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**Gender portrayal in Hong Kong children's television commercials**

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## **Gender portrayal in Hong Kong children's television commercials**

### **Abstract**

This study examined gender-role portrayal in commercials broadcast in children programs in Hong Kong. Content analysis of a sample of 137 children commercials indicated that overall speaking, Hong Kong children commercials were less gender stereotyped than U.S. in terms of sex composition, frequencies of female and male central characters and activities of central characters. However, voice-overs were male-dominated even for products targeting both boys and girls. Gender stereotypes mainly occurred in gender-typed products (mainly toys and character toys). Commercials for male gender-typed products more often used male characters only or no human characters. Commercials for female gender-typed products often used female characters only and indoor settings. Aggressive behaviors were rarely seen, and were performed by boys only.

(117 words)

## **Gender portrayal in Hong Kong children's television commercials**

### **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 usually associated with domestic products and home setting, while men are most often seen in non-domestic products and settings. The pattern of male predominance in terms of numerical representation and of authority has been witnessed for many years, and remained the same in recent years (Gunter 1995; Pearson, West & Turner, 1995; Mackay & Covell, 1997). Research on stereotyping in advertising to children reveals a similar pattern. Commercials in children's programs have been found to contain dominantly male characters. Commercials targeting at boys contain more cuts, loud music and more active playing. Commercials targeting at girls contain more fades and dissolves, soft music and quiet play (Furnham, Abramsky & Gunter, 1997; Kline & Pentecost, 1990; Macklin & Kolbe, 1984; Smith, 1994; Welch, Huston-Stein, Wright & Plehal, 1979).

While much of the research on gender stereotyping in children's advertising has originated from the United States, similar findings have been observed in other countries, such as Australia (Browne, 1998; Mazzella, Durkin, Cerini & Buralli, 1992), Britain (Furnham & Schofield, 1986), Canada (Rak & McMullen, 1987), and Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989). Evidence of existing cross-cultural research supports the universality rather than cultural specificity of gender stereotyping.

The current study attempts to analyze the gender portrayal of children's commercial in Hong Kong. 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 was similar in level to the United States, one of the top advertising markets (Advertising Age, 2000). Hong Kong's advertising endorsed western values and was significantly different from Mainland Chinese advertising (Chan, 1999; Chan & Cheng, 2000). Analysis of Hong Kong's children commercials contributes to the understanding of the influence of culture on gender role portray in advertising.

### **Literature**

Over the past twenty years, content analyses of television programs and commercials have found that women are underrepresented and portrayed in stereotyped roles (Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Dominick & Rausch, 1972; Signorielli, 1985). Men were represented as authoritative, even for products used primarily by women (Bretl & Cantor, 1988; Lovdal, 1989; O'Donnell & O'Donnell, 1978). Research on commercials broadcast in prime-time and weekend daytime children programs consistently found male dominance in the use of voice-over. While men and women were quite equally represented in numbers in prime-time commercials, women were underrepresented in commercials aired during children's programs (Doolittle & Pepper, 1975; Riffe, Goldson, Saxton, & Yu, 1989).

Previous studies on content of children commercials can be grouped into three areas, including analyzing the sex composition and demographic/activity profile of key characters in the commercials, analyzing the production techniques, and analyzing the interaction between young consumers and the products advertised. The following sections described a few major content analysis studies in each of these three areas.

Smith (1994) examined 82 "gender-positioned ads" (that is, advertisements featuring one sex of characters only) and reported a profound stereotyping. Smith (1994) hypothesized that, owing to the behavioral difference between girls and boys (girls would be more likely to play with boys' toys than boys to play with girls' toys), advertisers would position products

that are more likely to be consumed by both sexes towards boys than towards girls. The findings supported the hypothesis. Of the 82 advertisements, 33 percent were ads positioned for girls, and 67 percent were ads positioned for boys. The sex of narrator was found to correspond to the gender positioning of the advertisements. Only boys exhibited anti-social behavior and girls did not challenge authority in all the coded commercials. Smith (1994) therefore argued that this might be an outcome of stereotyping, when males were most often portrayed as aggressive, physically active and needing to win.

Welch et al. (1979) examined the audio and visual presentation of children's toy commercials. The focus of study was on the production features such as pace, cuts, sound effects and level of action. In analyzing a sample of 60 toy commercials, they found marked differences in visual and audio presentation among commercials targeted at girls, boys and both sexes. "Aggression," in particular towards objects and physical subjects, was found exclusively limited to boys' ads. Male and neutral commercials had higher rates of cuts and tended to be louder and more dramatic than female commercials. Female commercials contained more fades and dissolves, and were more often accompanied by soft background music. For voice-overs, although the sex of the narrator was usually the same as that of the characters in each type of commercials, the narrators in neutral commercials were found predominantly male.

Welch et al. (1979) concluded that the production techniques for boys' and girls' ads would create implicit patterns of masculinity and femininity. The exclusive depiction of aggression in boys' ads consolidated the images of toughness, quick changes and high energy, which was distinctively "masculine." Fades, dissolves and soft background music in girls' ads implied female stereotypes of softness, gentleness and predictability.

By using a cultural analysis approach, Kline and Pentecost (1990) examined gender portrayals in terms of “play groupings” (grouping of gender characters), “play styles” (patterns of play activities demonstrated in the ads) and “linguistic theme” (scripting of play on a gender basis). In “play groupings,” both girls and boys were featured playing with their same sex only. No doll commercials depicted both male and female characters playing together in the study. As for “play styles,” Kline and Pentecost (1990) observed that most toy commercials portrayed girls interacting with toys; i.e. adopting a separate identity that interacts with that of the toy. However, boys were more often shown identifying with, or role playing with the toys; i.e. taking on the characters of the toy as their own. The “play styles” revealed signs of authority for boys and passivity for girls.

The linguistic themes that framed children’s play in toy advertisements had also revealed gender difference. Language of boys’ ads emphasized power, control and domination. For example, the script would say, “In a world gone mad. To survive, you drive, Steel Monster!” Scripts for girls’ ads emphasized motherhood, familial relations, glamour and attention to physical appearance. For example, the foreground song for the commercial of a character toy “My little Pony” said “I’m a My little Pony mommy. Now I’m pleased as I can be. So soft and twinkle-eyed ponies, are in my family.”

Seiter (1993) also observed that commercials for boys character toys depicted conflict, pursuit and competition while girls’ doll commercials focused on care of family members, clothing and home-making.

From these stereotyped patterns of male and female portrayals on television, many researchers have argued that such portrayals can convey certain messages (or beliefs) about the genders to the viewers. Study of gender role representation on television has derived from the idea that the televised messages can provide children with models to imitate, and in return, to reinforce their behaviors. According to the “Social Learning Theory” (Bandura,

1969), a society defines what is male and what is female and the definition is transmitted to children. Children learn gender roles through observation and imitation, together with rewards and punishment. By observing members of their own sex and copying that behavior, children can discover how they are supposed to behave. On the other hand, models of the opposite sex can provide directions for what is to be avoided. To a certain degree, television can contribute to children's learning process by providing a pool of available models for observation (Smith, 1994; Thompson and Zerbinos, 1997).

Do children understand the stereotyped content? Huston, Greer, Wright, Welch & Ross (1984) attempted to measure children's response to male or female gender-stereotyped commercials. Pseudo-commercials were produced for gender-neutral products. Child subjects, ranging from 5 to 12 years old, were asked to judge whether those specially produced commercials was better suited to promote either the male or female product category. Findings indicated that children related different production techniques to different genders. Higher rates of sound effects, loud music, fast pacing and quick cuts were seen as "masculine." Soft melody and songs, dissolves and slow shifts were rated as "feminine." These findings supported that a strong correlation between production techniques and "gender appropriateness" (that is, whether they belong to boys' or girls' products). Huston et al. (1984) argued that the messages about masculine and feminine behavior conveyed by the production techniques could be influential in cultivating stereotyped gender-role perceptions among children viewers.

### **Children and children commercials in Hong Kong**

According to a survey on how Hong Kong children spent their leisure time, it was found that children aged between two and twelve on average spent 11.2 hours per week watching television, compared to 4.5 hours per week on outdoor activities and 3.3 hours



reading by themselves (Wong, 1999<sup>\*</sup>). Gender messages in television programs and commercials therefore had the potential to play a significant role in children's lives.

Advertising to children is permitted in Hong Kong. However, advertisers need to follow the instruction stated in the Commercial Television Code of Practice on Advertising Standard.

The major requirement is that children in commercials should be seen as safe, and presented in such a way as to set a good example of behavior and manners. A McDonald commercial featuring a boy manipulating parents to bring him to the restaurant was pulled out by the client because of complaints from the parents (Chan, 1997). There is no regulation governing the gender portrayal of children in television commercials (Hong Kong Broadcasting Authority, 2000).

### **Culture and gender stereotyping in children commercials**

Browne (1998) argued that gender stereotyping would be correlated with a country's religious orientation, urbanization, and the availability of education for women. More traditional gender roles would be adopted in countries with lower levels of urbanization and education, and countries with religious orientation favoring males.

In terms of urbanization and availability of education for women, Hong Kong is compatible with many western societies. The female labor participation rate for Hong Kong was 50 percent (Census & Statistics Department, 2000), which was lower than 57 percent in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000). Hong Kong has a population of 6.9 million. Of which, 12 percent (828,300) are children aged five to fourteen. There are slightly more boys than girls (Census & Statistics Department, 2000). Hong Kong provides nine-year free education to all children, both males and females, between the ages of six and fifteen. Chinese tradition has shown favoring toward males as they are responsible to pass down the family

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<sup>\*</sup> The survey was conducted by Research firm Taylor Nelson Sofres polled 335 parents of children between two and twelve, asking them about children's leisure habits.

names. As a former British colony, Hong Kong has laws protecting women from gender bias in terms of education, employment and pay package (Chan, 2000).

Although Hong Kong's economy and advertising industry indicates much similarity to the U.S., the two societies have significant differences in terms of the market environments and the cultural context. Hong Kong is an urbanized city-state and the U.S. is a vast country with great climate differences among its fifty states. Stores and services outlets are within walking distance or can be easily accessible by public transportation. Shopping is a very convenient activity, even for very young consumers. A survey on parents indicated that an even larger proportion of children in Hong Kong at age 4 made independent purchases while accompanying their parents to the marketplace than do children in the U.S. Children from Hong Kong and U.S. spent almost the same proportions of their incomes on snacks. However, children from Hong Kong spent less on entertainment, clothing and play items than children from the U.S. (McNeal, 1992).

Hong Kong and U.S. also differ in their cultures. Many scholars have searched for meaningful dimensions of culture variables. The best-known ones include individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and contextualization (Hofstede, 1980, 1984; Mulder, 1976; Hall, 1966). Hofstede (1980, 1984) studied attitudes and values among employees in an international corporation with sites in more than 50 countries. According to his studies, the United States was the most individualistic country while Hong Kong was among one of the most collective countries (Hofstede, 1984). In another survey measuring power distance and the masculinity index reflected by prevailing role distribution between husband and wife in a typical family, Hong Kong and U.S. had similar average age masculine scores. However, Hong Kong had a higher power distance score than U.S., indicating inequality between parents and children is a societal norm in Hong Kong (Hofstede, 1991).

The traditional vs. modern dimension of gender role ideology is central to our understanding of gender role portray in Hong Kong's children commercials. It was generally accepted that the gender role ideology in many Asian countries has been relatively traditional, when compared to that in the United States and Canada (Tang and Dion, 1999). Traditional beliefs are those in which men are viewed as superior and more important than women, and modern beliefs are those in which men and women are viewed as equals and equally important (Williams and Best, 1990). A survey of 952 Hong Kong youths aged 14 to 21 years old about attitudes toward marriage revealed deep ingrained of the traditional male provider role and the female homecare role. However, there was significant difference in the extent egalitarian role-sharing endorsed by male and female respondents (Yeung and Kwong, 1995).

Given the differences in market conditions and cultures between the two societies, a study of the children commercials in Hong Kong will investigate whether gender stereotyping in children television commercials is universal or culturally specific.

### **Research questions and hypotheses**

The current study attempts to answer two broad research questions. The first one is 'How males and females are portrayed in Hong Kong's children commercial?' As Hong Kong, like U.S., is considered as a masculine society (Hofstede, 1991), it is expected that the male dominance found in U.S. children commercials will occur in Hong Kong. Based on previous findings, five specific hypotheses were tested:

H1: There will be more ads using males only than ads using females only.

H2: There will be more male voice-overs than female voice-overs.

H3: There will be more male central characters than female central characters.

H4: There will be more male central figures taking authoritative roles than female central figures taking authoritative roles.

H5: Females will be more likely to engage in passive and obedient behavior in the commercials, and males will be more likely to engage in active and aggressive behavior.

The second research question focuses on whether commercials for different types of products have different gender stereotypes. Are there differences in gender portrayals of commercials for products associated with boys, products associated with girls, and gender-neutral products? Three hypotheses were tested.

H6: Commercials for male gender-typed products will use males only and commercials for female gender-typed products will use females only.

H7: Commercials for gender-neutral products will be more likely to use male voice-overs.

H8: Commercials for female gender-typed products will use more domestic settings, and commercials for male gender-typed products will use more out-of-the-home settings.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The sample TV commercials had been obtained from eleven weekends of children's programming broadcast on the two free-to-air Chinese-language terrestrial channels in Hong Kong. Cable TV was excluded as its advertising volume was still low. The weeks taped include the first three weeks of February, March and April 1999 and the first week of September and October 1999. February and April represented peak advertising period for children during Chinese New Year and Easter holidays. March, September and October represented low advertising period for children during school days. Commercials broadcast during children's programs on Saturday and Sunday mornings (9:00--11:45 a.m.) and afternoons (3:30--6:00 p.m.) in each channel were taped. These programs were mainly

imported cartoon series and local children variety shows. According to the AC Nielsen's weekly TV rating report (AC Nielsen, 1999), children aged 4 to 14 comprised a substantial portion of viewers during the selected program hours.

Duplicated commercials were not included in order to eliminate the bias from broadcast frequency of commercials. Public services announcements, station identification and promotional messages were excluded. Commercials for products that the prime purchasers and users were mainly adults were also eliminated from the analysis. These included real estate, financial services, kitchen utensils, electrical appliances, furniture, cosmetics, and skincare commercials.

### **Coding**

There were two separate measures of gender portrayal. The first was based on individual television commercial, and the second was based on individual central figure within each commercial. For each commercial, the product category, product gender-type, sex composition, sex of voice-overs, and location of the setting were coded. Within each commercial, the sex, age, activity involved and whether he or she was an authoritative character of the central figures were coded. A central figure refers to a child, adult, or cartoon character that appears most in the ad. There could be none or more than one. In the current study, at most two central figures that appeared the longest time were coded. The descriptions of coded variables were shown in the Appendix. The study used established coding schemes from previous studies by Browne (1998), Kline and Pentecost (1990), Siu (1996), Smith (1994) and Welch et. al. (1979). All commercials were video-taped and reviewed by two female Chinese university graduates with working experience in television advertising. One quarter of the sample was re-examined by one of the authors. Discrepancies were resolved after discussion among the authors. The coding reliability for variables coded for the commercial ranged from 0.91

for product category to 1.0 for location. The coding reliability for variables coded for central figures ranged from 0.79 for 'authority' to 1.0 for age and sex of central figures.

### **Findings**

The sample consisted of 137 commercials. Table 1 shows the sample profile. Food and drink, and fast food commercials made up nearly sixty percent of the sample. Toys and entertainment occupied another 27 percent and 10 percent respectively. Commercials on products targeting one sex were not common in Hong Kong children commercials. Most of the commercials attempted to target both sexes. There were 23 commercials on male gender-typed products, 4 commercials on female gender-typed products and 110 commercials on gender-neutral products. The proportion of commercials of gender-typed products was 20 percent. Gender-typed products were mainly toys, character toys, and entertainment products. Male-gender-typed commercials were nearly six times that of female-gender-typed commercials. The four commercials targeted at girls included a kitchen toy commercial, two Barbie dolls commercials and a Japanese snack commercial. All of them were international campaigns dubbing into Chinese narratives. The small sample of female product commercials posted a question on the validity of the study. Chi-square statistical test requires that the expected frequencies for all cells in the contingency table should be larger than five. Due to the occurrence of only four female-gender-typed commercials, the significance or insignificance results involving female-gender-typed commercials should be interpreted with caution.

[TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE]

Table 2 shows the sex composition of the commercials by product gender-type. The most frequently used gender compositions were featuring both genders (27 percent) and no human figures (26 percent). Gender-positioned commercials (that is, commercials featuring one sex only) contributed only three out of ten commercials. There was nearly equal number of commercials with male characters only or with female characters only. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

[TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE]

Table 3 shows the cross-tabulation of sex of voice-overs by product gender-type. Voice-overs were predominantly males. Of the 137 commercials, 86 used male voices alone and 26 used female voices alone. The remaining commercials used voice-overs of both sexes (16 percent) or no voice-overs (6 percent). Male voice-over was more than three times that of female voice-over. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported.

[TABLE THREE ABOUT HERE]

There were 80 commercials with central characters and altogether 120 central figures were coded. The proportions of male and female central figures were nearly equal, with 56 percent males versus 44 percent female characters. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Of the 120 central figures, only 16 (13 percent) were authoritative figures. Among these authoritative characters, nine were males and seven were females. Chi-square test indicated there was no association between gender of central figures and whether he or she was an authoritative character. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Table 4 shows the activity of the male and female central figures. Nearly equal proportion of male and female central figures engaged in physically active activities. None of the sampled commercials showed boys or girls engaged in obedient and helping behaviors, such as giving seats to the elderly, or responding to commands from adults. Chi-square test indicated that sex of central figure was not associated with type of activity. There was no evidence showing females more likely to engage in passive and obedient behaviors and males in active and aggressive behaviors. Hypothesis 5 was not supported. However, only boys showed aggressive and anti-social behaviors and none of the female central figures showed similar behaviors.

[TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE]



From Table 2, result of the Chi-square test indicated that sex composition of the commercial was associated with product gender-type. Male gender-typed products more likely used no human characters or male characters only. Female gender-typed products more likely used female characters only. Therefore, hypothesis 6 was supported.

From Table 3, there was a significant association between sex of narrators and product gender-type. For the four commercials targeted at girls, three used female narrators and one used male narrators. However, of the sixteen commercials targeted at boys, none of them used female voices. An overwhelming majority of male voice-overs (56 percent), compared to female voice-overs (21 percent) in commercials of gender-neutral products. Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Table 5 shows the cross tabulation of commercial settings by product gender-type. Most children commercials used fantasy settings (37 percent) and indoor settings (31 percent). Outdoor and an equal mix of indoor and outdoor settings were less frequently used and contributed to another 18 percent and 7 percent respectively. Chi-square test indicated that location was associated with product target gender. Commercials of products for boys used more frequently fantasy settings and unidentified background. Commonly used fantasy settings included outer space, abandoned cities, and deserted regions. For the four commercials of products for girls, three used home settings. Hypothesis 8 was supported.

[TABLE FIVE ABOUT HERE]

### **Discussions**

For the first research question ‘How males and females were portrayed in Hong Kong’s children commercials?’, we found that four out of five traditional gender stereotyped hypotheses were not supported. Females were not underrepresented in terms of frequency of central figures as well as in sex composition. Females were equally likely to be active and authoritative. Contrary to what is expected, children commercials in Hong Kong was less

gender stereotyped as that found in previous studies of Smith (1994) and Welch et al. (1979). What similar to that found in the U.S. commercials was the male dominance in voice-overs. Male predominance in voice-overs was found in adult commercials in Hong Kong (Siu, 1996). In fact, male dominance in voice-overs was not limited to commercials. The only two free-on-air commercial channels in Hong Kong use predominantly male announcers in producing billboard sponsor identification ads and station promotional spots. Nearly all Government's public services advertising use male voice-overs as well.

Hong Kong children commercials were less gender stereotyped than U.S. One may ask why? One possible explanation is the influence of the types of product being advertised. Macklin and Kolbe (1983) pointed out that methodological decisions such as decision of the period of broadcast and the types of commercials included would influence findings of gender role stereotyping. Some of the findings of strong gender stereotyped were based on observation of toy commercials only (Smith, 1994; Welch et al, 1979). As the sample was selected in both festival and non-festival periods, it did not contain a substantial proportion of toy commercials. Further research is needed to explore whether type of products advertised will have an influence on the degree of gender stereotyped.

Another possible explanation is that because of the relatively small size of the children market in Hong Kong (the population ages 5 to 15 of the U.S. market is about fifty times that of Hong Kong), level of market segmentation according to sex is low. This can be seen by a majority of commercials of products targeting at both sexes. Since the advertisers are addressing both girls and boys, sex composition of both sexes was predominantly used. The sample contained a high proportion (50 percent) of food and drinks products that usually all characters involved took active and healthy roles.

Another possible reason is the general aspiration for modernization and westernization in Hong Kong's advertising. Previous longitudinal study of Hong Kong's

print advertising found that the set of dominant values consisted of mainly western values and there was no typical eastern value (Chan, 1999). Hong Kong advertising in general looks for modernity in which traditional gender roles are considered to be outdated or undesirable. Further study of advertising creative personnel on views of modernity and gender portrayal in children commercials may shed light on this area.

Some of the children commercials in Hong Kong were adapted from international campaigns such as Coke and McDonald. Some of the commercials were created by local advertising agencies. In the current sample, all four commercials for female gender-typed products were 'imported' commercials. It will be interesting to investigate whether source of advertising message will have an influence on the gender portrayal in the future studies.

As advertising standards in Hong Kong require children in the commercials to behave responsibly, it is as expected that aggressive behavior is rare. Only boys are involved in such rare incidents. Maybe in the Chinese societies, people have higher moral expectation from girls than from boys. Another interesting finding was that none of the central figures showed obedient behavior. The absence of such behavior in the commercials may be due to that fact that obedient behavior is not interesting and appealing to children.

For the second research questions, the findings in the current study echoed that found in U.S. studies by Kline & Pentecost (1990), Seiter (1993) and Welch et al. (1979). All three hypotheses on differences in presentation of commercials of male gender-typed products and female gender-typed products were supported. Female voice-overs were underrepresented in commercials of gender-neutral products. The sex composition of the commercials matched with the product gender type. Commercials were mostly in indoor setting for female gender-typed products.

To conclude, the study showed that gender stereotypes in children commercials in Hong Kong was not strong in general. However, gender stereotype was the strongest in commercials of gender-typed products, especially toys.

This study adopted a textual analytical method — content analysis, in which the research interpreted the meanings of the commercials. Obviously, a limitation of this study is that the impact of stereotypical behavior on television cannot be ascertained. As Gunter (1995) points out, it is one thing to classify and describe the content of television, but it is quite another thing to establish or infer that certain meanings conveyed by television portrayals are being well understood by viewers and then absorbed into their existing beliefs. It will be instructive to look at the effects of television on children's perceptions, and their viewing habits, along with parental mediation and peer group culture. In addition, longitudinal research would be desirable to trace any changes in gender portrayals. Only through such kind of analyses and future research on children's attitudes could we be able to clarify the nature and degree of television impacts on their beliefs about the genders.

**Appendix. Description of variables**

For each commercial, code

Variable (coding reliability*)	values
Product category (0.91)	toys, character toys, snack/food, drinks, fast food, entertainment, stationery, others
sex composition of characters (0.94)	None/showing product only, males, females, males and females, cartoons/animals/puppets)
Sex of voice-over and narrators (0.97)	None, males, females, males and females
Product gender-type, products are gender-typed if most people would think they would be more appropriate for one gender than another (0.97)	Male-gender-typed (associated with use by boys), female-gender-typed (associated with use by girls), Gender neutral (appropriate for use by both genders)
Location (1.0)	mainly indoor, mainly outdoor, indoor and outdoor with equal proportion, fantasy or animated or artificial, unable to identify

For a maximum of two central figures in each commercial that appeared the longest time, code

Sex (1.0)	Male, female
Age (1.0)	under 12, 2=13-19, 3=20-35, 36-49, above 50
Activity (0.89)	passive, active, aggressive, anti-social, obedient/sharing/helpful, eating or drinking, others by Smith (1994)
Authority, audio statement suggesting recommendation by giving advice, verbal approval, or personal opinion (0.79)	Not present, present

\*coding reliability refers to the percentage of agreement of one quarter of the sample for checking

**Table 1. Sample profile (N=137)**

Product Category	Frequency	Percent
Snacks/food	55	40.1
Toys	16	11.7
Drinks	14	10.2
Character toys and dolls	13	9.5
Fast Food	12	8.8
Entertainment	12	8.8
Stationery	7	5.1
Others (schools, medicine etc.)	8	5.8

**Table 2. Sex composition by product gender-type**

Sex composition of the commercial	Product gender-type			Total (N=137)
	Male (N=23)	Female (N=4)	Neutral (N=110)	
<b>Human:</b>				
Males only	30%	0%	15%	18%
Females only	0%	75%	14%	13%
Both sexes	0%	25%	33%	27%
<b>Non-human:</b>				
Cartoons, puppets, Animals, toy models	9%	0%	18%	16%
No human characters	61%	0%	18%	26%
Chi-square=40.3; significance<0.001; expected frequency for some cells were less than 5.				

**Table 3. Sex of voice-overs by product gender-type**

Sex of voice-overs	Product gender-type			Total (N=137)
	Male (N=23)	Female (N=4)	Both (N=110)	
None	0%	0%	6%	5%
Male	100%	25%	56%	63%
Female	0%	75%	21%	19%
Both	0%	0%	17%	13%

Chi-square: 24.0; significance<0.001; expected frequency for some cells were less than 5.

**Table 4. Activity by sex of central figure**

Type of activity	Male character (N= 67)	Female character (N=53)
Passive	27%	38%
Active	27%	23%
Aggressive	5%	0%
Anti-social	1%	0%
Obedient	0%	0%
Eating & drinking	28%	30%
Others	12%	9%

Chi-square: 7.1; Not significant at 0.05 level.

**Table 5. Location by product gender-type**

Location and setting	Product gender-type			Total (N=137)
	Male (N=23)	Female (N=4)	Neutral (N=110)	
Indoor	13%	75%	33%	31%
Outdoor	9%	25%	19%	17%
In and outdoor	0%	0%	8%	7%
Fantasy	57%	0%	34%	36%
Unidentified	22%	0%	6%	9%

Chi-square: 18.3; significance<0.05; expected frequency for some cells were less than 5.



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