

## A Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Narrative Commercials' Brand Image Building: A Cognitive Poetics Approach

Guiyu DAI, Yang LIU & Jiao WANG

Center for Foreign Literature and Culture / School of English for International Business at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China

**Abstract:** The creation of a potential intellectual, psychological or emotional connection with the customers through revealing the hard and soft attributes of a brand is the general mechanism in brand image building of both Chinese and foreign narrative commercials. But the distinction of Chinese and foreign narrative commercials' brand image building mainly lies in the aspects like thinking mode, gender preference and parental love for children, which result in different ways of creating the image of Maker, Product and User through Possible World, Figure-Ground and Prototype to create both the hard and soft attributes of a brand. This paper provides an analytical mode for intercultural study of commercials' brand image building by combining the theories of cognitive poetics with Alexander Biel's Brand Image Building model so as to broaden the perspective of business discourse analysis.

**Keywords:** Brand image, narrative commercials, cognitive poetics, hard attribute, soft attribute

### 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of new media and the diversification of people's ideas, TV commercials/advertisements, an essential publicity channel, play a vital role in introducing products and services, attracting customers, and upgrading corporate image. Therefore, a well-designed advertisement can not only persuade consumers to pay attention to goods or services, but also disseminate the enterprise culture. A good business TV advertisement can not only attract consumers' emotional and intellectual response, but also illustrate the physical properties of a commodity and transmit spiritual values embedded in the product as well. So nowadays, brand image building through advertisement has become more and more important for an enterprise to achieve success and gain favorable reputation in the competitive market. Narrative commercials or storytelling advertisements, which are different from traditional advertisements filling up with empty and fluttering slogans, are characterized with legendary stories, dramatic conflicts, transmissibility and inheritability and thus become the most effective and sustainable tool in catching customers' attention. (Wang et al., 2011, p. 112). Up to now, research studies on narrative commercials have been mainly conducted on the basis of the theories such as multi-modality, narratology, systematic functional linguistics, etc. Few studies have tried to explore narrative commercials from the perspective of cognitive poetics. For this reason, the current study chooses twelve narrative commercials (six English narrative commercials and six Chinese narrative commercials) as examples to discuss the comparative study of English

and Chinese brand image building through a combination of the three sub-theories of cognitive poetics: Possible Worlds, Figure-Ground, Prototype with the three sub-images of Biel's (Biel, 1993, p. RC-8) Brand Image theory: Image of Maker, Image of Product, and Image of User so as to find a new angle of business discourse analysis and at the same time to discover the similarity and difference between Chinese and English Narrative Commercials' Brand Image Building.

## 2. Theoretical Basis

### 2.1. The Main Concepts of Cognitive Poetics

About one century ago, the Danish psychologist Rubin (Rubin, 1922, p. 186) put forward the theory of Figure-Ground. Contrasting to physical and moving objects respectively in the past, the range of Figure and Ground now is bigger and more abstract, ranging from tangible objects such as humans and cars to intangible objects such as imagery and thinking. Figure-Ground of cognitive poetics helps readers to build a systemic grammar framework and explore in-depth discourse implications. "The part of a visual field or textual field that is most likely to be seen as the Figure will have one or more of the following features that make it prominent: it will be regarded as a self-defined object or feature in its own right, with well-defined edges separating it from the ground; it will be moving in relation to the static ground; it will precede the Ground in time or space; it will be a part of the Ground that has broken away, or emerges to become the Figure; it will be more detailed, better focused, brighter, or more attractive than the rest of the field; it will be on top of, or in front of, or above, or larger than the rest of the field that is then the ground." (Stockwell, 2002, p. 15). Specifically, figures undergo perceptual processing earlier than ground regions (Hecht & Vecera, 2014, p. 147). In real life, however, the interpretation of discourses is rather dynamic: just as the prominence of Figure and the retreat of Ground, the unusual phenomena of the retreat of Figure and the prominence of Ground exist as well. As new focuses are chosen continuously, previous focuses are neglected in the process of discourse understanding; therefore, corresponding experience of understanding can be accumulated as a whole to complete the overall interpretation. Figure-Ground theory has been applied in sentence analysis, text interpretation and translation as well (Zhou & Cheng, 2013, pp. 68-71). Prominence function, and referential function of Ground not only play an important role in interpreting sentence structures, but also have unique style in text interpretation (Wan, 2013).

As an important concept of cognitive poetics, Possible Worlds theory states that "the actual world is only one of a multitude of possible worlds..." (Stockwell, 2002, p. 92), and people can make use of the theory to deal with the mental representation built in literature reading and discourse analysis. Originated from G. W. Leibniz's definition of possibility, Possible Worlds theory claims that world is the combination of possible worlds, while the actual world is 'the best of all possible worlds' (Leibniz, 1985, p. 125). Therefore, an important aspect of the comprehension of texts generally, and narrative texts in particular, is the cognitive representation of the 'world' of the text — this does not simply involve the ability to conceive of a sequence of events that 'happen' in the text world, but also the ability to contemplate and make sense of other events that are just imagined, wished for, hypothesized about, and so on (Gavins & Steen, 2003, p. 83). In addition, Elena Semino pointed out that Possible Worlds

theory provides a useful framework for the definition of fiction, the description of the internal structure of fictional worlds, and the differentiation between different genres (Xiong, 2011, p.13). According to the acquired information and background of readers, though readers might realize what they are reading cannot be achieved in the real world, they still can precisely understand the meaning and master the connotations of discourses and the world building, by which they project discourses into the corresponding situations in the real world to further strengthen the understanding.

Prototype theory, originated from Rosch's (Rosch, 1973, p. 328) idea in 1973, refers to the concept of hierarchical categories in cognitive science. The prototype is in the center of categories while the rest of the members are distributed around the prototype. The central tenet of Prototype theory is that concepts, rather than being defined by formal rules or mappings, are represented by prototypes and that categorization is based on similarity to these prototypes (Lawry & Tang, 2009, p. 1546). According to Rosch, many common semantic categories like FRUIT or FURNITURE are based on concepts with a prototype structure (Hampton, 1995, p. 686). In relation to various cultures, the members of prototype have obtained the flexibility required by changeable environment. The prominence of prototype varies due to different minorities, cultural backgrounds, customs, geographic locations (Shi, 2006, p. 135). The recognition that prototype prevails in linguistic categories will play an important role in the trend of linguistic studies and in various research fields such as syntax, semantics, and language learning (Lu, 2006, p. 141).

## **2.2. Biel's Brand Image Theory about Commercials**

As a medium in enterprise promotion, business advertisement is of great importance for enterprises to build renowned brand image. Narrative commercials with their vividness, storytelling quality, and easy transmissibility are favored by the public and have been used by enterprises as the most effective and sustainable tool to build brand image and transmit brand culture. Many scholars have tried to explore what kind of brand image models in narrative commercials can have both intellectual and emotional appeal to increase the impact of enterprises. They have constructed various brand image models, such as Aaker's (1995) model, Keller's (2013) model, Krishnan's (1996) model, and Biel's (1993) model, all of which contain the six elements of a brand: attribute, interest, value, culture, individuality, and user (Jiang, 2003, p. 107). Through these six factors, consumers get to know a brand image and process different information, and gradually establish an overall perception about the brand, which can be deeply remembered by connecting brand information with daily life. In his model of brand image, Biel (1993, p. RC-8) shows that brand image is represented by three sub-images, including corporate image (image of maker), image of product, and image of user (Figure 1).

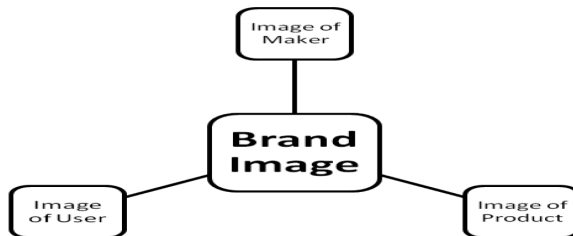


Figure 1. Biel's Brand Image Model

The degree of these three sub-images' contribution to brand image building varies according to different products. Brand image is a comprehensive reflection of brand elements in people's mind, in which brand personality and features are important ingredients which are shown in the interaction between customers and brands, that is, consumers express opinions and exert impact on brand through purchasing behaviors. Biel (1993, p. RC-9) states that there are two advantages of brand personality in brand image building: brand personality, "if it taps more enduring values, has a far better chance of continuing longevity; and brand personality encourages more active processing on the part of the consumer, suggesting that he or she can interpret a brand's image in a manner that is more personally meaningful." This brand information stored in people's mind could be activated by some stimulus or information trigger, especially when related associations are aroused, such as functional attributes, hard attributes and soft attributes. Jiang (2003, p. 111) points out that 'hard attributes' refers to the cognition of functional attributes, while 'soft attributes' refers to the emotional benefit of a brand. With the development of market economy, customers' need for individuality and emotion has increased, so soft attributes become a more important factor in brand differentiation.

### 3. Comparison of Chinese and Foreign Narrative Commercials' Brand Image Building

In this section, twelve narrative commercials (six Chinese narrative commercials and six English narrative commercials) will be analyzed based on the three sub-images of Biel's Brand Image theory to show how images of makers (corporate images), images of products and images of users are constructed by applying the three sub-theories: Possible Worlds, Figure-Ground and Prototype of Cognitive Poetics and where the intercultural similarities and differences of English and Chinese commercials exist in the brand image building process.

#### 3.1. Brand Image Building in Chinese Narrative Commercials

##### 3.1.1. Constructing the Image of Maker in Possible Worlds

Narrative commercials featured with storytelling usually use possible worlds model to create a good and positive brand image in the minds of consumers. Consumers seek experiences appealing to their emotions and dreams, and stories can help create such experiences (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & Riel, 2013, p. 286). The following is the English version of a Chinese

TV commercial which is the 10th anniversary narrative commercial “Bill Diary” of Alipay.com Co., Ltd. It is a good sample to study the Image of Maker from the perspective of Possible Worlds Theory.

#### Example 1

##### **Bill Diary**

*In 2004, I graduated from college and it was a new start of my life. The biggest expenditure from Alipay was the career suits, which I think is really funny now.*

*In 2006, I began to understand that both love and drinking capacity need practice after 3 blind dates and 3 refunds in Alipay.*

*In 2009, 12% of the expenditure is for cinema tickets which were always in pairs with consecutive numbers. The annual utility bills were paid by him (boyfriend).*

*In 2012, 26 cellphone Alipay bills meant that I forgot to bring my purse and paid the overtime meal 26 times late at night through Alipay.*

*In 2013, I was really not good at math but I learned financing finally. Thank you! Yu'ebao.*

*On April 29th, 2014, I received a bank transfer which is the first salary of my husband. Every bill is your diary. 10 years witnesses Alipay's remarkable financing features and the wonderful changes in 300 million people's life. Alipay understands your needs and wins your trust.*

(The Chinese version can be browsed at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNzQ3NzI1MjU2.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNzQ3NzI1MjU2.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2))

The above commercial depicts 6 scenes which represent 6 different periods of an Alipay's customer's life and creates a possible world based on the customer's own life experience. This possible world covers the customer's 10 years' experience of work, love, everyday life and marriage in accordance with these scenes — the first career suit, bitterness after consecutive blind dates, tiredness of overtime work late at night, expenditure paid by the boyfriend, managing money matters, happiness of receiving husband's first month salary. Alipay appears in all those scenes of the possible world and meticulously cares its customers' daily life. At the same time, Alipay and its customers go through the growing process together and share happiness and sorrow. This kind of customer-oriented care and interdependence between Alipay and customers makes up the soft attributes of the corporate image. The last sentence of this commercial, “10 years witnesses Alipay's remarkable financing features and the wonderful changes in 300 million people's life”, indicates Alipay's Functional Attributes — excellent bill management and calculation and 300 million customers, which reflects the great market share in mainland China. Development of financial services depends on consumers' understanding and the extent of their trust level. Usually, financial services' commercials use traditional advertising which cannot make up for its shortcomings of intangible features of their services. Narrative commercials establish consumer-centric possible worlds whose function is to shorten the psychological distance between the financial industry and consumers so as to strengthen consumers' awareness of financial service features and increase the trust level of consumers. Although the possible world created by the narrative story may not be entirely in line with the

real world, it can represent consumers' expectations toward financial services. The real world is one of the countless possible worlds and a possible world can become a real one when it passes the test of objectivity. In this commercial, Alipay, as a financial corporation, combines its functional attributes with its soft attributes and creates a meticulous, thoughtful, loyal and progressive corporate image through the narrative commercial.

Another example is a narrative commercial of BNP Paribas Cardif TCB Life Insurance Company, which tells a heart-touching story about the love between a father and his son. The English transcription is shown as below:

#### Example 2

##### ***Give Your Love to Your Dearest***

*This is a normal small fishing village. In this village, my young father raised me all by himself. My father never went to school when he was young, so naturally he became a fisherman in the village. My father is a traditional Chinese father, serious and silent. In my eyes, father didn't know how to express love for me, let alone would he speak out. With a smile, he touched my head, which I think is the best way for him to show his kindness to me. When I made mistakes, his criticism or blame becomes much easier. But father rarely beat me, except for once. Then, I cried and he cried too. That night, my father came into my room to apply medication on my wound. I pretended to be asleep. I knew father loved me. Most of the time our life was hard, but father was always hardworking. Father had always had a hope that we could have a house to live in. Father paid more efforts than the others in order to fulfill his dream. That Chinese New Year, we had our own house and my father was very happy. I was also very happy, too. Time flies, as every word that we said, once spoken out, never returned. My father became sick at the age of 58. He couldn't find his way back home. Bed sheets were washed the day before yesterday and the sofa became wet again today (father suffered from incontinence of urine). My career has just begun, but I need to go home often to bring him back home. As time went by, sometimes he even forgot who I was. Sometimes he was sober and sometimes puzzled, which was far beyond my ability to take care of him. I hope he could have better care and I could continue my normal life. Father was sober one day, he telephoned me. Before entering the nursing house, in the doorway I heard the complaint of the caregivers. At that moment, it was quiet in the room, only to hear his urine dripping along the edge of the bed. A letter was on father's desk; I opened it and found my father's characters and an old photograph. The letter reads: "I'm sorry and I make you a lot of trouble. I do not want to forget you and I'm trying to remember you. You must take care of yourself." Beneath the letter, there was an insurance policy which was his lifelong efforts and all his love of me.*

(The Chinese version can be browsed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqXYJ7HWtjg>)

This narrative commercial talks about a single father who was struggling in a small fishing village to bring up his son. Through years of hard work, he completed his hope — having a house. His son grew up and started to work outside the small village. The father thought he could

live a better life with his son, but he unfortunately suffered from dementia. He still loved his son even if he could no longer remember his son, because the love had already been preserved in an insurance policy. This touching story makes up a Possible World in which, there are pictures of father's love for his child: "*father rarely beat the child, except for one time*", "*give me some medicine*", "*I'm sorry and I make you a lot of trouble. I do not want to forget you and I'm trying to remember you*". There are also pictures of the son's love for his father "*bring him back home*", "*I hope he could have better care*". The care and love illustrates the emotional side of human nature. We all will grow old. When we are in our 60s or 70s, it becomes very difficult to know what we look like. When we were children, our parents took good care of us. So, in return we have the responsibility to take care of them when we grow up. When disasters appear, what should we do? In this Possible World, father used the insurance as a way to protect his lifelong efforts and his love for his son. This kind of story may happen anywhere. You cannot know when and how the misfortune will occur, but you can decide how to respond when it comes. It shows the hard attributes of TCB Life Insurance Company's corporate image: risk-preventing, monetary management. The touching narration of the father's love for his son indicates the soft attributes of the corporate image: care, support, love, relationship. Building a corporate image through the combination of hard and soft attributes in the Possible World of a narrative commercial can strengthen the emotional connection between the insurance company and the customers.

### 3.1.2. Foregrounding of the Image of the Product in the Figure-Ground

In daily life, people tend to regard perception as a Figure (or an object) and Ground; the former is what is being observed and the latter is where a Figure is generated. "The Figure is a moving or conceptually movable entity whose path, site, or orientation is conceived as a variable, the particular value of which is the relevant issue. The Ground is a reference entity, one that has a stationary setting relative to a reference frame, with respect to which the Figure's path, site, or orientation is characterized." (Talmy, 2000, p. 312). Figure-Ground can be used to build the image of the product. The following commercial is a festive television commercial from Padiberas Nasional Berhad (BERNAS). It depicts a story about family love. Please look at the English transcription below:

#### Example 3

##### ***More Rice***

*Voice Over: My mother is all that I have. When I was growing up, she was always busy.*

***Scene1 (Mother in workplace)***

*Mother: Your clothes are ready.*

*Customer: That's quick.*

*Mother: I'm rushing to pick my son up.*

*Mother is riding a bicycle to pick up her son.*

***Scene 2 (Childhood)***

*Voice Over: The only time I saw her was during meals.*

*Mother (to son): More rice?*

*Voice Over: However busy, she'd still eat together with me.  
Mother (to son): More rice?*

**Scene 3** (Present situation)

*Mother: More rice?  
Son shook his head and left.  
Mother: Are you coming back for dinner?  
Son (impatient): Don't know!  
Voice Over: As time went by, I saw her less and less.*

**Scene 4** (Son in workplace)

*Son (answering mother's call): Hello, Ma.  
Mother: Are you coming home for Chinese New Year?  
Son: I'm busy...Talk to you later.  
Mother: It's all right. I won't bother you.  
Colleague: Hey, it's almost Chinese New Year...Not going home again?*

**Scene 5** (New Year's Eve)

*Thinking about the happy time with mother, the son decided to go home to have dinner with his mother, because his mother was lonely on New Year's Eve.  
Son: Ma!*

*Voice Over: But now I realize why she always said "more rice". Because the longer I ate, the more time she could spend with me. One of the best gifts in life is time that you give to your family.  
(The Chinese version can be browsed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDLntfrYkLc>)*

The commercial recounts a son and a single mother's daily life. When the son was young, his mother would try all her best to prepare and enjoy meal with her only son and encourage him to eat more rice. However busy her work was, she never failed to do it. As the boy grew older, he became unwilling to have meals with his mother, though his mother wanted him to stay with her. After he made a living in the city, he had less and less time with his mother because of the busy work and tight schedule. He had not returned home for several New Years' reunion. Every year his mother would make a call and ask him whether he would come or not. Thinking about his mother's loneliness and their happy meal time when he was young, he decided to go home for annual reunion meals without telling his mother about it so as to give her a surprise. "*One of the best gifts in life is time that you give to your family*" is the really significant thing for a person and his / her family, which makes the family reunion (family bond) becomes the Figure in the commercial. The Figure will be foregrounded and stand out in the narration. Through the son's narration, the heartwarming story suggests people spend more time with families and enjoy the real joy of family gatherings. Different from other general advertisements which put the product as the figure on the foreground; this commercial takes the rice, a core product of BERNAS, as the Ground. We know rice is a staple food in Asian



families, especially in Chinese families but the rice's hard attributes: staple food, good smell, etc., appear nowhere in this commercial. Actually, the reoccurrence of "more rice" means more communication and more companionship with your loved ones as well as your families, especially at festive occasions, which illustrate the soft attributes of the product which brings about love, enjoyment, care and relationship. Building a product image in this way, BERNAS hopes that its product will let its customers know the value of family bonds and relations and will encourage them to cherish their families.

The next example is a brand image publicity film made by Nongfu Spring Company. This short film portrays a story about a worker's water quality monitoring job in a day. The following is the English transcription:

#### Example 4

##### ***One Hundred and Twenty Li (Sixty Kilometers)***

*My name is Xiao and I'm twenty six years old. After graduating from college in 2013, I came to the Wuling Mount factory of NongFu Spring Company as a worker responsible for the monitoring of water quality. This place is an intermediate station of my work. I will come twice every week. Because of the long distance, sometimes I will have a meal here. Wuling Mountain is quite high in altitude, and the road in the mountain is continuously winding like a spiral. One trip is about thirty-five to forty kilometers this way. This season, there will be more snakes. This is the Liulong Mount district of Wuling Mountain and Qigu River is in front of us. It takes about fifteen minutes from the lower foot of the mountain to the upper part of the mountain. The water of Qigu River comes from the lower part of the mountain to the upper part of the mountain and then erupts out of the cave in the upper part of the mountain. Our water monitoring area is in the upper part of the waterfall. The water needs to be tested once a week. I bring our mineral water sample bottle and screw off the cap and let the water of Qigu River fill in. When the bottle is full of water, I will screw back the cap and seal the water in the bottle. We monitor the quality of our source water. Water monitoring seems very easy work. But you must get the real situation of the source water. For example, if somebody comes and take a bottle of water out of the mountain, our people don't know what the real situation is in the mountain. However beautiful the bottles are; however beautiful the caps are; however beautiful the labels are, if the water is not good, then there is no value. Water is the source of our life. My job is to ensure the safety of the water and to let our consumers feel comfortable and safe. Owing to every employee's carefulness, we have achieved the Nongfu Spring's high quality in two decades. We do not produce water; we just bring it out from nature.*

(The Chinese version can be browsed at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XMTQ3MzM3NTI4NA.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTQ3MzM3NTI4NA.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2))

In this documentary film, the story depicts one day's work of Xiao Shuai who is a common worker responsible for water quality control in the Wuling factory of Nongfu Spring Company. In order to get an accurate result from the sample to ensure good quality of the mineral water, Xiao will tirelessly go a long way to the water source to get the sample twice a week. Most

of the time he will ride his motorcycle from the factory to the foot of the mountain and then climb the mountain on foot. Wuling Mountain is a nature preserve so that Xiao has to be aware of the great danger in a wild forest. Besides, the one-way trip to the mountain is about 35-40 kilometers, which is not easy work for any man. In this story, the Nongfu Spring mineral water is not the Figure but the Ground, whose hard attributes are seldom mentioned in the commercial. The real Figure is the routine work of a common worker whose honesty, carefulness, and dedication to his work indicate both the hard attributes (natural source, safety and high quality) and soft attributes (trustiness and healthiness) of Nongfu Spring mineral water. In the present new era, we all know that with the increase of people's income and the improvement of people's health awareness and living standards, they will pay more attention to their physical health. For drinking water, as a product closely related to people's daily life, safety naturally becomes the top concern. Both the hard attributes and soft attributes of the Nongfu Spring mineral water in this commercial want to emphasise its safety and its healthy quality. Using Xiao's routine work as the figure to build an emotional tie with the company's customers seems much easier and effective. A common worker, a normal job: what he says and does make audience believe that his dedication can ensure the quality of the Nongfu Spring mineral water, which naturally builds a reliable, honest, healthy product image in the heart of the viewer and customer.

### 3.1.3. Establishing the Image of the User in the Prototype Image Portrait

'Prototype' as a relatively stable cognitive structure refers to a mode of a certain type of event which contains certain typical features (Ye, 2004, p. 285). This type of cognitive structure, originating from accumulated human instincts and common experience reserves, is infinitely synchronic and eternal diachronic (Zeng, 2006, p. 222). And in the process of brand image building, the fact that internal prototypes could be externalized into character images or themes allows consumers to remember a brand image in an easier way and for a longer period. A Hong Kong TV commercial named "My Dad's Story — Dream for My Child" has both a Chinese and English version, which starts with a little daughter's composition, and depicts a love story between a father and a daughter, showing the little daughter's opinions of her father. Here is the English version:

#### Example 5

##### ***My Dad's Story - Dream for My Child***

*Daddy is the sweetest daddy in the world.*

*Daddy is the most handsome, the smartest, the most clever, the kindest.*

*He is my superman.*

*Daddy wants me to do well in school.*

*Daddy is just great, but...he lies.*

*He lies about having a job. He lies about having money. He lies that he is not tired. He lies that he is not hungry. He lies that we have everything. He lies about his happiness.*

*He lies because of me.*

*I love my daddy. (on the paper)*

Hug...

*A child's future is worth every sacrifice. (subtitle)*

*Pursue more from life. (subtitle)*

*Metlife. (subtitle)*

(The Chinese version can be browsed at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XODk4ODA3MjI4.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XODk4ODA3MjI4.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2))

In the commercial, a father character is adopted as a prototype to arouse audiences' memories of fathers taking care of children. In the story, the father devotes himself to raising a child alone without complaints, which on one hand is the expression of love, on the other hand leads to the daughter's ambivalence. The family's impoverishment makes the daughter aware of father's love for her and also her self-accusation of being a burden to her daddy, which can trigger audiences' parental love and facilitate them to search for solutions for their children. Therefore, formulating an insurance plan for children, as put forward at the end of the commercial, establishes the image of users who naturally endow themselves with the attributes of insurance of being supportive and protective. This prototypical image allows consumers to acquire a favorable feeling and sense of identity, so their purchase behaviors could be influenced in the end (Li, 2013, p. 209). In addition, the prototypical mode of challenge-conflict-resolution (Liu, 2010, p. 1) not only demonstrates the hard attribute of assurer as a problem-solver, but also embodies the brand positioning of problem-solving and happy-family-rebuilding. Generally speaking, in different cultures, the image of a father is always the embodiment of shelter, being a supporter and care-giver, representing empathy, trust, and unvarying love. This consistent symbolic character enrooted in the heart of consumers, satisfies consumers' needs and constitutes the soft attributes of the corporate image, which will create a more vital and vivid brand image.

The next example is a narrative commercial from TC Bank. It depicts a good mother figure in the narration. Its English transcription is below:

#### Example 6

##### ***Courage of Mother***

*This old woman was arrested in Venezuela. She was charged with carrying an illegal substance. She came from Taiwan. No one knows her. They questioned what was in the package. She told them it was Chinese herbs. She'd brought them here to make chicken soup for her daughter who'd just given birth. She hasn't seen her daughter for many years. Tsai Yin Mei, 63 years old, never traveled abroad before in her life. She can't speak English. She traveled on her own for 3 days, crossing 3 countries (over 32,000 kilometers). How did she do it? Tenacity. Courage. Love. For ordinary people with extraordinary dreams.*

(The Chinese version can be browsed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZD1Bx1yPRU>)

The commercial tells that a mother (Tsai Yingmei) was traveling from Taiwan to another country for the first time. She could neither speak English nor Spanish. She just wanted to make chicken soup for her daughter who had just delivered a baby in Venezuela. She was alone

during the three days' trip. She finally made it by her tenacity, courage and love, which are the typical characteristics possessed by ordinary mothers. This story uses a traditional Chinese mother as the Prototype who is middle aged, relatively slim, kind in mind, plainly dressed, tender in voice, hardworking, easy-going, careful, patient, kind and considerate. The qualities of the mother are associative to the soft attributes of the TC bank which serves the ordinary people like the mother. The creation of the Prototype in this commercial is to give customers and potential customers a sense of identity and also a positive message conveying a kind of care, values, and beliefs. Although the hard attributes of TC bank's brand image: a steadfast and reliable financial service provider is not showed directly in the commercial, the soft attributes of its brand image reveal the characteristics of the image of the users (TC bank's customers) through the portrait of the Prototypical mother. The kindness, warmth and helpfulness of the Prototype will arouse the viewers' emotional response and their psychological identification. Because of the mother's identifiable plain features and the emotional ties between the Prototype and the viewers, more and more customers will remember this brand and will be willing to accept the services provided by TC Bank. As a result, the image of the user as well as the brand image of TC bank will be built through the adoption of the Prototype in a narrative commercial.

### 3.2. Brand Image Building in Foreign Narrative Commercials

#### 3.2.1. Constructing the Image of the Maker in Possible Worlds

Like Chinese commercials, foreign narrative commercials also often build the Image of the Maker in possible worlds, but they are more allegorical and figurative than Chinese ones. The following English commercial "Three Little Pigs" was made by *The Guardian* (newspaper), which narrates a story about three little pigs who were arrested for committing murder on a big bad wolf. People commented about this incident and *The Guardian* reported the whole picture of this the case including some secrets. The content of the story is listed as below.

#### Example 7

##### ***Three Little Pigs***

*News: Big Bad Wolf boiled alive (Cooking pot horror in suburban brick house; Pigs claim they acted in self-defense; Family and friends pay emotional tribute; Police in urgent appeal for witnesses).*

##### ***Scene 1 (In front of the Pigs' house)***

*Police: Little pig! Little pig! Open the door! (But the door didn't open)*

*They refused to open the door and police break the windows and arrest those little pigs.*

*Journalist: Three little pigs are now being taken into custody, so the spotlight once again shone on the grey area of homeowners' right to protect their property.*

##### ***Scene 2 (In the RSS platform)***

*Person 1: This isn't right. The three little pigs are the victims.*

*Person 2: The wolf blew down two houses, he got what he deserved.*

*Person 3: The Pigs went too far.*

*Person 4: You have every right to defend your property.*

*Person 5: 無論在任何情況下，你都不應該奪取一條生命。(You shouldn't kill a person under any circumstance.)*

*Person 6: C'est ce qui arrive quand vous penetrez chez quelqu'un. (This is what you get when you enter a person's house without permission.)*

*Person 7: Keep your chinny chin chins up fellas.*

*Monologue: Is killing an intruder ever justified? Majority of people said yes.*

*Person 8: If someone tried to blow my house down, I'd do the same.*

*Person 9 (Finds video evidence on the network): There is no way he can blow down those houses, he has asthma.*

*Person 10: The wolf has asthma, so what's the truth about the pigs' houses being blowing down?*

*Guardian simulation: There's no reason why those two houses, one made of straw, the other from wood, should have collapsed, not even a healthy wolf huff and puff could bring them down.*

### **Scene 3 (In the court)**

*Police: The three little pigs have confessed conspiring to commit insurance fraud framing the wolf in an attempt to cover their tracks. Their motive was financial as they struggled to keep up with their mortgage payments.*

*Judge: Guilty!*

*(People's comments)*

*Person 11: I can empathize.*

*Person 12: I'm behind on my payments too.*

*Person 13: How could this have happened?*

*Person 14: I've lost everything.*

*Guardian: Public outrage as mortgage defaults soar*

*Protest: THE BANKS MADE THE PIGS DO IT!*

*The whole picture – the Guardian*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDGrfhJH1P4>)

This commercial depicts three scenes (In front of the Pigs' house; In the RSS platform; in the court), which stand for three different possible worlds the commercial wants to create. In Possible World 1, it is said a big wolf blew down the three little pigs' house. For revenge, the pigs caught the wolf and wanted to boil him alive. At this time, the police arrived and the three little pigs refused to open the door, so the police smashed the window and caught the pigs because they believed that the big wolf was a victim while those pigs committed murder. Except for the coverage of this news, *The Guardian* also raised a question whether people have the right to protect their property (the house). Possible World 2 is about people's comments about the arrest of the three little pigs. Half of the people (5 out of 10) believed that the three little pigs are innocent and only a few of them doubted the reason. Someone even found the evidence that the wolf was suffering from asthma, so he could not blow down the little pigs' house. *The Guardian* also had a simulation to prove the majority of the people's idea was totally

wrong. In Possible World 3, the pigs confessed the conspiring to kill a wolf with asthma to be able to cover their mortgage payments from their insurance return and *The Guardian* gave the reason — mortgage defaults.

The three Possible Worlds reflect the hard attributes or characteristics of cleverness and satire of *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* will always try to think outside the box and find the root reason that causes the incident. Every time people are confused, *The Guardian* will go deep into the facts and lead them to the important issues relevant to the case such as the property protection, simulation of the case and mortgage defaults. Most importantly, *The Guardian* as media has the hard attribute of investigating the whole picture rather than only a small part. The soft attributes of the corporate image reflect consumers' attention to individual values and emotional appeals in today's society, and they stimulate audiences to pay attention to corporate information autonomously. In this narrative commercial, animals (three little pigs, a big wolf) are chosen as the main characters which are amusing and quite attractive. This indicates the soft attributes of *The Guardian*: being reader-oriented, having a sense of humor. The three Possible Worlds are not real but help to combine *The Guardian*'s hard attributes with soft attributes to establish a brand new, unique modern media corporate image in its users' mind.

Another narrative commercial is the farewell campaign for the Volkswagen car — the Kombi. As a tribute to the people who were a part of its life, the Volkswagen Kombi fulfills its last wishes. The content of the commercial is transcribed into text as follows:

#### Example 8

##### ***Kombi's Last Wishes***

*How am I feeling? Surprisingly good, I mean it's strange to be making a will especially when you're a car. I was born in the late 1940s. This is Ben, the man who created me. I left the drawing board and conquered the world. I don't care what they say. I've been around. Then the announcement came, in it I ask people to go to my site and tell about the times we shared, stories poured in from across the world. Hundreds of them, I chose the most special ones and decided to publish a will. To the couple who went around the world in me, I left my odometer with the highest mileage possible. To the fan who took me to see three World Cups, I left my hubcap autographed by Pelé. To the artist who made me famous at Woodstock, I left on art kit. One by one, I delivered all my bequests. Stories even became a web series and a short film, and there was such a fuss. The media coverage in the sales numbers on my last edition was stunning, but the results that really matter to me were these:*

*Lauramqrs: Help me! A car ad made me cry...*

*Yael Vanden: It just feels like losing a good family member.*

*Maxmiller Alves: I couldn't believe that I would miss a car that much...*

*Megan Cull: I think I'll give my bus a hug...*

*And a car will never be produced again showed that it could still do plenty for its brand. But I still had one wish left, I needed to see someone again, the son of the man who created me, technically speaking, my brother. How am I feeling? Surprisingly good.*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oDrPrTp41s>)

In this commercial, the Volkswagen Car Company creates a Possible World where the car Kombi is personified as a real human who can talk and feel and share his sorrow and happiness with his friends. Although he is no longer being manufactured, he wants to do something in his last wishes: to meet with his fans; to see his brother (designer), etc. The Kombi (personified in this Possible World) is an old man or iconic symbol that stands for nostalgia, eternal youth, freedom, and good driving experience, which reflect the soft attributes of the corporate image of Volkswagen. The words “Across the world; highest mileage; three World Cups” in the story indicate that the Kombi was once an excellent and durable machine and those features are in accordance with Volkswagen Car Company’s hard attributes of its products: high quality, safety-first design. In the actual world, the Kombi is at the end of its life span. The last series have already been produced, now the Kombi inhabits a German museum as the last memory to the legendary car of Volkswagen. In the narrative commercial’s Possible World, however, the Kombi, the legend still remains young and will continue creating such amazing memories as long as we keep it alive in our spiritual mind. The Possible World of the Kombi shows the sound relationship between the Volkswagen Car Company and its customers. For customers, the product of Volkswagen — the Kombi, is not only a regular driving machine but also a part of a family that cannot be replaced by other brands. For Volkswagen Car Company, the Kombi fulfills the company’s motto “Every single moment you are building your own history.” Moreover, it represents the customized car which can offer good care and driving services for its customers. Through the figure of speech, personification, this commercial narrative has touched many people around the world, effectively exhibited the soft and hard attributes of the Volkswagen Car Company in the Possible World and built a sound relationship between the corporation and its customers.

### 3.2.2. Foregrounding of Image of Product in Figure-Ground

Foreign commercials also use Figure-Ground to foreground the image of products. The storytelling advertisement of Google Search in India is selected as an example and transcribed as below:

Example 9

#### *Reunion*

##### *Scene 1*

*Grandpa (Pointing to an old picture): This is me...and this is Yusuf, my childhood best friend. In front of our house in Lahore, there was a big park with a gate that was constructed in the Stone Age. Every evening, we would fly kites there, then go to Yusuf’s sweet shop to steal “Jhajariya’s” and eat them.*

*Granddaughter: Jhajariya?*

*Customer: Hello Mr. Mehra.*

*Grandpa: Meet my grand-daughter.*

*Customer (to granddaughter): Hello, how are you?*

*Granddaughter: Hello.*

**Scene 2**

*Granddaughter searched on Google with the key words “park with ancient gate in Lahore”, and she found the Mochi Gate. After that, she started the second search, with the key words “what is jhajariya”. She got the idea that Jhajariya is a delicacy of Indian origin made of corn, milk, ghee etc. Then, she input the “oldest sweet shop near mocha gate lahore” and found a shop named Fazal Sweets. Immediately, she searched with the key term “fazal sweet lahore” and found their telephone number. She dialed that number:*

*Ali (Shop assistant): Hello, sallam alaikum.*

*Granddaughter: Fazal Sweets?*

*Ali (Shop assistant): Yes...*

*Granddaughter talked with Shop assistant about her grandpa...*

*Ali (to Yusuf): Granddad, a call for you from Delhi.*

*Yusuf (pick up the phone): Hello?*

*Granddaughter: Yusuf Uncle?*

*Yusuf: Who's this?*

*Granddaughter: Hello, I am Suman from Delhi, your childhood friend Baldev's granddaughter. Do you remember, when you were kids, you used to get together and steal “Jhajariyas”?...*

*Ali started to search about the Indian visa requirements.*

**Scene 3**

*Baldev (Grandpa): When the partition happened, we had relocate to India overnight.*

*Suman (Granddaughter): Granddad.*

*Baldev: I miss Yusuf a lot.*

*Yusuf and his grandson (shop assistant) started to pack the luggage and search the weather information in Delhi. Suman (granddaughter of Baldev) searched their flight information and went to the airport to meet them.*

**Scene 4**

*Someone rang the doorbell, Baldev opened the door.*

*Baldev (to Yusuf): Yes? Who?*

*Yusuf: Happy birthday my friend.*

*Baldev: Yusuf? Yusuf! Oh? Oh! Yusuf.*

*Yusuf (hugged with each other): Oh! Baldev!*

*Baldev: Oh! Yusuf, my friend!*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHGDN9-oFJE>)

This commercial is a story about the India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Baldev and Yusuf were best friends when both were young. Because of the overnight Partition, many friends and families were separated for ever. One day, Baldev showed his granddaughter Suman an old photograph of him and his friend Yusuf. He told her that even though they didn't see each other for many decades, he still missed his friend and wanted to see Yusuf again. The Partition



of India made him live in India while his friend Yusuf lived somewhere in Pakistan. What he could remember was that in front of his friend's house there was a park with a gate made in the Stone Age. And every night he and Yusuf would fly kites there and "steal jhajariyas (a kind of candy)" from Yusuf's family sweet shop. Suman, the granddaughter of Baldev, used only the information her grandfather provided and was able to locate Yusuf's sweet shop in Lahore via her laptop and Google Search. She telephoned Uncle Yusuf's grandson Ali. In order to surprise her grandfather on his birthday, she invited Uncle Yusuf to come to meet her grandfather. In the end, old friends reunited after 6 decades apart. Generally speaking, the product of a company is often regarded as a Figure in an advertisement and the other setting is the Ground. In this commercial, however, the Figure is not the Google Search, which is seldom mentioned in the story. The real Figure that the commercial wants to foreground is the theme "Reunion" which brings out the soft attributes of Google Search: surprise, happiness and sensation, while Google Search is the Ground which shows the hard attributes of Google Search: rapidness, accuracy and convenience. Actually, what this commercial wants to emphasize is the soft attributes rather than the hard attributes, because soft attributes relate to the spiritual and emotional feelings of the customers towards a product and they are usually more acceptable than telling the features of a product directly. The theme "Reunion" touches an emotional chord in its customers' minds both in India and Pakistan as it depicts the pain of partition which still haunts the mind of people who got separated from their loved ones and places. This unique Figure's foregrounding helps Google to build a brilliant product image in customers' minds.

The following narrative commercial titled "До скорой встречи (See You Soon)" comes from a Russian advertisement of Continental GT of the automobile manufacturer Bentley Motors Limited. In the video, we can hear the music and song but seldom the conversation between the characters. From their interaction, we get to know how they develop their love. The following is the description of the content of the TV commercial:

#### Example 10

*A young lady drove her Bentley Continental GT to an automobile service center to do the preventive maintenance. A young car mechanic responsible for maintenance service drove this Bentley pretending to be a rich man to pick his beloved girlfriend every day. This kind of date lasted a long time. Until one day, the car owner came to the center to get her car. After the maintenance was done, the young car mechanic came to hand in the key and he was surprised to find out that the owner of this car was his lover. Is this a coincidence? Quite embarrassed at this moment, the young lady and the car mechanic burst into laughter and hugged with each other when recalling their happy memories.*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phrkq-PfRj0>)

In this commercial, the product Bentley Continental GT should be the Figure, but it is blurred as the Ground to set off the young lady and the car mechanic's wonderful date, that's to say, the real Figure is not the two characters but the joy, happiness and satisfaction in the characters' communication and dating process. Actually, this narrative commercial highlights

the happiness Bentley brings to people; whether you belong to upper-class or working-class, Bentley can give you the same pleasure and joyfulness. In this narrative story, the car mechanic disguises himself as rich gentry to date with the young lady and he enjoys the happiness of love and the satisfaction of being a successful man. In the meantime, the young lady finds the true love from the car mechanic by pretending to be a working woman. Bentley Continental GT, functioning as Ground, is the source and foundation of pleasure and delight. Bentley Continental GT's luxurious, upscale, comfortable features, which are the Functional Attributes, combine with the Soft Attributes such as happiness, energy, passion, etc., to establish the Image of Product. Both the lady and the car mechanic look at each other with a smiling face at the end of this commercial, indicating that love and enjoyment can overcome embarrassment only when you drive your Bentley. The Figure-Ground distinction strengthens people's cognition toward a product, and Bentley's commercial uses it to build up its unique product image in the minds of consumers.

### 3.2.3. Establishing the Image of User in the Prototype Image Portrait

Foreign narrative commercials also arouse customers' intellectual or emotional identification with Prototypes who usually act as main characters in foreign commercials as in Chinese ones. For instance, sports equipment manufacturers often add Prototypes into their advertisements. The following English sports narrative commercial with the title of "What's Your Motivation?" is one of NIKE's commercials:

Example 11

#### ***What's Your Motivation?***

*(3a.m.) At this time, I'm the only one working. I was told to quit. The coaches never noticed me. That was just my motivation. To work harder than everyone else. While you were sleeping, I have already done a hundred and fifty suicides (Basketball Conditioning Drills), and run three miles. My game might not be perfect, it's work in progress. For every shot I make out here, is another reason to fear me on the court. What we don't see is the hours of dedication I put in every single day of my life. What makes me is not what happens in the game but rather when no one is around. This is not a choice; this is a way of life. So, just remember, when you're sleeping, I'm out here working every day to be one step ahead of everyone else.*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uhCxBk6cQE>)

In Nike's advertisements, the characters are often those people who want to engage in sports activities and love sports. They are active and full of dreams and they venerate the heroes and desire to be leaders (Chen, 2010). In the above commercial, "What's Your Motivation?", Nike creates a prototype of an ordinary basketball player. He loves basketball and strives to make progress each day through hard training. The phrases such as "To work harder than everyone else", "To be one step ahead of everyone else" and "this is a way of life" reflect the qualities of the prototype: diligence, advancement, perseverance, which deeply impress consumers and stimulate their intellectual association with the functional attributes of Nike: a steadfast sports

supporter for its devotion to providing people with comfortable sports equipment and pleasant sports experience. As the narrative story unfolds, the image of the prototype is strengthened: the basketball player constantly asserts and encourages himself to make his way to success through overcoming numerous barriers. In the voice of the speaker “I”, Nike identifies the prototype with the users and conveys its upholding idea; that is, Nike’s consumers or users have unlimited potentials like the prototype. Nike’s confirmation of its users can arouse their emotional response to the brand, so the portrayal of the prototype not only demonstrates the functional and soft attributes of the brand, but also constructs the image of the users who are considered as possessing the same qualities of the prototype.

The next example is an incredibly touching narrative commercial of LEGO, which focuses on a father and son relationship built around LEGO. The transcription is listed as follows:

#### Example 12

##### ***Let’s Build***

*We are a team bound by blood. Nan’s (grandmother’s) knitwear and our own imagination. A team that shares our resources and pulls our talents, where we each bring something different to the table. We don’t see eye to eye on everything like bad times and brussel sprouts. But when we are in the game, we are in the zone because the things we built together live forever. We can conceive the inconceivable, bridge the unbridgeable and when we’ve built as far as we can fathom, I see a guy who will always go that extra brick with me. Let’s Build!*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwQqkX3qZak>)

This commercial tells a simple story about a father and son building things together with LEGO. In the commercial, two prototypes appear: a father and a son. The father is helping the son to build bridges, cars, buildings, spaceships, etc. The intimate emotional relationship between the father and his son is created through playing with the toy brand, LEGO. Obviously, this advertisement is targeting at families. For adults, they may think about the joyful times when playing LEGO with neighboring friends in their childhood, which evokes the nostalgia and happiness in their minds. For children, they will be attracted by those fascinating LEGO bricks playing with help of their parents and gain lasting and loving relationships with their parents. Two prototypes here encourage the targeted audiences to create their very own special family memories. LEGO, as toys, takes the responsibility to connect parents with their children. Prototypes also indicate LEGO’s mission: helping children to build and strengthen their happiness skills: imagination, confidence, curiosity, community when playing with those little bricks. “*The things we built together live forever*”. What the father and son build is not those toy buildings or vehicles, they are using their own imagination and creativity to build happiness and love together. “*When we’ve built as far as we can fathom, I see a guy who will always go that extra brick with me.*” The tiny bricks also build an emotional connection between the Prototypes and the targeted audiences (families). Through the portrait of the prototypes as two friends and cooperators, the image of the user of the brand LEGO will be created in its customers’ hearts.

### **3.3. Similarities and Differences of English and Chinese Commercials in Brand Image Building**

#### **3.3.1. Intercultural Similarities**

From the above analysis of the brand building in Chinese and Foreign narrative commercials, we can find that all the commercials try to create a kind of emotional or psychological connection with their customers in the creation of Possible World (in Examples [1], [2], [7] and [8]), Figure-Ground (in Examples [3], [4], [9] and [10]) and Prototype (in Examples [5], [6], [11] and [12]).

In building the image of the maker (company), both English and Chinese narrative commercials create a Possible World that forms the environmental setting of the story. Possible Worlds offer many kinds of possibilities for companies to show their hard and soft attributes, so creating an emotional tie is the target of corporate image building through a Possible World.

In building the image of a product, the English and Chinese narrative commercials use Figure and Ground Segregation as an effective way to highlight the soft attributes rather than the hard attributes of the product so as to build an emotional tie with audiences or customers. In addition, the Figure in the story generally is not the product or service that a company offers to its customers, which is completely different from the traditional advertisements that put the products or services in the central position of commercials.

In building the image of the user, both English and Chinese narrative commercials adopt a Prototype to indicate the psychological connection between Prototypes and targeted customers. The virtues of Prototypes will be unconsciously projected onto the targeted customers' minds when they are deeply absorbed in the storytelling process, in which their own dreams or desires seem to be fulfilled, so they naturally have a positive attitude toward the brand. In this way, a favorable brand image is built through using Prototype(s) in commercials.

#### **3.3.2. Intercultural Differences**

Though in the brand image building, Chinese and foreign commercials share something in common, they have some differences. First, the Chinese commercials try to arouse people's emotional response through telling stories in a more literal and realistic way and try to make us believe the stories are true, while the foreign commercials tell us stories in a more figurative and imaginative way in the form of a fable (in Example [7]) or using personification (in Example [8]). This difference may reflect the gap in the way of thinking between Chinese and foreigners because Chinese people tend to be more concrete in the way of thinking, while foreigners such as Europeans and Americans are more logical and abstract in thought than Chinese (Yu & Han, 2005, p. 85). So the events and characterization in Chinese commercials are closer to the real world of the consumers, while foreign commercials are more fantastic, symbolic and suggestive in meaning, encouraging viewers to think and imagine creatively.

Second, the difference between Chinese and foreign narrative commercials exists in the selection of gender roles in creating characters or Prototypes. In most cases, the gender roles in Chinese commercials are traditional: in Examples [2] and [5], the fathers are serious and

emotionally controlled; the son in Example [3] is career-minded, seldom going back to see his mother; the worker in Example [4] is brave and devotional in work; while in Examples [3] and [6], the mothers are both caring and tender, completely serving their children. However, the gender roles in foreign commercials are unconventional: in Example [9], the grand-daughter is very smart, searching information about her grandpa's friend through Google to arrange a reunion for them; in Example [10], the young lady driving a Bentley is depicted as an intelligent and economically independent woman; while in Example [12], the father is intimate, loving and friendly to his child. The above distinction may be explained in Hofstede's cultural dimension of Masculinity. According to Hofstede Center's statistics, China is a masculine society which scores 66 in the masculinity dimension, while countries such as Russia and India have much lower scores (36 and 56 respectively) in the degree of masculinity in comparison with China (Hofstede, 2016). A masculine society refers to a society in which gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and obsessed with material success; women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede, 2008, p. 297). Masculine society such as China means that people are usually success-driven and put males' features in a more important place than those of females. So the disparity in gender selection between Chinese and foreign commercials will influence the choice of gender roles in commercials and arouse different gender identification in the minds of audiences from different cultures.

The third difference shows in representing the soft attributes of a brand through different parental love for children in Chinese and foreign commercials. We can see in Examples [2], [3], [5] and [6], that the Chinese parents focus their entire love on their children and try to give whatever their children want and do whatever they can do for their children. No matter how tired they are, how difficult it is for them to make money, they will have the children enjoy a comfortable life as in Examples [2] and [5]. But in Example [12], the American father acts like a companion or cooperator or friend of his child rather than as a nanny as most Chinese parents are used to being. This is because of different cultural ideas of child bearing and rearing. In China, most parents consider their children a continuation of their own lives and some of them want to have sons to carry on the family line, so they take child bearing and rearing as the most important thing in their whole lives or put all their hopes on their children (Huo & Yuan, 2015, p. 1325). They often worry about the future of their children and try their best to help them especially when they are in financial trouble (as in Example [5]) or in the period of pregnancy and delivering a baby (as in Example [6]). But in most foreign countries, especially in America, people believe in individualism and self-reliance, so parents consider their own development or careers as important as their children's and will not put their energy and hope completely on their children, instead, they encourage their children to find their own values and make a living through individual effort and respect children's willingness, interest and hobbies in life, study and work and keep a friendly and equal relationship with their children.

The above intercultural differences reveal that different ways of thinking, gender preference and parental love for children are the causes of the different ways of brand image building in Chinese and foreign commercials through the creation of Possible World, Figure-Ground and Prototype, which can evoke different emotional, intellectual and psychological connections with audiences in different cultural backgrounds.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on Biel's (1993) Brand Image Building model, this paper attempts to use cognitive poetics to analyze the brand image building of Chinese and foreign narrative commercials and draws the following conclusions: (1) The combination of the three sub-theories of cognitive poetics: Possible Worlds, Figure-Ground, Prototype with the three sub-images of Biel's Brand Image theory: image of maker, image of product, and image of user can effectively distinguish and explain the hard attributes and soft attributes of a brand, which cooperatively perform the inducing, encouraging, persuading, promoting and social function of a product. (2) In narrative commercials, Possible Worlds can help establish an outstanding image of the maker (corporation) mainly by appealing to the audience's experiential and emotional response to the brand. (3) Figure-Ground can highlight a good image of the product mainly by strengthening the audience's cognitive and emotional response to a brand. (4) Prototype can embody an excellent image of the user mainly by inspiring the audience's value response to and intellectual and emotional association with the brand. (5) Finding a potential psychological or emotional connection with the customers is the general mechanism in brand image building of both Chinese and foreign narrative commercials. (6) The distinction of brand image building between Chinese and foreign narrative commercials lies in the aspects like thinking mode, gender preference and parental love for children, which result in the different ways of creating the image of maker, product and user through Possible World, Figure-Ground and Prototype to create both the hard and soft attributes of a brand. On the whole, the establishment of the images of makers, products and users through the creation of Possible Worlds, Figure-Ground, and Prototype in Chinese and foreign narrative commercials can deepen consumers' brand awareness, enhance their brand recognition, and evoke their brand association.

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### Author Note

Dai Guiyu is Professor of English at Center for Foreign Literature and Culture and School of English for International Business at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China where she is also Doctorial Supervisor of American Literature. Her recent publications include *Ecological Irony of Trash Phenomenon in American Postmodernist Fiction (English and American Literary Studies, 2016)*, *The Historical Transformation of the Theories of Western Subject Identity (Seeker, 2016)*, *The Literary Value of Trash Elements in American Postmodernist Fiction (Foreign Language and Literature, 2017)*.

Liu Yang is the postgraduate student at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China. His research fields are cognitive linguistics, cognitive poetics, business English studies and his publication include: *An Empirical Study on Business English Teaching and Development in China - A Needs Analysis Approach (Higher Education Studies, 2016)*.

Wang Jiao is the postgraduate student at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China. Her major research fields include business English studies, cognitive poetics.

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