The Construction of Beauty:
A Cross-Cultural Analysis
of Women's Magazine Advertising

By Katherine Frith, Ping Shaw, and Hong Cheng

As a media genre, advertising offers a unique opportunity to study how the beauty ideal is constructed across cultures. This research analyzes the content of advertisements from women's fashion and beauty magazines in Singapore, Taiwan, and the U.S. to compare how beauty is encoded and found a noticeable difference between the portrayals of women from the U.S. and from the two East Asian societies in terms of sexual portrayal. In addition, Asian ads contained a large proportion of cosmetics and facial beauty products whereas the U.S. ads were dominated by clothing. These findings suggest that beauty in the U.S. may be constructed more in terms of "the body," whereas in Singapore and Taiwan the defining factor is more related to a pretty face. The article also discusses how feminist critiques of the sexual objectification of women in advertising may need to be considered within their historical, Western context of origin.

Each culture has a set of general beliefs about what constitutes femininity and beauty. According to Wood (1999), to be feminine in the United States is to be attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. According to Hofstede (1997), in Confucian cultures, femininity is associated with virtue and modesty. The script for femininity is written into a culture and is transmitted over time through family, peers, teachers, and the media.

Likewise, beauty is a construct that varies from culture to culture and changes over time. A buxom Marilyn Monroe was the beauty ideal in the United States in the 1950s, soon to be replaced by the emaciated Twiggy of the 1960s. Whereas porcelain skin is valued in China, scarification of the skin is a beauty process in parts of Africa. Thus, the particular set of physical characteristics perceived as

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beautiful and desirable can vary across cultures and time periods. Advertisements offer us a unique opportunity to study the construction of beauty in a culture because advertisers are notorious for promoting a "beauty ideal" (Greer, 1999) or, as Cortese (1999) pointed out, presenting "the exemplary female prototype." Because the majority of research on images of women in advertising over the past 30 years has been conducted in the U.S. and Europe (Bordo, 1993; Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Gauntlett, 2002; Goffman, 1976; Kilbourne, 1987, 1999; Lafky, Duffy, Steinmaus, & Berkowitz, 1996; Richins, 1991; Soley & Kurzbad, 1986), the literature may reflect assumptions about women that are specific to Western cultures. Certain themes have dominated this literature, such as the stereotyping of women as passive and less powerful players in society, the portrayal of women as sexual objects in ads, and the cumulative effect of magazine advertising on women's self-esteem.

The purpose of this research is to compare the portrayals of beauty in women's fashion and beauty magazine advertisements from Asia and the U.S. to help understand how beauty is constructed across cultures.

Theoretical Issues

The Feminist Critique

Advertising has long been criticized by Western feminist scholars as a pervasive cultural institution that represents women in a problematic and often unacceptable way (Kates, Shaw, & Garlock, 1999). In particular, the positioning of women as sexual objects in ads has received a great deal of discussion (Jhally, 1989; Kilbourne, 1999). Although there have been numerous U.S. studies suggesting that sexual content interferes with brand name recall (Alexander & Judd, 1978; Chestnut, LaChance, & Lubitz, 1977; Horton, Lieb, & Hewitt, 1982; Richmond & Hartman, 1982; Steadman, 1969), nonetheless, attractive female bodies and sexual stimuli have historically been used in the U.S. to grab the viewer's attention and attempt to lend interest to a product or service (Frith & Mueller, 2003). According to Reichert, Lambiase, Carstarphen, and Zavoina (1999):

> In *TV Guide*, more than 35 percent of network promotional ads contain some sort of sexual reference. An analysis of Clio award-winning TV spots revealed that 29 percent contained a seductively dressed model, and 27 percent contained at least a hint of sexual suggestion. (p. 7)

The literature on sex appeal in advertising is extensive. Soley and Kurzbad (1986) compared "sex appeals" in magazine ads in the U.S. between 1964 and 1984. They found that, over time, sexual elements were becoming more visual and more overt. They concluded that female nudity and erotic content had become quite commonplace in contemporary U.S. ads. Another study of women's magazines from 1983 to 1993 showed that there was increased representation of women as sexual objects (Reichert et al., 1999). Reid and Soley (1983) found that ads with sexual content got higher visual recall/recognition scores, but the same did not apply to the verbal content.

The question most salient to this research, however, is this: Are beautiful women objectified and used in sexual ways in advertising across cultures? A number of studies have examined the portrayal of women in advertising in other societies. Comparing print advertisements from the U.S. and France, Biswas, Olsen, and Carlet (1992) reported that sex appeal was used more often in French than in U.S. advertisements. The authors interpreted this difference as being consistent with the perception that France is sexually more liberated than the United States. In a study of women's portrayals in Chinese advertising, Cheng (1997) noted that women in Chinese television commercials wore more "demure" and less sexually suggestive clothing than did women in U.S. advertisements.

One study comparing images of women in weekly U.S. news magazines (*Time* and *Life*) to weekly Indian magazines (*India Today* and *Illustrated Weekly of India*) found very similar portrayals of women in subordinate or accessory poses among these four magazines (Griffin, Viswanath, & Schwartz, 1994). The authors concluded that many of the Western advertising conventions and poses for women were being transferred cross-culturally in conjunction with concepts like "professionalism" by Western multinational advertising agencies. In certain areas, such as the portrayal of women in predominately housewife or domestic management settings, Indian magazines far outstripped their U.S. counterparts. When comparing the use of "sexual pursuit" as a theme in advertisements (men pursuing women in an overtly sexual way), however, U.S. magazines used these portrayals three times more often than Indian magazines.

In an analysis of how Caucasian women are used in Japanese advertising, William O'Barr (1994) pointed out that Western models are posed doing things that Japanese women would never do. He says that Caucasian women are often shown being "sensual and willing" in Japanese advertising (p. 187). O'Barr suggested that this is merely mirroring the way women are portrayed in advertising in the West. Frith and Mueller (2003) showed that in conservative Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, only Caucasian women are used in lingerie advertising as it would be unseemly for a local women to be shown partially undressed.

Underlying much of the past feminist research on representation of women in advertising is the basic assumption that, within patriarchal societies, women's bodies are the object of "the male gaze" (Shields, 1990). In his seminal work on the historical significance of the female nude in Western art, John Berger (1972) explained: "in the art form of the European nude, the painters and spectator-owners were usually men and the persons treated as objects, usually women" (p. 63). Much of the research on the representation of women in advertising has been anchored in Western women's experience. In her insightful essay on positionality, Fabienne Darling-Wolf (1998) described the difficulty Western feminist scholars encounter when they apply their life experiences to other cultures. She sobserved that there is a growing awareness within the feminist method of positionality when examining "texts positing gender oppression as the central component of all female experience" (p. 414). Thus, it is hoped that this study may help us to understand how feminine beauty ideals might manifest across cultures.

Beauty Types Research

To ascertain perceptions of women's beauty and beauty types used in advertising in contemporary U.S. culture, Solomon, Ashmore, and Longo (1992) conducted an experiment. They assembled a set of photographs of models employed by major U.S. fashion agencies and presented them to a sample of U.S. fashion magazine editors who were instructed to sort the models into piles based on similarity of looks. The results yielded relatively distinct beauty types: Classic, Feminine, Sensual, Exotic, Cute, Girl-Next-Door, Sex Kitten, and Trendy. In 1994, Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore applied the same eight beauty looks to advertisements collected from current major U.S. magazines and found the Trendy, Classic/Feminine, and Exotic/Sensual types were the most prevalent.

To date, little advertising research has attempted to look at how beauty is constructed in different cultures. In one study comparing beauty types of young girls in a Japanese version of *Seventeen* magazine to a U.S. version of the same magazine, the researchers reported that the Japanese models were typecast as "cute" and "girlish" (smiling and giggling) while the Americans girls were posed with more serious expressions, looking more defiant and independent (Maynard & Taylor, 1999).

Globalization and the Construction of Beauty

Ideally, for advertising messages to be resonant with a target audience, marketing theory holds that ads would need to reflect the social norms and cultural values of a given society (Belk, Bryce, & Pollay, 1985; Belk & Pollay, 1985; Cheng, 1994; Frith & Sengupta, 1991; Lin, 1993; Mueller, 1987). In a perfect world, we might expect that advertisements would be created by members of a particular society and consumed by members of the same society. However, globalization alters this process. Standardized campaigns can be created in the head offices of advertising agencies in the U.S. and Europe and run in foreign countries with only simple modifications such as translated headlines. Foreign branch offices of the big multinational agencies often follow Western styles when creating campaigns (Griffin, Viswanath, & Schwartz, 1994). In addition, the creative people in these branch offices have often received their training in U.S. and British universities or have interned in Western advertising agencies. The result is that the forms of representation, particularly of women, can take on a globalized or transnational look. As one Korean author put this:

> For thirty years, media have been taken to task for reproducing and reinforcing stereotyped images of women. Yet unfair representations of women in media still prevail worldwide. Sex stereotyping has been so deeply ingrained, even glorified, that the women themselves have become desensitized to their own inferior portrayal. The prospects appear even gloomier as the globalization of media progresses. (Kyung-Ja Lee, 2000, p. 86)

To better understand how women are represented in different cultures, this study uses the Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore (1994) beauty categories to examine advertisements from popular local women's fashion and beauty magazines in Singapore, Taiwan, and the U.S. The rationale for the selection of Singapore,

Taiwan, and the U.S. for this study is twofold. In terms of living standards and levels of development, the three societies are comparable and therefore interesting to compare and contrast. The United States possesses a Western culture that exerts enormous influence on the rest of the world, whereas Singapore and Taiwan, both traditionally under the influence of Confucianism, are two societies representative of Eastern culture.

Although Singapore and Taiwan have many similarities, they also have some differences. Singapore has a culturally diversified society with the Chinese making up about 70% of the population, followed by about 20% Malay and 10% Indian. Taiwan is a homogeneously Chinese society. English is Singapore's official language, whereas Chinese is the mother tongue in Taiwan.

Because women's fashion and beauty magazines generally deal with beauty, it was hoped that a comparison of the advertisements in locally popular women's magazines from each of these societies would shed light on the current status of how beauty is represented in each of these cultures.

In addition to beauty types, the product category and the race of the models were analyzed. Although Cortese (1999) contended that advertisers present the exemplary female prototype in advertising regardless of product or service, other researchers (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Mueller, 1987) have found a relationship between product categories and cultural values. Mueller (1987) argued that in cross-cultural research it is essential to observe the relationship between the product advertised and the appeal being made to the consumer.

Based on the literature review of women's portrayals in advertising the following hypotheses were formulated for this study.

> H1: Caucasian models will be used more often across cultures than models of other ethnic groups in women's beauty and fashion magazine advertising.

> H2: The beauty types used in women's magazine advertising will differ in the U.S., Singapore, and Taiwan.

> H3: The beauty types used for Caucasian models will differ from those used for Asian models.

> H4: The types of products advertised in women's fashion and beauty magazines will differ across cultures.

Method

Based on the eight beauty types identified by Englis, Solomon and Ashmore (1994), advertisements from popular fashion and beauty women's magazines in Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States were content analyzed. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), content analysis can aid in comparing media content to the real world. In this case, content analysis allows us to examine the portrayal of feminine identity across cultures.

To maintain comparability, the magazine types from each country were matched by format, audience demographics, local language, and circulation figures. Within the genre of women's magazines, there are various types, such as lifestyle (*Cosmopolitan,* for example), general interest (*Ladies Home Journal*), and fashion and beauty (*Vogue*). For circulation figures, we selected magazines that claimed that 80% or more of their readers were primarily local women between the ages of 20 and 35. The content for each magazine chosen was focused mainly on fashion and beauty. We also chose popular women's magazines that were published in the main local language, which was English in the U.S. and Singapore and Mandarin in Taiwan.

The women's magazines selected from Singapore were *Her World*, *Female,* and *Cleo*. *Female* is the second best-selling magazine in Singapore after *Her World*, with *Cleo* in third place. The latest circulation figures (2003) for *Her World* were 141,000*,* and for *Female* and *Cleo,* they were 83,000 and 81,000, respectively. These figures were obtained from Neilsen Research in Singapore.

Glamour, *Vogue,* and *Elle* are among the most popular and influential magazines in the United States that focus primarily on fashion and beauty. They were selected as the reference for a comparison with the two sets of magazines from Singapore and Taiwan. The latest circulation figures (from the second half of 2003) of these three U.S. magazines in their home country were 2,201,279 (*Glamour*), 1,192,949 (*Vogue*), and 981,117 (*Elle)*. These figures were obtained from the Magazines' Publishers Association.

Three of the most popular Taiwanese women's fashion and beauty magazines were chosen for this study: *Citta Bella*, *Jasmine,* and *Vivi*. All three magazines are published in Chinese, and the names *Jasmine* and *Vivi* are the English translations of the Chinese titles. *Citta Bella*, one of the most popular women's magazines, is published as a joint venture between a Taiwanese and a Singaporean company. The circulation figures of each of these three women's magazines are about 80,000. These figures were obtained from the magazine publishers through telephone interviews.

It is important to note that internationalization has found its way into the women's fashion and beauty magazine industry (Shaw, 1999). In each of the countries in this study, one of the top three fashion and beauty magazines is not originally a local magazine. The title *Elle* is owned by Hachette Filipacchi, a European publisher; *Cleo*, the third most widely read women's magazine in Singapore is a joint publication between an Australian publisher and a Singaporean company; and in Taiwan, the magazine *Citta Bella* is jointly published between Singapore and Taiwanese companies.

For the purpose of this study, three issues of each magazine were chosen at random from within the 14-month period, March 2001 to April 2002. The unit of analysis was restricted to advertisements of one or more full pages containing at least one woman. The coding criteria for beauty types required that both the face and some part of the model's dress be shown in the ad. In advertisements where more than one woman was present, the largest or most dominant woman was coded. Advertisements with numerous representations of women of the same size or having no dominant main character were not included in the collection. Iden-

tical advertisements were included in the coding process because repetition is a strategy frequently used in advertising campaigns. As a result, a total of 1,236 advertisements were collected from the above-mentioned nine women's fashion and beauty magazines published in the three societies under study.

Content Categories
In the 1994 study by Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore, eight distinct content categories were identified as the most prevalent beauty types in the United States. These included Classic, Feminine, Sensual, Exotic, Cute, Girl-Next-Door, Sex Kitten, and Trendy. In order to test the reliability of these categories in an Asian context, Siew, Ching, and Tan (2001) interviewed local fashion magazine editors and advertising art directors in Singapore and conducted a content analysis of 5 years worth of Singaporean women's magazines (1996 to 2000). These researchers found that, although the U.S. categories were viable in Singapore, one category, "exotic," was irrelevant as it was defined by Englis et al. as "non-Caucasian." Thus, this category was excluded from the present study. Siew, Ching, and Tan also found that two other categories, Classic and Feminine, shared many general characteristics and were thus combined for the purpose of this study. Also, Cute and Girl-Next-Door shared overlapping characteristics, as did Sensual/Sex Kitten so they too were combined for this study. As a result, the coding categories for this research were Classic, Sensual/Sex Kitten, Cute/Girl-Next-Door, and Trendy.

In addition to beauty types, the models in the ads were content analyzed for race. Product categories were also analyzed (see Appendix A for operational definitions).

Coding
Two independent Singaporean coders, both of whom had previously lived in the U.S., carried out the coding. They were bilingual (speaking both English and Mandarin). Coders were trained using a preliminary subset of about 50 advertisements. The coders met to compare their results (Holsti, 1969). When disagreements arose, coders discussed their interpretations and a final decision was made by consensus. This process continued until both coders were comfortable with the categories. Definitions and examples of the various categories were available at all times. To establish intercoder reliability, the two coders coded the same 240 advertisements (approximately 20% of the total sample), with 80 from each country. Using Cohen's (1960) formula, the reliabilities were determined for race types ($k = .96$), beauty types ($k = .85$), and product types ($k = .94$).

Findings

As can be seen in Table 1, Caucasian female models were used most frequently in all three societies under study with 91% appearing in the United States, 65% in Singapore, and 47% in Taiwan. These findings are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 304.12$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H1 is supported. Interestingly Caucasian models appeared more often than Chinese models in both Singapore and Taiwan, two

Table 1. Race of Models

	Singapore	Taiwan	U.S.
Chinese	111 (24%)	116 (46%)	5 (1%)
Caucasian	304 (65%)	118 (47%)	476 (91%)
Malay, Indian, Pan Asian	35 (8%)	45 (6%)	5 (1%)
Mixed races	15 (3%)	4 (1%)	9 (2%)
African-American	0	0	23 (5%)

χ^2 = 304.12, *df* = 8, *p* < 0.001.

Table 2. Beauty Types

	Singapore	Taiwan	U.S.
Classic	249 (54%)	112 (44%)	236 (46%)
Sensual/Sex kitten	90 (19%)	56 (22%)	165 (32%)
Cute/Girl next door	72 (15%)	68 (27%)	81 (16%)
Trendy	51 (11%)	16 (6%)	27 (5%)
Other	3 (1%)	1 (1%)	9 (1%)

χ^2 = 50.27, *df* = 8, *p* < 0.001.

countries with predominantly Chinese populations (approximately three quarters of the population of Singapore are Chinese and almost 98% are Chinese in Taiwan).

As shown in Table 2, the beauty types used in the magazine advertisements did differ (χ^2 = 50.27, *df* = 8, *p* < 0.001) among the U.S., Singapore, and Taiwan. Although Sexual/Sex Kitten is used more often in U.S. ads (32%) than in Singapore (19%) and Taiwanese (22%) ads, Cute/Girl Next Door is portrayed most frequently in Taiwanese ads (27%). These statistically significant differences confirm H2.

Although advertisements from all three countries tended to portray women in the Classic beauty type more often than other beauty types, the Sensual/Sex Kitten beauty type, which mainly relates to women's sexual attractiveness, was used more often in the U.S. than in Singapore and Taiwan advertisements. In terms of beauty types used in the two Asian countries, the Classic beauty type was used more often in Singaporean advertisements (54%) than in Taiwanese advertisements (44%). The Trendy type was used more frequently in Singaporean (11%) than in Taiwanese (6%) advertisements. The Cute beauty type was used more often (27%) in Taiwan than in Singapore (15%).

The majority of women models in magazine ads analyzed in this study were either Chinese or Caucasian. Of the total of 1,236 ads examined, 232 ads featured

Table 3. Comparison of Beauty Types for Chinese and Caucasian Models

	Chinese (n = 232)		Caucasian (n = 898)	
Classic	133	(57%)	426	(47%)
Sensual/Sexy	25	(11%)	243	(27%)
Cute/Girl next door	58	(25%)	141	(16%)
Trendy	15	(6%)	77	(9%)
Other	1	(1%)	11	(1%)

χ^2 = 35.41, df = 4, p < 0.001.

Table 4. Product Categories

	Singapore	Taiwan	U.S.
Beauty	188 (40%)	124 (49%)	132 (25%)
Cleaning	3 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (0%)
Clothing	118 (25%)	72 (28%)	277 (54%)
Entertainment	13 (3%)	4 (2%)	13 (2%)
Food & beverage	10 (2%)	10 (4%)	16 (3%)
Accessories	81 (17%)	25 (9%)	56 (11%)
Services	45 (10%)	5 (2%)	1 (1%)
Miscellaneous	7 (2%)	12 (5%)	22 (4%)

χ^2 = 168.29, df = 14, p < 0.001.

Chinese models (19%) and 898 ads featured Caucasians (73%). Thus, the data on these two groups were selected for comparison.

There were significant differences in the beauty types for each race. The Classic beauty was used most frequently for both races. However, the Sensual/Sexy type was used more often (27%) with Caucasian models than with Chinese models (11%). The Cute/Girl-Next-Door type was more popular with Chinese models (25%) than with Caucasians (16%). In addition, the Trendy type was used more frequently with Caucasian models (9%) than with Chinese models (6%). These differences were statistically significant (χ^2 = 35.41, df = 4, p < .001). Therefore, H3 predicting that beauty types are used differently for different races of models in women's magazine advertisements is confirmed.

Because the construction of beauty is connected to culture, it was anticipated that the beauty products advertised would be different from country to country. This was the case. There was a significant difference in the product types advertised across cultures (χ^2 = 168.29, df = 14, p < 0.001). As shown in Table 4, the

types of product advertised in women's magazines differed dramatically across cultures with beauty products occupying the greatest proportion in Singapore (40%) and Taiwan (49%), while clothing occupied the largest proportion of ads in the U.S. (54%). Thus, H4 was supported.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to compare the construction of beauty in women's magazines from the U.S., Singapore, and Taiwan to determine whether culture or ethnicity might play a role in how beauty is constructed in advertising. Overall, we found some similarities as well as differences. The tendency to portray women across cultures in the Classic beauty type indicates that certain aspects of beauty are more or less universal and shared by Eastern and Western cultures. It also suggests that the feminist critique of advertising for depicting women as sex objects may not be a universal phenomenon. That is, in comparing ads from Singapore, Taiwan, and the U.S., we found that Caucasian women were depicted most often in sexual portrayals across cultures. On the one hand, this may be a reflection of the more conservative Confucian cultural values held in Singapore and Taiwan, or, it may be, as Fung (2000) contended, that feminist liberal philosophy has not yet been internalized by women in Asia. However, in an age of global media, where global versions of women's magazines are becoming available across cultures, researchers may wish to examine futher the ways in which various races are depicted as "beauty ideals" in global media. The findings from this study suggest that Caucasian women are being presented as sex objects in Asia while Asian models are being depicted in more demure ways.

Among the original beauty categories developed by Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore (1994), Exotic was a type excluded from this study because the definition—"ethnic looking or non-European"—seemed inappropriate at the time. However, in retrospect, the concept of an "exotic other" in Asia might very well be the Caucasian woman who displays her body in ways a Chinese model could or would not.

An alternative way of looking at these findings might be to examine some of the classic feminist arguments on representation that contend that sexuality is a form of general exchange value in Western societies (Haug, 1987). The adage, "sex sells," rings true in the West, but may not hold true in the Asian context. Traditionally, in Western art the female body has served as the object of sexual stimulation. Kuhn (1985) and Berger (1972) have suggested that this cultural way of seeing the female form has material and historical roots.

However, displaying the female body has not been the tradition in Chinese art. In fact, traditional Chinese art often presents nature as the central focus, and human forms are often small and insignificant. Brush paintings of panoramic mountain landscapes containing very small human beings are more the norm and tend to reflect traditional Daoist beliefs in the primary importance of nature and man's place within this orderly universe. When women appear in traditional Chinese paintings, they are clothed in loose robes, and the face and hair, rather than

the body, become the central focus. Thus, traditions of "gaze" may very well have developed differently in the East and the West.

Much of the literature on the representation of women in advertising is built on the feminist argument that media are patriarchal, and that in patriarchal societies, men watch women and women watch men watching women (Berger, 1972). Yet, what this research suggests is that what women think men are watching may differ across cultures. In Western societies, women may think it is mainly their bodies that get noticed by men, whereas in Asia, women may think it is their faces that are most important.

The finding that product categories differ significantly between advertising in the U.S., Singapore, and Taiwan magazines supports this contention. Beauty products that are aimed at improving women's hair, skin, and face occupied the greatest proportion of ads in Singapore (40%) and Taiwan (49%), while clothing ads occupied the largest proportion of ads in the U.S. (54%). Because marketers prefer to advertise to audiences that are particularly interested in their products, this finding again suggests that for women in the U.S. beauty is constructed in terms of "the body," and this also fits with the higher proportion of sexual beauty types found in U.S. ads. Clothing is related to the body. Wood (1999) explained that clothing is designed to call attention to women's bodies and "to make them attractive to viewers" (p. 145). Whereas across cultures the Classic beauty type does predominate, nonetheless the high proportion of clothing ads, coupled with the high proportion of Sensual and Sex Kitten beauty types (used in about 30% of the U.S. ads), suggeststhat in the U.S. the body is a defining factor in beauty. In Singapore and Taiwan the defining factor seems more related to face, hair, skin (in these countries, over 40% of the ads were for beauty products). If "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," it is a cultural construct. It is possible that the beauty ideal in the U.S. is more related to body, whereas the Asian beauty ideal is more related to the face.

It is harder to explain the overuse of Caucasian models in both Singaporean (65%) and Taiwanese (47%) advertisements. The difference between the uses of Caucasian models in the two Asian countries is a matter of degree, with Singapore being more open to this practice than Taiwan. Singapore received an award from *Foreign Policy* magazine in 2000 for being the "most globalized" country in the world, and certainly, advertisers in Singapore show greater racial diversity in their ads than in either the U.S. or Taiwan. On the one hand, the large proportion of Caucasian models in these two Asian countries might suggest an openness in these societies to foreign models and beauty trends, it might also lend support to theories of hegemony and cultural imperialism on the part of foreign advertisers.

The general lack of non-Caucasian models in the U.S. ads (91% of the U.S. models were Caucasian) also suggests reluctance on the part of U.S. advertisers to depict the full range of beauty types in their ads, and further suggests that even after 30 years of criticism by feminist scholars, advertisers in the U.S. still seem fixated on "whiteness."

The finding that Singaporean advertisements tend to feature the Trendy type more frequently than Taiwanese advertisements do might mirror Singapore's openness to globalization and new trends. Likewise, the higher percentage of ads for

the Cute beauty type in Taiwanese ads is most probably related to their close proximity to Japan,' where Maynard and Taylor (1999) have confirmed the popularity of cute "girlish" images in female magazines.

In a nutshell, based on the findings of this study, we may conclude that the construction of beauty in women's magazine advertising does differ across cultures. However, we also observed that, increasingly, interactions between cultures in today's world have led to many cross-national and cross-cultural similarities in advertising creative strategies, including similarities seen in the traditionally different U.S. and East Asian cultures.

The significance of the research is that it brings into question some of the basic assumptions from feminist theory related to the representation of women in advertising. The consensus after years of discussion is that advertising creates unfair expectations in women because ads hold up an unattainable beauty ideal that is often related to a "desirable body shape" (Gauntlett, 2002; Greer, 1999). In fact, the fixation with body may differ from society to society. This is not to say that advertisers do not exploit women's insecurities, but what women feel insecure about will differ from culture to culture and may not always be body-related. As our understanding of other cultures begins to inform our theories on representation, advertising can become a rich source of cultural and cross-cultural knowledge.

Appendix

Beauty Types

Classic: A classic elegant look, model is slightly older than average. Fair skin, feminine, glamorous and sophisticated. Usually wears soft, demure, feminine apparel and is not heavily accessorized.

Sensual/Sex Kitten: Sexually attractive, usually wears sexy attire or revealing, tight clothes. Model can also be dressed in normal clothes but posed in an unnatural way, such as an uncomfortable, "cheesecake" pose (chest thrust forward, back arched).

Cute/Girl Next Door: Cute, casual attire, youthful appearance. Can also be outdoorsy, in a casual, active way.

Trendy: Wears faddish clothes and displays oversized accessories. Hair is tousled; there is a slight sense of chaos to this type. Can also have an "I don't give a damn" attitude.

Racial Types

Caucasian: Ethnically White in appearance. Usually American or European.

Chinese: Includes all Chinese models from Singapore, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States. Japanese were also coded into this category because the look is primarily similar.

Malay or Indian: Darker skin, curlier hair than Chinese.

Pan-Asian: A distinct but indeterminate Asian look with some Caucasian-looking features, but the Asian heritage is more distinct than Caucasian.

African-Americans:. Models with darker skin or African features.

Mixed races: An indeterminate racial type; may be partly Caucasian with some African American features or may look partly Asian, such as Indian and Chinese.

Others: Refers to Latin Americans, and other ethnically non-White models.

Product Types

This list is not inclusive and coders should use their best judgment if they find a product that is not mentioned here but is similar to the following:

Alcoholic beverages: Beer, wine, alcoholic drinks.

Beauty & personal Care: Cosmetics, hair care products, skin cream, etc.

Cleaning products: Detergents, Clorox bleach, floor cleaners, etc.

Clothing: All clothing designers, and manufacturers.

Entertainment & information: New movies, books, magazines, travel, internet, etc.

Food & nonalcoholic: Foods, snacks, colas, health foods.

Household appliances: TVs, VCRs, stereo equipment, etc.

Medicine: All medicines.

Personal accessories: Watches, handbags, belts, shoes, accessories, scarves, etc.

Services: Insurance and other services.

Miscellaneous: Any other products that do not fit comfortably in the above.

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Table 2.
Beauty types

	Singapore	Taiwan	U.S.
Classic	249 (54%)	112 (44%)	236 (46)%
Sensual/Sex Kitten	90 (19%)	56 (22%)	165 (32%)
Cute/ Girl Next Door	72 (15%)	68 (27%)	81 (16%)
Trendy	51 (11%)	16 (6%)	27 (5%)
Other	3 (1 %)	1 (1%)	9 (1%)

$$x^2 = 50.27, df = 8, p < 0.001$$

Table 3.
Comparison of beauty types for Chinese and Caucasian models

	Chinese ($n = 232$)	Caucasian ($n = 898$)
Classic	133 (57%)	426 (47%)
Sensual/Sexy	25 (11%)	243 (27%)
Cute/Girl-Next-Door	58 (25%)	141 (16%)
Trendy	15 (6%)	77 (9%)
Other	1 (1%)	11 (1%)

$$x^2 = 35.41, df = 4, p < .001$$

Table 4.
Product Categories