

Human Values for Authorizing Persuasive Multimedia Contents¹

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Abstract

This paper attempts to answer what should be taken into consideration to authorize persuasive multimedia contents, especially in the ad domain. Being persuasive is the essential property of ads, as simply delivering information may not be sufficient to persuade those who are exposed to them. On authorizing persuasive multimedia contents, much has been discussed from a technological and technical view point but so far very little has been done from a cognitive view point. What is suggested in this paper for the purpose of authorizing persuasive multimedia contents is the value most desired proposed under the name of utopic value. Everyone pursues the utopic value in the decision-making process. However, what constitutes this value is not, however, fixed. It varies according to contexts. In this paper, this variation is explained in terms of value shifting. In addition, I attempt to provide an empirical example of value shifting depending on the orientation types of context comparing ads of low-involvement products. The conclusion of this paper is that understanding the utopic value and its variation is the key to authorize persuasive multimedia contents.

Keywords: *value shifting, orientation types, utopic value, self-consuming, decision-making process*

1. Introduction

Multimedia is largely employed because of its efficient capability of carrying and delivering information to consumers. By virtue of its usefulness, it has been paid much attention to combine information with multimedia but so far very little has been done to how we can authorize persuasive multimedia contents appealing to end users or customers. If it is a simple matter of delivering information, all one needs to do is to list and display information logically. But if it is not a matter of persuasion, only listing information will not be sufficient to attract customers. It seems that there is something invisible and abstract to take into consideration in order to be persuasive in addition to correcting information. The most typical case of this multimedia type will be low-involvement product ads. Since low-involvement products have, by definition, no great difference in quality and price between them, the information based approaches cannot appeal their customers. Instead it might be something outside the products. These are additional values of the products. It is believed that

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they are emotions such as pleasure, fun, satisfaction and identity among many others. However, the status or the value of these emotional features is not the same from context to context. A context can be culture of a collective group or propensity of an individual. The value of these features, hence, varies according to the context especially along with temporal variants.

In this paper, under the assumption that these emotional features are the key to authorize persuasive multimedia contents, I shall argue this point at greater length through a contrastive approach to multimedia contents in various contexts in order to find out which emotional feature is the optimal appealing point in the given context.

2. Human values and Decision-making

2.1. Self-consuming values

As far as buying decision is concerned, today, necessity is no longer the most important factor as it was in the era of scarcity. It is still a decisive factor in a certain context but, in general, it just motivates buying or purchasing. It does not effect greatly on consuming behavior that decides the choice of a product among many others. Contrary to necessity, in the post scarcity era, designs and artistic completion or affectedness are considered more vital than necessity itself. These are in fact nothing to do with the functions of the products. This implies that we, end users, do not consume the products but consume something else. Today, I suppose that we do not only consume materials but also the additional values attached to them when we purchase products.

Though the notion of self-consuming value is vague, what is certain is that it always presupposes the optimal or maximum profit in a given context. Profit may be money, success, achievement and so on. Or it may be abstract such as happiness, sacrifice, honor and so on. Whatever it is, self-consuming value is the highest value to the people who take it as an objective in their decision-making process. So, I call this maximum profit *utopic value*.²

This value, however, is not a constant. As the most wanted value, the utopic value is variable according to the given contextual conditions. With respect to the relations between literal emotional features and its relative valorization, the following diagram might be useful to conceptualize it.

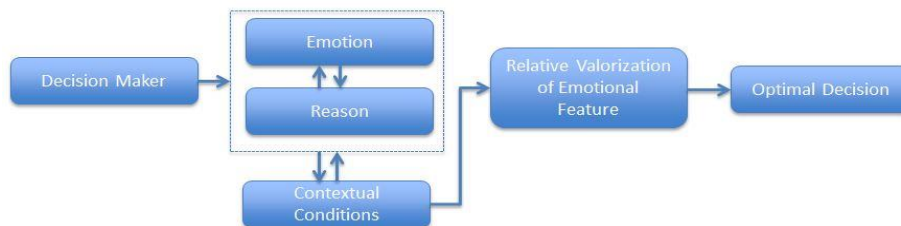


Figure 1

² I borrowed this term from the consumption values proposed initially by Floch (1990).

Reason Features	Emotion Features	Contextual Conditions
Practical Critical	Ludic Existential	Object Oriented Context Value Oriented Context

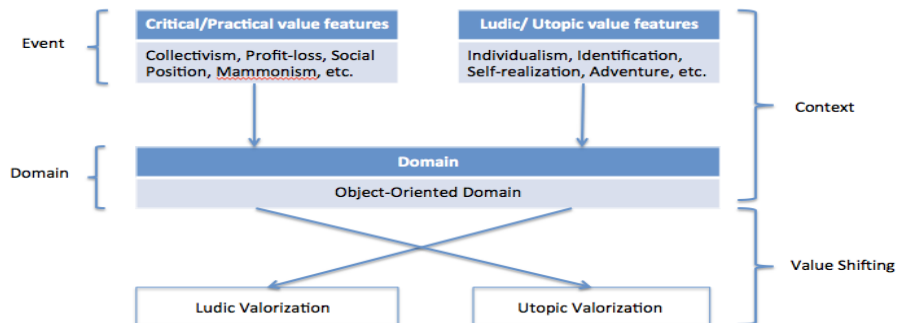
In general terms, critical and practical features are the factors that are concerned with material values or ordinary life while ludic and existential features are rather spiritual. These are the inherent context-free features of a decision-maker. However, under normal circumstances, it is not deniable that all decisions are affected by spatio-temporal variables that constitute contexts in which decision-making is taken. Various different contexts can be generalized equally in terms of 'object and value orientation. The object-oriented context puts more weight on worldliness whereas the value-oriented context considers unworldliness more important.

An optimal decision is what is taken for the most wanted self-satisfactory value, the utopic value. Since decision-making is the result of inter-actions between logical reasoning and emotional preference which take place amidst contextual conditions, however, it should not be surprising if the characters and types of the utopic value are not identical case-by-case even if the decision-maker is the same.

2.2. Value Shifting and Decision-making

For the purpose of explaining why the most prominent values of people vary depending upon situations I have developed a *value shifting theory*. This theorem is in short defined as the following:

Practical features belonging to the critical and practical value become the *utopic value* in object-oriented domains and the utopic features belonging to the *utopic value* become the ludic value in the object-oriented domains through value-shifted valorizations.



Event is the space where these values appear with their default values. Each event is the same everywhere because it is just an action or a phenomenon that we see in everyday life wherever we are. For this reason, the valorization of value features is absolute and invariable at the level of events.

Context is the combination of the event and domain. Since each value feature is pre-

defined in Plato's dualism, value shifting is not anticipated with value-oriented domains.³ Value shifting is caused only when events lie in object-oriented domains. Under this theory, it is the orientation types of the domains in which the events take place that cause value shifting. Orientation types of domains pre-organize the way in which value features are valorized. That is why we should conscientiously examine a domains' orientation type. From this, it should be said that the valorization of value features are relative and variable at the level of domains.

As the inherent feature of a decision-maker is profoundly influenced by his or her upbringing, personal temper, and contextual conditions, domains in other words as noted as in the above diagram are also bound to be influenced by not only diachronic but also synchronic factors. If inherent features are individual, contextual features are rather collective. Since the decision-making process is the way to obtain the maximal profit, whatever it is, in the given context, it is important to recognize what propensities have the contexts in which decision making is taken place.

Apart from the value shifting, the notion of the utopic value also needs to be redefined. The original concept of the utopic valorization suggested by Floch (1990) is rooted in Plato's dualism. However, here I redefine it as that which is most highly desired. This value is closely related to the domains in the given moment because what people want most is ever changing from context to context. Consequently, if a practical feature is taken as the most wanted value in a given context, it is the utopic value at the moment even though it will not be in another moment.

3. Contextual Condition for Valorization of Human Values

3.1. Object Oriented Context

When people talk about what the national characteristics of Koreans are, those that come to mind first on the list are hardworking, diligence, social success, pride and honor. In the aspect of agricultural tradition, labor was held sacred. Also, as a bureaucratic society, face and honor have infinite value. These features all together produce an image of a diligent work ethic for social status. Career-oriented thinking and ostentation-oriented behaviors suggest that Korea is in general an object-oriented country. In light of this observation, valorization of each value feature should be regrouped and reinterpreted in relation with object-oriented properties.

In this context where goal-oriented attitude is mostly welcomed, according to the value shifting theory, the value features belonging to critical and practical valorizations should be interpreted as indicators for the utopian valorization. On the contrary, the value features that indicate the utopian value become in turn indicators for the ludic value. Since Korean contexts, in general, are composed of events in object-oriented domains, the value features undergo a series of the following changes.

³ Floch (1990) did not say anything about why some features have utopic value while some others have critical or practical values. The classification done in Floch (1990) is, however, generally agreed. I think this general attitude comes from Plato's dualism according to which the mortals should pursue immortal, invariable values in the Ideal World. To Plato's eyes, everything one pursues to get in this real world is not a real but just a copy that is meaningless. In this aspect, critical and practical features closely related to this world are not utopic values.

Table 1. Orientation Type and Value Shifting

+ Value Orientation			
Critical/ Practical Value		Ludic/ Utopic Value	
Collectivism	Hierarchical Social Structure High Power Distance Uniformity Authoritarianism	Individualism	Free life style Diversity Freedom from constraints Low Power Distance
Goal Achievement	Materialism Aspiration Education Future Oriented Patience Sacrifice	Introspection	Life quality Religious Morality Education Identity
Face	Upward mobile lifestyle Ostentation	Ontologism	Reality Self-satisfaction
+Object Orientation			
Utopic Value		Ludic Value	

As it is well known, collectivism is one of main properties of Koreans. Given this, an individualistic attitude is not welcomed in most cases. Individual values are usually devaluated and ignored in front of collective values. Koreans easily combine collectivism with object oriented properties, if there is a common goal to achieve to an extent that they tend to sacrifice individual values. Collectivism is the utopic value in the sense that it refers to the most wanted value in object-oriented domains.

A strong desire for an upper ranked social position is compelling evidence that supports the idea considering that Korean culture is object-oriented. According to an ancient instructional book named *Filial Duty*, written by Confucius (BC551-BC479) or by one of his disciples, it is said that the first step of filial duty is not harming one's own body because it is given from parents and its final step is achieving fame and prestige to make their family name known in the whole world. For a longtime since Confucianism was introduced on the Korean peninsula around the 12th century, this has served as one of principal life codes for all Koreans. Koreans, deeply influenced not only by this but also by Confucianism, have traditionally exhibited a strong desire for social success and for being upper ranked in the social hierarchy.

The feature of education should be conceived in association with object-oriented property of the Korean context. Many people agree that the incredible economic growth of Korea was heavily indebted to education. In addition, some countries have benchmarked the Korean education system to transplant it into theirs in hopes of encouraging their economic development. The United States and Brazil are two of those who are very interested in the

Korean education system. But copying the system is not valid for them. Transplanting the system into theirs will not bring the result that they want. It is because the domains in which the education system lies are different. For Koreans, education is the ladder that allows and promises the social success that is their ultimate goal to achieve. Furthermore, education is the passage to make their utopic dreams come true. Outwardly, education seems to be crucial for Korean economic growth but in reality, it is not. It is the object-oriented properties that push Koreans to be highly educated. Consequently, transplanting only the education system into other non-object-oriented countries is meaningless.

For Koreans with object-oriented propensities, everything that does not have a practical purpose draws no attention. Furthermore, it is regarded as a thing of no value. *Useless* and *amusing* are the most commonly heard words in association with the value-oriented features in the object-oriented Korean culture. These utterances support that the value features pre-defined as indices for the utopic value become indicators for the ludic value. Generally, value-oriented features do not provide any concrete profit in the phenomenal world.⁴ Rather, they bring loss. Since Korean culture is object oriented, the features pre-defined as critical and practical values now should be accepted as utopic values as it is told in the value shifting theory.

This observation and interpretation on the valorization of features in the Korean context can be justified by the general tendency seen in the ads of low-involvement products such as beer.

Beer is not traditional Korean liquor. It was imported into Korea along with other western goods in the beginning of the 20th Century. In the sociocultural context of that time, all western goods were considered as advanced and better. Unexceptionally, beer immediately became a symbol of western culture, an object of admiration. At that time, drinking beer meant being rich, modern and different.⁵

Beer kept luxurious and privileged images until the end of the 70s. Beer was a symbol of industrialized Western culture, which was overlapped with the upper ruling class and a materially rich environment. These images are combined strongly with object-oriented features such as the desire for success and materialism. Hence, the advertisements before the 80s stimulated the desire to be upwardly mobile due to the symbolic meaning registered in beers.

The direction of beer advertisements changed after the 80s because beer was not a high-involvement product. Advertisements of low-involvement products are bound to find appealing points out of the products themselves because they are not distinguished by one another in terms of price and quality.⁶ The solution that Koreans found was to use celebrities instead of reinforcing messages by well structured storytelling. If one word sums up the

⁴ Koreans use to consider mental reward as not real compensation. This is because they are interested largely in object-oriented features in this world where they live. For example, Koreans do not visit museums on their soil because there is no compensation for their visit. They think unconsciously visiting museums is spending time and money. By the way, almost all Koreans who take a trip to France for the first time in their life willingly visit the Louvre without exception because visiting the Louvre or that he or she has visited the Louvre provides them a kind of privileged feeling as real compensation. In this case, it is related to ostentation.

⁵ In Korean culture, *difference* is a very important and interesting value feature to take into consideration. I believe that this feature can be construed as self-realization and discrimination at the same time. Here, I suppose difference as a strategy to be differentiated by means of discrimination instead of self-realization.

⁶ In the 80s, there were ads filled with critical values: ingredients, taste, degree of aging and a feeling of refreshment. This was because of the strong distrust on the goods prevailed at that time.

peculiarity of beer ads after the 80s, it is the absence of storytelling. It is very difficult to see any reciprocity between images and copies. There are only celebrities.

The reason why this kind of advertisement is widely used is due to the symbolic images of the high society of celebrities. TV stars, sports heroes –and celebrities- live in another world that most people long for. In other words, the celebrities in advertisements are the objects of admiration, the wannabes. Consuming the beer that these celebrities advertise makes consumers believe that they are in the same position with the celebrities psychologically, through a projection effect or assimilation. Their existence itself in the advertisements appeals to the utopian value in the object-oriented Korean context. The images, copies and narrative structures are thus not very important components in Korean ads because the existence of celebrities has the highest overall weight. This is why the narrative structures are poor in Korean beer advertisements.

After the 90s, however, it is not so easy to pick up which value the advertisements have pursued. All values were mixed and copied and the images do not match coherently. In many cases, copies appealed to the critical value while images and the narrative structure appealed to the ludic value. Amid this confused situation, the most prominent characteristic of Korean beer advertisements is that they still rely on celebrities, entertainers and sports players. In particular, this tendency is more visible after the 90s.

3.2. Value Oriented Context

In the real world, it might not be possible to imagine a totally value oriented community. It may only be possible in fantasy or in science fiction films. Nevertheless, if we limit the notion of value orientation to the opposite concept of worldliness, a non-material value seeking tendency can be considered as a manifestation of the value-oriented context.

This tendency is usually shown in those who have primitive beliefs or in religious people. Among many others, Brazilians have these two properties. They are religious in many aspects. They are catholic in principal but they worship the Virgin Mary in parallel with primitive beliefs.

The African blacks who were brought in Brazil came along with their primitive beliefs that made them submissive and obedient to the greater powers, such as natural phenomena and the white dominants. Moreover, catholic interpretation of the Bible with respect to working made Brazilians keep their distance from labor. Portuguese who discovered Brazil and developed colonial Brazil believed that labor was punishment forced by original sin. (DaMatta, 2004:13-27) This belief made Portuguese and first comers in Brazil maintain a respectful distance from labor (Buarque (1936: 31-66); Ferretti (1999)).

Brazilians who inherit these features in vein have developed a complacent attitude in association with the environmental peculiarities. Generally speaking, personal life is more important than collective goals. Catholicism and primitive beliefs encourage Brazilians to stick by the present. Consequently, they prefer enjoying themselves today to working hard and saving for a better future.

Brazilian culture seems similar to the Korean culture in the sense that they both put weight on the phenomenal world but they are different in the aspect that Koreans place social success

first on their wish list while Brazilians do not. For Brazilians, what comes first in the wish list is present pleasure.



The three ads above are those of the Brazilian beer Brahma. These are very famous for the reputation of fun and reversal. In the first ad, a turtle dying from thirst sees a can of beer dropped from a beer cargo truck. The turtle is desperate for the beer, but the driver of the cargo truck wants the can back. In this tension, they begin to play soccer as if the can were a ball. At the end, it was the turtle that plays better and wins the can. The second ad depicts the vengeance of the truck driver who was defeated in the previous ad. In this second ad, the truck driver intentionally initiates and challenges the turtle which is again dying from thirst. The driver shows off his high ability of handling a soccer ball, actually a beer can. However, the turtle does not pay attention to the driver's action; rather he runs away with the beer cargo truck leaving the driver upset. In the third ad, the turtle that robbed the truck takes two girls who are desperate for a ride and thirsty in the heat and goes to a motel. After arriving at a motel, the scenes audio lead the viewer to imagine indecent events especially when one of the girls says, "I want it one more time." But the final scene is a reversal of the previous ones. The turtle is showing its soccer skills shooting beer cans into a trash can as if they were soccer balls.

The above ads focused on the practical values of beer: a thirst quencher and a cooler. But they did not express these values in direct narrative forms. Rather they use metaphoric humors filled with soccer, girls, fantasy, sex, and reversal which are all things that Brazilians love. If it is possible to sum them up in a word, it will be fun or pleasing. Not only these ads but also most Brazilian beer ads take advantage of the ludic value in terms of Floch (1990) with a well-organized narrative structure.⁷ It is certain that this tendency comes from the collective innate Brazilian properties.

The features relative to the social positions do not appear in Brazilian beer ads. On the contrary to Korean beer ads, Brazilian beer ads use much more ludic features. In general, they do not use any code of endurance for reaching an upper ranked social position in the future to promote not only beer but also low priced everyday products.

⁷ In this paper, the ludic value is classified as a part of the utopic value in terms of Floch(1990).

3.3. Value conflict

The value shifting theory is also very useful to account for so called cultural shocks because they come from different interpretations of the same phenomenon. It is common knowledge that cultural differences are the main reasons that cause this kind of event. I believe that value shifting is the key to cope with such cultural shocks because it allows multiple valorizations of a phenomenon between different cultures.

As it is shown here, Koreans and Brazilians face different directions running for the utopic value. Koreans show more object-oriented propensity while Brazilians show more value-oriented propensity. Due to this difference of the two domains, Brazilian type beer ads focusing on instant gratification and pleasure cannot make sense in the Korean beer market. Inversely, Korean beer ads focusing on the desire for a change in social position could never make sense in the Brazilian beer market. The different orientation types between Korean and Brazilian contexts explain why they use different appealing strategies to persuade their customers. A Brazilian type ad will not succeed easily in Korea and vice-versa because of the consumption value collision.

This kind of collision or conflict is well known generally under the title of cultural shock. Everyone says that cultural difference causes cultural shock. But no one says the reason why. It is just because cultures are not the same. However, under the value shifting theory, it can be said why the same feature is differently valued not only between heterogeneous cultures but also in a homogenous culture.

Smoking, for example, is a universal phenomenon that is observed everywhere in the world. But Koreans, regardless of their age, do not smoke in front of people older than they are while Chinese and Japanese do so without any constraints. For Koreans, the event of smoking takes place in an object-oriented domain with symbolic images of vested right, which can be possibly extended to freedom, dominant power and social distinction.⁸ The shifted value of smoking in the Korean context makes the elder feel offended as if his prestige were disturbed if a younger individual smokes in front of him.

Chinese behave differently with respect to smoking. Contrary to Koreans, it is allowed even when in front of elders. I believe this is because of communism that has ruled them since the collapse of the Chinese Kingdom. Equality is theoretically a basic and principal concept laid in communism. Given this, hierarchal behaviors in smoking are not allowed in the Chinese construal domain where equality is one of the most wanted values. For Japanese, cigarettes are preferred items and they are not related to the elder's right.

Along with expansion of Korean companies in Brazil, the number of their Brazilian workers is growing proportionally. Many Korean companies in Brazil suffer unintended labor disputes. However, I believe they are not inevitable in most cases. The conflicts caused by the issue of overtime are a representative example. While overtime work is accepted in order to maximize productivity and to obtain a higher salary in Korean company culture, it is not accepted in Brazilian company culture. The fundamental cause of problems thus happens because of the collision of the consumption value.

⁸ Koreans consider cigarettes and smoking as exclusive property for the adult, especially for men. Cigarettes are not items of personal preference in Korean culture.

The maximization of profit and productivity is a priority to both workers and entrepreneurs in Korean company culture who are strongly goal-oriented. On the contrary, greater labor demands and goals do not belong to the utopian value in Brazilian company cultures that have a strong value-oriented character. If the company and individual keep an equal distance at the crossroad of choice, the choice is definitely dependent on individual propensity. The features of the utopian value are different from context to context according to whether the individual propensity is goal-oriented or value-oriented. The conflict between employers and workers that Korean companies have experienced in Brazil is caused because they seek different utopian indicators than one another, not just because of cultural misunderstanding.

From the above observations, it can be said that value shifting is the key not only to figure out what the utopic features are but also to avoid eventual cultural shocks between different cultures. In this respect, comparative analysis on advertisements of a same product in different contexts is very interesting because they show simultaneously how value shifting works in the course of valorizations of value features and how cultural shocks can be avoided. Cultural shocks are a result of incorrect valorizations of value features without considering the domain type. To avoid this incorrect valorization is the key to avoiding miscommunication and making persuasive ads across different cultures and contexts.

4. Conclusion

As far as consumption is concerned, we are about to face a major question on how persuade end users, namely consumers, because there is no discernible difference between them in quality and function in light of the basic requirements. Whatever the price of a product is, it does not matter because its consumers belong to the same group of purchasing power. Besides, to the eyes of most end users who are unfamiliar with the technologies involved, highlighting the technical points is pointless.

Most end users of the present day show a great tendency of not consuming products per se but something out of them instead. Actually, many products these days have additional functions irrelevantly to the ways they are supposed to be. These extra functions go sometimes to such an extent as to confuse the identity of the products. In this sense, it can be said that technology is something like a low-involvement product. It may be asked, however, whether end users make a buying decision just for the extra functions irrelevant to the essentials. In this paper, it has been argued that it is self-satisfactory consumption values introducing the 4 types of different consumption values of Floch (1990).

His model offers an absolute criterion for valorization of the features in question. But it should be said that those features do not always have the same values with respect to the valorization. A feature initially classified as practical can be considered as utopic. Or, a utopic feature can often be considered as having practical value. The value shifting theory explains the reason why the valorizations of such features are so varied.

According to the theory, value features in terms of Floch (1990) are pre-defined based on Plato's dualism. Hence, the values of those features are invariable everywhere. In the value shifting theory, this is what happens at the level of events. Value shifting takes place at the level of domain in which each event lies. All domains have its proper type of orientation:

object orientation or value orientation. Then features of every event should be valorized in association with the domain in which they appear. If there is a prerequisite or propensity to be goal-oriented, then most practical value features become those of the utopic value. The occurrence of value shifting and its necessity explains why the indicators of the consumption value are interpreted differently according to contexts. The value shifting theory implies further that the ultimate value is, whatever it may be, the *utopian value* at the given moment of choice because every decision is made for the maximum profit.

If construal domains are different, the same value feature has different valorization. This means that the most highly desired values are not the same from domain to domain. The value shifting theory not only opens the possibility for correct valorization of value features according to the domain types but also provides a clue in order to avoid so-called cultural shocks in various areas.

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