

Persuasion Path of Commercial Advertising: A Case Study of Watsons' Membership Points Ad in Thailand

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Abstract. In today's information-saturated media landscape, enhancing the persuasive power of commercial advertising has become a critical concern for both brand marketing and media studies. Taking Watsons Thailand's "Attract Attention-Enhance Understanding-Strengthen Memory-Drive Conversion" as an analytical case, this study explores the persuasive mechanisms and behavioural conversion pathways at work. Grounded in Media Influence Analysis theory, attitude function theory, self-monitoring theory, and reasoned action theory, this study aims to deconstruct the strategic logic behind commercial advertising strategies in information source construction, content design, audience adaptation, and channel selection. The investigation focuses on two core themes: how advertisements optimize message delivery through marketing keywords, and how they facilitate the transition from attitude to action. Findings reveal how advertisements cultivate audience trust in information sources and positive attitudes, then overcome cognitive barriers to efficiently convert belief into decision-making within short timeframes. Ultimately, this study establishes a complete persuasive chain in advertising: "Attract Attention-Enhance Understanding-Strengthen Memory-Drive Conversion."

Keywords: Commercial Advertising Persuasion, Media Influence Analysis (MLA), Attitude Function Theory, Self-Regulation Mechanism, Watsons Thailand

1. Introduction

In today's digital media landscape, "attention scarcity" and "weak persuasive power" issues loom over commercial advertising across industries. "A typical advertiser receives over 500 messages daily, yet only less than 5% of them get remembered when making decisions" [1]. However, as communication and promotional tools, commercial ads cannot be purely informational. This demands strategic techniques to embed brand messages in consumers' minds, sparking awareness while activating behaviors—driving actions toward desired outcomes or eliminating specific choices. Grounded in Media Influence Analysis (MLA) theory, Thai advertising is renowned for its creative approach, excelling at addressing consumer pain points and evoking emotional resonance [2]. A prime example is Watsons Thailand's "Membership Points Discount" campaign. Using a narrative-driven approach—"Insufficient budget? Abandon items? Transform them into attractive discounts"—the ad demonstrates how product discounts create positive impacts. Through multiple TV and social media placements targeting women aged 18-35, the campaign effectively leverages

brand value while demonstrating compelling media strategies aligned with real-world consumer psychology. These vivid and distinctive campaigns provide highly effective case studies for examining persuasive advertising strategies.

However, most existing studies have been conducted from a single theoretical perspective, which failed to fully demonstrate the complete operational process from information transmission to behavioral outcomes. Against this backdrop, this paper selects Watsons Thailand's advertising as a case study. By applying the case analysis method and integrating four main theories, it raises two key questions: (1) How does advertising utilize multi-theoretical frameworks to optimize designs across information sources, content, audiences, and distribution channels? (2) How can multiple theories effectively transform audience conviction into purchasing behavior?

Theoretical significance lies in enriching the achievements of "theoretical tools + strategic pathways"; Practically, it provides recommendations for brand advertising creation, maximizing the commercial value and user experience of advertisements.

2. Theoretical foundations and core conceptual definitions

This study establishes a comprehensive theoretical framework to analyze the persuasive pathways in commercial advertising influenced by multiple psychological mechanisms. By integrating Media Influence (MLA) theory, Attitude Function Theory, Self-Regulation Theory, and Reasoned Action Theory, it constructs four core mechanisms: business marketing psychology, cognitive persuasion psychology, social demand psychology, and belief judgment psychology.

MLA theory comprises four key components: the information source, the content, the receiver, and the channel (or medium). It provides a methodological framework for analysing advertising effectiveness. Attitude Function Theory examines the formation of attitudes through four dimensions—knowledge function, utilitarian function, value expression function, and self-defense function [3].

Self-Regulation Theory describes how individuals adjust behaviors based on explicit social norms [4]. The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that behaviour is driven by intention, which is itself influenced by attitudes and subjective norms. An individual's attitude towards a behaviour is based on their belief about the outcome of that behaviour and the evaluation of that outcome. Based on this theory, professional competence and reliability are measured through trustworthiness, while self-efficacy reflects the audience's ability to perform point redemption actions.

The derivation of conclusions refers to the audience's judgment regarding potential new situations based on past experiences and environmental information. Perceived severity indicates whether individuals recognize that unused points may lead to adverse consequences.

These theoretical components collectively form a collaborative analytical system: The MLA Theory provides structural support for communication, the Attitude Function Theory explains psychological acceptance processes, and the Theory of Reasoned Action outlines behavioral transformation mechanisms.

3. Analysis of Thai Watsons advertising elements based on MLA theory

3.1. Design logic of information sources and content

In the complex network of information dissemination, advertising as a powerful communication tool is significantly influenced by the credibility of its source and the logical design of content [5]. The inherent credibility and appeal of the information source, along with the logical coherence and memorable elements of the content itself, directly determine whether advertisements can break

through audience psychological barriers and achieve their communication objectives. This campaign employs dual optimization strategies: character designs that resonate with target audiences and dramatized storytelling approaches to enhance both the source material and content delivery.

From the perspective of information source design, the advertisement adopts a dual-source strategy combining "brand + role" to enhance credibility and appeal. As a leading cosmetics retailer, Watsons has cultivated a reputation for professionalism and reliability through years of market experience. Its expert approach to membership management and consumer demand analysis effectively communicates professional expertise to audiences. The ad employs a couple actor pair whose profile closely matches the target demographic, creating stronger audience immersion. Throughout this process, the advertisement conveys authentic emotions without overt persuasive intent, thereby significantly boosting the credibility of the information source. This further enhances the trustworthiness of the information source. It helps prevent audiences from developing resistance due to overly strong persuasive intentions.

From the perspective of information content, the advertisement employs a "conflict-resolution" dramatic narrative approach. It utilizes established reasoning and repetition to enhance the ad's comprehensibility and memorability. The conclusion derivation (Conclusion-drawing) forms a complete chain consisting of "problem emergence-negative consequences-solution-positive outcome," embodying the principle that "using points equals solving problems + gaining benefits." This tightly interconnected logical chain naturally leads viewers to their conclusions. This fully aligns with MLA theory's requirement that "information content should be easily understandable."

In terms of information repetition, advertisements employ dual approaches: visual symbol repetition and core message repetition to enhance memorability. Visually, the contrast between "beautiful" and "ugly" symbols serves as a crucial comparison that captures attention while evoking negative emotions. These symbolic impressions are then imprinted in the audience's mind through "point accumulation" and image associations. For verbal communication, "membership points" serve as cognitive anchors. Different characters repeatedly emphasize the "membership points" redeeming cash value across various scenarios from multiple perspectives. The inclusion of diverse characters and contexts prevents monotony caused by singular repetition, while repeated exposure effectively stores information into memory.

3.2. Recipient adaptation strategies and channel selection tactics

Moreover, MLA theory posits that effective persuasion requires "the adaptation of receiver characteristics and information" coupled with "the matching of communication channels and scenes" [6]. This advertisement exemplifies this principle by meticulously aligning its content strategy with audience needs to maximize communication efficiency.

The Recipient Adaptation strategy employs two distinct approaches: targeting "issue engagement" and "gender differences" as key dimensions to identify characteristic traits of primary target demographics. For engagement-focused audiences, advertisements prioritize two high-engagement topics: "shopping incentives" and "appearance management". The former aligns with consumers' value-for-money considerations, while the latter resonates particularly with beauty-conscious women aged 18-35 [7]. Both topics demonstrate strong consumer engagement. For price-sensitive audiences, systematic processing is adopted to rationally evaluate "points redemption effectiveness". For image-conscious audiences, heuristic processing is utilized. While the implementation methods differ, both strategies ultimately foster recognition of points redemption's practical value.

From the perspective of gender difference, advertising appeals to both core female and potential male audiences. For female users, the campaign reinforces the platform's "points-to-image management" conversion logic during usage. For male users, we employed visuals like "Guys Caring About Girls' Emotions" to demonstrate how "points earned by guys can enhance girls' shopping experience." This dual-gender approach not only retains primary female users but also expands market penetration through multi-angle engagement, effectively implementing what channel integration theorists call "complementary media targeting" [8].

In channel selection, the strategy employs "multi-channel collaborative deployment" to leverage the strengths of different platforms for product promotion. The approach emphasizes two key principles: "ease of understanding" and "proactive engagement". To enhance clarity, advertisements predominantly utilize video formats with narrative designs adaptable to various platforms. Whether on short video platforms, long-form video platforms, or TV channels, the campaign adopts an expression style combining "lifestyle scenarios + simple dialogues + intuitive visuals". This visual approach effectively communicates product value propositions, ensuring efficient market penetration through audience-friendly communication.

From the perspective of active channel engagement, "strong plot twists" in advertisements can stimulate audience initiative. As Chen notes, narrative surprises in digital advertising can significantly enhance viewer involvement and emotional connection by "breaking expected patterns while maintaining brand relevance" [9]. In short video ads featuring such twists, viewers are not only influenced by the ad itself but also captivated by the brand's clever marketing setups within the narrative. The "abandoning products for aesthetic appeal" storyline seamlessly transitions to the next scene—demonstrating "discount policies" with contextual explanations. This approach effectively generates a sense of novelty, encouraging audiences to actively share the content. Consequently, a viral effect emerges through the chain of "brand promotion → audience sharing → secondary dissemination." Moreover, instead of adding aggressive promotional messages at the end, the ad concludes with a positive value proposition: "Points system makes every purchase effortless" —a channel strategy combining passive placement with active diffusion that significantly expands brand reach and delivery efficiency.

4. Analysis of advertising's attitude activation and behavioral transformation mechanisms

4.1. The role of collaborative attitude function and self-regulation mechanisms

Attitude activation establishes the cognitive and emotional foundations required for audiences to develop and maintain attitudes. From a knowledge perspective, advertisements employ concrete "point redemption" scenarios that help consumers establish decision-making logic like "how to shop with limited budget," transforming the vague notion of "points being useful" into a clear understanding that "points can be used as cash." Practically, ads use dual approaches: "point redemption saves money (rewards)" and "not using points leads to ugliness (punishment)," enabling consumers to judge whether "using points benefits them." Value-wise, ads emphasize "using points buys goods and maintains beauty," linking "point usage" with values of "wisdom and self-love" to achieve the effect where audiences find self-identity through "point usage." From a self-defense perspective, point redemption alleviates the shame caused by budget constraints and inability to shop, preventing improper attribution to guilt [10].

Through the influence of self-monitoring mechanisms, attitudes can be transformed into behavioral intentions. The advertising slogans "Store staff recommend using points" and "Lovers complete deductions" subtly convey social signals like "using points is a common choice," making

high-self-monitoring individuals more susceptible to influence and prone to herd mentality, such as the current trend of "using points." Moreover, the simple and easy-to-implement process in these ads (requiring only membership verification) makes people feel that "using points has low barriers," gradually enhancing self-efficacy— "I can use points too." Additionally, seeing the ad immediately helps users imagine how convenient it will be to use points for deductions in daily life, providing psychological preparation and confidence for subsequent behavioral conversion.

4.2. From the perspective of the theory of reasoned action, this demonstrates the "attitude-intention-behavior" conversion pathway

The theory of Reasoned Action holds that human behavior is based on certain intentions, which are determined by attitudes and subjective norms. This advertisement can optimize attitudes and subjective norms, break the constraints of the situation, and thus form a closed loop of "attitude-intention-behavior."

From an attitude perspective, the product's expectation of "using points = maintaining beauty + cost savings" positively influences consumer attitudes toward points systems. By showcasing scenarios like women maintaining their beauty routines with points and couples making purchases without compromising each other's needs during checkout, it connects "point usage" with "positive shopping experiences". This approach ultimately leads consumers to conclude that "using points for purchases is value-for-money". Furthermore, by avoiding complex rules (no mention of redemption thresholds or expiration dates), the message effectively prevents audiences from developing negative perceptions about high usage barriers or prolonged point expiration periods.

From a subjective perspective, the combination of "professional staff recommendations + natural usage by couples" forms a social norm that supports the use of points. The "professional staff recommendations" represent industry-level norms, while the "natural usage by couples" reflects mass-level norms. These two aspects respectively embody "professionals' expectations for point usage" and "consumer groups' expectations for point utilization," collectively conveying the message that "using points is reasonable and widely accepted." This creates a psychological effect where people feel compelled to follow others' expectations.

At the situational level, advertisements lower behavioral barriers through "user-friendly operations" and "contextual relevance". When using loyalty points, users simply need to "show their membership status" without additional steps. The shopping scenarios mirror those where audiences frequently purchase, making "point usage cost-free". This perception leads consumers to believe "using points incurs no extra expenses", thus creating a smoother conversion chain: "recognizing points value (attitude) → wanting to use points (intention) → actually using points (behavior)".

5. Conclusion

This study examines Watsons Thailand's membership points advertisement as a case study, analyzing its persuasive pathway through the integrated lens of media theory and attitude function. The research demonstrates that the advertisement successfully establishes a complete communication chain of "attraction-understanding-memory-conversion" by employing a dual-source strategy that enhances information credibility through brand authority and relatable role models. The dramatic narrative structure employing "conflict-resolution" mode and strategic message repetition significantly improves information comprehension and retention among target audiences. Furthermore, the campaign effectively activates self-monitoring mechanisms by establishing social norms that characterize points usage as both wise and socially approved, thereby triggering herd

mentality among consumers with high social awareness. The advertisement also successfully enhances self-efficacy and response efficacy by demonstrating the simplicity and benefits of point redemption through realistic shopping scenarios, while simultaneously reducing behavioral implementation barriers by emphasizing user-friendly operations. These multidimensional strategies work synergistically to facilitate the crucial transition from positive attitude formation to concrete behavioral intention, ultimately achieving strong alignment between audience attitudes and actual purchasing behaviors. The case provides valuable insights for brands seeking to optimize advertising effectiveness in saturated media environments through theoretically-grounded, psychologically-aware communication strategies that address both cognitive and behavioral dimensions of consumer decision-making. Overall, the design of advertisements should not only focus on building the credibility of information, but also on inspiring emotional resonance among the audience. Behavioral guidance needs to balance the influence of social norms and personal efficacy perception. The selection of communication channels should aim to achieve scene adaptation and maximize communication efficiency. This systematic approach has a diverse theoretical framework. Can provide actionable implementation paths and strategic blueprints for contemporary marketing communication.

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