

The Influence of Advertising in Thai Local Cable TV on The Audience's Attitudes and Behavior

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Abstract

This study examines the approaches of advertising in Thai local cable TV by in-depth interviews with key informants to assess types and forms of advertising broadcast during January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2012 and to determine whether the advertising contents violate the Food and Drug Administration Act and the Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522. The study also examines the effects of advertising on the audience's attitudes and behavior through focus group discussions.

The results of the study found that most local cable TV operators own 1-2 channels. They create their own programs and broadcast them promptly without any screening committees as those of free televisions. Advertisements were broadcast more than six minutes per hour that was allowed by the NBTC rules. Unethical advertisements were in various forms and most of them came along with the contents from free satellite televisions. Most advertisements that violate the Food and Drug Administration Act and the Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522 are foods, medicines and cosmetics whose contents are false, exaggerated or misleading. Overall, these unethical advertisements greatly lessen the trustworthiness of advertising in Thai local cable televisions.

Introduction

Advertising is a form of communication that creates audience awareness about goods and services and brands. Advertising has influence on the decision of individual and on the behavior of people in society. Arens, Weigole, Arens. (2008) said that advertising is a business activity in presenting goods and services, that is essential to the society and the economy. This statement conforms to Harker & Harker (2000, p.155). In summary, advertising is a part of social activity which influences on making a living of people. Advertising is essential to economic system, trading and marketing. Advertising plays an essential part in all market economies. It stimulates growth and innovation, encourages competition and increases consumer choice. (EASA, 2009, p.4)

Therefore, advertising influences on audience' feelings, desires and ways of life (O'Guinn, Allen and Semenik, 2009, p.111) Advertising on television penetrates audience feelings and thoughts and in the long run advertising can change audience behavior. Advertising is very close to people and the people are exposed to advertising while they are relaxed. In psychology, when people are relaxed, their minds are widely open and ready to respond to stimulations (Udomchan, 2003, p. 162) Advertising in television is the major platform in mainstream media such as free TVs and alternative media such as pay TVs which consist of satellite TVs, nationwide cable TVs and local cable TVs.

Thai local cable televisions transmit their signals through local cables directly to members' homes. The qualities of their signals are better than those using antennas. Local cable TVs have plenty of channels. Their service areas cover suburbs and local communities all over the country. Local cable TVs are medium size businesses. Their main income is from membership fees while their supplementary income is from advertising (Udomchan, 2003, pp. 30-31). Advertisements in local cable TVs are medicines, supplementary foods for men and women, cosmetics and local manufacturing products. Some advertisements are exaggerated, emphasizing propaganda. Though there are a lot of complaints, those advertised products are still on demand. The research focusses on these questions: Why and how advertising in local cable TVs influences on the audience's attitudes and behavior and how to regulate advertising in local cable TVs.

This research is a qualitative research using phenomenological approach (Holloway, 1997) focusing on studying phenomena in social and culture dimensions. The research studied the influence of local cable TVs on the audience's attitudes and behavior as well as the practices and policies to regulate advertising in Thai local cable TVs.

Research Objectives

1. To study whether advertisements in Thai local cable TVs legal or illegal according to related acts.
2. To study the influence of advertisements in Thai local cable TVs on audience attitudes and behavior.
3. To study advertising policies and practices in Thai local cable TVs.

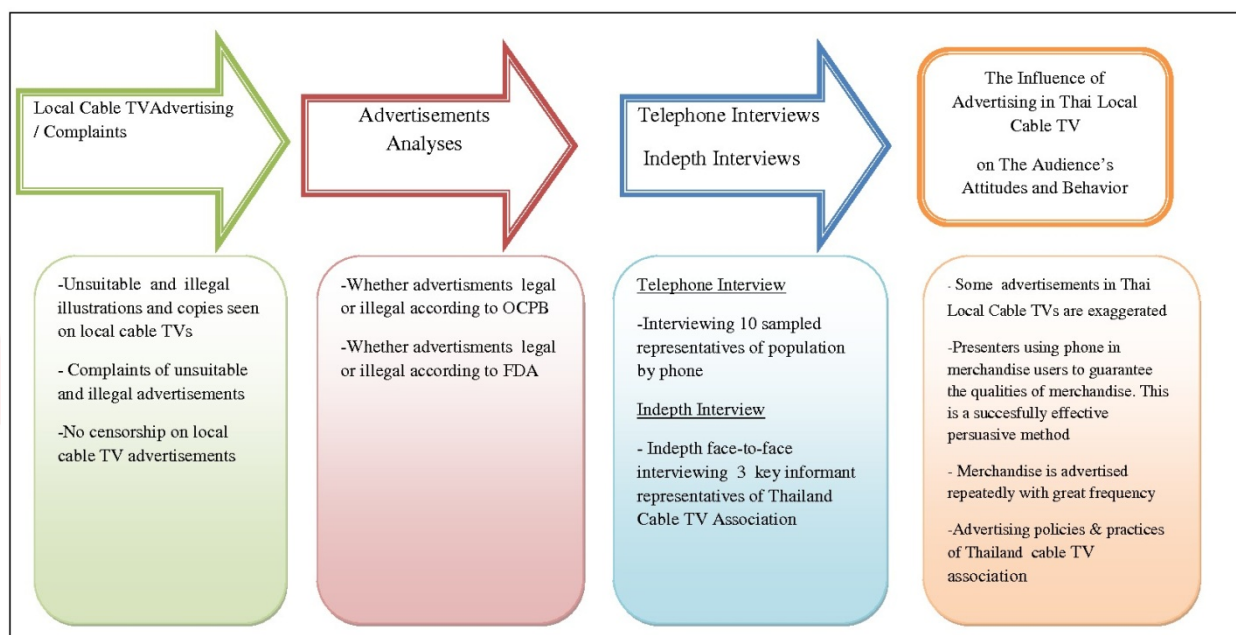
Definitions

- 1.** Advertising is important for the individual economy and the society. The European Advertising Standards Alliance's (EASA) explained that advertising plays an essential part in all market economies. It stimulates growth and innovation, encourages competition and increases consumer choice. (EASA, 2009, p.4)
- 2.** Thai local cable TVs means sending program signals through cable to members' home. The signal quality of this system is much better than antenna system. Cable TVs have a lot of channels for audience. The service covers suburban and local areas all over the country. Cable TVs are medium size businesses. Their main revenues are from membership fees and advertising. Membership rate are 250-300 baht per month.
- 3.** Attitude means positive and negative thinking of receivers towards advertising in local cable TVs. We assume attitude causes behavior in two way communication model.
- 4.** Behavior means response to advertisements by either purchasing or not purchasing merchandise.
- 5.** Office of The Consumer Protection Board (OCPB) is the government central protection agency that protects consumers and handles complaints about all products and services.
- 6.** Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is the government central agency that protects consumers' health in consuming food and health products.
- 7.** The National Broadcast and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC) is the independent state telecommunications regulator. It duties and responsibilities are to regulate national frequencies and regulate broadcast and telecommunications industries.

Conceptual Framework

Figure1. Conceptual Framework : The Influence of Advertising in Thai Local Cable TV on The Audience's Attitudes and Behavior

Conceptual Framework



Literature Review

The researcher began this research by studying related concepts, theories and research results to determine the scope to do the research as the followings:

1. Advertising concept in popular consumption era

Advertising is the source of information for consumers to make decision on purchasing goods and services. Advertising has influence on consumers because it can stimulate consumers' demands. Feldwick (1999, pp. 203-207) said that advertising can give details while offering goods and services. Advertising has another purpose to stimulate consumers to purchase more and more. Advertising is the source of information that make consumers have confidence in advertised goods and services, thus stimulating quick and continuous purchases. In summary, advertising has both short-term and long-term effects on consumers.

Therefore, advertising is a communication process that involves persuasion. Martineau (1957, p.58) said that philosophy of advertising consists of three factors as the followings:

- 1) Advertising must have creative, innovative and constructive purposes as main purposes.
- 2) Advertising must understand human communication process thoroughly.
- 3) Advertising must understand persuasion basics that reflect consumers' demands and advertisers must understand this concept thoroughly

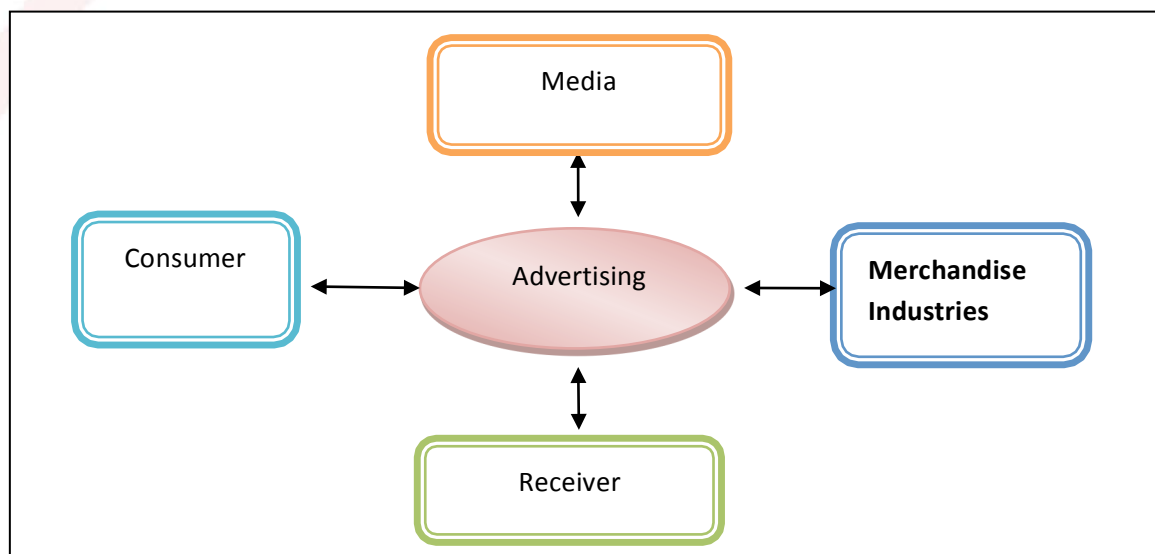
Leiss et al. (1990, p. 192) explained that from twentieth century advertising industry is a social unit in big society that connecting 4 worlds together. The four worlds are merchandise world,

media world, consumer world and media receiver world. So advertising is the mechanics that cement the relationship in new world era. as shown in figure 1.

So, advertising does not create only perception, attitude, consumer behavior but it also creates the value of contemporary consumption. At the same time it is found that advertising in local cable TVs also creates consumption of not needed merchandise.

Figure2. Advertising Roles since Twentieth Century

Source: Leiss, W. et al. (1990), *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products & Images of Well-Being*, London: Routledge, p. 192



2. Media Effect Concept

Siriyuwask (2002, p.477) said that media effect concept changes along with historical and social context. In one period, society believes that media have direct powerful influence while in another period society believes media do not have much influence. This depends on perceived effect of the society and the actual effect of working media.

However, McQuail (2000) said that the effects of the mass media result from the performance of the mass media and from the message receivers' exposure to the mass media whether intentionally or unintentionally.

The effects of the mass media are in three types: cognitive effect, attitudinal effect and behavioral effect.

The effects of the mass media come from two ways.

1. The effects result from the intention of the message senders
2. The effects result from the un-intention of the message senders

Some academics are interested in the time dimension of mass media effects. They study whether the effects are temporary or permanent. The short-term effects and long-term effects of the mass media on the message receivers are also studied.

Therefore, advertising in local cable TVs may have effects on message receivers in both short and long terms and also temporarily or permanently.

3. Persuasive Theory

Persuasive theory is used to explain public communication whose sub-theory is cognitive-response theory which deals with the internal thoughts of message receivers. Successful persuasion will make message receivers respond positively. Their feelings and behavior will be in positive ways. This theory points out two successful persuasive factors which are the central and the peripheral factors. The central factor is the presentation of thought with reasons and principles while the peripheral factor is the presentation of thought with the dimensions of feeling and behavior. (Thongprayual, 2005, p.56)

Advertising consists of variety of goals with the ultimate goal to persuade consumers to have attitudes and behavior that advertisers desire. So advertising works through the process of persuasive communication with the central and peripheral factors of persuasion. For advertisements of cosmetics and supplementary foods in local cable TVs, the central factors of persuasive message are product qualities or benefits while the peripheral factors are the credible and prominent presenters who confirm the qualities and benefits of the products. This advertising technique conforms to Bostrom (1983, p.10) who explained that persuasion is communication activity that stimulates the changes of attitude and behavior. The desired result is the response of message receivers.

4. The Normative Theory

The Normative Theory refers to the structure that the media should perform in society. Kaewthep (2009, p. 90) said that mass media are the “national institutions” and also the “national interests protectors”. So the standards of mass media involve control, protection and regulation in the scope of laws and regulations and media codes of ethics.

Local cable TVs are the self-regulated media under the supervision of Thailand Cable TV Association who sets rules and standard practices of programming and advertising for current 350 local cable TV member companies in Thailand.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research using 3 research methods : Content Analysis, Interview by telephone, and In-depth Interview

1. Content Analysis

Ten local cable TV members were interviewed by phone. Each was selected by Purposive sampling from 10 different provinces where regional boards of Thailand Cable TV association are located. These provinces are Pathum Thani, Trad, Nakhon Ratchasima, Roi et, Lamphun, Kamphaeng Phet, Nakhon Pathom, Phang Nga, Song Khla and Samut Prakan.

One local cable TV company was selected by random sampling from each province in each region. So, totally 10 cable companies were selected from 10 regions nationwide. Then their programming charts were studied in details by focusing on broadcasting program similarities and differences and also the types and forms of advertisements. The study found that 70% of broadcasting programs were similar while the different programs were their own particular programs produced for broadcast locally. For advertisements, most were the same general consumer products especially health products whose qualities are often exaggerated and emphasized with propagandized messages. These advertisements were broadcast with very high frequency.

The researcher analyzed advertising spots broadcast in local cable TVs during January 1, to December 31, 2012. The information was collected by the Surveillance and Health Complaints Center at the FDA and the Advertising Surveillance Center at the OCPB. Then the researcher studied whether the advertisements are legal or illegal according to the Medical Advertising Act, the FDA Act, the Medical Tools Advertising Act, the Cosmetics Advertising Act and the Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522

The researcher scheduled the studying of related laws as the followings:

1. Laws involving advertising of health products under the responsibility of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as the followings:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Medicine Act B.E.2510 | Medicine Ads. |
| 2) Foods Act B.E. 2522 | Foods Ads. |
| 3) Medical Tools Act B.E. 2551 | Medical Tools Ads. |
| 4) Cosmetics Act B.E. 2535 | Cosmetic Ads. |
| 5) Hazardous substances Act B.E. 2551 | Hazardous substances Ads. |

2. Advertising law under the responsibility of the Office of The Consumer Protection Board (OCPB)

Article 22 of The Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522 involving the advertising of houses and condominiums, which is beyond the FDA responsibility, states in summary that advertisements should not include unfair information for consumers as the followings:

- 1) False or exaggerated information
- 2) Misinformation about products and services
- 3) Information stimulating illegal or immoral activities
- 4) Information stimulating dissent in society
- 5) Other information prescribed in Ministry Decree No. 5 (4) and (5)

- (4) Advertising and services promoting gambling or trying one's luck
- (5) Advertising offering free gifts with products or services

2. Interviewed by Telephone

Ten local cable TV members were interviewed by telephone. Each was selected by purposive sampling from 10 different provinces where regional boards of Thailand Cable TV association are located as shown in table 1.

Table 1 : Provinces selected by random sampling for interviews

No.	Regions	Provinces
1.	Central	Pathum Thani
2.	Eastern	Trad
3.	Lower Northeastern	Nakhon Ratchasima
4.	Upper Northeastern	Roi et
5.	Upper Northern	Lamphun
6.	Lower Northern	Kamphaeng Phet
7.	Western	Nakhon Pathom
8.	Upper Southern	Phang Nga
9.	Lower Southern	Song Khla
10.	Bangkok Metropolitan	Samut Prakan

3. In-depth Interview

Three key Informants were interviewed in-depth. They are the Honorary Consultant, the President, and a board Member of Thailand Cable TV Association

Table 2 : Three key informants of Thailand Cable TV Association

No.	Name of key Informants	Position
1.	Mr. Kaseam Inkaew	The Honorary Consultant of Thailand Cable TV Association
2.	Mr. Suraphol Ceeprasert	The President of Thailand Cable TV Association
3.	Mr. Viriya Thamruangrong	A Board Member of Thailand Cable TV Association.

Findings

1. The Findings of content analysis as shown in Table 3 and Table 4

Table 3: summarizing FDA random sampling health products advertisements in number and percentage broadcast during January – December A.D.2012

Table summarizing FDA random sampling health products advertisements in number and percentage broadcast during January – December A.D.2012

Type of Product	Number of Advertisements	Number & Percentage of Legal Advertisements		Number & Percentage of Illegal Advertisements		Number & Percentage of Illegal Advertisements									
		No.	%	No.	%	Medicine Act		Foods Act		Medical Tools Act		Cosmetics Act		Hazardous substances Act	
						No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Medicines	84	35	41.7	49	58.3	49	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foods	142	50	35.2	92	64.8	-	-	92	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Tools	1	-	-	1	100	-	-	-	-	1	100	-	-	-	-
Cosmetics	99	53	53.5	46	46.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	46	100	-	-
Hazardous substances	2	1	50	1	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	100
Total	328	139	42.4	189	57.6										

Total ads is 328; 139 (42.4%) are legal; the rest 189 (57.6%) are illegal. And of the illegal ads, 92 or the majority of them are food ads.

Table 4: Summarizing OCPB random sampling advertisements in number and percentage broadcast during January – December A.D. 2012

Table summarizing OCPB random sampling advertisements in number and percentage broadcast during
 January – December A.D. 2012

Type of Product	Number of Advertisements	Number & Percentage of Legal Advertisements		Number & Percentage of Illegal Advertisements		Number & Percentage of Illegal Advertisements												Quality Exaggeration (FDA)	
		The Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522																	
		(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		Ministry Decree No. 5 (4)		Ministry Decree No. 5 (5)							
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
Products / Service	7,491	6,872	91.7	619	8.3	143	23.1	96	15.5	-	-	-	-	27	4.40	353	57.0	-	-
House / Condominium	2	2	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FDA Controlled Products	848	395	46.6	453	53.4	48	10.6	45	10.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	276	60.9	84	18.5
Total	8,341	7,269	87.1	1,072	12.9														

Remark: B.E. = Buddhist Era / B.E. is 543 Years prior to A.D.
 B.E. 2522 = A.D.1979

The Consumer Protection Act B.E. 2522
 (1) False or exaggerated information
 (2) Misinformation about products and services
 (3) Information stimulating illegal or immoral activities
 (4) Information stimulating dissent in society

Ministry Decree No. 5
 (4) Advertising and services promoting gambling or trying one's luck
 (5) Advertising offering free gifts with products or services

Total ads is 8,341; 7,269 (87.1 %) are legal; the rest 1,072 (12.9%) are illegal.
 And of the illegal ads, 619 (8.3%) are product or service ads.

2. The Findings of Interviews by telephone shown in Table 5 and Table 6

Results of phone interviews of 10 local cable TV members nationwide in summary.

Table 5: Advertisements seen most frequently by sampled audience by categories

Ranking	Advertisement
1.	Medical Herbs.
2.	Herbs enhancing sexual ability for men.
3.	Female functional food products.
4.	Face and body cream and female cosmetics.

Table 6: Advertising strategies seen most frequently by sampled audience

Ranking	Advertising strategies used
1.	Single and group presenters talking about the product good quality.
2.	Advertising placement in the program.
3.	Product Demonstration.
4.	Product users guaranteeing product quality.

The majority of sampled audience don't believe the ads they saw in local cable TVs. They thought the ads were exaggerated.

3. The findings of In-depth Interviews

The results of in-depth interviews with three key informants, the Honorary Consultant, the President, and a Board Member of Thailand Cable TV Association are as the followings.

3.1 Local Cable TV audience's complaints about Advertisements

The key informants said that there were no complaints about advertisements in programs produced locally by local cable TV stations themselves. Advertising complaints came from free satellite TV programs broadcast in local cable TVs with free-to-air system. At the moment, some local cable TVs have stopped broadcasting such programs because they caused a great number of complaints. Most complaints involved images and wording. Advertisements bringing in complaints were those not approved by the FDA such as foods, medicines and cosmetics. Government agencies that consumers could launch their complaints are the House of Representative Committee, The National Broadcast and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC), the Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

3.2 The Formulation of Advertising Practice Standards and Rules for Local Cable TVs by Government Agencies.

The key informants said that the NBTC is the only government agency that supervises and regulates local cable TVs and satellite TVs since December 2012. The NBTC required local cable TV and satellite TV companies to register in accordance with the laws. Local cable TVs are allowed to advertise for six minutes per hour but there is no rule on this matter yet for satellite TVs. Program rearrangements must be reported to the NBTC in advance for 15-30 days. Advertising contents should not be false, exaggerated, obscene or dangerous for national security. If rules are violated, the NBTC will issue them warnings and revoke their licenses if rules are violated repeatedly

3.3 Thailand Cable TV Association's Advertising Policy and Practice Standards

Thailand Cable TV Association emphasizes that its members should do business ethically and morally and in compliance with the NBTC's advertising rules and regulations. The members should not focus on making profits from advertising since local cable TVs' main income is from membership fees.

Conclusion & Discussion

The findings of this research titled the Influence of Advertising in Thai Local Cable TV on the Audience's Attitudes and Behavior are worthy for discussion in the following issues:

- 1) Advertising in local cable TVs has influence on receivers.

Since local cable TVs pick up signals from satellite TVs through free-to air system, they broadcast both the programs and the advertisements from the satellite TVs at the same time. Consequently, their viewers receive poor quality advertisements in high frequency. However, these advertisements have both cognitive and attitudinal effects on viewers. Especially, the high frequency broadcast of these advertisements can make viewers go along. This phenomenon conforms to Denis McQuail who said that mass media have three main effects: cognitive effect, attitudinal effect and behavioral effect.

- 2) Advertising influence comes from satellite TVs whose signals are picked up by local cable TVs through free-to-air system.

Local cable TVs are the mainstream media for local communities all over the country. Local cable TVs pick up signals from satellite TVs without the awareness of viewers that they watch programs and also advertisements from satellite TVs. Most satellite TVs' program contents and advertisements focus on selling products by persuasive techniques through advertising spots, propagandized programs and advertising placements along with conversational programs; all these with high broadcast frequency. So, these advertising techniques conform to Bostrom who said that persuasive communication can change attitudes and behaviors. The ultimate goal of persuasion is the positive responses of receivers. The adverse effects of persuasive advertisements may result in complaints.

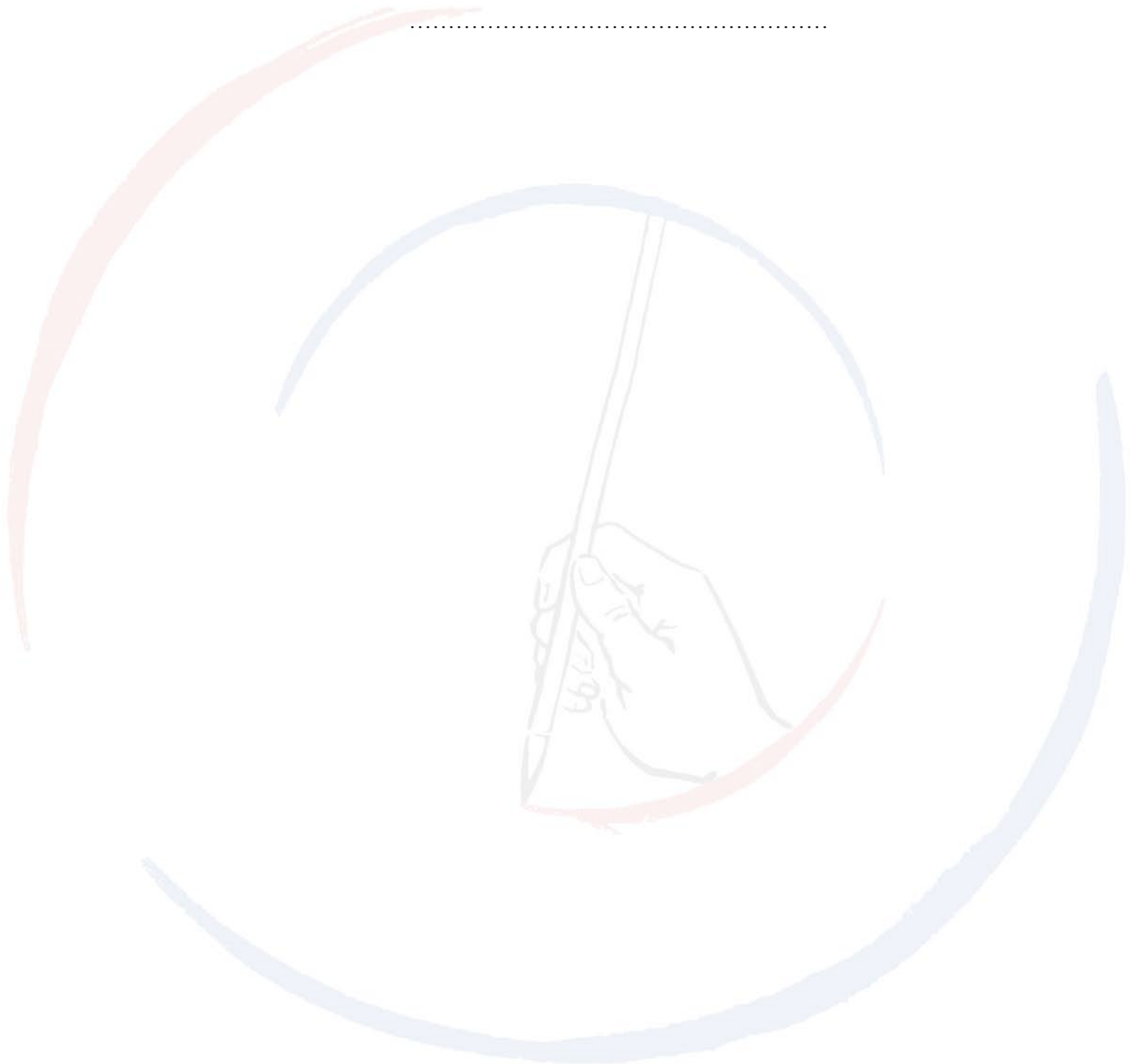
- 3) Thailand Cable TV Association has policies to monitor and regulate advertising strictly.

- (1) Thailand Cable TV Association formulates advertising policies and practices conforming to the rules and regulations set up by NBTC according to The Normative Theory .

- (2) NBTC allows local cable TVs to advertise only six minutes per hour. If they violate this rule, they will receive warnings and if they do it repeatedly, their licenses will be revoked

- (3) Each local cable TV produces their own program one or two channels. The rest come from free-to-air satellite TVs. The total channels for each cable is around 200-300 channels both from foreign or domestic TVs. So the ads are bad in qualities and uncensored.

(4) At present a large number of satellite TVs are not members of Satellite Television Association (Thailand) and are not registered with NBTC so it is difficult for regulation.



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