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## **Portrayal of females in magazine advertisements in Hong Kong**

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## **Portrayal of females in magazine advertisements in Hong Kong**

### **Abstract**

A content analysis was conducted to examine the portrayal of beauty types and occupational roles of female figures in magazine advertisements. A systematic random sample of 215 advertisements from a popular lifestyle magazine in Hong Kong was analyzed. Results provide evidence of gender role stereotypes. Two thirds of the advertisements adopted classic/feminine beauty type. The other two common beauty types were sex kitten and casual. Over-representation of Caucasian models was found as one-third of the female figures were Caucasian and other minorities. Caucasian models were more likely to be portrayed in trendy beauty type. Over half of the advertisements portrayed females in decorative roles and thirty percent portrayed females as celebrities. Recreational roles and professional roles were featured less frequently. Advertisements for products target females were more gender stereotyped than advertisements for products target males and females. The lack of variety in beauty types and occupational roles among female figures were discussed.

## **Introduction**

Extensive research has been done on the issue of gender roles in adult advertising and has supported the stereotyped portrayal of the two genders in television advertising (Dominick & Rausch, 1972; Flitterman, 1983; Livingstone & Green, 1986; Manstead & McCulloch, 1981). Consistently, female characters are associated with domestic products and home setting, while men are associated with non-domestic products and out-of-home settings. The female gender-role stereotypes in advertising include lack of female roles actively participating in sports, as well as depicting women predominantly in family and home-oriented roles, decorative and non-functioning entities. The phenomenon has been witnessed for many years, and has remained the same in the recent years (Cheng, 1997; Frith, Cheng & Shaw, 2004; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Kang, 1996; Wolin, 2003).

Research on gender stereotyping in children's advertising also found similar results as that among advertising for adults in the United States as well as in other countries, such as Australia (Browne, 1998; Mazzella, Durkin, Cerini & Buralli, 1992), Britain (Furnham & Schofield, 1986), Canada (Rak & McMullen, 1987), Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989) and Hong Kong (Chan & Yik, 2001). Evidence of existing cross-cultural research supports universality rather than cultural specificity of gender stereotyping.

Hong Kong, with its unique strategic position in business, finance, and information in the world, is a meeting point of the Eastern and Western cultures. Hong Kong is one of the most urbanized cities in the Pacific Rim and the per capita advertising expenditure is similar in level to the United States, one of the major advertising markets (Frith & Mueller, 2003). Hong Kong's advertising endorses western values and is significantly different from advertisements from Taiwan and Mainland China (Chan & Cheng, 2002; Tse, Belk & Zhou, 1989). Several studies of gender portrayal in television advertisements in Hong Kong have been conducted (Chan & Yik,

2001; Chau, 1997; Furnham, Mak & Tanidjojo, 2000; Siu & Au, 1997). There is no study on gender portrayal of female figures in magazine advertisements in Hong Kong. Magazine reading is a common leisure activity in Hong Kong. Weekly magazines ranked the fourth in terms of media coverage, after television, the internet, and newspapers (The Nielsen Company, 2009). Fifty-four percent of respondents aged 12 to 34 reported that they read weekly magazines in the past week (The Nielsen Company, 2009). A survey of media usage among 7,570 adolescents in Hong Kong reported that over one third of respondents read newspapers, magazines, comics, and books to increase their knowledge (Sivan, Fung, & Fung, 2008). Magazines were often used by adolescents for information about adolescent experience, sexuality and femininity, interpersonal relationship, and the value of success through physical beauty. Magazine contents and images played a significant role in construction of self-identity among adolescents (Evans et al., 1991; Kaplan & Cole, 2003). Seeing the importance of magazines in the Hong Kong media scene and among adolescents, the current study attempts to examine the contemporary gender role portrayal and beauty images of magazine advertisements in Hong Kong. It contributes to the understanding of the gender role portray in an under-researched but important medium in Hong Kong, a society that is influenced by both East and the West cultures.

### **Literature review**

Advertising provides images and language that are relevant to its target audience while keep pace with specific cultural, economic and social changes (Zhang, Srisupandit & Cartwright, 2009). However, advertising is a “distorted mirror” (Pollay, 1986) as it serves the interests of the advertisers by portraying selected lifestyles and values considered to be beneficial to the advertisers. For example, a content analysis study found that many traditional Confucian values such as humility,

patience, and thrift were not employed in Chinese television advertisements (Zhang, Song, & Carver, 2008).

Gender role stereotyping as a communication strategy was often used by advertisers to establish a shared experience of identification with the consumers (Hovland et al., 2005). These stereotypes include portrayal of young and physically appealing women, as well as portrayal of women in decorative roles or as sex objects. Over the past decades, content analyses of television programs, television commercials and print advertisements have found that women are underrepresented and portrayed in stereotyped roles (Cheng, 1997; Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Most of the studies on gender role portrayals have been conducted in Western cultures (Kim & Lowry, 2005). There are few empirical studies on beauty types and gender role portrayals in Asian advertisements. Many scholars argue that Asian cultures are different because of the long-standing values concerning families and human relations (Zhao, 1997). As an example, Cheng (1997) reported women in Chinese television commercials wore less sexually suggestive clothing than did women in U.S. advertisements.

### **Culture and gender portrayal**

Different cultures foster different gender-specific behaviors (Matsumoto, 2000). Williams and Best (1990) proposed the “traditional” vs. “egalitarian” gender role ideologies to differentiate cultures according to their degrees of endorsement of traditional gender norms. Traditional role ideology viewed men as superior over women, and egalitarian role ideology considered men and women as equals and equally important (Williams & Best, 1990). Egalitarian scores were found to be high in the Netherlands, Germany, and Finland where less differentiation was found between males and females. Williams and Best (1990) concluded that egalitarian gender ideologies would be found in countries with relatively high social economical development, a high proportion of

Protestant Christians, a low proportion of Muslims, a high proportion of working women, a high proportion of women enrolled in universities, and a greater degree of individualism.

Furnham and Mak (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of fourteen studies in eleven countries on five continents over 25 years (1975-1999) on the issue of gender-role stereotyping of television commercials. It showed that gender-role stereotyping of television commercials was consistent across different countries. The meta-analysis concluded that a majority of the studies showed gender stereotypes. It was characterized by the following patterns:

1. Males were frequently shown as the authoritative central figures, with females frequently shown as product users.
2. Males always played the roles as interviewers or professionals whereas females were confined as dependent roles.
3. Females were consistently shown as younger than males.
4. Females were more often portrayed at home while males were more often portrayed in outdoor settings.
5. Males were shown to be associated with pleasurable rewards, while females were more likely to be associated with social approval and self-enhancement.
6. Males were shown selling automobiles and sports products while females were always related with home and personal care products products.
7. When there were end comments in the commercials, it was more likely that male characters offered such end comments.

Furnham and Paltzer (2010) reviewed 30 content analysis studies in over 20 countries since 2000 and found similar patterns of gender stereotypes.

Regarding content analysis of gender portrayal of advertisements in Hong Kong, the first published study traced back to the 1990s. Siu (1996) conducted a content analysis of 434 Hong Kong

television advertisements and found that men were more likely to be portrayed as product authorities and women were more likely to be portrayed as product users. A content analysis of 341 print advertisements in Hong Kong youth magazines found that female characters were more likely to be featured in home setting, as wives or mothers, and featured in passive roles. Female characters were also found less frequently as professionals than male characters (Chau, 1997). The author concluded that females' participation in the labor market had not brought about any fundamental changes in the patriarchal ideology that has been dominating the Hong Kong society (Chau, 1997).

A content analysis of 175 Hong Kong television commercials found significant gender differences in mode of presentation, basis for credibility, role, reward type, location, age, product type, background and end comments. Men were more frequently depicted as central figures in Hong Kong's television commercials. Males were more likely to be voiceovers and to be authoritative endorsers. Females were more frequently portrayed visually and as product users (Furham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000). In a study of 137 children commercials in Hong Kong, voice-overs were male-dominated even for products targeting both boys and girls. Aggressive behaviors were exhibited by boys only. The gender stereotypes were attributed to the low level of market segmentation (Chan & Yik, 2001). A qualitative study of toy commercials in Hong Kong found that boys expressed aggressiveness through adventures and challenges while girls expressed femininity through housework and high concern with beauty (Wong, 1997). However, another study of 45 television commercials found that gender role difference was not significant in food and beverage advertisements in Hong Kong (Furnham & Li, 2008).

Regarding gender beauty type, Englis, Solomon and Ashmore (1994) found that classic/feminine, exotic/sensual, and trendy beauty types were the three most prevalent beauty types in U.S. magazine advertisements. Another study comparing beauty types of female figures in fashion magazine advertising and music videos on television found that different beauty types appear disproportionately across different communication media (print vs. television) and formats



(advertising vs. entertainment) (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994). A study of female images in magazine advertisements in Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States found that Western models were more often shown in sensual/sexy beauty type while Asian models were more often shown in classic beauty type (Frith, Cheng, & Shaw, 2004). Scholars argued that female roles and beauty types are created by social norms and cultural perspectives. It also becomes an integral part to the audience to establish her self-image (Fung, 2002; Solomon et al., 1992).

Many researchers have argued that these stereotyped patterns of male and female portrayals on television and the print media can convey certain messages (or beliefs) about the genders to the viewers. The cultivation theory proposed that heavy television viewers were more likely to perceive media portrayals as reality (Gerbner, Cross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). A study conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission found that children in Hong Kong were profoundly influenced by gender stereotypes, affecting choices from selection of school subjects to career aspirations (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). Previous studies indicated that reading of women's magazines and television viewing was correlated with respondents' dissatisfaction with their bodies (Prendergast & Leung, 1999). Women often referred to popular magazines when forming their self-identities (Fung, 2002). A typology of modern women images in Chinese magazine advertisements was proposed, including the feminine ideal, the cultured nurturer, the strong woman, the flower vase, and the urban sophisticate (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007). A reader response study found that Chinese young women used a variety of interpretive strategies and self-referencing responses to incorporate these modern women images. In the study, interviewees accepted Western forms of femininity characterized by independence and self-sufficiency. However, they rejected overt displays of sexuality. They tended to infuse the ideal feminine images with

personality traits that were more related to “Chineseness”, such as softness, collective morality, chastity, determination, and hard work (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007).

Gerbner’s cultivation theory proposed that values and portrayals in mass media such as television are capable of influencing or shaping viewers’ perception and attitudes (Gerbner et al., 2002). Media is an important socializing agent in the modern society. Children and youth may learn gender roles through observation and imitation. By observing members of their own sex and copying that behavior, children and youth can discover how they are supposed to behave. Media contents can contribute to children and youth’s learning process by providing a pool of available models for observation (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1997). A study using visual methodology found that girls aged 10 to 12 in Hong Kong learn about traditional as well as modernized feminine values from media images (Chan, Tufte, Cappello, & Williams, 2011).

### **Gender equality in Hong Kong**

Because of improvements in education, economic development, and the influence of the Western feminist movement, the status of women in Hong Kong has achieved significant improvements in the last two decades (Lee & Collins, 2008). In terms of social economical development and availability of education for women, Hong Kong is compatible with many western societies. The female labor participation rate for Hong Kong was 52 percent (Census and Statistics Department, 2006), which was lower than 56 percent in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). The proportions of Protestant Christians and Muslims were both low (under five percent). As a former British colony, Hong Kong has laws protecting women from gender bias in terms of education, employment and pay package (Chan, 2000). Hong Kong provides nine-year free education to all children, both males and females, between the ages of six and fifteen. The proportion of females with tertiary education is similar to that of males (Census and Statistics Department, 2006). The Hong Kong government takes an active role in promoting gender equality. The Equal Opportunities

Commission was established in 1996 and introduced the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. The Women's Commission was set up in 2001 to promote the well-being and interest of women in Hong Kong (Lee & Collins, 2008).

As Hong Kong is a Chinese society, Hong Kong is influenced by the Chinese paternal oriented culture that discourages gender equality. The traditional Chinese female ideal would be obedient, and would respect and maintain the patriarchal hierarchy within the kinship system (Croll, 1995). Chinese tradition has shown favoring toward males as they are responsible to pass down the family names. Chinese culture accorded greater esteem, privileges, and status to males and there were more restrictive prescriptions for the role of women. Women are expected to submerge their individuality to the family, following the orders of their fathers when young, their husbands when married, and their sons when widowed. The virtues for a woman are defined narrowly in her role as wife and mother (Cheung, 1996). Leadership was a problem for women in Hong Kong as women occupied only 18 percent of the elected members of the Legislative Council. There was a sharp fall off in women at higher levels (The Women's Foundation, 2006). A random sample survey of 2,010 Hong Kong people found that both male and female respondents were gender stereotypic, and few of them are counter-stereotypic (Women's Commission, 2003). Fung and Ma (2000) argued that deep-seated notion of stereotype has been traditionally inherited from the families, the education system, and the society. A survey found that 28 percent of respondents considered that women could realize their potential fully (Women's Commission, 2003). An updated survey found that women in Hong Kong remained largely responsible for household duties. The concept of "women as homemakers" was common in the society and there was room for improvement for women's status at home (Women's Commission, 2010).

### **Research questions**

The current study attempts to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the beauty types and occupational roles of female figures portrayed in weekly magazine advertisements in Hong Kong?
2. Are Chinese female figures and Caucasian female figures in magazine advertisements portrayed differently in terms of beauty types and occupational roles?
3. Are there differences in the beauty types and occupational roles between the advertisements of products target females and the advertisements of products target males as well as females?

### **Research method**

A quantitative content analysis study of advertisements in a popular lifestyle magazine in Hong Kong was conducted. Content analysis is an effective research method because it provides data that is empirical, systematic and objective. Popular lifestyle magazines have great impact in the society because of their vast readership. They have served as mirrors to reflect the main stream ideology of marketers and advertisers.

The Next Magazine, the second most popular lifestyle magazines was selected. We did not select the most popular lifestyle magazine because the university library did not have access to it. Statistics showed that the readership profiles of the top two lifestyle magazines were similar (The Nielsen Company, 2009). The Next Magazine has been published weekly since 1990 and its readership in 2009 was 688,000 (The Nielsen Company, 2009). Each issue of the Next magazine contained two books, i.e. Book A on general news and Book B on entertainment news. The average circulation during the period of July to December 2008 was 132,011 (Hong Kong Audited Bureau of Circulation, 2009). Six issues of the Next Magazine were selected by a systematic random process. The fourth issues of the magazine for the odd months from July 2008 to May 2009 were selected.

The unit of analysis was each individual advertisement with at least one full page, containing at least one female image displayed in dominating shot. Advertisements that did not have a dominant

female figure were not included in the sample. The female figure occupying the largest space in the advertisement was selected for coding. The beauty type, occupational role, and race of the female figures were coded according to the operational definitions shown in Appendix 1. The coding frame of Frith, Cheng, and Shaw's (2004) study was adopted because of its clarity and relevance to our current study. The product category of the advertised products was also coded. The advertisements were coded by one of the authors. Another author coded independently one fifth of the sample. The Perreault and Leigh (1989) inter-coder reliability scores for the six categories ranged from 0.92 to 1.0, which were above the minimum expected inter-coder reliability (Kassarjian, 1977).

## **Findings**

The sample consisted of 215 advertisements. Table 1 shows the sample profile. Cosmetics, skin care, perfume, contact lens and personal care advertisements made up thirty percent of the sample. Beauty and slimming treatment service, women clothing and accessories contributed another 18 percent and 17 percent respectively. These three product categories accounted for two-thirds of the advertisements. Most of these advertisements attempted to evoke consumers' awareness of physical beauty. The remaining one third of the advertisements was about retail and services, food and medicine, as well as furniture, home appliances, and electronic products. We further classified the product categories into two groups. We assumed that the first three product categories related with beauty target female audience while the latter three product categories unrelated with beauty target male and female audience.

[TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE]

Altogether 141 of the advertisements (65 percent) depicted Chinese female figures, while 66 of the advertisements (31 percent) depicted Caucasian female figures. The remaining 8 advertisements (4 percent) depicted Indian, Spanish, as well as African female central figures.

Because of the small number of female figures in other races, these advertisements were excluded in the subsequent analysis.

Table 2 shows the portrayal of beauty types by race of female figures for the 207 advertisements with either Chinese or Caucasian female figures. The beauty type most frequently used was classic/feminine. Of the 207 advertisements, 135 (65 percent) used classic/feminine beauty type. Sex kitten and casual beauty types contributed another 13 percent and 9 percent respectively. The remaining advertisements used trendy (7 percent), cute (5 percent) or other beauty types (1 percent). Chi-square test indicated that race of female figure was associated with beauty types (Chi-square value=29.7, df=5, p<0.001). Nearly equal proportions of Chinese and Caucasian figures were featured in the beauty types of sex kitten and cute. Chinese models were more likely featured in classic/feminine beauty type while Caucasian models were more likely featured in trendy beauty type. Chinese models in casual beauty type were more than twice the proportion of Caucasian models.

[TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE]

Table 3 shows the portrayal of occupational roles by race of female figures. Female figures were most often featured in decorative role (56 percent) and as celebrities (31 percent). Only two (1 percent) were featured as housewives. Female figures were seldom featured in professional roles (4 percent) or in recreational roles (8 percent). Chi-square test indicated that race of female figures was associated with portrayal of occupational roles (Chi-square value=21.1, df=4, p<0.001). Caucasian models were more likely featured in decorative role while Chinese models were more likely featured in celebrity as well as recreational roles. None of the sampled advertisements showed Caucasian models in the housewife role.

[TABLE THREE ABOUT HERE]

Table 4 shows the product categories by race of female figures. Chi-square test indicated that race of female figure was associated with product categories (Chi-square value=32.9, df=5,  $p<0.001$ ). Chinese models and Caucasian models contributed nearly the same proportions in the product categories of cosmetics, skin care, perfume, contact lens, personal care; furniture, home appliance and electronics as well as retail services and others. However, Chinese models were more likely featured in beauty and slimming service as well as food and medicine advertisements. Caucasian models were more likely featured in clothing and accessories advertisements.

[TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE]

Table 5 and Table 6 show the beauty types and occupational roles by target group of the advertisements. Chi-square test indicated that both the beauty types and occupational roles were associated with product target groups (Chi-square value=28.4, df=5,  $p<0.001$ ). Advertisements of products for females were more likely to feature sex kitten. Advertisements of products for males and females were more likely to feature causal beauty type. Advertisements of product for females were more likely to feature decorative roles. Advertisements of products for males and females were more likely to feature recreational and professional roles.

[TABLE FIVE ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE SIX ABOUT HERE]

## **Discussions**

A content analysis of beauty types and occupational role portrayal and beauty types of female figures in a popular magazine in Hong Kong was conducted. The finding echoed previous studies of gender role stereotypes. The classic/feminine beauty type dominated the sample of advertisements. As the advertisements come from one of the most popular lifestyle magazines in Hong Kong, the dominance of classic beauty model demonstrates the advertisers' intention to adopt a conservative approach to appeal to the majority of the adult readers. The prevalence of classic/feminine beauty

type may be attributed to the mature readership profile of the magazine. Readers of the Next Magazine were predominantly females (57 percent), and aged 25 to 54 (74 percent) (The Nielsen Company, 2009). The dominance of classic/feminine beauty types may suggest to the audience that a woman's physical appearance is more important than her ability or talents. The dominance of classic beauty type echoed findings from a study of female figures from magazine advertisements in Singapore, Taiwan and the U.S. (Frith, Cheng & Shaw, 2004) and a study in Taiwan (Lin & Yeh, 2009). The tendency to portray women across cultures in the classic beauty type supported a suggestion that certain aspects of beauty are universal and shared by Eastern and Western cultures.

Consistent with Frith et al's (2004) study, Caucasian female models were more likely to be featured as trendy beauty type than Chinese female models. The finding supported that Caucasian female models were linked with trendiness and modernity (Frith et al., 2004). Contrary the study of Frith et al (2004), Caucasian female models and Chinese female models were equally likely to be featured as sex kittens. This finding did not support the suggestion that advertisers, across cultures, presented Caucasian female models as more sexually liberal than Asian female models (Frith et al, 2004). The result suggested portrayal of Chinese female figures as sex kittens was accepted in Hong Kong. The occurrence of cute models in Hong Kong was lower than that in Singapore, Taiwan and the U.S. It was proposed that the outcome of depicting women in childish ways is to diminish their standing in society as full-fledged adults may be threatening to men and therefore this type of portrayal may be avoided by advertisers (Frith et al., 2004). The lower use of cute beauty types in the current study may again be attributed to the mature readership profile of the magazine.

The dominant occupational female roles in magazine advertisements were decorative and ascelebrities. These two roles occupied close to ninety percent of all advertisements sampled. Females were seldom shown in recreational roles, professional roles, or as housewives. Despite the fact that over 50 percent of the Hong Kong female population participated in the workforce, less than 5 percent of female figures in magazine advertisements were shown in professional roles. The



lack of female figures depicted in professional roles showed the ignorance of many advertisers to the opportunities of relating to the female consumers through their careers.

Despite the fact that only 5 percent of the Hong Kong population was non-Chinese, the sample revealed an over-representation of Caucasian female models. The result was similar to a study of 427 magazine advertisements in Mainland China that indicated that nearly 60 percent of the female models were non-Asian. Non-Asian models were most frequently portrayed in sophisticated urban images and were used predominantly by global brands (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007). The widespread use of Caucasian female models in the current study was also consistent with the findings observed in a similar study of magazine advertisements in Singapore, Taiwan and the U.S. (Frith et al., 2004). Caucasian female models are employed to associate with modernity lifestyle, western taste, and high-living. This indicates that the Hong Kong society tends to think highly of foreign models and western beauty trends, and an interest in embracing globalization.

The support for using Caucasian female models in the Chinese Hong Kong culture can also be linked to the cultural interpretation of color (Fung, 2006). Dark color symbolizes secrecy, and mystery, while white color symbolizes beauty and mystery. Traditional Chinese women believe the Chinese axiom that “one portion of whiteness can hide three portions of ugliness” (Fung, 2006). A qualitative study found that Hong Kong females perceived that pursuing white skin tone color is equivalent to making a great change in their lives. Interviewees expressed their concerns to stay competitive when compared with other women in beauty (Mak, 2007). The adoration of western modern lifestyle and a cultural belief of whiteness as beauty and modernization contribute to the dominance of Caucasian female models in Hong Kong.

The combination of female figures less often depicted as cute beauty types, less often depicted in professional roles in the current study demonstrates the conservative gender orientation among

advertisers and creative advertising personnel. It seems to reinforce the need of women to display physical beauty in order to gain self-confidence and approval.

In terms of product categories in which Chinese and Caucasian models appeared, skin care and facial beauty products as well as slimming services occupied the greatest proportion for Chinese models. Clothing and accessories as well as skin care and facial beauty products occupied the largest proportion of advertisements for Caucasian models. On the other hand, there were a high percentage of Chinese models employed in slimming services advertisements. We believe that advertising for slimming services tends to employ local celebrities with whom the target audience is familiar, and who are more likely to be Chinese. Previous findings suggested that western female models were more likely linked to body beauty while Asian models were more likely linked to facial beauty (Frith et al., 2004). The current study provided a different pattern. In the current study, Caucasian female models were used to a similar extent as Chinese female models for facial beauty. However, Chinese female models were more likely to be used in remedial body beauty products such as slimming, while Caucasian female models were more likely to be used in enhancement body beauty products such as clothing.

Analysis of target group products found that gender stereotypes was more severe for female target products than for products targeted for both males and females. The high percentage of portrayals of female figures as sex kittens for females target product is communicating to females that they need to be sexy in order to gain admiration from males. Advertisements for female target products portray women in predominantly decorative roles and as sex kitten beauty type. This is worrisome as female audiences are exposed frequently to restrictive beauty types and occupational roles for product categories that aimed at them as target audience.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, a content analysis of advertisements from a popular lifestyle magazine in Hong Kong was conducted. The results provide evidence of gender stereotypes. Female models were portrayed mainly in decorative and celebrity roles. The beauty types showed a lack of diversity, with classic beauty type dominating the scene. This emphasizes the advertisers' universal belief in classic beauty type and the importance of classic beauty for Hong Kong women. Further research should be conducted to examine whether the drive for beauty is inner-centered (i.e. to enjoy self-confidence) or is outer-centered (i.e. to please the significant others or to gain higher social status) in the advertisements. There was significant difference in the portrayal of Chinese and Caucasian models in the advertisements. Caucasian female models were more often portrayed as trendy beauty types than Chinese female models. Advertisements for products targeting females were more gender stereotyped than advertisements for products targeting males and females. Reader response studies should be conducted to investigate how females and males in Hong Kong interpret these gender stereotypes and restrictive beauty types. Further studies can be conducted by examining more different types of magazines as well as investigating audience interpretation of the magazine advertisements.

## Appendix 1 Operational definitions

### Beauty types

*Classic/feminine.* The model is slightly older than an average fashion model, feminine, usually wears soft and feminine apparel.

*Cute.* The model wears clothes more suitable for younger age. She may have small ponytails, accessories with cartoon characters, or childish facial expression.

*Sex kitten.* Usually wears sexy attire, lingerie, and revealing or tight clothes. She may show suggestive facial expression or body posture.

*Casual.* The model wears everyday clothes or clothes for physical exercises/recreational activities. She usually has no or light make-up.

*Trendy.* Wears faddish clothes and displays oversized accessories, colorful attire, and often wild or tousled hair.

*Others.* Other beauty types that do not fall into the above categories.

### Race

The Caucasian models are ethnically white in appearance and usually American or European. The Chinese models are ethnically yellow in appearance. As it is difficult to differentiate Chinese from Japanese or Korean, we therefore assume all of them are Chinese.

### Occupational roles

*Celebrities.* The model is a famous person from the entertainment world and other recreations or sports, including popular film and television stars, sports personalities, fashion models, and so on.

*Decorative roles.* The model is not depicted as having a functional role. She is shown only for her attractiveness and beauty.

*Housewives.* The model is represented as housewives in family roles, as mothers with children or carrying out household activities.

*Professional.* The model is featured in a career or business environment that showed her in some occupations in terms of dress or using accessories typical of the profession.

*Recreational.* The model is dressed in a way that suggests she is engaged in some recreational activity such as visiting friends, shopping, sports and other outdoor activities, walking or jogging.

Source: Frith, Cheng, & Shaw (2004)

Table 1  
Sample profile (N=215)

Product category	Freq.	%
cosmetics, skin care, and personal care	65	30.2
beauty slimming treatment/service	39	18.1
women clothing and accessories	37	17.2
retail, services and others	31	14.4
food and medicine	26	12.1
furniture, home appliances, and electronics	17	7.9
Products target at females	141	65.6
Products target at males and females	74	34.4

Table 2  
Portrayal of beauty type by race of female figures

Beauty type	Chinese		Caucasian		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
classic/feminine	98	69.5	37	56.1	135	65.2
sex kitten	19	13.5	7	10.6	26	12.6
casual	16	11.3	3	4.5	19	9.2
cute	6	4.3	4	6.1	10	4.8
trendy	1	0.7	13	19.7	14	6.8
others	1	0.7	2	3.0	3	1.4

Chi-square=29.7 (p<0.001); expected frequency for four cells were less than 5.

Note: The eight print ads featured Spanish/African/Indian female figures were excluded in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

Table 3  
 Portrayal of occupational role by race of female figures

Occupational role	Chinese		Caucasian		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
decorative	68	48.2	47	71.2	115	55.6
celebrities	56	39.7	9	13.6	65	31.4
recreational	7	5.0	9	13.6	16	7.7
professional	8	5.7	1	1.5	9	4.3
housewives	2	1.4	0	0.0	2	1.0

Chi-square=21.1 (p<0.001); expected frequency for three cells were less than 5.

Table 4  
Product category by race of female figures

Product category	Chinese		Caucasian		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
cosmetics, skin care, and personal care	41	29.1	22	33.3	63	30.4
beauty slimming treatment/service	35	24.8	4	6.1	39	18.4
clothing and accessories	13	9.2	23	34.8	36	17.4
retail, services and others	18	12.8	9	13.6	27	13.0
food and medicine	24	17.0	2	3.0	26	12.6
furniture, home appliances, and electronics	10	7.1	6	9.1	16	7.7

Chi-square=32.9 (p<0.001)



Table 5  
Portrayal of beauty types by product target

Beauty type	Products for F		Products for M/F		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
classic/feminine	91	64.5	50	67.6	141	65.6
sex kitten	24	17.0	2	2.7	26	12.1
casual	4	2.8	15	20.3	19	8.8
cute	6	4.3	4	5.4	10	4.7
trendy	13	9.2	3	4.1	16	7.4
others	3	2.1	0	0.0	3	1.4

Chi-square=28.4 ( $p < 0.001$ ); expected frequency for three cells were less than 5.

Table 6  
 Portrayal of occupational roles by product target

Occupational role	Products for F		Products for M/F		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
decorative	94	66.7	24	32.4	118	54.9
celebrities	40	28.4	26	35.1	66	30.7
recreational	2	1.4	14	18.9	16	7.4
professional	5	3.5	8	10.8	13	6.0
housewives	0	0.0	2	2.7	2	0.9

Chi-square=39.1 ( $p < 0.001$ ); expected frequency for three cells were less than 5.

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