BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL AND THE MODERN:

IMAGE REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

IN HONG KONG AND MAINLAND CHINA TV

COMMERCIALS

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Between the Traditional and the Modern:

Image Representations of Women

in Hong Kong and Mainland China TV Commercials

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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Chung Man Kwan

Abstract

This study attempts to compare the image representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China and to explore the competition and/or intertwinement between the traditional/local and modern/global forces in the construction of new images of Chinese women. A total of 1199 TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China in 2010 were collected, examined and analyzed for their image representations of Chinese woman by using both content analysis and multimodal analysis. While the content analysis examined the dimensions related to both voice/verbal characteristics and visual representations of women, the multimodal analysis further studied the textual and semiotic modes such as gesture, gaze, posture, head movement, facial expression, interaction, dress, grooming, and the use of space in order to better understand the ideological representations of women in contemporary Cultural China.

Results of this cross-cultural/regional study show that the representations of Chinese women in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials can neither be simply qualified as "traditional" nor as "modern", but rather, they can be more appropriately described as a delicate hybridization of both. While more traditional images are projected in the aspects of "product type" and "credibility", more modern images are portrayed via non-domestic settings and in recreational roles. Maintaining the traditional characteristics of being "in-group/ sameness", the more modern images are also "non-dependent" to others. While adhering to traditional expectations of being modest and frugal, they can also be assertive and act as providers of solutions and suggestions.

In general, woman figures in Hong Kong commercials exhibited more modern but less traditional traits than its mainland China counterparts. In the dimension of voice and female verbal characteristics, Hong Kong commercials feature more female voices and more English-mixing than its mainland China counterparts. Furthermore, the results of this study validate the significance and dominance of hedonism in Hong Kong society, as manifested in the extensive association of hedonistic values with woman images and in the emphasis of self-enjoyment, independence, individuality and sociability. In mainland China commercials, in contrast, woman images are often associated with masculinity, as manifested in their portrayals in conventional masculine occupations and workplace and in promoting technology products.

Finally, the study concludes with a discussion on the transformations of woman images in Chinese society in the globalizing age and on the "Chinese style of modern women" who retain Chinese feminine inner qualities such as being kind and caring but seek individual difference and good life for themselves at the same time. A non-dichotomized approach towards international advertising as well as to cultural studies of Chinese women is thus proposed which calls for further and more rigorous research into the interplay between the traditional and the modern dynamics in Chinese women today.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures & Tables

Figures

Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent years, numerous new words have been coined to describe contemporary women in the Greater China region, such as "HongKong-girls" ("gangnu", 港女), "leftover ladies" ("sheungnu", 剩女). These buzzwords have become very popular and commonly used in the region since 2005. Originally they were created on the Internet to refer to adult women of unpleasant characteristics who were found difficult to get along with and therefore remained unmarried. The criticism of these women in Hong Kong and mainland China has provoked strong debates on the Internet and in the wider society. Many argue that it is their personal choice not to get married, and that this is also because they can make their own living and there are not enough men in the society who meet their requirements. During the heated debates, more and more new words are being created to more precisely describe contemporary unmarried women, such as "unmarriable perfect women" ("yousheungnu", 優剩女) and "3-high women" ("sangaonu", 三高女, referring to those who are well-educated, in well-paid jobs and in high positions). Basically these new words are more positive and they highlight the capability and the status of contemporary unmarried women. The creation of these new words reflects the changing perceptions of women. With the rising status of women in Hong Kong and mainland China, it is noticed that contemporary Chinese women are self-reliant, economically self-sufficient and are becoming less dependent on men. These new characteristics of Chinese women have added to and interplayed with the traditional images of good wives and mothers. With the rapid development in China and globalization, modern

and Western values have also been influencing the growth and the new positions of Chinese women in the society. As advertising is a social actor as well as a cultural artifact (Cheng, 1997; Frith, 1995; Leiss et al., 1990; Zhang et al., 2009), it is believed that advertising is a significant means to explore and better understand the changing status and perceptions of Chinese women in contemporary Chinese society.

Most of the previous studies attempted to verify the stereotypical images of women and the transformation in advertising. One of the earliest studies on women images in advertising was done by Goffman (1979). In the context of US, it was found that women had been devalued and underrepresented in advertising in 1970s (see Courtney and Whipple, 1983; Goffman, 1979; Whipple and Courtney, 1985) and then the depictions of women as happy, caring and submissive mothers had been gradually replaced by career women and "supermoms" (Warner, 1997). More and more studies since then have started to look at women images and representations, and the scholarly interests have been spread from the US to the rest of the world.

Nonetheless, most of the previous studies have been primarily conducted from the egalitarian perspective, focusing on how women versus men have been underrepresented in the advertising media and relating their findings mainly to the persistent influences from the traditional forces. A full account of how traditional values and expectations impact on and contribute to the formation of current women representations in advertising and particularly how traditional values and expectations converge with modern/ Western values and influences in constructing the images of a contemporary woman in Chinese advertising

have not been adequately explored. Therefore, the present study attempts to systematically examine the image representations of women in contemporary Chinese advertising and to observe the competitions and/or intertwinements between the traditional and modern/global values as reflected and constructed in the representations.

The data of this study comprises a total of 1199 TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China in 2010 and the image representations of Chinese woman in the commercials were closely examined by using both content analysis and multimodal analysis methods. While the content analysis involved an examination of the dimensions related to both voice/verbal characteristics and visual representations of women, the multimodal analysis further studied the non-verbal/symbolic expressions such as gesture, gaze, posture, head movement, facial expression, interaction, dress, grooming, and the use of space in order to better understand the ideological representations of women in contemporary Cultural China.

The study is significant as it attempts to compare the image representations of women in TV commercials in two significant regions in Greater China - Hong Kong and mainland China, of which the practice of gender and advertising have not been well researched. The relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China has been very special: they share traditional Chinese culture backgrounds but experienced different social developments and transformation. Before 1997, Hong Kong was under British rule while mainland China was governed by the Chinese Communist Party. The reunification of Hong Kong and mainland China in 1997 became an historic event which

"symbolized a host of imaged fundamental clashes such as colonialism vs nationalism, capitalism vs Communism and East vs West" (Pan et al., 1999). The decision was made to select 2010 as the period of time for investigating the women representations in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China because this period is significant to both places: it is a decade after the return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China and a decade after China entered the WTO (World Trade Organization).

The study also attempts to make a significant contribution to the existing academic studies on gender and advertising by developing a comprehensive framework for examining the traditional versus modern representations of women in Chinese advertising. Most of the previous studies in gender and advertising have been primarily concerned with the egalitarian or dichotomous perspective, focusing on how women versus men have been underrepresented in the advertising media and relating their findings mainly to the persistent influences from the traditional forces. The present study devoted special attention to how traditional values and expectations converged with modern/ Western values and influences in constructing the images of a contemporary woman in Chinese advertising. By so doing, the study will make a significant contribution to further understanding of the products as well as processes of globalization and localization in contemporary Chinese advertising practices. It is hoped that the study will provide insights both for scholars who are engaged in studies on gender, advertising, cultural values,   and women of Greater China, and for advertising professionals who are involved in the global standardization versus localization debates in transnational advertising practices.

This study consists of seven chapters, drawing upon relevant literature and departing from traditional versus modern perspectives to lead the way to a more comprehensive understanding of current representations of women in Chinese TV commercials and their relations to the underlying ideological images and identities of contemporary Chinese women. Chapter One is an introduction of this thesis, providing the background of this study and highlighting the research aims and significance of this study. Chapter Two summarizes and reviews relevant literature on gender and media communication, specifically concerning women and their representations in media and advertising. Chapter Three explicates the research methodology of this study in which research questions, research approach, framework of analysis and sample collection/analysis details are presented. Findings from content analysis and multimodal analysis are reported in Chapters Four and Five respectively. Chapter Six offers a discussion on the findings and Chapter Seven presents implications and limitations of this study, as well as suggestions for further research.

<center>**Chapter 2**</center>

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

This chapter summarizes, reviews and highlights relevant literature concerning women and their representations in the media and advertising. This chapter is organized into three sections. Section 2.1 discusses how women have been traditionally and stereotypically perceived and associated with certain types of undervalued, underprivileged and subordinate groups. Section 2.2 presents the changing group identity and lifestyle of women in Hong Kong and mainland China, and the fluid social expectations of women today and in the past. Section 2.3 reviews and critiques previous research in culture and communication, and indicates the research gap that the present study seeks to fulfill.

2.1 Issues of gender and sex: from pre-modern to modern

One may be born female but she only becomes the kind of social being – "a woman" based on social definitions (de Beauvoir, 1949, cited in Butler, 2006; Mathieu, 1989). According to Wodak (1997:3), gender and sex "operate on the principle that, while the binary of the sexes is an immutable fact, the gender traits assigned to a sex by a culture are cultural constructions, that they are socially determined and therefore alterable". The differences between gender and sex seem direct and straightforward, but actually, they are in a complex relationship.

Mathieu (1989) has identified three paradigms for conceptualizing and clarifying the complex relationship between gender and sex: The first paradigm

<center>6</center>

is called "homology" in which gender is seen as social expressions of the biological sex. Based on biological sex, individuals learn and adopt "feminine" or "masculine" traits. Thus, gender-associated social traits are built on the foundation of sex. The second paradigm is called "analogy" which means gender symbolizes sex. Gender is a symbolic marking system to mold a social being into a particular gender group or gender role, either men or women, based on collective social experiences and cultural expectations rather than emphasis on biological characteristics. The third one is "heterogeneity" – gender constructs sex. Within this paradigm, the division of social beings into "men" and "women" is for the purpose of securing the domination of one group over the other. From the three paradigms, gender and social norms and expectations are indivisible. Therefore, examining the existences and representations of men and women in relations to social and cultural context has become a core element in gender studies.

Gender is not a fixed attribute determined by culture; instead, it is a fluid and flexible variable which can shift and change in response to different contexts at different times. Gender is a performance and a product of achievements (Butler, 2006; Gauntlett, 2008). What an individual does (performs or makes decisions) at a particular time contributes to and reflects his/ her gender identity. Behavior determines gender and there is no fixed behavior determined by gender identity; however, preferred behavior patterns for "men" and "women" are circulated and cultivated by the mass media and they affect the performance choice of an individual (Gauntlett, 2008).

Gender can be defined and interpreted sociologically: masculinity and

femininity; anthropologically: women as nature and men as culture; and historically: from liberal feminism to radical feminism, then to Marxist feminism and finally to socialist feminism. These different gender-defining perspectives will be further discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1   Masculinity and femininity

The binary opposition of "sex" is "male/ female" while the binary opposition of "gender" is "masculine/ feminine". Defining gender sociologically also means differentiating the world into masculinity and femininity (Chancer and Watkins, 2006). Superiority and inferiority are the basic distinctions between the two. As discussed by Chancer and Watkins (2006), feminine individuals are allowed to be clingy and emotional, and to express dependency feeling; whilst dependency is replaced by a "patriarchally based sense of power and privilege" for masculine individuals (p.19). Due to historical and traditional projections of the caring nature of domesticity, the domestic realm has been categorized with femininity and thus inferiority. The public realm, which has been regarded as the opposite pole of the domestic realm, has been highly associated with masculinity and superiority as it is seen as "a reservoir of eventual social and economic power" (Chancer and Watkins, 2006: 19). Society thus has generally been divided into two separate but unequal spheres, in which one sphere is dominated by femininity and the other one is dominated by masculinity.

Traditionally, feminine and home-bound images have been highly associated with women, but not men (Gauntlett, 2008). This is because the biological role of women in giving birth and lactation has developed a strong

connection between women and children nurturance and domesticity. Gauntlett (2008) mentioned, from the 1950s (in many major Western countries, such as UK and USA), with the economic development and the need to expand the workforce, career women had been encouraged and accepted in society; however, social expectations of women were still different from that of men, according to the mass media research conducted by Tuchman in 1978. It was expected that women should only work until the birth of their first child; the primary life goals for women had remained unchanged – marriage and children-bearing.

For the situation in China, after the political reform in 1949, Chairman Mao initiated a slogan that women in China could "hold up half of the sky" which served both as an ideological guideline and a showcase for a comparatively higher social status and equal work and study opportunity for women than before. Although the status and position of women in China have undergone a significant transformation, women's biological role in the reproduction of the species makes it impossible to detach themselves totally from domesticity and nurturance roles. Thus, the caring trait has consistently been associated with femininity and also with Chinese women (Chancer and Watkins, 2006).

Chancer and Watkins (2006: 19-20) have highlighted the traditional gender dichotomies between masculinity and femininity:

Masculinity | Femininity
- Rationality | - Emotionality
- Activity | - Passivity
- Public | - Private
- Business | - Family/ Domesticity

Chancer and Watkins have also associated certain occupation categories with traditional gender dichotomies. Masculine occupations include business executive, politician, lawyer and doctor; while feminine occupations include waitress, salesperson, elementary school teacher, caregiver, secretary, nurse, and home health aide. The high participation of women in feminine occupations over the past decades has contributed to the over-representations of women with care-giving, passive and caring characteristics in the mass media. These suggest that the traditional expectations of women are similar either at home or in the workplace.

Nonetheless, Fischer and Arnold (1994:166) pointed out that traits associated with masculinity and femininity are "orthogonal rather than bipolar to each other" so that each individual may demonstrate a mixture of masculine and feminine traits with varying degrees.

2.1.2   Women's movements and the birth of women studies

The birth of gender studies was highly associated with women's movements. The first wave of women's movement started in the 19th century and primary goals of the movement were antislavery and women's suffrage (i.e women's right to vote and to participate as full citizens in society). The second wave of women's movement started in the 1960s, triggered by the book, *The Feminine Mystique,* written by Friedan in 1963. She drew public attention to women by identifying "the problem that has no name" – being a happy housewife is far from fulfilling the satisfaction of a woman's life. Friedan (2001) proclaimed, "we can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something

more than my husband and my children and my family'" (p.32); and "a baked potato is not as big as the world, and vacuuming the living room floor – with or without make-up – is not work that takes enough thought or energy to challenge any women's full capacity" (p.67). She pointed out that the problem is the role itself – a typical mother or wife taking care of the family and the expectations given to women by society. She claimed that the problem had been accelerated by the portrayals of women in advertising as happy housewives because this kind of portrayal was inconsistent with the reality. From the 1950s or earlier, women were often associated with the images of "happy housewives" and selling washing machines, cake mixes, detergents, and face creams in magazines and television commercials. Friedan's observations have provided the basis for scholars to analyze the images of women in the media, particularly in advertising. Her voice has enlightened women to move out of domestic and household confinement and has encouraged women's participation in the workplace.

Chancer and Watkins (2006) defined a major goal of liberal feminism "was to move women from the domestic sphere within which they had been confined into the world of business, or culture" (p.32). Talbot (2000) specifically pointed out that liberal feminism in advertisements mainly concern freedom for women as individuals and concern whether women obtain equality in consumption: "women's rights, in advertising terms, means equal opportunities as consumers: whatever men can buy, women should be able to buy too" (p.180). She noted that liberal feminism in marketing discourse or market-place has been transformed from political or social issues to be a "lifestyle accessory" and autonomy to consume. However, she argued that the impacts of feminism on

advertising actually only empower commodities for women but do not empower women themselves, and women's feminine appearance and self-esteem are still dependent on male approval. Talbot also criticized liberal feminism for only facilitating a superficial expression of feminism: "the right to choose" in advertising.

Talbot (2000) also observed that, particularly in the field of advertising, the goals of feminism have far from achieved or equality has not been exhibited. This is probably why there has long been such a strong hostility from feminists towards advertising. From the view point of feminists, sex-role stereotypes, occupational stereotypes and relating femininity with consumption are all problematic representations of women and thus against feminism. Talbot commented that most advertisers, on the one hand, do understand that they have to align with the popular and contemporary issues in order to make their advertisements popular; on the other hand, take a long time to realize that the traditional portrayals and stereotypes of women in advertising have no or little resonance with contemporary women and they do not correspond with contemporary reality and women's perception of themselves.

2.1.3 Women as happy housewives

Friedan's book in 1963 was probably the first to point out the problems of shaping or molding women as happy housewives and the problems of closely associating women with home appliances; however, Ryan (2000), has attempted to provide a picture of an earlier time (1920s) that the associations of women with home or home appliances in the media actually reflected women's

aspirations, hopes and desires for goods and "modern" lifestyles, based on her analysis of a column headed "Ideal Home Record" in Daily Mail which was founded in 1896 and was positioned as a women's newspaper in Britain. She observed that women in the 1920s joining the imagined community of "modern" or happy housewives had to be able to use appropriate household appliances for her domestic work. Women's aspirations and desires for freedom and self-expression were experienced and achieved through their purchase of different appliances and through turning their home to a "perfect/ ideal home" so that they could be freed from domestic duties and thereby could enjoy plenty of leisure. This imagined community of "modern" housewives (at that time) was participating in "a shared sociability and a collective modern identity" (Ryan, 2000, p.18). Although many cultural critics positioned this kind of "modernity" as a negative or feminized form of modernity, Ryan maintained that using household appliances was a significant symbol of modernity in that period of time. The motives of purchasing and using those "modern" appliances indicated how domesticity had been modernized. Ryan regarded this as "suburban modernity" which was achieved with the latest modern technology developments while traditional expectations of women on housekeeping were retained.

Also, according to Usherwood (2000), with the introduction of self-service retailing in the 1940s in UK, women as the majority of consumers were empowered with the ideas of autonomy and personal/ individual choice, through their relative freedom in the process of selection and purchase of goods (with limited assistance and involvement from salespersons). Cohering with Ryan's comments (2000), Usherwood noted that the "modernization" in retailing has

empowered women and enabled them to pursue of happiness and satisfaction through their autonomy and power in consumption. Browne (2000) also observed that women were not passive consumers as many cultural critics described (such as Talbot, 2000).

2.1.4   Women as nature

In her well-known essay titled "Is female to male as nature is to culture" (1972), Sherri Ortner sought to explore the roots of inequality between men and women. She postulated that women were closer to nature than men and that it was a major source of their subordination under men. She defined culture as human consciousness and its products, and she argued that culture is superior to nature because culture has an ability to transform (such as to socialize and culturalize) nature. Thus, she related culture to superiority and nature to inferiority, and she further associated women with nature and then with inferiority due to the biological functions of women in giving births, women's social roles (in home) and their psychic structures.

The universal association of women with the domestic family context, according to Ortner, could also be explained by the concept of "women as nature" because she believed that it was a natural extension of her lactation role and was a natural nurturance reflection of her mother nursing role with her children, and home was a natural activity sphere for mother and children. Ortner argued that women, however, were not totally distinct from culture; rather, women were between nature and culture since women were responsible for and acting as primary agents teaching/ transforming their children into "socialized"

human beings. Women were devalued in this aspect because the high level of socialization was done by or restricted to men. Cooking was an example: from raw to cooked represented from nature to culture; while turning the raw/cooked to delicious cuisine was in a high level – "triumphing over nature" (Ortner, 1972:20). The first type of cooking was usually done by women (at home) while the second type of high-level cooking is usually done by chefs who were always men. She noted that women were generally quite satisfied with the naturally subordinated and inferior position due to their nature and biological functions.

Ortner's idea of men as culture and superiority corresponds with the concepts in radical feminism. Radical feminists agreed that the divisions between nature and culture, and between public and private, were main causes of women's subordination (Chancer and Watkins, 2006). One of the important concepts in radical feminism is "patriarchy", which allows and empowers men to exert control in all spheres and dominate over women. In traditional male-dominated societies or companies, decision-makers are men. Women do not have the rights to choose or to object, and they even do not have the right to decide whether or not to have sexual relations with men or have children. Thus, having power to control women's own bodies became a major goal in radical feminism in the 1970s and 1980s.

2.1.5 Women as the marginalized group

At every level – psychological, economic, political and cultural – there is "self-and-other" which refers to the relationship between oneself/ one group of people and another (Memmi, 1965, cited in Byerly, 2007). The differentiation

between "self" and "other" (or "samed" and "othered") is developed through an "unconscious" process, according to Austrian physician Sigmund Freud. French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan further evaluated that the differentiation process and he pointed out that it is an internal process which one self is developed in relations to others via a process of social constructions and symbolic systems outside the self, including language, culture, and sexual differences (Byerly, 2007; Hall et al., 1992). Women have been regarded as "othered" due to their relatively low economic and political status in the nineteenth century (Byerly, 2007).

Who or what should be in the group of "samed" or "othered"? Why women group is "othered" but not "samed"? As noted by Andermahr et al. (2000), "samed" is the most powerful side of the equation between groups and they highlighted that media is in the power of disseminating an ideology of difference which serves to reinforce the status of those in the positions of power. This results in portraying women as hypersexualized, male-dependent, victims and basically unintelligent in the media. Tuchman (1978) and Gross (1995) viewed these stereotypes as the "symbolic annihilation of women" and Gandy (1998) concluded these stereotypes have affected and cultivated an unbalanced social and cultural perceptions of women (and other marginalized groups). These resulted in an unequal power between men and women, and the experiences and contributions of women in society are undervalued (Byerly, 2007; Dines and Humez, 1995). Therefore, the differentiation between men and women in social contexts goes beyond the natural biological distinctions between two "sexes"; rather, men and women are socially constructed that they carry and show culturally conditioned "gender" traits (Wodak, 1997).

2.1.6   From pre-modern to modern: impacts on women roles and lifestyles

According to Giddens (1991:70), "What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behavior."

Gauntlett (2008) pointed out that when society is in the period of pre-modern (traditional) culture and tradition dominates, choices of individual actions have already been prescribed by traditions and customs, and individuals have been provided with defined roles; when society is in the period of modern (post-traditional) culture, individuals have to work out the roles by themselves and have to make significant choices on their own, from everyday questions about food and clothing, to high-impact questions about occupations and relationships.

It is believed that with the economic and political developments, i.e. with the influx of the characteristics of modern social life – such as cultural self-consciousness, consumerism, skepticism, the Chinese society will move from "pre-modern" to "modern", as in many Western countries (Gauntlett, 2008). Modernism is characterized by an ideology of controlling over nature and attempts to impose rational control over the physical and social worlds; transition, fragmentation, instability are some significant aspects of modernism or postmodernism. "Postmodernism" refers to changes in social consciousness while "postmodernity" refers to changes in social conditions (Cortese, 2008). Therefore, the rise of feminism and the women's movements contributed to postmodernism while postmodernity refers to the equality achieved and the rise

of women's status.

A successful process of "modernization" would result in capitalist democracy and equality, in which individual role and actions are based on own decisions but not the traditional norms and expectations (Giddens, 1991). In addition to this, Hung et al. (2007) observed that "modernization" in the Chinese context is often associated with foreign/ global idea, concepts and goods, and "modern" often refers to anti-traditional or anti-Chinese.

When society is transforming and undergoing the process of "modernization" (macro-level), the micro aspects of society – individual level – change at the same time. Gauntlett (2008) highlighted that social changes result from changes in how individuals view life, which in fact stem from social influences and observations. By this concept, from the individual level (micro-level), women are dissatisfied with their everyday life - being a happy housewife is far from fulfilling the satisfaction of a life (Friedan, 2001). This initiated the women's movement (macro-level) and changed the social perceptions of women role and images. Gauntlett (2008) also pointed out that the connections between macro and micro level are in relation to the decline of religion (traditional beliefs), the rise of rationality and also the power of the mass media. Mass media affects individuals' perceptions explicitly and implicitly because the idea and knowledge presented in the mass media are re-appropriated by audience. The media do not merely reflect and construct the social world, but are "central to modern reflexivity" (p.107).

2.2 Ideology, identity and lifestyle: women's positioning

According to Gauntlett (2008), "lifestyle" applies to choice, behaviors, attitude and beliefs, being a container for the identity. The reflexive projection of self can be experienced through (not limited to) identity and lifestyle while the construction and reconstruction of identity and lifestyle are highly related to consumerism in modern culture. What products to buy and what clothes to wear contribute to the projection of self. The consumption choices available in the market create a space for the development of individuality, and consumerism allows individuals to develop and project a lifestyle. Consumerism, individuality and lifestyle are features of modern culture. As discussed by Talbot (2010), the relationship of consumerism and women is life-long. She noted that in general, women have long been forced to feminize themselves from man's points of view and to cultivate their feminine characteristics through consumption in order to acquire a feminine appearance shaped by mass media and beauty industries.

One example showing how consumption choices affect and construct individuality and lifestyle is fashion. Entwistle (2000) explored the relationship between power dressing of women in the workplace and female empowerment in the 1980s and 1990s. She observed that it is a fact of life for women to wear business suits at work in business or other professional settings because this type of self-representation and power dressing ,which included clothes, hair and make-up, signified "authoritative", "professional", and even "productive". Career women wearing business suits aim to differentiate themselves from the lower-middle-class women such as secretaries and office assistants, and to diminish their sexuality, so as to mark out their status and be visibly recognized

as professionals.

Although as discussed above, consumption allows individuals to select and present their own identity and lifestyle, women's "personal" choices on fashion, particularly career women, are still heavily affected by and dependent on male's approval and comments in the 1990s (Entwistle, 2000; Talbot, 2000). Those socio-cultural and worldwide practices and norms can be taken as an invisible barrier which lies between women and "real" full autonomy. Thus, women in modern times have shifted from the traditional defined roles to a struggling position, in which women are entitled to experience individual "personal" choices of projecting themselves as professional career women while they also have the responsibility to "de-eroticize" their sexuality in order to manage the sexual responses of men.

Polyzou (2010) pointed out that identities, desire, ideologies and practices exert influences to each other. How social beings perceive themselves and how they perceive others would influence how they act, perform and present themselves in a given/ particular social context. Identity or acts of identification is constructed or performed by an individual through choices and repetitions of discursive and semiotic actions. She noted that group identities are basically represented in gender and sexuality, and sexuality includes desires and sexual practices in discursive representations of gender. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the ideological practices of a group or its group identity, it is significant to recognize the socially shared factual beliefs (knowledge) and evaluative beliefs (attitudes) within the group. In the popular media, specifically TV and magazines, group identity has been associated with shared lifestyles

which indeed is a broad genre referring to a way of living, a way of work, interests and/or leisure pursuits, and incorporating aesthetics, style (fashion), and consumption. Polyzon pointed out that the situational context of the texts could not be neglected in examining the underlying/ presupposed identities and ideologies. One of the main goals of the popular media is to reinforce the dominant ideologies and identities which are expected/ presumed to be socially shared/ acknowledged by the participants or even society.

Focusing on the contextual analysis of situated identities, Archakis and Lampropoulou (2010) recognized that identities are neither static nor stable; rather, identities are fluid and dynamically created and recreated through discourse. Also, they believed narrative – interactional setting – is a discourse genre highly relating to identity work because social and cultural identities can be manifested in narrative construction. Through what narrators tell and how narrators tell their stories, narrators display their identities. Evaluation is identified as a core part in exploring narrators' identity as it reveals the attitudes and beliefs of the narrators and it contributes to the point of persuasion (i.e. to convince others of what has said by the narrators). Based on the framework of three-level positioning proposed by Bamberg (1997), Archakis and Lampropoulou (2010) examined the naturally occurring sexual narrative conversations between adolescents and researchers in Europe and their findings conform to universal gender stereotypes characterizing macho, hegemonic and tough to men while reserved and vulnerable to women.

2.2.1 Changing group identity and lifestyle of women in Hong Kong and mainland China

"Women rule inside and men rule outside" has been a traditional ideological guideline for how Chinese women should position themselves in society and at home. With the emphasis on Confucianism in traditional cultural China and a strong orientation towards the past among Chinese people, women have been traditionally bounded with Confucian principles of family loyalty, obedience and respect (Tai and Tam, 1997). A distinct and profound hierarchy has been extensively adopted at home and in society (Wang, Zhang and Goodfellow, 1998). Shackled with the hierarchical relationship and feudal ethical rules, women have been requested to adhere to "the three obediences": obedience to her father before marriage, to her husband after marriage, and to her sons after the death of her husband (Su, 1996). The patriarchal culture in traditional China emphasizes "father-son relationship", creating a subservient role for women and reinforcing the inequality between men and women in Chinese society (Yuen et al., 2004). Women have long been put in lower levels so that they have to give obedience to and respect those in higher levels, namely men; and women are valued based on the sacrifices they made for men (Tai and Tam, 1997). Discrimination against women was institutionalized in nearly all structures of Chinese society: family, education, culture, the economy as well as the political system (Pearson, 1995).

The status of Chinese women has only started to improve after the political reform in 1949 when Chairman Mao initiated a slogan that women in China could "hold up half of the sky" which ideologically brought a relatively higher social status and equal work and study opportunity for women than before.

Women's liberation in the Chinese mainland has then begun to grow but, unlike in Western countries, women's movement fighting for gender equality has never happened in modern China. According to Zhang (2003), the ideology installed from the slogan and the "goals" for women assigned by Chairman Mao were to serve society and serve others through participating in nation building. Zhang pointed out that gender equality has never been highlighted in state policy so that women's emancipation was actually an illusion. On the one hand, female employees were treated unequally with their male counterparts as they were often assigned to the least-skilled or lowest-paying jobs and the idea of "equal labour, equal pay" in socialist ideal was far from achieved; on the other hand, women were cultivated by de-feminization: pretty feminine appearance was discouraged whilst male standards of dress were the guidelines.

In the period of Cultural Revolution in China (1960s and 1970s), women wore the same clothes as men, keeping their hair short with no make-up so that individual difference or awareness were minimal. Women were heavily influenced by the official role models/ heroines/ "Iron Girls" created by the government; traits of the heroines were "revolutionary zeal, selfless character, masculine strength and plain dressing" (Zhang, 2003:212). Thus, the de-feminization was exercised not only physically through appearance and dress, but also ideologically by passing political messages to women that women's biological condition would not determine their destiny and they could be as strong and hard work as men.

In the 1980s, after the Cultural Revolution in China, or so called post-Mao China, public attention has been shifted from the collective to the individual.

The "Four Selves" campaign was publicized by China's Women's Federation, promoting "self respect", "self-confidence", "self-determination" and "self-realization". The attention on "small I" (individual) has shifted people's attention to individuality and gender differences. Gender discourse thus has taken shape in post-Mao China, with its mainstream idea re-assessing the impacts from Maoist ethics on Chinese women (Zhang, 2003).

Yuen et al. (2004) also reported that Chinese women have gradually realized their self aspirations and interests in the late-1980s, and their awareness of autonomy has been raised. They believed "freedom" and "modernity" are interrelated, and "financial independence" is a basis for female freedom because the financial ability of a woman would enable her to break traditional expectations (i.e. subservient and subordinate role for women) and to exercise her rights and autonomy. Therefore, the new identity of Chinese women has been gradually shaped and modified with the economic growth of China and female participations in different business activities.

In the past 50 years, women's participation, roles and status in Mainland China society have significantly improved: women have not only shared nearly half of the total employed population but also more than 40% of officials and about 20% of entrepreneurs are women (Xinhua News, 2009; ACWF, November 2011a). As indicated in a recent report (ACWF, November 2011b), women's participation in China's national and social affairs is significant in contemporary Chinese society that about one-third of the representatives in National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) are female in 2011.

In addition, according to a survey reported by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) in May 2006, more than 80% of the women in China are confident about their ability and capability that they do not agree with the traditional Chinese concept that "men are strong and women are weak". The majority of the respondents hold a negative attitude towards the traditional saying that "women should try to avoid surpassing their husbands in social status" and more than 80% of them support the view that "men should carry half of the housework". Also, most respondents have a strong sense of independence and they prefer to work outside home even when their family has no strong financial burdens. Reported by ACWF in 2011, an international survey done by HSBC revealed that 63% of Chinese women in mainland China, compared to 58% of men, claimed that they make all or most of the family's financial decisions. This manifested a positive and rising status of Chinese women and a more equalitarian relationship between women and men in mainland China (ACWF, November 2011c).

Given the close geographical proximity of Hong Kong and China, Hong Kong has been closely linked to China culturally, socially, politically and economically, particularly after its return of sovereignty to China on 1 July, 1997 from the British; nonetheless, due to different socio-cultural development and long time separation, Hong Kong and China have their own unique economic and socio-cultural environment (e.g. Chan and Cheng, 2002; Tai and Tam, 1997).

Having been a British colony over 150 years, Hong Kong has become a place where East meets West. Hong Kong people have been exposed to western

culture much earlier than those in mainland Chinese so that Hong Kong people are generally more westernized and English is more widely used in communication (Tai and Tam, 1997).

Influenced by Western feminist movements, the status of women in Hong Kong has achieved significant enhancements in last two decades. With the Sex Discrimination Ordinance enacted in 1995 and the establishment of Equal Opportunity Commission in 1996, Hong Kong is achieving gender egalitarian. According to the UN press release in 1999, more than 39% of the working population in Hong Kong was women and more than half of the university graduates were females. In the figures provided by the University Grant Committee in Hong Kong, between 2004 and 2010, about 55% of the university students were females each year. The Census report in 2010 has further revealed that nearly 50% of the work population has been taken up by women and that the number of women engaged in the services industry, such as social and personal services, professional and business services, financing and insurance, accommodation and food services and retail, is much higher than that of men (Census & Statistics Department, March 2010).

In short, Hong Kong women have constituted strong and active labor power in services industries and the number of female university students indicates an equal opportunity in receiving high education in Hong Kong. In addition, according to a telephone research survey conducted by the Gender Research Centre of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (HKIAPS) in 2005, over 63% of the female respondents and over 72% of the male respondents regard the social status of

Hong Kong women as "very high or high", with only 3.2% of the whole sample stating that it is "not high at all or not high" (GRC of HKIAPS, July 2005).

The high status of Hong Kong women corresponds with the emphasis on female consumers in the market. Fung (2002) pointed out that shopping is a social activity reserved exclusively for women, particularly in Asia, and there are numerous taken-for-granted female products in the market such as cosmetics, accessories, and fashion items. He attempted to examine Hong Kong women's identity by linking up media discourses (i.e. magazine) and women's cultural consumption activities. Being a gendered and social activity, shopping has been perceived as one of the symbolic forms of materialistic culture in Hong Kong. Fung observed that, through shopping and reading magazine, women are allowed to: 1. identify themselves to a group identity of being "modern", "stylish", "intelligent", and "independent" career women by purchasing and using goods prescribed by the imagined group; 2. gain recognition and assurance among their (imagined) peer group. Also, according to Machin and van Leeuwen's study (2005) of Cosmopolitan, a global female magazine, "lifestyle" combines individual style and social style. Individual style allows individual difference which means there is room for individual expression and individuality; whereas social style foregrounds the social determination of style that it is determined externally by social factors, such as class, gender, age and social relations which are outside our control. Therefore, lifestyle is a social style as well as group identity, which is characterized by shared consumer behaviours (shared taste), shared patterns of leisure time activities and shared attitudes to key social issues; but at the same time it is an individual and diverse style, which diminishes homogeneity and allows flexibility.

Tai and Tam (1997) studied the lifestyles of female consumers in Greater China area, including mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, from a marketing perspective, in which they aimed to quantitatively examine how people spend time and money in terms of AIO: activities, interests, and opinions. They commented that Hong Kong people were more interested in living in the present and "live for today" has become a spending philosophy in Hong Kong society. In their findings, regarding roles and perceptions, women in Hong Kong and mainland China agreed that housework and purchase decisions should be done by both husband and wife together; women should be allowed to develop their career and treated equally at work. Nonetheless, Hong Kong women hold a significantly stronger opposing view to say "home" was woman's place than women in China. Women in China projected more traditional and homebody images; while Hong Kong women were more independent and less home oriented as most women would pass their housework to domestic helpers and devote more time to career and friendships. For brand and price consciousness, women in China perceived foreign brands as symbols of status, prestige and superiority compared to the value-seeking and quality conscious attitude of Hong Kong women. Tai and Tam concluded a mixture of traditional and modern/Western values were found in women from both Hong Kong and mainland China. Although Hong Kong women showed a more modern view in their lifestyle, women in Hong Kong and mainland China were still adhering to beliefs about traditional women's role.

Thus, from their study and what has been discussed above, the group identity and lifestyle of Chinese women are, on the one hand, bounded with social factors, not only those social stable categories such as class, gender and

age, but also those feudal Confucian principles and traditional expectations of women as well as those shared ideological guidelines and identity within their imagined peer group; on the other hand, with the influence of Western individualism and feminist movements, stimulated to stretch beyond the existing traditional boundary in the patriarchal society and search for ways to express individuality and empower themselves.

2.2.2 Traditional women in culture

Marriage, parenthood and domesticity were the main themes for women traditionally and women were seldom depicted as dominant characters or decision makers on television (Gauntlett, 2008). Gunter (1995) found that the contradictions between women and men role depictions in television show the incompetent and inferior images of women: assertive and aggressive men versus passive women; adventurous, active and victorious men versus weak, ineffectual, victimized, supportive and laughable women. These were particularly obvious in male-dominated cultures.

Women have traditionally been highly associated with the domestic sphere and with home universally for decades (e.g. Frith and Mueller, 2010; Talbot, 2000). Browne (2000) described women as domestic managers in making choices over consumer goods and designing their home improvements; and making an ideal home could be regarded as women's lifetime project. However, although home is the traditional domain of women, according to Tuchman (1978), on television, the one who solved both emotional and practical problems at home was still men, but not women. This indicated that women had little

value even in their own "workplace" and on television. Chancer and Watkins (2006) also observed that men hold power and take control in all decision making spheres specifically in patriarchal societies.

As indicated by Friedan (2001), traditionally the only things women should care about are their husband, their children and their family. Gauntlett (2008) reinforced the feminine and housewifely stereotypes of women by describing those women on screen as "simpering housewives whose dream was to impress their authoritative, working husbands by using the latest kitchen accessory or washing powder" (p.54). Women were never advised to explore or fulfill their own potential; instead, their main life goal was to bring happiness to their husband and their family. Male-centered culture fosters maximum power and voice of men while women's voice is minimal or even denied.

Positioning "housewife" as a kind of "occupation" in the media started in the 1950s and it was a strategy to help women identify themselves. Although there was emphasis on the great importance of this role, in terms of societal and personal, women were still put in a world of bedroom, kitchen, sex, men and children, and at the same time, women were linked with food, clothing, cosmetics, furniture, and miscellaneous products for better family life (Gauntlett, 2008).

With the women's movements worldwide and the increasing employment opportunities for women from the world wars periods, women have been recognized to work outside their traditional realm – home; however, as mentioned above, there were traditional expectations of kinds of job women

should do. According to Chancer and Watkins (2006), feminine occupations include waitress, salesperson, elementary school teacher, caregiver, secretary, nurse, and home health aide. These occupational stereotypes have reinforced the expectations of the care-giving, passive and caring characteristics of women. Talbot (2000) also highlighted secretarial work, nursing and the glamour models are typical women's occupations being projected in the media for decades.

Apart from the above universal themes and expectations of women, there were some specific ideological guidelines and expectations of Chinese women traditionally in mainland China in relation to its cultural background and historical events. As discussed above, women were encouraged to dress like men with short hair and no make-up particularly in the 1960s and 1970s; in addition, with the influence from Confucianism, women should be selfless, virtuous and kind (Zhang, 2003), should adhere to "the three obediences" (Su, 1996), and they should not surpass their husbands in social status (Cheng, 1997). Hung et al. (2007) described the official ideal woman in traditional China as caring, modest, undemanding, quiet, soft, and perseverant, and the official ideal woman focus only on inner qualities. In addition, Zhang (2003) listed eight traditional feminine virtues forming the ideal Chinese womanhood: good-tempered, gentle, loyal, obedient, benevolent, wise, filial and kind.

2.2.3   The ideal modern women

Different from the traditional roles, characteristics of modern women are relatively easy to justify, even without the comparison with men. According to the email interviews conducted by Gauntlett (2008), typical characteristics of

ideal modern women are – "being independent in attitude, and attractive in looks" (p.210). He interviewed female magazine readers from various developed countries, including USA, UK, Hong Kong and Australia, about their perceptions of how modern women should be. From the quotes he shared in his book, a number of common and typical adjectives could be found (p.210): the outlook of ideal modern women should be attractive, sexy, beautiful, slim and well-dressed; the attitude of ideal modern women should be independent, active, career-minded, intelligent, compassionate, competent, fashionable, sexual confident and assertive, should be like superwoman and positive towards sports and modern things (such as modern interior house décor and furnishing, and modern clothes).

From Gauntlett's findings (2008), it seems that modern women have no strong connection with husband or domesticity, and ideal modern women are no longer only bounded with feminine traits but are also expected to exercise masculine traits such as being assertive, independent and confident.

Nonetheless, Talbot (2010) used "double-bind" to refer to the situations modern women are facing, especially for those in leadership positions. She argued that it was a challenging task for women to maintain femininity as expected while being professional and masculine in a day. She quoted an example of a Spanish female boss and explained that when she was trying to display likeability by using indirect forms or when she was trying to downplay her institutional authority in the workplace, she was indeed perceived as lacking self-confidence or toughness; whereas this kind of negative evaluation would not be asserted to male bosses if they do something similar. Therefore, the

double standards on men and women turn women in to a "double-bind" situation in which they are struggling between femininity and masculinity.

2.2.4   Contemporary Chinese women

Due to the reforms and rapid social, cultural, economic and political changes in China in the past few decades, and with the influx of western ideas as a result of globalization, China and Chinese people have been situated between traditional and modern, Chinese and Western. In such a strongly authoritarian and hierarchical society, it is expected that there are competitions and/ or complex interplay between traditional and modern, Chinese and Western. Several scholars have sought to explore the dual or hybridized identity and ideological expectations of contemporary Chinese women.

Hung et al. (2007) have identified three types of contemporary Chinese women images from Chinese advertising: cultured nurturer (family), strong woman (work) and urban sophisticate (leisure). Cultured nurturer retains the traditional Chinese conceptions of womanhood, such as being soft, kind, well-mannered, virtuous, and attentive to family and children; nonetheless, cultured nurturer appreciates consumerism, spends quality time with her family and children, and retains leisure time for herself. Strong woman is associated with the attributes of wisdom, ambitions and independence of spirit. Also, strong woman has her own career while at the same time she maintains her Chinese virtues, such as, being gentle, easy to get along with, understanding (sensitive to others' feelings), and slightly rebellious but not confrontational. The third type of contemporary Chinese women is the urban sophisticate who

highly values hedonism. The urban sophisticate absorbs Western consumerist values, such as luxury, modernity, comfort, sexuality, enjoyment and vitality; and she apply these values to the adornment of herself and her home, and to her lifestyle. From their findings, overt displays of sexuality were not common or positively perceived by Chinese female readers; nonetheless, Chinese women have added the Western ideology of independence and hedonism to their original and traditional perceptions of ideal women.

Zhang (2003) noted that there are dual demands on contemporary Chinese women: socially, women should be career-minded and capable at work; interpersonally, women should be "good wives", "good mothers" and "good daughters-in-law" according to traditional Confucian expectations. She pinpointed the most important and challenging task for contemporary Chinese women is to balance these dual demands, and specifically between society, family and self. In her discussion, she sought to explore how the push and pull from the traditional and modern, Chinese and Western have shaped the contemporary Chinese women. Zhang identified a role model who was a bus conductress in Beijing, China. The female bus conductress demonstrated high professional ethics, such as warmth, sincerity, diligence and devotion, so that she fulfilled the social expectations; she dressed elegantly with light make-up that it indicated she relished her appearance, echoing the Western femininity. This female bus conductress, from my point of view, also corresponds to what Gauntlett (2008) regarded as "ideal modern woman" – "being independent in attitude, and attractive in looks" (p.210); nonetheless, the female bus conductress displayed some traditional Chinese feminine attributes in her attitude, such as kindness and gentleness.

Wu and Chung (2011) have analyzed more than 100 female characters in award-winning Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials between 2007 and 2009, and they concluded that hybridized representations of women are dominant. "Being professional and caring", and "being fun and fearless, and being soft-spoken" are two of the most typical hybridized female images of modern and traditional. Also, modern representations of women are common: women are often depicted as professional and/or recreational roles; are often projected to be independent, fearless and brave, fun and vital, and kind to oneself; they often express their opinions and ideas directly and explicitly. Wu and Chung's study indicated that the representations of women are shifting towards modern and Western. Therefore, contemporary Chinese women are accepting and adjusting themselves to Western forms of femininity while maintaining the inner qualities and essence of traditional Chinese women.

2.3 Research in culture and communication: concepts and approaches

2.3.1 Culture and image representation

It is commonly understood that culture is the "way of life" of an individual, a social group or a community, and culture has often been defined as the "shared values" of a social group or a community by scholars in cultural studies (e.g., Hall, 1997; Kidd, 2002). Rojek (2007) also pointed out that while individuals usually think of their choices as well as perceptions towards different daily and social issues are private and unique, the individual choices and perceptions are in fact public and are culturally shaped.

Hall (1997) maintained that culture is primarily concerned with the production and the exchange of "shared meanings"; "shared meanings" and cultural practices among people within a cultural group are crucial in order to achieve meaningful interpretation and communication. Meaning is the expression between textual or acoustic form (signifier) and the concept referred by the form (signified). As pointed out by many scholars (e.g., Hall, 1997; Kidd, 2002; Rojek, 2007), representation is a significant part in the production and exchange of meanings between members of a culture. To represent something means to refer it to objects, people or events in the real world, or to fictional objects, people and events in imaginary worlds through description, depiction, symbolization or substitution. Language, signs and images are thus components in representation.

Cortese (2008) noted that representation is one of the key components to be examined in media and cultural studies, particularly in examinations of cultural meanings of signs in relation to social life and reality. He maintained that the cultural sphere is neither stable nor fixed but is fluid and changing upon confrontation and contention. Constructionist approach in representation argued that meaning can be fixed neither by merely the reflective ability of things themselves nor by solely the intention of individual users; rather, meaning depends on the symbolic function of signs among social actors (Hall, 1997). Kidd (2002) pointed out that the constructionist approach in representation has turned the focus of cultural studies to hidden patterns – "structure" – beneath the surface and has incorporated the idea of "difference" or "otherness" in cultural meanings. Constructionist approach is adopted in the present study.

The study of signs is generally known as semiotics, but using semiotic approach to examine representation has been criticized for its static and detached views on signs. In this perspective, Hall noted Foucault's approach to representation which highlights the discursive formation of meaning within discourse and emphasizes more on rules and practices ("power/ knowledge"). Correa (2009) used an example of woman wearing high-heeled shoes to explain that notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed and reinforced through communication, ideology, and the use of signs, by men and women at the same time within the cultural contexts. She noted that wearing high-heeled shoes is a response from women on the ideological practice of patriarchy that women themselves participated in the reinforcement of their subordination under men. By wearing high-heeled shoes, women place themselves in an attractive role under the male power of granting/ approval, and women limit their physical activity and strength at the same time. Thus, this case showed that weaker and passive traits in femininity are constructed and circulated at the ideological level by women (but not limited to) and they constantly respond to the ideology of male dominance under patriarchy.

Given the fact that advertising is heavily loaded with images, it is significant to explore how meanings, values, identity and ideology are conveyed through visual cues connotatively and denotatively. Cortese (2008), with reference to the work conducted by Goffman (1976) and relevant studies, has sought to decode and deconstruct some of the cues in image representations in advertising (see Table 1). Cortese's (2008) work has provided significant implications and established a ground for the present study to examine the underlying ideological image representations of women in TV commercials. It

is believed that through **decoding and deconstructing various visual representation strategies, such as gesture, movement, expression**, this study can provide a more in-depth and detailed discussion on woman images and their identity in relation to tradition and modernity.

Table 1　Cues in advertising and their symbolized meanings (Cortese, 2008)

	Portrayal/ strategies	**Symbolized meanings**
Male		
1	broad shoulders and think muscular neck	Masculine power and strength appeals to female (because biologically females prefer men who are able to meet the demands of competition within a male hierarchy and provide food and shelter for their family); symbolized the protective ability of men.
2	Depicted as grasping, squeezing, clenching, manipulating, shaping or gripping objects	Projected as masculine grip
Female		
1	With a small waist and a high-pitched voice	Symbolized females are weak and need helps from "protectors" – men
2	Large pupils	A sign of sexual appeal
3	Youth	A sign of health and sex appeal (any signs of aging in women, such as gray hair, wrinkles, denote unattractiveness because it is acceptable for men to age but not for women)
4	Hair grooming and blushing	Signs of sexual and attractive appeals
5	Smile	A sign of approval and attraction
6	Breasts, cleavage and lips	Signs of sexual arousal
7	(Relative) size	Size is related to power and authority. It is common to depict male in bigger size than female and it implied and reflected traditional cultural attitudes of male power and authority over females.

Table 1 (Continued)

	Portrayal/ strategies	**Symbolized meanings**
8	Body chopping and depicting females as inanimate objects	Signified women are objects, which are lower in hierarchy than men, and not even human. Advertising depicting women's bodies without faces/ head symbolizes women have no brain and no individuality; without knees symbolizes the immobility and submissive of women.
9	Physical contact with a man	Symbolized the dependence of woman and the power and authority of men.
10	Bending of a body	A sign of unpreparedness, submissiveness and appeasement
11	Depicting a female reclining or lying on objects, or lowering a female physically	Signs of subordination (in a hierarchy) and deference.
12	Depicted as barely touching, delicately holding or tenderly caressing men, objects or themselves.	Projected as feminine touch.
13	Silent (lack a voice)	A sign of passive, subordination
14	Depicted as sex objects	A sign of sexual objectification

2.3.2 Advertising and stereotyping

Cortese (2008) suggested that television and advertising, together with the whole collection of entertainment industries, formed "culture industry", and he further explored the relationship between advertising and social life/ lifestyle. He noted that a successful way of advertising is to associate goods to elements of a valued social life, such as happy family relationship, romance and love, achievement. Correa's view (2009) cohered with Cortese's and stated that advertising, being a cultural form, is primarily concerned with the promotion of

the dominant value system of the culture and thereby the dominant patriarchal ideology in the society. Therefore, on the one hand, advertising is not only about hard selling commodities, but also selling a lifestyle which would be obtained by consuming or using the particular products and services offered; on the other hand, advertising reflects and moulds dominant values, ideas and beliefs as well as constructing ways of viewing and making sense of the world. The ideology is constructed through signs which are contained in advertisement and its message.

Advertisements are everywhere and people have been loaded with symbolic images and advertising messages. Gauntlett and Hill (1999) noted that television has a significant role in the household and is a part of the domestic space. In the late 20th century, television is a dominant form of media in Greater China area. As reported in Chan and Chan's study (2005), from 2002, nearly every Chinese family has at least one television set (the household penetration rate for television in China was 99.5%). Also, television commercials are regarded as crucial cultural texts due to its capacity for complex rhetorical strategies/ styling, such as angles of the camera, lighting and sound effects, voice-over and editing effects. Correa (2009) described television as the most widely shared medium of images and messages and as an effective transmission tool integrating dominant patterns of images, messages, and ideologies into people's daily lives.

According to cultivation theory, consistent and regular images and portrayals construct a specific (distorted) portrait of reality. When viewers get in touch with these images and portrayals continuously, they will gradually be

cultivated by the behavior, norms, values and expectations conveyed and projected (Frith and Mueller, 2010; Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994; Kim and Lowery, 2005). Thus, a great amount of messages from TV programs and TV commercials go into people's head, either consciously or unconsciously (Gauntlett, 2008). In other words, television has the power to cultivate people to have the same views of the world (Gerbner et al., 1994).

With its huge number of audience, its wide coverage, its rhetorical complexity and its potential cultivation power, television commercial is a significant cultural platform reflecting and constructing social norms and expectations in society. Nonetheless, advertising does not exist in a vacuum and has to be in step with social norms, including contemporary cultural, economic and social issues, as well as contemporary language and words (Talbot, 2000). Therefore, advertising is also a social actor and a cultural artifact (Cheng, 1997; Frith, 1995; Leiss et al., 1990; Zhang et al., 2009). Serving as a "distorted mirror", advertising displays and reflects certain cultural tendencies such as attitudes, behaviors and values, reinforcing certain lifestyles and philosophies of the community that help in promoting products/ services (Pollay, 1986; Feng & Wu, 2007).

Cortese (2008) noted that advertising consolidates existing social arrangements and try to tell people what should be our identity and lifestyle. From the symbolic images in advertising, men and women are "told" how differently they should behave; in fact the underlying notion is reinforcing the dominance of men and the subordination of women. The representations of women and girls on popular culture have drawn attention of feminists and they

primarily agreed that those representations are ideological stereotyping (or distorted) and serve to reinforce patriarchy and power. Since the representations of women in media texts generally do not reflect the reality about women, stereotype/ distortion has become an important concept in contemporary feminist media studies (Correa, 2009; Kidd, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994)

Stereotyping is a set of representation practices which reduce everything about the person to certain traits, exaggerate and simplify them. It includes both normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable things while excludes all others which do not fit (Hall, 1997). In addition, stereotyping usually occur where there are power inequalities and stereotyping maintains social and symbolic order by classifying people and facilitating the bonding of those into the group of "samed" and into the group of "othered". This manifested the Foucault's approach to representation in which historical aspects of power and knowledge in discourse influence the discursive formation of meaning in practices. Stereotypical representations and the influence of power and knowledge on discourse underpin the focus of difference and otherness in structuralism within cultural studies. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Kim and Lowery (2005), most advertisers tend to use traditional cultural stereotypes (often distorted, misrepresented, or unrealistic) in their commercials because those stereotypical representations make their commercials easier to reach and communicate with their target audience.

One of the earliest studies on women images in advertising was conducted by Goffman (1979) who manifested the stereotypical images depicted in advertising and listed some of the typical behaviors displayed in advertisements:

women were more likely to be shown as smaller than and subordinate to men; men were often in executive and father roles which would instruct and help women; women were in submissive and subordinate poses. Furnham and Mak (1999) published a review of 14 content analysis studies (1975-1999) on gender role stereotyping in television commercials across five continents; and Furnham and Paltzer (2010) conducted an updated study and reviewed 30 studies in over 20 countries, including Hong Kong, which were published between 2000 and 2008. They noted that gender role stereotyping in television commercials is a universal phenomenon in the past few decades; however, it is noted that generally gender role stereotyping is declining in Western countries whereas it is probably still strong in more traditional Asian and African countries. The below stereotypical patterns are found consistently in the two reviews:

1. Women are more likely to be presented visually while men are more likely to do voice-overs;

2. Women are more likely to be users of the product advertised while men are more likely to be portrayed as authoritative central figures;

3. Women are more often in dependent role while men are more often in professional role;

4. Women are more likely not to present an argument/ reason for choosing the particular product advertised than men;

5. Women are more likely to be shown as "models" than men for body products and clothing;

6. Women are more likely to be associated with products that are used at home, such as body, home and food products; while men are more associated with products which are "away from home", such as, car and sports products;

7. Women are more often shown in home settings while men are more often in occupational and leisure settings.

In the context of US, it was found that women had been devalued and underrepresented in advertising till the late 1970s (see Courtney and Whipple, 1983; Goffman, 1979; Whipple and Courtney, 1985) and then the depictions of women as happy, caring and submissive mothers had been gradually replaced by career women and "supermoms" (Warner, 1997). More and more studies have then been started to examine women images and their representations in the media. Scholar interests have also spread from the US to the rest of the world. The below section summarizes the previous studies on gender representations in advertising and attempts to categorize them into groups.

Previous studies on women images in advertising

The first group of studies compares gender role portrayals in advertising across distinct cultures, specifically East versus West. Most of these studies report gender role stereotypes and unbalanced gender representations across the globe, for example, Cheng (1997) compared the gender role portrayals in Chinese and US television commercials and Zhang et al. (2009) analyzed the magazine advertisements from the US, China and Thailand. They both reported that women have often been portrayed in non-occupational roles and in decorative positions while men have often been depicted in occupational/executive roles and in recreational roles. Nonetheless, Cheng (1997) also pointed out that seductively dressed women often appear in US commercials but rare in Chinese commercials and that women characters in the

US advertisements are highly depicted in recreational roles. Cheng (1997) and Zhang et al. (2009) both agreed the Chinese advertising tend to reinforce even more stereotypes then its Western counterpart. Zhang et al. (2009) explained the influx of Western civilization helps promote gender equality in Chinese society but the deeply rooted Confucian and Buddhism have slowed down the process.

Ji (2009) compared the model images and gender representations in magazine advertisements between US and China. Her study showed that Asian, female, classic and trendy models, fully clothed models, house/home and fantasy settings are more commonly used in Chinese magazine ads than their US counterparts. She suggested that there is a co-existence of traditional and modern beauty type (i.e. "classic" coexisted with "trendy") and setting (i.e. "home" versus "fantasy") in nowadays Chinese advertising. She proposed that the traditional ideal images of women in advertising will be replaced by new, modern gender images; and this is a dynamic construct which is done in relation to ever-changing cultural values and social norms and expectations.

Bresnahan et al. (2001) studied the gender roles in TV commercials in Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan and the US. They discussed gender stereotypes are diminishing in the places with different paces and the changes are particularly significant in the setting, products being advertised and gender of voice-over in the TV commercials. Nonetheless, for occupational role portrayals, female characters are still more often associated with traditional feminine roles than with those traditional masculine roles.

In a study comparing celebrity endorsement in advertising between the US and Korea conducted by Choi et al. (2005), a majority of celebrity endorsers in Korea TV commercials is male and the frequency of using celebrity endorsers in Korea is much higher than its US counterparts. The authors associated the findings to the traditional collectivistic cultural norms of Korea which emphasize harmony, social hierarchies and group-orientation. They noted that consumers adhering themselves to group norms and mainstream, and connecting themselves to the celebrity endorsers through consumption are common consumption practices in Korea. Erdogan (1999) pointed out that celebrity endorsers (or so-called spokesperson / product representatives) have been treated as another source of credibility (other than "product authority") as well as a source of attractiveness and appeals. With the functions of celebrity endorsers, it is interesting to see the how commonly female celebrity endorsers have been adopted in Chinese TV commercials nowadays. Nonetheless, there are limited studies on the celebrity endorsers in Chinese TV advertising.

The second group of studies compares gender role portrayals or gender representations in advertising in similar cultures/ cultural backgrounds. Moon and Chan (2006) investigated gender portrayals in television commercials in Hong Kong and South Korea. Their results revealed that female characters in Hong Kong are more likely to be depicted as young female but less likely to be depicted in high-level occupation; but female characters are often depicted professionally and credibly in Korean television commercials.

Wee et al. (1995) investigated the sex role portrayal in TV commercials between Singapore and Malaysia. They noted that Singapore has been more

heavily influenced by Western culture than Malaysia so that a more modern portrayal of women in advertising is found in Singapore. Women in Singapore TV commercials are more likely to be depicted in white-collar and service occupations and they are usually beauty conscious; while those in Malaysia TV commercials are more frequently to be depicted as a young housewife staying at home, to be associated with personal and beauty care products, and to be depicted dependently/ in relation to others. Also, they have sought to examine the functional roles of the characters in TV commercials and they found that men are more likely to be providers of help but less likely to be recipients of helps than women.

The third group focuses on gender role portrayals or gender representations in advertising in one selected country/ place and the existences of gender stereotyping have been reported across the globe (Frith and Karan, 2008). A number of significant studies on Asian countries have been summarized below.

Cheng and Wan (2008) studied the women images in China subway advertisements and found that women are still under-represented and more likely to be portrayed in non-occupational roles and in fulfilling family duties. Moreover, their findings indicated the Chinese subway advertising has strengthened the worldwide stereotypes that women tend to dress seductively and be strongly associated with cosmetics and clothes but seldom in technology-related products and services.

Lin (2008) investigated role portrayal preferences of women in foreign and domestic magazines in Taiwan magazine advertising and the findings showed

that classical beauty is more popular in domestic magazines whereas trendy feminine endorsers is more popular in foreign women's magazine. She pointed out that traditional and conservative images of women are still prominent in Taiwan society while the uses of trendy female images shape Taiwan to a more modern and liberated society. She concluded that her sample signified an atmosphere of belonging, equality and collectivism, in which individual heroism and personal power have been downplayed.

Similar gender stereotyping are also found in Korean television advertising where women are often portrayed as young, as nurturing children, preparing meals, doing housework (Kim and Lowry, 2005). They also noticed that women are less likely to be portrayed as authority figures, in business settings, and less likely to be voice-overs, while men are more often in dominant and leader roles. A more recent study on Korean magazine advertisements by Kim and Cha (2008) also revealed that most young Korean women agree that Western beauty is superior to traditional Korean beauty and they primarily associate Western beauty with advanced and modern beauty ideals. With the influences of globalization and the influx of Western beauty, Kim and Cha (2008) pointed out that traditional values (such as conservative, passive and domesticated) and modern values (such as wild, sensual, sexy, aggressive, seductive and liberal) are both exerting influences on Korean women through advertising.

Ford et al. (1998) analyzed Japanese magazine advertising and they noticed that some previously identified stereotypical feminine traits are absent, such as fearfulness, fussiness, and worry. However, women are still more often depicted as decorative and in home settings but less in occupational/ sport settings. In the

same study, women characters are more concerned with their appearance and are shown in sexist ways; they are more often to be depicted as product users and presenters but less in product authorities.

Frith (2008) studied the images of women in Singapore magazines and found that the majority of Chinese women in the advertisements are shown in Classic beauty type but seldom in sexual poses. However, Karan (2008) indicated that Indian women, comparing to the "traditional image" displayed in Singapore women representations, are trying to strike a balance between traditional and modern. Based on the findings from the images of women in Indian magazine advertisements, Karan (2008) concluded that: 1) there is a similar percentage of women being portrayed as "Cute" (young, independent and casual) and "Classic/ Elegant" (the subdued and traditional Indian women); 2) higher status and empowerment of women are projected through an increasing number of advertisements targeting at Indian women; 3) most Indian woman characters in advertisements look directly into the camera that it indicated that Indian women are becoming more self-confident, assertive and can hold their own ground. Nonetheless, most Indian women are projected in "glamorous/ decorative" roles or as "housewives", but rare in "professional" role. Karan (2008) believed it is a natural phenomenon in relation to the nature of the products advertised. She concluded "the global processes are fast working in India with the process of modernization".

Fung and Ma (2000) did a survey on sex-role stereotyping in Hong Kong and found that characteristics such as "shy", "gentle", "compassionate", "affectionate", "sympathetic", "understanding", "children-loving" and

"sensitive to the needs of others" are all perceived to be female attributes. They noted that traditional Chinese thoughts and stereotypic notions are still influencing both men and women in Hong Kong. Although both men and women have stronger self-concept in contemporary society, women ranked themselves higher on the ability to establish and maintain harmonious relationship with others and on measures reflecting morals and virtue whereas men ranked themselves higher on leadership, persuading others, and ability to cope with pressure. Fung and Ma (2000) explained such stereotyping has been traditionally rooted in family, education system and society which are powerful social pressures which have molded both men and women in Hong Kong to standardized sex roles.

Most of the previous studies in gender and advertising have been primarily concerned with the egalitarian or dichotomous perspective focusing on how men versus women have been overrepresented versus underrepresented in the advertising media and relating their findings mainly to the persistent influences from the traditional forces. A full account of how traditional values and expectations affect and contribute to the formations of current women representations in advertising, and furthermore, how traditional values and expectations converge with modern/ Western values and influences in constructing the images of a contemporary woman in Chinese advertising have not been well attempted. Therefore, the present study attempts to systematically examine the image representations of women in contemporary Chinese advertising and to observe the competitions and/or intertwinements between the traditional and modern/global values as reflected and constructed in the representations.

Previous studies on female voice in advertising

Numerous studies has proved that the traditional and universal practice in advertising was using male voice-over (e.g. Bartsch et al., 2000; Bresnahan et al, 2001; Cheng, 1997; Craig, 1992; Kim and Lowry, 2005; Lovdal, 1989; Whipple and McManamon, 2002). They noted that it is primarily because male voice has long been regarded as an authoritative tone and male voice provides a sense of convincing, credible and knowledgeable. Also, the preference of male voice-over indicates the existence of patriarchal and male-dominant social norm (Cheng, 1997; Kim and Lowry, 2005).

Although male voice-over dominates, there is possibly an increasing trend of employing female voice-overs in TV commercials. Lovdal (1989) compared the situation in the 1970s and 1980s while Bartsch et al. (2000) did a more updated research in the 1990s. They reported more and more female voice-overs have been found: increasing from 7% in the 1970s to 9% in the 1980s and dump to 30% in the 1990s. These revealed the gender preference or bias on voice-over has been decreasing significantly.

Nonetheless, Whipple and McManamon (2002) pointed out that there is possible relationship between the sex of voice-over and gender-specific product and in their finding it was interesting that a female voice-over for men's cologne is better rated than a male voice-over. The authors suggested, given the sensuous characteristic of cologne, female voice-over is welcomed probably because female voice is generally more pleasant and sensuous, and because of the seductive associations with women.

Tannen (2001) has attempted to relate men's/ women's talking habit to context. She noted that men favour and more likely to do "public speaking" (Report-talk) whereas more women favour and more likely to do "private speaking" (Rapport-talk). It is very difficult to determine whether advertising is a "public" space or "private" space. With its business nature, TV commercials aim to convey messages and persuade targeted consumers of the products/ services advertised within a limited period of time. Also, TV commercials are broadcasted widely in public. However, since advertising manifests rich and intimate messages and representations, allows instant and direct access to people's desire, love and emotions (Cortese, 2008), advertising can be taken as a "private" medium due to its emotional and personal connections to their audience. It seems there are very limited scholars have attempted to reveal to what extent female voice has been incorporated in TV commercials. Most previous studies have mainly focused on the sex of voice-over, which is one of the essential elements in the auditory feature of commercials; nonetheless, voice from visible characters in the commercials should not be neglected. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the presence of female voice in TV commercials which are "public" and "private" simultaneously.

Lovdal (1989) has touched on this issue and described that female voice was rarely present in TV commercials in the 1980s; when a female voice was present, she was not speaking to the population at large, instead, she was speaking to pets, babies, children, and other women. She discussed women only talk to those of inferior or lower status and to other women concerning feminine issues. Similar to the perceptions of sex of voice-over, as mentioned above, female voice has often been perceived as inferior, weak and soft, and this is

probably one of the reasons of the uncommon use of female voice in advertising. In addition, traditionally Chinese women have been encouraged not to speak too much, to hide their own feelings and to be supportive to all words spoken by their fathers, husbands and son (e.g. Hung et al., 2007; Johansson, 2001).

Previous studies on cultural values in advertising

It has been widely acknowledged that advertising, as an important unit in social and cultural communication, is a carrier of cultural values (Leiss et al, 1990; Pollay, 1986; Pollay and Gallagher, 1990). From the 1990s, there have been increasing scholarly interest in exploring cultural values reflected in Chinese advertising or advertising in the Greater China region (e.g. Chan and Cheng, 2002; Frith and Wesson, 1991; Pasadeos and Chi, 1992; Tse et al., 1989). The studies conducted by Pasadeos and Chi (1992) and Tse et al. (1989) revealed that Hong Kong advertisements used more Western cultural values and stressed hedonistic values while mainland China advertisements stressed traditional and utilitarian values. In a more recent study conducted by Chan and Cheng (2002), the value of "enjoyment", such as sensory-satisfying experience of consumers, has been found dominant in Hong Kong commercials while commercials in mainland China frequently stresses on the "traditional" value by focusing on the historical image of the brand.

Porter and Samovar (1997) pointed out that the emphasis on different cultural values varies along a minimum-maximum dimension. Some cultural values, such as collectivism, respect for elders and tradition, are more typical in Eastern cultures while values such as individualism, youth and modernity are

more representative in Western cultures (Chan and Cheng, 2002; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Frith, 1990).

With increasing cultural contacts and globalization, cultural hybridity has become a notion of investigation across many spheres of cultural research and is gaining visibility in recent transnational/ transcultural media studies (e.g. Cheng, 1994, 1997; Kraidy, 2002; Wu, 2008a, 2008b). Chan and Cheng (2002) suggested that Chinese advertising is a melting pot of eastern/ traditional/ Chinese and western/ modern cultural values but it is not a pick-and-throw struggle; instead, it converges the "good" from both cultural values by taking a minimum/maximum of a cultural value or a balance between certain values. Global cultures often interplay and compete with local conditions of life and traditions, as different groups of people on the local ground usually position differently towards global cultural resources and thereby hold conflicting views reading the past and interpreting the contemporary world. Rojek (2007) employed the term "multiple modernities" to refer to the diversity of lived experience in relation to the ever-changing life in modern culture. Cohering to Rojek's idea about multiple modernities, many scholars such as Chan (2007) adopted a post-postmodern perspective and pointed out that the contemporary global culture is comprised of diverse cultural sources including culture-based identities and lifestyle which are rooted in local communities. He stated that hybridization is a purposeful attempt to synthesize foreign and local cultural attributes which is not simply repeating the past/ the present practices; it involves cultural conflicts and is able to transcend pre-determined conceptual structures constructively.

Wang and Yeh (2007) described the process of hybridization as imitation, borrowing, appropriation and mutual learning. They noted that hybridization is found in most transnational advertisements or television serial dramas. We can observe that the existing studies have devoted attention to the embedment of traditional/ Eastern/ Chinese versus modern/ Western cultural values in advertising practices. Nonetheless, how traditional versus modern values underpin the contemporary image representations of women in advertising has not been seriously investigated.

2.3.3 Advances in quantitative and qualitative research

In the field of media and cultural studies, quantitative and qualitative research methods are two broad paradigms: quantitative research methods emphasize on numerical information or quantities whilst qualitative research methods primarily focus on meaning and interpretation (Stokes, 2003).

Content analysis

Content analysis is one of the most widely adopted quantitative research methodologies by scholars in media communication research (e.g. Berger, 2011; Neuendorf, 2011; Priest, 2010, Stokes, 2003; van Zoonen, 1994; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). Content analysis is a useful research technique in studying and answering communication research questions because content analysis measured the frequency of variables in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner. Numerous scholars over the world have employed content analysis to examine gender representations/ sex-role stereotyping in the media (e.g. Chan

and Cheng, 2002; Cheng, 1997; Courtney and Whipple, 1983; Craig, 2002; Frith, 2008; Goffman, 1979; Ji, 2009; Karan, 2008; Kim and Lowery, 2005; Lin, 2008; Lovdal, 1989; Warner, 1997; Whipple and Courtney, 1985; Zhang et al., 2009). They incorporated a number of coding categories which are primarily derived from theory and previous research into their own content analysis. Their findings have been summarized in Section 2.3.2.

By means of generalization (Bell, 2001) or categorization (van Leeuwen, 2001), examining signs in media texts by content analysis generate general but quantitative evidence for the review of cultural codes and tendencies. Nonetheless, quantitative content analysis has been criticized for being inflexible and for ignoring the complexities of the interplay between signs; the isolation of signs and overly concerned with numbers has been criticized for being too descriptive, uncritical and lacking reliability (Furnham and Paltzer, 2010; Stokes, 2003; van Zoonen, 1994). Also, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) noted that the coding categories have not been evolved correspondingly with the radical social changes in society among most of the gender-role content analysis study over the past few decades. They suggested more subtle coding categories should be developed and a cultural framework should be provided in future studies

Multimodal analysis

With the advantages and disadvantages of content analysis, many cultural and media studies have attempted to combine semiotic analysis with content analysis in order to offer breadth/ general as well as depth/ focus examinations

on media texts. Semiotic analysis is significant in studying images or visual texts and it involves relating images to ideological structure with special attention to interpretation and meaning (Strokes, 2003). Sign, a fusion of form and meaning, is a core unit in semiotics and it exists in all modes (Kress, 2010). A multimodal approach considers how signs are used with other signs in several modes and in context (Machin, 2007).

Images and language/ words are interdependent components in multimodal communication, especially in the age of digitalization (Kress, 2010; Kress and van Leeuwan, 1996, 2001; Moya, 2011; Rheindorf, 2004; van Leeuwan, 2004). First major works on multimodal analysis were done by Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwan since 1990s. In their definition, "multimodality" refers to "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined – they may for instance reinforce each other ("say the same thing in different ways"), fulfill complementary roles or be hierarchically ordered"; they also pointed out that a semiotic product or event "is both articulated or produced and interpreted or used" in the process of communication (Kress and van Leeuwan, 2001:20). Modes are material-semiotic resources which are used in articulating discourse through selecting and combining multiple semiotic modes according to the interests of a particular communication situation/ context. Although visual modalities such as gesture, gaze, posture, head movement, facial expression, interaction, dress, grooming, and the use of space have become increasingly important in today's communicative act and in the process of making interpersonal meaning, Kress (2010), Moya (2011) and van Leeuwan (2004) stressed that images and language possess their own significance in meaning

making process and it is necessary to consider both textual (both spoken and written text) and visual (image) modes in discourse analysis because they have their own specific communicative purposes that sometimes contrasting meanings may be made.

Machin (2007) shared a similar definition of multimodal analysis with Kress and van Leeuwan that he defines multimodal analysis is a social semiotic approach to visual communications, which breaks down compositions into their most basic components – signs and then understands how signs are used in combinations to create meanings; his book discussed how modes or signs play significant roles in denoting and connoting mood, attitudes and ideas, and in creating associations with individual and social values and norms. According to Machin (2007), elements and styles of representations in media texts, such as poses, objects (props), settings, participants and style of the piece of text, are signs and are carriers of connotations. For example, a pose connotes values, personalities and ways of living; props connote occupations and/or lifestyle, such as a laptop and a cup of coffee connote an urban and cosmopolitan lifestyle. In other words, television commercials – moving images with sounds and words – consist of many modes and in each mode there are carriers of connotations (signs).

Kress (2010) also noted pragmatics and positioning are important theoretical parts in multimodal analysis. A pragmatic approach emphasizes on social circumstances, participants and the environment of use, and it concerns with the correlations of variations of use with variations in environment. Positioning is a result of choice selected from a range of possibilities so that the

choice is ideological. Narrative positioning has drawn the attention of scholars, such as Bamberg (1997). He suggested that the analysis of positioning facilitates our understandings of how participants in an interactive activity want to be understood. Also, the analysis of positioning perceives verbal and non-verbal communicative devices as performance features. It is useful in understanding the intrinsic social forces in interactive activities among participants, specifically how participants position themselves and attend to one another in interactional settings. Focusing on storytelling, Bamberg suggested a framework of narrative positioning in which he de-synthesized positioning into three different levels: Level 1: "How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?"; Level 2: "How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience?"; Level 3: "How do narrators position themselves to themselves? (Who am I)". The process of positioning is a product of interactions between individual/group identities and social/ ideological contexts and stereotypical discourses. This framework was later applied by Archakis and Lampropoulou (2010) to examine heterosexual identities and stimulus of erotic desire. Through the positioning analysis, they noted that the representations of the narrators in their study reflect their roles and elements of social relations, ideologies and identities. As discussed in Section 2.2, how social beings perceive themselves and how they perceive others would influence how they act, perform and present themselves in a given/ particular social context (Polyzon, 2010). Archakis and Lampropoulou (2010) believed narrative is a discourse genre highly relating to identity work because social and cultural identities can be manifested in narrative construction. The process of positioning is a product of interactions between individual/ group identities and social/ ideological contexts and stereotypical discourses. The three levels of

positioning consider semantic (temporal) and linguistic (structural) layers of the narratives, and pragmatics of narrating. Positioning analysis refers linguistic devices as performance features reflecting the active engagement of narrators/ speakers and how they expected to be interpreted/ understood.

Therefore, in order to understand the meanings associated with the representations of women in television commercials in relation to the social-cultural context, a multimodal approach should be adopted in supplement to content analysis in the present study. Also, the present study attempts to apply the analytic framework on positioning to explore the underlying ideological representations of women in TV commercials. Although narrative elements in TV commercials are not naturally occurring (as required in conversation discourse analysis), TV commercials share some major characteristics of narratives, for example, spoken (plus visual/non-verbal communication), evaluation and persuasion. Therefore, it is expected that through analyzing the positioning of woman characters in TV commercials, the competitions and intertwinements between tradition and modernity on Chinese women can be further understood.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology of the present study. Section 3.1 presents the research aims and questions of this study. Section 3.2 describes the research framework outlining how images of Chinese women are investigated through audio and visual modes in TV commercials, and provides comprehensive coding definitions and procedures which are developed and refined from previous studies. Section 3.3 presents data collection and sample profile.

3.1 Research aims and questions

As discussed in Chapter 2, most previous studies have been primarily concerned with the egalitarian or dichotomous perspectives focusing on how men versus women have been overrepresented or underrepresented in the advertising media and relating their findings mainly to the persistent influences from the traditional forces. Nonetheless, most scholars have mainly devoted their attention to gender-role stereotyping through content analysis; whilst the formations of individuals' images and identities in the advertising media in relation to social, cultural and economic context have not been well attempted. Moreover, few studies on cultural values in advertising have been conducted to examine how traditional versus modern values and expectations underpin the contemporary image representations of women in commercials, particularly in the rapid-developing Greater China region.

Hence, the study aims to locate and compare the contemporary image representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China, with special attention to the competition and/or intertwinement between the traditional/local and modern/global forces in the construction of new images of Chinese women. Specifically, this thesis is going to investigate:

RQ1:   What are the similarities and differences in the image representations of women in Chinese TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

    RQ1.1:   To what extent has female voice been incorporated in Chinese TV commercials?

    RQ1.2:   What language choice patterns of women are most prevalent in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials?

    RQ1.3:   What visual representations of women (in terms of product type, credibility, setting, role portrayal, appearance and trait projections) are most prevalent in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials?

RQ2:   Are women playing more "traditional" or "modern" roles and functions in Chinese TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

    RQ2.1:   How are the female characters positioned in relation to one another, to the audience, and to the context within the Chinese TV commercials?

    RQ2.2:   How are the traditional and modern images hybridized in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

3.2 Framework of analysis

In the present study, image representations of women refer to semiotic presentations including visual and audio elements which formulate the contemporary images of women and construct the new/ current social contexts for women in particular social environments. In other words, contemporary images of women in TV commercials are examined via their audio and visual involvement and participation, and how they are situated in and what are the contexts of the TV commercials.

This study primarily adopts content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis approach to generate quantitative and qualitative accounts of the contemporary image representations of Chinese women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

3.2.1   Defining traditional versus modern representations

Incorporating the perspectives and views on traditional and modern values/ representations of women from scholars in gender and communication studies (reviewed in Chapter 2), the present study defines traditional and modern representations of woman images specifically in relation to Chinese culture.

In this study, traditional values refer to authoritative, patriarchal and family-oriented values in traditional Chinese culture which have served as strong ideological guidelines creating and maintaining the specific expectations and practices of men and women in the society (Johansson, 2001). Women in traditional society were expected to downplay their competency and to be

inferior; and, the home, particularly the kitchen, was their realm (e.g. Bartsch et al., 2000; Chancer and Watkins, 2006; Craig, 1992; Friedan, 2001; Gauntlett, 2008; Gunter, 1995; Kim and Lowery, 2005; Tuchman, 1978; Wodak, 1997). These were promoted and reinforced by numerous socially accepted concepts, such as "men are strong, women are weak", "women should try to avoid surpassing their husbands in social status", "thinking managers and recreations, thinking men; thinking housework, thinking women" (Cheng, 1997). Traditional women should do their best to be "kind, gentle and virtuous" (Yuen et al., 2004). Also, traditionally, Chinese women had been encouraged to focus on their inner beauty and to serve the family wholeheartedly; whereas striving for good appearance and self enjoyment were socially unaccepted (Hung et la., 2007; Johansson, 2001).

Modern values refer to the values associated with modernization and Western democracy such as individualism, consumerism and egalitarianism (e.g. Chan and Cheng, 2002; Chen and Schweitzer, 1996; Frith, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Hung et al., 2007; Yuen et al., 2004). These modern values provide a space for the constructions of individual lifestyles and identity, allowing individuals to seek their self-satisfactions and achievements and providing them ability to stand out from the crowd. Women are provided with consumption choices to invest on their outer beauty, and are no longer restricted to domesticity. Furthermore, women could enjoy equal social status and power with men at work, at school and at home (e.g. Hung et al, 2007; Johansson, 2001). The ideological guidelines for modern women are "being independent in attitude, and attractive in looks" (Gauntlett, 2008), and "being the fun fearless female" (Machin and Thornborrow, 2003; Machin and van Leeuwen, 2003, 2005).

3.2.2   Steps and dimensions of content analysis

Integrating the insights from scholars such as Bartsch et al. (2000), Cheng and Wan (2008), Frith (2008), Kim and Lowery (2005), Lovdal (1989), O'Donnell and O'Donnell (1978), Schneider and Schneider (1979), Wu and Chung (2011) and Zhang et al. (2009), the study has developed an extensive coding framework and has derived three steps to examine the traditional versus modern representations of Chinese women in Chinese TV commercials (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Steps and dimensions of analysis

Steps of analysis	Dimensions of analysis
Step 1	Voice and female verbal characteristics: - Voice-over - Female voice - Language choice patterns
Step 2	Visual representations of women: - Product type - Credibility of woman figures - Setting - Role portrayal - Appearance and trait projections
Step 3	Traditional versus modern representations: - Voice and female verbal characteristics - Visual representations of women

Step 1: Voice and female verbal characteristics

This study first investigated the audio representations of women in TV commercials. Three aspects are examined in this dimension: voice-over, female voice, and language choice patterns. The unit of analysis is per TV commercial.

Voice-over

The traditional and universal practice in advertising is using the male voice-overs (e.g. Bartsch et al., 2000; Bresnahan et al, 2001; Cheng, 1997; Craig, 1992; Kim and Lowry, 2005; Lovdal, 1989; Whipple and McManamon, 2002) because of the traditional perceptions of the power of male voices: authoritative, convincing, credible and knowledgeable. Also, the preference for male voice-overs indicates the existence of a patriarchal and male-dominant social norm (Cheng, 1997; Kim and Lowry, 2005). Nonetheless, some studies noted that the use of female voice-overs has been increasing (e.g. Bartsch et al., 2000; Lovdal, 1989) and perhaps it may due to the characteristics of confidence, intelligence, competency projected by modern women nowadays (Gauntlett, 2008).

Bresnahan et al (2001) commented that voice-overs exhibit significant implications for status and relative role power. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the adoption of female voice-overs reflects new perceptions and expectations of women regarding their new power and status, which indeed breaks the tradition boundary on representation of women.

Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, Whipple and McManamon (2002) pointed out that there is a possible relationship between the sex of voice-overs and gender-specific products. They suggested that since the female voice is generally more pleasant, gentle and sensuous, female voices are favored in some types of products, such as men's cologne. Thus, in the present study, the relationship between female voice-overs and different gender-specific products will also be examined.

The definition of voice over, according to Bartsch et al. (2000), Craig (1992) and Lovdal (1989) is that: a voice is heard but the person in invisible (off-screen). Whipple and McManamon (2002) mentioned that announcer, narrator, voice of authority and off-camera talent are all common names with voice-over. In this study, a voice-over was coded as "Male", "Female", "Male + Female" or "No voice-over".

Female voice

Do females or males speak more? It primarily depends on the setting: women probably speak less in "public spaces" but more in "private spaces" when compared to men (Tannen, 2001). This study does not seek to explore and understand how and why women speak more/ less than men; rather, this study aims to investigate whether women have a space to speak in advertising. Traditionally, female voice is uncommon in advertising due to the stereotypical perceptions that female voices are inferior, weak and soft.

With reference to the perceptions of sex of voice-over, as mentioned above, and the traditional preference for Chinese women to be quiet and gentle (e.g. Hung et al., 2007; Johansson, 2001), the absence of female voices is a traditional strategy in advertising. However, having a voice is a sign of women's modern status because it signifies they have a chance to speak, to debate, and to express self. Thus, the presence of female voice in advertising is regarded as a modern representation of women. In this study, the inclusion of a female voice in TV commercials is coded as "Female voice present" while "Female voice absent" is coded if there are no female voice in the entire TV commercial. The

inclusion of a female voice is defined as any hearable and understandable utterances from a female; invisible voice-over and voice from any visible female figures are included.

Language choice patterns

Language choice also contributes to the traditional and/or modern representations of women. According to Wu and Chan (2007) and Wu (2008a), the use of English is an indicator of the global/ Western appeal since English is a global lingua franca. Also, Loveday (2008) noted that English mixing in Japanese advertising helps to create a Western/ foreign identity. As pointed out by Hung et al. (2007), "modern" in a Chinese context is closely associated with globalization, westernization, or things foreign/ global. Therefore, the use of foreign languages is taken as a representation of being modern whereas the use of local language is taken as being traditional. In other words, female voice in the sample classified as "Local language only" is regarded as a traditional representation, whilst "Local + Foreign language" is regarded as a modern representation. "Local language" refers to the use of Putonghua in the mainland China TV commercials while it refers to Cantonese in the Hong Kong context; "Foreign language" refers to the use of languages other than the local language, such as English and French.

Step 2: Visual representations of women

In this step of analysis, woman figures in the collected TV commercials are examined each by each (maximum three woman figures from one commercial)

and this aims to reveal how women are depicted and how women have been situated and linked up with different objects and participants in the designated world in advertising. There are five sub-dimensions: product type, credibility, setting, role portrayal, and appearance and traits projections. Variables used in each dimensions were derived and modified from numerous relative studies, such as Chancer and Watkins (2006), Cheng (1997), Cheng and Wan (2008), Ford et al. (1998), Hung et al. (2007), Karan (2008), Zhang et al. (2009). Table 2.2 shows variables in each sub-dimension, traditional versus modern, in the image representations of women in Chinese advertising. The unit of analysis is per woman figure.

Table 2.2 Variables of traditional and modern visual representations of women in Chinese TV commercials

	Traditional	**Modern**
1. Product type	Domestic products	Non-domestic products
	Personal products	Technology products/ Cars
2. Credibility	Product users	Celebrity endorser
	Adornment/ Story actress	Product authority
3. Settings	At home - Other room of home (e.g. living room, bedroom) - Kitchen - Outdoors at home - Bathroom	Out-of-home - Social setting - Studio setting - Outdoor/ Natural Scenery setting - Workplace - Sport center - Hospital/ Clinic
4. Roles	Feminine occupation	Masculine occupation
	Family role: Pure domesticity	Family role: Cultured nurturer
	Decorative/ Demonstrative role	Recreation role

Table 2.2 (Continued)

	Traditional	**Modern**
5. Appearance/ projections:		
Clothes	Non-sexually objectified	Sexually objectified
Looks	Modest/ plain	Glamorous/ fancy
Belongings/ accessories	Frugal/ undemanding	Luxurious/ Technology-interested
Relations with others	Dependent/ subordinate to others	Non-dependent
Connections with others	In-group/ sameness	Individually/ individuality
Body movement	Reserved/ shy	Fearless/ vital
Verbal manner	Quiet/ soft-spoken	Assertive/ certain
Functional role	Problem-causer/ sufferer	Solution- / suggestion-provider

Product type

One sub-dimension to examine how traditional or modern values have underpinned the image representations of women in Chinese TV commercials is by studying what types of product women characters tend to sell and their relations with the products. Cheng and Wan (2008) highlighted the portrayals of women in advertising were related to the categories of product/service being advertised. Since women have always been associated with housework and domesticity, they are expected to be responsible to buy things for the house and for better family life (Friedan, 2001; Gauntlett, 2008); women have therefore been used to sell domestic products such as washing machines, detergents and food (Bartsch et al., 2000) and personal products such as skin-care products and clothes (Cheng and Wan, 2008; Wee et al., 1995) in commercials. Advanced domestic products reflect general improvements of life quality but the linkage

between domesticity and domestic products is still valid. Therefore, using women characters to sell "domestic products" or "personal products" is considered as a traditional representation of women.

With the influence of modernization and Western consumerism, it is postulated that women characters are likely to be depicted to sell products which are not traditionally associated with women, such as non-domestic products and technology-related products (e.g. Bartsch et al., 2000; Cheng, 1997; Cheng and Wan, 2008). Therefore, using women characters to sell "non-domestic products" or "technology products/ cars" is considered as modern associations of women with the products/ services being advertised.

Their operational coding definitions are:

- "Domestic products" primarily refer to products being used at home and non-gender preferential body care products, such as cooking utensils, refrigerator, air-conditioner, detergents, food, fast food, medical drugs, vitamin supplements, shampoo, bath gel, simple home appliances;

- "Personal products" primarily refer to body-oriented and skin beauty products which are basically targeting at woman consumers, such as, cosmetics, facial cream/ mask, slimming products, accessories/ jewellery;

- "Non-domestic products" primarily refer to products being used or found out-of-home, and includes products/ services related to service industries, infrastructures and government policy, e.g. bank services, insurance, airlines, travel package, cars, house/apartments, government consultation;

- "Technology products/ cars" include, but not limited to, computer, mobile phone/ smartphone, internet/ wi-fi service, camera, television, cars.

Credibility of woman figures

According to Furnham and Paltzer (2010), credibility is one of the most significant dimensions in advertising. There are traditional stereotypical depictions of men and women in advertising in terms of their credibility. As discussed in Chapter 2, the depictions of woman figures in less credible roles could be explained by (1) the traditional gender dichotomies between masculinity and femininity (e.g. Chancer and Watkins, 2006; Fischer and Arnold, 1994), (2) the concept of female to men as nature to culture proposed by Ortner (1972), and/or (3) the idea of women as marginalized/ underprivileged/ undervalued group as discussed by numerous scholars (e.g. Byerly, 2007; Gandy, 1998; Gross, 1995; Tuchman, 1978). These all manifested the relatively lower status, inferiority and subordination of women in traditional and stereotypical perceptions which disabled women to play credible and authoritative roles in advertising.

A number of scholars have examined the credibility of woman figures in advertising in different places and they all found that woman figures were more often depicted as "product users" and in "decorative/ adornment" role than as "product authority" (e.g. Ford et al., 1998; Karan, 2008; Kim and Lowery, 2005; Zhang et al., 2009). Also, being as another source of credibility, celebrity endorsers (Erdogan, 1999) were generally dominated by men traditionally and this gender preference has been substantiated in collectivistic cultural societies such as Korea (Choi et al., 2005). As celebrity endorsers act as a source of credibility as well as a source of attractiveness and appeals, it is interesting to see how regularly female celebrity endorsers have been used in Chinese TV commercials nowadays in which the adoption of female celebrity endorsers

signified the representativeness, power and credibility of women in this age of modernization and female empowerment in Greater China.

In this study, the credibility of woman figures in TV commercials is classified into four types, namely "product user", "adornment/ story actress", "celebrity endorser", and "product authority". The first two are regarded as traditional depictions of women in TV commercials while the later two are regarded as modern ways. With reference to Choi et al (2005) and Zhang et al. (2009), the operational coding definitions of those variables are:

- "Product user" – being portrayed primarily as a user of the product/ service being advertised;

- "Adornment/ story actress" – being portrayed primarily to adorn the product/ service being advertised, or being portrayed primarily as a non-functional member in story telling in TV commercials;

- "Celebrity endorser" – (also named spokesperson / product representative) usually actress, athletes, music artists, etc; being primarily portrayed themselves and spoke directly to the audience on behalf of themselves; may show their names, titles, or positions;

- "Product authority" – being portrayed primarily as a source of information or an expertise of the product/ service being advertised.

Setting

Setting of the woman figures is another important indicator to understand the competition and/or intertwinement between the traditional and modern values in the construction of new images of Chinese women because the settings reveal

the realm of the characters.

Domestic realm and the home are typical and traditional settings for women characters in commercials (e.g. Bartsch el at., 2000; Chancer and Watkins, 2006; Ford et al., 1998; Gauntlett, 2008; Ji, 2009; Kim and Lowery, 2005; O'Donnell and O'Donnell, 1978; Ortner, 1972; Schneider and Schneider, 1979). Some scholars have further investigated in which particular rooms at home women characters tend to appear. Specifically, "kitchen" and "other room of home" (e.g. bedroom, living room) are the two most typical settings for women characters inside home (e.g. Craig, 1992; Dominick and Rauch, 1972; Gauntlett, 2008; Lovdal, 1989). The preference for placing women at home has projected the traditional home-bound images of women (Gauntlett, 2008). Also, this accords with the traditional and Confucian expectations that good Chinese women should stay at home and take up the responsibilities of all home duties wholeheartedly such as cooking and cleaning – "men rule outside and women rule inside". Therefore, depicting woman images in the domestic realm/ home setting is regarded as a proof of traditional representation of women. Contrary to the domestic realm/ home setting, a non-domestic realm/ out-of-home setting signifies a modern realm of women which implies an ideology that new women are not bounded by family or father-husband-son; rather, they can participate in "outside" activities and strive for their career, enjoyment, satisfaction in the public realm.

In this study, settings of woman characters are classified into two major groups: "at home" – domestic realm (traditional), and "out-of-home" – public realm (modern). Each group is further divided into sub-groups in order to

74

provide a more detailed and full account of the relationship between the realms and female characters. The sub-groups of "at home" include: "kitchen", "bathroom", "other room of the home" and "outdoors at home". The sub-groups of "out-of-home" include: "social setting", "studio setting", "outdoor/ natural scenery", "workplace", "sport center" and "hospital/ clinic". Only the major setting of a commercial has been coded.

Role portrayal

As discussed in Chapter 2, the typical and traditional roles and expectations of women are giving birth, lactation, children bearing, taking care of the family and doing housework, particularly in traditional patriarchal Chinese society. All these duties are caring in nature and the roles of women are mainly pure domesticity and non-occupational (e.g. Cheng and Wan, 2008; Friedan, 2001; Fung and Ma, 2000; Gauntlett, 2008; Karan, 2008; Kim and Lowery, 2005; Tuchman, 1978; Warner, 1997). Men, in contrast, are mainly presented in business/ professional roles and recreational roles (e.g. Cheng, 1997; Ford et al., 1998; Karan, 2008). As pointed out by Warner (1997), the traditional roles of women have been gradually replaced by strong career women and "supermoms". Modern women have gradually taken up masculine occupations and they do participate in sports and other leisure activities, which have long been limited to men only (Gauntlett, 2008). These signified modern women have no longer been restricted to feminine traits and occupations; instead, there could be either/or a combination of feminine and masculine traits and roles.

Most previous studies have differentiated the characters into "occupational

role" or "non-occupational role" (e.g. Cheng, 1997; Cheng and Wan, 2008; Zhang et al., 2009). However, this categorization seems not detailed enough to achieve the research goals of the present study. According to the discussion about the masculinity versus femininity traits and their associated stereotypical occupations by Chancer and Watkins (2006) and Bresnahan et al. (2001) and the discussions about women roles in Chinese society by Hung et al. (2007), there are traditional versus modern representations in terms of occupations and family roles. Thus, in this study, the main role of the characters is coded as follows: Traditional role portrayals of women include portraying them in "Feminine occupation", "Pure domesticity" family role and "Decorative/ Demonstrative role". Modern role portrayals of women include portraying them in "Masculine occupation", in the family role of "Cultured nurturer" and in "Recreational role".

The operational coding definitions of the variables are:

- "Feminine occupation" – being portrayed in occupational role whose job nature is serving, caring or assisting, such as retail sales, waitress, service and clerical jobs, elementary school teachers, caregivers, secretaries, administrative assistants, nurses, dental assistants;

- The family role of "Pure domesticity" – being portrayed in doing housework/ trivial household chores, skilled in domestic crafts, devoted all her energy/ being exhausted in taking care of her family and children, such as cleaning toilet, sweeping, washing clothes, cooking;

- "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" – being portrayed in decorative role (non-functional)/ as flower vase; primarily served as a sexual or attractive stimulus;

- "Masculine occupation" – being portrayed in occupational role whose job nature is more assertive, independent or scientific, such as business executives, banker politicians, lawyers, doctors, athletes;

- "Cultured nurturer" – being portrayed in family/ parental roles which primarily enjoy quality time with the family rather than exhaust themselves in doing trivial housework, such as teaching, singing, playing with children, sharing duties/ housework/ decision power with men;

- "Recreational role" – being portrayed in relaxing, leisure and enjoying roles; engaged in non-work-related activity, such as, watching movie, shopping, dining with friends, hiking, doing sports, drawing;

Appearance and trait projections

Stereotypical perceptions of women attributes have been proved in numerous studies across different places in the world (e.g. Chancer and Watkins, 2006; Cortese, 2008; Gandy, 1998; Goffman, 1979; Gross, 1995; Hung et al., 2007; Johansson, 2001; Kim and Lowry, 2005; Tuchman, 1998; Warner, 1997; Wodak, 1997; Zhang et al., 2003). Women have been traditionally considered as inferior, dependent, submissive, and subordinate to men, and traditional traits of women include being selfless, virtuous, kind, caring, modest, undemanding, quiet, submissive, soft, perseverant, reserved, good-tempered, gentle, loyal, obedient, benevolent, wise, filial. Kim and Cha (2008) also pointed out that traditional representations of women include being conservative and passive while the modern representations of women include being sexy, aggressive, seductive and liberal.

Universal stereotyping of women is also found in their relations and positioning to men. Lovdal (1989) noted that men were active participants while women only appeared quietly in the state commercials in 1980s. Kim and Lowry (2005) examined how women are placed in Korean TV commercials in relation to men and they revealed that there is a significant pattern: woman figures tend to be included in the background setting while a male central figure is probably in the foreground with active roles and functions. In addition, Cheng (1997) and Moon and Chan (2006) highlighted that man and woman figures tend to be depicted in groups rather than individually in Chinese commercials. Wee et al. (1995) observed that woman figures in Singapore and Malaysia commercials tend to be recipients of help rather than help-providers, and they tend to be depicted dependently/ in relation to others.

Nonetheless, numerous scholars have noted that some modern traits are also found in woman images in contemporary TV commercials (e.g. Frith, 2008; Gauntlett, 2008; Karan, 2008; Warner, 1997). Modern traits of women include freedom to choose for their roles and styles, individuality and decision making power. Also, the looks and attributes of ideal modern women include attractive, well-dressed, intelligent, assertive and confident, and they like all modern and technology goods.

Based on the significant findings from all those studies, this study has postulated the following traits in different aspects to examine traditional versus modern representations of women in advertising in terms of their appearance/ trait projections. There are eight aspects being investigated in this dimension, namely, clothes, looks, belongings/ accessories, relations with others,

connection with others, body movement, verbal manner, and functional role.

Variables in each aspect and their coding definitions are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Variables in appearance/ projections of woman figures in Chinese TV commercials

Variables	Coding definitions
Clothes	
Non-sexually objectified	The figure is wearing everyday clothing, such as formal dress, casual wear, sport wear
Sexually objectified	The figure is wearing seductive outfits, such as mini skirt, underwear, low-cut, bikini, see-through clothing, or wearing clothing that partially exposes her body (e.g. unbuttoned blouses); or (partially) naked body
Outlook	
Modest/ plain	The figure is with little or natural make up.
Glamorous/ Fancy	The figure is meticulously groomed (generally) with unnatural, heavy, exaggerated makeup, such as bridge red lipstick, shiny eye shadows, smoky eye makeup, or extraordinarily long eye lashes.
Accessories	
Frugal/ undemanding	The figure is wearing or carrying no or little accessories, such as jewelry.
Luxurious/ technology- Interested	The figure is wearing, carrying or using luxurious brand products, such as jewelry, brand handbag; or carrying or using high technology products such as smartphone, music player, computer; or driving or associating with luxurious car, helicopter, luxurious hotel or services.
Relations with others	
Dependent/ subordinate to others	The figure is in a depending role, assisting, subordinating or staying aside to other figures in the commercial; or its role is in a lower status or hierarchy to other figures in the commercial.
Non-dependent	The figure has no, fair or privileged relations with other figures in the commercials.

Table 2.3 (Continued)

Variables	Coding definitions
Connections with others	
In-group/ Sameness	The figure shares similarity and common interests, style, actions, habits, lifestyles, beliefs, etc, with other figures in a group in the commercial.
Individually/ individuality	The figure shows individuality and being stylistic differences with others, in terms of their interests, style, actions, habits, lifestyles, beliefs, etc; or being confidence without others' company.
Body movement	
Reserved/ shy	The figure projects traditional (Chinese) feminine traits (e.g. reserved, submissive, conservative) in her non-verbal communication, such as hiding her body by furniture, standing behind other dominant figures in the commercial, crossing hands in front of her chest (self-protective), drawing back her body, staying passive.
Fearless/ vital	The figure projects modern feminine traits (e.g. fearless, vital, aggressive, assertive) in her non-verbal communication, such as being confidence in public speaking (e.g. chest out, stand straight), willing to take challenges, showing initiative, strong and freedom (e.g. raising her limbs, opening up her arms, branding her hand to hold her waist, standing with two legs separated).
Verbal manner	
Quiet/ soft-spoken	The voice or pitch of the figure is soft, gentle or weak; or she has short and soft utterance; or she shows uncertainty or vagueness in her speech (e.g. by tag questions, broken sentences, using weak modal auxiliaries/adverbs)
Assertive/ certain	The voice or pitch of the figure is strong or certain; or she has assertive or definite utterance; or she shows power in her speech (e.g. by exclamation sentences, using strong modal auxiliaries/adverbs)

Table 2.3 (Continued)

Variables	Coding definitions
Functional role	
Problem-causer/ sufferer	The figure is causing, facing or handling problems; or the figure is in need of help (weak or negative portrayal).
Solution- / suggestion- provider	The figure is performing as an advisor offering helps, assistance, suggestions, solutions, tips, or methods to the problems concerned in the commercial (positive or affirmative portrayal).

Step 3: Traditional versus modern representations

Traditional versus modern image representations of women in TV commercials have been studied in audio and visual aspects respectively in Step l and Step 2. Results from these two steps demonstrated that to what extent woman images have been depicted in relatively traditional or modern representations or have projected relatively traditional or modern attributes in particular dimension(s). Nonetheless, another significant aims of this study is to manifest possible traditional-modern fusion patterns in the image representations of women in TV commercials.

Based on the results from Step 1 and Step 2, this study has attempted to organize and reveal patterns of traditional-modern representations of women in TV commercials in three perspectives: auditory aspect, context and role, appearance and trait projections. Traditional-modern patterns are then compared between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

3.2.3   Framework of multimodal analysis

To complement the content analysis, multimodal analysis has been adopted to reveal the underlying ideological image representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China. Positioning analysis is also incorporated in the analysis, in which emphasis is given on the contextual setting and identities of women in TV commercials.

This section of qualitative analysis has attempted to: 1) discuss the exclusion and inclusion of certain traditional/ modern women traits in relation to the world, belief and attitudes, social practices/ norms which are shared/ promoted, or presumed to be shared/ promoted in the TV commercials based on the situational context of the commercials being studied (see Polyzou's 2010/ refer to Section 2.2); 2) analyze the positioning of women in TV commercials by de-synthesizing their verbal and non-verbal performance and their interactive activities with other figures in TV commercials, with reference to the three-level of narrative positioning performance proposed by Bamberg (1997) and later applied by Archakis and Lampropoulou (2010) (refer to Section2.2 and Section 2.3.3).

The three-level of narrative positioning performance has been refined and its analytical attention has been extended from primarily linguistic means to multi-modes including language features,, agency and action, attitudes and emotions, visual composition, metaphorical associations and modality in TV commercials (Archakis and Lampropoulou, 2010; Machin, 2007); and the questions are answered with special attention to the traditional and modern representations and constructs of women in TV commercials in the study.

Level 1: "How are the characters positioned in relation to one another and/or to the context within the TV commercials?" – i.e. whether the characters are constructed in terms of protagonists, antagonists, perpetrators or victims, and whether they are in control of the particular event or helplessly being inflicted by others;

Level 2: "How do the characters position themselves to the audience?" – i.e. how the characters are related to real world, how they are placed at a wider social context, and how they are talking/ presenting to the audience;

Level 3: "How do the characters construct themselves? (Who am I)" – i.e. the traits, attributes and attitudes being displayed and projected by the characters; and the implicit expressions of self's preference, lifestyle and identity.

3.3 Sample - Television commercials

Television commercials collected from Hong Kong and mainland China major television channels constitute the sample for analysis in this study. Television has a significant role in the household and is a part of the domestic space (e.g. Chan and Chan, 2005; Gauntlett and Hill, 1999) and television has the power to cultivate people to have the similar behavior, norms, values and social expectations (Frith and Mueller, 2010; Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994; Kim and Lowery, 2005). Therefore, television commercials are an appropriate and significant medium to investigate the role and depictions of women images being "accepted" by the society.

3.3.1 Data collection

The sample of this study consists of day-time and prime-time television commercials from one major television channel in Hong Kong and one in mainland China respectively. Chinese Jade Channel of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB Jade) is selected as the source of Hong Kong sample. TVB Jade is a free-on-air wireless broadcasting stations in Hong Kong and has been serving Hong Kong citizens for more than half a century. Channel One of China Central Television (CCTV1) is selected as the source of mainland China sample as CCTV1 is the primary channel of China Central television and it is a nationwide channel covering all types of informational and entertaining programs.

Kim and Lowery (2005) pointed out that, only analyzing commercials from prime-time television is insufficient to examine the social reality because it cannot fully reflect the situation in other time periods. Also, day-time and prime-time television programs usually target at different audience and it will be meaningful to include both parts in this study. The audience of day-time television programs is generally women or homemakers while the audience of prime-time television programs usually includes men and women (Craig, 1992). In order to form an extensive and overall picture of women representations in Hong Kong and mainland China, this study tapes the program from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the two places and then all the commercials during the time periods are extracted. The second and third week of November 2010 constitute the time frame and one weekday and one weekend are randomly selected from each week as the sample for this study.

A total of 16 hours of television programming has been recorded from Hong Kong and mainland China respectively (i.e. 4 hours per day x 4 days). November is chosen because there are no major holidays in the two places so it is expected the collected commercials could represent and reflect the general patterns without seasonal or festival influences; however, it was worth noting that the 16th Asian games in Guangzhou were held in the second half of November so perhaps there might be additional factors affecting the advertising practices.

3.3.2   Coding

Each tape is reviewed and each commercial is given a serial number. With reference to the practices adopted in previous studies (e.g. Bresnahan et al., 2001; Cheng, 1997; Kim and Lowery, 2005), commercials for television shows, drama serials and movie promotions are excluded. All repeated commercials are included in the study because repeat impressions are significant and powerful in creating distorted views in the notion of cultivation theory (Gerbner and Gross, 1976, Kim and Lowery, 2005). In other words, the higher frequency of same/similar commercials, the stronger cultivation power to the public it is. Thus, each repeated commercials is counted as one commercial and given a serial number.

The unit of analysis, for Step 1 of the content analysis which aims at examining the audio representations of women through the adoptions and practices of female voice, is per each commercial. This attempts to display a holistic picture of how female voices are being employed in relation to

commercials and to explore the usages and language patterns of the female voices on the ground of commercials. The presence of female voices in songs or background music is not taken into account.

For Step 2, which aims at investigating the visual image representations of women, the unit of analysis is one female character who fulfills either of the following criteria: 1. appears on screen for at least three seconds; 2. has at least one line of dialogue (Dominick and Rauch, 1972). Maximum three major female characters are coded from one single commercial. If there are more than three major female characters, the three with more lines of dialogue or longer air-time are chosen.

For multimodal analysis, a total of six frequently broadcasted and representative TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China are selected for analysis. There are two main selection criteria. First, the commercials should air more than once a day (either day-time or prime-time) and should be found on at least two days during the sample collection period. With reference to cultivation theory, commercials which air more frequently have a stronger cultivation power; thus, the first criterion is to validate the significance of those commercials in constructing or reflecting a specific (distorted) portrait of reality in society (Frith and Mueller, 2010; Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994; Kim and Lowery, 2005). Second, based on the results from content analysis, representative hybridized woman images are selected to illustrate the prevailing push and pull of tradition and modernity in contemporary society and how traditional and/or modern values dominate/ interplay in the projection of self overtly and covertly in different contexts; in

other words, cases will be selected from the dominant types of traditional/ modern/ hybridized representations of women identified in content analysis so that an in-depth and qualitative multimodal discussion can be made to further our understanding on the push and pull of tradition and modernity in the forms of individual expressions and reactions to/ within a particular social context or event.

3.3.3 Inter-coder reliability

Inter-coder reliability refers to the extents of agreement among independent coders who code the same content with the same coding instruments, and high inter-coder reliability is significant particularly in content analysis in order to generate objective and reliable results (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

All TV commercials in the sample were videotaped and replayed for coding. There were two coders (one female Chinese graduate and I) with competence in Putonghua and Cantonese for this study. The female Chinese graduate was invited to be a voluntary coder and she did not know the research questions but was told the title of this study. A pilot coding exercise was done after I reviewed the coding instrument of this study with her. Randomly selected from the sample, 60 TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China respectively were coded in the pilot exercise. Disagreements were solved with further discussion, refinements and clarifications of the coding scheme. I was responsible for coding the Hong Kong TV commercials collected while the other coder was responsible to code the mainland China TV commercials collected in the sample. The coding was done independently and was finished within three weeks after the pilot coding exercise.

In order to check the reliability of the coding results, 20% of the TV commercials from each of the two places were randomly selected and counter coded (i.e. double-coding). For quantitative analysis Level 1 (Sample-All) which aims to examine the audio representations of women in TV commercials, the inter-coder reliability is 99.2% and 98.9% for Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials respectively. For quantitative analysis Level 2 (Sample-F) which aims to examine the visual image representations of women in TV commercials, the inter-coder reliability is 94.1% and 93.4% for Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials respectively. Therefore, the coding results of this study are valid for analysis as all the inter-coder reliability levels are over 90% which are satisfactory (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). Discrepancies were settled by further discussion and the two coders agreed the final coding results.

3.3.4 Sample details

In responding to the research questions which aim to investigate the audio applications of female voice and the visual representations of woman images, Figure 1 demonstrates the design of this study and reveals that all the commercials assembled Sample-All and they were further selected and formed Sample-F.

Figure 1 Coding design
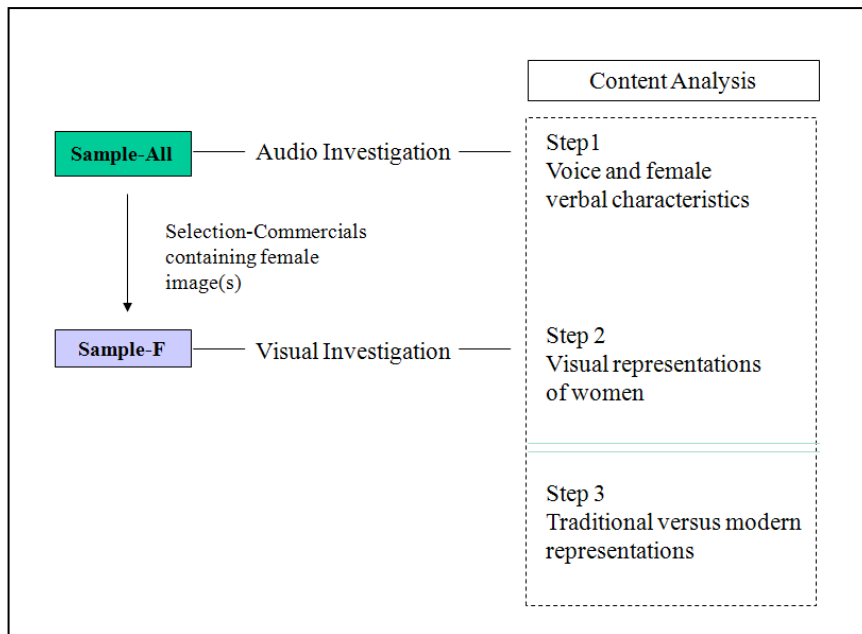
Table 3.1 Profile of Sample-All

Place	Product Type								Total	
	Domestic Products		Personal Products		Non-domestic Products		Technology products & Cars			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Hong Kong	383	60.3%	111	17.5%	122	19.2%	19	3.0%	635	53.0%
Day-time	198	58.6%	68	20.1%	65	19.2%	7	2.1%	338	53.2%
Prime-time	185	62.3%	43	14.5%	57	19.2%	12	4.0%	297	46.8%
China	344	61.0%	23	4.1%	65	11.5%	132	23.4%	564	47.0%
Day-time	109	48.9%	3	1.3%	45	20.2%	66	29.6%	223	39.5%
Prime-time	235	68.9%	20	5.9%	20	5.9%	66	19.4%	341	60.5%
Total	727	60.6%	134	11.2%	187	15.6%	151	12.6%	1199	100.0%

Sample-All

Table 3.1 shows the profile of the commercials collected during the specific

time periods from Hong Kong TVB and mainland China CCTV. A total of 1199

TV commercials are collected, of which 635 are from Hong Kong TVB and 564 are from China CCTV. Within the commercials collected from Hong Kong TVB, 338 of them (53.2%) are gathered from day-time period while 297 commercials (46.8%) are from prime-time period. For China, a larger proportion is from prime-time period which takes up 60.5% of the China sample compared to 39.5% from day-time period.

"Domestic products" is the dominant product type being advertised in both Hong Kong and China TV commercials, which take up 60.3% and 61% of the collection respectively. The high frequency of domestic product TV commercials is noticed commonly in both day-time and prime-time periods in the two places. "Non-domestic products" and "Personal products" TV commercials are common in Hong Kong TVB, which constitute 19.2% and 17.5% of the collection respectively. Only 19 commercials advertising "Technology products & Cars" (3%) are found. In contrast, in China, "Technology products & Cars" is the second top frequent type (23.4%), followed by "Non-domestic products" (11.5%). TV commercials advertising "Personal products" are limited (4.1%).

The entire collection of TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China is used to examine the adoption of female voice in TV commercials and their language patterns, in order to better understand whether women were stereotypically linked to certain types of products from the perspectives of voice/auditory, and to explore the traditional/modern characteristics being reflected from their choice of languages.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the sample (Sample-All) is reduced based on the selection criteria mentioned in Chapter 3.3.1 so as to establish a specialized sample pool (Sample-F), in which each female character formed a unit. A total number of 598 female characters have been identified from Sample-All for analyzing the visual image representations of women in Hong Kong and China TV commercials. Table 3.2 shows the profile of Sample-F and Table 3.3 displays the penetration of woman images in all the commercials collected.

A total of 341 female characters have been identified in the Hong Kong data set, of which more than half (51.9%) of them are in "Domestic products" commercials while 25.8%, 20.5% and 1.8% of them are in "Personal products", "Non-domestic products" and "Technology products & Cars" commercials respectively.

"Domestic products" commercials are top prevalent in China. In the total of 257 female characters identified in China CCTV, 60.3% appeared in "Domestic products" commercials, compared to 16.3%, 16% and 7.4% "Non-domestic products", "Technology products & Cars" and "Personal products" commercials respectively.

Table 3.3 reveals that, overall, woman images are highly involved in "Personal products" TV commercials that the ratio of "Personal products" TV commercials to women images is 1:0.80. Also, it is worth noting that the ration of "Non-domestic products" TV commercials to woman images is also

significant, which was 1:0.60, compared to the relatively low penetration of woman images in "Domestic products" commercials (1: 0.46) and in "Technology products & Cars" commercials (1:0.31). Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials share similar patterns of the penetration of woman images in the four product types of commercials.

Table 3.2 Profile of Sample-F

Place	Product Type								Total	
	Domestic Products		Personal Products		Non-domestic Products		Technology products & Cars			
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		
Hong Kong	177	51.9%	88	25.8%	70	20.5%	6	1.8%	341	57.0%
Day-time	90	50.3%	51	28.5%	36	20.1%	2	1.1%	179	52.5%
Prime-time	87	53.7%	37	22.8%	34	21.0%	4	2.5%	162	47.5%
China	155	60.3%	19	7.4%	42	16.3%	41	16.0%	257	43.0%
Day-time	41	40.2%	3	2.9%	34	33.3%	24	23.5%	102	39.7%
Prime-time	114	73.5%	16	10.3%	8	5.2%	17	11.0%	155	60.3%
Total	332	55.5%	107	17.9%	112	18.7%	47	7.9%	598	100.0%

Table 3.3 Penetration of woman images in TV commercials

| Place | Product Type | | | | | | | | | | | | Sample-F Total | |
| | Domestic Products | | | Personal Products | | | Non-domestic Products | | | Technology products & Cars | | | | |
	Total no. of commercials	No. of woman images	Ratio	Total no. of commercials	No. of woman images	Ratio	Total no. of commercials	No. of woman images	Ratio	Total no. of commercials	No. of woman images	Ratio		
Hong Kong	383	177	0.46	111	88	0.79	122	70	0.57	19	6	0.32	341	57.0%
Day-time	198	90	0.45	68	51	0.75	65	36	0.55	7	2	0.29	179	52.5%
Prime-time	185	87	0.47	43	37	0.86	57	34	0.60	12	4	0.33	162	47.5%
Mainland China	344	155	0.45	23	19	0.83	65	42	0.65	132	41	0.31	257	43.0%
Day-time	109	41	0.38	3	3	1.00	45	34	0.76	66	24	0.36	102	39.7%
Prime-time	235	114	0.49	20	16	0.80	20	8	0.40	66	17	0.26	155	60.3%
Total	727	332	0.46	134	107	0.80	187	112	0.60	151	47	0.31	598	100.0%

Chapter 4

Results from Content Analysis

In order to explore and examine how traditional and modern values compete and intertwine in current image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials, this study has collected 1199 TV commercials from major TV channels in Hong Kong and mainland china, and content analysis has been done according to the framework discussed in Chapter 3.

This chapter presents coding results and they are presented based on the three steps of analysis (refer to Table 2.1 in Chapter 3.2.2). Section 4.1(Step 1) focuses on the gender of voice-over and language choice patterns of female voices in all the commercials collected (Sample-All). Then this study examines each individual woman figure in the commercial (Sample-F). Section 4.2 (Step 2) manifests the visual representations of women in TV commercials in terms of types of products being advertized, settings, credibility, roles and appearance/trait projection. Section 4.2 (Step 3) compiles tables showing to what extent traditional and modern values, traits and attributes compete and intertwine in the image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials quantitatively.

4.1 Step 1: Voice and female verbal characteristics

In a total of 635 TV commercials from Hong Kong and 564 TV commercials from mainland China (Sample-ALL) (refer to Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.3.4), the first step of analysis is to investigate the audio representations of women in TV

commercials. There are three sub-dimensions in Step 1: voice-over, female voice, and language choice patterns. The unit of analysis is per TV commercial.

4.1.1   Voice-over

Table 4.1.1 indicates that the dominant gender of voice-over is male (58.5%) and male voice-over is consistently and highly dominant in commercials of all product types (Domestic products: 39.8%; Personal products: 26.1%; Non-domestic products: 71.7%; Technology products & Cars: 86.8%). In general, only 15.5% of the commercials employ female voice-overs. Female voice-overs are relatively more prominent in products types which are traditionally associated with women –"Personal products" (20.9%) and "Domestic products" (19.5%). Only 2.5% of all commercials employ both male and female voice-overs together in one commercial while about one quarter of the TV commercials do not have voice-over (23.4%).

For "Non-domestic products" and "Technology products & Cars", male voice-overs are prominent in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. Male voice-overs are used in nearly 90% of commercials on "Technology products & Cars" (Hong Kong: 89.5%; China: 86.4%). However, female voice-overs do occupy 10.5% of the Hong Kong "Technology products & Cars" TV commercials which are relatively salient when compared to its mainland China counterparts.

Nonetheless, the voice-over strategy used in "Domestic products" and "Personal products" TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China

TV are different. For these two types of TV commercials, the percentage of female voice-overs is slightly higher than that of male in Hong Kong commercials (Domestic products: 26.4% versus 21.1%; Personal products: 21.6% versus 19.8%). However, surprisingly, the findings are reverse in China commercials that male voice-overs are dominant even in these two stereotypical feminine product categories. More than 60% of the "Domestic product" TV commercials and more than 55% of "Personal product" TV commercials in mainland China are using male voice-overs.

It is noted that from the commercials collected in mainland China, 17 "Domestic product" TV commercials (4.9%) adopt a combination of male and female voice-overs while "male + female" voice-overs are rare or none in all other types of products (Non-domestic products: N=1; Personal products and Technology products & Cars: N=0). For Hong Kong commercials, similarly, there is a limited amount of commercials using "male + female" voice-overs (Domestic products: N=7; Personal products: N=4; Non-domestic products: N=1; Technology products & Cars: N=0).

It is also interesting to know from Table 4.1.1 that Hong Kong commercials have a greater tendency not to use any voice-over ("Personal products": 55%; "Domestic products": 21.1%; and "Non-domestic products": 32.8%). For China, about a quarter of commercials of "Personal products" (26.1%) and "Domestic products" (22.7) used "no voice-over". The chi-square results of both Hong Kong and mainland China indicate that there are significant relationships between the gender of voice-over and product type.

Table 4.1.1   Gender of voice-over in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials by Product Type

Product Type		Voice-over								Total
		Male		Female		Male + Female		No Voice-over		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Domestic Products	HK	81	21.1%	101	26.4%	7	1.8%	81	21.1%	383
	China	208	60.5%	41	11.9%	17	4.9%	78	22.7%	344
	Total	*289*	*39.8%*	*142*	*19.5%*	*24*	*3.3%*	*159*	*21.9%*	*727*
Personal Products	HK	22	19.8%	24	21.6%	4	3.6%	61	55.0%	111
	China	13	56.5%	4	17.4%	0	0.0%	6	26.1%	23
	Total	*35*	*26.1%*	*28*	*20.9%*	*4*	*3.0%*	*67*	*50.0%*	*134*
Non-domestic Products	HK	74	60.7%	7	5.7%	1	0.8%	40	32.8%	122
	China	60	92.3%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	4	6.2%	65
	Total	134	71.7%	7	3.7%	2	1.1%	44	23.5%	187
Technology products & Cars	HK	17	89.5%	2	10.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19
	China	114	86.4%	7	5.3%	0	0.0%	11	8.3%	132
	Total	131	86.8%	9	6.0%	0	0.0%	11	7.3%	151
Total	HK	307	48.3%	134	21.1%	12	1.9%	182	28.7%	635
	China	395	70.0%	52	9.2%	18	3.2%	99	17.6%	564
Total		702	58.5%	186	15.5%	30	2.5%	281	23.4%	1199

Hong Kong results: Chi-square = 92.6 ($p<.001$); 4 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.22 ($p<.001$)

China results: Chi-square = 53.4 ($p<.001$); 5 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.19 ($p<.001$)

4.1.2   Female voice in TV commercials

Table 4.1.2 shows the presence of female voice, including female voice-over and voice from female figures, in Hong Kong and China TV commercials. In the total of 1199 TV commercials, only 40.5% of them consist of female voice. A high percentage of the presence of female voice (79.1%) is recorded in "Personal products" TV commercials whilst female voice is present in nearly

half of the "Domestic products" TV commercials. However, female voice has been generally excluded in "Non-domestic products" and "Technology products & Cars" TV commercials in both places (female voice absent: 77.5% and 87.4% respectively).

The general patterns of female voice present/ absent in different product types of TV commercials is relatively consistent between Hong Kong and mainland China: the majority of TV commercials in the two places do not include female voice. More than half (51.2%) of the Hong Kong TV commercials and nearly 70% of mainland China TV commercials exclude female voice.

The distributions of female voice in TV commercials of different product types between Hong Kong and mainland China are similar. Only a limited percentage (10.5% and 12.9%) of TV commercials include female voice in advertising "Technology products & Cars" while nearly half (47.3% and 40.1%) use female voice in "Domestic products" TV commercials. For "Non-domestic products" TV commercials, the absence of female voice is dominant, especially in the sample from mainland China (commercials with female voice, n=2). The situation is less diverse in the case of Hong Kong that female voice is found in more than a quarter (32.8%) of "Non-domestic product" TV commercials. A high proportion (78.4% and 82.6%) of "Personal products" commercials includes female voice in the two places. From the chi-square results of both Hong Kong and mainland China, there are significant relationships between the presence of female voice and product type.

Table 4.1.2   Female voice present/absent in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials by Product Type

Product Type		Female Voice Present		Female Voice Absent		Total
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Domestic Products	HK	181	47.3%	202	52.7%	383
	China	138	40.1%	206	59.9%	344
	Total	*319*	*43.9%*	*408*	*56.1%*	*727*
Personal Products	HK	87	78.4%	24	21.6%	111
	China	19	82.6%	4	17.4%	23
	Total	*106*	*79.1%*	*28*	*20.9%*	*134*
Non-domestic Products	HK	40	32.8%	82	67.2%	122
	China	2	3.1%	63	96.9%	65
	Total	*42*	*22.5%*	*145*	*77.5%*	*187*
Technology products & Cars	HK	2	10.5%	17	89.5%	19
	China	17	12.9%	115	87.1%	132
	Total	*19*	*12.6%*	*132*	*87.4%*	*151*
Total	HK	310	48.8%	325	51.2%	635
	China	176	31.2%	388	68.8%	564
Total		486	40.5%	713	59.5%	1199

Hong Kong results: Chi-square = 62.9 ($p<.001$); 0 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.31 ($p<.001$)

China results: Chi-square = 85.6 ($p<.001$); 0 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.39 ($p<.001$)

4.1.3   Language choice patterns

Table 4.1.3 exhibits the language choice patterns of female in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. Overall, the majority of the sample adopt "Local language only" (63.8%), compared to 36.2% speak "Local language + Foreign language".

Table 4.1.3 Language choice patterns of female in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials by product type

Product Type		Language choice				Total
		Local language only		Local language + Foreign language		
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Domestic Products	HK	96	53.0%	85	47.0%	181
	China	136	98.6%	2	1.4%	138
	Total	*232*	*72.7%*	87	27.3%	*319*
Personal Products	HK	18	20.7%	69	79.3%	87
	China	10	52.6%	9	47.4%	19
	Total	*28*	*26.4%*	78	73.6%	*106*
Non-domestic Products	HK	31	77.5%	9	22.5%	40
	China	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	2
	Total	*33*	*78.6%*	9	21.4%	*42*
Technology products & Cars	HK	0	0.0%	2	100.0%	2
	China	17	100.0%	0	0.0%	17
	Total	*17*	*89.5%*	2	10.5%	*19*
Total	HK	145	46.8%	165	53.2%	310
	China	165	93.8%	11	6.3%	176
Total		310	63.8%	176	36.2%	486

Hong Kong results: Chi-square = 43.6 (p<.001); 2 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.38 (p<.001)

China results: Chi-square = 61.5 (p<.001); 4 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.59 (p<.001)

"Local language only" is a salient language pattern in China sample (93.8%) as only about 6.3% (N=11) of the female voices have integrated foreign language namely English into their verbal language, of which nine commercials are "Personal products" and two are "Domestic products". No English/ other language mix is found in the product types of "Non-domestic products" and "Technology products & Cars".

In Hong Kong TV commercials, more language mixings are found. Same as its China counterparts, "Local language only" is the dominant language pattern in Hong Kong commercials; nonetheless, it contributes only nearly half of the sample (46.8%). Table 4.1.3 reveals that "Domestic products" commercials and "Non-domestic products" commercials in Hong Kong mainly adopt "Local language only", which is 53% and 77.5% respectively. However, female voices in "Personal products" TV commercials in Hong Kong exhibit a strong tendency to embed English into their local language (79.3%). Furthermore, "Local language + Foreign language" is employed in the only two "Technology products & Cars" commercials in Hong Kong.

The chi-square results reflect the significant relationships between adoption of different language patterns and product type in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

4.2 Step 2: Visual representations of women in TV commercials

Five dimensions, namely product type, credibility, setting, role portrayal, and appearance and traits projections have been examined in order to reveal how women are depicted and how women have been situated and linked up with different objects and participants in the designated world in advertising. Only commercials which possess woman figures have been extracted from Sample-All. The unit of analysis for this part is per woman figure. A total of 598 woman figures have been identified, of which 341 are from Hong Kong while 257 are mainland China TV commercials (Sample-F) (refer to Table 3.3 in Chapter 3.3.4).

4.2.1 Product type

Table 4.2.1 shows the relationship between the portrayal of woman figures and product types in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. In total, more than half of the woman figures appear in "Domestic products" (55.5%) compared to 18.7% in "Non-domestic products", 17.9% in "Personal products" and 7.9% in "Technology products & Cars". From the table, specifically, "Domestic products" is the most salient product type in both Hong Kong (51.9%) and mainland China (60.3%), which means more than half of the women figures are associated with this product type respectively in the two places.

For Hong Kong, the largest proportion of woman figures is found in "Domestic products" (51.9%) TV commercials and the second large proportion is in "Personal products" (25.8%) followed by "Non-domestic products" (20.5%). Only six "Technology products & Cars" TV commercials (1.8%) contain woman figures in the Hong Kong data set.

"Domestic product" is also the top product type in China data set, which constitutes 60.3% of the commercials being collected from mainland China. The number of "Non-domestic products" and "Technology products & Cars" TV commercials were similar, which are 16.3% and 16% correspondingly. Interestingly, only 7.4% of woman figures are found in "Personal product" TV commercials in mainland China.

To compare Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials, regarding the presence of woman figures in commercials by product type, "Personal

products" is the second top in Hong Kong data set but it is the least product type in mainland China data set; there is a significant frequency of "Technology products & Cars" in mainland China compared to its very limited percentage in Hong Kong counterpart.

The results of Chi-square test exhibit a significant relationship between the product type and the place and they are moderately related based on the Cramer's *V* value.

Table 4.2.1   Presence of woman figures by product types in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Product Type	Hong Kong		China		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Domestic Products	177	51.9%	155	60.3%	332	55.5%
Non-domestic Products	70	20.5%	42	16.3%	112	18.7%
Personal Products	88	25.8%	19	7.4%	107	17.9%
Technology products & Cars	6	1.8%	41	16.0%	47	7.9%
Total	341	57.0%	257	43.0%	598	100.0%

Chi-square = 68.5 ($p<.001$); 0 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.34 ($p<.001$)

4.2.2   Credibility of woman figures

Table 4.2.2 shows the credibility of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. Generally woman figures are mainly portrayed as "Product user" (55.9%). "Adornment/ Story actress" and "Celebrity endorser" portrayals are 22.4% and 14.4% respectively. Only 7.4% of the woman figures are depicted as "Product authority".

It is shown that the credibility of woman figures in Hong Kong and in mainland China TV commercials share a similar distribution pattern: most frequently as "Product user" (more than half); then nearly a quarter of the sample as "Adornment/ Story actress"; next, around 15% as "Celebrity endorser"; and finally the smallest proportion as "Product authority".

Table 4.2.2   Credibility of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Credibility	Hong Kong		China		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Product user	198	58.1%	136	52.9%	334	55.9%
Adornment/ Story actress	75	22.0%	59	23.0%	134	22.4%
Celebrity endorser	53	15.5%	33	12.8%	86	14.4%
Product authority	15	4.4%	29	11.3%	44	7.4%
Total	341	57.0%	257	43.0%	598	100.0%

Chi-square = 10.9 (p<.05); 0 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.13 (p<.05)

4.2.3   Setting

Table 4.2.3 exhibits the distribution of different settings of the woman figures between Hong Kong and mainland China. The majority of the woman figures is depicted in the setting of "Out-of-home" (74.1%) whilst a quarter of them are situated "At-home" (25.9%). Specifically, within the "Out-of-home" group, "Social setting" is the dominant setting (33.9%); while "Studio setting" and "Outdoor/ Natural scenery" are the next two major settings, which constitute 27.3% and 20.7% of the "Out-of-home" group respectively. For the "At-home" group, a majority of the setting (60.6%) is "Other room of home", which in fact

includes living room, bedroom, dining room, etc. "Kitchen" is also a common setting under "At-home" group (27.1%).

In Hong Kong data set, nearly 80% of the woman figures is depicted in "Out-of-home" settings, in which "Social setting" is prominent (35.3%), and "Studio setting" (28.7%) and "Outdoor/ Natural scenery" (23.5%) are also common. In contrast, only about two-thirds of the woman figures in China commercials are situated "Out-of-home". Similar to the Hong Kong data set, "Social setting" is the most outstanding setting (31%) and "Studio setting" is the second popular setting (24.6%) in the mainland China data set; however, in contrast with the results from Hong Kong data set, "Workplace" is the third common setting (18.1%) among China woman figures while "Outdoor/ Natural scenery" (15.8%) was slight less common than "Workplace" so that "Outdoor/ Natural scenery" was the forth common setting in China data set.

As shown in Table 4.2.3, a smaller proportion of the Hong Kong woman figures (20.2%) and mainland China TV woman figures (33.5%) is portrayed "At-home". "Other room of home" setting constitutes nearly 50% of the Hong Kong "At-home" commercials whilst "Kitchen" is the second contributor (34.8%). China data set exhibits a similar pattern that "Other room of home" and "Kitchen" are the two prominent settings in China TV commercials. Nearly 70% of the mainland China "At-home" woman figures are situated in "Other room of home" setting whereas about 20% of them are in "Kitchen" setting.

It is revealed through the Chi-square result that there is a significant relationship between the setting of woman figures and the places.

Table 4.2.3 Setting of women figures between Hong Kong and mainland China TV Commercials

Setting	Hong Kong		China		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
At-home	**69**	**20.2%**	**86**	**33.5%**	**155**	**25.9%**
Other room of home (e.g. living room)	*34*	*49.3%*	*60*	*69.8%*	*94*	*60.6%*
Kitchen	*24*	*34.8%*	*18*	*20.9%*	*42*	*27.1%*
Outdoors at home	*10*	*14.5%*	*8*	*9.3%*	*18*	*11.6%*
Bathroom	*1*	*1.4%*	*0*	*0.0%*	*1*	*0.6%*
Out-of-home	**272**	**79.8%**	**171**	**66.5%**	**443**	**74.1%**
Social setting	*96*	*35.3%*	*53*	*31.0%*	*149*	*33.6%*
Studio setting	*78*	*28.7%*	*42*	*24.6%*	*120*	*27.1%*
Outdoor/ Natural scenery	*64*	*23.5%*	*27*	*15.8%*	*91*	*20.5%*
Workplace	*31*	*11.4%*	*31*	*18.1%*	*62*	*14.0%*
Sport center	*0*	*0.0%*	*18*	*10.5%*	*18*	*4.1%*
Hospital/ Clinic	*3*	*1.1%*	*0*	*0.0%*	*3*	*0.7%*
Total	**341**	**57.0%**	**257**	**43.0%**	**598**	**100.0%**

Chi-square = 57.8 ($p<.001$); 0 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.31 ($p<.001$)

4.2.4   Role portrayal

Table 4.2.4 displays the role portrayal of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. In the total of 598 woman figures, the majority of them portray "Recreational role" (45%). "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" is another significant role for woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials as more than 20% of the sample are in this role while about 15% of the sample portray "Masculine occupation". It is noted that portraying woman figures in the roles of "Feminine occupation", "Pure domesticity" or "Cultured nurturer" are not common and they constitute only 3%, 6.9% and 7.9% of the sample respectively.

For the role portrayal of woman figures in Hong Kong TV commercials, "Recreational role" record the highest frequency (50.4%); while "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" is the second frequent role portrayal (22.3%). A similar number of woman figures are found in "Masculine occupation" and "Pure domesticity" and they each constitute about 10% of the sample. A very limited woman figures portray "Feminine occupation" and "Cultured nurturer" and they each constitute about 3% of the sample.

According to Table 4.2.4, more than one-third of the woman figures in mainland China TV commercials are in "Recreational role" (37.7%) whilst about 20% of the sample are in "Masculine occupation" and another 20% are in "Decorative/ Demonstrative role". About 14% of the woman figures portray "Cultured nurturer" whereas only about 3% of them portray "Pure domesticity" role and another 3% in "Feminine occupation" role.

The result indicates that "Recreational role" is the major role portrayal of woman figures commonly in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials that the practice is particular significant and outstanding in the Hong Kong data set. Significant number of woman figures portraying "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" is reported in both Hong Kong and China data set. In addition to the above similarities between Hong Kong and mainland China woman role portrayal, it is noticed that "Feminine occupation" is neither common in Hong Kong TV commercials nor in mainland China TV commercials.

In terms of differences, a relatively higher proportion of woman figures in mainland China TV commercials portray "Masculine occupation" roles than that in Hong Kong data set (21% vs 10.3%). Also, depicting woman figures as "Cultured nurturer" is much more frequently in China TV commercials than that in Hong Kong (13.6% vs 3.5%). However, depicting woman figures as "Pure domesticity" and "Feminine occupations" roles are relatively more common in Hong Kong TV commercials than that in mainland China; and specifically, a great difference is found in "Pure domesticity" role between the figures from Hong Kong and mainland China (9.7% vs 3.1%).

From the Chi-square result, there is a significant relationship between "role portrayal" and "place".

Table 4.2.4   Role portrayal of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Role Portrayal	Hong Kong		China		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Recreational role	172	50.4%	97	37.7%	269	45.0%
Decorative/ Demonstrative role	76	22.3%	51	19.8%	127	21.2%
Masculine occupation	35	10.3%	54	21.0%	89	14.9%
Cultured nurturer	12	3.5%	35	13.6%	47	7.9%
Pure domesticity	33	9.7%	8	3.1%	41	6.9%
Feminine occupation	11	3.2%	7	2.7%	18	3.0%
Others	2	0.6%	5	1.9%	7	1.2%
Total	341	57.0%	257	43.0%	598	100.0%

Chi-square = 47.7 (p<.001); 2 cells have expected count less than 5; Cramer's V=.28 (p<.001)

4.2.5   Appearance and trait projections

In order to achieve the objectives of this research and provide a holistic analysis on the image representations of women in TV commercials, this study examines the appearance and trait projections of the sample via eight aspects, namely clothes, look, belongings/ accessories, relations with others, connection with others, body movement, verbal manner, and functional role (details in Section 3.2.2). Table 4.2.5 shows the results of how woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials have been depicted in these eight aspects which reflect the appearance and trait projection of the woman figures in TV commercials.

(1) Clothes

As shown in Table 4.2.5, more than 80% of the sample is "Non-sexually objectified" and this practice is commonly adopted in both Hong Kong and mainland China data set which are 80.4% and 81.3% respectively.

(2) Look

In general, the outlook of the majority of the woman figures is "Modest/ Plain" which constitutes 76.1% of the whole sample. Specifically, nearly 70% and nearly 90% of the woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials are categorized as "Modest/ Plain" respectively. More Hong Kong woman figures look "Glamorous/ Fancy" (32.3%) than those in mainland China TV commercials (12.8%).

(3) Belongings/ Accessories

Portraying woman with little or no belongings or accessories is a common

and usual phenomenon in both Hong Kong and mainland China data set; in other words, a very high proportion of the sample projected the "Frugal/ Undemanding" trait through their visual image representations, which constitute 95.6% and 90.7% of the Hong Kong and mainland China data set respectively. It is also observed that the frequency of associating woman figures with luxury or high-technology products is slightly more common in mainland China TV commercials than that in Hong Kong.

(4) Relations with others

In general, the majority of the sample demonstrate "Non-dependent" relations with others (71.7%). The "Non-dependent" relations with others is found more frequently in Hong Kong data set than that in China, which are 76.2% and 65.8% correspondingly; in contrast, a higher proportion of woman figures in mainland China TV commercials are "Dependent/ Subordinate to others" (34.2%) when compared to that in Hong Kong TV commercials (23.5%).

(5) Connection with others

From Table 4.2.5, there is a nearly equal distribution of portraying woman figures "In-group/ Sameness" (51.9%) and "Individually/ Individuality" (48.1%) in Hong Kong data set. For China TV commercials, "In-group/ Sameness" is comparatively more prominent as it constitutes nearly two-thirds of the China data set; whilst about one-third of the woman figures in China data set are depicted "Individually/ Individuality".

Table 4.2.5　Appearance and trait projections of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Appearance/ Projection	Hong Kong (N=341)		China (N=257)		Total (N=598)		Chi-Square
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Clothes							
Non-sexually objectified	274	80.4%	209	81.3%	483	80.8%	0.04
Sexually objectified	67	19.6%	48	18.7%	115	19.2%	
Outlook							
Modest/ Plain	231	67.7%	224	87.2%	455	76.1%	29.31***
Glamorous/ Fancy	110	32.3%	33	12.8%	143	23.9%	
Belongings/ Accessories							
Frugal/ Undemanding	326	95.6%	233	90.7%	559	93.5%	5.08*
Luxurious/ Technology-interested	15	4.4%	24	9.3%	39	6.5%	
Relations with others							
Dependent/ Subordinate to others	80	23.5%	88	34.2%	168	28.1%	7.44**
Non-dependent	260	76.2%	169	65.8%	429	71.7%	
Connection with others							
In-group/ Sameness	177	51.9%	162	63.0%	339	56.7%	6.95**
Individually/ Individuality	164	48.1%	95	37.0%	259	43.3%	
Body movement							
Reserved/ Shy	85	24.9%	93	36.2%	178	29.8%	8.36**
Fearless/ Vital	256	75.1%	164	63.8%	512	85.6%	
Verbal manner							
Quiet/ Soft-spoken	84	24.6%	50	19.5%	134	22.4%	12.65**
Assertive/ Certain	121	35.5%	67	26.1%	188	31.4%	
No utterance	136	39.9%	140	54.5%	276	46.2%	
Functional role							
Problem-causer/ Suffer	31	9.1%	19	7.4%	50	8.4%	
Solution-/ Suggestion-provider	131	38.4%	73	28.4%	204	34.1%	8.30*
Nil	179	52.5%	165	64.2%	344	57.5%	

*p<.05.　**p<.01.　***p<.001.

(6) Body movement

The results exhibit that the trait of "Fearless/ Vital" (70.2%) is more commonly projected than "Reserved/ Shy" (29.8%). Particularly, "Fearless/ Vital" is comparatively more outstanding in Hong Kong data set as more than 75% of the woman figures in Hong Kong TV commercials display the characteristic of "Fearless/ Vital" through their body movements and gestures. For China data set, about 64% of the woman figures project "Fearless/ Vital" while more than one-third of the woman figures are "Reserved/ Shy".

(7) Verbal manner

It is noted that nearly half (46.2%) of the woman figures in the sample do not even utter a word in the commercials, and the phenomenon is more substantial in China (54.5%) than that in Hong Kong data set (39.9%).

For those woman figures with utterance in the TV commercials (N=322), the number of woman figures adopting "Assertive/ Certain" verbal manner (58.4%) is over the number of those adopting "Quiet/ Soft-spoken" verbal manner (41.6%). The findings are similar in the two places that nearly 60% of the woman figures are "Assertive/ Certain" whilst about 40% of them are "Quiet/ Soft-spoken".

(8) Functional role

The majority of the sample do not involve into any problem-solution discourses (57.5%), which means they are neither in the role of "Problem-causer/ Sufferer" nor "Solution-/ Suggestion- provider".

Problem-solution discourse is relatively more common in Hong Kong TV commercials (47.5%) compared to 35.8% in mainland China TV commercials.

Interestingly, within the problem-solution discourse (N=254), in total, a large proportion of the sample (80.3%) act as "Solution-/ Suggestion-provider" whilst only 19.7% of the sample act as "Problem-causer/ Sufferer". "Solution-/ Suggestion- provider" is the prominent functional role of women in both the Hong Kong and mainland China data set, which are 80.9% and 79.3% respectively.

4.3 Step 3: Traditional versus modern – image representations of women in TV commercials, between Hong Kong and mainland China

As described and explained in Chapter 3.2.2, each dimension of the representations of women in TV commercials is associated with modern (global) or traditional (Chinese/ local) culture, norms and/or expectations. This section presents the results from the perspectives of modern/ global versus traditional/ Chinese/ local so as to provide an overall picture demonstrating how tradition and modernity are competing and intertwining in the image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

4.3.1 Traditional versus modern: audio representations in TV commercials

Based on the previous research, there are traditional norms and stereotypical

preference for adopting a particular gender (i.e. male) to become the voice-overs and using local languages in TV commercials. In order to examine to what extent modern forces and cultures have been competing and intertwining with the traditional norms and expectations in the audio dimension (one of the five human senses), this section reports the gender of voice-overs and language choice patterns of female from the perspective of traditional and modern (Table 4.3.1).

Table 4.3.1   The traditional and modern usages of voice and female language mixing patterns in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Hearing	Hong Kong		China		Total		Chi-Square
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Gender of voice-over	(N=453)		(N=465)		(N=918)		
Traditional	307	67.8%	395	84.9%	702	76.5%	58.29***
Modern	146	32.2%	70	15.1%	216	23.5%	
Language mixing patterns of female	(N=310)		(N=176)		(N=486)		137.9***
Traditional	145	46.8%	165	93.8%	310	63.8%	
Modern	165	53.2%	11	6.3%	176	36.2%	

***$p<.001$.

Notes:

Gender of voice-over: "Traditional" – "Male voice-over"; "Modern" – "Female voice-over" and "Male + Female voice-over".

Language mixing patterns of female: "Traditional" – "Local language only"; "Modern" – "Local language + English or other languages".

According to Table 4.3.1, the traditional practice of employing men to be the voice-overs is dominant in the sample (76.5%) compared to only 23.5% of the sample include female voice-overs. China data set shows a stronger adherence to the traditional practice (84.9%) than Hong Kong data set does (67.8%). The inclusion of female in voice-overs (female merely or female +

male) is much more common in Hong Kong TV commercials and it shows a bond to modern approach in voice-overs in Hong Kong TV commercials.

Table 4.3.1 also revealed that a large proportion of female voice adopt the traditional language pattern – "Local language only" in TV commercials (63.8%). The situation is particularly remarkable in China data set as more than 90% of the female voice employ merely local language and thus again reflect a strong adherence to the traditional practice. In contrast, Hong Kong data set demonstrates the immersion of modern attitudes in language choice. More than half (53.2%) of the female voice in Hong Kong data set adopt modern strategies which meant they mix English or other languages, such as Japanese, Italian, into the local language. Therefore, there are significant and diversified differences in the norms and practices between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials in voice and female language choice patterns.

4.3.2   Traditional versus modern: context and role

In terms of context and role, Hong Kong and mainland China share similar traditional-modern practices and cultures: being traditional in the dimensions of "Product type" and "Credibility of woman figures" whilst expressing modernity via "Setting" and "Role portrayal".

Table 4.3.2 shows the frequency of woman figures being associated with traditional and modern context and role in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. Hong Kong data set exhibits greater differences between the frequency of traditional and modern practices in the aspects of "Product type",

"Credibility of woman figures" and "Setting" than that in China data set. In other words, Hong Kong data set exhibits stronger traditional values in "Product type" and "Credibility of woman figures" as well as stronger modern values in "Setting" than that in mainland China data set.

Table 4.3.2 The traditional and modern context and role for women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Context and Role	Hong Kong (N=341)		China (N=257)		Total (N=598)		Chi-Square
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Product type							
Traditional	265	77.7%	174	67.7%	439	73.4%	7.02**
Modern	76	22.3%	83	32.3%	159	26.6%	
Credibility							
Traditional	273	80.1%	195	75.9%	468	78.3%	1.27
Modern	68	19.9%	62	24.1%	130	21.7%	
Setting							
Traditional	69	20.2%	86	33.5%	155	25.9%	15.20***
Modern	269	78.9%	171	66.5%	440	73.6%	
Role portrayal							
Traditional	120	35.2%	66	25.7%	186	31.1%	8.01*
Modern	219	64.2%	186	72.4%	405	67.7%	

*$p<.05$.   **$p<.01$.   ***$p<.001$.

Notes: Variables of "Traditional" and "Modern" in the above dimensions please refer to Table 2.2 in Chapter 3.2.2.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show that how traditional and modern context and role compete and overlap in the associated image representations of woman in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. As shown in the two figures, there are two quadrangles in each figure. The solid line quadrangles represent traditional practices while the dotted line quadrangles represent modern

practices. The solid line quadrangles and the dotted line quadrangles compete and stretch towards outer shells, revealing whether traditional or modern practice is more outstanding in the particular aspects. The larger the quadrangle, the more dominant the traditional or modern practice it is. The overlapped area of the solid line quadrangles and the dotted line quadrangles constructs the area of "Hybridization of tradition and modernity" which means traditional and modern are equally significant and common in practices. The size and extensions of the overlapped area – "Hybridization of tradition and modernity" reflects the significance and popularity of mixing traditional and modern values and expectations in constructing and presenting the image of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

In comparing the two figures, it shows that the "Traditional quadrangle" in Figure 2 is larger and exhibits greater extensions toward the angles of "Product type" and "Credibility of woman figures" and "Role portrayal", than those in Figure 3; whilst the size of "Modern quadrangle" in Figure 2 and Figure 3 is similar but the quadrangle in Figure 2 stretches more towards "Setting" while the quadrangle in Figure 3 stretches more towards "Product type" and "Role portrayal".

The area of "Hybridization of tradition and modernity" is larger and more remarkable in Figure 3 than in Figure 2; in other words, Hybridization of tradition and modernity is relatively more significant and salient in the image representations of woman in China TV commercials when compared to that in Hong Kong TV commercials. From Figure 3, the hybridization area exceeds the most inner shells and its boundary is between the first and second inner shells.

The adoptions of hybridization practices in the four aspects are in a relatively balanced manner. For the hybridization area in Figure 2, the adoptions of hybridization practices in the four aspects are relatively imbalanced. A larger proportion of the area is bounded within the most inner shell, except the end pointing towards "Role portrayal". Since the boundary of the hybridization area on the side of "Role portrayal" nearly touches the second inner shell, there is a significant mixture of traditional and modern role portrayals of women in Hong Kong TV commercials.

Figure 2: Intertwinements of the traditional and modern context and role of women in Hong Kong TV commercials
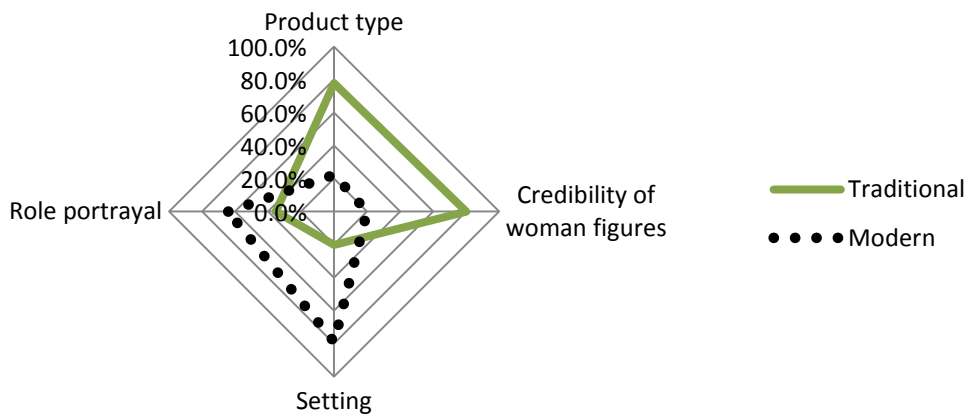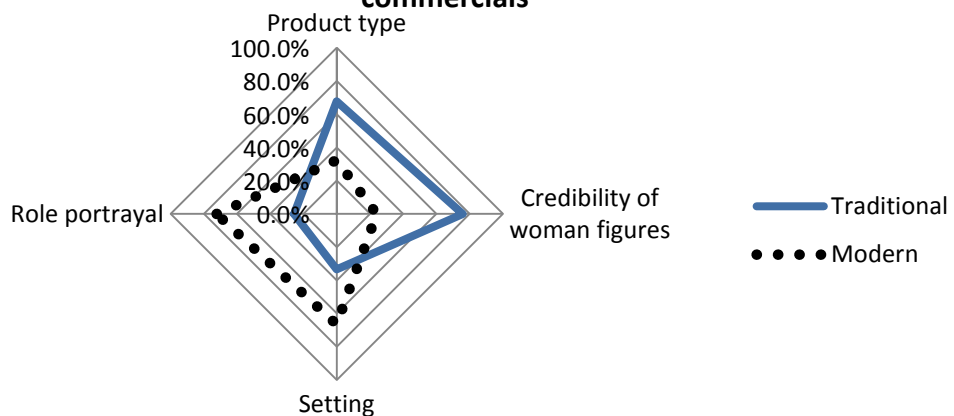

Figure 3: Intertwinements of the traditional and modern context and role of women in mainland China TV commercials

4.3.3   Traditional versus modern: appearance and trait projections

An independent-samples t-test has been conducted to compare the number of traditional traits being exhibited and projected by woman figures between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials (Table 4.3.3a): a t of -2.85 with 596 degrees of freedom indicates that the difference between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials in portraying woman figures with traditional traits in their mean score of Hong Kong data set (N=341, M=3.78, SD=1.80) and that of mainland China data set (N=2.57, M=4.19, SD=1.71) is statistically significant ($p<.01$). In other words, the number of traditional traits being exhibited and projected by woman figures is higher in mainland China TV commercials than those in Hong Kong TV commercials, and the difference is statistically significant.

As shown in Table 4.3.3a, another independent-samples t-test has been conducted to compare the number of modern traits being exhibited and projected by woman figures between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials: a t of 4.34 with 596 degrees of freedom indicates that the difference between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials in portraying woman figures with modern traits in their mean score of Hong Kong data set (N=341, M=3.30, SD=1.94) and that of mainland China data set (N=257, M=4.19, SD=1.82) is also statistically significant ($p<.001$). In other words, the number of modern traits being exhibited and projected by woman figures was higher in Hong Kong TV commercials than those in mainland China TV commercials, and the difference is statistically significant.

Table 4.3.3a The number of traditional and modern traits of the appearance and trait projections of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

Appearance/ Projection	Place	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test for equality of means		
					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
No. of Traditional traits	HK	341	3.78	1.80	-2.85	596.00	**
	China	257	4.19	1.71			
No. of Modern traits	HK	341	3.30	1.94	4.34	596.00	***
	China	257	2.62	1.82			

**p<.01.   ***p<.001.

Table 4.3.3b exhibits the frequency distribution of the traditional traits reflected from the appearance and traits projection of woman figures in the sample. About 50% of the woman figures in the Hong Kong data set project 0-3 traditional traits through their appearance and other projections; nearly 30% of the woman figures project 4-5 traditional traits; and around 20% of them project 6-8 traditional traits.

For the results from mainland China data set, the woman figures project more traditional traits comparatively. Only About 40% of the woman figures exhibit 0-3 traditional traits through their appearance and other projections (which was 10% less than that from Hong Kong data set). A similar percentage of woman figures projecting 4-5 traditional traits is found in China data set with Hong Kong data set (30%). Around 30% of the woman figures in China data set exhibit 6-7 traditional traits but none exhibits 8 traditional traits. The results from the China data set in the segment of 6-8 traditional traits is about 10% higher than that from the Hong Kong data set.

Table 4.3.3b   The frequency of traditional traits in the appearance and trait projections of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

No. of Traditional traits	Woman Figure - Hong Kong			Woman Figure - mainland China		
	Freq. (N=341)	%	Cumulative %	Freq. (N=257)	%	Cumulative %
0	1	0.30	0.30	4	1.60	1.60
1	30	8.80	9.10	4	1.60	3.10
2	57	16.70	25.80	36	14.00	17.10
3	80	23.50	49.30	58	22.60	39.70
4	71	20.80	70.10	49	19.10	58.80
5	27	7.90	78.00	28	10.90	69.90
6	46	13.50	91.50	54	21.00	90.70
7	22	6.50	97.90	24	9.30	100.00
8	7	2.10	100.00	0	0.00	100.00

Table 4.3.3c   The frequency of modern traits in the appearance and trait projections of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials

No. of Modern traits	Woman Figure - Hong Kong			Woman Figure - mainland China		
	Freq. (N=341)	%	Cumulative %	Freq. (N=257)	%	Cumulative %
0	38	11.10	11.10	52	20.20	20.20
1	39	11.40	22.60	26	10.10	30.40
2	39	11.40	34.00	23	8.90	39.30
3	56	16.40	50.40	78	30.40	69.60
4	56	16.40	66.90	43	16.70	86.40
5	72	21.10	88.00	17	6.60	93.00
6	32	9.40	97.40	16	6.20	99.20
7	9	2.60	100.00	2	0.80	100.00
8	0	0.00	100.00	0	0.00	100.00

The frequency distribution of the modern traits reflected from the appearance and traits projection of woman figures in the sample are reported in Table 4.3.3c. In the results from the Hong Kong data set, about half of the

woman figures project 0-3 modern traits whilst nearly 40% of them exhibit 4-5 modern traits through their appearance and other projections. About 10% of the woman figures in the Hong Kong data set exhibit 6-7 modern traits.

The woman figures in China data set exhibit less modern traits than their Hong Kong counterpart, as shown in Table 4.3.3c. A large proportion of them (70%) project 0-3 modern traits, which is 20% higher than the results from Hong Kong data set; around 20% of the woman figures in China data set exhibit 4-5 traditional traits whilst less than 10% project 6-7 modern traits. No woman figures with 8 modern traits are found in Hong Kong or mainland China data set.

In summary, according to the results from Table 4.3.3a-c, there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of traditional traits and modern traits between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. The woman figures in mainland China data set exhibit more traditional traits but less modern traits than those in Hong Kong data set.

4.4   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to examine the image representations of women in TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China TV major TV channels based on the three steps of analysis.

The first step focuses on the gender of voice-over and language choice patterns of female voices in all the commercials collected (Sample-All). A total

of 1199 TV commercials have been studied and, overall speaking, male voice-overs are most common, particularly in product types which have long been associated with men/ masculinity. About half of the Hong Kong TV commercials feature female voice but female voice is absent in about two-thirds of the mainland China TV commercials. More than half of the female voice in Hong Kong TV commercials mixed English into vernacular Cantonese; however, in mainland China TV commercials, language mixing strategy is rarely found in the female voice.

A total of 598 female characters are identified in the 1199 TV commercials (Sample-F). I have examined the visual representations of women in TV commercials in terms of the type of products being advertized, settings, credibility, roles and appearance/projection. The findings show that traditional and stereotypical depictions of women in "product type" and "credibility" are still valid in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials, but modern representations of women are also noticed as there are significant numbers of female characters being portrayed in product types and credibility roles which have traditionally ignored women. Also, modern representations of women are found in "setting" and "role portrayal" as a great significant number of the female characters appear "out-of-home" and are in "recreational role", so that they are getting away from traditional domestic roles and away from domesticity. These modern representations of women are more significant in Hong Kong TV commercials. For the appearance and trait projections of woman figures, the results from Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials share similar patterns that a majority of the woman figures are: "non-sexually objectified" (clothes), "modest/plain" (outlook), "frugal/

undemanding" (belongings/ accessories), "non-dependent" (relations with others), "in-group/ sameness" (connections with others), "fearless/ vital" (body movement), "no utterance" and "assertive/ certain" (verbal manner) and acting as "solution-/ suggestion- provider" if they are assigned in a problem-solution functional role.

The third step of analysis shows to what extent traditional and modern values, traits and attributes compete and intertwine in the image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials based on the quantitative results from the first and second steps. A modern practice in gender of voice-over is found in Hong Kong TV commercials. Traditional language choice is found in female voice in mainland China TV commercials whilst the significant frequency of English-mixing in female voice in Hong Kong TV commercials exhibits their modern attitudes in language uses and practices. For the context and role of women in TV commercials (including product type, setting, credibility of woman figures, and role portrayal), hybridization of tradition and modernity is more significant and salient in the image representations of woman in China TV commercials when compared to that in Hong Kong TV commercials. For the appearance and trait projections of women in TV commercials, the woman figures in mainland China data set exhibit more traditional traits but less modern traits than those in Hong Kong TV commercials.

I hope the results from this chapter has provided objective findings to the research questions of this study as well as offered a holistic background and implications for further analysis. In next chapter, I will try to examine the

hybridized images of women in TV commercials, with particular attentions to the push and pull of tradition and modernity in the forms of individual expressions and reactions to/ within a particular social context or event.

Chapter 5

Findings from Multimodal analysis

From the results reported in Chapter 4, the image representations of women, specifically in terms of the audio representations, context and role, appearance and trait projections, have been situating in-between tradition and modernity, though some dimensions/ aspects are shifting more towards tradition whereas some are more towards modernity, and the patterns are slightly different between Hong Kong and mainland China. This chapter targets to investigate the duality of woman images in TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China, specifically the push and pull of tradition and modernity in the forms of individual expressions and reactions to/ within a particular social context or event, through qualitative lens and detailed explorations based on the three questions on positioning performance which I have refined (see Chapter 3.2.3):

Level 1: "How are the characters positioned in relation to one another and/or to the context within the TV commercials?" − i.e. whether the characters are constructed in terms of protagonists, antagonists, perpetrators or victims, and whether they are in control of the particular event or helplessly being inflicted by others;

Level 2: "How do the characters position themselves to the audience?" − i.e. how the characters are related to real world, how they are placed at a wider social context, and how they are talking/ presenting to the audience;

Level 3: "How do the characters construct themselves? (Who am I)" − i.e. the traits, attributes and attitudes being displayed and projected by the characters; and the implicit expressions of self's preference, lifestyle and identity.

With reference to the cultivation theory (as discussed in Chapter 2.3.2), commercials which air more frequently have stronger cultivation power; and repeated and regular exposures to media messages construct a specific (distorted) portrait of reality and the media messages play significant roles in viewers' identity development (Frith and Mueller, 2010; Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994; Kim and Lowery, 2005). A total of six frequently broadcasted and representative TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China have been selected and analyzed in this chapter (Selection rationale can be referred to Chapter 3.3.2).

Case 1:

Hong Kong TV commercial –

PXE Sewame anti-acne trace-free repairing serum (personal product, international brand)

Description:

This commercial is advertising a skin-care product for teenage girls. The main functions of this product are "anti-acne" and "trace-free", and balsam pear extract is one of its major and outstanding ingredients. In this commercial, the main character is a teenage girl. She is chatting with a group of friends in a social setting. She has short hair and is wearing a light blue sundress projecting a young, healthy and energetic image. This commercial is primarily in a problem-solution structure and the major female character is depicted as a solution provider. She is the dominant speaker and her voice is lively and vivid. English-mixing is found in her speech and bilingual texts are used in the

captions in this commercial. There are two supporting characters: another young girl (an acne-sufferer) and a young man (a comedian – acting as a balsam pear).

First, the commercial shows a close-up of the acne-suffer and it refers her big acne as an active volcano. She says to the main female character, "哎呀，好大粒暗瘡呀" (Oh dear, a big acne). This girl raises her acne problem and seeks help. The camera then turns to the main female character who is staring at a balsam pear. Suddenly she has a brainstorm. She then describes, "苦瓜有助去痘" (Balsam pear helps anti-acne) and an animated video come out simultaneously: a little balsam pear cartoon is jumping on an acne; bilingual captions show the specialty of the product – "低溫液化技術 Low-temperature Liquefaction Technology" and "加勒比海群島苦瓜 Caribbean Balsam Pear". After the animation, the camera returns to the main female character and showed that she is using the product. She continues, "加埋多種瓜果精華" (plus essence from numerous fruits and vegetables); "痘印無咗" (trace-free); "Extraordinary".

In the final part, a big balsam pear with a smiling face appears and it is personated by a young man. Wearing a balsam-pear outfit, he only displays his face and two hands. He is happily swinging his hands. At this moment, the main female character says, "咦, 苦瓜仔" (Hi, Mr. Balsam Pear) and she stands in front of the camera and is leaving "Mr. Balsam Pear" at her back. She says, with bright and charming smile, "一抹去痘, 青春 all day" (sweep away acne, be young "all day"). The commercial then displays the copy of the products and the main female character states confidently, "雪完美去豆精華素, 巴黎雪完美 PXE" (Sewame Anti-acne Trace-Free repairing serum, Paris Sewame PXE).

Analysis:

The main female character in this commercial is positioned positively in relation to her female friend (acne-sufferer) as well as to the male character (Mr. Balsam Pear). After knowing the acne trouble of her friend, the female character is depicted as helpful, caring, smart and initiative in offering solutions. Since she is thinking of the solution on her own (she did not discuss with her friends or seek advice from external sources), it demonstrates her capability, independence and individuality. She has the brainstorm from a balsam pear and it signifies her close relationship with nature and how she values nature and health. She further supports her choice/ suggestion by highlighting the strong points of the product (i.e. the technology used and its special ingredient). This move projects an analytical and knowledgeable image and establishes her credibility. These are all modern representations of the female character.

Also, the female character has a strong, confident and leading image especially in her position in relation to the male character. Depicting a person as a non-human object symbolized the person was lower in hierarchy and status (Cortese, 2008). Thus, in this commercial, depicting the male character as a funny balsam pear cartoon has lowers his status and reputation. Moreover, he is placed at a distant point to the camera whilst the main female character is right in front of the screen. As size has been related to power and authority, depicting the main female character in bigger size than the male character implies and reflects an underlying attitude of her power and authority over his. After the main female says "hi" to him, he does not/ is not allowed to respond or reply verbally. His "silence" is also a sign of subordination. In short, being a protagonist in this commercial, the main female character is positively depicted

as an independent, capable, healthy and lively modern female as well as advance over the male character. All these attributes contributes to the constructions of her modern and energetic image.

The main female character, in the first half of the commercial, is a "character" in the story, attempting to seek solutions for her friend who has an acne problem. She then immerses herself in her own imagined world, evaluating and accessing whether this product is good at anti-acne. Finally the female character moves into a wider context from the story world. She shifts from being a "character" in the story of the commercial to being a spokesperson talking directly to the audience/ target customers. It seems she is doing a reflection and summary of her own experience. She comments that "Mr. Balsam Pear" can sweep away acnes and keep a person young. Shifting from a product-user to a spokesperson/ representative, the main female character has successfully built up a modern and credible image and reduced her distance with the audience. At the beginning, her distance with the audience is distant because the audience has nothing to do with the commercial and the audiences are related to the commercial merely in ways of "story-reading" and self-referencing. Then, the main female character changes the participants of the event and turns audience from passive message receivers to listeners. Through her direct gaze, confident pose, and other body gestures, she is like an advisor offering suggestions to her listeners. Although she is a representative of the product being advertised, she does not put herself as an authority and does not attempt to instruct the audience what they should do. She strives a balance between pathos, ethos and logos so that in addition to the emotional and story approach, she provides scientific and objective accounts of the product being

advertised and establishes her credibility. Her words/ utterance are affirmative and lively. She connects herself to the audience through her vivid images and underlying values, such as youth, capability, initiative, healthiness, and independence.

The main female character in this commercial is a happy, independent and vital individual. Traditionally, women have been associated with nature and thus with inferiority; in traditional patriarchal society, women are traditionally depicted as male dependent and unintelligent. On the contrary to these traditional associations and portrayals of women, this commercial exhibites a modern life attitude of women: they have to work out everything for themselves and make decisions and choices for their own, which echo with the modern roles of women described by Gauntlett (2008). The problem-solution structure of this commercial provides a stage for the female character to show that she is capable and intelligent enough to solve problems independently and rationally even without men's comment and approval. This story signifies that women are not necessarily weaker than men in terms of problem-solving and decision-making ability. Thus this female character has erased the traditional helpless and male-dependent images of women.

The main female character consolidates her modern image by mixing English into her local language. The use of English is a sign of Western/global appeal and help creating image by a Western/ foreign identity (Loveday , 2008; Wu and Chan, 2007; Wu, 2008). Thus, the character projects modern traits and attributes through her actions and attitudes while her Cantonese-English lingual strategy adds Western elements to her identity.

Nonetheless, she preserves numerous traditional feminine traits. She exhibits enthusiasm of helping her friends and she builds a good connection/ relationship with her group. Also, she is kind and caring, and shows understanding when her friend is talking about her acne problem.

The main female character in this commercial demonstrates her independence and individuality as a unique person in dealing with issues while she values friendship and is helpful and gentle interpersonally; in other words, she possesses modern attitudes and traditional feminine characteristics.

Case 2:

Hong Kong TV commercial –

Smartone-vodafone (telecommunication services – Technology products, international brand)

Description:

Smartone-vodafone is one of the leading voice, multimedia and broadband services providers in Hong Kong. This commercial is a corporate advertising for its new brand slogan – "love the difference". There is only one character in this commercial who is a young female in her 20s. She is the only and dominant figure in this commercial but she has no utterance. However, there is a vivid sound track as a background music supporting the story of this commercial and consolidating the message being conveyed. The sound track consists of three English sentences repeatedly sung by an unnamed female singer with her soft

and low-pitched voice: "Let's keep smiling; let's keep laughing; let's be happy hohohoho". This commercial is constructed in a combined setting, including scenes from "at-home" and "out-of-home"; "out-of-home" social setting is its main scene. The female character is energetic, laughing and happily projected throughout the commercial.

The story of this commercial is demonstrating a daily life of the young female character basically. It starts by showing the female character getting out of her bed, entering the living room where various communication devices and network are meticulously placed around. She swipes her phone and notebook computer by her finger. She sits in front of the computer, checking out the weather forecast of the day. Then she changes her clothes to smart-casual and leaves her house. Walking down a street, she presses a big "play" icon and then three colourful cartoons are dancing around her on the street, which signifies that she is listening to and enjoying music with her portable music device. Next the story shifts to talk about instant network communications. The female character is in the center of a circle of her friends and they are communicating/ chatting through note-cards which indeed refer to the instant messaging – one of the mobile services available. On the note-cards, there are cyber/ new languages: "Hv a Nice Day :p" (i.e. Have a nice day, (with a smile)), "Halo Halo ^_^" (i.e. Hello Hello, (with a happy face)), "@.@!!SORRY! DUN BE MAD. T^T" (i.e. (with a puzzled face" Sorry! Don't be mad, (with a crying face)), "WUZZZUP" (i.e. What's up), and audience cannot see heads of those people holding these cards but their self-selected animals/ other objects serve as their representations in the cyber world. Next, the female character is sitting in a flying car cabinet. Numerous unreal but fun/ stylistic objects are shown in her surroundings/ the

city, such as a rainbow made by colourful balloons, interesting buildings, colourful cable cars, a huge grass-made rabbit and several big ferris wheels in the middle of the town. Finally, the commercial has captured a (colourful, paper-made, unreal) rocket launch. A gentle and low-pitched female voice-over says, "體驗好啲; 精彩多啲; 成就自己多啲; Why not? 同我哋一齊, 你都可以; 愛上不一樣" (Do more; enjoy more; be more; why not? join us; love the difference).

Analysis:

It is a modern approach to use a female character to advertise technology-related services/ products as they have long been highly associated with masculinity and men. The female character demonstrates that how technology has amazingly immersed in her life and how much she enjoys the modern way of living. Being a protagonist in this commercial, she exhibits her individuality and independence. In her home, there is no one else which implies she is living alone in a tiny apartment, but she is able to connect to the outside world through telecommunication devices such as phone, computer and internet network; although there are no other major characters, she is not lonely or bored because her life is rich of audio-visual elements and she is able to stay connected with her friends and her social networks. All those multimedia and social networking functions provided or supported by those telecommunication devices have become her "companions"; she is actively "interacting" with her "companions" and she creates her unique, modern and enjoyable ways of living with her companions. In short, the female character is enjoying her individual and independent life, having fun from the modern telecommunication products/

services and leading herself towards her preferred and innovative world. She is a commander/ master of all her "companions" (i.e. multimedia and social networking functions) and at the same time she is empowered and facilitated by them in actively constructing her preferred quality of life.

The female character does not have any interaction with the audience neither by direct/ engaging gaze/ pose nor verbal communication. The whole commercial is constructed in an imaginary story discourse. Audiences are not expected to involve in or interact with anything inside the story; instead, audiences are expected to involuntarily perform self-reference relating and comparing their own life experience to that of the female character in the story. The fun, enjoyable lifestyle being projected and promoted in the story provides a niche for audience to advance or perfect their ways of living. The desire of a better quality of life would probably be turned to a driving force for consumption that the advertising goals would then be achieved. Rather than instructing or "hard-selling" the products/ services to the audience verbally, the female character in this commercial is positioned as a role model to the audience. The imagery/ unreal elements of the story lower its modality and provide the audience with more rooms for imagination, creativity, exploration and self-referencing without normal traditional constraints or consequences.

The female character is constructed as happy and stress-free lady. Echoing with the lyrics of the background music: "Let's keep smiling; let's keep laughing; let's be happy hohohoho", she smiles all the time and she displays that how she enjoys herself and makes fun from the integration of modern telecommunication technology in her life. Although she has no verbal

expressions throughout the whole commercial, her big, energetic and confident body movements and gestures have successfully produces noise and attracted attention from the audience. Her quiet thus possibly should not be interpreted as submissive or lack of voice; rather, her individuality and uniqueness have been manifested through her eye-catching non-verbal messages. Also, perhaps it was an intention to keep the female character silent so that audience's audio-attention would be paid to the background music in which its lyrics and its lively rhythm highlight the main gist of the story. The repetition of the three-line lyrics has intensively cultivated the audiences what does it mean by fun and how much fun can be obtained through the products/ services being advertised. The fun image of the female character has then been consolidated.

The portable telecommunication devices of the female character and her well-equipped home play significant roles in her modern lifestyle; with those telecommunication technology/ devices, she enjoys her individual space (freedom) whilst she is able to stay connected with others and the society at the same time. Also, at the end of the commercial, a textual construction of her lifestyle has been done by a female voice-over: "體驗好啲; 精彩多啲; 成就自己多啲; Why not? 同我哋一齊, 你都可以; 愛上不一樣" (Do more; enjoy more; be more; why not? join us; love the difference). Values of independence, hedonism, self-adventure/ exploration and individuality have been highlighted. "Love the difference" is a summary of the textual construction of the "new" lifestyle, and its meanings can be extended: different life experience, different life exposure, different life attitudes and different society so that "Love the difference" probably implies "love a brand new lifestyle". This commercial has demonstrated how technology has successfully moved the female character to

the new lifestyle and how such a lifestyle has been cultivating her and people in her social networks in this age of mobile telecommunication and new media.

Nonetheless, the exclusion of men in this commercial reveals that, this modern lifestyle is applicable to and significant for women. In other words, the promotion of this modern lifestyle aims at, but not limits to, women, showing a significant relationship between modernity and women. The absence of men also implies that, in the modern world, it is not a must to have both genders; women can have fun and happiness without men.

Using a female character as the protagonist and targeting at female customers, this technology-related product commercial has valued the status and economic independence of women nowadays. The independence and individuality of the female character both at-home and out-of-home signifies the independence, capability and sociability of modern women. Also, the use of up-to-date telecommunication technology and cyber/new languages in communication are modern constructions of the character, depicting the female character as a smart and trendy young lady.

Case 3:

Hong Kong TV commercial –

Kotex sanitary napkin (personal product, international brand)

Description:

The main character in this commercial is a young female in her early 20s. The

story of this commercial is happened on a beach on a sunny day with a blue sky. The dominant female character is playing beach volleyball with her friends. She has long hair and is wearing a blue-striped t-shirt and white shorts. She is energetic, happy and active. The story of this commercial can be basically divided into two parts. The first part focuses on depicting and projecting the personalities of the female character whilst the second part shows her interaction with a male character in the commercial.

The female character is happily playing beach volleyball with her female friends in the first part of this commercial. She is the focus and the faces of her girl friends are not shown clearly. She is active and energetic and this is constructed through her involvements in the volleyball games and via her dynamic actions in setting, passing and jump-attacking the ball. With the camera angle pointing upwards, the main view of the screen has been occupied by the female character. Sunshine and blue sky have also been captured as a background in order to project a good summer time. The female character laughs and enjoys her day on the beach. She is cheerful and happy. She says, "我做咩都咁 enjoy; 嗰幾日我一樣無拘無束" (I enjoy doing anything and I feel free even during menstruation).

After she jump-attacks the ball, the story transits to its second part. Her volleyball accidently hits a young male character, who is sitting next to them on the beach and his drink spills from his cup to the sand. She is shocked at the moment but she quickly recovers and instantly shows a fearless smile. In the final shot of the story, the female character invites the male character, with her hand, to stand up and join her games. She is confident and initiative. Her

friendliness and enthusiasm helps spare their embarrassment. Finally, a female voice-over says, "Kotex white 有零摩擦護翼; 配合速吸防回漏設計; 吸走濕悶感覺; 俾你放心 keep going" (Kotex White features soft and comfy wings. With its maximum absorbency and dryness design, Kotex white takes away your wet and stuffy feeling so that you can "keep going" freely).

Analysis:

In this commercial, the female character shows good connections with her friends, projecting a sense of group (solidarity) and sharing similar lifestyles in-the-group through how they dress and their interests (beach volleyball games); the female character also displays the characteristics of independence, vitality and confidence in her interactions with the male character in the second part of the commercial. She is a protagonist that she appears in most of the air-time in this commercial. She is happy, active and energetic. Nonetheless, she projects her own individuality in the group. She is not a follower; instead, she demonstrates her power and determination, through setting and jump attacking the ball to the opposing team. In other words, she projects modern traits via her active participation and outgoing characteristics whilst traditional traits are also exhibited but limited. In the second part of the commercial, the female character has accidently attacked the ball to a young male character and his drink spills. In this event, the female character demonstrates her ability in handling crisis and in building up relationship with male. From her fearless smile and her idea of using "invitation" as compensation to her mistake, she is confident and open to friendship. Traditional traits of women, such as weakness, shyness, submissiveness, are diminished in this female character. Her invitation makes

her an initiator and positions herself in a leading/ control role in her interaction and relationship with the male character. Therefore, this female character primarily possesses modern traits and attributes, especially when she is positioned in relation to male.

Modern representations of the female character in this commercial are also exhibited in her role and setting. This commercial has depicted the female character in a recreational role and in a social setting which is opposed to the traditional and stereotypical associations of women to domesticity (domestic setting and housework).

The female character positions herself as a friend of the audience. She is sharing her one day experience on the beach with the audience. Audience can "see" what have she done and have happened on her on that day whereas audience can "hear" her comments and reflection. She positions herself as an agent and uses first-personal pronoun to talk about her feelings, "我做咩都咁 enjoy; 嗰幾日我一樣無拘無束" (I enjoy doing anything and I feel free even during menstruation). Her voice is casual, lively and assertive and she constructs a relatively down-to-earth image to the audience by her informal vernacular language and the relatively "real" scenarios in the commercial. Also, she employs English code-mixing in her utterance –"enjoy" – so that on one hand, she highlights the element of "enjoy" in her lifestyle; on the other hand she builds a more Western/global image.

She is a user of the product being advertised – Kotex sanitary napkin – and it seems she is using it during her beach day (she does not explicitly declare

about it). She does not attempted to describe any details, functions or strong points of the product; rather, she shares how great she feels even during her period. The emphasis is on personal feelings and she is fascinated about "enjoyment" and "freedom". These two hedonistic values are highlighted in order to construct her modern lifestyle where resistances and constraints are diminished (extends the stress/ uncomfortableness caused by menstruation to stress/ problems in wider social contexts). She sometimes smiles towards and looks directly into the camera so that her distance with the audience is shortened. Also she speaks lively and happily in the commercial, consolidating her happy and energetic image. Then, the voice-over adopts a "you" approach to directly associate the audience with the commercial in order to appeal to its target customers and try to impose the proposed lifestyle to them. In her last sentence, "俾你放心 keep going" (you can "keep going" freely) has reinforced the "free" and "enjoy" lifestyle as well as empowered its (target) customers to "keep going" (do anything) fearlessly.

This commercial is not merely selling a feminine care product, but also a lifestyle. The lifestyle being promoted and projected through the female character emphasizes a lot on enjoyment and freedom so that females can enjoy and do anything freely, including sports, outdoor activities, making friends, or even troubles. More importantly, the female character has attempted to pass a message to her audience, probably female, that, they are capable to overcome barriers and obstacles which have long been badly affecting women (i.e. uncomfortableness/ sickness caused by menstruation). To further extend this empowerment, it implies that it is possible for women to get rid of numerous biological, intrinsic, nature problems and break through traditional and

stereotypical cangue and lock. Also, the initiative and confidence of the female character encourages women to take an active and leading role in male-female relationship. Traditionally women are expected to be passive, reserved and shy, and to be only approached by men. Primarily, it is morally unacceptable for women to invite, approach or flirt men in old days. Thus, in the promoted lifestyle and in the underlying message of this commercial, contemporary women should no longer be bounded by traditional concepts and women should be free to do anything, including approaching men.

Case 4:

China TV commercial –

Joyoung soya milk maker (domestic product, local China brand)

Description:

The product being advertised in this commercial is a typical home use appliance – soya milk maker. Joyoung is a local China corporation and is a listed company in Shenzhen Stock Exchange in China. In this commercial, there are totally three characters: one adult female (mother), one adult male (father), and one girl (daughter). The female character is the single dominant figure and she is the only speaker throughout the commercial. The commercial is in a family setting; specifically the scene is in a kitchen.

In the first scene, the female character is standing alone in the middle and confidently highlighting that "好豆漿就要全營養" (good soya milk, has to be rich in nutrient). She looks directly at the camera and she emphasizes her words

142

by a confident hand movement: pointing upwards with her first finger. This is an assertive move showing her strong belief. However, she then quickly changes her posture and embraces the soya milk maker (the product being advertised) with both hands and a gentle smile. This body movement shifts her from strong and powerful to relatively soft and submissive images.

In the second scene, the three characters are drinking soya milk at the same time. The female character is in the middle and her daughter is on her left whilst her husband is on her right side. Then the final scene returns to the female character. She is standing alone in the middle which is just like the first scene. Her hands are holding each other on the bench and then she embraces the soya milk maker with both of her hands again, declaring "好豆漿, 九陽做" (good soya mike, made by Joyoung's).

Analysis:

Although the female character is situated in a family setting, she does not communicate (neither verbally nor non-verbally) with her family members; she does not involve in any housework or trivial household chores, rather she is more like an advisor/ nutritionist or person who is in charge of the food quality or health care of her family. She is a protagonist in this event/ commercial, with power, own judgment/ belief (about good quality soya milk) and decision power. Her decision to buy/ use that Joyoung soya milk maker has brought effects to her family, and has been supported by her family, through the scene that both her husband and daughter are drinking the soya milk together.

She positions herself as an authority to the audience. Her utterances are confident, assertive and definite, through her exclamation sentences and adoption of a strong modal adjunct: "就" (has to be). Her two sentences are short but powerful. Although she has not adopted the "you" approach in her speech, her direct gaze enables audience to know that she is talking to us/ the audience and she is attempted to instruct/ teach the audience that what good soya milk is and how good soya milk can be made. She does not merely position herself as a product user; rather, she is in a role of sharing, imposing (her) belief and idea to the audience.

The first and general impression of this commercial to most people may be: traditional, due to its traditional domestic setting, the domesticity of the product, and the traditional mother/ wife role of the female figure. Nonetheless, certain modern traits and attributes of the female character have been displayed and projected in the commercial. From her confident and assertive utterance and hand movements, she has been getting away from the traditional inferior and submissive characteristics of traditional Chinese women. Also, her strong belief, judgment and decision making power show her independence and individuality. The silence of her husband in the commercial signifies that she is not controlled or mastered by her husband; instead, she is in lead and is capable.

Her knowledge/ belief of soya milk quality, her care to her family and her pleasant looking shows that she values good outlook and good inner quality (inner beauty), which satisfy both modern and traditional expectations on good women in Chinese society. Moreover, her pleasant but frugal outlook as well as her soft-touch (embrace) with the soya milk maker, have aligned her to the soft,

gentle and frugal images of traditional Chinese women. However, the commercial has excluded the soya milk making process and audience cannot see the female figure participating in any washing, cleaning, cooking or preparing tasks; audience can only see her drinking and enjoying soya milk with her family. Thus, this female character, although being depicted as a mother/ wife, is not necessary the one who serves the family selflessly which has been expected in traditional Chinese society; rather, a harmonious and fair family atmosphere has been projected in which certain patriarchal elements, such as strong men weak women and women as servants, have been diminished. Therefore, this female character has demonstrated how women in Chinese society stretch out their modern traits and power within the "traditional" boundaries.

Case 5:

China TV commercial –

Taiji cough syrup (domestic product, local China brand)

Description:

Taiji Group Co. Ltd is one of the top 500 enterprises in China, specialized in manufacturing modern Chinese medicines. The product being advertised is cough Syrup which is one of the Taiji's top selling products. In the commercial, there are totally two subjects: one adult female (with long hair and wearing a sleeveless, plunging neckline and side vent white dress) and a panther. The story of this commercial is straightforward: a fast-running panther is chasing a pretty female in a forest field for her cough syrup.

In the first scene, a fast-running panther is chasing a pretty female. Audience can only see the back of the female character who wears a long white dress with long hair and who is running away and escaping from the panther's chase. The setting is a forest field with a blue sky. The next shot is a close-up of the female character. She turns around her head and showed a big and confident smile to the audience, having no glamorous makeup or accessories. Then, it comes to the final scene of this commercial: the female character is standing upright on a big stone step and in the middle of the scene while the panther is standing on her right hand side and is partly hiding behind her. The female character is standing upright with her chest-out; she bends her left hand to hold her waist and her right hand to hold the cough syrup (the product being advertised); she separates her two legs slightly and she lifts her right leg and pointed her toes on a little stone step. Her right thigh is out shown from a side vent of her dress. She has no utterance throughout the commercial; a male voice-over is used to speak out the name and the major functions of the product in the final scene.

Analysis:

The female character is the only visible human character in the commercial. Although she does not say anything throughout the commercial, she is actively involved as she is present all the time and she is the focus particularly in the second and the final scenes. In the first scene, it seems that the female character is helplessly chased by a strong and brutal panther and she has to keep running in order not to be caught. In this sense, it is likely that she is a victim or a

sufferer. She cannot but passively reacts to the panther's chase in term of escape. The second scene is a transition. The commercial shows a close-up of the female character and her big and confident smile signifies that she has survived. She is not hurt, beaten or killed by the strong panther; rather she is the winner and she is able to master the panther. In the final scene, the female character is positioned in a winning position and in front of the panther that she is ahead of it. Her pose conveys a significant non-verbal message to the audience that she is strong and capable enough to handle such a brutal panther.

Since men has long and traditionally been described or shaped as physically strong and muscular and thus been linked up with strong and brutal animals such as tiger, lion and panther, it is likely that people can substitute a man for the panther in this commercial; thus the story of this commercial can be ideologically and culturally reinterpreted as "a man was chasing a woman and she tried very hard to escape (from his control and from the traditional/ patriarchal ties); eventually the woman succeeds and she is even ahead of the man". This has interestingly corresponded to the modernization of women in traditional patriarchal society that women have been gradually transforming from weak, helpless, inferior and submissive to strong, independent and powerful. Therefore, in relation to the panther (or the reinterpreted man), the female character has shifted from passive and weak to a leading position.

The female figure is being depicted as a feminine looking but masculine action woman. Constructing an action-oriented image to the audience, she does not attempt to instruct or "hard-sell" the audience verbally how good and effective the product is; rather, she conveys the messages through non-verbal

communication. The close-up of the female character and her direct gaze shortens her distance with the audience; her smile and posture projects a confident and affirmative image. Although the story of this commercial is probably unrealistic, the simple story structure and the traits projected via the non-verbal communication of the female character provides sufficient rooms and hints for audience to do associations and link up different socio-cultural incidents to the story.

From the final scene, the female character has positioned herself as a warrior who is able to surmount obstacles and challenges. Using her right hand to hold the cough syrup, the female character empowers the syrup and implies that the syrup is as strong and powerful as her in dealing with difficulties (i.e. cough/ sickness). Nonetheless, she projects femininity through her outlook. The stereotypical sexual appeal is still valid in this female character. Showing her neckline, breast (partly), cleavage, shoulders, arms and her thigh, the female character is visually and seductively attracting and appealing to the audience. Therefore, the female character retains some stereotypical seductive expectations on women (i.e. sexually objectified outlook) while she demonstrates numerous modern and masculine qualities and traits via her actions and attitudes, such as strong, leading, capable and independent. In other words, in this commercial, stereotypical images and perceptions of a woman have been retained superficially (i.e. outlook and appearance) whilst the essence (i.e. inner qualities and attitudes) have been shifting towards modern.

Case 6:

China TV commercial –

Weizhi V2 passenger car (technology products/ cars, local China brand)

Description:

Weizhi is a local car brand based in Tianjin, China, and is a listed company in Shenzhen Stock Exchange. In this commercial, there are totally two characters: one adult female (passenger) and one adult male (driver); and probably they are in love. The female character is the dominant figure and she is the only speaker throughout the commercial. Her voice is soft, gentle and low-pitched. The commercial is in an outdoor setting: a beautiful and natural environment with blue sky, sunshine, green lawn and trees. The male is driving and the female is sitting next to him inside the car cabin. The car is riding on a road which is long and clear without other vehicles.

This commercial can be divided into three parts with three main themes. The first part emphasizes on "freedom": a car is setting off and tones of dried leaves are blown from the ground in the wind; with the car's window opened, the female character outstretches her hand; her hand swings in the breeze (signifies flying) and the angle of this shot has strategically incorporated blue sky and clear ocean as the background; the female character says in a soft and relaxing voice, "想不到我可以更加自由" (I have not imagined/expected that I can be more free/ independent). In other words, she implies that she is enjoying a kind of freedom which she has never imagined or expected before.

The second part focused on "fly" which indeed refers "to surpass/ to excel":

the car is passing through several locations (different beautiful and natural scenarios); several horses are running on a green lawn next to the car road and the speed of the car surpasses the running speed of those horses; the female character uses her soft and non-aggressive voice and says, "想不到我可以飛" (I have not imagined/expected that I can fly). This signifies that, owning or driving this car has enabled her to excel in speed (or surpass natural power). Some modern symbolic values are projected such as adventure, success and glory.

The third part of this commercial highlights "happiness" which is also a modern symbolic value: the shot turns inside the cabinet, showing a female hand covering/gripping a male hand on the gear transmission stick; the female character says, "想不到幸福可以加速" (I have not imagined/expected that happiness (blessing) can be "speeded up"); then the camera moves showing the faces of the two characters that the female character is nearer to the camera whereas the male driver is in a relatively more distant position to the camera; the female character relaxingly closes her eyes with a soft and gentle smile; she is facing towards the camera (facing away from the male character); the male character gazes at her with love and care.

Analysis:

Traditionally car has always been associated with masculinity and men and numerous studies have proven that car commercials mainly include male characters. However, with the growing status and economic power of women in Greater China region, this commercial has interestingly put its focus on and

150

targeted at female consumers so that it adopts a female figure as its major character. The female character is the only speaker in this commercial and she has no verbal interaction with the male character. In the first and second part of the commercial, the male character is hidden while audience can only see a hand from the female character and hear her voice. The female character is dominant and a protagonist.

In the final part of the commercial, the female character interacts non-verbally with the male character. The shot shows her hand gripping the man's hand on a gear stick. This body message signifies a masculine grip with power and control (Cortese, 2008). Although the male character is the driver who is supposed to be in control of the car, there is an additional force/ control exerted by the female character – her hand on the gear stick. There are two possible interpretations about this grip: 1) the female character has even a stronger power and control than the man does since her hand is on top of/ covering/ gripping the man's hand which indeed signifies an authoritative control; or 2) the two characters are controlling the car hand by hand together, since she is not grasping his hand tightly, that perhaps there is no particular meaning on which hand is on top and there is no significance on power difference. Nonetheless, for either of these two interpretations, it is quite clear that this female character has exhibited her power and participation in car control which has traditionally been restricted to men primarily. To extend this to a wider social context, as there are lots of metaphors describing "life" as a "road" particularly in Chinese culture, it is possible to ideologically extend her power in "controlling the car" to "controlling her life". Thus, empowerment of women has been manifested in this commercial.

Also, the depiction of the female character is non-stereotyped, particularly significant in the final part of this commercial. With reference to Cortese's extensive investigation on the visual representations of women in advertising, women have traditionally and stereotypically been depicted as inferior, submissive and weak women and these are usually manifested in high-pitched voice, smaller in size (relatively), feminine touch/ contact with men (see Chapter 2). The female character in this commercial, however, has basically gone against most of these stereotypical expectations or practices: her voice is low-pitched; she is closer to the camera and thus bigger in size than that of the male character; her physically contact with the male character is neither subordinating nor dependent; she is not sexually objectified. In addition, in the final shot, the female character relaxingly closes her eyes and she is facing towards the camera (facing away from the male character) whereas the male character is gazing at her with love and care. These displays enjoyment (relaxation) and independence: she does not put her focus (gaze) on her man, unlike most traditional Chinese wives who have to devote all her time and energy to her family/ husband selflessly; she is relaxed and free and she enjoys to be loved and cared (kind to oneself).

The female character in this commercial adopts an "I" approach to share her feelings and experiences to her audience so as to form a sisterhood relationship. Her soft and low-pitched voice allows her to construct a secure and trustworthy relationship between her and her "sisters". She employs a relatively weak modal adjunct "可以" (can) in all her three lines of utterance in order to align with the soft, gentle and relaxing atmosphere of the commercial. "可以"

(can) also refers to possibilities that the female character is indeed bringing hope, desire and possibility of advancements to the audience. By not being too certain, assertive or aggressive, the female character has created a friendly and feminine connection with the audience. Moreover, she says "想不到" (I have not imagined/expected) consistently in the opening of her utterances, successfully stimulating her audience to do some thinking and self reflections. This is a soft way to raise audience's interest and curiosity, and invite audience to fall into the setting of the commercial. Instead of depicting as an authority or expert, this female character establishes her credibility and positive image through continuous "I" sharing and bringing out new desire and possibilities.

Hope and desire are main themes in this commercial and they are the basic elements in the lifestyle promoted in this commercial. "Freedom", "fly" (adventure: to surpass/ excel) and "happiness" are the main themes in this commercial as well as the key elements in the promoted lifestyle. The female character demonstrates to the audience that, with the car (the product being advertised), she is empowered to enjoy more freedom, to excel others, to enjoy life, to be happier and to be loved. Simultaneously, she indeed is promoting a lifestyle which incorporates all these modern social expectations into a life. Traditionally in Chinese patriarchal and Confucian society, there are numerous feudal and ethics rules for women so as to restrict their performance within the society's/ men's framework and boundaries. The female character in this commercial has exhibited a new and modern identity that she/ "sisters" can be free and relieved from traditional boundaries, can surpass anything or anyone including men, and can enjoy love and happiness; she/ "sisters" are no longer subordinate or dependent to or the servants for men. She has a power to control

her future "road"/ life (signified in her hand on the gear stick). Nonetheless, the female character has not totally erased traditional Chinese feminine characteristics. She remains soft, kind and gentle, from her voice, her utterance, her gaze and her reserved smile. Therefore, traditional Chinese feminine characteristics have been retained in her verbal and non-verbal manner and etiquette while modern values and traits have been projected in her desires, attitudes and in her lifestyle.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have tried to examine the duality of woman images in TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China, specifically the push and pull of tradition and modernity in the forms of individual expressions and reactions to/ within a particular social context or event. Three representative TV commercials from Hong Kong and mainland China respectively have been analyzed qualitatively.

This chapter has analyzed the six selected TV commercials with reference to the three questions on positioning performance: 1. How are the characters positioned in relation to one another and/or to the context within the TV commercials?; 2. How do the characters position themselves to the audience?; 3. How do the characters construct themselves? The above analysis has shown a clearer picture of how woman characters position and perform in different contexts and event, and how they incorporate both traditional and modern values, traits and attitudes in their images, identity and lifestyle. For example in Case 4 (from mainland China), the female character is a happy housewife

(traditional representation) as well as a happy individual (modern representation), who enjoys to be in a family and take care of her husband and her daughter, and at the same time, who owns a voice in decision making and is confident/ proud of her belief and ability. Also, some positively perceived traditional feminine characteristics of Chinese women, such as kind, gentle, soft-spoken and caring traits, are retained in representations of this modern strong woman. Similarly in Case 1 (from Hong Kong), the female character is nice and caring to her friend (traditional representations) but she also shows that she is strong at tackling problems, is able to solve problems independently and individually (modern representations).The female character in Case 6 (from mainland China) reveals that how a modern woman values enjoyment, freedom and adventure, success and glory (modern representations) but she is soft-spoken, kind, gentle and far from aggressive (traditional representations). Nonetheless, Case 5 (from mainland China) exhibits a hybridized female image: stereotypically seductive (i.e. sexually objectified looks) plus modern/ masculine qualities (i.e. strong, leading, capable and independent characteristics).

It is interesting to observe that the female characters in Case 2 and Case 3 (both from Hong Kong) project a relatively more modern life attitude and lifestyle. They value hedonism, independence, individuality and sociability, and they embed English words/ phrases in their vernacular languages, so that modern and Western images have been shaped.

To conclude, female characters in TV commercials have no longer been restricted to traditional domestic role and settings; modern representations of

women and attachments of women to modern lifestyle were significant strategies in nowadays advertising. Nonetheless, the traditional feminine characteristics were retained, serving as a backbone in the image constructions of the modern Chinese females for whom the traditional and modern expectations emerged.

Chapter 6

Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from the content and multimodal analysis in relation to the objective and research questions of this study. In particular, this chapter proposes that current woman images in TV commercials signify a Chinese type of modern woman, which can neither be simply described as traditional nor as modern, but a delicate hybridization between the two. Attempting to offer a full exploration of the "Chinese type of modern woman", Section 6.1 discusses how traditional and modern characteristics cluster together in a complementary relationship and how they shape the personalities and behaviors of woman images in TV commercials. This is followed by a discussion of individual and societal markers of the traditional and the modern in the "Chinese-modern lifestyle" of Chinese women. Section 6.2 in this chapter discusses the differences of the representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China.

6.1 Images of modern Chinese women

Several scholars have tried to explore the hybridity of woman images in TV commercials in the Greater China region, and mostly they commented that contemporary Chinese women can be simply described as neither traditional nor modern. Zhang (2003) studied gender role portrayals in magazine advertising from egalitarian or dichotomous perspectives and noted that there are dual demands on contemporary Chinese women: socially, women should be career-minded and capable at work; interpersonally, women should be "good

wives", "good mothers" and "good daughters-in-law" according to the traditional Confucian expectations. In their readers' perception study on advertising, Hung et al. (2007) pointed out that contemporary Chinese women have added the Western ideology of independence and hedonism to their original and traditional perceptions of ideal women/ womanhood. Wu and Chung (2011) observed that contemporary Chinese women images in award-wining TV commercials are accepting and adjusting themselves to Western forms of femininity while maintaining the inner qualities and essence of traditional Chinese women.

Due to the reforms and rapid social, cultural, economical and political changes in China in the past few decades, and with the influx of western ideas through globalization and the growth of media, China and Chinese people have been situated between the traditional and the modern, the Chinese and the Western. In such a strongly authoritarian and hierarchical society as the Chinese, competitions and/ or complex interplay between the traditional and the modern as well as between the Chinese and the Western are inevitable. The findings of this study indicate that both traditional and modern values and characteristics play significant roles in the image constructions of women in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials. It is surprising to see that woman figures in contemporary TV commercials have been depicted non-stereotypically in many dimensions and aspects, such as the limited frequency of portraying women in home settings and their independence and assertiveness (Section 4.2). Traditional Chinese values in woman's image representations along with modern Western values have formed the backbone of contemporary "Chinese type of modern women". Projecting both traditional and modern traits and

characteristics, hybridized images of women are found in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials, with different degrees of appropriation and re-invention. Although some traditional and stereotypical expectations and perceptions of Chinese women still exist in contemporary TV commercials, there is no single woman figure depicted in a "pure traditional" way. In other words, "modern" elements, more or less, have already been appropriated in woman figures in TV commercials and it signifies that pure-traditional woman figures have gradually disappeared whilst hybridized images have become the norm. In the analysis in Chapter 5, I have attempted to demonstrate how the traditional and the modern elements shape the modern images of Chinese women figures in TV commercials. Traditional feminine traits are rooted in most Chinese woman figures in the collected TV commercials while modern-mix catalyzes the transformations of women's attitudes and lifestyle from traditional family orientation to a globally promoted "good life for self".

It may be possible to describe the current image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials as being in the process moving from "pre-modern" to "modern", as in many Western countries (Gauntlett, 2008). However, a more nuanced view is to describe those modern elements as polishers shaping Chinese women towards full modernization whilst traditional norms, cultures and expectations are rooted in a deeper shell of self. We can observe that both superficial and inner construct of a person play significant roles in choices of the projection of self in terms of individual style, social style and lifestyle, of which this idea is substantiating in line with the views of Machin & van Leeuwen (2005) on style.

My proposed concept of the "Chinese type of modern women", on one hand, refers to women who are "performative modern" and who appropriate modern values as well as retain certain less-feudal Chinese feminine characteristics (survival of the fittest across centuries) in their essence; on the other hand, "Chinese type of modern women" entails a hybridization of tradition and modernity in Chinese women images and identity, in which selective appropriation and/or reinvention between traditional and modern traits and attributes are involved.

6.1.1   Essence versus behavioral performance

Johansson (2001) proposed that traditional and modern cultures and values converge into a shared notion offering an alternative symbolic space for contemporary Chinese women. However, he did not further explore or explain in what dimensions the traditional and the modern values are particular dominant in the "shared notion", or how contemporary women project and perform themselves in the "share notion". Nonetheless, aligning with what Johansson highlighted, this study has found that homogenization is not the outcome when the traditional meets the modern in Chinese society.

With the rapid influx of Western culture and values through globalization and different new media, most Chinese women have been exposed to the Western type of (ideal) modern women. This raises a question: to what extent do Chinese women appropriate modern values/ characteristics from the Western type of (ideal) modern woman? As mentioned in Chapter 2.3.2, hybridization is often superficial and focuses primarily on nominal elements (Wang and Yeh,

2007). Thus, it is probably easier for a person to copy or learn others' actions, poses and gestures than to learn or copy others' temperament. In other words, a person's behavior is easier to be influenced than that of a person's personality. From the findings, the essence and the behavior of woman images project different ways of hybridization between the traditional and the modern values, in which they are often in a complementary relationship shaping the contemporary Chinese woman: the traditional values have served as strong ideological guidelines maintaining and monitoring the shape of inner self – "what kind of person – to be", while the modern values have exerted significant influences on their behavioral performance, their external self – "what to do and how to do – to do".

Being kind, gentle, virtuous and obedient have long been taken as requirements for a female to be deemed a "good" woman in Chinese society (e.g. Yuen et al., 2004); contemporary Chinese women, instead of detaching themselves entirely from traditional expectations, select and turn some fittest traditional requirements into ideological guidelines for self-cultivation. In other words, rooted deeply in Chinese culture and society, some traditional values do now play significant roles in the personal growth and in the nurturance of moral conduct of Chinese women. Therefore, in the sample, many women figures possessed traditional feminine characteristics such as being kind, gentle, caring, modest, and frugal which shaped the personality of contemporary Chinese women. Nonetheless, it appears that the behavior and performance of woman figures in TV commercials do not conform to most of the traditional norms: they are now no longer confined to the domestic realm or highly attached to domesticity; it is no longer necessary for Chinese women to lower themselves

in order not to surpass their husband; they are no longer restricted to "flower vase" roles and they do not have to remain silent and selfless at all times; and there is no strict social rule for Chinese women to be the same within a group (collectivism). Thus, it appears that traditional values and traditional feminine characteristics are relatively more significant and influential in the construct of the inner self of contemporary Chinese women, guiding them "to be" socially approved; whereas the modern values and modern feminine characteristics are relatively not prominent particularly in the lifestyle and behavioral performance of contemporary Chinese women.

As discussed in earlier chapters, modern values refer to values associated with modernization and Western democracy such as individualism, consumerism, egalitarianism and hedonism (e.g. Chan and Cheng, 2002; Cheng and Schweitzer, 1996; Frith, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Hung et al., 2007; Yuen et al., 2004). These values have provided a basis for the constructions of individual lifestyles and identity, allowing individuals to seek self satisfaction and achievements and providing them with the ability to stand out from the crowd. Although a person's personality contributes to her individual style (Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2005), the hybridized images of women manifesting the traditional elements in their personality do not contradict with their modern expressive images and their expressions of individuality. The modern expressive images have primarily foregrounded egalitarianism and hedonism. Since the woman images in the sample showed limited linkage to the domestic realm and domesticity and they were commonly depicted in out-of-home settings and recreational roles, traditional stereotypes such as "thinking recreations, thinking men" and "thinking housework, thinking women" are weakened. The

association of women with recreation and hedonism signifies the emphasis on own happiness and preference among contemporary Chinese women. It becomes relatively uncommon to see woman images doing everything for the sake of their husband and family selflessly. The active participation of woman images in out-of-home recreational activities projects not only hedonism and egalitarianism but also individuality. Individuality foregrounds individual difference which is often denoted and connoted through expressions of feelings, actions, postures and attitudes. With a cheerful, fearless, sociable, non-dependent, assertive, confident, capable and strong "to-do" attitude, woman images in TV commercials from both Hong Kong and mainland China have expressed individuality particularly reinforcing their rights "to do" – such as their rights and freedom to choose, to speak, to play, and to have fun.

6.1.2   Markers of Chinese-modern lifestyle (women)

From the results of this study, individual difference and modern lifestyle are major markers of modernity in Chinese style of modern women. Lifestyle is a group style combining individual style and social style (Machin and van Leeuwen, 2005); and lifestyle applies to choices, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs, being a container for the identity (Gauntlett, 2008). Individual style foregrounds individual creations and individual choices, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs. Social style refers to signifiers expressing people's social positions which are externally motivated and determined primarily by social factors, such as class, gender, age, occupation, social reputations and status. What products to buy and what clothes to wear create a symbolic space for the development of self, identity and lifestyle, so that a person's values and beliefs contribute to the

reflexive/ performative projection of self; however, when it comes to Chinese women, with their duality of tradition and modernity, it seems lifestyle is not simply a reflexive/ performative projection of self or individual lifestyle, but also a carrier of markers of social feelings and attitudes towards modernization.

According to the results of the study, higher social status, reputations, recognition and the empowerment of women have been demonstrated via the adoption of female voice-over, the participation of female voice in the commercials, the significant increases of portraying women as "product authority", "solution-/ suggestion- provider" and in "masculine occupation" role (compared to previous studies). Traditionally, these roles have been restricted to men only due to their strength and privileges in the traditional patriarchal society, so that the opening of these roles to women in contemporary advertising signifies a progressive and positive social attitude towards the ability and social functions of women.

Lifestyle is fluid; Chinese-modern lifestyle involves continuous re-selection and re-invention of traditional and modern/ Western values and elements. Lifestyle combines individual style and social style; Chinese-modern lifestyle carries individual and societal markers of tradition and modernity.

Individual markers of tradition and modernity

Traditional and modern values and traits have been identified at the individual level in the woman images in the sample. As discussed above, along a traditional-modern continuum, the women images seem to appropriate "strong

traditional" in the basis of what kind of person "to be" while modern values and traits outweigh traditional values in their "to do" attitude. From the analysis, there are four significant markers:

1. *Being kind, modest, gentle and caring at all times*

   These positively perceived traditional feminine characteristics are at the core of the image representations of Chinese women in commercials. A great majority of woman figures in the sample are pleasant, warm-hearted, non-aggressive, non-critical and inoffensive, which are in concordance with the traits of the official ideal woman in traditional China identified by Hung et al. (2007) and those woman images are able to (partially) meet the traditional Confucian expectations and Chinese virtues (described by, e.g. Cheng, 1997; Hung et al., 2007; Su, 1996; Wu and Chung, 2011; Zhang, 2003).

2. *Extending from happy housewives (domesticity) to happy individuals (sociability)*

   According to numerous scholars (e.g. Browne, 2000; Cheung and Wan, 2008; Cortese, 2008; Frith and Mueller, 2010; Kim and Cha, 2008; Kim and Lowry, 2005; Talbot, 2000), women have traditionally been intensively associated with domesticity across countries, from home setting, house work, to domestic role (housewife) and domestic products. However, from the results of this study, a great proportion of woman figures are depicted as happy individuals rather than simply happy housewives. In addition to being domestic mangers taking care of her husband and family, it seems, Chinese women have gradually been incorporating their own potentials, happiness

and personal aspirations into their life goals. From the sample, the modern "to do" expressions shape Chinese women into happy individuals. Their realm/ network have been extended from family to friends, to workplace and to the recreational sphere, with a space for individuality and achieving self-satisfaction. The woman figures in Case 4 in Chapter 5 display how a modern happy housewife is indeed a happy individual: her domesticity is downplayed as she is not a selfless servant or she is not doing trivial housework; her sociability is expanded as she is enjoying quality time with her family and functioning as an advisor without seeking men's support or approval. Case 2, Case 3 and Case 6 have demonstrated the significance of hedonism (such as enjoyment and freedom) and sociability in contemporary Chinese women's life attitudes.

3. *Shifting from being inferior and weak to being independent and competent*

In traditional patriarchal society, the male-centered culture fosters the maximum power and voice of men; and thus women become inferior, subordinate, passive, naïve, and some are victimized in television (e.g. Chancer and Watkins, 2006; Cortese, 2008; Frith and Mueller, 2010; Gunter, 1995). However, as contemporary Chinese women have become more educated and valued in the workplace due to the (relative) gender equality achieved at the societal level in the past few decades, women's ability and voice have been increasingly evaluated positively. The life goals of Chinese women have switched from serving their family with obedience, to striving for self-satisfaction and accomplishments in the family, the workplace, and in personal development. Thus, at the individual level, men's power, control and their approval have been downplayed in the life of contemporary

Chinese women. As mentioned in Section 2.2.1, "self respect", "self-confidence", "self-determination" and "self-realization" have been highly promoted in the "Four selves" campaign publicized by China's Women's Federation in the late 19th century. The awareness of autonomy among Contemporary Chinese women and their achievements in the workplace have empowered Chinese women to be financially independent and have unblocked their traditional subordination to men. In the sample, a significant proportion of women are depicted independently and capably: they are "non-dependent" to others/ men; they are the protagonists and are in leading positions in the commercials; they are functioning as "solution-/ suggestion- providers" which shows their credibility and competence in offering advice and dealing with problems. Most importantly, "victimized" weak women are not present and instead they have been positively portrayed. Some woman images have started to occupy "masculine occupations". Although a limited proportion of women are depicted as "product authority" or "endorsers", it appears that contemporary Chinese women have been moving from the most passive adornment role to a relatively more active role – "product user".

4. *Dual approaches: reserved as well as assertive*

As mentioned above, woman figures in the sample revealed that contemporary Chinese women have been empowered to focus on individual "self", such as individual enjoyment, self-satisfaction and self-assurance, and they have become relatively more independent and competent than traditional Chinese women. The rising status and credibility as well as the rising awareness of autonomy of Chinese women have enabled them "to

do"/ to behave confidently and assertively. From the findings, a majority of the woman figures have displayed the characteristics of being "fearless/ vital" in their non-verbal communication. Although it is not very common for visible woman figures to speak in the commercials, it is interesting to notice that once they speak (for those who utter in the commercials), a greater proportion of them are "assertive/ certain" rather than "quiet/ soft-spoken". Nonetheless, it is significant to note that it has become possible for a woman to adopt strong and assertive words plus direct and explicit expressions while her manner is gentle and her voice is soft. For example, in Case 4 in Chapter 5, the woman figure employs a strong modal adjunct: "就" (has to be) and direct "you" approach to assertively convey her belief and idea to the audience, whilst her voice is soft and gentle. Therefore, it is a "double-bind" situation (Talbot, 2010) for Contemporary Chinese women to be reserved and gentle so as to echo with the traditional norms, as well as to be assertive and confident in modern days at the same time.

Societal markers of tradition and modernity

At the societal level, Hong Kong and mainland China are in an ever-changing age as the two places have undergone numerous and significant political and socio-cultural changes as well as economic re-positioning over the past few decades. It is more than a decade after the return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China; and it is a decade after China entered the WTO (World Trade Organization) and three decades after the opening up of China. With the political and socio-cultural transformations and rapid economic growth in the

Greater China area, Chinese women's participation, roles and status in Chinese society have progressively improved (e.g. ACWF, May 2006, November 2011a, November 2011b, Census & Statistics Department, March 2010; Xinhua News, 2009). Despite the ideological differences between Hong Kong and mainland China, both places have been responding to the influx of Western and modern values and ideas economically, politically and/or socially. From the findings, there are three observable societal makers of tradition and modernity contributing to the current representations of women in TV commercials:

1. *From a Wen Bao (enough food and clothing) society to a Xiao Kang (well-to-do) society*

   Consumerism has grown simultaneously along with the rapid economic development in Chinese society. In Xiao Kang society, contemporary Chinese people are economically self-sufficient to achieve better life quality and are free from hunger and cold. The consumption power and desire for "quality of life" among Chinese people have stimulated the importations of global brands as well as Western/ modern values into the Cultural China region. The exposure to diversified, modern and technology goods has induced fluctuations in people's lifestyle and spending philosophy. Modern China wants its women, especially the independent professionals with incomes, to be glamorous and fashionable rather than wearing shapeless and identical drab Mao suits, hacked haircuts and black slippers (Borton, 2004). The shift in life attitudes and preference corresponds to the needs of modern goods in the fast growing China. Although Talbot (2000) pointed out that the impacts of feminism on advertising only empower commodities for women but do not empower women themselves and women are only given

autonomy to consume, "the right to choose" and "the right to consume" go beyond the superficial level described by Talbot in the China context. The concept of consumption in Chinese society has empowered commodities as well as consumers, including men and women. When China was a Wen Bao society, individual ("small I") empowerment was not highlighted in collectivism and at that time people devoted all their energy to fight against hunger and cold. When the society is moving from Wen Bao to Xiao Kang, both men and women are seeking values, assurance, prestige and superiority regarding "small I" through consumption, particularly foreign brands consumption (Tai and Tam, 1997). Therefore, in the patriarchal Chinese society, "the right to choose" and "the right to consume" are particularly significant for Chinese women because they have assured the status of Chinese women that they are not living in the shadow of their husband and they enjoy the same "rights" as men. Thus, Xiao Kang society is an overall advancement of the society and people. People's desire for modern goods and their new spending philosophy facilitate changes in traditional and feudal social norms. Products being advertised (including domestic products) are not merely for assisting people in satisfying basic utilitarian needs in their daily life; rather, the products bring "modern" elements (such as effectiveness, high-quality, good looks) to the life and the family of the consumers, empowering them to be selective and enabling them to strive for better quality of life. Therefore, it appears in the sample that modern lifestyles and value of hedonism are frequently highlighted in Chinese advertising, even for "domestic products". Autonomy to choose, to consume and to construct their preferred lifestyle has empowered Chinese women, which are manifested in the involvement and participation of women in

different product types, role portrayals, setting and activities, and reflected in the modern/ masculine qualities carried in the woman figures in the commercials.

2. *Rising Chinese women*

The status and social positions of Chinese women have been steadily improved nationwide. Gender equality has gained more and more attention over the past few decades in Hong Kong and mainland China. With the political reform in 1949 in China, the ideological guideline for Chinese women to "hold up half of the sky" and the de-feminization of Chinese women have become seeds of women's liberation in China although gender equality has been far from achieved in deeper social structures in Mao's era, as commented by Zhang (2003). Nonetheless, the movements enabled relatively equal opportunities between men and women to receive education and work and, particularly in post-Mao China, awareness of "self"/ "small I" has been nurtured so that Chinese women have started to acknowledge their value and realize their self aspirations. The re-assessment of women's role, participation and status in the society has enabled them to break traditional expectations (i.e. subservient and subordinate role for women) and to obtain "freedom", "modernity" and "financial independence" through more work and study opportunities as well as greater exposure to social and world issues (Yuen et al., 2004). Women's achievements in the academic field and in the workplace (see Section 2.2.1) contribute to the depictions of Chinese women in professional, credible, independent and competent images in advertising. In addition, by delegating housework to domestic helpers, contemporary Chinese women, particularly in Hong Kong, are able

to devote more time to their career and friendships (Tai and Tam, 1997) so that contemporary Chinese women can incorporate more diversified elements in their life goals instead of only serving the family. Therefore, with the shifts in attitudes and desires among contemporary Chinese women, traditional portrayals and stereotypes of women in advertising have been downplayed while modern traits have been introduced so as to correspond with contemporary reality and women's self-perceptions.

3. *"Samed" or "othered"? – men are strong, women are not weak*

As mentioned in Section 2.1.5, women have often been deemed "othered" and regarded as a marginalized group in traditional society when compared to men which have always been considered as mainstream and deemed "samed", due to the relatively low economic, social and political status of women and due to the women's biological role in giving birth and lactation (e.g. Andermahr et al., 2000; Byerly, 2007; Gandy, 1998; Gauntlett, 2008). In traditional cultural China, women were regarded as "marginalized" because they were expected and were shaped to be subservient and subordinate, bounded with Confucian principles and shackled with patriarchy and feudal social rules. Their lack of power and space as well as their financial and psychological dependence have let the dominant group exert control in all spheres and have fostered the domination of men over women. However, as discussed above, in contemporary society, with the socio-economic development and the rising status of women, patriarchal ideologies and hierarchical relationships have gradually diminished. The traditional Chinese concept that "men are strong and women are weak" is rejected by a great majority of Chinese women, according to a survey

conducted by All-China Women's Federation (ACWE) in 2006 (refer to Section 2.2.1). The social recognition of women and their self-assurance have challenged the dominant role of men. For Chinese women in contemporary society, does men's approval really matter? Probably men's approval or approval from the mainstream group is becoming less crucial in woman group.

In the sample, moving beyond individual level to interpersonal/ societal level, the results show that classifications between "samed" and "othered" have become increasingly blurred because social expectations of men and women have been merging. Woman figures have been moving away from traditionally defined roles to a stage that they, as individuals, have to work out the roles by themselves and have to make significant choices on their own (Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991). It seems masculine women and feminine men, in terms of appearance and behavioral performance, are now socially accepted. This phenomenon is reflected in their popularity in popular culture and TV discourse (though may not be encouraged). The woman figures in the sample showed abundant masculine qualities, too. According to the gender dichotomies between masculinity and femininity by Chancer and Watkins (2006), masculinity refers to rationality, activity, public and business versus emotionality, passivity, private and family/ domesticity in femininity respectively (refer to Section 2.1.1). By this categorization, most woman figures in the sample adhere more to masculinity than to femininity. They are rational and they are able to provide practical solutions and suggestions in the commercials. They are active and public as they are frequently depicted in recreational roles and in social settings; they are confident and sociable in

interpersonal relationships. They are often depicted in (masculine) occupations, particularly in the China data set, and they do not have strong attachments to family/ domesticity in the commercials. Thus, the cross-relationship between men and women and between masculinity and femininity offer increasing flexibility in social groupings.

Who or what should be in the group of "samed" or ""othered"? This question perhaps should not be answered in terms of gender anymore in contemporary society. Since contemporary Chinese women are now becoming socially and financially strong, it is possible for women to have the same power as men ideologically and to be their own boss without trying to please and to gain approval from others. The results of this study showed the independence of women, their can-do attitude and their modern individual and without-men-lifestyle, so that women are not dependent on men or weak in contemporary Chinese society.

6.2 Images of modern women: Hong Kong versus mainland China

In the sample, the representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials share similar strategies, preferences and ideologies: woman figures have to respond to the dual demands from tradition and modernity – "Chinese type of modern women", which have been extensively explored above. Generally, contemporary Chinese women have been situated between the traditional and the modern, and a hybridization of these two dichotomous values is showed in the essence and behavioral performance of woman figures in the sample, as well as in their Chinese-modern lifestyle. Nonetheless, specifically

there are several significant variations in the representations of women between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

In the audio dimensions, Hong Kong TV commercials have a greater tendency to use female voice-over and to include female voice than its mainland China counterparts. Also, it is more common to find English-mixing strategies in the female voice in Hong Kong TV commercials than those in mainland China TV commercials. The difference in historical backgrounds and the difference in national language policy may account for the differences in the use of female voice and in their language patterns. As Hong Kong is a former British colony and English has been more widely adopted in education and communication, Hong Kong people have had greater exposure to western ideas and beliefs so that Hong Kong society is more likely to endorse the use of English in communications and to exercise gender equality which indeed encourages and recognizes the participations of female and their voice in different social aspects.

The differences in socio-cultural background between Hong Kong and mainland China may also account for the differences of outstanding values in the two places. Being a capitalistic and market-driven society, Hong Kong encourages the consumption of material goods; whilst China is more towards socialism in which the well-being of the nation is encouraged (Chan and Cheng, 2002). Moreover, the extensive and intensive encounters with western values and beliefs have nurtured the growth of hedonism values in Hong Kong society (e.g. Pasadeos and Chi, 1992; Tse et al., 1989). Thus the findings of this study cohere with the previous research and showed that woman figures in Hong

Kong TV commercials have been highly attached to hedonism values, in which enjoyment in relation to sensory-satisfying experience (e.g. comfortable, tasty, cool, cozy) or emotional-satisfying experience (e.g. love, freedom, vitality, adventure) have also been incorporated (see Chapter 5 particularly Case 2 and Case 3). In addition, the higher frequency of depicting woman figures in social setting/ studio setting, in recreational role, in glamorous appearance, and depicting them with vitality and individuality, in Hong Kong commercials, are tangible representations directly or indirectly related to hedonism. Thus, it appears that the representations of women in Hong Kong commercials do correspond to the Hong Kong socio-cultural norms emphasizing hedonism, and show significant adherence to modern values. The attachments of Hong Kong women to consumerist and hedonist values and the relatively more westernized social norms in Hong Kong society may also account for the findings that the average number of modern traits being exhibited and projected by per woman figure is higher in Hong Kong TV commercials than that in mainland China TV commercials.

Despite the fact that, on average, there is a higher frequency for woman figures in China TV commercials to possess more traditional traits (6-8 traits) but fewer modern traits (0-3 traits) than those in Hong Kong TV commercials, in terms of their appearance and trait projections, woman figures in China TV commercials demonstrate stronger "masculinity", which indeed is in opposition to traditional and stereotypical portrayals of women worldwide. From the findings, China woman figures are more often depicted in the workplace and in roles of "masculine occupation", and they have greater involvements in advertising "Technology products & cars" than woman figures in Hong Kong

TV commercials. Historically from the age of Chairman Mao, Chinese women have been educated and cultivated to be "Iron girls". The ideological concept of de-feminization has been rooted in China society and the slogan of "women can hold up half of the sky" has heavily influenced the images and identity of China women for decades (Zhang, 2003). Thus, this may account for the relatively "masculine" image representations of women in China TV commercials. In addition, as discussed above, with the rapid development of China over the past few decades, people in China now possess greater consumption power and desires. The spending attitudes of women in China are in relation to the pursuit of status, prestige and superiority (see Tai and Tam, 1997). "Technology products & cars" are new, modern, luxurious and material goods for most people in China. Therefore, in short, including woman figures in advertising "Technology products & cars", on one hand, corresponds to the images of "Iron girls" upon social expectations and norms; on the other hand, it responds to their desire on modern goods and modernity.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Summary of the findings of this study

The present study aims to locate and compare the contemporary image representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China, with special attention to the competition and/or intertwinement between the traditional/local and modern/global forces in the construction of new images of Chinese women. Specifically, there are two major research questions:

RQ1:   What are the similarities and differences in the image representations of women in Chinese TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

   RQ1.1:   To what extent has female voice been incorporated in Chinese TV commercials?

   RQ1.2:   What language choice patterns of women are most prevalent in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials?

   RQ1.3:   What visual representations of women (in terms of product type, credibility, setting, role portrayal, appearance and trait projections) are most prevalent in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials?

RQ2:   Are women playing more "traditional" or "modern" roles and functions in Chinese TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

RQ2.1:   How are the female characters positioned in relation to one another, to the audience, and to the context within the Chinese TV commercials?

RQ2.2:   How are the traditional and modern images hybridized in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China?

Attempting to answer these questions, this study has developed an extensive coding framework and has derived three steps of analysis so as to systematically examine the traditional versus modern representations of Chinese women in the Chinese advertising (see Table 2.1 in Chapter 3). A total of 1199 TV commercials, of which 635 from Hong Kong and 564 from mainland China, have been collected and analyzed in Step 1 which focused on the use of female voice and its language choice patterns. Then in Step 2, this study focused on investigating the visual image representations of woman figures, in terms of the product type being advertised, credibility of the woman figures, setting, role portrayal, and their appearance and trait projections. From the collected TV commercials, there were totally 598 female characters being analyzed in Step 2, including 341 and 257 female characters from the Hong Kong and mainland China TV sample respectively. Based on the findings from Step 1 and Step 2, Step 3 of this study has located the dominations/ recessions of the traditional and the modern in different aspects/ dimensions of the image representations of women, and also compared the patterns between Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials.

The main findings of the three steps of analysis include:

1. Generally male voice-over dominates Chinese advertising (about 60%); the adoption of female voice-over is more prevalent in Hong Kong TV commercials as compared to that of mainland China.

2. About half of the Hong Kong TV commercials have featured female voice but female voice is absent from more than two-thirds of the mainland China TV commercials. However, the distributions of using female voice in TV commercials for different product types in Hong Kong and mainland China are similar, with significant involvements of female voice in TV commercials of "Domestic products" and "Personal products" and an absence of female voice particularly obvious in "Technology products & Cars" for both places. Nonetheless, the use of female voice for "Non-domestic products" is relatively common in the Hong Kong contexts whilst it is rare in the mainland China TV commercials.

3. More than half of the female voice in Hong Kong TV commercials mix English into vernacular Cantonese, while such language mixing strategy is rarely found in the female voice of mainland China TV commercials.

The traditional practice of employing a particular gender (man only) to do the voice-over is dominant in the sample. China TV commercials show a stronger adherence to the traditional practice while a significant "modern" practice in gender of voice-over is found in Hong Kong TV commercials. Traditional language uses and choice are prominent in female figures in mainland China TV commercials whilst hybridized language patterns and attitudes in language practices are exhibited in the female voice in Hong Kong TV commercials.

4. Regarding the presence of woman figures in commercials by product type, woman figures were most commonly used in "Domestic products" advertising in both the Hong Kong and the mainland China contexts; "Personal products" comes second in Hong Kong data set which is closely followed by "Non-domestic products". However, "Personal products" was the least product type in the mainland China data set; there was a significantly high frequency of "Technology products & Cars" in the mainland China sample compared to its counterparts in Hong Kong.

5. The credibility of woman figures in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials share a similar distribution pattern: it most frequently depicted as a "Product user" (more than half); then nearly a quarter of the sample is depicted as a "Adornment/ Story actress"; next, around 15% is "Celebrity endorser"; and finally the smallest proportion is "Product authority".

6. "Out-of-home" setting is prevalent for woman figures in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials, in which "Social setting" is the most outstanding practice.

7. "Recreational role" is typical of woman image representation in both Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials; "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" is the second major role for woman figures in the Hong Kong contexts; whilst "Masculine occupation" was the second top role in China data set and "Decorative/ Demonstrative role" was the close third.

In terms of context and role, Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials share similar practices: being traditional in the aspects of "Product type" and "Credibility of woman figures" whilst expressing modernity via "Setting" and "Role portrayal". The phenomena are particularly prevalent in the

Hong Kong data set whilst the frequency differences between the traditional and the modern in the four dimensions are comparatively less significant in the China data set. In other words, hybridization of tradition and modernity in context and role portrayal is more salient in the image representations of woman in China TV commercials as compared to that in Hong Kong TV commercials.

8. For the appearance and trait projections of woman figures, the results from Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials show similar preference that a majority of the woman figures are: "non-sexually objectified" (clothes), "modest/plain" (looks), "frugal/ undemanding" (belongings/ accessories), "non-dependent" (relations with others), "in-group/ sameness" (connections with others), "fearless/ vita" (body movement), "no utterance" and "assertive/ certain" (verbal manner) and acting as "solution-/ suggestion- provider" if the woman figures are assigned in a problem-solution functional role.

Nonetheless, when considering the above traits in terms of the traditional and the modern, the average number of modern traits being exhibited and projected by per woman figure is higher in the Hong Kong sample than that in the mainland China sample. The average number of the modern traits is similar to that of the traditional traits in the Hong Kong sample whereas the average number of the traditional traits outweighs the average number of the modern traits in mainland China sample. There is a higher frequency for a woman figure in China TV commercials to possess more traditional traits (6-8 traits) but less modern traits (0-3 traits) than a woman figure in Hong Kong TV commercials did.

On top of studying the image representations of women in TV commercials quantitatively, this study has selected six representative TV commercials as cases for qualitative analysis so as to examine the hybridized images of women in TV commercials, with particular attention to the push and pull of tradition and modernity in the forms of individual expressions and reactions to/ within a particular social context or event.

The push and pull of tradition and modernity produce hybridized images. For example in Case 4 (from mainland China), the female character is a happy housewife (traditional representation) as well as a happy individual (modern representation), who enjoys to be in a family and take care of her husband and her daughter, and at the same time, who owns a voice in decision making and is confident/ proud of her belief and ability. Also, some positively perceived traditional feminine characteristics of Chinese women, such as kind, gentle, soft-spoken and caring traits, are retained in representations of this modern strong woman. Similarly in Case 1 (from Hong Kong), the female character is nice and caring to her friend (traditional representations) but she also shows that she is able to tackle problems independently and individually (modern representations).The female character in Case 6 (from mainland China) reveals that how a modern woman values enjoyment, freedom and adventure, success and glory (modern representations) but she is soft-spoken, kind, gentle and far from aggressive (traditional representations). Nonetheless, Case 5 (from mainland China) exhibits a hybridized female image: stereotypically seductive (i.e. sexually objectified looks) plus modern/ masculine qualities (i.e. strong, leading, capable and independent characteristics).

Therefore, female characters in TV commercials, from both Hong Kong and mainland China, were now in a melting pot of the traditional and the modern that it was common to see a woman figure being traditional in her role portrayal while exhibiting modern feminine characteristics such as strong and assertive; or being traditional in a home setting while being modern through mixing English into her utterances. Thus, female characters in TV commercials have no longer been restricted to traditional domestic role and settings; modern representations of women and attachments of women to modern lifestyle were significant strategies in nowadays advertising. Nonetheless, in many cases, traditional feminine characteristics were retained and they primarily served as a backbone in the image constructions of the female characters so that traditional and modern expectations of Chinese women were bridged.

7.2 Concluding remarks and implications

Aiming to locate and compare the image representations of women in TV commercials between Hong Kong and mainland China from traditional/ local versus modern/ global perspectives, this study has showed how traditional/ local and modern/ global values intertwined in the construction of the images of contemporary Chinese women. The findings and discussion of this study have several implications/ contributions for scholars who are engaged in gender and advertising and in cultural/women studies of Greater China as well as for advertising professionals who are involved in the global standardization versus localization debate in transnational advertising practice.

In terms of methodological contribution, this study has attempted to reconsolidate the definitions of tradition and modernity in contemporary Chinese society and to establish a holistic framework for the examination of the audio and visual image representations of women by means of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Previously most scholars have put their research focus primarily on role portrayals with an egalitarian or dichotomous perspective focusing on how men versus women have been overrepresented versus underrepresented in the advertising discourse and relating their findings mainly to the persistent influences from the traditional forces so as to argue for the existence of the stereotypical/ non-stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising.

However, for the fast growing Greater China area, the constructions of new images of women are influenced not only by persistent traditional forces but also by the influx of modern/ Western values. In the age of rapid economic, socio-cultural and political development, it is more significant to investigate how Chinese women, the so-called marginalized group, to be represented in nowadays advertising so as to reveal the images and identity of contemporary Chinese women who are involved in a continuous process of re-positioning and re-selection between tradition and modernity. Therefore, this study has tried to develop an extensive framework to objectively evaluate how woman images in TV commercials/ contemporary Chinese women move along the traditional-modern continuum in different dimensions of their representations. This framework is expected to be useful for studying the representations of women in advertising in Asian countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, Korean and Japan, which are also influenced by Confucianism and patriarchy.

The findings indicate that there is a delicate combination of traditional and modern values in the image representations of women in Hong Kong and mainland China TV commercials: traditional values serve as strong ideological guidelines maintaining and monitoring the shape of inner self – "what kinds of person – to be"; while modern values exert influences more on the projection of external self – "what to do and how to do – to do". Rooted deeply in traditional Chinese culture and society, some traditional values, such as being kind, gentle, virtuous and obedient, play significant roles in personal growth and in the nuturance of moral conduct of contemporary Chinese women; while the active participation and extensive involvement of Chinese women in various recreational and occupational activities have projected their modernity that they are detaching from domesticity and from subordinate roles. The hybridized images of women show the traditional elements in their personality do not contradict their modern expressive images and their expressions of individuality.

Also, the hybridized images of women and their lifestyle are not simply a reflexive/ performative projection of self or individual lifestyle, but also a carrier of markers of social feelings and attitudes towards modernization. From the findings, the Chinese-modern lifestyle of women carries both individual and societal markers of tradition and modernity which contribute to the contemporary representations of women in commercials. At the individual level, contemporary Chinese women have remained kind, modest, gentle and caring at all times but there is a noticeable extension of portraying Chinese women from happy housewives (domesticity) to happy individuals (sociability). Moreover, they are shifting from being inferior and weak to being independent and

competent; nonetheless, there is a "double-bind" situation for contemporary Chinese women to be reserved and gentle so as to echo with the traditional norms as well as to be assertive and confident in modern days. At the societal level, with the economic growth and the increasing power of consumption, together with the rising status of Chinese women and their opportunities to work and receive education, there are shifts in the expectations of and life goals of women that they are able to devote more time on their career and friendship and they have started to acknowledge their value and realize their self aspirations. The relatively higher social positions of Chinese women and the socio-economic development in contemporary society have enabled Chinese women to enter the mainstream whilst patriarchal ideologies and hierarchical relationships have gradually diminished.

In addition, the findings of this study provide evidence of the significance and dominance of hedonism values in Hong Kong society, as manifested in the extensive association of hedonism values with woman images and in the emphasis of self-enjoyment, independence, individuality and sociability. In mainland China commercials, interestingly, in contrast to traditional and stereotypical portrayals of women worldwide, woman images are often associated with masculinity, as manifested in their portrayals in conventional masculine occupations, in the workplace and in promoting technology products. In other words, Hong Kong resembles Western core value significantly while China is shaping her own "iron girls" with modern/ Western values in the representations of women in TV commercials.

The intertwinements of tradition and modernity is not simply

pick-and-throw so that it is crucial for us to move beyond the binary dichotomies, such as patriarchal versus capitalistic, masculine versus feminine, active versus passive, and strong versus weak, into dialectical dynamics. The hybridized woman images in TV commercials show that it is possible and common to incorporate both traditional and modern values in oneself. The diversities of different traditional-modern combinations provide rooms for individuality and self-expression. Thus, it appears that the hybridization of traditional and modern values is a complex and on-going process.

The study has added one more cross-cultural study of the two significant regions in Greater China, Hong Kong and mainland China, to the field of gender and advertising discourses, and to the field of mass media research because the representations of women and its practices in advertising have not been well researched and compared in the two places. Although they share similar traditional Chinese culture backgrounds, their different social-cultural and economic developments and transformation result in different preferences and images of women. The results of this study validate the significance and dominance of hedonism values in Hong Kong society and the extensive association of hedonism values with woman images in advertising shows the consistence of image representations and general advertising practices. For mainland China, the representations of women in TV commercials projected a relatively delicate balance of tradition and modernity while masculinity in women has also been highlighted. In other words, Hong Kong resembles significantly more of Western core values while China is shaping her own "iron girls" with modern/ Western values in the representations of women in TV commercials. These findings are significant as they record the transformations

of woman images in Chinese society in the globalizing age and they call for more attention to and closer studies on the hybridity of Chinese woman images in the future.

7.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

As this study has attempted to get an extensive and overall picture of the representations of women in TV commercials, this study has collected both day-time and prime-time, weekday and weekend TV commercials. Nonetheless, only one TV channel from Hong Kong (i.e. TVB) and one from mainland China (i.e. CCTV) were selected as the source of sample and the sample was collected all in November due to time and resource constraints. Since China is geographically large and contains hundreds of regional TV channels, the sample of woman image representations in a major national TV channel may differ from those in regional channels and therefore the findings may not be convincingly generalized across all regions in mainland China. Also, as only one month − November had been selected as the convenient time frame for the sample collection. Further efforts would need to be to seasonally adjust the figures in the two locations if greater statistical accuracy is to be achieved of the data sets. Additionally, November 2010 did not have any major festivals, but it should be noted that Asian Games 2010 was carried out in the second half of November in Guangzhou, China and there may be additional factors in the image representations of women in the commercials collected at the time. Therefore, for future research to further explore the image representations of women in Greater China area, it may be worthwhile to draw a larger sample size with more (regional) TV channels from major cities in China, such as

Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, and to include more months in the time frame for sample collection. Moreover, although this study offers much insight about current situations and existing advertising practices/ norms of women's images in TV commercials in Hong Kong and mainland China, it is worthy of our efforts to obtain longitudinal data so that we can trace the progression of women's images moving along the traditional-modern continuum across time.

In addition, this study primarily examined the audio and visual representations of women in TV commercials through quantitative and qualitative analysis; despite the fact that the framework of analysis for this study has already attempted to include as many dimensions/ signs as possible in details, this study has only given limited research attention to linguistic aspects. Traditional and modern forces on women's language attitudes and linguistic choices in TV commercials have only been superficially touched upon in this study. This study has offered much insight about the language mixing patterns of woman figures in TV commercials and has discussed how language preferences contribute to their traditional and/ or modern representations. Nonetheless, this can be further enhanced by examining their language semantically and syntactically. Their word choices and their sentence structures such as direct, indirect, hedging, affirmative, do contribute to their traditional and/ or modern representations in TV commercials. Thus, further attempts can be made on the linguistic aspects and incorporate this area to my existing research framework so as to further enrich its validity and vigor.

Given the limitations of content analysis, this study does not offer explanations or provide any clues to the effectiveness/ significance of the

findings to the society, and the perceptions/ reactions of audience. Despite the fact that this study has tried to enhance the understanding of image representations of women in TV commercials by qualitative analysis, this study provides little implications to the questions such as: "What are the effects of those hybridized representations on contemporary Chinese women, children and even men?", "Do the hybridized representations in TV commercials mirror the changes in society's expectations of Chinese women?", "What factors or motives drive such hybridized portrayals of women?", "Does the appropriation of modern values is done from women's point of views, or from men's?". These questions are indeed crucial to further understanding this topic. Talbot (2000) pointed out in her study that there were no or little resonance between traditional portrayals and stereotypes of women in advertising and contemporary women in reality. Thus, with the exploratory results obtained in the present study, the next stage would be to investigate the impacts of such hybridized images of women on contemporary Chinese women in reality and on the society through consumer research, survey and interviews.

Upon the findings of this study, it is interesting to notice the de-feminization of woman images in mainland China TV commercials and its relation to modernity, which has been rarely mentioned in previous studies. Future research can examine the significance and effects of de-feminization on images and identity of Chinese women in advertising.

The above suggested possible studies may further our understanding of what representations of women in TV commercials are most appropriate to, and positively/negatively acknowledged to the TV audience today and most

effective in building up connection/ self-references with the target consumers, as well as provide further insights into the progression of Chinese society in the globalizing age.

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