

THE GENDER-ROLE STEREOTYPING OF MEN AND WOMEN IN HONG KONG TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

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The present study aimed to examine the portrayal of men and women in television advertisements in two different television channels (English and Chinese medium) in Hong Kong. The study involved a content-analysis of how men and women are portrayed on television using the well-used coding scheme. The Chinese channel had significantly more gender stereotypic adverts compared to the English channel (6 out of 10 attributes compared to only 2 out of 10 attributes). Results were compared to previous studies done in Asia as well as in the rest of the world.

Key words: gender-role, stereotyping, television, Hong Kong

Since its inception public television has been accused of powerful social influences in its portrayal of contemporary people in society. Nearly 30 years ago Sternglanz and Serbin (1974) provided evidence of how television programs and commercials typically portray gender-stereotypical images. In addition to being a powerful communication tool, television also portrays how a society operates in a specific cultural context. It serves, critics have argued, as a model of socialisation and control by dramatising its current norms and values (Bryant & Zillman, 1994).

McArthur and Resko (1975) carried one of the first pioneering content-analytic studies on gender stereotypes on TV advertisements. Since then, many have followed (e.g. Courtney & Whipple, 1974; Culley & Bennett, 1976; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Furnham & Farragher, 2000; Furnham, Babitzkow, & Ugucioni, 2000; Furnham, Pallangyo & Gunter, 2001; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; O'Donnell & O'Donnell, 1978; Schneider & Schneider, 1979), often using coding schemes modelled on the original one as used in the McArthur and Resko study. The coding scheme involved coding eight different characteristics of the central character in the televised advertisement.

Furnham and Mak (1999) examined and reviewed sex-role stereotyping in television advertisements of fourteen studies across five continents over a period of 25 years. Sex-role stereotyping tended to be surprisingly consistent across different countries. In most countries, males were more likely to be the authoritative figures doing voice-overs, while females were more likely to be users of the products and are presented visually. Further, men were more likely to adopt a professional role in an occupational or leisure setting, whereas females were more likely to have a dependent role often portrayed at home. The

I should like to acknowledge the detailed and very helpful criticisms of an anonymous reviewer.

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content category “reward type” showed even greater sex-role stereotyping in virtually all the sample countries: females were shown to be associated with more products that yield social/self enhancement than males, which in comparison were more associated with pleasurable rewards.

However, results were not all consistent. Several studies showed a reverse pattern on specific incidences of sex-role stereotype (Furnham & Skae, 1997; Ferrante, Haynes, & Kingsley, 1988) where women are portrayed as independent, professional and authoritative concerning the product benefits; while men were portrayed as dependent and unintelligent and as user of the products. This no doubt has a humorous effect that advertisers wish to create. The fact that women are increasingly shown as independent, authoritative figures can be explained by the rising number of working women as shown by the global statistics.

A recent East-West study comparing gender-roles in prime-time advertisements in America, Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan showed that the majority depicted males and females in non-stereotypic gender roles (Bresnahan, Inoue, Liu, & Nishida, 2001). Further, there have been some more recent studies using data from Japan (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002). Using 17 content analytic categories and based on five content analyses (sample as a whole; using only the central figure; using two central figures; using visual presentation only; using aural presentation only) Furnham and Imadzu (2002) found strong and consistent evidence of sex-role stereotyping. Male central figures were more authoritative and appeared more as narrators or interviewers than women, frequently giving scientific or factual arguments for the product being advertised. Females tended to be young, attractive, product-users giving opinions rather than facts and being accompanied by jingles or groups of other similar females.

Studies conducted by Williams and Best (1990) and Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) suggested that Asian countries are slower to adopt ideas of gender equality that have become popular in the West in recent years. A study of gender stereotyping in Japanese television advertisements shown between 1961 and 1993 confirmed the fact that there is evidence of declining stereotypes although traditional differences remain (Sakamoto, Kitou, Takahira, & Adachi, 1999). One study in particular examined the TV advertisements from Hong Kong and Indonesia (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000) and concluded that gender-role stereotyping is stronger in parts of East Asia than in the West (specifically Europe). Further, the results from the two studies were found to be surprisingly similar although the two countries are very different in terms of size, culture, religion and history. For example, it was found that males are more likely to do voice over as an authoritative figure, rather than a user, in both Hong Kong and Indonesian TV advertisements. Females on the other hand are more likely to be used as background, or as users of body-products with a social or self-enhancement quality. Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) content-analysed only one Hong Kong channel (namely Jade). Results were contrasted with a content analysis from Indonesia. This study content analysed a Chinese and an English speaking channel on Hong Kong television. It is thus a within-country comparison.

Hong Kong, a cosmopolitan city that celebrates cultures from both the East and the

West reflects two very different groups of population. One group, mainly of Chinese origins, still has deep-rooted traditional perspectives and prefer watching the Chinese channel, compared to their Western counter-parts of either Western origin or Westernised Chinese with western values and culture who often prefer watching the English channel. The existence of two different channels aims to serve these two different linguistic audiences. It is thus hypothesised that greater gender stereotyping will be found in advertisements on Chinese channel than on English channel (Bond, 1986).

A previous study (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000) which examined one channel (Chinese channel) in Hong Kong revealed that the stereotypical portrayals of men and women in TV advertisements were greater than shown in similar studies conducted in Italy, Britain, and the United States (Bretl & Cantor, 1988; Furnham & Skae, 1997; Furnham & Voli, 1989). A central hypothesis is that differences will be found between the two channels, in terms of how men and women are depicted in TV advertisements. This study is essentially examining sub-cultural differences by looking at differences and similarities of two channels produced for, and in, the same society. It is not easy to get reliable viewing figures or a breakdown of the audiences for the two channels. The station (Television Broadcasts Limited) transmits around 14,000 hours of programmes on its Jade (Chinese) and Pearl (English) channel to 2.1 million homes annually. Nearly all of the Chinese programmes are made locally and in Mandarin whereas a greater percentage of the English channel programmes are imported. However, all advertisements are either locally made or adapted for the local market. At prime time viewing the two channels average 81% of the television audience. However the audience for the English channel is much smaller aimed at the ex-pat community (of less than 5% of the population) and better educated, bilingual Cantonese inhabitants.

The rapid globalization of commercial products means it is possible to divide products into predominantly local vs global products and brands. Inevitably the Chinese channel portrayed more local brands than the English channel and this may lead marketeers and producers to portray more local, and possible gender stereotypic scenes. Further, some advertisements are simply dubbed or subtly changed adaptations and translations of western-made advertisements and maybe exactly the same product/portrayal but in a different language. In this study, however, there were no advertisements that fell into this category.

METHOD

Sample of advertisements:

The two most popular TV channels in Hong Kong TVB Jade (Chinese channel) and TVB Pearl (English channel) were chosen for the analysis. For a period of two weeks, from August 20th 2001 to September 2nd 2001, advertisements were recorded from both channels. Since TVB Pearl is suspended in the morning, all samples were therefore recorded in evenings for easier comparisons. Advertisements were recorded for a fairly wide 3-hour period each day from either 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Such selection of time slot per day was randomly assigned but attempts have been made to achieve an equal number of recording sessions across the two weeks period. Repeated TV advertisements were discarded, and any advertisements with unidentifiable central figures or the central figures being children and

cartoon characters were also excluded from analysis. In the end 81 from TVB Pearl and 73 from TVB Jade, non-repeat advertisements with clearly identifiable central characters were retained for detailed analysis.

Coding procedure:

The coding procedure was taken from the Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) study, which was originally modelled on Manstead and McCulloch (1981) and McArthur and Resko (1975) coding procedure. This coding scheme has been employed by many subsequent content analyses for the past 20 years; hence direct comparisons can be drawn with findings from previous studies (Furnham & Mak, 1999). The central figure was any adult portrayed in the advertisement that has the most distinguishable role, irrespective of whether they were presented visually, vocally or both. The 10 measured attributes were as follows:

Mode of presentation: The central figure was classified as voice over if he or she appeared as a disembodied voice-over, and as visual/other if the figure was presented visually, speaking or silent.

Credibility basis: The central figure was classified as one of the following: user (central figure portrayed primarily as a user of the product), authority (central figure depicted as a source of information concerning the product) or other (central figure which was neither a user nor an authority).

Role: Having a dependent role included parents, spouse, partner or a gender object; whereas professional means researcher or expert; or other where interviewer/narrator was responsible for describing the product being advertised. Note that professional and other was later collapsed into the same category.

Location: The central figure was classified according to the location to which he or she appeared: home, occupation, and leisure/unknown.

Age: The central figure was classified as either young (approximately under 30 years old), middle aged (approximately 31 to 60 years old) or as old (approximately over 61 years old).

Argument: This is classified according to the type of argument the central character gave about the product: factual (if the argument contains scientific or technical evidence concerning the product), opinion (if argument involved personal views or testimonials in favour of the product) or as none (if no argument was given).

Reward type: This refers to the reward gained from using or buying the product, and this is divided into five categories: social approval (social improvement in health or appearance), self-enhancement (self improvement in health or appearance), practical (having advantage for social or career advancement), pleasure (where rewards themselves were pleasurable), and other (when rewards do not fit into any of the categories above). Note that social and self-enhancement were combined subsequently for analysis.

Product type: Product type comprised of four main categories: body (when product involve health, cleansing, or clothing), home (when products are directly related to home or housework), food, and other (when none of the former categories were applicable).

Background: This refers to which five of the following backgrounds the central figure was portrayed against: mostly female, mostly male, mixed (a mixture of both males and females were shown and neither was predominating), mostly children, and none (when the central figure appeared alone with no other humans in the background).

End comment: The end comment is coded present if the central figure delivers a message, a sentence or a slogan with regards to the product. It is coded absent if no remark was given by the central figure.

To ensure coding reliability, 10% of the advertisements from both channels were coded independently by two Chinese-English bilingual speakers, one male and one female. They were trained by the second author. There was 94% agreement on the central character of each advertisement. For other key attributes, the percentage of agreement are as follows: 89% for mode of presentation, 94% for credibility, 94% for role, 83% for location, 87% for age, 83% for argument, 87% for reward type, 94% for product type, 89% for background and finally, 100% for end comment. After initial coding, the differences were discussed and reconciled. These agreed coding were then merged with the rest of the coding before final data analysis was performed. Note that none of the categories were collapsed after collection of data.

RESULTS

English TVB Pearl Channel

An overall significant chi-square was performed on the choice for central figures, $\chi^2(1, N=81)=5.44, p<.05$ showing that males (63%) were being more likely than females (36%) to be portrayed as central figures.

Mode of Presentation: An overall significant chi-square was found, $\chi^2(1, N=81)=8.81, p<.01$, suggesting that males were more likely to do voiceover than females, while females were more likely to be depicted visually than males.

Table 1. Percentage of Male and Female Characters Depicted in the English Speaking Channel Advertisements

Attributes		Male	Female	χ^2
Mode of presentation	Voiceover	60.8	26.7	8.81**
	Visual/other	39.2	73.3	
Credibility	User	19.6	26.7	0.55
	Authority/other	80.4	73.3	
Role	Dependent	9.8	10.0	1.19
	Interviewer/narrator	70.6	60.0	
	Professional/other	19.6	30.0	
Location	Home	9.8	16.7	2.28
	Occupation	11.8	3.3	
	Leisure/unknown	78.4	80.0	
Age	Young	13.7	33.3	4.81
	Middle aged	84.3	66.7	
	Old	2.0	0.0	
Argument	Factual	43.1	40.0	0.76
	Opinion/none	56.9	60.0	
Reward type	Social/self enhancement	5.9	0.0	2.56
	Practical	23.5	33.3	
	Pleasure	25.5	26.7	
	Other	45.1	40.0	
Product type	Body	7.8	6.7	4.53
	Home	0.0	6.7	
	Food	9.8	16.7	
	Other	82.4	70.0	
Background	Mostly female	7.8	40.0	19.19***
	Mostly male	21.6	0.0	
	Mixed	39.2	40.0	
	Children	9.8	13.3	
	None	21.6	6.7	
End comment	Present	68.6	76.7	0.60
	Absent	31.4	23.3	

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

Credibility: The chi-square was not significant for credibility basis, $\chi^2(1, N=81)=0.54, ns$, although overall, regardless of the gender of the central character, more characters adopted the authority role than as a user.

Role: No significant differences were detected between males and females in role, $\chi^2(2, N=81)=1.19, ns$, whether it was dependent or interviewer/narrator or professional/other.

Location: The overall chi-square for location was found not to be significant, $\chi^2(2, N=81)=2.28, ns$.

Age: Again, no significant differences were found between males and females in terms of age, $\chi^2(2, N=81)=4.81$. However, descriptive statistics show that most of the central characters were in the middle-aged category, and this was followed by young, and finally old.

Argument: The chi-square test on the type of argument used between the two sexes was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N=81)=0.76$.

Reward type: A chi-square test results showed that there were no significant difference between reward categories, $\chi^2(3, N=81)=2.56$.

Product type: The differences between product type categories were found not to be significant either, $\chi^2(3, N=81)=4.53$.

Background: An over chi-square was highly significant across all backgrounds, $\chi^2(4, N=81)=19.19, p<.001$. Females were most likely to be portrayed in their own gender background than males, and surprisingly, in this sample of advertisements, females were never portrayed in a background consisted mostly of males. Both females and males were equally as likely to be portrayed in a mixed background, and males are more likely than females to be portrayed alone in the advertisements with no backgrounds.

End comment: There was no significant differences as shown by the chi-square, $\chi^2(1, N=81)=0.60$.

Results for Chinese TVB Jade channel

An overall chi-square was performed on the choice of central character and there were no significant differences between males (60.3%) and females (39.7%).

Mode of presentation: The chi-square analysis revealed highly significant association between gender and the mode of presentation $\chi^2(1, N=73)=13.57, p<.001$. Males (68.2%) were more likely to do voice over than females (24.1%); and whereas females (75.9%) were presented visually more often than males (31.8%).

Credibility: A significant chi-square was found between gender and credibility, $\chi^2(1, N=73)=5.44, p<.05$. Females were more likely to be shown as product users (51.7%) rather than product authorities (48.3%). Males on the other hand were more likely to be depicted as product authorities (75%) than product users (25%).

Role: The relationship between gender and role was found to be highly significant, $\chi^2(3, N=73)=10.50, p<.01$. Males were more likely than females to adopt the role as an interviewer/narrator. Females, however were more likely to be portrayed as a professional/other and as dependent than males.

Location: The overall relationship between gender and location was also found to be

significant, $\chi^2(2, N=73)=8.50, p<.05$. Females (13.8%) were slightly more likely to be placed in a home setting than males (11.4%). This was also the case in occupation location; females (17.2%) were also more likely to be placed in an occupation setting than males (0%). Finally, males (88.6%) were placed most frequently in leisure/unknown location than females (69%).

Age: A significant difference for all three age groups, $\chi^2(2, N=73)=13.89, p<.01$. There were more females in the younger group, and more males in the middle aged group.

Argument: Chi-square analysis revealed that the difference between type of argument

Table 2. Percentage of Male and Female Characters Depicted in the Chinese Speaking Channel Advertisements

Attributes		Male	Female	χ^2
Mode of presentation	Voiceover	68.2	24.1	13.57***
	Visual/other	31.8	75.9	
Credibility	User	25.0	51.7	5.44*
	Authority/other	75.0	48.3	
Role	Dependent	15.9	20.7	10.51**
	Interviewer/narrator	75.0	41.4	
	Professional/other	9.1	37.9	
Location	Home	11.4	13.8	8.51*
	Occupation	0.0	17.2	
	Leisure/unknown	88.6	69.0	
Age	Young	36.4	79.3	13.89**
	Middle aged	61.4	17.2	
	Old	2.3	3.4	
Argument	Factual	43.1	51.7	2.25
	Opinion/none	65.9	48.3	
Reward type	Social/self enhancement	13.6	20.7	2.51
	Practical	29.5	41.4	
	Pleasure	56.8	37.9	
	Other	0.0	0.0	
Product type	Body	11.4	24.1	3.39
	Home	4.5	10.3	
	Food	52.3	41.4	
	Other	31.8	24.1	
Background	Mostly female	0.0	44.8	30.25***
	Mostly male	25.0	0.0	
	Mixed	29.5	34.5	
	Children	11.4	3.4	
	None	34.1	17.2	
End comment	Present	100	100	a
	Absent	0	0	

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

^a no statistic are computed because end comment was a constant.

used between females and males was found not significant, $\chi^2(1, N=73)=2.25$.

Reward type: The overall chi-square showed no significant association between gender and reward type, $\chi^2(1, N=73)=2.51$.

Product type: The chi-square was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N=73)=3.39$, *ns*, suggesting no significant difference between the categories.

Background: An overall chi-square was performed on the 2×5 contingency table and highly significant differences were found between gender and the background to which the central characters were placed against $\chi^2(3, N=71) 30.25, p < .001$. Both genders were more likely to be placed against a background of their respective gender, and were never placed against the opposite gender alone in this sample of advertisements. Nonetheless, both males and females were often placed in a mixed gender background (29.5%, 34.5%). Males (11.4%) were placed in a background with children more frequently than females (3.4%), and males (34.1%) were also more likely to be depicted alone in an advertisement than females (17.2%).

End comment: No statistic was computed because in all the advertisements in this sample an end comment was always present for both male and female central characters.

DISCUSSION

As predicted, results from the first study revealed that there were indeed some significant differences in gender stereotyping attributes between TV advertisements from the two channels (English TVB Pearl and Chinese TVB Jade). However, it should be pointed out that the male-female ratios in the central figures were very similar (63:36 and 60:40) and not significantly different from one another. The results of the analysis of the Chinese channel (Jade) are partly similar and partly different to that of Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000). In that study there were nine significant differences (out of ten) whereas in this study, there were six. Yet whereas the overall chi-square analysis showed a fairly similar pattern of significant differences the pattern of results within each attributed characteristic showed important differences. Thus, for instance, there was a significant growth in the professional female role from less than 1% (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000) to 37.9% in this study. The same is true for the location attribute which showed in this study a growth in the depiction of females in the occupation and leisure/unknown category compared to the results of Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000).

The choice of central character was found to be different between the two channels. This ratio found on Chinese channel was consistent with the previous findings from Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000), where men were more frequently depicted as central figures in advertisements on the Chinese channel though in this study the results were not significant, possibly due to the comparative small ($N=73$) compared to the previous study (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000).

For both channels, females were frequently portrayed visually (73.3% for English channel and 75.9% for Chinese channel), rather than being voiceovers. Meanwhile, males comprised a larger proportion in voiceovers than females (60.8% for English channel and

68.2% for Chinese channel). This finding is consistent with what was previously found in other studies where men largely did voiceovers and women were frequently portrayed visually (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000; Manstead & McCulloch, 1981; Neto & Pinto, 1998).

In line with the recent research in Britain (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Furnham & Skae, 1997; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002), females were portrayed far less as a dependent role (10%), but as interviewers or narrators (60%) in advertisements on the English channel in Hong Kong. In the Chinese channel males (75%) were more frequently depicted as interviewer or narrator than females (41.4%). Females on the other hand were more likely to be portrayed in the role of professional or other (37.9%) than males (9.1%). Although there were more males as interviewer/narrator, females were more likely to be a professional/other role than males. Perhaps this was due to the rising global statistics on working women in general, particularly in lower socio-economic status families where women are required to work to maintain the standard of living of the household. In that sense it is probable that fewer of the women viewing the English language channel had paid employment compared to the Chinese language channel. The present finding, therefore, only partially supports what was found in the Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) study.

No significant difference was found in the filmed location of advertisements on the English channel, but in the Chinese channel it was marginally significant. Unlike past studies (Manstead & McCulloch, 1981; Mwangi, 1996; Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000), where females were over represented at home, the present findings revealed that females (17.2%) were more likely to be filmed in an occupation location than males (0%). Males on other hand were filmed mostly in leisure or unknown locations (88.6%) as opposed to females (69%). Finally, both sexes were equally likely to be placed in a home setting (males 11.4%, females 13.8%). This may reflect a shift in gender stereotyping in advertisements on Chinese TVB Jade channel in Hong Kong.

Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) found that male central characters were often middle aged, while female central characters were often younger than 30 years. Similar effects were found in advertisements from the Chinese channel but not the English channel. On the Chinese channel, female central characters were frequently younger (79.3%) than male central characters (36.4%).

Significant differences were not found in the type of argument (factual or opinion) attribute in both channels. Both sexes were equally as likely to present a subjective argument rather than a factual one. This finding is consistent to findings in Australia (Mazzella, Durkin, Cerini, Buralli, 1992), but contrast with the previous study by Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) carried out in Hong Kong. As in other studies such as Furnham and Voli (1989), Manstead and McCulloch (1981), males were portrayed giving more factual argument than females. This may show a shift from the traditional gender-role stereotyped portrayal. Alternatively, this could also reflect a change of advertising/marketing strategies where advertisers believe that by giving a more subjective argument, regardless of the gender of the central character can create a more personal effect on the viewers, i.e. "we understand your needs, this is what we use too".

Perhaps they believe that such a personal effect can help mediate identification with the viewer and this consumer centred approach to marketing can help increase sales.

The reward given by the advertised product showed no significant gender stereotyping in both channels. Unlike previous findings, females and males were equally as likely to advertise products whose rewards are social/self-enhancing, practical and pleasurable. As for the type of product being advertised, no significant differences emerged in how females and males were depicted were detected either. Thus, this study fails to replicate findings from previous study (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000).

Past research revealed that females were more frequently portrayed in a background with other females. The present study supports this finding, whether it was advertisements on the English channel or the Chinese channel. While females were more frequently depicted against a background of other females, males were more frequently placed in a mixed background or a mostly male background. Such stereotyping under this attribute was surprisingly similar in both channels.

Unlike previous findings in the Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000) study, significant associations were not found between the end comment attribute and gender. This was the case for both English and Chinese channels. Specifically, in advertisements on Chinese TVB Jade channel, 100% of both male and female central characters gave the end comment, as opposed to the past study on Hong Kong where 63.5% of males gave the end comment and only 36.9% of females in comparison gave the end comment (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000). Whether it signifies a decrease in gender stereotyping for this attribute remains uncertain. This is because such change may be due to the fact that advertisers were more aware of the importance of giving an end comment, regardless of the gender of the central character. If the recency effect is in operation the importance of the end-comment should not be overlooked.

Whilst it is interesting to focus on difference between gender portrayal in the two language channels it is also worthwhile focusing on the similarities. There were indeed four attributes (argument, reward type, product type, end comment) that showed no significant difference in either channel. That is forty percent of the content categories showed no significant differences between channels. Indeed these are least likely to show significant differences in other studies in the area (Furnham & Mak, 1999). This suggests a universalism at least with regard to advertisements.

Overall as predicted, the degree of gender stereotyping in advertisements from the English TVB Pearl channel was slightly less apparent than advertisements in the Chinese TVB Jade channel although men were depicted more frequently as central figures on English TVB Pearl channel. Further, gender role stereotyping on the Chinese channel was found to be greatest in mode of presentation, role, age, and background. Such finding was largely consistent with the previous Hong Kong study (Furnham, Mak, & Tanidjojo, 2000) although there were some evidence that seem to suggest that the degree and the strength of stereotyping in Hong Kong is declining (Furnham & Skae, 1997) as found in the Western cultures, but at a much slower rate. Differences in advertisement sampling (time, number of advertisements, products) may, however, account for the differences in the results of the two studies. Only by doing studies over many years and using very

similar advertisement sampling frameworks can help determine whether stereotypes are actually changing on any one channel in any one country. Similar result patterns in how gender-role stereotypical attributes were distributed were also present in other studies such as in Denmark (Furnham, Babitzkow, & Uguccioni, 2000) in Japan (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002), in Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998), in South Africa (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002) and in the U.S. (Furnham & Skae, 1997).

Various criticisms maybe made of these content analytic studies. The content categories may be too limited or too unsubtle to pick up important nuances in the data. More importantly perhaps some of the categories specifically product type, reward type and background remain ambiguous. Thus, for instance, social/self enhancement in the reward attribute category could be seen as either stereotypically male or female. Similarly for the credibility category even a user role could be seen to be perfectly credible if sex-role compatible. Thus a male using computer office equipment with ease and pleasure could be seen as perfectly credible even if not an authority. In this sense, it is possible the attributes need either to be re-thought or else the coding needs to be done in such a way as to determine whether stereotypes are appropriate, positive or negative.

Indeed it is quite possible that reliably measured changes in stereotypic sex-role advertising maybe seen to actually accurately reflect life-style, behavioural changes in males and females with regard to these attributes rather than changes in the stereotypes. That is, it is not that stereotypes are changing but society. The only way to test this is to attempt to gather reliable data on the changes of men and women at work, in the home and at leisure in a society over time.

Clearly gender stereotypes are established and maintained by numerous forces amongst which the most powerful are primarily socialisation, education and the media. Hong Kong has shown considerable change over the last decade including the "hand-over" from British to Chinese administration, large immigration (from the Mainland) and emigration (of the young, educated elite), as well as economic recession. Globalisation is to a large extent westernisation where western ideas, ideals, products and processes are exported and imported all over the world. In time these changes affect the stereotypes and how men and women are portrayed in all aspects of the media particularly advertisements which are very costly to make and have powerfully persuasive contents.

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(Manuscript received April 28, 2003; Revision accepted September 30, 2003)