

Rethinking Advertising Skepticism in China after West

RÉFLÉCHIR L'EFFET DE SCEPTICISME FACE A LA PUBLICITÉ SCEPTICISME EN CHINE APRÈS LES OCCIDENTAUX

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Abstract: The present article reviews skepticism on the instrument of advertising in China which emphasizes that advertising in its existing institution doesn't fit in the Chinese context. The literature reveals that consumer perceives the meaning of controversial, deceitful and waste of resources of advertising practice. It is reason of consumption of luxurious goods and increases the values of advertised item. Consumerism, consumer culture, sexual imagery, materialism and social differences are the conducive elements by advertisers to exploit for their utmost desire of maximization of profits. The review indicates that the regulation/code of conduct of advertising in the Western style is not a panacea. The elucidation of advertising as phenomena can arguably be addressed in the indigenous socio-political and cultural setting. In post-socialist China, Confucius ideals recommended as cultural, political, social and economic manifestation for authorities. It is suggested that institutionalization of advertising in accordance to Confucius' "li", "ren" and "xiaokang" serve the objectives of harmony, fair balance between economic growth and development and moreover issues concerning to the ecology.

Key Words: Advertising scepticism; Advertising regulation; China; Confucius norms; Consumerism; Material culture

Résumé: Le présent article suggère des commentaires de l'effet de scepticisme sur l'instrument de la publicité en Chine, lequel souligne que la publicité dans son institution existante ne rentre pas parfaitement dans le contexte chinois. La littérature montre que le consommateur perçoit le sens de la controverse, fourbe et le gaspillage des ressources de la pratique de la publicité. C'est la raison de la consommation de biens de luxe et augmente les valeurs de l'annonce. Société de consommation, la culture de consommation, de l'imagerie sexuelle, le matérialisme et les différences sociales sont les

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*Received 8 January 2011; accepted 18 February 2011

éléments conductifs par les annonceurs d'exploiter pour leur plus grand désir de maximisation des profits. L'examen indique que le règlement / code de conduite de la publicité dans le style Occidental n'est pas une panacée. L'élucidation de la publicité en tant que phénomènes peut sans doute être abordée dans le contexte socio-politique et culturelle de milieu indigène. En post-socialiste de la Chine, les idéaux de Confucius ont recommandé que les manifestations culturelles, politiques, sociales et économiques pour les autorités. Il est suggéré que l'institutionnalisation de la publicité conformément selon le Confucius "li", "ren" et "xiaokang" servent les objectifs de l'harmonie, le juste équilibre entre la croissance économique et le développement et d'ailleurs les questions relatives à l'écologie.

Mots clés: L'effet de scepticisme de la publicité; Réglementation de la publicité; La Chine; Les normes de Confucius; Le consumérisme; La culture matérielle

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, many notions are associated with the word 'advertising'. It varies from capitalistic identity to consumerism and 'cultural production of economic value' to 'manipulation of simulated context'. These identities are inculcated into the grassroots level of our thought process. Which means we have to consume at every level of our daily life be it is a cultural practice or a religious ritual. The pure feelings e.g. love and grief are also symbolisms (abstract) into the context of commodities. The size of market and the buying power are mainly under consideration of the advertisers. The prime objective of whole activity of advertising is to manipulate demands and maximize the utility of the goods and services. This desire of advertisers, producers, and advertising agencies sometimes overwhelmingly cross the cultural barriers of the society and brings influx of sexual imagery, cultural taboos and violence into societies. The rising questions at the instrument of advertising by society portray other side of the picture through putting forward the question of social responsibility, skepticism and consumerism with the meaning of advertising.

Skepticism in relation to advertising is not a recent phenomenon. During the times of great depression in the Europe and America (1930), advertising came under the public's, political and scholarly scrutiny and it coined a term '*consumer movement*' (Calfee and Ringold, 1994). It was the time when the Western societies were highly skeptic of the truthfulness of the advertising. Intensive skepticism on advertising by society made regulatory authorities conscious about the ethical businesses and corporate practices. Major regulatory authorities e.g. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Better Business Bureau (BBB) and the like were constituted. The objectives of formation of these institutions were promotion of truth through advertising, these models of ethical practices were borrowed from '*printers ink version*' (Tedlow, 1981).

However, this part of the world where China is situated, the first wave of social reform began through the adoption of Western model of social development in 1906 as the result of nationalist movement when the late Qing dynasty established post and telecommunication department in Beijing. Foreign financial control of transport and telecommunication observed resistance in the following warlords, Kuomintang, Mao periods as Chinese policy for the skepticism on capitalistic methods (Comor 1994:194).

The second wave of criticism on advertising began in 1950 which was led by the Economist John Kenneth Galbraith. His works explains that it is assertive role of corporations on manoeuvring of marketing power by persuading consumers through tactical advertising, disapproving the consumerism at the operating cost of societal expenses which could be utilized for the common good of the society and could be valuable for the cyclical process of economic growth (Kesting, 2010). The scholars (Backman 1968; Resnik and Stern 1977; Grossman and Shapiro 1984) take the counter criticism position on advertising against worsened and wasteful by the Galbraith. In the same era, the criticisms on advertising by consumer movement urged the authorities of PRC to initiate the counter measure (legalization and strong hold) against the diffusion of capitalistic methods which chiefly means advertising in ideological socialist society. Wang (2008:8) argues that during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) in China, advertising came to sudden halt and in post reforms periods it gradually attempted to reinstate the status in Chinese society. However, the debate over advertising skepticism and advertising as worsened or wasteful arguably

addressed by Stigler (1961) when he labels advertising with the economic of information (EOI). The article presents some rationale on political economy, consumer, marketing and advertising research, explains that products and services include some additional price of information which linked with searching cost and if consumer add searching cost in utility of certain item then cost will be increased from the items that are being advertised. Similar notion considered by Federal trade Commission (FTC) in U.S. when they began regulating advertising on their untruthfulness. FTC stands on the position that markets reward those brands or products that are deceptive in the form of their rejection (Ford, Smith et al., 1990).

Den Xiaoping gave a turning point to Chinese economy through the reforms in 1976 without breaking against any system through arguing that 'It *does not matter what color a cat is ,as long as it hunts mice*'. The ultimate objective of reforms is the prosperity and development in PRC through which government could reduce the poverty in the country. It was also a window for marketing instruments specifically for advertising which was connotation as 'capitalistic evil' in China during the Cultural Revolution. After 80s, many global, multinational companies (MNCs) and corporations setup their business and to following them many other Western advertising agencies entered China. It deemed that opening up of Chinese corporate communication practices similar to Western, in 1983, urged Chinese advertising association (CAA) to establish. . The enforcement regarding untruthful or deceitful advertising was over looked by the regulatory authorities until 90s. Gao (2007) argues that the reason of such delay was '*a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics*'. It is obvious in socialist structure of governance that government is ultimate/sole moderator of people's rights through the law enforcement and implementation in the case when market is being maneuver through excessive or untruthful advertising.

Since the emergence of advertising, it is the interest of research among the social Scientists in East and West to figure out instrument of advertising, public beliefs about the advertising. Pollay and Mittal (1993) argue that credibility and attitude towards advertising remained pivotal to research during the entire period rather than specific product advertising or advertising content.

Presented review article attempts to sketch out the advertising belief considering critical view on advertising in China after West.

2. CONTROVERSIAL ADVERTISING

Advertising effects on society have always been the point of debate among communication academicians. Products which advertised having association with many context. These contexts refer symbolic and cultural meaning of advertising. It is varied from intensive effects to ethics within the discipline. Scholars categorize the research in to "controversial advertising" which could be studied in "obnoxious", "socially sensitive products" decent products", "acceptable advertising", and "advertising ethics". (Fahy, Smart et al., 1995; Wilson and West 1981). Advertising causes behavioral stimulus to a consumer. The context of original usage of the product exaggerated and added psychological objects in the utility of advertised product. Shavitt, Lowrey et al. (1992) commented that advertising reports positive perception about product information but in reality presented product information is always controversial. It is an attitude of consumer which plays important function in the single and multiple function of utility of products. It is distinct in position portrayal to '*persuasive message selection*' and varied from personal satisfaction to social character (Shavitt, Lowrey et al., 1992). However, utilitarian of advertised items refer in ads as young, active, creative and prosper whereas contrast to it is ignorant, lazy and orthodox. Pollay and Mittal (1993) measured the "value corruption" in advertising and evaluated that advertising changes the values of youth, promotes materialism and dreadful possessions in society, makes people to buy goods for show-off and persuades people to live in the illusion. The cultural objects find conflict to the meaning of advertising when it works against the essence of the set culture of the society.

The concept of "promotes undesirable" pointed out by Pollay and Mittal (1993) that there are intense sexual meanings and imagery in advertising. The advocates of the '*sexualization of culture*' are not in support that the notion of sexual imagery is part of Western culture but associates with advertising in different connotations and portrayals e.g. Gill (2009) refers it '*democratization of desire operating in visual culture*'. It is argued that '*democratization of desire*' is the manufacturing of consumer consent and '*visual culture*' refers the mediated culture specifically it could mention as advertising.

It is common phenomenon that advertising persuades consumer through manipulation of their attitude in certain fashion e.g. rejection of consumer's own opinion and misrepresentation of consumer satisfaction. Pollay and Mittal (1993) revealed '*falsity and misleading*' mentioning that in general advertising is misleading and deceives the intelligence of average consumer. However, the correlation could find between the self esteem and advertising skepticism. Prendergast, Liu et al. (2009) figure out the credibility of advertising in Hong Kong (democratically administered region and more open capitalistic methods compare to mainland) and finds that advertising lacks credibility in general whereas self esteem and advertising skepticism are significant in relation.

It is argued that advertisers employed the propaganda techniques for the persuasion of potential consumers which negate the notion of '*democratization of desire*'.

Wilson and West (1981); Jensen and Collins (2008) asserted "unmentionables" as those goods, ideas and services that are for the motive of delicacy, politeness, ethics and having opposite reaction of bad taste, hatred and anger when it is advertised or publically manifested. They mention the examples of goods as "personal hygiene, birth control, warfare, and drugs for terminal illness", ideas as "political ideas, palliative care, unconventional sexual practice, racial/religious prejudice and terrorism", services as "abortion, sterilization, VD, mental illness, funeral directors, and artificial insemination". However, Rehman and Brooks (1987) & Waller (1999) discuss the controversial products focusing on feminine hygiene, they considered "undergarments, alcohol, pregnancy tests, contraceptives, medications, and VD services" in the controversial product category of advertising.

Jones and Reid (2010) finds in the observation of the Australian alcohol televised advertisements that sexual imagery through portrayal of '*raunchy culture*' presents the female as stereotype through their exhibition of sexual appeals and surprisingly the likeliness is significant among female compared to male but considerable ration of consumers are offended by such type of portrayals. The significant relationship exists between religious intensity and controversial advertising. De Run, Butt et al. (2010) is referring his findings on controversial products and their advertisements to Malaysian Muslims. He finds that difference among the consumers' attitude is due to advertising as compared to product itself, the degree of controversial advertisement is proportional to the degree of offensiveness and religiosity. Similarly, in the mainland China the significance of offensiveness of controversial advertisement is distinct among different age groups. Fam, Waller et al. (2008) label it generation R(ed) (over 57 years), generation X (34-56 years) and generation Y (15-21 years) and finds that generation R is more offended to advertising compared to generation Y in the case of stereotype (sex and gender related products) of advertising and their presentations, whereas generation Y offended from the advertising of social and political groups. She argues that '*generational cohorts*' consider significant which influences the attitude of offensiveness in advertising whereas the consumer cultural factors and strategy of advertising can't be ignored. However, the Chinese consumers are learned enough in responding to controversial products which stirs up their negative perception about the products and their advertisements, moreover when global or international corporation advertise such products which is perceived as controversial products produce negative image and bad publicity of corporation.

3. ADVERTISING CONTENT AND CONSUMERS

Advertising content misdirect consumer specially when consumer required specific technical or expert opinion on the verification of the provided information. Hoek and Maubach (2005) found that the information provided through direct to consumer advertisements (DTCA) of prescription medicine exposes the concern of consumers, doctors, regulators and interest groups. The development of drug ads should be according to the guidelines of policy makers regarding format, content and style. Hoek and Maubach (2005) point out that public policy could not reduce the potential harm of DTCA, but only to unsanctioned DTCA. This notion is not only associates with the DTCA but also with the technical, hi-tech, scientific and nutrition related products too which could hardly be verified by consumer in a general setting. Advertising content refers text and visual. Visual dominate in the technical, scientific, medical and nutrition related ads over the typographic elements. The uses of microscopic visuals are common in ads for testimony of potential buyers, it is almost impossible for consumer to observe it through naked eye. McQuarrie and Mick (1999) argue that visual content of the advertisement culturally inserted and considered important and meaningful by practitioners of corporate communication but observations of interpretative analysis of four magazines

reveal that it perceived in abstract forms 'rhyme, antithesis, metaphor, and pun' distinct elements 'iconic, indexical, and symbolic' and contrast meaning about the product 'sophistication, beauty, safety, fun'. The content of ads is wrapped in the socio-cultural characteristics of the society with having lots of meanings for the society and individual in particular. Such advertisements are having potentially persuasive in nature. McQuarrie and Mick (1999) asserted that common 'rhetorical and semiotic systems' of visuals and text within potential consumer and advertiser is significant for intensive reception of the message. In the case of Hi-Tec and technology brands e.g. Cars, when producer (advertiser) ignore the cultural meaning of their ads in the material culture, consumer ignores the ads of such brands (McCabe and de Waal Malefyt, 2010).

The intensity of effectiveness of ad content varies from the medium which used for the transmission of the message e.g. radio, TV, film, billboard, web [...].The web based ads are common in practice in PRC for the tremendous growth of internet industry. There are as many as 162 million users ,second after U.S; the revenue of internet ads was \$1.3billion in 2008, online frauds, deceptive and misleading ads on internet are a challenge for the authorities (Wang and Sun, 2010). Advertisers used internet medium to invoke of their brands. Wang and Sun (2010) finds online ad sphere about U.S, Romania and China that Chinese respondents reflect least trust toward online ads compared to U.S. and Romanian counterparts because of socio-cultural characteristics and less credible ad content available in online ads. The ad content could be divided into primary and secondary group, it is arguably consists of core information about product and entertainment. Sun, Lim et al. (2010) studied these two factors in the perspective of gender in the web based ads and finds that informative behavior is significant among male respondents compare to female, the female respondents are more responsive to the entertainment.

Advertising not only affects the society but it also has negative effects on children. The symbolic meaning that associate advertisers to the childhood used in different ways, as it is varied from product to product: delicateness or safety in the advertisements of cars, compassion and confidence in the services advertisements, cleaning and smoothness in bath products, other than symbolic meanings of childhood usually devise by advertising formats like calm, friendliness, imagination, naturalistic, genuineness (Martínez, Prieto et al., 2006). Advertising and its effects on the behavior of children have widely been studied by scholars. Martínez, Prieto et al. (2006) observed the behavioral effects and discovered that children adopt the violent behavior from television advertisement and he emphasized to take urgent measures against this kind of advertisements. Many global corporations are focusing on children as their potential buyers of the future e.g. P&G using cartoon story promotional campaigns of their bath soap brand *safeguard* and persuade them if they do not clean their hands with *Safeguard* their health will be at risk and inferring that they can't get good score in their exam. Global corporations are targeting to children in the emerging markets in India and China for their long term future goals in these countries.

China's one child policy attracts brands related to children and many multinational companies are pouring money in this big segment of the market, as long as Chinese economy is booming day by day and many potential buyers spending to their children.

Valero (2009) argues that Chinese children are 68% of their parents and their spending rate is highest in the world whereas there are least advertising (self) regulations for children ads. Gray (2005) points out that advertising industry is facing many debates on obesity and excessive consumerism towards children in the European Union. He recommends that self-regulation is the best way for advertisers to demonstrate their respective responsibilities. The related industries carry on self-regulation from different aspects of advertisers, agencies and media. However, they should write and sign a code of advertising practice, and create a self-regulated organization to oblige the related industries in observing crucial measures to practice their conduct and self-regulation.

Pointing out the economic harms of advertising, Foley (1999) discussed misleading advertising that motivates consumer lifestyle, it increases the uncontrolled consumption influenced by advertising content. However, to implement the absolute truth in advertising is impossible, advertising is usually used as a device of cheating masses for their money and considered as deceiving, many advertising tactics such as comparative advertising, figures, testimonials, and "puffery" are also considered illegal because they are likely to potentially deceive consumer Gao, (2007).

It is argued that lack of regulations on misleading ads furnish sufficient room to potential harm to society as Banerjee (2010) asserted that Indian courts rejected the precedents of English courts and

emphasize on consumer protection from misleading statements (contents) and criticized it as commercially dishonest practice.

4. CONSUMERISM IN CHINA

The notion of consumerism or consumer culture emerged from West during the 17th and 18th century and widely used during 20th century from dominance of productions view through industrial revolution(Sassatelli 2007: 13-14). Consumerism stemmed from West and spread all over the world. Consumerism and capitalism are closely associated. It refers to the mass consumption resultant to the advertising stimuli. Western corporations trigger psychological and cultural messages that cause the mass consumption of their goods and services. Packard (1963:12) points out that consumerism combined with the excessive materialism. The industrialized West comprehended in nineteenth century that development couldn't be attained without implementing free market economy which is necessary for production and consumption. Abela (2006) argues that it is not true that the consumerism is linked with the well being of society, modern marketing methods which also include advertising stimulate consumption, it is difficult to minimize the consumerism in the presence of modern marketing methods. The consumption of luxurious items cumulates capital which strengthens capitalism. Cyclical process of production, massive demand and consumption are the gadgets of capitalistic methods. Sombart (1967) cited by Sassatelli (2007:21) pointed out that luxurious desires have the potential to create demand for precious items linked with the free market of economy in the presence of credit provided services. Hence, these precious items having had a potential of new capitalistic formulation, the ingredient of this formulation are 'material culture', 'superior class', the intention of buying' beyond necessary' are presented within commerce, industry and agriculture. Moreover, these ingredients spread across material (production & consumption) and culture (spread from proletariat to nobility and super bourgeoisie in every dimension of society).

Many exiting phenomena of the contemporary world related to social class which segmentize societies into groups of income and consumption, develop and developing, big markets and small, environment and eco-life disasters are products of free market economy. However, Industrial countries realized that they need to sustain their development and have to protect their environment and should consider the issues related to consumerism and culture which is causing social disorder e.g. obesity, luxurious spending under the name of fashion, sexuality, gay and lesbianism. These countries are looking forward to new markets for their production units where they necessarily produce and instigate society for consumption. The emerging markets are the new home land of dirty factories of the industrialized countries, among those China is one.

China is the most populous consumer market but right from the beginning the governments of China took effective initiatives against the capitalistic pursuits. However in China after 1949, advertising was heavily criticized specifically during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 76) – considered as “Capitalistic consumption and a token of advanced capitalistic culture” (Hong 1994), whereas Swanson (1990) points out that advertising was recognized as “Capitalistic evil” in China. Lu (2010) argues that consumerism is the currency in West for the existence of the capitalism which dominantly affected the spheres of 'institution construction' and social life, quest for accumulation of wealth is the core object of people's life. Similarly, Chinese are experiencing such pursuits after reforms, and institutionalizing modern prosperity right, considering consumerist standard of values. It is demise of ecology and environment when materialistic pursuits become key elements of the societies where rising production, rising consumption and rising waste indicators alarming for future human's protection on the planet. Lu (2010) presents a distinct view refers as 'revolution of popularization and wide acceptance of ecological values, the ecological view should be propagated through the advent of training and education in spite of advertising, and firms should audit at their 'environment and ecological degradation'. The phenomenon of consumerism exists between two constructs, one capitalistic pursuits or materialism and second global culture. However, advertising builds a bridge between these two and furnish ground for the consumerism Figure 1.

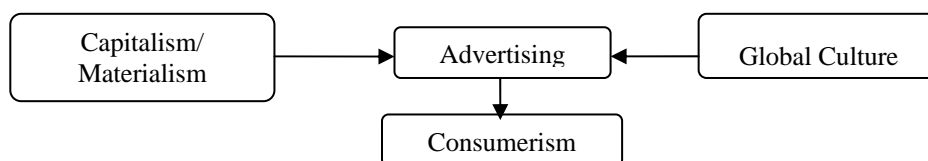


Figure 1: constructs of advertising

There is a wide difference in the intention and perception of advertiser, agency (creator) and consumer, wide misunderstanding exists on the portrayal of global culture viewing that consumer is highly receptive of it (Zhou and Belk, 2004). He finds in his analysis of reader response-approach on fashionable Chinese respondents through local and global print and television advertisements that Chinese respondents have two distinct views: one, they want to consume luxurious fashionable as status symbol, on the other hand, they are attached with nationalistic and local values, the contrary finding presents a view of global ads and their effect on local cultures.

Consumerism in China is immense, many aspects of economical, social, moral as well as personal usefulness emerged, and consumerism changed the outlook of rural China to cosmopolitan China. This rural and cosmopolitan China presents different level of consumption ranging from daily life to luxurious symbols, 'body politics' to social status, and gender to beauty glimpses. Yang (2011) argues on rising discourse on women portrayal in China between loving and matures; presenting the context of those working class mature aged ladies look young through consumption of fashion, cosmetic surgery and health care products they portray superlative vital consumerism that benefit from beauty, sexuality and individuality. These identify and extend desire of cosmetics and beauty gadgets in cosmetic economy of China and ensure the consumer capitalism.

Hua (2010) argues on the phenomena of cosmetic surgery and related resistance in China that distress, anger, anxiety personified the Chinese women's bodies in emerging new transition of China, She terms it as 'new type of Cultural Opium' for Chinese society presented through Western pretty face on advertising and controlled by capitalistic market through corporate instruments as 'active agent', empowering itself through 'personal body politics'. However, the notion of 'body politics' is not only associated with feminine but also with masculine portrayals in media and advertising. Xu, Mellor et al. (2010) observed in his study on 517 adolescents among 219 male and 298 female. He finds that male body dissatisfaction results of different socio-cultural sources, peer groups and they have pressure to increase their muscles and weight whereas female reported greater pressure from peer, media, adult relatives and colleagues compare to their counterparts for their outlook. Yang (2011) comprehends that this notion of beauty politics magnifies the various roles of feminine in their demands of body, beauty and age in developing consumerist society of China which presents a new form of gender exploitation. This rising scale of demand is multiplying the consumer capitalism in China and it needs to launch a 'bio-political strategy' to control 'women and their bodies' to be trapped by the consumerist instruments and need to direct them toward Mao's poetic phrase 'women be hold half of the sky' considering them as the key players of the nation building through their role in political and economic objectives in post-socialist China. Hence, consumerism in China adapted a new form which intriguing for infinite items for consumption that comes back to back.

5. ADVERTISING REGULATIONS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CHINA

Chinese government is vigilant to harmful effects of advertising on Chinese society and government imposes regulations at advertising contents. Government wants to accelerate market forces in smoother way which could contribute to gross domestic production (GDP), sometimes authorities ignore certain vigilance on the market. Gao (2007) reveals in her study of Chinese advertising regulations that Chinese economy is growing in the situation of market mechanisms, although their political system contains authoritarian socialism, Chinese advertising system is dependent on regulations, Self-regulation or social responsibility is secondary and is suppressed in its role. The lack of independent trade and consumer organizations and negligible public participation in process of implementation affect the essence of advertising regulations. Public vigilance can assure strong regulation and assertive implementation, although harmful products are legally allowed to advertise but they find other means for their advertising and promotional activities. Similarly, Taylor and Raymond (2000) examine the three harmful product categories; cigarettes, alcohol, pharmaceutical and personal care products on advertising restriction in four major East Asian markets. They found that albeit cigarette advertising is banned in China yet cigarette advertisers practice promotional activities through event management and sports sponsorships as well as for their national airlines. Whereas alcohol advertisements are generally legal in China, Pharmaceutical products are allowed to be advertised after the approval of advertising content by the concerned authorities.

Chinese advertising law evolved in the political and economic context during 1982, 1987 and 1994 following provisional regulations and advertising law which successfully attracted Western advertising agencies and sophisticated industries related to advertising (Gao, 2007). The existing Chinese law of advertising couldn't furnish adequate advancement related to the emerging technology e.g. new media and global web, inappropriate ad practices of advertiser and marketers that break the trust of consumer on market (Wang and Sun, 2010).

Western Advertising practices having least acceptance by the Chinese society and their legal and socially responsible application frame work on advertising couldn't adequately correspond in the scenario of China. In the liberal and democratic societies, media and related practices are controlled through the self regulation (social responsibility), society and media are the watch dogs of mal practices of corporations. In a case when products incur potential harm to consumer or environment e.g. snow milk, Johnson Vitamin tablets, BP Crude oil leakage, Shell Brant Spur Crisis, the individuals knock at the door of courts. Although, Western advertisers are advocate of self-regulation or social responsibility yet it couldn't function properly. Jones and Reid, (2010) referring to alcohol advertisements in Australia that consumers are not satisfied from the social responsible or self-regulation system and they propose to the policy maker to introduce a certain code of advertising regulation system. Rotfeld (2002) views that social service advertising may be effective to change social and consumer behavior, advertising is not too efficient to be a solution of some social problems and trust in advertising itself becomes part of the problem. Foley (1999) lists benefits and harms caused by advertising from economic, political, cultural and religious aspects; he identifies moral principles for advertising, emphasizing truthfulness, the dignity of human beings and social responsibility. Western type of social responsibility is not appropriate to the context of Chinese society, authorities controls the misleading and fraudulent ads through their creation, elucidation, immoral/cheating, confirmation, and counteractive measures, these five corrective measures are for implication of multinational or global corporations in China (Gao, 2008). However, Fam, Waller et al. (2008) argues that Chinese advertising market is developed unlike other international markets specifically when they go for gender/sex-related products, Chinese consumers are unlikely to accept the advertising of those product which are manifesting cultural conflict to the host society. Before pouring their money in the big market of China, foreign corporations should spend their resources to understand the Chinese-socio cultural characteristics of market.

Advertising law of China 1994 is not appropriate to the contemporary Chinese needs, society and consumers are more demanding for strict regulation on deceitful, misleading and immoral advertising e.g. referring general provision of object of ad law (Chapter I/ 1, Original in Chinese language):

“advertising law is formulated in order to regulate advertising activities, promote the sound development of advertising business, protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers, maintain the socio-economic order, and enable advertisements to play a positive role in the socialist market economy”(Ad Law China, 1994).

It is not comprehensively serving the interest of consumers for penalties of mal practices are minimal and insignificant. However, distinct supervision and controlling (State, province, municipal) authorities, ambiguous clauses and scanty penalties invite opportunities to the advertisers to violate the law e.g. (Chapter V/37, Original in Chinese language):

“Where, in violation of the provisions of this Law, false propaganda for commodities or services has been conducted by making use of advertisements, the organ in charge of advertising supervision and control shall order the advertiser to stop publishing the advertisements and to use the same amount of its advertising expenses for making corrections in public within the corresponding areas, thus eliminating the effects, and shall impose on the advertiser a fine of not less than the amount of its advertising expenses but not more than five times that amount; the advertising agent and advertisement publisher who are held responsible shall be confiscated of their advertising charges and shall also be imposed thereupon a fine of not less than the amount of the advertising charges and not more than five times that amount; if the circumstances are serious, the advertising business of such offenders shall be stopped according to law. If the case constitutes a crime, the offenders shall be investigated for criminal responsibility according to law” (Ad Law China, 1994).

However, immense criticism observed by academicians, consumers and society regarding relationship of ad with different factors for instance economy, culture, values, gender and consumerism and others (Qingqing, 2010; Chan and McNeal 2003; Hong, 1994). Chinese consumers are in opposition to heavy clutter of ads appear on print, electronic and web that have been repeated over and over again sometimes with the endorsement of celebrities (Liu 2002; Chuen and McNeal, 2002), porn ads attract youth for porn content and websites (Barboza 2006; Fam and Waller 2003). Hence, it is argued that comprehensive social responsibility/ Ad regulations in China should assure by the authorities in the larger interest of society and state which triggers social development, economic progress and harmony in the society without overlooking the fact that China is the biggest market of the world and looking forward for the World trade organization (WTO) implications in the socialist economy scenario.

6. DOGMA OF CAPITALISM, SOCIAL DIFFERENCES AND ADVERTISING

Advertising is a prime institution of capitalism (market economy); create demands or establish brands (items) through the means of persuasive advertising messages to the targeted segments of the societies. The potential of penetration of an item in any market is determined by possible advertising spending. Inundated of advertising messages for an item adds value to it as a brand through capturing certain portion of market segment in that product line. However, the product which fails to meet preferences of psychological, societal and cultural expectation of market in their presentation, they wouldn't survive in that market.

Ng (2010) observes in his study of cross cultural differences in brand strength effect among Eastern and Western finds that Eastern represent significant brand strength when they are motivated compared to Westerners. The factor of motivation is created by advertising messages through enthusiastic slogans, jingles and stunt visuals.

Scholars and practitioners distinguish advertising from marketing through labeling 'advertising is to tell and marketing is to sell' but it is common observation that items which heavily advertised are highly expensive in the market. The theory of economics of Information (EOI) Stigler (1961) addresses this question that some additional price added as search value in product price and advertising save consumer search value for that particular item. This theory doesn't convince on the worthy and luxurious items which are heavily advertised and presented prestige for their consumers. The rising prestige of such items instigate consumer to go for phony articles which gave them equilibrium with the capitalistically privileged class. Wilcox, Kim et al. (2009) observed behavior for desire of phony items and point out that such desire gets intensified in the form of social motivation when luxurious items serve the function of social prestige compared to 'value expressive function' which can be influenced by 'marketing mix' (product design, packaging, advertising and presentation in the market). It is argued that advertising is the part of all marketing activity that associated with outlook of the items, packaging and the way it distributed. However, advertising agencies serve the function of an amplifier for market which symbolizes items into human desire according to consumer's power of purchasing and his/her social class. Therefore, advertising agencies segment type of media into below the line (BTL) and above the line (ATL) through examining their diffusion to certain section (segment of market) of consumers (called target audience). This division of media, type of consumers and category of items in which it falls; advertising itself falling and extending into various types (e.g. direct to consumer, retail, business to business etc.).

Advertising serves its purpose of marketing communication which contains the commercial aspect in the field of communication, advertisers and agencies claim no political intent which reflects connection with advertising. Wernick (1991:26) discusses that distinct to other social institutions (churches, schools, legal and state organs) 'advertising system' doesn't function similar to promote and 'socializing masses to values', it reflects that advertising doesn't have concerns on what content advertising promoting may refer to as an intent (*ideologically*) 'it promotes to sell'. Sassatelli (2007:132) describes it as advertising executive lauded themselves objective and 'value-neutral agency', which transcribes as an '*ideological function*'. The meaning and imagery advertising presents openly promotes consumption and if it doesn't serve the purpose advertising is meaningless for advertisers. Advertising serves the '*Ideological function*' in the words of Sassatelli on the behalf of advertiser which is no less than maximization of profit and maximum expansion of their items in the markets. However, Mansvelt (2010) points out that relationship

between consumerism and capitalism diminish their line, goods are contributing more than that of social and cultural characteristics, under and over consumption represents dual meaning as powerful and powerless which exist politically and economically and shaped the public discourse in neo-liberal economies. Sassatelli (2007:133) refers two distinct functions of advertising: one which is core function to be commercial, second function is '*complex politics of representation*' which instigate variety of '*social identities*' presented Figure 2, it is indistinctness between advertising content and context '*it can produce and dominate socio-cultural differences*' and can sketch out new affinity which can '*support new cultural orientations and innovative social tendencies*'.

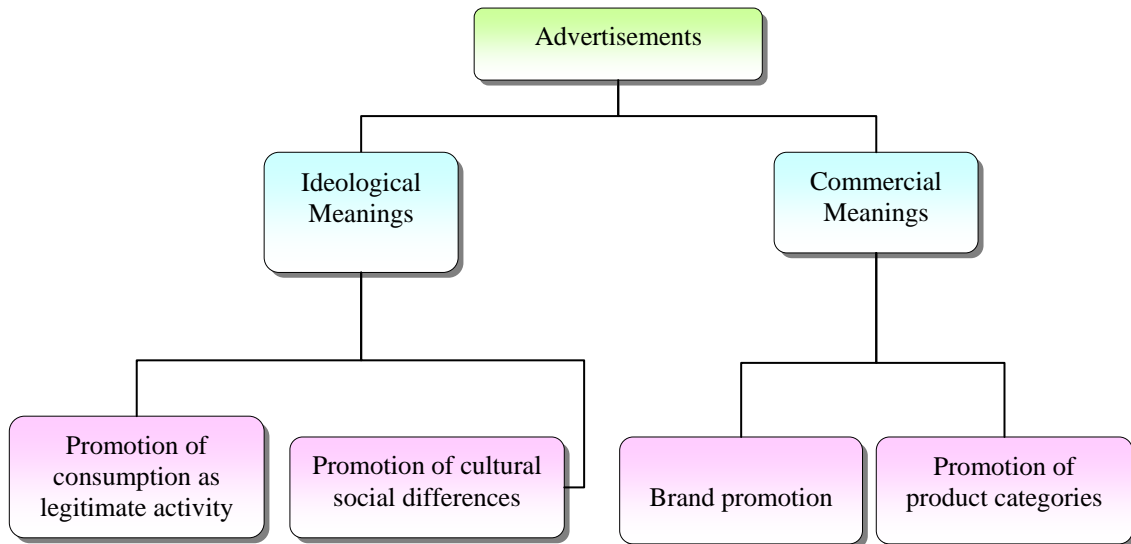


Figure 2: Two distinct meanings of advertisements
 Modified from Sassatelli (2007)

Advertising makes gender differences more visible and portrayals of women beauty as commodities is common, such images even presented in those ads which are not directly in use by females e.g. shaving razors, motor bikes. This powerful portrayals segmentized gender in to social movements e.g. feminism. D'Enbeau (2010) suggested that feminist media organization make ideological equilibrium with advertising that '*sex sells*', finding from the textual analysis of sex appeals in advertising reveals that advertising that use sex appeals serve double function. First, to foster the demand and increases revenue for the items which sponsor that ad, second it provides an opportunity to promote feminist ideology through such ads. Advertising ideological function is not only associated with feminist beauty but also with the man as masculine commodity. Gentry and Harrison (2010) observe masculine perspective presented in U.S television commercials that traditional masculinity is dominant in U.S TV ads in the changing scenarios of such roles in U.S society, gender neutral role of ads doesn't observe which intensify '*male confusion*' regarding their roles.

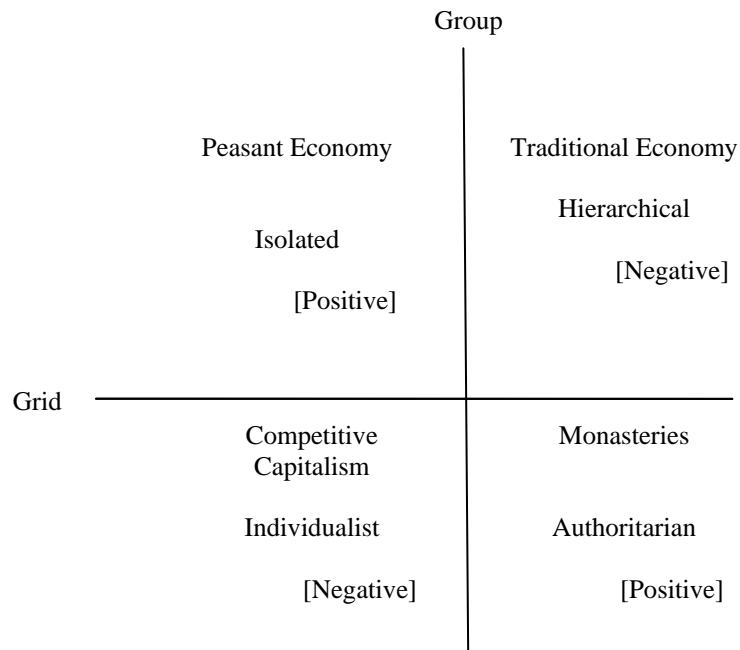
Power and status symbol in ads satisfy the traits of self esteem among the members of certain social groups e.g. smoking girls presented as masculine image in feminist portrayal, tattoos with lesbian and gay social groups. These differences look more visible when different consumer segmented into different market according to their worldly and technological orientation and labeled differently. They are *Silent Generation* (born between 1928 and 1945), *baby boomers* (born 1946–1964), *generation Xers* (people born between 1965 and 1980) and '*millennial*' (born after 1980) in U.S as suggested by Malikhao and Servaes (2011); among all, '*millennial*' consume intensive media content (including all type of ads content) which represents high level of individualism that is leading toward '*narcissism*'. Differences in society and individualism leads toward capitalization or consumer culture which ultimately serve the commercial function of advertising where every individual needs to consume independently. Ruckenstein (2010) observes the scale of consumption and children's talk about money, finds that children follow the pattern of objective saving, it changes in adults over the passage of time into consumer culture that is against the basic instinct of human. So for, advertising is building block of consumer culture and capitalism. Hence, main land China is promoting inspiration for building a harmonious society regardless of any consideration about

geographic, religious, political and institutional biases. The prime objective of this harmony is the social development. Jian (2010) suggested that in the construction of harmonious socialist society, negative influences need to be minimized through institutionalizing advertising in the context of socialist society.

7. CHINESE SOCIO - CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ADVERTISING

Chinese culture has magnificent tradition of ancient dynasties, Mao's socialist and modern eras and its splendid with Confucius to Maoist cultural and socialist features which embedded through individuals' family ethics to social fabric. These socio-cultural characteristics are unlike the Europe, follow Asian tradition in their norms system where Chinese give greater value to the family. It is broader term in its socio-cultural perception, in original Chinese content it refers as "li". The basic meaning, it represents one family or a hierarchy of family chain but in broader context it represents nation and at large the family of this planet. Confucius is the father of ethics of harmony who connect "li" with "ren". However, "ren" refer to love that begin from self which follows family, community, nation and universe (Fan, 2010). Both notions coupled with each other through several responsibilities and duties and it can be coded through out hierarchy and institutions of human life as humanity, righteousness, modesty, wisdom and faithful (Weerd, 2010).

Maoist socialism borrowed ethics of harmony from Confucius and following pursuits of common good within nation state sphere of "li". Culture and society is not an over night phenomenon, it emerged among small group of practitioners and across time widely accepted by society(ies). It transfers from one generation to another. However, values we own are called host values which could conflict with invaded norms. The invasion of norms is the product of consumer culture trigger through marketing instrument e.g. advertising. Socio cultural patterns are resistance in mass consumption, in several cultural ceremonious representations we are bound to behave in accordance to socio cultural setting. But it is consumerist intention to symbolize cultural identities into consumption means. This 'logic of affirmation' paraphrases consumerist items as socially acceptable and foremost which furnishes an opportunity to the members of cultural group for their catharsis of the leading position in society. Consumerism is prime for it insists on continuous production and reproduction, it creates opponents for confrontation and controls related understanding and roles, adaptation of consumerist items or creative use of existing one is portrayal of controlling valuable fragment of information (Sassatelli, 2007: 98). However, 'logic of affirmation' symbolizes self in advertising placement in socio/global cultural environment. Douglas, Isherwood et al. (1996: 83-84) points out four lifestyles of Western capitalist societies; an aggressive and 'individualistic' style high speed driving, exploited by advertisement saying, through use of hi-Tec gadgets, will to break obligations, 'sporty, risky and artistic' type of amusement; a style which is normative, proper and careful in using economic resources, obedient to set of institutions, family and norm system; a style which is open, cooperative, against the customs, expedients and give importance to simplicity and spiritual values; free style, 'withdrawn' but unexpected 'life style of isolation' avoid the other styles be hold. Douglas figures out consumption between anthropology and economics and use seminal approach when he considers consumption identical to the culture. Mary and Baron (1979) identify in their theory of cultural bias that the consumer philosophy can be viewed from 'four fundamental cultural biases' which can exist in every social setting of institutions. These biases correspond into two construct of social 'organization'; 'social structure' and 'grid', it can be viewed as strong and 'hierarchical' or weak and 'egalitarian', the groups of society strongly incorporated or fragile (Figure 3). In the organizational setting bias observed within strong organization and closely linked with social groups, on the other hand, Weak organization give and individualistic setting supported by individualistic bias, strong and classless organization preset the setting of authoritarian bias, whereas individualist in outer sphere and strong organization observed 'isolated bias. However, Chinese society is knitted into strong organization and societal group and their preferences are cultural values oriented which are not explicitly extroverts in their presentation.



**Figure 3: Cultural biases in different socio-cultural settings.
Modified from Mary and Baron (1979)**

Similarly, Hourdequin (2010) observes aspects of socio-cultural organization in the Confucius position through characterizing themes in *Analects* on social and moral reforms and aspects which create reasons to a morally declining society. He finds that Confucius is against comprehensive withdrawal from society even though it is against 'moral integrity of self'. Confucius according to Hourdequin (2010) alarms though opposing 'deep involvement with corrupt regimes' and recommend institutional reform in case when moral engagement would impossible to maintain with them. Contemporary advertising present bits of information and portrayals which embrace self esteem through consumption of goods. Mick and Buhl (1992) find it as inspirational and sense of life is similar reflection in advertising, beyond symbolized structure and context there are 'multiple legitimate interpretations' (socio-cultural identities) that present the actual meaning within their existence. However effects of advertising on social, cultural and moral characteristics have long been subject to research in communication discipline. Chinese socio- cultural context is not widely discussed in Western literature. Amazingly, the notion of "*guanxi*" is misunderstood in Western marketing/ advertising literature and it is referred to as mainstream cultural tool in China (Ambler, 1994; Su and Littlefield, 2001; Xin and Pearce, 1996). However, "*guanxi*" is unclear notion that exist in private norm (Fan, 2000).

The socio-cultural differences become more visible when global or cross cultural corporations invoke their brands in host culture. The visible differences appear in the form of anger, distrust and ethical questions. Whereas commoditization of cultural symbolizes through advertising means raise issues concerning obesity and consumerism. Peng and Daifang (2010) point out successful stories of U.S advertising in Chinese market that U.S advertisers put emphasis to make their brand penetrate in Chinese markets through portrayals of traditional cultural values, primarily focus on use of folk culture commercialization and persuade consumer instinct of fashion in terms of advertising strategy in China. Many harmful products e.g. cigarettes and alcohol are designed in different flavors for female market in China. Ho, Ma et al. (2010) find in their survey of 11095 urban and rural women in China attending different level of education between age 14-24 for smoking behavior that smoking intention is increased among Chinese women compared to previous years and it is carrying need to launch preventive measures to reduce dire consequences of smoking. Material culture pervasive in Chinese culture and marketing instruments are translating values into money. Durvasula and Lysonski (2010) argue that the Chinese youth

have massive behavior towards money; this capitalistic behavior is influenced by status and apprehension aspect and the factor accomplishment is effected by this rising aspect of money. It is argued that advertising and marketing instruments are promoting material pursuits in Chinese society which will largely affect Chinese culture and their strong foundation of moral and moreover societal harmony.

8. CHALLENGES, RHETORIC OF DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ADVERTISING

Contemporary PRC is moving ahead in economic and development direction through their cultural and ideological frame. This frame is a blend of socialist and market economy according to the prerequisite of Chinese society. In this non-stop economic development process there are several barriers e.g. poverty, issues concerning to harmony and common good for every segment of society. These challenges can be addressed through fast development, dialogue and institutionalization of market oriented organs for the progress and welfare of society. The notion of market which will be purely based on production and consumption will increase the distress of consumers within the sphere of society. Contrast to it, if market organ will tightly control by government then process of fast development can't be achieved. Government of PRC is endeavoring to figure out a middle way that can foster greater welfare and rapid economic progress; it leads towards institutionalization of market oriented organs and lauds spheres of social organization. As suggested by Saich (2000) that such reform program sponsored by Chinese Communist party (CCP) which has been widening greater '*social space*' where issues and challenges concerning to '*social interests*' could be presented and can express to the policy-making bodies. These '*societal spaces*' are equivalent to the consumerist organization in West which influence government policies through their public representation or boycotting unethical items. Sassatelli (2007: 186 & 188) points out that consumer are rising initiatives against the global and multinational companies in the form of '*alternative*' or '*ethical*' or '*critical*' or '*political*' and successful boycotting of brands and initiatives that raise demands of local enterprise and common products. It is the part of the development of fair-trade program which is having conflict with '*humanitarian justice*' and with local culture and traditions; these programs serve the purpose of '*cultural hegemony*' and economic superiority over tuff competition in the '*global market*'. Sassatelli (2007) further suggests '*humanitarian consumer-citizenship*' that can encounter through acceptance of '*green and ethical industry*' and probability of local small scale industry. Consumer incentives are against the content (sexual imagery, consumer culture, deceitful practices etc.) of brands and their resultant consequences (obesity, luxurious buying, and excessive spending etc.) presented in advertising. Ross, Nightingale et al. (2003: 53) argues that historically most of '*litigations*' have been associated with '*advertise products*' e.g. cigarettes, fast food, and often '*litigation*' labeled to those advertisements in which people presented in the action for instance speedy driving in cars' ad, racial prejudice against any specific cultural group.

Sassatelli views best fits to the liberal and medium size markets but in the case of PRC the view of societal good and institutionalization of market organs (advertising is one of them) can meet the requirement of 1.3 billion people.

The indigenous concept '*Xiaokang(xiǎokāng)*' derive from Confucius *Analects*, later widely used during the times of economic transformational reforms which refers that fare balance between economic and societal welfare best fits to the process of institutionalization. '*Xiǎokāng*' addresses the basic question of difference between free market economy and socialist economy that state is dissimilar to the corporation, basic purpose of it to accelerate the economic activity and at large safeguard the welfare of the people. Sibin (2009) suggests that '*Xiaokang society*' in China is the best model that addresses the '*universal-type of social welfare system*' which can meet the basic social demands of citizens and set institutionalization for social policies; factors that influence these institutionalizing process are government, community, enterprise, society and family, government role is prime in this model which have to undertake concerns of citizen for their demands and concern over institutions, responsibilities of enterprise toward society, growth of non-profit and welfare organizations (NPOs) in the form of '*social space*' and more importantly economic growth pre-requisite for the poverty reduction. The process of Chinese institutionalization instead of saying reform can not be similar to the West because of cultural and historic differences between both in process of development during the span of time. Institutionalization doesn't mean that government should accept market instrument at the cost of development and should shrink its circle of influence over

the comprehensive welfare of people. It is argued that reform within instruments of market e.g. marketing and advertising needs to be accelerated according to the demands of time and requirement of cultural and geographic characteristics of Chinese society. Croll (1999) points out about the discontentment in rural workers for their social welfare that '*social stability and political authority are dependent on the government's ability to reform social welfare provisioning*'. It refers institutionalization of entrepreneur behavior toward greater welfare of their workers, community and at large society in the form of action and presentation. It has been observed that Chinese national corporations pay high attention on the welfare of their concerns e.g. workers, community and society compared to global or multinational companies (MNCs). Hence, in the recent scenarios, audience of advertising and consumers of products in PRC have more room to express in comparison to history through their '*social spaces*', '*litigation*', lobbying, media reporting and finally politically institutionalization of advertising instrument against their power of persuasion of deceitful practices, racial and religious prejudices, promotion of consumer cultural identities and political ideology. Similarly, government has a challenge of fast economic growth, development and public welfare.

9. CONCLUSION/FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Western nations and China are having two distinct geo-cultural requirements for their markets and consumers. Materialism, individualism and consumerism are the core products of contemporary advertising and market instruments that are leading societies into multidirectional crises for instance cultural, financial, and crisis of ethics.

Institutionalization of advertising should be practiced according to the demands of society within the dimension of time and space. Material pursuits are more visible in rising China that make scholars to refresh/invoke Confucius norms "*li*", "*ren*" and "*Xiokang*" as an institution for advertising. These norms are grounded on the humanistic principle of brotherhood that every person on this earth is interconnected within the family of human, they should be honest in the usage of material resources (in the form of production and consumption) of this planet which are not in abundance anymore, there should be a balance between economic production and welfare, if this balance is disturbed, it will be a scenario of crisis either in the form of economic, environmental, social, moral or cultural. Chinese authorities CCP and government of PRC are looking forward to possibly institutionalizing framework between social and liberal economy. It is a dire need to the institutionalization of Confucius ideals for the market organs.

The future research can further investigate how to institutionalize advertising through the model of "*li*", "*ren*" and "*Xiokang in order to serve economic, ethical, legal and philanthropic objectives as sustainable development within the Chinese frame of reference*?"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge the Mangrove research team of School of Journalism and Information communication, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China and Mr. Ashok Kumar for their useful suggestions.

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