

Images of the Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT. With changing social expectations, rising living standards, and increasing Western influences in China, young Chinese women residing in urban areas have developed an awareness of their new identities as contemporary women distinct from the traditional or revolutionary ideals of the past. The current study examines the images of women depicted in a representative sample of magazine advertising in China. Of the 427 magazine ads examined, over 80% featured one or more images of contemporary Chinese woman: nurturer (8%), strong woman (12%), flower vase (28%), and urban sophisticate (44%). Further, the findings showed specific correlations between the featured images and (1) product categories, (2) magazine type, and (3) presenter ethnicity. Implications of the findings are discussed. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS. Portrayal of women in advertising, Chinese consumers, content analysis

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Journal of International Consumer Marketing, Vol. 19(2) 2006

Available online at <http://jicm.haworthpress.com>

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doi:10.1300/J046v19n02_02

Since the reintroduction of the market system in China in the late 1970s, China has experienced unprecedented growth, increased influences from the Western world, and commercialization of its media. These societal forces have in turn cultivated consumerist values, including the desire for self-actualization (Pan and Wei, 1997) and the “good life” characterized by luxury and pleasure (Belk and Pollay, 1985). It has been postulated that the globalization of production, capital, and media would lead to the globalization of consumer culture (Levitt, 1983; Quelch, 2003). Recent research shows that consumers undergoing cultural adaptations brought on by globalization or multiculturalism (Ger and Belk, 1996; Peñaloza, 1994,2001) rely on tastes, styles, and fashions to mark their new identities (Abbas, 2002; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Instead of emphasizing production as the driver of the economy, Chinese consumers are taking on consumption as “an activity, a way of social life and ‘the work of the imagination’” (Munshi, 2001, p.7) to help realize a “relatively comfortable life” (*xiaokang*), an objective underlying the modernization reform in China (Davis, 2000).

While the marketization process affects both men and women, the latter are especially affected. This is because women constitute the main consumer segment for which the majority of products are advertised as well as the most common representation in advertising, including advertising for products and services *not* targeted at women (Hooper, 1998; Johansson, 2001). The androgynous figure that epitomized Chinese women during the Cultural Revolution era (1966-1976) prior to the modernization reform (1979-to date) has since given way to new and widely commercialized forms of femininity (Hooper, 1998). Not since the calendar posters or *yu fen pai* of old Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Canton in the early 20th century have women in China been such a focal target for and popular emblem of consumerism.

The objective of this study is to examine broadly the feminine images portrayed in contemporary magazines in China. We reviewed the literature on women in China and proposed a typology of four distinct feminine images in advertising that includes aspects of traditional and modern ideals. The typology is relevant to current market situation in China characterized by growing foreign influence as a result of increased foreign direct investment and availability of foreign brands in the market (Hung and Gu, 2005). We then developed a coding scheme to operationalize the typology and assessed the types of feminine images depicted in a representative sample of magazine advertising. We also developed hypotheses to examine the featured images’ correlation with product categories, magazine type, and ethnicity of presenters. Findings of this

research could indicate the criteria underlying positional consumption (James, 2000) in China.

PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

Consumer culture plays an important role in constructing femininity in a discourse on consumption (Beetham, 1996). Specifically, women's magazines and the advertisements therein stimulate, complement, and reinforce underlying cultural values (Stevens, Maclaran, and Brown, 2003) that reflect the desired images of women in particular historical, cultural and ideological contexts (Kates and Shaw-Garlock, 1999). These images in turn affect women's self-perceptions (Martin and Gentry, 1997).

Since 1964, the year that marked the beginning of organized women's movements and growing concerns over the portrayal of women, many studies investigated the changing images of women in the mass media. To emphasize the impact of women's liberation on society, many of the studies focused on examining the level of sexism depicted in advertising (Ferguson, Kreshel, and Tinkham 1990). For example, Venkatesan and Losco (1975) examined the images of women depicted in magazines from 1957 to 1971. They found that although the portrayal of women as sexual objects decreased after 1959, other stereotypical portrayals such as women as dependent on man, housewife, sexy, high-living, physically beautiful remained popular. These changes (and lack of changes) reflect the historical events (e.g., women's liberation movement) and the ensuing culture in the United States.

The road to women's liberation in China is more devious and complicated as a result of drastic changes in the political and economical scenes in China, which goes beyond but affects the role of women in society. As we would show in the following, the portrayal of women in magazine advertising, a renewed mass medium since the economic reform, reflects the social expectations placed upon women since the reintroduction of the market system in China in the late 1970s.

Women in Chinese Society

The Confucian tradition in China places paramount importance on maintaining a harmonious relationship in the family and society via an established social hierarchy. Women are defined primarily by their relations to men (Siu and Au, 1997) and are assigned the role of being kind, docile, decorous, modest, and dutiful. These social expectations of

women underwent dramatic changes during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when the traditional ways of life came to a halt to give way to revolutionary moves. Following the Maoist slogan of “women holding up half the sky,” Chinese women were expected to be asexual, austere, and as capable as men (Andrews and Shen, 2002). The proper woman of the period, as illustrated in official magazines such as the *China Reconstructs* and *China Pictorial*, was a worker or peasant who wore plain, androgynous clothes with no adornments or jewelry, and who sacrificed her individuality, sexuality, family, and friends—at least temporarily—to “serve the poor and lower-middle peasants whole-heartedly” (Andrews and Shen 2002, p.142). These social expectations of women were a drastic departure from the Confucian ideal, where a woman would be obedient and respect and maintain the patriarchal hierarchy within the kinship system (Croll, 1995).

Although these feminine ideals are at odds with one another and carry important differences in social expectations, neither the respectful woman of the past nor the “masculinized woman” of the revolutionary period provided a clear, unified feminine ideal for Chinese women of the period to model themselves upon. When the Chinese government underwent economic reform and promoted the “Four Modernizations” in the late 1970s, what constituted the desired feminine ideal became even less clear. The economic reform not only lifted the constrained singular feminine image, but opened up possibilities for Chinese women as well as other social agents such as the advertising media and global consumer culture to redefine femininity and construct the “modern Chinese woman.” While some traditions returned after the Cultural Revolution and continued to influence society’s expectations from women, modern society imposes new expectations and a contemporary woman is also expected to be smart, independent, knowledgeable, and is one who could plan and enjoy her life. The current research examines the images resulting from the fusion of cultures.

Magazines in China

The changes in Chinese society are reflected in the magazines and the advertising. Magazines were first introduced to China in 1890s and they targeted upscale readers interested in modern science, technology, and foreign products. Some of the magazines such as *Women’s Magazine* and *Happy Home* targeted a female readership. While these magazines carried considerable advertising (e.g., 50% in *Happy Home*, Xu, 1990, xxii), magazine advertising was by no means popular, as magazines

were distributed only in a few port cities (e.g., Shanghai) in the first half of the 20th century. During the Cultural Revolution, magazines and other mass media became the channels for propaganda, promoting community ideology and government policies. Commercial advertising was treated as a wasteful capitalist business practice and was banned. However, the ensuing economic reform re-established advertising as an important means to invigorate the economy, guide consumption, and develop international economic activities (Central Administration for Industry and Commerce, 1982). With more than 4,000 magazines and periodicals printed in China and an annual circulation estimated at 2.5 billion copies (Guiqi, 1987), magazines have become a major source of information and entertainment for many consumers. Moreover, magazine ad spend has grown 72.85% over the past five years and it surpassed the growth of ad spend for both television and newspapers (Zheng, 2004). Thus, magazines are becoming a promising medium for advertisers.

Local and foreign magazines follow different developmental paths in China. Foreign ownership of China's media has been strictly monitored and it could only take the form of a joint venture until recently. This policy encourages local media giants to rise to the top. However, unlike television and newspapers where local media vehicles have been more successful in attracting advertising dollars, it is the joint-venture fashion magazine, *Elle*, that tops the list in the category of magazines. *Elle* attracts 20% of all ad spend in fashion magazines in spite of its low circulation of 300,000 which is less than half that of the most popular fashion magazine, *Shanghai Style* (860,000), a local publication (Zenith Media 2000/2001). Thus, it is necessary to examine both local and foreign magazines to get a comprehensive view of this medium in China.

THE NEW FEMININE IDEALS

Based on a review of the literature, we identified four specific images of the contemporary Chinese woman that women in China are socialized to pursue (1) nurturer, (2) strong woman, (3) flower vase, and (4) urban sophisticate. While each image incorporates features of the homogenized global consumer culture and features reminiscent of traditional Chinese cultural values, the nurturer and flower vase are more traditional, whereas the strong woman and urban sophisticate are more modern.

Nurturer

Although the private, pleasurable, and nurturing aspects of a woman's life disappeared from public discourse during the revolutionary years, the domestic role for women has never disappeared from the Chinese conception of womanhood (Chen, 2001). Qualities such as domesticity, nurturance, and softness that are believed to be uniquely female (Croll, 1995) remain central to the way men view their marriage partners. The ideal wife according to a recent survey of urban males in China is indistinguishable from traditional feminine ideals of being "beautiful . . . soft, kind, well-mannered, loyal, virtuous, skilled in domestic crafts (e.g., sewing, cooking and so forth) and can take care of children" (Croll, 1995, p. 153). Surveys conducted among students and professionals supported these findings and show repeatedly that men preferred a wife who is "gentle and soft" (*wenrou*) and who puts her interests after their own (Evans, 2000).

The consumerist culture brought on by the economic reform recognizes and reinforces the gendered representation in the domestic sphere. The visual images in magazines, billboards, and television advertising display women admiring household appliances such as refrigerators, blenders, and vacuum cleaners in leisurely, reclining poses (Hooper, 1998). These visual representations of women reclining next to household appliances provide contemporary Chinese women with not only a fantasy into the modern world, where she is seen with "scientific" products (Gottschang, 2001), but also a fantasy of an idealized middle-class housewifery identity that combines images of the traditional, the leisurely, and the modern.

Strong Woman

The next feminine ideal we identified is a woman who is talented, ambitious, and independent of spirit. An article published in the *Metro-polis* (November 1999) entitled "Thirty Traits of the Talented Woman" carried the following description:

She is intelligent, sharp-witted, well-informed, knowledgeable, well-spoken, and has good taste; she is independent, self-respecting, and conscious of women's equality; . . . She is a doer—straight-forward, efficient, and self-controlled. She is a bit of a rebel but not confrontational. While she may be attractive to men, her attraction

is based on personality, not beauty (cited by Andrews and Shen, 2002).

Lifestyle magazines frequently run stories on successful women who exemplify the “thirty traits” listed above. These role models suggest to readers of lifestyle magazines who are not yet “urban white collar” (*dushi bailing*) workers that they could strive to achieve this coveted position, while readers who are already in upscale office jobs could strive to move up from secretarial positions to managerial positions (Andrews and Shen, 2002). Although these stories have focused on “strong women” in the commercial sector, athletes and fashion models, who train hard and are determined enough to win have also been constructed as alternative role models of success to Chinese consumers (Brownell, 2001).

Flower Vase

The “flower vase” image is glamorous, charming, and attractive based on a mix of traditional Chinese and Western ideals. She is bejeweled and she applies skin-care and skin-whitening products, beautifying and age-defying cosmetics, bust enhancers, and new hairstyles to enhance her looks (Evans, 2000; Farquhar, 2002; Hooper, 1998; Johansson, 2002). The emphasis on a woman’s physical beauty marks a drastic departure from the recent past. To the extent that the androgynous ideal of the Cultural Revolution equated a woman to a man, the flower vase embraces and emphasizes gender differences. To the extent that women of the communist past looked upon the sacrificing individual (i.e., the androgynous ideal) as an image and reality to strive for, the flower vase wants to stand out from the crowd and dazzle everyone with her looks.

Urban Sophisticate

The metropolises of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou are the intersection between China and the affluent West as well as the intersection between affluent urbanites and impoverished rural emigrants. Cosmopolitan ideology allows people faced with rapid globalization to make sense of their experiences and to sustain an array of socioeconomic and cultural hierarchies (Abbas, 2000; Hannerz, 1990; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). Thus, styles and tastes become important social indicators of the

“good life.” Affluent urbanites distinguish themselves from those with less cultural than economic capital by displaying and consuming products and brands newly arrived from the West or Japan that offer them a level of comfort and luxurious living beyond the reach but desired by the general public (Andrews and Shen, 2002).

Self-Congruity

Research on attitude-formation function suggests that an advertising appeal that matches the image of the focal product (e.g., utilitarian appeal/utilitarian product) renders the ad more persuasive (Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Shavitt, 1992). Similarly, when a brand matches the self-image of the consumer, the consumer has higher purchase intentions (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg, 2000). Based on this line of research, we hypothesize that positional products would use matching feminine image appeal in the advertising. There are three focal objects in the context of this research that are image-imbued: product category, magazine type, and presenter ethnicity. We hypothesize that matching feminine image appeals would have a higher likelihood of being included in the advertising along these focal objects. We put forth the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be significant differences between the featured image and product category. It will be more likely for the nurturer image to appear in ads for domestic products (H1a), the strong woman image to appear in ads for business-related products (H1b), the flower vase (H1c) and urban sophisticate (H1d) images to appear in ads for beauty products.

H2: There will be significant differences between the featured image and magazine type. It will be more likely for the nurturer image to appear in ads in general interest magazines (H2a), the strong woman image to appear in ads in business-related magazines (H2b), the flower vase (H2c) and urban sophisticate (H2d) to appear in ads in fashion magazines.

H3: There will be significant differences between the featured image and the ethnicity of presenters. It will be more likely for the nurturer (H3a) and flower vase (H3b) images to appear in ads that feature Asian presenters, while it will be more likely for the strong woman (H3c) and urban sophisticate images (H3d) to appear in ads that feature non-Asian presenters.

METHODOLOGY

Magazine Selection

The objective of the content analysis is to examine broadly the feminine images portrayed in magazines in China and the featured images' correlation with product categories, magazine types, and ethnicity of presenter. We will also examine the correlation between featured images and two additional indicators of foreignness, brand origin, and magazine origin that are of interests to international marketing managers. To ensure that the selected ads came from a broad range of magazines, we employed stratified sampling and selected five categories of magazines that attracted the highest levels of magazine ad spend: fashion (23%), business (13%), computer (12%), lifestyle (10%), and general interest magazines (4%) (Yao, 2003). The ad spend in other categories of magazines are negligible.

We selected three local magazines and three foreign magazines from each category that have scored the highest ad spend within the category. We combined fashion and lifestyle magazines because these categories were not mutually exclusive. For example, the magazine *Miss Fashion* was categorized as a fashion magazine in one survey (2003 Spring-Average Issue Readership Survey) but a lifestyle magazine in another (Yao, 2003). Thus, we lined up the magazines in these two categories and picked the top six local magazines and top six foreign magazines to represent the broad category of fashion/lifestyle magazines. We ended up with 30 magazines in our sample (i.e., 12 fashion/lifestyle magazines, 6 business magazines, 6 computer magazines, and 6 general magazines). Details of the selected magazines can be found in Table 1.

We included in our sample all April 2004 issues of the selected magazines. We chose April because there were no important holidays during this month in China and the ads featured during this time frame were representative of the "average" advertising (Cheng, 1997; Yao, 2003). We included all April issues regardless of whether the selected magazine was a weekly, semimonthly or monthly.

Ad Selection

We selected ads that were at least one-half page in size and contained at least one woman. Of the 1511 ads featured in the selected magazines, 621 fit our criteria. After deleting 194 duplicates, we included 427 ads in our sample: 352 ads (82.4%) came from fashion/lifestyle magazines,

TABLE 1. Selected Magazines and Number of Ads Scored

Magazine Type	Adspend in 2002-03 (Unit:10,000RMB) *	Ads Scored	Total number of Ads
Fashion/lifestyle magazines			
Elle ^a	16414.27	68	91
Trends Cosmopolitan ^a	15399.87	48	113
Trends Esquire ^a	7241.37	12	78
Ray-Li Fashion ^a	5881.82	15	53
Harper's Bazaar ^a	5107.36	90	152
Trends Home ^a	3990.08	5	33
Shanghai Style ^b	5106.64	48	57
Friends ^b	3416.51	14	24
Hope ^b	2673.28	10	21
Miss Fashion ^b	3465.69	16	32
lflair ^b	3015.82	11	24
Woman's Day ^b	2372.91	15	36
Business magazines			
Fortune China ^a	8204.58	7	50
IT CEO & CIO in ^a Information Times	4496.81	7	65
Global Sources ^a	4161.55	6	52
Cai Jing Magazine ^b	4358.51	5	64
Global Entrepreneur ^b	2174.67	2	23
China Entrepreneur ^b	1729.39	2	29
Computer magazines			
PC World China ^a	2645.47	2	20
PC Magazine ^a	2476.99	4	38
CHIP ^a	1664.23	8	38
China Computer Users ^b	5584.11	1	59
China Internet Weekly ^b	4757.80	2	17
Microcomputer ^b	4315.47	7	113
General magazines			
Sanlian Life Weekly ^a	3202.70	5	50
New Weekly ^a	2135.22	8	41
China Newsweek ^a	2038.79	6	83
Xinmin Weekly ^b	1636.04	1	13
China Comment ^b	1071.80	0	3
Oriental Outlook ^b	951.75	2	39

^a Joint venture magazines

^b Local magazines.

* Source: Adapted from the following sources, Yao, Lin (2004), "2002-2003 Nian Shang Ban Nian Quan Guo Qi Kan Guang Gao Fa Zhan Qing Kuang (2002 -2003 Biannual Report on Advertising in National Magazines), <http://www.media.hc360.com/wzjx/040112.htm>, retrieved on March 15, 2004.

53 (12.4%) from business/computer magazines, and 22 (5.2%) from general interest magazines. We combined business and computer magazines into one category in data analysis and the result reporting because both were professional magazines and each contained only a small number of ads that fulfilled our requirements.

Coding Scheme

The coding scheme included the following sections: feminine images (four levels), product categories (8), magazine categories (4), magazine origin (2), brand origin (2), and ethnicity (2). To operationalize the feminine images, we used as the basis the categories of women in advertising developed by Venkatesan and Losco (1975) and we adapted (dependent on man, physically beautiful, high living), modified (homemaker), and supplemented (self-reliant, embodiment of taste) these categories to accommodate changes over time and to conform to the purpose of our study. There were six items in the current coding scheme. Flower vase (physically beautiful) and strong woman (self-reliant) were each described by a single item while nurturer (dependent on man, homemaker) and urban sophisticate (high living, embodiment of taste) were each described by two items. The judges marked the presence (1) or absence (0) of each item in an ad. Since the items were not mutually exclusive and a given ad could portray more than one image, we allowed for multiple coding as did Venkatesan and Losco (1975). The coding scheme also included eight categories of products that have invested most heavily in magazine advertising in China (Yao, 2003) as well as four categories of magazines discussed earlier. Regarding the indicators of foreignness, the magazines and brands were coded as having either a local or foreign (joint venture/imported) origin (plus “hard to determine”). The presenters were coded as being either Asian or non-Asian (plus “hard to determine”). Details are shown in Appendix.

Coding Procedures

One of the authors and a student, both of whom were native to China acted as the judges. After an initial training session on the methodology and the coding scheme, they each coded a practice set of ads that were not included in the sample proper to help clarify problem areas. To ensure the reliability and objectivity suggested by Kassirjian (1977), the judges then conducted two pretests consisting of 22 and 25 ads, respectively (ads not in sample proper). The percentage of agreement in pretest 1 was an

average of 85%. After clarifying the definition of items that have low agreement (e.g., physically beautiful), the percentage of agreement rose to an average of 95% in pretest 2.

The two judges coded the sample of 427 ads independently. According to Kassarian (1977), inter-judge reliability and objectivity were the two most important conditions for ensuring the validity of content analysis research. There are several indices that can assess inter-judge reliability. Percent agreement is the most widely used index and the simplest to calculate. However, it overestimates inter-judge agreement for nominal variables and could lead to misleading conclusions (Perreault and Leigh, 1989). Cohen's Kappa can remove the impact of chance agreement among judges (Cohen, 1960; James and VandenBergh, 1990) but its effectiveness is reduced, when the probability distributions associated with each judge are skewed (Gwet, 2002). Perreault and Leigh's (1989) measure, on the other hand, is sensitive to correcting skewed chance agreement (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991). Moreover, it takes into consideration the number of judges and the nominal characteristics of the codes. Since no single index is optimal, we report in Table 2 the percentage agreement, Cohen's Kappa, Perreault and Leigh's (1989) reliability index, and the 95% confidence limit for each code. As indicated, all indices exceeded the critical values suggested in the literature (Cohen, 1960; Kassarian, 1977; Perreault and Leigh, 1989) and thereby validate the reliability and objectivity of this study.

RESULTS

The items were featured 457 times in the 427 ads, thus yielding on the average the presence of just over one item per ad. The coding items that appeared most frequently were taste (34%), beautiful (28%), and high living (24%), followed by self-reliant (12%), dependent (8%), and homemaker (2%). As discussed, the nurturer and urban sophisticate were measured by two items each. Pearson correlation showed that items within either cultured nurturer ($r(\text{dependent, homemaker}) = 0.31$) or urban sophisticate ($r(\text{high living, taste}) = 0.31$) correlate at the $p < 0.001$ level and have internal consistency. To relate the six items to the four images, we used a split half approach. If an ad scored a 1 (presence of one item) or 2 (presence of both items) on a two-item image, or if it scored a 1 on an one-item image (since it is not possible to score 0.5), the ad was considered featuring that particular image.

TABLE 2. Inter-Judge Reliability Index

Content	# (K) of Categories	Percentage of Agreement	Cohen's Kappa ^a	Estimated Reliability (I _γ) ^b	95% Confidence of Lower Limit of I _γ ^c
Image					
Dependent	2	97.4	82.6***	97.4	95.9
Self-reliant	2	97.2	85.6***	97.1	95.5
Homemaker	2	100	100***	100	100
Physically beautiful	2	94.8	87.6***	94.7	92.6
High-living	2	93.9	82.5***	93.7	91.4
Tasteful	2	96.0	91.2***	95.9	94.0
Successful	2	97.4	86.2***	97.4	95.9
Magazine types	4	100	100***	100	100
Product categories	8	89.3	84.6***	93.7	91.4
Ethnicity of model	3	92.0	84.5***	93.8	91.5

Notes

^a *** is significant at $p < 0.001$.

^b $I_{\gamma} = \{[F_o/N - (1/k)][k/(k-1)]\}^{.5}$ for $F_o/N = 1/k$, $I_{\gamma} = 0$ for $F_o/N = 1/k$, where F_o is the observed frequency, N is the sample size, and F_o/N is the percentage of agreement.

^c Limits = $I_{\gamma} + Zc[I_{\gamma}(1 - I_{\gamma})/N]^{.5}$, where I_{γ} is the critical value for the c percent confidence interval, and N is the sample size (Perreault and Leigh, 1989).

Content Analysis

Based on the above scoring approach, 35 ads (8%) featured the nurturer, 50 (12%) featured the strong woman, 120 (28%) featured the flower vase, and 186 (44%) featured the urban sophisticate. Thus, urban sophisticate is the most popular feminine image magazine advertising. Indeed, 53% of the ads in fashion/lifestyle magazines featured this image. Regarding the traditional/modern divide, images that place a stronger emphasis on modern culture (i.e., urban sophisticate, strong woman) are more popular than images that place a stronger emphasis on traditional culture (i.e., flower vase, nurturer).

Meanwhile, Pearson correlation showed no significant correlation among nurturer, urban sophisticate, or strong woman ($p > 0.05$) and these images were independent of each another. Flower vase has negative correlation with the other images ($p < 0.001$) (Table 3). We speculate

TABLE 3. Correlation Between Feminine Images

Feminine Images	Urban Sophisticate	Cultured Nurturer	Flower Vase	Strong Woman
Urban Sophisticate	1	0.027	-0.411**	-0.040
Cultured Nurturer		1	-0.162**	-0.082
Flower Vase			1	-0.163**
Strong Woman				1

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

that it is because ads featuring the flower vase tend to show a close-up of the model and are less effective in revealing feminine characteristics that might derive from one's character or the context.

Image Correlates

Hypothesis 1. H1 suggests that there would be significant differences between the featured image and product category. Chi-square test showed significant differences ($\chi^2(28) = 363.36, p < 0.001$). Also as hypothesized, 49% of computer ads featured the strong woman, 96% of cosmetics ads featured the flower vase, and 66% of fashion ads featured the urban sophisticate. The top category that featured the nurturer was automobile (45%). Although it came somewhat as a surprise, a review of the ad copies showed that these ads are for family cars and they portray women in family contexts. Thus, the findings supported H1 and H1a-H1d.

Hypothesis 2. H2 suggests that there would be significant differences between the featured image and magazine type. Chi-square test showed significant differences ($\chi^2(8) = 101.73, p < 0.001$). As hypothesized, the strong woman was featured broadly in business/ computer magazine ads (42%), the urban sophisticate was featured in fashion/lifestyle (47%) and general magazine ads (55%), and the flower vase was featured in 34% of fashion/lifestyle magazine ads. Interestingly, the nurturer was featured in a variety of magazine ads, including 13% of business/ computer magazines, and 22% of general magazines. The findings provided support for H2 as well as H2b to H2d, but only partial support for H2a.

Hypothesis 3. H3 suggests that there would be significant differences between the featured image and ethnicity of the presenters. Results showed significant differences ($\chi^2(8) = 34.58, p < 0.001$). Whereas 51% of non-Asian presenters portrayed the urban sophisticate, there was a spread among the images portrayed by Asian models (34% flower

vase, 33% urban sophisticate, 10% cultured nurturer, and 21% strong woman). Thus, the findings provided support for H3 and H3d.

Additional Findings. Although no specific hypotheses were set, we examined the correlation between featured image and brand origin and magazine origin. Results showed no significant overall brand origin ($\chi^2(8) = 12.33, p > 0.05$) but significant magazine origin ($\chi^2(4) = 13.00, p < 0.05$) effects. Separate per image analysis showed that while there were no significant differences across either brand origin ($p > 0.05$) or magazine origin ($p > 0.05$) in three of the four images (flower vase, cultured nurturer, and strong woman), there were significant correlational effects for urban sophisticate.

Urban Sophisticate and Foreignness. The urban sophisticate stood out among the four images as the one that carries the most foreign characteristics. In addition to featuring a high percentage of non-Asian presenters (51% vs. 33% Asian), the urban sophisticate has significant correlation with brand origin ($\chi^2(2) = 10.68, p < 0.01, 48\%$ versus 29% local) and magazine origin ($\chi^2(1) = 14.60, p < 0.001, 50\%$ versus 30% local). Thus, the urban sophisticate showed significant effects favoring the global on all three indicators (brand origin, magazine origin, and nurturer ethnicity). The remaining images have either no significant effects on these indicators or significant effects that favor the local (flower vase ethnicity, strong woman ethnicity) (Table 4).

CONCLUSION

This study proposed and tested a typology of four images of contemporary Chinese woman on a representative sample of magazine advertising in China. Results verified the typology and showed that Chinese women were exposed to multiple feminine ideals that included the nurturer, strong woman, flower vase, and urban sophisticate. These images differ from the singular Confucian or androgynous feminine ideals of the past. Meanwhile, as we have discussed, these images nevertheless carry features that included traditional and modern cultural characteristics.

The content analysis showed that among the four images, the urban sophisticate (44%) was the most popular image, followed by flower vase (28%), strong woman (12%), and nurturer (8%). The emphasis placed on a woman's appearances and tastes rather than the domestic and employed work she does reflects the much higher ad spend on fashion/lifestyle magazines. Thus, Chinese women consumers are undergoing cultural adaptations and are relying more heavily on tastes, styles, and

TABLE 4. Feminine Images and Correlates

	Product Category	Magazine Category	Brand Origin	Magazine Origin	Ethnicity
Nurturer 35 (8%)	Auto 5 (45%) Others 12 (27%) Other electronics 4 (17%) $\chi^2 (7) = 60.80, p < 0.001$	General 5 (22%) Business/computer 7 (13%) Fashion/lifestyle 23 (7%) $\chi^2 (2) = 9.23, p < 0.05$	JV/import 40 (12%) Local 10 (12%) n.s.	JV/import 39 (13%) Local 11 (18%) n. s.	Asian 16 (10%) Non-Asian 18 (7%) n.s.
Strong woman 50 (12%)	Computer 6 (49%) Other electronics 5 (26%) Others 10 (23%) $\chi^2 (7) = 64.72, p < 0.001$	Business/Computer 22 (42%) General 8 (36%) Fashion/lifestyle 20 (6%) $\chi^2 (2) = 70.83, p < 0.001$	JV/import 30 (9%) Local 5 (6%) n.s.	JV/import 25 (9%) Local 10 (7%) n.s.	Asian 32 (21%) Non-Asian 17 (7%) $\chi^2 (2) = 19.20, p < 0.001$
Flower vase 120 (28%)	Cosmetics 86 (96%) Daily necessities 2 (29%) Other electronics 4 (21%) $\chi^2 (7) = 263.06, p < 0.001$	Fashion/lifestyle 118 (34%) General 1 (5%) Business/computer 1 (2%) $\chi^2 (2) = 29.19, p < 0.001$	JV/import 100 (30%) Local 19 (22%) n.s.	JV/import 83 (29%) Local 37 (27%) n.s.	Asian 53 (34%) Non-Asian 58 (23%) $\chi^2 (2) = 10.02, p < 0.01$
Sophisticate 186 (44%)	Fashion 131 (66%) Auto 6 (60%) Communication 13 (54%) $\chi^2 (7) = 103.14, p < 0.001$	General 12 (55%) Fashion/lifestyle 164 (47%) Business/computer 10 (19%) $\chi^2 (2) = 15.54, p < 0.001$	JV/import 161 (48%) Local 25 (29%) $\chi^2 (2) = 10.68, p < 0.01$	JV/import 145 (50%) Local 11 (30%) $\chi^2 (1) = 14.60, p < 0.01$	Asian 51 (33%) Non-Asian 130 (51%) $\chi^2 (2) = 15.13, p < 0.001$
Overall IMAGE effects	$\chi^2 (28) = 363.36, p < 0.001$	$\chi^2 (8) = 101.73, p < 0.001$	n.s.	$\chi^2 (4) = 13.00, p < 0.001$	$\chi^2 (8) = 34.58, p < 0.001$

fashions to mark their new identities. However, one has to ask what social/cultural effects, the many urban sophisticate and flower vase images exert on Chinese women, when many older consumers would have been enculturated in either the traditional or revolutionary roles. Are these consumers becoming more “contemporary” or they becoming disengaged? More specifically, how do Chinese women view these feminine images and the advertised products, when many commercials promoting fashion, automobile, and communication products are relying on the urban sophisticate image? Are there differences in perceptions by the consumer’s age? Among the target consumers, are they differentiating the products? Is there a “gap” in the positioning of products, especially in products targeted at the more mature women?

The findings also provided general support for the hypotheses. Thus, in general, there were significant differences between the featured image and (1) product category, (2) magazine type, and (3) ethnicity of presenters. Meanwhile, the research also undisclosed findings that were less expected. For example, the nurturer image was depicted in a variety of magazines, including business and computer magazines; and Asian presenters were featured in a variety of featured images, including the strong woman. Also, aside from the urban sophisticate, there were no brand origin effects. Thus, flower vase, strong woman, and nurturer were featured in commercials of both local and foreign brands.

Past research suggests that Chinese consumers prefer global brands (Batra et al., 2000). Our findings show that in terms of advertising appeals, global brands tend to feature the urban sophisticate image and non-Asian models. This poses one question. Do Chinese consumers prefer global brands or are they persuaded by the global advertising appeals? What would be the effects on a local brand that incorporates in its ads the urban sophisticate image and non-Asian presenters? Alternatively, is there a role for global brands to localize their advertising appeals? Future research needs to examine these issues to provide more specific directions to international marketers.

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SUBMITTED: September 2005

FIRST REVISION: December 2005

SECOND REVISION: February 2006

ACCEPTED: March 2006

APPENDIX Coding Categories

Coding Categories	Description
Nurturer	<p><i>Dependent on man</i></p> <p>Woman relies on male for affection and instruction</p> <p>Woman relies on male for happiness</p> <p><i>Homemaker</i></p> <p>Woman shown using household appliances or doing housework</p> <p>Woman shown taking care of husband or children</p>
Strong Woman	<p><i>Self-reliant</i></p> <p>Woman shown as smart, talented, confident</p> <p>Woman shown as professionals or working</p>
Flower Vase	<p><i>Physically beautiful</i></p> <p>Woman concerned with enhancing facial appearance and skin conditions</p> <p>Woman concerned with looking more youthful, slimmer, more appealing</p>
Urban Sophisticate	<p><i>High-living</i></p> <p>Woman concerned with luxury leisure</p> <p>Woman concerned with luxury adornments and material possessions</p>

APPENDIX (continued)

Coding Categories	Description	
	<i>Embodiment of taste</i>	
	Woman concerned with taste in living environment	
	Woman shown as being tasteful, distinct and unique	
	Woman shown engaged in the arts (incl. reading)	
Product Categories	1. Computer and accessories	2. Cosmetics
	3. Fashion and accessories	4. Communication
	5. Other electronics	6. Daily necessities
	7. Auto	8. Others
Magazine origin	1. Local	2. Joint-venture/imported
Brand origin	1. Local	2. Joint-venture/imported
	3. Hard to determine	
Ethnicity of model in ad	1. Asian	2. Non-Asian
	3. Hard to determine	