

An Investigation into Psychological Influence Techniques Using Language and Visuals in Milk Advertising in English and Vietnamese

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Abstract: This study delves into the realm of advertising psychology, specifically focusing on the employment of psychological influence techniques in milk advertisements in both English and Vietnamese. In the contemporary advertising landscape, where consumers are constantly bombarded with messages, understanding the nuances of psychological tactics becomes imperative for marketers. The research explores various elements integral to advertising effectiveness, including language, imagery, color, headlines, design style, brand logos, messages, and calls to action. Emphasizing the pivotal role of imagery, the study investigates how visuals create initial impressions and captivate viewer attention. Additionally, it scrutinizes the impact of advertising language, a specialized form of communication designed to elicit specific reactions and behaviors from the target audience. Drawing on a theoretical foundation rooted in Halliday's social semiotics, the research builds upon Leeuwen's advancements in semiotic theory, proposing 33 techniques that leverage language and imagery to influence consumer psychology. To provide empirical insights, the study utilizes a system of techniques put forth by the authors: Andrews, Van Leeuwen, Van Baaren (2013). Through the analysis of English and Vietnamese milk advertisements, this investigation aims to elucidate the nuanced effects of language and imagery in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors within the context of milk advertising.

Keywords: Psychology influence techniques, milk advertising, English, Vietnamese.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, advertising has become so prevalent that one can sit indoors and encounter numerous ads through print media, broadcasting, the Internet, etc. There are many factors that contribute to creating an impressive advertisement for those who come across it, such as language, imagery, color, headlines, design style, brand logos, messages, and calls to action that the designer wants to convey to the audience. Among these, imagery is the most crucial factor in advertising, as it can create an initial impression and attract the viewer's attention. Images are used to convey messages, demonstrate the

features and benefits of a product or service, as well as evoke emotions and generate interest.

From the theories of semiotics proposed by Halliday, numerous researchers have delved deeply into systematizing concepts within semiotics. Language researcher Leeuwen, in his work "Introducing Social Semiotics" (2005), provides an overarching view of social semiotics theory and introduces research methods and applications for analyzing text and social images. These theories have found applications in various prominent fields, such as the collaborative work "Reading Images: The

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Grammar of Visual Design" (Kress, G & Leeuwen, 1996). This book focuses on studying semiotic systems and the syntax of images, exploring how images are expressed in media texts and advertising.

Similarly, Clare Painter, in her book "Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis of Children's Picture Books" (2001), applies social semiotics to analyze and understand images and stories in children's picture books. Another noteworthy contribution is Wendy L. Bowcher's "Social Semiotics as Praxis: Text, Social Meaning Making, and Nabokov's Ada" (2018), presenting research on social semiotics and its application in analyzing language and social meaning in Vladimir Nabokov's work, "Ada." These studies showcase the versatility of social semiotics in diverse fields, providing valuable insights into the analysis of language, images, and social meaning in various contexts.

Based on Halliday's social semiotics theory, Leeuwen adopted and developed the semiotic theory to a new level. Along with his colleagues, they proposed "hidden persuasion 33 psychology influence techniques in advertising" using language and imagery in advertising to impact customer psychology. In this study, we will use the system of techniques proposed by the research group Andrews,

Van Leeuwen, Van Baaren (2013) to analyze and describe samples of American English and Vietnamese milk advertisements to clarify the effects of using language and imagery in English and Vietnamese milk advertising.

Building upon the knowledge of social psychology, particularly relying on the delineation of fundamental human needs through Maslow's hierarchy, the group of authors, Andrew, Leeuwen, and Baaren, has constructed a system comprising 33 techniques in psychologically influencing target audiences. These techniques are categorized into three groups aligning with the basic human needs: instinctual, social, and personal.

Based on the characteristics of the collected data, which are static advertisements in the form of posters from press and the official websites of milk brands, unlike dynamic video ads on television or other media, our analysis focus in this study is on language and imagery. Therefore, we have selectively chosen a few techniques suitable for examination in our research across three dimensions: instinctual, social, and personal. Other techniques not included in this study are hoped to be explored in future research endeavors.

Table 1:

Instinctual needs	Social needs	Personal needs
1. Fluency	1. Social proof	1. Promised land
2. Mere exposure	2. Attractiveness	2. Humour
3. Anchoring	3. Fleeting attraction	3. That's not all
4. Truthworthiness	4. Anthropomorphism	4. Implementation intentions
5. Recency & Primacy	5. Authority	5. God terms

2. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Approach

Statistical methods are utilized to determine the quantity and frequency of occurrences, calculating ratios based on the frequency of appearance of the identified research objects. Based on this, we categorize and compile corresponding tables. This allows us to identify the most frequently used objects, revealing common characteristics.

Qualitative Approach

Descriptive methods, analysis, and synthesis are employed to highlight the features of language and image techniques used in the sampled milk advertisements from a semiotic perspective.

The study utilizes 45 samples of American English milk advertisements and 45 samples of Vietnamese milk advertisements taken from posters

of well-known dairy brands in the United States and Vietnam. The language data are collected from milk advertising posters on various websites and official social media pages of different brands. Designing survey sheets and conducting surveys, followed by employing statistical methods to generate synthesized tables based on specific criteria.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Techniques Used in English and Vietnamese Milk Advertisements

3.1.1 Techniques Based on Instinctual Needs

After analyzing language data from American English and Vietnamese milk advertisements based on the criteria of five techniques: flow, pure contact, reliability, disruption and reframing, beginning and end, the synthesized results are as follows:

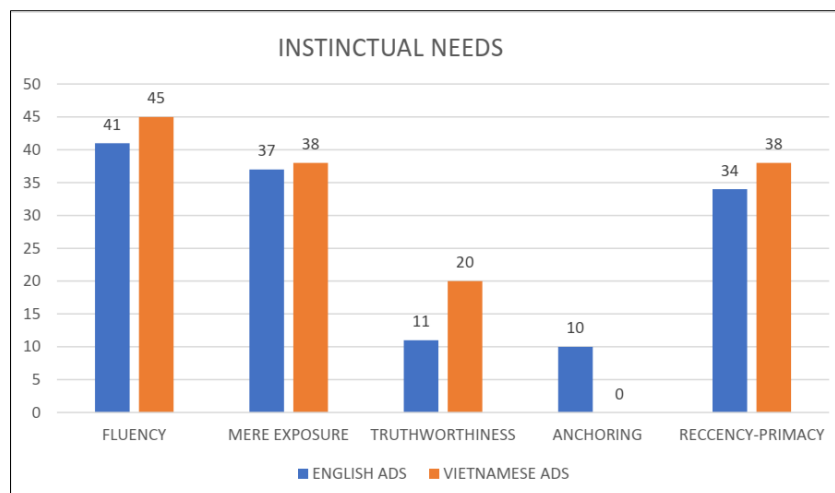


Chart 1: Techniques Impacting Instinctual Needs

Based on the comparative data above, the techniques: fluency, mere exposure, and recency-primacy are widely utilized in both American English and Vietnamese milk advertisements, with approximately equivalent levels of usage. This reaffirms the similarity in basic instinctual needs among individuals, despite differences in categories, ethnicities, and social cultures. They still share fundamental common ground.

In the analysis of the technique fluency, accounting for 91.1% in American English milk ads and 100% in Vietnamese milk ads, the researchers Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz (1998) demonstrated that flow increases viewer preference and induces more positive emotions than negative ones. A clear, simple, and easily perceptible message fosters a processing flow that contributes to a positive, favorable experience for the viewer. Conversely, complex products or messages that require more time may lead to negative emotions for the audience.

For example, in American English milk advertisements taken from two well-known US dairy

brands, 'Clover' and 'Organic Valley,' we observe that the product names are not complex. They have moderate length, typically comprising two to three syllables in one word, often consisting of 1 to 2 words, and are constructed with easily pronounceable elements. Similarly, in the case of two Vietnamese milk brands, 'TH true milk' and 'Vinamilk,' the brand names are highly memorable. For instance, 'TH' contains only two consonant letters, serving both as an abbreviation for the brand and conveying the product's message upon entering the market—'True Happiness.

Furthermore, when examining the font styles used in the advertisements, whether in English or Vietnamese, they consistently employ common or artistic fonts—elegant yet easy to read, not causing discomfort for the viewer. For instance, in the Clover (US) milk ad, the line 'Happy National Chocolate Milk Day' is presented in a visually appealing, soft, and uplifting font, evoking positive emotions. Similarly, 'TH true milk' opts for a standard font but plays with different sizes to highlight the brand.



3.1.2 Techniques Based on Social Needs

When examining social needs, there is a notable difference in the techniques used in American English and Vietnamese milk advertisements. The technique that exhibits a significant disparity is 'fleeting attraction,' accounting for a substantial

71.1% in the Vietnamese milk ad samples, while only representing 28.9% in the American English milk ad samples. Fleeting attraction is created through establishing a sense of similarity between the message communicator and the target object.

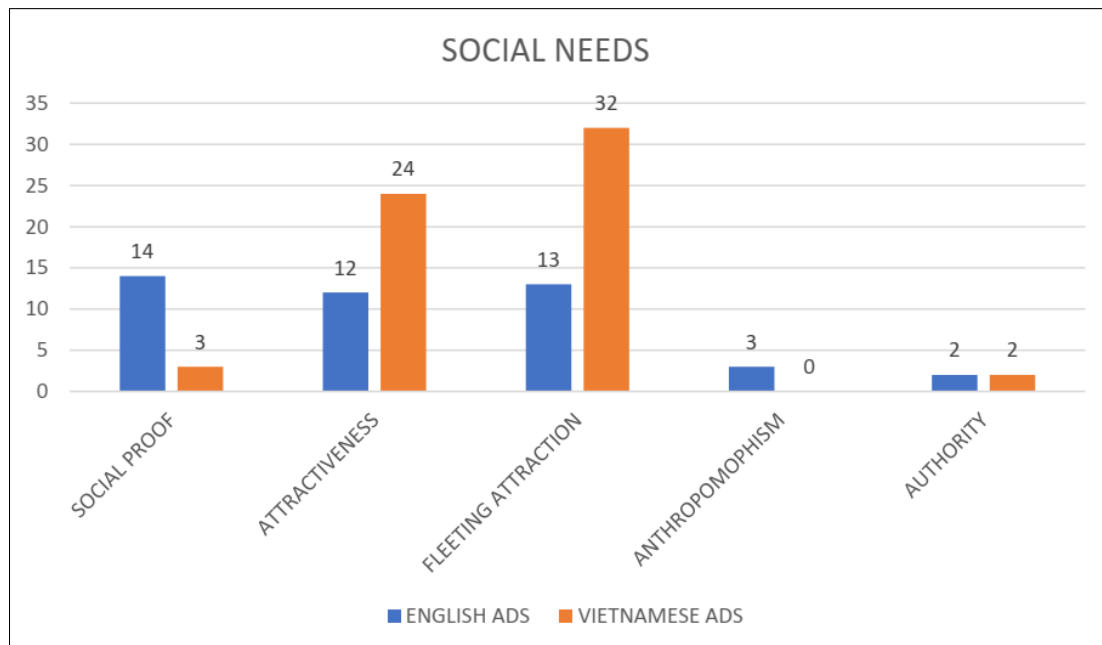


Chart 2: Techniques Impacting Social Needs

According to Burger, Soroka, Gonzago, Murphy & Somervell (2001) in their study 'The Effect of Fleeting Attraction on Compliance to a Request,' they presented evidence that individuals who are not familiar but share common interests or some

common characteristic, after chatting for a few minutes, are more likely to comply with a request compared to others with no prior interaction. Hence, the impressions made during the first encounter are crucial.



In Vietnamese milk advertisements, we observe the presence of cute cartoon characters, such as adorable pigs, who can act and speak like humans. These characters are aimed at children (targeting specific baby formula), and incorporating animated characters creates a sense of familiarity and connection with children, making it easier for them to relate. In contrast, in American English milk advertisements, the imagery often features women

and cows in a bonding, affectionate manner, reminiscent of the loving relationship between mothers and their children. The theme of love and affection is universally touching and creates a positive sentiment for the viewers.

3.1.3 Techniques Based on Personal Needs

When examining techniques that impact individual needs, the most prominent technique is

the 'God terms' technique, while the appearance of humor as a technique is relatively scarce. However, the disparity between the remaining techniques in

American English and Vietnamese milk advertisements is quite significant.

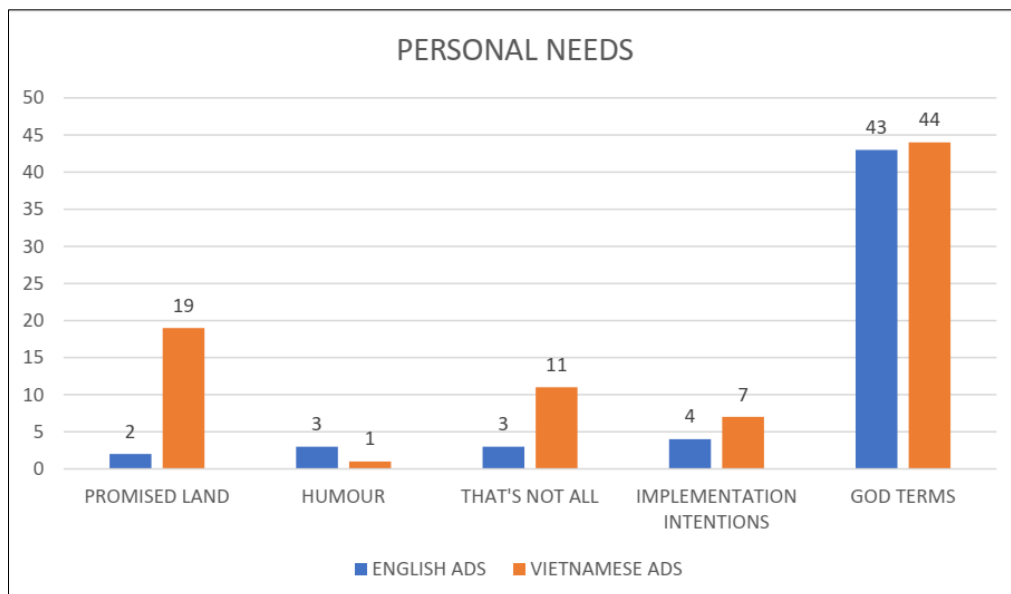
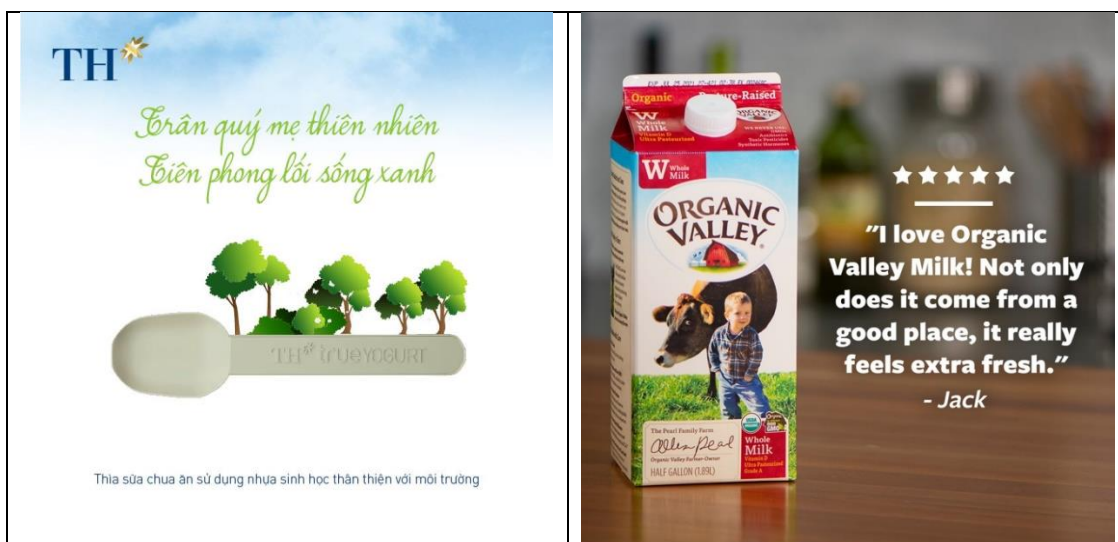


Chart 3: Techniques impacting personal needs

In advertisements, designers often convey a certain message to acknowledge the product either indirectly or directly by using the 'God terms' technique—language used here can carry a strongly positive or strongly negative connotation (the language of demons) to capture the viewers' attention. However, in most advertisements, especially those related to milk (targeting children

and adolescents), the use of strongly negative language is highly limited as it could have a certain impact on the psychology of this specific audience. This aligns with our prediction, as up to 97.8% of Vietnamese milk advertisements and 95.6% of American English milk advertisements employ this technique and predominantly use strongly positive language.



A deeply meaningful word combined with a product or brand will reinforce the image of that product, such as 'precious,' 'pioneer,' 'Mother Nature,' or in English, 'love,' 'good,' 'extra fresh.' When the purpose is motivational, designers will use words that align with the product's criteria to persuade the viewers. According to Burke (1945, xv),

emphasizing various options to build motives, or available options when putting action 'in the context of' something else, through his dramatic pentad, including action, scene, agent, agency, and purpose.

Therefore, presenting valuable words always implies a 'promised land' to attract customers

to the product, as it can help them achieve their desired goals. It's surprising that the usage rate of this technique is 42.2% in Vietnamese milk advertisements, while it's only 4.4% in American English milk advertisements. This indicates that making promises to stimulate personal needs is prevalent among the Vietnamese, suggesting that they may easily be swayed by these promises, even if they may be exaggerated for the seller's purpose.

3.2 Evaluating the effects of Using Psychological Influence Techniques in Milk Advertisements on Viewers

Based on the desire to understand which advertisements effectively apply the mentioned techniques, we have selected 10 advertisements for evaluation: 5 in American English (ES01, ES03, ES20, ES23, ES45) and 5 in Vietnamese (VS14, VS19, VS21, VS34, VS42). We asked 102 participants to choose their favorite advertisements. When examining the American English advertisements, ES20 accounted for 28.5%, while ES23 only accounted for 18.6%.

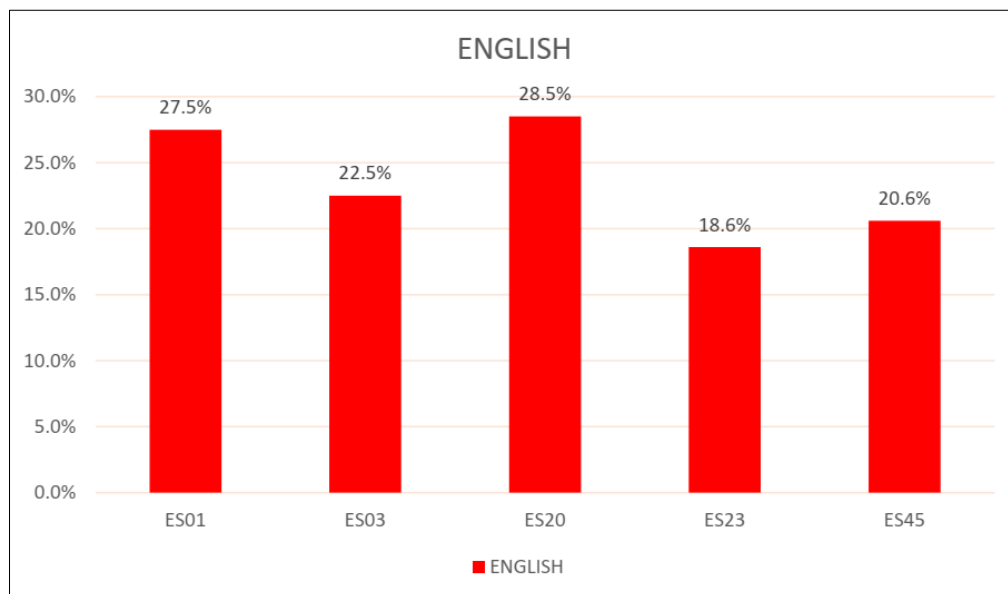


Chart 4. The percentage of favourite advertising English posters

In the selection criteria for Vietnamese milk advertising posters, we also chose a sample that meets the most techniques and coincidentally, ES20

is the advertising poster that meets the most technical criteria (11 out of 15 criteria).



As for advertising poster ES23, it contains the least amount of information, merely representing

a user experience with the product. Therefore, it may lack sufficient grounds to build consumer trust.



Meanwhile, the selection rates for Vietnamese-language advertising posters vary

significantly, indicating that many individuals are attracted to ads with strong impression factors.

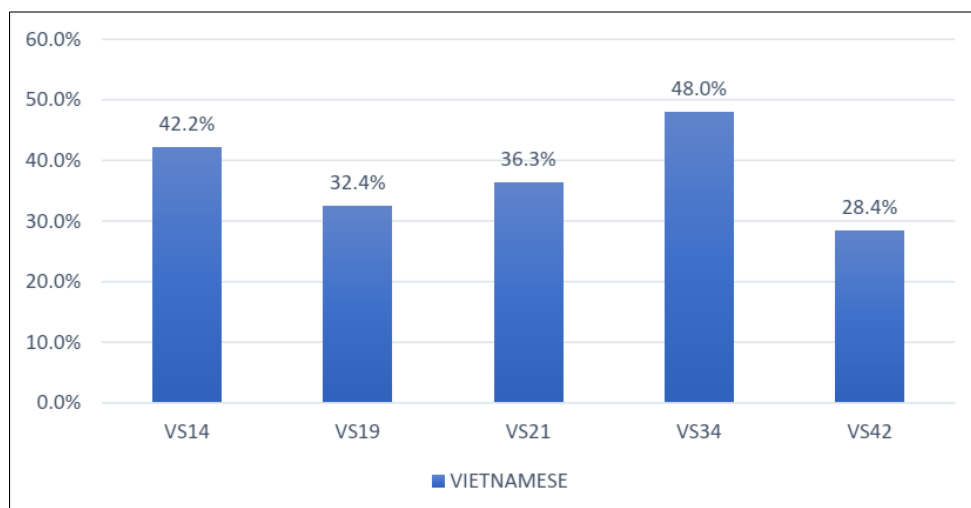


Chart 5: The percentage of favourite advertising Vietnamese posters

From the collected results, we observed that in Vietnamese-language ads, the most favored sample is

VS34 (48%), while the least chosen is sample VS42 (28.4%).



Although, when examining the applied technical criteria in the two samples, they may not be the ones that meet the most, they are positioned at the top and bottom of the selection by participants. The interesting point is that despite both samples using representative facial images, and even using a more famous figure (celebrity chef Võ Quốc) in sample VS42, it has the lowest selection rate. This reflects the criterion of the 'attraction' technique

being outstandingly demonstrated, and females always have a particular allure when appearing in ad samples.

Based on the 15 techniques examined, we have constructed a set of 10 criteria to facilitate easier selection for participants, as some techniques overlap in terms of criteria, so we have excluded duplicates.

Table 2:

No	CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A FAVORITE ADVERTISEMENT
1	Short and understandable information
2	Familiar images, positive actions
3	Impressive and attractive representative face
4	Incorporation of unexpected elements, attention-grabbing
5	Interesting product message placed in a noticeable location: beginning or end
6	Use of features with human-like qualities or animal anthropomorphism
7	Presence of a celebrity or influential figure in the ad
8	Inclusion of humor, interesting elements
9	Offering many benefits, shocking promotions
10	Use of memorable and unique language

When asked 'When looking at an advertising poster, which of the following factors will capture your

attention and liking?' participants provided interesting feedback, as shown in the chart below:

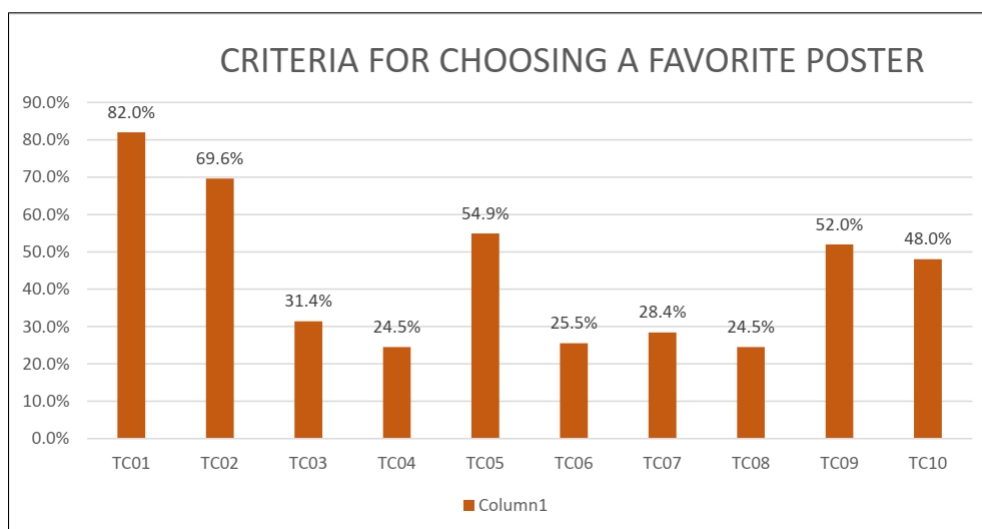


Chart 6:

Based on the data, criterion 1 'concise, easy-to-understand information' is the top criterion chosen by viewers, with a convincing figure of 82%. In contrast, criteria 4 and 8 fall into the group of least chosen criteria with the same percentage of 24.5%. The group of 4 criteria with the second-highest number of choices after criterion 1 includes: TC02, TC05, TC09, and TC10. A notable point is that among the top 5 chosen criteria, 4 criteria are related to the use of language in advertising. From this, we recognize the importance of using language in advertising alongside images, even though in the remaining 5 criteria with the lowest number of

choices (TC03 (31.4%), TC07 (28.4%), TC06 (25.5%), TC04, 08 (24.5%)), these are related to images appearing in advertising. However, a persuasive advertisement cannot be without impressive images; there must be a harmonious combination of both language and images to create a creative, appealing, and attention-grabbing advertisement for viewers.

Besides, the motivations for participants should be paid attention to choose to purchase a particular product, and we obtained the following data:

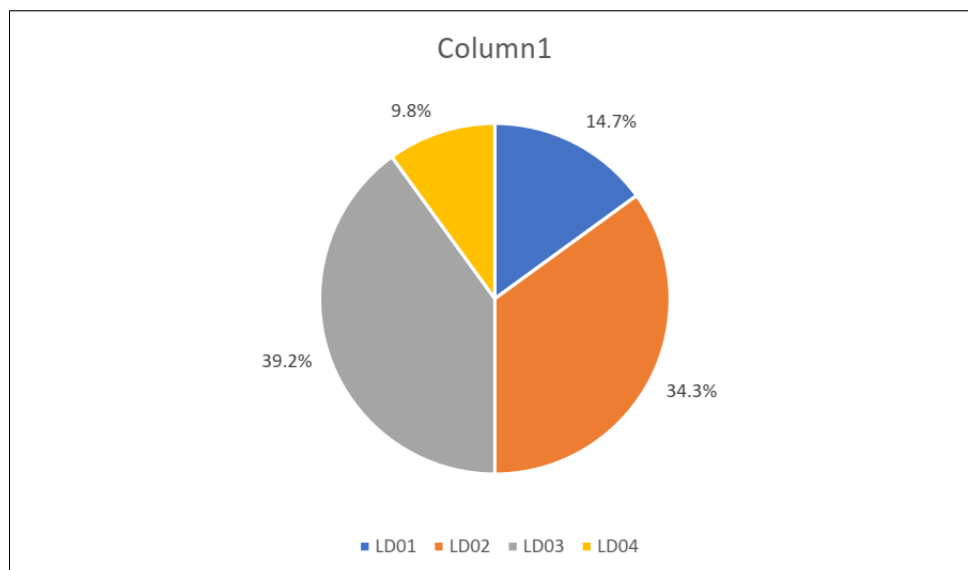


Chart 7:

When surveying, we provided four reasons for deciding to choose a product within the same brand, as follows:

Table 3:

Code	Content
LD01	Having idols, celebrities, influential figures representing the brand
LD02	Advertisements showcasing the product impressively, prompting you to buy that product.
LD03	Numerous benefits, promotions related to the product.
LD04	Other reasons.

The number LD03 'having numerous benefits, promotions related to the product' was the most chosen, accounting for 39.2%, while other reasons accounted for the least at 14.7%. An interesting point is that reason number 02, which is related to considering advertisements as one of the determinants for purchasing a product, ranked second with a percentage of 34.3%. It can be said that advertisements play a significant role in increasing the desire to buy a product. This indicates that advertisements play a solid role in reaching the target customers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After careful consideration and filtering out 15 common techniques related to language and imagery from the 33 psychological manipulation techniques proposed by the authors' group, to examine their applicability in milk advertisements in English and Vietnamese, we found that these ads use at least one psychological manipulation technique, and the more techniques they use, the higher the likelihood of being liked.

Through statistical analysis and a direct survey of 90 milk ads in English and Vietnamese, along with a questionnaire for 102 viewers, we observed that certain techniques are used consistently in milk ads, such as fluency, pure contact,

and the language of the deity. However, we were genuinely surprised to find that some techniques we expected to be highly prevalent, such as reliability, anthropomorphism, or yet-to-come techniques, were not used as much as anticipated.

Furthermore, from these results, we also noticed the very positive impact of employing psychological manipulation techniques in language and imagery to attract and capture the attention of viewers in milk ads. However, a more in-depth analysis requires further detailed research to clarify these effects.

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