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Do females in advertisements reflect adolescents' ideal female images?

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Abstract

Purpose — The purpose of this study was to investigate how Chinese adolescent girls and boys construct their own ideal female images in response to gendered advertisements based on Arnett's (1995) theory of self-socialization and Hirschman and Thompson's (1997) three interpretive strategies. A qualitative interview study was conducted for this purpose.

Design/methodology/approach — Altogether 32 adolescents aged 15 to 19 living in 16 different provinces in China were recruited for a face-to-face interview. Three advertisements were shown depicting an elegant woman, an urban sophisticated female and a strong woman, and interviewees were asked to describe the appearance, the personality, and the work and family life of the female character in each advertisement. They were asked to choose one of them as most closely representing their ideal female image.

Findings — The interviewees constructed their ideal female images from the advertisement that best suited their ideal appearance, personality, and work and family life. Female interviewees aspired to be like the elegant woman, identified with the urban sophisticated female and rejected the strong woman in the ads. Male interviewees appreciated the urban sophisticated female but rejected the strong woman.

Research limitations — With just 32 interviewees the generalizability of the findings is limited.

Practical implication – Female central characters in advertisements should be pilot-tested among the target audience to maximize levels of aspiration and identification.

Originality/value — This is the first study to examine ideal female images from gendered advertisements among adolescent boys and girls in China.

Keywords Media effects, Self-socialization, Gender roles, Advertising, Qualitative study, Consumer perception

Paper type Research paper

Do females in advertisements reflect adolescents' ideal female images?

Introduction

The female consumer market is generating more wealth through economic participation as well as spending. Female earnings in China are expected to increase from US \$1.3 trillion in 2010 to US \$4 trillion in 2020 (Silverstein et al., 2012). It is therefore important for marketers to relate strategically to the new generation of females. Adolescence is an important stage when gender socialization takes place (Erikson, 1968). The media plays an influential role in the socialization of adolescents (Arnett, 1995). Adolescents make use of media to develop their gender role identity — one of the important aspects of identity formation (Rouner et al., 2003; Greenberg et al., 1992). According to the theory of self-socialization, adolescents base their behaviors on ideal role models in the media. They seek out information actively to monitor and change their own behaviors to fit in with their ideal gender images (Arnett, 1995; Brown, 2000). Advertising, as a powerful socializing agent, has the potential to shape consumer interest (Pollay, 1986). A qualitative study was conducted among Chinese tween girls aged 10 to 12 and adolescent girls aged 15 to 18 on how and what they learn about gender roles and gender identities from female media images (Chan et al., 2011; Chan et al., 2012).

However, these studies did not cover adolescent boys, and did not extend to the perception of ideal gender images. To date, limited empirical data has been collected to investigate how adolescents form their own ideal female images in response to advertisements. Using the theory of self-socialization as a theoretical framework, the

present study attempts to fill this literature gap.

Literature review

Arnett (1995) stated that the great diversity in the media provides adolescents with a wide range of ideal images, promoting a wide range of individual differences in beliefs, characteristics, interests, and values that resonate with adolescents' own beliefs, characteristics, and interests. As the media is market-driven, media owners provide adolescents with what they are looking for rather than messages that promote social order and civic education. Compared to other socialization agents such as parents and teachers, adolescents have more control over their media socialization. They can select media information that best suits their interest and in the most desirable format (Arnett, 1995). A study found that young consumers used different media for different gratifications (Chan and Fang, 2007).

How do adolescent audiences respond to media images? Hirschman and Thompson (1997) classified three interpretive strategies to create user-media relationships. Media users may aspire, reject, or personalize media images. The first strategy is *aspiring*: a media image is represented and interpreted as an ideal self-image that media users can aspire to. It focuses on building a desired and ideal self-concept, value, belief, and characteristic similar to the ideal image. This can be seen in the way that certain good-looking, talented, smart, and successful celebrities are admired by young people (Chan, 2011). The second one is *rejecting*: media users criticize the media image. It emphasizes the separation of the self-concept and the undesired media image. For example, celebrities who take drugs, have plastic surgeries, and are materialistic are perceived as negative role models (Chan, 2011). The last strategy is *identifying*: media users relate

their self-concept to the ideal images found in the media. They reflect and personalize their own values, beliefs, and interests and conceive them to be united with the person portrayed in the media. For example, adolescents reported their appreciation of a female singer who did not follow the trend to be skinny. They commented that her personal choice matched their own values and beliefs (Chan, under review).

The responses to gendered advertisements

To maximize communication effects, marketers are interested in examining what types of female images will best achieve their communication objectives. Previous studies have been conducted to examine consumers' responses to advertisements portraying female images. Research into how media portray female images in Western countries mainly focused on how media images of thin female characters negatively affect female audiences' self-evaluation and eating behavior (e.g. Clay et al., 2005; Grabe et al., 2008; Harrison et al., 2006). A qualitative study using autovideography found that adolescent girls were most concerned about their own physical appearance and body images when they consumed advertising images with female characters (Chan et al., 2012).

An experimental study of Czech participants' responses to magazine advertisements portraying different gender roles indicated that participants tended to prefer portrayals of their own gender (Orth and Holancova, 2004). Another experimental study conducted in China showed that female participants liked advertisements using female images more than male participants, no matter what types of female images were used in the advertisements (Ng and Chan, under review). Hung et al. (2007) interviewed Chinese women to investigate their interpretation of modern female images in advertisements and showed that interviewees accepted Western values such as self-sufficiency and

independence, but rejected displays of sexuality. At the same time, interviewees also valued inner characteristics such as gentleness, softness, chastity, determination and hard work (Hung et al., 2007).

There were numerous studies of females' responses to advertisements portraying female images. However, little is known about how adolescent girls and boys form their own ideal female image in response to gendered advertisements. Based on Arnett's (1995) theory of self-socialization and Hirschman and Thompson's (1997) three interpretive strategies, this study was conducted to investigate how Chinese adolescent girls and boys aspire to, reject, or personalize female images in advertisements. Qualitative research method was used in the current study because it emphasizes the rich contexts of participants' responses and perceives participants as reflexive and meaning-making actors instead of passive subjects (Marecek, 2003).

Portrayal of females in advertisements

Previous content analyses were conducted to investigate the depiction of Chinese females' beauty types and occupational roles in print advertisements (Chan and Cheng, 2012; Frith et al., 2004; Hung et al., 2007). The previous studies classified female characters into four beauty types including (1) classic: females who are slightly older and have an elegant, glamorous and sophisticated look; (2) sexy: female characters who usually wear sexy and revealing clothes; (3) cute/girl-next-door: females who have a cute and youthful appearance and an active manner; and (4) trendy: females who usually wear faddish clothes and have uncaring attitude (Chan and Cheng, 2012; Frith et al., 2004). Another study identified four types of female ideal in advertisements, including (1)

cultured nurturer: females who depend and rely on males for affection and happiness; (2) strong woman: women shown as smart, talented, and professional; (3) flower vase: women who are concerned about being physically beautiful; and (4) urban sophisticate: females with a leisurely and luxurious life (Hung et al., 2007). Previous content analysis found that the classic beauty type occurred most frequently in Hong Kong magazine advertising (Chan and Cheng, 2012), while the urban sophisticate type occurred most frequently in Chinese magazine advertising (Hung et al., 2007).

Research questions

This study examined four research questions:

- (1) How do Chinese adolescent girls and boys perceive the **appearance** of females depicted in images in gendered advertisements?
- (2) How do Chinese adolescent girls and boys perceive the **personality** of females depicted in images in gendered advertisements?
- (3) How do Chinese adolescent girls and boys perceive the **work and family life** of females depicted in images in gendered advertisements?
- (4) To what extent do Chinese adolescent girls and boys aspire to, reject, or identify with the females depicted in images in gendered advertisements?

Contributions of the current study

The present study makes three contributions. First, previous studies of self-socialization focused mainly on children (e.g. Auster and Mansbach, 2012; Knobloch et al., 2005; Tobin et al., 2010). Only a few studies focused on adolescents (e.g. Anderson and McCabe, 2012). This study will expand knowledge about self-socialization to cover

adolescent girls and boys. Second, previous studies identified that appearance, personality, work, and family were dominant themes reported by adolescent girls in the interpretation of female media images (Chan et al., 2011; Chan et al., 2012; Chan and Ng, 2013a). The present study provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how these themes are related to ideal female images. Third, previous studies investigating Chinese adolescent girls' gender role and identity perceptions were mainly conducted in one geographic location, for example Hong Kong (Chan et al., 2012; Chan and Ng, 2012), Shanghai (Chan and Ng, 2013b), and Jilin, a province in northern China (Ng and Chan, under review). In the present study, the sampled interviewees were recruited from various provinces in China.

Method

Interviewees

Thirty-two interviewees participated in the current study. Fifteen of them were male and 17 were female. Their ages ranged from 15 to 19 years ($M = 17.7$, $SD = 1.3$). The majority of them ($N = 21$) were in senior high school, two were in junior high school, two were in vocational high school, and seven were at university. Most of them ($N = 28$) were living in privately owned housing and the remaining four were living in rental housing. Interviewees were recruited from various provinces, municipalities and special administrative regions of China, including Anhui, Beijing, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hong Kong, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jilin, Liaoning, Macau, Shanghai, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Zhejiang.

Procedures

Students of a public university in Hong Kong taking a course on consumer behavior were asked to recruit adolescent boys or girls from their social networks to participate in the study. During the Chinese New Year break, most of the students went back to their hometown for a family reunion. They were instructed to conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview using a list of questions (See Appendix) and audio-record the interview.

Interviewees were shown three selected advertisements on an electronic device. Interview transcripts were prepared. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

Informed consent was obtained from the interviewees' parents before the interview took place. The interviews were conducted in Chinese in January and February 2013.

Stimulus

Three television commercials were selected by one of the authors on the website Youku (The Chinese version of Youtube) to represent three distinctive types of female images, including an elegant female, a strong woman, and an urban sophisticated female. An elegant female image was selected because this type of image occurred most frequently in magazine advertising (Chan and Cheng, 2012). The other two female images were selected because "cute" and "successful" female images were identified as ideal female images among Chinese adolescent girls (Chan and Ng, 2012). All female images selected were Chinese. The first 30-second television commercial was for Mary Kay beauty services (Youku, 2013a). It features a gorgeous and mature woman at various life stages including her university graduation, her wedding, at work, and her family life. Her husband serves as the narrator, complimenting her for her beauty and perfection. The second 30-second television commercial was for the Tsinghua Tongfang U49F laptop computer (Youku, 2013b). The commercial featured Momo Wu, a celebrity singer in

China. In the commercial, she appears as independent and aggressive. Her narrated script is “People say I’m an early bloomer, but I think I’m just fully prepared. Life is a competition. You can waste your time in preparing, waiting, and depleting; or you can jump-start and win immediately”. The third 30-second commercial was for the e-life smart phone (Youku, 2013c). It features a cute young woman who enjoys a colorful urban life. She engages in exercise, cooking, shopping, work, and dating her boyfriend.

Data Analysis

The authors read the transcripts multiple times to familiarize themselves with the data. The constant comparative method was used in the analysis to generate meaningful categories by systematically exploring and investigating the phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Questions 1 to 4 were analyzed in the current study. Summary notes were created and interpretations of and reflections on the data were recorded. The notes were constructed, discussed, and refined based on the process of data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Topic codes were created based on the answers to the research questions. The processes of data coding were stopped when new codes ceased to exist (Charmaz, 2006). The final codes were discussed and agreed by the authors. Representative quotes were chosen and translated into English by the authors. Because of the small sample size, less emphasis was put on analysis by sex or by education. As a result, statistical analysis was not conducted.

Results

Research question 1: Appearance

The elegant female in the first commercial was perceived to be mature, dignified, intellectual and elegant. Interviewees commented that she was a noble middle-aged

woman. She looked beautiful in her sophisticated clothing and makeup. An interviewee said,

“This is a mature woman. She pays attention to the details of her appearance. For example, the makeup and the clothing are matched perfectly. It fulfills our traditional aesthetic standard for Chinese females.”

(male, age 17)

An interviewee reported that she looks like a Miss World winner:

“She is dignified. It feels like she participates in the Miss World beauty contest. The ad showed her college graduation, her wedding and her working conditions. At different life stages, she appears to be very dignified and noble. She seems to have an invisible crown on her head. She looks like a champion in the Miss World contest.”

(female, age 17)

Interviewees described the appearance of the strong woman in the second commercial as wild, unique, trendy, and not pretty. They highlighted that she wore heavy makeup and fashionable clothing. Two interviewees said she looked neutral while another female interviewee thought she looked masculine. Here is an illustrative quote:

“She is very special. Neutral, or even masculine. She looks grand and a bit pushy.”

(male, age 19)

Interviewees reported that the urban sophisticated female in the third ad looked cute, pure, young, gentle, and sweet. Most of the interviewees found her pleasant and attractive. Here is a typical quote:

“She is pretty, petite, and sweet. Her clothes are trendy. A bit cute and playful.”

(female, age 16)

Four male interviewees commented that she looks like a child. One interviewee compared her to the other two females in the ads and said:

“She is very pretty. She gives people a refreshing feeling. She is not as mature as the lady in the first commercial and not as extreme as the woman in the second commercial. Her outlook makes me feel comfortable. She is approachable.”

(male, age 17)

Research question 2: Personality

Interviewees perceived that the elegant female in the first advertisement was gentle, warm, competent, and mature. A few interviewees perceived that she was confident, independent, and professional. An interviewee put it this way:

“She has the combination of strength and gentleness. I think she is intelligent, has her own thinking about life, and possesses sophisticated taste.”

(male, age 19)

Interviewees’ comments on the personality of the strong woman in the second advertisement portrayed her as individualistic, strong-minded, brave, unique, and passionate. She cared little about what others think and do. She was tough in facing challenges and was keen to express her views. Three interviewees associated her personality with masculinity. An interviewee commented that she was aggressive and had high self-esteem. Another interviewee commented:

“She is lively, individualistic, and independent. She is well prepared for everything. Highly motivated and has the courage to express herself.”

(female, age 19)

Interviewees described the personality of the urban sophisticated female in the third advertisement as youthful, lovable, cheerful, dependent, and emotional. They perceived her to be optimistic and willing to accept new things. Four interviewees reported that she was spoiled. Two interviewees perceived her personality as friendly. The following quote illustrates this:

“Feels like a girl next door, very friendly and simple-minded. She always holds the phone, indicating that she is fashionable. And she looks weak, triggering men’s desire to protect her.”

(female, age 19)

One interviewee said she was emotional and unsteady. In his words:

“She is going to change all the time. She is not so mature, and a bit self-centered.”

(male, age 19)

Research question 3: Work and Family Life

Interviewees admired that the elegant female in the first advertisement was able to maintain a good work-family balance. She had a happy family and at the same time, a successful career. She was able to take good care of her husband and stayed on good terms with him.

Nearly all the reported attributes were good. She was perceived to enjoy a perfect and satisfactory family and a fulfilling career. This is reflected in the following quote:

“A woman who has a very successful family and career. She enjoys a good relationship with her husband. The family relationship is harmonious. Everyone is going to envy her. She is very capable at work. She may be an excellent model from school to work.”

(female, age 17)

“She enjoys a happy family life. Her husband loves her and appreciates her very much. She has her own career and her family is very harmonious. This is a typical image of a successful middle-aged woman.”

(female, age 19)

Interviewees stated that the strong woman in the second advertisement was single.

Most of them perceived that she was living alone, paid much attention to her work, and was engaged in a stressful and unstable career. Her work schedule was packed and fast-paced. An interviewee said:

“She is a strong woman who is young and workaholic. Maybe due to family reasons, she has to work very young. She doesn’t have time and energy to fall in love.”

(female, age 17)

The urban sophisticated female in the third advertisement had an easy and relaxing life, interviewees felt. Most of them perceived that the woman was not married, but had a steady relationship with her boyfriend, and that her work was not stressful at all. She did not put a lot of effort into her work. She had plenty of time to do the things she enjoyed,

such as shopping or chatting with friends. Three interviewees thought that she was a designer. Here is a typical quote:

“She probably is a fashion designer. She treats her work as a hobby. She can make some money. The job is not tiring and she has a lot of fun. Her life is quite good. She has a great relationship with her boyfriend. She must come from a wealthy family and does not need to worry about daily life.”

(female, age 15)

Research question 4: Ideal female image

Interviewees were asked which one of the three female characters most closely represented their ideal female image. Altogether 18 interviewees chose the urban sophisticated female in the third ad, 11 chose the elegant female in the first ad, and three selected the strong woman in the second advertisement.

Seven female interviewees and 11 male interviewees selected the urban sophisticated female in the third advertisement as their ideal female image. Female interviewees expressed an aspiration for her colorful life and her good relationship with the boyfriend.

Here is a typical quote:

“She has a job that she loves. I like her job. Her lifestyle and clothing are appropriate for my age. Her love life is great. She has a good relationship with her boyfriend. Becoming a girl like her is one of my aims. Although the female character in the first ad is very beautiful and successful, she is quite remote from me. I do not belong to her age, so I would not think about things such as marriage.”

(female, age 19)

Male interviewees said the girl in the advertisement was cute, active, and beautiful. An interviewee put it this way:

“Her appearance is OK. She is not too old or too trendy. Girls should be outgoing and lively, so that you can chat with her happily. You won’t feel bored when you stay together with her. She may demand a lot of your attention. She is not that aggressive. So, she is able to appreciate others.”

(male, age 18)

An interviewee perceived that the elegant female and the strong woman made him nervous. In his words:

“A sophisticated and mature woman is not suitable for me at my age. She makes me feel stressed. Although teenagers like us appreciate creative people, the female character in the second advertisement is extreme. If I stay with a girl with heavy makeup every day, I would feel uncomfortable. I like girls who are approachable. This type of girl is attractive. The female character in the second ad enjoys a rapid pace of life and faces many challenges. She gives me a feeling of instability and high pressure. The girl in the third ad is casual. She seeks happiness. She is close to my reality and my desired lifestyle.”

(male, age 17)

Seven female and four male interviewees admired the elegant female in the first advertisement.

Her maturity, her elegant appearance and her success in balancing family and work won their hearts. Here are two typical quotes:

“She possesses many advantages that females are looking for, such as self-confidence and independence. She is good at balancing family and work. She is the ideal goal of every female.”

(female, age 17)

“At my age, I prefer mature women. They can communicate with you normally and smoothly. They understand your values and world view. They are not childish. A mature woman attracts me.”

(male, age 19)

Only three female interviewees remarked that the girl in the second advertisement was their ideal female image. All of them were high school students. Two of them reported that they appreciated her great performance in the television program “The Voice of China”. An interviewee appreciated her pursuit of self-actualization. Here is an illustrative quote:

“She knows what she wants. She has clear goals and a clear mind. She is courageous in pursuing her dream. She has no fear of failure and difficulties. She is pursuing her true self.”

(female, age 18)

None of the male interviewees selected the strong woman. They said they disliked

females who were aggressive and strong. They perceived that it would be difficult to get along with a strong woman.

Discussion

In the present study, 32 Chinese adolescents aged 15-19 years old were asked to describe the appearance, the personality and the work and family life of three female characters in television advertisements and to choose one as most closely representing their ideal female image. This study focused on the self-socialization of adolescent girls and boys by making use of advertising images. The results showed that interviewees reflected their gender roles by responding to female images in the advertisements. The results echoed findings from the previous qualitative studies that generated dominant themes about gender roles and identities (Chan et al., 2012; Chan and Ng, 2013a). Although the generalizability of Chinese adolescents was enhanced because the interviewees were living in various parts of China, the limited generalizability of the findings beyond its 32 interviewees should be noted.

This study provided empirical evidence of Arnett's (1995) theory of self-socialization. Three advertisements promoting different beliefs, characteristics, interests, and values were shown to interviewees. The findings revealed that the interviewees were active in reflecting their ideal female images from the three advertisements. Female interviewees chose the image that best represented their ideal appearance, personality, and work and family life aspirations.

Based on the Hirschman and Thompson's (1997) three interpretive strategies, interviewees' narratives showed that female interviewees identified with the urban sophisticated female in the third advertisement, aspired to be like the elegant female in the first ad, and rejected the strong woman in the second ad. Most female interviewees chose the urban sophisticated female or the elegant female as most closely representing their ideal female image. Female interviewees aspired to be like the elegant female

because the mature woman enjoyed success in both her career and her family life, two life goals that the interviewees sought. She was also attractive in her physical appearance. She represented an ideal self-image that interviewees wanted to achieve in the future. The emphasis on career success and glamorous outlook for ideal female images is consistent with a previous study showing that adolescent girls had strong desire to pursue their dreams and at the same time have a good manner and wear presentable clothes (Chan and Ng, 2013b). It echoes the desirable traits of achievement and hedonism among Chinese female young adults (Hung et al., 2007).

Female interviewees identified their self-concept as related to the urban sophisticated female in the third advertisement. They personalized their own values, belief, and interests with hers because she was close to their age and background. To this group of female interviewees, relationships and enjoyment are more important than work. This is consistent with previous studies, showing a similarity in lifestyle to the market segment of “conservatives” who perceived that family was more important than career (Chan and Ng, 2012). Our interviewees’ identification with the fashionable clothing of the urban sophisticated female echoed a previous study of adolescent girls’ deep concerns about their physical appearance (Chan and Ng, 2013b).

Comparatively few female interviewees selected the strong woman as their ideal female image. Most of them chose to separate their self-concept from the aggressive girl. The results indicated that the image perceived of the single and workaholic female would be an undesirable female image for adolescent girls. This is consistent with a previous study that showed the smallest market segment to be “single-handers” who were likely to accept females staying single (Chan and Ng, 2013b). The rejection of the strong woman

in the second ad was probably because of her lacking a happy family life (Hung et al., 2007).

The issue of the difficulties of strong women in finding husbands has been widely reported in the news. These females are labelled “left-over” females. A millionairess furniture entrepreneur and single Chinese female commented, “Traditional Chinese values assign a higher social status to males. They may not be afraid of strong women. However, they need to make a lot of adjustments in relating to strong women” (Journeyman Pictures, 2012).

Chinese adolescent boys’ ideal female image in response to advertisements was also investigated in this study. Most of the male interviewees chose the urban sophisticated female in the third ad as most closely representing their ideal female figure. They were attracted by girls who are youthful and approachable. Traditional females who are gentle, loyal, and good at housework represented the ideal wife for males in China (Hung and Li, 2006). Only a few adolescent boys selected the elegant female as their ideal female. The relatively low appreciation of a mature and successful female among adolescent boys indicates that they are not ready to think about what their ideal female image may be in the future. They are more likely attracted by youthful female images now. For those male interviewees who chose the elegant woman, they thought she is understandable and easy to get along with. None of the male interviewees selected the strong woman, showing that adolescent boys do not like females who are independent and aggressive.

Marketing implications

With the improvement of the status of women in China, many marketers and advertisers are keen to use contemporary female images, including strong woman and urban

sophisticated females, to attract audiences. These females are portrayed as enjoying a high level of autonomy, both financially and psychologically. Previous studies found that young Chinese adults were alienated by non-Asian women in advertisements who appeared to be individualistic and hedonistic (Hung et al., 2007). Our study found that the images of an urban sophisticated female and an elegant woman, both Chinese, were able to trigger aspiration and identification in adolescent girls. These images were also considered to some extent, as ideal female images by adolescent boys. However, our study found that there is potential risk involved in the adoption of a strong woman image for brand communication. The use of a Chinese female celebrity perceived to be single or aggressive is not appealing to most of the young female audience, and repellent to the young male audience. In this particular case, the strong woman was endorsing a personal computer, which was considered a mass-oriented product targeting both males and females. The lack of aspiration and identification from females and the rejection response from males are going to erode the advertising effect and may result in negative brand communication. This is undesirable for the marketer involved. Marketers should pilot-test the perception of the central character among the target audience to minimize the possibility of rejection and maximize the possibility of identification or aspiration.

Based on the three advertisements only, it is difficult to examine how factors such as product category and advertising execution styles will affect consumers' responses to the advertisements. The findings seem to suggest that for consumption that is personal and seeks immediate gratification, urban sophisticated females can be useful. This is because this image can be identified with by females and appreciated by males. For example, a Chinese brand, Jasonwood, launched a print advertising campaign using urban sophisticated female images to promote its fashionable jeans in bright colors. The

campaign was able to generate impressive sales (Tien, 2011). For consumption that is long-term oriented, for example banking services, the adoption of a mature elegant female can also be considered. This image is able to generate aspiration among the female audience. We interviewed adolescent girls and boys who were mainly urban-dwellers. Future research is needed using a larger sample with a more diverse demographic background.

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Appendix: List of questions for in-depth interview

1. Please use at least two words to describe the **appearance** of the female in each advertisement (If necessary, I can show you the advertisement again).
2. Please use at least two words to describe the **personality** of the female in each advertisement (If necessary, I can show you the advertisement again).
3. Please use at least two words to describe the **work and family life** of the female in each advertisement (If necessary, I can show you the advertisement again).
4. Among the three females in the advertisements, which one most closely represents your ideal female image? Why?
5. Apart from the females in the three advertisements, what is your ideal female image?*
6. What types of media affect your ideal female image? (e.g. a television program)*

Note: * Answers to Questions 5 and 6 were not reported in this paper.