

Analyzing Taylor's Message Strategy Wheel in Non-Western Patriarchal Alcohol Advertising: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

This study adopts quantitative inferential statistical analysis to explore the prevalence of Taylor's message strategy wheel in a non-Western patriarchal context, shedding light on its global applicability and also on the association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of alcoholic drink advertised. We examined 182 video ads of alcoholic beverages manufactured in Ghana. The findings reveal the wheel's relevance in non-Western alcoholic advertisements, with beer ads predominantly employing emotional appeals (ritual view) over logical appeals (transmission view), while bitters ads demonstrated a more balanced distribution. Notably, the sensory segment of the ritual view emerged as the most utilized. Moreover, a significant association between Taylor's Wheel and the advertised alcoholic drink type (beer or bitters) was observed. Implications for stakeholders are discussed, alongside recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Taylor's Wheel, Advertising message strategy, Alcohol, Beer, Bitters

Introduction

Ad message strategy models are used by product advertisers [including those in the alcohol industry] to guide their advertising communication campaigns (Wolburg & Haley, 2023). One such model is Taylor's (1999) six-segment message strategy wheel, which is considered a valuable model for analyzing consumer products across various marketing communication channels (Tsai & Lancaster, 2012). Existing studies on the application of Taylor's Wheel to alcohol ads have predominantly focused on a Western perspective (Agarwal, 2020; Deng et al., 2020; Jung & Hovland, 2016; Venger & Wolburg, 2019; Wolburg & Venger, 2009; and Yang, 2019). This raises questions about the global applicability of Taylor's model. To bridge this gap, we investigate the frequency of use of Taylor's (1999) wheel in alcohol ads in a non-Western patriarchal setting like Ghana by posing RQ₁: Which of Taylor's strategies (ritual or transmission view) is most prevalent in Ghanaian alcohol ads?

Secondly, the few existing studies on the application of Taylor's ad message strategies in alcohol advertising (Agarwal, 2020; Jung & Hovland, 2016; Venger & Wolburg, 2019; Wolburg & Venger, 2009) fail to examine the association between advertising message strategies and the type of alcohol being advertised, leaving a gap on whether the type of drink reflects the choice of message strategy in alcohol ads to which we pose RQ₂: Is there an association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of drink advertised?

In addressing these gaps, we provide significant theoretical and practical contributions. First, applying Taylor's model to Ghanaian alcohol ads offers insights into the global relevance of the model and contributes to theoretical knowledge of how it may function in a non-western patriarchal cultural context. Second, examining the association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of alcohol advertised will shed light on the extent to which specific strategies are preferred for different types of alcoholic beverages and the prevalence of these preferences within the industry.

Literature Review

Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel

The Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel (Taylor, 1999) is a comprehensive model drawn from several theories of consumer psychology for analyzing and categorizing ad message strategies (Jacobson et al., 2022). It draws from the theoretical work of Carey (1975), Frazer's (1983) creative strategy summary, Kotler's (1965) consumer response theories, Laskey et al.'s (1989) typology of main message strategies for television advertisements, Petty et al.'s (1983) elaboration likelihood model, Rossiter et al.'s (1991) strategy model, and Vaughan's (1980) FCB Grid (Taylor, 1999). The model serves as "the best alternative" to understanding the "advertiser's message strategy for communicating the benefits of consumption" (Venger & Wolburg, 2019, p. 298).

Taylor (1999) classifies ad message strategies into two categories: *ritual* and *transmission* views (Jung & Hovland, 2016; Venger & Wolburg, 2019). The *two* are further expanded to form the six-segment messaging strategy wheel (see Figure 1).

The first three segments of Taylor's wheel (ritual: ego; social; sensory) "are for products that have high emotional importance and use" while the fourth to sixth segments (transmission: acute need; ration; routine) "are best suited for providing detailed economic information about the product, price, and benefits." (Ju & Park, 2015, p. 21) (see Table 1).

Application of Taylor's Wheel

Taylor's wheel has been applied to diverse topics including political communication (Cunningham & Jenner 2003), viral advertising (Golan & Zaidner, 2008), cosmetic surgery (Ahn & Taylor, 2013), direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising (Ju & Park, 2015), global pandemic (COVID-19) advertising (Deng et al., 2020), employee influence on social media (Jacobson et al., 2022), and advertising in times of crisis (Finneman et al., 2023).

In the context of alcohol advertising, Jung and Hovland (2016) used the wheel to examine the content of 316 alcohol ads in gender-specific American magazines (Women: *Southern Living* and *Vogue*; Men: *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated*). They discovered that regardless of gender, the ads appealed to the emotions of the target audience; and concluded that though the content of the messages was the same for men and women (“what to say”), there were distinctions in the style of presentation (“how to say it”) (p. 232). Agarwal (2020) used the wheel to identify message strategies that impacted user engagement in 303 alcohol ads on Instagram from three leading brands in the United States of America: *Bud Light*, *Budweiser*, and *Coors Light*. She found social and ration to be the most popular strategies. She cites the ration strategy as a new trend in alcohol advertising and calls for further investigation to evaluate that claim.

Wolburg and Venger’s (2009) cross-cultural study of American and Ukrainian alcohol advertisements found that both countries mostly employed strategies from the ritual view part of Taylor’s (1999) wheel. American advertisers appealed more to *ego*, while Ukrainian ads employed *social* and *sensory* strategies. In a follow-up to Wolburg and Venger’s (2009), after 10 years, Venger & Wolburg (2019) employed Taylor’s (1999) message wheel to conduct a cross-cultural text analysis on how Ukraine and the United States navigate the challenging regulatory environment for alcohol advertising. They found that though transmission and ritual views were present in alcohol advertising in Ukraine and the United States, both countries used more of the transmission view (ration), which is “ideal for providing economic information about the product, price, and benefits” (Venger & Wolburg, 2019, p. 298). They explained that Ukrainian alcohol advertisers employ less risky forms of creative strategy by placing greater emphasis on product claims due to the country’s stringent regulatory policy and the public’s opposition to alcohol advertisements. American alcohol advertisers use puffery to position their

products as “the best,” owing to concerns about potential future regulations, “public scrutiny,” and a “desire to avoid the fate of the tobacco companies” (p. 309).

This current study examines the prevalence of Taylor's (1999) framework in alcohol advertisements from a non-Western patriarchal context (Ghana), and the association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of alcohol advertised.

Method

This study conducted a quantitative content analysis of video ads for alcoholic brands (local and international) manufactured in Ghana. We utilized a five-step approach: (i) identify the objective of the study and the research questions; (ii) select the research sample; (iii) create coding categories; (iv) train coders to accurately code the material and test for intercoder reliability; and (v) analyze and interpret the findings (Krippendorff, 2019).

Selection of sample

Sampling alcohol advertisements

To reflect the study's scope, we purposively sampled local and international alcoholic brands manufactured in Ghana. A total of 69 (59 bitters and 10 beer) registered alcoholic brands were identified on the official website of the Food and Drugs Authority of Ghana (Food and Drugs Authority, 2022). We further sourced video ads of the identified brands from two widely used online platforms in Ghana—Facebook and YouTube (Kemp, 2021)—they were chosen for their accessibility and researchers' convenience. Of the 69 brands, 47 (39 bitters and 8 beer) had at least one video ad on either Facebook or YouTube, resulting in a cumulative count of 213 ads (91 bitters ads and 122 beer ads). We excluded the 22 brands (20 bitters and 2 beer) without video ads during the study period. To avoid duplication, ads found on both platforms, were counted once.

Coding categories

Following Golan and Zaidner's (2008) approach, all identified ads were coded. The categories were as follows: (i) the name of the alcoholic brand; (ii) the type of alcohol (iii) the link (URL) to the video ad; (iv) the type of message strategy (ritual or transmission view); and (vi) which of Taylor's six-segment message strategies was used in the ad.

Training coders and intercoder reliability

Following (Krippendorff, 2019) we selected and trained two Ghanaian advertising academics. The training was done online. The coders were sent the coding sheet, coding guide, and links to the ads (Krippendorff, 2019; McMillan, 2000). Following the coders' feedback, we made the required modifications until each coder expressed their comprehension of the study's rating criteria and the process of completing the coding sheet (Krippendorff, 2019, Memon et al., 2017). After training, the two coders independently pretested 31 ads (15%) to perfect their understanding of the coding sheet and process (Krippendorff, 2019). Using Cohen's kappa (1960) the inter-coder reliability score resulted in almost perfect agreements ranging (.866—.918, $p < .001$). They then independently coded the remaining 182 ads (.897—.935, $p < .001$). In case of disagreement between the coders, the lead researcher and at least one coder agreed on an answer for it to be assigned to a category (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

Results

RQ₁ Which of Taylor's strategies (ritual or transmission view) is most prevalent in Ghanaian alcohol ads?

The prevalence of use of the ritual or transmission views was significantly different ($\chi^2 (5, N = 182) = 27.1, p < .001$). Cramer's V, which measures the effect size of associations (Rea and Parker, 2014), indicated a strong effect size, $V = 1$. The *Ritual* view comprised 66.5% of the

messages, (*sensory*, 25.30%; *social*, 24.70%; *ego*, 16.50%), while the *Transmission* view comprised 33,50% (*ration*, 14.30%; *routine*, 11%; *acute need*, 8.20%) (see Table 2).

RQ₂ Is there an association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of drink advertised?

We found a significant association between the use of Taylor's Wheel (Ritual or Transmission view) and the type of drink advertised ($\chi^2 (N = 182, 1) = 4.79, p = .029$). For beer ads, the Ritual view was used 72.9% times, compared to only 27.1% times in the Transmission view. In contrast, bitters ads showed a more even distribution of the use of Taylor's Wheel (ritual view, 57.3% vs. transmission view, 42.7%). This implies that the type of drink influences the strategy used (see Table 3).

We further investigated the frequency of each of the six segments of Taylor's Wheel (ritual (rv): *ego*, *sensory*, *social*; and transmission (tv): *acute need*, *ration*, *routine*) per the type of drink (beer and bitters). The most frequent segments in beer ads were *social_{rv}* (28%), *sensory_{rv}* (25.2%), *ego_{rv}* (19.6%), and *acute need_{tv}* (13.1%), whereas the bitters ads indicated *sensory_{rv}* (25.3%), *ration_{tv}* (25.3%), *social_{rv}* (20%), and *routine_{tv}* (16%) (see Table 4).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine the prevalence of Taylor's Wheel in alcohol ads from a non-Western patriarchal setting and the Wheel's association with the type of alcohol.

Prevalence of Taylor's strategies (ritual or transmission view) in Ghanaian alcohol ads

We found the ritual view (66.5%) to be the most prevalent. This is consistent with Jung and Hovland (2016). Our results however contrast with Venger and Wolburg's (2019) who found the transmission view to be more predominant in Ukrainian and American alcohol ads. The similarities and differences between our study and these previous investigations lend credence

to Taylor's (1999) assertion that beyond the product, culture may influence the prevalence of an ad message strategy.

Additionally, we discovered that Ghanaian video alcohol ads employ all of Taylor's six-segment message strategies. Under the ritual view, *sensory* (25.3%), was found to be the most employed segment. This suggests that some alcohol ads use the *sensory* segment to attract consumers. For example, *Club Beer's* ad message, *there is no way to describe the rich silky flow of liquid in each bottle [cos] chale [friend] taste no y& [the taste is] deep*, depicts the gratifying taste of the beer. This is consistent with Jung and Hovland's (2016) opinion that advertisers assume appealing to emotions would make people drink alcohol.

Furthermore, some ads were found to employ the *social* segment by linking drinking to social acceptance such as bonding with friends (Akesse-Brempong & Cudjoe, 2023). For example, the ad message “*Alomo bitters...is made of friendship; a strong bond between former strangers now committed to each other*” depicts how alcohol manufacturers use ads to appeal to consumers' desire for social acceptance and inclusion. By doing so, such ads imply that consuming the product would elevate one's social standing among peers. This advertising strategy may appeal to individuals who value their social status and social connections and may influence them to consume the advertised product.

Next, the use of the *ego* segment infers an appeal to consumers' emotions to create an association between alcohol consumption and feelings of self-worth (Jung & Hovland, 2016). An example is *Gulder Beer's* ad message, “*Whatever they say, always remember that it's your journey; own it, enjoy it.*” By highlighting the benefits of drinking alcohol, these ads create an association between consumption and feelings of self-importance (Jung & Hovland, 2016). Contrary to the positive benefits Babor et al. (2017) note that this could have negative implications for men who are vulnerable to alcohol use disorders, as they may be more

susceptible to these types of messages and perceive alcohol consumption as a way to enhance their self-image.

Although the results suggest that Ghanaian alcohol ads use the transmission view less frequently (35%), the prevalence of the *ration* segment (14.30%) under the transmission view supports Agarwal's (2020) assertion that the use of *ration* is a new trend in alcohol advertising. Advertisement messages like *Kakai Bitters'* “*twenty years of manufacturing experience...a blend of quality Ghanaian and Chinese herbs...drink to release pressure and tension*” suggest how alcohol companies use the *ration* segment to reinforce alcohol's functional benefits, such as its ability as an aphrodisiac to help 'weak' men perform well in bed (Fiaveh, 2020), cope with stress, or as an appetizer (Frimpong-Mansoh et al., 2021).

Association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of drink advertised.

We found a significant association between the use of Taylor's Wheel and the type of alcohol advertised. Relating our findings to Venger and Wolburg's (2019) cross-cultural (Ukraine and USA) study of 7 beer ads and 43 non-beer drinks, which concluded that there were more transmission view ads than ritual view ads, we propose that, in addition to their suggestions of culture and time, the type of alcoholic drink being advertised can influence the ad strategy.

Our finding also implies that using the ritual view strategy, Ghanaian alcohol advertisers draw on beer's association with sociocultural gatherings (Dueppen & Gallagher, 2021) like funerals and festivals (Ba-an et al., 2022) to create an emotional and cultural attachment sense of belonging among consumers to increase the appeal of their products.

On the other hand, the even use of ritual and transmission views by bitters advertisers suggests that bitters—which are frequently promoted as aphrodisiacs in Ghana (Fiaveh, 2020)—employ both emotional and functional appeals to sell. For example, in an *SM Bitters* ad, a man informs his friends how consuming it has made him potent “*It is a blend of medicinal*

herbs, roots, and leaves...when you drink it! [makes a fist to suggest the phallic power that comes with drinking the bitters] Can't you see my wife no longer bickers?

Implications

For academics, this study opens a new chapter on the prevalence and applicability of Taylor's Wheel, from a non-Western patriarchal setting with a focus on alcoholic ads. Scholars can replicate this study to explore other product categories. Furthermore, the study provides alcohol manufacturers and advertisers (especially new entrants) with information on the associations between Taylor's Wheel and types of alcohol in the Ghanaian market. They can employ such associations to develop more targeted and culturally sensitive ad campaigns.

Limitations and future lines of research

This novel attempt to investigate the prevalence of Taylor's Wheel in alcohol ads from a non-Western patriarchal setting, and the Wheel's association with the type of alcohol advertised, has limitations that should be considered for future studies. First, focusing solely on Ghana limits the generalization of our findings. A future cross-cultural study with similar non-Western countries can extend the scope to provide a more complete understanding of Taylor's Wheel's prevalence in such cultures. Second, our findings do not establish causality for the association between Taylor's Wheel and the type of alcohol advertised. Future studies should employ an experimental design to identify the underlying reasons why advertisers use specific strategies in alcohol ads and how they affect consumers' cognitive and affective responses.

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Tables

Table 1. *Description of the six segments of Taylor's (1999) wheel*

| View | Segments | Description |
|--------------|---------------|--|
| Ritual | 1. Ego | This segment employs Freudian psychoanalysis to appeal to consumers' egos. It caters to the consumer's self-perception or desired identity. Such ads appeal to brands that emphasize the consumers' self-worth and definition of who they are through product ownership or consumption (Finneman et al., 2023; Taylor, 1999). |
| | 2. Social | This strategy promotes societal approval through the use or ownership of the product. It draws on the Veblenian social-psychological model that promotes "love, attachment, affliction, notice, or admiration" (Taylor, 1999, p. 13). |
| | 3. Sensory | These ads appeal to customers' senses of smell, touch, hearing, taste, and sight (Finneman et al., 2023). Drawing on the Cyrenaics concept, Taylor (1999), argues that the approach gives clients "moments of pleasure" (p. 13) by showing how the product would satisfy their sensory needs. |
| Transmission | 4. Routine | This segment leans towards the Pavlovian learning model (Taylor, 1999). It emphasizes the product's place in a consumer's everyday life (Golan & Zaidner, 2008) it uses "convenience, ease of use, and product efficacy" to remind consumers to keep buying (Taylor, 1999, p. 13). |
| | 5. Acute need | This targets customers with immediate needs but limited time. It focuses on building brand recognition and familiarity for products to be "known and trusted" (Taylor, 1999, p. 13). |
| | 6. Ration | The Marshallian economic model (Kotler, 1965), which suggests "that purchasing decisions are the result of largely "rational" and conscious economic motivations" (Taylor, 1999, p. 8), together with the customer's need for information, underpins this segment of the wheel (Taylor, 1999). Ads in this segment employ logic-based information and persuasive strategies like projecting the product's unique selling point (USP) for the product to seem better than that of competitors (Golan & Zaidner, 2008; Ju & Park, 2015; Taylor, 1999). |

Own elaboration based on Finneman et al. (2023); Golan & Zaidner (2008); Ju & Park (2015);

Taylor (1999)

[Table 1, Page 3]

Table 2. *The frequency of Taylor's six-segment message strategies in Ghanaian alcohol ads*

| View | Message strategies | Frequency | % of Total |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|
| Ritual | Sensory | 46 | 25.30 % |
| | Social | 45 | 24.70% |
| | Ego | 30 | 16.50% |
| | Subtotal | 121 | 66.50% |
| Transmission | Ration | 26 | 14.30% |
| | Routine | 20 | 11.00% |
| | Acute need | 15 | 8.20% |
| | Subtotal | 61 | 33.50% |
| Total | | 182 | 100.00% |

Note. Expected frequency and percentage for each cell: 30.3 and 16.7%.

[Table 2, Page 7]

Table 3. *Test of association between Taylor's Wheel (Ritual or Transmission View) and type of alcohol advertised.*

| Type of Drink | | Taylor's message strategy | | Total |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------|
| | | Ritual | Transmission | |
| Beer | Observed | 78 | 29 | 107 |
| | Expected | 71 | 36 | 107 |
| | % within row | 72.9 % | 27.1 % | 100% |
| | % within column | 64.5% | 47.5% | 58.8% |
| Bitters | Observed | 43 | 32 | 75 |
| | Expected | 50 | 25 | 75 |
| | % within row | 57.3 % | 42.7 % | 100% |
| | % within column | 35.5% | 52.5% | 41.2% |
| Total | Observed | 121 | 61 | 182 |
| | Expected | 121 | 61 | 182 |
| | % within row | 66.5 % | 33.5 % | 100% |

Note. $\chi^2 (N = 182, 1) = 4.79, p = .029^*$ *significant at .05 **significant at $p < .001$

[Table 3, Page 7]

Table 4. *Frequency of Taylor's six message strategies per type of drink*

| Drink | | Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategies | | | | | | Total |
|---------|-----------------|---|-------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------|
| | | Ritual View | | | Transmission View | | | |
| | | 1 Ego | 2 Social | 3 Sensory | 4 Routine | 5 Acute Need | 6 Ration | |
| Beer | Observed | 21 | 30 | 27 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 107 |
| | % within row | 19.6% | 28.0% | 25.2% | 7.5% | 13.1% | 6.5% | 100.0% |
| | % within column | 70.0 % | 66.7 % | 58.7 % | 40.0 % | 93.3 % | 26.9 % | 58.8 % |
| Bitters | Observed | 9 | 15 | 19 | 12 | 1 | 19 | 75 |
| | % within row | 12.0% | 20.0% | 25.3% | 16.0% | 1.3% | 25.3% | 100.0% |
| | % within column | 30.0 % | 33.3 % | 41.3 % | 60.0 % | 6.7 % | 73.1 % | 41.2 % |
| Total | Observed | 30 | 45 | 46 | 20 | 15 | 26 | 182 |
| | % within column | 100.0 % | 100.0 % | 100.0 % | 100.0 % | 100.0 % | 100.0 % | 100.0 % |

Note. $\chi^2 (N = 182, 5) = 23.9, p < .001$.

[Table 4, Page 7]

Figure

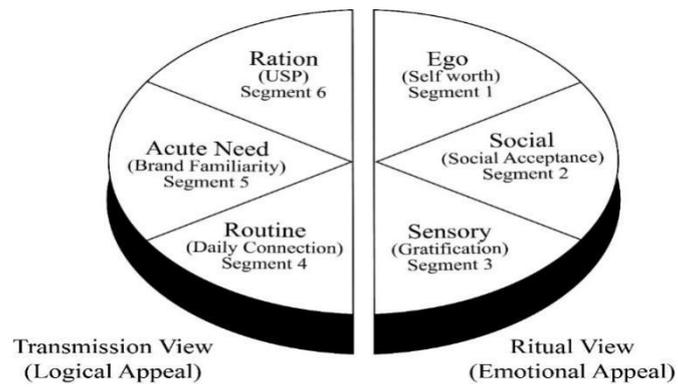


Figure 1. *Six-segment message strategy wheel (Taylor, 1999)*

[Figure 1, Page 3]