

**Cross-Cultural Comparison of Women's Representations between
British and Chinese Television Advertisements**

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed: Shulin Gong (candidate)

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Abstract

This research examines the similarities and differences of television advertising representations of women between the UK and China, by this means raises the issue of how the globalised situation frames the contest and coalesce between 'real'/'represented' and 'Eastern'/'Western' women.

This study contributes to knowledge by combining representations with cultural and cross-cultural theories and by extending current debates about gendered representations into a cross-cultural field. This research assesses the roles of advertising in the construction of woman and femininity by semiotics approaches, and carries out theoretical disclosure of women's representations by the exploration of gender practice in advertising. Moreover, by the comparison of the female-related content in television advertisements between China and the United Kingdom, this study explores the different social cultures and power structures behind women's advertising representations between the UK and China. On the basis of theoretical considerations of orientalism, feminism and gender studies, this research argues that the similarities and differences of women's representation between British and Chinese television advertisements are produced by the combination of factors including traditional cultural and social values, gender concepts in cultures, the developments of advertising industries, media laws and regulations, politics, globalisation and the developments of feminism in the UK and China.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This research examines the similarities and differences of advertising representations of women and related views of gender between British and Chinese cultures, raising the issue of how globalisation frames the contest between 'real'/'represented' and 'Eastern'/'Western' women. It begins by stating the significance of women's studies in China and challenging the settled global power by providing a new research direction for the gendered and power-structured world map. I achieve this by exploring a number of fascinating and important theoretical questions in the fields of feminism/post-feminism and globalisation by offering a challenging mode of reading acceptance, negotiation and resistance, set against the stereotyped and sensationalist image of the 'third world women' as the victim. To make the introduction chapter clearer, I divided it into three parts. The first part introduces my orientation, explains the reasons forced me to choose this topic and the practical significance of this research, which contains three perspectives: why woman; why UK-China comparison; and why advertising. The second part introduces the research questions and research aims. The third part maps the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Why Women and Gender?

Four years ago, when I first came to the United Kingdom for my master's degree program in mass media, I attended an elective course - 'gender and media'. It was in that course, for the first time, I realised that the gender issue is one of the significant cultural themes in our contemporary society.

I graduated from one of the Chinese 211-project universities with an undergraduate degree in language and cultural studies. I came in contact with a lot of experts and scholars on campus, and was exposed to a myriad of well-known issues in China such as the aggravation of social stratification, the increasing interactions and conflicts

between China and the USA, the sharp decline in the rural population, the significant gap between the young and old generations, or issues of quality of citizen living and the environment, etc. However, at that time I did not realise that the existing gender relations and gender roles in China are sometimes problematic. As far as I know, there was no gender-specific module offered between 2008 and 2012 in the department of Journalism Studies in my undergraduate university. It seems that the issue of gender have not get enough attentions in Chinese universities and academia during that period .

According to Li (2005:3), the cause for the neglect of gender issues in Chinese academia and society is determined by its current social conditions. Since China has been plunged into a series of internal and external troubles from the 19th century, millions of Chinese people have been trapped in wars and famines, struggled on the extreme poverty line and suffered the physical and psychological threats of political turmoil. It means the Chinese cannot shift their focus from living conditions to a relatively ideological topic such as women's political rights, as people did in the developed countries which have experienced the rapid development of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation in the past two centuries (Li, 2005: 3-4).

However, we have no evidence to deny that issues of gender are critical social hotspots of the present age. According to the research on Chinese women's living conditions conducted by Feminist Voice in 2015, 73% of the respondents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current women's living conditions; 44% of respondents are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the speed of progress in the field of gender equality in recent years. Only 17% of respondents believe that men and women in the Chinese market can get the same pay for the same amount of work; and up to 93% of respondents think that fertility has significant negative impacts on women's career development (Feminist Voice, 2015).

At the same time, the development of Chinese feminist movement is not optimistic. Xu (2016) points out that the biggest obstacle to the current feminist movement in China is the lack of channels to legally criticise and balance the contradiction between the ruling class and the disadvantaged groups. The needs and requirements of vulnerable groups cannot influence or change national policies and regulations, the only approach to acquire benefits for the vulnerable groups (such as women) is to wait for the awareness and assistance of the top rulers (Xu, 2016). The core policy is firmly controlled by male discourse, and no political power honestly speaks for women. The conflict-confrontation-compromise-advancement model of traditional Western feminist movement lacks the innate conditions for realisation in the Chinese context, because the power of non-governmental organisations in China is feeble, and the appeal of feminism is often stifled in the cradle (Xu, 2016). Due to the considerations of maintaining public security and social stability, the media censorship and supervision of the feminist discourses in China are relatively strict (Zhang, 2010; Xu, 2016). The official feminist activities in China are often in the form of appealing to gender equality proposed by some government agencies (such as the Women's Federation). These so-called feminist appeals are rarely applied to the political and practical aspects (Xu, 2016). Moreover, feminism is often given a negative image online and has been dubbed as 'idyllic feminism' to describe women's attempts to gain more rights and benefits (China.com, 2018). The politicisation and social stigma of feminism have led to the long-term negative cognition of Chinese feminist movements.

Such realistic and objective conditions not only hinder the development of feminism in China but also to some extent become the factors causing a lack of change in women's images and the misrepresentation of women's identity and gender roles in mass media, reflecting the neglect of the woman and gender issues in Chinese academia and Chinese society.

Over the past decades, views on genders in the British society have undergone a series

of revolutionary changes. In the UK and other Western countries, many researchers have conducted in-depth discussions on women and social issues from various angles including identities and roles, stereotyping, cultural studies, audiences, representations, ideology, journalism, education, politics, etc., while the amount of gender and women research (especially in the fields of media and cultural studies) is relatively rare in China. These practical considerations, and the importance of research, co-constitute the main reasons for this study to look at women, especially women in China.

This research focuses on the representation of woman. Although the concept of 'woman's seems very problematic for many post-feminists today, as it has frequently criticised that gender roles and gender identity cannot be defined through a series of dualistic concepts such as husband and wife or men and women (Li, 2008). There are many gender identities (except for males, female, transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, etc.) and gender roles that cannot be defined and classified, as the subjectivity is much more complicated than these categories listed above (Li, 2008). However, focusing on woman provides us an effective approach to discuss the gendered representation as the category of woman could help to understand the power relations and discourses of gender and the construction process of the concept of woman hidden behind the representation.

1.2 Why UK-China Comparison?

This research compares the similarities and differences between Chinese and British women's representations. The reasons for doing this cross-cultural comparison include, first of all, the number of studies exploring the relationship between the interpretations of gender in Chinese and British cultures is relatively small. Both the UK and China have their unique social backgrounds and cultural traditions, resulting in the different encoding and decoding approaches of gender and woman between the British and Chinese contexts. The cross-cultural comparison of women's

representation combined with the broad social and cultural context could help us analyse the culture and discourses of gender and the political, economic and cultural developments of Chinese and British societies in the context of globalisation.

Secondly, the research of media representation are inevitable to make connection with the considerations of cross-cultural elements today. Our contemporary world, as Bowman states, is 'saturated with media' and 'moreover with a range of mediated images that often claim to testify to some insight into other cultures, in a quasi-anthropological way. There are also types of media text that seem to constitute, precipitate or otherwise relate to one or another kind of cross-cultural encounter, and so on' (Bowman, 2010; 2014). But the fact is that a large number of research of media representations have been excluded or subordinated in the conceptualisation and construction of the ethnographic scene (Bowman, 2014). Media representations are always constructed on editorial decisions, involving various exclusions, selections, subordination, and emphases. Thus, the examinations of globalisation and representations are inseparable to some extent.

Thirdly, many of the previous comparative studies between Western and Eastern cultures are considered to be problematic. A problem often arises in the cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Western cultures is that researchers often use one of them (usually the West) as a role model to try to explain and correct the other's problems (usually the East) (e.g. Said, 1978; Chow, 1993). For example, according to Chow (1993), in many Western universities, modern Chinese cultural studies are either marginalised compared with traditional Chinese literature studies or marginalised relative to the research of the data of China in social science (Chow, 1993). The situation of modern cross-cultural communication and cultural-comparative studies are not unrelated to our conventional views on modernity and the global interaction in the past few decades.

The modern European and American civilisations are sometimes considered as 'better'

cultures than the rest of the world, leading to the otherisation of the other cultures in the global interaction process, while modern China is often considered to be 'dangerous' and frequently be criticised from various perspectives from politics, ideology, economy, and legal system to environment pollution, human rights and gender equality (e.g. Dutton, 2005; Lieber, 2013). The cultural splitting phenomenon - considering the Chinese culture as the Other, not only hinders the Western understandings of modern China but also affect Chinese understandings about themselves. These concerns and discussions about China were emerged from the internal ideological system of the Western discourse. In this situation, the studies of China and Chinese culture have become a corresponding object to the Western concerns, and the corresponding cross-cultural comparison has become an indicator to measure the degrees of modernisation and Westernisation levels of China.

Today, many scholars have made great efforts to fight against the stereotypes and restore the positive value of modern China. One of these attempts is to recognise that China has equal value to Europe (e.g. Chen, 2012; Murthy et al., 2017). Parallel to these research is the rethinking of colonialism, Orientalism, post-colonialism and globalisation (e.g. Yūzō, 2016). These rethinking of West-China relations made a series of attempts to reverse the problematic aims of the previous cross-cultural comparison such as 'for China's benefit' or 'for the modernisation and democratisation of China'.

In this sense, the intentions of the cross-cultural research should not be merely to improve the social and cultural situation of the so-called 'weak' culture. The cross-cultural research between the UK and China, regardless of the specific research objects or methods, should not take the British and Chinese cultures as two isolated objects or 'pure' national contexts. Taking the UK-China cross-cultural comparison as the research aim means taking the globalisation and trans-cultural interactions as the research background and taking the specific cultural and political contexts of the UK and China as the starting point. In this case, the comparison between Chinese and

British gender representations does not mean to take the Chinese representation or more likely the British representation as an indicator to examine the other. If we take one culture as the reference to look at another, this reference will ultimately be ascribed to the West under the influence of Orientalist discourse and hegemonic culture, and the uniqueness of the UK-China cross-cultural comparison will be once again recycled into a polarised world as a result.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this cross-cultural comparison of women's representations is to create a new world map through cultural comparison and communication. This research takes both China and the UK as its constituent elements. In this sense, as long as we reach a consensus in the relevant values such as the recognition of women's empowerment and gender equality, we can use the Chinese women's representations to discuss the British representations, and use the British representations to examine Chinese representations *vice versa*.

In terms of the research object - advertising, today's Chinese advertising industry has been hugely shaped by the global and its relationship with the West (the UK) in all perspectives, as to become modern is a 'grand narrative' (Lyotard, 1984) for China in the last two centuries while modernity is considered as highly equal to the Western mode of social-cultural, political and economic structures (Chow, 1993; Chen, 2002; Li, 2016). The peculiarity of Chinese modernity lies in its constant struggle between emulating Western modernity and creating an alternative mode of development (Walker, 1999; Lu, 2007; Klein, 2014; Li, 2016).

However, as Chen (2002) points out, the social transformations and cultural changes in China are not simple replications of the West, but are modifications situated in specific local/global cultural and social contexts. In the field of the gender discourse, admittedly the current common understandings of gender and gender roles in China have been largely effected by Western (including British) gender concepts and feminist ideas. In this sense, the modern Chinese gender discourse could be seen as a

negotiation space of multiple factors including traditions, globalisation, Western (including British) feminist ideas, cultural resistance, politics and regulations (see Chapter 3 for details). And the representations of woman in Chinese advertising campaign are produced in this global environment.

At the same time, the interpretation of the British advertising representation should not be limited within the British context. Many shreds of evidence have proven that Western (including British) cultures have won the dominant position in the conflicts between different cultures and groups around the world, producing a series of ideological phenomena such as post-colonialism and cultural homogeneity, however, the hegemonic culture and power relations are unavoidably changing in the process of globalisation, because the cross-cultural communication is always a two-way flow (see Chapter 2). The current world is an interactive system which is strikingly new and continuously updated (Li, 2016). The emerging new cultural phenomena are the international environment for the reproduction of British advertisements, and also provide the theoretical background for this cross-cultural comparative research.

Therefore, by investigating the advertising representation of women between the UK and China, this research will see the similarities and differences as a reflection of the global cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity. In other words, what this cross-cultural comparison wants to explore is how the global interaction of gender concepts between the Eastern (China) and Western (the UK) countries re-constructed the discourses of woman and gender in different contexts today.

1.3 Why Television Advertising?

The third question about my research orientation is why I choose to study advertising and women's advertising representations. As it is widely accepted that visual cultural genres (such as films and television) are the main conduit for the deepening

of globalisation and postmodern trans-cultural interactions (Howard et al., 2018). As Nicholas Mirzoeff states 'the fascination with the visual and its effects that was a key feature of modernism has engendered a postmodern culture that is at its most postmodern when it is visual' (Mirzoeff, 2009: 4). The dominant position of visual cultures is produced by the reordering of power relations. The cases for my study came from television advertising. Advertising is the biggest media industry in the world and the most important representative of modern visual culture today (Media Shift, 2016; Brewer & Roy, 1994). And television advertising represents one of the most influential forms of visual advertising campaign (Garland-Thompson, 2009).

The reasons for considering advertising as a cultural form are, first, advertising represents our mainstream social values. As we all admitted that, the job of the advertiser is to understand and stimulate the needs of the segmented audiences. Therefore, the designs of advertising characters and gender settings must conform to popular culture and cater to the mainstream social values and consumption views of the mass audiences in order to effectively play its commercial role (Nava, 2013). In other words, social culture plays a decisive role in constructing advertising representations. Advertising representations must reflect specific national cultural characteristics in order to obtain the recognition of a wide audience group in a particular area (Brewer & Porter, 1994). The advertising form and the reflected cultural values in a country are not separated from the influence of traditional conceptual patterns in specific contexts. Thus, advertising is an important form of cultural discourse which reflects the social ideology, such as the underlying trends of social culture, fashion outlook, and gender views and roles. Advertising in different countries contains specific cultural concepts and cultural meanings. The advertising campaign can be seen as a mirror to reflect social-cultural views and ideas, including the views and understandings of gender in one country.

Second, advertising is closely related to the changes of contexts. On the one hand, the changes of contexts are reflected in the fact that the spread of 'strong' or popular

culture in the global cultural flows could bring about significant changes in the social culture, politics, economy and values in the local context. And these changes are also reflected in advertising representations (Lee, 1993). On the other hand, the appeals of different historical periods, regions, social groups, and the influence of different national traditional cultures will also be reflected in advertisements texts.

As far as women's advertising representations are concerned, the image and life of women advertised and endorsed by the advertisements, on the one hand can be seen as the commercialised discourse construction process of female identities, on the other hand, these representations can be regarded as social expectations of women and cultural reflections of gender consciousness. In this process of expectation and reflection, the mass audiences construct, maintain, and revise the image of women and the concept of gender through the manipulated and filtered advertising images, and use this knowledge to correct and guide the technology and practice of femininity, identity, and our gender views in real life. Therefore, advertising can be seen as an effective approach for us to discuss the relationship between women, gender, and culture. This is also the reason why this study chose advertising as the object of the case analysis.

1.4 Research Questions and Aims

This study contributes to knowledge by combining representations with cultural and feminist theories and by extending current debates about gendered representations. In the comparison of the female-related content in television advertisements between China and the United Kingdom, this research assessed and judged the role of advertising campaign in the construction of the representations of women and femininity through semiotics, and on the basis of theoretical considerations of Orientalism, feminism, post-feminism and gender studies. This study aims to explore the social culture and power structure behind women's advertising representations and

carry out theoretical disclosure of women's representations by the exploration of gender practice in advertising.

Based on these issues in the fields of gender, advertising and cross-cultural comparison, this research addresses the following questions:

* How women are represented in Chinese and British advertisements respectively? What are the similarities and differences of women's advertising representations between UK and China?

* What social and cultural factors cause the similar representations of women between UK and China? And to what extent traditional values and culture, and modern consumer society, have an impact on representations of women in Chinese and British context?

* Why the differences of women's representations between UK and China are produced? To what extent globalisation, modernity and Western feminism affect the representations of women in different contexts? And to what extent Chinese advert representations accept and negotiate with hegemonic discourses? How and why?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis unfolds in 14 chapters. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 review previous relevant research and literature in the field of gender, advertising representation and cultural studies. Chapter 6 explains the method used in this research. Chapters 7 - 13 present the descriptive and analytic discussions using the academic arguments and theoretical considerations expounded in literature review chapters. Chapter 14, as the concluding chapter, knits together the arguments and re-examines the overall analyses and findings.

The next four chapters present the previous literature and research related to the cross-cultural comparison of woman's advertising representations. As previously introduced, this study has three core research objects: advertising, woman's images and cross-cultural comparison. I divide the literature review into four chapters.

Chapter 2 introduces research and concepts related to cross-cultural comparison. The studies of theoretical concepts related to cross-cultural comparisons such as Orientalism, Occidentalism, cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity are reviewed from specific perspectives, including Chinese context, British context, advertising and women.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature and research on feminism and woman. This chapter starts with summarising the main content and theories of feminism, especially post-feminism, and the core concepts related to feminism; such as the critique of patriarchy and gender stereotypes under the gender dualism system, the development of feminist discourse, the construction of the concept of women, as well as the channels for women's empowerment. The combining of feminist theories not only provides an effective analytical tool for the analysis of women's advertising representations but also situates the study within the feminist ideas. Moreover, this chapter describes several other important concepts related to woman's representations, such as gender, sexuality, femininity, and Eastern and Western body views. Among them, Foucault's discussion of sexual discourse and Butler's gender performativity theory are the starting points and main focuses of this section. Additionally, this chapter introduces women's cultures in the UK and China and their relationship with globalisation. The literature and related theories combined with particular contexts of British and Chinese advertising industries and women's representations are also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 4 reviews the study of advertising representation from an intercultural

perspective. This section begins with a global view and summarises the research on representation and advertising representation. This section also examines the research on the advertising industries in the UK and China respectively.

Chapter 5 focuses on the study of women's advertising representation, including studies of women's representation, the relationship between feminism and women's advertising representation, as well as some significant empirical research on female advertising representation.

Chapter 6 has three primary purposes. The first one is to explain why this study adopts semiotics as its primary research method by examining the main aim of this research and comparing the common research methods used in the studies of gender representations. Second, this chapter explains the relevant concepts of semiotics, including signifier, signified, connotation, denotation, codes, symbols, etc., and clarifies how semiotic approach is applied to the analysis of advertising representations. Third, this chapter details the collection and selection processes of adverts, as well as the results of sampling and case selection.

The findings and discussion chapters argue the advertising representations of women and how the female representation as cultural symbols reflect the differences and similarities of the gender discourses between Chinese and British contexts. The findings and discussions is divided into seven chapters based on the analysis of female advertising images in Cortese (2015). These seven chapters compare women's representations between Chinese and British case study adverts from the following perspective: the advertising constructed femininity, women and family in advertising, the images of new women, the display of female bodies; nudity, sex and female advertising characters, the images of ethnic and exotic women, and women's idealised male images in advertising.

Chapter 7 looks at the representations of femininity in the case study advertisements

between China and the UK. This chapter argues that the female characters and femininity constructed in the chosen Chinese and British advertisements are both performed and commercialised. However, this chapter finds significant differences in the ways of shaping, constructing and using femininity between Chinese and British adverts. Significant differences also exist in the attitudes toward femininity and gender relations in adverts, and women's roles in organising advertising narratives. The reasons causing the differences include the social and cultural traditions and social values, the different degrees of feminist development in the two countries, and the particular circumstances of the Chinese advertising discourse.

Chapter 8 explores and compares how advertising represents women in the families, functioning as a technology of distinguishing sexes and gender roles. Regarding the advertising constructed relationship between women and families, the Chinese commercial shows a significant gap between different female generations. Differences also exist in the representations of woman-family relations, ethnicities in families, and the family structures between the UK and China. This chapter analyses and summarises these similarities and differences by combining socialist, historical, and political perspectives on feminism and gender cultural theories.

Chapter 9 explores the links between advertising representations of the 'new woman', women's identities, and globalisation. This chapter finds many similarities in the positioning, identity and life status of the young middle-class women between the Chinese and British adverts, which can be considered as the result of globalisation and the global spread of feminism and Western gender concepts. However, from the constructed female characters of Chinese advertisements, this chapter finds the sense of social anxiety of the independent female which is rooted in the traditional Chinese gender concepts and social culture and also imprinted into the feminist discourse in China today.

Chapters 10 and 11 examine the representations of women's bodies in the Chinese and

British advertisements from the perspectives of the display of female body and the exposure of female body respectively. These two chapters focus on the important driving factors that cause the differences in representations of women's bodies, including different gender discourses in cultures, the degrees of feminist development, and relevant laws and regulations of media texts between the UK and China.

In Chapter 12, I discuss the dynamics of Orientalist discourse in advertising and its impact on reconstructing 'foreigner'/ethnic women within the globalising multicultural contexts. First, this chapter analyses two advertisements that have included ethnic/'foreigner' female characters with a specific focus on multicultural/orientalist advertising campaigns. This provides a theoretical context for understanding gendered and racial representations of women in the advertising campaign in the UK and China respectively. Second, it explores how stereotypical imageries of Asian/Caucasian women and commodified Orientalism have evolved in the British/Chinese mass media over time. Third, this chapter analyses how the Orientalist images of women take shape under the guise of globalisation and multiculturalism with more detailed explanations of specific race/gender symbols. Based on these discussions, the chapter concludes by showing how Orientalist ideologies have been rearticulated within the context of modernity and post-modernity.

Chapter 13 compares the advertising representations of women's idealised male images. This chapter finds that the image of the ideal man in the Chinese case advert is portrayed as asexual, and his existence is to support and dedicate himself to the family; while the idealised male image in British advertisement is created by the female character through her illustration and imagination, which has reflected the female's resistance and obedience to the male homo-society. In these construction processes of the idealised masculinity, the female characters in both advertisements play significant roles in the represented gender relations; however, compared with the British female character that makes the resistance to the male homo-social bonding, the Chinese female images are constructed as having less initiative and being held

more rigidly within the framework of the traditional family.

As the concluding chapter, Chapter 14 evaluates the answers to the research questions and how the aims of the research have been addressed. It consolidates the main arguments from each chapter in order to examine the contributions and limitations of this research. In light of the discussions and arguments presented, this chapter reviews the similarities and differences of women's advertising representations between the UK and China from the perspectives of femininity, family, new woman, the female body, exotic woman, and woman's idealised masculinity. While recognising the limitations of this research, I offer insights into its contributions to gender studies and cross-cultural studies.

Edward Said, referring to the personal dimension of his work *Orientalism*, once wrote: 'much of the personal investment in this study derives from my awareness of being an "Oriental" as a child growing up in two British colonies' (Said, 1978: 26). Said's *Orientalism* and his other postcolonial critical theories are no exception. His Eastern lineage, the tough situation of Palestine, and the discursive hegemony of the West all constitute the specific historical background of his writings. Along with this line, there is no doubt that my ethnic and gender identity, the ideas of feminism and post-feminism I accepted, the Western media coverage of China, and the Western theories I have accepted, etc., have together formed my starting point in this cross-cultural comparison research.

Hence, how to find the research and theoretical angle for the comparison of the woman's representations between the UK and China has become the essential and first issue need to be solved. In this regard, I turned to the directions of orientalism criticism, feminist media critiques and post-feminism to find the solutions, which will be introduced in the next chapters. Moreover, in order to set the stage for the discussion and comparison of women's advertising representations between the UK and China, the next following chapters will review previous literature and research

from the perspectives of cross-cultural comparison, advertising, feminism, globalisation, and women's advertising representations.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Cross-Cultural Comparisons: the UK and China

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the practical significances, objects and research questions, and the structure and framework of this research. This chapter examines the relevant literature and theoretical backgrounds of cross-cultural comparisons between the UK and China.

As argued in Chapter 1, the cross-cultural comparison is a complex and challenging theme in today's academia. The question gets more complicated when cross-cultural comparisons are combined with gender issues and advertising. The cross-cultural comparison of gendered advertising representations involves many issues, including characteristics of advertising, the use of gender in advertising, gendered representation and social culture, globalisation, hegemonic ideology, cultural integration and cultural differences. All of these issues occur in the continually changing new global system. Therefore, this chapter will review literature and research about the contemporary global network and the critical issues that exist in it, to lay a foundation for discussing how the global system impacts gendered cultures in the UK and China in the next chapter.

This chapter consists of six sections. The second section examines the related concepts of culture. The third and fourth sections review the literature and theories around Orientalism, hegemonic culture, intercultural communication, globalisation, homogeneity, heterogeneity and hybridity. These sections aim to provide a basic standing point and theoretical perspective for this cross-cultural comparative analysis. In the fifth section, I discuss the research gap in literature and how this work originally contributes to this field. Lastly, I conclude the literature discussed in this chapter and explain how to apply the theories into the discussions and examinations of the advert cases.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Comparison and Related Concepts

This section expounds the concept of culture which reveals the power relations behind the representation of the East and arguments of cross-cultural communication to explore the issues involved in the UK-China cultural comparison of gender representation.

Since the early 1980s, the appearance and the abundant accumulation of various academic works in post-colonial studies have marked an attempted transformation of the bygone main way in thinking certain relationships and conflicts existing in the world especially between Western and Eastern cultures (e.g. Spivak, 1988; 1999; Gandhi, 1998; Chambers & Curti, 1996; Ashcroft & Griffiths, 1990; Geneva, 2000). Many academics today, especially those concerned with trans-cultural processes (e.g. Wu, 2017) and with the world systems associated with global cultural capitalism (e.g. Appadurai, 1996; Li, 2016), have noticed that the world has been a congeries of all aspects of interactions and blends from economy and education to policy and culture for many years.

According to Giddens (1999), 'globalisation is becoming increasingly decentred', and the development process of globalisation is also the current changing processes of the structures of our culture, family, and governance. Globalisation represents the core characteristics of our modern world (Dirlik, 2002: 20). Our modern world is characterised by increasing global cultural interconnections and a dramatic 'space - time compression' (Harvey, 1989). The globalisation as a cultural phenomenon is partly generated by the development of mass media that makes people better connected to each other and easily access to more information all around the world, as Ien Ang (1990: 252) states: 'the transnational communication system[...] offers opportunities of new forms of bonding and solidarity, new ways of forging cultural

communities'. Waters (1995: 136) also points out that globalisation is pluralising our world 'by recognising the values of cultural niches and local abilities'.

The trans-cultural process under the globalisation system is not always amicable and harmonious, as culture is a highly competitive area filling with conflicts between different groups (defined by ethnicity, social class, gender, age, sexual identity, etc.) (Longhurst et al., 2017: 167-168). Thus, if we believe there is a global cultural system emerging, this cultural system will be 'filled with ironies and resistances, sometimes camouflaged as passivity and a bottomless appetite in the Asian world for things Western' (Appadurai, 1990). The reality is that the modern world is still unequal. As Yang (2002) states:

'In simple terms, the west-non-west relation was thought of in terms of whites versus the non-white races. White culture was regarded (and remains) the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, literature - in a word, civilisation.' (Young, 2002: 3).

Yet the global cross-cultural communication is not entirely negative. As a result of globalisation and worldwide migration, the clear racial division between the West and the East is at least not as absolute and apparent as it once was (Young, 2002). In terms of broad consensus, the gap between the West and the East which was mainly manifested in the domination of Western political force in the colonial era, has now been gradually dissolved into a more generous interaction system which shows more tolerance and acceptance towards multi-culture and diverse identities (Young, 2002; Shands, 2008; Murden, 2011). The post-colonialist discourse which is reshaping our cultural relations, according to Young (2002), not only supports the right of non-Western peoples to access to material well-being and resources but also asserts 'the dynamic power of their cultures, cultures that are now intervening in and transforming the societies of the west'.

So, what is culture? Said (1993:7) concludes two levels of the concepts of culture: First, culture means all of human practices including arts, literature, description, communication, representation, and other aesthetic forms. Culture also includes 'specialised knowledge available in such learned disciplines as ethnography, historiography, sociology, and literary history.' Second, culture can be understood as 'a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought'. In other words, culture is the reflection of ourselves, our society and our traditions (Said, 1993: 7).

Regarding the second level definition of culture, Said points out that culture can be seen as a storage of social knowledge in a certain context which on the one hand create the same or similar national identity and recognition, but on the other hand could cause a certain degree of exclusion and rivalry to other cultures (Ghazoul, 2007; Liu, 2015). So he argues that: 'in this second sense culture is a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a placid realm of Apollonian gentility, culture can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another [...]'(Said, 1993:7).

Said states that culture has played a sophisticated and indispensable role in the process of colonialism and an unchanging Eurocentrism always existed in the cross-cultural communication during the decades of imperial expansion (Said, 1978). Let us go back to the current situation. Due to the colonial history and synthetic effects of other factors, the expansionism of culture hegemony does exist in the interactions of cultures in the current globalised context (Liu, 2015:2). The imbalance in the human civilisation today makes the issue of national cultural identity more daunting than ever (Greig, 2002), which will be further discussed in the following sections.

2.3 Orientalism and Occidentalism: the UK and China

Similar to cultural globalisation, but the discourse of Orientalism is a different response to globalisation. Orientalism in this research is a terms used by cultural studies researchers to criticise the cultural description and ideological representation of the Orient constructed by Western discourses, with 'supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' (Said, 1978: 2). The West objectifies, differs and otherlises the Orient (including Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies), making the Orient a political and servile object, thereby 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 1978: 3). As the result, the Orient has been constructed as 'an integral part of European material civilisation and culture' and an irrational, feminised, weak and non-European Other (Said, 1978: 2; 65).

Said (1978) applies Foucault's notion of discourse to explain the operation mode of Orientalism, and states that: 'without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.'(Said, 1978: 3). In this sense, the Orient has become an object of thought or action for the West. For Said, Orientalism is constructed as an authoritative discourse, therefore, 'no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism' (Said, 1978: 3). In this process, 'the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western', and the logic of Eurocentric modernity has been reinforced (Said, 1978: 46; Li, 2016).

To be more specific, Said stresses that the Orient is not a 'mere being', but is a discursive construction of the 'Orientalised' Orient (Said, 1978: 6). Even such geographical concepts of the East and the West are artificially constructed (Said, 1978:

6). The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a comprehensive object, reflecting the conflicts between discourses and the manipulation of power and hegemony in various contexts. Therefore, Orientalism is not just an imagination about the Eastern cultures, but a created system of knowledge about the Orient, which re-shaped the Orient by Western consciousness and therefore made the Orientalism a general discourse (Said, 1978: 6).

Furthermore, the process of 'Orientalising' the Orient hides the deep-rooted Western-centrism notions and racist remarks (Said, 1978; Liu, 2015: 205). In the Orientalist discursive system, the Orient is the object of being gazed, written, studied, and represented as the Orientalist logic believes that the Eastern people cannot 'correctly' express what they want and need (Zhang, 2008: 86). For Said (1978), Orientalism is an effective discursive operating mechanism in which the Orient and Oriental cultures are always located in the position of being manipulated, gazed, and constructed. The culture was characterised by the classification of 'named features' in the Orientalist discursive system, such as giving Africans labels of 'black, lazy, sloppy[...]' and named the feature of Asians as 'yellow, sad, stereotyped[...]' (Liu, 2015: 204), or describing the Orient as the synonymous with tyranny, lasciviousness, irrationality, feminisation, degeneration, childishness, abnormality and inanimation while representing the Europeans with the images of democracy, modernity, science, chastity, masculinity, morality, development, maturity, and vitality (Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Liu, 2015). To sum up, the Orientalisation creates a series of 'oriental' images, separate them from the Western culture, and made the Orientalist culture suspicious and dangerous (Clifford, 2001). In the process of being Orientalised, the Orient has become the subordinate of the Occident (Said, 1978).

Taking Western representations of the East as an example, Said (1978: 46) pointed out that 'the Orient helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience.' For Orientalism, 'to make sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient', and this sense 'is directly indebted to various Western

techniques of representation that make the orient visible' (Said, 1978: 46).

According to Said (1978: 26), Orientalism still has a strong vitality in the postmodern world:

'One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardised moulds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardisation and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the mysterious Orient.' Said (1978:26).

Said points out that the United States now is taking the dominant position of in the world political arena, continuing the model of 'European imperialism' in the post-colonial context (Said, 1994), and the American-dominated cultural and political forces play a significant role in global interactions and communications. Therefore, we cannot get a deepen understanding of Orientalism without exploring a series of power relations. As Said repeatedly appeals, Orientalism is not only a social phenomenon but also a political fact, by shaping the form of popular cultures to achieve the purpose of homogenisation and cultural imperialism (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1993).

Cultural hegemony usually refers to the process that the ruling class or culture dominates the ideology and religion of another class or society, and achieves the purpose of dominance by controlling cultural content and re-establishing and unifying essential customs, beliefs, values, lifestyles and so on (Bullock & Trombley, 1999: 387-388). The imposed ruling-class worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm through the hegemonic cultural intervention. This kind of cultural intervention is not accomplished by direct military force (Alan & Stephen, 1999; Hassig, 1994: 23-24), but by a positive 'acceptance' of the dominance of the ruling class and see the ruling

culture as the 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1992).

Specific to the Chinese context, Orientalism, cultural hegemony, and self-Orientalism are significant concepts for understanding women's representations in China because the Westernised gender discourse has often been used either to suppress non-homologous voices or push for reforms towards homogeneity in modern China gender power system (Chen, 1995; Yu, 2016). Orientalism helps us to understand China's acceptance and resistance to Western practices (Li, 2016). In terms of representation, Orientalism provides a lens through which we can understand Chinese women's representations as a fighting arena of the 'yearning for Western practice' versus 'traditional gender cultural experiences' (Guo, 2016; Li, 2016).

Today, Orientalism has to be reconsidered not only 'as a system of mystification and manipulation imposed from the outside', but also 'as an on-going process of self-realisation and self-fashioning' (Chow, 2007: 292; Li, 2016). The Orientalist discourse is complex in Chinese context. According to Ju & Zhao (2004), the post-colonial context and Orientalist discourse significantly shape the identity of the modern Chinese. However, globalisation and localisation have similar fates of being commercialised in China (Ju & Zhao, 2004). Chen (2002) points out that social transformations and cultural changes in China happened in recent decades are not mindless Western replications; but are modifications situated in specific historical and social contexts in Chinese society (Li, 2016). Chen retrofitted the term 'Chinese Occidentalism' to describe how discourses about the West enable the Chinese to generate new discourses and indigenous practices for 'Chinese' purposes (Chen, 2002).

Different from the orientalism discourse, China's Occidentalism discourse is mainly confined to Chinese context (Li, 2016). Occidentalism refers to the stereotyped representation of the Western world and the nativist resistance to the West (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). There are two manifestations of China's Occidentalism including

official Occidentalism and anti-official Occidentalism (Tang, 2000). Official Occidentalism manifest as criticising the West for decadence and corruption through official platforms for the purpose of controlling the society and monitoring dissidents while Chinese intellectuals and civilians invoke the West to support social and political reforms and resist domestic political suppression (Tang, 2000). China's Occidentalism is a dynamic discourse system. It is not only constantly changing, but also easily influenced by social-cultural and political factors (Chen, 2002; Li, 2016).

In China, as Li (2016: 23) states: 'the erosion of communism and collectivism has left ample room for the revival of traditional culture and nationalism, which are also reactions to the challenges of globalisation.' According to Li (2016: 23), the official nationalism in China represents two converging narratives: 'China as a victim of foreign imperialism', and 'China as a victor under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party'. Since the 1990s, the import of Western values and media products in the Chinese society has occurred in conjunction with a revival of Chinese traditional culture, leading to the use of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism in business strategies (Li, 2016). As Li (2016: 23) points out, 'While selling nationalism often relies on the appropriation of Chinese symbols, images, rituals, historical heroes, and China's anti-imperialist history, promoting cosmopolitanism celebrates the country's imagined integration with the West'.

These all suggest the complexity of invocations of the local and the global in the cross-cultural comparison of advertising representations. This also reminds that in the comparative study between China and the UK, the research should not only considers the impacts of Orientalist discourse and cultural hegemony on the modern Chinese society, but should also pay attention to the particularity of the Chinese and British contexts, and even the influence of Chinese discourse on British culture and society in the convection of cultures in the globe. The following section will discuss globalisation, cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, which further lays the groundwork for understanding how advertising deals with local, regional, and global

forces.

2.4 Globalisation, Cultural Homogeneity, Heterogeneity and Hybridity: the UK and China

One central debate about today's globalisation process is the increasing intensions between homogenisation and heterogenisation (Li, 2016). As previously discussed, the globalisation process on the one hand encompasses optimistic cross-cultural understandings, on the other hand brings international conflicts and upheaval (Valentine, 2015). A vast array of empirical facts could be brought to bear on both views. These facts are mostly based on the premises of increasing cross-regional economic interconnections; the speedup of information dissemination; the erosion of old hierarchies; the possibility of forming new identities; and social and cultural changes (Li, 2016; Held & McGrew, 2000). Most often, arguments around homogenisation divide into either critique about Americanisation (or Westernisation) or the imperialist nature of global cultural trends, or debates about commodification and consumer society, and very often these two perspectives are closely intertwined (Schiller, 1996; Li, 2016).

Cultural imperialism is one main argument point around culture homogenisation, which can be seen as a form of cultural legacy contributing to the continuation of Western hegemonic discourse (White, 2001). The works of Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak all have influenced use of the term cultural imperialism. According to Foucault (1979), power produces 'truth'; 'truth' works as a 'system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements', which often coincides with various forms of cultural imperialism. Said (1993) reaffirms Foucault's arguments and points out that cultural imperialism exists and has significant influences in the international systems of power. Spivak (1999) cites the works of Foucault and Said, and points out that Western

literature and culture have a long history of exclusion of the subaltern from mainstream discourse. Cultural imperialism is an example of this.

However, cultural imperialism has been criticised for its simplification of the complicated culture (Straubhaar, 1991; Li, 2016), for considering local audiences as passive receiving objects (Notoji, 2000; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Li, 2016), and for ignoring the new meanings produced during the local interpretation of global media products (Li, 2016). As Tomlinson suggests the process of cultural imperialism is associated with local transformation and interpretations of the imported visual or textual products (Lechner & Boli, 2009). In essence, the term of cultural imperialism is the simplification of the global dominance of Western ideology, which fails to recognise that any culture is a mixture of different ideas, concepts from different cultures (Li, 2016). As previously stated, cross-cultural communication does not go in one direction from the Western countries to the third world at the same time maintains the 'purity' of Western cultures. Cultural communication is an interactive process, and its impact works on every country.

According to Appadurai (1996: 35), 'the global relationship [...] is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable'. Appadurai (1996) uses five 'scapes' to describe global cultural communication and cultural flows: ethnoscapen, mediascapen, technoscapen, financescapen, and ideoscapen. As the key for us to understand the complexities of globalisation, these five dimensions are responsible for describing the global cultural flows from the perspectives of ethnicity, media, technologies, finances, and ideologies. Appadurai (1990) argues that these landscapes build the 'imagined worlds'. Mass media is a significant force that affect our imagination of modernity and our understandings of nation and identity, and thus blurs the boundaries between the national and the international (Appadurai, 1990; Li, 2016). According to Li (2016), Appadurai's arguments of cross-cultural communication mean that cultural globalisation is a dynamic process rather than the simplified cultural homogenisation. As Appadurai (1996: 17) states, 'globalisation is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and

even localising process'.

Giddens (1999) argues that 'globalisation today is only partly Westernisation[...] [and] is becoming increasingly decentred'. Robins, Cornford, & Aksoy (1997) state that globalisation helps promote diversity. To be more specific cultural globalisation is a modification process that absorbs and localises diverse global cultural elements and recreates a new local social, political and economic culture. As Kroon & Swanenberg (2018: 1) argue, the ongoing globalisation processes are 'turning the world into a far more diverse place' and creating an environments 'in which new discursive genres and patterns are emerging, along with new linguistic and cultural practices and identities'. Bhabha (1994b: 37) also states that globalisation opens up 'the third space of enunciation', leading to the diversity and enrichment of local cultures. Moreover, Li (2016) points out that new meanings are unenviably and continuously produced when one culture is introduced into another area: cultural globalisation will inevitably create new space for individual imagination, international communication, and identity formation, through which different audiences unremittingly negotiate with complex power relations.

Given the complexity of globalisation, Canclini (1998) uses the term hybridity to illustrate the contemporary state of civilisation: 'at the end of the twentieth century, nations and nearly all ethnic groups are economically, politically and culturally integrated in the modern world, or are experimenting with intensely hybrid processes which produce a complex heterogeneity'. Theory of hybridity holds that cultural export is the fusion of local and global forces (Li, 2016). In the process of consuming cultural products, audiences reproduce and remould the meaning and content of media products, which virtually leads to the empowerment of local audiences (Appadurai, 1996; Canclini, 2006).

The usage of hybridity theory, however, has also been criticised for denying and glossing over racism (Ien Ang, 2001), neutralising power relations and hiding unequal

power relations (Dirlik, 1997), and endorsing multiculturalism co-opted by global powers (Li, 2016). Therefore, Kraidy (2002) proposes a critical theory of hybridity that captures the 'dialectic articulation' between structures and dynamic power discourses (Li, 2016). Kraidy (2002: 334) stresses that 'hegemonic structures operate in a variety of contexts to construct different hybridities'. This concept recognises hybridisation as a form of cultural reproducing mechanism, in which the hegemonic discourse plays an important role (Li, 2016).

The context of hybridity and heterogeneity brought by globalisation is providing the ethnic researchers an opportunity to seek new theoretical space. Therefore, another question that this section needs to explain is my position in this cross-cultural comparison as the ethnic spectator. The ethnic spectatorship research position means that this research adopts the Western theoretical perspective and identifies its applicability and inapplicability to Chinese context, and added the interpretation of the particularities of Chinese gender and advertising discourses into the cross-cultural comparison between China and Britain.

The concept of ethnic spectatorship was put forward by Chow (1991a). She brought the observation of her mother's recognition of the Italian director's film *The Last Emperor* into the theoretical framework of the research of modern Chinese identity. According to Chow (1991a), in the context of intercultural communication, the reception experience of the ethnic spectators is a part of the dynamic cross-cultural interpellation process. Chow's mother's recognition of the 'foreign devil' and the engagement of the perceptive operations of the film need to be analysed combined with the modern Chinese 'nativism' as well as the 'larger realm of modern history'. As an ethnic spectator, his/her ethnicity is not 'simply ethnic' but 'ethicised', and has always been constructed by the cross-cultural context (Chow, 1991a). According to Zhou (2015), Chow's theoretical construction of ethnic spectatorship can be seen as a metaphor - in the present, all people are ethnic spectators, whether facing them is visually or textually. In this sense, the ethnic spectatorship can be seen as a theoretical

standpoint for each researcher of the cross-cultural studies.

The recognition of ethnic spectatorship could effectively digest cultural allochronism¹ and help audiences with different cultural contexts coexist at the same time (Zhou, 2015). However, the experience of ethnic spectators may also bring the re-enhancement of the national identity in the confrontation of local cognition and heterogeneous cultures (Chow, 1991a; Zhou, 2015). Therefore, the research position in cross-cultural studies cannot be generalised, but needs to be appropriately adjusted according to different research objects and researchers' individual experiences.

The use of Western theories in cross-cultural research also requires caution, and we need to consider the applicability between Western theories and cross-cultural research objects. In the operation of specific researches, as a 'Westernised' Chinese women, Rey Chow proves the possibility to employ Western theories into the discussion of ethnic issues:

'The use of "Western theory", whose richness and sophistication is part and parcel an outcome of the uneven distribution of material well-being between the "First" and "Third" Worlds[...] "Western theory" is there, beyond my control; yet in order to speak, I must come to terms with it. For someone with my background, the awareness of the issues of ethnicity emerges as a "belated" consciousness [...] this belated consciousness, however, is ineluctable even while it must use the rarefied products of its own historical exploitation to reveal itself. The way we use "Western theory" to understand the non-West is, in this light, a reversal of what happens historically.' (Chow, 1991a: xvi).

According to Li (1993), the richness and complexity of modern Western theories

¹ Bowman (2016) states that allochoronism is a kind of essentialism believing in the unchanging essence of the other culture, which is not divorced from Saidian orientalism. It refers to one tendency involved in certain manners of treating other cultures in which producing a fantasy that the characters of the other culture could never changing through time (Bowman, 2016).

reflect the unequal distribution of material and cultural resources between the Western and non-Western worlds in the recent centuries. From the academic perspective, the application of the Western theories into the cross-cultural comparison needs to be examined by the ethnic considerations and cultural experiences. In this sense, the primary aims of cross-cultural comparison are to re-examine and deconstruct the previous relationship between various powers and specific historical moments and to rebuild a combination of the structure of the relationship between the various social/cultural forces, or in the words of Gary Hall, to explore 'culture/power relations' which at the same time 'theoretically interrogates its own relation to politics and to power' (Hall, 2002:10).

This experience also works with gender issues. In most Western European societies, both in the past and present, the semiotic systems of gender usually appears with the binary logic of women/men, masculinity/femininity, etc. (Juschka, 2014). Under the influence of the logic of enlightenment consistent with Aristotle's natural history and philosophy, women were considered as 'irrational', 'weak', and 'dependent' while men are 'rational', 'strong', and 'independent' (Juschka, 2014). Under the logic of dualism, the half of these combinations are seen as negative while the other half goes the opposite.

Women in the Third World are in much worse situations. Women of colour are particularly vulnerable to the categorisation of social groups, and this classification stifles complex identities of subjects (Chow, 1993). In traditional Western academic discourse, the category of woman often refers to the Western woman while the 'third world' is represented by the male group in the third world; the categories of woman and the 'Third World' are mutually exclusive as the 'Third World' itself has frequently been 'feminised' and 'negativised' (Chow, 1992: 5-6; 12). Thus, as Trin (1990: 96) claims: 'to simply denounce Third World women's oppression with notions and terms made to reflect or fit into Euro-American women's criteria of equality is to abide by ethnographic ideology [...] which depends on the representation of a coherent cultural

subject as source of scientific knowledge to explain a native culture and reduces every gendered activity to sex-role stereotype. Feminism in such a context may well mean "Westernisation". However, as Young (2002: 195) states, if we identify feminism as an attractive and effective strategy of the West for pushing global cultural erosion, we might have to come to the conclusion that many modern gender concepts and values are the Westernised as the beginnings of feminism and Western modernity are difficult to distinguish.

Therefore, to assume feminism is simply equal to westernisation might cause the mistake of dualism which is in the same line with the Orientalist discourse. It is now generally believed that modernity discourses and modern gender recognition are not created by the Western ideology, but are products of the collision, compromise and coalescence in the interactive process of the world (Young, 2002: 194-195). From the 18th century onwards, modern gender concepts has been evolved in many ways over times and cultures, at the same time, the espoused theories of feminism and post-feminism in the Western and non-Western worlds also changed over the past decades (Young, 2002: 195-196). I will make more detailed explanations of this in the next chapter.

2.5 Research Gap

As it can be seen from the previous literature and research, the topic of culture has been repeatedly discussed by the academia from various aspects through various research objects. But research on the Chinese and British cultural relations, especially in the field of the culture of gender, still appears to be inadequate. It is also worth noting that the cultural relations between China and the UK are constantly changing. Therefore, more updated information and data are needed to continuously supplement the discussions of the similarities and differences between Chinese and British cultures and societies, and to explore the forming reasons of these similarities and

differences between the UK and China.

Moreover, although the Saidian critiques of Orientalist discourses is an important theoretical basis for this research to discuss the relationship between East and West, the research object of Saidian Orientalism is not about China. Although the previous experience of critiques of Orientalism and cross-cultural research can be applied to the discussion of the relationship between hegemonic culture and other cultures, it still needs to be further refined into specific countries and cultures. Therefore, this study's discussions of cross-cultural relations between China and the United Kingdom expands the application of Orientalism and refines the previous discussions of global interactions and cultural exchanges, which can be seen as an effective complement to cross-cultural gender research.

2.6 Summary

This chapter lays the background for discussing women's advertising representation in a cross-cultural context, which helps to answer the research questions of the differences and similarities between British and Chinese cultures of gender. From the perspective of cross-cultural comparison, this chapter discusses the relationship between culture, globalisation, Orientalism, and hegemonic culture. At the same time, this chapter identified my research position as the ethnic spectator.

In order to pave the way for interpreting women's advertising representations, the next chapter will review studies on feminism and gender, and summarise the gender views in British and Chinese cultures respectively and their relationships with modern feminism, post-feminism and globalisation process.

Chapter 3 Literature Review: Cross-Cultural Comparison, Feminism and Woman: the UK and China

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to review the relevant literature and research about feminism, post-feminism, gender, and woman in the British and Chinese cultures. This chapter consists of seven sections. The second section summarises research and theories of feminism and post-feminism. The introduction and examination of feminist and post-feminist theories and studies provide an effective analytical tool for the analysis of women's advertising representations. The third section of this chapter describes other relevant concepts of woman and representations, including the concepts and arguments of gender, sexuality, femininity, and Eastern and Western body views. Foucault's discussion of sexual discourse and Butler's gender performativity theory are the starting points and main focuses of this section. The next two sections reviews research on woman in British and Chinese cultures respectively, and their relationship with the globalisation process.

3.2 Feminism and Post-Feminism

In addition to the considerations of cross-cultural interaction, another research object in this study is woman's representation. In this research, first, feminism and post-feminism have been employed as the significant theoretical supports for the discussion and analysis of women's advertising representations. Second, the development levels and development tracks of feminism/post-feminism in the UK and China to some extent has caused the similar or different representations of women and gender roles. Therefore, this section will review the concepts and key theories of feminism and post-feminism, and feminism in the UK and China.

To retrospect the history, feminist thoughts were generated by Western bourgeois democratic ideologies in the 18th century. With the decades of development and

growth, feminist ideas eventually brought a large-scale outbreak of women's movements in the following decades (Cott, 1987; Walters, 2005; Witt, 2006; Allen, 1999). In the mid of the 20th century, Western feminist movements came to public attentions again, which is known as the second wave of feminism. Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) are generally considered as the foundation works of the feminist critiques during that period (Li, 2005: 8; Hunt, 2016). Feminist scholars launched a massive liquidation of sexuality in academic fields including literature, history, politics, psychology and sociology, such as criticising the descriptions of female characters in traditional literature and media representations (e.g. Woof, 1966; Newton, 1981); rewriting the history with the female discourse (e.g. Cameron, 1992; Abel, 1982; Fetterley, 1978); advocating female writing (e.g. Abel, 1982); investigating how women were oppressed over time (e.g. Merchant, 1980; Schiebinger, 1989); evaluating the role women played in the process of human civilisations (e.g. Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1989); exploring the fundamental value of the liberation of women (e.g. El Saadawi, 1993); discussing forms of oppression of women in different cultures social reality and the extent (e.g. Graham-Brown, 1981; Göçek & Shiva, 1994); exploring ways for improving current living situation of women; and so on.

In general, traditional feminism was divided into the following three schools: Marxism feminism, radical feminism, and liberal feminism (Desai, 2014; Willis, 1984; Tong, 1992; Lin Rui, 2008). Marxist feminism attributes the sexual oppression and gender surveillance of women to the nuclear family² structure and the patriarchal and capitalist systems (e.g. Firestone, 1970; Millett, 1970). Therefore, it demands a top-down 'sex role revolution with radical changes of personal and family lifestyle' (Yates, 1975: 80), to completely change the subsistent gender structures and improve social, political and economic independence for women (Wintle, 2008). Liberal feminism is contrasted with radical feminism from many perspectives including the

² The nuclear family refers to a family consisting of two parents and their children (Encyclopaedia, 2011).

understandings of sexuality and the attitudes to gender relations (Murphy, 2014; Appignanesi & Garratt, 1995; MacKinnon, 2013; Dines, 2011). Liberal feminism builds on the ideological basis of liberalism and believes that 'female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to success in the so-called public world' (Tong, 1992). Friedan (1981) is one of the representative works which have a significant impact on liberal feminism, in which Friedan pierced and criticised the myth of the traditional female roles such as wives and mothers, and encouraged women to enter the public domain and strive for political and legal rights.

With the further development of feminism, new schools of feminism keeps emerging, such as psychoanalytic feminism, existential feminism, post-modern feminism, eco-feminism and so on (Lin, 2008). Although different feminist schools vary widely, they all share a common goal: 'to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes' (Hawkesworth, 2006: 25-27). Additionally, different schools of feminism maintain a high degree of uniformity at two points (Li, 2005): first, women have suffered from gender oppression, sexual discrimination, and stereotyped role settings in the worldwide for a long time; women are always in the position of, as Beauvoir (1949) said, 'the Second Sex'. Second, the existing patriarchy system all around the world is artificially constructed.

Here is a set of definitions of patriarchy: patriarchy refers to 'the fundamental goal of patriarchy is to maintain women's subordinate and exploited relationship to men in all social institutions' (Gordon, 1996: 219); 'Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organisation of a range of different cultures.' (Malti-Douglas, 2007); 'Today, as in the past, men generally hold political, economic, and religious power in most societies.' (Lockard, 2007). Thus, patriarchy can be understood as a power system of male domination, the objectification of woman, and a male-dominated mode of thinking, which existed and is still existing in our societies.

With the process of the post-industrialisation of Western countries, post-modern feminism stepped on the stage of history in the early 1990s (Li, 2005: 155; Krollokke & Sorensen, 2005), which has been generally considered as the 'third-wave' of the feminism (Coole, 2000: 184). Among them, the most influential are the French feminists including Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigaray.

The third wave feminism has proposed a post-structuralism framework to discuss implicit political representations of gender oppression. It comprises a set of critiques of essentialist social construction theory, dualism, grand theories, and the relations of power and discourse (Gillis et al. 2004; Li, 2005:158-177), and deconstructs the confrontation of 'male' and 'female' in cultures. It strives to 'be anti-essentialist and non-judgemental, welcoming a variety of identities both across and within people' (Cocca, 2014: 98), and embodies 'contradiction, contrast, paradox, and an aversion to labelling' (Chananie-Hill et al., 2012: 46).

According to Li (2005: 159), the philosophical assumptions of post-modern feminism is that the generalisation of the so-called universality of knowledge is problematic. The discourses of science, religion, law, and the production of knowledge only have relative values as all grand theories are based on the standard of male discourse while 'women have never got any benefit from the liberation of bourgeois liberalism' in the mainstream discourse (Li, 2005: 159). Based on the critiques of essentialism and dualism, post-feminism opposes the macro analyse of traditional understanding of gender as the categories of man and woman are too general and no longer universally applicable (Li, 2005: 160), and turns its focus to the survey of micro-politics and the intersection between ethnicity and gender (Gills, Howie & Munford, 2007; Freedman, 2003; Henry, 2003).

For post-modern feminism, there are no universal gender concept: the concepts of gender could be interpreted through various cultural and historical perspectives and

positions (Li, 2005: 162). It denies the universal concept of the liberation of woman as all other feminist theories are partial because women belong to different classes, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, so there is not a specific category can represent all women (Li, 2005: 162).

One significant postfeminist representative is Luce Irigaray. Building on psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, Irigaray questioned the consciousness of rational subject which was created by Western male discourse. She believes that those seemingly objective and gender-neutral philosophy and scientific discourses are manipulated by men. In the male-dominated world, 'man would search, with nostalgia and repulsion, in woman for his own repressed and uncultivated natural pole' in order to make the woman become the 'lesser form' of man (Irigaray, 2008: 33). Irigaray points out that the differences between female subjects are not reflected in the male-dominated symbolic order, and women's rights and interests have not been protected by our laws, systems, or languages (Weedon, 1995; Li, 2005).

Anti-essentialist thoughts were also valued in post-feminist discussions of the social construction of women and gender roles (Stone, 2004). According to Li (2005), traditional feminism divided the sexual characteristics of the individual into masculinity and femininity, but post-feminism posed a challenge to this division and shifted attention to individual inner specific differences of gender identities. Post-feminism not only opposes sexual differentiation but also objects to the concept of sex. It attaches great importance to the distinctions of race, class, ethnicity, nationality and sexual orientation (Li, 2005: 129). Li (2005: 129-130) points out, on the question of gender and sexual difference, post-feminism believes that knowledge and discourse of gender are shaped by contexts, histories and languages, while gender differences and subjective consciousness are constructed by discourse. For post-feminism, the basic hypothesis of the traditional model of repression is reflected as the fact that the male body is always associated with violence, lust, objective objectivity and orgasm, while the female body is associated with tending, intimacy,

and non-genital happiness (Li, 2005: 137). Monique Witting argues that even the physiological female body is constructed by society (Robert, 1998). Butler (1993) further criticises the distinction between biological sex and socially constructed gender, and argues that material things (such as the body) are subject to social construction of gender discourse and the construction process of women's subordination.

In the postfeminist view, discourse is the power. Foucault's theory of power and knowledge provides post-feminism with a way of thinking in terms of power and gender discourse. As Li (2005: 138) writes: 'post-feminism draws on Foucault's notion of power formation and concludes the following implications: Foucault's theory is not to tell us what to do, nor to provide us with a better social blueprint, but to provide us with an idea of how to treat the existing theoretical perspective, and to analyse their methods from the perspective of power. Foucault reminds people how people's ways of thinking and acting have served for ruling themselves, and how people control themselves through the process of creating truth'.

Foucault further proposed the concept of 'disciplinary gaze' and used the example of the Panopticon to metaphorise the fact that everyone in the society is under the gazing and surveillance of power (Foucault, 1995). According to Foucault (1977), social power uses a range of sexual disciplines and knowledge to define the so-called 'normal' sexual behaviours and sexual orientation, forcing people to abide by the various social norms and cultural practices created by discourses and institutions. Different eras and cultures have different discourses about woman and femininity, producing a complete set of disciplinary and repression of woman and woman's bodies in different contexts. In the creation process of discipline and punishment around gender, woman is trained to positively create their docile bodies (McNay, 1992).

Thus, many feminist research were committed to creating a female-dominated

discourse and culture (e.g. Agger, 1993). However, according to Li (2005: 139), 'when we opposed the oppression through discourse (such as to use feminist discourse to challenge men's superior position and the treatment of women as inferiors) we have entered the field of the dominant discourse. These new labels we invented, on the one hand, are challenging the oppressions, on the other hand have repressed us in another identity that is forcing us to conform to the norms of the groups or communities which we belong to, and constructing our mental models [...] Power relations and discourses are constantly changing, but we can never escape the issues they have brought up with'. Therefore, the resistance against power and male-dominated discourse is a long-term project for post-feminism in this sense.

The post-feminists have long timely questioned how to comminute and abolish the universal understanding of gender dualism constructed by power and advocate expressions outside culturally-defined gender binaries and gender stereotypes (Brunce, 2015). Among recent examples are Chris Beasley's (2005) critiques on the gender hierarchy in which 'masculinity and men are severed altogether' (Beasley, 2005: 233) and Sarah Whitney's discussion on the public surveillance of young women's lives and bodies (Whitney, 2017). Beasley (2005: 233) concludes that masculinity is merely an 'identification', and 'it is not tied to a sexed body and apparently escapes the biological. It also appears to escape the social, since it is no longer conceived in historical terms and aspects of masculinity's social production, as a positionality whose definition rests upon the subordinated status of women, seem to disappear'. Whitney (2017) finds that, the young women today 'continue to be shamed for sexual expression and bodily non-conformity' as they are 'perceived as rightful subjects of surveillance' by the mass media texts. Markula (2009), drawing on Derrida, discusses the possibilities for feminism to think 'outside' of the gendered categories of female/femininity and male/masculinity and reach beyond the hierarchical binary gender structure, and concludes that 'this remains a very difficult task' (2009: 103-104). Overall, the post-modern feminist critiques today have been subsumed into broader gender studies which focus on subjectivity, identity and intersectionality

projects (Maclaran, 2015).

This section reviews the main theories and research of feminism and post-feminism. The next section will further make explanations of the relevant concepts supporting the discussions in this research, including the literature and arguments of gender, sexuality, femininity and the body.

3.3 Gender, Woman and Related Concepts

The previous section discusses the concepts and theories of feminism and post-feminism. This section continues the theme of woman and reviews literature in the field of gender studies.

Instead of understanding sex differences as born, biological and natural (e.g. Freud, 1908), many studies today argue that both gender and sex are socially learned and labelled by power and discourse (Scott, 1988). The idea of gender was formed during the second feminist movement (Lindsey, 2010). According to Oakley (1972), the concept of sex uses physical and biological differences to distinguish men and women, while gender a psychological and cultural concept which is related to the social construction of the difference between man and woman and between masculinity and femininity.

The proposal of the concept of gender plays vital roles in exploring the causes of gender oppression, the unequal gender relations and the promotion of women's liberation, etc., making the public realise that women's gender role and identity are not determined by the biological factors (Eagly & Wood, 2011), and even the biological sexual differences - which we take as common sense for a long time, is made up of by the power and society (Li, 2008).

Building on Foucault's argument about sexuality, Judith Butler offered a new point of view on gender. According to Butler (1990), human societies are organised around the norm of gender and sexuality. Butler (1990) questions the meanings of the existence of woman as a gender category and believes that gender studies should focus on the process in which a subject becomes a woman rather than the woman as a state in gender discourse.

The premises of Butler's concerns about the gender concept are subject and subjectivity. According to Barker (2012: 220), subjectivity refers to 'the condition of being a person and the processes by which we become a person; that is, how we are constituted as cultural subjects and how we experience ourselves'. In other words, the gender of the subject is first defined by the social, cultural, and discourse systems which begin at birth. Butler (2006) believes that gender identity is the result of the intertwining of various discourse systems, but because this interaction is always in progress, the gender of the subject is also in progress, and the subjectivity is not in a fixed state.

Butler (1993; 2006) views gender as a process which is produced through performativity. According to Butler (1993), we are encouraged and required to imitate certain characteristics of woman or man and perform the 'appropriate' sexual identities since the birth. In the process of the repeated and repetitive performances of gender, we build ourselves into the subject with specific gender identity. The gender identity is a performative construction which is stabilised by a set of continuous behavioural production and gender-programming/staging of the body. In this sense, the subjectivity is given meanings in the process of performativity. Building on this, Butler rejects the labels of gender (whether the label is divorced from the dualistic man/woman discourse system or not), as the gender identities and roles which we used to take for granted (such as woman, man, husband, wife) are not ontologically valid or epistemologically sound (Butler, 2004).

Gender identity is closely related to the concept of identity. According to Morrow & Messinger (2006: 8), identity refers to 'an individual's sense of identity as masculine or feminine, or some combination thereof'. Gender identity is argued to be informed by many factors including the media (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015: 67). Hall (1996: 5-6) argues that identity can be seen as 'the points of temporary attachment to the subject positions, which discursive practices construct for us'. As Pierre Bourdieu states, 'To a very large extent we do not choose our identity. We received the cultural identity which has been handed down to us from previous generations [...] We adhere to groups, whether clubs or political or religious organisations, and we adopt the identifying images of social groups, whether in hair-style or clothing, so as to confirm our social identity.' (Robbins, 1991:174).

For the same reason, the power and discourse of gender take steps to distinguish our gender identity from those who belong to different groups. Our gender identities are dependent on and informed by the subjectivity. As Butler (1990) points out, they are not fixed or inborn but are dynamically constructed (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015: 72). Butler (1990) also argues that there is no core gender identity that drives our behaviour. These behaviours are modelled the concepts of being a woman or man which is taken from our society and culture. The illusion of core feminine and masculine gender identities is produced by the social and political forces aiming to shape the subject into the gendered subject (Seidman et al., 2016).

Historically, the term gender was adopted as a means of setting gender roles and distinguishing masculinity and femininity (Marecek, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). The discourse of gender determines the categories of gender roles.

The gender role refers to a social role encompassing different psychological characteristics or behaviour patterns that are generally considered as appropriate, acceptable or desirable for people based on their gender identities (Levesque, 2011). Different social cultures have different requirements and expectations for the 'ideal'

gender behaviours, but some gender roles have wide recognitions (Eisenclas, 2013). For example, in many civilisations, war is usually considered to be suitable for males while the role of raising children is generally for females (Lockard, 2014).

After the sexual revolution, gay liberation, and feminist movements in the mid-20th century (especially in the 1960s), newer gender roles emerged and were widely accepted in Western societies including the UK. Previous dualistic understandings of gender roles (such as men are the backbones and primary figures of the core family, responsible for interacting with the outside world while women rely on men and are responsible for internal family connections; or men are strong and rational while women are weak and emotional) have been considered as gender stereotypes (Basow, 1992).

The understandings of gender roles are usually centred on the interpretation of conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Alters & Schiff, 2009). Femininity refers to a set of roles and behaviours generally associated with females, which is both socially constructed and biologically created (Martin & Finn, 2010; Dunphy, 2000; Edley, 2001).

Femininity often plays an oppression role in gender recognition, as it is an essential social-constructed reference for gender performativity (Varney, 2002). The social norms of femininity reinforce gender roles by associating attributes and characteristics with one gender (Dornan, 2004). According to Martin & Finn (2010), gender roles are constructed by power, discourse, and context, so that femininity and masculinity can be understood as man-made provisions of gendered individuals within a specific social culture based on the concept of biological sexes. Based on the male/female duality in our pre-existing language system, the masculinisation and feminisation are accomplished by performing an external symbolic system of gender (Martin & Finn, 2010). This kind of man-made regulations on femininity or masculinity has gradually become the general accepted 'common sense' following long-term cultural

precipitation and accumulation.

In life, both females and males can exhibit feminine traits and behaviours (Bem, 1974; Wijgard, 1997; Dunphy, 2000; Martin & Finn 2010). As it has been frequently argued that, there is no absolute femininity or masculinity (Butler, 1999 & 1990; Laurie, 2014). The so-called pure femininity or masculinity is just a political constraint for the power-constructed ideal status of gender classification (Callaghan, 1994). However, the fact is gender roles and identities are often strictly defined under the binary framework of man/ masculinity - woman/femininity in life or in media representations.

According to Connell (1995), mainstream gender ideology expects to be able to name the changes of gender characteristics in a 'normative' way to regulate the general public's awareness of gender roles with an apparently acceptable substance. Raewyn Connell once wrote, 'we act in response to particular situations, within definite structures of social relations [...] gender relations, the relations among people and groups organised through the reproductive arena, form one of the major structures of all documented societies [...] Actions are configured in larger units, and when we speak of masculinity and femininity, we are naming configurations of gender practice...the important thing is the process of configuring practice. Taking a dynamic view of the organisation of practice, we arrive at an understanding of masculinity and femininity as gender projects' (Connell, 1995: 71-72). Through crowning or naming something or someone as feminine or masculine, the politicisation of gender concepts can be implemented, which further solidifies people's understanding of traditional femininity or masculinity.

Femininity is inseparable from gender discourse and power. In real life, femininity has been fixed into the discursive practice of being a woman (Salway, 2001; Edley, 2001). Therefore, the practice of femininity discourse can be seen as a regulatory or ritual social practice, which is created by bio-power aiming to make docile bodies (Butler,

1993; Krolokke & Scorensen, 2006).

In contemporary world, the constitution of femininity (as well as masculinity) are more complex as it has crossed the boundaries of gender, ethnicity, class and geography; the definition and understanding of femininity usually change with contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Moreover, as Callaghan (1994) points out, femininity should be considered to be as an unfixed and uncompleted construction process of subjectivity which is always changing. As a result, the interpretation and discussion of femininity should be placed in specific cultural contexts.

Another relevant concept of gender is the body. According to Butler (1993), gender does not exist without the body. 'Gender is assigned to the body through performativity. Our ways of doing gender produce something real, and they construct meanings of gender inscribed to the body' (Krijnen et al., 2015: 24).

The body is involved in all aspects of society because of its operational code of social and cultural power. The understandings of the body between China and the UK are significantly different.

In Western cultures, since the Plato, the dichotomy of the soul and the body is one characteristic of Western academic thinking: the soul is fundamental and dominate; the body is vassal and the tools (Lloyd, 1993). And the binary relationship between body and mind has been further strengthened by some influential philosophers in history such as Cartesian and Friedrich Nietzsche (Wang Zhimei, 2007). Martin Heidegger broke the dualist thinking of the relationship between mind and body. He argued that the primal nature of human's existence is not the mind, consciousness, or spiritual subject, but 'Dasein' (existence), which is always a being engaged and the coherence of being-in-the-world (Wheeler, 2011). Hans-Georg Gadamer further pointed out that human is 'essentially linguistic beings' (Gadamer, 1976: 61), thus focusing on the agency, self-consciousness, and culture of the human as the human

does not merely 'exist' but has 'being' in a specific time and place (Morris, 1990: 442). In modern Western societies, the body received unprecedented attention in various fields of ideology, derived different kinds of intellectual discourses, such as body phenomenology, body sociology, body narratology, etc. (Wang Zhimei, 2007).

Among all the works that have changed the body view of modern Western philosophy, Michel Foucault's concept of power cannot be ignored. Foucault (1975) states that our views of body are engraved by culture and history, representing power relations and gender discourse. The individual acquires the body through sensing history and culture, but in turn, to a large extent history and culture determine how the individual views the body. The disciplinary and discretionary power exercised in the social constructions of the discourse and the knowledge of body, giving the body political and philosophical meanings, which has achieved the regulation of the practices and policies of the body. Under the guidance of the discourse of body, people will consciously construct their docile bodies, build the subjective consciousness and define their gender identities (Foucault, 1975). Foucault's excavation of the construction process of the discourse of body reflect the distrust of power and institutions in the postmodern society, resulting in a series of arguments and critiques around the body politics in British society.

In the traditional Chinese culture, in addition to the physiological meaning of the body, the meaning of Chinese character 'body' ('身') also connotes 'in person' and 'personal experience' (Zhang, 2008a). For the ancient Chinese, the body is not only confined to flesh, bone and blood, but contains a phenomenological sense of the non-material 'potential body', which means the body is open to the endless world in a way of 'borrowing the manifestation through all kinds of behaviours' ('借用显体') (Zhang, 2008b). Everything in the world is coincide with the human body, which is summed up as 'human's body is small but contains the heaven and the ground' ('人身虽小，暗合天地') in Chinese philosophy. Thus the whole universe could be seen as the reflection of the body (Zhang, 2008b).

It is noteworthy that the traditional Chinese cosmism not only takes the human body as the starting point and the origin of the world but also interpret the world through the generation mechanism of the human's body (Zhang, 2008a). This eventually led to the Chinese Copernicus-like discovery that launched the 'Tao' of the universe from the 'Tao' of male and female in the name of 'Yin' and 'Yang' philosophy. In other words, the traditional Chinese concepts take the world as the incarnational of the human body. Therefore, answers to how and why the body is generated are also the fundamental solution of the issues of the universe (Zhang, 2008a). The essence of the universe is based on 'the ignorant couple' ('夫妇之愚') and started by man and woman ('造端于男女'). The 'Tao' of man and woman represents 'the beginning of the world' ('鸿蒙') (Zhang, 2008a).

In Confucianism, 'Tao produces man and woman' ('干道成男，坤道成女') (Interpretation in I Ching: part 1); and 'the intercourse of man and woman is equal to the Qi of earth goes up becoming the cloud, and the Qi of heaven goes down becoming the rain' ('天地絪縕，万物化醇；男女媾精，万物化生') (Interpretation in I Ching: part 2); 'Tao begins from natural acts of couples, but everything happened between "heaven and earth" could be understood deeply within it' ('君子之道，造端乎夫妇，及其至也，察乎天地') (Zhong Yong) (Zhang, 2008a). In traditional Chinese philosophy, sex and the body could be infinitely extended to the entire universe and also reduced to each subject, the body contains both Yin and Yang (Zhang, 2008c). In this sense, the Western interpretations of the sexual body become partly invalid in Chinese context, because as the origins of the universe, the body has gone beyond the scope of gender characteristics. Therefore, it can be seen that the concept of body in Chinese society are not confined to the considerations of gender power and patriarchal society, which will be further explained in Chapter 11.

3.4 Globalisation and Woman in British Modern Culture

Gender is an important part of the modern culture. It is undeniable that the ideas of gender in the modern British society is significantly influenced by feminism. Feminism, which contributes to the diversity of gender identities and gender roles through challenging conventional male-ordered structure, on the one hand, reaches the worldwide influence as an important part of Western cultural discourses, on the other hand, has been re-shaped by its articulation through a global discourse of an increasing focus on nationalism and cultural heterogeneity.

The history of feminism in Britain dates to the very beginnings of feminism itself, and largely changed the public's understandings of the concept of 'woman' and women's representations. As previously discussed, the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s were associated with significant policy changes and cultural shifts (Charles, 2008). They challenged the male-dominated institutions and raised demands for gender equality, for civil rights, and for the right to define one's sexuality, for an end to sex discrimination in the public sphere and an end to the abuse of women in the private sphere (Charles, 2008: 41).

In Britain, feminist movements and women's political engagements have had a remarkable impact on the society (Aune, 2014). For example, as the significant element of society - family (which has historically been central to women's lives and been criticised as the locus of major gender inequalities) has been largely influenced by feminism and postmodernism since the late 1960s until now (Nelson, 2016). With increasing rates of divorce, decreasing rates of marriage, the public's greater acceptability of various family styles from being single mom/dad to organising families based on lesbian and gay relationships in the Western countries, the family is seen as more fluid and more diverse (Robinson, Nelson, & Nelson, 2016). According to Jackson (2015), these trends are variously understood as indicating the rise of 'postmodern families' (Stacey, 1996), the 'transformation of intimacy' (Giddens, 1992),

'the end of patriarchy' (Castells, 2004), or a change from 'communities of need' to individualised 'elective affinities' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Even modern family relationships are shifting, the idea of 'family' and the social organisation of domestic life remain highly gendered in the global view (Krook & Childs, 2010; Bahrani, 2013). Compared with more privileged Western women can now have the opportunity to live outside the heteronormative families, only a small minority of women and men are actively accepting alternative family styles and lifestyles in Asian (Nelson, 2016). It is now widely accepted that issues of gender are a social-political matter, and political power still resides in the hands of the male. Thus, there is still a long way to go before all genders enjoy equality in every area of society and all women are freed from the male-dominated global power over them.

The influence of feminism on the social status of British women and gendered culture is profound and significant, but there are many other factors that affect the role of women in British culture, such as traditions, neoliberalism, post-feminism, globalisation, subjectivity and so on. The constructions of women and contemporary gender relations are profoundly contradictory (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2008). Feminist ideas about being a woman are both articulated and repudiated. On the one hand, young women are encouraged by the discourse of a can-do girl's power, yet on the other hand, female bodies are frequently represented as sexual objects (Gill, 2007). On the one hand, women are re-inscribed as active and independent subjects, yet on the other side, they are objects of the scrutiny and hostile gender surveillance system (McRobbie, 2004). As a result, women are constantly hovering between traditional and new roles, which again addresses existing structural determinants of gender inequality and suggests a 'dangerous relationship' between modern gendered culture and neoliberalism (Newman, 2013). Additionally, the multicultural context in Britain suggests a complex living environment for British women. For example, within some religious communities in Britain, men's control over women's sexuality and reproduction is still obvious. Such means the context is important for understanding gendered cultures and women in gendered cultures (Grill, 2016).

The current narrative of globalisation emphasises hypermobility and global interactions. At the same time, as a global discourse of modernity, hegemonic feminism is being re-shaped by its articulation through an increased focus on local cultures and state interventions, which both reconstruct the modern British gendered culture. Globalisation has had a significant impact on Western women and feminism, at least in the following ways: first, the critical role of women is highlighted. Western mainstream organisations have begun to acknowledge that women play a significant role in globalisation and economic growth (Eisenstein, 2015), one example is the Demos forum held in 2008 in New York declared that 'Forget China, India and the Internet, economic growth is driven by women'. Second, as Eisenstein (2010) argues, the extension of the capitalist system might result in the confusion of where the interests of women lie, as capitalism, consumerism and global issues could divert the attention of domestic women for liberation. Third, in the globalised context, there is no such thing as a set of common interests linking all women and women's movements, as women are so diverse and incommensurate in their needs, cultures, backgrounds and consciousness, and they no longer constitute a united historical subject (Grewal & Kaplan, 2000; Eisenstein, 2015). Fourth, with the growth of globalisation, the issues of ethnicity and class are hotly debated in the global context, more scholars realise that the Western feminist movement, which had focused on gender inequality as the main source of women's oppression, does not correspond to the realities of ethnicity, class and other social issues at home and abroad (Desai, 2002; Eisenstein, 2015). In this case, globalisation has facilitated new spaces and perspectives for understanding women in different contexts.

When looking beyond the west, more attention needs to be practised. Superficially similar trends in different countries - less marriage rate, later marriage ages, more divorce, and more professional women - may not have the same meaning or consequences in different places with different histories and cultural traditions. Next, I will discuss women in modern Chinese culture.

3.5 Globalisation and Women in Chinese Modern Culture

The previous section discusses women and gender in British modern culture. This section will turn the attention to Chinese women.

As previously discussed, today's China has been hugely shaped by the global and its relationship with the West in all perspectives, ranging from China's semi-colonial history to its current significant influences in the global economy (Li, 2016). To become modern is a 'grand narrative' (Lyotard, 1984) for China in the last two centuries since the first Opium War³ (1839 - 1842) when the country was defeated by the British army in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and then experienced several historical periods commonly regarded as the early twentieth century, the Mao Era and after 1978 (Li, 2016). Modernity⁴ is commonly treated as highly equal to the Western mode of social-cultural, political and economic structures (Chow, 1993). Clearly, modernity started as a Western project and the West, and its historical experiences still take dominance in the conceptualisation of other parts of the world. The peculiarity of Chinese modernity lies in its constant struggle between emulating Western modernity and creating an alternative mode of development (Walker, 1999; Lu, 2007; Klein, 2014; Li, 2016). Therefore, China has shown a contradictory attitude toward the West: a strong desire of imitation and a powerful resentment toward the West as the result of historical domination and imperialism of Western countries (Li, 2016). Knowledge of Chinese modernity and globalisation provide essential background for understanding

3 The First Opium War was a series of military conflicts between the Qing dynasty of China and the United Kingdom in the 19th century. It is commonly considered as the beginning of Chinese modernity (William, 2009).

4 Modernity is identified with industrialism and the sweeping social changes associated with it - which lead to and as further shaped by different forces and processes associated with an 'expansionist capitalist economic order based on private property; industrialism'; 'the dominance of secular, materialist, rationalist and individualist cultural values'; growth of bureaucracy; nation state and an international system of states; separation of the private from the public area and so on (Hall, et al., 1992: 3).

the discourse of gender and women's advertising representations in China.

The *status quos* of Chinese women's lives and Chinese modern gender relations are special. On the land of China, the liberation path of women is very different from that in the West but is significantly impacted by the West. In China, from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the People's Republic of China, China governments took a series of social reform measures to promote women's social and political rights. Many scholars believe that the practice of gender equality in China is first and foremost promoted by the male-dominated government aiming to achieve national independence, freedom and development (Barlow, 2014; Zhang, 1995). In this sense, Chinese feminist discourse, on the one hand, is the product of globalisation, on the other hand, has been often considered as a 'compulsory' and politically oriented feminism, as Chinese feminism embodies China's pursuit and imagination of modernity since its birth (Liu, Karl & Ko, 2013). Xia (1996) holds the view that the Chinese women's liberation movement based on male made guideline did not challenge the real social status of women because discourses and power are still controlled by men, and the areas of production of knowledge are seldom able to accommodate women's lives and experiences.

Chinese feminism before 1949 is generally named as the 'male feminism' (Wang, 2013), and feminism in Mao era is often named as the 'state feminism' (Wang, 2013; Hui, 2014). The women's liberation movement in the Mao era determined by law with the principles of 'gender equality', 'equal pay and equal work', 'freedom of marriage' has reduced the social oppression on women (Barlow, 2004). In the Mao time, women are no longer dependent and auxiliary roles of male social roles such as fathers, husbands and sons, but refer to a specific conceptualised social group (Zao, 2015). According to a woman in the Maoist era, 'you only felt like a woman when you gave

birth; at other times you don't exist as a woman' (Woman Stats Project, 2012). The economic and political independence of women are produced by nationalism and collectivism. In other words, women's liberation is accomplished at the expense of the disappearance of subjectivity and individual gender identity (Dai, 2004; Zao, 2015).

From the Reform and Opening-up (1978) to the present, great changes have taken place in the life and social status of Chinese women (Barlow, 2004: 303; Hui, 2014, Li Xiaojiang, 1985; 2005; Womanstats Project, 2012), accompanying with profound changes of the relationship between the feminist ideology and the Chinese society (Tao, 2017). One of the most significant changes is the reconstruction of women's gender identification (Womanstats Project, 2012). Contemporary Chinese feminist discourse can be understood as the product of the interactive game between Western feminism, state feminism, market feminism (Li, 1985), practical feminism (Li, 1998; 1999; 2009), liberal feminism (Hui, 2014), the consumer society, and cultural globalisation. The dilemmas faced by contemporary Chinese women are not only reflected in the pursuit of gender equality but also reflected in political and economic issues such as seeking the country's development and narrowing the gap between urban and rural women (Li, 2009; Zao, 2015).

The changing social and cultural positions of Chinese women are reflected in the representations of women. To a large extent, it can be said that the connotations of female mainstream representations often express different definitions and regulations of gender in different historical contexts in China. In the past, the Confucian ideology has had a decisive influence on women's social roles and historical representations of the female images for a long period of time. Confucian gender norms force the society to shape women in accordance with the requirements of male domination, resulting in a series of stereotyped female images working as an appendage to men and families in

Chinese traditional literature (Zhou, 2014). However, Yuan (2006) states that Confucianism also contains the values that can promote the ethic of gender parity. The Confucian ethics and feminist ideas both emphasize individual interdependency and both argue that 'ren' and 'care' can be applied into all people in need (Yuan, 2006). In this sense, although the female image has long been marginalised and stereotyped, there are still some traditional Chinese literature show us the female alliances and woman's self-hood, such as *Dream of Red Mansions*.

Next, from the image of the young female students during the Chinese May 4th Movement of 1919⁵, to the depiction of 'Red Women' and 'Iron Girl' in the Cultural Revolution⁶, and the diversity of the modern female images, the representations of the Chinese female, to a certain extent, have reflected the social and cultural changes in China (Hui, 2014). Today, according to Song (2015), contemporary Chinese women are not only being asked to make an economic contribution to modern China but also retaining and embodying 'the traditional virtues of oriental women'. Therefore, we find both of images of new femininity such as powerful and independent women (e.g. Li & Dong, 2015; Wang & Liu, 2018), and portrayals of traditional femininity shaped by the Confucian gender norms such as 'the unmarried woman follows her father, the married woman follows her husband, the widow follows her son' ('未嫁从父, 出嫁从夫, 夫死从子') (e.g. Bai, 2017; Gao & Zhang, 2017).

The discourse of gender keeps creating norms of femininity. Taking different female audiences' attitudes to the representation of the female body, Li (1998) argues that many Chinese women born before the 1980s have experienced an ascetic education in

⁵ The May Fourth Movement was a students' political movement in Beijing on 4th May 1919, protesting against Chinese government's attitudes to the Treaty of Versailles. This movement has been named as the Chinese Renaissance by Hu Shi (1933).

⁶ The Cultural Revolution was a socio-political movement in China from 1966 to 1976, launched by the Chairperson Mao Zedong, aiming to preserve the Communist governance by destroying the elements of Chinese traditional cultures and the capitalist society (Tang, 1986).

their adolescence, and one of the consequences is their fear and rejection of secondary sexual characters. Li (1998) finds that the sign of femininity has been swept away from mainstream representations from the 1950s to the 1970s which is based on the cultural and political atmosphere of asceticism and could be traced back to the Neo-Confucianism ('程朱理学') of in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and the Chinese revolutionary ideology in the 20th century. This social phenomenon was also reflected in the standards of Chinese femininity. Feminist Julia Kristeva visited in China in 1974 and described her impression of gender different in Chinese culture as: '(Chinese costume) is characterised by deliberately weakening the difference between men and women... In the People's Republic of China, the human sexual behaviour is a taboo topic'.

These historical factors discussed above and the current cultural environment co-shaped the concepts of being a woman in Chinese context. For today's Chinese women, on the one hand, the traditional standard of femininity ask them to be virtuous and thoughtful, on the other hand, Western femininity norms, such as the promotion of breast enhancement and sexy clothing (which were spread to China in the process of globalisation), and modern feminist ideas have become the important criteria for contemporary Chinese to define femininity and motherhood, which have created a huge generation gap between the older and the teens on the representations of woman, female roles and the female body (Li, 2009; Tang, 2018). In short, the representation, especially advertising representation is full of gendered implications and expresses the complex situation of Chinese women who are in the status of inferior position in both the local society and the global power hierarchy system.

3.6 Research Gap

In this study, feminist and post-feminist discourses on female identity, gender roles,

femininity, and the female body will be used to support the discussion of cross-cultural female advertising representations. As we have to acknowledge that, feminism is originated from the Western especial the Western European and American societies, in which the cultural backgrounds, national conditions, and histories are significantly different to the Chinese context. Thus, gender issues in the UK and China will certainly be in different forms of expression and in different positions in social psychology, which means that appropriate ways to deal with gender representations should also be different.

However, in terms of the comparison between the UK and China, the particularity of Chinese gender discourse and its relationship with British feminism and gender in British culture are rarely discussed. Therefore, this research will discuss the differences and similarities between Chinese and British feminism and gender discourses, and then extend the comparison to the field of current women's advertising representations (which are shaped by the discourse of gender and feminist ideas in the UK and China respectively) from different gendered themes. The cross-cultural comparison of different development degrees of feminism between China and the UK is also a complement to the discussion of the globalisation process of gender studies, as well as a supplementary analysis of the process of rethinking and transformation of the discourse of gender in China under the influence of Western hegemonic feminist ideologies.

3.7 Summary

This chapter reviews previous literature of feminism, post-feminism, gender, and women in British and Chinese cultures. Based on the review of concepts and theories in the studies of cultural construction of gender, femininity, the body and gender knowledge, this chapter lays the theoretical path for advertising case studies from the perspectives of feminism and gender performativity theories. In addition, through

reviews of women in British and Chinese cultures respectively, it is not difficult to find that social concepts about women and women's living status are very different in different areas. In other words, we may live in a globalised and modernised/post-modernised world, but it cannot, therefore, be assumed that feminism and globalisation will have the similar impacts on Chinese and British discourses of gender and the same meanings for Chinese and British women. Therefore, the comparison of women's representations contributes profound realistic significance to heighten women's status worldwide. At the same time, introductions to the global context in this chapter also help understand women's advertising representations.

Based on the previous literature of feminism and woman examined in this chapter, this research will further explore the socio-cultural psychologies and historical origins buried in advertisements through the analysis of women's images, gender roles and gender identities, and reinterpret the embodiment of gender discourse represented in the chosen advert cases. This chapter also reveals different understandings of women and gender issues in the UK and China respectively, and examines the gender concepts in different cultures and gender power structures and their relations with globalisation in these two countries, which lay the foundation of the discussion of the cross-cultural comparison of women's representation. The next chapters will further review and explore previous literature and research which are related to the advertising representations and British and Chinese advertising campaigns.

Chapter 4 Literature Review: Cross-Cultural Comparison and Advertising

Representation: the UK and China

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed cultural globalisation and postmodern context which lays the background for understanding advertising representations in different contexts. This chapter aims to expand on the relations between cross-cultural comparison and advertising representations specifically in the characteristics and development of advertising industries in the UK and China respectively.

In the first section of this chapter, I argue that representations are closely related to culture, power ideology and so on. To analyse the meaning of representations, Stuart Hall's arguments of the relation of culture and representation (Hall, 1992; 1997) is used to draw attention to the political and ideological aspect of the construction of representations. Building on the discussion of representations, the second part introduces the most common representation form in our everyday life - advertising representation. I argue that, as a significant site for negotiating cultural identity, constructing gender identity and adjusting power relations, advertising representations address issues concerning dynamic global and local interactions, shifting traditional and modern gender concepts, evolving advertiser and consumer relations. This section also elucidates two interconnected systems of advertising and how this shapes consumer cultures. The last part of this chapter analyses advertising industries in the UK and China, and how globalisation alters the contexts of advertising industries, which further provides background information for the interpretation of advertising representations in these two countries.

4.2 Representation

This study is a comparative research of advertising representations of women between

the UK and China. One of the greatest advantages of taking cross-cultural perspective to look at women's representations⁷ is that it is particularly useful in analysing two key terms hiding in my research topic: gendered culture and global power structure. The reason is hidden in the relationship between representations, culture and power.

First, I want to make a review of the definitions of representation. Many scholars and theorists have discussed the concepts of representation from various perspectives. Today, in general, representation is understood as 'the products of the social process of representing' (Fiske et al., 2006: 265). This term 'refers both to the process and to the product of making signs stand for their meanings. It is a useful concept because it unifies what appears at first sight to be an unconnected diversity of conceptual bits and pieces' (Fiske et al., 2006:265). Representation is a process of 'putting into concrete forms (that is, different signifiers) an abstract ideological concept', and 'the social process of making sense within all available signifying systems: speech, writing, print, video, film, tape, and so on' (Fiske et al, 2006:265). Also, representation 'differs from form to form, time to time; and representations themselves also change. Hence, the concept of representation allows full force to the notion of re-representation; the revoking and bringing into view of signifiers for the "same" signified' (Fiske et al., 2006: 265-266).

For Stuart Hall, representations are 'the production of meaning through language', and have two relevant meanings: firstly, 'to represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses'; secondly, it also means 'to symbolise, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for'. (Hall, 1997: 16). In other words, representation is a process of selecting, expressing, constructing and shaping the connection of concepts and languages that make us can identify the 'real' world and

⁷ For my study, there are two good bonding points for the cooperation of women's media representation critiques and cross-cultural comparative studies: both of them are trying to explore the representation of culture and the identity of nation, ethnicity and gender; and both of them criticise popular culture and the existing social and global power relations.

the 'represented' imagination. Hall (1982) argues that the question of representation is essentially the question of construction process of meanings as the meaning of representation is given and manipulated.

Bennett et al. (2005) make further supplement of the concept of representation. According to Bennett et al. (2005), representation has symbolic, political and cognitive meanings. In addition, Barker (2004: 177) points out that: 'the common-sense meaning of the concept of representation is that of a set of processes by which signifying practices appear to stand for or depict another object or practice in the "real" world'. Representation is 'an act of symbolism that mirrors an independent object world' and also is 'cultural constructions' rather than an 'innocent reflection of the real' (Barker, 2004: 177).

In short, representation essentially can be understood the construction process of meaning and the function of power in this process. The construction of meaning is endlessly and accomplished in the system of representations. Therefore, cultural meanings of representations are closely related with discourse and power within a certain context (Hall, 1997). The concept of power used in this study comes from Foucault's arguments about the 'active and productive' power (Tao, 2015).

For Foucault (1976), power is an active and productive force which moulds and produces our views and understandings of identities, concepts, objects and subjects. Foucault expands the connotation of the traditional understanding of power, and points out power exists everywhere in the human society; we can trace the operating process of power behind the construction of every ideological existences such as our languages, knowledge and social customs. For example, in terms of the function of power in the construction of sex discourse, Foucault (1976) points out that, power defines the concepts of the 'unusual' sexual activities or 'abnormal' sexual orientations through the observation, analysis, description, sorting, naming and renaming of the 'normality' of sex. In this process, our sexual activities have been limited within

specific visible frames, and some 'anomalous' forms of sex (such as extramarital sex or homosexuality) have been repressed and stigmatised. Therefore, through the operation of power, a set of knowledge about sex has been formed in our culture. Hall further responds to this:

'The knowledge which discourse produces constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are "known". When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are "known" in a particular way will be subject (i.e. subjected) to it. This is always a power-relation.' (Hall, 1992: 204-205).

Building on Foucault's observation of the relations between power, knowledge, and discourse, Hall recognises the important role of 'power relations' in the construction of the meanings of representations. According to Hall (1997), meanings of representations are demonstrated through our thoughts and feelings which are closely linked with power, culture, and social practices. The production of meanings is dynamic, it changes with the changes in social, cultural and contextual factors, which could cause the differences of interpretations in different cultural imaginations and practices.

Representation has two operation systems (Hall, 1997: 19). As illustrated by Hall (1997: 19): 'The first [system] enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things - people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc. - and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organised into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between "things", concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language.'

The systems of representation are closely related with the shared signs and symbols in cultures. As Hall (2013) formulates: 'to put it simply, culture is about "shared

meanings" (Hall, Evans and Nixon, 2013: xvii). Therefore, representation relies heavily on our society and world as well as the conceptual and cultural systems (Rojek, 2009:50). For this research, it is necessary to put the interpretation of women's advertising representations in the cultural vision and dimensions, to take women's representations as a dynamic whole of which are constructed by powers and cultures.

The social and cultural construction process of representation determines its strong ideological tendency, as Hall (1984: 11) states 'there is no space of representation, including theoretical space, exists outside ideology'⁸. Representation is also an important way of maintaining the existing power structure as power needs to legalise and strengthen its regulating functions by the forms of popular culture (such as advertising representations) (Cavallaro, 2001: 44). Moreover, representation exists in the practices of our everyday life and gets involved in the formation and change of our identity consciousness and our readings of ourselves and the world (Gledhill, 1997: 339).

Scholars have discussed representations from different perspectives, among which the representation of gender is a hot point (Krook & Childs, 2010). The social norms of gender impacts on the representation of the feminine and masculine symbols that will be further perceived by the audience and then act on the continuous reconstruction of the views of gender and identity in our cultures (Tincknell, 2005; Krook & Childs, 2010). A stubborn feature of mass media representations, as noted by feminists, is the provision of numerous gendered texts which often result in gender stereotypes and the objectification of women. But in many cases, the misrepresentations of gender and woman are not straightforwardly visible (see Chapter 3), which means we need to take a closer and deeper look into the cultural meanings and the construction process

⁸ Ideology in this sense is defined by Hall (1986:92) as: '[...] the mental frameworks-the languages, concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation-which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out, and render intelligible the way society works. Or, to put it another way, ideology governs the way we perceive our world and ourselves; it controls what we see as natural or obvious'.

of the representations of gender and woman.

4.3 Advertising and Representation

This research looks at advertising representations. Advertising is generally believed as the most important socialised cultural industry in modern society, and advertising representation is the representation genre we most often encounter in our everyday life (Branston & Stafford, 2006: 296).

One manifestation of powers of advertising representations is that today we have been surrounded by a cavalcade of advertising images and videos containing messages about who we are and how we fit into society. The root of this situation can be traced back to the early industrial capitalism that uses advertising as its important mechanism to organise and maintain markets for its products (Dyer, 1996: 21). Today, it is not a secret that almost all the ultimate goals of ads are to promote their brands/ideas or sell their products, and modern advertising industry has tried various tricks to achieve its goals: advertisers keep persuading us that we are not 'materialistic' enough through millions of ads everywhere (Kilbourne, 2012); advertising representations create associations to connect their products to social values in order to encourage consumption (Cohen, Eliya & Hammer, 2004:169); capitalism, with the assist of postmodern marketing, keeps creating many new market resources and new consumption excuses through responding to the changing social values (Maclaran, 2015).

Many factors could affect advertising representations. Li (2016: 28) states that advertising is shaped by four interdependent factors including market, policy, culture, and technology. The effect degree of each factor varies in different areas. For example, according to Hong, Lu & Zou (2009), the factor of policies makes Chinese advertisers and media agencies deal with more contradictions than media agencies in other

countries, as Chinese media agencies have to act as kinds of 'party-state mouthpieces' while pursuing economic profits.

Turow & McAllister (2009: 2) argue that the advertising involves two interconnected systems: a system of ideology and a system of media support. These two systems of activities are crucial to our societies. By the system of media support, it means advertising is a typical product containing persuasive messages which are co-created and co-distributed by several organisations. These organisations and their functions differ in different countries. By the system of ideology, it means advertising practitioners' works are not only made up of economic and cultural ideas, but also contain the views of how and why types of people or particular individuals could be persuaded by advertising representations (Turow & McAllister, 2009: 2-4). The system of ideology works within the advertising industry helps to 'encode bias and legitimate assumptions about linguistic behaviour and social asymmetries' (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995:227). Fairclough (2001: 36) also argues that advertising discourse embodies 'ideologies which legitimise, more or less directly, existing societal relations'. The representations and texts of advertisements are produced by the ideology of the dominant culture, thus, advertising acts as the 'agent which is responsible for the construction of meanings and helps reinforce and perpetuate power structures by reproducing hegemonic idealised images or identities which lie at the core of existing social relationships' (Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009).

Advertising is also closely related to culture and society. Advertising practices can be regarded as a social thermometer or a historical mirror not only of existing values but also of changes in society (Satue, 1985; Berganza et al., 2006), as O'Barr (1994:3) describes: 'in depicting the context of use of a commodity, the advertisements depict a number of things about society, such as who does the laundry, who prepares breakfast while someone else sits at the table, and who drives and who rides as passengers in a car.' In this regard, advertising plays a significant role as a socialising institution which structures our sense of the society, re-constructs our gender identities through

representations of different genders, creates new needs, and mediates the relations between consumers (Saz-Rubio & Pennock-Speck, 2009). Advertising also represents the established social regulation and controls some important cultural institutions such as films and sports while society finds ways to re-create itself through advertising discourse (Jhally, 2014). These offer an answer to where the power of advertising industry derives from.

Advertising not only represents cultures and social values but also shapes consumer cultures and audiences' identities (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990; Jhally, 2014). The latter could be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, advertising representations are part of the context within which people understand or define identity, or in Jhally's words, 'Advertising draws us into our reality' (Jhally, 2014: 148). Secondly, as many critiques on advertising have claimed, advertising works as a tool whereby audiences are manipulated and controlled by advertising discourse. The advertising industry works as a discourse which concerns a specific universal relationship between people and objects which has been described as 'objedification' (Jhally, 2014: 13). Raymond Williams (1980: 185) calls advertising 'the magic system, [...] a highly organised and professional system of magical inducement and satisfactions functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies but rather strangely co-existent with highly developed scientific technology'. Baudrillard (1988) argues that activities of consumption conducted by advertising discourse play a significant role in manipulating our identities and consciousness, and our perceptions of 'the self' have been changed by the advertising industry's power of seduce audiences into a 'hyper-reality'. These arguments above have proven the huge impact of advertising and advertising representations.

Given the relationship between advertising and context which has been discussed above, the analysis of advertisement text cannot be separated from the examination of cultural values, beliefs, and myths connected to advert representations (Chaudhuri, 2009: 177). Advertising critique has to start by giving people the ability to recognise

the influence of advertising texts, of where that power relation rests. Advertising absorbs and merges an unbounded range of symbolic practices, discourses and cultural references (Schroeder & Morling, 2006). Every commercial is made for certain strategic aims in terms of information circulation. But it is worthless to simply observe the texts of one commercial, as the cultural and ideological meanings of the commercial representation need to be evaluated from the system of codes, the message circulation process, the power structure, and the institutional context within which the text and image are produced. Any attempt to understand the contemporary advertising-women relationship should be concentrated at this level.

4.4 West-China Relations and the Particularity of Chinese Advertising

The information discussed above representations and advertising provide essential contexts for cross-cultural comparison of women's advertising representations in this study. As we discussed above, media and marketing theories hold that advertising representations are in the same line with the social norms and cultural values. As a significant place for negotiating power relations and cultural identity, advertising address issues concerning dynamic global and local interactions, shaping emerging gender and subject identities, evolving advertisers and audiences communication, shifting market and media relations and so on.

Regarding the Chinese context, according to Li (2016), China is becoming more assertive since the 2007-2008 global financial recession. Western modernity has been increasingly questioned, and the dynamic relationship between local and global forces is consequently changing (Li, 2016). On the other hand, in the last decades, the Chinese government has attempted to recreate Chinese national identity and de-Westernise China through vigorously promoting Chinese culture and economic and military powers, selectively restoring the communist legacy, and strengthening the censorship of publications and media contents (Li, 2016; Sun, 2010). This context

makes Chinese advertising representation often reflect the tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the contradiction between tradition and modernity, as well as the scramble between socialism and capitalism.

Li (2016: 106) takes Chinese consumer culture as the example to analyse the relations between the global forces and the local advertising industry. She argues that nationalism and cosmopolitanism have become central to consumer culture in China. On the one hand, scholars (e.g. Jian, Wang & Wang, 2007; Shirk, 2007; Li, 2009) have realised the rising nationalism in contemporary Chinese consumer culture. On the other hand, Western brands and lifestyles continue to have a high level of popularity in China (Li, 2016). Thus, Chinese advertising can be understood as the product of the negotiation between nationalism and 'cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics' (Rofel, 2007: 11) under the influence of four major factors including market, technology, culture and policy (Li, 2016: 106).

Zhang & Shavitt (2013) state that Chinese advertising discourses and practices are the syntheses of competing values such as traditional Chinese culture, modernity, Confucianism, socialism, and capitalism. Li (2016: 30) further argues that the likely conflicting ideas co-existed in Chinese consumer culture, including Orientalism and Occidentalism, Chineseness and Western values, and nationalism and cosmopolitanism, in fact, are not completely different and conflicting, but 'rather are different business and advertising strategies exploited by different players at different times'. For Li (2016: 30), the global and the local 'must not be understood as opposing forces but as constituting each other; their interactions also involve regional forces'.

In addition, globalisation alters the content of Chinese brand advertising to a certain extent. In the past, most ads were produced by advertisers of a particular country and consumed by audiences of the same country (Belk, Bryce & Pllay, 1985; Frith & Sengupta, 1991). Griffin, Viswanath & Schwartz (1994) find that with the rapid spread of global brands and transnational corporations, standardised ad ideas can be

created in the head offices of advertising agencies in Europe and America and run in other countries with only simple modifications such as translated slogans, and branch offices of multinational agencies. This situation is especially evident in Chinese ads of global brands such as Coca-Cola.

Moreover, according to the statistics of *Oriental Outlook* (2018), about 5 % of the Chinese students graduated from American and British universities have chosen to work in advertising and media agencies when they went back to China. The Western education background might make them follow the British or American styles when creating advertising campaigns. In short, these interlinking factors have significant influences on Chinese advertising, which work interdependently with how the relations between local and global, between tradition and modernity, between government and ad agencies, and between advertiser and consumer, are coordinated and imagined. The West-China relationship, in particular, plays a crucial role in understanding Chinese advertising representations.

4.5 Research Gap

The literature review of representation and advertising representation, as well as the particularity of advertising campaigns in China and the UK, co-support the comparison and analysis of the women's advertising representations in this study. However, few previous studies have made in-depth comparisons of the differences and similarities of advertising industries, advertising representations, advertising characteristics and relevant laws and regulations between the UK and China. Therefore, this research will attempt to fill in this gap. At the same time, this study has extended the cross-cultural comparison between China and the UK into the fields of advertising representations and woman's representations. Through the comparative analysis of woman's advertising representations, this study explores how the political and social-cultural factors and gender concepts caused the different advertising

representations in the UK and China respectively and however the globalisation, feminism and patriarchy discourses shaped the similarities of the British and Chinese representations.

4.6 Summary

This chapter reviews the literature of representation, advertising, and advertising representation. In terms of advertising, both British and Chinese advertisings are key objects for understanding cultural homogeneity, heterogeneity and hybridity, and gender in British and Chinese cultures. The next chapter will continue the discussion of woman and advertising representation, and focus on the previous empirical research of women's advertising representations.

Chapter 5 Literature Review: Women and Advertising Representations

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analyses the notions of advertising representation as a cultural and political category highlighting the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the developments of British and Chinese advertising in the global context. This chapter aims to organise previous empirical literature on the third level of my research: the relation of women and advertising representation. The first part introduces some basic concepts and relevant impact factors of women's representations. Here, the influence of globalisation on women's representations will be discussed. The second part examines the historical development of feminist media critiques on women's media representation and the relation of feminism and representation. As women's representations have a long and rich history that coincides with the development of feminism, an explanation of how feminism impact women's representations today will be provided in this section. Finally, this chapter also reviews existing literature and arguments of women's advertising representations from the following perspectives: femininity, sex and female body, family and women's social roles, ethnic female images and exotic femininity. These themes represent the basic directions of today's feminist critiques on women's representation, and also constitute the main structure of the discussion chapter in this research.

5.2 Women's Representations

This section expounds the concept of women's representation to explore what construct women's representation and which factors impact women's representation. The first question that this section will answer is what women's representations are. Women's representations are similar but slightly different from gender representations. According to Krijnen & Bauwel (2015: 40-41), the notion of gender representation has two meanings. Firstly, it refers to 'the representation of men and women in the

media [...]; questions that stress the disparity in the number of men and women present in media and the roles they fulfil'; secondly, it refers to 'the portrayal and imagining of gender, questioning how women and men are portrayed in the media and the meanings attached to these portrayals'. Following this line of thought, women's representation could be understood firstly as the numerical analysis of women's presences in the media, secondly as the meanings and the ideologies attached to women's images in media. These two meanings coexist in current research on women's representations.

According to Ottosson (2012), there are two common approaches to analyse women's representations. One approach is the quantitative analysis of the depiction of women in media. The other approach interprets the construction process of women and cultural meanings of the gendered images. Some scholars hold the view that sometimes the numerical analysis could not reflect the 'real' issue (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015), as the discourse of gender and women's lives are more complicated than the amount of female characters or gender-stereotyped images in media. The meanings hidden behind these numbers are multiple, ranging from the symbolic annihilation of women to the social structure of patriarchal power. This leads to the second question - what constructs women's representations.

Spence (2005) argues women's representations are constructed by the mainstream views of femininity and our understanding of being a woman. Jhally (2011) finds that advertisers often use gendered/sexual signs which are in line with the mainstream definition of femininity and masculinity to shape advertising characters. There is little room for variation unless the purpose of the ad is attract eyeballs by using a 'funny' and 'abnormal' reversal of gender roles. As the discursive construction of femininity in a specific context, women's representation shows us the basic elements of being a woman through the depiction of femininity, the designed gender display, and the set of gender display (Spence, 2005).

Building on Spence (2005), Krijnen & Bauwel (2015: 70) point out that the construction process of women's representation is not arbitrary but is based on the common understanding and hegemonic discourse of femininity and gender, as women's representation only makes sense when the audience could identify with the represented women and femininity. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that women's representation in media can shape the discourse of gender and affect most people's opinion, identities, views and self-recognition (e.g., Gledhill, 1997: 339; Geis, Brown, Jennings, & Porter, 1984; MacKay & Covell, 1997; Tincknell, 2005; Krook & Childs, 2010; Wood, 2011: 257). Media representation shapes the discourse of gender through representing the images of women and men, which allows 'media [to] advance ideals of what is desirable in men and women' because representations have shown audiences with 'models of what it means to be male or female, or in a relationship' and also 'what men and women are and should be' (Wood, 2011: 257-262).

Globalisation remains a critical reference point in understanding the discursive construction of women's representation. Due to the rapid globalisation of media and culture, on the one hand, representations need to be examined in a transnational view as the current media texts are produced in a global context; on the other hand, global audiences can easily access information and media texts from different countries at any time (Waisbord & Morris, 2001; Crane, Kawashima, & Kawasaki, 2016). With the abundance of Western media and cultural values being transmitted across the world, Western representations and values have been consumed and accepted by audiences in the global arena. Taking the influence of Western representations of women as the example, on the one hand, the global spread of Western media representation of women is creating a more liberated female culture in Asia (Kim, 2010), on the other hand, it has generated a complex condition for 'reflexivity'⁹ and the construction of gender relations and femininity in Asia.

⁹ Reflexivity refers to 'the relationship one may have when consuming and comparing mass media with what they are experiencing in their own lives' (Goodall, 2012)

In terms of the influence of globalisation on women's representations in China, some researchers implicated that the global spread of Western media products have largely shaped Chinese contemporary women's media representations and affected the understanding of femininity among Chinese young generations:

Madanat et al. (2011: 102) find that 'Western media, fashion, and advertising promote thinness as the most desirable appearance, which leads to the pursuit of slimness.' Some Chinese scholars came to similar conclusions. Luo et al. (2005) note that China's import of Western media products has resulted in the diffused sexual attractiveness in Chinese commercials and increased body dissatisfaction levels among Chinese young women. Although some researchers held the view that the key elements of the Chinese ideal female body, such as thinness and whiteness, are rooted in some historical periods of China (Leung, Lam, & Sze, 2001), but some researchers observed that representations of beauty in the East Asian had experienced a series of change in the past decades under the influence of Western norms about femininity and beauty, one example is the popularity of Western appearance such as deep sculptured faces and double eyelid in modern East Asian society, which has led to the popularisation of plastic surgery in the East Asian market to a certain extent (Kyo & Selden, 2012; Li & Ma, 2008). Studies on changes of mainstream femininity in China illustrate that Chinese modern femininity discourse, to some extent, could be regarded as a negotiation field of Chinese traditions, hegemonic culture, politics and globalisation. The impact of Western hegemonic femininity discourse on representations of women and femininity in the Third World is obvious and profound, however, the symbols of Western femininity, as Hemondhalgh (2008: 219) states, 'will be often reinterpreted and adapted by symbol creators in other contexts'.

In summary, the construction of women's representations occurs in discourse in response to specific contexts, and the mass media plays a vital role in defining femininity and woman's identity. Advertising, in particular, has received harsh

criticism for perpetuating an unrealistic feminine ideal and strengthening gender stereotypes. The reviewing of concepts and discussions of women's representation contributes to understanding the relationship between women, global culture and media, and offers the theoretical basis for examining women in Chinese and British commercials. The next sections will concentrate on existing literature about the relationship between feminism and women's advertising representations.

5.3 Feminism, Women's Representations and Advertising

This section analyses how feminism impact women's representations, specifically women's representation in advertising. This section contains an outline and review of previous media research into relations of feminism and women's representations. The review of previous studies is organised both historically and through a cross-national lens. This section firstly provides a broader picture of how feminist researchers studied women's representations and helps to understand how feminist theories have been applied into women's media studies, which contribute to examining women's representation and gender stereotypes in British and Chinese advertisements in the discussion chapter. Secondly, this section concludes the new trend 'feminism sells' in marketing which contributes to understanding the representation of 'new women' in advertising in Chapter 9. This section, on the one hand, emphasises the importance of considering feminism in reading women's advertising representations and explains how to apply feminist theories into the discussion of woman's representations, on the other hand, it supplements the theoretical considerations of feminism discussed in Chapter 3, therefore co-provides the feminist approach for the following case analysis.

Nicholson (2013) states that women's representations have a long and rich history that coincide with the development of feminism. The rise and development of feminism are considered to be the key and primary factors of the dramatic changes in women's

representations in recent decades. Since the second wave of feminism swept the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s, feminists have been questioning the 'political correctness' of the depiction of women and female body in media (e.g. Wagner & Banos, 1973; Sexton & Haberman, 1974; Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Sullivan & O' Connor, 1988; Gill, 2007: 9; Cortese, 2016; Mendes & Carter, 2008). The central idea of feminist media criticism is that 'hierarchical gender relations (re)produce social inequalities across time and cultures, thereby making it difficult for men and women to be equal partners in democratic society' (Mendes & Carter, 2008), and the primary goal of feminist media criticism is to 'fill in the gaps' in knowledge about gender-setting-gaps made by the prior male bias (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2016: xiii).

Western feminist media criticism focuses on the following themes: how women are represented in media, which generally proved the portrayals of women tended to be heavily stereotyped (e.g. Hole & Levine, 1971; Butler & Paisley, 1980; Gallagher, 1990; Dow & Condit, 2004: 448); how media practitioners strengthened and perpetuated gender inequities (Mendes & Carter, 2008); how audiences understand 'gender' through media representations of gender display (e.g. Friedan, 1963; Gallagher, 1992); how feminism influence media industry (e.g. Barratt, 1992); how culture and power shape women's representations (e.g. Wolff, 1990; Hooks, 1990; Franklin et al., 1991); how media construct gender identity and subjectivity (e.g. Rakow et al.; 2015; Press, 1991); the experiences of women working in the media industry and the difficulties that female faced in seeking career development (Chambers et al. 2004; Robinson, 2005); the relationship between woman and media studies (e.g. Toth & Aldoory; Oleksy, 2001; Humez, 2002; Dines & Humez, 2003; Esser & Hanitzsch, 2013; Wood, 2002; Jansen, 2002; Defrancisco et al., 2013; Byerly, 2006; Charlebois, 2016; Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005; Vinnicombe et al., 2013). With the theoretical development of feminism and post-feminism, some researchers start to question the relations between the construction of the concept of woman and gender-related issues of media (Barrie, 2002; Pilcher, 2017).

The representation of women is one significant critique object of feminist media research, and researchers made many qualitative and quantitative studies on the images of women and gender relations in the mass media. They found that the mass media has strengthened gender stereotype in insidious ways. The constructed female photos did not really represent the complexity and diversity of woman's subjectivity but often conveyed the information of alienation, objectification, prejudice, and distortion (Van Zoonen, 1991; Li, 1993).

In terms of advertising, research shown that female advertising characters were more often placed in the private sphere than in the public sphere: female characters were more often used in the advertisements of household detergents and cosmetics while male characters are more often shown in non-domestic products' advertisements (Hennesse & Nicholson, 1972; Gill, 2007a). This situation is remarkably similar all over the world (e.g. Bresnahan, et al., 2001; Luyt, 2011; Michelle, 2012; Nassif & Gunter, 2008; Paltzer, 2010). Some studies state that female characters are outnumbered by the male overall in media, but the images of women are often absent in some specific media types such as political news and sports (e.g. Creedon, 1995; Meeks, 2012). Additionally, some research indicate that the mass media often focuses on showing women's beautiful appearance and sexual appeals (Seidman, 1992; Sommers-Flanagan & Davis, 1993) and the female images are more easily objectified in media representations compared to the male images (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). The reasons of the objectification of women are multiple, ranging from the symbolic annihilation of women to the social structure of patriarchal power (Van Zoonen, 1994; Gallagher, 2003; McQuail, 2010).

Building upon findings of feminist studies in the 1970s, Gaye Tuchman put forward with theories of 'reflection hypothesis' and 'symbolic annihilation'. According to Tuchman (1978: 3-38), the commercialised essence of mass media determines its characteristic of using the dominant social values to design media content through a symbolic performance of the mainstream social and cultural phenomenon. In terms of

the gender representation, media representations of woman play a significant role in 'transmitting a patriarchal ideology concerning the place of women in society' (McQuail, 2010: 120-121), as it distorts some parts of the complex situation of woman's life and woman's social roles, creating the so-called media 'symbolic annihilation' of gender or the misrepresentation of woman. In the process of the 'symbolic annihilation' of woman, regulations and social norms of gender identities and gender roles represented in media texts have further deepened the influence of the power and gender discourse on the construction of our understandings of woman and woman's social roles (Manchel, 1990: 450-460).

From the late-1970s onward, new theories put forward by poststructuralists provided feminists a new conceptual direction that made the feminist media critique take the angle of arguing the signification position that media takes in constructing reality, rather than trying to find out 'a pre-existing reality to the meaning of the categories masculine and feminine' and how 'the media were involved in actively producing gender' (Gill, 2007: 12). As discussed in Chapter 3, post-feminism suggests that the understanding of masculinity/femininity/gender/sexuality a dynamic and unfinished process; it is a place where various forces are struggling with each other. Gender identity is seen to be partial, fragmented, fluid, and performed, rather than immutable and ahistorical (Long, 1991; Kaplan, 1992; Mendes & Carter, 2008).

However, it is worth noticing that both traditional feminist media criticism and post-feminist studies have pointed out that advertising campaigns often use misrepresentations to objectify women and reinforce sex differences/stereotypes in order to stimulate consumption (Berger, 1977; Betterton 1987; Irigaray, 1985; Goffman 1979; Kilbourn 1999, 2000; Bordo 1993; Manca & Manca 1994; Cortese 1999; Williamson 1978, 1986; Kim & Chung, 2005), because advertisers need to grab audiences' attention and convey certain messages in a concise amount of time (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015). Advertising was argued to have distorted the imagery of female bodies to meet the pleasure of the male gaze, condoned or encouraged

violence and stereotypes against women, and belittled the feminist movement (Mulvey, 1975; Sheehan, 2013).

Many scholars suggest that the stereotyped gender images usually work as a technology of constructing gender identity (e.g. McQuail, 2010; Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015: 73). Feminists believe that the function of stereotype in shaping our gender identities is negative, as stereotypes deny the dynamic nature of gender, and promote an essentialist concept of gender (Van Zoonen, 1994). Under the logic of gender stereotypes and the male-dominated power system, women are often linked to the 'domestic situation' as mothers and wives, or as sex objects to titillate and entertain male audiences; female characters usually are young, slim, emotional, have perfect body parts which conform the image of 'ideal' beauty and traditional femininity (Hole & Levine, 1971; Butler & Paisley, 1980; Gill, 2007; Meyers, 1999; Gallagher, 1990; Mager & Helgeson, 2011; Lindner, 2004; Collins, 2011; Frith & Mueller, 2010). However, Goffman (1979) noticed that the advertisements which are problematic and reprehensible in the eyes of feminists actually did not make most audiences feel disgusted, because the stereotyped depiction of the setting of gender roles is based on the real world. In other words, the stereotyped gender advertising representations are the reflection of the reality as the production of representations is basically consistent with the experience and information about gender and woman preconceived in the society. In this sense, the idea expressed by advertisements is the strengthened reflection of the common understanding of pre-existing gender roles and gender relations.

Although many types of research have proven that stereotypical representations of gender are still easy to find in contemporary media, some studies have shown contradictory results (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015; Mcrobbie, 2010). Studies prove that fewer stereotypical representations of women appear in advertising, and women are being represented in a broader scope of powerful and professional roles as a global phenomenon (MacDonald, 1995; Wollin, 2003; Bruce, 2015). Another evidence is the

increasing number of images of 'superwoman' in mass media, which is usually simultaneously portrayed as a good friend, lover, mother, wife, boss or employee, and overall is an available and 'self-assured sexual being' (Gill, 2007b; Krijnen & Bauwel, 2015). These are several examples of a new trend in advertising: using feminist ideas and women's power as the branding strategy to meet the new consumer psychology.

Many studies suggest that feminism is a tool of modern marketing (e.g. McQuail, 2010; Lotz, 2006; Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1999; McRobbie, 2008; Reker, 2016). In fact, the appropriation of feminist beliefs for commercial purposes is not a new thing. It harkens back to the 1920s with Edward Bernays' campaign encouraging female consumers to break gender limitations of smoking (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1999) and has been revived recently with the increasing of 'femvertising' which uses huge numbers of women/girls' images as forms of empowerment (Bahadur, 2015; Reker, 2016). In the post-Fordist society, advertising is positively trying to attract audiences' interests through convincing them to identify with the ideas of the product/brand (Johnston & Taylor, 2015). With the global awareness of feminist ideas and women's power, feminist messages are used as a means of sales promotion (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1999; Reker, 2016).

The study conducted by Silverstein and Sayre in 2009 states that 'women seek to buy products and services from companies that do good for the world, especially for other women. Brands that—directly or indirectly—promote physical and emotional well-being, protect and preserve the environment, provide education and care for the needy, and encourage love and connection will benefit' (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009; Reker, 2016). Reker (2016) also finds that the post-Fordist society has reshaped the logic of consumption; the new branding strategies encourage consumers to make purchases based on the idea that the product/brand supports rather than on the product itself. Reker (2016) suggests this new trend is becoming increasingly popular due to the great influence of women's purchasing power, and women's power will continue to increase in the coming years. Goldman, Heath & Smith (1999) states that common

strategies used by advertisers include a 'subtle reframing of the male gaze shifting the power as such a relationship from the surveyor to the surveyed' and 'validating an image of the new woman defined as independent and equal to men'. Feminist ads encourage the self-empowerment of women and claim that 'the female body as a site for women's pleasure and as a resource for her power in a broader marketplace of desire than marriage' (Duffy, 2010; Reker, 2016).

By encouraging feminist beliefs and women's self-empowerment through signified ideology, advertisers are able to target the female market rather effectively. The findings of Stamper (2015) have indicated the statistical success of the appropriation of feminism for commercial purpose which is defined as 'commodity feminism' by Goldman, Heath & Smith (1991) and Goldman (1992). Therefore, Lotz (2006) reminds us that advertising is a tool of capitalism and the initial purpose of feminist advertising is to earn business benefits rather than breaking gender stereotypes.

Apart from commodity feminism, 'popular feminism' has also infiltrated women's advertising representations and the consumer culture. Popular feminism is media-friendly and consumer-oriented. The usage of feminism by advertising is hardly surprising given the characteristics of advertising as it has been discussed in Chapter 3. For example, advertising absorbs feminist critiques against the sexualisation of female in advertising as well as elements of social change (Dyer 1982; Goldman 1992; Williamson, 2003; Reker, 2016). McRobbie, in her article 'Young Women and Consumer Culture: An Intervention', explains the instrumentalisation of feminism in mass media. McRobbie (2008) takes the commercialised girlhood as the example and argues that the invocation of girlhood in the current commercial culture has 'now occupy a critical place in the formation of the categories of youthful femininity'. And this appropriation of the commercialised girlhood 'draws on a quasi-feminist vocabulary which celebrates female freedom and gender equality' and 'many of the forms directed towards girls and young women seem to have embraced what has been troublesomely labelled 'popular feminism''. McRobbie (2008) suggests

that popular feminism is 'celebrated in such a way as to suggest that the politics of feminist struggles are no longer needed' because advertising creates images of women who have already won the freedom but in fact, these representations often simply act as 'a therapeutic mechanism for women to feel empowered through their capitalist values' (Reker, 2016). Therefore, this kind of advertising could not be seen as a genuine progressive of feminism.

Today, researchers find some paradoxical facts about women's advertising representations. Luck (2016) finds the ads containing feminist messages work to empower women by sending the message that they are more than their appearance while telling women they are still deficient (in order to encourage consumption). Gill (2007: 1) argues that the construction of women in today's media is extraordinarily contradictory: 'confident expressions of "girl's power" sit alongside reports of "epidemic" levels of anorexia and body dysmorphia [...] feminist ideas have become a kind of common sense, yet feminism has never been more bitterly repudiated'.

Reker (2016) holds the view that advertising is fundamentally incompatible with the goals of radical feminism as it is not an agency through which gender-power change could be achieved. But the advertisements offer up a post-feminist view in which the empowerment of women is enacted through their ability to choose what they want to be like or what products they would like to buy, and tensions between feminist and post-feminist approaches to issues of empowerment, emancipation, and identity offer such possibilities for advertisers (Lazer, 2007).

Another new phenomenon in women's advertising representation which has been increasingly noticed is the representation of female masculinity (e.g. Cooper, 2010; Fink, 2015; Bruce, 2015). Part of the reasons lies with the global spread of feminist thoughts and the rise of the third wave of feminism (Bruce, 2015). Feminism has long timely emphasised women's empowerment. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between female masculinity and the new form of modern femininity (Gillis et al.,

2004). With the rise of the third wave feminism, some feminists further proposed an ambiguous conceptual framework to discuss implicit political representations of gender oppression which challenges the traditional feminist positions that passively oppose the determined relations of woman and femininity (Bruce, 2015).

Although there are considerable debates about what the third wave of feminism is, it comprises a set of generally accepted concepts (Gillis et al. 2004). It strives to be non-judgemental and anti-essentialist, welcoming a variety of identities both within and across us (Cocca, 2014: 98), and embodies an aversion to labelling (Chananie-Hill et al., 2012: 46), and questions how to abolish the ideas which have 'crippled' our ability process and perceive representations outside culturally-defined gender binaries (Bruce, 2015). Among recent examples are Chris Beasley's (2005) use of Halberstam's concern with 'female masculinity' to criticise the gender hierarchy and sexualities in which 'masculinity and men are severed altogether' (Beasley, 2005: 233). Beasley concluded that masculinity is an identification. It is not tied to a sexed body and apparently escapes the biological. It also appears to escape the social, since it is no longer conceived in historical terms and aspects of masculinity's social production, as a positionality whose definition rests upon the subordinated status of women, seem to disappear' (2005: 233). Markula (2009), drawing on Derrida, discusses 'what it might mean to think "outside" of a category of feminine/masculine' and 'reach beyond the hierarchical binary structure', and concludes that 'this remains a very difficult task' (Markual, 2009: 103-104).

However, advertisers keenly caught the trend of breaking the boundaries of the binary gender concept of male/masculinity and female/femininity. The post-feminist slogans which advocate the fluidity of gender have been cleverly used by advertisers to defend for the advertising representations of male femininity and female masculinity, which successfully covers up the initial purpose of using the untraditional and rare depictions of sexes - to sell products.

In summary, feminism is closely related to media criticism and advertising representations of gender from the beginning. Current advertising representations often show the phenomenon of the co-existence of gender stereotypes and feminist rhetoric. The advertisements containing feminist messages merely offer a cursory look into feminism, but these advertising representations can still reflect levels of social acceptance and recognition of feminism in consumer cultures. The next section will further focus on previous research of women's advertising representations from specific perspectives.

5.4 Works on Women's Advertising Representations

The review of existing literature in the previous section concentrates on areas where feminism becomes a key theme in both advertising criticism on women's representations and the construction of women's advertising representations, especially in Western countries. As discussed in previous sections, scholars have long challenged and critiqued how advertising campaigns use images of women and women's bodies for selling purpose; advertising has been critiqued as an accomplice in pleasing male gaze, debasing feminism, reinforcing stereotypes, and so on. Women's representation in advertising is a complicated and dynamic topic, whose diversity and significance deserve great attention. Thus, many scholars from different research traditions commit themselves to this field. This far-ranging study, which varies in addressing concerns and meanings about women and gender¹⁰ in advertising, could be roughly categorised into two main research approaches: 'Goffmanian' analysis which is usually connected women and gender representations to questions of power and discourse; and 'Sex Role' research which is based on social role theory developed by Eagly (1987) (Krihen & Bauwel, 2015: 47). These two significant

¹⁰ Sometimes it is difficult to strictly separate women's advertising representations and gender advertising representations apart, as these fields often overlap. Therefore, this section will consider work on gender representation as well, but focus on the role of women's representation in the researches of gender representations.

approaches co-exist in researches of women's advertising representations and are often overlapped.

The first significant body of studies on women's representations in advertising is based on the theories of Erving Goffman who is commonly regarded as having made significant contributions for research on the analysis of gender and advertising through his publication *Gender Advertisements* (1979) which is still considered as a significant foundational work in academia today (Krihen & Bauwel, 2015).

Goffman takes advertisements as the object of the discussion, as ads provide something about gender representations which are more productive and more complex than representations on other mediums. To be more specific, Goffman (1979: 23) states that 'first, ads [...] are intentionally choreographed to be unambiguous about matter [...]. Second, (ads) can be shot from any angle that the cameraman choses, the subjects splayed out to allow an unobstructed view [...]'. And finally, [...] a real person is very considerably restricted as to the sort of live scenes he will be allowed to glimpse from whatever angle'. It means advertisements could give the audience a chance to look into a world filled with socially constructed and defined gender relations, roles, and displays. Also, the ad takes the things that really exist in the society and forms them into distorted reflections by emphasising something and de-emphasising others. At this point, Hancock & Garner (2014) also argue that scenes or images in ads are crafted to mimic real life and have blurred the boundaries between fantasy and reality in regards to advertising. Advertisements create the hyper ritualisation of the world, which provides us with an opportunity to recognise our relations with the advertising images and characters (Jhally, 2011). In short, Goffman sees advertising as a framework reshaping gender display based on the reality. In this framework, all related ingredients of women's advertising representations, including scenes, actions of the characters, dialogues, etc. have embodied ideas of gender under the manipulation of powers.

Furthermore, Goffman proposes six tools to examine gender displays¹¹ and their relation to power structures including: 'relative size', 'the feminine touch', 'function ranking', 'the family', 'the ritualisation of subordination' and 'licensed withdrawal'. The Goffmanian measurement category is believed to be very effective for studying gender representations (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), which makes people concerned about the 'less obvious' elements hidden in advertisements (Mager & Helgeson, 2011), and is still employed today to analyse gender or women in advertising (Bell & Milic, 2002; Lindner, 2004; Diaz Soloaga & Muñiz, 2013). Goffman emphasises the importance of geographically and historically positing the analysis and the tools resulting from it. As it has been noticed by many scholars, the meanings and the examining tools of the gender representations change with time and space (Kang, 1997; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Lindner, 2004; Mager & Helgeson, 2011; Krihen & Bauwel, 2015).

Goffmanian studies have a particular enlightenment significance to this research. Although women's representation is not the same as gender representation, these two themes often overlap and cannot be wholly separated. Goffman's research, on the one hand, provides directions and tools for examining women's advertising representations, such as why and how to analyse women's position in gender display. On the other hand, it helps us to realise the importance of power in constructing women's advertising representations. At the same time, Goffman reminds us that the frameworks and tools of analysing women's advertisements need to be adjusted according to time, geographical, social-cultural conditions, and political factors, which will be further explained in the methodology chapter.

The second body of work on women and gender advertising representation follows the viewpoint that media images show people the 'appropriate' behaviours of sexes which are regulated by social norms and relevant social institutions such as family,

¹¹ Gender displays refer to the idea that expressions of gender, which are socially learned and patterned, and function as 'a ritualistic affirmation of the social hierarchy' (Goffman, 1976: 6 from Krihen & Bauwel, 2015: 49).

peers and education (Krihen & Bauwel, 2015). One of the representatives is Jean Kilbourne. Jean Kilbourne started concentrating on the portrayal of women in advertising since the 1960s. Through her series lectures titled *Killing Us Softly*, Kilbourne examines the way women are represented in commercials and its relation to many social issues such as eating disorders, depression and low self-esteem (Kilbourne, 2000; 2010; 2013). Kilbourne directs her attention to three elements: gender of the main character, setting and product category. She argues that advertising degrades women, encourage abuse and violence, and reinforce the patriarchal society. She also draws a connection between the sexual advertising content and the objectification of women's bodies, stating that advertisers are 'real pornographers' (Rutherford, 2007). All of these help to further understand women's advertising representations, especially help to find the tiny, seemingly unproblematic details in hidden advertisements.

Most of the previous studies of women's advertising representations looked at the nature of women in commercials. In assessing the nature of women's representation on television advertising, researchers collected a block of advertisements from specific channels in specific periods, analysed the visual, textual and verbal messages contain gender-related information. There are several main research objects across the existing literature: examining female beauty, women's bodies, nudity and sexual content related to female characters, gender roles, and exotic women. The next sections will offer examples of how contemporary advertising deals with women's advertising representations from these perspectives.

5.4.1 Myths of Femininity in Advertising

Femininity is constructed by the dominant ideology (Hermes, 2007: 191) and operation as a metaphor for culture. Each culture has a set of common ideas about what constitutes femininity and female beauty. Advertising industry offers us a unique

opportunity to study the construction of femininity and female beauty in specific cultures and specific periods.

The social belief of femininity is a construct which varies from culture to culture and changes with contexts. About twenty years ago, according to Wood (1999), to be feminine in the Western culture means to be deferential, attractive, emotional, unaggressive, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. Recently, the femininity seems to become a contradictory and schizoid discourse. On the one hand, the long-standing influence of sexual double standard remains in Western countries, which still impresses upon the construction of femininity (De Visser & McDonnell, 2011; Griffin et al., 2012); respectability, attraction, and sexual reputation remain as normative elements of femininity (Farvid & Braun, 2006; McRobbie, 2009). On the other hand, post-feminist discourses and the neo-liberal society produce new forms of racialised and classed femininity (Walkerdine, 2003). Post-feminist critiques accompanying the emergence of the sex-saturated shifts in popular culture have suggested that woman's femininity is also associated with women's empowerment, and women are exhorted to participate into discourses of pleasure (Attwood, 2009; Walters, 2010). In the UK, young women are called on to enact a 'hyper-sexual feminine look' which is 'characterised by high heels, short skirts, low-cut tops, fake tan, long, straight and (bottle) blonde hair, smooth bare legs in all climates, lots of make-up and a buxom slimness' (Griffin et al., 2012). The British young white middle-class women, as a new form of neo-liberal subjectivity, are considered as disordered, feckless, and excessive consumers (Skeggs, 2004; Redden & Brown, 2010; Griffin et al., 2012). Therefore, it has become increasingly difficult to define femininity in contemporary culture, yet advertisers do find ways of employing women's representations in this profoundly dilemmatic space.

Women's advertising representation is a significant tool for understanding the construction of woman's femininity in a specific context because the advertising

industry is notorious for popularising an 'ideal' of femininity (Greer, 1999)¹² or showing 'the exemplary female prototype' (Cortese, 1999; Frith et al., 2015) . Hence the role model of representations of femininity is a part of the discourse of gender co-formed by a series of interacting factors such as culture, tradition, globalisation, politics, consumerism, and so on.

Female beauty is one key element of femininity. Likewise, female beauty is socially constructed and differs in different cultures and changes over time, that leads to different advertising representations of female beauty as representations of beauty are based on the common beliefs of beauty in a specific context. Solomon, Ashmore, & Longo (1992) conclude yielded relatively distinct beauty types in Western mass media: Classic, Feminine, Sensual, Exotic, Cute, Girl-Nex-Door, Sex Kitten, and Trendy; Bjerke & Polegato (2006) finds blue eye colours, blond and dark hair are preferred in British advertisements than in the Latin countries. Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore (1994) find the Trendy, Classic/Feminine, and Exotic/Sensual types are the most prevalent in American advertising. Regarding the Chinese context, through analysing a six-months-period sample of Chinese magazine advertisements, Chan & Cheng (2012) find among all types of female characters in advertisements, the most common type is the traditional gentle and submissive 'feminine' women accounting for 69% among all samples. In addition, 'sexy woman' accounts for 13%; 'cute' accounts for 5%; 'fashion' accounts for 1%. Zhu & Cong (2010) state that compared to Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and other Asian countries, the image of cute and neighbour girls appears more frequently in ads of the mainland China, while the Hong Kong's advertisers prefer using sexy women in advertisements.

From a cross-cultural view, Frith, Shaw & Cheng (2015) compare the portrayals of

¹²Of course, advertisements not only represent the 'ideal' femininity but also takes part into the construction process of the hegemonic cognition of femininity, which could be proven by Kilbourne's arguments reviewed in the last section. This research mainly focuses on representations and advert texts.

beauty in women's fashion advertisements across Eastern and Western countries. Their findings reaffirm an increasingly noticeable fact that certain aspects of femininity are more or less universal and a universal beauty standard does exist in women's advertising representations which the authors attribute to the globalised media and cultural environment.

The previous literature about femininity and beauty, on the one hand, suggest some commons in Eastern and Western women's advertising representations, on the other hand, it implies that Western feminist critiques of advertising for materialising women as sex object need to be more or less adjusted in the Chinese context. The marketing strategy 'sex sells' which goes successfully in Western countries may not work in China, as the sexy actress is not the most popular type of women in the mainland Chinese market. In addition, as Fung (2000) states, that Western feminist liberal ideas about femininity and female identity have not been entirely accepted by people in Asia.

5.4.2 Sex and Body

Within researches on women's advertising representations in recent years, one of the most polarised debates focuses on the sexual representations of women and the pornification of women's bodies. Reichert (2003: 234) points out that sex in advertising refers to the information evokes audience's sexual thoughts and feelings which involves various forms including nudity, sexual behaviour, physical attractiveness, and double entendre. The problematic and often unacceptable representations of women as a sexual object in ads have received many discussion (Jally, 1989; Kilbourne, 1999).

A number of researchers have compared the sexual portrayal of women in advertising in different countries. Through the comparison of advertisements between America

and France, Biswas, Olsen, and Carlet (1992) report that French advertising uses more sex appeal than the U.S., which the authors contribute to a more liberated sexual culture in France. In the analysis of women's representations in Chinese advertising, Cheng (1997) finds that women on Chinese television screen wear more 'demure' clothing than women in American television advertisements. In an examination of how Western women are used in Japanese advertising, O'Barr (1994: 187) argues that Western models often portrayed to be 'sensual and willing' in Japanese advertising, and are represented to do things that Japanese models would never do. Firth & Mueller (2003) point out that in conservative Asian countries, only Western models are used in lingerie commercials as it is considered inappropriate to post a local woman in advertising sexually. Thompson (2009) point out that the degree of Western women's sexual openness is higher than women in China, yet using sex and women's bodies to attract the audience has been widely accepted in the Chinese market since the 2000s. Some studies also suggest that nudity of women in advertising is not a global marketing strategy due to different social acceptance, values, norms and regulations to sexuality across cultures (Boddewyn, 1991; Lass & Hart, 2004; Mueller, 2004; Nelson, & Paek, 2008).

Underlying many of the past discussions on the sexual portray of women in advertising is the underlying assumption that, within patriarchal societies, women's bodies are the object of 'the male gaze' connoting 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey, 1975; Berger, 1977; Shields, 1990). In discussing the female nude in Western art, Berger (1977: 63) points out that: '[I]n the art form of the European nude, the painters and spectator-owners were usually men and the persons treated as objects, usually women'. Erens (1990: 28) makes similar arguments that female characters on the screen are the 'bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning'.

Mulvey (1975) further suggests it is necessary to wipe out the intermediary of female images in order to freeze and destroy the male gaze and create a distance between representations and audiences. In Rey Chow's view, the operation scheme in Mulvey's

theories of reconstructing the distinction and confrontation between the reality and the illusion is problematic, as the destruction of the pleasure of gaze means to initiatively give up the subjective position that women could own (Zhou, 2015). Particularly in current global - (post) colonialist context, when we are facing many forms of cross-cultural textual and visual products, Mulvey's theoretical framework cannot solve all problems as the intention of 'destroying' the male gaze does not consider the acceptance situation in the cross-cultural context. Rey Chow (1995) reaffirmed the positivity of the 'illusion' of gaze (which transcends the previous binary distinction of the true or false) and regarded it as a specific perceptual experience (Zhou, 2015). In this sense, women's sexual representation should be regarded as a dynamic process in which both the power of the male gaze and women's positive subjectivities take part in. Chow also reaffirms the importance of ethnic spectatorship in discussing representations (Chow, 1995), which, once again, has emphasised the importance of taking a cross-cultural lens to look at sex representations of women in advertising.

The previously reviewed literature on the relations between globalisation and representations have illustrated that the global spread of Western hegemonic ideology is not always successful, which has been noticed by many researchers. Focusing on the widespread of American media industries across the globe, Kuipers (2012) argues that Western representations of gender and sexuality are accepted and indigenised by audiences in other cultures simultaneously making the Western subject position desirable, however, the transportation of Western hegemonic gender discourse is not always successful. Kuipers (2012) cites De Kloet (2008)'s explanations of sex difference in Chinese and Western contexts as the example of Chinese local resistance to Western discourse. According to De Kloet (2008: 200), different from the west, sex was understood in China 'not as an irreducible polarity in traditional Chinese cosmology', but is 'one principle among many [...] that determined a person's position in the family and in society', but sex still plays significant role in constituting Chinese modern culture and further impact the representations of sex in mass media.

Today, discussions around advertising representation of sex and women's bodies have become more complex and polarised as sexual content is increasingly normalised through contemporary popular culture. Advertisers contribute to this normalisation and the increasingly capitalised and sexualised representations because, quoting Ariel Levy, 'Sex sells. That's our justification for everything. The sex industry has become every industry' (Penny, 2010: 5). For the young female audiences who are growing up with the view that sexual content in advertising is common and deeply misogynistic (Maclaran, 2017), sexual performance and self-objectification have become their 'duties that must be undertaken and perfected' (Penny, 2010: 11). Given this context, Heywood & Dworkin (2003: 85) suggest that the term sexualisation 'no longer seems to wholly describe what is happening'. Therefore, Heywood & Dworkin (2003: 88) remind us that it is the context of women's sexual representations which 'occupy different registers informed by different codes', rather than whether it contains overt sexuality/nudity or not, that we should pay attention to, in order to advocate a world 'where our standard of measurement doesn't start with a White-male heterosexual nucleus' (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000: 134).

5.4.3 Family and Gender Roles

The gender role attitudes and relations between women and families have long been discussed from various perspectives in different disciplines such as sociology, media studies, feminism, and political science. Family and home, as well-known examples of the private sphere, were long regarded as women's 'proper place' in most societies (Vickery, 1993; Tétreault, 2001; May, 2008). Women are always required to devote a considerable part of their lives to childbirth and child-rearing. Even if some women had some power - even a great deal of power in some periods - this power in those women's hands is easily regarded as 'illegitimate', 'non-authoritative' and 'unusual', disturbing the 'normal' social order (Wells, 2009).

This series of gender ideologies associated with the gender division of labour reflect our conventional understandings of gender social positions and further penetrate into various forms of culture, which again solidifies the gender division of labour and the related hierarchical concepts, making them become an essential tool for maintaining gender orders (Wells, 2009; Wu, 2010).

The separation of the private/public - women/men has fixed the artificial concept of sexual differences and strengthened the 'common sense' consensus that men are the 'stronger' sex. In the West, the Bible called for men to lead families as 'husbands', which means to 'be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life' (1 Peter 3:7). As in the underlying field of sexual politics and sexual repression, the ascription of the relationship between women and family has been challenged by feminists in a number of ways. Firstly, feminists attempted to open up the private sphere of the family to public scrutiny, and to state that the ideology of separating spheres has devalued the value of private sphere (Childers & Hnetzi, 1995: 252). In addition, the new valorisation of knowledge and theories of gender and society, as opposed to the traditional male perspective, are continuing to emerge (Eagleton, 1991: 6). The public sphere is increasingly opened up to female participation, and the private spheres of work and ideas encourage male participation (Faludi, 1999: 9-35). Today, according to Deleuze and Guattari, postmodernism is changing the traditional split between spheres, producing 'the supersaturated space of immediate presence and media-scrutiny of late capitalism' (Hardt & Weeks, 2000: 280). Ultimately, the boundaries and divisions among genders and gendered labour are increasingly blurred in Western societies.

In China, traditional culture has maintained the gender hierarchy of male superiority and female inferiority, which strictly controls women's living and active spaces. Gender division of labour as the fundamental political operating system began in the early Zhou Dynasty (1046BC-249BC). As the official work on bureaucracy and

organisational management, *the Rites of Zhou* regulated the living space and work scope of the two sexes, dividing society relations into two types, where the 'public' (公) and the 'private' (私), the country and the family, and the 'internal' (内) and the 'external' (外) correspond to the male and the female (Boltz, 1993; Wu, 2010). The state is public, and the family is private. Social labour is divided into the 'internal' business of the family and the 'external' affairs of the family (Wu, 2010). Men should occupy the 'external' space, while women should take care of the 'internal' space, known as the traditional customs that are generally regarded as the social basis for the subordination of women: 'men farming and women weaving' (男耕女织), 'husband and wife are different' (夫妇有别), and 'men managing external business and women managing internal affairs' (男主外, 女主内).

These mainstream gender ideologies in different historical contexts conveyed a series of authorities about gender division of labour through the norms of gender discourse. By particular channels such as literature and mass communication platforms, traditional gender discourse which long-termly controls the mass audience has turned into a series of gender-related subconscious behaviours.

As far as advertising is concerned, the relationship between female and family is a long-standing popular topic in advert texts. Television advertising has been frequently criticised as it is argued to have always depicted stereotyping images of women's lives and social roles which further aggravates the dualistic gender settings. The female characters constructed by advertising have changed over time in response to feminism, political-economic changes, and social-cultural factors. For instance, Dominick & Rauch (1974) find that women's social roles in advertising are limited to homemaker and family caretaker, and women are rarely portrayed in professional roles. Ferrante et al. (1988) observe that the role given to women in television advertisements has undergone tremendous changes from the 1970s to the 1980s, and women in the 1980s' advertising are found to be appeared more frequently in public areas and represented in a larger range of occupations than in the 1970s. Lysonski (1985) examines 5,000

British magazine advertisements and finds that women were seldom depicted as career-oriented or doing masculine activities. In a follow-up study, Michell & Taylor (1990) find that there are two polarising trends of women's representations in British advertising: one towards a more feminine, home-related, dependent portrayal; the other towards a career-oriented, non-traditional female authority female images. Following the pattern documented in previous studies, Furnham & Elena (2000) find that there is a marked difference in roles in which sexes are portrayed in British advertisements in the 1990s: females are found to be more likely to be depicted in familial or dependent roles while males are more likely to be portrayed in occupational settings. Zotos & Tsihla (2014) attribute the clouded women's advertising representation in the 1990s to the weakened feminism and negative social attitudes regarding women's sexual freedom during that period. In the 2000s, there is still evidence could prove that stereotyped gender roles and using women as decorative objects exist in advertising in the UK (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009).

Interestingly, some scholars agree that many gendered advertisements do not adequately reflect contemporary gender roles (Gilly 1988: 84; Milner & Higgs 2004: 81; Paek et al. 2011: 204; Plakoyiannaki & Zotos 2009; Tsihla & Zotos, 2013). The depiction of female roles in advertising reports a significant time lag between representations and their evolving social statuses (Gilly 1988; Zotos & Tsihla, 2014), and some advertising representations of gender are argued to incorporate stereotypical gender roles that no longer exist (DeYoung & Crane, 1992). Possible reasons could be tracked to advertisers' marketing tricks, as it has been discussed in Chapter 4 - through promoting traditional feminine roles and sexualising female bodies to satisfy the male gaze and provoke gimmicks. On the other hand, it could be attributed to political and cultural effects which may continue to diffuse patriarchy concepts and hierarchical patterns of gender (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014), which again, reminds us the importance of understanding the 'context' in interpreting women's advertising representations.

Regarding the Chinese context, a series of related factors including the discourse of

gender, socio-economic and political-ideological changes co-shaped women's representations. As I have reviewed in Chapter 4, China's advertising industry is a discourse field jointly controlled by the commercial society, government and social culture. Gallagher (1981) suggested that in China where the government-controlled media with a strong commitment to the liberation of women appear to 'offer exceptionally positive images of women and lay stress on women's contribution to economic and social development'. Luo & Hao (2007) argue that the representations of women in China are to a large extent influenced by the interaction of party ideology, audiences' acceptance, editorial policy, and the changing reality of women's lives in China.

5.4.4 Ethnic Images and Exotic Femininity

Changing images of ethnic femininity and exotic women in advertising have provided a dynamic view of the way that intergroup conflicts and global power coordinates. It is argued that stereotypes of ethnic minorities have not been eliminated but have changed with changes in social norms and other cultural and political factors in Western countries (Jackman, 1994; Cortese, 2016). White cultural representations about ethnic minorities, particularly Asian women, are closely related to orientalism and cultural stereotypes.

Compared with the richness of research on advertising representations of black women in Western media, few scholars have thoroughly examined the commodified images of Asian women and femininity in today's advertising. Hoeffel, Rastogi & Kim (2012) argue that representations of Asian characters are far from enough considering the per cent of Asian Americans taking in all people in the U.S. The stereotyping and misrepresentation of Asian continues (Sun, 2002). Western advertising often stereotypes and eroticises Asian women as a 'hypersexualised sexual subject' or 'a passive sex object', and Asian female characters in Western media are

mostly shown as exotic, promiscuous, sensuous, but untrustworthy (Cortese, 2016: 171).

However, as it has been discussed in Chapter 2, in the world we currently live in, knowledge, information, images, and people are all flowing, from one place to another, across cultural and geopolitical boundaries, which has been characterised and classified by Appaduria (1990) as five dimensions of global cultural flow. Kim & Chung (2005) suggest that the growing significance of Asia's role in the new global economy will inevitably prompt Western marketing and advertising campaigns use more multicultural representations and Asian images. Multiculturalism is one of the 'fashionable' marketing strategies today. Representations of multiculturalism could show the artificial image of 'openness', ethnic unity, harmony 'colour-blind' among races, and the rich cultures in one country (Kim & Chung, 2005). Cronin (2003: 3) argues that we have a 'radically altered context' for cross-cultural representations and the boundaries between 'Self', and 'Other' are gradually disintegrating. Ang & Stratton (1995) suggest that 'classical Orientalism has now been transformed into a neo-Orientalism, where it is no longer powerless, colonised Asia which is the subject of othering, but an empowered and, to a certain extent, threatening modern Asia'.

Looking at women in advertising within the globalised context, Johansson (1999) finds a remarkable gap between numbers of the representations of Caucasian women in Chinese advertising and the representations of Asian women in Western advertising. Besides, Asian women are portrayed as childish while Western women are portrayed as sexy and powerful in Chinese advertising. Johansson (1999) argues that on the one hand, the white woman takes the symbolic position of men and masculinity, and shows female power and pleasure which are Chinese women often lack; on the other hand, the images of white women in Chinese advertising represent a threat to Chinese nationalism and self-identity, and also represent Chinese aspirations of becoming a modern country. Zhang Youbin (2009) also finds that one of the characteristic of contemporary Chinese advertising is the frequent use of various Western visual and

auditory elements, mixed with Chinese aspirations and interpretations of Western characters, languages and cultures.

5.5 Research Gap

Looking from the previous discussions on various advertising representations of woman in different countries, we can find that, compared with the more complete and developed discussions on women's advertising representation and its relations to feminism and other cultural and political factors in the Western and British academia, the advertising representations of women and gender relations in China still needs a more systematic combing. Therefore, this research will attempt to compensate for this deficiency in the fields of gender and advertising representations in China. In addition, the cross-cultural comparison of the images of women in the UK and China is still almost blank compared to the increasingly frequent cultural exchanges and interactions between China and the UK. This study introduces the theories of cultural studies and cross-cultural perspectives into the analysis of women's advertising representations, thus complementing the cross-cultural comparative analysis of gender in cultures between China and the UK. In addition, advertising texts are often updated in a timely manner over time. Therefore, based on the analyse of the advertising cases within the recent three years, this research timely follows up and supplements the research on the development and changes of gender in modern British and Chinese cultures.

5.6 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter contains an outline of previous empirical research into women's advertising representations in different historical periods and different countries. This chapter gives a clue about how advertising representations of women should be analysed. It not only focuses on findings of feminist media critiques, but

also looks at the research objects and perspectives of women's advertising representations, which provide useful inputs to my data collection process, methodology and discussion structure. Additionally, the review of relevant studies about the relationship among globalisation, women's advertising representation, feminism, multiculturalism, and the consumer society offers backgrounds and theoretical basis for comparing women in British and Chinese advertising in this research.

Chapter 6 Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter has three main purposes: firstly, to introduce the epistemological considerations for my methodology and analytical approach. Secondly, to explain the reason of methodology selection and how the chosen method will be employed in this research. Thirdly, to outline and substantiate the processes of data collection and case selection.

Visual semiotic analysis has been selected as the primary methodology in this research. According to Van Leeuwen, (2001), the method of visual semiotics is an efficient way to study the questions including 'what do images represent and how', what are the 'hidden meanings' of images, and 'what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in images stand for'. In this manner, semiotics is a useful tool that directly relates to my research object - advertising representations of women.

6.2 Overview: Semiotics as the Methodology

There are two research methods could be used to analyse the depiction of women in advertisements, namely semiotics and content analysis (Van Zoonen, 1996). Advertising contains a series of symbols. Some researchers believe on the one hand, advertising symbols reflect the reality, on the other hand, they reconstruct the reality: the former consideration of the symbol works as a symbol of reality; the other consideration of symbols are symbols for reality.(Van Zoonen, 1996; Eubanks & Petrakis, 1999), which brings in different modes of analysis: qualitative content analysis and quantitative semiotics. According to Van Zoonen, due to the different academic origins of these two methodologies, it is difficult to combine content analysis (as a method of sociology) and semiotic analyses (as a method of humanities)

in one research project. Other differences are summarised by Van Zoonen (1996) shown in the *Table 6.1* below:

Item	Semiotics	Content analysis
Communication model	(Re)construction	Transmission
Object	Latent content	Manifest content
	Single texts	Large body of texts
Method	Qualitative	Quantitative
	Humanities	Social science
Results	Signification	Occurrence

Table 6.1. Differences between content analysis and semiotics (Van Zoonen, 1996:

85)

Limiting to the complexity of advertising, it is not easy to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of these two methods. The researcher should select the most suitable method depending on the specific research aims, objects, and questions. Regarding the research of woman and advertising, based on the review of the previous literature, the content analysis focuses on some practical facts, such as the amount of women's roles in advertising and the level of objectification of the female body; while semiotics help us to explore the connotation and ideology which constructed the images of female and gender relations. Barthes (1957: 120) claims that 'semiology is a science of forms since it studies significations apart from their content'. Sonesson (2014) also states that 'semiotics is a discipline the aim of which is to lay bare the rules and regularities which govern the use of signs and other meanings in human beings as well as in other species; as well as to discover the emergence of these meanings in evolution, child development, and socio-cultural history'. This research applies the social semiotic method to discuss and compare the advertising representations of women between the UK and China, which I named as a Barthes-type mythological analysis path.

In this study, all the research questions will be discussed through a Barthes' mythologies-type mode. Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* (1957) is a collection of articles which deconstructs the bourgeois myths and ideological operation mode of the society. The 'myth', quoting from Barthes, can be understood as 'a special type of speech', or a way of expressing opinions and ideas (Barthes, 1957: 181). Barthes (1957) makes interpretations for a series of popular symbols in commercials such as toys, wine, hairstyles and soap powders, and explores how the meaning-making practice of these commercialised symbols functions in the French society. All these advertising symbols can be regarded as the 'text', and the text can be seen as the reflection of the culture/society. Barthes (1957) provides the studies of advertising texts and representations a new approach - social semiotics, which is employed as the primary research method in this study.

The first purpose of this study is to analyse and compare how culture shapes different women's representations in China and the UK, and how globalisation brings similarity into women's representations in different contexts. According to Bowman (2017), the purpose of *Mythologies* is to discuss a series of question including 'what does this or that mean for culture; how does this or that work on us; why do we desire this but not that; what effects do these images and practices have on us and on others; where do these ideas, discourses, and values come from; where do they take us; and where are they going [...] '(Bowman, 2017: xi). In this study, from the specific examples and cases, similar questions will also be analysed through such a mythological research model.

The second level of the mythological approach in this research derives from Paul Bowman's *Mythologies of Martial Arts* (2017) which not only focuses on signs, signifiers, and practices of popular culture, but also further informed by the author's practical and professional experiences in many related academic activities. In this study, the author's relevant practical experiences and specific ethnic or cultural experiences will be taken into account as well.

In summary, this study is a qualitative study based on the representation-interpretation with a humanistic orientation, orienting to interpretive the issues of women's advertising representation from a cross-cultural perspective, in order to seek the meanings and meaning construction process hiding behind the advertising representation. This research aims to inspect the interactions among women, consumerism, globalisation, context and cross-cultural interactions through semiotics. In order to explain the application of the semiotic approach in this research, the next sections will provide a general illustration of semiotics and the methodological and analytical approaches of advertising cases, and briefly explains how to use semiotics to look at the construction process of the advertising representations of women and other gendered symbols.

6.3 Basic Concepts of Semiotics

Semiotics is a significant approach to interpret representation. According to Tomasellis (1996: 29), semiotic is a study of: '[...] how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance, and other forms of expression'. And 'the method incorporates not only how things come to mean, but how prevailing meanings are the outcomes of encounters between individuals, groups and classes and their respective cosmologies and conditions of existence.' Tomasellis (1996: 29) states, 'these social and cultural categories are criss-crossed by other lines of tension such as gender, psychology, religion, language, ethnic, and nationalist forms of domination and/or resistance [...]' These encounters and conflicts are manifested in semiotic struggle.' Therefore, we can see that semiotic analysis aims to explore the construction approach of symbol, the meaning-making practices, the implications of the advertising symbolic system, and the cultural and social effects of representations, making it a popular methodology in the studies of analysing and criticising the visual culture and advertising representations.

The basic elements of semiotics are signs and codes (Tomasellis, 1996). The sign stands for the things or concepts, which contains both signified and signifier perspectives. The signifier refers to the pronunciation, picture, image of an object, and the signified refers to the concept of this object. In some cases, the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary and based on conventions and cultures (Tomasellis, 1996).

De Saussure laid the foundation of the analysis of linguistic signs while the account of semiotic work of visual signs derives from Charles S. Peirce (1958) which explains three aspects of signs: iconic, indexical, and symbolic (*Table 6.2*):

	Symbol	Icon	Index
<i>Signify by</i>	Convention	Resemblance	Connection
<i>Example</i>	Words	Picture	Smoke-fire
		Statue	Symptom-disease
<i>Process</i>	Must learn	Can see	Can figure out

Table 6.2 *Three aspects of signs* (Berger, 1982: 15 from Van Zoonen, 1996)

A single sign hardly make cultural meanings. The meanings of sign come from the articulation of signifier and signified, its syntagmatic or paradigmatic relation with other signs, and the relevant code and convention shared by people in the same cultural or social group (Van Zoonen, 1996). We use signs to describe and interpret our society and our history. Barthes (1957) states that signs are both denotative and connotative, and contains first and second order significations. Denotation refers to the direct meaning of the object or the image. Connotation is the result of the cultural and ideological interventions of the image and the object (Tomasellis, 1996), and is related to the underlying cultural values expressed by the sign system (Van Zoonen, 1996). The visual matters will become matters of representation when wedded to

particular types of media technology (Bowman, 2014). As Williamson states, 'the technique of advertising is to correlate feelings, moods or attributes to tangible objects, linking possible unattainable things with those that are attainable, and thus reassuring us that the former is within reach' (Williamson, 1978: 31). The connotation meanings could be different in different contexts. For example, an image of black cat denotes a particular kind of cat, but it connotes bad luck in the Netherlands, however in some other cultures, the symbol of the black cat works as a mental support (Van Zoonen, 1996). Therefore, before we discuss the connotation or the cultural meaning of the advertising signs, we need to have a basic understanding of the culture and the society in which the sign or sign system is produced and constructed.

The cultural values and beliefs are expressed by the association of signs and narratives (Van Zoonen, 1996). Bignell (1997) gives an example of an advertising image of a man wearing a pair of shoes stepping out of a Rolls-Royce, and argues that, at this moment, the shoes have been attached with the connotation of luxury brought by the sign of 'Rolls-Royce', suggesting 'a mythic meaning in which the shoes are part of a privileged way of life' (Bignell, 1997: 16).

The dominant connotation meanings of the sign and symbol create the myth (Heck, 1980: 125). Myth works as 'a mode of signification' (Barthes, 1972), and it offers 'explanations of why the world is as it appears to be, and why people act as they do' (O'Sullivan et al., 1983: 147). However, Barthes (1972: 109) points out that 'while there are age-old myths, there are no eternal ones [...] because it is human history that converts reality into an oral or expressive state'. Thus, the myths is always in the process of changing, shifting and transforming, which is particularly evident in the changes of Western representation of China in the past decades.

Myth aims to distort (Barthes, 1972: 121) and transform some concepts and values as the 'inevitable', 'natural' or 'God-given' (Tomasellis, 1996). The operation of myth is happened between discourses (Tomasellis, 1996), which leads to the third order of the

sign - the signification of ideology (Fiske & Hartley, 1978). The signification of ideology of the sign is based on the discourse. Many scholars have defined the discourse from different perspectives. Van Zoonen (1996) defines the discourse as our way of talking things in which we use 'specific code' spreading within specific context. Foucault (1972: 117) defines the discourse as a 'group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation' (Foucault, 1972: 117). Hall (2013) summarises Foucault's thoughts on discourse as:

'[A] group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment [...]. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But [...] since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do our conduct - all practices have a discursive aspect.' (Hall, 1992: 291; in Hall, 2013: 29).

The concept of discourse, according to Tomasellis (1996), could help us understand the relationship between representation, text, con-texts, and social practices. In practice, the group in power uses the discourse of institution, law, morality, etc., to legitimatise their ruling position and protect their interests and rights (Tomasellis, 1996). The set of discourse is also used to subdue and assimilate the other group in order to strengthen the dominance of the power, such as defining the Orient as the Other and the unsaid. In this way, the Other (in various aspects including race, gender, identity and so on) has frequently been stereotyped and objectified. As previously discussed in the literature review chapters, commercial is one of the most common discourse practices that creates the externalisation and otherisation of the image of the gendered subject.

Mass media representations reflect, strengthen and sometime reconstruct our cultural structure. The production and interpretation processes of media representations are named as 'encoding' and 'decoding' processes by Hall (1973; 2005). He also defines the phases in the encoding/decoding processes of representations and texts as the

'moments'. Corner (1983: 266-267) supplies the concept of the encoding moment as 'the institutional practices and organisational conditions and practices of production' while the decoding moment as 'the moment of reception [or] consumption [...] by [...] the reader/hearer/viewer' which is 'closer to a form of "construction" than to "the passivity [...] suggested by the term "reception"'. The encoding and decoding moments are effected by the dominant ideology which produces the concept of the preferred meaning (Tomasellis, 1996). However, we need to notice that the advertising representations are always filled with the struggles between different discursive practices, which might result in different or even opposing representations of one object. Moreover, the encoding and decoding moments are different in different societies and historical periods.

In summary, the semiotic analysis of advertising representations involves a series of concepts including signifier, signified, connotation, denotation, power structure, ideology, encoding and decoding. These concepts discussed above will be further employed in the case analysis of women's advertising representations in next chapters.

6.4 Analysing Advertisements

The semiotic analysis of television advertising is commonly based on the assumption that the cultural meanings of representations are designed to effect and shape the consumer's understanding and experience of the society, the lifestyles and themselves. Williamson (1978: 11-12) declares that ads have two functions, 'a function which is to sell things to us' and the other function of creating 'structures of meaning'. Advertisements encode signs, codes, and social myths and encourage audiences to recognise and enjoy the conveyed meanings (Williamson, 1978). In this way, advertising makes the mass audience unconsciously participate in the construction process of meanings, and thus further retains particular mythic ideas and reinforces the dominant discourses and power structures.

Analysing advertisements through semiotics involves a number of steps. According to Bignell (2002: 34), the first step to understand the advertising representation is to read the various signs in the advertisement text. Bignell (2002) argues that anything carried meaning (which can be linguistic or iconic or non-representational) in the advert text can be regarded a sign. The advertising sign not only denotes the images but also connotes our society and culture. Bignell (2002) reminds us that some of the advertising signs could be recognised consciously, but some are not easily to be captured until we carefully look through the narrative. For illustration, Bignell (2002: 35) uses an example of a female model in a perfume advertisement to explain the denotation and connotation of advertising signs:

A beautiful	(A sign)	Denotation	(A concept)	Connotation
female model in a perfume ad	A particular person, a videoed model	Youth, slimness, health, etc. →The mythic signified 'feminine beauty' → sexually desirable women (a mythic meaning)		

Table 6.4 *Denotation and connotation of the female model* (Bignell, 2002: 35)

In Bignell (2002)'s example, the advertisement presents the audience a series of concepts such as 'youth' 'feminine beauty' 'slimness', and these concepts are consisted of advertising signs and construct the mythic meanings of the female advertising character and femininity. Although the encoding and connotation of advertising female images could be different in different contexts, Bignell (2002) provides us the way of using semiotics to look at advertising representations, which include the following steps:

* To identify the signs, symbols, and the sign system which are relevant to our research questions in the advertisement text.

* To examine the denotation (the first order) of these signs, the connotations and the social myth (the second order) of these signs, and to observe how the advertising represents the social and cultural meanings of the product by examining the construction process of the mythic and cultural meanings of the signs and symbols in the advert.

* To consider how the mythic and cultural meanings constructed in the advertising representations relate to the ideology, the power structure and the discourse system in the real world. In other words, to look at the ideological operation and the discursive function of the advertising representations (the third order).

The semiotic analysis of advert case in Bignell (2002) could help us understand the obvious visual symbols in the print advert texts. However, compared with print advertising, television advertising has some particularities. First, most television advertisements are dynamic and multi-dimensional with both visual and auditory elements. Therefore, the symbol system of television advertisements is more complex. Second, television advertisements often contain one or more plots and sub-plots, and the advertising symbols in television advertisements are more diverse and changeable, which makes the semiotic analysis of advertising text more difficult. Based on the visual semiotic analysis steps of Bignell (2002), this study adds the following considerations to the semiotic analysis of advertisements:

* To analyse the development or conflict of the storyline, and to extract the metaphorical expression and effective symbols in the advert. In the semiotic analysis of TV/video advertisement, the first thing is to sort out the narrative clues, main plot and sub-plot of advertisement, that is, to interpret the development and change of the advertisement plots and sub-plots. In other words, to interpret the development and change of advertisement plot. By sorting out the main plots and sub-plots of advertising narrative, we can identify the relevant effective symbols in advertising texts, and further analyse the connotation and extension of symbols, as well as the

hidden social myths and power structures.

* To deconstruct the dynamic visual representation of the advertising mainline: drawing on Goffman's (1976) advertising analysis framework, to analyse the visual elements such as the place where the advertisement occurs, the scene and the represented lifestyles, and to deconstruct the non-verbal behaviour or body language of the advertising characters that play guiding roles in advertising narrative, focusing on the facial expression changes, location and movement, body setting, etc. Unlike print advertisements, the effective information conveyed by television advertisements is more complex and changeable. Therefore, by observing and deconstructing the dynamic representation of advertisement texts, we can further recognise the transformation and change of symbols.

* To analyse other visual components of advertising images that offers visual information to the receiver, that is, the components of visual information in advertising images (O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 1988). The combination of visual components is the main method to convey meaning in dynamic television advertisement texts. The semiotic interpretation of television advertisements should not only pay attention to the dynamic symbols in the main line of advertising narration, but also look at the setting and combination of other visual symbols.

* To deconstruct the copy: advertising copy is 'the verbal or written part of a message' (O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 1988: 275). Copies of television advertisements include slogans, words and dialogues, conveying intuitive information to the audience. Semiotic deconstruction of advertisement cases is not a simple text interpretation, but an attempt to explore the implicit information behind the literal meaning.

* To understanding related policies and marketing strategies: when interpreting television advertising texts by semiotics, attentions should also be paid to the social and cultural environment in which the advertisement is located, as well as the policies,

laws and regulations related to the products or services. On the one hand, advertising representations and the use of advertising symbols are shaped by the relationship between society, culture and power, and are also influenced by marketing and marketing links; on the other hand, advertising production and information dissemination will also be affected by the relevant laws and regulations in one country. Therefore, in the semiotic analysis of representation, we need to examine the positioning of advertising, target audience and other related marketing factors; analyse the characteristics of local and global advertising industries; and consider the impact of relevant policies and regulations on the combination of advertising symbols.

However, it is worth noting that not all advertisements and advertising symbols have valuable meanings. Rao (2014) reminds us that when choosing television advertising cases, we consider the validity and value of advertising cases.

6.5 Procedure and Data Collection

In order to have appropriate and valid samples for case analysis, twenty-four days of prime-time televised advertisements (11:00 am - 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm) was recorded from the most popular Chinese television channel CCTV 1 and British commercial television channel ITV 1 from April 2016 to March 2017¹³. The advertisements broadcasted in prime-time on these popular channels captured the most massive audiences, and with such a far-reaching viewership, we can conclude that the representations and ideologies these television advertising promote are extensive and mostly mainstream. In this manner, I operationalised the research aim of looking at the 'mainstream' gender ideologies in different contexts.

Due to the repetition of ads in a certain period (which aims to deepen the audience's impression of them) and the quota of television station (generally television station

¹³ All figures and screenshots used in the case analysis sections are derived from video websites Youku and YouTube as most ads I collected could be found online.

has a quota of broadcast times of a particular commercial, so the commercial is continually aired in one month in order to make the quota), this research selected the first day of each month from April 2016 to March 2017 to collect television commercials in order to avoid sampling repetition and improve work efficiency. All advertisements from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in these days have been video-recorded.

In addition, in order to expand the capacity of the database to better select advert cases, I have made a long-term random observation of a large number of commercials in China and the UK from April 2014 to January 2018. The observation platforms include Chinese television channel CCTV1, British television channel ITV1, brands' official websites, Youku, and YouTube¹⁴. In the process of advert observation, the commercials uploaded on Youku and YouTube which met the case selection standards were also recorded. The case selection standard include: first, the advert should contain the signs of the research objects (femininity, woman and family, female body, sexuality, ethnic woman and woman's idealised masculinity); second, the advert is broadcasted between April 2014 and January 2018. The advertising cases used in my semiotic analysis are from these recorded advertisements.

6.6 Research Objects and Discussion Structure

By the approach of visual semiotics, this study examines images and cultural symbols of femininity, sexuality, gender relations, cultural diversity, and globalisation. Connecting advertising representations to periods of social changes which highlight the social norms and cultural ideologies in specific contexts have also been taken into considerations in this research. In order to make the research structure clearer, this

14 The reason for choosing Youku and YouTube as ad observation platforms is that these two video sites are very influential in China and the UK respectively (Wangyi, 2017; Sweney, 2010), and a large number of newly released TV ads are uploaded to these two platforms every year. This research not only observed the commercials broadcasted on TV channels but also observed the adverts uploaded on Youku and YouTube from 2015 to 2018.

study partly follows the research structure of Cortese (2015), on the basis of which the collected advert samples are sorted and organised. Cortese (2015) discussed women's advertising images from the following perspectives:

- * Portrayed women, women's life; and multiculturalism, which lay the background information for women's representations, as gender representations are intricately linked to the power structure and social structures;

- * Visual attraction, body display in advertising;

- * Lesbian advertising¹⁵;

- * Constructed bodies, gender representations and sexism in advertising;

- * Ethnic considerations. Currently race and ethnicity have become important selling points for advertising industry, which could be discussed from three perspectives: 'ethnic representations in advertising'; 'the proportional representation of minorities in advertising'; and consumer behaviour effects of advertising on ethnic representations (Cortese, 2015: 180).

Based on the framework of Cortese's analysis of female advertising images, this study makes several revises and builds up the structure of discussion in the light of the literature review. This research discusses, analyses and compares women's advertising representations from the following seven perspectives:

¹⁵ Cortese (2015) puts lesbian advertising in considerations, however, although the socio-cultural and political-legal situation for gay men and women living in Chinese society has experienced diachronic changes and improved in the recent decades, homosexual communities' civil rights are frequently denied in China. The most recent example is the injunction landed on the mainstream traditional media agencies' desks aiming to representations of gay people which are issued by the State Administration of Radio Film and Television in China. This issues makes the cross-cultural comparison of lesbian representations become difficult. Therefore, this study does not discuss this issue for now.

* The Advertising Constructed Femininity

As discussed in Chapter 3.1, advertising representation is a complex, ideological, social product. Therefore, the first part of the discussion chapters will give an overview of the relationship between women's advertising images and the consumer society, which will pave the way for the following discussions.

Advertising industry is known for advocating fashion and accelerating fashion product consumption in today's consumer society. According to Jhally (2014), the profit-chasing nature of modern advertising determines its function in creating time value and cultural meanings of the advertised products, and using the sign and symbols of advertising texts to accelerate the update and transmission of meanings and values. In the process of information transmission, consumption has been given various symbolic meanings (Jhally, 2014). The drifting designation of this visual rhetoric gives advertising output a strong plasticity, which has been taken by the advertisers to add various updated commercialised imagination into the representations of the advertised products (Smith, et.al, 2004: 167-168). This function of consumption rest largely in their ability of creating, carrying and spreading cultural meanings and illusions (Sahlins, 1976; McCracken, 1986 & 2005). The primary purpose of fashion product advertisement, as a forefront and typical genre of modern advertising in consumer culture, is to form a variety of illusions and make the mass audience feel 'not materialistic enough' (Williams, 1980: 185). These illusions have been encoded with diverse seductive or stimulating connotative symbols and myths, which will be transformed into the fashion product containing social values and format exchange values through the circulation of fashion symbols and information. Therefore, the first chapter of the discussion will look at how fashion advertisements construct femininity in our consumer societies.

Femininity is a fluent and complex concept. As reviewed in Chapter 5, the previous research find that the current advertising constructed femininity shows two seemingly

opposite types: the traditional home-related femininity which is constructed by patriarchy ideology, and the non-traditional/modern femininity which is co-shaped by feminist discourse, social norms, political factors, etc. This chapter will focus on the new modern femininity for two reasons: first, traditional femininity has been discussed and criticised by researchers while the modern femininity is a new but worthy researched topic as it could reflect the social changes in specific contexts; second, as the feminism has become a global and mainstream discourse, the non-traditional and new femininity will unavoidably dominate advertising representations of women within the globe, therefore, the cross-cultural comparison of the modern femininity could reflect different levels of development of feminism and modernity in different countries.

* Woman and Family

Family and motherhood are argued as two keywords related to the representation of femininity; they are also the critical arena in which the dilemmas and contradictions of contemporary femininity are constructed, navigated and struggled with. By contrasting the shaping of women in families, we can see changes of women's roles in families and alterations of the structure of modern family in different cultures.

* 'New Woman'

Cortese (2015) discusses gender in culture in the context of the United States, so she uses multiculturalism to describe the cultural context in which the ads are located. However, the setting of cross-cultural comparison of women's representations is more complicated.

Combining literature review on modernity and postmodernism, it can be seen that the comparative study of advertisements involves many cultural and political issues in the context of the globalisation systems, including Orientalism, cultural imperialism, and post-colonialism and so on, which could not be covered by the single term 'multiculturalism'. So I turned my attention to the discussion of globalisation and the

cultural hegemony.

This research achieves this purpose through discussing images of 'new woman' in advertising. The reason to discuss representations of the 'new' female in our contemporary globalised moment for a variety of reasons. Although evoking the notions of globalisation may spark discussions from different perspectives. Nevertheless, it suggests a broader and more complex context related to the young women's daily experiences and lifestyles. Adjustments regarding the empowerment, resilience, resistance, oppression, and manipulation of the young female generation when they are facing ideological, technological, social, cultural and economic structural transformations have provided background information for my discussion. Changes around the young female are noticeable in both the UK and China. In the British context, feminist projects such as 'Pink March' or 'Girl's Power' have taken hold in popular culture and declared the concomitant idea that women have all the opportunities and choices, which seems gradually banished the problematic discourse of gender into a distant and dullish past (Munford & Waters, 2014). In China, as previously modern Chinese thoughts on gender and woman are a complex agglomeration of ideas drawn from feminism, modernity, liberalism, socialism, and national cultural revivalism. The arguments of modern advert female images and identities can be fruitfully understood as the new chapter of gender concepts in British society and the rhetoric of China's project of globalisation and cultural resistance.

* Body Display

* Body, Nudity and Sexuality

The usage of feminine symbols of the female body is argued as the important tool of advertisers to please male gaze and promote products. As previously discussed, the objectification and self-objectification of the woman caused by representations of the female body in advertising the have been criticised by feminist media research for more than 80 years. Following the approach of Cortese (2015), this study disassembles the discussion of the body display and the constructed body into two

chapters. The first chapter discusses how female bodies are represented in commercials of women's products and analyses how traditional gender surveillance system and feminist ideology worked behind these representations of the body. Based on theories of gendered gaze, the second chapter discusses how women's body is shown as the sexual appeal in advertising, to inspect how the contexts shape different levels of audiences' tolerance to the sexualised representations of the female body.

* Image of ethnic/exotic woman

Why study the advertising representations of ethnic/foreign woman? According to Cortese (2016), first, the images of exotic femininity or ethnic women help to shape cultural attitudes about other culture or ethnic minorities. Second, advertisements are argued as reflections of contemporary global relations and social structure, they serve as a type of barometer of the willingness of 'we' to accept 'them', that is, ads are indicators of the global power structure and cultural flows. Third, the cautious evaluation of advertising representations of ethnic femininity 'fosters critical media literacy' (Cortese, 2016). Analytical reflection on representations of ethnic/foreign female empowers us to look at the configurations of gender and global power hierarchy, and significant social changes in the field of gender discourses.

We live in a time that doing the comparative studies of the gender discourses are not only possible but also necessary. The history of Western colonial domination and contemporary cultural imperialism have forced the China to be 'Westernised' to a certain extent, and the concept of gender in modern Chinese society is produced in such context. However, which should be noticed is that the global cultural interaction and communication have already become an indelible part of both the British and Chinese cultures and shaped the understandings of gender in both the British and Chinese societies today. In this context, it is necessary to discuss and compare the exotic women images in advertising in order to explore the impacts of globalisation and cross-cultural exchanges on the customary or new-born homogeneous and heterogeneous cultural phenomenon, and to outline the social-historical conditions

which govern the differences of the ethnic representations as well.

As far as the research objects, the British and Chinese advertisements contains women with other ethnicities are selected. I discuss the Asian women's images in the chosen British ad as well as the portrayed Caucasian women in the Chinese advert case. In addition, the re-creation of the subjectivity of these exotic women is another research point in my discussion, this kind of subjectivity surpasses the individual consciousness, and can be regarded as an effort of historical forces of multiculturalism and globalisation.

* Women's idealised male images

The discussion of women's advertising images cannot avoid talking about gender relations and gender display, as in many cases, the constructed meaning of gender identity in advertising is accomplished through strengthening or even creating a difference between masculinity and femininity (Jahly, 2014; Cortese, 2015). Therefore, in order to understand the social gender discourse which constructed advertising representations, to some extent, it is necessary to discuss how advertisements build the meanings of both femininity and masculinity in the consumer-focused society. The female character's idealised male image on the screen can be regarded as the representation of the commercialised hegemonic 'masculinity'. Examining the relationship between female characters and the images/settings of their idealised men in television advertisements from different cultural backgrounds, I explain how different cultures and social customs are reflected at different discursive levels. Additionally, the represented ideal masculinities in commercials require female's participation in the construction process of masculinity, thus how the commercials identify the female characters' positions helps us to understand the culture and the discourse of gender behind representations.

6.7 Case Selection

To select the sample of ads from all the ads I recorded was the most challenging thing since I tried to avoid as much subjective preference as possible, but at the same time, I wanted to choose the case rationally as an arbitrary selection could subconsciously lead to an invalid and worthless comparative study.

In the process of selecting advertising cases in this study, the possible impacts on the validity of the case selection and the accuracy of the analysis can be assumed as: the chosen advertising case is not general in the country or does not have a large number of audiences. In order to ensure the objectivity of case selection, thus ensuring the effectiveness of case comparison and analysis, that is, to ensure that selected advertisements can represent a particular type of female advertising representation in the country, this study will adopt the following collection and sampling methods: first, long-term observation of a large number of television commercials in China and the UK. Through the observation of television advertisements from 2014 to 2018, I will make sure the advertising cases selected in this study for comparative analysis are typical and representative in the UK and China respectively. Second, the case selection is based on the review of related research on women's representation in the UK and China respectively. The analysis of previous literature further helps to narrow down the scope of case selection. Finally, the commercials selected for comparison are from the same brand or for similar products in the UK and China to make the case comparison more practical and effective. By selecting advertisements of the same brand or the same type of products, the similarity of the representations of the female groups are ensured, thereby the similarities of the way and the purpose of advertising representations between these two countries is guaranteed, and the randomness of case selection could be avoided to the utmost. Also, some advertisements are too short and lack of value of analysis. Therefore, this study does not consider the advertisements fewer than ten seconds when selecting advertisement cases.

The detailed information of the selected 19 advert cases and the purposes of case selection are shown as follows:

* ASOS (the UK) and Vipshop (China)

In the first discussion chapter, which examines the advertising constructed femininity, I selected four television commercials from two fashion brands - British B2C brand ASOS and Chinese shopping website Vipshop.com, which both have significant influences in the local markets - for comparison.

As it has been concluded in Chapters 4 & 5, the growth and development of feminism in Britain have largely changed the public's understanding of 'being a woman'. The new ideas brought by post-feminism are opposed to the essentialism-based concept of gender, focusing on self-identity, subjectivity and cultural differences. Popular feminist rhetoric, on the other hand, was absorbed and employed by advertisers, and has quickly been applied as commodity feminist ideas to shape the image of new femininity in advertising. As a result, ASOS adverts *Support the Talent* and *More Reasons to Move* which emphasise subjectivity and weaken gender difference can be seen as the examples of the representations of non-traditional femininity in British advertising industry¹⁶.

In the case of China, the unique political and historical backgrounds and the particularity of Chinese advertising have led to a lag in the development of the Chinese feminist thoughts. At the same time, Chinese feminist remarks cannot be effectively reproduced into advertising representation as British feminism has done. For Chinese women, the most pressing task now is to fight for economic

¹⁶ The main broadcasted platform of the ASOS adverts is the Internet. However, as television gets more digital today, the Internet has become a platform for television and TV advertising (Wolk, 2018), and many brands are advertised on both television and digital platforms. Therefore, although this research mainly focuses on the traditional television adverts, the ASOS adverts are also considered as one of the research objects as there is no obvious difference between the chosen cases and other TV ads.

independence and gender equality. So, I chose two Vipshop.com ads, which showed us a group of young female consumers owning independent financial ability. These female consumers, who have significant consumption capability, are the spokespersons of the new femininity in China today.

* McDonald *Red Bean Pie a Taste of Home* (China); Happy-wife *Vegetable Fresh* (China); McDonald *Dad* (the UK); and McCain *We Are Family* (the UK).

Chapter 8 focuses on the advertising representations of women in families for two aims: to examine how women's roles in the families changed and how the structures of families changed. I achieve these aims through two panels of advert cases. The first panel discusses the representation of one woman in one family. The cases chosen for comparison are the Chinese McDonald advert *Red Bean Pie a Taste of Home* and the British McDonald advert *Dad*. The primary purpose of the first panel of case studies is to examine how women's roles in the families changed. The second panel examines the representations of women in various families by the cases Happy-wife *Vegetable Fresh* (China) and McCain *We Are Family* (the UK), aiming to explore how the family (which used to be considered as a significant element of femininity, see Chapter 5) changed in these two countries.

As it has been discussed in Chapter 5, the family is seen as more fluid and diverse in Britain, and British women now have the opportunities to live outside the heteronormative families. Therefore I chose the British McDonald adverts *Dad* and McCain ad *We Are Family* which show the diversity of family styles as typical cases to discuss the relationship between woman and family represented by the advertisement.

In comparison, the significant changes happened within the Chinese family are reflected as the gender roles and the financial rights of women in families. As introduced in Chapter 4, the most significant dilemma that Chinese women are now facing is to keep a balance between working in the society and taking care of their

families which put double pressure on most Chinese women. For some particular reasons, Chinese feminism has always been negotiating with nationalism, politics and Confucian gender norms, and the pursuit of gender equality and economic independence is still the top one task for Chinese women. The most obvious changes that have taken place in the typical Chinese family is the significantly improved economic power of the woman in the family. Therefore, McDonald's red bean commercial *Red Bean Pie - A Taste of Home*, which describes the different roles and social statuses of two female generations and the Happy-wife advert *Vegetable Fresh* which describes various families are suitable for the cross-cultural comparison of women in the families.

* Mercedes Benz (the UK) and Mercedes Benz (China)

Chapter 9 looks at the representations of new middle-class young women and examines how globalisation shapes images of modern women and the identities of the new women. This chapter selects the Chinese commercial and British commercial from one of the well-known global brand Benz for comparison. A series of new women portrayed in these two ads potentially suggested free-choice and independence as two important slogans of global feminist discourse that are arguably important to feminist projects in both the British and Chinese societies.

* Bodyform (the UK) and Sofy (China)

Chapter 10 discusses the different influences of feminism on women's body display in advertising. I select two commercials of British sanitary brand Bodyform and Chinese sanitary product Sofy respectively. The Bodyform advert *Red Hit* shows us the empowerment of women and girls which is in the same line with feminist ideas while the Sofy advert *Magic Rabbit* represents the traditional Chinese femininity with a strong colour of gender-based essentialism. Although these two commercials look very different from their themes, female characters, narratives or even colours, however, these two ads are highly representative in their respective countries. On the one hand, with the awareness of 'feminism sells' and the wide application of

commercial feminism in the Western countries, advertisers started to seek for a more feminist way to represent female characters, on the other hand, as it has been discussed in Chapter 4, Chinese feminism is not an independent and fully developed discourse at present. For Chinese women, compared with the objectification of female body, the greater challenge comes from fighting for economic rights and political rights. Gender stereotypes in Chinese society now are deep-rooted much more than in the British society. Besides, influenced by the particularity of Chinese advertising industry, the female representation in Chinese ads is relatively less 'feminist' than that of the Western countries. In summary, the commercials of Bodyform and Sofy are typical in the UK and China respectively, and the comparison of them could reflect the degrees of development of feminism in each country.

This chapter will answer the following two related questions: to what extent television advertising uses female body and femininity as its marketing strategy to please male gaze; to what extent feminism and post-feminism affect and change the shaping and display of female bodies in the UK and China.

* Durex (the UK) and Durex (China)

In Chapter 11, I extend the discussion from the fourth discussion chapter and investigate representations of sexuality and nudity which are related to the female body in advertising texts. This chapter chooses two Durex commercials from China and the UK respectively. The represented female body in this chapter is considered as a commercialised myth connoting various social norms, regulations, laws and rules, imaginations, and meanings attached to the symbol of female body. This chapter will discuss how the nudity of women and sexual content are differently represented in the British and Chinese adverts and why. Different representations of female bodies here not only reflect different social norms, rules, laws and regulations, but also indicate the different cultural meanings and functions of nudity of female body and the influence of cultural traditions on the representation of the female body in different contexts.

* Hungry House (the UK) and Smithfield (China)

In Chapter 12, I examine how the Asian woman is represented in the British advert and how the Caucasian/British woman is depicted in the Chinese commercial. This chapter chooses two food commercials to compare how exotic femininities are represented in the UK and the China respectively - the British hungry house commercial which contains a young Chinese female character and the Chinese Smithfield commercial acted by Caucasian characters.

* Just Eat (the UK), Mr. Clean (the UK), and Jinlongyu Cooking Oil (China)

Chapter 13 discusses the relationship between female advertising characters and advertising represented ideal masculinity in different countries, from the British advert Just Eat and the Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil advert. The two adverts both use the family as the backgrounds of their narratives, both contain interactions between male and female characters and show the imagination of women on the ideal male figures. This chapter not only shows what the idealised masculinity is in different countries or how the woman's idealised male character is constructed and represented in various cultural contexts but also illustrates how women take participate into the construction process of the ideal masculinity. During the case selection process, I found an interesting point when discussing the gendered symbol of hug in the Chinese advert. Therefore, I selected another advert case the British Mr. Clean commercial which also represents the hug between the female and male characters, to compare the cultural meanings of hug between the Chinese and British advertisements.

There are three things that need to be noted for the case selection: first, many of the cases I have chosen cover various aspects of femininity and female's identities; therefore, the content or narrative or the location of some ads may be repeated. For example, the case study commercials which depict women in family involve elements of feminism and considerations of globalisation at the same time. However, I will try

to focus on one or several points of view in each discussion chapter, and make sure each case comparison has its explicit research aims and arguments. Second, the dialogues, background sound and slogans in the Chinese ads are translated into English by myself. Last, more detailed information of the selected ads and the case selection criteria could be seen in the *Table 6.5* below:

Theme	Selected Case ¹⁷	Country	Length (s)	The Selection Criteria
Femininity	Vipshop 1	China	35	Contains woman or women; Fashion advert.
	Vipshop 2	China	32	
	ASOS 1	UK	64	
	ASOS 2	UK	41	
Woman and Family	McDonald	China	19	Contains woman or women; Shows the woman-family relations; Food Product advert;
	HappyWife	China	30	
	McDonald	UK	89	
	McCain	UK	32	
New Woman	Mercedes Benz	China	52	Contains the new woman or women; Mercedes advert;
	Mercedes Benz	UK	16	
Woman and Body 1	Sofy	China	15	Shows women's body; Napkin advert;
	Bodyform	UK	61	
Woman and Body 2	Durex	China	20	Shows women's body; Contains gender interactions; Durex advert;
	Durex	UK	21	
Exotic	Smithfield	China	15	Contains white woman in the

¹⁷ In the chosen cases, the first broadcasted years of the Happy-wife, Sofy and Durex adverts cannot be confirmed, but these cases still could be found on television and were displayed on these brands' official websites as the case adverts in the data collection year, which shows that these adverts are qualified for comparison.

Femininity	Hungry House	UK	16	Chinese advert; contains East Asian woman in the British advert; Food product advert.
Woman's	Just Eat	UK	30	Contains woman's idealised man; Food or food service advert.
Idealised	Mr. Clean	UK	31	
Masculinity	Jinlongyu	China	60	

Table 6.5 Selected advert cases (2015-2018)

6.8 Summary

In summary, this research employs the qualitative research method based on the mythological mode to compare and analyse the Chinese and British advertising representations with reference to the research framework of female advertising image in Cortese (2015). This research selected 19 advert cases for comparison. The main research method of this study is semiotics. To adopt the method of semiotics means that this study takes the construction of female advertising character in advertising texts as a symbolic system to study the cultural and ideological meanings behind the representations. This study uses semiotics to compare and analyse the symbol of women in advertising representations between the UK and China, and it also looks at the following perspectives including the function of women in adverting narrative lines, nonverbal lessons or body images of the female and male advertising characters, relevant composition of , the meaningful verbal or written part of a message such as slogans and dialogues in the chosen television ads.

This chapter not only discusses the reasons for choosing semiotics as the methodology, but also identifies an analytical framework for the cross-cultural comparison of female representations. In addition, this chapter details the data collection methods and results. In this research, 10 British advertisements and 9 Chinese advertisements were selected. The discussions of women's representations include the following

angles: the advertising constructed femininity, women and families in advertising, new women, the female body display, nudity and sex, the images of ethnic/exotic women, and women's idealised male images. The next seven chapters will make detailed analysis and comparison of these advert cases.

Chapter 7 the Constructed Femininity in the Consumer Culture: Women in Fashion Brand Advertisements

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine and compare advertising representations of modern femininities between the UK and China, in order to make an overall introduction of how women in different cultural contexts are differently represented in the consumer society. This chapter selects four television commercials for case studies from two fashion brands: British fashion brand ASOS and Chinese fashion brand Vipshop, which both have significant influences in the local markets. As previously introduced, ads of these two brands represent a common, taken-for-granted understanding of 'what is the modern women and femininity be like' in the UK and China respectively.

This chapter interprets the similarities and differences between the chosen British and Chinese commercials from the following perspectives: social and cultural traditions, development levels of feminism, advertising industries, and some specific social phenomena. In this chapter, I focus specifically on how advertisers adopt an approach of feminist ideas to their advertising strategies and different approaches of reflecting 'women's power' in the British and Chinese ads.

7.2 Case Analysis

In this chapter, two Vipshop commercials and two ASOS ads are analysed from the perspectives of the advertising narratives and ways of the shaping of female images and femininity.

7.2.1 Case 1 Chinese Vipshop Commercial A

Established in 2008, the primary business of Vipshop is the sale of commodity-based

discount brands, covering clothing, shoes, beauty, home, and so on. In 2013, Vipshop became the highest-valued e-commerce company in China, with a broad customer base and considerable influence over China's market (Shao, 2013). The chosen Vipshop advertisement broadcasted in 2016 consists of the following scenes: a young woman is lying in bed and doing online shopping (*Figure 7-1*); she tries her new dress and makes a purchase through Vipshop again (*Figure 7-2*); the woman puts on her new clothes and goes out with her female friends (*Figure 7-3*); a man buys a bag on Vipshop and gifts it to the woman, who happily tries the new handbag, and continues to visit Vipshop with her male partner (*Figure 7-4*); a group of women are online shopping in the office together (*Figure 7-5*).

These series of scenes covers all perspectives of a female consumer's daily life - waking up in the morning, lying in bed, and shopping using laptop - and thus presents the beginning of the day for the young woman. The next scene emphasises the woman's body when she is trying the new dress, and places the woman in the position of being gazed at. Then, the woman goes outside with friends wearing her new clothes, which seems to imply that one of the aims of her purchasing is to acquire recognition from other women to get gratification and a sense of achievement.

In the family scene, the love of the man for the woman is expressed in the form of material and spiritual supports. This kind of support, on the one hand, is represented through the behaviour of consumption, as the man bought a new handbag for the woman; on the other hand, it is represented through technical guidance: the woman needed the man's suggestions and advice when she was doing the online shopping. Thus, the female character has been trapped in a role needed to be supported and supervised by the male character. Additionally, looking from the gender display (man sits in the middle while woman stands beside him) and the woman's body language (showing the husband her dress), the Vipshop advert has further strengthened the patriarchy gender roles. As Goffman (1979) points out, advertisers use the positions and the sizes of men and women as strategies to express the essential relationship

between genders, conveying the ideas such as woman needs the advice and protections from the man. In a sense, the intention of the Vipshop advert is consistent with the heterosexual patriarchy society, which could also be seen in the second Vipshop case advert.

The female Vipshop advertising characters are not portrayed as positive images in the workplace neither. In the next scene, several female figures gather around a computer screen discussing consumption. We can suppose that these women are in white-collar jobs and are doing shopping during working hours, judging from the location, the surrounding and their dressings. At this moment, the self-identification of these women does not come from their occupations and other social positions, but from the consistency of assimilation of the female characters accomplished through consumption.

This advertisement also selectively represents the main purposes of the female characters' consuming behaviours, including: deriving pleasure from consumption; accessing recognition and popularity among female friends; certifying love through the male partner's support. At the end of this advertisement, subtitles show the message 'Vipshop, 4pm every day', which implies that consumer behaviours are unavoidable and necessary in a female consumer's daily life. At this point, Vipshop has become a gendered symbol which is trying to diversify and differentiate the female audience (which is encouraged to take this symbol as one of the essential elements for the confirmation of their social identities) and the male audience (represented by the male character in this advertisement as playing the role of intellect and authority).

It is worth noting that the male character does not directly participate in consumption activities in this commercial. But according to the commodity classification and the business orientation of Vipshop, this brand does not only target at female consumers but sells a large number of products designed for men. In the chosen commercial case,

however, the male character does not appear as a shopper but is constructed as a guiding role providing authoritative suggestions, gazing at the female character and supporting her material requirements, which can be seen from the gender settings in the case study advertisement.

As shown in *Figure 7-4*, it is not difficult to determine that this commercial represents two kinds of gender position settings. In the first role, the man is sitting on the sofa while the woman is standing by and showing her new handbag to him. In the second setting, the woman points out some products that she is interested in, and asks for pieces of advice from the man. Through these two kinds of role settings, the traditional gender relationship is once again represented on the screen, in which the voice is controlled by the male character. If the stereotyped representation of the female character is not evident enough in commercial A, commercial B further reinforces the stereotype of patriarchy gender settings on the television screen.



Figure 7-1 Vipshop advert A scene 1



Figure 7-2 Vipshop advert A scene 2



Figure 7-3 Vipshop advert A scene3



Figure 7-4 Vipshop advert A scene 4



Figure 7-5 Vipshop advert A scene 5

7.2.2 Case 2 Chinese Vipshop Commercial B: the Emphasis of Gender Difference as the Marketing Tool

The second Vipshop commercial tells a story about conflict between a couple by emphasising significant differences between men and women. The beginning of this commercial showed a scene of a couple walking on the street (*Figure 7-6*). The male character was admiring the painting while the female character was attracted to several shopping stores, and quickly went inside one store (*Figure 7-7*). In this scene,

the male was represented as being more interested in spiritual aspects such as art and cultural products, while the female was portrayed as subservient to consumption. In the next scene, the man lifted several shopping bags, held an ice cream, and looked around in anxiety (*Figures 7-8 & 7-9*). The shopping bag and ice cream appeared here as feminine symbols, which strengthens the stereotyping view that connects women with shopping and dessert. Moreover, the male character is also oppressed by the setting of the pattern of genders here.

In the next scene, the female character appeared and told the male character that she finally bought the handbag that her aunt wanted. The male character showed a confused facial expression, complaining: 'are we travelling or doing shopping?' (*Figure 7-10*). The female character read her mobile phone messages: 'I still have to buy something for neighbours, friends, boss, colleagues, ex-boyfriends [...]' (*Figure 7-11*). These items were shown on the screen in the form of pink word boxes, pointing directly to the male character and pressed him back into the corner of the television screen. It is important to note here that pink is commonly believed to be a feminine colour. This series of interaction between the female and male characters connotes that the female character pays more attention to the contextual interpersonal relationship, while the male character is rational and has clear purposes. The male character here played a function of conflict solving, putting forward an appropriate solution: 'dear wife, if you want to buy overseas products, please use Vipshop!' He clicked on the phone and took a handbag out of it (*Figure 7-12*). The female then put the handbag on her face with enchantment and satisfaction, and the handbag here can be regarded as a symbol of the female character's dependence and satisfaction (*Figure 7-13*). Here, Vipshop has been constructed as a symbol of authority and professionalism in order to distinguish genders. The male role provides guidance, while the function of the female role is to enjoy the satisfaction brought about by the symbol manipulated by the male role. This commercial tells the audience a complete story. Using the narrative structure in Dijk (1975: 287-290), the story can be analysed as follows:

- * Abstract: disagreement erupted during a heterosexual couple's journey abroad; the male character wanted to enjoy the travel while the female character wanted to go shopping.
- * Location: tourist resort
- * Unexpected context: ignoring the male character, the female role sought to buy things alone.
- * Complication: the male character was getting impatient and felt the travel plan was being disrupted.
- * Resolution: the male character suggested using Vipshop, taking a handbag out from the cell phone and giving it to the female figure.
- * Evaluation: the idea that the female was intoxicated with the satisfaction brought about by Vipshop has fully affirmed the wise decision of the male.
- * Conclusion: the woman loves shopping; the man provides mental and material supports to the woman's consumption in the gender relationship which is conducive to family harmony and stability.



Figure 7-6 Vipshop advert B scene1



Figure 7-7 Vipshop advert B scene2



Figure 7-8 Vipshop advert B scene3



Figure 7-9 Vipshop advert B scene 4



Figure 7-10 Vipshop advert B scene5



Figure 7-11 Vipshop advert B scene 6



Figure 7- 12 Vipshop advert B scene 7



Figure 7- 13 Vipshop advert B scene 8

7.2.3 Case 3 British ASOS Commercial A *Supports Talent: Meet the Amazing Creatives*

The second case study panel comes from the advertisements of British brand ASOS, which became one of the top ten most visited English e-commerce sites in 2016 (May, 2016). In the ASOS commercial, all of the characters have their names, specific

identity information (including cultural backgrounds, languages, genders and locations), and individual ideas and faiths. The roles in this commercial include photographer, director, chef, artist, poet, etc. (*Figures 7-14 & 7-15*). There is Diane Sagnier, who has always wanted to direct her own music video, and artist and photographer Kim Kanert, who will be auctioning off portraits to fundraise and raise awareness for a bone marrow charity which she became involved with after becoming a genetic match for a leukaemia patient. They all have highly inspiring stories, and their creative journeys have been followed within the ASOS Supports Talent team.

The first character in this advertisement believes that '2015 was a hyper-visible year for the Trans community. I thought this was a great opportunity to use my skill set to say something that means something'. The second character says: 'I want to get rid of the negative social connotations that come along with ADHD, or at least, kind of highlight the positive attributes: there's a lot of beauty in ADHD.' The third character tells the camera that 'my passion project is dedicated to the topic of leukaemia. My biggest hope is that more people will register to donate and tell others.' The next character said 'My passion project is to shoot a music video in Roswell about aliens that could possibly fall from the sky'. The fifth character says: 'My passion project is a new album, and concert to go with it, a free concert.' Finally, the last character says 'The passion project that I'm doing with ASOS is to find the balance between nature and the city. To just believe in your ideas alone, I'm just so thankful, because you know, it is 2016, but it's still not that easy for everyone to be whom they are.'

Although there were four female characters appeared in this advertisement, including Elizabeth working as a photographer and creative director; Kim Kanert, living in German, and shoots analogue photographs; Diane Sagnier who speaks French and is a photographer and director; and Hollie McNish, working as a poet, however, it cannot precisely determine the 'gender' of the roles judging from the advertising texts and the roles' social occupations. Seen from the official page of ASOS on YouTube (*Figure 7-14*), it is not difficult to find out that this series of advertisements have similar

topics namely 'ASOS Supports Talent: meet the amazing creatives', from the title it can be seen that the first purpose of this project is to 'support'. Through representing the specific characters and their own stories, British ASOS advertisements are trying to de-gender, anti-label, and promote personality and differences among individuals with particular emphasis on the importance of subjectivity and self-consciousness.



Figure 7- 14 Elizabeth De La Piedra in ASOS advert A

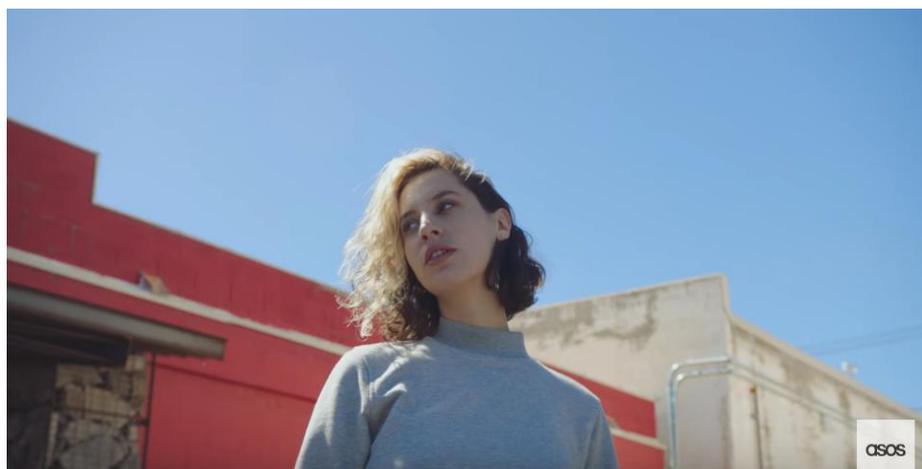


Figure 7- 15 Diane Sagnier in ASOS advert A

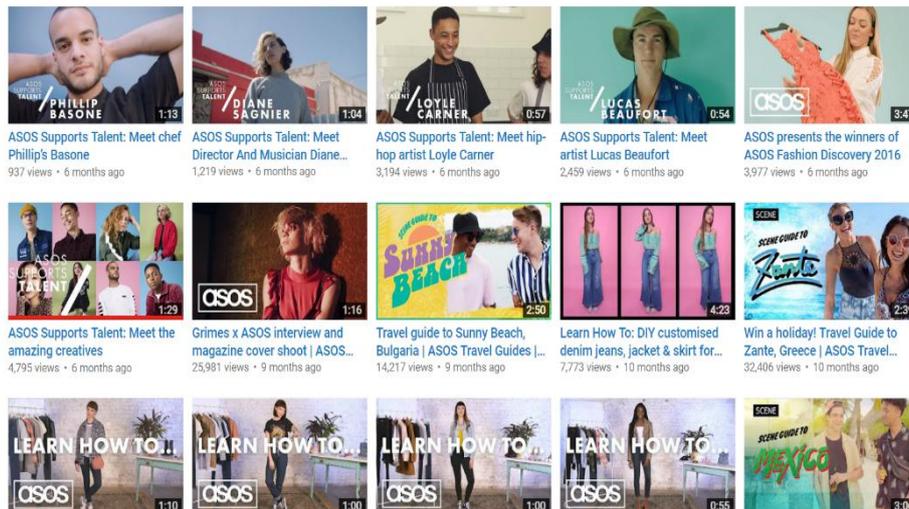


Figure 7- 16 ASOS official page on YouTube

7.2.4 Case 4 British ASOS Commercial B *More Reasons to Move*

If we argue that the ASOS advertisement *Support Talent* does not pay adequate attention to subjectivity and fluidity of femininity in British society, the shaping of gender roles in 'More Reasons to Move' fills this vacancy. This advert fully embodies the critiques of postmodernism regarding the foundationalism and essentialism of traditional gender concepts, as well as challenging the gender dualism and gender inequality highlighted by feminism.

There are several characters in this ASOS advertisement, of which seven are female. The most striking feature of this advertisement in shaping the female images is that all these seven female images have more or less subverted the so-called 'female beauty' stereotype frequently used in traditional advertisements, and show a variety of femininities, races and body shapes. The advert starts with a close-up of a female boxer with short hair, an Asian face and a confident expression (see *Figure 7-17*). It is noteworthy that this female character is not a traditional slim female advertising model, but has body figure that may be rated as 'large size' by prevailing social norms regarding the female body. The representation of the female boxer, on the one hand, has demonstrated the power of women; on the one hand, it has broken the convention

of using 'perfect' femininity in advertising, which can be seen as another victory for feminism.

In the next scene, the advert used a series of signs that embody traditional femininity, to be jointly interpreted by both male and female models. Looking from the body language - posture, look, body in motion, this advert show us: the female character bent over to show the flexibility of her limbs, accompanied by a background voice saying 'for the rush'; this is followed by a male character dancing with the background voice saying 'to unwind'. The advert also represents male and female models showing masculinity, practising pull-ups with the strapline 'for the hang time'. In the next three scenes, three female characters show the power of women. First, the female boxer appeared again, saying 'the haters' while practising boxing. Second, a group of male basketball players argue 'because I'm the man' when a female basketball player appears to rebut 'really?' and dunk at the same time. Next, a female black yoga practitioner without her right leg says 'because they said I could not.' The advert places emphasis on subjectivity and self-awareness, as expressed by a pair of female characters, one of whom said to the other that 'I'm here for her.' A male runner followed this with 'for me.' A man doing flat support interjects 'I'm just here for likes' and is asked 'why?' by a female trainer; a dancing black male embodying signs of traditional femininity says 'because I look this good.' The final background appears: 'Everyone has a reason, find yours.'

As we can see, the female models here deal with multiple races, colours, body sizes and even sexual orientations. There is a strong female boxer (*Figure 7-17*); female trainers (*Figure 7-18*); a female basketball player who challenged the males (*Figure 7-19*); female characters with close relationships (*Figure 7-20*); a disabled female yoga trainer (*Figure 7-21*);. The gender roles reproduced in the advertisement also break the traditional dichotomy of gender and embody a number of topics that have so far attracted considerable attention in Western societies, including the mobility of masculinity/femininity, the nature of gender, the diversity of races and

colours, and the variety of body types and sizes.



Figure 7- 17 Female boxer in ASOS advert B



Figure 7- 18 Female trainers in ASOS advert B



Figure 7-19 Female basketball player in ASOS advert B



Figure 7-20 Female characters with close relationship in ASOS advert B



Figure 7-21 Disabled yoga trainer in ASOS advert B

7.3 Comparison of the Advertising Constructed Femininity and Women

By contrasting the construction of female characters and the usage of contemporary hegemonic femininity in Chinese and British fashion brand advertisements, we can find the following similarities existed in the advertising constructed femininity and the female images between these two countries:

7.3.1 Similarities: Commercialised Femininity and Myths of Gender

The first similarity between the two is the performativity nature of female characters and the commercialised femininity in the chosen advert cases, attributing to the great changes that the modern consumerism has brought to our lifestyles, our consumption concept, and the ways of cognising and implementing our identities.

Although the female characters in the Vipshop and ASOS adverts vary in their appearances, ethnicities, body figures etc., these branding advertisements were conveying an idea that the consumption of fashion should be treated as a positive lifestyle through the intentional colouring and packaging of the direct or metaphorical description of the ubiquitous consumer behaviours rooted in everyday life of the female characters. Under the logic of consumer society, the pursuit of fashion and fashion products of these advertising characters can be seen as a performative cultural phenomenon and as an extension of the gender and identity performativity in the commercialism discourse.

The reason for seeing the advertising representations of female characters and femininity as a kind of commercialised performance is because numerous feminist media studies have pointed out that the encoding processes of the gendered advertising characters and femininity often contains hints of essentialist ideas of gender, reflecting advertising's functions in the 'discipline and punishment' of the construction of the discourse of gender; it is still not easy to detect these hints hiding

behind pictures and videos as these representations generally seem very 'natural' and 'normal' to us (Carter & Steiner, 2004:2). This kind of 'natural' or 'normal' representation of gender and femininity is a disguised method of gender discrimination discourse. Determined by the profit-driven nature of advertising, the ultimate aim of creating these representations of femininity is to promote products and encourage consumption.

In this sense, the representations of female characters and the femininity in the chosen cases are not representing femininity in real life, but, as the commercialised symbols in the television advertising coding system, are constructing the femininity in a very persuasive and stereotypical way. These gendered feminine codes play an important role in the propagation effect of fashion product advertisements, so they have been frequently reshaped and represented, which elicits the second similarity of the constructed female image and femininity between British ASOS and Chinese Vipshop commercials: the purpose of using femininity and female symbols in advertising.

Second, as we can see from the chosen cases, both brands encoded an amount of female images in their advertisements, indicating that the female and femininity are two popular coding symbols to which advertisers attach extreme importance. Advertising can be seen as a mass communication genre with the function of shaping gender concepts and disseminating gender related ideas. A successful advertisement could expose and effect the discursive imagination of a certain gendered group and the gender concepts in a specific cultural context. The advertising representations often connect certain cultural and ideological values or political purposes with the objects of gender, to create a series of myths which are consist of a large amount of reshaped and commercialised gender symbols. In this sense, the represented femininity and female character can be regarded as significant parts of the gender myths created by these fashion product advertisements.

Additionally, the chosen British and Chinese advert cases both contain a series of

feminine symbols and female characters. This is partly because women are becoming the main target audiences of the fashion products. The other reason is to provide an attractive imagination target (Van Zoonen, 1996: 85-88) and a gazing object for the audience through the advertising construction of 'what women and femininity should be like' in specific cultural contexts.

7.3.2 Differences

The differences in the women's representations between the ads of Vipshop and ASOS lie in the following perspectives:

7.3.2.1 Different Ways of Shaping Female Images

The first significant difference between women's representations in the Vipshop and ASOS adverts is their different ways of shaping female visual imagery: the Vipshop commercials focus on showing and strengthening the connection between woman and femininity, while the ASOS commercials emphasise the diversities of gender roles and gender identities.

To be more specific, the female characters in Vipshop advertisements, despite having considerable economic purchasing ability, are still limited within the traditional framework of the binary and stereotyped understandings of gender differences and woman-femininity relations. The women in the Vipshop ads are constructed as beautiful, young, keen on consumption, and overly care about their beauty and appearances. The representations of female characters in Vipshop adverts not only lack positive guidance in resisting the standardised female beauty constructed by patriarchy gender discourse, but also could cause social bias of perceiving and understanding modern femininity. This kind of representations of female and femininity on the one hand, reflects that the impact of the ubiquitous consumerism on

Chinese women is enormous. On the other hand, it shows that the concepts of de-gendering and resisting to the body norms functioned on women which are advocated by modern feminism have not been widely accepted in the modern Chinese society. This kind of representation can be seen as a manifestation of the incomplete development of Chinese feminism today. Compared to the beautiful and slim female characters in Vipshop commercials, ASOS commercials present a series of characters with various colours and body figures that reflect the diversity of subjects and gender identities as well as a more culturally diverse society.

It is worth noting that the representations female characters in the Vipshop ads reflect one of the recent vast changes in women's representation in Chinese society. In the past, most female advertising characters in Chinese advertising market were constructed as 'frugal, obedient and virtuous' (Ma, 2009: 32). The role function of the female characters is mainly to show her contribution to the family or provide an object of erotic gaze to meet the consumer's needs (Ma, 2009). The selected Vipshop advertisements show that the mainstream image of the woman has gradually changed from the traditional obedient or sexy role types to a new consumerism-driven type. This emerging female group has gradually occupied an important position in Chinese society today, which will be further discussed in Chapter 12.

This change of woman's representation is born out of the changes of economic structure and consumption view in modern China which are brought by the increasing economic power of Chinese women. However, compared with the rapid development of the economic ability of woman, the feminist ideas have not been fully developed accordingly and the gaps between women and men are still obvious in Chinese society. According to *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*, the comprehensive indicators of Chinese women's social status and political empowerment rank the 100th out of the 144 countries in the world. The ranking of women's social status is seriously asymmetrical with China's economic growth rankings. Chinese women are often required to exist as ornaments of the family and for the lives of others rather than an

independent and integral individuals (Su, 2005). As the object with ornamental function, women need to pay extra attention and monetary support on the production, maintenance and modification of the customised beauty. Under the consumerist logic consumption becomes the most convenient approach to 'become beautiful' while the word 'beautiful' is closely related to love and self-realisation in the patriarchy gender discourse.

Therefore, there is no essential difference between the images of women in the Vipshop adverts and the traditional women's role. The female characters in the case adverts are depicted as another group of depersonalised people, who are passive and silent, hiding behind the signboard of consumption.

It can be seen that the Vipshop advertisements keeps inducing the female characters to pay extra attentions to the consumption and the beautiful appearance brought by consumption. The case adverts patiently explains the necessity and the convenience of purchasing fashion products. Through the advertising's narrative line, slogans, and representations of women and gender relations, the chosen cases build the strong links between female, femininity and consumption, and keep persuading women to make the consumption behaviour an indicator of 'being a woman' and a wide-accepted lifestyle for women.

According to the multi-years' observation of advertising representations in this study, this kind of similar advertising cases that incorporates consumer desire into the modern femininity is not uncommon in Chinese advertising industry, and as a result, femininity has become a homogenous commercialised symbol which holds women as inborn with the desire for consumption of clothes and makeup products. These advertisements create women's religious belief in consumption through the game of the 'discipline and punishment' of women's body and appearance, and greatly increase the difficulty of dissolving the gender dichotomy discourse in China.

In contrast, the women in ASOS commercials reflect post-feminist discourse and an emphasis on subjectivity and individualism. As discussed in Chapter 3, feminism and post-feminism hold that different women belong to different social classes, ethnicities, nationalities, abilities, sexual orientations, and ages, and there is not a single type or simple label that can represent every woman. The concepts of woman and gender identity are socially constructed by the power system of gender and sexuality. Each concept of gender has its particular cultural meanings in different contexts. The above arguments have been incorporated into the representations of advertising roles in ASOS ads, which embody the advertisers' keen awareness of the diversity of gender-identities as well as the wide acceptance of the post-feminist gender ideology in British society

7.3.2.2 Different Ways of Constructing and Using Femininity

The second significant difference between Chinese Vipshop advertisements and British ASOS advertisements lies in their construction and usage of femininity: the Vipshop advertisements have shaped and highlighted 'consumption behaviour' and 'dependence' as important indicators of femininity. Through creating consumption-oriented femininity and reinforcing gender differences, these adverts achieved the aim of stimulating consumption. ASOS advertisements, on the other hand, represented the ideas of female empowerment and gender diversity - although we should admit that the purpose of advertising is to sell - but it is achieved through binding feminist values and other 'politically correct' social concepts with its advertising representations in order to resonate with the mass audience. Therefore, to a certain extent, the represented femininity in ASOS ads has played the role of broadcasting feminist ideas by describing the diversity of femininities.

To be more specific, the Vipshop adverts creates the consumption-oriented femininity and constructs the consumption behaviour as a significant component of femininity

which further transfers consumerism into a gendered symbol and makes the idea that 'women love buying' a collective unconscious about femininity. The mass audiences (not only women but also men) will be guided by this psychological hint created by advertising representations, thus contributing to the development of consumer society and capitalism. To a certain extent, this also encourages advertisers to make unlimited exploitation of femininity to pursue economic benefits, resulting in the commercialisation and materilisation of femininity and woman.

In the atmosphere of consumption engendered by Vipshop advertisements, the desires of the female character for beauty and fashion made her be inevitably constructed by the consumer society and capitalist ideology. Under the guidance of consumption desire, woman is encouraged to positively pursue the materialisation of the body and the regulation of herself, such as try to change her appearance into the image which is represented in the fashion product adverts. At the same time, consumption behaviour, as the tool of performing femininity, reveals the artificial nature of being a woman. As Butler (1993) illustrates, what we mean by woman or the female body is the result of a gender division that relies on the power to force the repetition of writing, citing and acting the discourses of woman and femininity. In the Vipshop ads, the female characters made themselves a gendered group through the repetitive performance of buying clothes and handbags, which further imprisoned herself in the narrow position of the secondary sex, and made herself become the gazed Other in the power structure of gender discourse.

In contrast, in the ASOS ads, the binary gender pattern of femininity - female / masculinity - male has to some extent been broken down. The case study advertisements fully embodied a post-feminist attitude to the ideology of gender discourse, reflecting the challenge and subversion of the traditional binary male-masculinity/female-femininity gender model. As discussed in Chapter 3, post

feminism criticises the essentialist gender concepts¹⁸ and advocates that women's self-recognition of gender identity is imposed by culture and society. For post-feminism, the liberation of women (and all genders) requires the abolition of gender categories and the deconstruction of the binary relation between woman - femininity and man - masculinity (see Chapter 3). In this sense, the usage of femininity in ASOS ads *Support Talent*, and *More Reasons to Move* can be regarded as a valid post-feminist and post-modern practice.

7.3.2.3 Different Attitudes to the Femininity-Woman Relations

Following the above discussion, the third difference in the constructed femininity between the British ASOS and Chinese Vipshop advertisements is related to their different approaches to the construction of gender settings. In the ASOS advertisements, as discussed, the represented femininity or masculinity of the advertising characters is not only tagged by their gender identities. Gender is no longer an apparent label for distinguishing the expressions of femininity and masculinity in the ASOS adverts. At the same time, the ASOS adverts reproduced the recognition and acceptance process of the self and placed emphasis on individual value and subjectivity, as evidenced in slogans of 'because I look this good' and 'everyone has a reason' in the *More Reasons to Move*. In contrast, the Vipshop advertisements attempted to summarise certain behavioural patterns of each gender through the expression of different consumption attitudes between women and men, and limited femininity within the pursuit action of fashion and hedonism. The advertising objectives of the Vipshop advertisements are accomplished through strengthening the differences between the manipulated performances of the male and female characters when facing consumption.

From the representations of female characters in the Vipshop advertisements, we can

¹⁸ which holds that the gender of the subject is determined since the birth and will not change (see Chapter 3).

see that the Chinese case adverts spare no effort to develop the femininity of woman into an attractive symbol to attract consumers. In the Vipshop advertisements, the advertising characters are divided into two significantly different gendered groups - man and woman. As the essential element of Vipshop advertisements, the woman-man interaction not only activates the advertising content from the internal mechanism, but also supports the basic narrative model of the adverts, showing the specific development level of advertising campaign and the mainstream ideas of femininity and gender roles in Chinese context.

7.4 Discussion and Analysis of the Representation of Femininity between Chinese and British commercials

According to Roland Barthes, advertising is arguably the best indicator of contemporary popular culture (Barthes, 1972). The advertisement texts generally cater to the public's awareness and use the dominant ideology to construct representations of fashion and woman. Therefore, the similarities and differences of representations of femininity between the British ASOS and Chinese Vipshop commercials depend heavily on the factors of society, culture, politics, and so on. The reasons for these differences and similarities include:

7.4.1 Traditions and Social Values

The ASOS advertisement's attention to self-identities and the diversity of the subjectivity of the advertising characters to some extent has reflected the emphasis on the individual and personal values in British society. As Young (2010) states, the 'individual' is a significant base of the Western modern of civilisation, as the freedom of both political democracy and the capitalist market economy relies heavily on the existence of individual liberty and civil rights. Although the patriarchal discourse systems have long-termly attempts to classify women as one gender category for the

discipline and management purposes, the tradition of valuing individual experience has benefited the Western women's liberation movements to a certain extent, thus making the mass audience more focuses on the diversity of genders and identities. Therefore, the detailed description of the characteristics of various characters in ASOS adverts have a profound social, cultural, and historical background in British society.

Compared to the ASOS advertisements, the Vipshop advert was more concentrated on highlighting the purchase behaviour of the advertising characters. The Vipshop advertisements are trying to blur women into a whole homogeneous consumer group by intentionally distinguishing woman and man through their different consumption attitudes. Consumption inevitably have become the common fate of the whole female group.

Grouping people into specific social groups and weakening the presence of the individual under collectivist value have a long national tradition in China, which were formed during the development of Chinese nationalism over thousands of years (Lin, 2013). The word 'individual' generally has a derogatory sense when it comes down to the interests of the group, the nation and the masses in Chinese traditional values (Hsu, 1981; Zhang, et al. 1996; Lin, 2013). Although, as previously introduced in Chapter 3, cultures are showing a trend of homogeneity under the unavoidable influence of the global system of Orientalist and post-colonialist discourses. Hegemonic cultural ideas and values that have been disseminated to the world through mass communication tools and techniques. Modern Western concepts have gradually been accepted by more Chinese in the process of learning the Western economic and social systems. However, as Lin (2013) observes, the unique and ingrained cultural traditions in China still play a significant role in manipulating mainstream social values in many perspectives, resulting in the conflicts and contradictions existed in the Chinese national identity, showing as two distinct-different but often blended attitudes - learning from and resisting towards the West.

One of the conflicts shows as the underlying understanding of 'people' in modern Chinese contexts. Traditional Confucianism emphasises the value of collectives and groups which determines that Chinese behaviour pattern tends to be socially and collectively orientated (Michailova & Hutchings, 2006). On this basis, the concept of 'people' in Chinese culture have been constructed on a divine ideological level of emphasising 'integrity, goodness, and beauty' ('真善美') rather than the individualised 'her' or 'him' (Tang, 2012). Under the guidance of Chinese collective cultural tradition, gender is constructed as a series of political symbols, and the existence of the individual could be weakened within the collective gendered symbol system, which to some extent could hinder the development of post-feminist ideas such as the advocacy of diverse subjectivities and gender identities in China.

In contrast, Steele & Lynch (2012) find that the ideas which emphasise the importance of individual value, the pursuit of the personal rights, and individual independence have been widely accepted by the Chinese today. Along with other political factors, such as the one-child policy and booming development of market economy (Hofstede, 1980), the self-consciousness of the new generation in China has developed to an unprecedented state (Wang, 2007), and the individualism may replace collectivism as the new mainstream value orientation in China (Steele & Lynch, 2012). However, it cannot deny that the collectivist tradition still plays significant role in shaping the perception of gender and gender identity, which also has impacted the representation of the gendered groups in the case study adverts.

7.4.2 Development Levels of Feminism

Another significant factor that led to the different shaping and usages of femininity in the chosen British and Chinese commercials can be attributed to the varying the development degrees of feminism in the UK and China respectively. It is commonly

believed that culture has played an important role in constructing the symbols and symbol system in advertisements, directing the narrative structure and the character settings. Therefore, the development levels of feminism in different countries also could affect the representations of women and femininity in advertisements as the modern cultural interpretation of gender has a close relationship with feminism.

In British society, due to the long-time fight of political feminist movements and the penetration of gender constructivism theories, the inopportune (from feminist perspectives, including the guiding role, authoritative role and so on) patricentric role setting has gradually withdrawn from the mainstream representations. Advertisers impose the new mainstream gender concepts to the public to get rich rewards. The weakening of gender boundary and the deconstruction of the special connection between woman and femininity in the ASOS adverts is the visual expression of the changes of the recognition of gender identity brought by feminism as well as a continuing confirmation to the development of the post-feminist concept of femininity in the consumer society. Therefore, in the British case study adverts, we can see that gender is no longer a necessary tag for the advertising characters. This 'de-gendering' (which means to rid of unnecessary reference to a specific sex or of prejudice toward gender) phenomenon can be understood as a positive responding to post-modern feminist ideas which aims to restore the 'true' feature of individuation and individual freedom, thereby providing more choices for subjects.

The British advert cases to a large extent have reproduced the ideas of post-feminism: in the chosen cases each advertising character is allowed to be tagged by multiple options but not completely trapped by the gender identities, appearances, body figures, or ethnicities. Along the logic of post-feminism, the distinction of woman and man may become less critical in the future, and the subject will not be trapped by the limited classifications of our gender identity (see Chapter 3), which is consistent with the diversified trend of multiple genders and identities represented in the British advert cases

In the Chinese case adverts, the performed gendered symbols - the advertising constructed femininity, on the one hand, re-shapes the characteristics of consumer behaviour and builds the connection between women and consumption. It repeatedly instructs the female audience that as a woman, you should love your life, maintain the charm of being a woman, and pay attention to your body and appearance management (which are all accomplished through consumption) in order to conform to the requirements of hegemonic femininity and dominant gender ideology. On the other hand, the duality of gender and modern gender bias are reaffirmed through the role settings in advertising texts, and women have been blurred into a conceptualised group. These stereotyped representations of women and femininity in the Vipshop ads are closely related to the incomplete development of feminism and post-feminism in Chinese society. As explained in Chapter 4, the starting point and the essence of China's feminist discourse are not to speak for woman, nor do not go into the depth of deconstructing the gender-based disparities and dualistic gender concepts. Due to the insufficient development of feminism in China and its excessive dependence on the Chinese official discourse and political system, feminism cannot become an independent political force, but has become a tool for whitewashing political purposes and regulating various social relations in China.

However, the representations of woman and femininity in advertising always have to conform to the consumption culture logic due to the inherent requirements of advertising champion. In order to achieve the marketing targets, the advertising's encoding strategy must be consistent with the mainstream gender concepts in making the representations of woman and femininity. In this sense, the representation of the deconstruction of gender identity and diversified femininity in the British ASOS commercials is merely a marketing strategy used by modern advertisers to seduce and entice consumers.

7.4.3 Development Levels of Advertising Industries

As previously discussed, the Vipshop adverts classify and femininity and the female group through representing the beauty and consumption behaviours of female characters, while the ASOS commercials function as a flag of political correctness, which encourages de-sexualisation, multicultural identity, and the diversity of subjects. The ASOS adverts show audiences different attitudes to gender and life, through which an inclusive atmosphere to gender diversity and subject diversity can form. The ASOS adverts have also contributed to the process of solidifying feminist social consensus and subconsciousness, which has a significant relationship with the different development levels of the advertising industries in the two countries.

According to Sun (2015), the Western (British) advertising industry has accumulated more than a century of practical experience and theoretical research, and has entered a mature period. For the British society, which has witnessed years of feminist movements, erasing gender stereotyping messages in advertising has long been the goal of gender equality movements. As previously discussed, the ultimate purpose of advertising production is to receive the recognition of the consumers, in order to make them buy the products and share the information with more people in their social network. This has led to the tendency that more and more British brands prefer to use the symbols of feminist values such as the empowerment of women to design their advertising texts, thus creating a series of feminist commercials that is referred to as the 'femvertising' (Feminist Voice, 2016). The chosen two ASOS advertisements delineate a small part of the current emerging complex 'femvertising' industry in the UK.

In contrast, China's advertising industry started relatively late, and is still in the process of exploring and developing (Sun, 2015). Chinese advertisers have just realised that women are becoming the leading consumer group and female consumption is setting off an unprecedented consumption upsurge (Liang, 2014).

Therefore, a large number of advertisements use female characters to dominate the advertising narrative. The two Vipshop commercials discussed in this chapter can be regarded as typical examples of these female-dominated advertisements.

7.4.4 Love \approx Money in Today's Chinese Society

Femininity in the case study adverts is reproduced on the one hand by advertising female characters, and on the other hand by gender settings. When comparing the femininity and gender setting in ASOS and Vipshop advertisements, we can see that in the Chinese advert cases, the contact between genders is established through women's consumption behaviours and men's guidance and support, which reflects a new and significant phenomenon in Chinese society: using the man's materiality support to the woman to evaluate the gender relationship.

In China, the concept that a 'qualified' boyfriend should keep buying things for his girlfriend has been deeply rooted, although it was frequently criticised, and still has a broad mass base. One typical case is 'the event of YSL star lipstick' happened in the end of 2016. At that time, along with the launch of a limited-edition lipstick by YSL, an article was published titled 'what is your boyfriend's reaction when asks him to gift you the YSL star lipstick?' This article was widely shared and received a lot of attention, which created a link between the questions of 'whether the boyfriend would like to gift you the lipstick' and 'whether he loves you or not' on Chinese social media (Sohu News, 2017). The lipstick has been linked with love through the use of mass media. At that time, the use value of the product itself is no longer relevant, as the product has been simplified as a symbol, which is commercialised as an equal symbol of the acquisition of love and happiness.

Through such an artificial connection of the consumption and the gender relations, the category and use value of the product becomes less relevant: in the case of a lipstick

or any other fashion products sold on the Vipshop.com, as long as the man pays for it, it solidifies the man's image as the donor or the supporter in the patriarchy binary gender setting, which again reveals the realistic predicament faced by feminism and post-feminism in China.

7.5 Summary

Through comparing the similarities and differences between the Chinese and British advertisements on the representation of femininity, we can see that the factors including society, culture, traditional gender concepts and values, feminism, and the development of advertising industry all could influence the representations of femininity and female images in advertising. The value logic of the consumer society and the market strategy of the advertisers painted the representation of femininity with the colour of consumer culture. To a certain extent, the advertising representation of femininity is inevitably commercialised and manipulated in the global trend of consumerism, and the different meanings of the representation of femininity can be seen the projection, transformation and reproduction of the commercialised concepts of gender roles and identities in different societies. All of these factors will be taken into the consideration of the discussion around female advertising representation. In the following chapters, I will illustrate the complicated relationship between advertising and women from these perspectives discussed above.

Chapter 8 Woman in Family

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter compared the similarities and differences of advertising constructed femininity between China and the UK. This chapter explores and compares how advertising represents women in the families, functioning as technologies of distinguishing sexes and gender roles. Indeed, family and motherhood seem to denote that the critical, essential element of femininity which in some way or another affects every woman. As Judith Butler puts it:

'Why shouldn't it be that a woman who wants to have some part in child-rearing, but doesn't want to have a part in child-bearing, or who wants to have nothing to do with either, can inhabit her gender without an implicit sense of failure or inadequacy? When people ask the question "Aren't these biological differences"? They're not really asking a question about the materiality of the body. They're actually asking whether or not the social institution of reproduction is the most salient one for thinking about gender. In that sense, there is discursive enforcement of a norm.' (Butler, 1994: 113).

On first sight, this gender norm of 'discursive enforcement' has not affected the gendered advertising representation as the focus of the woman's advertising images are normally to show their beauty and perfectness, while their roles as mother and other family member is merely the response to the narrative of the advert. However, feminist media critiques have pointed out that advertising tirelessly persuades us that doing housework and caring for the family are the 'natural' responsibilities of women, trying to confine the social value of female within the private sphere. As reviewed in Chapter 5, many studies have proven that the advertising representations of the inevitable responsibility of motherhood and being a qualified wife not only reflect a ubiquitous social expectations of women's roles but also fuel the construction of the stereotyped common understanding of femininity.

Based on these, this chapter discusses if advertising strengthens the stereotype of gender setting or change the traditional understanding of women's role in the family, compares the differences of representations of women in the family between UK and China, and investigates the social-cultural factors behind the different images.

This chapter also interprets how British and Chinese advertising represent family as family is argued as the vital area of the representation of femininity and motherhood. This chapter explains how advertising defines family and women's roles in the family, and the political and ideological issues existed in the represented family structures.

8.2 Case Analysis

In this chapter, I selected four advertisements from Chinese and British televisions. Two of them are both from the transnational corporation McDonald while the other two are from Chinese and British local brands respectively. These four cases include the Chinese McDonald's commercial *Taste of Home*; the British McDonald's advert *Dad*; the Chinese Happy-Wife cooking sauce advert *They Were All of the One Voice*; and the British McCain advert *We Are Family*. These advertisements will be divided into two groups for discussion. The first set of McDonald's adverts focuses on the internal members and organisational structure of one specific family; the second set of ads (the Chinese Happy-Wife cooking sauce advert and the British McCain advert) shows a wide variety of families in British and Chinese advertising.

8.2.1 Case Panel 1 Woman and Family

Chinese McDonald *Taste of Home*

Chinese society and gender concepts have changed rapidly in many ways over the past decades. A clear example of what is referred to as the 'empowerment of Chinese

women' can be seen in many contemporary commercials (Liu et al., 2017). The McDonald's 2017 advert *Taste of Home* is one of the best examples.

McDonald commercial *Taste of Home* shows us the changing process of a typical modern Chinese family's structure. The advertisement starts with a retrospection of the female leading character's childhood memories: 'When I was a kid, we always ate red bean soup when dad was leaving.' (*Figure 8-1*). This 'leaving' could be interpreted from the father's stuffed backpack and his whisper to the young female leading character. The certificates and the printed calendar with the character 'fortune' hung on the wall provide a look at a typical Chinese family atmosphere in the 1990s.

In this scene, 'dad' connotes 'leaving'; he is 'leaving' to the public arena, and going out to work to support financially the family. The image of 'mother' has been blurred into the background board and materialised into a symbol of the domestic area. These images of housewives and mothers were formed by specific historical conditions in the patriarchal social discourse. According to Thompson (1996), women have been limited within the domestic arena for a long time in the history of advertising in a global area. For these characters, the happiness is achieved by a happy marriage and a happy family while the role the advertising designed for them is to devote themselves into the family to realise the life values of themselves. During the past few decades, feminist critiques of the advertising representations of these stereotyped gender roles have been accepted by the mainstream social view in many countries, and representations of women have changed as a consequence.



Figure 8- 1 'When I was a kid, we always ate red bean soup when dad was leaving' in
McDonald advert *Taste of Home*

Although recent advertisements are still filled with a large number of symbols of wives and mothers, today, an increasing number of women are entering the public area, and the idea of new independent woman is gaining recognition from the society. Similarly, symbols of women in television commercials are not only limited within the area of families:

'Now I am leaving [...] sweet red beans taste like home, which never change.' (*Figure 8-2*)

In the next scene, the grown-up female character says goodbye to her parents. She sits in the coach with a backpack on her knees. The symbol of the backpack has been transferred from the father to the daughter over twenty years in this commercial. In this case, the backpack not only symbolises 'leaving', but also represents the changes of family members' positions, which could also be proven by the regulation of the female character's physical perspective - from looking up to her father to looking down on her parents - that implies the change and transformation of the power structure and economic responsibility in a typical Chinese father-mother-child family model.



Figure 8- 2 'Now I am leaving [...]'in McDonald advert *Taste of Home*

Food is the key element relating advert characters to the image of the family in the commercial; it also offers evidence of the decades in which China went through a period of transformation under the influence of globalisation and capitalism. 'When I was a kid', the food is a bowl of homemade red bean soup, but 'now', it becomes the branded, industry-produced red bean pie. The line 'sweet red beans taste like home, which never change' is subverted when the advertising slogan segues into a familiar and impersonal myth: the overwhelming spreading of global capitalism, dawning brand consciousness, and the homogenisation of the consumer society. The commercial uses the 'same' taste of home to make emotional connections with consumers, and the focus is on 'never changing'. Our understanding of gender in popular culture, however, is undeniably changing. The representations of the new women draw from a popular discourse through describing the phenomenon whereby women have become intelligible and independent in contrast to 'the past', where the latter is a mythical and stereotypical construct of traditional image of 'mother'. Although the female character was represented through the shifting power structure and position within the family, she also relates to a commercialised gender discourse concerning women's new power, the rising social status and the increasing economic ability, which gives birth to the liberalisation of the new woman in Chinese society.

This kind of new female group will be further discussed in Chapter 9.

British McDonald Advert *Dad*

Similarly, the British McDonald's commercial *Dad* also frames a narrative around a family. This advert is about a single mother telling her son stories about her husband and seeing the father's shadow in her son.

At the beginning of the advertisement, a boy turns over his father's relics and asks his mother: 'What was dad like?' Hearing this, the mother stops doing housework, looking sad while being slightly surprised (*Figure 8-3*). The mother takes the boy out of the house and tells him on the road: 'He was big and cuddly, your dad. Tall as a house, and big, big, hands.' (*Figure 8-4*). The boy stops and looks at his own hands. They continue on the road, and the mother said, 'He was never scruffy, always smart.' The boy stops and raises his trousers. The mother sits with the boy at the playground for a while and continues to tell him about 'his shoes, so shiny you could see your face in them' as the boy looks down at his dirty shoes. Then they pass by a group of teenagers who are playing football. The boy asks, 'Dad played football, did he?' and the mother smiles and recalls: 'Yeah, he was good. Captain, I think.' The boy clumsily kicks the ball which is off the field back to the court. They walk to a river and the boy throws a pebble into the river and asks: 'he liked techno?' The mother sits on the railing on the shore and smiles, replying: 'Yeah. He was a right catch, your dad.' They pass by two teenage girls; the boy shyly smiles at them, but the girls take a glimpse and ignore him. The mother continues to describe the boy's father: 'A 'wow' with all the girls.' The boy could not help but look back at the two girls who had left.



Figure 8- 3 the mother stops doing housework in McDonald advert *Dad*



Figure 8- 4 'He was big, you dad' in McDonald advert *Dad*

Subsequently, the mother and son arrive at a McDonald's outlet. The boy asks, 'Did he have blue eyes, like me?' The mother smiles and touches the boy's head, saying, 'No. Brown.' The boy follows his mother go into the restaurant with disappointment. The boy brings food over to his mother who is sitting at a table, and the mother watches him unwrapping a hamburger. Suddenly, the mother says: 'That was your dad's favourite too.' She looks out of the window and murmurs 'tartar sauce', and, turning back to her son, watches the boy accidentally spill sauce on his chin. She continues: '[...]all down his chin.' The mother looks at the boy and wipes the tartar sauce away from the chin, showing a gratified smile (*Figure 8-5*).

This advert actually contains three characters: the mother and son, as well as the father who appears through the dialogues between mother and son. The sign of the mother in the British McDonald's advert, on the one hand, assumes the obligations of household chores in the private area. On the other hand, it also bears the social responsibility of supporting the family and raising children in the public arena. The mother is invested with an emotional role and the image of the fosterer of the family in this advert. The image of the father (which has not directly appeared in the advertisement) can be regarded as a functional symbol that symbolises the family that is once 'complete'. The boy asks about the father's image, constantly compares himself with his father, and desires to grow up and to perfect his self-recognition by imitating his father. Food is the significant sign for the boy to reach a connection with his father in this advertisement. Through the action of the boy eating the hamburger, the mother sees the shadow of her husband in the boy, thus again making the family 'complete'.



Figure 8- 5 the mother in McDonald advert *Dad*

8.2.2 Case Panel 2 Women and Families

Women in Chinese Happy-Wife commercial *Vegetable Fresh*

Through the first set of advertisements produced by McDonald's, we saw the

interaction between the members in one family in which the female characters both played significant roles in leading the narrative. In this section, I will continue to focus on representations of various families - and the functions of female roles in these families - through a second set of advertisements, including a Chinese Happy-Wife advert and a British McCain commercial.

The Chinese Happy-Wife cooking sauce advertisement *Vegetable Fresh - They Were All of One Voice* represents a number of families with the traditional husband-and-wife (male and female) family structure from multiple countries including China, South Korea, the United States and France (*Figures 8-6; 8-7; 8-8; 8-9*). The similarities among the portrayals of these couples in the advertisement are clear: each couple has the same ethnic identity; the (female) wife holds the advertised product 'Vegetable Fresh' cooking sauce while the (male) husband clutches his wife's shoulder; each couple says the same words in Mandarin: 'Fried vegetables, vegetable fresh!'

The narrative of the Happy-Wife advert seems very simple, but the meanings of the representation are multiple. First of all, the representation of the female character and the gender display in this advertisement can be seen as another reproduction of the family gender stereotype in the traditional patriarchal system. The sign of the husband indicates the protection of the family through the action of holding his wife's shoulder, and the symbol of the wife represents the private sphere by having the symbolised Happy-Wife product in her hand. The advert also reflects the conflict between Orientalism and nationalism in the context of globalisation. As the couples from various countries praise the Chinese product, this commercial tries to shape Happy-Wife as an international brand, to imply that the quality of its product has been recognised all around the world, and to stimulate Chinese consumers' longing for high-quality life as represented by the advertised product.

It is worth noting that among the four couples in this advert, the wife and husband

from each family both have the same ethnicity. By classifying these couples as Chinese, Korean, French, and American, the advert sets clear boundaries between countries and cultures. This kind of intentional otherness to the West, making the West become the opposite of China in advertising representations, is precisely in line with many Chinese consumers' imagination and subjective expectations of the Western cultures. The advertising representations show the attitudes of self-Orientalism and Occidentalism in the ethnic setting and the representation of the family in the ad text, aiming to inspire Chinese consumers' purchase desires of the product which is recognised by the Western consumers in the commercial.

On the other hand, the fact that the couples from different countries speak the slogans in Mandarin shows that the Chinese advertising industry, which was modelled by the discourse of globalisation and modern Western ideology, is changing. Through the representation of the worldwide recognition of Chinese language embodying nationalist sentiments, the Happy-Wife advertisement has undergone a process of localisation, in the sense of reshaping cultural meaning through the Happy-Wife product, implying a capitalist discourse that appeals to nationalist discourses.



Figure 8-6 the Chinese couple in Happy-wife advert *They Were All of One Voice*



Figure 8- 7 the American couple in Happy-wife advert *They Were All of One Voice*



Figure 8- 8 the Korean couple in Happy-wife advert *They Were All of One Voice*



Figure 8- 9 the French couple in Happy-wife advert *They Were All of One Voice*

British McCain Advert *We Are Family*

The changes represented in Chinese McDonald's commercial are about the changing

economic fabric of the family, the social consequences of the one-child policy and the rising status of Chinese women's financial ability. The British frozen food brand McCain's newly released commercial shows changing family member structures which position British family life in a non-traditional light. *We Are Family* takes an honest approach and celebrates families of all kinds:

'When it comes to family, what is normal? Mommy, mom, ma, mama, stay-at-home moms, working moms, single moms, adopted moms, nannas, grands, put you to bed and tell you not to believe in ghosts; dad, daddy, two daddies, long-distance daddies, weekend dads who pick you up and let you stay up late; friends are really like your own blood [...]'(Figures 8-10; 8-11).

According to Mark Hodge, marketing director at McCain, the advert was developed from the insight that half of British consumers do not think that television advertisements reflect the reality of modern families, and that most audiences could not recall seeing anything in popular culture that featured a family like their own in recent years. He commented that 'we welcome the increased scrutiny the media has put on stereotypes in recent months. The campaign for increased gender diversity in advertising and the rise of a new breed of 'honest' parenting influencers are important steps in helping to reflect the diverse reality of families today' (Hodge, 2017).

Along with different female images, this commercial shows the attempt to represent men and women in various roles in British families. In addition to the traditional 'dad and mom and kids', there are more settings including 'single mom' or 'dad and dad' or 'kids with different ethnicities' in a family. These particularities of the multiple family types and roles that make watching this commercial a pleasurable experience for the advertising audiences recognising feminist ideas as the advertising text offers a possibility and opportunity of positioning themselves in more diverse and mobile roles. By introducing various gendered family members, the patriarchy discourse of family and woman's traditional roles has been challenged and subverted, and a

multiplicity of gender identity becomes available. The British McCain commercial enables this variety in gender representations and can thus be regarded as a site of resistance to the previous stereotyped discourse of family and motherhood.



Figure 8- 10 single mom in McCain Advert *We Are Family*



Figure 8- 11 'friends are really like your own blood' in McCain Advert *We Are Family*

8.3 Similarities and Differences of Women in Families between British and Chinese Commercials

Through the comparative analysis of the images of women in families in the Chinese and British case studies advertisements, we can see the following similarities and differences in the representation of women between the UK and China.

In terms of similarities, in the construction processes of female roles in both Chinese

and British advertisements, the female roles not only participate in the 'private sphere', but also assume certain responsibilities in 'public sphere'. This is shown in the role settings of the daughter and her mother in the Chinese McDonald's commercial, and the single mother who raised her son in the British McDonald's commercial, revealing the identity dilemma faced by the modern women when they bear the double responsibility and pressure deriving from the society and the family. The double responsibility and pressure of modern woman's roles in terms of social function and family responsibility further show that the concept of gender roles is a socially constructed object connoting a series of gender norms and requirements changing with social developments. The oppression and control brought by the gender norms are unequal for different women in different contexts.

Apart from the similarities, the differences between the representations of women in families in the Chinese and British chosen adverts lie in the following perspectives:

8.3.1 Different Ways of Constructing the Female Images in Families

The first difference between the British and Chinese adverts is their different ways of representing women's images in families. Although the shaping of female characters in the advertisements has shown the woman's identity is constructed in both the private sphere and the public sphere. However, in the Chinese advert cases, we can see an obvious contradiction of the female images and a gap between the female roles in the family.

Compared to the British case adverts, the Chinese advertisements separately constructed the different women who are responsible for two different gender roles. The women taking the family gender role include the mother in McDonald's China advertisements who connotes the traditional personality traits of Chinese women such as kindness, loving-kindness, and dedication, and the wives holding the cooking

products which denote the private sphere in the Happy-Wife Chinese advert. The woman taking the social role is the second generation female who leave the family to work and takes part in the activities in the public sphere.

An important reason for this separate treatment of female advertising images in the case adverts is that in recent years, the social status of Chinese women is undergoing tremendous changes. The traditional gender concept makes women be asked to take on heavy family responsibilities. However, the massive social pressure in contemporary Chinese society is pushing Chinese women to engage in social labour and political activities in the public sphere. At the same time, the rise of women's economic ability and the feminist ideology in China continue to be accepted by more women and men. Women's empowerment consciousness is deeply rooted in the new generation of women's groups (see Chapter 3). Under the influence of global recognition of feminism and modernism, the issues of women's employment and gender inequality have been noticed and criticised by more women and men today. Moreover, for the purposes of governance and prompting economic development, the government strongly advocate the increase in women's employment. Under the support of political authority discourses such as 'women can hold up half the sky' ('妇女能顶半边天')¹⁹, Chinese women have generally embarked on various social roles and pay extra attention to seek their career developments and improve their economic capabilities.

However, the patriarchal gender norms and feminist discourses have waged a tug of wars in the discursive field of woman's gender roles, which has led to a certain degree of bias in the perceptions of female characters between the new (the daughter in the Chinese McDonald advert) and the old (the mother in the Chinese McDonald advert) generations of Chinese women, and also makes modern Chinese women struggle between the roles of 'traditional wife and the mother' and the image of 'self-reliance

¹⁹ 'Women can hold up half the sky' was a proclamation proposed by Chairman Mao to encourage women to participate into social labours in the early days of the People's Republic of China (Gao, 2017).

and self-improvement'. In the Chinese case advert, we can see the different understandings of gender roles and the predicament of social identities faced by contemporary Chinese women in the context of social and ideological transition in China. Therefore, in the case study adverts, we can see both the images of the traditional female and the new woman. This is also the measure taken by Chinese advertisers to cater to more female consumer groups through recombining the representations of women with different self-recognitions of the gender identities.

After a long-term's observation of television advertising cases in this research, the contradictory way of constructing female images is relatively rare in the British advertising campaign. The difference between the representation approaches of the role family in constructing female identities is on the one hand created by the different national conditions and social cultures between the UK and China, and on the other hand is caused by the different development degrees of feminism in the two countries.

8.3.2 Different Representations of Ethnicities

The second difference between the British and Chinese advertisements is the different representations of ethnicities. The British McCain advertisement shows a mixture of female characters with various skin colours and different roles in one or multiple families. The representations of women of different ethnicities reflects a tolerant attitude towards minorities and the recognition of multiculturalism. By comparison, the gender setting in the Chinese Happy-Wife advert has once again reinforces the self-Orientalism and strengthens the stereotype of the West. The different representations of women and ethnicities will be further analysed in Chapter 12.

8.3.3 Different Representations of the Woman-Family Relations

Another apparent difference between the Chinese and British advertising

representations of women lays in the shaping of the family structure related to women.

The representations of women in families in the Chinese McDonald's and Happy-Wife adverts focus on the happiness and integrity of the family, where both the male character (the husband) and the female character (the wife) are indispensable parts in the constitution of the family. The Chinese advertising representations of gender emphasise the happiness and integrity of the family, and have relatively simplified the shaping of female characters. The family structure in Chinese advertising is limited within the framework of the traditional (male) husband - (female) wife - child family model. Women in the family are limited to a few options of the gender roles: the mother, the wife, and the daughter.

Compared with the traditional 'perfect' family structure created by the Chinese adverts, the British adverts are more concerned with the different roles of women in various family structures. The British McDonald's and McCain adverts break the male-female-family discourse which frequently appeared in the traditional advertising campaign, and try to resonate with the audience by representing more individual emotional activities of advertising characters.

In the British adverts, similar to the various portrayals of the family types, women's identities within the families are represented as diversified. In the case study adverts, various gender roles of women are recognised such as 'single mom', 'working mom', 'stay-at-home mom' and so on, showing the different independent personalities and personal values of women. Moreover, the relationship between women and families is not fixed. The variety of family structures in the advertising representations contains a wealth of rebellious tactics, and each kind of family structure can be interpreted from different social-cultural perspectives. The integration of various family forms in a short advertisement attempts to deliver the concepts of diverse sexual orientations and living concepts and the mutual symbiosis of races, cultures, and identities. This

approach of hybridity can be regarded as a valid deconstruction of patriarchal discourses of family and woman's family roles.

Moreover, looking at the representations of women's positions in family relations in the Chinese McDonald's advert, changes are taking place in the gender structure of the Chinese family as a result of the rising social status of women and China's one-child policy. Women have always emerged in feminine roles as an essential part of families, emphasising the integrity of the heterosexual family, but, as Foucault (1997: 1128) says, 'if one asks people to reproduce marriage bonds for their personal relationship to be recognised, the progress realised is slight'.

In the British McCain advert, what has changed is the structure of family members. Man does not constitute an essential element of the family; the gender roles of female characters and the family structures are more diverse. The British adverts reflect a new phenomenon whereby the emerging new gender identities appear to have been accepted by the mainstream social discourse in the UK; in particular, single people and homosexual people have been recognised as a modern lifestyle and a common sexual orientation in the British society.

Additionally, Foucault asserted that 'we live in a relational world', in which the possibilities for relations are 'extremely few, extremely schematized, extremely poor'. Our legal, social, and institutional worlds 'have limited the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage' (Foucault, 1997: 1128). Given that 'a rich relational world would be extremely complicated to manage', the institutional framework has attempted to narrow the possibility of social relations, and following Foucault's diagnosis, we need to 'fight against the impoverishment of the relational fabric' of the world (Foucault, 1997: 1128-1129). As previously discussed in Chapter 3, post-feminism holds that it is impossible to name a woman by a single adjective, or using the term 'woman' in all circumstances, as the pure 'woman' might not exist. The woman is a very complex category that is constructed by the

controversial scientific discourses of sexuality and technologies of gender practices. We accept the setting of our gender because we are forced to compromise the self-recognition of our identity within the hierarchical structures of gender discourse. The gender identity we could possess is contradictory, partial, and strategic (Nicholson, 2013). In this sense, the representation of multiple gender roles of women in different types of families in the British case study advert can be seen as a great success of post-feminism in British society, as one of the main tasks of post-feminism is to subvert gender stereotypes, and strive for the social acceptance of the complexity of gender identities and family structures (Scott, 2007).

According to Scott (2007:1), the complexity of identity and relation is one of the most significant concerns of the modern and postmodern society. In this sense, the British commercial representations indicate a fact that the British society has entered the stage of the modernism and postmodernism co-existed. The representations of woman and family in the case study adverts clearly show a tendency of encouraging the social identification of the emerging new relationships and identities which were not generally accepted or categorised in the past. Furthermore, in a multi-cultural society with the democratic system, identity is not limited to the gender field: many cases have shown that the diversities of ethnic, cultural, social and other identities have reached a common consensus under the influence of post-feminism and multiculturalism in the UK, accompanied by ideological, social and pluralistic political practices at the national and cross-national levels (see Chapter 3). And these factors co-constructed the representation of the diversified women's roles and woman-family relations in the British adverts.

However, these pluralistic practices of identities and relations are considered as significant threats to the centralisation of politics, as in most cases, one stable centralised government is based on the logic of homogeneity of cultures and identities within specific geographical and cultural environments (Sun & Yu, 2011; Bo, 2011). The diversity of genders and relations might lead to different levels of contradictions

and disputes among various political groups, making it a fact which has been avoided by a centralised state. As discussed in Chapter 5, the cultural flow and cross-national communication in the perspective of globalisation cannot be avoid, however, the state has the ability to slow the development of a specific ideological trend, which also becomes a political aid for cultural resistance in a certain social context. Therefore, for the purpose of maintaining social and political stability, the developments of post-feminism and post-modern gender ideas are relatively slow and often come cross resistances from different aspects in China. The social cognition of the woman-family relations has become a special discourse reflecting the drastic competition among globalisation, hegemonic culture, localisation and nationalism in the Chinese context. This kind of social and political facts has led to the rare representation of multiple gender identities and the woman-family relations in the case study advertisements and the whole Chinese advertising campaign as it has been observed in the data collection period, because the representations of woman and family are closely related to the development of feminism and the gender concepts in a specific context.

8.4 Summary

By comparing the representations of women in families, we can see that, first, compared to the British cases, the Chinese adverts show a significant gap between various female characters, reflecting a different perceptions of female roles between the new and old generations in China. Second, the British case study adverts show more diverse in women's identities and the woman-family relations while the woman and the woman-family relation in the Chinese ads have been largely simplified.

The reasons causing the different representations of woman and woman-family could be concluded from the perspectives of economy, politics, traditions, common values, and the development levels of feminism and modern/postmodernism in the UK and China. In the UK, the wide acceptance of post-feminist ideas on gender concepts and

the awareness of the diversity of identity and lifestyle have made the advertisers abandoned the stereotyped representation of traditional family roles but turned to show the multiple woman-family relations. In China, the rapid social changes happened in recent decades create different cognitions of woman's roles and identity between the new and old generations, resulting a significant gap between the female images constructed in the Chinese adverts. And the special cultural especially political conditions ultimately led to the simplification of woman's identity and the woman-family relation in the Chinese advertising representations.

However, the advertiser's specific attention of the identity and relation diversities is not aiming at the liberation or equality, which could be proven by the complex and sometimes contradictory representations of women in the advert texts. The purposes and goals of advertisements are utilitarian - to maximise the attraction of their products to the mass audience.

Chapter 9 New Women · New Norms

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focuses on the traditional significant components of woman - family and motherhood, in this chapter, I explore the new identity of modern woman by looking at the links between advertising representations of the 'new woman', women's identities, and globalisation.

The concept of new woman was a feminist ideal which emerged in the 19th century and had a profound influence in the 20th century in the British society (Lavender, 2014). The positioning and transformation of the new female image has always evolved with changes of historical and political situations. The change process of the image of new woman not only shows the changes of women's behaviours and gender concepts, but also reflects the distribution of social and political discourses and powers (Patterson, 2005; 2008; Rowbotham, 1999). It is the epitome of the change of thoughts in a specific historical period. Today, the term was used by scholars to describe the growing group of educated, economic-independent, feminist women in Europe and America (Stevens, 2008: 27). In China, the new female image in the 21st century is generally considered as the woman being accepted high education and economic independent (Chen, 2014).

This chapter compares the British and Chinese advertising representations of the new women in our contemporary globalised moment for a variety of reasons. Although evoking the notions of globalisation may spark discussions that are politically from both the left and right, nevertheless it suggests a broader and more complex context in which British and Chinese young people lives. Adjustments in terms of the empowerments, resiliencies, resistances, oppressions, and manipulations of the young generation when they are facing ideological, technological, social, cultural and economic structural transformation have provided background information for my

discussion. Changes among the young female groups are noticeable in both the UK and China.

In the British context, feminist projects such as 'Pink March' or 'Girl's Power' have taken hold in popular culture and declared the concomitant idea that women have all the opportunities and choices, which seems gradually banished the problematic discourse of gender into a distant and dullish past (Munford & Waters, 2014).

In China, modern Chinese thoughts on gender are a complex agglomeration of ideas freely drawn from feminism, modernity, liberalism, socialism, and national cultural revivalism. The generations of Chinese who grew up after China's reform and opening up were generally the 'only-one child'. Due to the development and changes of the times and politics, the thoughts and ideas of these people are very different from those of the older generation. The trend of globalisation has compressed the earth into planes and the dependence between countries has increased (Screberny, 1997). In the process, ideas and values which were or still are popular in Western developed countries are globally spreading. The social trends of influence on young people born in China after the 1990s include: globalisation, consumerism, pragmatism, gender equality, individualism, utilitarianism and irrationalism (Wu, 2016; HY Digital Marketing Research, 2014) while the influence of traditional Chinese culture seems to be gradually weakening. Therefore, the arguments of modern advert female images can be fruitfully understood as the rhetoric of the projects of globalisation, feminism, and cultural changes in both the UK and China.

Historically embedded discourses of gender identity are primary defining forces of representations of both the gendered person and the consumer culture. Focusing on female identity in advertising as a socio-political discourse can shed light on the prospects of political practices and social changes. In addition, feminists and cultural studies scholars have engaged in a range of theoretical critiques which have demonstrated that the nature of the ostensibly neutral, universal category of identity is

structurally classed, sexed, and racialised. The dominated narrative in the modern globalising world is based on a Western, male, heterosexual model which excludes the other and subordinate groups (see Chapter 3). Thus, exploring the differences and similarities of representations of the advertisements in which the young female generation takes the subjectilised position of the narrative also provides a way into thinking the recognition, decoding and adjustment of feminism, modernity, and other hegemonic ideas in non-Western societies including China.

Based on these premises, my aim is first to look at how the young women are represented in the Chinese and British commercials respectively, to what extent specific cultures and social concepts of gender and the new woman manipulate the changed representations of female identities, and how the new woman becomes the focus and domination of the chosen advertisements. For illustration, this chapter uses a series of new women portrayed in advertisements which potentially suggests the themes of independence and autonomy that are arguably important to feminist projects in both the UK and China.

My focus on the female narrative of advertisement texts aims to explore the female characters identities as 'complexes of meaning, networks of interpretation' (Fraser, 1997: 152), which implies that women could be differently portrayed at different historical and cultural junctures. I carry over the concerns with social norms, politics, historical and cultural factors around the discourses of gender and woman into the following discussion. The most recent mainstream discourse of gender has argued to be significantly affected by decades of political movements, feminist media critiques, and empowerment of women. Given the transformation of hegemonic gender discourse, the meanings of advertisement text should be understood within specific ideological and historical contexts. As Dyer (1982) argues, the 'text in itself' and context and conceptualises text are inseparable. Extra-textual elements such as social, historical, and cultural discourses should be taken into consideration of the advertising text. Thus this chapter focuses on the social-cultural difference and similarity through

comparing the representations of the new women between the British and Chinese commercials.

9.2 Case Analysis

As previously emphasised, advertising can be fruitfully understood as a valuable cultural indicator as it can be examined for the ways in which it represents the social world and its members. In the recasting of gender images in advertisements, the simultaneous recreation of the new emerging group of middle-class women and the issues of reorienting gender identity brought about by the rise of these new female groups have drawn the attention of most advertisers on a global scale (Zhou, 2015).

Nowadays, new female consumers are making more and more decisions about goods and services to meet their individual needs. In China, young female consumers are characterised by ideas of 'high income', 'strong consumption power' and 'main consumer groups of luxury brands' (Zhou, 2015), and they have also become 'opinion leaders' in consumption, as they can direct and change brands' marketing strategies (Lin, 2010). Female groups' dominance of the consumer market is also prevalent in Britain, and their purchasing ability has had a significant impact on the advertising industry (Greer, 2007). According to Armstrong & Kotler (2007: 167-181), modern marketing strategies are now shifting from large scale of advertising communication (the 'shotgun' approach) to focus on specific groups of the potential clients who are more likely to be attracted by the product and brand (the 'rifle' method). The age, income, lifestyle, and purchase ability of the new female group marks them become a particularly attractive targeted audience group for many advertisers.

This female group is highly coincident with the target consumers of the luxury vehicle brand Mercedes-Benz, which is designed for urban life (Mercedes-Benz, 2018). As previously discussed, on the one hand, the advertiser takes the representation of

woman as a particularly effective marketing vehicle, and on the other hand, the representations also enriched and deepened the images of the female groups. Therefore, this chapter selects two advertisements of Mercedes-Benz from China and the United Kingdom respectively, aiming to look at the relationship between advertising representations and new women. Both of these Mercedes-Benz advertisements contain a series of urban young women's images.

By comparing the advertising representation of new women in Chinese and British Mercedes commercials, I will discuss not only the similarities and differences between these female images, but also some deeper considerations. In ways that we have yet to recognise and acknowledge completely, women have helped to shape the new consumer culture (Russell, 2007) and gender discourses on the global scale (see Chapter 3). So that we can no longer simply compare the portrayals of the new women between the British and Chinese commercials: we need to articulate fuller accounts of their similar or different social roles and identities in different contexts. We need to extend our interrogations and arguments in ways that validate not only the presence of the new women in advertising, but also their roles in shaping local gender concepts and changing global gender discourses. The following two Mercedes advertisements could give us a clue about the relations between the new women, the discourses of gender and feminism, advertising, the changing femininity, society, and globalisation.

9.2.1 Case 1 Chinese Mercedes Commercial: *She's Mercedes*

Mercedes Chinese commercials represent the changing processes of six different female characters. Female character 1 changes from waiting for someone to accompany her to dinner, to preparing a sumptuous meal at home - 'you are waiting for a meal, a meal is waiting for you' (*Figures 9-1; 9-2*). Female character 2 changes from waiting for her partner in the opera to starting to act on the stage by herself -

'you are waiting for a good show and a good show is waiting for you.' During the performance, female character 2 pushes a male character away, which seems to be declaring the combination with the male (*Figures 9-3; 9-4*). Female character 3 meticulously prepares her makeup before interviewing an important figure, but the departure of the male interviewee indicates the failure of her action - 'you are waiting for an opportunity, the opportunity will probably not wait for you' (*Figures 9-5; 9-6*). Female character 4 changes from holding the hands of male partners when climbing up the mountain, to driving the car by herself while looking in the car mirror at her flawless make-up. At this moment, the advert line is 'listen to him and naturally have direction. Regardless of him, the direction will naturally come' (*Figures 9-7; 9-8*). Female character 5 changes from a model photographed by a male photographer to a fashion designer - 'the world wants to define your beauty, but you define the beauty' (*Figures 9-9; 9-10*). Female character 6 comes to the fencing hall which is almost exclusively occupied by men, and defeats her opponent - 'people look at you with different sights, you use the extraordinary ability to fight back' (*Figures 9-11; 9-12*).

At the end, the background voice proclaims 'the more you go forward and the harder it will be; the harder it is, and the more you will go forward' (*Figure 9-13*), accompanying a feature of women's footsteps from high heels to sneakers. In the last scene, the female characters gather together, cheering up with the background sounds: 'they thought you were lonely, but you are not alone. The one who understands you is waiting for you here. To meet your confidence, and see yourselves' (*Figure 9-14*).

In the Chinese Mercedes commercial, the female characters display woman's empowerment through their resistance to the social gender setting, freely choosing their lifestyle and finding joy in being themselves without being impacted by the absent male. Goldman (1992) argues that the value of the liberation of women is presented through a series of symbols such as leisure and lifestyle, discretionary income, and professional and personal characters, which is related to the power behind representations. The women portrayed in this advert are, to some extent,

representing the female empowerment which is readily accepted in our society today. They are a group of women with an awakening sense of independence and a strong subject consciousness, which can be proven by a series of symbols represented in the advertisement, including the close-up feature of different shoes and the six uses of the word 'you' in the advert.

Although there are no important male characters appearing in this advert, the male part still represents 'a dinner', 'a good show', 'an opportunity,' 'direction', 'world', 'people' and 'they'. In the Mercedes-Benz adverts, women are not independent and complete individuals; there is always an invisible partner hiding in the shadow, including the absent partners at the dinner and the show, the departing interviewee, the male partner during climbing, the photographer, the fencing opponent, and so on. For example, a woman's first choice for dinner is to have a male companion, and making her actual dinner another option which she tries to avoid at the beginning. It suggests that a heterosexual relationship is the main legitimate and acceptable source of social life. The appearance of the women's party at the end of the advert seems to be the second choice, because in the eyes of the general public 'you are lonely', and the fact is here that 'you are not alone'. Here, being single becomes an adverse factor, and only through those who understand you and are waiting for you, can you see yourself and your identity.

The female characters in this advert oppose the stereotypical sexual relations but have still fallen into the trap of set by the hegemonic logic of the male-dominated gender relations. This apparent resistance is widespread in today's Chinese society. For example, my own parents often repeat the same sentence to me: 'a girl should be as independent as a man'. It appears to be a resistance to gender inequality that is reinforcing the social constructed 'legitimacy' of 'man equals independence'.



Figure 9- 1 'you are waiting for a meal' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 2 'a meal is waiting for you' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 3 'you are waiting for a good show' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 4 'a good show is waiting for you' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 5 'you are waiting for an opportunity' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 6 'the opportunity will probably not wait for you' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 7 'listen to him and naturally have direction' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 8 'Regardless of him, the direction will naturally come' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 9 'the world wants to define your beauty' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 10 'but you define the beauty' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 11 'people look at you with different sights, you use the extraordinary ability to fight back' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 12 'the more you go forward and the harder it will be' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 13 'the harder it is, and the more you will go forward' in Chinese Benz advert



Figure 9- 14 'to meet your confidence, and see yourselves' in Chinese Benz advert

9.2.2 Case 2 British Mercedes Commercial

The second advert case - the British Mercedes Benz commercial - shows the essentials of being an adult female: 'when you start to be responsible, there are several rules you should follow', which include 'work[ing] hard'; 'mind[ing] your manners'; 'go[ing] to bed early'; and 'time to grow up'.

This advert shows four scenes: two young women drive to the beach (*Figure 9-15*); one of the female characters pours a glass of water on a man's face in public (*Figure 9-16*), reminding us to 'mind your manners'; the female characters dance and drink at a club (*Figure 9-17*), implying the opposite of 'go[ing] to bed early'; the two female characters watch the sunset together after a small argument (*Figure 9-18*), which means it is now time for the young women to 'grow up'.

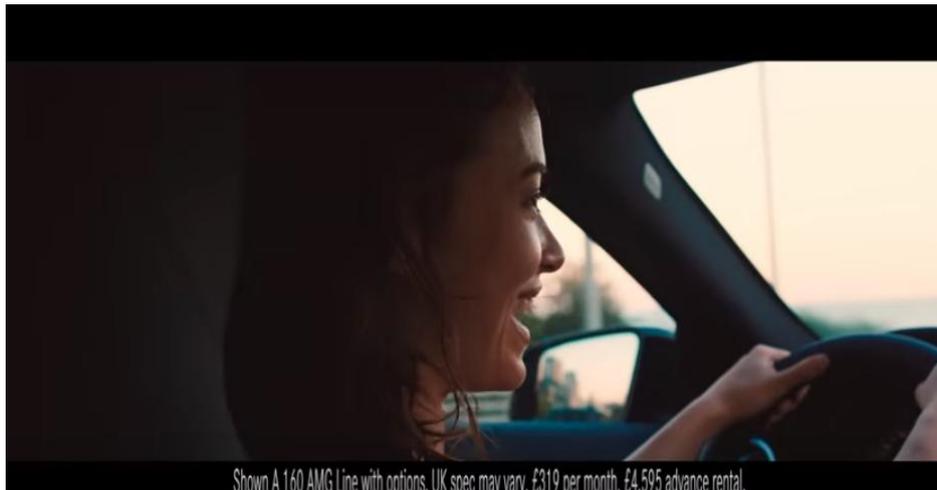


Figure 9- 15 driving to the beach in British Benz advert



Figure 9- 16 'mind your manners' in British Benz advert



Figure 9- 17 'go to bed early' in British Benz advert

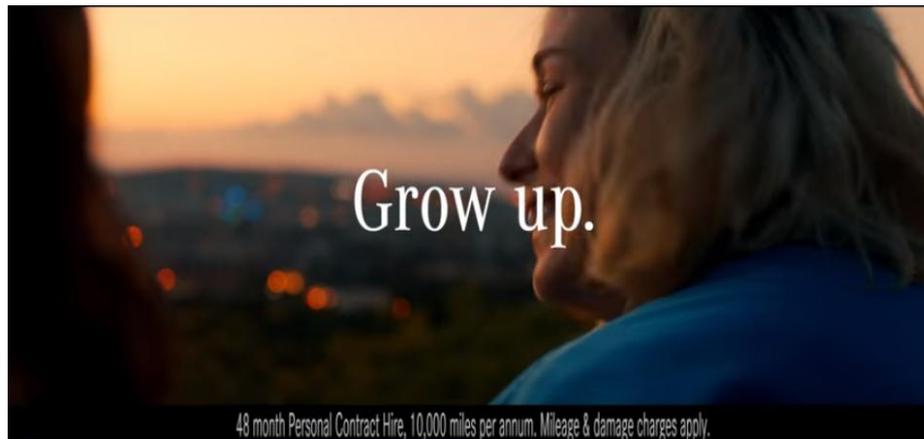


Figure 9- 18 'grow up' in British Benz advert

9.3 Similarities and Discussion

9.3.1 Female Bonding, Feminism and Commodity Feminism

By comparing the approaches to female characters in the British and Chinese Mercedes Benz adverts, we can see that both advertisements end with a depiction of female bonding or, in other words, female homosocial union (*Figures 9-13 & 9-18*).

The designs of the female characters are varied in the two Mercedes case advertisements: we see five middle-class women living without male's company, and two young women learn to grow up after experiencing quarrels and hangovers. Both the British and Chinese Mercedes advertisements attempt to use a series of actions connoting the independence of the female group which are benefited from the projects of feminism to portray female characters' daily life and leisure time.

These two Mercedes adverts both express the idea that women can live independently, and that they need to build up a strong bonding relationship with other women. Mercedes advertisements have shaped the symbol of the female same-sex group, showing the rising of women's empowerment and the resistance to patriarchal gender settings, which reflects the wide acceptance of feminist ideas among the female

consumers of Mercedes in the two societies.

Behind these representations is the recognition of feminist beliefs in the contexts of the UK and China. Today, as Maclaran (2017) states, the feminist word has finally made a comeback in Western countries. In the West, high-profile women such as Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, and Emma Watson are popularising feminism for a new generation (Maclaran, 2017). Consequently, feminism has become a buzzword in the British advertising marketing, resulting in the emergence and rapid development of commodity feminism. In China, although we have to admit that feminism and women's social status are still complex and need further improvement (see Chapter 5), the younger generations have been seeking new ways to discuss the issues of gender facing the changing gender relations and roles in the contemporary era, and Chinese citizens are relatively optimistic about the government's commitment to promoting gender equality (Wesoky, 2013). As a result, integrating the ideas of gender parity and women's empowerment into advertising texts has become now a hot new trend in China.

As advertising is a mode of business activities, it must balance dominant ideology with financial viability. Advertisers understand the predispositions of their clients when creating a market segment, and then turn fictive communities into communities of consumption (Berger, 2011). Regarding the targeting consumers in these adverts, we can assume that the Mercedes-Benz product is targeted at the young people of the urban middle class. In these advertisements, we see the representation of the diversity and autonomy of female characters, which implies that the women's rights advocated by feminism are deeply rooted in young urban female professionals and the well-educated social classes in both the UK and China.

From the feminist point of view, the emerging middle-class young women represented in the Mercedes adverts have thoroughly implemented and practiced the social consciousness of women's rights and power. The best explanation for this is that the

secure emotional connection is built by the new middle-class female group at the end of the case studies adverts; this homosocial community had previously only been represented by the male union associated with the working and living conditions in the traditional industrial or agricultural societies.

From a cross-cultural perspective, we can see that feminism and Mercedes' advertising are also connected through a joint process which turns different areas (the UK and China) into one coding program to seek common interests and voices. In commercials targeting the middle class, the life of each female character is built around engaging in typical middle-class entertainment, such as hiking or fencing in Chinese Mercedes advert and the drinks and beach in the British Mercedes advert. In terms of the representation of women's lifestyles in these adverts, it is not difficult to find that the new middle-class women in both British and Chinese adverts have similar lifestyles.

Therefore, we can state that the impacts of globalisation and global feminism on the young new women in both China and the UK are both profound. The lifestyles of these young new women in China and Britain are becoming more similar under the influence of the globalisation, which could be seen as a rhetoric of the suffusion of feminist trends in the globe. The Mercedes advertising representations of woman and the female bonding absorb and embody the ideas of feminism and woman's empowerment, once again projecting the commercialised feminist discourse to the audience's understanding of women's roles and identities.

Feminism, however, is a complex and pluralistic discourse. The commercialised activities of packaging feminism into a selling tool are sometime dangerous and disconcerting, as the commodity feminist ideas reflected in the Mercedes advertising representation are overly simplistic and easily manipulated. Moreover, the representations of women in Mercedes advertisements can be seen as a kind of self-representation of decentralised and reorganised gender subjects. These images of

the new woman represent the commercialised female self-identity designed to be decoded by audiences along the designed route. In this sense, the advertising representation of the new woman has become an important tool in reconstructing the identities of the new woman, reinforcing the designed feminist ideas, and reflecting the new relations of feminist discourses between different contexts from the global perspective. Therefore, we can say that the boundaries between advertising and gender myths, representation tools and feminist concepts, historical social relations systems, and the identification of possible identity issues of the new woman can be interlinked. The identity of the new woman, feminism, and advertising texts are mutually constructed.

9.3.2 Global Femininity and the Anti-stereotyped Independent Woman

The second similarity between the British and Chinese commercials is that both adverts construct femininity as a basic characteristic of the new female characters. Although each culture has a set of general concepts about the constitution of femininity and beauty (Frith et al., 2009), we cannot find a noticeable difference in the constructed femininity in the chosen two commercials.

Additionally, these advertisements do not deliberately avoid representing the femininity of the female characters when proposing feminist concepts and advocating the independence of women. The female characters in the British and Chinese Mercedes commercials are all attractive and feminine. The emergence of global feminist discourse and the growing power of the new female groups brought about changes in the public's awareness of femininity and gender roles, which resulted in the changing image of the new independent women in advertising. Freedom, right of choice, working and consumption abilities, individualism and untrammelled self-hood represented by the female characters are accompanied by the onset of globalisation and the empowerment of the new female groups in both the British and Chinese

societies.

Looking at the evolutionary history of women's representations, we can see that women are gradually getting rid of the traditional stereotyped role setting that existed in the early stage of the advertising industry (see Chapter 5). Many female characters have become an important driving force of advertising narratives today in both the UK and China. These new style female characters differ significantly from the images of the traditional wife and mother, and the images of the new woman are used by more advertisers to cater to the modern young generations.

However, based on the examination of the new female images prevailing in the global film market, Quan (2017) finds that the characters of new women often show the trends of sexualisation or masculinity in recent years. On the one hand, sexy women are often an integral element of advertisements, and the design of the new female model is no exception (Quan, 2017). Such a setting seems akin to a product that pleases the male gaze. Based on the male-dominated aesthetic sexuality, the new woman can easily become a materialised product of the consumer society under the manipulation of patriarchal gender discourse.

On the other hand, some of the new women on screen have been shaped as masculine images representing manhood, such as the image of tomboy (Quan, 2017). Through representing the masculinity of the female characters, media seems to have obscured gender boundaries by deliberately negating the femininity of woman. However, first, by abandoning femininity to shape the new image of women is tantamount to denying the diversity of women's identities and the complexity of gender. Second, it has also belittled the meanings of femininity. Thirdly, the interdependent relation of the new female image and female masculinity in media representation can be seen as the reconfirmation of the so-called natural heterosexual gender identity (Mallarme, 1991), as it to some extent has fallen into the traps of essentialist patterns by using the performativity of the marks of gender differences to express the new woman's identity.

In other words, masculine female images (such as tomboys) only work in the level of the superficial visual symbol, denoting a fixed gender concept that lacks complexity and fluidity.

Compared with the polarised representation of sexualised women or masculine women discussed above, the shaping of female images in the chosen Mercedes-Benz advertisements has neither given up on the display of femininity nor deliberately used the sexualisation of women to meet the male gaze. To some extent, such representations can be seen as the result of the wide acceptance of feminist and post-feminist ideas which not only propose the positive role of feminism but also advocate the diversity of identity, and it could be seen as the significant effects of the commodity feminism on the global advertising industry. The representations of the female character in the British and Chinese Mercedes adverts show us the possibility of creating a space of gender equality, free choice of gender identities, rather than deliberately emphasising the relationship between femininity, masculinity and genders.

In summary, although the images of the new women in the chosen Mercedes advertisements vary in many aspects, they all share the commonality of an anti-artificial style of representing femininity. Naturally demonstrating the relations of female and the feminine appearance is also a tactic by which could subvert the traditional gender framework that treats masculinity as 'strong' and femininity as 'weak', as the image of the new woman in the advert texts shows the coexisting of femininity and independence in the woman. In other words, these images, by naturally representing femininity and the new woman's daily life, first, have subverted the allegation that powerful and independent women are illogical or unconscionable, second, have changed the stereotyped portray of woman in artificial advertising texts. In this way, the symbolic meaning of the female as a gazed object in advertising has been dramatically diminished.

9.3.3 Emphasis on 'Me'

Moreover, we can clearly see an emphasis on subjectivity and individual values in the shaping of both the British and Chinese advertising characters. As previously discussed, the emphasis on individualism has a long history in the British culture, while the focus on subjectivity in these advertisements can be seen as a result of globalisation and of China's unique political and social culture.

Today, the one-child policy gives Chinese youth the privilege of inputting more money on their personal desires. Sun & Wang (2010) find that being the only one child in the Chinese family with the 4-2-1 structure (four grandparents, two parents, and one child) means that this only child constitutes a large share of Chinese families' overall consumption, resulting in a shift in the cultural values of the new generation from the traditional values of frugality to the values of consumerism. The great attention on self-realisation of the young Chinese make them become the new 'Me Generation' (Guo, 2006). A 2006 national survey of young people by the Chinese Youth and Children Research Centre revealed that 77.5 % of young people consider realising self-value as their life goal (Guo, 2006). The new generation has a strong sense of individualism. They engage the world in new ways, seeking for personal fulfilment and pursue a 'good life' which are largely different to the older generations in China (Guo, 2006). The sense of individuality and self-consciousness of this highly 'liberated' new generation is acutely reflected in the expressions of 'personal interest', 'personal feeling' and 'personal identity' in the Mercedes adverts, which are in the line with the living principles of the contemporary Chinese young women.

9.3.4 Women's Desire and the Advertising Industry

The fourth similarity of the representation of in the British and Chinese Mercedes adverts is that both adverts try to tell us what women want and want to be.

Today, representations of women in advertising have become more diversified and sometimes contradictory (see Chapter 5). The design of the female advertising characters needs to cater to the targeted audiences' changing views on woman, gender and identity, while the identity, self-recognitions, and the attitudes to gender issues of the targeted audiences are showing a trend of personalisation and diversification in the postmodern consumer society. Therefore, the design of advertising female characters must seek balance in different factors including the traditional concepts of women's roles and identities, women's empowerment and self-awareness, the social and political factors, the economic effects, and broadcasting platforms of advertising, etc. The case study adverts have offered detailed portrayals of the new women's pursuit of happiness and self-realisation. These details were trying to shape the new woman's representations by depicting the desires of these new women, which to a certain extent can be considered as the result of the emerging of she-economy on the global scale. However, speaking from the nature of advertising campaign, the advertising representation of the female character is still an artificial illusion rather than a real insight into the identity and desire of women. In this sense, the design and usage purposes of the new women in the Mercedes advertisements are substantially the same as the traditional images of women.

9.4 Difference and Discussion

These two Mercedes adverts both take women as the main promoters of the advertising narrative. The advert texts seem to be in line with the concept of new and independent women; however, we can see that the dependence of women on men in Chinese advertising is much more obvious than in the British case study advert. Moreover, the female same-sexual union in the Chinese case study advertisement appears to be the second choice for the female characters facing the absence of male company. The Chinese advert shows us a series of young, beautiful and confident female characters that are constructed based on the character and identity of a special

female group in Chinese society. This female group has been growing in number in recent years, and is closely related to the concept of the so-called 'leftover women', in China. The phrase 'leftover women', referring to a group of unmarried women who usually have high levels of education and successful careers, has already become a significant category for Chinese women to identity their gender identity (Fincher, 2016) and has been frequently represented in Chinese popular culture.

The modern concept of 'leftover women', according to Li (2016), is derived from an ancient panic of woman's gender identities. In traditional Chinese society, most women do not participate directly in socially productive labour. Preparing for marriage, taking care of the family, and doing housework until the end of life are the entire content of a traditional Chinese woman's existence (Fincher, 2016; Feldshuh, 2018; Shen, 2017). Unlike British lifelong single women, such as Elizabeth II and Jane Austen, who were respected and accepted in British society, being single seems to be one of the most unacceptable lifestyles for the Chinese woman in the traditional society (Li, 1993). The husband and family usually constitute and determine the gender roles and identities of women, and this forms the so-called three principles of ancient female identity: 'the unmarried woman follows the father, the married woman follows the husband, when the husband dies, the woman follows the son' ('为嫁从夫, 出嫁从夫, 夫死从子'). Naming the unmarried elder woman as the 'leftover' has faintly revealed the ancient fear of being single for today's Chinese women (Li, 2016), which shows that the traditional Chinese gender discourse structure still has a certain degree of influence in the contemporary Chinese society.

However, the female life story has also undergone dramatic changes in recent years. Now, most Chinese women work outside, many women's incomes are more than their husbands (although, on average, women still earn less than men in China) (Ji, 2015) and the proportion of female college students was already approaching half even ten years ago (Li & Kirkup, 2007). In this new era, marriage is no longer entirely associated with the issues of survival anymore for Chinese women. Li (1993) points

out that the main reason for successful Chinese women being single lies in Chinese traditional spouse-choosing customs: in terms of choosing the marriage partner, Chinese men usually prefer to date women who are relatively inferior in the educational background, family conditions, and working capability, while most Chinese women prefer an older and more successful male partner. The dramatic improvement of women's social status and the backward ideas about different genders' roles in marriage co-caused the so-called 'problem' of the leftover women, which reflecting the gap between the rising economic ability of women and the social understanding of woman's identity, as well as the inadequate development of feminism in the Chinese context.

However, from a realistic perspective, although the new Chinese women are getting more power, it is undeniable that Chinese girls are still distinctly 'second-class' citizens, particularly in rural areas (Johnson, 2009; Li, 1993), which is specifically reflected in the fact that young Chinese women are often required to sacrifice their personal interests and career developments in order to support their families like the elder female generations did (Bauer et al., 1992; Schein, 1997; Yeh et al., 2013; Yang & Scott, 2016). The traditional marriage discourse require that all the members of the society to obey the social custom of getting married (Yang & Scott, 2016; Li, 1993). Although China has become increasingly global and Westernised since the 1970s, it is far from clear whether the traditional concepts of gender roles will be heavily challenged by globalisation, at least to a similar degree as in the economic field (Yang & Scott, 2016). The fact is that traditional marriage values and conjugal relations still seem to inform the notion of 'being a woman' for many Chinese women and men today (Lan & Fong, 2015).

Goode (1963) predicts that, due to the global spread of industrialisation, gender roles and family patterns in the non-Western cultures will gradually converge towards the Western model. More than fifty years since Goode predicted a global convergence in terms of the development of gender ideology, many research findings suggest that

China is still different in terms of women, family, and gender values as it is under the influence of the distinctive and complex national context (e.g. Lan & Fong, 2015; Yang Hu & Scott, 2016; Li, 1993). Feminism in China is also a complex concept which likely to be deeply influenced by the social and historical factors discussed above. Therefore, the changing processes of the female characters in Chinese Mercedes Benz advert, from relying on the male companionship to independence and seeking feminine bonding can be seen as a changing process of the modern Chinese women in recent years. The representation of the new woman in Chinese Benz advert, on the one hand, reflect the feminist identity demands of women, on the other hand, is constructed under the influence of traditional gender discourse and its derivatives such as the concept of the 'leftover woman', which again indicates the contradiction of Chinese women's modern identity as well as the inadequate development of feminism in China

9.5 Summary

From the comparison of female characters in the advertisements, it can be seen that there are many similarities in the positioning, identity and life status of the young middle-class women between the Chinese and British case study adverts. These similarities can be considered as the result of globalisation and the global spread feminism and American and British gender concepts. However, from the constructed female characters in the Chinese advertisement, we still find the sense of social anxiety of the independent female as a gendered group. This anxiety is rooted in the traditional Chinese gender concepts and social culture, and it is also imprinted into the feminist discourse in China today.

Chapter 10 the Displays of Female Body

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 discussed the images of new women in Chinese and British commercials. This chapter examines and compares the displays of the female body in advertising between the UK and China. According to Grosz (2005) gender differences are also understood as the differences between bodies. As previously mentioned, the modern advertising industry makes extensive use of feminine/masculine symbols of the gendered body which has strengthened our fundamental understanding of the manifestations of the bodies of different genders. And the discussion of the representations of the female body in this chapter is based on the understanding that advertising representations of women's bodies and aesthetic illusions on women's bodies constitute significant parts of the commercialised performativity of gender.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to compare the depictions of the female body in women's sanitary television advertisements to help understand the different social readings of gender and relevant cultural elements behind the constructed female bodies. This chapter tries to answer the following related questions which include: how and why British and Chinese advertising similarly or differently use the female body as their communication strategies; to what extent the construction of female bodies has been linked with traditional femininity in different contexts between the UK and China; and to what extent the represented female bodies have been impacted by feminist and modern feminist discourses in the UK and China respectively.

As Jagger et al. (1998: 198) point out, the body is not a given object, but both a signifier and a signified, both historical and social constructed, therefore, the body must be re-defined as an outstanding part of the culture (Jagger et al., 1998: 80). As discussed in Chapter 3, advertising and other forms of popular culture often shape women into objects through the male gaze, the deprivation of female subjectivity, and

the sexualisation and objectification of women's bodies. According to Evans & Thornton (1989), women are paradoxically positioned as an object in the male-dominated culture while the male domination is defined as natural and reasonable. The patriarchy consciousness on women's identities is precipitated in specific cultural contexts and functions as a tool of maintaining the existing gender structure, which not only creates a series of norms and regulations on woman's body but also tremendously effects the social evaluation and representations of women's roles and bodies (see Chapter 3).

Based on these understandings, the examination of the advertising representation of the female body should not only concern the gender settings and relevant advertising industry regulations, but also notice that the advertising representation of the female body as a commercialised object of gender politics cannot be separated with the gender norms and cultural imaginations attached to the represented female body as well as the symbolic meanings of the gendered body itself. Therefore, the comparison of representations of the female body should be placed into the specific contexts to analyse, compare, and criticise the subtle relationships between the body and the local/global contexts.

10.2 Case Analysis

This chapter uses women's sanitary product commercials as study cases to look at representations of the female body, because these commercials are significant indicators of social attitudes to the sexed body. Women's sanitary product commercials could be seen as having created a private time and space for women, in which the products are shaped as the object connoted women's 'secret', and technically solved women's 'problems'. That is, these commercials are located in a discursive dimension that implies 'pure' space for female and female body through gendered technology and performativity, but the secret space of women articulated by these

commercials is shown in front of all categories of the mass audience. Therefore, the way of representing the female body in sanitary product commercials produces something that constructs the cultural meanings of gender ascribed to the female body, corresponding to social cognition of female identity, femininity, and the discourses of body and menstruation.

Moreover, compared with other advertising genres, the proportion of women in the target audience of sanitary napkins adverts is relatively high. Therefore, the representation of women and female bodies in sanitary napkin adverts can accurately reflect women's self-consciousness of the gender, identity, their social roles, and their understanding of the female bodies in a specific cultural environment. In this sense, the investigation of representations of female bodies in sanitary product advertisements constitutes an examination of the social understanding as well as women's self-recognition of 'being a woman' in a specific context.

In this chapter, the commercials from two sanitary product brands - Chinese Sofy and British Bodyform - have been selected for comparison: both have remarkable influence over the local market and are popular among female consumers. The comparison starts with the analysis of the different ways of representing woman's body and femininity that commonly exist in the local advertising campaign between the UK and China.

Today, the idea of the 'woman's power' is spreading with a rapidly growing influence in British advertising industry. Apart from Bodyform, there are many other well-known sanitary brands that are beginning to pay attention to the new image of women. The emphasis on and communication of women's power can be seen in the official websites of several famous sanitary product brands in the UK (*Figures 10-1; 10-2; 10-3*). For comparison, as we can see from the previous discussion chapters, the image of the new woman and the ideas of feminism are getting more attentions in the Chinese advertising industry. However, the most popular Chinese sanitary brands

such as Anerle and Sofy still have not given up using the traditional feminine elements to decorate their commercials and official websites (Figures 10-4; 10-5), reflecting the different social interpretation of females, femininity, and female bodies in different contexts. Next, this chapter will further look at the visual and textual meanings of the female body as the most significant gendered symbols in the chosen two advert cases from the UK and China respectively.

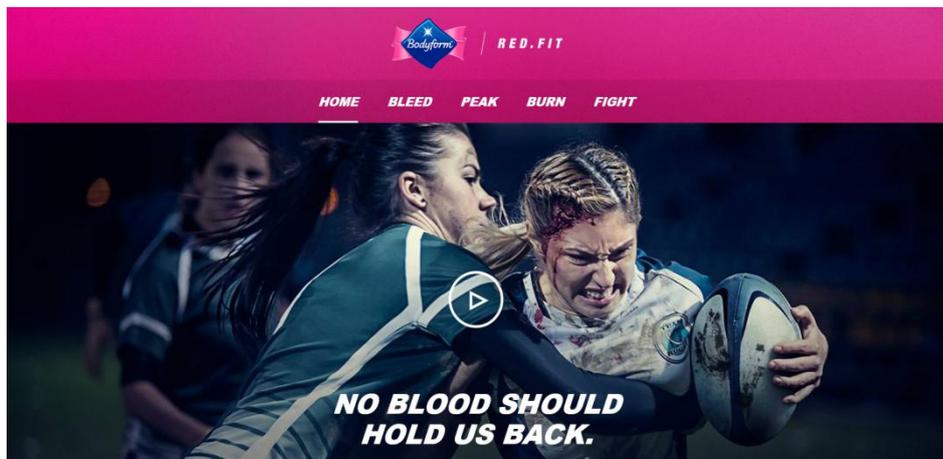


Figure 10- 1 Bodyform official website (2017)

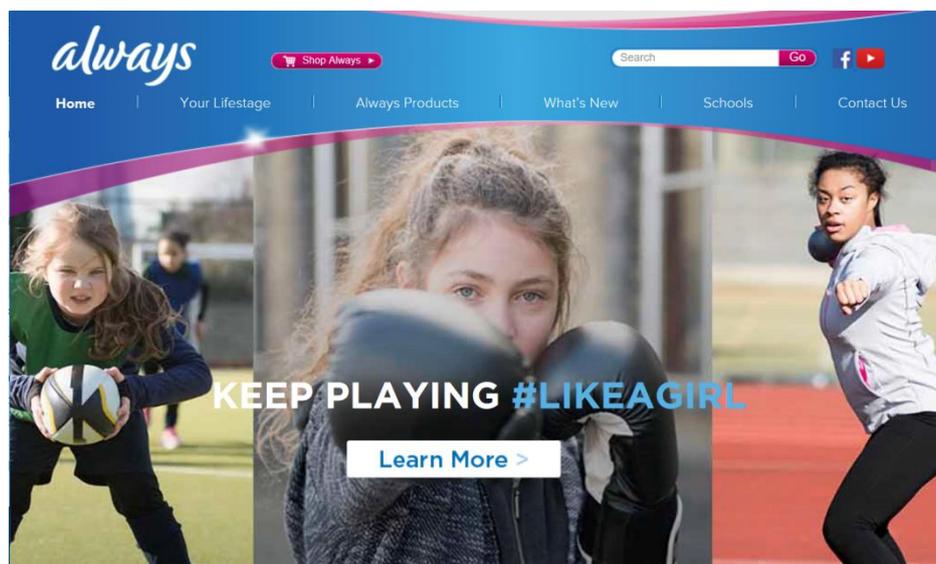


Figure 10- 2 Always official website (2017)



Figure 10- 3 Tampax official website (2017)



Figure 10- 4 Chinese Anerle official website (2017)



Figure 10- 5 Chinese Sofy official website A (2017)

10.2.1 Case 1 Chinese Sofy Commercial: Fairy-Tale in Nowadays

The opening scene of the Sofy commercial takes place in the bedroom in the evening. The leading female character and her female friends are praying: 'Sofy, please make girls' nights change' (Figure 10-6). From the word 'change' it can be seen that for girls, their 'original' night is not satisfactory, and needs to be 'adjusted'. The female characters in this commercial, however, accept the *fait accompli* that girls are born as girls and they cannot change their biological attributes. The way to change the 'unsatisfactory' situation is to pray. When the commercial shows that the girls' night need to be changed, it could be understood that women's nights are different from those of other genders. This kind of setting of the female character is in the line with the traditional discourse of gender difference. For a long time, gender difference has been assumed to be bio-determinative as a natural phenomenon. Gender differences are considered as essential, universal, binary, and persistent. This view permeates extensively throughout patriarchal culture in both the UK and China.

At this moment, two magic rabbits appear (Figure 10-7). The two magic rabbits

integrate the sanitary pad and underwear together, naming the new product 'peace of mind', and send them to the praying girls. The appearance of the two rabbits, on the one hand, is representative of the Sofy sanitary pad; on the other hand, they connote the usual sense of 'femininity' from their appearances and colours. They are acting as the external part that links the female characters with femininity and the pure female space. Through a further affirmation of the female characters' relationship with femininity and the female space, the female cognitive process in this commercial presupposes a premise of an essentialist concept of gender, that there is a universal category of 'women'; they enjoy a common set of experiences not only coming from their same physiological and biological characteristics, but also from their position of being defined as the woman by the feminine symbols. Such essentialist representations of the woman-femininity relation are attempting to draw a line between the man and the woman and to provide a one-dimensional picture: that is woman is feminine and needs to be 'rescued' by external forces (such as the rabbits and the sanitary pad). This kind of representation reaffirms the fact that the concepts of woman and femininity are constructed by societies, discourses, power, and cultures.



Figure 10- 6 praying girls in Sofy advert



Figure 10- 7 Sofy Magic Rabbits in Sofy advert



Figure 10- 8 woman's body curves A in Sofy advert



Figure 10-9 woman's body curves B in Sofy advert

In the next commercial scene, the girls receive the Sofy sanitary napkins and put them on behind the curtain. Because of the coverage and the curtain, the facial features of the female characters in this scene are erased (*Figures 10-8; 10-9*). As a result, the curve of the female body is highlighted through the lens processing, where the female has been processed as a body silhouette with a discernible hip and waistline. As John Berger writes in *Ways of Seeing*:

'Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight' (Berger, 1972: 47).

This has been quoted by van Zoonen (1994) to describe a phenomenon that often appears in representations, where the female body is often constructed as the object of the male gaze and shown as the object of desire, fantasy, and violence, especially in pornography representations. Through the silhouette of feminine body parts shown in the Sofy advert, we can see a series of sexy and docile female symbols. These sexual and feminine symbols of the female body have created an invisible but effective

representation which is in the same line with the softcore pornography²⁰. This is evidenced in the next advertising scene (*Figure 10-9*), where the emergence of the sanitary pad blocks the private part of the female body silhouette. The lines of woman's waist and buttock are depicted on the packaging of the Sofy sanitary pad, making the Sofy sanitary one significant symbol of femininity, and resulting in the materialisation of the female's body parts.



Figure 10- 10 waking up in the morning in Sofy advert

Next, the female characters in the advertisement wake up happily (*Figure 5*). In this scene, all the colours are fresh and bright, including the white bed and decorative pink roses, and the background music includes a cheerful young woman's voice. The highlighting of femininity is further enhanced in the next scene, where the women are in a garden, and the leading character waves a magic wand, saying 'Rainbow! Come out!' Then, the garden fountain suddenly opens to show a rainbow, as the voice-over says 'being the girl, keeping the highlight'. This commercial provides a fantastic and magical world for the female characters, and also for the female audiences. Sanitary pad has been magically shaped, which dramatically meets the girls' longings for traditional fairy tales, echoing the girl's prayer at the beginning of the advertisement.

²⁰ 'Softcore pornography' refers to commercial or sexually suggestive photos or films that have less sexually exposed ingredients (Dubberley, 2005).

Furthermore, the official site of Sofy sanitary products is decorated with fantastic feminine elements including pink hearts, stars, and lovely rabbits (Figure 10-11). The Sofy logo could be understood as a kind of protection, situating the sanitary napkin as a guardian for women (Figure 10-12). Combined with modern feminine decorative elements, this creates a modern fairy tale for female audiences. Through the representation of the female body, the universal and disciplined gendered body has been produced; its continuation is accomplished through technical discourse of sanitary product, making the woman's body in the menstrual period an influential discourse generated by the investment in the sanitary product.



Figure 10- 11 Sofy official website B (2017)



Figure 10- 12 logo of Sofy

10.2.2 Case 2 War of Women in British Bodyform Commercial

From the second commercial, we can see considerable differences between the Sofy advertisement and the British Bodyform advertisement in terms of the camera angles, tones, tones of the images, background music, and character settings. The colour tones of the Bodyform advert are dark and cold, with long and brief rhythm background music which could easily evoke the Cold War era in the audience's mind. The characters are shot from a low angle, which hints at the power and authority of the advertising characters (Berger, 1982: 38). The beginning of this advertisement shows the audience a series of images of female characters or female body parts (*Figures 10-13; 10-14; 10-15; 10-16; 10-17*): the facial contours of the dancers as they walk out of the darkness; the facial features of the female footballer's bleeding forehead; female skateboarders clutching skateboards; a close-up of the female boxer's back; a close-up of the female runner's lips; a the female cyclist riding on her bicycle, looking down at the screen in the snow-covered woods. This series of representations of the female body connotes the strong side of women.



Figure 10- 13 skateboard players in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 14 cyclist in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 15 runner in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 16 football players in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 17 climber in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 18 dancer in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 19 warrior in Bodyform advert

The next scene uses a tracking lens to show a series of scenes talking about how the above-mentioned female characters got hurt during sports: the boxer was hit on the nose; the footballer fell to the ground during a competition; the runner fell down on the mountain path; the surfer got injured in the sea; the dancer was hurt during practice; the mountain rider was wounded in the leg; the skateboarder injured her elbow; the outdoor climber cut the hand during climbing. Among these female characters, there is an image of a female knight riding on a horse and holding a sword in her hand, with multiple injuries and blood on her face. Compared to the images of other female characters, a sense of the Cold War was evoked by the appearance and action of this female character. This image can be understood from two perspectives: it shows a higher female social position, as women were generally not encouraged to fight in the past, and it could also be understood as a symbol of the female spirit in overcoming difficulties (*Figure 10-19*).

In this process of female struggle, the bleeding body is a typical event. In the next scene, then, the camera turns to portray the dancer's bleeding toes (*Figure 10-20*). The dancer put on her shoes again and is ready to stand up, while the runner takes a breath and prepares to continue running. These portrayals use close-up shooting angles of the female characters' faces, giving the audience an intuitive sense of their subtle changes in expression: a pained expression gives way to a spiritual state of high morale. Then,

the lens cuts to the runner's legs, where the bleeding does not stop her from running. The knight manipulates her horses and assumes the posture of assault like Napoleon crossing the Alps. The soccer player shoots and cheers her team to victory with a bleeding forehead. A line of text appears on the screen, saying 'no blood should hold us back'; the background is the vision of the female knight waving the flag while riding the running horse. Next, the close-up camera features the dancer's hands and feet and the boxer's nose and mouth. The dancer starts dancing and the boxer beats her opponent, accompanied by the background sound of crashing glass. The advertisement finishes here, and the logo of Bodyform appears with the text 'live fearless' on the screen, with bright red blood as the background.



Figure 10- 20 bleeding dancer in Bodyform advert



Figure 10- 21 bleeding climber in Bodyform advert

10.3 Reading and Comparison: Symbolisation of Female - Body Politics

The similarity between the two adverts lies in the fact that, due to the nature of female sanitary products, both advertisements have designed a gendered 'positioning' for women through the description of sanitary product and the representations of the female body, thereby realising and re-organising a gender surveillance system that is under the influence of patriarchal society and has been challenged by feminist and commercial discourses. Although both of the Chinese and British adverts are related to female sanitary products, however, there are remarkable differences in terms of their representations of the female body, including the different styles of body-related femininity, different purposes of the represented body, and different representations of blood as a part of female body. Moreover, the images of the body in these two commercials are not unique, but commonly exist in advertising in the local cultures.

In the following sections, I will conduct a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences of the representations of the female body between the British and Chinese commercials.

10.3.1 Similarity behind Representations - Menstruation and Gender Surveillance

Before starting the discussion of women's representation in the sanitary product commercials, it is important to look first at the development process of the advertising of the feminine sanitary product, as sanitary napkin advertising has been closely related to the gender surveillance system that has been imposed on the female body in both the UK and China. Historically speaking, commercials for women's menstrual products in China and the United Kingdom have both undergone a process of constant development and reformation, which is closely linked with the changing social

awareness of the female body and woman's social status in different historical periods.

In the early period, women used various materials such as wool or cotton to absorb menstrual blood (Friedman, 2007). The menstrual blood was long-termly considered as a 'dirty' symbol or a shameful thing that was unfit for public discussion (Zhu, 2011; Caster, 2015; Røstvik, 2018). Changes and progress in feminine hygiene began to take shape since Western cultures move forward into the modern age; for example, in the early 20th century, modern values began to shape people's concepts and beliefs in the United States (Ruck et al., 2018). Menstrual product commercials, sex education programs, and promotion by drug stores and education pamphlets broadly distrusted modern approaches to menstruation, which in turn slowly supported new positions for women in home and in society (Røstvik, 2018). The first disposable sanitary pad was used by French nurses looking for effective methods to stop excessive bleeding on the battlefield (Femme International, 2013). Borrowing this idea, the American Kimberly-Clark company produced the first of the disposable pads. In the early period of the 20th century, however, the sanitary product was a notoriously tricky category to advertise in public, as people during that time believed that it was improper for sanitary protection products to appear directly in commercials (Gurowitz, 2008). In order to avoid causing undue embarrassment during a purchase, Johnson & Johnson introduced silent purchase coupons for sanitary products in the 1930s (*Figure 10-22*).

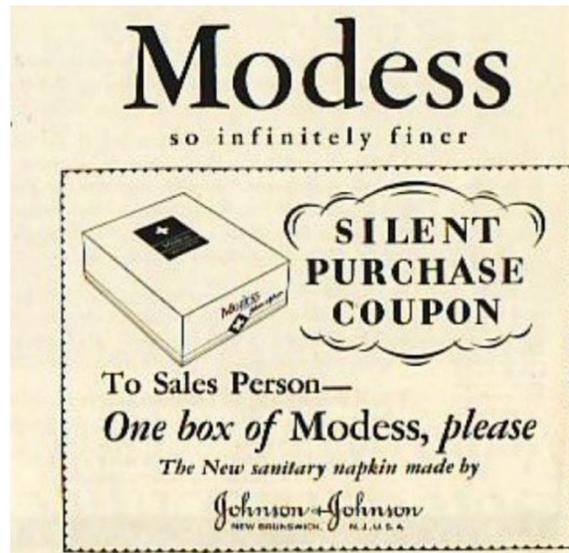


Figure 10- 22 Modess advert in Good Housekeeping Magazine 1937 (Gurowitz, 2008)

Since the mid-20th century, sanitary products began to reach the advertising stage in a half-concealed way in the British society (Gurowitz, 2008). In China, the first television sanitary product commercial appeared in the late 1980s (Long, 2017). In nowadays, television adverts offer numerous sanitary product commercials almost every day. The development of sanitary napkin advertising - which developed from implying sanitary napkin products to directly showing the products even the menstruation blood to the mass audience - could be regarded as the awakening of the female self-consciousness and the wide acceptance of feminist ideas on the menstruation and the female private body part.

After the cultural taboo of advertising representation of sanitary products was gradually eliminated, the focus returned to the text of the advertisement itself. The female advertising characters who were hypothetically in their menstrual periods in adverts represent a standard category symbolising the relationship between the woman and the sanitary product technology (as in the Sofy commercial, updates to sanitary products result in the 'changed' women's nights). The dialogues between female advertising characters in the Sofy ad construct the speech object of the subject: the uncomfortable menstruation.

The discourse of uncomfortable menstruation constructs the social phenomena in the field where the mobility of the interrelationship between gender and social development is visible, showing the dependence of women on the development of sanitary product technology. It produces and disseminates power/knowledge, which directly affects both the advertising construction of the discourse of women and advertising texts. The cognitive subject (woman), the perceived objects (sanitary products), and the modalities of knowledge (the woman's self-recognition changing according to updates in sanitary products) are all the results of the unique historical changes (from around 100 years ago until now) in power/knowledge relations of gender, which are produced, transferred, and strengthened within the discourses and social norms of gender. In other words, the subjective construction of the discourses of women and menstruation is always in process. Therefore, the advertising representations of women and menstruation and the effect of the representations are constantly updated.

In the chosen cases, the discourses of menstruation and the discourse of technology (the update of the sanitary products) are both involved in the construction of women's identity consciousness in menstrual periods: women need to be aware of the new advertised sanitary products in order to make their life better, which is seen in commercial texts from 'let the girls' nights change' to 'no blood should hold us back'. Although the representation of the woman-napkin relation is aiming to fulfil the selling purpose of these commercials, it still sets a clear position for these female characters in their menstrual periods, where every discourse about menstruation and femininity defines the characteristics, standard features and conditions of the theme of the female body. In this sense, the symbol of sanitary napkin commercials has enrolled in constructing a set of traditional or new sexuality surveillance systems for women and menstruation.

10.3.2 Differences in the Representation of Female Bodies between the UK and China

The two sanitary napkin advertisements both embody the influence of the gender supervision system created by the operation of power through the so-called development of the technology of sanitary products on the gendered group named 'being a woman'. In terms of advertisement representations, however, the difference of representations of female bodies is significant. Such differences are not the exception, but are widely present in the advertising industries of both countries.

10.3.2.1 Representations of Blood

The first difference of the representation of the female body between the Sofy advert and the Bodyform advert is the diametrically different representation of blood, which reflects the social regulation of the female body.

The menstrual blood is a part of the gendered body. As discussed in Chapter 2, the regulation and control on the female body are manifested in the training of physical norms of woman, including the height, weight, action, appearance, behaviours, and ways of living (Li, 1993), which are carried out through humiliation, ridicule, avoidance, and persecution (Jaggar et al., 1998). The control of physical excreta such as menstrual blood is one significant link in the regulation of gender, as the body must discharge these 'dirty' matters (such as tears, faeces, menstrual blood, and so on) in order to establish a 'clean and appropriate' body (Li, 1998; Robinson et al., 1998:75). In this sense, menstrual blood is both separated from the gendered body, and also a part of it. The representation of menstrual blood, therefore, can be seen as the reflective of power and social norms imposed on woman and woman's body. The next sections will continue to explore the different representations of menstrual blood in the Chinese and British adverts, and examine the discourse of gender and dominant ideology around menstruation behind these representations.

· The Blue 'Blood' in Chinese Sofy Commercial



Figure 10- 23 the blue liquid in Sofy commercial

As we can see from the Sofy commercial, a blue liquid has been used to represent menstrual blood. On the one hand, this is a specialised treatment under the limitation of administrative advertising regulations in China; on the other hand, it can be seen as the result of the negotiation of abstinence culture and commercialism.

One of the items in *Self-Discipline Guidance for Sanitary Products Advertisement*, customised by the Chinese Advertising Association, has prohibited the usage of red and similar colours in presenting the absorbable liquid in mass media (Liao, 2008). Therefore, no red liquid is allowed to be represented in any Chinese sanitary napkin advertisement. Avoiding talking about menstrual blood does not merely happen due to the pressure of political regulation in China or because advertisers would like to create a visual fantasy for these 'uncomfortable' things. In fact, the abstinence culture and the ignorance about menarche and menstruation have co-contributed to a common negative, disgusted and fearful feeling of this female physiological phenomenon in Chinese society (Li, 1998), which to some extent also effects the representation of menstrual blood in advertising.

As a part of the body, menstrual blood is a critical juncture that makes women aware of their gender differences with men because the menstrual blood could be regarded as a signal that the little girl is beginning to change into a mature woman (Knight, 1995; Li, 1998). The description of menstrual blood has been affected by a lot of misunderstanding, fear, and disgust throughout history all around the world (Laws, 1990). The negative evaluation of menstruation reflects the ignorance of the 'incomprehensible' physiological phenomena as well as the low social status of women in the past (Li, 1998). These historical reasons still have influence on the representation of menstrual blood today, for example, in the chosen Chinese case advert, the representation of red blood (as a regular physiological phenomenon) is missing and replaced by the blue liquid.

The blue liquid in the Sofy commercial expresses a denial and evasion of the menstrual blood as a transformative process of biological sexuality, reflecting the deprecating attitude to woman's physiological feature as well as a psychological tendency of asceticism which is generally existed in the discourse of Neo-Confucianism ('程朱理学'). The replacement of menstrual blood with blue liquid shows that traditions still play a powerful role in the field of advertising representations of the body, reflecting the reality that the mainstream view of the female body in the Chinese context has not been largely re-shaped by feminist and post-modern discourses of gender. As previously discussed, the woman's representation could be seen as a complex negotiation space for the traditional gender view, politics and regulation factors, globalisation, and feminist ideas. Woman's representation, as a gendered object, could be discussed from multiple perspectives, and the various factors listed above could have different levels of effects on different perspectives of the woman's representations. From the perspective of the representation of the feminine 'private' body part, the effect of traditions is still obvious in the Chinese case study advert.

· **The Fight to End Period Blood Shaming in British Bodyform Commercial**

In the British Bodyform commercial, the blood has been constructed as a significant symbol of identity recognition. Looking from the denotation level of the advertisement texts, the advert represents the blood of female characters who get injured during fighting and sports. Combined with the commercial slogan 'no blood should hold us back', this also encompasses menstrual blood from the connotation level.

As previously discussed, menstrual blood can also be considered as a part of the body. It has been constructed in historical myths many times as an 'unclean' matter unsuitable for display and discussion in public. The sanitary product brand Always used a red dot to suggest blood in its commercial in 1993 (*Figure 10-24*), which first broke with the tradition of absence of menstrual blood in sanitary napkin adverts. Blogger Copyrater described this advert as a 'historical advertising moment'. In this sense, the creative representation of women's blood in the Bodyform commercial should be understood as a feminist declaration: a challenge to the shaming of talking and showing female period blood and female body.

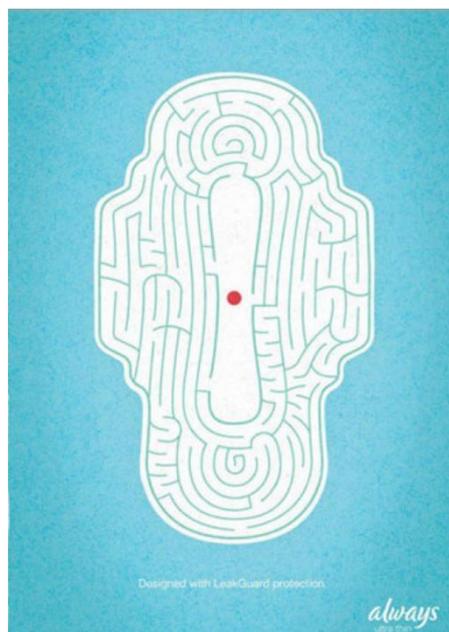


Figure 10- 24 Always ultra-thin with leak guard advert 1993

The fight to end period blood shaming could be regarded as the fight to end the oppression of the female body. As blog writer Rupi Kaur said:

'[...]every woman in the history of humanity has or had a period. Each month, her uterus sheds its lining, sending blood flowing out through her vagina. This process is as natural as eating, drinking and sleeping, and it's beautiful too: There's no human race without it. Yet most of us loathe talking about it.' (Rupi, 2017).

Feminist pioneer Gloria Steinem once proposed a question: 'What would happen, for instance, if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not? The answer is clear - menstruation would become an enviable, boast-worthy, masculine event: men would brag about how long and how much' (Steinem, 1978).

Steinem (1978) imagines a society where 'men-struation' justifies men's social positions, where we could have 'Paul Newman Tampons' or 'Muhammad Ali's Rope-a-Dope Pads' or a new type of compliments: 'Man, you lookin' good!' 'Yeah, man, I'm on the rag!' Nearly forty years later, Steinem's argument still stings. According to Abigail Jones' report on Newsweek 2016:

'Today, tampons and pads are taxed in most states while adult diapers, Viagra, Rogaine and potato chips are not. Men can walk into any bathroom and access all of the supplies they need to care for themselves: toilet paper, soap, paper towels, even seat covers. Women, however, cannot. In most schools, girls have to trek to the nurse's office to ask for a pad or tampon, as if menstruating is an illness rather than a natural function[...].'

In this sense, the direct representation of blood in the Bodyform advertisement is a part of the fight to end period blood shaming today, echoed by the symbol of female warrior interspersed in the advert. Through the representation of blood in the Bodyform advert, we can see that the attitude of the dominant culture to female physiology has slightly changed in the UK. In the past, in both China and the UK,

menstruation was considered as an essential factor limiting women's social activities. It is, even now, often viewed by the dominant discourse of gender as 'women's issues' (Fingerson, 2012: 4). Menstruation restricts women's social activities because it is 'shameful, bewildering, and disempowering' (Fingerson, 2012: 2). The Bodyform advert, however, has shaped a series of female characters who actively participate in various social activities; through the representation of women's blood, which functions as the significant sign of female empowerment, menstruation has become a source of power for women in the British advert, which again corresponds with the advert slogan 'no blood can hold us back' as a feminist declaration.

10.3.2.2 Representations of the Feminine Body and Femininity

The second difference of the representation of the female body between the Chinese Sofy and British Bodyform adverts lies in their construction of femininity.

The Sofy commercial used Chinese actress Angelababy as the leading female character. In the commercial, Angelababy has beautiful long hair and a slim body figure, making wishes in front of the camera. The camera quickly switches to her friends, who are all young, beautiful, and thin, and wearing pink or blue pyjamas. The advertisement uses a series of beautiful and feminine female images full of youthful vitality, trying to make audiences recognise Sofy products through the representation of a series of symbols of 'perfect' femininity that are commonly accepted in the Chinese society.

The femininity represented in the Sofy advertisement can be read from two levels of connotations. The first level of connotation implies the sexy femininity, represented by the silhouette of a sexy female body; the second level of connotation indicates to the cute and innocent femininity, conveyed by the advertising-constructed feminine symbols including the rainbow, magical rabbit, fairy stick, and the girls who need to

be protected. Through these two levels of representation of the female body, the female characters and the femininity discourse have been further constructed and modelled, and the stereotypes of women's beautiful and sexy bodies are established and reconfirmed.

In comparison, the female body displayed in the Bodyform advertisement is not directly linked with traditional femininity and the menstrual period. The representation of the female body in this advert reminds the viewer of violent films through the depiction of the cybered body part including the bleeding toes, the hand covered with scars, bleeding knees, and broken noses. In addition to other paradigmatic differences between the two cases including camera angles, background colours, and so on, the visual effects of these represented bodies are entirely different from the traditional exhilarating feminine elements of the body represented in the Sofy advertisement.

In this sense, the representation of the female character in the Bodyform advert could be regarded as a Mulvey-style attempt to destroy the pleasure of gaze obtained by watching the represented female body. Mulvey pointed out that one of the intentions of her writing was to analyse 'pleasure or beauty', and then 'destroys it' (Mulvey, 1976). In Mulvey's view, the pleasure achieved from gazing the female body is produced by the power structure in which the female body is sexually objectified, and it must be destroyed. For Mulvey, the way to destroy the pleasure of gazing is to remove the traditional female image on the screen; that is, to end the male gaze and replace the traditional Hollywood-style representation with a Brecht-style description, in order to create a distance between the audience and the film which could effectively freeze the gaze of the viewers. Although more attempts need to be made to rid the woman out of the position of being at gazed on the screen, the representation of women in the Bodyform advert could still be regarded as the re-discovery of female subjectivity and the power existing in female bodies, reflecting the awakening of political consciousness around the female body in British society. The next section

will further analyse how these differences between representations are produced in different contexts.

10.3.2.3 Representations of the Body and Feminism

As indicated in earlier chapters, advertising often devalues female and female roles by misrepresenting and manipulating femininity and the female body (Luo & Hao, 2007). Alongside changes in the structure of the relationship between sexes and the development of the dominant ideology, however, we can see that the British case study advert has experimented with different femininities and different modes of performing/interpreting gender, which seems to run counter to the traditional consensus that advertising obstructs the liberation of women. The representation of female bodies in the case advertisement is inseparable from the developments of feminist views of gender and woman. The representation of women in the British commercial, on the one hand, has been influenced and adjusted by feminist and post-feminist discourses, showing the social expectations of women's empowerment and the diversity of women's identities; on the other hand, the British society has completed the shaping of the new female symbols through advertising, and advertising has thus become a popular form of advocating commercial feminist ideas and reflecting the changed views on the relations of woman and femininity.

In comparison, we can see the persistent use of the feminine symbols in the Chinese Sofy sanitary napkin commercial through a series of young feminine female characters and sexy female bodies in the advertising representation. These gendered symbols of woman and woman's body reflect the stereotyped understanding of women in the Chinese traditional gender ideological system.

In traditional Chinese society, the male power system dispels the subjectivity and self-awareness of women through a series of gender constraints which incorporates

women into the male-dominant social discourse and power system around gender (Ebrey, 1993). Women are governed and monitored by a complete set of norms that regulate female identity and body. Today, the development of society and the spread of feminism have prompted Chinese women to consciously or unconsciously ask for improvements of women's social status and social recognition of women's power and significant roles from the perspectives of politics, economy, labour market, family and household; the current Chinese society views the relationship between the sexes as more equal and objective (Wang Qi, 2016; Zhang Xiaoquan, 2016; Song Lina, 2016; Mu Aiping, 2016; Zhang Mei, 2016).

Although some Chinese women today have begun to pay attention to their career developments and are eager to gain the right to 'speak' (see the discussion on new women in Chapter 9), however, it is undeniable that in China, gender is still an important label for the classification of groups (Zhang Mei, 2016). Many traditional ideas about gender and gender identity still impact the common understanding of gender concepts in nowadays, hindering the developments of feminism and post-feminism in China. Under the influence of the long-term indoctrination of Chinese patriarchy cultural system and traditional gender concepts, the empowerment awareness of many women are still relatively weak, which shows a substantial lag compared to modern and post-modern feminist ideas and values (Zhang, 2016). The represented female characters and female bodies in the Sofy commercial can be taken as an excellent example of this gap as the female advertising characters unconsciously place themselves in the positions of being gazed and protected, obediently follow the regulation of menstruation discourse represented in the advert, and automatically accept the feminine and 'being protected' roles that the advertising texts have set for them.

10.4 Summary

In conclusion, the factors mentioned above, in the end, co-contribute to the feminine representation of the woman's body in the Sofy advertisement, which once again strengthened the differences between genders that have long been established in traditional cultures. The female advertising characters are prescribed to play the roles of conventional femininity, reflecting a significant gap between the feminist ideas of being a modern woman and the traditional discourse of feminism, which further shows the inadequate and hysteretic development of feminism and post-feminism in Chinese context. By contrast, the representation of the female body and the blood in the British Bodyform advert show the logic of the power of women and transparent modern feminist ideas. Such feminist signs do not always there since the birth of the modern advertising industry but have undergone a process of long-term development, negotiation, compromise and transformation.

Appearances and behaviours of female characters in the Bodyform commercial (and other similar commercials) do not conform to the traditional definition of femininity in the patriarchal gender system but reflect the significant features of the awakening self-consciousness of modern British women. The Bodyform advertisement subverts the authority of male discourse and shows the audiences the possibility of achieving the independent consciousness of identity and subjectivity by showing the female advert characters' accomplishment of a series of challenging things, at the same time, the representation provokes the vigilance of the effect of patriarchal cultural norms on the representation of traditional femininity. In this process, the female characters in the case advert have acquired satisfaction and pleasure, and fulfilled their own redefining the concept of women: I am capable of doing anything and the menstruation cannot hold me back.

By comparing the representation of women's bodies, we can see that the developments of feminism have a relatively large gap between the UK and China. The

social interpretation of female and female bodies in the Chinese context still does not get rid of the constraints of the traditional male-dominated power structure. However, we cannot conclude that feminism is failed in China. First, as previously discussed, the new image of women which has been dramatically impacted by feminist discourse is emerging in Chinese advertising campaign (see the discussion of new women in Chapter 9). Second, the representation of women in Sofy commercial, on the one hand does not entirely in line with the traditional Chinese concept of the woman which emphasise the dedication and maternity, on the other hand is far from the modern feminist concept of the independent woman. The representation of women in Sofy advert, on the one hand, reflects the fact that feminism is not as fully developed in Chinese society as it was in the United Kingdom; on the other hand, this kind of representations of femininity is closely related to the new relationship between gender roles and the modern society in the current Chinese context, which will be further explained in Chapter 13.

Chapter 11 Female Body Exposure, Sex and Visual Attraction

11. 1 Introduction

Chapter 10 compared the British and Chinese advertising representations of the female body from the perspective of the body display. This chapter continues the theme of the female body and turns the focus to the relationship between sexuality and the nudity of the female body, aiming to examine how British and Chinese advertisements capture women's physical attraction and body display and how the similarity and difference are produced in the process of globalisation.

In this chapter, I choose two Durex commercials from China and the UK respectively. These two ads could be regarded as another attempt of Durex to carry out its international marketing project. In the consumer society, one of the goals pursued by global brands such as Durex is to expand their markets to a global area. They actively incorporate local talent, content, and cultural values, merging the global and the local to maximize their business benefit, which indirectly produces glocalisation and cultural hybridity through the global advertising (Roudometof, 2016). Glocalisation is portmanteau word of globalisation and localisation, which neutralises tensions between global and local forces (Roudometof, 2016). Global advertising of the international brand, as pointed by Wind, Sthanunathan, & Malcom (2013), follows three general principles: 'a global concept based on a universal human motivation'; 'a unified brand vision that allows for local modifications'; and 'an infrastructure, including culture, technology, and other resources, which facilitates the collaborations between global and local players'. Based on this, these two Durex ads can be understood as excellent examples to examine how advertising uses sex to accomplish the visual attraction of ad content in different contexts. These two ads share the common brand concept and the unwritten global secret in the advertising industry - 'the sex sells'. Representations of Durex ads in different contexts allow for local modifications. Therefore, through interpretations of these two ads, we have the

opportunity to get a glimpse of the social and cultural factors behind the use of the gazed female body and female-related sexual signs and symbols in the advertising texts.

11.2 Cases analysis: Women in Durex Commercials

The British Durex ad described a series of scenes happened between the female role and the male role including rendezvous in an ancient log cabin (*Figure 11-1*), having sex (*Figure 11-2*) and returning from the fantasy to the reality (*Figure 11-3*). This ad constantly uses verbal and visual elements such as provocative figures, dialogues, and actions to attract viewers. The sex-related symbols and sexual content in the ad include: kissing, hugging, sexual intercourse; female body exposure and other visual factors (the setting of advertising characters, context, provocative expressions and camera effects), and sexual talk and voice-over ('Discover the new Durex Pleasure Ring for him and for her, be heroes for the night').

The Chinese Durex commercial does not directly use sexual elements to represent the gender relation but employs a meaningful gender display and a series of rhetorical symbols with sexual implications to connect sexual behavior between the male and female advertising characters. At the beginning of the ad, the male and the female characters experiences an unpleased Bungee Jumping because the jumping rope is too short (*Figures 11-4; 11-5; 11-6*). At this time the slogan appears: 'Want to make the time longer? Try Durex long-lasting.' Then the bungee rope is lengthened, the male character hugs the female character, jumps down and they both have a happy time (*Figure 11-7*). The sign of Bungee in the case study advertisement can be regarded as symbolic interaction. Advertisers use the closeness between Bungee Jumping and sex - which both need certain durability - to realise the denotation of Bungee Jumping as a sexual symbol. The syntagmatic axis is logical and meaningful, and the paradigmatic axis guide audiences to produce associations. The copy does not provide any direct

description of the sexual composition, but the brand of Durex has been embellished in the commercial, which helps the audience focus on the real indicator of the symbolic sexual system in this commercial - the Durex condom.



Figure 11- 1 British Durex advert scene 1



Figure 11- 2 British Durex advert scene 2



Figure 11-3 British Durex advert scene 3



Figure 11-4 Chinese Durex advert scene 1



Figure 11- 5 Chinese Durex advert scene 2



Figure 11- 6 Chinese Durex advert scene 3



Figure 11- 7 Chinese Durex advert scene 4

11.3 Comparison and Discussion

By comparing and analysing the images of women in the Chinese and British Durex advertisements, we can see that some similarities and differences existed in the gendered representations in the two advertisements, which are shown as follows:

11.3.1 Similarities and Discussion - Realisation of Women's To-be-looked-at-ness

The similarity between the two advertisements lies in the ways and purposes for the usage of female body and femininity, despite vast differences in plot settings, character designs and narrative styles. As we can see, both these adverts try to use a number of symbols of femininity to attract audiences, which is determined by the characteristics of advertising and the operating mode of the male gaze as discussed in previous chapters.

This chapter also finds similarities of the construction way of female bodies in both adverts, including the youthful look of the female characters, smaller body sizes (compared to the male characters), close shots of the female breast, and so on. The youthful look of the advertising female characters is a sign of health and sex appeal,

and the female characters are also drawn towards masculine power and displays of strength. A smaller body size defines the classic feminine shape, which conveys a 'being-protected' image, as this is a sign of vulnerability and appeal to a male's self-identification through cultural transmission as a protector. The breast is also an important component of attraction and gender display (*Figures 11-3, 11-4*). These exhibitions of women's bodies have repeatedly been shown in many advertisements in China and the United Kingdom. The attraction of the female body is socially constructed as an instantaneous decision, and we can see that the social construction processes of the female body are similar in China and the UK.

Although both the Chinese and British advertisements use femininity as an important decoration, however, the sexual cues around female bodies and the female body exposures are represented differently between the Chinese and British Durex advertisements. Where the British advertisement uses copious description of naked body parts and sexual behaviours, the scenes in the Chinese advertisements do not seem to have much to do with sexuality. The next sections will further interpret the differences in the representation of the female body between the Chinese and British Durex advertisements.

11.3.2 Differences and Discussion

The differences of representations of female body and femininity include:

11.3.2.1 Different Function of the Female Body in Gender Settings

Although these two advertisements both use the female body as one of the visual elements of the advertisement, the represented female bodies play different roles in the gender setting in each advert, and at the same time, the constructions of the gendered symbols associated with femininity and female body also show considerable

differences in these two advert cases.

As we can see from the advertising narratives, both the Chinese and British advertisements use attraction and interaction between the sexes as the mainstay of the narrative. When it comes to the settings of sexes, however, the difference in the function of gendered roles between the two adverts is apparent at a glance. In the British Durex advert, the functions of the female and male characters are similar in promoting the development of the advertising plots, which can be proved by the active behaviour of the female characters in the represented sexual behaviour, and the advertising slogans 'be heroes for the night'. The heroes here are used in the plural form and are spoken by male and female voices. In this sense, the female body can be regarded as a channel for the display of exogenous feelings of sex: women get pleasure through sexual contact, as do men.

In the Chinese Durex advertisement, the protective function of the male character is pronounced. He provides hugs and comfort to the female character before the bungee jump, and is asked to find solutions to the female character's complaints. The Chinese Durex advert focuses on the interaction between the female and male characters, connoting the weakness of the female and the power of the male in the gender relation. In the Chinese advert, the role of the female body and the subjective initiative of the female character have been weakened, and the symbol of the female body becomes an dependent objective existence separate from the subjectivity of the advertising character.

In this sense, the femininity displayed by the Chinese Durex advert can independently exist without the female body, which precisely coincides with traditional ideas of the body in China. In the logic of the ancient Chinese body view, the body is no longer limited to the physical body. As reviewed in Chapter 4, the Chinese traditional body concept believes that the physical body can be opened to the infinite world through our subjectivities and consciousness, and the pure physical entity of the body does not

exist. Therefore, in the Chinese advertisement, the female body is not the object of highlighting femininity and strengthening sex distinction because the shaping of femininity is accomplished through the representation and narrative of the whole advert, rather than just through the physical existence of the female body. Therefore, the description of the feminine and female sexual body seems less prominent in the Chinese advert when compared with the British advert. This leads to my discussion of the second difference of the represented female body: the exposure and nudity of the female body in advertising.

11.3.2.2 Body Exposure and Nudity

In addition to the different functions of the female body, it is not difficult to find that a significant difference exists in representations of female nudity and body exposure between the British and Chinese Durex advertisement cases.

As we can see, the female character in Chinese Durex advert is relatively conservatively dressed up while the woman in British advert is more exposed, implying the different myths about nudity and sexuality in these two cultures which owe more to the gender ideologies in different contexts than to the preferences of the advertisers. The different representations of the nudity levels and body exposure of the female advertising characters reflect the different attitudes to the nudity of female body between British and Chinese contexts.

The public's attitude to the representation of nudity has different development trajectories between the East and the West. In the Western cultures, the representations of nudity is relatively common and free and social views of the nude female body are open compared with the Confucian culture, proven by many cases from the nude female statues in ancient Greece to the cover girls in *Playboy* in contemporary America. In Western civilisations, the praise and appreciation of the beauty of

physical body and the nudity can be traced back to centuries BC (Liddell, 2011; Zhang, 2013). In the Pericles period (the 5th century BC), the dualism of the separation of the body and soul was generally accepted by philosophers such as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato (Wickramasekera, 2014). Ancient Greek philosophers believed that the soul is noble and immortal while the body is greedy and filthy due to the desire of human, however, it did not stop Socrates and Plato to praise the beauty of the female body in their daily life while paradoxically belittling the body in their philosophical thoughts (Zhang, 2013; Li, 2018). From the 5th century, the Mediaeval Christian religious practices such as sexual abstinence and fasting made a strict controlling of sexuality and the nude body (Kalof, 2014; Li, 2018). But since the Enlightenment, humanistic thoughts occupied the mainstream of social and ideological trends, the public's views on representations of sexuality and female body became more open and positive, and the naked body became the mainstream aesthetic object in Western societies again (Turner, 2010: 113-131; Li, 2018). As a rebellion against industrialisation and rationalism, people in Western societies began to 'admire nature and the aesthetic appeal of the end of primitive society - appreciating the beauty of human body' (Zhang, 2013). In the British context, after a high degree of industrialisation and long-term bondage to Fordism, people's attitudes towards the nudity have been gradually changing. This could be proven by a series of social movements that challenged traditional codes of sexuality and body in the British society. One of the most well-known examples is the sexual revolution taken place from the 1960s to the 1980s in Britain (Cook, 2005).

In China, the body has been given a strong political meaning in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, so the physicality of individual body was often overlooked (Ames, 1993; Huang Junjie, 1996). The regulations of the representations and descriptions of the body before the Ming Dynasty (AC1368-1644) were relatively loose (Li, 1993), and the descriptions of the female body often appeared in literary and artistic works. However, in traditional Chinese culture, the nakedness of the body was still considered as a rebellious or immoral behaviour, which not only loses face,

but also ruins the normal social order ('有伤风化') (Michaels, 2014; Chen, 2007). Under the control of a strong new Confucian political ideology, represented by Neo-Confucianism ('程朱理学') in Ming Dynasty, the feudal period of anti-sexual abstinence in China was particularly long. After the Reform and Opening-up in the 1980s, with the wider contacts with Western modern concepts and ideas, the Chinese society had just stepped out of the shadow of 'cannot talk about the topic of nude in public' (Li, 1993), but the Neo-Confucian views on the female body and nudity still exist in representations, social customs, concepts, laws and regulations in China. The social traditions and some considerations of political factors in the current China have made the regulation and censorship of the representation of body (especially female body) relatively strict (Chen, 2007), resulting in the less advertising representations of the nudity of women compared with the UK.

11.3.2.3 Female Body and Representations of Sexuality

Similar to the exposure of the female advertising characters, Chinese and British advertising have different ways of depicting sexual behaviours. The Chinese Durex advert uses a metaphorical method to express the importance of safe sexual behaviour; a story about bungee jumping is used as the main line to describe the relationship between male and female characters. The British Durex advert applies a series of sexually suggestive signs and the naked body to describe sex, while the Chinese advert creates a romantic love story to represent gender relations, where sexuality has been reduced to a tiny part that is never openly described. The avoidance of sexual description in Chinese advertising representations is confirmed by the advertising construction of women's idealised male images, as discussed in Chapter 13.

From a business point of view, an essential consideration for this 'carefulness' in sexual representations in Durex adverts, as well as in other commercials in the Chinese advertising industry, is the product of the official discourse of sexuality and

the related laws and regulations. In 1989, China's State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC) issued the *Regulations on the Prohibition of Advertising Advertisements on Sex Products* to forbid the media representation of sex products including condom (China Development Brief, September 26th 2014). In 2014, for the purpose of AIDS prevention and control, SAIC lifted the condom advertising ban and allowed the description of condom on the television screen (China Development Brief, September 26th 2014), but resistance to and disapproval of sexual representation have persisted in China in the past decades. For comparison, the restrictions on the reproduction of sexual codes in advertisements are relatively less strict in British society. In the UK, sex is one of the hot topics concerned with politics, sociology, history, and philosophy, while in China, and the theme of sex is considered by the masses as a topic of undecidability and vulgarity (Li, 2008; 2009). The cultural factors shaped the significant different representation of sexuality between the British and Chinese Durex commercials: compared with the direct representation of sex in the British case study advert, the Chinese advertising narrative (from the Chinese Durex advert to the wider conception of the idealised male discussed in Chapter 13) eventually 'sublimated' into the level of realising the benefits of the whole family, in which the individual sexual desire and lust have been abandoned.

As we can see from the Chinese Durex commercial, the representation of sexuality is still a politically restricted area in mainstream Chinese media today. Chinese culture, however, did not 'imprison' the topic of sexuality from the very beginning (Li, 1993). Before the Tang Dynasty, Chinese society adopted an open attitude towards sex and sexual descriptions (Hays, 2015). The repression of sexuality began in the Song Dynasty when the Neo-Confucian discourse ('程朱理学') advocates the idea of 'the spiritual control of human beings and destroyed human desires' (存天理, 灭人欲). The government began to construct sexuality and nudity as 'bad' and 'corrupt' things in order to control the spirit of the mass to achieve social stability and ensure the consent of the governed. The official political discourse sharpened the negative views of sexuality in the Chinese organisational discourse of gender which still has significant

impact in today's society (Li, 1993). During the Cultural Revolution, literature and media involving sexual content were considered to be 'yellow' and the political enemy of 'revolution' as they represented the 'bourgeois lifestyle'; the sexual representation completely disappeared in the mainstream media, and the public's fear of the topic of sex reached an unprecedented peak in Chinese culture, eventually resulting in an asexual culture during the Cultural Revolution in Chinese society (Li, 1993; Walden, 2008). Since the 1980s, due to the demands of Reform - Opening Up and globalisation, the attitudes of the Chinese authorities regarding sexuality have gradually changed (Xiao, Mehrotra & Zimmerman, 2011). But the Chinese government is still insisting on 'the construction of spiritual civilisation', protecting young people from the negative effects of the 'pornographic/yellow content' and media representations of sex and sexual behaviours (*Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Strengthening the Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation*, 1996).

Although sexual content and representation are still banned in the mainland mainstream media, the Chinese government has given up punishment for many non-marital sexual activities (such as premarital sex, extramarital affairs, and one-night stands) (Li, 1993). The representation way of sexuality and the female body in modern Chinese mass media can be seen as products of the negotiation between globalisation and Chinese political discourse, and the descriptions of sexuality and nudity in the Chinese Durex commercial constitute just one representative product in this unique cultural context.

Foucault (1976: 14) predicts that future sexuality could be unruly and free, and a 'garden of earthly delights'. As Foucault writes: 'We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but - and this is the important point - a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities'

(Foucault: 1976: 49). Therefore, what we can foresee is that with the continuous development of globalisation and the deepening interaction between Chinese and Western/British cultures, we might be able to see more open policies or regulations on sexual representation and more sexual representations similar to the British Durex advert in Chinese advertising one day in the future.

11.3.2.3 Regulations and Behind the Regulations

The reason for the difference in the physical and sexual advertising representations of women between China and the UK lies in different social cultures and gender discourses. From a practical perspective, the two countries have different regulations on female body representation and sexual content. The regulations in these two countries draw on a whole range of discourses - political, cultural, religious, medical, pedagogic, psychological and aesthetic - to determine whether or which kind of female or sexual representations might be immoral, tasteless, harmful or, conversely, have political, educational or aesthetic values.

In the UK, according to Arthurs (2004: 21), the influence of religion is still visible in the British society in the late of the 20th century, leading to a series of regulations on the representations of female body and sexuality. However, the rise of 'neo-liberal' economics and the values of consumerism have joined the religious factors with contradictory effects on women's sexual representations and the related regulations (Arthurs, 2004: 21-22). In the UK, *The Video Recordings Act 1984* introduced the R18-rated classification for media content, clarifying that 'the portrayal of sexual activity can range from kissing to detail of unstimulated sex. The normalisation of overtly sexualised behaviour is a concern at the junior categories. The classification system allows progressively stronger portrayals of sexual behaviour as the categories rise' (*BBFC Classification Guidelines*, 2014). In addition, British obscenity laws demand that media texts cannot contain things that might 'corrupt or deprave' in order

to protect children in this respect (Arthurs, 2004: 22). The Broad-casting Standards Commission (BSC) strengthened the top-down regulations on sexual representation, and formulated a 'Code on Sexual Conduct' that included rules against the representation of sex. However, according to the Broadcasting Act of 1990, 'free markets' were encouraged, although commercials also have to pass a public-service-style 'quality threshold' and conform to all kinds of content restrictions of media products (Arthurs, 2004: 22). In the 1990s, BSC did an extensive audience research about what is considered acceptable sexual representation, especially female sexual representation. Arthurs (2004: 23) believes that the research has contributed to the greater diversity in sexual representations in British media. The tradition of the tolerant acceptance of nudity, modern sexual liberation movement, Western sexual freedom values, a less authoritarian political environment and a not very strict media regulatory system on sex representation contribute to the representation of the nudity of female body parts in the chosen case.

As far as China's laws and regulations on representation of nudity are concerned, Article 364, paragraphs 1 and 4 of the *Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China* clearly stipulates that in China, the person transmitting pornographic books, films, audiovisuals, pictures or other obscene articles shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment criminal detention of not more than two years (*Criminal Law*, 2009). *The Interim Provisions on the Administration of Internet and Culture* in China also stipulates that the mass media shall not provide content that endangers social morality or national cultural traditions. The provision prohibits the following items including: 'the content of expressing or concealing sexual behaviours or causing sexual imaginations'; 'direct description of private body parts'; 'description of sexual behavior, or with sexual suggestion or sexual provocation'; 'description of sexual parts or explosion of sexual body parts without covering or use only small coverings'; 'representation of no clothing in the whole body or little clothing in the privacy part' (*Interim Provisions on the Administration of Internet and Culture*, 2003). Influenced by a series of factors including traditional culture, philosophical speculation about the

body, political propaganda, laws and regulations, the issues of nudity could easily lead to significant social discussion and controversy in the Chinese society, causing substantial social anxiety about the representation of nudity and body exposure (e.g. Wang, 2014). These factors discussed above can be regarded as the reasons causing the missing representation of sexual behaviour and related female body in the selected Chinese Durex commercial.

11.4 Summary

By comparing the representations of women and sex between Chinese and British advertisements, it can be seen that, first, the use of femininity as a means of attracting viewers exists in both the Chinese and British case study adverts, reflecting a long-termly existed commercialised relationship between the symbols of woman and the advertising industries. Second, the functions of female bodies in gender settings between the British and Chinese commercials are differences. At the same time, the degrees of female body exposure and the representations of sex are significantly different in these two chosen cases. The British Durex advert shows the audiences sexual activities of the advertising characters, reflecting a positive attitude towards sexuality while the Chinese Durex uses the bungee jumping to imply sexual activities. As discussed above, which registered within the visuals and structures of the adverts are the different considerations of sexuality and the female body in British and Chinese cultures and traditions as well as different restrictions of media laws and regulations around what types of sexual imagery are allowed to be shown in advertising.

Chapter 12 Consuming Orientalism: Advertising Representations of Exotic Women

12.1 Introduction

The previous chapters explored the representations of women from the perspectives of femininity, family, new identity, and the female body. This chapter continues the theme of women's representations and takes the angle of ethnicity into considerations by arguing how the representations of foreign or minority women are differently constructed between the Chinese and British contexts. As demonstrated in previous chapters, recent trends in the globalised marketing and global culture have transformed the cultural content and marketing strategies of advertising campaigns today. In particular, these advertising campaigns have sought to diversify their cultural repertoire of advertising representations through the greater hybridity and inclusion of ethnic characters or 'foreigners' and the invocation of global imageries. However, it has been frequently argued that representations of ethnic groups or 'foreigners' in such advertising campaigns are usually based on racialised and gendered reflections of globalisation that draw on resurrected themes of post-colonialism and Orientalism. This particularly holds true in their depictions of the female as the Other (and the implicit rarity or of absence the male of the other).

It is worth noting that images of women of the Other in advertising are not ahistorical in origin. Oftentimes, the advertising campaigns in both the UK and China selectively emulate and modify popular images of Asian/Caucasian women in the local cultures that have been shaped throughout the British and Chinese histories respectively. In this sense, this chapter aims to show how such representations also emerge from the specific multicultural and globalised context of post-civil rights Britain and neo-liberal China that have destabilised, transformed, and relocated the powers of Asian/Caucasian images.

In this chapter, I discuss the dynamics of Orientalism in advertising and its role in reconstructing 'foreigner'/ethnic women concerning 'local'/Caucasian women within the globalised contexts. First, this chapter analyses two advertisements that have included ethnic/'foreigner' female characters with a specific focus on multicultural/orientalist advertising campaigns. It provides a theoretical understanding of the gendered and ethnic representations of women in the advertising campaign in the UK and China respectively. Second, this chapter analyses how the Orientalist images of women take shape under the guise of globalisation and multiculturalism with the detailed explanations of specific ethnicity and gender symbols by exploring how stereotypical imageries of Asian/Caucasian women and commodified Orientalism have evolved in the construction of the modern British/Chinese advertising texts. Based on these discussions, the chapter concludes by showing how Orientalist, multi-cultural and post-modern gender concepts have been jointed in the globalised contexts of the UK and China.

12.2 Historical Review - Something Changed, Something Not...

This chapter discusses and compares the cultural meanings of the representation of 'foreigner'/ethnic women in advertisements. Before starting the case analysis, I would like to briefly review the historical lines of the representations of the Chinese woman in the British media and the representations of White women in Chinese media respectively, thus providing a contextual ground for the following discussion.

In the past decades, the Chinese female images in the mainstream Western media have experienced the process of evolution from stereotyped and stylised to diverse and individualised (Gao, 2010; Li, 1997; Wang, 2012). From the early 20th century to the 1930s, two kinds of typical Chinese female images often appeared in Western mass media. One kind of represented Chinese female characters is charming, gentle, obedient and fragile; another kind is barbarous, evil, femme, catty, and debauchery

(Gao, 2010), both of these two types of female representations could be seen as a direct reflection of Orientalist discourse long termly existed in Western capitalist society in the last century. Most of the Chinese female characters on the screen at this period were supporting roles, aiming at satisfying the possessiveness, curiosity and gazing pleasure of the Western audience, such as the Chinese female characters in the films including *The Red Lantern* (1919), *The Toll of the Sea* (1922), *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924), and *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931) (Gao, 2010).

With the continuous deepening of cultural and political communications between China and Western countries, the images of Chinese women gradually occupied more critical roles on the Western screen. The examples include the Asian female characters in *The Good Earth* (1937) and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) (Gao, 2010). However, these characters still could not escape the destiny of being consumed, materialised, stereotyped, and otherised. Most of the Chinese female characters were constructed as the object of being 'hunted', being 'manipulated', or being 'saved' on the Western screen between the 1930s to the 1980s (Fang, 2008; Gao, 2010; Wang, 2012). These images were used to construct an imaginary Eastern paradise or an object of erotic to flaunt the conquest of the Chinese female by the Western male, conveying an evident discourse of hegemonic and patriarchy logic.

Since the 1990s, with the development of the civil rights movement and global feminism, the Asian women in the mainstream Western representations started to own distinctive personalities (Wang, 2012), which reflects a developing trend of representations of diversity, multiculturalism, and subjectivity in the Western society. The examples include the Asian female characters in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), and *Elementary* (2012). These diversified Asia female figures connote a new social phenomenon that, since multiculturalism has been institutionalised in Western societies, and Western representations of the other seemingly becomes an equal expression between various ethnicities in the era emphasising identity and subjectivity. Most of these forms of ethnic representation are realised under the banner of

'politically correct' , aiming to create an 'artificial and decorative display of cultural diversity' (Lu, 2005).

In contrast, the representation of Caucasian women in Chinese media appears very monotonous and lacks change. Judging from the numbers of gendered representation, the appeared European and American figures on the Chinese screen are mostly male while women are generally shown as affiliated roles (Lin, 2014). Most of the white female characters merely exist as the partner of the male character or as the object of gazing, such as the character of secretary in *The Tokyo Trial* (2006) (Lin, 2014). These Western female characters did not have a significant function in promoting the progress of the story. The primary purpose of the construction of these female characters is to represent the 'advanced' and 'higher-level' Western European cultural elements.

The two selected cases are both in line with the contemporary situation of the representation of ethnic/foreigner women. The detailed analysis will be made in the following sections.

12.3 Case Analysis

This chapter selected two advert cases for comparison - the British Hungry House and Chinese Smithfield adverts. The discussion focuses on the representations of the Asian woman in the British Hungry House advert and the Caucasian woman in the Chinese Smithfield advert.

12.3.1 Case 1 British Hungryhouse Advert

The story of the first advert case - British hungryhouse.co.uk took place in a relaxed and lively ambience, depicting a group of young people ordered food through Hungry

House and happily enjoyed their friend-reunion time. It started with the leading female character - a young female with Asian appearance opened the door, finding her friends are chatting and sharing beers around the table (*Figure 12-1*).

The action (opening the door) of the leading female character with an Asian appearance has a double meaning in this scene. On the one hand, from the narrative level, this action reveals the function of the female character as the heroine leading the development of the story in the advert. That is, the moment this female character pushes the door, the advertising narrative begins. On the other hand, this action conducted by the Asian character also caters to the theme of this advert - 'Nothing beats a good Chinese takeaway with your mates'. What the advertisement tries to tell the audience is that everyone can easily obtain delicious Chinese food through Hungry House, and the moment that the female character with the Chinese appearance opens the door (assuming that the female character comes from the origins of the Chinese food appeared in the ad) has provided the possibility of accessing and contacting Chinese food for her friends with various ethnic identities.

At the suggestion of the heroine, these young people ordered Chinese food delivery through Hungry House (*Figure 12-2*). In this scene, the heroine stands aside and shows the Hungry House app on the phone to her friends sitting around the table. At this moment, everyone's attention was focused on the heroine's mobile phone. However, the field where the gaze occurred was not limited to the mobile phone. Instead, the Chinese food on the mobile phone and the Chinese appearance of the female protagonist jointly constituted the integrity of the cultural object of gaze that the advertisement presents.

This 'being-gazed' cultural object smoothly continued to the next advertising scene - a group of Chinese chefs preparing fried noodles and other Chinese food. These foods were quickly delivered to the heroine and her friend's place and shared by them (*Figure 12-3*). The advertising characters in this advert involve four types of ethnicity

and gender: Asian woman; black man; Caucasian man; and Caucasian woman. Through the construction of various ethnicities and genders, the theme of this advert has been implemented, that is: Hungry House delivers all types of food to everyone, and everyone can gain the sense of happiness through the usage of Hungry House. In this advertisement, the happiness brought by Chinese food is realised under the leadership of the heroine. The curiosity of other characters in the advertisement as well as audiences have been satisfied and become a self-performance of the British hegemonic attitude to the Chinese elements. However, what the audience has tasted through performances on the screen are indeed the cultural meaning and cultural consumption hidden behind the 'Chinese food'. The political intent of representations of ethnicity was therefore realised through combing the ethnic food with the Asian female character.



Figure 12- 1 the young female opens the door in Hungryhouse advert



Figure 12- 2 ordering food in Hungryhouse advert



Figure 12- 3 Sharing food in Hungryhouse advert

12.3.2 Case 2 Chinese Shuanghui Smithfield Advert

The narrative line of the second case - Chinese Shuanghui Smithfield commercial is not complicated. The advertisement included several simple scenes: a group of Caucasian men and women sat in front of a Western European-style dining table, and the white waiter brought up exquisite food (*Figure 12-4*). Next, the ad shot switched to a close-up of a Caucasian woman. The woman tasted Shuanghui Smithfield food with a fork and showed a satisfied smile (*Figure 12-5*). At this time, the slogan rang:

'Each piece of ham has been carefully crafted by us. From 1936 to today, whether it is the European court or the Chinese table, we are only responsible for high-quality food. Pure American taste comes from Smithfield - Shuanghui organisation'.

Looking at the advertising slogans, a vital rhetoric task of Smithfield advert is to give a positive evaluation of relevant products to obtain the recognition of the Chinese audience. However, the colours of the Orientalism have been infiltrated in the lines of advertising slogans, which can be reflected in the use of the words such as 'high-quality food', 'Pure American taste', and 'European court'. These three examples have deliberately labelled the West with 'high-quality' and made the 'Chinese table' become the follower of Western culture, which exactly match the subjective expectations of some Chinese consumers toward the West. Combining European courts and American products with high-quality and advanced lifestyles, the advertiser hides the colour of the self-Orientalism and hegemonic culture in the advertising symbols such as food, clothes, and furniture, aiming to inspire audience's consumption desire. The influence of this similar hegemonic culture is not uncommon in the Chinese advertising campaign today. These advertising tries to construct and describe the self-value realisation which comes from enjoying these advertised high-quality products by the Western characters in advertising, in order to stimulate the longing for the portrayed comfortable life inside the world on the screen for Chinese consumers.

Hu (2000) finds that the measurement standard of social status and wealth in China today sometimes is equal to the usage of Western cognitive symbols and the degrees of globalisation and Westernisation. Western models, brands, public appeals and ideologies have largely affected the new understanding of the cultural categories such as beauty and fashion, which has particularly affected the development of gender-related concepts such as femininity and masculinity in China. This phenomenon originated from the sentiment of inferiority that cultural imperialism brought to China which has frequently been discussed by scholars such as Homi

Bhabha. Bhabha (1994a) pointed out that the greatest destructive force of colonialism lies in the fact that it infuses the Other with a sophisticated sense of inferiority resulting in the loss of the traditional local culture (Zhan, 2015). Cultural imperialism is particularly evident in the way of shaping the Western images in the Chinese Smithfield advert and many other similar Chinese television commercials.

However, the production of advertisements with the intense colour of cultural imperialism is not always economically effective. It is worth noting that consumers' acceptance of advertisement representations is based on the recognition of traditional values and local mainstream concepts. The traditional and local values sometimes could lead to the resistance of the representation of Western hegemonic discourses when these two are in conflict.

Concerning the Smithfield advert, Western upper-class social ethos constructed by symbolic images such as Western-style dinners, red wine glasses, high-class Western-style tableware and White women in evening dresses have provided Chinese audiences with the objects of envying, hoping, and desiring. These symbols capture the contradiction of the West as simultaneously exotic and influential in the Chinese imagination. However, the closeness to the Western ideology in the advert, as Bhabha (1994a) states, is an impossible mission, as the metaphor of Western identity is constructed as a place of prohibition and a conflicting authority. It can be proven by two points in the setting of the advertising characters and the construction of the advertising narrative:

First, the advertising characters were appeared without exception as being identifiable as 'non-Chinese' in the Shuanghui Smithfield commercial. What the advert meticulously created are the scenes full of 'pure' Occident and Western cultural elements. Second, the deliberate distinction between the 'European court' and the 'Chinese table' in the advert, on the one hand, represents the desire and rejection of Western cultural identity, on the other hand embodies the emphasis on ethnic purity,

which reminds the Chinese audience the issue of the national-identification through constituting two parallel spaces in the advertising discourse. In this advertisement, the boundaries between the 'European court' and the 'Chinese table', the heterogeneous culture and the native culture, and 'them' and 'us' are divided and distinguished, which constitutes the breaks and gaps between the above representation of the west and the audiences in China.

In addition, in the Smithfield commercial, the close-up of the facial features, mouth, and chewing of the Western female character were represented as sexually active, which shows that the representation of Western female in Chinese advertising is not limited to the considerations of economy, race, and power, but also linked with the heterosexual desire. According to Rey Chow (1991b: 86), Caucasian woman made the symbol of what Chinese woman or China does not have, and the image of the Caucasian woman is a fetish for Chinese audiences that has nothing to do with sex. However, Vig (2015: 95) points out that this argument is both right and wrong: it is right in arguing the White woman be imaged as an object which is more than just the heterosexual opposite to male, but wrong in stating that the representation of the White female character is unrelated to sexuality. Therefore, regarding the chosen case, when the female character was used to represent advanced food in the advertisement, she has been given the function of constructing differences as well as becoming a symbol of sexual desire and fetishism.

However, in the Smithfield advert, the gender categories and sexual fantasies do not make up the core logic of the representation of the Caucasian female advertising character, which automatically indicates that the symbol of the Caucasian woman is heterosexually constructed but not limited within the heterosexual space. In other words, the heterosexual factors are not the primary consideration of the construction of the Caucasian female character. The distance between the Caucasian female character and Chinese (male) audiences is a source of post-colonial allegory leading to the fear of castration to Chinese (male) audiences as the gap between the

representation and the reality makes Chinese audiences clearly know that they will never become or completely 'own' the Caucasian character. The racial representations thus come to transgress the internal structure of gender power relations, proving that racial representations of gender are both economical effectively and dangerous because the representation of ethnicity could easily create an invisible but destructive gap between the advertising text and the local audience.



Figure 12- 4 Waiters bring up food in Smithfield advert



Figure 12- 5 Tasting food in Smithfield advert

12.4 Comparison and Discussion

By comparing and analysing the images of women in the Chinese and British Durex advertisements, we can see that both similarities and differences existed in the gendered representations in the two advertisements, which are shown as follows:

12.4.1 Similarity and Discussion: Politics of Ethnicity and Sexuality

Looking at the narratives of Hungry House and Smithfield commercials, we can see that both of these advertisements add more or less meaningful considerations related to women and race when describing the food. These gender and race-related foods are meaningful because they have surpassed the superficial meaning of food and brought to the audience the politics of food in the ideological realm (Parker, 1998). The sign of food in both advertisements is gendered and ethnic, which is restricted by culture and expresses social relations. On the one hand, it represents the ethnic relationship between the female advertising character (the food taster) and the food from other culture, connecting the local with the other; on the other hand, this process is accomplished by the female leading characters, which combines the ethnicity and globalisation with the consideration of gender.

Explicitly speaking, first, on the ethnic level, the symbol of food was more than just the basic function of food in the two selected advertisements, but it had become the way of determining the ethnicities and gender identities of the protagonists in the adverts. This is particularly evident in the representation of the Smithfield advertisement. This kind of food represented by the advertisements no longer refers to a simple natural relationship between people and food but contains a complex, contradictory ethnic relationship (Lu, 2005; Parker, 1998). Whether it is the Chinese food ordered by Chinese women in hungry house advert or the ham eaten by the Caucasian woman in the Smithfield commercial, the symbol of food has been linked with woman and been given a cross-cultural meaning. The differences existed in the

advertising representations caused by operations of ideologies will be further discussed in the following sections.

Second, from the perspective of gender, if we carefully observe the reproduction of women in the two advertisements, we can find that there is a very close relationship between food and sexuality. Exotic women in the advertisements appear as food tasters. On the one hand, this image provides the object of gazing. On the other hand, it is the representative of the authority of the ethnic food. In this sense, the exotic woman in advertisement texts has become a product of the modern globalised market, which highlights the relationship between woman and modernity in the consumer society. Women, modernity, gender, and globalisation have been constructed as several inseparable objects in advertising representation, which will be discussed in the next sections.

12.4.2 Difference and Discussion

Although both the British and Chinese advertisements show us the relationship among race, gender and culture, the effects and purposes of the representations of ethnic women are very different, which should be attributed to the different social contexts of the advertising campaigns between the UK and China. In the British Hungry House commercial, the ethnic woman is located in a multiculturalist environment. In the Chinese advertisement, the purpose of presenting ethnic woman is to reflect the internationalisation of the product rather than reflecting the hybridity of cultures. This differentiation is closely linked with the social and cultural environments in which the advertisements are located.

12.4.2.1 The East Asian/Chinese Woman in Hungry House Advert

Overall, on the one hand, the image of the East Asian woman in British Hungry

House advert embodies the hybridity of culture and ethnicity. On the other hand, the existence of the leading female character with an East Asian appearance is not only possible but also necessary.

In this advertisement, the function of the advertising constructed identity of the East Asian character was first of all to build the connection between the Chinese food and the British audience, or in Rey Chow's word, to achieve the 'suture' of advertising representations and audience and make the subject admits 'that was what I saw' or 'that was me' (Chow, 1991a: 34). Concerning the cultural background of the advertisement, the female protagonist brings the widely accepted multicultural phenomenon into the advertising narrative. The represented cultural diversity can not only be reflected from the East Asian female character but also can be expressed through the coagulation of various ethnicities and genders which is accomplished by the enjoyment of Chinese food in the advert. In this sense, the second function of the East Asian female character is manifested: to build the bridge for the gap between the British culture in which these advertising characters 'live' and all the Chinese elements that appear in the advertisement, and enable other advertising characters to naturally enjoy everything that is in their cultural environment constructed through the representations of Chinese culture and multiculturalism.

At the beginning of the advertisement, the camera first recorded the female leading character's action of opening the door from the view of her friends and then used the perspective of the heroine to look around other people. This two-way perspective created a closed space for Chinese and other cultures and ethnicities. Then, as the female protagonist introduced the Chinese food on Hungry House to her friends, a cultural flow of the East Asian culture to other ethnicities has been formed in this space. The cultural acceptance of these characters (in this case, the acceptance of the Chinese culture) is both passive and active. On the one hand, it is passively evoked by the Asian female protagonists. On the other hand, the cultural acceptance of these characters is active, which is implied by the active use of chopsticks and the

popularity of Chinese foods in the advert. This kind of active acceptance of other culture contains the natural response and the constituent of a performative component.

Also, the sitting position of the heroine also implies important cultural and gendered intentions. As we can see from *Figure 12-3*, the leading female character took the central position of the advertising image, surrounded by her friends of different ethnicities. The position of the East Asian girl in the Hungry House commercial signified two levels of cultural meanings: the gaze of ethnicity and the gaze of gender. The central position of the Asian female character in the advert, on the one hand, provided the possibility of agglomerating other advertising characters, showing their unified acceptance of Chinese food, which again highlighted the function of Hungry House App in acquiring Chinese food, on the other hand, the female character became a gazing object under the function of the referential structure of the patriarchal culture.

Using the image of Westernised Chinese female character to introduce the Chinese food has an active performance component, as Kim & Chung (2005: 268) states, 'under the guise of multiculturalism, Orientalism has evolved into an object to consume and a vehicle to stimulate consumption'. However, we have to admit that the racial representation always adopt the myth of ethnicity to implement of the imagination of the other's culture through parody, imitation and performance in the overlapping areas between the tradition and the modern, and the self and the other.

If we look at the construction of all advertising characters in the Hungry House advert, it is not difficult to find a natural reflection of globalisation that not only echoes Rey Chow's argument of the modernity which is non-Western but influenced by the West but also in the same line with the context of multiculturalism. The shaping of advertising characters with various skin colours and genders appear in Hungry House advertisement reflects the tolerance of different ethnic groups and the recognition of East Asian/Chinese culture. Each ethnic advertising role could be interpreted from

different levels of global power structures. Integrating various identity characters into the hungry house advertisement reflects the juxtaposition and compatibility of various races, cultures and identities. The hybrid representation of ethnicity can also be seen as a commercialised deconstruction of Orientalist discourse.

Therefore, it can be said that the representation of ethnic woman in the Hungry House advert is contradictory but reasonable in the post-colonial world. On the one hand, it uses ethnicity and female as the selling points which reiterates the discourse of Orientalism, and on the other hand, it deconstructs the Orientalist discourse through the representation of multiculturalism. This paradoxical representation of East Asian woman can be seen as a reflection of the development and frustration of multiculturalism in British society. The subtle handling of ethnic women in the Hungry House advert is not uncommon in the British media today. In terms of strategies of the representation of ethnicity and multiculturalism, we can refer to the theories of many post-colonial scholars, such as the strategy of 'the voyage in'²¹ put forward by Edward Said (1993); and the theory of hybridity, and 'the cultural difference as an alternative to cultural diversity' proposed by Homi Bhabha (1994b).

Although the positive representation of the ethnic female does not own a long history or a vast proportion, once it is interpolated in the mainstream advertising representations, it will impact the representation of gendered ethnicity. The orientalist discourse has roots in cultural, religious, and even sexual traditions in British bourgeois society, and part of the discomfort is still present today. However, the rigidity of the views of ethnicity and gender is on its way out, and the British society is gaining speed in the progression toward ethnic equality and gender equality. The representations of ethnic diversity and multicultural phenomena in British advertising are gradually deconstructing the stereotyped way of representing ethnic women in the intricate interaction between the cultural flows in the globalised and post-colonist

²¹ Said (1993) codifies the 'voyage in' as the integration and movement of the people from the Third World into the First World. According to Said (1993: 295), the concept of voyage in 'constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work'.

context. Therefore, the representation approach of the ethnic woman in the Just Eat advert can be regarded as a representative of this trend in British society.

12.4.2.2 The Caucasian Woman in Smithfield Advert

Unlike the British Hungry House advert, the representation of the Caucasian woman in Smithfield advert shows the strong colour of self-Orientalist discourse and the apparent intention of distinguishing the East from the West based on the ideology of Orientalism and nationalism.

To be more specific, the Caucasian woman in the Smithfield advertisement is constructed as a symbol connoting both gendered perspective and ethnic consideration. The female image has the significant function of isolating the other and the self. On the one hand, she represents the Western Europe. Through representing an imaginary pure Western world, the advert text satisfies the Chinese audience's self-Oriental expectations and the pleasure of gazing. The female character as a gendered symbol has been weakened to a general symbolic imagination of the Chinese audience to the West through the intentional emphasis of the gap between 'them' and 'us', the Chinese nationality thus has been highlighted and re-confirmed in the advert text.

The Smithfield advert deliberately described the particular characteristic of particular national, geopolitical, cultural and linguistic signs, and thus produce a binary opposition of China/Western-Europe and the ancient/modern. From the 'European court' to the 'Chinese table', the signifier of the 'advanced' food in the Smithfield advert implies that Chinese modernity is learnt from the Western modernity, and the modern Chinese ideas are always in the state of learning and catching up of the West. In fact, the West-East relationship represented in the Smithfield advert suggests two seemingly inconsistent tendencies: one is the tendency of Western-centralism and self-Orientalism, proven by the advert slogan implying the West equals to the high

quality; the second is the tendency of emphasising 'pure ethnicity' and nationalism of China, evidenced by the split of the West and China through the recurrence of a pure Western world in the advertising representation. Both of these tendencies are virtually the essentialisation and stereotype of Chinese or Western cultures.

This political paradigm is both common and has a far-reaching impact on the advertising industry in China. The way of treating ethnic identity in the Smithfield advertisement is not unrelated to China's entire social and political environments. As far as the entire advertising industry is concerned, in recent years, there have been two kinds of seemingly opposing conflicts in China's advertising industry. On the one hand, some advertisements use Western symbols, images, cultural elements, and languages to render advertisement products. While on the other hand, the Chinese government has added forceful support towards the national brands, resulting in the vast amount of national brands' commercials fulling of local cultural elements broadcasted during the peak period on television²². As a result, the Western culture has become a constructed political image. This image gave birth to the 'Official Occidentalism', that is, the intentional isolation and otherisation of the image of West in the mainstream ideology of contemporary China and the usage of the West as the constitutive other to advocate nationalism (Chen, 1995; Wu, 2015), ultimately to solidify and strengthen internal dominance and governance (Wu, 2015). The construction and otherisation of the image of the West in Chinese discourses is not aiming at the cultural invasion but is aiming to seek the intensification or adjustment of political structure and ideological discourses within the Chinese context (Wu, 2015).

However, the symbol of the Western-Europe represented in the Chinese case study advert is a product of the negotiation converging various independent or correlated forces. If we go back to the initial scene of the Smithfield advert, we can find that

²² Such as the 'national brand advertising project' proposed by the CCTV (China Central Television) in 2017.

there is no pure 'Chinese' or 'Western' modern subject at all.

At the beginning of the advertisement, the usage a series of descriptive words about the cultural flows, such as 'come from' or 'from (the European court) to (Chinese dinner table)', has illustrated the liquidity of the cultural meaning of the advertised products. Such an image of the West was born in the combination of many kinds of conventional, cultural, political and ideological factors and has become a increasingly complex and diversified object. Therefore, it once again proves that the deliberate emphasis on the 'European table' and 'America' in the Smithfield advertisement is very worthy of vigilance because, in this way, the West has been depicted as a superficial and rigid image. Moreover, the representation of the Caucasian female produces a 'beautiful' imagination of the West for the Chinese audience, which creates an imaginative connection between the ethnicity and the advertised product. This kind of imaginative ethnic connection, to some extent, could undermine the audience's attention to the 'troubles' (Butler, 1990) of gendered representation.

In summary, the 'foreign' woman in the Smithfield advertisement is both visual cultural symbol and economical product of globalisation. She is the sexualised desire object as well as a product of the modern trans-cultural political and economic projects. The ethnic female advertising representations have tangled up with issues of economy and culture, the local and the global, and the self and the other. The admiration and the otherisation of the Caucasian female in the Smithfield advert have shown China's longing and uneasiness for the ambiguous hybrid modernity. In fact, the gendered representation of the Caucasian female in Chinese advertising text, on the one hand, reflects the attractions of Western modernism for the Chinese audience: the imaginary wonderland constructed by the Western images connected the advertised product with the concepts of 'advanced civilisation' and 'developed countries', indicating that the advertised product is in line with high-quality and modernity; but on the other hand, this gendered temptation is also dangerous: in addition to the castration anxiety brought by the represented Caucasian woman for

Chinese (male) audiences, the complexity of the gendered ethnic representation also lies in its distinguish between 'Europe court' and 'Chinese table', which strikingly reminds us of the embarrassing situation of Chinese nationalism today. On the one hand, the Chinese advert is attempted to draw a line between the Chinese nationality and the Europe. On the other hand, the entry of European cultural elements in the Chinese context is uncontrollable. Therefore, the Chinese advert tries to portray the Europe as an imaginary independent community. Here, the image of the Caucasian woman is not only created by an ethnic erotic gaze, but also becomes a contradictive element which is copied into the Chinese context used to divide the local and the other. The copied modern Caucasian female image in the Smithfield advertisement thus becomes a symbol reflecting the desire for modernity and the anxiety of subjective/national identity for the Chinese mass audiences.

In fact, it seems impossible for the advertising text to be ultimately reflect the reality of the other. The over-critique of the images of the ethnic female seems to have fallen into the trap of unrealistic imagination of the authenticity and purity of the national culture. Moreover, we should not expect a 'perfect' representation of the globalised cultural integration. As Bhabha (1994a) advocates, maybe we should find 'in-betweenness' or 'the third space' in the globalised context. This also points the way for the advertising representation of the ethnic/ 'foreign' woman in the future.

12.5 Summary

In summary, we can see that the representation of 'foreign'/ethnic women in the Chinese and British advertising cases is very different. This vast difference is inseparable from the social and cultural environment of China and the United Kingdom. In the global process of homogeneity and heterogeneity, how to reshape and represent the images of the national culture and the other's culture are significant tasks faced by both the UK and China. However, for women, the struggle to get rid of

the influence of ethnic stereotypes is longer and harder than men. The sense of frustration of ethnic women is not only caused by the rejection of hegemonic culture but also brought by the ubiquitous control of the patriarchal system which still existed in many perspectives of our societies.

Chapter 13 The Idealised Masculinity: Women and Their Idealised Male Images

13.1 Introduction

Chapters 7 to 12 compared and analysed how women are represented in Chinese and British case study commercials. This chapter argues the function of woman in the gender relations in advertising representations. According to Jhally (2011), women and men are portrayed in advertisements according to the constructed definition of femininity and masculinity respectively. That is to say, the constructed meanings of gender in advertising is accomplished through strengthening or even creating a difference between masculinity and femininity. The portrayed women's ideal male characters on the screen, in this sense, have depicted the most representative commercialised hegemonic idealised masculinities, which is also the main discussion object of this chapter.

This chapter, on the one hand, focuses on the construction process of masculinity in advertising, on the other hand, considers the female characters who shape masculinity by giving fantasising agency in advertising narratives. In the chosen ads, the female characters either create idealised the male roles or define the range of masculinity standards, playing significant roles in gender relations. This chapter explores and compares the images of women's idealised male images in two television advertisements from the UK and China: British Just Eat 2016 commercial and Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil advert. By examining the depiction of the idealised male characters and the role of woman in constructing the images of the idealised men in the British and Chinese advertisements, this chapter shows how the discourse of gender and social customs are reflected at the discursive level.

While acknowledging that cultural hegemony has significantly impacted the global gendered representation, this chapter demonstrates that cultural differences on the common understanding of masculinity could still be reflected in specific

advertisements. Additionally, this chapter argues that the represented masculinity in both commercials requires the female's participation into the construction process of masculinity and that the commercials identify the female characters' positions when they are facing their idealised male partner helps to understand gender roles in the power-structured discourses of gender behind the representations.

13.2 Representations of Masculinity, Woman, and Advertising

As Connell (1993) points out, the definition of masculinity is culturally different, however, historically, the definition of masculinity has been associated with 'material' masculinity such as honour, loyalty, and physical toughness in many cultures (Sommer, 2015). It was widely accepted in Chinese history that the 'pure man' (纯爷们) should be heroes like Guan Yu²³ or Yue Fei²⁴ who devoted themselves to the fight against evil forces or the dark side of the society. In the British historical context, the mainstream masculinity was commonly seen in characters like King Leonidas²⁵ or William Wallace²⁶.

The traditions and the contemporary cultural values and ideologies co-constructed the myths of masculinity in nowadays. The current understanding of masculinity usually combines the traditional martial masculinity along with newer various modern values such as chauvinist patriotism, entrepreneurship as well as the emerging requirements for men such as sensitivity and honesty (Sommer, 2015). It should be noted that these requirements on men are different in different cultural fields (Sommer, 2015), and adaptively changes with the development of socio-economic and cultural factors (Yoon-Joo, Heley, & Avery, 2010), which will inevitably lead to different

²³ Guan Yu (died AC 220) was a general serving under the warlord Liu Bei in the late Eastern Han dynasty (Perkins, 1999).

²⁴ Yue Fei (24 March 1103 - 27 January 1142) was a Han Chinese military general who lived during the Southern Song dynasty (Perkins, 1999).

²⁵ Leonidas was a warrior king of the Greek city-state of Sparta (Bradford, 2011).

²⁶ William Wallace was a Scottish knight who became one of the main leaders during the Wars of Scottish Independence (Stevenson, 2013).

representations of masculinities in different contexts.

However, under the logic of the consumer-focused society, the profit-pursuing nature of advertising determines it need to adequately reproduce the most widely accepted masculinity in a particular social culture within a limited time to maximise the effectiveness of advertising. Ideally, the masculinity created by advertising usually has a relatively large audience group. Therefore, the advertising representation of masculinity can be understood as the commercial definition of hegemonic masculinity in one specific context as elaborated by Connell (2005).

Simultaneously, the advertised hegemonic masculinity, as a particular cultural resource, has been incorporated into the logic of the consumer society. With the social transformation from the textual culture to the visual culture in our current society, the pursuit of the visual cultural image has surpassed that of any previous era (Bowman, 2014). In essence, the masculinity in advertising has become a distinct appellation in the specific context, as the advertising representation of masculinity not only contains the performativity of gender demonstrated by Butler (1993) but also constitutes the selling point and the object of being gazed at in the consumer society.

As Cortese (2015) argues, the discussion of masculinity always involves the considerations of gender display and gender relations. Therefore, to understand the socially constructed masculinity in advertisements, to some extent, it is necessary to discuss how advertisements create the differences between the female and male characters, and what roles have women and men played in advertising narratives. These constructed differences are not limited within the different sets of female and male characters in advertising, but also includes changes in the discourse of femininity/masculinity, the bargaining of power between woman and man, and the representations of the newer understandings of femininity/masculinity. This is also the reason why this chapter focuses on the roles of the women and the construction of gender relations in the advertisements.

13.3 Cases Studies: Women's Idealised Male Characters

Advertisers focus on gender and relationships, because audiences define themselves by gender, and gender can be 'communicated at a glance', making it easy for advertisers to use this theme in advertising (Jhally, 2011a). As advertiser Jerry Goodis says, 'advertising doesn't always mirror how people are acting, but how they're dreaming [...] in a sense, what we're doing it wrapping up your emotions and selling them back to you' (Lantos, 1987). This discussion is not an illustration of what the idealised male images or gender relations should be like in British and Chinese societies respectively, because the masculinity is a complex concept; instead, it is an explanation of how the gender relations and gender concepts construct these images and roles in the globalised contexts.

13.3.1 Case 1 Woman's Imaginary Men in British Just Eat Advert

The first advertisement is from the British online food order service Just Eat. The Just Eat advert contains three scenes: the reality scene, the fantasy scene, and the reality-fantasy combination scene. The female character (F1) in this commercial is the main clue in combining these three scenes.

In the reality scene, the leading female character makes a series of interactions with her male partner (M1). This scene is followed by a fantasy scene where F1 created her dream men (M2s) in her imagination. These men appear and interact with F1 through the reality-fantasy complex scene to the fantasy scene. Finally, F1 brings her dream men back to the reality scene, and her real-life partner appears in the same frame with her imagery partners.

The beginning of this advert was located in the real scene. In this sense, F1 is lying on

the sofa wearing casual clothes. M1 came to ask her: 'shall we get takeaway from Just Eat?' F1 picks up the iPad and starts to browse the Just Eat app. This implies the independent action ability of F1 in this relationship, which paves the way for the illusion of F1 as it shows the ability and the initiative of the female character to picture her dream men. While browsing the menu from Just Eat, F1 started to sing: 'I see you baby, chicken madras'. Then she put on a dress and begins to dance while a group of strong men (M2s) appeared from behind the door, wearing yellow suits and cloudy headdresses. The yellow clothes represent the colour of the chicken madras on the menu, which means that the chicken madras is as attractive as the imagined men; on the other hand, it shows that food and sex are two basic natures of human beings. Wearing a cloud-like headdress conveys that M2 is a fantasy figure as the product of F1's imagination. The interactions between F1 and M2s happen in the reality-fantasy combination location. These imagined men have no role setting and do not have to follow the social norms; as long as they exist only within the female mind, they only acted following the intentions of F1.

Afterwards, the female character steps into the fantasy scene. M2s begin to dance around F1 on clouds while F1 sings: 'you drive me crazy'. F1 is always located in the central position in the advert, which represents a strong attachment pattern between M2s and F1. Suddenly, M1 called F1's name, which forced the female character back to the reality-fantasy scene. The imagination of the female character does not stop. She covers her dream men to slip away from the door they came in. One of her dream men waves his hand to the female character from behind the door and then leaves.

In the Just Eat advertisement, the representation of masculinity is created by the female character and completed and realised through male homosocial relationships. The action of the female character moving her dream men from the illusion into the real world also brings the imagined masculinity into the reality through male homosocial relationships. On the one hand, M2s are the excellent representatives of the ideal masculinity for F1; on the other hand, M2 is in the opposite of M1 in the

male homosocial relationship. Through walking from the fantasy scene into the reality scene, the function of M2 changes from F1's manipulative object into the object representing masculinity in reality, which will be further discussed in the sections below.



Figure 13- 1 Woman and her dream men in Just Eat advert.



Figure 13- 2 Woman, her dream man, and her real-life partner in Just Eat advert

13.3.2 Case 2 Woman's Idealised Male in Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil Advert

The second advert case in this chapter is from Chinese famous cooking product Jinlongyu Cooking Oil. The Jinlongyu advertisement 2016 presents a traditional heterosexual family, and is played by the famous Chinese couple actress Angelababy (F2) and actor Huang Xiaoming (M3). This commercial is composed of two scenes: the scene of monologue and the scene that combines reality and fantasy. The locations of the reality-fantasy scene in this commercial include the seaside, a flowering field, and an imaginary kitchen. These two scenes have outlined the image of the ideal male for Chinese women: this man commonly appears as a reliable figure, and also takes the role of spouse or boyfriend. In the monologue scenes, the male character expresses his allegiance in this gender relationship and his responsibility for the family. In the real life scenes, the male character performs as both romantic and to be able to support the family with substantial material conditions.



Figure 13- 3 Wife and husband in Jinlongyu advert

Jinlongyu Cooking Oil commercial starts with the monologue scene. At the beginning of this commercial, the leading female character is sitting on the chair while the leading male character is sitting on the arm of the chair, staring down at the female figure and surrounded her with his arm. The display of gender relations between M3

and F2 connotes that the idealised man should be gentle, humble, and tolerant, and is willing to take care of the woman. Then, the male character asks in front of the camera: 'to be a noble bachelor or a responsible husband?' The male monologue sets 'the noble bachelor' and 'the husband' as two options to identify individual positions of Chinese men. This setting is not about the 'unmarried' and the 'married' but about the 'bachelor' and the 'husband', which means the married Chinese man is required to obey and conform to social norms of marriage, and become a socialised husband. Using 'noble' to describe the 'bachelor' and 'responsible' to describe the 'husband' reflects a widely-accepted traditional value in Chinese society: individualism cannot survive in the social environment of family collectivism; individual identity is shaped and changed by the marriage status.

Next, the male character holds the female's hand and takes her to the beach to see the sunset. The male character answers the question: 'My choice means responsibility, I choose to give her sunshine'. Linking the image of the ideal man with the keyword - 'responsibility', which again emphasises the standard requirements of being an idealised Chinese male.

In the next scene, the characters go back to the monologue location. The female character looks up at the male, and asks 'to be a princess adored by millions or a gentle and virtuous wife?' The female's monologue sets 'a princess' and 'a wife' as two options to identify individual positions of the Chinese woman, which means once the Chinese woman is married, she must also obey and conform to social norms for females, and become a 'gentle and virtuous wife' in the family. Then, the male character cooks in the kitchen while the kitchen is filling with imaginary sunflowers. The female character hugs him from the behind and says: 'My choice is a commitment, I choose to give him warmth'. The advert ends with both characters' voice: the male says: 'you are my sunshine'; the female says: 'I am your sunflower'.

13.4 Comparison of the Idealised Male Images

By comparing the represented relationship between the male characters in Just Eat and Jinlongyu commercials, we can find that both adverts use signs of imagination to describe the female-male interactions. By using the rhetoric fantasy of ideal masculinity, both advertisements were trying to use visual symbols and elements to reconstruct an imaginary space of the female-male relationship for the mass audience. The symbolic reality created by the ads is filled with an idealised imagination of the relationship between men and women, and further becomes the projection of an idealised imagination of the advertised product, which once again reaffirms the selling purpose of advertising. However, the differences of the constructed relationship of the woman and her ideal male partner between the British and Chinese commercials are apparent, which mainly reflects from the aspects of the constructing approach of woman's dream man and the function of woman's ideal masculinity.

13.4.1 Construction Approaches of the Relationship between Woman and Her Ideal Man

While the advertisements employed a series of imaginary signs into the construction of the woman's idealised male images, a phenomenon draws my attention during the data analysis process: in the Chinese advertisement, the female character's ideal male partner is real, and generally represents the role of husband or boyfriend. The Chinese female character in the advert does not replace her partner with any imagery character, but tries to idealise the image of her male partner. In contrast, the British advertisement reflects fewer restrictions of the gender discipline on women made by the traditional patriarchal society. The woman in the British advert owns more options in the gender relations and has the ability to change the image of the ideal men at any time.

In addition to the British Just Eat 2016 commercial, a similar example can be found in

the British television commercial of the cleaning product Mr Clean. When the husband does housework, the leading female character replaces him through her imagination with the image of Mr Clean who had a more muscular and athletic body (*Figure 13-5*). When she is woken up after being called by her husband twice, she is re-attracted by her 'real' husband (*Figure 13-6*). In this advertisement, Mr Clean has become a symbol of the idealised masculinity for the woman. Although the symbol of masculinity and fantasy - Mr Clean - is based on the character of the husband, it has already grown out of the prototype of the husband in this advertisement and has become another object. The leading female character enjoys and is immersed in the process of replacing her husband with her imagination in this commercial.

For comparison, in shaping perfect male characters, the Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil advert represents the idealised male image through idealising the real male prototype, rather than by creating a new character to replace the existing prototype. Here, the represented woman in the Chinese advertisement can be regarded as a gendered sign for the division of women: the woman who is loyal to her husband in both real life and spiritual fantasy could own the same happy life as the female advertising character. The function of the representation of the gender relation in Jinlongyu advert is to automatically provide Chinese women with a template of the idealised woman. The advert encourages audiences to subconsciously accept the template of the gender relation represented by the advert, and consciously draw a line with the derailment (both physical and spiritual) behaviours.

However, what must be acknowledged is that the female character owning the freedom to depict her ideal man in the British Mr Clean 2016 commercial is common even in the Chinese context. 'She' might not be an image that conforms to the patriarchy gender standard of 'female saint' or 'perfect mother/wife', but this character is real and authentic, even though this 'authenticity' is also constructed after being selected and partly deleted. In this regard, the representation of gender relationships in Chinese advertising provides guidance on the perfect model of gender relations, while

the represented gender relationship in British advert represents the real-life gender relations and conflicts.

In addition, although women in modern Chinese society gradually began to own more self-awareness and choices, as Li (2004) finds, Chinese women are still concerned with the bonds of families. In Chinese society, the illusion which is out of the responsibility of the family could be regarded as disobedience of the placement of Chinese women's social positions and functions, and will be suppressed by social rules and be attacked by hegemonic ideology (Li, 1999). The image of Chinese women's idealised men to some extent is constructed under the considerable influence of this woman-family relation, which points out the second difference of the represented relationship between woman and her idealised male image in advertising between the UK and China: the different functions of woman's ideal male image, which specially focuses on the different attitudes to the representation of sexuality.



Figure 13-4 Wife and Mr. Clean in Mr. Clean advert



Figure 13- 5 Wife and husband in Mr. Clean advert

13.4.2 Functions of Women's Idealised Male Images: Asexual Support and Sexual Imagination

By discussing the images of the idealised male character in gender relations in commercials, the analysis of both advert cases highlights a second difference of the construction of gender relationship between woman and her idealised masculinity: different functions of the ideal male image. Specifically, the ideal male partner in the Chinese advertisement appears as an indispensable part of the female character. The male character carries the role of the material supporter of the essential part of Chinese woman in the advertisement - the family.

In essence, the idealised gender relation represented in the Chinese advert is asexual. In comparison, in the British Mr Clean advert which this chapter discusses above, the symbol of the hug is applied to express the female character's gratitude to her male partner after he did all the housework (*Figures 13-6; 13-7*). Similar to the Mr Clean advert, in the Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil advert, the female character hugs the male character when he is cooking (*Figure 13-8*). However, the 'hug' develops into behaviours with strong sexual implications in the former advertisement, while the hug is transformed into the dialogue of seeking the inner 'promise' ('the choice is a

commitment, I choose to give him warmth') in the Chinese case study advertisement.



Figure 13-6 'Hugging' (1) in British Mr. Clean advert



Figure 13-7 'Hugging' (2) in in British Mr. Clean advert



Figure 13- 8 'Hugging' (3) in Chinese Jinlongyu advert

This phenomenon reflects the characteristics of the represented idealised men in China or even in the East Asian cultures. According to Wang (2016), the traditional ideal male images in Chinese mass media are often shaped to be asexual and maternal. Compared to the represented gender relations, which are full of sexual hints in Western television dramas, kissing is commonly considered a 'major' progression in gender relations on Chinese television screens (Wang, 2016). This argument could be confirmed by the majority of Chinese television series with high ratings such as *Eternal Love* (2017), *Princess Agents* (2016), and *My Sunshine* (2015).

Regarding the case study advert, as indicated in the advert texts, the idealised male character in the Jinlongyu advertisement generally works as a protector in the gender relations. In this sense, the image of the asexual male character to some extent has implied that Chinese society is still male-dominated, as the most important function of the male advertising character is to show man's responsibility to the family and the gender relation rather than working as a sexual gazing object.

On the other hand, the asexual male image is produced by the tradition of abstinence in Chinese society. As Li (1998) finds, the Neo-Confucian discourse existing in the

past thousands of years and the revolutionary ideology after the founding of the People's Republic of China have co-created an atmosphere of abstinence in modern Chinese culture. Therefore, the sexual content is often considered not suitable to be displayed on the mainstream mass media platforms (see Chapter 11). Sexual repression has been transformed into a public subconscious mind, and it is also reflected in the advertising representation of gender relations and relevant laws and regulations.

These social factors mentioned above all have constituted the asexual description of woman's idealised man in the case study advert. And the female is irrelevant to the construction of her ideal man and lacks initiative. She is not the creator of her ideal male image, as such an ideal masculine image is pre-defined by social customs and the public's subjective expectations of genders and gender relations. The female advertising character functions as a subordinate role to help the male character to complete the shaping of the asexual image as a supporter.

The British Just Eat advertisement suggests that the female character's dream men have two basic functions: the object of gazing; and the tool of reconstructing male homo-sociality²⁷. To be more specific, the idealised male character in the Just Eat advert exists as the carriers of sexual symbols and an object of gaze bearing sexual illusions of the female character. These imaginary men have strong body figures, healthy skins, and are lively and alert. They have no real life-role setting in this advertisement - they act entirely by the woman's consciousness and mind. Moreover, the woman's dream men in the Just Eat advert work as a significant tool to represent the female character's resistance to the male homo-sociality. The advert text suggests that the ideal masculinity, represented by the female character's fantasy men, is

²⁷ Male homo-sociality refers to social bonds between males (Bird, 1996: 121). Masculinity studies point out that men's social statuses are organised by relations between men; men's practices of gender are accomplished by a homosocial enactment in which 'the performance of manhood is in front of, and graded by, other men' (Kimmel, 1994: 128-129). Men attempt to improve their social position in masculine hierarchies, using 'makers of manhood' such as power, wealth, physical prowess, occupational achievement, and sexual achievements (Kimmel, 1994: 129)

created by the imagination of the female. At the end of the commercial, these fantasy men leave the fantasy scene, and step into the same frame with the real male advertising character, blending reality with fantasy. The hybridity of reality and fantasy has reproduced the main path to acquire and maintain masculinity, male homo-sociality, which plays a vital role in perpetuating perceived patterns of male dominance (Bradley, 2007: 103-104).

The existing natures of masculinity have decided that the acquisition and recognition of man's masculinity come from the interactions with other man in the male homo-society (Kimmel, 2004; 2005). In the case study advertisement, although the leading female character independently created a group of idealised male images, her consciousness was still affected by a series of pre-existing ideological and cultural systems of the male homo-social relationship. This illusion of male image is derived from the leading female's imagination and is also the representation of the hegemonic relationship between subjectivity and reality. The hegemonic male homo-society's control of both men and women is hidden through the internalisation of the form of male's power. Once the woman's imaginary men entered into the real scene, they unavoidably then went into the framework of the erotic triangle and place the female character into the intermediary position of the male social relationship as the imaginary men have become a real existing object with a social identity at that moment.

However, on the other hand, in the process of creating the ideal male image, the leading female character also tries to break the male homo-social bonding. As the leading character running through all the scenes, the female character plays the role of conducting advertising narrative. In the imaginary scene, she stands in the centre position surrounded by the group of men. At that moment, the female performs the functions of both sexual attraction and maternal dependence as these male characters are created by her imagination. Then in the real-fantasy combination scene, the female character covers her fantasy men to sneak away without being found by the male

character. From this standpoint, the female performs the role of being attached and being needed. Under the female-centric narrative model, the female character achieves a two-way's satisfaction, and these two kinds of satisfaction both originated from the resistance of the female character to the male homo-social union. The resistance is manifested in that the female character has not only created the idealised male characters, but also provided them with protection in the male social relationship. Through the resistance (even it is unsuccessful and incomplete), the commercial feminist advertising effects of showing woman's initiatives and self-values have been realised and concreted.

Through the rebellion and resistance to the male homo-social relation, we can see that the British advertisement set the woman as a binary opposition to the male group. In contrast, due to the factors discussed above, the resistance of the woman towards the binary opposition between the two sexes in the Chinese case study advert is still not apparent.

13.5 Summary

This chapter provides a comparative study to illustrate how masculinities are constituted in the gender relationships and through other discourses related to gender. The woman's ideal masculinity was differently represented in British Just Eat and Chinese Jinlongyu Cooking Oil commercials, behind which is the different gender discourses in the British and Chinese contexts.

The discussions state that the image of the woman's idealised male image in the Chinese advert case is represented as asexual, and the function of the idealised male character is to take responsibility of the family. The asexual image of the male character on the one hand shows the particularity of the gender concepts in modern Chinese culture, which emphasises the male social responsibility while the sexual

function of man has been degenerated into an unimportant position. On the other hand, it is determined by the abstinence culture and related laws and regulations in China. For comparison, the ideal male image in British advertisement is created by the female character through her illustration and imagination, which has re-represented the female's resistance and obedience to the male homo-society. In these construction process, the female characters in both advertisements play significant roles in the represented gender relations, however, compared with the British female advertising character who makes the resistance to the male homo-social bonding, the Chinese female character is constructed as having less initiative and being held more rigidly within the framework of family. By examining and comparing these relations, this chapter explicated the specific cultural meanings of gender and the ideological functions of advertising that generate oppression and prohibition for each gender.

Chapter 14 Conclusion

14.1 Introduction

As previously discussed, advertising is a combination of the economy and culture as it not only stimulate consumption but also constructs and diffuses cultural meanings. Advertising campaign is not just an economic activity pursuing commercial purposes but also reflects global cross-cultural meaning exchanges. Advertising culture is grounded by the specific times and contexts, as the advertisement texts contain certain cultural concepts and values which play a subtle role in stimulating and influencing the mass audience (see Chapters 1; 3; 4). Therefore, television commercials are often seen as the indicators of the cultural connotations of the society and the history, or in other words, commercials are the mirrors of the popular culture (see Chapters 4; 5). In this sense, the production of television advertising needs to be based on a set of well-grounded factors such as customs, commerciality, nationalism, globalisation and historical considerations. Certain cultural traditions, beliefs and values largely influence the consumption psychology and behaviour of advertisers and consumers, thus resulting in the similarities or differences of advertising representations among various countries (see Chapter 4).

At the same time, as the expression of popular culture, the female advertising characters in television commercials are often constructed as attractive communication symbols, and the feminine symbols in advertising are one of the most popular visual symbols used by advertisers (see Chapters 4; 5). The symbols of female and femininity in the advertisement convey not only certain product information but also are specific cultural connotations, conveying important ideological information and cultural/cross-cultural meanings. The representations of women in television commercials have also been differently represented due to differences in cultural traditions and gender values between the UK and China.

This research selected 19 commercials from the Chinese and British television advertisements. The sample collection duration of this study was from April 2014 to January 2018. The 19 television advertisement cases were selected from these collected commercials. Using semiotics as the methodology, this research compares and analyses the women's representations and related symbols between British and Chinese advert cases. Through the comparison and analysis of women's representations in Chinese and British advertisements (including femininity, women and family, new female image, female body, exotic female and female idealised male image), this research found the social-cultural factors such as commercialism, globalisation, Orientalism, traditional culture, traditional discourse of gender, the development of feminism, the development of the advertising industry, regulations, etc. have all contributed to the similarities and differences in the representations of women in the Chinese and British advertisements.

The following sections will explain how this research meet its objectivities including 'what are the similarities and differences of women's advertising representations between the UK and China', 'to what extent traditional values and culture contribute to these similarities and differences', and 'to what extent globalisation, modernity and Western feminism affect the women's representations in Chinese and British advertisements' from the following perspectives:

14.2 Femininity

The first finding and discussion chapter argues and compares the representations of femininity between the UK and China. Although the female characters in the case study ads vary widely, this research found that the performativity of femininity existed in both countries' adverts. The advertising representations of female characters and femininity contain the commercialised performativity because the represented characters and femininity in advertisements are the commercialised symbols in the

advertising coding system.

This research found that the Chinese case advertisements highlighted 'consumption behaviour' and 'dependence' as important indicators of femininity. By creating the consumption-oriented femininity and reinforcing gender differences, the Chinese ads achieved the aims of promoting merchandise and stimulating consumption. The Chinese case adverts were more concentrated on highlighting the keyword 'purchase' when representing femininity.

In comparison, the British case advertisements represented the ideas of female empowerment and gender diversity. Moreover, in the British case advertisements, the represented femininity or masculinity of the advertising characters is no longer limited by their sexes. And sexuality is no longer a visible tag for distinguishing the femininity and masculinity in the British ads. At the same time, the British ads reproduced the recognition and acceptance process of the self and reflected the emphasis on individual value and subjectivity.

The first reason causing the different representations of femininity lies in the different social traditions between the UK and China. Grouping people into specific social positions and weakening the presence of individual under the guidance of collectivism have a long-time national tradition in China. In comparison, the British case advertisement's emphasis of self-identities, personal values and subjectivity of the advertising characters can be regarded as the cutting-edge reproduction of the emphasis on the individual and subject in the modern British society.

Another significant factor that led to the different shaping and usages of femininity between British and Chinese commercials can be attributed to the varying degrees of the development of femininity in each country. In the British society, due to the long-time fight of feminist political movements and the penetration of gender constructivism theories, the inopportune patricentric role setting has gradually

withdrawn from the mainstream representations. The advertiser used the characters containing the meanings of 'weakening the label of genders' to attract the mass audiences. Erasing gender stereotyping messages in advertising has long been the goal of gender equality movements in British popular culture. This has led to the tendency of more brands to represent the empowerment of women, thus creating a series of feminist advertising which is collectively referred to as 'femvertising'. In China, women have become the leading consumer group in recent years, and female consumption is setting off an unprecedented upsurge (Liang, 2014). Therefore, a large number of advertisements use female characters to dominate advertising narrative. However, due to the insufficient development of Chinese feminism and its excessive dependence on official discourse and political system, feminism cannot become an independent social force or ideological field in China, but has become a political tool. Therefore, the Chinese case adverts still tried to use a feminine label to represent all kinds of women.

14.3 Women and Families

Family and motherhood usually denote that the critical, essential element of femininity which in some way affects almost every woman. By analysing and comparing the representations of women in families between the UK and China, this research found that, first, the double dilemma of women between the family spheres and the public spheres exist in the constructions of female roles in both Chinese and British advertisements. The pressure of social and family responsibilities faced by female advertising roles further shows that traditional gender ideology still influences and controls advertising, standardising and managing the representations of women in advertising.

This research also found the differences in the representations of women in families between the British and Chinese adverts. The first difference shows the different

relationships between woman and family. In the Chinese case ads, both the male character (the husband) and the female character (the wife) are indispensable parts in the constitution of the family. Chinese advertising representations of gender emphasize the happiness and integrity of the family, and have relatively simplified the shaping of female characters. Compared with the fantasy and perfect world created by the Chinese case adverts, the British adverts are more concerned about the different roles of women in various family structures. The images of mothers in British adverts have played more pluralistic roles such as single mom, working mom, and stay-at-home mom and so on, and showed their independent personality and personal value.

Another apparent difference between the Chinese and British advertising representations of women lies in the shaping of the family structure related to women. The family structure in Chinese advertising is limited within the framework of the traditional (male) husband - (female) wife - child family model. Women in the family are limited to the identities of the mother, the wife, and the daughter.

In the British advertisements, due to the diversity of portrayals of the family, women's identities in families are correspondingly diversified. The integration of various family forms in short advertisements deliver the concepts of diverse sexual orientations and living concepts and the mutual symbiosis of races, cultures, and identities. This kind of representation can be regarded as a valid deconstruction of the patriarchal discourse. The British adverts also reflect a new phenomenon that the growing women's identities and practices appear to have been accepted by the mainstream social discourse, in particular, being single has been recognised by advertising as a normal way of life. In comparison, due to reasons for the maintenance of social stability and the identity homogeneity in national characteristics, representations of multiple gender identities and family structures in Chinese advertisements are still rare.

14.4 New Women

The third finding and discussion chapter focuses on the representations of new women. With the development of society and the advancement of gender ideas, women participate in all aspects of social life in nowadays. Both the Chinese and British advertisements have positively represented the images of new women in the public sphere. These new women's images are independent and have strong self-awareness. They are no longer limited to the gender roles within the field of family, but more focus on their individual development and contributions to social progress.

By comparing the construction approaches of female characters in the Chinese and British case study ads, we can see that one of the similarities is that both advertisements are ended with the depiction of the female bonding. Behind the representations is the recognition of feminist beliefs in the contexts of the UK and China. Moreover, in the case study commercials, it is not difficult to find that the new middle-class women in both British and Chinese ads have the similar lifestyles. By analysing the advert texts, this research found that the impacts of globalisation and global feminism on the new women in both China and the UK are profound and undeniable. The lifestyles of new women in China and Britain are getting more similar under the influence of globalisation rhetoric and feminist discourse. The advertising representations absorb and embody feminist ideas and cultural values and once again projected the feminist views and cultures to audiences.

The second similarity between the British and Chinese case commercials is that both adverts constructed femininity as an essential characteristic of the new female characters. Although each culture has a set of general concepts about the constitution of femininity and beauty, this research does not find a noticeable difference in the constructed femininity in the case commercials. Additionally, these case advertisements do not deliberately avoid representing femininity of the female characters when proposing feminist concepts and advocating the independence of

women. This research found the female characters in the case commercials are all attractive, feminine, and intended. The values of individualism and untrammelled selfhood represented by the female advertising characters are accompanied by the onset of globalisation and the emergence of the new female groups.

The Chinese and British case study adverts both take women as the main promoter of advertising narrative. The advert texts seem to be in line with the concept of 'new and independent women', however, this research found that the dependence of women on men in Chinese advertisement is much higher than that of women in the British ad, and that the female same-sex union in Chinese advertisements also appear to be the second choice of the female characters due to the absence of men. The Chinese advert shows us a series of young, beautiful and confident female characters which are constructed based on the character and identity of a special female group in Chinese society. This female group with a growing number in recent years is called the 'leftover women', which has revealed the fear of 'being single' for Chinese women.

From the comparison of female characters in the advertisements, it can be seen that there are many similarities in the positioning, identity and life status of the young middle-class women between the Chinese and British adverts. These similarities can be considered as the result of globalisation and the global spread of feminism and Western gender concepts. However, from the constructed female characters of the Chinese advertisement, this study still found the sense of social anxiety of the independent female as a gendered group. This anxiety is rooted in the traditional Chinese gender concepts and social culture, and it is also imprinted into the feminist discourse in China today.

14.5 The Female Body

This research also compared the representations of the female body between the

British and Chinese adverts. This research selected two sanitary products commercials as the cases to analyse the discourse of gender behind the representations of the female body. This chapter found that both adverts consist of a set of traditional or new sexuality surveillance system on women and menstruation.

The first difference between the representation of the female body between the Chinese and British case study adverts is the diametrically different representation of blood, which reflects the social regulation of the female body. The blue liquid used in the Chinese commercial expressed a denial and evasion of the menstrual blood as a transformation process of biological sexuality. In the British case commercial, blood has been constructed as a significant symbol, by which we see the attitude of the dominant culture to female physiological phenomenon has largely changed in the UK.

The second difference between the representations of the female body between Chinese British adverts lies in the construction of femininity. There are two levels of femininity represented in the Chinese advertisement. The first level refers to the sexy femininity, represented by the silhouette of a sexy female body in the ad; the second level indicates to the innocent and cute femininity, which was conveyed by the advertising-constructed feminine symbols including the rainbow, magical rabbit, fairy stick, and the girls who need to be protected. Through these two levels of representation of the female body, the female characters are modelled, and the stereotypes of women's beautiful and sexy body are further established.

In comparison, it is not difficult to find that the female body displayed in the British advertisement is not directly linked with traditional femininity and the menstrual period. The representation of the female body in this advert even gives the viewer a feeling of violent film through the depiction of the cybered body part including the bleeding toes, the hand covered with scars, bleeding knees, broken nose, and so on. Except for other paradigmatic differences between two cases including camera angles, background colours, etc. In this sense, the representation of the female body in the

British case could be regarded as a Mulvey-style attempt to destroy the pleasure of gazing.

This research argued that the reason causing the differences lies in both the gender view and the development of feminism in Chinese and British contexts. The British advert which promotes the empowerment of women and destroys the gaze pleasure on the female body is the product of the development of feminism and the spread of gender equality in British society. In comparison, in China, under the influence of the long-term indoctrination and impregnation of traditional feudal ideas, there are still many women own weak subjective awareness and value themselves down which shows a substantial lag compared with the modern and post-modern feminist ideas and concepts.

14.6 Female Body, Nudity and Sex

The fifth discussion chapter focused on the representation of nudity and sex of women. The similarity of the two case study advertisements lies in the way and purpose of the usage of female body and femininity. Both of these adverts try to use femininity to attract audiences, which is determined by the profit-seeking nature of advertising and the operating mechanism of the male gaze.

This research found that the represented female bodies play different roles in the gender setting in each advert, and at the same time, the constructions of the gendered symbols associated with femininity and female body also show considerable differences in these two case study adverts. In the British advert, the functions of female and male characters are similar in promoting the development of advertising plots. The female body is the object of highlighting femininity and strengthening sex distinction in the British advert. In the Chinese advertisement, the protection function of the male character is pronounced. 'He' provided hugs and comforts to the female character before the bungee jump and was required to find solutions facing the female

character's complaints. In Chinese advert, the role of the female body in gender relations has been weakened and merely becomes an dependent and objective symbol.

Moreover, the female character in Chinese case advert is conservatively dressed up while the woman in British advert is more exposed, implying the different myths about nudity and sexuality in these two cultures which owe more to the gender ideologies in different contexts than to the preferences of the advertisers. The different representations of the nudity levels and body exposure of the female advertising characters reflect the different attitudes to the nudity of female body between British and Chinese contexts.

This research also found that the Chinese and British case adverts have different ways of depicting sexual behaviours. The Chinese advert used a metaphorical method (a story about bungee jumping) to imply the sexual behaviour of the male and female advertising characters. The British advert used a series of sexually suggestive signs and the naked body to describe sex. Compared with the direct description of sex and female body in the British ad, the Chinese advert creates a romantic love story to represent gender relations while sexuality has been reduced to a tiny part of the story. The avoidance of sexual description in Chinese advertising representations can be re-confirmed by the advertising construction of women's idealised male images discussed in Chapter 13.

The reason for the difference in the physical and sexual advertising representations of women between China and the UK lies in different social cultures and discourses of gender. From a practical perspective, the two countries have different regulations on female body representation and sexual content. The regulations in these two countries draw on a whole range of discourses from gender to politics, to determine whether or which kind of female or sexual representations might be immoral harmful or suitable for the mass audiences in the UK and China.

14.7 Ethnic and Exotic Women

This research also looked at the representations of ethnic and exotic women in advertising. Looking at the narratives of the case study commercials, this research found that both advertisements employed the symbols of women and ethnicity into the description of the food, which can be seen as a code that is restricted by culture and expresses social relations. On the one hand, it represents the ethnic relationship between the female advertising character - the food taster and the food from other culture, connecting the local with the other; on the other hand, this process is accomplished by the female leading characters, which combines the ethnicity with the gender.

In terms of differences, this research found that the shaping of advertising characters with various skin colours and genders in the British case study advertisement reflects the tolerance of different ethnic groups and the recognition of Asian/Chinese culture. On the one hand, the advert used ethnicity and female as the selling points, and on the other hand, it deconstructs the Orientalist discourse by the representation of ethnic hybridity. This paradoxical representation of Asian/Chinese woman can be seen as the reflection of the development and frustration of multiculturalism in British society.

In comparison, the representation of the Caucasian woman in the Chinese case advert contained the strong colour of self-Orientalist discourse and the apparent intention of distinguishing the East from the West. The admiration and the otherisation of the Western female in the Smithfield advert have shown China's longing and uneasiness for the Western culture and Westernised modernity. On the one hand, the Chinese advert was attempted to draw a line between the Chinese nationality and the European cultural elements. On the other hand, the entry of European cultural elements in the Chinese context was uncontrollable. In the Chinese advertising representation, the Caucasian woman not only worked as a gazing object but also became an ornamental element which is copied into the Chinese advert texts, reflecting the ambivalence of

modern Chinese people in confirming the subjective and national identity.

14.8 Women's Idealised Masculinity

The last finding and discussion chapter provided a comparative case study to illustrate how masculinities were constituted in relation to the structure of gender relationships.

This chapter showed that the image of the woman's idealised man in Chinese media was represented as asexual, and his function was to support and take responsibility of the family. This image on the one hand shows the particularity of Chinese patriarchal culture, on the other hand, is determined by the abstinence culture and related laws and regulations in China. In the meantime, the idealised male image in the British advertisement was created by the female character through her illustration and imagination, which re-represented the female's resistance and obedience to the male homo-sexual union.

In these construction process, the female characters in both advertisements played significant roles in the represented gender relations. However, compared with the British female character who made the resistance to the male homo-social bonding, the Chinese female was constructed as having less initiative and being rigidly limited within the framework of the traditional family discourse. In examining and comparing the construction process of women's idealised masculinity, this chapter explicated similarities and differences of the views of gender and gender relations existed between the British and Chinese cultures, and examined the ideological functions of advertising which generated oppression and prohibition for each gender.

14.9 Limitations

Limited by time, equipment and funding, the amount of television advertisements

selected from the Chinese and British televisions in this study is not too many. The research is based on the case study rather than content analysis, which affects the breadth of the research of advertisements. In addition, due to a large number of new media video materials and the difficulty of sampling, this study only focuses on television advertisements. However, I hope to expand the scope of cross-cultural gender research into new media in the future.

14.10 Reflections on the Study's Contributions

Building on the previous research on the characteristics of advertising, woman's advertising representation, and the trans-cultural communication in the globalisation context, as previously concluded, this research has answered the following questions: first, how advertising represents woman in the UK and China. Second, what are the similarities and differences of the representations of women between the UK and China. Third, how these similarities and differences are produced.

This research not only contributes to the knowledge of gender and woman studies but also have a contribution to cross-cultural studies.

In terms of its contribution to woman and gender studies, although the themes of woman and family have been repeatedly criticised in previous research, the current mass media has witnessed the dramatic changes of the representations of woman due to the resurgence of post-feminism and the rising of woman's empowerment in the past few years (see discussions in Chapter 3). In this sense, the representations of women are in a state of constantly changing. Therefore, the topic of woman's representation should be treated as a timeless theme until 'woman' as a gender discourse has been completely dismembered and the concept of gender roles has been deconstructed.

In this research, the interpretation of the female advertising representations and the analysis of the social and cultural factors constructing the representations help us to deeply understand, dissect and criticise the existing gender power structure. In the process of constructing female images, advertisements and other mass mediums have different levels of review and presupposition of gender ideas (see Chapter 4). The selective representation of women and the patterns and characteristics of the construction of gender meanings play an important role in the self-shaping and the positioning of gender consciousness for the audience. By comparing the similarities of women's representations in different cultural systems could help us analyse the living environment of women in different contexts, explain the causes of gender inequality, and reveal the internal mechanism of gender discrimination. Therefore, the analysis of women's representation helps to increase the sensitivity of gender inequality for the media and the audience. Perhaps in the future, more female advertising images will step out the frame which emphasises women's traditional gender roles and identity in the name of consumerism; probably in the future, more women will gradually get rid of the influence of patriarchal gender concept and identification and own the choice of selecting their gender identities. These are one of the main desires and expectations of this research.

In terms of its contribution to cross-cultural studies, this research combines women's studies with cross-cultural studies. This research links the comparison of women's representations with the considerations of political, economic, and cultural factors in China and the UK, and conducts the theoretical discussions of the historical and realistic contexts of women's representations. This research puts gender and advertising research into the context of globalisation and post-colonialism. The cross-cultural approach helps us to analyse and study the gender discourse in a broad social and cultural context of globalisation.

Different cultural, historical, political, economic, and social backgrounds make Chinese and British advertisements imply different gender concepts and ideas. Due to

the different cultures and gender concepts between China and the UK, such as the differences in the awakening of women's subjective consciousness, the different influence of traditional gender consciousness on women, the different development levels of social and cultural status of women, the differences between the national collectivism in China and the cultural tradition emphasising individualism in the UK, and so on, have made the Chinese and British advertisements have many differences in the shaping of female images. Therefore, the cross-cultural analysis of women's representations could help us introspect the gender awareness, discourses of gender, nationalism, globalisation, and the degree of the development of feminism in different contexts while criticising the patriarchy gender setting and the stereotyped gender discourse. The cross-cultural analysis of women's representation helps us to explore the connection between the two countries as well as the social and cultural factors buried in the representations.

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Figure 7-2. Vipshop advert A scene 2 From:http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTY0ODEwMjg4MA==.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2&spm=a2h0k.8191407.0.0. Retrieved date: June 20th 2017.

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Figure 7-11 Vipshop advert B scene 6 From http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTUzMDM1NTM4NA==.html?from=s1.8-1-1.2&spm=a2h0k.8191407.0.0 Retrieved date: June 20th 2017.

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