

Gender Representation in Chinese Tobacco Advertising

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Abstract: The broad development prospects of the Chinese tobacco consumer market have attracted an increasing number of international companies to do business and invest in China. In tobacco marketing campaign, gender representation in advertising is a common and effective means to attract consumers. It has a great significance to marketing practitioners and advertisers, especially in the emerging market of China. A comprehensive understanding of gender representation in Chinese advertising can provide a universal framework for marketing campaign and help establish an academic foundation for market segmentation. This literature review aims to research the portrayal of gender representative images and roles in Chinese advertising, their formation reasons and changing trends. Drawing on huge number of academic journals, research papers and academic books in the online academic literature database, this literature review will critically analyze and summarize the literature related to gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising. The results show that the characteristics of gender representation in traditional Chinese advertisements are influenced by traditional Chinese culture, socialist political policies and Western value culture, and tend to modern Western advertising models. The gender representation in Chinese online advertising emphasized the concept of self and began to show more Chinese characteristics. In the future, the booming Chinese online advertising will have more variables and more complex trends, and there will be a huge academic gap left for future research.

Key words: gender representation; tobacco; advertising; cultural background

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INTRODUCTION

As the leading trading country and consumer market in the world, China is attracting huge amounts of international investment and business with its rapid market growth and broad development prospects. In the global arena, the Chinese market has an important position, and its booming development provides valuable opportunities for the marketing and advertising industries.¹ According to data from Statista,

Chinese advertising market reached \$87 billion in 2019, ranking second in the world.^{2,3} By 2020, the digital advertising market is expected to reach 80.921 billion U.S. dollars and continue to grow at a rate of 7.9% per year.⁴ Among them, tobacco advertising occupies a significant proportion. The revenue of Chinese tobacco industry has been rising year by year and is expected to reach \$149.7 billion in 2024.⁵ The rapid development of the tobacco industry and the advertising industry has made tobacco advertising the next gold mine. For this market, tobacco advertising practitioners and marketers must better understand

how to attract Chinese consumers, so that they can gain an advantage in increasingly complex and fierce competition. Advertising gender representation is one of the most common means in marketing advertising. Through the depiction and display of gender images and roles in advertisements, it implies people to define themselves through gender representation, and then connect products with consumers and achieve marketing purpose.⁶ Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of gender representation in Chinese advertising and the reasons for its formation can effectively help marketers conduct marketing and maximize effects of advertising. In addition, although gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising has been actively responding to global culture and Western culture for a long time, as the traditional Chinese advertising market shrinks, the rapidly growing Chinese online advertising gradually highlights new features with Chinese characteristics in terms of gender representation in advertising.⁷ These changes not only create more obstacles to understand the gender representation of Chinese tobacco advertising, but also bring huge research space to researchers.

The aims and objectives of literature review is to analyze Chinese tobacco advertising gender representation and its changes. Using gender representation as a clue to show the development trajectory and trends in Chinese advertising, so as to help marketers better understand likes and dislikes of Chinese consumers in tobacco advertising and help them adopt correct marketing and advertising strategies to have a positive effect on products and brands. Meanwhile, literature review will also focus on the new changes and new requirements of gender representation in Chinese advertising in traditional media and new media. The research questions which will be addressed are “How has gender been represented in tradition (off-line) Chinese tobacco advertising?”, “What are the reasons for any differences in how gender is represented in Chinese advertising? ”, “How has gender been represented in online Chinese tobacco advertising?” and “Are there differences between gender representation in offline and online Chinese advertising?”

To answer research questions, it is necessary to set certain parameters in the online search to limit the search results to obtain more appropriate search results. Research requires many academic journals, research papers and academic books related to the subject to build the foundation for the research. Therefore, it requires the use of professional online academic databases and resources, including databases provided online and through the Queen's University Belfast Library, such as Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, science Direct, ProQuest, Taylor & Francis Online and Wiley Online Library. In the process of searching literature related to the gender representation of Chinese tobacco advertising, China, tobacco advertising, gender, male, female, role and image, and social media are set as keywords to find and filter available academic resources. These keywords involve marketing, advertising, and media fields. Meanwhile, some academic research in areas that are often closely related to gender representation in advertising have also been investigated, including traditional culture, social changes, political policies, consumer psychology and marketing strategies. Since Chinese advertising gender representation are usually compared with those of other countries with different cultural backgrounds and geographic locations, searches, and surveys of descriptions of advertising gender representation in the United States, Japan, and South Korea are also conducted. In the process of further review of the results that meet the search restrictions, headlines and abstracts were read to determine their relevance to the key concept of gender representation in the advertisement and remove duplicate items. After the second screening, more than 100 academic journals, research papers and academic books published between 1975 and 2020 were retained for analysis and established a basis for literature review. Although some valuable studies may have been missed in the process, a rigorous review and sufficiently representative samples have been provided for the construction of literature reviews. Based on these academic resources, a detailed reading and analysis of the 60 most closely related to the research topics were carried out to get the results and discuss them. In addition, gender representation in Chinese advertising is divided into gender representation in traditional media advertisements and gender representation in new media advertisements according to different carriers. The publication date of the academic literature required by the two is obviously different. Therefore, the literature is arranged and classified according to

their publication dates. Through this procedure, the timeliness of the academic resources used is guaranteed and the number of literatures is balanced. Research on gender representation in online advertising has a stricter time limit, generally limited to 15 years, while traditional advertising does not have special restrictions.

EARLY STAGE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ADVERTISING PARTICIPANTS

Since the birth of advertising, gender representation has existed in marketing. While advertisers are obsessed with the depiction and display of gender and use gender images in advertisements, the public is also concerned about how the representation of different races and genders are portrayed.⁸ People of different gender are portrayed as different representative images and roles in advertisements, which are derived from social reality but do not necessarily correspond to the behavior, image and social status of men and women in the real world. In the communication between advertising and consumers, gender representation cleverly becomes a clue connecting the two, prompting people to learn gender through advertising, and to classify and define themselves. Erving Goffman mentioned the issue of gender representation in Gender Advertisements.⁹ In the gender portrayal of advertisements, men and women usually play relatively fixed roles. Men generally play the role of parents, showing control, protection, authority, and power, while women usually act like children, lacking control and need protection. McArthur and Resko also stated in their research that women are more portrayed as a non-independent role than men and dependent on others.¹⁰ The male role is more portrayed as authoritative and independent. These two seminal and famous works provide basic methods and framework for follow-up research.

In the early stage of advertisements, the representation of men and women differed greatly in image and frequency. According to the research of Belkaoui and Belkaoui, women appear in advertisements far less frequently than men, and they are portrayed in negative stereotypes.¹¹ They usually play a decorative role and are

confined to the family environment, and their images are mostly related to product users and family consumers. Correspondingly, the frequency of appearance of men in advertisements dominates, and they are set as authoritative and professional person, and their images are often expressed in the form of professional roles.¹² These research analyzed and summarized the stereotyped gender impressions in advertising, and stereotyped gender impressions have become the standardized representation of gender images and roles in early advertising in China and the world.

CHINESE TOBACCO ADVERTISING GENDER REPRESENTATION IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The appearance characteristics and roles of gender representation in advertisements reflect the cultural background and social reality. Different cultural backgrounds will bring unique differences in the gender representation of advertising.¹³ And the social reality will add time characteristics to the representation, and further process the gender representation in the advertisement. A comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture and social reality will help marketers and advertising practitioners grasp the consumer psychology and emotional preferences of consumers, thereby closely linking products and consumption to achieve better marketing effects.

Influence of Cultural Background

With a large number of research on gender roles being widely carried out in many countries around the world, the gender representation in advertisements has been found to change with differences in cultural backgrounds. Many of the cross-cultural advertising gender representation literature introduced the concept of national gender based on the cultural dimension theory of Hofstede to explain the differences and similarities of advertising gender representation in different countries and different cultural backgrounds. According to the cultural dimension theory analysis of Hofstede, China belongs to masculinity, which means that China is a success-oriented and success-driven male society, and men are more inclined to put work first in society.¹⁴ This leads to the similarity between male representation and stereotyped male impressions in advertisements. They are more career-oriented and appear as independent professional images. Meanwhile, Chinese women are also obsessed with better work and remuneration because of the value system of masculinity, which has

led to the appearance of more independent and professional images of women in Chinese advertisements.¹⁵ In addition, the masculinity society also indicates that the social status difference between men and women will be greater.¹⁶ The concept of gender inequality is specifically manifested in the gender representation of advertisements as the images of men and women in advertisements are closer to traditional stereotypes. However, this is not entirely applicable in China. Chinese unique traditional culture and political policies have added more Chinese characteristics to the gender representation in Chinese advertising.

In terms of the Chinese cultural background, Confucianism has always maintained a distinctly dominant position in China. The traditional ideology has directly led to the differences in the depiction of gender in the entire Chinese society. In China, the characteristics that men admire are reflected in two aspects: "Wen" and "Wu".¹⁷ "Wen" represents wisdom, civilization, elegance, and other qualities related to academics and art. "Wu" stands for strength, strength, power, military strength, and is usually associated with muscularity, strength and success. These male characteristics are very popular in traditional Chinese advertising. And in traditional Chinese Confucian culture, they are considered to be ideal qualities of Chinese male representation, and there is no difference between them. However, in the analysis of Chinese male qualities conducted by Louie, "Wen" is more commonly regarded as a higher-level trait than "Wu" and it has been favored by the public more.¹⁸ This has led to a higher frequency of wise and culturally attractive male images in Chinese traditional media advertisements. Compared with Western advertisements full of images of strong and powerful men, there is a significant difference. This is further verified in the research of Shaw and Tan, the male characters in Chinese advertisements show more fragility compared to Western male representation which contains toughness and masculinity.¹⁹ For the female representation in Chinese advertising, the traditional Chinese value system centered on Confucian culture is not so friendly. In traditional Chinese cultural values, the social status of women is much lower than that of men, and the notion that women must depend on men is

emphasized. For example, in the most famous "three obedience" in traditional Chinese culture, which imposes strict restrictions on women, women are not allowed to be independent. Obey their fathers before marriage, their husbands after marriage, and their sons after their husbands die. These traditional concepts not only emphasize the dependence of women, but also imply the information that women need to fully invest themselves in the family. According to the research of Hsu, traditional Chinese values give Chinese women more distinctive characteristics of chastity and obedience to authority.²⁰ In the description of female images in Chinese advertisements, these characteristics are manifested as more shyness and subordinate status, and more of the role of decoration and family.²¹ Cheng mentioned in his research that women in Chinese TV commercials have less nudity and dress more demure.²² In China, scantily-clad women are often unpopular and not respected because of the influence of traditional culture. Compared with the representation of Western women, in Chinese advertising, nudity is usually not associated with positive traits such as self-confidence and independence. Although traditional Chinese culture has added some unique features to the representation of women in Chinese advertising, the images and roles of women in traditional Chinese media advertising still have more similarities with traditional stereotypes.

Influence of Political Factors

During the Mao Era, the representation of women in Chinese advertisements is displayed more in plain worker images, rather than rigid housewives. Under the influence of the gender equality politics of "women hold up half the sky" proposed by Mao, the social status of Chinese women has been improved as never before, especially in work. Affected by the collectivism and political policies of the China, Chinese women are encouraged to participate in labor and are widely used as labor in various production activities, not only in the family.²³ This has led to a rapid increase in the female employment rate, maintaining a high level in Asia.²⁴ The behavior of enhancing social status of female through political policies has not only won more appearances and roles for women, but has also formed the long-term representation of women in Chinese advertisements characterized by short hair and plain clothes.²⁵ However, Hulme pointed out that the popularity of "Mao suits" that eliminate male appearance

characteristics and female appearance characteristics is a weakening behavior of female appearance characteristics, which is a kind of forced asexualization.²⁶ Asexual clothing and asexual consciousness suppressed pursuit and expression of beauty, and laid the groundwork for the subsequent changes in female representation in Chinese advertising.

The reform and opening implemented by China have made Chinese traditional values and gender representation under the impact of Western masculinity and Western capitalist values, and Western masculinity has long been in a dominant position.²⁷ Western masculinity interrupted the gender equality movement in China, and Chinese society has returned to a state of inequality in which men dominate and women are subordinate. Cao and Hu stated that the reform and opening has exacerbated gender inequality in China, more women have been discriminated against and unfairly treated in the workplace, and have begun to return to their family roles.²⁸ Zhang, “Tony” Srisupandit and Cartwright found in research that gender discrimination and inequality in Chinese society have led to a significant reduction in the frequency of female images in Chinese advertisements, more role restrictions, and higher similarity between female representation and traditional stereotypes.¹⁵ In addition, the capitalist values that entered China through reform and opening have further become the driving force for the change of female representation in Chinese advertising. Hulme believes that reform and opening not only brought various styles and colors of clothes to Chinese women, but also liberated the suppressed desire for beauty and individuality.²⁶ According to the research of Munshi, after the reform and opening, personalities and economic abilities have been developed.²⁹ Hedonistic consumerism has gradually spread among Chinese women, and modern Chinese women have begun to focus on their own beauty. The change has led to a radical change in the representation of women in Chinese tobacco advertising. Asexual clothing, simplicity and demureness have become history, Western-style fashion has gradually become a benchmark, and the representation of women in Chinese tobacco advertising has more nudity and more sexiness.

Global and Local

Globalization has not only enhanced the communication and cooperation between countries and regions, but also brought disputes between globalization and localization. The openness of China is gradually increasing, the depiction of gender representation in advertisements faces a choice, one is western modern culture, and the other is traditional Chinese Confucian culture. In the research of Chinese advertising by Shao and his colleagues, interviewees always insisted on a view that the depiction of gender representation in Chinese advertising bears the dual influence of Chinese traditional culture and Western culture.³⁰ They are all clearly aware that the concepts grown from traditional Confucianism are being impacted by Western values and Western capitalism.

Influence of western culture

With the continuous communication and integration between different cultures, Western culture has gradually occupied a dominant position in the portrayal of gender images in Chinese advertisements. Mueller stated in his research that the beauty standards of the Western model often act as a status symbol in Asian countries.³¹ According to the social comparison theory, people will judge themselves through comparison. In upward comparison, the individual will set the person whose social status is higher than himself as the object of comparison. In the field of advertising, this has prompted Western models to become the benchmark for gender representation in Chinese advertising, and has led to Chinese tobacco advertising female representation continue to lean towards global beauty. Luo and Hao analyzed the images of women in Chinese magazine advertisements from 1956 to 2003 and found that the number of women wearing makeup and fashionable clothes was increasing.³² Frith and his colleagues attribute this change to the relevance of fashion and modernity to Caucasian female models.³³ Luo believes that the global beauty standard is built around Western female images, such as big eyes and sharp chins, and it has become a standard of beauty in China and has deeply influenced the portrayal of female representation in Chinese advertising.³⁴ The research result of Farquhar also confirmed this.³⁵ The standardized feminine beauty of Western models is spreading in Chinese advertisements and gradually becomes the ideal beauty. Huang and Lowry further confirmed the mainstream status of this aesthetic in their research on advertising models in Chinese

magazines. In Chinese female magazines, Western female models accounted for 84.6% of female advertising images.³⁶ The global beauty represented by Caucasian female images is leading the female representation in Chinese advertising.

In addition, the trend is also due to the idiosyncratic attitude of Chinese society towards fair skin. "Yi Bai Zhe Bai Chou", which means fair skin can cover a hundred kinds of ugliness on the face, is a proverb in Chinese society that best expresses the preference of fair skin. Both Chinese men and women firmly believe that fair skin can make up for facial defects and blemishes. This is easily connected with the global beauty represented by Caucasian female images in advertisements.³⁷ According to research of Chan and Cheng on the portrayal of Eastern and Western models in Chinese advertisements, Caucasian models are dominant in advertisements, and they also account for the largest proportion in advertisements for clothing, accessories, skin care and beauty products.³⁸ The strong preference of Chinese people for fair skin has further promoted the spread of global beauty in China. The image of western women has a subtle influence on Chinese consumer in terms of perception and judgment of beauty, and it has prompted people to believe that some of the physical characteristics of Caucasian women are more superior. This in turn enhanced the attractiveness of the appearance of Western Caucasian models and strengthened the representative position of global beauty in the gender image of Chinese advertising.

The changes that Western culture has brought about gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising are not only reflected in beauty standards, but also in sexual liberation. In China, the degree of sexiness or nudity in advertisements is closely related to Chinese cultural values. Confucian values have always maintained a restrictive attitude towards sex. For a long period of time, men and women will not be shown in the image of revealing clothing.³⁹ After the reform and opening, China began to contact with Western cultural values and relaxed restrictions on sex.⁴⁰ The turning point of the sexuality was further discussed in the research of Laing on the neutral culture of Chinese advertising.⁴¹ At the beginning of the 20th

century, the advertising images of scantily-clad females were not popular in China. However, at the end of the 20th century, the female images in Chinese advertisements already imitated the sexiness of Western advertising models through their posture and appearance, and even nude images appeared. According to the gender analysis conducted by Huang and Lowry on nudity in Chinese advertisements, naked female images accounted for 75.8% of the observed samples.⁴² Whether male or female, Western model or Eastern model, nudity is no longer a taboo in Chinese advertising, but has become a means of publicity that is acceptable to the public to enhance attractiveness. Although the level of nudity in Chinese advertisements is relatively low compared with other countries, the demand for sex appeal and sexy images has been significantly increased.⁴³ Sexy has become one of the important characteristics of gender representation in Chinese advertising.

For the male representation in Chinese advertising, it also reveals globalization in the specific expression of hegemonic masculinity. Although some male hegemonic characteristics such as authority, strength and robustness dominate in Western and Eastern advertising, on a global scale, hegemonic masculinity will be different due to different factors such as geographic area, cultural background, and social reality.⁴⁴ In traditional Chinese culture, masculinity is classified into "Wen" and "Wu", where "Wu" represents a general hegemonic feature.¹⁸ With the import of Western culture, the specific expression of "Wu" has become more globalized, and is called "Old Grilled Meat" (OGM). In the research of Hall, the image of OGM has a high similarity to the image of Western metrosexual.⁴⁵ Men have the characteristics of focusing on appearance and fashion, and have moderate muscles and maintain a cool attitude. The new image of middle-aged men influenced by Western culture has quickly become the trend of male images in Chinese tobacco advertising.

Influence of Chinese local culture

In China, although the depiction of tobacco advertising roles and images has gradually tended to the modern advertising gender model dominated by Western culture, adherence to local culture is still an important factor. Zhou, Poon and Wang mentioned in the research of advertising attitudes of Chinese consumers that race and ethnic image have an important influence on advertising.⁴⁶ The correct choice of ethnic representatives can help motivate

consumers to maintain a positive attitude towards advertising and products. Zhou and Belk stated that although the Western model has strong appeal and advantages in Chinese advertising and marketing, Chinese consumers prefer Chinese elements and Chinese models in advertising.⁴⁷ This is not only because Chinese traditional cultural values are deeply rooted, but also because of nationalism and racial preferences. Since ancient times, the Han nationality has been the largest ethnic group in China and accounted for more than 90% of the population. This makes the ethnic attitude of Chinese have a fairly high consistency and a high sense of national honor. Meanwhile, the concept of family that Chinese traditional Confucian culture has always emphasized is deeply rooted in the mind of the people. Family culture refers to family in a narrow sense, and refers to the entire Chinese nation in a broad sense. The cultural value that every member of the Chinese nation is a member of the family urges the Chinese to have a strong preference for the compatriots of the Chinese nation. The specific manifestation of the preference in the advertising field is to prefer advertisements with Chinese faces as the representative image. In the survey of model ethnic preference in advertisements conducted by Barnes and his colleagues, Chinese showed a strong preference for Eastern models, and the number of respondents who expressed a strong preference for Eastern models was almost twice as much as the people have a strong preference for West models.⁴⁸ Chinese face has become one of the important criteria for Chinese consumers, and this also makes most companies give priority to ethnicity when choosing male or female models in Chinese advertising. The local culture that Chinese consumers adhere to is deeply embedded in Chinese advertising, which also makes Chinese face become an indispensable feature in gender representation of Chinese advertising.⁴⁹

For gender representation in traditional Chinese tobacco advertising, traditional Chinese Confucian culture, socialist political policies and Western cultural values strongly influence the portrayal of gender representation. Both male gender representation and female gender representation have experienced a process from localization to globalization. The gender

representation of Chinese advertising is dominated by traditional Chinese culture and socialist political policies, and gradually transformed into a modern advertising gender representation that is dominated by Western culture. Although Chinese consumers still have strong local preferences in the depiction of gender images, such as Chinese elements and Chinese faces, it has been extremely Western in general. These research not only answer the question of what gender representation in traditional Chinese tobacco advertising is, but also explain why the gender representation in traditional Chinese tobacco advertising is significantly different from that in traditional advertising in other countries. For advertisers and marketers, a comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture and differences will lay the foundation for the success of international advertising in the future.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Wendels pointed out that gender representation in advertising has a very important effect on the desire of consumer to buy products and brand evaluation.⁵⁰ Only the customized advertising aimed at Chinese consumers can maximize the effect of marketing.⁵¹

CHINESE TOBACCO ADVERTISING GENDER REPRESENTATION IN NEW MEDIA (ONLINE)

The Online Era of China

In the past 20 years, the popularization of the Internet in China and the application of related technologies have made remarkable achievements. The number of online users in China has continued to rise rapidly, and online consumption has become one of the most popular research areas. As the largest online retail market in world, China has achieved steady growth for many years and reached \$1.9 trillion in 2020, which is more than three times that of the American market (Ma, 2020).^{52,53} According to a report of Statista, among the 710.3 million online shopping users in China, millennials have become the largest online shopping group.⁵⁴ The substantial increase in the number of purchases of tobacco products is due to the frequent exposure of young people to tobacco advertisements on social media.⁸² In these tobacco advertisements, the focus of young people is more concentrated on the models.⁸³ Yang and his colleagues conducted research on Chinese millennial consumers and found that millennials are the only children in Chinese families, and their growth is closely integrated with the Internet.⁵⁵ They have full access to the information of world through the

Internet, and attach great importance to the individual and freedom, so their representation is completely different from the previous generations. Hiller and Woodall mentioned in their research that values are the core of consumer behavior, which can guide individual choices and behaviors and provide a basis for understanding consumer behavior.⁵⁶ Hedonism in Western culture, as one of the most important values of young Chinese consumers, deeply influences the consumption behavior and value judgment of millennials.⁵⁷ This not only interprets the enthusiasm of Chinese marketing practitioners for Western-style advertising, but also provides a reference for the changing trend of gender representation in online tobacco advertising. In addition, East Asian culture, with Japanese culture and Korean culture as an important part, has gradually become another factor that has a strong influence on the gender representation of online tobacco advertising in China, relying on the advantages of geographical distance and cultural communication.

Critical Absorption of Western Culture

Although the Western media is full of images of extremely thin female bodies, images of healthy women with muscles will be representation of online advertisements in China.⁵⁸ For millennials, the largest receiving group of online advertising, Western aesthetics and Western advertising have been accompanied by their growth. This has caused the gender representation in online advertising in China to be largely influenced by Western trends. Jung and Forbes believe that young Chinese, who have long been exposed to western media advertisements and body images, have a higher perception of being slim.⁵⁹ However, as the concepts of exercise, fitness, and health have been accepted by more and more people in the Western world, healthy and muscular female appearance will become a popular trend of female body images.⁶⁰ The female image, which is significantly different from the slim figure, will also become the new female gender representation in Chinese tobacco online advertisements. Meanwhile, young people in China have begun to express a negative attitude towards the portrayal of extremely thin women in modern advertisements. In the research of Chan

on the portrayal of female images in advertisements for young girls in Hong Kong, girls have already expressed dissatisfaction and critical attitudes towards the extremely thin body images in the advertisements.⁶¹ Chan and his colleagues further explained it in their research, these negative attitudes come from excessive post-processing and unrealistic female body images.⁶² Respondents took a critical stand on the images of women with slender bodies, perfect skin and perfect faces in the advertisements. They thought the image was unnatural and unrealistic. Jung also mentioned in the research that the extremely thin female body image creates a huge weight loss pressure and strict body requirements for young Chinese women, and causes an increase in the risk of eating disorders.⁶³ Therefore, some brave women have begun to emphasize a healthy body image. It is foreseeable that the appearance of healthy and muscular women will gradually replace the slim appearance of female images in Chinese online advertisements and become the ideal female images in Chinese online tobacco advertisements.⁶⁴

In addition to body images, the role images of Chinese women are also changing towards individuality and freedom under the influence of Western culture and Western values. Arnett pointed out that the media can provide a large number of ideal images for teenagers when they identify their social identity and gender roles, and serve as a role model for them to make positive changes.⁶⁵ Advertising, as one of the most common means of displaying gender images in the media, provides a wide range of role images for young people. Western value culture with individuality and freedom has penetrated into the mind of Chinese young people following the widespread dissemination of Western advertising. This was proved in a research of Chinese women on the image of modern women in advertisements. Majority of interviewees expressed acceptance of Western values, revealed individualism and hedonism, and demonstrated independence and selfreliance.⁴⁹ In the research conducted by Leung Ng and Chan on female roles in advertisements, they asked the respondents in detail in terms of appearance, personality, work and family life, and ideal female image.⁶⁶ These respondents are all from China, but their answers are very Western. The female role image shows a high degree of autonomy, and has the characteristics of maturity and elegance that suggest independence. The influence of western value culture and the improvement of Chinese female status have prompted Chinese advertising female roles to break

through the limitations of traditional Chinese Confucian culture. For marketing practitioners and advertisers, contemporary female images that emphasize individuality and freedom will be a portrayal of the ideal female role pursued by young people, and this also means that it will become the female representation of online tobacco advertising in China.

Integration of East Asian Culture

As neighbors in East Asia, China, Japan, and South Korea have a long history of cultural exchanges. The trend of gender aesthetics has been maintained and will continue to be integrated with each other for a long time. In the analysis of Zitong about the "Feizhuliu" culture in Chinese Internet pop culture, it was confirmed that this emerging gender aesthetic trend has absorbed many representative characteristics of Japan and South Korea.⁶⁷ "Feizhuliu" culture was once the most famous and popular in China. Although it no longer dominates the Internet culture where the trend is changing very quickly, for millennials, it still has an important influence on the image of men and women in online advertising. In terms of online images, the image of men in the "Feizhuliu" culture is based on decadence and contains many different forms of negative life attitudes such as coldness. The image of women in the "Feizhuliu" culture shows a completely different style. "Feizhuliu" women will display cute, innocent, and childlike as important features of appearance, and add lollipops, colorful hairpins and cartoonstyle decorations to the image. The image implies a subtle strategy of showing goodwill by Asian women, which is widely used by people in daily life and to create romance in relationships.⁶⁸ The strong preference of East Asian people for cuteness has gradually evolved into a new visual feature of female expression on the Internet in contemporary China. Even now, in Chinese online advertising, there are still a large number of advertisements that use "Feizhuliu" as the theme of the gender image.

In terms of male representation in Chinese tobacco online advertising, the influence of East Asian culture on it is more significant. A new mixed masculinity has gradually become the most popular and trendy male representation in Japan, South Korea and China, which has

changed the traditional hegemonic masculinity that people have maintained in the past.⁶⁹ Hybrid masculinity incorporates some feminine beauty concepts on the basis of traditional masculinity, including fair skin, slim body and delicate makeup. It is called "Little Fresh Meet" (LFM) in China. According to the research of Luther and Smith on gender representation in Japanese advertising, the image of young people with fair skin and delicate makeup has existed in Japanese advertising for more than 20 years.⁷⁰ Similarly, appearances with these characteristics have been favored by Korean men and women for many years. Jiang, Huhmann and Hyman found that with the spread of the Internet and social media, the feminine masculinity has also entered China and gradually became popular.⁷¹ For online advertising in China, the positive response of Chinese consumers to the emerging hybrid masculinity is very strong. This means that fashionable, delicate makeup, fair-skinned and feminine male representation will dominate marketing and online advertising.

The Influence of Aging Society

The aging population of China is significantly increasing, and the image of the elderly is becoming the next important feature of gender representation in Chinese online advertising. Although China has enjoyed a huge demographic dividend in the past few decades, with the increase in life expectancy and the decline in the birth rate, China has become the country with the fastest aging population in the world and is facing a very severe aging society issues.⁷² According to a report of Statista, the aging population of China will account for 17.4% of total population of China in 2020, which is approximately 245 million, and this number is expected to continue to increase rapidly in the coming decades.⁷² This means that the elderly will become a consumer group that cannot be ignored in the future. Products and services that focus on the health and longevity of the elderly, such as health food, health care products and medical services, basically choose elderly men and elderly women as endorsers in advertisements, which makes the image of the elderly become a representative trend in Chinese advertisements. According to research of Chen on aging advertisements in China, the frequency of appearance of old men and old women in Chinese advertisements has shown a continuous increasing trend, and they mainly appear in advertisements for food, health products and medicines.⁷³ Prieler, Ivanov and Hagiwara conducted a further gender analysis of

the image of the elderly in Chinese advertisements and found that older men appear more frequently than older women.⁷⁴ The aging trend of Chinese advertising is not only because the demand for health-related products and services has driven the popularity of advertising images of the elderly, but also the result of the concept of respecting the elderly in traditional Chinese culture. Many advertisements need elderly models to highlight their long history, stability and authority, which is young models cannot bring.⁷⁵ In China, the consumer market for the elderly will gain huge potential for development through online sales, and aging advertising will also become one of the representative characteristics of Chinese online tobacco advertising image.

After entering the era of online advertising, gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising has gradually tended to highlight Chinese characteristics. This is not only reflected in the aging of advertising, but also reflected in the self-orientation of Chinese consumers towards gender images and roles in Chinese advertising. From a direct point of view, the "Feizhuliu" culture and Hybrid masculinity are formed on the basis of the unique Chinese culture and social reality, not simply copy. From an indirect perspective, although the female representation in Chinese tobacco advertisements are still under the shadow of Western culture, Chinese women have already consciously and critically absorbed. In terms of body image, the extremely slim body image is gradually being abandoned by the public. Chinese women are pursuing their own ideal beauty with a more rational attitude. Similarly, in terms of gender roles, the independent characteristics of Chinese female representation are the demands for the improvement of Chinese female social status, rather than a blind, unthinking copy of independent female images in Western culture. These are a good description of the gender representation of online tobacco advertising in China, and emphasize the differences in gender representation between traditional advertising and online advertising. These research and predictions have great significance to advertising practitioners and marketers. Chinese consumers are under the guidance of these emerging Chinese

characteristics to appreciate advertising and understand the creativity of advertising.⁷⁶ Whether marketers and advertisers can clearly grasp the trend of development and change will affect whether it will become an opportunity or an obstacle in the future.¹

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The research on gender representation in advertising takes the beginning of the Internet era as the key point of separation. The research of gender representation in traditional advertising and online advertising have shown a state of polarization. With the widespread application of network technology, online advertising has occupied a dominant position in the advertising industry, but the research on gender representation in online advertising is not abundant. Although traditional media including newspapers, magazines and television have shown a sluggish trend, the research of traditional advertising gender representation has been going on for decades, with rich, mature and detailed literature.⁷⁷ The academic research on gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising also has the same situation. There have been many research on gender representation in traditional Chinese tobacco advertising. However, there are few studies on Chinese online tobacco advertising, and there is almost no literature describing the gender characteristics of online advertising in China in detail. In most cases, it is only logically speculated based on the existing relevant literature, and there is no detailed and practical academic research results.

Karson, McCloy, and Bonner pointed out that although online advertising has developed at an amazing speed, its history is still short.⁷⁸ In other word, the reaction and attitude of Consumers are still changing, and there are still many uncertainties. For example, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) groups have diverse cognitions and requirements for gender in advertisements. The traditional simple division of male and female gender representation in advertising is no longer sufficient to satisfy the public. Diversified gender images and characteristics will be one of the further research directions for future research on gender representation in advertising.⁷⁹ In addition, big data will also add more variables to the research on gender representation in Chinese advertising. Chen and Zhou mentioned in their research that big data is undergoing intense discussions in the Chinese advertising market,

and it is like a double-edged sword for advertising.⁸⁰ On the positive side, big data provides evolutionary opportunities for marketing and advertising. The huge amount of consumer data can help marketers and advertisers to accurately construct the gender image of advertising and predict trends. From a negative perspective, advertising practitioners are also facing tremendous pressure and severe challenges. The entire advertising industry is trying to use big data to innovate itself to gain more competitive advantages, but any wrong information and technical obstacles may lead to wrong judgments on the gender representation of advertising, and then fall into the trap of big data. Although the practice of big data is still at the beginning stage, its application and practice have great potential, which can bring diversified possibilities to online advertising in China in the future.

CONCLUSION

Chinese gender representation has been continuously developed and changed in the past few decades. In the early stage, Chinese advertising only mechanically imitate the gender stereotypes in advertisements. In the subsequent development process, Chinese traditional Confucian culture, socialist political policies, and Western cultural values have become the most powerful factors shaping the gender representation of Chinese tobacco advertising. This study combed through the status of domestic and foreign research on Chinese gender representation, summarized the characteristics of roles and images in advertising, compared gender representation in traditional advertising and online advertising and provided reasons. It is believed that the ideal male characteristics of "Wu" and "Wen" embodied in Confucianism were influenced by Western culture and East Asian culture respectively. They became OGM which has a very high similarity with the image of Western metrosexual and LFM with feminine feature produced by the integration of East Asian culture. For the representation of female in Chinese tobacco advertisements, the appearance and role portrayal have gradually weakened submissive attributes and subordinate status due to Western value culture and hedonism, and began to emphasize beauty, freedom and

individuality. Its direct manifestation is increased nudity and sexiness, and the global beauty dominated by the appearance of Caucasian women has gradually become the standard image in traditional Chinese advertising. Although localization requirements still exist in the gender representation of Chinese tobacco advertising, such as Chinese elements and Chinese face, the gender image of traditional Chinese tobacco advertising has been extremely biased towards the modern advertising gender image dominated by Western culture.

After the advent of the era of online marketing, gender representations in Chinese tobacco advertisements highlights the attribute of self. The attribute of self has two meanings. From a cultural perspective, the attribute of self is embodied in the persistence of Chinese local culture in cultural integration. Whether it is "Feizhuliu" culture or Hybrid masculinity, Chinese local culture is an important part. From an ideological level, it is embodied in the critical ideology of gender representation in modern Western advertising. The body image of fitness and independent role image are the judgments of Chinese consumers based on their own consciousness, rather than blindly following the trend. In the future, the diversification of gender recognition and classification, and the application of big data in advertising will bring more uncertainty to gender representation in online Chinese advertising.

This study takes the gender representation in Chinese tobacco advertising as the core point and combed its development and changes. This has important guiding and enlightening significance for marketers and advertising practitioners. China has 1.4 billion people distributed in 34 administrative regions, and the geographical environment, economic conditions and cultural background of each administrative region are different.⁸¹ Faced with such a complicated situation, marketers and advertisers need universal and basic gender representation research to guide them, so that marketing and advertising remain correct within the framework of the Chinese market, and lay the foundation for segmentation. In addition, compared with mature research on gender representation in traditional Chinese tobacco advertising, the current academic research of gender representation in Chinese online tobacco advertising with detailed description and specific analysis is still kept in a small amount, and many literature are reasonable speculations based on the existing research of gender representation in

traditional advertising and the current social situation. For academics and marketing practitioners, the research on online gender representation in China needs more discussion and research. There is still a huge academic gap waiting for people to fill.

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