However, Koeszegi, Vetschera, and Kersten (2004) proposed that Canada is a low-context country. Anglo-Canadians like communicating directly with each other and deliver their intention as clearly as possible.

These differences would lead to different marketing strategies in these two countries. In this thesis, the author would focus on the different information delivery media of fear appeal in Chinese and Canadian top magazines.

Pictographic v.s. Phonetic Language

Language is a distinct difference between China and Canada. In previous research, some scholars showed that the language, by itself, would influence consumers' perceptions towards the product/advertisements and their memory about it (Tavassoli & Han, 2001; Zhang & Schmitt, 2004) Shinoto (1989) argues that Chinese is a hieroglyphic and ideograph language and the Chinese code the information in a totally different way, mainly through vision, compared to other languages (Krishna, 2011). For instance, Chinese is written in a pictographic system and Chinese consumers would be impressed more by visual advertisements than auditory ones; however, English is regarded as a phonetic (sound-based) language and English-speakers would be more easily influenced by auditory information (Schmitt *et al.*, 1994). There is also an ice cream brand name example in Saad's (2013) *Evolutionary Consumption* that Anglophone consumers would perceive "Froce" ice cream to sound sweeter than "Fropy" ice cream, which shows that Canadians would get influenced more easily by auditory messages. Through this comparison, Chinese would prefer receiving information through text message compared to Canadians. Thus, we propose another hypothesis:

H2: *Compared to Canadian fear ads, Chinese fear ads would more frequently express the fear*

information through 'text'.

Sensory feelings can help people perceive information (Krishna, 2011) and vision can enhance the information delivery (Hoarty & Lauder, 1994). Different information delivery mediums would also have different influences on specific groups of people. For example, cartoon characters would have a positive effect on attitudes toward products and advertisements (Mizerski, 1995). However, because of the lack of relevant literature on how different are the effectiveness of these different information mediums under different cultural contexts, we should do further research on this topic. Since there are many different types of information mediums, in this study we only choose people, animals, and objects—these three nominal variables—as our research objects (Ito *et al.*, 1998). We propose two research questions:

RQ1: *Compare the differences of use frequency of images in the advertisements between Chinese and Canadian ads.*

RQ2: *Compare the differences of use frequency of three information mediums: a) human, b) animals, and c) objects, between Chinese and Canadian ads.*

Fear Appeal Has Been Used in Many Industries

Fear appeal has been widely used in different places. For example, Peters, Ruiters, and Kok's (2013) revised meta-analytic test found that Canadian marketers have widely used the graphic warning labels and negative physical influences in cigarette advertising. Laroche *et al.* (2001) discussed the persuasive effect of fear appeal messages in cigarette advertising. Meanwhile, fear

appeal has also been used for advertising automobiles (Berkowitz and Cottingham, 1960), beauty and personal care (Benet, Pitts, and LaTour, 1993), medicines, insurance (Burnett and Oliver, 1979), and in many other industries.

As Triandis (1995) discussed, Chinese care more about social fitness or social stability and harmony. What is interesting is that Chinese marketers actually seldom apply fear appeals for cigarette advertisements, especially on the cigarette packages. The author believes that except for the cigarettes, some other products may also reveal differences in fear appeal applications. As Ray and Wilkie (1970) showed, the high fear appeals are effective but the researchers do not have an explicit idea how the product category influences the effectiveness of high fear, which means that fear appeal ads among different product categories would expose different influences on customers' perceptions and behavior. Thus, it is very interesting and necessary to conduct research to find out general fear appeal usage frequency differences among different product categories, which would give future researchers better information. Since there is no trend or comparison in this issue, we cannot make a hypothesis for it. So, we propose the research question:

RQ3: *Compare the fear appeal use frequency in different industries (product types/services) between China and Canada.*

Humor May Influence the Degree of Fear Appeal

Humor and fear both have a persuasive effect on the audience and can lead them towards the

way the information sender seeks (Brooker, 1981). Humor would develop a positive arousal and affect the information receiver toward a positive behavior (Abel & Maxwell, 2002; Fadiman, 1972). For example, similarly, fear generates a kind of negative arousal among the recipients and leads them to avoid the behaviors and leave a lasting influence (Rogers, Cacioppo, & Petty, 1983). For example, some cigarette ads would express the message of “smoking may increase the risk of getting cancer,” and some people will avoid the behavior of “smoking,” or always be reminded of getting cancer.

Since China is a high-context culture (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998), the Chinese would use ‘pun’ (a word or phrase that has two interpretations), or some indirect and complicated messages in the humorous ads (Laroche, Nepomuceno, & Richard, 2014). For example, the inverted character “Fu” means good luck will be used. Anglo-Canadians, characterized by a low-context culture, prefer to communicate directly. Able and Maxwell (2002) showed that humor is an enhancement on the low- and high-stress, which is a negative condition.

In this research, humor is treated as a general concept, which means any kind of thing you perceive as funny or interesting in the ads. Thus, it is difficult to tell which country’s fear appeal ads would contain more humor messages. Thus, we propose the following research question:

RQ4: *Find out which country’s fear ads would use ‘humor’ more frequently.*

Meanwhile, as Able and Maxwell (2002) experimented, humor can arouse a positive emotion and can decrease the negative condition level (anxiety), so humor may also impact the perceived degree of fear appeal:

H3: The country which has a higher frequency of humor will have a lower degree of fear appeal.

Inspiration from the Protection Motivation Theory

The Protection Motivation Theory was first proposed by Rogers (1975) to give a clear theoretical support to figure out the influence of fear appeals. Rogers, Cacioppo, and Petty (1983) later extended the protection motivation theory to a more general model related to persuasive communications, with a concentration on the cognitive processes that mediate behavior change. MacDonell *et al.* (2013) conducted a tobacco research among Chinese youth and studied how fear appeal influences people's behavior using the PMT model (see Figure 1).

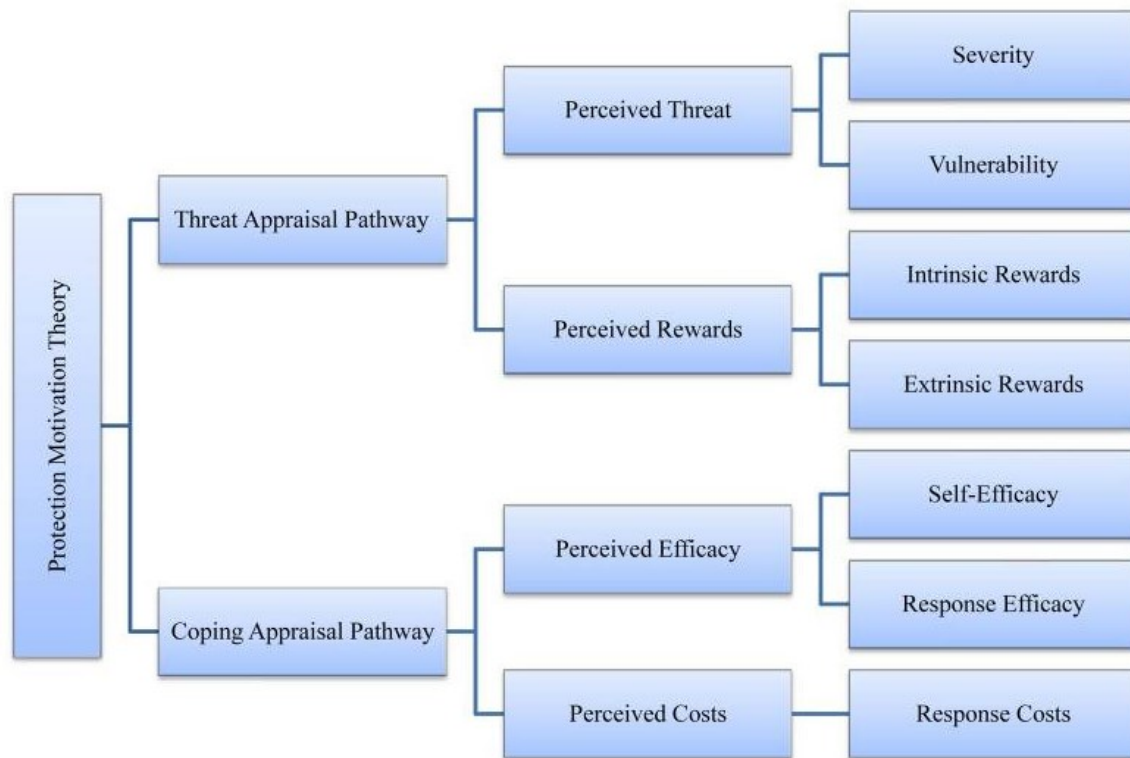


Figure 1. Overview of the Central Constructs of Protection Motivation Theory (MacDonell *et al.*,

2013)

The research checked the inner relationships among the seven constructs and found that Perceived Threat and its two constructs (severity and vulnerability) are negatively related to smoking intentions, while Perceived Rewards and its two constructs (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards) are positively related to smoking intentions. Higher self-efficacy and higher response efficacy are negatively related to the intentions to smoke, and higher Response Cost is positively related to the intention to smoke. Meanwhile, there are also other researchers who had worked on the PMT in different industries around the world (Pechmann, Zhao, Goldberg, & Reibling, 2003; Laroche, Toffoli, Zhang, & Pons, 2001). In this thesis, the researcher would compare these seven constructs within a more general ads sample and find out the differences in usage frequency.

Perceived Threat/Severity

“Severity” means the perceived negative consequences that could result from engaging in a risky behavior. Some fear appeal ads show severity of the proposed threat in a very explicit or drastic manner. For instance, the severity of the threat of smoking would be clearly shown in the cigarette advertisement. However, other fear appeal related ads do not show it: in a skin protection product ad, while the text suggests that women may face the threat of bad skin if they do not use the product, it does not state the consequences of having bad skin (Norman, Boer, & Seydel, 2005).

According to previous research, how people perceive the threat in the information delivery

media (here the advertisement) varies a lot, depending on how the information is delivered (by text or by image) (Block & Keller, 1995), the type of the ad itself and some other influential factors (Lewis, Watson, & Tay, 2007). In this situation, we only study one variable, namely “Severity”. The research tries to find the perceived threat severity frequency difference between these two countries’ fear appeal advertisements. Thus, our research question is:

***RQ5:** Compare the frequency of perceived threat severity in Chinese and Canadian advertisements.*

Perceived Efficacy

Perceived efficacy is a subjective perception that people think they are capable to achieve a goal. The subjective perception would be influenced by how the information is delivered (Bandura, 1993). In this research, we discuss two types of communications: explicit and implicit. The direct/explicit fear appeal concentrates on the benefits you can get from the information and express the information more clearly. An explicit (or direct) communication shows the efficiency of the proposed protective action directly—the reader *does not* have to make any inference. For instance, “this brand helps you to lose 5kg of weight within 10 days”. However, the indirect/implicit communication would have an implicit message; invite the reader to conclude about the effectiveness of the proposed protective action (Williams, 2012). For example, “this brand allows you to benefit from 25 years of experience in weight loss research.” As discussed before, China is a high-context culture and the Chinese like to use “pun” and indirect information

to deliver their message (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Laroche *et al.*, 2014) and Canadians prefer to communicate directly and express their message as clearly as possible (Koeszegi, Vetschera, & Kersten, 2004). Thus, we draw our hypotheses:

H4a: *Compared to Canadian ads, Chinese ads would express more frequently the efficiency of the proposed protective action in an implicit way.*

H4b: *Compared to Chinese ads, Canadian ads would express more frequently the efficiency of the proposed protective action in an explicit way.*

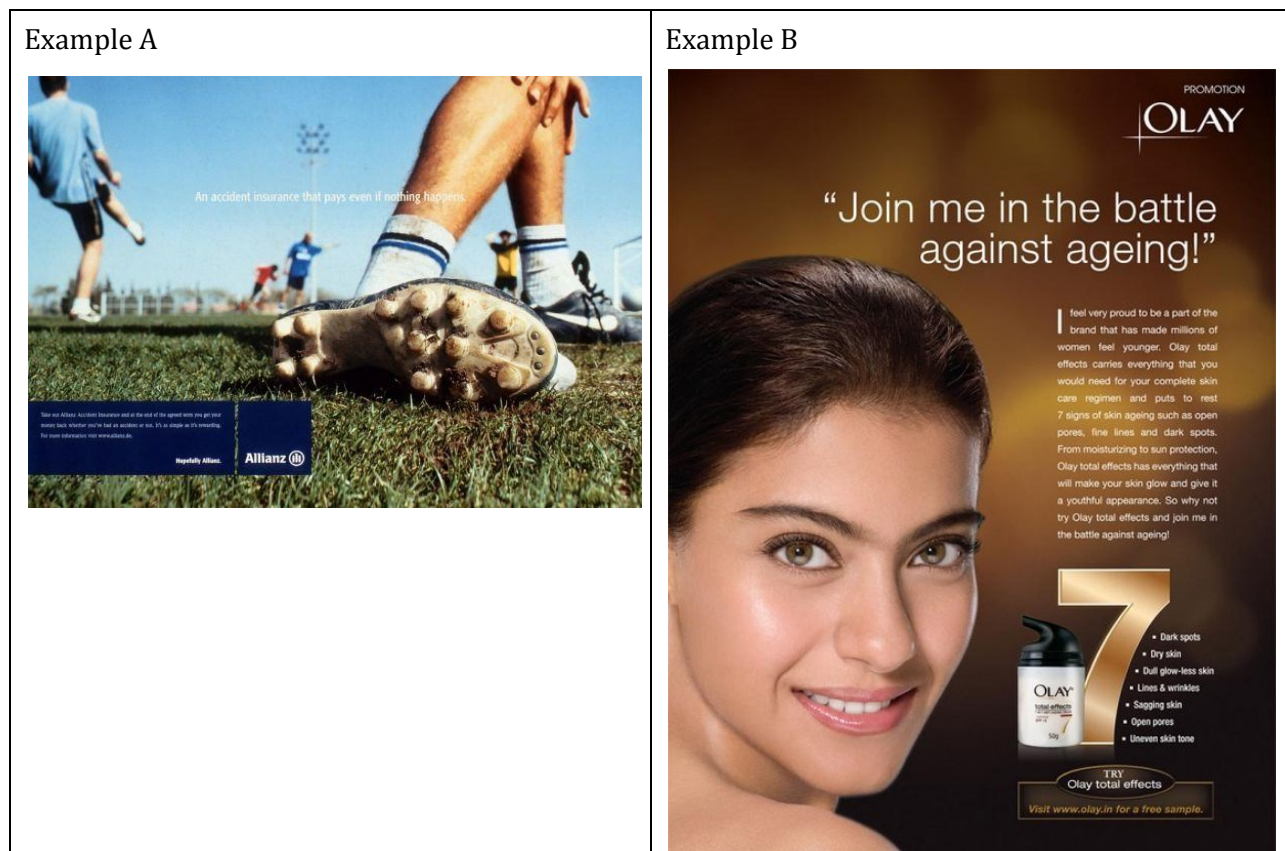


Figure 2. Fear appeal ads example

When people think about a threatening message they develop strategies to avert a threat, which means that they engage in danger control processes (this is a protective reaction). They may also engage in a fear control processes, which means that they are motivated to cope with their fear, and try to control this fear (this is a defensive reaction). The decision to engage in a fear- or a danger-control process is an individual decision. That is, for the same ad some people may engage in danger control, but other people may engage in fear control (Witte, 1994). An advertiser may position fear messages such that readers can infer that the proposed protective action (for example using the advertised brand) can help them to either ignore their fear (fear control: “You can ignore your fear when you use this brand”), as shown in Example A of Figure 2, if you buy Allianz accident insurance, it can help you decrease (or remove) your fear of accident (like break your foot). On the other side, the proposed protective actions help them effectively fight against a threat (danger control: “You can effectively fight against the threat when you use this brand”), see Example B in figure 2, Olay can help you fight against ageing.

In this research, we are interested in the differences in the fear control and danger control usage by Chinese and Canadian fear appeal related ads. Thus our research question:

RQ6: *Compare the usage difference of fear control and danger control in Chinese and Canadian fear appeal related ads.*

Fear appeals suggest either that people can avoid negative consequences of their choices (*avoid losses*), or that people can gain from making the right choices (*realize gains*). Hence, the literally same message can be expressed either negatively or positively. In some instances, one

and the same message may include both aspects (avoiding losses and realizing gains work in combination) (O’Keefe & Jensen, 2007; Witte, 1994). Thus our research question:

***RQ7:** Compare the usage difference of “Avoid losses” and “Realize gains” in Chinese and Canadian fear appeal related ads.*

Perceived Rewards and Costs

The perceived rewards include intrinsic (e.g., pleasure) and extrinsic rewards (e.g., social approval). Generally, an intrinsic reward is an outcome that gives an individual satisfaction. For example, an intrinsic reward is the satisfaction one feels when s/he did something well or helped someone else make another person’s day better. Intrinsic rewards are intangible and arise from within the person who is doing something. When it comes to fear appeals, intrinsic rewards are the perceived positive physical and psychological effects that arise from within the person related to one’s engagement in a risky behavior or from one’s engagement in a protective behavior (Witte, et al., 1998). An intrinsic reward from engaging in a risky behavior example is like: an anti-alcohol campaign emphasizes that drinking alcohol is addictive while showing the picture of relaxed and happy people. Here, alcohol is a threat (being addictive) combined with an intrinsic reward (feeling happy and relaxed) that emerges from engaging in a risky behavior (drinking alcohol). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to decrease the value of a putative intrinsic reward. An Intrinsic reward from engaging in a protective behavior is like: the ad of a life insurance company emphasizes that it is important to be well consulted in order to sign the right type of contract and the picture shows an elderly person sitting relaxed and happy

in a rocking chair. Here, the choice of the right contract is a threat, but engaging in the proposed protective behavior (using this brand) leads to an intrinsic reward (feeling happy and relaxed). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to reinforce the value of an intrinsic reward.

While intrinsic rewards arise from within the person, extrinsic rewards are the perceived positive consequences that arise externally for accomplishing something. Generally, an extrinsic reward is the recognition of one's endeavor. This recognition may be in the form of tangible things such as a certificate of accomplishment, a trophy, or a monetary reward such as gaining a lot of money. Extrinsic rewards can also be intangible, such as a verbal praise or respect and glory brought by others. When it comes to fear appeals, extrinsic rewards are the perceived positive physical, material or psychological effects that arise from externally related to one's engagement in a risky behavior or from one's engagement in a protective behavior. An extrinsic reward from engaging in a risky behavior example is: A road-safety advertising shows a young man who impresses his girlfriend by driving faster than 200km/h on a highway where only 100km/h are allowed. The slogan states that this trip ended in the hospital. Here, a threat (ending in hospital) is combined with an extrinsic reward (recognition from others) that emerges from engaging in a risky behavior (driving very fast). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to decrease the value of a putative extrinsic reward. An extrinsic reward from engaging in a protective behavior example is: The ad for a toothpaste suggests that by using this product you will avoid the risk of unhealthy teeth and people will respect you more because of your healthy white teeth. Here, a threat (unhealthy teeth) is combined with an extrinsic reward

(recognition from others) that emerges from engaging in a protective behavior (using this brand).

In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to reinforce the value of an extrinsic reward.

So, we propose following hypotheses and research question:

H5a: *Compared to Canadian fear ads, Chinese advertisements would express extrinsic rewards more frequently in the fear appeals.*

H5b: *Compared to Chinese fear ads, Canadian advertisements would express intrinsic rewards more frequently in the fear appeals.*

RQ8: *Find out the frequency differences of risky behavior and protective behavior engaged by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.*

The perceived cost is the price that an individual need to pay if he wants to achieve a goal, for example, if you want to use a software, you need to spend \$70 to buy it. Here, the amount of money, \$70, is the perceived cost. Response cost is the cost related to the recommended behavior, for example, you need to pay an amount of money if you want to buy something. The response cost would associate with *social cost* (e.g., worsened social relationships; “if you stop smoking, your friend would not think you are cool any more”), *monetary cost* (e.g., individual spending; “you pay \$1 for an apple”), *personal cost* (e.g., psychological efforts, feeling of stress; “you feel very nervous when you prepare for the final exam”), and *time cost* (e.g., time needed; “you need 5 days to finish writing the annual report”) (Norman, Boer, & Seydel, 2005). Since according to researchers, the cultural distinction exists in China and Canada, such as Collectivist and Individualist (Hofstede, 1980), high- and low- context culture, and language differences, the

Chinese would be influenced more by social threat (Triandis, 1995), and Canadians would behave to avoid physical harm (Stangor & Ceandall, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1981). However, we still cannot tell which kind of response cost is more frequently used in Chinese and Canadian fear appeal magazine ads. Thus, we state our research question as followed:

RQ9: *Find which country's fear appeal ads imply higher frequency of response cost, and for which kind of cost: a), social cost; b), monetary cost; c) personal cost; d) time cost.*

Table of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Variable	Reference
H1a	Social fear appeal	Tang, Sun, Wang, & Yang, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1981
H1b	Physical fear appeal	Stangor & Ceandall, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1981
H1c	Self-esteem fear appeal	Robberson & Rogers, 1988;
H1d	Economic fear appeal	Bellah <i>et al.</i> , 2007;
H2	Fear appeal delivery media "text"	Tavassoli & Han, 2001; Zhang & Schmitt, 2004; Krishna, 2011;
H3	Higher frequency of humor, less degree of fear appeal	Able & Maxwell, 2002;
H4a	Implicit communication	Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Laroche <i>et al.</i> , 2014;
H4b	Explicit communication	Koeszegi, Vetschera, & Kersten, 2004;

H5a	Extrinsic rewards	Witte, et al., 1998; Norman, Boer, & Seydel,
H5b	Intrinsic rewards	2005;

Table of Research Questions

Research Question	Variable	Reference
RQ1	Fear appeal delivery media “image”	Krishna, 2011; Saad, 2013;
RQ2	3 Information mediums: human, animals, or objects	Mizerski, 1995; Ito <i>et al.</i> , 1998
RQ3	General industry fear appeal usage frequency differences	Peters, Ruiter, & Kok, 2013; Benet, Pitts, & LaTour, 1993; Burnett & Oliver, 1979
RQ4	Frequency differences of humor	Able & Maxwell, 2002; Laroche, Nepomuceno, & Richard, 2014; Fadiman, 1972
RQ5	Frequency differences of severity	Norman, Boer, & Seydel, 2005;
RQ6	Frequency differences of fear and danger control	Witte, 1994;
RQ7	Frequency differences of “avoid losses” and realize gains”	Witte, 1994; O’Keefe & Jensen, 2007
RQ8	Frequency differences of risky	Witte <i>et al.</i> , 1998; Norman, Boer, &

	behavior and protective behavior	Seydel, 2005;
RQ9	Frequency of response cost, and which type of cost: social, monetary, personal or time	Norman, Boer, & Seydel, 2005; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995; Stangor & Ceandall, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1981

Research Methodology

Procedure

There are three major steps in the research methodology. First, ads that contain fear appeals are collected from Chinese and Canadian magazines with high circulation by the researcher. Then, four judges (two Chinese and two Canadians) are recruited to review and screen out those that do not contain fear appeal messages. In the last step, the remaining qualified ads are coded by two Chinese/Canadian coders.

Sampling Ads

We selected the Top 30 magazines in terms of circulation. The magazine list is obtained online. We then read a few issues of each magazine to get a general impression of the content, the target audience and the sorts of ads contained in it. Some magazines are not qualified because they predominantly featured high-end, glamorous and extravagant products ads, such as BMW automobiles, Rolex Watches, Chanel perfume, sunglasses. The remaining magazines have a good number of ads of various kinds in each issue. Besides, the content of these magazines are more comprehensive and targeted at a more diverse readership. They become, therefore, the selected magazines for ad samples. We start with the latest issues (issues in Year 2015 or 2014) and go back in years. Restrained by the availability of magazines in the library, we stop at the Year 1994 or 1997, depending on the holdings of the magazines. We count the total number of ads in each issue as well as the number of ads that contain fear appeals. Duplicate ads are ruled out at the end

of the data collection phase. Note that we come across some ads that have high similarity. For example, there are ads that use the same image, same format with just a few lines of text difference. We consider these ads as different ones. All the ads are numbered (e.g. 2013MagNameAbbreviation-Volume#-Issue# or 2013MagNameAbbreviation-Volume#-Issue# (1,2,3,4...), if there are more than 1 fear appeal ad in one magazine) on the back of the ads for future coding use. After this step, we have 683 Chinese ads and 714 Canadian ads that contain normal information or potentially fear appeal messages, and up to this point, one single research assistant, who speaks fluently English, and Mandarin, is responsible for all the tasks above.

Ads screening

Two Chinese judges are recruited to review the 683 Chinese ads; two Canadian judges are recruited to review the 714 Canadian ads. They need to select the ads that both of them think contain fear appeals. These two Chinese coders speak Mandarin, Cantonese and English and Canadian coders speak English, and French. The two groups of coders are given a two-page training material (the first two pages in Appendix A) that describes what fear appeal is, how it works and in what area fear appeal is usually applied. There are also two ad examples to illustrate fear appeals. The training is conducted by the research assistant in English. The two groups of judges are only asked to identify the presence of fear appeal, regardless of the degree of the fear-arousing messages. They are also briefed that an ad is considered to have fear appeal if such a message is present in the text, the image or both. The two groups of judges look at the

ads separately and mark down the ad numbers that they do not think contain fear appeal. They then discuss their disagreement together with the researcher. An ad is qualified only when both judges agree. After this stage, we have 205 qualified Chinese fear appeal related ads out of 683 and 220 qualified Canadian ads out of 714.

Coding ads

Two Chinese coders, who speak English and Mandarin, and two Canadian coders, who can speak English and French, are recruited for the coding task. The research assistant train them by explaining what fear appeal is, how it works and where it is usually applied, and showing them two ad examples (see Appendix A: Coding Instructions). This procedure is identical to the one for training the two judges. Before the coding, they are informed that they will answer the questionnaires objectively, according to what the marketers attempted to do, instead of how they react to the fear appeal ad. Then they are also briefed on some of the terms used in the coding sheets, as well as the coding procedures. With all questions answered, they start to code one exercise ad, voicing his/her reasoning for coding, with the supervision of the research assistant, before coding the sample ads. The research assistant monitors the data entry process without giving his opinion on the coding. The two coders enter the data in a pre-designed excel coding sheet. After all the ads are coded by both coders, the research assistant will review the coding. In the case of disagreement, the research assistant will look at the differences and resolve them with each group of coders plus a third judge.

Findings and Discussion

Inter-Judge Reliability

Each step of the content analysis need to be checked for reliability. Based on Kassarian's (1977) research, inter-judge agreement should be at least 85%. And according to Rust and Cooil's (1994) Proportional Reduction of Loss formulas, more accurate inter-judge reliability can be tested. From Appendix Table 1, the PRL are satisfied, according to critical tables provided in Rust and Cooil's (1994) research.

Table 1. Inter-Judge Reliability

	Agreement after discussion	Remained disagreements(r)	Total number of ads(n)	Inter-judge agreement (1-r/n)	PRL Reliability
Fear appeal ads	China	91	683	86.7%	0.86
	Canada	55	714	92.3%	0.92

The results are achieved after discussion. At last, 205 out of 683 (30.0%) Chinese ads are identified as fear appeal ones. And from 714 Canadian ads, 220 are chosen as fear appeal ads (30.8%). In this comparison, China and Canada almost have the same frequency of fear appeal magazine ads. All the findings below are drawn out from these two samples.

General fear appeal

Item 4 in Appendix B: Coding Questionnaire collects the frequency of different types of fear appeals (participants would select all choices that apply). Item 5 in Appendix B just collects the frequency of the dominant type of fear appeal used in the ad.

From Table 2, H1a ($\chi^2=17.222, p=0.000$) and H1c ($\chi^2=3.940, p=0.047$) are supported and H1b ($\chi^2=0.960, p=0.327$) and H1d ($\chi^2=1.571, p=0.210$) are not supported by the results. That means, in this research, we can only show that the Chinese fear appeal related ads contain more social and self-esteem related factors, which is congruent with the fact that the Chinese, as in collectivist culture, are more easily influenced by social pressure or how others think about them (Tang, Sun, Wang, & Yang, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1981). That Canadian magazine ads express more frequency of physical fear appeal (H1b) can be partially supported ($\chi^2=27.695, p=0.000$) by the test of “dominant type of fear appeal” (see appendix Table 3). However, the economic fear appeal influence cannot be found in this research and there is not a significant difference in both Table 2 ($\chi^2=1.571, p=0.210$) and Table 3 ($\chi^2=1.672, p=0.196$). This maybe related to the types of magazine ads since most of the ads are in Medicine (Chinese: 45.6%; Canadian: 32.3%), and Beauty and Personal Care (Chinese: 15.6%; Canadian: 41.8%), which are not related to “Economic.” Only 5.9% of Chinese and 6.8% of Canadian Financial Services ads are related to economic fear appeal ads and they makes no significant difference here.

Table 2. Type of fear appeal

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Physical	73%	77%	0.960	0.327
Social	50%	16%	17.222	0.000
Economic	18%	13%	1.571	0.210
Self-esteem	55%	45%	3.940	0.047

Table 3. The dominant type of fear appeal used in the ad

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Physical	16%	51%	27.695	0.000
Social	19%	10%	2.930	0.087
Economic	4%	8%	1.672	0.196
Self-esteem	59%	30%	18.390	0.000

Fear Appeal Delivery Media

From Table 4, H2 is supported ($\chi^2=18.216$, $p=0.000$) since Chinese ads (70%) express fear appeal more frequently through only “text” than Canadian ones (50%). From the result, we can also find that neither Chinese marketers nor Canadian marketers like to express fear appeals only through “image” since the frequency of image only for China is 4% and for Canada it is 10%. At the same time, it can be noted that Canadians (40%) use more combined method (“text” and “image”) to deliver fear appeal messages than the Chinese (26%) ($\chi^2=10.288$, $p=0.001$). (cf. RQ1)

Table 4. The fear appeal delivery medium

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Text	70%	50%	18.216	0.000
Image	4%	10%	5.315	0.021
Text & Image	26%	40%	10.288	0.001

After studying Table 5, we find the answer for RQ2. Objectives are the only variable where there is a difference between China (39%) and Canada (25%) for fear appeal image type ($\chi^2=3.557$, $p=0.059$). As to “People” ($\chi^2=1.962$, $p=0.161$) and “Animals” ($\chi^2=0.282$, $p=0.595$), there is no significant difference for the two countries’ fear appeal image types. From Table 6, both Chinese (74.6%) and Canadian (82.4%) use more real pictures to express fear appeals than drawings. It seems that advertisers prefer to use real pictures to convey fear appeal messages instead of drawings. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference of which country use real pictures more often ($\chi^2=1.443$, $p=0.230$).

Table 5. Information delivery medium of Image

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
People	51%	62%	1.962	0.161
Animals	10%	13%	0.282	0.595
Objectives	39%	25%	3.557	0.059

Table 6. A real picture v.s. a drawing

		Real	Drawing	Total
country	China	44	15	59
	Canada	89	19	108
	Total	133	34	167

$$\chi^2 = 1.443, p = 0.230$$

Which Industry Fear Appeals Show Up More Often

Item 2 in Appendix B asks whether this ad is a national brand (local) of your home country or it is an international brand.

Table 7. Local v.s. International

	Local	International
China	73%	27%
Canada	95%	5%

$$\chi^2 = 41.948, p = 0.000$$

From the appendix Table 8, we can see that the majority of Chinese fear appeal related ads are in Medicine (45.6%) and Beauty and Personal Care (15.6%), but also some are in IT Software (7.8%), Office Supplies (7.3%), Insurance Services (8.3%), and Finance Services (5.9%). Most Canadian fear appeal related ads are also in the industries of Beauty and Personal Care (41.8%) and Medicine (32.3%), some are in Financial Services (6.8%) and Telecommunication Services (7.7%). We can find that Medicine and Beauty and Personal Care

have a higher frequency of expressing fear appeal messages in both China (collectivist nation) and Canada (individualist nation). For the minority industries' fear appeal ads differences, they may be caused by the random sampling method. (RQ3)

Meanwhile, most of Chinese (73%) and Canadian (95%) fear appeal related ads are local ones (belonging to the national brands of each home country), instead of international ones and Canadian magazines have more local fear appeal ads than Chinese ones ($\chi^2=41.948, p=0.000$) (See Table 7). So marketers in both countries can pay more attention to local brands in using fear appeals into their magazine advertising campaign. For international brands, considering the different cultural influences, they need to adjust their marketing strategy based on each country; thus, it may be easier for them to adopt positive emotional evoking/appealing method (like humor) instead a negative emotional appealing method (fear). In this way, they can build their brand in a more general way.

Table 8. Fear Appeal Used in Different Industries

		country		Total
		China	Canada	
Product	Financial	12	15	27
	Services			
	Automobile	2	4	6
	Personal Care	32	92	124
	Clothing/Fashion	2	1	3
	Foods and Drinks	2	0	2

Consumer Electronics	1	3	4
Household Appliances	5	2	7
Household Products	1	9	10
Medicine	94	71	165
Industrial Products	2	0	2
Sports gears and equipment	1	0	1
IT Software	16	0	16
Office Supplies	15	4	19
Insurance Services	17	2	19
Telecommunications Services	3	17	20
Total	205	220	425

The influence of humor in fear appeal ads

After studying the frequency of humor in Table 9, we conclude that Canadian fear appeal ads (28.2%) contain more humor than Chinese ones (4.4%) ($\chi^2=43.167$, $p=0.000$; RQ4). Based on this significant result in Table 9 and Table 10, H3 is supported since Canadian ads (Mean=1.30) score lower than Chinese ones (Mean=1.47) on the degree of fear appeal ($t=2.776$, $p=0.003$), while Canadian ads contains a higher frequency of humor. Thus, it shows that the humor used in fear appeal ads can generally decrease the degree of fear appeal in the comparison between

Canadian and Chinese magazine fear appeal ads. In future fear appeal applications, marketers may make use of humor to decrease degree of fear appeal to accomplish certain purposes. However if fear is the objective, the use of humor may backfire.

Table 9. Frequency of Humor

		humor		
		Yes	No	Total
country	China	9	196	205
	Canada	62	158	220
Total		71	354	425

$$\chi^2 = 43.167, p = 0.000$$

Table 10. Degree of Fear Appeal

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	degree_Ch	1.4683	205	.66805	.04666
	degree_Ca	1.3024	205	.54794	.03827

$$\text{One-tailed: } t = 2.766, df = 205, p = 0.003$$

Findings based on the Protection Motivation Theory

Perceived Severity

As for RQ5, in Appendix Table 11, Chinese magazine ads have a higher probability (86%) of severity of the proposed threat present in the ad than Canadian ones (49%) ($\chi^2 = 64.691, p = 0.000$). And it can be shown that Chinese magazine ads (73%) use more “text” to express the severity of the threat than Canadian ones (50%) ($\chi^2 = 15.472, p = 0.000$). Meanwhile, Canadian magazine ads

(25%) use more “image” to express the severity of the threat than the Chinese ones (1%) ($\chi^2=42.800, p=0.000$). And the combination method (“text” and “image”) makes no difference for these two countries ($\chi^2=0.090, p=0.764$). It is clear that both Chinese and Canadian magazine ads prefer to use “text” to deliver the severity of the threat (Table 12).

Table 11. The Severity present or not

		Yes	No	Total
country	China	176	29	205
	Canada	108	112	220
Total		284	141	425

$$\chi^2= 64.691, p=0.000$$

Table 12. The severity of the threat is conveyed via

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Text	73%	50%	15.472	0.000
Image	1%	25%	42.800	0.000
Text & Image	26%	25%	0.090	0.764

The way of Perceived Efficacy express

From Table 13, neither H4a or H4b are supported by the results and Chinese (Explicit/Implicit: 57%/43%) and Canadian magazine ads (Explicit/Implicit: 62%/38%) show no difference in expressing the efficiency of proposed protective action (either directly or indirectly) ($\chi^2=1.193, p=0.275$). However, Canadian ads (73%) suggest people can effectively fight against a threat (danger control) by using the brand than Chinese ones (44%) ($\chi^2=37.624, p=0.000$) and

obviously danger control shows more often in the ad for both of these two countries (see Table 14). At the same time, Chinese ads have more combination methods (“fear control” and “danger control”) (34%) than their Canadian counterparts (11%) ($\chi^2=33.264, p=0.000$). However, for “fear control”, there is no difference for Chinese and Canadian ads (16%) ($\chi^2=2.535, p=0.111$) (RQ6). Moreover, in Appendix Table 15, we have two major findings for RQ7. “Realize gains” is used more frequently in Canadian ads (39%) than in Chinese ones (7%) ($\chi^2=59.134, p=0.000$). However, “avoid losses” is used much more frequently in Chinese ads (54%) than in Canadian ones (18%) ($\chi^2=58.483, p=0.000$). This result follows Hofstede’s (1984) research that collectivists would perform more avoidance behavior, while individualists prefer to realize personal gains, instead of protect themselves from losses.

Table 13. The efficiency directly v.s. indirectly addressed

		Directly	Indirectly	Total
country	China	117	88	205
	Canada	137	83	220
Total		254	171	425

$$\chi^2= 1.193, p=0.275$$

Table 14. Fear control v.s. Danger control

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Fear	22%	16%	2.535	0.111
Danger	44%	73%	37.624	0.000
Both	34%	11%	33.264	0.000

Table 15. Realize gains v.s. Avoid losses

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
realize gains	7%	39%	59.134	0.000
avoid losses	54%	18%	58.483	0.000
Both	39%	43%	0.602	0.438

Perceived rewards and costs

It is interesting to find is that Canadian ads have both higher frequency of intrinsic rewards (83.6% v.s. 69.3%) and extrinsic rewards (66.2% v.s. 29.6%) than Chinese ones (respectively: $\chi^2=11.722$, $p=0.001$ in Table 16; $\chi^2=56.329$, $p=0.000$ in Table 19). From Table 17, both Chinese (99.3%) and Canadian ads (96.7%) mainly express protective behavior with intrinsic rewards and there is no significant difference between these two countries when comparing the two types of intrinsic rewards ($\chi^2=2.493$, $p=0.114$). Chinese and Canadian magazine ads both prefer to use “text” to deliver the intrinsic rewards and Chinese ads use more “text” (87% v.s. 47%), less “image” (3% v.s. 14%) and “both” (10% v.s. 39%) than Canadian ads (respectively: $\chi^2=54.107$, $p=0.000$; $\chi^2=11.471$, $p=0.001$; $\chi^2=33.430$, $p=0.000$) (Table 18).

Also, there is also no significant difference between the two countries in the two types of extrinsic rewards ($\chi^2=0.055$, $p=0.815$) and both Chinese (96.7%) and Canadian (97.3%) ads show more frequency of protective behavior of extrinsic rewards (Table 20). Chinese and Canadian magazine ads also both prefer to use “text” to deliver the extrinsic rewards and Chinese ads use more “text” (85% v.s. 52%), less “image” (3% v.s. 15%) and “both” (12% v.s. 33%) than Canadian ads (respectively: $\chi^2=19.862$, $p=0.000$; $\chi^2=5.641$, $p=0.018$; $\chi^2=15.882$,

$p=0.000$) (Table 21). Canadian ads contain both high frequency of intrinsic rewards (84%) and extrinsic rewards (66%); however, Chinese ads express more intrinsic rewards (69%) than extrinsic rewards (30%). It is very important to show that irrespective of which country and which kind of rewards, both express protective behavior more often, which means protective behavior is relatively a more effective behavior than risky behavior in fear appeal arousal process (magazine advertisements). In addition, intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards both mainly use “text” to deliver the rewards message.

Table 16. Whether Intrinsic rewards in the ads

		Yes	No	Total
country	China	142	62	205
	Canada	184	36	220
	Total	326	98	424

$$\chi^2 = 11.722, p = 0.001$$

Table 17. Risk behavior V.S. Protective Behavior (Intrinsic rewards)

		Risk	Protective	Total
country	China	1	141	142
	Canada	6	178	184
	Total	7	319	326

$$\chi^2 = 2.493, p = 0.114$$

Table 18. Intrinsic rewards conveyed via:

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Text	87%	47%	54.107	0.000
Image	3%	14%	11.471	0.001
Text & Image	10%	39%	33.430	0.000

Table 19. Whether Extrinsic rewards in the ads

		Yes	No	Total
country	China	61	144	205
	Canada	145	74	219
Total		206	218	424

$\chi^2 = 56.329, p = 0.000$

Table 20. Risk behavior v.s. Protective Behavior (Extrinsic rewards)

		Risk	Protective	Total
country	China	2	59	61
	Canada	4	145	149
Total		6	204	210

$\chi^2 = 0.055, p = 0.815$

Table 21. Extrinsic rewards is conveyed via:

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Text	85%	52%	19.862	0.000
Image	3%	15%	5.641	0.018
Text & Image	12%	33%	15.882	0.000

From Table 22, related to the response cost, the Canadian magazine ads (85%) imply higher percentage of response cost than Chinese magazine ads (37%) ($\chi^2=103.001, p=0.000$). It is surprising to find (Table 23) that Canadian ads have higher frequency of social response cost (21% v.s. 0%), lower monetary response cost (12% v.s. 93%), and higher personal response cost (94% v.s. 4%) than Chinese ads (respectively: $\chi^2=18.488, p=0.000$; $\chi^2=152.733, p=0.000$; $\chi^2=196.371, p=0.000$). We find the same conclusion with the perceived rewards, since “text” is the main carrier to convey the response cost for both China (92%) and Canada (65%) and, besides, Chinese ads use it more often ($\chi^2=20.210, p=0.000$).

Table 22. Response cost implied in the ads

		Yes	No	Total
country	China	75	130	205
	Canada	186	34	220
Total		261	164	425

$$\chi^2= 103.001, p=0.000$$

Table 23. Type of response cost

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Social cost	0%	21%	18.488	0.000
Monetary cost	93%	12%	152.733	0.000
Personal cost	4%	94%	196.371	0.000
Time cost	5%	5%	0.000	0.989

Table 24. The response cost is conveyed via:

	China	Canada	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Text	92%	65%	20.210	0.000
Image	4%	8%	1.092	0.296
Text & Image	4%	27%	18.444	0.000

Discussion

This research provides very general findings on the fear appeal magazine ads usage frequency in China and Canada. It studies the question in a macro perspective, for example, when we measure humor, we include general humor, anything perceived to be humorous; when we test the degree of fear appeal, we try to find a result regardless of the different fear appeal types. In this way, we often can find some valuable results that some specific industry studies have not revealed.

Based on all the findings, the majority of Chinese and Canadian magazine ads related fear appeal are local, instead of international. For future general fear appeal research, scholars may try to find the reason why this phenomenon happened. As we can see in Table 2, Beauty and Personal Care, and Medicine are two industries where fear appeals are most often used. If we want to learn more about fear appeal, these two industries will be the best choice to study.

The national personalities and cultural differences can be partial shown from the different

types of fear appeal usage frequency in Chinese and Canadian magazine ads. However, “economic” fear appeal does not have a significant use difference in Chinese and Canadian fear appeal ads. This is a very interesting finding, which need further discussion. Humor does have some effect on fear appeal ads and it decreases a little the degree of fear appeal. Mainly, it is still used in the Canadian market, instead of the Chinese market. It is a good choice for marketers to be introduced into fear appeal ads, when they want a milder effect.

When it comes to the information delivery media, “text” is always the main method to convey whichever kind of message, fear appeal itself directly, perceived severity of the threat, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, and response rewards, which does not conflict with psychological research results: image/pictures can help consumers increase their awareness, perception, and attitudes towards the ads, and even the memory about the information (Sandar, 2000).

Theoretical Implications

The research discusses the fear appeal ads in a more general way. It reveals that the fear appeal has been widely used in Medicine, Beauty and Personal Care, IT Software, Office Supplies, Insurance Services, Finance Services and Telecommunication Services in China and Canada. This finding gives scholars some future research direction, not only focusing on the Cigarette (Tobacco) industry, but also on other industries.

At the same time, the finding of RQ4 and H3 (The country, which has higher frequency of humor, will have lower degree of fear appeal), strengthens the previous results. For example,

humor can decrease a negative condition (stress) (Able & Maxwell, 2002) and perceived pain (Adams & McGuire, 1986).

The results in Table 2 and Table 3 also support Laroche *et al.*'s (2001) study that the Chinese are more easily influenced by social factors (fear appeal) and Canadian by physical factors (fear appeal).

What is more, the study revealed some findings that have not been mentioned in previous studies. For instance, Canadian ads express both a higher frequency of intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards than Chinese ones, and both Chinese and Canadian ads prefer to express protective behavior through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. These two findings provide a direction for future researchers.

Managerial Implications

There is a very clear finding that no matter which method—fear appeal, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, or response cost—they are all more frequently delivered by “Text” in China and Canada. As mentioned, China is a high-context culture and the Chinese prefer to express information in a more implicit and multiple meaning (like “pun”) way; thus, it is easy to understand that Chinese fear appeal ads use more frequently “text” than “image.” However, it is not easy to explain why Canadian fear appeal ads also use more frequently “text.” Even though, a word is an efficient way to deliver a message, customers would not spend much time reading the little sentences or paragraphs in the ad. Marketers may be careful when they want to deliver fear

appeal information through “text,” as they need to think about how to attract the customers’ attention and how to combine “text” and “image” to increase the efficiency of fear appeal.

At the same time, according to the findings in Table 2 and Table 3 (H1a and H1b), marketers can make use of social fear appeal ads in the Chinese market and apply physical fear appeal ads in the Canadian market, which may increase the efficiency of fear appeal influences on consumer behavior.

Limitations

Although the judges were told to answer all the questions very objectively, pretending they are the advertisers, they still may use their personal opinions in the coding process. For example, the judges, who are fat, may be more sensitive to the weight-lost products. Gender is also a key factor which may influence the judge’s perceptions. For instance, in item 7 Appendix B, male and female judges may evaluate the degree of severity totally differently towards Beauty and Personal Care related fear appeal ads. Female judges may perceive higher degree of severity than male judges, who may not that care about their hair or skin.

The sample size may be not large enough and cause opposite findings: Canadian ads express more social cost and Chinese ads express more monetary cost.

Future Study

For future research, the differences between Chinese judges and Canadian judges can be tested. The researcher can choose 30 Chinese ads and fully translate them into English. Then two Chinese judges and two Canadian judges begin to code the 60 ads (30 Chinese ads and 30 Canadian ads). At last, the researcher can test whether there is a significant difference between two groups of judges.

In addition, the researchers can use more countries, which have distinct cultural differences, like France, Saudi Arabia, and India. When more countries' data are put into comparisons, there might be more interesting results.

This content analysis research is a more qualitative study and only compares the usage frequency of easily observed variables. In these specific countries, there might be more quantitative research to be done. For instance, according our findings, there might be more industries which use fear appeals frequently, besides cigarette (MacDonell *et al.*, 2013; Laroche, Toffoli, Zhang, & Pons, 2001). Based on our general findings, scholars can conduct more specific quantitative studies to find out why there are such use differences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Coding Instructions

1. Fear Appeals in Advertising

1.1. What is a fear appeal?

There is not one unique definition of what a “fear appeal” is. Some descriptions of what is meant by fear appeal appear below:

- A fear appeal posits the risks of using and not using a specific product, service, or idea such that if you do not “buy,” some particular dire consequences will occur.
- Communications using fear appeals are designed to stimulate anxiety in an audience with the expectation that the audience will attempt to reduce this anxiety by adopting, continuing, discontinuing or avoiding a specified course of thought or action.
- A fear appeal is a persuasive message that attempts to arouse fear in order to divert behavior through the threat of impending danger or harm.
- A fear appeal presents a risk, presents the vulnerability to the risk, and then describes a suggested form of protective action.
- Fear is a primitive instinct which can occasionally guide and activate human behavior. It creates anxiety and tension, causing people to seek ways to reduce these feelings.

1.2. How does a fear appeal work?

Basically, all fear appeals in advertising involve the following steps. They ...

- ... create a fearful situation to activate a person's sense of risk and vulnerability
- ... depict a danger in a serious manner to warrant attention.
- ... provide a solution as a means of fear reduction

1.3. Where are fear appeals applied?

Fear appeal is an advertising strategy that is not limited by the product category, but obviously some categories are more prone to fear appeals than others. Fear appeals are most noticeable in ads about personal safety, anti-smoking, anti-drinking, health protection, aids prevention and so forth. However, fear appeals also exist in ads for insurance services cosmetics, dental hygiene, and food, to name a few.

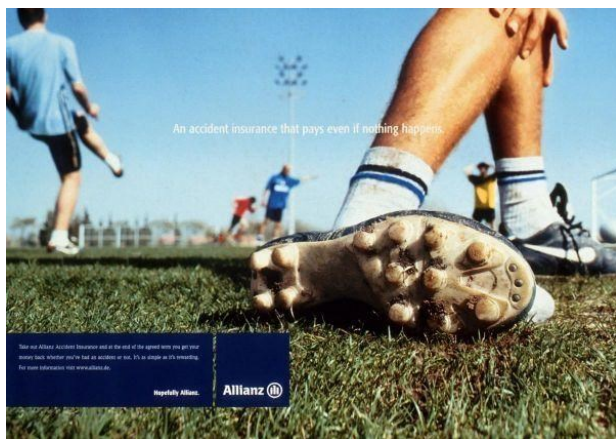
Below are three sample ads that use fear appeal in an anti-smoking campaign, for an insurance service and for a cosmetic product.

Example

A



Example B



Example C

PROMOTION

OLAY

“Join me in the battle against ageing!”

I feel very proud to be a part of the brand that has made millions of women feel younger. Olay total effects carries everything that you would need for your complete skin care regimen and puts to rest 7 signs of skin ageing such as open pores, fine lines and dark spots. From moisturizing to sun protection, Olay total effects has everything that will make your skin glow and give it a youthful appearance. So why not try Olay total effects and join me in the battle against ageing!

7

- Dark spots
- Dry skin
- Dull glow-less skin
- Lines & wrinkles
- Sagging skin
- Open pores
- Uneven skin tone

TRY Olay total effects

Visit www.olay.in for a free sample.

2. The Coding Task

You are about to read and evaluate fear-arousing ads along various aspects. You need to fill in one coding form for each ad (the coding form is available online, and for clarity you also receive the coding form as a word document). Each coding form contains (*up to*) 24 decisions for you to make.

Please first read the ad (most ads can be read in less than 20 seconds), then carefully fill the coding form. When looking at one ad:

- Make sure you read the text and the image in the ad.
- Look for clues/evidence in the ad to answer the questions/make the decision.
- If you find it very hard to make the decision, return to the question and instructions, and then try to focus on the whole picture of the advertisement.

Please always keep in mind that we want to know what the advertiser attempts to do. We are not interested in your individual reactions toward the ad. Please also discard your existing knowledge about the product/service and only judge the ad.

Please make sure that you have truly understood the questions in the coding form. To this end, please consider the detailed explanations given in this document. Please read this document very carefully, and whenever you are not sure, please go back to it refer to the examples and definitions given. The best is if you print this document and the questionnaire, as this allows to go back and forth between the online questionnaire and instruction easily.

Filling the coding form will take approximately 3 minutes per ad. For the first couple of ads you may need more time, and need to go back to the definitions more frequently, than in a later stage when you are well trained.

At some point you may become little impatient. Should this happen, relax and take a break. As you continue, you will get used to the coding very soon and the process will be a lot smoother.

You should not code more than 10 or 15 ads one after the other. If you code too many in one go you may suffer from a lack of concentration. It is much easier to avoid coding errors during the coding process than to correct for coding errors at a later stage when we compare results between the coders.

Very important: You must make sure that you note the right number of the ad you are evaluating. Any mistake in your answers to this question could have substantial consequences for the subsequent analysis. Therefore, for security reasons, the question about the ad number appears twice, in the beginning of the questionnaire and at the end. You also receive a list of the ads with their respective number (**Contact Sheet**). Please print this list as well and use it to organize your coding work.

4. Coding Fear Appeals

Below are some detailed explanations related to some specific questions that appear in the coding form and that require further explanations for clarity.

Questions that are not detailed here are self-explanatory.

Q4: Which type of fear appeal does this ad contain? (please select all that apply)

- **Physical fear appeals** are designed to stimulate anxiety and vulnerability to physical danger, threat or harm.
- **Social fear appeals** are intended to create anxiety and tension related to violations of social norms, regulations or the law.
- **Economic fear appeals** are designed to stimulate anxiety related to economic conditions (loss of income, loss of job, loss of social security)
- **Self-esteem fear appeals** relates to the fear of damage to the social image of the self, such as the fear to lose face in social relationships

If you think that **another type of fear appeal is present** (one that does not fall into the above mentioned categories), please note it in your own word. Please offer a short description of how you understand the fear appeal.

Q6: Does this ad also contain some type of humor?

Fear appeals are sometimes combined with some type of humor, such as

- some kind of sarcastic description of the consequences of not engaging in the recommended protective behavior (*see example B above – the person has in fact no broken leg*)
- the humorous display of how easy it is to engage in the recommended protective behavior

There are many other types of humor that may emerge in ads with fear appeal.

If you think that there is some type of humor involved, please answer “Yes.”

Q11: Is the severity of the proposed threat present in the ad?

“Severity” means the perceived negative consequences that could result from engaging in a risk behavior. While some fear ads show severity of the proposed threat in a very explicit or drastic manner (*see Example A above: the severity of the threat of smoking is clearly shown*), others don’t show it (*see example C above: While the text suggest that women may face the threat of bad skin if they don’t use the product, it does not state the consequences of having bad skin*).

Please simply decide is the severity of the proposed threat is present or not.

Q13: Does this ad show the efficiency of the proposed protective action explicitly (*directly*) or implicitly (*indirectly*)?

Fear ads can be distinguished in terms of the explicitness of the potentially fear provoking communication.

An explicit (or direct) communication shows the efficiency of the proposed protective action directly—the reader *does not* have to make inferences. In contrast, an implicit (or indirect) communication invites the reader is invited to conclude about the effectiveness of the proposed protective action. Examples:

- **Explicit (*direct*)** : “This brand helps you to lose 5kg of weight within 10 days”;

Q14: Does this ad suggest that people can *ignore (or control) a fear* or does it suggest that

people can effectively *fight against (or control) a threat or danger* by using the brand?

- **Implicit (*indirect*):** “This brand allows you to benefit from 25 years of experience in weight loss research”

When people think about a threatening message they develop strategies to avert a threat, which means that they engage in **danger control processes** (this is a protective reaction). They may also engage in a **fear control processes**, which means that they are motivated to cope with their fear, and try to control this fear (this is a defensive reaction). The decision to engage in a fear- or a danger-control process is an individual decision. That is, for the same ad some people may engage in danger control, but other people may engage in fear control.

When you answer this question, please keep in mind that we are not interested in knowing how you react to the threat presented in the ad. We are only interested in knowing what the advertiser attempts to do.

An advertiser may position fear messages such that readers can infer that the proposed protective action (for example using the advertised brand) can help them to either ignore their fear (fear control) or that the proposed protective actions helps them to effectively fight against a threat (danger control). Examples:

- **Fear control:** “You can ignore your fear when you use this brand”
- **Danger control:** “You can effectively fight against the threat when you use this brand”

Q15: Does this ad suggest that people can realize gains, or does it suggest that losses can be avoided when they adopt the proposed protective behavior?

Fear appeals suggest either that people can avoid negative consequences of their choices (*avoid losses*), or that people can gain from making the right choices (*realize gains*). Hence, the literally same message can be expressed either negatively or positively. In some instances, one and the same message may include both aspects (avoiding losses and realizing gains work in combination). Examples:

- **Avoid losses** “*If you do not follow these recommendations, you will increase your chances of dying early*”
- **Realize gains:** “*If you follow these recommendations, you will increase your chances of living a long, healthy life*”
- **Avoid losses & realize gains:** “*If you do not follow these recommendations, you will increase your chances of dying early, but if you follow these recommendations, you will increase your chances of living a long, healthy life*”

Q16: Are intrinsic rewards brought by the message of the ad?

Generally, an intrinsic reward is an outcome that gives an individual satisfaction. For example, an intrinsic reward is the satisfaction one feels when (s)he did something well or helped someone else to make another person’s day better. Intrinsic rewards are intangible and **arise from within the person** who is doing something.

Turning to fear appeals in advertising: Intrinsic rewards are the perceived positive physical and psychological effects that **that arise from within the person** related to one’s engagement in a risk behavior or from one’s engagement in a protective behavior. Examples:

- **Intrinsic reward from engaging in a risk behavior:** An anti-alcohol campaign emphasizes that drinking alcohol is addictive while showing the picture of relaxed and happy people. Here, alcohol is a threat (*being addictive*) combined with an intrinsic reward (*feeling happy and relaxed*) that emerges from engaging in a risk behavior (*drinking alcohol*). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to decrease the value of a putative intrinsic reward.
- **Intrinsic reward from engaging in a protective behavior:** The ad of a life insurance company emphasizes that it is important to be well consulted in order to sign the right type of contract and the picture shows an elderly person sitting relaxed and happy in a rocking chair. Here, the choice of the right contract is a threat, but engaging in the proposed protective behavior (*using this brand*) leads to an intrinsic reward (*feeling happy and relaxed*). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to reinforce the value of a intrinsic reward.

When you answer this question, please first decide if the ad promises an intrinsic reward at all. If yes, then please decide if the intrinsic reward emerges from engaging in a risk behavior or from engaging in a protective behavior.

Q19: Are extrinsic rewards brought by the message of the ad?

While intrinsic rewards arise from within the person, extrinsic rewards are the perceived positive consequences **that arise from externally** for accomplishing something. Generally, an extrinsic reward is the recognition of one's endeavor. This recognition may be in the form of

tangible things such as a certificate of accomplishment, a trophy, or a monetary reward such as gaining a lot of money. Extrinsic rewards can also be intangible, such as a verbal praise or respect and glory brought by others.

Turning to fear appeals in advertising: Extrinsic rewards are the perceived positive physical, material or psychological effects **that arise from externally** related to one's engagement in a in a risk behavior **or** from one's engagement in a protective behavior. Examples:

- **Extrinsic reward from engaging in a risk behavior:** A road-safety advertising shows a young man who impresses his girlfriend by driving faster than 200km/h on a highway where only 100km/h are allowed. The slogan states that this trip ended in hospital. Here, a threat (*ending in hospital*) is combined with an extrinsic reward (*recognition from others*) that emerges from engaging in a risk behavior (*driving fast*). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to decrease the value of a putative extrinsic reward.
- **Extrinsic reward from engaging in a protective behavior:** The ad for a tooth paste suggests that by using this product you will avoid the risk of unhealthy teeth and people will respect you more because of your healthy white teeth. Here, a threat (*unhealthy teeth*) is combined with an extrinsic reward (*recognition from others*) that emerges from engaging in a protective behavior (*using this brand*). In this example, the fear appeal is used as a strategy to reinforce the value of an extrinsic reward.

When you answer this question, please first decide if the ad promises an extrinsic reward at all. If yes, then please decide if the extrinsic reward emerges from engaging in a risk behavior **or**

from engaging in a protective behavior.

Appendix B: Fear Appeal Coding Questionnaire

Q1: Please note the ad number here: _____

Q2: The advertised product/service belongs to a _____ brand

- 1.... a national brand of your home country (France/ Germany)
- 2.... a foreign (international) brand

Q3: To which product/service type does the advertised product/ service belong?

- 1. Automobile
- 2. Beauty and personal care
- 3. Clothing/ Fashion
- 4. Foods and drinks
- 5. Consumer electronics
- 6. Household appliances
- 7. Household products
- 8. Medicine
- 9. Industrial products
- 10. Sports gears and equipment
- 11. IT software
- 12. Office supplies

- 13. Insurance services
- 14. Telecommunication services
- 15. Financial services
- Others: _____

Q4: Which type of fear appeal does this ad contain? *(Please select all that apply)*

- A. Physical *(examples : anxiety and vulnerability to physical danger, threat or harm)*
- B. Social *(examples : anxiety and tension related to violations of social norms, regulations or the law)*
- C. Economic *(examples : loss of money, loss of job, higher taxes, loss of social security)*
- D. Self-esteem *(examples : loss of pride; loss of respect; loss of social status)*
- E. Other(s) _____

If more than one fear appeal was used → Q5; Otherwise → Q6

Q5: What is the dominant fear appeal used

- 1. Physical *(examples : anxiety and vulnerability to physical danger, threat or harm)*
- 2. Social *(examples : anxiety and tension related to violations of social norms, regulations or the law)*
- 3. Economic *(examples : loss of money, loss of job, higher taxes, loss of social security)*

4. Self-esteem (*examples : loss of pride; loss of respect; loss of social status*)

Other(s) _____

Q6: Does this ad also contain some type of humor?

1. Yes

2. No

Q7: What do you think of the degree of fear appeal of this ad?

1. Low

2. Medium

3. High

Q8: The fear appeal is conveyed via _____

1. Text

2. Image

3. Text and Image

If Image or Text and Image → Q9; Otherwise → Q11

Q9: On the image, is the fear appeal mainly conveyed via ...

- 1. People
- 2. Animals
- 3. Objects

Q10: Is the image that conveys the fear appeal

- 1. A real picture (a photo)
- 2. A drawing (cartoon character)

Q11: Is the severity of the proposed threat present in the ad?

- 1. Yes, the severity is present
- 2. No, the severity is not present

If Yes → Q12; If No → Q13

Q12: The severity of the threat is conveyed via _____

- 1. Text
- 2. Image
- 3. Text and Image

Q13: Does this ad show the efficiency of the proposed protective action explicitly (directly) or implicitly (indirectly)? *Examples:*

- *Explicit (direct) : “This brand helps you to lose 5kg of weight within 10 days”*
- *Implicit (indirect): “This brand allows you to benefit from 25 years of experience in weight loss research ”*

- 1. The efficiency is directly addressed
- 2. The efficiency is indirectly addressed

Q14: Does this ad suggest that people can ignore a fear (**fear control**) or does it suggest that people can effectively fight against a threat/ a danger (**danger control**) by using the brand?

Examples:

- *Fear control: “You can ignore your fear when you use this brand”*
- *Danger control: “You can effectively fight against the threat when you use this brand”*

- 1. Dominantly fear control
- 2. Dominantly danger control
- 3. Both, fear control and danger control

Q15: Does this ad suggest that people can realize gains, or does it suggest that losses can be avoided when they adopt the proposed protective behavior? *Examples:*

- *Realize gains* : “You will be better off (e.g. : *look younger; be happier ; have more friends; save money*) when you use this brand”
 - *Avoid losses* : “You will avoid negative consequences (e.g. : *look less old; be less frustrated; have less enemies; pay less money*) when you use this brand”
- 1. Dominantly “realize gains”
 - 2. Dominantly “avoid losses”
 - 3. Both, realize gains and avoid losses

Q16: Are intrinsic rewards (=positive consequences that arise from internally) brought by the message of this ad?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

If yes → Q17 and Q18; If no → Q19

Q17: The intrinsic rewards (=positive consequences that arise from internally) relate to engaging in ...

- 1. ... a **risk behavior**
- 2. ... a **protective behavior**

Q18: The intrinsic rewards (*=positive consequences that arise from internally*) are conveyed via ...

- 1. Text
- 2. Image
- 3. Text and Image

Q19: Are extrinsic rewards (*=positive consequences that arise from externally*) brought by the message of this ad?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

If yes → Q20 and 21; If no → Q22

Q20: The extrinsic rewards (*=positive consequences that arise from externally*) relate to engaging in ...

- 1. ... a **risk behavior**
- 2. ... a **protective behavior**

Q21: The extrinsic rewards (*=positive consequences that arise from externally*) are conveyed via ...

- 1. Text
- 2. Image
- 3. Text and Image

Q22: Does this ad imply response cost? (*Response cost = the perceived social, monetary, personal time and effort cost from adapting the protective behavior*)

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

If yes → Q23 and 24; If no → Q25

Q23: What type of response cost does this ad imply? (*Please record all that apply*)

- A. Social cost (*e.g., worsened social relationships*)
- B. Monetary cost (*e.g., individual spending*)
- C. Personal cost (*e.g., psychological efforts, feelings of stress*)
- D. Time cost (*e.g., time needed*)
- E. Other efforts _____

Q24: The response cost is conveyed via _____

- 1. Text
- 2. Image
- 3. Text and Image

Q25: What colors are dominantly used in this ad? (*Please note up to three*)

- A. Red
- B. Yellow
- C. Green
- D. Blue
- E. Pink
- F. Violet/Purple
- G. Brown
- H. Black
- I. White