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Gender representations in East Asian advertising: Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea

Prieler, Michael, Ivanov, Alex and Hagiwara, Shigeru

Michael Prieler
prieler@hallym.ac.kr
Professor. School of
Communication.
Hallym University. South Korea.

Alex Ivanov
aivanov@cityu.edu.hk
Assistant Professor.
Department of Media and
Communication.
City University of Hong Kong.
China Creative Media Centre.

Shigeru Hagiwara
hagiwara@rikkyojogakuin.ac.jp
Professor. Department of
Contemporary Communication.
St. Margaret's Junior College.
Tokyo. Japan

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Abstract

Gender representations in television advertisements have been a subject of academic research for many years. However, comparatively few studies have looked into television advertising's gender representations in Confucian societies, particularly from a comparative perspective. This study compares the representation of males and females in 1,694 television advertisements from Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea. It uncovers stereotypical gender representations related to age (females were predominantly young, males were middle-aged), clothing/nudity (females were more suggestively dressed, males were fully clothed), work (females were depicted more often at home, males were typically depicted in the workplace), authority (males were used for voiceovers more than females, with males being the so-called "voice of authority"), and beauty (more females than males advertised for the cosmetics/toiletries product category). Overall, gender representations were highly stereotypical in all three cultures, which may be due to a shared common cultural background based on Confucianism. In terms of the degree of gender stereotyping, Hong Kong was more gender-egalitarian than Japan and South Korea; this finding is consistent with results from Project Globe's gender egalitarianism index and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) by the United Nations, but not with Hofstede's masculinity index. These results suggest a relationship between gender representations and some gender indices. Finally, this article discusses the possible effects of stereotypical gender representations on audiences in relation to social cognitive and cultivation theories.

Keywords

Television advertising, content analysis, gender representations, Confucianism, comparative research

1. Introduction

Gender representations in television advertisements have been a subject of academic concern for many years (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010) because they can potentially affect society and limit

women's opportunities (Bandura, 2009; Gerbner, 1998; Smith & Granados, 2009). This type of research began in the United States in the 1970s (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974) and was followed by a great number of articles. Comparatively few studies have examined gender representations in television advertising in Confucian societies (Arima, 2003; Bresnahan, Inoue, Liu, & Nishida, 2001; Cheng, 1997; Kim & Lowry, 2005; Siu & Au, 1997). This should be a particularly interesting arena for studies on gender, as Confucianism is based on a clear division of genders. The purpose of this study is to analyze how gender is constructed in television advertisements in the Confucian societies of Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea and to discuss the possible effects of such representations.

1.1. *Confucianism and advertising's effects on culture*

Although Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea differ in various aspects, they all share a common cultural background based on Confucianism (Ko, Kim Haboush & Piggott, 2003; Nyitray, 2004). The Confucianism legacy has often been blamed for the continuing low status of women, rigid gender role divisions, and male dominance in these cultures. In Confucianism, a clear division between husband and wife exists (and, more generally, between male and female members of society). The husband is the dominant partner and is expected to show responsibility and benevolence to the latter, who is subordinate in the relationship and is expected to show obedience, loyalty, and respect (Hyun, 2001). Confucian societies seem to be particularly interesting venues for gender research because scholars claim that the patriarchal Confucian philosophy has exerted a negative impact on women, and it has been blamed for both historical and contemporary gender discrimination. Although economic development is challenging these traditional values and the status of women has improved (Cheung & Holroyd, 2009; Kendall, 2002; Liddle & Nakajima, 2000), women in Confucian societies still face large cultural disadvantages.

Advertisements are sources of meaning in a culture because they tell the audience not only stories about products but also about social roles, goals, and values (Pollay, 1986). Following the social constructionist approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hall, 1997), advertising images are constructed (Goffman, 1976) as part of larger social processes that construct and encourage some meanings of dominant groups over others (Ibroscheva & Ramaprasad, 2008). For example, advertisements construct and represent gender in accordance with traditional hierarchical gender relations in society (Luyt, 2011). Thus, they recreate stereotypes and hamper change because once such practices become habitual, others expect such behaviors, which are perpetuated by society (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Such gender expectations are not natural, timeless or universal but are socially, historically and politically situated. Gender is what we agree on in a particular social context (Bohan, 1993).

Two theories on media effects that draw from the assumptions of social constructionism are social cognitive theory and cultivation theory. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2009) claims that social behavior is learned through direct and vicarious observation, such as watching television. People model their behaviors based on these observations, including information about gender roles. Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) makes the related claim that television plays an important role in creating (distorted) views of reality (particularly for heavy viewers). Watching television produces the viewer's worldview, that is, images of social behaviors, norms and values. Empirical research supports these theories: A meta-analysis confirmed heavy viewing to be associated with gender role stereotyping and that TV teaches gender role stereotyping (Oppliger, 2007). Relating more specifically to this research, the same effect was found for television advertisements (Garst & Bodenhausen, 1997; MacKay & Covell, 1997). Although our content

analysis cannot possibly examine media effects, this sort of content analysis is an important first step in understanding the possible impact of media (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005).

1.2. *Literature review, hypotheses, and research question*

The study of gender representation in television advertisements has a long history (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). English language studies on Asian countries began in the 1990s, including studies on Singapore (Lee, 2004; Siu & Au, 1997; Tan, Ling & Theng, 2002; Wee, Choong & Tambyah, 1995), Malaysia (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Tan et al., 2002; Wee et al., 1995), China (Cheng, 1997; Paek, Nelson & Vilela, 2011; Siu & Au, 1997), Indonesia (Furnham, Mak & Tanidjojo, 2000), and the Philippines (Prieler & Centeno, 2013). There have also been several studies on Hong Kong (Furnham & Chan, 2003; Furnham et al., 2000; Moon & Chan, 2007), Japan (Arima, 2003; Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Milner & Collins, 2000), and South Korea (Kim & Lowry, 2005; Moon & Chan, 2007; Paek et al., 2011; Prieler, 2012). However, there is no comparative study of all three cultures to date, which makes this multicultural study even more timely. In the following review, we outline the most common gender representations in detail, including the gender of the primary character, age, setting, degree of dress, voiceover, and product category (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). However, our main emphasis will be on previous studies on Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea.

Most previous research has studied the gender of the primary character in television advertisements, which some have interpreted as an indicator of the importance, relevance, and recognition of the respective gender (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli & Morgan, 1980; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Most studies in Hong Kong reported a predominance of male characters (Furnham & Chan, 2003; Furnham et al., 2000), while studies on South Korea showed a predominance of female characters (Kim & Lowry, 2005; Paek et al., 2011; Prieler, 2012). In contrast, Moon and Chan (2007) reported no statistically significant differences for both cultures. The results for studies on Japan were mixed, with one study showing more male characters (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002), two showing more female characters (Arima, 2003; Milner & Collins, 2000), and another nearly no differences (Bresnahan et al., 2001). Despite the mixed results of previous studies in East Asia, more studies found male predominance (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Thus, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H1: There will be more males than females in all three cultures.

The age of the primary character is another widely studied variable. Most studies report a predominance of females in the younger age segment (under 35), while more males were found in the middle age and older age segments (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). In a meta-analysis, Eisend (2010) found that the odds of females being younger were three times higher than they were for males. Research on Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea all reported more females than males in the younger age segment (Furnham & Chan, 2003; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Furnham et al., 2000; Kim & Lowry, 2005; Milner & Collins, 2000; Moon & Chan, 2007; Prieler, 2012; Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima, 2011). Considering these findings, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H2: More females than males will be represented in the young age segment in all three cultures.

The degree of dress of male and female characters in television advertisements has been investigated in comparatively few studies, most of which were conducted in the United States (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000; Lin, 1998; Nelson & Paek, 2008) and showed that more females than males were wearing suggestive dresses. A comparison between British and Chinese television advertisements revealed more nudity in British ads than in Chinese ones

(Hao, 2011). In a multicultural study of Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, and the United States, Nelson and Paek (2008) found that nudity differed among the seven countries, with US and Chinese ads showing the lowest levels of nudity and German and Thai ads showing the highest levels. Overall, all studies to date have shown more females in states of undress and more males fully dressed. Thus, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H3: More females than males will be suggestively dressed in all three cultures.

The nature of the setting is regarded as an important indicator of gender bias (Nassif & Gunter, 2008). The existing literature reports that setting is a variable that largely produces highly stereotypical results and clear gender divisions. Most often cited is the association of females with a home setting (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). A meta-analysis shows that the odds that females will be depicted at home (vs. at work) is approximately 3.5 times higher than they are for males (Eisend, 2010). Findings on South Korea were stereotypical, with more females at home and more males at work (Kim & Lowry, 2005; Prieler, 2012), while findings in Japan showed more females at home but a similar number of males and females at work (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002). Finally, the results for Hong Kong were mixed, with more males at home in one study (Furnham et al., 2000) and more females at work in another study (Furnham & Chan, 2003). Considering these findings, we suggest the following hypothesis for the most common gender representation related to setting:

H4: More females than males will be shown in the home setting in all three cultures.

The predominance of male voiceovers is one of the most consistent findings in the literature (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Voiceovers are interpreted as the "voice of authority" in giving advice and recommendations, a quality that women are presumed to lack (Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974). In more than 70 studies, we have found only three studies with more female voiceovers – one on Turkey (Milner & Collins, 1998) and two on South Korea (Paek et al., 2011; Prieler, 2012). However, there was a study on South Korea that reported more male voiceovers (Kim & Lowry, 2005). Thus, the findings are mixed. The exception of these three studies is even clearer when considering that Furnham and Palzer (2010) reported an even more pronounced dominance of male voiceovers in Asia. This finding is in line with all studies on Hong Kong and Japan that reported male voiceovers of more than 60% or 70% (Arima, 2003; Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham & Chan, 2003; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Furnham et al., 2000). Thus, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H5: There will be more male than female voiceovers in all three cultures.

The product categories used by different genders are important variables for determining whether products are associated with respective genders and to what degree these associations limit gender portrayals. For example, the association between females and the cosmetics/toiletries product category emphasizes the importance of beauty for females in society. This association is reported in most previous research (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). One study in South Korea linked phones and home entertainment with males and cosmetics/toiletries and household products with females (Prieler, 2012). Another study found non-technical products to be associated with females (Kim & Lowry, 2005). In Japan, males were associated with technical products and females were associated with food/drinks and personal care products (Bresnahan et al., 2001). However, a different study on Japan showed surprisingly similar gender associations for body products (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002). The same finding was true of a study in Hong Kong (Furnham et al., 2000), while another study led to rather stereotypical results, with more females associated with body and home products on Chinese language television channels (Furnham & Chan, 2003). Considering that the majority of studies found an association between females and the cosmetics/toiletries product category, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H6: There will be more females than males in advertisements for the cosmetics/toiletries product category in all three cultures.

Previous research has indicated that gender representations vary by culture (Paek et al., 2011). This finding is in accordance with social constructionism, which suggests that the construction of gender and its meanings are based on their social context (Bohan, 1993). For example, some research has indicated a relation between Hofstede's masculinity index and gender predominance (Milner & Collins, 2000); a higher score in Hofstede's masculinity index increases the likelihood of a male voiceover (Paek et al., 2011). Hofstede's masculinity index (2001) shows Japan as the most masculine culture (associated with greater gender differentiation) with a value of 95, followed by Hong Kong (57), and South Korea (39). In contrast, the results from the newer Project Globe (Emrich, Denmark & Den Hartog, 2004) show a tendency toward more gender egalitarianism in Hong Kong (score: 3.47) than in Japan (3.19) and South Korea (2.50). South Korea had the lowest score of all 62 investigated cultures. Similarly, the Gender-related Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014) ranks Hong Kong 49th, Japan 79th, and South Korea 85th. On the other hand, the common cultural background of Confucianism strongly shapes gender relations (Ko et al., 2003; Nyitray, 2004) and may lead to a similar construction of gender even though traditional Confucian values were challenged in these cultures (Cheung & Holroyd, 2009; Kendall, 2002; Liddle & Nakajima, 2000) and all of them have been developing differently in recent years. For example, Hong Kong was influenced by the influx of Western culture and people as a British colony (Moon & Chan, 2007). We formulate the following research question based on these mixed findings:

R1: Are there differences in the degree of stereotyping in advertisements in Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea?

2. Method

2.1. *Sample of advertisements*

The sample recording was conducted in Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea during one week in April 2012. In Japan, we recorded all five main commercial television stations: Fuji TV (market share: 18.7% in 2009), NTV (18.6%), TV Asahi (16.9%), TBS (14.6%), and TV Tokyo (7.0%). In South Korea, we recorded the three main commercial television stations that broadcast television advertisements: KBS 2 (12.2%), MBC (11.6%), and SBS (11.2%). In Hong Kong, we recorded TVB Jade (55.8%). However, we did not include the second major television station, ATV Home, after a pretest resulted in only five ads during a 12-hour coding test (WARC, 2012). After investigating the definitions of prime time in the three cultures, we decided to record from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., which was the most inclusive approach. To produce a representative sample, the recordings between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. were divided into one-hour blocks, and the television channels were randomly assigned to these time slots (Cheng, 1997). We did not control for duplication because viewing repetitions represent the reality of television viewing (Arima, 2003). This led to 709 television advertisements in Hong Kong, 775 in Japan, and 550 in South Korea. Of these advertisements, 624 included primary characters in Hong Kong, 628 in Japan, and 442 in South Korea. These groups served as our samples.

2.2. *Coding procedure*

Our unit of analysis was the primary character in each television advertisement. We first analyzed whether there was a primary character in the advertisement and then identified the primary character's gender (0 = no primary character, 1 = male primary character, 2 =

female primary character). A primary character was defined as 18 years or older and appearing on camera with either a speaking role or prominent exposure for at least three seconds. When several characters appeared in an advertisement, we followed a method from previous research (Nassif & Gunter, 2008; Prieler & Centeno, 2013) that was adapted during our coder training and pretests. The coders selected the primary character as the character who (1) was central to the story, (2) appeared in close ups for the longest period of time, (3) appeared for the longest period of time, (4) provided substantial information about the advertised product or service, (5) used or held the product, and/or (6) had the more extensive speaking part (in this particular order of decision criteria).

Our project was bilingually organized, with three bilingual student pairs (one male and one female, speaking English and the respective local language) from each studied culture, and did not include any researchers. Coders were blind to the hypotheses and were trained on the coding manual for approximately ten hours. To produce comparable coding results, the coding manual was developed using comments from all three cultures, and one of the authors supervised the coder training process in all three places. Intercoder reliability coefficients for the pilot test and the final sample were measured by Krippendorff's alpha coefficient. After the coders finished a pilot test consisting of 50 television advertisements that were not included in the final sample and reaching a reliability of above $\alpha = .70$ for each reported variable, they began independently coding the sample. All variables in the final sample had alpha values above .70, which Hayes (2005) regards as sufficient if the intercoder reliability was corrected by chance, all coders coded all units of the culture, and disagreements between the coders were resolved, all of which were true in our study.

2.3. *Variables*

2.3.1. *Age*
Characters' age in the advertisements were estimated to be (1) 18-34 years; (2) 35-49 years or (3) 50 years and older.

2.3.2. *Setting*
The following settings were coded: (1) workplace (inside); (2) home (inside residential space); (3) other indoors (e.g., store, restaurant, car, bus, train, etc.); (4) outdoors, and (5) other (artificial, etc.). If several settings appeared, the dominant setting was coded.

2.3.3. *Degree of dress*
Degree of dress was adapted from the previous literature (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000; Nelson & Paek, 2008) and coded as follows: (0) fully dressed was defined as wearing everyday dress, such as walking shorts, but excluded short-shorts and underwear; (1) suggestively clad was clothing that partially exposed the body, such as sleeveless or tight shirts, short-shorts/mini-skirts or clothing that exposed the cleavage or chest areas; (2) partially clad was clothing such as under-apparel, lingerie, bikinis, and briefs; and (3) nude was bare bodies or those wearing translucent under-apparel or lingerie, including actual nudity or suggested nudity, such as holding a towel or linen so that genitals were concealed.

2.3.4. *Product category*
Based on the results from a pilot test, eleven categories were selected for this study: (1) cosmetics/toiletries, (2) pharmaceuticals/health care products, (3) drinks, (4) foods/snacks, (5) restaurants/coffee shops, (6) retail outlets, (7) home entertainment, (8) mobile phones/providers, (9) finance/insurance/legal, (10) fashion/clothing, and (11) other.

3. Results

This study used chi-square tests to analyze the sample of television advertisements, including primary characters. We were interested in assessing both the overall significant differences between males and females for each category and subcategories that contributed to this significance. Thus, we computed the adjusted standardized residuals (ASRs) as post-hoc tests to break down the results. In turn, we attempted to answer each hypothesis while simultaneously addressing RQ1 regarding differences in the degree of stereotyping between the cultures. To analyze such differences, we calculated odds ratios by collapsing the categories into dichotomous variables, such as (1) being ages 18-34 and (2) being the remaining ages (Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011). We performed significance tests between the odds ratios of the respective cultures using z-tests with the formula: $z = \delta/SE(\delta)$, where δ is the difference of the log odds, and the standard error is the square root of the sum of the separate standard error squares. The separate standard errors of the log OR is the square root of the frequencies' reciprocals (Altman & Bland, 2003).

Table 1. Relationship between gender and miscellaneous variables

	Hong Kong				χ^2; Odds ratio	Japan				χ^2; Odds ratio	South Korea				χ^2; Odds ratio
	Female (n = 371)		Male (n = 253)			Female (n = 372)		Male (n = 256)			Female (n = 172)		Male (n = 270)		
	n	%	n	%		n	%	n	%		n	%	n	%	
Age															
18-34 (1)[a]	317	85.4	161	63.6***	40.01*** (df = 2);	264	71.0	94	36.7***	99.13*** (df = 2);	127	73.8	116	43.0***	40.48*** (df = 2);
35-49 (2)	38	10.2	67	26.5***	3.35	95	25.5	95	37.1**	4.21	37	21.5	125	46.3***	3.74
50+ (2)	16	4.3	25	9.9**		13	3.5	67	26.2***		8	4.7	29	10.7*	
Degree of Dress															
Suggestively Dressed (1)	122	32.9	9	3.6***	78.08*** (df = 2); 5.19	171	46.0	4	1.6***	164.44*** (df = 2); 22.89	85	49.4	4	1.5***	156.68*** (df = 2); 56.83
Partially Dressed or Nude (1)	20	5.4	18	7.1		26	7.0	8	3.1*		4	2.3	1	0.4	
Fully Dressed (2)	229	61.7	226	89.3***		175	47.0	244	95.3***		83	48.3	265	98.1***	
Setting															
Home (1)	80	21.6	53	20.9	72.80*** (df = 4); 1.03	96	25.8	41	16.0**	32.87*** (df = 4); 1.82	68	39.5	38	14.1***	65.56*** (df = 4); 3.99
Workplace (2)	12	3.2	54	21.3***		28	7.5	32	12.5*		0	0.0	32	11.9***	
Other Indoors (2)	110	29.6	44	17.4***		71	19.1	36	14.1		54	31.4	63	23.3	
Outdoors (2)	103	27.8	86	34.0		52	14.0	76	29.7***		27	15.7	93	34.4***	
Others (2)	66	17.8	16	6.3***		125	33.6	71	27.7		23	13.4	44	16.3	
Product Category															
Cosmetics, Toiletries (1)	145	39.1	48	19.0***	52.42*** (df = 10); 2.74	101	27.2	15	5.9***	102.57*** (df = 10); 5.98	27	15.7	13	4.8***	112.49*** (df = 10); 3.68
Pharmaceuticals, Health Care Products, Food Supplements (2)	33	8.9	28	11.1		31	8.3	8	3.1**		9	5.2	16	5.9	
Drinks (2)	23	6.2	25	9.9		36	9.7	60	23.4***		44	25.6	17	6.3***	
Foods, Snacks (2)	81	21.8	50	19.8		52	14.0	37	14.5		26	15.1	8	3.0***	
Restaurants, Coffee Shops (2)	18	4.9	19	7.5		0	0.0	3	1.2*		2	1.2	10	3.7	
Retail Outlets (2)	6	1.6	10	4.0		7	1.9	4	1.6		13	7.6	10	3.7	
Home Entertainment (2)	7	1.9	11	4.3		14	3.8	5	2.0		4	2.3	14	5.2	
Mobile Phones/Providers (2)	0	0.0	5	2.0**		14	3.8	8	3.1		7	4.1	39	14.4***	
Finance, Insurance, Legal (2)	29	7.8	21	8.3		31	8.3	68	26.6***		13	7.6	91	33.7***	
Fashion, Clothing, Accessories (2)	9	2.4	2	0.8		10	2.7	4	1.6		13	7.6	21	7.8	
Other (2)	20	5.4	34	13.4***		76	20.4	44	17.2		14	8.1	31	11.5	

N = 624 (Hong Kong), 628 (Japan), 442 (South Korea), * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.
Note: The significance levels for differences between sub-categories are based on post-hoc tests using adjusted standardized residuals.
[a] Numbers in parentheses indicate which categories were combined for computing the odds ratios.

In terms of numerical gender representations, advertisements in South Korea employed more male than female primary characters (61.1% vs. 38.9%; χ^2 = 21.729, df = 1, p < .001), whereas advertisements in Hong Kong and Japan employed more female than male primary characters (Hong Kong: 59.5% vs. 40.5%; χ^2 = 22.314, df = 1, p < .001; Japan: 59.2% vs. 40.8%; χ^2 = 21.427, df = 1, p < .001). Thus, Hypothesis 1, which proposed that there are more male than female primary characters in all three cultures, was rejected. As these findings already indicate, the results between Japan and Hong Kong were similar and showed no significant difference, whereas the results for South Korea were significantly different.

In regards to age (see Table 1), significant differences between genders were found across three cultures (Hong Kong: χ^2 = 40.014, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .253; Japan: χ^2 = 99.132, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .397; South Korea: χ^2 = 40.481, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .303). Overall, 85.4% of females and 63.6% of males belonged to the young cohort (18–34 years) in Hong Kong (ASR = ±6.3), 71.0% of females and 36.7% of males in Japan (ASR = ±8.5) and 73.4% of females and 43.0% of males in South Korea (ASR = ±6.4). Thus, Hypothesis 2, which stated that there would be more females than males in the young age segment, was confirmed for all three cultures. In contrast, more males than females were found in the middle age and older age segments (see Table 1). These findings were consistent between the three cultures and no statistically significant differences were found (see Table 2).

Table 2. Results of z-tests between odds ratios of each culture

Variables	Hong Kong - South Korea	Hong Kong - Japan	South Korea - Japan
Primary Character[a]	6.61***	0.08	6.55***
Age	-0.38	-0.86	-0.42
Degree of Dress	-4.52***	-3.82***	1.59
Setting	-4.38***	1.96*	2.50*
Voiceover[a]	-3.08**	-1.43	-1.67
Product Category	-0.73	-2.24*	-1.06

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
[a] Since an odds ratio cannot be calculated for primary character and voiceover, we have performed a z-test on the proportions.

Significant gender differences in the degree of dress and strong associations between gender and type of dress were found in all three cultures (Hong Kong: χ^2 = 78.076, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .354; Japan: χ^2 = 164.442, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .512; South Korea: χ^2 = 156.677, df = 2, p < .001, Cramer's V = .595). A higher percentage of females (32.9%) than males (3.6%) were suggestively dressed in Hong Kong (ASR = ±8.8), Japan (46.0% vs. 1.6%, ASR = ±12.2), and South Korea (49.4% vs. 1.5%, ASR = ±12.3). These findings supported Hypothesis 3. In contrast, more males than females were fully dressed. Only a few ads showed primary characters that were partially dressed or nude. Whereas chi-square tests showed significant results for all three cultures, the degree of stereotyping was nevertheless highly varying. Females were 5.9 times more likely than males to not be fully dressed (vs. fully dressed) in Hong Kong advertisements, whereas females were 22.89 times more likely than males to not be fully dressed in Japanese ads and 56.83 times more likely than males to not be fully dressed in South Korean ads. Between the latter two cultures, however, no significant difference was found.

Regarding the setting, gender differences were found in all three cultures (Hong Kong: χ^2 = 72.800, df = 4, p < .001, Cramer's V = .342; Japan: χ^2 = 32.868, df = 4, p < .001, Cramer's V = .229; South Korea: χ^2 = 65.559, df = 4, p < .001, Cramer's V = .385). Advertisements showed more females than males at home in Japan (25.8% vs. 16.0%, ASR = ±2.9) and in South Korea

(39.5% vs. 14.1%, ASR = ±6.1), whereas no significant gender differences were found for Hong Kong (female: 21.6%, male: 20.9%, ASR = ±0.2). Thus, Hypothesis 4, which stated that more females than males would be shown in the home setting in all three cultures, was not supported. In addition, ads showed more males than females in the workplace in all three cultures. More specifically, in Hong Kong, 21.3% of males and 3.2% of females (ASR = ±7.2) were shown in the workplace. In Japan, 12.5% of males and 7.5% of females (ASR = ±2.1) were shown in the workplace, and in South Korea, 11.9% of males and 0.0% of females (ASR = ±4.7) were shown in the workplace. The gender differences regarding the home led to significant differences between the cultures. Females were 1.03 times more likely than males to be at home (vs. not at home) in Hong Kong advertisements, whereas females were 1.82 times more likely than males to be at home in Japanese ads and 3.99 times more likely in South Korean ads.

In terms of the voiceover, more male than female voiceovers were used in Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea, which becomes even more obvious after removing ads featuring both male and female voiceovers or having no voiceover (Hong Kong: 13.9%, Japan: 32.6%, South Korea: 28.5%). However, these gender differences were statistically significant only for Hong Kong (n = 537, 62.9% male voiceover, 37.1% female voiceovers; χ^2 = 35.980, df = 1, p < .001) and Japan (n = 423, 58.4% male voiceovers, 41.6% female voiceovers, χ^2 = 11.917, df = 1, p = .001), but not for South Korea (n = 316, 52.2% male voiceovers, 47.8% female voiceovers, χ^2 = 0.620, df = 1, p = .431). Thus, these results do not support Hypothesis 5 stating that there will be more male than female voiceovers in all three cultures. Significant differences between the proportions of male and female voiceovers were only found between the results for Hong Kong and South Korea.

Finally, gender differences in advertised products were significant for all three cultures (Hong Kong: χ^2 = 52.421, df = 10, p < .001; Cramer's V = .290; Japan: χ^2 = 102.575, df = 10, p < .001; Cramer's V = .404; South Korea: χ^2 = 112.487, df = 10, p < .001; Cramer's V = .504). More females compared to males were included in the advertisements for the cosmetics/toiletries product category in all three cultures (Hong Kong: 39.1% vs. 19.0%, ASR = ±5.3; Japan: 27.2% vs. 5.9%, ASR = ±6.8; South Korea: 15.7% vs. 4.8%, ASR = ±3.9), supporting Hypothesis 6. Investigating possible cultural differences, we found only significant differences between Hong Kong and Japan (Table 2). Females were 5.89 times more likely than males to advertise for cosmetics/toiletries products (vs. other products) in Japan, whereas they were only 2.74 times more likely in Hong Kong.

Based on the dominance of the cosmetics/toiletries product category (especially in Hong Kong), we have controlled the removal of advertisements for cosmetics/toiletries to see if this leads to significantly different results. This was the case for the variable numerical gender representations. While the results for South Korea were similar, the predominance of females in Japan and Hong Kong disappeared and was ceased to be statistically significant (Hong Kong: 52.4% vs. 47.6%; χ^2 = 1.023, df = 1, p = .312; Japan: 52.9% vs. 47.1%; χ^2 = 1.758, df = 1, p = .183). In contrast, the removal of the cosmetics/toiletries product category led to nearly identical results for the other variables. This was true for the age differences between males and females, with more females outnumbering males in the 18-34 age segment, and males outnumbering females in the 35-49 age segment. However, for the 50+ age group, significant gender differences emerged only in Japan. In addition, the results for dress were the same, with significantly more females being suggestively dressed and more males being fully dressed in all three cultures. Finally, the setting and the voiceover led to nearly identical results – only the workplace setting in Japan showed no gender differences and significantly more male than female voiceovers were also found in South Korea (56.1% vs. 43.9%; χ^2 = 4.268, df = 1, p = .039).

4. Discussion

Overall, all three cultures employ stereotypical gender representations in television advertisements. Thus, the construction of gender was similar among the cultures and confirms highly stereotypical gender representations, as expected for Confucian societies. One variable that was not in accordance with traditional gender depictions was the gender of primary characters, with more females being represented in Hong Kong and Japan. However, this result matches previous studies on Japan (Arima, 2003; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002). One reason for this result may be that females are the main target group of most products and advertisers tend to use spokespersons of the same gender as their target group for their ads (Whipple & McManamon, 2002). The product type was found to be a significant predictor of the gender of the primary character, with female-oriented products most often promoted by female primary characters (Paek et al., 2011). This connection could also be seen in our sample after the removal of ads for the product category cosmetics/toiletries, which led to no significant numerical gender differences in Japan and Hong Kong.

This study shows that females in TV advertising in all three cultures are depicted as younger, wear less clothing, and are more frequently used in advertisements of cosmetics/toiletries than males. From a social cognitive theory viewpoint, such representations may solidify gender stereotypes (Oppliger, 2007). For instance, the imbalance of age has been perceived as a stereotype of a "double standard of aging" for many decades (Sontag, 1997). It appears that not much has changed even though most industrialized societies are increasingly aging. Such underrepresentation of older females may shape society's consciousness by implying that older women are not as highly esteemed as younger ones (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner et al., 1980). These underrepresentations may also influence how older people perceive themselves (Donlon, Ashman & Levy, 2005) and how younger people perceive them (Gerbner et al., 1980). Gender differences in the degree of dress can be interpreted as a form of sexual objectification of females, which could lead to anxiety, shame, depression, and eating disorders (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). For example, research in Belgium has shown that viewing female models who were scantily dressed had more negative effects on body esteem issues compared to viewing models who were more fully dressed (Dens, Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2009). Finally, the product association of cosmetics/toiletries with females emphasizes the importance that society assigns to female beauty and contributes to their sexualization (Luyt, 2011), which has been linked to negative thoughts about one's body (Dens et al., 2009).

Gender representations for setting and voiceover yielded mixed results. Whereas more males were shown at the workplace in all three cultures, more females were shown at home in Japan and South Korea. These findings confirm gender divisions in Confucian societies. However, in Hong Kong, more males were found at home, which confirms findings from a previous study (Furnham et al., 2000). More male voiceovers were employed in all three cultures. However, this difference was not statistically significant in South Korea, which is in line with previous research that found a predominance of female voiceovers in South Korea (Paek et al., 2011; Prieler, 2012). However, after removing ads for the cosmetics/toiletries product category, in South Korea significantly more male than female voiceovers were found in the sample. Overall, such predominantly stereotypical representations construct a certain gender image and may teach the audience about gender expectations that are attached to specific places and typical activities in those places. Such representations may reinforce the association of a specific gender with authority within society (Bandura, 2009) and define socially acceptable modes of behavior (Carter & Steiner, 2004). For example, research has found that viewing stereotypical advertisements decreases

interest in jobs traditionally associated with the opposite gender (Smith & Granados, 2009) and thus supporting traditional gender divisions in Confucian societies.

Although the majority of findings were generally similar, confirming expectations in a Confucian society, some differences in the degree of stereotypical gender representations between the cultures were found. The order of the odds ratios for the gender of the primary character, degree of dress, and setting followed the order of Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea. The findings for product category also showed Hong Kong to have the smallest degree of gender differences. Although several of these differences were not statistically significant, this order indicates a tendency in the data. Comparing these results with the results from Hofstede's masculinity index, the Project Globe's Gender Egalitarianism index (Emrich et al., 2004), and the United Nation's Gender-related Development Index (UNDP, 2014) shows that our results resemble the rankings of the latter two, but not of Hofstede's masculinity index. Thus, the results of this explorative study indicate that there may be a relationship between some gender indices and stereotypical gender representations in television advertisements. Future research should further examine these findings.

In summary, nearly all gender representations in this study were highly stereotypical, indicating that advertising agencies construct gender along traditional Confucian ways. Such representations are problematic not only from a social responsibility standpoint, as women are pressured to follow such gender images (Zhang, 2012) and gender stereotyping may have potentially adverse effects on women (Oppliger, 2007; Smith & Granados, 2009), but also from a business perspective. For example, the overwhelming representation of scantily dressed women may increase women's negative attitudes toward such ads compared to ads without nudity (Dianoux & Linhart, 2010). Similarly, the predominance of male voiceovers is based more on tradition rather than actual effectiveness because female voiceovers have proven to be at least as effective as male ones (Whipple & McManamon, 2002). Moreover, product associations could be less restricted because although targeting one gender may make sense in the short term, ultimately companies must often target both genders (Milner & Fodness, 1996). It is surprising that marketers and their advertising agencies around the world still portray gender in stereotypical ways even though research has found that both men and women are highly critical of sexism and traditional sex roles in advertising (Lysonski & Pollay, 1990; Van Hellemont & Van den Bulck, 2012). Women do not feel adequately portrayed in advertising, and this perspective may lead to negative company images and even to boycotting a firm's products (Ford & LaTour, 1996). This phenomenon clearly shows that advertising practitioners should rethink their own traditional stereotypes in using gender in advertising. Finally, the advertising industry in many countries is still dominated by males, which may also have an effect on gender representations, as shown in another context (Lauzen & Dozier, 1999). Perhaps a higher percentage of females employed in ad agencies and clients' marketing departments may lead to more diversity in advertising content itself.

5. Conclusion, limitations, and future research

This study has found stereotypical gender representations for nearly all investigated variables. Nevertheless, this study can provide only limited conclusions based on the characteristics of content analysis. Specifically, this study cannot describe the possible effects of gender representations on the audience and possible consumer responses. Thus, we suggest that more studies investigate whether gender representations are interpreted differently and have different effects in different cultural settings. This study has also found possible associations between the degree of gender stereotyping and some gender indices – a topic that should be further investigated in future research using predictive methods and including more countries. Although our sampling is in accordance with most previous

research (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), our study included only advertisements shown on primetime television, which limits the inferences that can be drawn for the full day of television programming and for other media. Consequently, we suggest further research that would compare different parts of the day and include a cross-media comparison of gender representations. Our study was also limited in its focus on television advertising. Although TV still attracts the lion's share of advertising budgets around the world, future studies should not only include other traditional media (such as print and radio) but also look at new media advertising. Despite these limitations, this study was able to show that gender representations are still highly stereotypical in Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea.

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