

# Cultural Differences as Seen in American and Japanese Advertisements

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## Introduction

Owing to the remarkable progress in communication technology, such as communication satellites, coupled with advancement in long-distance air transportation, the world has been getting smaller and smaller. We live in what Marshall McLuhan calls "a global village" <sup>(1)</sup> or what American architect B. Fuller calls "a spaceship earth." <sup>(2)</sup> From our living room we can watch live broadcasts of what is happening all over the world. In that same living room we probably also have goods imported from formerly distant countries.

We cannot live without keeping in contact with people from countries around the world through exchanges of information and commodities. Representatives of nations and companies, politicians, economists, and engineers must sit at negotiation tables to discuss problem-solving methods. In addition to specialists, people from all walks of life now have the opportunities to interact with people from other cultures. It is quite understandable that they are confronted with problems resulting from differences in intercultural communication. There are many instances of Japanese travelers and students studying abroad embroiled in trouble they do not need. We see and read about friction in the field of politics and economics and we have come to realize that much of this friction or conflict results from misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.

How can we overcome such friction and conflicts? Firstly, we should know our own culture well and then strive to understand other cultures. Realizing that cultural differences exist and then implementing ways of

making them more acceptable are then next steps in getting along with one another.

This paper will focus on the cultural differences embedded in advertisements inserted in magazines and newspapers published in the U.S. and Japan. Advertisement is one form of communication – communication between advertisers and its potential consumers. Companies (producers and sellers) make every effort to capture buyers' attention and make the readers purchase the products by means of this written communication called advertisement.

E. T. Hall, a cultural anthropologist, states, "Culture is communication."<sup>(3)</sup> Culture encompasses people's everyday life and their way of thinking, which is inherited through learning from generation to generation.<sup>(4)</sup> Studying advertising patterns is a key to knowing the people and their culture since it reveals what particularly moves people in the culture and what they value. Advertisements aim at the general public. "The copy of an advertisement must attract readers. It must hold their interest and finally convince them of the strength of the product advertised."<sup>(5)</sup>

Philip R. Cateora claims, "as companies become global marketers and seek to standardize various parts of the marketing mix across several countries, cross-cultural studies become more important. A company needs determine whether standardization or adaptation of the marketing mix is appropriate."<sup>(6)</sup> There are two ways to advertise – 1) standardization and 2) localization. In the former type of advertisement, companies use standerdized advertisement in all the markets (world and local). In the latter type, a product's advertisement is adapted from country to country. Only the latter type of advertisements will be focused on in this paper.

It is often said that the thinking pattern of Americans is more analytical than Japanese. For example, the sentence structure of English is

quite different from that of Japanese. In English predicate verbs follow their subject. The speaker cannot change a positive sentence into a negative one, while speaking, judging from the situation. He/She is forced to be straightforward and logical. In Japanese, on the other hand, predicate verbs come at the end of the sentence, allowing speakers to change their opinions in the process of their speech, if they judge it to be necessary. These characteristics of the sentence structure affect the speakers' way of thinking as it is reflected in their respective advertisements. One can assume American advertisements generally reflect the American way of thinking and their values in the same way that Japanese advertisements do.

## I. Advertisements Collected

The material-sources of this research are advertisements of the following companies: 1) precision instruments, 2) automobiles, 3) airlines, and 4) miscellaneous. These areas were chosen because of extreme competition, both domestic and the world markets. In addition to the advertisements found in magazines and newspapers in the US and Japan, some data were furnished by the companies<sup>(7)</sup> directly for the sake of this research.

<i>The New York Times</i>	January 1 ~31, 1994
<i>The Japan Times</i>	October 1, '93 ~ May 31, '94
<i>The Daily Yomiuri</i>	January 1 ~ April 31 '94
<i>The Nikkei Weekly</i>	January ~ April '94
<i>Asahi Shinbun</i>	September ~ June '94
<i>National Geographic</i>	January ~ December '93
<i>Japan International Journal</i>	May, '94

The writer wanted to collect advertisements which dealt with the same products both in America and Japan, and both of which originally are written in English since these advertisements should indicate cultural

differences more clearly. Unfortunately, such advertisements turned out to be somewhat scarce. According to explanations given by several Japanese companies, this is because companies tend to entrust their advertisements to their respective branches (US/Japan) as they see fit to promote the products. Consequently, the American branch and its Japanese parent company do not necessarily advertise the same product in the same way. Almost all comparisons in this paper are between English language advertisements inserted in the US and Japanese advertisements inserted in Japan.

## II. Comparisons between English Advertisements Inserted in Magazines and Newspapers Published in the US and Japanese Advertisements in Japan Introducing the Same Product

### II - 1

Cameras : (a) Nikon F - 601 (Japanese name) and N 6006 (name in the US)

Automobiles : (b) GALANT (the same name both in the US and Japan)

(c) Windom (Japanese name) and Lexus ES300 (name in the US)

Comparing these advertisements, one of the conspicuous differences is the amount of introductory and descriptive words about the products. In Japanese advertisements, photos occupy a large part of the advertisements with few accompanying words. However, advertisements in the US have comprehensive information with all the attractive features of the camera while the photo occupies a small and secondary part in the advertisement. <sup>(8)</sup>

*(When the writer has translated Japanese advertisements into English, they are in quotation marks and italicized.)*

The Japanese advertisement of the F - 601 says:

*"A single-lens reflex camera to take beautiful pictures. Various things*



the other day. A man in a fetal position under a hurdle caught a runner in midair.

Is this fun, or what?

To Antonis Achilleos, part-time busboy, full-time amateur photographer, it is. In fact, to Antonis, making great photographs is more fun than making touchdowns, jump shots or holes in one.

**Homestretch**  
— by —  
**Antonis Achilleos,**  
busboy

One afternoon, while driving to get a Sturpee, he spotted a vision of beauty in sweat socks flying through the air. Something clicked. He grabbed his Nikon N6006<sup>®</sup> leaped

a hurdle and waited. Was it worth it? What do you think?

Antonis used an N6006 to experiment with and expand creativity. It autofocuses quickly and precisely in light as dim as a single candle. There's Spot Metering, Center-Weighted Metering, and Matrix Metering, for rapidly changing light conditions or fast-moving action.

"Hey, Mister, duck!"

There's a powerful pop-up flash with 28mm coverage. Here Antonis brightened the foreground by increasing the flash one stop. And he underexposed one stop to maintain the ominous sky and provide contrast to the brightly lit foreground. To create a sense of motion (as if she needed it), he used Rear Curtain Sync.

See the N6006 at authorized dealers where you see this symbol. For more on the authentic Nikon MasterCard, call 1-800-NIKON-33.

Think the Nikon N6006. Autofocusing, a built-in flash, interchangeable Nikkor lenses, 1/8000 shutter speed. Just ask Antonis. For a free booklet call 1-800-NIKON-33.

ter closes, and he shot at 1/15th. Even though the flash isn't designed to cover the entire frame, Antonis chose a 24mm AF Nikkor to exaggerate the angle. He could have picked any one of nearly eighty legendary lenses. The same lenses most pros use behind the dugout or in the end zone.

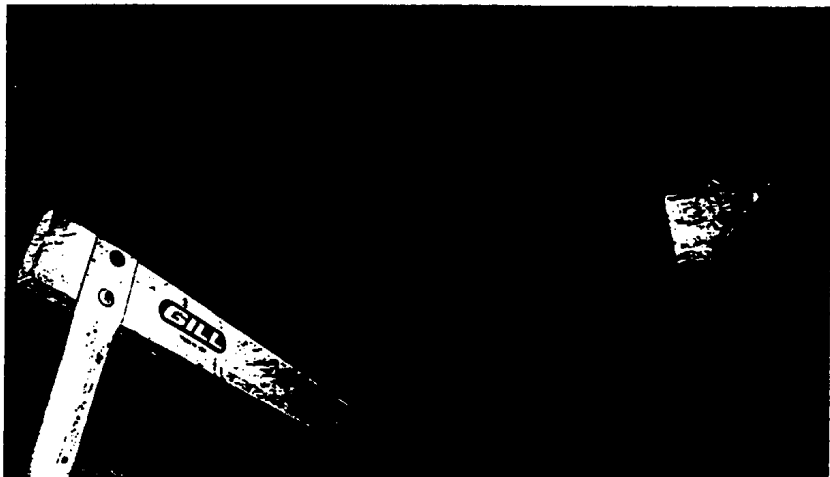
The N6006<sup>®</sup> however, is the Nikon for people who don't have press credentials. Or sideline passes.

You see, this is the Nikon that amateurs show their stuff with. This is the Nikon for people with a passion for photography who just happen to be dentists, plumbers, or busboys.

This is the Nikon photo buffs make part of their everyday wardrobe.

Because who knows what you'll see flying in the air on your way to 7-Eleven?

**Nikon**  
We make it possible.



The Advertisement of N 6006 in the US

have no confidence in taking satisfactory pictures, the F-601 is the solution. The advertisement actually assumes that the reader has little knowledge and/or ability in taking good pictures. It seeks to take the pressure off the potential buyers by telling them that this camera will help them not only take good pictures, but begin to bring them the joy of taking photos as well.

On the other hand, the American advertisements is introduced as a short story. The title of the story is 'Homestretch' by A. Achilleos, a busboy. Under the story there is a photo of a runner caught in midair. When the readers finish reading, they have detailed information about

the capabilities of the F-601 camera. For instance, they can use the Rear Curtain Sync, which fires the flash just before the shutter closes and they can shoot at 1/5th to create a sense of motion. But it also tell them that "this camera is not for people with press credentials or sideline passes, but for those with a passion for photography who just happen to be dentists, plumbers, or busboys." Then the advertisement concludes with "This is the Nikon photo buffs make part of their everyday wardrobe. Because who knows what you'll see flying in the air on your way to 7-Eleven?" If the readers are "photo-crazy," they will be impressed by this advertisement. This advertisement may suggest that the camera be part of the readers' everyday life. It also assumes that the consumer not only likes to take pictures, but likes to take good ones. The suggestive advertisements make the reader feel capable of taking good photos with the camera. Both advertisements in English and in Japanese stress the same things — how good the camera is — to the reader. However, in the Japanese advertisement, the subject is the camera while in the advertisement in English the reader is the subject.

According to George Fields,<sup>(9)</sup> an advertisement consists of 'concept' and 'execution.' The former is what an advertisement tries to convey and the latter is how to convey it. In the Western world 'concept' is the subject and if the 'concept' is effective the advertisement works even if the 'execution' is not so effective. But in Japan it is very difficult to separate 'concept' and 'execution'. Visual expression seems to be the concept as well as the effective way of conveying messages in Japanese advertisements. In the US, advertisements need to explain how well a product works. The subtlety in Japanese advertisements versus American advertisements may best be explained as cultural difference.

The American advertisement of a car called Galant appeared in the magazine, *Motor Trend*. The difference in the length of description of GALANT is quite obvious: Lengthy for the American advertisement and

あなたと創る Creating Together  三菱自動車

格闘家らしい、いメノセーゴです

全性能向上。最高のギヤランになる。

## 94キセラン誕生

そのために、この本は、  
「そのために、この本は、」

[illegible]

新たにV6 MIVEC、MIVECエンジン登場。

[illegible]

さらに充実、新しいギヤラン ヴィエント登場

[illegible]

## THE INDIVIDUAL

GALANT

**Photo** [REDACTED]

1990-1991 年度の財政状況

ワイヤ・リヤスポイラ・15インチアルミホイール

## The Advertisement of GALANT in Japan





レクサスES300に乗りかえた人。  
貿易会社部長ジェフリー・スコット



男はできるだけ多くの目の出と世の入りを見るべし。と語るMr.スコットの職場は山盛りビジネスの第一線で活躍する雄大な一帯を誇っていました。チストライバーの気風もあり、車へのこだわりは人一倍。レクサスES300に関しては、先陣の走るスタイルにひかれるとともに、オナーの旗にふくまれた数々の佳績に魅せられたという。「日本車は新しいカテゴリーで勝負してきた。それも宜々とね」。情熱的に動くウィンドムを語るMr.スコットでした。

日本名 ウィンダム。  
これがワールドプレステージクラス。

Are you **WINDOM?**

（フレッシュフェア Part I）  
4/11(土)・12(日)

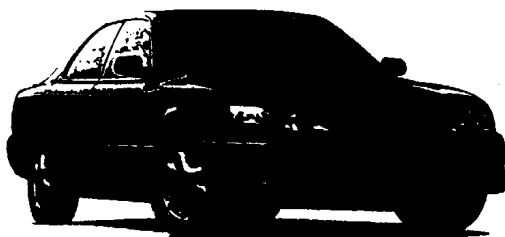
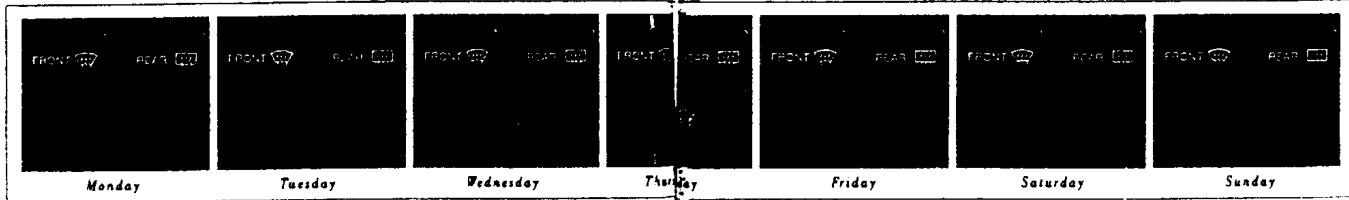
人へ 社会へ 地球へ TOYOTA

1992年4月11日(土) ウィンダム 毎日、読売、中日

### the Advertisement of Windom in Japan

The ad copy of the Windom advertisement reads "Are you Windom?". According to the explanation given by one member in charge of this advertisement "Windom" is a coined word: 'win' means to gain a victory and 'dom' is a suffix attached to 'win', to express "to keep winning." 'Are you Windom?' could be interpreted in two different ways. One is

## Maybe It's Time You Injected Some Monotony Into Your Life.



The ES300

**P**lus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, the more things change, the more they remain the same. Lexus engineers are firm believers in this quip, at information. This information is then relayed to the climate control microprocessor, which has at its disposal sixteen air vents in order to either cool you down or warm you up. The result? The weather may not be predictable, but



least when it comes to the way the automatic climate control of the Lexus ES300 sports sedan operates. All this may sound highly technical (indeed it is), but it runs like a breeze. The temperature



Four sensors, including a solar sensor that can measure ambient light from the sun's rays, are used to help gather readout is an illuminated liquid crystal display; the controls are large and conveniently placed; the airflow warms or the cabin of the Lexus ES300 surely is. Day in, day out, it's always the same old story. Which, when you think about it, is quite a pleasant surprise.



### The Advertisement of LEXUS ES300 in the US

'Are you winning?' and the other is 'Is your car Windom?' In the Japanese advertisement of Windom, the following words can be read "A person who changed his car to LEXUS ES300. Mr. Jeffrey Scott, chief director of a trading company." The picture shows him opening the door of a Windom while holding a bunch of flowers in front of a flower shop. The attractive features of Windom are written on the left hand corner in small letters. But the aim of this advertisement has been achieved, when the readers recall Windom together with a corporate executive. The image the Windom advertisement portrays is that Windom cars are for executives. There is no necessity for them to read the attractive features of the car. In Japan well-known people, especially

celebrities often appear in advertisements.<sup>(10)</sup> This aspect will be discussed further in the next section.

The English counterpart has a much longer written account. "Maybe It's Time You Injected Some Monotony Into Your Life." The readers will wonder what some monotony is. They must read on to find the answer.

In Japan, celebrities also appear in commercials. According to CM data bank which conducted surveys on the impressions Japanese audiences have towards TV commercials, the most popular commercials were those dealing with inexpensive products. TV commercials with soccer players were ranked second, perhaps a reflection of the recent soccer boom.<sup>(11)</sup> From these findings, too, we can say that Japanese seem to have a tendency to be influenced by famous people. Japanese put their trust in them, and accordingly, the products they recommend.

The features of the products is less important to the reader. So even if they are written in small letters or not written in detail, the advertisement is still effective.

Famous people can draw the attention of the reader. When a professional car racer admits he uses a tire of a certain brand, it may raise the reliability value of the tire. This is a phenomenon common throughout the world, and obviously a merit of employing famous persons.<sup>(12)</sup> But American advertisements usually use ordinary people. A housewife, for example, is a tester of some goods and readers trust the test result because they know the company is not permitted to employ false advertisement. If the test results turned out to be incorrect, the company could be sued.<sup>(13)</sup> So Americans are likely to react indifferently to advertisements with celebrities and sometimes even sneer since a sponsor must have paid them a great amount of money. Americans seem to be much less inclined to use celebrities in advertising. Japanese, in contrast, appear to have a weakness for them.

## II -2 Comparative Advertisements

“Free competition is the basis of American capitalism.”<sup>(14)</sup> Under this system advertisements work as an important source of information for consumers and at the same time, provide advantageous means for companies to market their selling points to indicate the differences and superiority of their products over other products. One approach in this kind of advertisement is to directly compare their product with other companies' products. At times this competitiveness seems excessive from the Japanese point of view.<sup>(15)</sup> Japanese advertisements are often referred to as mood advertisements, since they are not so logical or wordy. Since Japan is a High Context culture (discussed in detail in the conclusion,) people can often intuitively understand what a nonverbal advertisement wants to convey to them.<sup>(16)</sup> Next, people pay homage to harmony. They do not like to stand out as different from others. In America the general definition of comparative advertisements requires that they must fulfill the following two conditions 1) more than one brand should be clearly expressed in an advertisement and 2) an advertisement should compare the product from more than one characteristic point of view.<sup>(17)</sup> Therefore, a simple comparative advertisement such as 'A brand is better than B brand' cannot be considered a comparative advertisement even though there are actually many cases of this simple type of advertisements in the US.

## II -2-1 Six Comparative Advertisements Which Fulfilled the Above-Mentioned Two Conditions. English Advertisements in the US Newspapers and Magazines

- a. The New Mazda Truck (furnished data)
- b. Mitsubishi GALANT (*The New York Times*, January 22, '94)
- c. B M W (*The New York Times*, January 26, '94)
- d. The new Mazda Protage \*European styling and more room than a Mercedes 190E, for a heck of a lot less deutsche marks (furnished data)
- e. The Mazda Protage \*More interior room than Corolla, Civic and Escort sedan (*The New York Times*, January 28, '94)  
The Mazda Familia (Japanese name of Protage) has no Japanese comparative advertisement of this type.
- f. The Mazda 626 \*It costs less than a 4-cylinder Toyota Camry LE\* (furnished data)

A Japanese advertisement of Mazda 626 claims that the car won many prizes around the world, such as the Golden Steering Wheel for 1992, 1993 Car of the Year Denmark, Great Australian Automobile Award for 1992, NRMA's Best Cars for 1992, Best Buys for 1992 and Car Of The Year Australia, 1992.

- a. The New Mazda truck is not sold in Japan. This 'Saddle up and let's go dancing' advertisement appeared in some American magazines, and rates the Mazda truck in comparison to Toyota and Nissan from six characteristic points of view.

## Mazda Truck      The result of the test

# Saddle up and let's go dancing.

### **The New Mazda Truck**      It's bigger. Meaner.

And it's here. The all-new Mazda truck isn't your typical compact pickup. Jump on the gas and see what a 160-horse stampede feels like. That 4.0-liter V6\* kicks out more horsepower and more torque than any import compact ever. Plus it's got rear-wheel ABS, a three-year/50,000-mile warranty,\*\* and an extra helping of attitude. So it hauls, tows, works and plays like a big truck. Point it at the sorriest excuse for a road and it'll

go for it like a dog after a T-bone. The new Mazda truck.

Because you don't run through the mud in ballet slippers.

	MAZDA	TOYOTA	NISSAN
LARGEST AVAILABLE ENGINE	4.0L V6	3.0L V6	3.0L V6
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE	160/220	150/180	153/180
MAXIMUM TOWING CAPACITY	5,900 lb.	3,500 lb.	5,000 lb.
FRONT TRACK (INCHES) (4x2/4x4)	56.7/58.3	53.3/56.3	54.9/56.1 55.7/56.9 (V6)
REAR TRACK (INCHES) (4x2/4x4)	57.3/57.3	53.9/56.1	54.5/54.5 56.3/56.3 (V6)
BASIC WARRANTY (YEARS/MILES)	3/50,000	3/36,000	3/36,000

\*Available on B4000 only. \*\*See dealer for limited-warranty details. Rally bar and 112 attached lights are not Mazda accessories.

**mazda**  
IT JUST FEELS RIGHT.\*

b. Mitsubishi Galant's advertisements goes as follows:

More spacious than a Toyota Camry.

(It's also roomier than Altima or Accord.)

More affordable than a Nissan Altima

(In fact, it has the lowest base price of the group. \*\* )

More powerful than the new Honda Accord.

(Even more horses to be precise. And more powerful than the Camry, too.)

Introducing the all-new 1994 Mitsubishi Galant.

The Galant is sold in Japan, but this comparative advertisement is not used in Japan. According to a Mr. Iwata of the Mitsubishi publicity department, comparative advertisements are self-restrained because Japanese are not familiar with this type of advertisement.

c. In the ad copy of the BMW 325i Sedan, there is a picture of the car making a curve on a snowy road. The theme line is "the Ultimate

Driving Machine” and the copy reads “EVALUATE THE COMPETITION ON THIS SLIDING SCALE.” This appeared in *The New York Times* on January 26 in 1994. Six key rival automobiles became the target of the testing as BMW 325i was compared to the Mercedes C 280, Saab 900SV6, Volvo 850 turbo, Acura Legend GS equipped with traction control, Lexus ES 300 and Infiniti 300 traction. This is point-blank advertising. Since BMW is a German company, this advertisement shows how effective the company thinks comparative advertisements are in the US. A Japanese advertisement for BMW introduces one of the service programs, ‘BMW Service Free-Way’ with no comparisons.

There was one comparative advertisement in Japanese, The Mazda RX-7. The ad copy reads “RX-7 again won a great victory.” “Mazda won in the '93 12-hour production race in Bathurst for two consecutive years. The following matrix is the result of the race but this is not as complete comparison as those in the US.

	POS.	MACHINE	LAPS
	1	Mazda RX-7	263
RESULT	2	Mazda RX-7	263
	3	Honda NSX	253
	4	Nissan SKYLINE GTR	247

## II-2-2 The Following Are Simple Comparative Advertisements Classified by Type of Business.

A table of car companies

Mazda \* That 4.0-liter V6\* kicks out more horse power and more torque than any import compact ever. (furnished data)

Mazda \* So it weighs about half a ton less than most of its competitors. (furnished data)

Mazda \* the best-selling convertible in the world the Mazda



Miyata (furnished data)

- Mazda \* And its 24-valve V6 is one of the smoothest, quietest piston engines in the world. M626 (furnished data)
- Nissan \* ... the new Skyline comes equipped with a fuel-injected twincam 24-valve engine that represents the best in current technology. (*The Japan Times*, furnished data)
- Honda \* "*It is Your Civic that won the seventh consecutive championship.*" (Japanese magazine, furnished data)
- Cadillac \* Number one in Luxury carsales in 1993 for a number of reasons. For the 45th consecutive year. More Americans chose Cadillac than any other automobile.
- \* Nothing in its class has that much confidence.
- Protage LX (*The New York Times*, January 5, '94)

#### A table of airlines

- JAL \* Japan's biggest network. JAL (*The Japanese Times*)
- Northwest \* ... we've more flights to America than any other airline, with connecting flights to over 200 U.S. cities (*The Daily Yomiuri*, January 4)
- Northwest \* a whole new level of service that offers you a better choice of meals, the control of your own personal video system and the comfort of more personal space... with nearly 50% more legroom and reclining seats.
- \* more space than virtually any other worldwide airline. (*The Japan Times*, April 30, '94)
- Northwest \* More destinations, more comforts, more flexibility. To make the most of your next trip to North America, fly non-stop to Detroit.
- Only on Northwest Airlines. (*Japan International Journal*, May, '94)
- Northwest \* No. 1 in America. The most punctual airline to fly.

(*The Japan Times*, December 8, '93)

ANA

\* JAPAN'S BEST TO THE WORLD

CLUB ANA added 10 inches to your personal comfort zone, creating a full 50 inches between seats. We further expanded your degree of comfort by increasing seat recline from 39 to 49 degrees. (*The Nikkei Weekly*, February 28 '94)

ANA

\* The newest mileage service program in the sky.

Miles that add up quicker and earn you free trips faster to places like Hong Kong, Sydney or New York. (*The Japan Times*, November 8, '93)

ANA

\* As a special incentive from now until Dec. 31, 1993, you earn more mileage points. (*The Japan Times*, November 8, '93)

TWA

\* The most comfortable way to fly ONLY ON TWA (*The New York Times*, Jan. 31 '94)

TWA

\* ...you'll enjoy Comfort Class passenger service, with the most legroom of any major U.S. airline (*The New York Times*, January 31, '94)

TWA

\* you'll find out why the most recent J.D. Power and Associates survey ranked TWA best in customer satisfaction for trips over 500 miles\* (*The New York Times*, January 31, '94)

United Airlines \*And only United brings you daily service to New York from Asia (\*Grab these low winter fares before they melt away.) (*The New York Times*, January 6, '94)

American Airlines \*No other airline knows American better than American Airlines. (*The Japan Times*, April 4, '94)

US Air

\* The More, The Better.

With the most flights to more cities from New York, US Air offers more opportunities to save.

US Air \* US Air has more flights to more cities from New York than any other airline. (*The New York Times*, January 10, '94)

US Air \* ... we offer the most opportunities for you to save. (*The New York Times*, January 10, '94)

US Air \* US Air offers the most non stop flights to the most Florida cities (*The New York Times*, January 27, '94)

US Air \* Plus, US Air offers the fastest free ticket to the most destinations (*The New York Times*, January 27, '94)

Continental Micronesia \* Continental Micronesia Business first now offers more leg room between seats than any business class flying around Asia or across the Pacific. (*The Japan Times*, June, '94)

Delta Air Lines \* You'll love The Way We Fly (*The New York Times*, January 12, '94)

\* the newest most modern fleet of aircraft to the Pacific Rim (*The New York Times*, January 12, '94)

Korean Air \* Fly the spirit of dedication

\* ... when we give you a lift, you'll hit Korea an average of over 4 hours sooner than on other airlines (*The New York Times*, January 18, '94)

Even in simple comparative advertisements, American advertisements surpass Japanese advertisements in using comparative and superlative degrees as far as airlines and automobile advertisements are concerned.

## Conclusion

Appealing American advertisements tend to work through logical explanations as they attach greater importance to words, while Japanese advertisements entice the readers by visual impressions more than by words. American advertisements are more explanatory, show more data

regarding the product, and use more comparisons with other companies' products than Japanese advertisements. American advertisements are more aggressive, using more decisive expressions and imperative techniques. This difference in the quantity of words is an example of a cultural difference that appears in advertisements. According to Ishii<sup>(18)</sup> Japanese adults engage in conversation on an average of three hours and thirty-one minutes a day while their American counterparts average six hours and forty-three minutes a day. This difference can be explained by 'High Context culture' and 'Low Context culture' as referred by E.T. Hall.<sup>(19)</sup>

E.T. Hall took notice of the relationship between context and intercultural communication. Communication is influenced by contexts, which include all surroundings—the physical, social, and psychological environment as well as time, and these factors have a large effect on the context and form of communication. According to Hall, one of the functions of culture is to put a highly selective screen between man and his/her outside worlds. This "screen" decides which information he/she should take in and which information he/she should reject. So each culture decides what context is paid attention to and what context is ignored. Elements of context include non-verbal codes, physical, social, and psychological environments and personal relationships. These elements emphasize and/or reinforce language code, complete the message and decide what communication means as a whole.<sup>(20)</sup> The society which depends highly on the above-mentioned elements of context is called a High Context culture and the society which depends more on verbal communication is called a Low Context culture.

Japan is a homogeneous society, sharing a common race consciousness,<sup>(21)</sup> with people living in similar situations and it is easier to understand each other without explaining everything in words. There are even such expressions as 'HARAGEI' 'a knack for making one's views felt', and 'SASSHI NO BUNKA' 'culture of guessing'. Japan is a High Context Culture, in which people do not have to depend so much on verbal

communication, like twins brought up in the same environment who can communicate in shortened sentences and fragmented words.<sup>(22)</sup>

When Japanese see an advertisement they tend to catch the feelings of the advertisement rather than trying to get the complete information about a product. Therefore, the advertisements tend to be more visual and the lay-out more eye-catching since words carry less impact. On the other hand America is a Low Context Culture. Independent individuals with various cultural backgrounds, in a so called "salad bowl" society, get together like mosaics, so they share fewer premises than Japanese. Under such conditions they need to put information in a message which is made up from language code, not from communication context. Therefore, American advertisements feature words and they strive to be understood by all. With so much emphasis on individualism, American advertisements tend to flatter the reader, whereas Japanese advertisements appeal more to the individual's desire to be like the rest of the group.

"The essence of advertisements is in comparison."<sup>(23)</sup> Comparative advertisements are really a very effective way to feed consumers with information about a particular product with the intention of encouraging purchase. According to Kaji, comparative advertisements are most active in the US.<sup>(24)</sup> The lists in previous pages show comparative advertisements are much more frequent in the US than in Japan. This may be explained from a rhetorical point of view.

According to Aristotle, "rhetoric was a skill that any educated person could use... there was a persuasive element, an attempt to persuade listeners of something or to produce an intended effect."<sup>(25)</sup> In Western countries rhetoric means persuading and rhetorical communication is language activities which aim at changing a listener's attitude as a result of the speaker's persuasive message. So in rhetorical communication the message consists of verbal and written language as opposed to nonverbal language. Accordingly American rhetoric has a tendency to

be argumentative and to flow logically. <sup>(26)</sup> At school there are courses in public speaking or debate. Americans learn to improve this skill throughout their lives and so are able to persuade their opponents.

The American way of persuasion in communication is through dialog aimed at clarifying the difference of their opinions. The method must be precise to be effective in a society where people are not only different in their way of thinking and feeling but also have different values. They have to let their listeners know what they are thinking. To persuade listeners, speakers make an endeavor to clarify the differences between their own and listeners' 'thought' logically, explaining cause and result, and supporting opinions with statistical figures, their own experiences, and other examples.

This rhetoric style is reflected in American advertisements as comparative forms. That is why there are many comparative advertisements and many fewer mood advertisements in the US. In advertisements, companies highlight the selling points of their products. The best way to outline the differences of the items produced by different companies is to compare those items from various characteristic features' points of view.

On the other hand, Japanese are not accustomed to persuading listeners by using verbal language, still less, using rhetorical strategy. Basically they think or expect that people share the same feeling or thought. When there is a necessity of persuasion, they do not attempt to convince someone publicly. <sup>(25)</sup> They do it through so-called 'nemawashi', 'behind-the-scenes negotiations aimed at reaching a shared consensus.' People do not like to clarify differences of opinion in an obvious manner. Speakers feel uneasy and uncomfortable when listeners do not agree with them. In such occasions, relations will often aggravate to such a point that a quarrel may erupt.

In Japanese culture, which puts a higher value on the smoothness of human relations, speakers have a tendency not to use the proof of figures or concrete facts because this will only make their differences more

conspicuous. Speakers generally do not go straight to their target, and ambiguity or subjectivity is tolerated to a greater extent.

There are few comparative advertisements in Japan, but in the Japanese way of rhetoric, which corresponds to the characteristics of a High Context culture, comparative advertisements which emphasize differences and/or argue strongly do not appeal to many Japanese people. People do not like confrontation and are not familiar with comparative advertisements. They are adept at catching what the advertisements want to convey to them through visual presentations.

All in all, advertisements are tailored to meet the various facets of both societies in Japan and the US. Advertisements are invariably adapted to match cultural demands and cultural differences, so as to be appealing, and thus, achieve their objectives.

## Notes

- (1) Furuta, Gyo. (ed). *Ibunka komyunikeishon*. Tokyo : Yuhikaku, 1987. p. 62.
- (2) Okabe, Rohichi. *Ibunka o yomu*. Tokyo : Nanundo, 1988. p. 61.
- (3) Hall, E. T. *The Silent Language*. New York : Doubleday, 1959. pp. 94 - 95.
- (4) Furuta, Gyo. *Ibunka komyunikeishon kii wahdo*. Tokyo:Yuhinkaku, 1990. p. 2.
- (5) Mosdell, Chris. *COPYCATS The New Language of Our Modern Consumer Society*. Tokyo: Macmillan Language House, 1989, p. 4.
- (6) Cateora, Philip R. *International Marketing Eighth Edition*. MA : IRWIN, 1966, p. 353.
- (7) Nissan Jidosha Co., Toyota Jidosha Co., Mitsubishi Jidosha Co., Matsuda Co., Honda Gikenkogyo, Nissan Jidosha Co., Volkswagen Audi Nippon KK, Volvo Cars Japan Corporation, Canon Co., Nikon Co., Asahi Kogaku Co., AIWA CO. LTD., Sony Co., and Nippon

- 美しい映像を求める人の、ニコン。

**Nikon**



A query, if we may.  
How do you get a vision that's in your head onto a piece of film not much larger than your average postage stamp?

No, this is not a trick question.



SB-25 with D-type AF Nikkor offers 3D Multi-Sensor Balanced Fill Flash. Also has Slow/Reel Sync, Red Eye Reduction, and FP Flash-Sync up to 1/4000th.

It's what photographers challenge themselves with day and night. In this case: day. Barely.

You see, pro photographer Roger Ressmeyer knew the sun was setting and lighting conditions were changing rapidly. He knew the windsurfer was moving erratically. He knew he only had an instant, or less, to get it. He knew it was almost impossible.

He knew, however, that he had the new Nikon N90. A camera designed to let you walk away with shots from situations you would ordinarily walk away from.

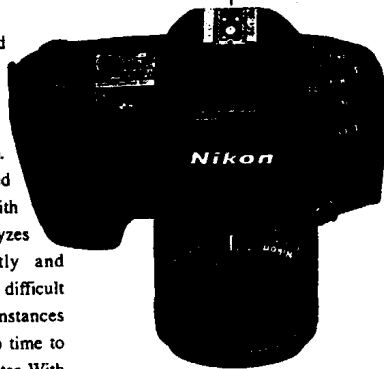
The Nikon N90 has Advanced 8-segment Matrix Metering, with powerful software which analyzes exposure instantly and accurately even in difficult light situations. Instances when you have no time to think, let alone meter. With our new D-type AF Nikkor lenses, which actually incorporate subject distance information into the exposure, Matrix Metering moves into a new dimension. Quite literally. It becomes 3D Matrix Metering.

The N90 even knows when you've recomposed. It compares the lighting patterns from your original composition to those in your new one. That way, what you see will be perfectly exposed on film. Ask Roger.

Imagine the same technology in flash photography. By way of the world's only 5-segment TTL flash sensor, the Nikon N90 used

It's designed to make the most of an invaluable piece of equipment you already have.

Your eye.



{The Nikon N90 System.}



You would imagine that shooting a moving windsurfer at dusk from a rocking boat would be sheer hell. But with the N90's innovative 3D Matrix Metering, CAM 246 Wide-Area Autofocus, Multi-Sensor TTL Flash with the new SB-25 Speedlight, and a 35-70mm f/2.8 D-type AF Nikkor lens, Roger Ressmeyer made the experience pure paradise. Then again, he was shooting in Hawaii.

with our SB-25 Speedlight can perform Matrix-like analysis of the scene with Monitor Pre-Flash for ideal flash output. So you can get shots you would never have dreamed of trying before. A severely backlit portrait. A bride in white, running through a shower of rice as the sun sets.

The Nikon N90's new advanced CAM 246 Autofocus Detection System focuses accurately in an instant. It has a Wide-Area Focus Detection Sensor that's nearly 20% of the frame width, for more creative composition, even if the subject is off center or moving. Like a windsurfer at 20 knots for instance.

And what's more, with the Nikon Data Link System, you can connect the new Nikon N90 to a Sharp® Electronic Organizer, so you can control the camera remotely and customize operations for the way you like to shoot.

Yet another accessory with creative features is the MF-26 Multi-Control Back. With it you can auto-bracket ambient exposure, and auto-bracket flash output, among other things. So that you can rest assured you've got the shot.

Combined with this new technology, there is a solid connection to Nikon's past. Our timeless F-bayonet mount accepts nearly 80 Nikkor lenses. Including our new D-type AF Nikkors and high-speed AF-I Nikkors.

Of course there's one thing this camera can't give you. The vision inside your head. The idea that sparks a feeling. The thought that provokes an inquiry. The brainchild that makes someone say "man, what a picture."

That's up to you. Question is, which photographic tool are you going to choose to turn that vision into reality?

© 1993 Nikon Inc. Nikon Data Link System available mid '93. Sharp® is a registered trademark of Sharp Electronics Corp.



With an 8-segment ambient Matrix Meter, remarkably powerful Nikon software, as well as the world's first five-segment TTL flash sensor, the N90 provides you with an unprecedented degree of control.



## The Advertisement of N 90 (name in the US)

- (9) Fields, George. 'Kokoku hyogen no nichibei hikaku.' *America no kokoku hyogen*. Tokyo : Nikkei kokoku kenkyujyo, 1984. pp. 127 - 128. pp. 145 - 146.
- (10) Some examples of advertisements with celebrities: Ramon A, Disa for Nissan Serena, Kenichi Hagiwara for JAL, Rod Stewart for Subaru Legacy, Jody Foster for Honda Civic Ferio, etc.

- (11) *Asahi shinbun* May 27th, 1994.
- (12) Inoue, Kumi. '*Kokoku ni miru amerikajin no hassoho - hikakukenkyu.*' *America no kokoku hyogen*. Tokyo : Nikkei kokokukenkyujo, 1984. p. 90.
- (13) Inoue, Kumi. op. cit. p. 91.
- (14) Hoshiba, Hideo. *Amerika no kaze to tsuchi*. Tokyo : Dentsu, 1985. p. 53.
- (15) Nevertheless, there have been comparative advertisements in Japan. There was, for example, the comparison of the taste of sauce for grilled meat, between two companies in 1984. When this advertisement, with its taste results, was inserted in several newspapers and magazines, it became a topic. What is more, the sales of both of the sauces went up.
- (16) Hoshiba, Hideo. op. cit. p. 32.
- (17) Hoshiba, Hideo. op. cit. p. 32.
- (18) Furuta, Gyo. *Ibunka komyunikeishon*, op. cit. p. 90
- (19) Hall, E. T. *Beyond Culture*. New York : Debleday, 1976. p. 127.
- (20) Furuta, Gyo. *Ibunka komyunikeishon*. op. cit. p. 54.
- (21) Fruta, Gyo. *Ibunka komyunikeishon*. op. cit. p. 47.
- (22) Okabe, Rohichi. op. cit. p. 73. Hall, E. T. *Beyond Culture*. op. cit. p. 91.
- (23) Kawakami, Hiroshi. '*Hikakukokoku, kokoku no honshitsu.*' *21 seiki wa hikakukokokujidai*. op. cit. p. 3.
- (24) Kaji, Tetsuya. '*Amerika ni okeru hikakukokoku no hensen to keisu studei.*' *21seiki wa hikakukokokujidai*. Ibid., p. 5.
- (25) Gwinn, Robert T. (Chairman) *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 15th Edition Micropaedia Ready Reference* 10. Chicago : Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1768. p. 20.
- (26) Fruta, Gyo. *Ibunka komyunikeishon*. op. cit. p. 179.