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**The female consumer and  
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advertising in China**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

引言.....	1
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter One. China's new market segment: women.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. A historical overview of consumption in the People's Republic of China.....	8
1.1.1. Chinese consumption during the Maoist period.....	8
1.1.2. Consumption under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and the market economy.....	9
1.1.3. The Post-Deng era.....	11
1.2. The evolution of Chinese female consumption.....	13
1.2.1. Women during the Maoist period.....	13
1.2.2. Female consumers in the era of post-Mao reforms.....	16
1.2.3. The <i>One-child Policy</i> and the effects on female consumer behaviour in China.....	19
1.2.4. China's entrance into the World Trade Organization and the globalisation period.....	23
<b>Chapter Two. Changing roles and values of female consumers in Mainland China.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1. Three main segments: ideologues, traditionalists and moderns.....	27
2.1.1. The Ideologues.....	28
2.1.2. The Traditionalists.....	29
2.1.3. The Moderns.....	31
2.2. The general characteristics of Chinese consumers.....	33
2.3. Characteristics of contemporary Chinese women as consumers.....	35
2.3.1. Consumption culture of female consumers.....	36
2.3.2. Women's consumption in different age groups.....	38
2.3.3. The reasons for women's consumption and purchase.....	39
<b>Chapter Three. Marketing to Chinese women.....</b>	<b>42</b>
3.1. The status of modern women in China.....	43
3.1.1. Factors affecting consumption and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.....	45
3.2. What do Chinese women want?.....	48
3.2.1. A lifestyle analysis of female consumers in China.....	49
3.2.2. The main product segments related to women: luxury, cosmetics, clothing, cars and household.....	52

3.3. Women’s consumption behaviour.....	57
3.3.1. An evolutionary explanation for shopping behaviour of Chinese women.....	57
3.3.2. The role of emotions.....	59
3.3.3. Searching for information.....	60
<b>Chapter Four. The role of advertising.....</b>	<b>62</b>
4.1. A brief explanation of the evolution of women’s representation in advertising in China.....	64
4.2. Media portrayal of women.....	69
4.2.1. The feminine ideals: nurturer, strong woman, flower vase and urban sophisticate.....	72
4.2.1.1. The <i>flower vase</i> .....	72
4.2.1.2. The <i>strong woman</i> .....	74
4.2.1.3. The <i>cultured nurturer</i> .....	74
4.2.1.4. The <i>urban sophisticate</i> .....	75
4.2.2. Western influences in advertising.....	78
4.3. Stereotypes and gender representation.....	82
4.3.1. “Leftover women”.....	83
4.3.1.1. Case study: Ikea’s sexist advertising on single women in China.....	85
4.3.1.2. Case study: SK-II’s advertising is empowering single women in China.....	88
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Online References.....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>123</b>

## 引言

这篇论文分析讨论有关中国城市女性消费者的特征以及现代广告在促进中国女性消费者创造中的作用。最近几年，中国经济不断发展并且生产水平和人民生活水平比以前改善了，还有消费水平也有了提高。这些方面都促使了中国女性消费行为的造成。结果是，中国女性已经开始把自己打造成中国社会最强大的市场部分。

分析女性消费特点非常重要，这是因为目前女性所占比例的重要性。女性的地位在消费市场中越来越重要，女性不仅是个人消费品的购买者，也是多数儿童用品、老年人用品、家庭用品以及男性用品购买的决策者。她们在许多的方面获得了成绩。事实上，到目前为止，在教育方面，很多女性受教育程度很高，在工作方面和各个领域有着主要的地位。随着女性受教育程度的提高、就业机会的改善和收入的提高，中国女性的经济独立以及在家庭经济决策中她们达到前所未有的高度。她们支配个人收入并且在家庭买房、买车、购买贵重物品时，大量女性会自己作主。

关于现代广告业的话题，中国广告在塑造消费者需求上起着一个重要的作用。同时，由于中国女性是中国消费市场的主要动力，通过广告刺激女性的消费是公司最重要的营销战略之一。此外，中国女性是大多数产品和服务被宣传的主要消费者群体，她们也是广告中最具代表性的人物。这是因为，女性在广告中的代表性如此重要的原因。

本篇论文分为四章。第一章介绍中国新的市场部分：女性。通过中国消费历史概观来分析中国女性消费的现象，以给企业提供这个巨大市场的总览。在第一章的第一个部分，历史描述是从毛主义时期到全球化时代以及中国加入世界贸易组织。改革开放让中国经济得到很快的发展：从那时起，诞生了各种各样的行业，人民的生活水平提高了，市场国际化的进程就成为了事实。看到全球化带来了那么多商机，很多国际公司开始在中国投资。通过中国消费者选择的变化，我分析了中国女性消费者的角色和价值的变化，以及她们在二十一世纪作为一个具有新要求和新信仰的现代女性。通过第二个部分，在毛泽东的领导下，中国经历了一些重大的经济和社会变革，中国打破了儒家传统不允许女性享有平等权力的价值观，这时候，在家庭中女性扮演着一个重要的角色。另外，男女平等为国家服务是毛主席支持的重点。此外，女性在家庭和工作场所都非常重要。毛泽东提出“妇女能顶半边天”的口号，意思是中国女人与男

人平等，并且在工作方面女性可以做男人能做的一切。中国政府把这个口号作为提高妇女社会地位的指导思想，教育女性追求平等权利、就业和参政机会。

毛主义后，中国女性消费者的整体状况有所改善。事实上，中国的改革确立了阴柔之美，美成为女性的一个重要特征，而且在这一时期，中国女性还受到了许多外国潮流和西方价值观，如唯物主义、女权主义和现代主义，这些方面影响到女性的消费态度。最近几年，在全球化时期，外趋势创造了女性消费者的新身份。她们变得更加复杂、雅致和富有，并且她们需要高质量的产品。

第二章中，从消费者分析来进行了丰富的描述，这个部分解释了当代中国三个不同女性的特征。女性出生的时期和历史背景也被考虑，因为这些方面可能影响到消费者的行为。通过中国消费文化的主要特征以及这一个市场部分进行消费和购买的原因描述，可以安排一系列的营销程序。这些营销方案可以达到女性消费者，并促进产品进入中国市场。

中国女性角色的变化和消费欲望的增长，给那些正计划进入中国市场的公司提供了许多机会。另外，由于中国女性是最重要的消费群体，因此必须强调她们的购买行为和她们的消费文化在中国社会里有什么样的结果。这个话题非常重要并且与很多方面有关。第一个方面是消费习惯的原因，现在中国女性花钱为了改善生活的很多方面，比如美容产品、化妆品、护肤品、美发及服装等。另一个领域是女性对高科技产品、电子设备感兴趣，还有旅行和度假。奢侈品购买是另一个方面。

第二部分分析了中国消费者的一般特征。它们开始购买包括不是生活的必需品，消费者改善自己的愿望，老年人和青年消费者人数的提高，地区的差异等。另一个因素是品牌忠诚。由消费者长期反复地购买使用品牌，并对品牌产生一定的信任、承诺、情感维系，乃至情感依赖的形成。

在第三章中指出了女性新的需求和行为。第一个部分有关全球化时代对女性消费的影响及其在社会中的作用。第二个部分调查了中国女性消费者生活方面。女性消费者是当今市场经济中最具活力的消费群体。事实上，最近中国女性正在寻求与奢侈品、个人护理和新技术相关的新产品。由于女性在消费行为中所处的特殊地位和扮演的特殊角色，形成了其独特的消费心理和消费特点。

第三个部分分析了女性作为消费者的身份，尤其是她们的消费行为。女性在购买过程中受到许多方面的影响：首先，在研究信息过程中和在购买活动之前，情感的作用很重要。女性的感受和行为方式受到她们成长的环境、生活方式和周围环境的影响。

公司和营销人员要充分重视这一庞大群体，针对女性的特点，改善生产和经营方式，这样他们可以吸引和维持女性顾客，为企业带来源源不断的商机。此外，营销策略要关注女性消费者情绪的变化。中国女性消费者非常重视自我意识、自尊心较强。在购买行为中，她们喜欢根据自己的爱好和标准分析商品，评价商品。购买后，她们总愿听到别人的赞赏。并且，女性对生活方式的反应要比男性快，女性的审美观影响着社会消费潮流。

生活方式已经改变，市场已经改变，营销人员需要制定新的营销策略来满足中国女性的这些新需求，这些新需求具有强烈的情感倾向。

在第四章中，第一部分介绍了中国广告中女性代表的演变。它描述了中国广告业在促进中国女性作为消费者的作用，广告对产品的消费有着重要的职能。此外，由于广告已经成为人们生活的一部分，所以分析对消费者购买行为的影响是很重要的。然后，我提供了一个简短的历史描述，在广告和中国女性在广告中的代表性。过去，中国的大众媒体和广告都是共产党的宣传手段。广告中的女性代表是共产党鼓励女性参与工作活动的一种常见方式，其目的是为国家做贡献。在文化大革命期间，它被认为是腐朽和资本主义的象征，所以广告被禁止。但在八十年代又出现了。在这一时期，广告是全国范围内商业化程度更高的标志。同时，由于中国复杂的广告和杂志的女性形象，女性气质被重新发现。

在讨论广告时，出现了另一个问题，例如性别刻板的印象。事实上，性别代表是中国广告的一个重要组成部分，关于这个话题，大部分研究都是从 1990 年开始的。由此分析，出现了一些矛盾。在某些情况下，女性形象仍然与过去的女性理想、服装和行为中的传统美准则联系在一起。另一些则代表了现代、精明、有创业精神的女性，她们紧跟当代中国社会的新潮流和西方的影响。前几章的研究将为分析一些显示性别差异和刻板印象的中国广告提供了一个参照系，而另一些则构成了报道影响中国社会的一个主要现象：剩女。这一词是指已经过了适婚年龄，但是仍然未结婚的女性，广义上是指二十七岁以上的单身女性。剩女这个话题在各种媒体平台上普遍存在。并且，广告是中国推广“剩女”话语的最重要手段之一。

在论文的最后部分，分析了两个广告：第一个来自跨国公司宜家，第二个是高端化妆品 SK-II 公司的广告。第一个案例是指宜家广受批评的广告，该广告表现中国家庭的一个问题：父母希望女儿尽快找到男朋友并结婚。在第二个广告中，微博成为一个发表意见的重要手段。此外，它提高了对剩女话题的认识。在本文中，我分析了用

户发出的一些微博评论以支持 SK-II 推广的 #改写命运活动。这两个广告代表了社交媒体的贡献非常重要，这是因为，广告和媒体部门也发挥着重要的社会作用；因此，它们可以通过创造没有刻板印象的女性形象来减轻性别代表，并传达积极的信息。



## Introduction

This thesis aims at exploring the characteristics of the Chinese urban female consumer and the role of advertising in promoting the creation of the Chinese woman as a consumer. The relentless development of the Chinese economy, the improvement of citizens' living standards and the increase in the consumption level have redefined Chinese women's consumption behaviour, along with it, in recent years, Chinese women have begun to establish themselves as a strong market segment in the Chinese society.

I have structured my dissertation into four chapters.

The first chapter starts with a historical overview of the evolution of women's consumption habits, from the Maoist period up to the globalisation era and China's entrance into the WTO. I have analysed the changing roles and values of the Chinese female consumer over the time, and her establishment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a modern woman with new needs and beliefs.

In the second chapter, the consumer analysis will be further enriched with the description of the features of three different groups of women in contemporary China. The period of birth and the historical context in which they grew up have also been considered as they have an influence on consumer behaviour. By explaining the main characteristics of the Chinese consumer culture and the reasons for pursuing consumption and purchase of this market segment, it is possible to arrange a series of marketing procedures that could reach female consumers and promote product placement into the Chinese market. The changing role of women as consumers and the increase in their consumption level have provided companies with a lot of business and marketing opportunities.

The third chapter investigates women's new needs through a lifestyle analysis of the female consumer in China. Now they are asking for new products related to the field of luxury, personal care and new technologies. Lifestyles have changed, the market has changed, and marketers need to develop new marketing strategies to meet these new needs of Chinese women characterised by a strong inclination towards emotions.

The fourth section describes the role of the Chinese advertising industry in the promotion of Chinese women as consumers. I will provide a brief historical description of advertising in China and Chinese women's representation in advertising. From this analysis, some contradictions have emerged. In some cases, the female figure is still linked to past feminine ideals and traditional beauty canons in clothing and behaviour. Others represent a modern,

sophisticated, and entrepreneurial woman who follows the new trends of contemporary Chinese society and Western influences.

The research conducted in the previous chapters, together with a content analysis on a data sample of Weibo posts, will provide a frame of reference for the analysis of some Chinese advertisements showing gender differences and stereotypes, while others constitute a means for reporting a significant phenomenon affecting the Chinese society: leftover women.

I have focused my attention on the centrality of the Chinese woman in the advertising sector. The first commercial analysed is from the multinational company Ikea, the second one derives from the high-end cosmetic brand SK-II. Both advertisements have raised the leftover issue. In the first one, the audience's reaction to gender stereotypes has highlighted the importance of cultural values and knowledge of the consumer's characteristics for marketing activities. The second one has contributed to the reaffirmation of single urban women and it has attempted to challenge the leftover cultural stigma through an emotional video. For this case study, I have examined the contents of fifty posts from the popular Chinese social media Weibo. The results have demonstrated the active participation of the Chinese web community to the campaign, and users' support to eliminate social pressure on single women.

Nowadays, Chinese female consumers have developed a strong awareness of their tastes and consumption attitudes, and their behaviours in the purchasing process have caught marketers' attention. Companies and advertisers have begun to target this important market segment and adapt their strategies with the aim of creating advertisements which can appeal to women's consumer behaviour.

## Chapter One

### China's new market segment: women

In recent years there have been some profound changes in consumer lifestyles in China; the varying role of women, the ageing of society, smaller families, trends regarding delayed marriage, and single parents have redefined the consumer market segment in China, and more specifically the role of Chinese women into the society. Chinese women, especially those residing in urban areas, are becoming a major force in the consumption of daily and durable products, and they have a more significant impact on society as consumers.

With the transformations of social expectations, the rise of living standards, and Western influences in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Chinese urban women have developed a new kind of awareness of their femininity and of their possibility to create a new identity into the Chinese society characterized by modern consumption.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional household decision making is undergoing significant changes as a large number of women have joined the workforce. As women now have higher purchasing power, marketers need to have a better understanding of women's changing values and roles in modern society.<sup>2</sup> To analyse women's behaviour, it is important to notice how women feel about their lives, their attitudes toward their job, and how they approach the various aspects of life that lead to the consumption of many products and services.

In China the reform period, which began in 1978, has led to remarkable economic expansion, the annual growth rate of the GDP has had unprecedented rise and the living standards of people residing in urban areas have improved.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, China is being transformed from a centrally planned economy into a market-driven one, resulting in the emergence of a new consumer society, and women, who make up almost half of the total number of consumers in China, have deeply influenced consumption and purchase decisions. Nowadays, Chinese women's economy is powerful, women enjoy equal privileges, have access to the higher level of education, cover positions of responsibility in the workplace and also play

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<sup>1</sup> Kineta HUNG, Stella Yiyun LI, Russell W. BELK, "Consumption and the 'Modern Woman' in China: A Conceptual Framework", in *AP - Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, 6, 2005, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Susan H. C. TAI, Jackie L. M. TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis of Female Consumers in Greater China", *Psychology & Marketing*, 14, 3, 1997, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> GDP is the acronym for Gross Domestic Product such as the monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a period of time, generally on an annual basis.

an important role in the family buying process. Career development has brought economic independence and Chinese women are able to manage their finances.

Women constitute a central consumer segment for a great variety of advertised products, and they are also the most common representation in advertising.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, women's consumption behaviour and their growing desire to purchase have become very important to international marketers.

In order to understand the context within which China's current female consumer culture has developed, it is necessary to explain the historical evolution of Chinese consumption over the decades.

## **1.1. A historical overview of consumption in the People's Republic of China**

### *1.1.1. Chinese consumption during the Maoist period*

Since its foundation in 1949, the People's Republic of China started a process of socialist transformation under the leadership of the chairman Mao Zedong.

The economic policies implemented during this historical moment brought stability, ended the inflation spiral and laid the foundation for further development and industrialisation. In this period, China expanded its industrial output and increased agricultural productivity. Moreover, the new regime established a solid basis for economic growth and improved citizens' daily lives with rising life expectancy and income.<sup>5</sup>

During the first thirty years in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) monopolised political power, the national leadership defined the concept of "modernity" in terms of increased industrial production and the success of collective ownership.<sup>6</sup>

Once in power, the Chinese Communist Party developed a redistribution system based on a planned economy. Privately-owned homes and businesses were seized and people's communes were established in the countryside where peasants were organised into units. While in urban areas, there was the institution of work-units, called the *danwei*, based on economic units. The *danwei* and the communes organised the work duties and provided for housing, healthcare, education, and childcare.

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<sup>4</sup> Kara CHAN, Leung Ng YU, Liu JIANQIONG, "How Chinese young consumers respond to gendered advertisements", *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, 15, 4, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara MOLONY, Janet THEISS, Hyaewool CHOI, *Gender in Modern East Asia: an integrated history*, New York, Routledge, 2018 (2016), p. 381

<sup>6</sup> Deborah DAVIS, "Urban Consumer Culture", *The China Quarterly*, 183, 2005, p. 698.

This new model of social organisation, together with the socialist planned economy, has influenced Chinese people's possibilities and characteristics of consumption. During the Maoist era, the desire for consumption was considered a sign of capitalism and bourgeois culture, therefore to be avoided. Indeed, in this period, consumption practices became politicised, they were banned or subjected to public censure and the life of ordinary citizens was devoted to the display of the correct political ideology that was in favour of collectivism and of the common effort for the construction of the new society.

In this period, lifestyles and consumption patterns of the Chinese population were marked by socialist frugality, and collectivism held a place of primary importance. The work-units provided goods and services for the population: not only did they take care of the social welfare, they also assigned housing and consumer goods that in capitalist societies were known as discretionary assets, such as weekly films, fruits for holidays, plastic sandals for summer, etc. As a result, this historical phase was characterised by a sort of levelling of both the social consumption structure and the general living standards of the Chinese population.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the socialist reforms promoted by the government centralised the distribution system, thus resulting in the origin of the state monopoly of consumer products with price and product homogeneity throughout the country. At that time, the basic groceries like grain and oil could only be bought in state stores in exchange for coupons, and since the state established the prices and the supply of products, the quantities of products purchased by each consumer had a limit as well.

In conclusion, during those years, the Chinese consumer was not recognised as an entity, and no laws guaranteed him rights. Moreover, the Maoist period was characterised by a general consumption uniformity imposed by the government: along this trend, most of the Chinese population wore the same clothes, had the same haircut and had the same reduced possibility of buying consumers goods.

### *1.1.2. Consumption under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping and the market economy*

Mao's death in 1976 ushered in a lot of changes in the Party's leadership and focus. Two years later, in 1978, Deng Xiaoping solidly took control of the Party and reversed most of Mao's policies. Under his leadership, China followed the policy of "opening up to the outside world" (*duiwai kaifang* 对外开放) which was considered essential for both the national

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<sup>7</sup> Deborah DAVIS, "Introduction", in: Davis Deborah S., *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, p. 3.

economic development and for the raising of citizens' living standards. The shift from a closed to an open market economy marked a turning point for Chinese consumption; the *Open-door Policy* increased the individuals' income, and this led to a change in people's consumption structures and behaviours. Moreover, China's Open-door Policy and the high economic growth rate enabled many transnational companies to enter the Chinese market; thus, foreign goods, brands, products and ideas together with foreign investments were allowed to re-enter the Chinese market.

When in 1978 the government introduced the *Four Modernizations*, China embarked on one of the most extensive economic reforms. Before 1978, China's economy was a *planned* economy; the production and distribution of goods were ruled by the forces of supply and demand and by the government's control over output quotas. The planned economy created shortages of both raw materials and finished goods and people's access to such goods was completely controlled by supervisors at work. In 1979, the most important change was the transformation of the centrally planned economy into a market-oriented one, and the new definition of Chinese socialism became "socialism with peculiar Chinese characteristics" (*you Zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi* 有中国特色的社会主义). From this transformation, a consumer market emerged, and the "Chinese consumption" phenomenon started, thus resulting in the widening of citizens' lifestyles and consumption categories.

The first wave of consumption, which took place in the 1980s, changed the consumers' role in China. Disposable income increased rapidly, consequently, consumer purchasing power improved. Consumer spending, previously dominated by food purchases, expanded to include non-food items. Bicycles, colour televisions, electric fans, cassette players, refrigerators, and washing machines were commonly purchased durable products in this period. Spending on new food and clothing also increased, and Western brands producers were committed to heavily promoting their brands in China.<sup>8</sup> As a result, in the field of consumption, the reform period brought a lot of benefits and advantages. First of all, consumer goods were more available and in greater variety. Then, private-run markets provided better quality and assortment compared to state stores. Abundant food and affordable clothes were available, private merchants sold goods in the entryways of large state-owned department stores. These activities provided many opportunities for women to take part in economic activities.

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<sup>8</sup> Kelly TIAN, Lily DONG, *Consumer-Citizens of China. The role of foreign brands in the imagined future China*, Oxford, Routledge, 2011, p. 44.

The new policies implemented by the government revitalised the Chinese economy, increased the well-being of the Chinese population and raised its living standards. One of the most significant events that influenced the development of the “Chinese consumption” phenomenon is de-collectivisation: by the winter of 1982-1983, people’s communes and the *danwei* were abolished, and administrative townships replaced them. Despite this, until 1990, most of the urban workers were employed in state-owned enterprises and they continued to enjoy the benefits offered by the “iron rice bowl” (*tiefanwan* 铁饭碗).<sup>9</sup>

In this period, the legacy left by Maoism in the economic sphere was considered an impediment to the world’s economic integration, this is because since the socialist period China had become a nation characterised by overproduction and insufficient domestic demand, therefore China needed to remedy the economic immobility.

With the rise of Deng Xiaoping, the government’s attitude towards Chinese consumption changed and the practical approach to the economic development sought to renew productivity by reintroducing the value of consumption. Moreover, conspicuous “bourgeois” consumption became the new ideal.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.1.3. *The Post-Deng era*

A further turning point for consumption in China was marked by the entry of the PRC into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which took place in 2001. From this moment, China granted greater access to its market and to potential Chinese consumers to foreign companies and, for the first time, the personal consumption became the main driving force for the economic growth.<sup>11</sup>

Together with the increasing importance of personal consumption in China, there was an increase in consumers’ rights: in 1993, the Eighth National People’s Congress implemented the first law regarding the protection of consumers’ rights. In addition, in 1995, the first law on advertising was adopted. In this period, there was also the rise of many consumption dedicated channels, such as websites, newspapers, magazines, and television programs.

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<sup>9</sup> This term was used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara E. HOPKINS, “Western cosmetics in the gendered development of consumer culture in China”, *Feminist Economics*, 13, 3-4, 2007, p. 290.

<sup>11</sup> Karl GERTH, *As China goes, so goes the world. How Chinese consumers are transforming everything*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2010, p. 7.

China's rapid economic expansion was followed by the birth of mass consumption with the development of advertising, fashion and luxury goods. During the 1990s, most urban residents began to buy goods that were previously considered luxuries, and so not indispensable, such as cosmetics and electric appliances like washing machines, colour televisions, fridges.<sup>12</sup> They bought them because they saw such items as necessities and as symbols of social status. The global flow of mass-mediated culture spread throughout China. Moreover, the birth of global media was used by transnational companies as a vehicle for positioning and marketing their products worldwide, and China was affected by this global consumer culture.<sup>13</sup>

The period before the accession to the WTO was characterised by a qualitative development of the Chinese market. While in the first years of the opening policies, consumers were looking for products that could meet the criteria of functionality, since 1985 the increasing interest in innovation represented by consumers' goods and the curiosity towards Western items have become very strong and widespread, and Chinese consumers have started looking for high-quality products. Moreover, Chinese companies have understood the essence of the brand, and the life of Chinese people have changed because foreign brands were common and because of the acceptance of foreign products. Chinese consumer relied on those foreign products' brands because they marked good quality, they had a good reputation, an attractive appearance, and diversity of choice. High price meant good quality for them, and those who consumed these products were regarded as refined.

The decision of China's leaders to join the WTO implied the endorsement of the "modern lifestyles".<sup>14</sup> As a result, membership of the WTO was a means to increase trade, but it also had a symbolic value referred to the acceptance of China by the global economic powers. Moreover, China agreed to accept it and, partially, to emulate the economic policies of capitalist nations.<sup>15</sup>

Another important fact is that the access into the WTO marked a new era for China's initial participation in the process of globalisation. The concept of globalisation emerged out of Western society in the 1990s. In China, the analogous concept to this was what the Chinese

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<sup>12</sup> DAVIS, "Urban Consumer...", cit., p. 692.

<sup>13</sup> Yang FENG, Kavita KARAN, "The global and local influences in the portrayal of women's roles: Content analysis of women's magazines in China", *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 3, 2, 2011, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> In this case, the word "modern" is associated with the idea of economic development. Modernity in this moment of the Chinese history is referred to the importance of crossing borders and to the Western influence, both these aspects are reflected by the membership in the WTO.

<sup>15</sup> HOPKINS, "Western cosmetics...", cit., p. 297.



called a “heading of the world” (*zouxiang shijie* 走向世界); that was a nationalist slogan of self-strengthening that contributed to giving the Western concept of globalisation a Chinese nationalist content.<sup>16</sup> China’s success in the globalisation period can be assessed in terms of trade, foreign investments, and financial flows. Furthermore, China’s economy has benefited considerably through globalisation and as the “manufacturer of the world”, China depends heavily on exports for growth.

## **1.2. The evolution of Chinese female consumption**

### *1.2.1. Women during the Maoist period*

Through the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and under the leadership of Mao Zedong, China experienced some substantial economic and social changes and China broke up with the traditional Confucian values which did not allow women to enjoy equal privileges, and the typical female role was played within the family.<sup>17</sup> According to those feudal beliefs, a woman would be obedient and would respect the traditional patriarchal hierarchy and family-oriented culture. A woman was taught to serve the family and to sacrifice everything for the good of the familiar equilibrium. She would respond to a set of basic moral principles called “The Three Obediences”: obedience to her father before marriage, obedience to her husband after marriage, and obedience to her sons as a widow after the death of her husband. As well as that, she would respect “The Four Virtues”: fidelity, appropriate speech, physical charm, and proper merit.

In 1949, when the People’s Republic of China was founded, Mao Zedong wanted Jiang Qing, his wife, by his side, and this seemed to be a prelude of all the future laws and reforms enacted to protect the rights of Chinese women, starting with The New Marriage Law passed on May 1950. Moreover, Party cadres described the Communist revolution as a release from the “feudal” past in which women were segregated and abused.<sup>18</sup> This conservative message that women’s primary role was the management of household and family was reversed when the Party embarked the country in the Great Leap Forward campaign, which began in 1958. The campaign appeared to fulfil Mao’s vision of gender equality with women and men working

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<sup>16</sup> Li XIAOJIANG, Tani E. BARLOW, “From ‘Modernization’ to ‘Globalization’: Where are Chinese women”, *The University of Chicago Press Journal*, Globalization and Gender, 26, 4, 2001, p. 1275.

<sup>17</sup> Jenny S.Y. LEE, Oliver H.M. YAU, Raymond P.M. CHOW, Leo Y.M. SIN, Alan C.B. TSE, “Changing roles and values of female consumers in China”, *Business Horizons*, 47, 3, May-June, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 382.

equally for the nation. Moreover, it marked a transformative experience through which women acquired great importance both in the household and in the workplace; they learned new skills, they related with other women, became economically self-sufficient, and were recognised for their achievements in working activities.<sup>19</sup>

The Maoist slogan of “Women hold up half of the sky” indicated that Chinese women during this period were expected to be austere and asexual.<sup>20</sup> In addition, their contributions to the national welfare and their responsibilities should be treated as equal to those of men in return for devoting themselves to the country’s development. The Chinese government used this slogan “as both an ideological guideline and a [...] (means for) increasing women’s social status, cultivating women to pursue equal rights, employment and [...] opportunity to participate in the political arena”.<sup>21</sup> Although those practices were opposed to the androcentric vision of the past, which exalted gender differences, inviting women to take possession of “male” spaces implied for them also the risk of a loss of femininity. Thus, it was not a question of becoming “equal to men”, but to become “like men”, in a process of masculinisation in all levels, from the language to external appearance, and to roles and functions in both society and within the family. Women involvement in the workforce was necessary. These women’s lives exemplified the process through which the Maoist party-state replaced a failed traditional patriarchal order; as Barbara Molony wrote: “the Party gave them a new language for understanding themselves”.<sup>22</sup> Although these women’s roles embodied the way the Revolution could empower rural and urban women; the Party propaganda did not mention the fact that women continued to be responsible for the domestic labour and child-care.<sup>23</sup>

In the pre-reform period, the communist ideology elevated peasant lives and discouraged the consumption of goods related to the bourgeois lifestyle; citizens displayed political commitment and limited consumption.

Not only did the ideology of Mao’s China shape the nature of consumption, it also rejected displays of differences of any kind, including gender.<sup>24</sup> A lot of slogans remarked an equal role for women in the communist society. The models that women presented in propaganda posters were examples to emulate because they did the same jobs as men and abandoned the more

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<sup>19</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 441.

<sup>20</sup> Kineta HUNG, Stella Yiyun LI, “Images of the Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis”, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 19, 2, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> FENG, KARAN, “The global and local...”, cit., p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 383.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> HOPKINS, “Western cosmetics...”, cit., p. 289.

traditional domestic duties. Therefore, any display of femininity and beauty should not be expressed because they marked visible signs of difference. Femininity should be hidden and as Barbara E. Hopkins wrote

Use of cosmetics visible to others was unacceptable, and only the most basic soaps were produced by the state factories. [...] Dress was androgynous with most pieces of clothing looking like parts of an army uniform. [...] Later when the long hair was also condemned, she cut her hair. Militant red guards would stop passersby and cut long hair or skirts and break semi-high-heeled shoes, all symbols of bourgeois femininity.<sup>25</sup>

The billboards that covered every corner of the cities celebrated a new type of woman: no longer *petite*, soft, with a modest attitude, accurately dressed and with elaborate hairstyles, but a proud and determined woman with a resolute aspect, bold posture and massive build, more suited to the new tasks that the CCP entrusted to her.

Chinese women benefited from the development of new social programs that ensured more education, more economic security, and more employment opportunities. At the end of the Fifties, the percentage of working women in China between the age of 16 and 60 reached 90%.<sup>26</sup> Around the same time, in 1949, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) was established. The All-China Women's Federation was, and it is today, an umbrella organisation that would enfold all existing women's groups.<sup>27</sup> At the time, it had an essential role in monitoring the actual implementation of measures in favour of women and in giving voice to women in China. By 1953, the Federation included more than forty thousand women officials across the country.<sup>28</sup> The Federation acted above all as an organ of the government and it was entrusted with exalting the Party decisions and it had to mediate between the Party members and women themselves. An important responsibility of the Women's Federation was to mobilise women to participate in national campaigns through which the Party strengthened its power.

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<sup>25</sup> HOPKINS, "Western cosmetics...", cit., pp. 289-290.

<sup>26</sup> Zolzaya ERDENEBILEG, *Holding up Half the Sky? Assessing the Current State of Female Employment in China*, in "China Business Review", 2016, <https://www.chinabusinessreview.com/holding-up-half-the-sky-assessing-the-current-state-of-female-employment-in-china/>, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018.

<sup>27</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 383.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

In the cities, the Federation branches included groups of women workers, students, teachers, artists, professionals, and housewives. Many of these women were also members of residents' committees and they managed every aspect of neighbourhood life and social problems.<sup>29</sup>

In 1950, the PRC promulgated the revolutionary Marriage Law. The concern for a new democratic marriage system based on the free choice of partners, monogamy, equal rights, and the protection of the interests of women and children, had redefined women's role within the household, it expanded women's employment, and incorporated them into local governance. Therefore, this new law articulated a modern vision of the Chinese family and its relationship with the state.

The emphasis on gender equality in all the aspects of the Chinese society and citizens' lives became stronger during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The Cultural Revolution aimed at a complete cultural transformation of China, including the issue of gender. During the Cultural Revolution, women made substantial gains. They broke into higher-paying jobs in industry, pursue political careers, so, the Cultural Revolution questioned the idea of women's inferiority, and women's oppression in China began to be reduced. The images of women that dominated the propaganda media were masculinised military heroines and "iron girls" who did the heavy labour of men. However, the

[...] changes in China since the Cultural Revolution have had a mixed and inconsistent impact on women's movement and status in China. On the one hand, [...] Chinese women experienced rapid progress in terms of gender equality during the Cultural Revolution. Women's labor force participation rate [...] remained high, and women's representation in higher educational institutions was also higher [...]. On the other hand, however, there is evidence that women still suffered an extremely low status in Chinese culture. Repeated reports of female infanticide after the implementation of the one-child policy was one of the first messages that alarmed the Chinese as well as the world population as an indicator of the persistence of women's low status in China. It was during the Cultural Revolution that the All Women's Federation was forced to suspend itself, an indicator that women's affairs were placed in a secondary position [...].<sup>30</sup>

### *1.2.2. Female consumers in the era of post-Mao reforms*

After the Maoism, the overall situation of Chinese women improved, and for the first time, both sexes could express their personal ambitions. Incomes also rose rapidly; not only

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<sup>29</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 384.

<sup>30</sup> Yuhui LI, "Women's Movement and Change of Women's Status in China", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 1, 1, 2000, p. 33.

people had more money in their pockets, they also had more free time to spend it. From this period, China's GDP grew at an annual rate of about 11 percent and the economy quadrupled in size.<sup>31</sup> This growth brought an explosion of wealth among the Chinese people and the consumer revolution period started.

In addition to consumption itself, reforms renewed Chinese femininity, and beauty became a marketable characteristic of women. Women were engaged as window dressing for the opening of new shopping centres, and hotels used beautiful women to greet guests.<sup>32</sup>

In this period, Chinese women were exposed to a lot of foreign trends and Western values such as materialism, feminism and modernism, which influenced women's consumption attitudes. Shop windows were filled with clothes of a great variety of styles and fabrics, but also jewels and luxury items, and all of them were widely publicized on the new magazines dedicated to fashion and beauty. Billboards in the cities showed elegantly dressed and smiling women in their new role: in the past, they were producers and then, they became consumers who were charged with the expansion of the domestic demand and thus they contributed to the revival of the Chinese economy. The approach towards consumption and femininity was now driven by the growth of private media and advertising and not only by the party's line. The growth in the consumption of products that displayed gender such as cosmetics reflected these changes.

For example, sales of cosmetics grew from less than 500 million yuan per year before 1980 to 4 billion yuan in 1990 (Hong Kong Trade Development Council 2000), and they continued to grow in the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>33</sup>

The reappearance of femininity had a lot of meanings. The manifestation of femininity and masculinity through clothing and other fashion accessories was a symbol of the opportunity to assert the opposition to the identity homogenization requested during the Maoist period. Furthermore, displays of femininity with European or Western influences through short skirts and high heels were considered as political acts of refusal on communism and they exhibited the improvement of consumer's personal identity.

Women were an important component of these new social trends, and they benefited in many ways, gaining education, higher quality of life, and more choices about work and family. Because of this new social opportunities and the following economic growth, the "New Woman"

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<sup>31</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 486.

<sup>32</sup> HOPKINS, "Western cosmetics...", cit., p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

described in fashion magazines emphasised the images of women as glamorous and hedonistic and seemed to reflect a post-Mao re-feminisation, which properly fitted into the model of globalisation leading to the universal consumer culture of the following years.<sup>34</sup>

While, on the one hand, providing women with more alternatives and better material life, on the other hand, the economic reforms of 1978 reduced gender equality and widened the gap between rich and poor. The return of the household as a primary unit of production, consumption and welfare led to the re-establishment of gendered divisions of labour and opportunities.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, there was a reduction of women's participation in the economic development and the public sphere. Women served as effective heads of household, responsible for providing subsistence for the family.

Moreover, studies of income inequality conducted by Western and Chinese scholars showed that by the 1990s, China went from being one of the most economically egalitarian countries in Asia to have one of the most unequal distributions of wealth.<sup>36</sup>

The impact of Deng Xiaoping's economic reform was dramatic for many urban women. During the economic restructuring, many women were disadvantaged in several ways: some of them were laid off, others were forced to retire at a younger age or received less social support after being laid off. This new period, called "socialism with Chinese characteristics", abandoned the gender co-responsibility and requested all Chinese citizens to use whatever means possible to create social wealth and economic growth. This meant that people who were having power and strong influence within the society, often men, were held up as new models for Chinese patriotism. So, the Deng-ism "Let some get rich first" did not include Chinese women and most of them were obliged to work in the agricultural production in the countryside or to accept low-paying factory jobs in urban areas.

Nevertheless, in this period, the most part of Chinese women became a significant force in the educated urban middle and upper class. During the reform period, girls continued to make progress in equal access in education. In cities, the rate of girls pursuing college-level education increased, and the One-child Policy encouraged parents to invest fully in the career success of

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<sup>34</sup> Yang FENG, Kavita KARAN, "The Emerging Hybrid Images of Women in China: The Portrayal of the New Woman in Chinese Local and International Magazine Advertising", *Advertising and Society Review*, 11, 1, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 489.

<sup>36</sup> Amy HANSER, "Made in the PRC: consumers in China", *Contexts*, 3, 1, 2004, p. 15.

daughters.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, educated urban women occupied a large number of professional positions in business, media, finance, education, and other sectors.

The economic reforms and the opening undergoing in China since 1978 have created new challenges for Chinese women, at the same time, they have offered them new choices and opportunities. Historical, economic and social changes have contributed to redefining Chinese femininity and constructing the so-called “modern Chinese woman”, more aware of her new identity as a contemporary woman in a globalised world.

*1.2.3. The One-child Policy and the effects on female consumer behaviour in China*

After the population booms in the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese government realised that the population would be a greater issue influencing the national economic growth rate. For that reason, in 1979, China introduced the legislation of the *One-child Policy* to be implemented as a temporary means of restraining such high population growth. “Since this policy’s implementation, China has experienced changes in filial piety and patrilineality”.<sup>38</sup>

The consequences of the Policy are visible in today’s society, China is currently one of the rare countries in the world with more men than women.

**Distribution of the total population in China from 1949 to 2016, by gender**

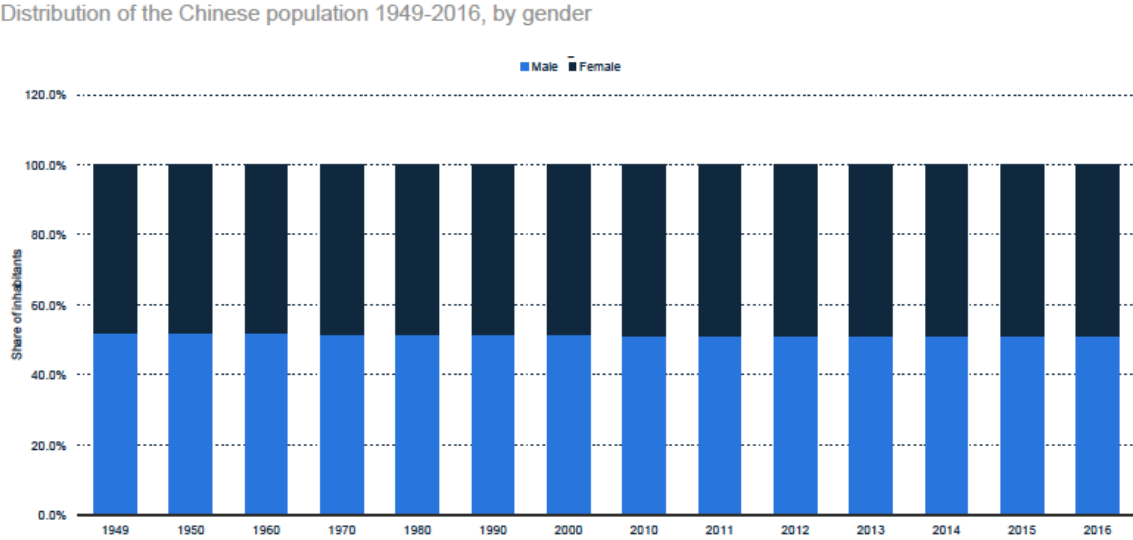


FIGURE 1. Population distribution by gender from 1949 to 2016. Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

<sup>37</sup> MOLONY, THEISS, CHOI, *Gender in Modern...*, cit., p. 490.

<sup>38</sup> Kristine SUDBECK, “The Effects of China’s One-Child Policy: The Significance for Chinese Women”, *Nebraska Antropologist*, 27, 2012, p. 43.

According to official estimates of 2016, the surplus of men of marriageable age between 20 and 24 years was almost 110 to 100. Consequently, this deficit of young women is accompanied by several social, demographic and economic problems. The policy has had a great influence on issues like increasing abortion, female infanticides, orphanages and the imbalanced ratio of male and female among the Chinese population.<sup>39</sup>

In relation to this Policy, it is important to mention two basic elements that characterise the Chinese culture: the male preference and the population growth. Traditionally, the Chinese culture places a high value on males within the society, furthermore, there is a strong preference for large families, this is mainly due to the Confucian influence and to the dominance in the past of an agricultural economy.<sup>40</sup> Sons are viewed as labourers of the family; moreover, they are perceived as the ones who have the duty to continue the family lines, to carry on the honour of the family name, which is a filial obligation, and to support the old generations. For that reason, for many years, Chinese couples have preferred sons over daughters. Men are usually the main source of financial income for the family while women do not generally work outside the home, they are usually low-paid and do not receive comparable benefits as their male counterparts.

The reasons that brought to this unprecedented population growth in China were in part due to the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, which provided better healthcare, increasing life expectancy, and decreasing infant mortality.<sup>41</sup> However, in the 1970s, the Chinese government began to meet the damaging effects of high population in a country which was experiencing great economic difficulty. After the rise of Deng Xiaoping, the planned control of the national growth became a crucial component of China's modernisation. Thus, the incessant population growth was recognised as a national crisis which was incompatible with the economic development within China. Therefore, the Chinese government had to develop severe measures to counterbalance people's well-being with the economic and environmental asset, and this resulted in the implementation of the One-child Policy in 1979.

After the introduction of the One-child Policy, married urban couples were allowed to have one child, and this created the typical family composed of four grandparents, two parents and one child. For any additional child, the family must pay a fine based upon on the income and province of residence, or it was subjected to penalties from the government; while those families living in rural areas could have a second child if their first one was a girl.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> SUDBECK, "The Effects of China's...", cit., p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.



Secondly, after the policy's implementation, the Chinese society had to cope with changes in family planning, and Chinese families faced a lot of challenges concerning the sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, abandonment of children, undocumented children, and unequal gender ratio. Thanks to technological advancement during the 1980s, sex-selection abortion was frequent within the Chinese society. Many families, which followed the traditional preference towards sons instead of daughters, resorted to this drastic measure regarding family planning, thus, female infanticide became a common practice in response to the One-child Policy. Another consequence of this policy was the frequent abandonment of children, especially girls. Many Chinese girls were abandoned soon after birth, while most boys were abandoned after realising visible illness or disabilities. Moreover, parents usually did not register the abandoned son or daughter, leaving him or her as undocumented child; while other children could be completely undocumented and still live with the family. This practice allowed parents to still use the childbearing permit to try to conceive a boy.<sup>42</sup> The most controversial adaptation of the Policy's implementation was the unequal gender ratio, which was mainly attributed to female abortion, infanticide, abandonment and undocumented daughters. This resulted in a huge gap between the amount of male and female in the Chinese society; moreover, the consequence of the gender ratio is visible because of the lack of prospective spouses.

Another aspect is the changing gender role within the society, indeed cross-cultural studies have examined that drastic decline in fertility is accompanied by a large increase in women's participation in the working force.<sup>43</sup> Since the One-child Policy has reduced the amount of time spent on childbearing, maternity and childcare, early marriage would allow women to be freed from family responsibilities at a relatively young age, furthermore, it also enables women to dedicate themselves to work and education rather than only motherhood. Moreover, since singleton daughters have no siblings to compete for family investments, parents encourage these young women to strive academically, to study abroad, and to have successful careers.

However, female empowerment is not the first thing that springs to mind when discussing China's One-child Policy (1979-2016), because it is primarily known for creating hardship for Chinese women. It led to angry reactions among Chinese women because they felt that they were being degraded to "child-bearing machines", and this vision goes against the image of the emancipated Chinese woman. Nevertheless, according to a Weibo article by the

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<sup>42</sup> SUDBECK, "The Effects of China's...", cit. p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> SUDBECK, "The Effects of China's...", cit. p. 53.

Feminist Web forum, 女权主义贴吧 (*nüquan zhuyi tieba*), titled 独生子女政策对中国女性地位的三大贡献 (*dushengziniuzhengce dui Zhongguo nüxing diwei de san da gongxian*), “The One-Child Policy’s Three Major Contributions to Chinese Women’s Status”, women’s status in China has risen also thanks to this Policy and it has indirectly benefited the role of women in society.<sup>44</sup>

The first contribution is linked to the slogan “Daughters also carry on the family line” that has been propagated throughout China since the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> With the implementation of the One-child Policy, the government promoted the idea of male-female equity, trying to attenuate the traditional deep-rooted preference for sons. Slogans promoted the importance of the equality among girls and boys for China’s future and propagated the idea that daughters could also carry the honour of the family line. Women’s status improved, and daughters’ role in the family became more and more important, they received more parental attention and better education. Moreover, the improvement of women’s education opened the doors to more non-traditional jobs for women.

The second principle propagated throughout the One-child Policy was later marriage and later childbirth. This meant that women could concentrate on their education and careers before taking the role of wives or mothers.<sup>46</sup> Otherwise, encouraging earlier childbirth might affect negatively women’s future, independence and emancipation.

The third point stressed the promotion of excellent birth and childrearing. This is due to the fact that before the One-child Policy there was a lack of prenatal and postnatal care. Since the Policy’s implementation, sanitary conditions improved and thousands of women were saved from maternal death.

The one-child limit is an outdated social policy that cannot be sustained in the modern era. Its original intent was to decrease the population growth and to allow China to reach a higher level of economic development. However, several unintended effects emerged over the

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<sup>44</sup> FEMINIST WEBFORUM 女权主义贴吧, “Dushengziniuzhengce dui Zhongguo nüxing diwei de san da gongxian” 独生子女政策对中国女性地位的三大贡献 (The One-Child Policy’s Three Major Contributions to Chinese Women’s Status), Weibo, 2017, [www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404071219883321876#\\_rnd1486322999846](http://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404071219883321876#_rnd1486322999846), 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Manya KOETSE, *How the One-Child Policy has improved women’s status in China*, in “What’s on Weibo”, 2017, <https://www.whatsonweibo.com/one-child-policy-improved-womens-status-china/>, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

time, thus increasing the investment in women and bringing higher value to the birth of daughters.

#### *1.2.4. China's entrance into the World Trade Organization and the globalisation period*

With the entrance into the WTO, the Chinese market began to be influenced by foreign trends and products. This also affected the purchasing behaviours of Chinese women. Affluent Chinese women showed a preference for quality over quantity in all aspects of their lives, for instance, they preferred a less polluted environment and more leisure time, and they also appreciated value more than prestige.<sup>47</sup> Convenience and desire to save time was transforming the way Chinese women purchased.

In that period, Western influences changed the social roles and expectations among urban consumers. The social and economic forces released women from obligatory domesticity and, in the field of the labour market, the average pay gap between men and women narrowed, while women's presence in professional and managerial ranks increased. Since the 1990s, 82,3% of women in China have taken up jobs and have become economically independent.<sup>48</sup>

In the modern society, women have higher purchasing power and they are exerting a substantial impact on a variety of consumer decisions that used to be reserved to men's domain. Therefore, women's career in the workplace, the high-level of education, the enhancement of their economic status, the significant influence on the household income, fewer children, and the access to the public sphere have improved Chinese women consumption development.

The potential of the female consumer in China's market is vast, and as Tai and Tam have indicated, as women become wealthier, more heterogeneous, and sophisticated, they require higher-quality products with a new and diversified design.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Chinese urban women have become very fashion conscious and able to indulge in expensive foreign brands. Thanks to this new wave of foreign novelties, Chinese companies have understood the essence of the brand, and the life of Chinese people have changed because foreign brands become common and because of the acceptance of foreign products. Female consumers in China are reported to be brand conscious as they are strongly attached to imported goods.<sup>50</sup> As a matter

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<sup>47</sup> TAI, TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis...", cit., p. 289.

<sup>48</sup> FENG, KARAN, "The global and local influences...", cit., p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> TAI, TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis...", cit., p. 291.

<sup>50</sup> TAI, TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis...", cit., p. 304.

of fact, Chinese consumers rely on foreign branded products because they mark high quality, they have a good reputation, a more attractive appearance, and diversity of choice. Moreover, in this case, high price means good quality and those who consume these products are regarded as refined.

Globalisation exerted a significant impact on every social field in China and the Western consumer culture was gradually introduced. The inevitable influence of Western consumerism reflected in both women and men's consumer psychologies and behaviours. If previously any display of westernization was banned, including not only the way people dressed but also the way people lived and acted, as it was considered an attack on the traditional Confucian values, now Chinese citizens, especially women, are free to choose the garments they want to wear and the products they want to use according to the style they prefer.

China's entry into the global economy increased the status associated with lifestyles that aimed to emulate foreign consumption patterns. As industrialised economies and markets were valued as "modern", middle-class consumption of foreign industrialised countries was associated with lifestyles that were considered "modern". In China, these "modern lifestyles" were reflected in women's magazines in which consumption goods like cosmetics and other aesthetic products were advertised defining the style of the "modern" woman.

China's accession to the WTO and the growing social changes influenced by the global environment have contributed to the creation of contemporary Chinese women. Nowadays, women constitute the main market segment in China, their purchasing power is strong, and their consumer behaviour and culture continue to fascinate marketing specialists from all over the world, who are willing to promote their products in the Chinese market.

## Chapter Two

### Changing roles and values of female consumers in Mainland China

As a result of the rapid economic changes in China, the financial and social roles of Chinese women have changed considerably, thus becoming a dominant driving force. Nowadays, Chinese women are struggling with their primary roles along with the new functions created for them by the social environment; moreover, the transformation of women's role will affect women's consumption values and their purchasing decisions.

As previously mentioned, the rise in Chinese women consumption is due to women's improved educational background and the enhancement of women's economic force. These social changes shaped the new mindset of Chinese women and made them more ambitious in consumption. Furthermore, women are more disposed to enlarge their expenditures and to lower their savings.

A better-educated woman now replaces the traditional submissive and devoted woman; she is extensively involved in professional fields, moreover, her potentials and decisions in both the household and the workplace are acquiring a higher status.

“The future is female”, HSBC said assertively in a 2010 survey on luxury goods, highlighting the importance of female consumers to the investment decision-making of many global companies.<sup>51</sup>

Nowadays spending by women has become significantly important to the “great Chinese consumption power”.<sup>52</sup> The changing face of Chinese women and the growing desire to consume provide many opportunities to companies that are planning to explore the Chinese market.

Moreover, the improving gender equality offered Chinese women the chance to move into leadership roles in management and entrepreneurship. As Chinese women made achievements in their careers, also their family roles changed, with women having a greater voice and families becoming less patriarchal. As a result, women are now playing a more significant function in the domestic spending structure, and they are the primary decision-makers for the daily

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<sup>51</sup> Vivian NI, *Consumption Trends and Targeting China's Female Consumers*, in “China Briefing”, 2012, <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2012/03/08/consumption-trends-and-targeting-chinasfemale-consumer.html?share=reddit&nb=1&nb=1>, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

household consumption and purchases in their families. For this reason, the importance of women as consumers rely not only on the fact that they purchase for themselves, but it is also important to remark their growing interest for every other family member. Thus, it is interesting to understand women’s household consumption patterns and behaviour, and the influence that women have on the family’s purchasing decisions. For instance, women’s preferences may determine the clothes their husbands are wearing, the education their children are receiving and the healthcare products their families are using. They are also influential in big-ticket family purchases such as homes and cars; Chinese women are managing the domestic finance through investments in stocks, real estate, banking products and commercial insurance. This trend may create a new women-centric market space in the future.<sup>53</sup>

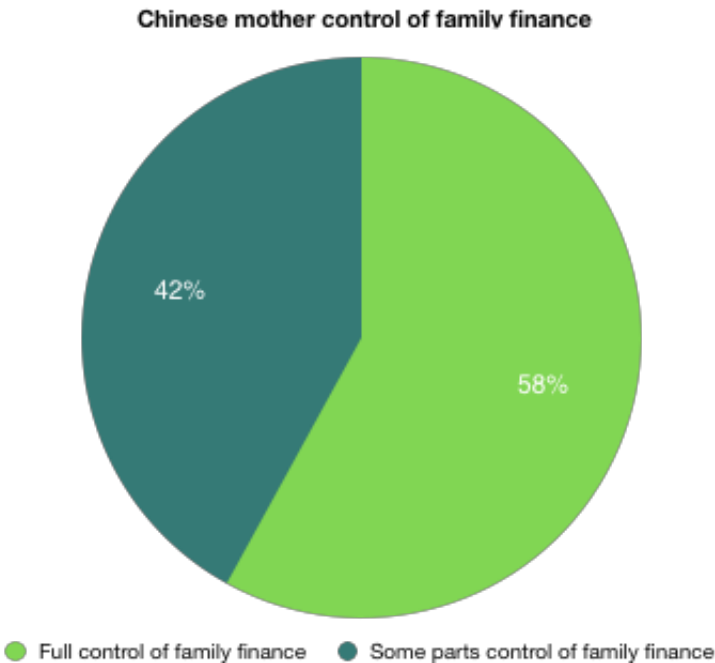


FIGURE 2. Chinese mother control of family finance. Source: modified from *Women’s Strength in “China’s Consumer Trends in 2016”*

Nowadays Chinese women are spending money to improve every aspect of their life. “Looking good” is one of the reasons that encourage women to spend their money. As a matter of fact, Chinese women are interested in the beauty culture as their income has increased and their social power has grown. Clothing and cosmetics are the primary beauty sectors in which women’s purchasing desire is achieved. Moreover, the increasing number of Chinese women’s

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

demands for expensive, high-end cosmetics and skincare products is expanding the beauty market in China.

The improved educational and professional opportunities enhanced Chinese women's awareness towards the products they buy, and the general modernisation in the field of technologies in China influenced their interest in using high-tech products. As Vivian Ni said, a report in 2011 shows that 41% of surveyed Chinese women want to spend their extra money on electronics, mainly on purchases of mobile phones, personal computers and other electronic devices.<sup>54</sup>

Getaway experiences including travels and holidays are others huge expenses, especially for women living in big cities like Shanghai and Beijing.

Luxury good consumption is another area in which women are the primary consumer segment. They now spend as much as men on luxury consumption, accounting for 50% of luxury purchases from companies like Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Traditionally, Chinese men have been considered the primary consumers of luxury goods because of the practice of giving gifts to business partners, guests and government officials, however, Chinese women are now catching up in luxury consumption.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, women are becoming less price sensitive and more sophisticated about brands and products they buy. They are spending more than before and they have also changed their purchasing habits becoming less impulsive.<sup>56</sup> Another factor is that, a Chinese woman is now spending much more time doing online research on what she wants to buy, consulting blogs and other research engines before entering a store. She looks for products she can use daily, rather than buying a product she uses once a month; she wants products that last longer.

### **2.1. Three main segments: ideologues, traditionalists and moderns**

The rapid economic growth in recent decades has generally transformed the nation's women. Chinese women are now self-confident, independent and they play multiple roles both at home and in the society. The transformation of their roles led to a revaluation of women's consumption values when it comes to making purchase decisions. To satisfy the desires and

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> Shaun REIN, *China's New Purchasing Powerhouse: Women*, in "Forbes", 2009, <https://www.forbes.com/2009/08/05/china-women-marketing-leadership-managing-retail.html#12faff3b58af>, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

consumer's behaviours, marketers developed strategies and promotional campaigns for their products and services to target this market segment. This results in a separation of Chinese women's market segment into three different groups; only by understanding the characteristics of each group, international marketers will fulfil their marketing expectations.

A study conducted by Yat-ming Sin and Hon-ming Yau identifies three main groups constituting the Chinese female demographic: the ideologues, the traditionalists, and the moderns. These segments are significantly different in terms of age, educational level, employment position, family income, and consumption values associated with purchase decisions.

### *2.1.1. The Ideologues*

Women influenced by the communist philosophy and who match the communist model are considered *ideologues*. Ideologues are marked by old age, low educational level, low income and some retirements.<sup>57</sup> This segment consists of women who were born before or during the establishment of the New China. This group of Chinese women is affected by the norms and values promoted during the Maoist period based on the creation of a new model for Chinese women: that of nationalists. This segment was released from the unequal status imposed on women by the Chinese feudal ethics; they were educated by the government propaganda to believe that active participation in political affairs, serving one's country and society are important duties of every citizen. They have a relatively high concern for social consciousness and responsibility, but moderately low concern for family orientation and independence.<sup>58</sup>

After 1949, the promotion of the ideology of China's communist government influenced women's lives, and the loyalty belonging to the family should be shifted to the Party. In the post-Mao China, the role and the image of women changed, above all, in the household context with the establishment of a more democratic family system. During this period, China created a new feminine image based on military uniforms and strong allure rather than on the promotion of women's beauty and femininity. Indeed, at the time, the female model was mainly represented by the young industrial worker and by the peasant with a lower level of education,

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<sup>57</sup> Leo YAT-MIN SIN, Oliver HON-MING YAU, "Female Role Orientation and Consumption Values", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 13, 2, 2001, p. 67.

<sup>58</sup> LEE, YAU, CHOW, SIN, TSE, "Changing roles and values...", cit., p. 19.



whose achievements derived from hard work and whose commitment to the Party was a sign of equality between the status of women and that of men.

Ideologues are characterised by the performance outside the household and they still endorse the idea of serving the country and promoting the national welfare. Their focus is on patriotic and social values, and although this group is in decline, many women still belong to it.

International marketers attach considerable importance to this group because ideologues are usually very loyal consumers, so they constitute a significant market niche. Their closeness to the environmental protection of the country and to the social welfare is also visible in their buying behaviour as they prefer to purchase local products promoting the national economy and employment. Moreover, they are devoted to community activities.

Ideologues also tend to select brands which are approved by an independent testing agency or by a respected social figure, like popular government officials, as their reference group. They usually choose people they consider similar to themselves or with whom they desire to be linked to or associated with, like politicians and labour union leaders enhancing the product appeal.

Given these considerations, international marketers should prefer promotional campaigns that emphasise social values rather than individual ones; they could enhance the promotion of national loyalty to the product or brand by creating joint ventures with local companies or trying to localise their product image.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.1.2. *The Traditionalists*

The *traditionalists* segment shares demographic characteristics with ideologues, except they are a little bit younger. Being younger, they look at a different ideal of women's roles and images as compared to ideologues. Women who belong to this group were born or grew up during the Cultural Revolution. Having experienced the destructive effects and the chaotic situations caused by the Cultural Revolution during the Maoist period, Chinese women belonging to this group started to question the legality of the communist ideologies and values. Consequently, many of them broke up with the communist model of the ideal woman and started to rediscover their traditional role. The fundamental difference that contrasts with the principles promoted by the formerly mentioned segment is that, although traditionalists are younger than the ideologues, they believe that ideals of tradition should drive the contemporary society. They are aware of the fact that the most important responsibility for women is to take

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<sup>59</sup> LEE, YAU, CHOW, SIN, TSE, "Changing roles and values...", cit., p. 20.

care of the family rather than to build careers. Moreover, traditionalists tend to be submissive to seniors or superiors, this is similar to the way they were forced to be in ancient China.<sup>60</sup>

Traditionalists are mainly influenced by the Confucian ideology, which is based on values regarding the family relationship, harmony, and loyalty. For that reason, they represent the traditional roles of women. They accept that men should have high social status, they should also listen to their husband, and agree that raising children is a great achievement in life. They have a strong sense of responsibility, and their philosophy emphasises the family. As regards the family, their choice of products and brands when making purchasing decisions is easily influenced by family members, so that they consider family values as the most important factors in the buying process.

This group's aspiration is linked to the feminine ideal, thanks to this image they do not discard the traditional beliefs about women.

Besides adhering to Chinese traditional family values, traditionalists also follow the cultural values such as "face" and "reciprocity". They show a great inclination toward the concept of *guanxi* (关系).<sup>61</sup> This is a sign of their willingness to give gifts not only to enhance personal relationships but also to symbolise generosity. For that reason, marketers should promote more gift-giving occasions. As traditionalists look at these events as necessary, potential consumers will be more likely to give gifts during some special moments. For instance, the Chinese New Year and birthdays are considered special occasions and, for that reason, marketers should give importance to that practice; they could encourage women to give gifts as a way of showing appreciation.

Additionally, traditionalists are very price-sensitive and they have the tendency towards money saving. Comparing prices even on small items, watching for advertisement announcing sales, and looking for promotions, special offers, discounts, or coupons stimulate sales for this market segment and satisfy it.<sup>62</sup> Because traditionalists appeal to the essential values of loyalty and harmony, these group members are likely to continue being loyal customers once they have been satisfied by a product or a brand.

Marketers who want to address promotional strategies to this group of women should emphasise close family relationships and women's roles inside the household. They should use marketing strategies like advertisements focused on stressing the ability of a product to provide

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<sup>60</sup> LEE, YAU, CHOW, SIN, TSE, "Changing roles and values...", cit., p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> *Guanxi*, or personal networks, are based on the cultivation of relationships and networks of mutual dependence. They require the manufacturing of obligation through the exchange of gifts and favors.

<sup>62</sup> LEE, YAU, CHOW, SIN, TSE, "Changing roles and values...", cit., p. 20.

benefits and advantages to all the family members. Other promotions, like offers and discounts, should be effective at stimulating this market segment; moreover, they must try to avoid advertising that recalls the hardship of life experienced during the period of the Cultural Revolution. They do not need to be reminded of these painful days, because this is something most Chinese people would rather forget. Traditionalists will appreciate advertisements that promise better days ahead; they will enjoy humorous themes in advertising that are easily understood.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.1.3. *The Moderns*

The *moderns* segment moves in another direction. Being the youngest, better educated, better employed, and the most affluent, their primary objective is personal achievement and economic independence. Moderns are emerging as a new group in addition to traditionalists. This segment is part of the emerging middle class in Mainland China. China's middle class is overgrowing and will make up the most considerable portion of China's consumer market. However, despite the increasing interest in China's middle class, there are still many difficulties in defining what "middle class" means. People living the so-called *middle-class lifestyle* in China, do not have a strong sense of affiliation, but they have the desire to define themselves through their own self-earned economic mobility; so, rather than seeking to emulate the richest, they prefer to distance themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Under the country Open-door policies, foreign goods, and the modernisation promoted in 1978, Chinese women were exposed to western ideas and economic growth, and, as a result, their economic and social roles began to change. This new group of women, called the moderns, and born in 1978 or later, is struggling to balance its basic roles with the new ones created by the social changes; they are striving for social and economic independence.

Today, Chinese women are achieving gains in education and they are also conquering considerable economic power. Moderns now play an important role in the buying process; their desire to live for today without any constraint or restriction imposed by the family or by the society, contributes to meet their attitude towards choosing products that benefit their own personal needs rather than the family's ones. Moderns are self-indulgent and self-oriented; because of their predilection for this kind of lifestyle they prefer to purchase beauty and healthcare products. Women belonging to this group are not only buyers of grocery in the

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>64</sup> Lianne YU, *Consumption in China*, "China Today", Cambridge, Polity Press, 2014, p. 81.

household, but they have also the authority over household expenses.<sup>65</sup> The products they prefer to buy include not only the traditional feminine beauty products but also masculine products like cars or cameras.

The introduction of foreign products and investments, the development of joint-venture companies, and the market-oriented employment system have provided a lot of opportunities for this market segment, thus contributing to the creation of a new class of Chinese working women who are better educated, have higher incomes and are exposed to western influences. The moderns are characterised by becoming very fashion-conscious, and they are willing to spend their savings on the purchase of costly foreign brands and imported products. Brand and quality are the two main factors influencing moderns' purchasing decisions.<sup>66</sup>

Moderns want to simplify their lives and to save time, this attitude is reflected in the way they shop. Less time for shopping means less opportunity to compare goods and, for that reason, brand names are becoming more and more critical to this group.<sup>67</sup> They are loyal to favourite brands, and one reason for that is they do not want to waste time searching for new products or alternative choices. Indeed, they are also a very impulsive market segment excited by new possibilities and coolest products. For instance, a one-stop shop selling different goods can attract these consumers. At the same time, in-store stimuli like attractive packaging, special price promotions, and point-of-purchase should be emphasised, because moderns have the tendency to decide the product to purchase while they are inside the store, thus encouraging unplanned consumptions.

The creation of brand names for quick reference and the attention to in-store stimuli can be some effective marketing strategies used for this category. Moreover, making the buying process and consumption activities more convenient, and designing sales efforts to stimulate impulsive behaviours should help women, belonging to this market segment, to be attracted by those strategies. For this group, international marketers should put more emphasis on social value that can help to enhance the moderns' personal image. Studies have also shown that moderns not only read as a leisure activity but, thanks to their higher educational level, they also pay a lot of attention to packaging instructions or ingredient tables; these women are most likely to read such materials instead of throwing them away. For that reason, direct mailing and advertisements in magazines, and other kinds of printed media, represent an opportunity for marketers that seek to reach this group.

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<sup>65</sup> LEE, YAU, CHOW, SIN, TSE, "Changing roles and values...", cit., p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

## 2.2. The general characteristics of Chinese consumers

The rapid economic growth and the fast development that the People's Republic of China has undergone have produced consumers with a high-level of disposable income and with the desire to spend their savings to improve their lives. Regardless of the type of purchased product, Chinese consumers are becoming more sophisticated and modern.

In March 2012, the McKinsey Institute published the report "Meet the 2020 Chinese Consumer". This report identifies four main trends that characterised the evolution of the Chinese market and consumers.<sup>68</sup>

First, the purchase of discretionary goods, such as the tendency to buy items that do not meet the individual's primary needs.

Second, aspirations-driven trading up. This trend is driven by consumers' aspiration to improve themselves, the way they live, and their social status. Since the Chinese judge themselves and others by what they buy, goods have become identifying elements, like status symbols, which describe the role assumed by the person in the society.

Third, the growing number of elderly and young consumers. In 2020, 5% of the population will be made up of consumers over the age of 65, more inclined to discretionary purchases such as travels, leisure activities, clothes, and less disposed to save money. But what is important is that the spending patterns of older people in 2020 will be different from those of older people today. In the same period, 35% of urban consumption will be composed by the so-called "Generation 2".<sup>69</sup> Among the young consumers, there are one-child consumers born after 1980 and grown up in a period of relative abundance, economic security and internationalisation. They are open-minded, they have confidence in the future; therefore, their buying behaviour is very different from that of their parents. Particularly, Chinese young people are unwilling to save money and sometimes they are disposed to get into debt to support their own expenses.

Fourth, the emerging geographic differences. The considerable variations in the economic profiles of the cities, along with differences in spending power have increased the disparities across geographic areas. As the report states, while the gap across groups of sales of necessities will narrow thanks to their affordability, it will widen for discretionary items, such as electronic products.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Yuval ATSMON, Max MAGNI, Lihua LI, Wenkan LIAO, "Meet the 2020 Chinese Consumer", *McKinsey Consumer & Shopper Insights*, March 2012, p. 21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*.

These trends allow us to understand the preferences and the main features of the Chinese consumer, such as an increasing westernized consumer, influenced by the American way of life, searching for emotional satisfaction and self-affirmation, and for whom the material goods become status symbols which identify the roles in the society and which reflect the belonging group.

Chinese contemporary consumers are also pragmatic; they do not want to buy impulsively, but before buying, they prefer to do research, visit stores, ask friends or relatives for advice, and learn through the new media. In particular, the new generation of young consumers in China is inclined to communicate with friends about their consumption experiences on the web, and they love trying new products like digital gadgets. For that reason, the growing influence of the internet and social media as less traditional instruments of communication is creating a new way to meet the wants of the new generation of Chinese consumers.

Another factor is the increasing brand loyalty, especially for niche brands compared to mass brands. Consumers are showing a tendency to prefer local globalized brands to foreign products. The main causes are:

- the government intervention to protect local business and enterprises;
- the quality of Chinese products is becoming higher and even more competitive;
- the consumer ethnocentrism, as buying Chinese brands is supporting China's domestic economy.<sup>71</sup>

The Chinese culture is also characterised by collectivism. It is possible to consider this trend as a part of the traditional Confucian influence and as a legacy of the Maoist socialism under which the individual's needs were subjected to the collective interest of the overall society. However, the de-collectivization process started in the 1980s has implied a change of this cultural trait through the expansion of personal spaces. Consequently, in recent decades, Chinese consumers' spending behaviours have been characterised by individualism.

The attitude towards foreign brands, the importance of quality over quantity, and the concept of purchasing a product as a symbol of social status have influenced the Chinese consumption behaviour towards high-end and luxury products.

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<sup>71</sup> Xiaogang BI, Sailesh GUNESSEE, Robert HOFFMANN, Wendy HUI, Jeremy LARNER, Qing-ping MA, Frauke Mattison THOMPSON, "Chinese consumer ethnocentrism: A field experiment", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 11, 2012, p. 259.

### 2.3. Characteristics of contemporary Chinese women as consumers

In daily life women are not only the buyers of personal goods, but also the decision-makers of most of children's articles, relatives' articles, and male supplies.

Today the improvement of Chinese women's education as well as the enlargement of employment conditions, and the increase in income make women's economic independence stronger, while their power in the family economic decision-making reaches an unprecedented level. The current generation of Chinese women has grown up in relatively good conditions; women are more independent and play greater roles in the society, economy and workplace. Modern Chinese women are more self-centred and have higher aspirations for themselves; as a result, they escaped the centuries-old belief of inferiority. The changing socio-economic landscape in China played an influential role in reducing the gender inequalities. Gender is an important demographic value and it is also a significant factor affecting the consumer choice while shopping. For instance, in the apparel shopping behaviour, women are more astute than men in decoding the syntax of clothing. They shop more often, and they spend more money on clothing than men. Women enjoy shopping because they view it as a leisure activity and as a means for satisfaction.<sup>72</sup>

The One-child Policy has freed many women from caring for large families, and the workforce participation rose.<sup>73</sup> The number of women working in offices, where the pay is better, is also rising. This suggests that the income gap between men and women may narrow further, while women's independence will increase rapidly. Nowadays, more than 60 percent of women are responsible for the family's purchase of food, daily necessities, and for the household durable goods, so it is not difficult to see that women's business decisions are more emphasised on family than men. Therefore, women are more willing to devote their time and energy to building an ideal family and creating a comfortable living atmosphere.<sup>74</sup> Chinese women are now self-confident, and they manage to balance the professional role with their position in the family, as they are generally regarded as mothers or wives.

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<sup>72</sup> Osmud RAHAMAN, Benjamin C. M. FUNG, Zhimin CHEN, Wei-Lun CHANG, Xiang GAO, "A study of apparel consumer behaviour in China and Taiwan", *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 11, 1, 2018, p. 23.

<sup>73</sup> ATSMON, MAGNI, LI, LIAO, "Meet the 2020...", cit., p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Xinrong LI, 欣荣李, "Zui da xiandu de zhuazhu nüxing xiaofei xinli" 最大限度地抓住女性消费心理 (To maximize the psychology of the female consumer), in *Baidu wenku*, (<https://wenku.baidu.com/view/bf9b58e8172ded630b1cb665.html?from=search>), 2010.

Now, with the development of the society, women's status has improved, and they are increasingly becoming the new force affecting the consumption habits in China's consumer market. The consumption pattern of modern Chinese women has undergone fundamental changes, from subsistence-oriented consumption to development-oriented and enjoyable consumption. Therefore, it is important for businessmen to understand the consumption psychology and behaviour of Chinese women. Women usually have strong expression and communication skills; they can use all these tasks to speak to other consumers, and their buying experiences to persuade others. At the same time, women's shopping decisions are more susceptible to other consumers' experience.

### *2.3.1. Consumption culture of female consumers*

Female consumers play an important role in the market. From youth, they usually make independent decisions; in the family, they also assume the role of wife and mother, consequently, they are the purchasers of a clear majority of goods and products. Their opinions are also important as they can influence relatives' purchasing behaviours. Female consumers tend to know how to consume, and they usually follow some consumption behaviours that characterise their purchasing decisions and inclinations. The first is that women pay more attention to the emotional and external factors of goods. When shopping, especially when they are buying daily necessities or household appliances, their attention is paid to the basic functions of the product and to the real utility. When they buy, they attach great importance to the appearance and the shape of the products; particularly, they consider the emotional factors, linked to the product, that produce their buying motivation.

Because of their status in the family and their experience in housework, women's attention to goods is different from that of men. For instance, when buying daily necessities, they are more concerned about the actual utility of commodities and about the specific benefits that those products will bring. Therefore, the design, the details, and the usability of the goods are specific features that female consumers take into consideration in the purchasing process. Women pay much more attention to convenience while buying.

At present, the employment rate of young women in China is relatively high; furthermore, they should work and take care of the family equilibrium, so what they want is to shorten the time they spend doing housework and have much more time for entertainment and rest. To this end, they have a strong requirement for convenient daily goods and for prepared food.



Female consumers have strong self-consciousness and self-esteem. They tend to evaluate both themselves and others according to their buying standards. For that reason, in the purchase activities expressions, the language, advertising, and the advice of the salespersons will affect the self-esteem of female consumers and then affect the realization of the consumption behaviour.

Another characteristic that describes Chinese women's consumption behaviour is the dominance of irrational consumption, which results in impulsive purchases. Women's impulsive buying behaviour is frequent during the consumption process. In general, there are many factors influencing the consumer behaviour, such as the product itself, the surrounding environment, and the consumption psychology. Female consumers are easily affected by discounted prices, and they often buy something that is useless because of the impact of promotional activities or advertising. For that reason, advertising, discounts, and salespersons' advice affect women's "unnecessary" perceptual consumption. This is not planned before, and the goods purchased are not essential for life. Different people also have different views of this "non-essential" consumption. For instance, in the eyes of men, it is regarded as an immaturity of vanity, while in the eyes of women this is linked to the nature of beauty, and from the merchant's point of view, it is a business opportunity. There are several manifestations of irrational consumption among women. First, there are women whose purchasing experiences are affected by the market atmosphere such as discounts and advertisements. These women are sensitive to promotions and to all kinds of advertisements. They pay much more attention to media than men do. Furthermore, women are more likely to accept more vivid and perceptive media, such as television and magazines. Then, women usually do not regret buying. This feature is strictly linked to emotional consumption. Most young women do not regret the price they pay for the good purchased when they are happy or in a bad mood, and some people think that the purchasing moment represents the resolution or the consequence of the mood at that time. For that reason, marketers should be able to attract more sensitive, passionate female consumers by catching the consumer's psychology and providing emotional services. The third manifestation is related to the entertainment experience because female consumers enjoy shopping as a hobby. In this case, shopping is the soil of irrational consumption. As buying is a pleasure, Chinese consumers enjoy walking through the stores in the shopping malls, looking at store windows, where they can experience the quality of luxury and foreign brands. The fourth feature that characterises women's consumption is related to women's desire to follow new trends and fashion.

### 2.3.2. *Women's consumption in different age groups*

Women's consumption behaviour is also influenced by the period of birth and the historical context in which they grew up.

Women born after the 1990s, for instance, are characterised by impulsive consumption. The desire for shopping exceeds the consumption strength, and they do not have a rational consumption concept. They constitute the new generation of consumers, they are the most Westernised and the most open to new products. Most women of this age do not have life pressure, so they are not able to measure the consumption trend and, for that reason, they are driven by a high purchase impulse. These consumers pursue individualism, and they often use the internet to follow global tendencies. Their consumption is characterised by online shopping and internet research. Chinese women see the shopping experience as a way of releasing stress, due to the fact that psychological pressure of women in modern cities is increasing. Shopping can help women relieve stress, balance their emotions, help them express happiness and increase their pleasure.

In comparison, most women born after the 1980s have become the new force in the workplace, and most of the white-collar workers in this age group have a huge consumption potential. Their purchasing power and shopping consciousness are affecting the marketing strategies of many enterprises. The number of white-collar women in China is increasing, most of whom are unmarried. According to a survey conducted by Horizons Research, more and more people, especially among higher educated women, are deciding to stay single.<sup>75</sup> Modern white-collar women are professionally and financially independent, they live freely and they consume boldly. They are undoubtedly the main force in the consumer market; they easily accept new products, pursue new trends, and have a high demand for the quality of life. With the rise of women as consumers, the real estate industry, which was formerly focused on men as the main purchase group, has begun targeting their sales promotion to women. Owning an apartment gives women a sense of responsibility; moreover, it enhances the individual's self-esteem, independence and sense of safety because an apartment is also considered a source of investment and a potential profit.<sup>76</sup> Besides purchasing apartments, single women also boost

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<sup>75</sup> XIAO, Yue, 小月, "Danshen nüren: xiaofeizhe, kuailizhe" 单身女人: 消费着、快乐着 (Single women-consuming and enjoying), *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, Women of China*, p. 26.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*.

the development of the entertainment economy. In addition to shopping, single women enjoy holidays, doing sport, attending art courses, watching films, travelling and dining out.

Women's consumption habits are related to themselves; they like spending on clothes, perfumes, and cosmetics. At the same time, they pay attention to appearance and career. For women in this age group, the brand is very important, as it can be a sign of the quality of the product. Additionally, they have become the main force in online shopping.

Women who grew up after the 1970s have a family and they experience high life pressure. They are more mature and rational than younger women. They attach great importance to their families, children's education, health insurance and living conditions. For that reason, they pay a lot of attention to the quality of the products they purchase in order to benefit their family.

Women who grew up in the 1960s experienced the hardship of the Cultural Revolution period, and they shared the results of reforms and opening-up period. Chinese women who are 50 years old or older, and who grew up lacking materials and coping with harsh living conditions, are the products of traditional and modern concepts. Consequently, their consumption behaviours combine tradition with modernity. Frugality and pragmatism are the common characteristics of this generation. Of course, there are women in this age group who have pursued a high quality of life, they wear brand clothing, use high-end cosmetics, and travel abroad; some of these women are very rich and they remain well focused on their family. They also tend to take pride in their husbands' successes and they pay attention to their family health and their children's education.

### *2.3.3. The reasons for women's consumption and purchase*

The realistic purchasing motivation is referred to the practical use of goods and services. When buying goods, female consumers with this motivation pay attention to the actual and functional value of goods, and they request economical and durable products; they do not pursue the fame, the packaging appearance, the colour, the shape or the trademark of the goods. This purchasing motivation is the result of changes in people's consumption habits and consumption patterns. The reasons for these transformations concern the economic conditions and the traditional concept of frugality, practice, thus contributing to the development of realistic motives.

Beauty is another reason for purchasing. It focuses on the artistic value of goods. In the purchasing process, people displaying this buying motivation pay special attention to the beauty

of the product, to its performance, and to the psychological identification derived. Therefore, they attach great importance to the shape, colour, and style of goods and to all the details and features that characterise them. Beauty is the most important requirement, while utility and price are not very important in this case. Usually, young people, intellectuals, and art circles' members consider the beauty motivation as an important purpose in their purchasing experiences; for that reason, they are often the main buyers of luxury cosmetics, jewellery, arts and crafts and furnishings.

The importance of the brand name is another buying motivation. The brand is the manifestation of the product symbolic value, and brand awareness is an important indicator of the consumption inclination. Brand awareness includes brand consciousness and the attitude toward a brand name. This is characterised by the pursuit of famous brand goods or admiration for some trademarks. This is mainly due to the fact that, in recent years, women's consumption has gradually developed from traditional material consumption, such as food, daily necessities, to high-end consumption, which is due to a more sophisticated attention for luxury products. In the eyes of female consumers, the brand name is a sign of the quality of the product. A lot of women will consider the brand factor when consuming or buying a product; although the price is high, the quality is guaranteed.

Another characteristic is the renewal of the consumption pattern. With the upgrading of the consumption structure, the feature of female consumption has also changed gradually. The new consumption styles, such as the use credit cards and online shopping habits, have replaced the traditional models of consumption. Since 2007 credit card consumption has become the mainstream consumer payment method for urban women.<sup>77</sup> The disposable income has risen, and Chinese women spend most of their incomes on clothing, communications, travel, cosmetics and entertainment. Many of China's urban women no longer worry about food and clothing, and they want to spend money to improve their living standards. They recognize the importance of health; a growing number of women are joining fitness centres and when buying food, for instance, women pay great attention to the nutritional equilibrium and to the arrangement of their family's daily diets.<sup>78</sup>

Patronage loyalty refers to the degree to which a shopper is willing to remain loyal to existing stores or shopping centres. This buying motivation is characterised by the purchase of

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> GU Wentong, 顾文同, "Zhongguo chengshi nüxing xiaofei xiguan zhuanbian" 中国城市女性消费习惯转变 (Urban Chinese Women's Consumption Habits Changing), *Women, Feature*, 2, 2006, p. 23.

goods based on trust. From the shopping experience, consumers continue buying in the same store because of their special interest for a good, a shop, a salesperson, and so on. Consumers with this buying motivation are not only the most loyal supporters of stores or brands, but they also play a sort of promotional role when talking to other people.

Female consumers are becoming more selective about their spending; they are allocating more of their income to lifestyle services and activities. Moreover, Chinese consumers are seeking a more balanced life considering health and family as priorities.

All these features characterising Chinese women's consumption have been taken into consideration by international marketers who want to enter the Chinese market, develop their marketing strategies and address them to Chinese people. Women's lifestyles, shopping behaviour and purchasing preferences have been widely analysed, and the results are used by global enterprises in order to create advertising that could properly reach this market segment and promote correctly product placement in China.

As mentioned above, Chinese women are emerging as one of the most important group of consumers in the world. They are spending more than ever before, they have also changed their living habits to become less frivolous, and they have the money to keep on spending. Understanding how women think and what they want to buy is critical for foreign firms that are trying to sell their products to them; consequently, companies do not have to rely only on special prices and discounts to sell to women. Indeed, they need to create a sort of emotional connection and to forge a strong brand position.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Marketing to Chinese women**

After the beginning of the reform period, which was aimed at opening the Chinese economy to foreign trade and investments, Western companies were fascinated by the potential of China's expanding market and by the increasing purchasing power of the developing Chinese middle class. China remained one of the most attractive destinations for multinational companies and, in 2011, it became the first country by volume of incoming foreign direct investment.<sup>79</sup>

In order to be successful in the Chinese market, international companies have adapted their marketing strategies to the Chinese consumer culture. They have also realised the potential of Chinese female consumers as a new market segment. But how can they target Chinese women? First, they have to understand the market, then they have to understand the consumers. Marketers and retailers have recognised that women are the core of their market. Indeed, women in China are becoming a segment of influential consumers; they are big spenders in the fields of household appliances and high-end products. The big-ticket industries, like automotive, financial services, computers, electronics, home improvements, and travel have enhanced the Chinese female consumption.

Marketing to Chinese women has its challenges; this is because of the differences that rely on female consumption behaviours. Consequently, any marketer who wants to capture a substantial share of women's segment has to choose its marketing strategies and promote its products correctly.

Women have several priorities, preferences, and attitudes. Their purchasing process is distinct, and they respond differently to marketing strategies, media and advertising. The reason is that men and women perceive, believe and behave in ways that are linked to their gender. In the past, their particular roles in the workplace and at home generated distinctive needs. Moreover, gender-based differences in perceptions, attitudes, and communication styles generated various responses in decision-making processes and purchase outcomes.

Chinese women are now deeply integrated into the workplace, their educational level has risen, and their income has increased. The result is a powerful consumer segment that has the

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<sup>79</sup> Francesco SILVESTRI, "Marketing in Cina: una prospettiva culturale", *Orizzonte Cina*, 5, 4, 2014, p. 7.

power to make its own decisions concerning what they want to buy and what they want to consume.

Nowadays, women are not only the buyers of female related products like cosmetics and clothing, they also drive the consumption of historically male-driven categories, such as electronic purchases, home improvement decisions, big-ticket items like cars, insurance policies, and other major appliances. The strength of the “Sheconomy” has become the focus of various industries in the field of consumption. Women are powerful energy in the shopping activity, and

According to the report of Guotai Jun’an Securities, nearly 75 percent of household consumption decisions are made by women and the contribution rate of female consumption to economic growth is 66.4 percent. [...] (By 2019) the size of the Chinese mainland women’s economic market [...] will grow to 4.5 trillion (yuan).<sup>80</sup>

Women are profitable consumers. This is due to two main dimensions that characterise female consumption behaviour: loyalty and referrals. First, they stay more loyal to the product or brand they have chosen. Second, because word of mouth is prevalent among women, they are more likely to recommend to others those brands or products that impress them positively. Consequently, effective targeting at women generates higher consumer satisfaction among both women and men.

### **3.1. The status of modern women in China**

China’s entrance into the World Trade Organization in 2001 facilitated the interactions with foreign cultures, and China became more globalised and modernised. Thus, it encouraged the emergence of the consumer culture in China, which represents one of the most important changes in globalisation. Moreover, consumption is becoming an increasingly significant part of people’s everyday lives. The wave of consumption brought by the globalisation period has developed new consumerist values and attitudes, but it has also increased the Chinese sophistication in consumption. Globalisation has focused attention on the flow of Western cultural products through media and market in China. As a result, Western consumption

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<sup>80</sup> Xiaochen LIU, ‘*Sheconomy*’ contributes over 70% of Consumption, in “All-China Women’s Federation”, 2018, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/survey/1805/4951-1.htm>, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

patterns gained significant influence in China, especially on urban women who showed increasing consumer behaviour. Globalisation opened different possibilities for Chinese women and made them contemporary social agents for breaking all the forces driving against their affirmation as “modern women” in China.

The process of globalisation has affected both men and women. Women are especially involved into this phenomenon because they are the primary consumer segment for which products are publicised (including those products and services belonging to male consumers) and also the most common representation in advertisements.<sup>81</sup>

Today, women’s growing economic power has changed the Chinese female consumer’s role in the society, and Chinese women are becoming increasingly involved in the consumption patterns thanks to their success in the business world. The reason is attributed to the transitional economy, which offers several opportunities for women. Another aspect is that Chinese women have less pressure to bring up children. This is not only due to the One-child Policy, but also to the presence of grandparents who treat their nephew or niece as a prince or a princess; thus, due to the traditional idea of “big family”, the older generation has played a major role in bringing up children. Moreover, Chinese women are entitled to only three months paid maternity leave, and most of them return to work afterwards, this inevitably leads to leaving grandparents to take over their duties. If no grandparent is available, nannies take care of those children.<sup>82</sup>

The empowerment of women has been on the broader policy and legislative agenda. In 2001 the State Council promulgated the National Program for Women’s Development in China (2001-2010). The Program major objectives consisted of six areas of development, such as the economy, women’s participation in decision-making and management, education level, healthcare, law, and environment. By 2010 most significant targets of the Program were achieved bringing significant progress in women’s development and gender equity.

As economic globalisation grows and social development advances, new challenges and opportunities for women’s development arise. The Government’s 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan calls for the “overall development of women” as an objective. And the All-China Women’s Federation

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<sup>81</sup> HUNG, LI, BELK, "Consumption and the ‘Modern...’", cit., p. 349.

<sup>82</sup> Aileen JIANG, Cecilia WANG, *Women Entrepreneurship in China: Past, Present, and Future*, in “Fair observer”, 2012, [https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central\\_south\\_asia/women-entrepreneurship-china-past-present-and-future/](https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/women-entrepreneurship-china-past-present-and-future/), 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018.



(ACWF) has carried out its national gender equality plan, the *Program for Chinese Women's Development (2011-2020)*.<sup>83</sup>

Special attention is given to the new generation. Young consumers are the first to enter the global stage in the age of cosmopolitan consumer culture. Chinese young people, especially those living in the urban cities, have experienced the biggest change in their lives, they have become trend-setters for the whole country and they constitute one of the most significant group for the market research in China. They are influenced by new fashion trends, activities, and lifestyles, thus, contributing to the economic growth and cultural development of China. Especially young women express the desire to pursue the “good life”, through self-improvement, further-education, training, new hobbies, and entertainment experiences. They show greater confidence in the future, which will be better than the past.

At the same time, opportunities pursued by young Chinese consumers have led to the development of a healthy middle class. Among them, there is a large group of *élite* women, called white-collar women. They are ambitious and entrepreneurial Chinese women constituting a significant part of China's *e-generation*, surfing the internet and conducting business using mobile phones for both professional and personal connectivity. This category of women has a pervasive interest in fashion, beauty consumption, and they have their ideas about styles and self-improvement.

Better living and higher standards have contributed to raising the quality of life of the ageing population, and marketers should shift their focus from the young generation to the potential of elderly consumers. The greying generations tend not to have a highly-developed sense of self and of their individual needs.

### *3.1.1. Factors affecting consumption and Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

The changing status of women in China is the result of urban consumption inclinations. Indeed, since the consumer behaviour has social traits, individual consumption activities also depend on many social factors including the economic factor, the cultural factor, the social status, personal characteristics, and the psychological factor.

The economic factor implies changes in the consumption structure. Chinese people's income and consumption expenditure have increased, so the living standards of urban residents

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<sup>83</sup> Frank ZHAO, *China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020)*, in “Women of China”, 2015, <http://m.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/xhtml1/source/1502/998-1.htm>, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

have improved too. The upgrading of living standards and the increase in individual income have resulted in the enlargement and diversification of the citizens' needs. Moreover, the implementation of the family's spending power provides a basis for the female consumer practice, as they are the key decision-makers for home shopping.

Women are getting more and more independent in the modern society. They have a great concern about their economic status and power in the family decisions and personal matters; their spending power has improved, as for their power to practise the consumer lifestyle. The assortment of commodities promoted by the development of the social economy and by the promotion of consumer culture has aroused women's consumer needs and wants. International marketers have to deal with these new consumers' trends and try to further understand what can realise their expectations and satisfy their needs.

Consumer behaviour is also influenced by social factors, such as family, social roles and status. The latter is referred to women's status in the society and in the family structure. Women's status is determined by their educational, employment and income level, social contacts and involvement in politics. Raising social status generates Chinese female consumers' subjectivity; that implies the real consumers who go shopping for themselves in order to satisfy their needs.

Considering other factors that characterise the consumer behaviour, it is important to mention the socio-cultural factors which are related to a consumer within his social and cultural settings, while the personal and psychological factors are presented in a consumer considering him an individual. First, it is important to say that culture exerts a profound influence on consumer behaviour, which includes the roles of the buyer's culture, subculture and social class.<sup>84</sup> Culture is the most fundamental reason for people's wants and behaviour.<sup>85</sup> Then, each culture contains smaller groups called subcultures which share value systems based mainly on shared life experiences and situations. Subcultures include nationalities, religions, and geographic regions. From a marketing point of view, many subcultures make up essential market segments to which marketers design tailored marketing programs and products. Social classes are society's ordered divisions whose members share values, interests, and behaviours. The cultural factor is related to the changes in China's gender culture and to the new forms of advertising that influence women's behaviour and shape Chinese women's consumption inclinations. Gender identities are essential facets of culture because they shape the way of

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<sup>84</sup> Pinki RANI, "Factors influencing consumer behaviour", *International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review*, 2, 9, 2014, p. 52.

<sup>85</sup> Pinki RANI, "Factors influencing...", cit., p. 53.

living daily life; gender culture influences the way women think and behave in the society. Now, Chinese women are not only mothers and wives, but also active participants of the social progress.

Personal factors involve the buyer's characteristics such as age, occupation, lifestyle, personality and self-image.

The psychological factor refers to the unique psychological characteristics that lead to responses to one's own environment. It is linked to women's identity and consumption. Here identity means the consumer self-image and public images. With the upgrade of women's social status and economic power, women's self-consciousness has been reinforced. Identity and consumption are related to this because the individual's consumer behaviour is the manifestation of their identity, and women's images are reflected in what they purchase.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, once the consumer's psychological needs are met, and thanks to the force of the motivation stimuli, people can satisfy their needs. The classification is based on five levels of basic needs arranged in a pyramid structure.<sup>86</sup> From the bottom, there are the basic needs that must be satisfied first: the physiological needs. They include the need for food, water, sleep and warmth. Once this lower-level is met, people can move on to the next level, that is safety needs. They involve self-preservation, financial security and physical well-being. Then, there are social needs; they are concerned with friendship, belonging, and love. The next level contains personal needs, which are the need for achievement, prestige, and self-respect. At the top of the pyramid, there are the needs for self-actualisation that involve self-fulfilment. Consequently, with the resolution of basic needs and the improvement of living conditions, people begin to satisfy higher-level needs through consumption.<sup>87</sup>

All these factors are taken into consideration by international marketers and retailers who want to position their products in the Chinese market. Targeting at women is not simple, they have to bear in mind all the characteristics concerning Chinese women and understand the consumer behaviour. Particularly, the psychological factor helps marketers understand how and why consumers behave; mainly the concepts of motivation and perceptions are useful for interpreting the buying process and for directing the marketing strategies.

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<sup>86</sup> Jerome NYAMEH, "Application of the Maslow's hierarchy of need theory; impacts and implications on organizational culture, human resource and employee's performance", *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 2,3, 2013, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> Kendra CHERRY, *The Five Levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, in "Verywellmind", 2018, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4136760>, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

### 3.2. What do Chinese women want?

With increasing Western influences, the rise of new forms of consumption, and the changes in social opportunities, Chinese urban women have developed a new awareness of their identities as contemporary women having now a greater force in the consumer market. Moreover, these social forces have encouraged consumerist values, which include the desire for self-actualisation and the “good life” characterised by luxury and pleasure.<sup>88</sup> Growth in spending by the Chinese people born after 1990 is shaking up the world’s consumer, media and advertising.

As Tom Doctoroff said, before Deng Xiaoping opening-up reforms,

[...] the Chinese women’s life was decidedly monochromatic, comfortingly stable, and uncomfortably repressed. Today, fashion explodes with color and shops seduce with discounts.<sup>89</sup>

Today, women’s desires are shaped by personal passions and digital technology. Chinese women really want stability both at home and at work; they want to have a happy family, a secure job with growing income, good health, and all the comforts of modern life.<sup>90</sup> Female consumers in China represent a huge market segment for both personal and household products, and more and more marketers are interested in targeting the Chinese female audience.

A market research on China’s Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) conducted by Nielsen in 2013, indicated that women’s consumption patterns have undergone substantial changes.<sup>91</sup> A growing number of Chinese women are now willing to buy expensive, high-end products; moreover, they are willing to pay more for their favourite items. Women in the upper and middle class in China have their own consumer habits and lifestyles; they are more likely to expose themselves to media and to use the Internet as the most efficient tool for the research of the latest fashion trend information.

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<sup>88</sup> HUNG, LI, “Images of the...”, cit., p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> Tom DOCTOROFF, *Billions. Selling to the New Chinese Consumers*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 75.

<sup>90</sup> Michael J. SILVERSTEIN, Abheek SINGHI, Carol LIAO, David MICHAEL, *Un premio da 10.000 miliardi. Come conquistare i nuovi consumatori di Cina e India*, edizione italiana a cura di Lamberto Biscarini e Iuri Longhi, Milano, Rizzoli ETAS, 2013, Kindle edition, position 2252.

<sup>91</sup> Sue FENG, *Emerging online channels resonate with Chinese shopper*, in “Nielsen”, 2013, <https://www.nielsen.com/cn/en/press-room/2013/nielsen-emerging-online-channels-resonate-with-chinese-shoppers.html>, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

The contemporary Chinese woman's identity has become more jumbled. Thus, she is driven by three factors: Western individualism, the entrepreneurial motivation, and the sense of self-importance. First, American and European pop culture is everywhere. The new trends brought by foreign fashion magazines, from *Marie Claire* to *Elle*, influence Chinese women's consumption. The second point related to women's identity is the entrepreneurial system which affects working women and encourages them to make money. Third, the single-child household created a generation of young women with a strong sense of self-importance.<sup>92</sup> Today, families invest a lot in the future generations' well-being.

Chinese young consumers are more inclined to spend than to save; indeed, younger Chinese women are relatively highly sophisticated and fashion conscious, and many are willing to pay a higher price for imported goods and foreign brands. Chinese young women seek motivation, self-definition, they are fascinated by clothing and beauty products, the reason is that women are more engaged and interested in fashion than their male counterparts.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.2.1. *A lifestyle analysis of female consumers in China*

A way to analyse women's consumer behaviour in China is by exploring their lifestyles through the evaluation of their approaches to various aspects of life that lead to the consumption of many products and services. This includes different areas: women's status and perception, brand consciousness, price awareness, self-confidence, and work skills. Lifestyle information is very useful for product positioning and market segmentation, and it helps retailers to understand the distinctions that characterise consumers in different cultures.

Status and self-perception are important components of Chinese women's buying behaviour. Since the period of the economic reforms, China's citizens have grasped the opportunity to become rich quickly, and eventually, the *élite* lifestyles and the growing accumulation of goods have constituted a sort of framework to measure China's economic growth and success as emerging market.

According to a study conducted by Susan H. C. Tai and Jackie L. M. Tam which compares the lifestyles of female consumers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, there are a lot of similarities within the lifestyles of these consumers.<sup>94</sup> There has been a significant change in the perception

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<sup>92</sup> DOCTOROFF, "Billions. Selling...", cit., p. 83.

<sup>93</sup> Osmud RAHMAN, Benjamin C. M. FUNG, Zhimin CHEN, Wei-Lun CHANG, Xiang GAO, "A study of apparel consumer behaviour in China and Taiwan", *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 11, 1, 2018, p. 26.

<sup>94</sup> TAI, TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis...", cit., p. 295.

of gender roles among women in China. As regards women's role in the household purchases, most women in Greater China agreed that both husband and wife should share household duties and decide together on major purchases. Moreover, they think that both males and females should be treated equally at work, and women should seek their own careers.

Brand awareness and price consciousness are other components of women's perception in the buying process. According to the survey, women in China were found to be the most brand conscious and the least price sensitive of the three groups. Women seek prestige, success, and status of international brands. Price is often the determining factor for Chinese consumers when making purchase decisions; at the same time, they are very brand conscious as their attachment to luxury brands shows it. If a brand can designate a higher social or economic status, Chinese consumers are happy to pay a premium. Women's perception of foreign brands is superior to local brands; therefore, they seek the prestige associated with the image of those foreign brands, regardless of the value of the product.

The need for experience, reassurance, and brand visualisation are essential factors in the Chinese market. Furthermore, the Chinese consumer needs to be reassured of the brand's reputation through multiple tests, which involve several aspects. The first one is the brand's graphic components and packaging; it is important to value the cultural perception of symbols and colours.

A particular aspect that combines brand policies and market education is the one that reflects the country of origin of the item, thus, resulting in a marketing tool used to help the promotion of multinational companies and their affirmation in a foreign country: the *Country of Origin (COO)*. The COO is a psychological effect which occurs when consumers are unfamiliar with a product, and the image of the country of origin of a product has a "halo effect" on the evaluation of that product. For instance, a positive image of a particular product category can be a guarantee for customers approaching a new purchase experience.<sup>95</sup> The influence of foreign brands on consumer behaviour is a significant topic. Understanding the impact of Chinese cultural factors on the behaviour of Chinese consumers can be helpful for international companies for their evaluation of marketing strategies to be adopted in China. The concept of *Country of Origin* is one of the problems regarding the influence of foreign brands on consumer behaviour. It is not only a sign of product quality, but its effects on the consumer's behaviours have further implications, which include the emotional dimension and the social norms.

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<sup>95</sup> Xiaoling HU, Leeva LI, Charlene XIE, Jun ZHOU, "The effects of country-of-origin on Chinese consumers' wine purchasing behaviour", *Journal of Technology Management in China*, 3, 3, 2008, p. 296.

Consumers see foreign brands as signs of prestige and products have a high symbolic value for them.

The effects of consumption of foreign brands in China can be analysed from a cultural point of view. Hofstede has highlighted China's specific dimensions through different cultural measurement: the collective nature, long-term orientation, and hierarchical relationship. The description of some of those principles will help us gain a better understanding of the behaviours of the Chinese people towards foreign brands and products.

The first feature regarding the Chinese society is the high degree of collectivism. Indeed, the Chinese will follow more easily the group's standards than the individual ones. Therefore, the consumption of a product of foreign origin is symbolic and has an active function for the identification with the group membership.

Another feature is the concept of hierarchy. The Chinese society is highly hierarchical; therefore, people have a strong awareness of their status within the society. Moreover, they attach great importance to product selection phase because brand, price and details must be related to their social status.

Then, there is long-term orientation: a dimension which refers to the links that every society has maintained with its past historical or social background while dealing with the new challenges of the present and future. It is related to the concept of pragmatism, and China is a very pragmatic culture; the Chinese show the ability to adapt traditions easily to changing conditions and high perseverance in achieving results.

Besides Hofstede's cultural dimensions, there are also some cultural values which deeply affect the Chinese society. One characteristic is the concept of 关系 (*guanxi*); as previously mentioned, social interactions are fundamental in the consumer society and they constitute a sort of guarantee in the buying process. Thus, Chinese consumers' behaviours are more easily persuaded by the existing trust between people with whom they have a good relationship. Therefore, the recommendations, *word-of-mouth*, and comments from others play a very important function in the choice of the brand. Chinese consumers associate the brand with their social life and relationships with other people. The brand is also an element for assessing the social position of a person.

Another feature is the concept of 面子 (*mianzi*) such as face, self-esteem. It refers to the idea of reciprocity; thus, giving oneself a good image, aligning the role and status with the aspects of their group membership is very important. In the practical side, this concept makes the

Chinese consumers consider products rationally; however, there is also an emotional side, which contributes to paying attention to symbolic values and to the characteristics of the product.

These features belong to the Chinese traditional culture but they still influence the modern society and the consumption characteristics of Chinese people. Nevertheless, the attitude towards international brands is influenced by the modern Chinese culture as well as the traditional one. Specifically, modernity, youth, success, and wealth allow Chinese consumers to pay attention to foreign brands. Modern Chinese people consume more symbolically; they look for products with a brand name, either for the excellent quality of the product or the value that the symbol of the brand conveys. The relationship between consumers and brands includes several aspects and depends on several elements. For instance, elements such as age, sex and living standards can influence the perception of foreign brands. For that reason, young urban consumers in China, mostly women, with a high standard of living are the potential buyers of foreign branded products.

Other lifestyle factors influencing the consumption behaviour are self-confidence and addiction to work. Chinese women agreed that work is an integral part of their lives. As women become more career minded, they prefer living independently and play the dual role of professional worker and mother/wife; marketing strategies should be tailored to meet their particular needs and be aware of their self-image.<sup>96</sup>

### *3.2.2. The main product segments related to women: luxury, cosmetics, clothing, cars and household*

Since women have become a powerful consumer segment in the Chinese market, they shop more frequently than men and spend more than before on personal-care products, luxury products, fashionable clothes, high-tech products, and travels.

For a very long time cosmetics in China were seen as wasteful luxuries and expression of incorrect political thinking. Now, with the expansion of China's new market economy, cosmetics, hair products, accessories, and even cosmetic surgery are becoming substantial business sectors. They not only represent a form of rehabilitation of the Chinese femininity because of the new beauty trends, but they are also a sign of new consumer culture with a new social structure and influenced by Western styles and consumption patterns. Through globalisation, commodities take on new symbolic meanings; for women, clothes are an essential

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<sup>96</sup> TAI, TAM, "A Lifestyle Analysis...", cit., p. 305.



means of expression of their identity and lifestyle choices. Chinese women not only have a great concern about fashionable clothing and beauty commodities, they also have a high inclination towards the purchase of luxury goods and brand-named products.

The luxury sector is one of the most important product categories on which Chinese women have started to focus. With the rapid economic growth and the huge population, China has become one of the most attractive markets for luxury brands in the world. Hence, China's upper and middle-class consumers are becoming important target segments of these luxury brands. The growing number of Chinese luxury consumers can be attributed to the rising disposable household income in China.<sup>97</sup> These consumers spend a large amount of their income on luxury and use their purchases as symbols to display their increasing social status. Women have become an important demographic in the Chinese luxury market (which has traditionally been dominated by men). The reason for this improvement is the stronger positions that women are acquiring in the workplace, thus they are gaining social status and financial independence.<sup>98</sup>

The most affluent women in the upper-middle class are enjoying a comfortable life, and they are the main drivers of luxury consumption in China. They usually have a home and a car, they have a strong interest in frequent travels, a greater inclination towards the use of the Internet, online resources and high-tech products like computers, mobile phones, and other means of communication. However, these new propensities towards new technologies do not cancel the previous interest in personal-care products, like beauty items, cosmetics, clothes, accessories and jewellery. Chinese people choose luxury products to represent their economic and social status. When purchasing, *élite* urban consumers display a great interest in quality, price and brand names. Regarding the consumer habits, *élite* women buy branded products for themselves and they also show a great passion for world-famous luxury brands either for clothing and handbags or concerning skin-care products. As regards car consumption, *élite* women have some decision-making power. Therefore, seen from the perspective of the life attitude, Chinese *élite* women pay attention to the quality of life, moreover their consumption lifestyle or habits will be emulated by the rising middle-income consumers. In the cities, most Chinese urban women are not members of China's *élite*, but they are middle-income residents, workers, and migrants trying to emulate the *élite* and to acquire their spending habits.

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<sup>97</sup> MARTIN ROLL, *Chinese Luxury Consumers-trends and Challenges for Luxury Brands*, in "Martin Roll-Asia", 2017, <https://martinroll.com/resources/articles/asia/chinese-luxury-consumers-trends-and-challenges-for-luxury-brands/>, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*.

Chinese women interest in buying luxury cars as a symbol for displaying their status is widespread, and this phenomenon is changing the conditions of this traditionally male-dominated sector. Now, Chinese women constitute a new market segment for the luxury car domain, accounting for 40 percent of buyers. Chinese women are more ambitious than women in the US and Europe, so they prefer more powerful and more expensive car models.<sup>99</sup> Luxury cars have become a means for women to show their power in the society. Other luxury goods purchased by women include handbags, sunglasses, designer clothing, watches, leather products, and other items representing self-satisfaction for this group of female consumers.

A study conducted by Zhan L. and He Y. in 2011 investigates the psychological motivations and attitudes for luxury consumption in China. The results show that consumers in China are characterised by three psychological traits when purchasing luxury branded products: value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence and need for uniqueness.<sup>100</sup> The first trait refers to the tendency to request qualities and functions of a product or service for a given price.<sup>101</sup> The second trait refers to individual distinctions towards the inclination to follow the social norms. As China has a collective culture, consumers are driven by social needs and follow the group norms. Another characteristic of Chinese consumers is the lack of knowledge about luxury brands. The study suggests that Chinese wealthier consumers can name only few luxury brands in any product category; in other words, due to their limited experience, the best-known brands may represent the whole category of luxury brands in China. The last trait reflects the tendency to distinguish oneself from the others.

Another important point related to the consumer behaviour among women is the increasing consumption of cosmetics. Chinese women are more fashion consciousness than previously and they are constantly asking for the development of new skin-care and beauty products. The changing perception of beauty, along with the development of the cosmetics industry in China, shows the rapidity of the social changes in a country where, in the past, make-up was a sign of decadence. While forty years ago make-up and cosmetics products were

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<sup>99</sup> Ruonan ZHENG, *In China, Women Buy up luxury Cars as a Symbol of their Newfound Power*, in “Jing Daily”, 2017, <https://jingdaily.com/women-hold-half-of-the-sky-of-luxury-cars-in-china/>, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Lingjing ZHAN, Yanqun HE, “Understanding luxury consumption in China: Consumer perceptions of best-known brands”, *Journal of Business Research*, 65, 2012, p. 1452.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*.

considered immoral, today's China "has become the eighth largest cosmetics consumer in the world".<sup>102</sup>

Nowadays an increasing number of women in white-collar jobs are willing to spend a percentage of their income on cosmetics; therefore, the beauty industry is flourishing. Foreign companies successfully promote their beauty products in the Chinese market. For instance, two famous foreign brands such as L'Oréal and Lancôme have great success in China, and they are expanding their investments with an increased market penetration through both luxury and mass brands. By the year 2020, L'Oréal key objective is to achieve a customer base of two billion.<sup>103</sup> A strategy adopted by foreign firms consists in purchasing popular Chinese brands with the purpose of extending their market share. Since the accession to the WTO, China has removed the restrictions on foreign investments, hence encouraging the importation of foreign cosmetics and the consolidation of a growing cosmetics market. In 2004 L'Oréal acquired two famous Chinese brands, Yuxi (Yue-Sai) cosmetics and Mini-nurse to round out its product base and to enlarge their production through the segment of skin-care products.<sup>104</sup> Chinese female consumers have different demands for skin-care products. A survey shows that moisturising, hydrating, whitening, and cleansing are the most valued products.<sup>105</sup> The most purchased goods include whitening skin creams, cleansing milk and bath gels that tend to replace soap, and certain types of colour cosmetics, such as nail polish or eyeshadow. With China becoming an ageing society because of the rising number of elderly population, anti-ageing products and wrinkle creams are expected to meet growing success among Chinese women.<sup>106</sup>

Regarding the fashion market, Chinese women are the major consumers. With the growth of social awareness and the use of social media, the fashion market in China has developed. This is attributed to the increasing sense of fashion among women in China. Chinese women are increasingly more sophisticated and more aware of their appearance. Moreover, the equilibrium of consumption between males and females as well as the rapid economic development are making women rich and independent. Today's women are exposed to

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<sup>102</sup> Christina LIONNET, "Chinese women go crazy for cosmetics", *Women of China, Focus Special Reports*, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> EUROMONITOR INTERNATIONAL, *L'Oréal company profile-SWOT analysis*, in "Baidu", 2012, <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/4c5b03e483d049649b6658a9.html?re=view>, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

<sup>104</sup> HOPKINS, "Western cosmetics...", cit., p. 295.

<sup>105</sup> IPSOS, *Beauty & Skin Care Consumption Features of Women in China's First- and Second-tier Cities*, in "Ipsos", 2016, <https://www.ipsos.com/en/beauty-skin-care-consumption-features-women-china#>, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

<sup>106</sup> LIONNET, "Chinese women...", cit., p. 7.

extensive advertising, they read fashion magazines and follow friends, co-workers, and even celebrities' dressing habits. Chinese professional women from tier one cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, who are well informed and fashion conscious, are pushing the demand for high-end fashion apparel.

In the present day, Chinese women play a significant role in the growth of the automobile culture and economy in China. The car - as a symbol of prosperity and personal freedom - is becoming more and more important for Chinese women's lifestyles. The automobile market in China is developing. Car ownership and use are exposed to the new values of Chinese modernisation; as a result, over the last decade, millions of urban citizens in China have abandoned bicycles or crowded public transportation in preference for the more comfortable car. Today, owning a car exerts a strong current of fascination among Chinese men and women.

According to articles in *China Daily*, in 2013 the number of private cars in China reached 85 million compared to only six million ten years earlier. [...] Between 2003 and 2013 the total number of women with a driver's licence increased massively from 20 million to 60 million.<sup>107</sup>

In recent years, the number of women drivers has increased, and they are registered both as owners and drivers. In 2016, they officially made up almost 30 percent of Chinese car-owners.

### Car ownership rate in China in 2016, by gender

Car ownership in China 2016, by gender

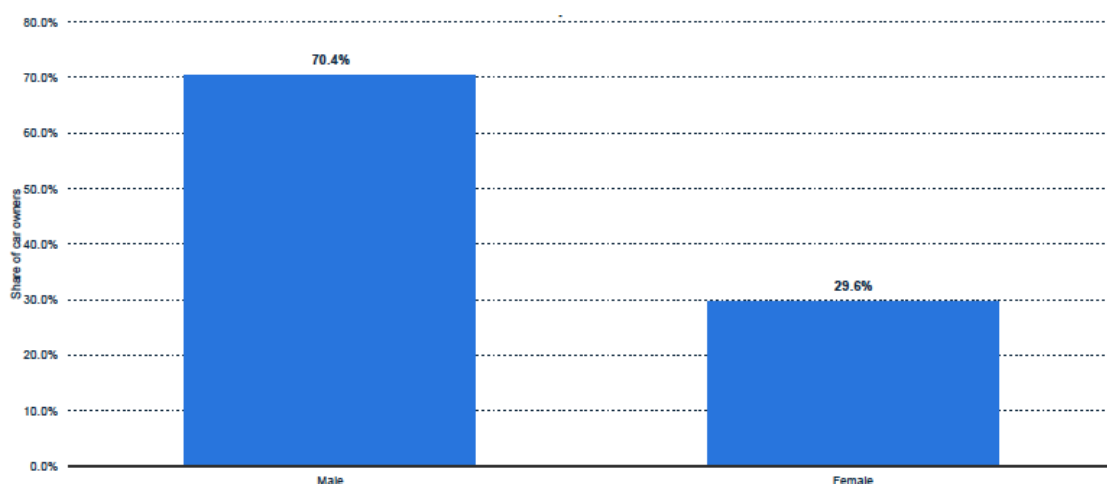


FIGURE 3. Car ownership rate in China in 2016. Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

<sup>107</sup> Hilda RØMER CHRISTENSEN, "The Lure of Car Culture. Gender, Class and Nation in 21st Century Car Culture in China", *Women, gender and research*, 1, 2015, p. 111.

The Chinese middle-class, mostly made up of white-collar professional men and women, has been important for promoting car culture in China, and both market and media have been active in exposing the image of a new gender-equal ideal in this segment.

As regards household products, women are the main decision-makers in the family today. In most families, women make decisions about daily consumption, children care products and other daily necessities.

A survey conducted by the Huakun Women's Consumption Guiding Center in 2005 indicates that there have been changes in the consumption habits of women in China, and women aged between 31 and 40 are the consumers with the greatest purchasing power. The survey findings indicate that women make the decisions about daily consumption for their families. Women's attitudes affect their families' decisions on major consumption, and most of the married women have the final say in purchasing houses, cars or other valuable products.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.3. Women's consumption behaviour**

This part analyses women's identity as consumers, focusing on their consumption behaviour. Women are influenced by a lot of aspects during the purchasing process; first of all, it is important to mention the basic role of emotions in the information search process and before the purchase activity. The way women feel and act is affected by the context in which they grew up, by way of living, and by the environment that surrounds them.

#### *3.3.1. An evolutionary explanation for shopping behaviour of Chinese women*

Studies of gender, identity and advertising research have remarked that there is evidence that men and women process information and messages differently. This is mainly based on two pieces of evidence: the biological disposition of their brain and the psychological element based on the centrality of their gender identity and self-schema. These two aspects have

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<sup>108</sup> GU Wentong, 顾文同, "Zhongguo chengshi nüxing xiaofei xiguan zhuanbian" 中国城市女性消费习惯转变 (Urban Chinese Women's Consumption Habits Changing), *Women, Feature*, 2, 2006, p 22.

potential implications for how men's and women's consumption is researched and represented.<sup>109</sup>

According to the female information processing, earlier research has identified that women's behaviour is characterised by a tendency towards "elaborate and imaginative processing that goes far beyond the focusing on singular concepts that characterises male thought".<sup>110</sup> These traits are consistent with another tendency to consider a wide assortment of information and an increased capacity for comprehensive processing. Moreover, women tend to store more information than men. Men focus on highly available information while women will consider a more extensive array of information both available and concealed. While men do not pay close attention to details, women tend to process information more extensively, and they remember details. All these aspects have implications for marketing and advertising practices. These fundamental differences in the way men and women process information must be considered by international marketers when making advertising. As a result of the gender differences stated, advertisements should be detailed for women and less detailed for men.

The impact of demographic variables such as gender, age, education, income level and family composition influence female consumer behaviour and point out the differences in how males and females shop. Even if women do not need to buy something, they are happy to wander around shopping centres. On the opposite, men tend to buy quickly and leave the shop quickly. Women are polychromatic shoppers while men are monochromatic. For instance, women enjoy shopping for different things at the same time, they shop more frequently than men because they not only shop for themselves, but also for the overall family members. In addition, women spend a long time engaged in shopping activities. "Besides buying, they also view shopping as a chance for recreation, relaxation and socialization with their friends".<sup>111</sup> Men have a lower involvement in shopping activities, while women are highly involved and they like to spend time browsing alternative choices.

Women treat shopping as entertainment; the tendency to keep shopping is associated with their leisure time, and they are more sensitive to sales than men. They like to shop for appearance-related products.

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<sup>109</sup> Margaret K. HOGG, Jade GARROW, "Gender, identity and the consumption of advertising", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 6, 3, 2003, p. 160.

<sup>110</sup> HOGG, GARROW, "Gender, identity and...", cit. p. 163.

<sup>111</sup> Gerard PRENDERGAST, Choi CHING LAM, "An evolutionary explanation for shopping behavior", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30, 4, 2013, p. 366.

Age is another significant variable. In China, older consumers are more price-conscious and pragmatic, whereas younger consumers are more fascinated by product style and brand names.

### 3.3.2. *The role of emotions*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century people live in an emotional society, which requires new marketing strategies and concepts. Every consumer has different choice criteria for purchasing a product. They may include perceptions and emotions. Since men and women have different emotional responses towards advertising, they might have different perceptions of the advertised product, thus this may impact their consumption patterns. All these ideas have contributed to the developing of emotional marketing, which is the combination of personal emotions and product marketing to meet the consumer's needs.

Emotional marketing has recognised the importance of women's feelings, motivations, and interest levels in the buying process. The use of emotional marketing in female consumers' segment has increased the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Moreover, marketers' effort in this situation is to stimulate consumers with a variety of emotions in order to influence them to choose and buy their products.

Female consumers are the most dynamic consumer group in today's marketing economy. Many scholars have examined women's emotional nature and their impact on consumer behaviour. They observed that women "have a strong response in understanding the emotions of others, and they may express their emotions more than men do".<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, they noticed that women's emotional behaviour might also influence the consumption behaviour of other people, for instance, family members, friends or children.<sup>113</sup>

Another characteristic is that women's behaviour may be more responsive to celebrities' endorsement compared to men. Consumers sometimes perceive celebrities as their idols and they align their consumption style with those of celebrities. From this perspective, women respond more positively and have favourable behaviours towards products endorsed by celebrities.

Female consumers are inclined to personalised consumption; they follow their own ways to show their beauty. Women have delicate emotions, excellent communication skills and they

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<sup>112</sup> Salman MAJEED, Changbao LU, Muhammad USMAN, "Want to make me emotional? The influence of emotional advertisements on women's consumption behavior", *Majeed et al. Frontiers of Business Research in China*, 11, 16, 2017, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem*.

pay attention to their appearance. All these characteristics also reflect female consumers' psychological traits, which determine the performance of women in the purchasing activities. As women pay a lot of attention to the aesthetic value of the commodities, the colour, design, and packaging of the product may have a strong impact on women's desire to buy an item. They like the most popular and fashionable product that will bring them a pleasant mood. For example, in the purchasing of clothes, colour is the first impression. As each colour has its own characteristics, different colours will give people different psychological feelings. In conveying the psychological feelings, the colours have symbolic meanings. In Chinese culture, for example, red is an auspicious as well as a popular colour, which symbolises luck, happiness, vitality and celebration. For that reason, when making business in China, marketers should pay a lot of attention to the use of colours for packaging or advertisements, because they may positively or negatively affect the consumers' perceptions. Moreover, as female audiences perceive emotional advertising to be more amusing, original and lively, marketers should adopt these strategies and focus on the creation of emotion or feelings that can influence consumers' behaviours.

### 3.3.3. *Searching for information*

Information search begins when a consumer perceives a need that might be satisfied by the purchase or the consumption of a product. Consumers search for information from both internal and external sources.<sup>114</sup> Internal information sources may include the consumer's memory, knowledge, and experience. The last one is related to the experiential sources which involve handling, examining and using the product. External information sources imply personal and impersonal sources. Personal sources can be family, friends and neighbours. While, public sources are newspapers, television, radio, and magazines. And commercial sources include advertising, retailers, salespeople, point-of-sale displays, etc. The challenge for marketers is to identify which information source is the most powerful in their market segments. International retailers cannot generalise the marketing strategies, but they should be careful in balancing standardisation and differentiation approaches in different markets.

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<sup>114</sup> UTKARSH, "Individual differences in consumer information search for services: A multiple mediation study", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 37, 2017, p. 33.



In order to have security while making shopping choices, Chinese consumers rely heavily on a variety of information sources.<sup>115</sup> Fashion magazines, TV advertisements and the Internet are the most popular media for gathering information on where to shop. However, TV advertising continues to dominate as the most influential channel for products and brand awareness.

A study conducted by McKinsey & Company indicated that *word-of-mouth* and the Internet have grown in recent years as leading information sources in China.<sup>116</sup> Particularly, women are affected by *word-of-mouth*, which is one of the most influential channels of communication for women's consumption behaviour. Positive *word-of-mouth* from family, friends and colleagues may influence Chinese female consumers and they might be involved in emotional considerations during the purchasing activity. This is because female consumers want to make choices with approval from their family and friends. This tendency can be explained by China's cultural characteristics. Since China is known for being a collectivist culture, Chinese consumers tend to follow group norms and the behaviour of other group members.

Consumers also attach considerable importance to salespeople. They may influence the consumers' perception of a product or a brand; thus, training salespeople at the store is essential for retail managers in attracting female Chinese consumers.

The socio-economic factors have a strong influence on Chinese females' information search behaviour. They include educational background, income, social status and occupation. For instance, in the apparel shopping, some studies revealed that female consumers with a higher educational background tend to have a sensitive attitude towards information they obtain by observing other people's clothing or mass media advertisements. Consumers with a higher income level utilise more personal and non-personal information sources than lower income consumers. These consumers with a higher income level rely on Internet search and store display.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Yoo-Kyoung SEOCK, Jae-Ok PARK, Ye-Lan NAM, "Influence of socioeconomic factors on Chinese female consumers' information search behaviour in apparel shopping", *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 7, 2, 2014, p. 97.

<sup>116</sup> Yuval ATSMON, Max MAGNI, Ian ST-MAURICE, "China's new pragmatic consumers", *McKinsey & Company, Marketing and Sales*, October 2010.

<sup>117</sup> SEOCK, PARK, NAM, "Influence of socioeconomic...", cit., p. 97.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The role of advertising**

To communicate with customers and in order to stimulate consumer demand, companies can use a set of promotional activities including advertising, sales promotions, personal selling and direct marketing. They have to develop marketing strategies and adapt them to their target audience. So that, they can create new consumption desires for consumers, and they can open new market opportunities for their products.

Advertising is the most important means to stimulate people's wants. Philip Kotler has defined it as any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organisation, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor.<sup>118</sup> An advertising message is oriented on both rational and emotional processes among the people receiving the message. The first feature is the rational meaning. Advertisers use consumers' rationality and reveal the product's unique qualities and features. The second characteristic is that advertising often affects the emotional side of consumer behaviour, and due to his complexity, advertising can generate positive or negative emotional response.

Advertisements can be found in all kind of mass media, from newspapers to radio and television. They are tools used by producers to convey a particular type of message about their products and to persuade customers to purchase them.

Advertising studies pay attention to the global transformation process, and since it is directly connected with the market system, production and consumption, the advertising industry has been developed in countries where large communities of consumers are concentrated.<sup>119</sup> For instance, China has a significant production of advertising that is justified by the growth in people's living standards, and increased consumption.

Since women in China are the primary motive force in the development of the consumer market, stimulating female consumption through advertising certainly becomes one of the most important corporate strategies for companies. Moreover, women constitute the main consumer segment for which most products and services – including those not targeted at women – are

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<sup>118</sup> Narayana RAO, *Management of Advertising-Kotler's Chapter Summary*, in "Management Theory Review", 2014, <http://nraomtr.blogspot.com/2011/12/advertising.html>, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018.

<sup>119</sup> Natalia P. KOPTSEVA, Ksenia V. REZNIKOVA, "The Cultural Aspects of Advertising Communications in Modern China", *East Asia*, 34, 2017, p. 252.

publicised as well as they are the main figures portrayed in advertisements. As Perry Johansson wrote

Historically women around the world have been entrusted a double reproductive task in nationalism: as carriers of both – the nation’s children and the nation’s culture. Women have to deal with this double task [...] in modern consumer cultures at two levels as well: one, being constructed by marketing as the main consumer segment for which the majority of products are advertised and two, as the most common representation in advertising which sells goods and services.<sup>120</sup>

Today, advertising has become a part of people’s everyday life, therefore the relationship between gender representation and ads has become important for researchers’ analysis. Advertisers often adopt gender role stereotyping as a form of communication tool with the aim of creating identification with the consumers. It is not rare to see a beautiful and attractive woman appearing in an advertisement for male customers or a perfect woman in an advertisement for a female item. Many studies have investigated the female representation in advertising, and how the audience responds to the advertisements that use different female images. Most research on gender representation in Chinese advertising has been conducted since the 1990s, and it represented some similarities with the Western ones. For instance, a comparative analysis between China and the US advertisements found that male characters are often portrayed in working environments or recreational roles, whereas women are depicted in non-occupational and decorative roles. Moreover, in both context, there is a preference for young characters. Concerning differences, other studies conducted by Johansson found that Chinese advertisements often portrayed women as shy and subordinate, while Western ones represented women as sexually attractive and self-confident.<sup>121</sup>

Advertising studies allow us to understand companies’ marketing activities, furthermore they reveal specific cultural norms that differ depending on global regions. In modern China, advertising is a developing sector, and advertising costs are increasing annually. The visual advertising images in China are based on a complex combination of global ideas, traditional influences and cultural values, and they also embody different aspects of the Chinese political background. Female figures and images pertaining to the ancient past of China are generally

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<sup>120</sup> Perry JOHANSSON, “Selling the ‘Modern Woman’: Consumer Culture and Chinese Gender Politics”, in Shoma Munshi (a cura di), *Images of the ‘Modern Woman’ in Asia. Global Media, Local Meanings*, Richmond, Routledge Curzon, 2001, p. 94.

<sup>121</sup> Perry JOHANSSON, “Consuming the other: The fetish of the western woman in Chinese advertising and popular culture”, *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 2, 3, 1999, p. 381.

encountered. At the same time, due to the effects of globalisation, Chinese female images are shaped in the context of international trends and mass media culture. Chinese media also represent this constant interaction between the traditional values and the modern social ideals. As Barbara Molony wrote, mass media offer alternatives to the traditional feminine model regarding self-sacrifice and familial duty “in the proliferation of images of women as sexually attractive and fashionably Western”.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, fashion and beauty items are aspects of female self-expression, and sometimes “women are also commodified as objects for the consumption of men”.<sup>123</sup> This is because the capitalistic culture has developed a male business centred culture - that is linked to stereotypes - which features women as a beautified group related to sexual entertainment.

#### **4.1. A brief explanation of the evolution of women’s representation in advertising in China**

The “hybrid” identity of Chinese women (the result of mixing the modern and traditional models and Western influences) is the outcome of the transforming society and cultural values over the years; thus, resulting in changing the representation of Chinese female images in advertising, particularly in magazines. Rapid economic growth has increased consumption patterns among women in China, and the continuous request for beauty and fashion products have led to an expansion in women magazines between the 1990s and 2000s. These magazines have contributed to shaping new women’s identities and have facilitated the global flow of mass-mediated culture, especially among the visual image industries. Indeed, China’s Open-door Policy led many international women magazines to enter the Chinese market and to serve as advertising means for international companies. Moreover, the globalisation period has focused attention on the flow of Western cultural products through media into China, leading to changes in women’s lifestyles, fashion and professional roles. These changes have affected the way women are portrayed in advertising and the ideas of consumption through the image of the *New Woman*.<sup>124</sup> The *New Woman* portrayed embodies two contradictory natures: on the one hand, she achieved freedom, independence and self-fulfilment; on the other hand, she is

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<sup>122</sup> Barbara MOLONY, Janet THEISS, Hyaeweol CHOI, *Gender in Modern East Asia: an integrated history*, New York, Routledge, 2018 (2016), p. 493.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>124</sup> Yang FENG, Kavita KARAN, “The Emerging Hybrid Images of Women in China: The Portrayal of the New Woman in Chinese Local and International Magazine Advertising”, *Advertising and Society Review*, 11, 1, 2010, p. 2.

presented as a woman who is not realising her ambitions through the participation in collective actions, but by the consumption of consumer products. This view is related to the emergence of a new class of young and professional working women.

Chinese women's role within the family, and more largely in the whole society, has been represented in advertising in different ways through the history. They were first considered soft-spoken and submissive; this concept was clearly opposed to the stereotype of the individualistic and hedonistic Western woman. As previously mentioned in the first chapter, this representation changed during the Maoist period with the beginning of organised women's movements and growing concerns over the portrayal of women. When the government established the All-China Women's Federation, a large number of periodicals for women started to be published. The purpose was to educate Chinese women in the "new thinking" and women were portrayed by the Communist propaganda as "iron women". This term, which was used to show equality between males and females, designates a group of young women who devote themselves to hard work. Thus, Chinese mass media including magazines started to encourage female participation in building the country's future. Magazines' covers in this period reflected the revolutionary and de-feminised image, and Chinese media were used as instruments to propagate the party line and state policies. This is the cover image of *Women of China*. In this case women are portrayed as equals to men by participating in labour, and this reflects the desire of the government to promote women's social contribution.

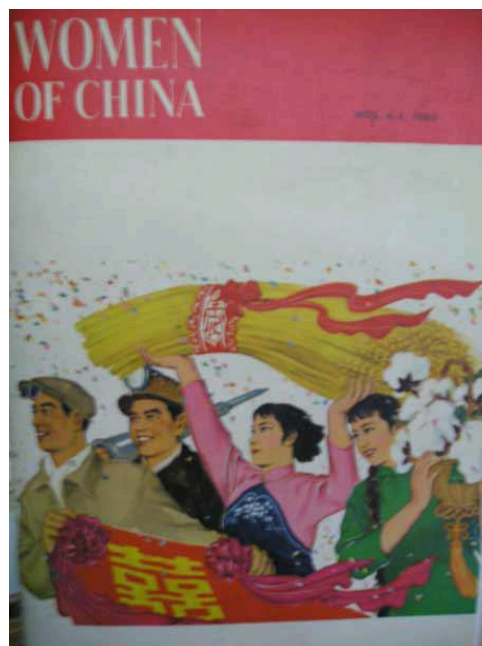


FIGURE 4. Cover "Women of China". Women portrayed together with men as part of the labour force. Source: Luo Yunjuan, Hao Xiaoming, "Media Portrayal of Women and Social Changes"

In the 1980s, after being considered a symbol of decadence and waste of capitalism during the Cultural Revolution, advertising reappeared in Chinese publications. At the same time, the government was launching its reform policies, based on the four-fold modernisation plan which incorporated many aspects of capitalism. In this period, advertising meant greater commercialisation for the country. Before the 1990s, most Chinese magazines had only one single coloured illustration, such as the cover.

And [...] (they) carried around fifty pages of text with a few black and white drawings painted on rough, darkish paper.<sup>125</sup>

After the economic reforms, the female portrayals changed acquiring importance and showing those feminine characteristics that were hidden during the period of the Cultural Revolution.

In the early 1990s, the Chinese advertising industry developed, and full-page multi-colour advertisements started to appear regularly changing the magazines design and content; they included new sections devoted to everyday life, love, relations, and fashion. Moreover, the layout, the structure and the atmosphere of images became more sophisticated. As global media became a part of contemporary Chinese society, advertising describes the material culture in line with the aspirations of middle-class women seeking new identities. The images of women in magazines changed radically beginning to emphasise beauty, glamour, individualism, and hedonism. These new female images reflected the post-Mao re-feminisation model, along with globalisation trends and consumer culture.<sup>126</sup> The covers displayed career and leisure scenes with women in party dresses and expensive jewellery. The following illustration from *Marriage and Family* shows a woman in a sleeveless silky evening dress sitting by a table with a glass of wine in her hand.

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<sup>125</sup> Perry JOHANSSON, “Selling the ‘Modern Woman’: Consumer Culture and Chinese Gender Politics”, in Shoma Munshi (a cura di), *Images of the ‘Modern Woman’ in Asia. Global Media, Local Meanings*, Richmond, Routledge Curzon, 2001, p. 96.

<sup>126</sup> FENG, KARAN, “The Emerging Hybrid Images...”, cit. p. 5.



FIGURE 5. Cover 'Marriage and Family', July 1990. Source: Shoma Munshi, "Images of the 'Modern Woman' in Asia. *Global Media, Local Meanings*"

Such image fits well with re-feminisation ideals, with the idea of globalisation, and with the Western principles of individualism and modernity. Thus, the Chinese female body, dressed and make-up stands for modernisation, progress and innovation.

Not only women are the heart of modern consumer culture, but consumer culture is, in fact, the result of femininity itself. Here, the term "consumer culture" refers to "a commodified symbolic universe where individual and collective identities are structured by products and advertising".<sup>127</sup> Therefore, consumer culture plays an important role in building femininity. Specifically, women's magazines and advertisements inspire and reinforce cultural values that affect women's self-perceptions.<sup>128</sup>

Today, magazines have become a significant source of information and entertainment for several female customers.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the products and the female portrayals represented in magazine advertisements constitute the main form through which Chinese female consumers are constantly linked with the new fashion and social trends.

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<sup>127</sup> JOHANSSON, "Selling the 'Modern Woman'...", cit. p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> Kineta HUNG, Stella Yiyang LI, "Images of the Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 19, 2, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*.

Magazines portrayals of female fashion models embody modernisation and the Chinese essence; the first is related to the effects of the globalised modern culture affecting the Chinese society, while the second safeguards the Chinese way of life. Chinese models portrayed in advertising or fashion magazines covers like *Elle China* or *Vogue China* represent modern women whose styles and attitudes are more westernised and in line with the relentless development of new trends, designs and lifestyles. As we can see in the following two cover images from two well-known international fashion magazines, beauty is still one of the essential features portrayed. Charming women images with beautiful make-up, dressing up fashionable and wearing trendy clothes cover the front page of the magazines.

The first image is from *Elle China* magazine published on September 2018. It depicts the stunning model Sun Fei Fei 孙菲菲 wearing an elegant black dress. As we can see the fancy and colourful makeup is in line with the red background of the photo; moreover, the red lipstick and the eyeshadow on her eyes definitely highlight her traits. The model pose, her gaze straight into the camera and the overall style are clear examples of modern style and Western influence in advertising.



FIGURE 6. *Elle China* September 2018 cover. Source: Weibo [https://www.weibo.com/ellechina?refer\\_flag=1001030103\\_&is\\_hot=1](https://www.weibo.com/ellechina?refer_flag=1001030103_&is_hot=1)



The second cover image portrays the elegantly dressed actress Zhou Xun 周迅. She stands in the middle of the image and she is adorned with a long silver sparkling dress. In contrast with the showy dress, hairstyle and makeup are soft and simple and they reflect the actress' pure beauty. This is a clear representation of a Westernized portrayal of a female model but always respecting the Chinese standards such as elegance and refinement.



FIGURE 7. *Vogue China* September 2018 cover. Source: Weibo [https://www.weibo.com/voguechina?is\\_hot=1#\\_rnd1533640814162](https://www.weibo.com/voguechina?is_hot=1#_rnd1533640814162)

#### 4.2. Media portrayal of women

From the previous section, we can understand that there is a strong relationship between mass media and the society, especially between the media portrayal of the Chinese woman and the historical context that has influenced the socio-economic changes in China. Mass media are agents of social changes, and reflectors of social structures. Moreover, in the representation of Chinese women in advertising, there is evidence of the interaction of party ideology, editorial policy, and readers' taste, as well as the changing reality and consciousness of Chinese

women's life. All these social influences have determined the images of Chinese women suited to periods of time in the contemporary Chinese history.

Historically, women around the world have been the exporters of the national traditions. Thus, while feminine beauty has acquired renewed significance, the Chinese culture has also given it a range of meanings which include the Western consumerist ideals, the socialist and the traditional ideals.

Media play a significant role in economic development and in promoting consumption; they help to emphasise the conceptualisations of femininity and ethnicity. This role is increasingly important in China. Not only media have been defined as the mirrors of the world, but their contents also highlight some aspects over others. Indeed, feminists' media studies have focused on media portrayals of women and social reality. The attention was dedicated to the gender-role messages in advertising. Results showed that women are often under-represented or stereotypically portrayed. This kind of stereotyped portrayal of women in mass media has become a global phenomenon. Differences in media representations are mainly due to social and cultural influences. Asian advertisements, for example, are more likely to portray women in middle or low-income jobs and in decorative roles in international women's magazines. Furthermore, Asian female models are mostly represented as product users and homemakers, and they are often portrayed in the classic beauty type. On the other hand, local women's magazines portray women as fashionable consumers, devoted wives and mothers. This kind of representation is in line with the family-centred lifestyle of the Confucian tradition.<sup>130</sup>

Despite the more traditional interpretation, contemporary Chinese women are shown as active within the modern economy. The public visibility of the contemporary Chinese woman through mass media gives them the opportunity to participate in the global consumer market. This is evident in the re-emergence of semi-dressed female models in magazines and the growing number of Asian female models on billboards for advertising lingerie.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, the new roles portrayed in advertising create new feminine representations, such as the young businesswoman wearing a smart business suit, or the Chinese millennials travelling or studying abroad. However, the physical look of modern Chinese women tends to diverge with the emotional one. The external appearance is more and more Westernized, and it shapes a

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<sup>130</sup> Kara CHAN, Leung Ng YU, Liu JIANQIONG, "How Chinese young consumers respond to gendered advertisements", *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, 15, 4, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Megan M. FERRY, "Advertising, Consumerism and Nostalgia for the New Woman in Contemporary China", *Continuum*, 17, 3, 2003, p. 284.

professional and independent woman in Western clothes. While the inner side is linked to the more traditional view which emphasises qualities such as softness and perseverance.

Advertising provides images and languages that are relevant to its target audience, and sometimes advertisers use gender role stereotyping as a strategy to communicate with consumers and define an experience of identification with them. They usually include portrayals of women in decorative roles or portrayal of young and appealing women.

Female representation showing sex stereotypes in advertisements and the audience's response to gendered advertisements are significant topics. The audience uses various methods to interpret the gendered commercials; indeed, people have different cultural backgrounds, moreover, features such as gender and age have also an impact on the reactions to gendered advertisements. Various studies have investigated the effects of sexual themes in printing advertising. The results of one study conducted by Grazer and Kessling showed that the use of sexual themes in advertisements produces favourable reactions among male respondents. However, a higher level of sexual intensity may distract the audience's attention.<sup>132</sup>

Gender representation is a central component of advertising in China and most research on this topic has been conducted since the 1990s. Results show that males appear more frequently than females in Chinese advertisements. Moreover, men are associated with a wider range of products than women, for example, food, cars, medicine, insurance and drinks. On the contrary, Chinese women are more commonly associated with shopping, clothing, cosmetics, healthcare products, beauty commodities, household appliances and food. Recently the number of women portrayed in domestic roles has decreased, while women depicted in commercials for high-tech products like mobile phones and personal computer increased.

As mentioned above, in some contexts, female representation in advertising still carries a more traditional perception and women are often portrayed as homemakers and not in work-related roles. However, thanks to the emergence of mass-mediated culture that has further influenced the portrayal of women, as well as the increase in women's consumption behaviour, advertising images have started to represent women in professional environments. Thus, the advertising industry together with international trends have created new kinds of perspectives among women. Particularly, young Chinese women living in urban areas have developed a new awareness of their identities as contemporary consumers which differs from the more traditional ideal and past values.

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<sup>132</sup> CHAN, YU, JIANQIONG, "How Chinese...", cit., p. 7.

#### 4.2.1. *The feminine ideals: nurturer, strong woman, flower vase and urban sophisticate*

Many studies have been done on the portrayal of women in advertising and each of them has identified a specific role. Regarding Chinese females' perceptions of the modern woman images in advertisements, Hung *et al.* conducted a study about modern woman representation in Chinese magazine advertising. They identified four particular and conflicting images that women in the contemporary society are pursuing: flower vase, strong woman, cultured nurturer and urban sophisticate.<sup>133</sup> These images exemplify both aspects of traditional and modern ideas such as features regarding the global consumer culture and other features reminiscent of the traditional Chinese cultural values. Indeed, the nurturer and flower vase images are more traditional, whereas the strong woman and the urban sophisticate are more modern. This study is significant because it shows how the Chinese advertising industry is still strongly influenced by foreign aspects as a result of the increased foreign direct investments and the availability of foreign brands in the Chinese market. Moreover, women's magazines and advertising therein stimulate and reinforce the cultural values and reflect the desired image of women in historical and ideological context.

##### 4.2.1.1. *The flower vase*

The three practitioners used the Chinese metaphor of the *flower vase* to describe advertising pervasive use of beautiful young women in decorative roles. The woman described as physically attractive is referred to a portrayal that focuses only on physical beauty. Women depicted in advertisements purely to be decorative were found to be particularly widespread in China.

The *flower vase* image is charming and it is based on a combination of traditional Chinese culture and Western values. This role conveys charm, glamour and beauty; furthermore, it is the second most-used role portrayed in advertisements in China.

The *flower vase*, which is coded as physically beautiful, is considered the official ideal of the modern Chinese woman, such as a woman who celebrates her femininity and enhances her physical beauty through the use of cosmetics and jewellery. Such feminine representation is usually accentuated by signs of naturalness (lack of make-up on the face), purity and grace. The

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<sup>133</sup> Kineta HUNG, Stella Yiyang LI, Russell W. BELK, "Consumption and the 'Modern Woman' in China: A Conceptual Framework", in *AP - Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, 6, 2005, p. 2.

woman this image usually represents, embodies all of these qualities and combines them harmoniously. These characteristics are remarked also in the background of the image, where there are natural elements and materials like grass, wind and clear skies. The girl represented in magazines' covers showing the *flower vase* attitude is bejewelled, she applies beautifying cosmetics like skincare products and skin-whitening lotions, and age-defying products, she uses new hairstyles to enhance her looks.<sup>134</sup> The *flower vase* emphasises gender differences and describes a feminine image which stands out from the crowd emphasizing uniqueness and individuality. It wants to get away from the androgynous concept of the Cultural Revolution which equated a woman to a man, or the Communist female model which sacrificed individuality and strived for the social well-being. These individual desires together with the encouragement by the Chinese state to develop beauty and fashion industries suggest that the renewed interests in the female themes have taken a national significance to mark China's modernity.<sup>135</sup> This role assigned to women in advertising is significant. The alluring decorative beauty and the frequent use of the words "young" and "beautiful" are usually used to portray women in advertising. The emphasis on women's external appearances is used to persuade customers to purchase products. Moreover, the study revealed that there is a strong preference for depicting women as associated with youthfulness, the reason is that the elderly female character would only feature in commercials for medicines because the value of older women is limited and these standards are difficult to use when promoting products.<sup>136</sup> While encoding women as young, attractive and alluring is in line with global trends, and this practice is central in contemporary Chinese advertising techniques.

The woman in a physical decorative role is frequently identified in mobile communication commercials and in a vast majority of cosmetic product advertisements. Aside from this representation, there are other three images of the modern woman in Chinese magazines advertising which are associated with family, work, and leisure, such as the threesome of time-consumption activities related to modern Chinese womanhood.

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<sup>134</sup> Kineta HUNG, Stella Yiyang LI, "Images of the Contemporary Woman in Advertising in China: A Content Analysis", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 19, 2, 2006, p. 13.

<sup>135</sup> HUNG, LI, BELK, "Consumption and the 'Modern...'", cit., p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> Yun SHAO, Fabrice DESMARAIS, C. Kay WEAVER, "Chinese advertising practitioners' conceptualisation of gender representation", *International Journal of Advertising*, 33, 2, 2014, p. 340.

#### 4.2.1.2. The *strong woman*

The *strong woman* is the feminine ideal which identifies a talented, determined and autonomous woman. Her attraction is based on personality and intelligence, not the physical beauty. In the Chinese context, this ideal is related to urban white-collar workers striving to achieve their professional position. Lifestyle magazines usually represent successful women who exemplify the ideal of the talented, strong woman. Women are portrayed in working or career role, and the setting, clothes and activities indicate specific professional roles. Traits such as ambition or status are generally associated with career women. The strong woman image is used as a model to advertise a variety of products. Work settings are prevailing in advertisements for technology and mobile communication products, but also for food and beverage advertisements. Moreover, career women feature most often in computer and other electronic product advertisements in China

Independence is another typical characteristic of the career woman, and the work oriented-role identified by this image is coded as self-reliant. Hung *et al.* describes the strong woman as a model of success; she is “talented, ambitious, and independent of spirit”.<sup>137</sup> This is associated with the ideal of *social climber* because her most important function in the Chinese consumerist culture is not referred to the consumption mode or personality, but she shows her ability and becomes a point of reference for other types of urban women who want to move up socially and afford what they desire.

Advertisers not only focused on professional urban white-collar workers to be depicted as strong women, but also, they constructed alternative examples of success, such as women in the commercial sector, fashion models or athletes, who train hard and are determined enough to win. A study on female athlete endorsers features women in advertisements for a variety of services and sporting goods.<sup>138</sup> This is because professional athletes are considered to be working people and therefore included as career women.

#### 4.2.1.3. The *cultured nurturer*

Although during the revolutionary period the private and nurturing aspects of the woman’s life disappeared, the domestic role has never been removed from the Chinese idea of

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<sup>137</sup> HUNG, LI, “Images of the...”, cit., p. 13.

<sup>138</sup> Matthew TINGCHI LIU, James L. BROCK, "Selecting a female athlete endorser in China: The effect of attractiveness, match-up, and consumer gender difference", *European Journal of Marketing*, 45, 7/8, 2011, p. 1215.

womanhood. This function, which implies qualities such as softness, nurturance, and home life, is believed to be primarily female and it remains a central theme for the ideal of the contemporary Chinese woman portrayed in advertising.

Images of the mother (the *nurturer*) are often depicted in Chinese advertising. This figure represents the ideal wife or mother who is portrayed as soft, virtuous and well-mannered and who is taking care of her family. The woman as homemaker or housewife is characterised by a high degree of dependence and she is generally depicted in the household setting. Generally, the woman portrayed as a mother is considered to be a more traditional and gender-stereotyped depiction.

The consumerist culture carried by the economic reforms has strengthened gender representation in the familial sphere; within the domestic context, men usually prefer a wife who is kind, gentle and soft and puts her interests after their own.

In advertisements, the *cultured nurturer* is shown either spending a lot of time with the family or with household appliances. Indeed, the visual images of women like magazines, billboards, and television commercials display women in leisurely poses, admiring household appliances like refrigerators and cleaners. Moreover, in China, this image is frequently used to advertise automobiles, specifically family cars. Advertisers often portray the female character with one or more children in the commercial, and the attention of the model is focused on the child or children, or the product being advertised. These female representations provide images of a contemporary Chinese woman

with not only a fantasy into the modern world, where she is seen with “scientific” products, but (they) also (represent) a fantasy of an idealized middle-class housewifery identity that combines images of the traditional, the leisurely, and the modern.<sup>139</sup>

#### 4.2.1.4. The *urban sophisticate*

The last feminine ideal is the *urban sophisticate*. Rather than striving for happy family life (*cultured nurturer*) or career success (*strong woman*), the *urban sophisticate* is hedonistic; she strives for an identity where appearance is important. The woman portrayed is ambitious, independent, smart, charming and has good taste. This image is related to the development of the globalised society and the cosmopolitan ideology. Indeed, Chinese consumers are experiencing an age of rapid globalisation and urbanisation, and this requires them to make

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<sup>139</sup> HUNG, LI, “Images of the...”, cit., p. 12.

sense of their experiences and to sustain the new socioeconomic structures and cultural hierarchies. Moreover, new styles and tastes are blooming, and they are becoming significant indicators of individualism; thus, they constitute a chance for young consumers to distinguish themselves from others.

This feminine ideal is usually represented in lifestyle magazines and it is associated with Western consumerist culture and values such as modernity, youth, vitality, luxury and sexuality. Advertisements usually depict the urban sophisticate woman wearing charming and styling clothes seen in the windows of the most elegant boutiques. The new urban woman is interested in art galleries and museums, she is an internet user and she is also fascinated by popular music, books and films. She is conscious of her role as a consumer; she knows where to shop and how to shop. This kind of woman usually adorns herself and her home with the latest fashion items. Indeed, the house is the most representative setting for the urban sophisticate; such as the typical urban apartment tastefully decorated with stylish furniture, elegant rooms and well-designed kitchens.

This description highlights the “good life” of urban Chinese women. And it represents the new social context within which urban consumers are living. It shows women “golfing, wearing Western dresses, posing with aeroplanes, at horse races and other settings”.<sup>140</sup> They have access to a great variety of products and brands – most of them coming from foreign countries – that offer a high level of comfort and a way to generate desires and inspirations. Newly-arrived commodities and designer products emphasise the emergence of cosmopolitanism whose results are visible because window-shopping and lifestyle magazines readings are becoming forms of aspirational modern consumption for Chinese women. This female ideal conveys modernity by adopting global consumption patterns.

The multiplicity of feminine ideals in the contemporary society and the major role of advertising in the consumption of everyday products allow women to create their own consumer identities and help them to fulfil their desires. The existence of these four female ideals offers many versions of alternative Chinese feminine values that marketers and advertisers use for promotional activities, advertising and other marketing strategies in order to approach a particular market segment.

Beauty, talent, sophistication, and nurturance are the features preferred by women in many cultures. Indeed, the meanings carried by these ideals are also reflected in the social and

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<sup>140</sup> HUNG, LI, BELK, "Consumption and the ‘Modern...’", cit., p. 3.



historical background of China. For example, the *flower vase* image suggests that beauty in China not only means having beautiful traits, appearance or body shape, but it also embodies the inner qualities of softness and kindness that makes beautiful Chinese women more restrained than the Western counterpart.<sup>141</sup> The two opposite images of the *strong woman* and the *cultured nurturer* show the separation of the consumerist role between the woman in professional and career fields, and the woman in the domestic context. However, it is important to remark that women covering the role of *strong women* in China are the ones who can manage the double burden of home and work.

Consumer culture as a global phenomenon incorporates ideas and images of a modern, Western, hedonistic and even more individualistic lifestyle. It can resolve the incessant contradictory relationship between traditional and modern way of living. Moreover, the consumerist discourse linked to advertising participates in the construction of women identities and tastes. The most traditional aspect and the desire for modernisation are also remarkable in Chinese women behaviour. There is evidence that “being modern” is a desired model for Chinese women, especially for those who are purchasing products recently arrived in urban China like cosmetics, household appliances, and new recipes for meals. Another evidence is women desire of “being feminine”. The acceptance of femininity is related to a lot of aspects. First of all, the emergence of new Western forms of femininity that are characterised by independence and self-sufficiency (*urban sophisticate* and *strong woman*). The other element is avoiding the display of sexuality. In order to find a compromise, Chinese culture tends to permeate feminine products with qualities such as morality, softness, chastity and determination, or a combination of these values, that are linked to all the characteristics not in line with the Western consumerist culture. Thus, it appears that Chinese women are trying to break the link between modernity and Western influences by diffusing modernity with Chineseness with collective morality and determination.<sup>142</sup>

The combination of women’s real perceptions and commercial images can weaken the potential of consumer culture if it is intended as an alternative symbolic space for Chinese women. As mentioned in the study, it is important for the future research in this domain to examine the extent to which Chinese women use each of these roles for the construction of their personality and to understand the global consumerist environment that surrounds them.

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<sup>141</sup> HUNG, LI, BELK, "Consumption and the ‘Modern...’", cit., p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*.

The different images of women in Chinese advertising involve local and foreign features which help to understand the variety of feminine representation in China. The results showed that the urban sophisticate is identified by non-Asian models, foreign brands and foreign magazines, thus making it the most foreign modern woman image. This also proves that female consumers use a variety of interpretative strategies and self-referencing responses to identify themselves with these images.

#### *4.2.2. Western influences in advertising*

When talking about advertising in China, it is important to remark that foreign influences have inspired and stimulated the Chinese advertising sector since the globalisation period. Furthermore, Western advertising has had an impact on the development of the advertising industry and culture in China.

Given the increasing presence of multinational corporations, international advertising is developing rapidly throughout the country. Currently, we can see a lot of products and items advertised using a Western style: preference for light or basic colours, different poses in videos, well-structured photos, preference for Caucasian models, more tolerance towards nudity in advertising with naked or semi-naked models.

Foreign companies which are trying to enter the Chinese market should implement different marketing strategies to reach consumers properly. Multinational companies often try to adopt the same strategies and campaigns developed in their home country, including the use of Western models and sex appeal in promoting their products in the largest emerging countries. They try to adapt methods to the Chinese market; however, adaptation is not always a good strategy for foreign companies which are desiring to develop their marketing plans in China. International beauty and fashion brands are targeting Chinese female consumers and they are trying to develop marketing programs to reach this market segment; thus, advertising can be an effective resource for creating brand awareness, diffusing the knowledge of a brand's new product line or attiring new consumers.

As the Chinese society has become more open, representation of the Western styles has changed, thus revealing a new phase in which everything Western is adored and desired. Furthermore, the use of sex appeal in Chinese advertising has grown and received increasing attention among the audience. In the advertising industry, strategies based on Western marketing practices, such as the use of Caucasian models and sex appeal, are useful approaches for the Chinese cultural context and these techniques have become a subject of extreme interest.

If marketers want to stimulate consumer aspiration and identification through advertisements, local Asian appearance is useful for increasing consumer affinity, while a strong character is more in line with a foreign model.

Nowadays, Chinese popular culture is filled with imported foreign television shows, films and commercials delivering images of a rich and beautiful West.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, Western images of female Caucasian models are still present in magazines and television advertising in China. Furthermore, Caucasian models are dominant in international women magazines in China perhaps to give the magazines a more global look, while Asian models are preferred for local women's magazines. Another point linked to the cultural aspect is the fact that Chinese consumers prefer Western models to show sexuality, whereas Asian models are depicted more frequently in traditional beauty type than their Caucasian counterparts. Asian look is useful in enriching consumer identification, and Chinese women prefer to see models that resemble them. This tendency towards the prevalence for images of sexy Caucasian women may be a reflection of conservative cultural values; thus, when advertisements are used to promote the purchase, Caucasian women (and generally Western ones) are employed instead of Chinese models. Other studies on this topic also underline the different roles attributed to Chinese female models and the Western ones. Asian models are often portrayed in entertainment roles, while Caucasian ones are frequently depicted in decorative roles; this indicates that magazines representing these ideals of modern woman tend to promote international lifestyle and fashion-oriented values. Additionally, this also implies the consumer preference for Asian models or celebrities as spokespersons for their products.<sup>144</sup>

Concerning these issues, a study conducted by Cheng and Toland Frith (2006) showed a research method based on the semiotic analysis that can be used to evaluate social phenomena; one of these is advertising, as it uses a variety of signs and symbols to create meanings and contents. Researches on this topic have shown that the spoken language is only one of the many systems of meaning; to this extent there are other factors like gesture, clothing, architecture, art, and many other cultural elements that can be studied and considered a part of the semiotics.

Two representative commercials were examined and compared. Both images are from two campaigns of the multinational cosmetic brand Estée Lauder, 雅诗兰黛 (*ya shi lan dai*) in

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<sup>143</sup> Perry JOHANSSON, "Consuming the other: The fetish of the western woman in Chinese advertising and popular culture", *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 2, 3, 1999, p. 377.

<sup>144</sup> Yang FENG, Kavita KARAN, "The Emerging Hybrid Images of Women in China: The Portrayal of the New Woman in Chinese Local and International Magazine Advertising", *Advertising and Society Review*, 11, 1, 2010, p. 22.

Chinese. The first image featuring an Asian model is from the campaign “Pure Colour Envy” of 2016, while the second one shows the way in which Western women are often displayed in Asia.<sup>145</sup> For the analysis, it is used the *three levels of meaning* method.

The advertising featuring an Asian woman can be analysed through this method. The first level of analysis focuses on the surface message of the advertisement and include colour, objects and the positions of items. As we can see in the image (*FIGURE 8*), the background colour is black and it recalls the same colour of the woman’s shirt and hair. The product being advertised is a lipstick and it is represented in the foreground of the image. The message in the headline states: “丰唇出色 这就是我的小秘密” (*feng chun chuse zhe jiu shi wo de xiao mimi*), and it means “Excellent plump lips, this is my little secret”. The message conveys the possibility to enhance women’s lips by using Estée Lauder new cosmetic product. The second level of analysis is related to the symbols portrayed. The woman represents an ideal Asian beauty type and expresses the qualities of softness and purity. She is young, she has porcelain skin, with soft makeup. The way she looks at the camera implies modesty and shyness; indeed, she hides half of her face with a strand of hair. The way she touches her lips and hair conveys sensuality, however the image does not express strong sexual suggestions, on the contrary, the focus is on her lips as the product of the campaign is a lipstick. All these elements have always been beauty signifiers in Asia, more specifically in the Chinese context. There is no sexual allusion in the advertisement; the pose, clothes and the background suggest sensuality, fairness, elegance and beauty, all topics that are in line with the Chinese beauty canons.

The third level of analysis identifies the cultural message expressed in the advertisement. As mentioned above, in the overall image there is no sex allusion whereas it enhances purity and brightness.

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<sup>145</sup> This comparative analysis is a key element to show the differences in the way Chinese and Western women perceive beauty. Estée Lauder Company has grown its sales in China. In 2017, it was reported an overall sale growth of 40 percent, moreover thanks to the savvy use of online sales channels including Tmall and WeChat, e-commerce sales of the company increased by 50 percent. Recently, this prestigious cosmetic brand has been highly successful in revitalizing its brand image becoming more relevant and accessible for young consumers (millennials) and urban women in China. (Jing Daily, 2017)



FIGURE 8. Asian model portrayal on Estée Lauder advertising. Source: Baidu

The second advertisement displays a Western woman. The product being advertised is another line of lipsticks from the Western cosmetic brand Estée Lauder. Unlike the previous advertisement which shows purity and elegance, in this advertisement, the focus is on sex appeal. In this case, the black colour used in the background together with the model's pose, assume another connotation: sexuality. The advertisement portrays a Western blonde model who is dressed in a black elegant outfit and she is in a relaxed pose. She looks straight into the camera with a seductive look, her pose and the background seem to be independent from the product advertised. The model is young and beautiful, she appears like a goddess, and everything is associated with the gold and black colours, from the atmosphere to her dress. The headline message states: “雅诗兰黛 NEW PURE COLOR LIPSTICK 摩登迷情 优雅绽放” (*ya shi lan dai, NEW PURE COLOR LIPSTICK, modeng miqing youya zhanfang*), the English translation is “Estée Lauder New Pure Color Lipstick. Modern fascination, Elegant blooming”. The cultural message that advertisers want to convey is modern beauty and fascination. It reveals a sort of obsession with charm and attractiveness, and this is an underlying ideology in Western societies. The pose and the clothes of the Western model give the impression of seduction. This kind of advertisement representing Western models in sexually liberal poses is frequent in Asia and it shows the way in which Western women are often portrayed in Chinese advertising.



FIGURE 9. Estée Lauder new lipstick advertisement showing a Western model. Source: Baidu

Chinese beauty standards are very different from the Western ideal of female beauty, and this affects the way women are portrayed in advertising. The representation of these two models suggests that women of different ethnicities tend to be stereotyped in several ways in advertising. Images of Western women reflect the idea of sexuality and passion, whereas Chinese women embody the virtues of purity and refinement. Western influences in advertising also have a significant impact on the cultural perception of gender and the creation of advertising representations.

### 4.3. Stereotypes and gender representation

In recent years Chinese mass media have made progress in two main aspects: one is the promotion of women's participation in media and communication activities, and the other is the reduction of stereotypes perceived by the audience. However, greater attention should be paid to gender discrimination in the fields of advertising and commercials, where the display of women's role is often stereotyped and thus used to attract people's attention.

Gender representation in advertising is a global phenomenon. The relationship between advertisements and gender is more evident since advertising has become a part of people's everyday life, and consumers have been exposed to extensive advertising and communication strategies that companies frequently adopt in order to create identification with their audiences and involve them into their campaigns. This relationship reveals many cultural factors which led to reinforce sex role stereotypes, and underlines the pervasiveness of consumerism and commercialisation of gender in the advertising sector.

Stereotyping is frequently used in advertising and, as previously mentioned, advertisers usually adopt this kind of marketing strategies to appeal to the audience and encourage it to buy products. Moreover, these marketing practices influence not only consumer behaviour but also thoughts and self-perceptions. Advertisements not only reflect, but also tend to reinforce the stereotypical representations that are already common in a specific culture. In the case of Chinese women, there is evidence that advertisements present traditional stereotyped women and beauty standards that probably put a lot of pressure on female consumers.

Today, Chinese women are challenging the traditional power hierarchies in China thanks to their empowerment, their success in the workplace and their achievements in the society. However, they are facing many difficulties which are almost linked to stereotypes. One of the main examples of gender discrimination and stereotype in the Chinese advertising sector concerns the theme of *shengnü* (剩女), the leftover woman.

#### 4.3.1. “Leftover women”

Before examining a few examples of stereotypes in Chinese advertising, I would like to analyse one of the most recurring topics on gender stereotypes in the Chinese media which has influenced the representation of women: the “leftover” women issue.

The introduction of Western values not only contributes to the emergence of a new concept of Chinese femininity and consumer culture, but it also brings new difficulties. The growing number of unmarried women labelled as “leftover women” has become a significant social phenomenon today.

In the last ten years, the term “leftover women” - or in Chinese *shengnü* (剩女) - has emerged as a visible stereotype in popular consciousness in China. The derogatory term “leftover woman” is a neologism and it is used to describe an urban, professional woman in her late twenties or older who is still unmarried. It also underlines the resurgence of gender inequality in post-socialist China. This ideology has been carried out since 2007 by Chinese mass media when the official Xinhua News website posted a message which exhorted women to lower their standards and stop holding out for a good partner. It said: “Women Marrying Late Shouldn’t Blindly Let ‘Late’ Become ‘Never’”.<sup>146</sup> This script has been widely recycled on state media over the years, including the All-China Women’s Federation website. The same year, the

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<sup>146</sup> Leta HONG FINCHER, *Leftover women: The resurgence of gender inequality in China*, London, Zed Books Ltd, 2014, p. 15.

Chinese Ministry of Education added the term “leftover” to the official Chinese lexicon. Since then the state media have promoted the use of this term through surveys, articles, cartoons which stigmatised educated urban women who were still single. Furthermore, currently, the term is widely used in the mainstream media, advertising, magazines articles, and has been the subject of several films and television series in China. This is clearly an attempt to stop urban educated women from delaying marriage.

Today, these highly educated, single women are seen as violators of traditional gender roles; thus the “leftover women” campaign is trying to strengthen these gender norms. The ACWF believed that the path to upgrade population quality and increase marriage rates, in order to reach the social harmony, was through targeting leftover women. As a matter of fact, between 2007 and 2012, the ACWF published more than 200 editorials on leftover women and arranged matchmaking events in large cities to help women to avoid the “leftover” stigma. Moreover, the All-China Women’s Federation today has taken a leading role in the campaign to pressure urban women to get married.

Many urban women express anxiety about becoming a leftover woman if they are not married by their late twenties. This intense pressure to marry comes from parents, relatives and friends, and the Chinese state media also contribute to amplify it.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the media statements regarding leftover women, China actually faces a shortage of marriage-age women. This is mainly the result of the country’s sex ratio imbalance generated during the One-child Policy as a consequence of the traditional preference for boys, the technologies that allowed parents to detect the sex of their baby and the resultant sex-selective abortion. As Hannah Feldshuh wrote: “Despite the surplus of men that is a result of China’s One-child Policy, women are blamed for marriage market challenges through sexist narratives and terminology”.<sup>148</sup> Indeed the marriage market in China has been of strong importance for Chinese parents so much so that marrying off a child was viewed as a mission that every parent with a child under the age of thirty should accomplish. After thirty, this mission becomes harder. The leftover discourse also develops from notions of Confucian filial piety, which has historically been considered the principal moral virtue that one should strive for. As a matter of fact, considering filial piety as the central principle, the belief that women’s ultimate role is to be a virtuous wife and a good mother still permeates within the most traditional families.

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<sup>147</sup> HONG FINCHER, *Leftover women: The resurgence of gender...*, cit. p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> Hannah FELDSHUH, “Gender, media, and myth-making: constructing China’s leftover women”, *Asian Journal of Communication*, 28, 1, 2018, p. 38.



In the examination of the reasons for the formation of leftover women, four aspects are considered. First, a considerable number of women go to college and receive high education, and some of them will continue pursuing higher degrees after graduation. Thus, most of their time is devoted to studying, and when they finish their education, they are already in their late 20s or 30s. Another aspect is the fierce competition in the workplace which forces women to spend most of their time at work, especially during the first years of their professional life. Furthermore, in order to guarantee the superior status in the family, Chinese men show the inclination to find women of lower socio-economic status. In this sense, it is more difficult for highly educated women with good economic conditions to find a husband because their economic position is already relatively high. The last point is the introduction of Western feminist ideals. They not only have encouraged women to pursue political and economic equality but have also raised the awareness of their own identity. Thus, women begin to consider themselves as independent individuals and, because of their economic independence, marriage is no longer considered a necessity in their life.

Examples of gender roles stereotyping and representation of women can be found in current advertising, and this shows us that the myth of an ideal woman in Chinese media and her “leftover” counterpart is still present in the advertising sector. When viewed as reflective of the discourse on leftover women, advertising case studies reveal that mass media, specifically advertising industry, construct and reinforce how the term *shengnü* is perceived and interpreted by the audience. With regard to this topic, I have selected two advertisements representing Chinese female models as case studies. The first case study is referred to Ikea’s sexist advertising which has stigmatized a young Chinese woman and has reinforced the “leftover” stereotype. The second one concerns *#changedestiny*: the advertising campaign of the beauty brand SK-II, which is empowering single women in China through the video *Marriage Market Takeover*.

#### 4.3.1.1. Case study: Ikea’s sexist advertising on single women in China

An example of commercials which deals with the issue of *shengnü*, labelling Chinese single women, is the one of Ikea (the Chinese name is 宜家家居 *Yijia jiaju*).



FIGURE 10. IKEA advertisement that was criticised for stigmatising single women in China. Source: Weibo.

In October 2017, the Swedish furniture chain published an advertisement titled “轻松庆祝每一天” (*qingsong qingzhu mei yi tian*), the English translation is “Celebrate each day easily”. It described a Chinese family having dinner. The video portrays a mother who was scolding her daughter for not bringing home a boyfriend to meet the parents; she told her daughter “再不带男朋友回来就别叫我妈” (*zai bu dai nanpengyou huilai jiu bie jiao wo ma*), which means “Don’t call me mum if you cannot bring back home a boyfriend”. The following scene showed the daughter appearing at their parents’ door with a well-dressed man she claimed to be her boyfriend. Suddenly the parents’ attitude towards the young women changed; they seemed happy. They quickly tidied up the home, set the table and decorate the house placing some Ikea products on display to celebrate the occasion. They have dinner all together and, in the final part of the video, some neighbours suddenly arrived at the family’s door to see the woman’s boyfriend.

The advertisement became an immediate talking point in the mainstream media; moreover, the implications this video conveyed have been widely criticised by Weibo users and it attracted accusations of insensitivity towards single women. The advertisement has created an angry backlash on Chinese social media and netizens have complain about the references of leftover women stereotype. The video refers to a young single woman as if she is nothing to her parents unless she has a boyfriend. Therefore, this 30-second commercial is a clear example of how young single women in the contemporary Chinese society continue to be stigmatized. This advertisement has been accused of being “sexist” and perpetuating negative stereotypes about leftover women. Few days after the publication of the spot, Ikea released a statement on

which the company apologised for giving the wrong perception; it said: “男女平等是宜家一贯倡导并与中国社会共同分享的文化和价值观” (*nan-nü pingdeng shi Yijia yiguan changdao bing yu Zhongguo shehui gongtong fenxiang de wenhua he jiazhi guan*).<sup>149</sup> The English version said: “Gender equality is a fundamental part of the IKEA culture and values, which we share with everybody”.<sup>150</sup> Soon the company removed the discriminatory video from its advertising campaign.

## Discussion

Currently, Chinese women have gained huge consideration in both professional and social fields. According to Roseann Lake, author of a new book on China’s leftover women, Chinese young (unmarried) educated women are shaping China’s economy.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the state media portrayals of “leftover” women, which show them to be highly educated, demonstrate the great progress made by urban women over the past decade. According to the National Bureau of Statistics reports, 71 percent of Chinese women between the ages of eighteen and sixty were employed, accounting for 44 percent of the country’s workforce. However, when it comes to the matter of the heart, the society appears to belong to another era where the cultural tradition related to marriage is still alive. Thus, social pressure is becoming one of the most significant and inevitable sources of anxiety for Chinese women. Another reason is associated with the fact that Chinese urban and educated women usually have high standards for careers and partners; they pursue perfection and seek the “three *gao* (高)” such as high education, high professional achievement and high income. From a different cultural background, these characteristics would not necessarily be negative. Many Westerners would celebrate women with those characteristics as independent women with full control over their lives and goals.

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<sup>149</sup> IKEA, “Guanyu Yijia dianshi guanggao ‘qingsong qingzhu mei yi tian’ de shengming” 关于宜家电视广告“轻松庆祝每一天”的声明, in Weibo, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017. [https://www.weibo.com/1785749160/FrRmtwxTQ?from=page\\_1006061785749160\\_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#\\_rnd1536762531469](https://www.weibo.com/1785749160/FrRmtwxTQ?from=page_1006061785749160_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1536762531469), 12<sup>nd</sup> July 2018.

<sup>150</sup> WEN Yi Ting 温亦婷, “‘Zai bu dai nanpengyou huilai jiu bie jiao wo ma’ IKEA renu Zhongguo shengnu, mang che qishi guanggao” 《再不帶男朋友回來就別叫我媽！》IKEA 惹怒中國剩女，忙撤歧視廣告 (“Don’t call me mum if you don’t bring back your boyfriend!” IKEA provokes leftover women in China and rushes to remove the discriminatory ad), *Fengchuan Mei*, (<http://www.storm.mg/article/350047>), 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

<sup>151</sup> Roseann LAKE, *Leftover in China. The women shaping the world’s next superpower*, London, W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2018, p. 11.

However, since the ACWF began publishing semi-controversial articles on this topic, these female's qualities began to assume a negative association.

In IKEA's commercial, the advertising representation of the Chinese woman seems to be linked to the past. However, it shows a real phenomenon which is affecting Chinese society and women today. The campaign portrayal of a closed-minded Chinese family is only an example of the difficulties that single women are facing now. And the fact that the web community has expressed its own thoughts on this topic is a sign of real change.

The "leftover women" topic becomes pervasive across various commercial media platforms that propagate gender essentialism. Indeed, advertising is one of the most important means by which leftover women discourse is promoted in China. As a matter of fact, the ways we view ourselves, others and the world around us are shaped by the ubiquitous mass media and advertising. Social scientists agree that media influence individuals' thoughts. Moreover, they can be channels for persuasion, they can attract attention and help to bring a certain kind of audience into specific marketing programs. These characteristics suggest that the advertising sector has an important social role; thus, it can contribute to alleviate gender representations through the creation of women's images without stereotypes and to convey positive messages for consumers.

#### 4.3.1.2. Case study: SK-II's advertising is empowering single women in China

In April 2016 a four-minute promotional video gained massive support on Chinese social media.<sup>152</sup> It was the new advertising campaign launched by the prestige beauty brand SK-II on China's leftover women. Originally founded in Japan in the early 1980s, SK-II was acquired in the 1990s by Procter & Gamble, the American multinational company. Today, this high-end skincare brand is very famous in mainland China, especially among female consumers in their late 20s and beyond. Also, most of SK-II's sales revenue derived from this targeted demographic segment. It includes successful and independent women which can make autonomous decisions regarding spending money; thus, they can enjoy the benefits that SK-II products can offer. Marketing to China's most active class of consumers, such as young, urban and cosmopolitan women, is not easy. Their needs have varied and their aspirations have also undergone an intense shift. The modern woman's mindset has changed; therefore, she is no longer excited to purchase whatever is related to fashion trends, but her beauty ambitions have

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<sup>152</sup> "SK-II: Marriage Market Takeover". YouTube video. Posted by SK-II. 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irfd74z52Cw&t=4s>

become more refined with sophisticated individual tastes. In this case, the cosmetic brand has moved the inner part of urban women, the emotional one. SK-II has targeted this market segment for promoting the launch of his new skincare product and it has touched women sensibility arousing one of the main problems affecting professional women in China. They want to focus on China's most active consumers, such as young cosmopolitan women, because they have an essential role in the society as trend setters with a better chance of influencing consumers' behaviour. Therefore, this high-end cosmetic company has emphasized the beauty standards that characterise urban and professional women in China in order to acquire this specific market share for their product.

In 2016, the company developed one market-based intervention to fight against gender discrimination in China through the campaign *#changedestiny*. Thanks to this campaign the company positions itself as a source of investigation for women's empowerment and social change. To kick off the launch of the new skincare product - Facial Treatment Essence - in China, SK-II uploaded onto its official YouTube channel, and on Chinese video sharing website *Youku*, a video titled *Marriage Market Takeover*. The short video explored the issue of leftover women. It expressed the objective of the *#changedestiny* campaign; it attempted to challenge the cultural stigma of unmarried Chinese women through emotional and inspirational stories from ordinary people and celebrities.<sup>153</sup>

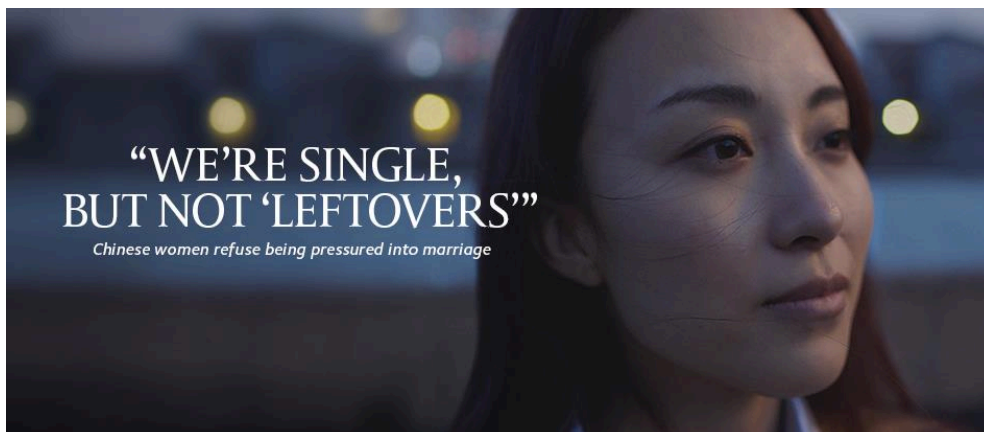


FIGURE 11. A picture from the video 'Marriage Market Takeover'. Source: SK-II.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Cara WALLIS, Yongrong SHEN, "The SK-II *#changedestiny* campaign and the limits of commodity activism for women's equality in neo/non-liberal China", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 35, 4, 2018, p. 377.

<sup>154</sup> "SK-II: Marriage Market Takeover". YouTube video. Posted by SK-II. 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irfd74z52Cw&t=4s>

*Marriage Market Takeover* is carefully crafted, and it deploys music, images and conversations in a way to create maximum emotional appeals and responses from the audience. In the video several urban, middle-class “leftover women” discuss their lives, and their parents also offer their perspective on daughters’ current professional and sentimental situation. At the beginning of the video yellowed photographs of young girls flow across the screen while the viewer hears parents’ voices saying: “不是小孩子了” (*bu shi xiaohaizi le*), “You’re not a kid anymore”, and “你一天不结婚父亲就不死” (*ni yitian bu jiehun fuqin jiu bu si*), “I won’t die in peace unless you’re married”, then a female voice says “你现在已经是剩女了” (*ni xianzai yijing shi shengnü le*), “You are a leftover woman”. We can understand the social pressure those women feel every day, especially during family holidays when they come back home and their parents constantly remind them about their age and ask them about the reason why they are still unmarried.

As the video proceeds, the emotional part and affective tensions play out through conversations between the women and their parents. The generational gap comes out in this part with individual women talking about their experiences and parents who clearly show their own opinions regarding early marriage and the construction of a family.

There is also the representation of the now ubiquitous urban Chinese Marriage Market, where parents display pictures and information about their single sons or daughters; one woman in the video describes it as akin to parents trying to “sell their daughters”. Women portrayed in the video explain how marriage is a sign of respect to parent in Chinese society, and some of them express varying feelings of conflict and regret while holding back tears.

Then, a subtitle appears. It states that daughters decided to attend the Marriage Market just to deliver a personal message to their parents. At this moment, the viewers might be prepared for seeing the daughter accept parents’ wishes to settle on a marriage partner. Instead, the daughters’ photos at the Marriage Market were accompanied by short texts like “I don’t want to get married just for the sake of marriage. I won’t live happily that way”. When parents appear, they show a different mood; some are crying, others say they will always be there for their daughter and always support her.

The final image shows parents and daughters smiling, while voiceovers express women independence and self-confidence. The text on the screen says: “Don’t let pressure dictate your future”. This recalls the main objective of the video such as breaking gender stereotypes and underlying the empowerment of single women in mainland China. Indeed, this is a clear

example of how advertising, in this case a commercial for a beauty product, can influence the audience reactions and feelings promoting women's self-esteem and empowerment.

The video was an instant success; it received a lot of views and media attention, moreover in 2016 it also won an award. Despite all the supporting comments from the web community and celebrities, the spot also received some critics regarding the way SK-II company has promoted the launch of their new skincare product. Indeed, some critics refer to media representation strategies the company has chosen. Portraying women as successful and powerful is appealing to Chinese women. Chinese women enjoyed the advertisement and sales of SK-II products increased by 50 per cent from June 2016 to February 2017. This kind of representation is related to the intrinsic logic of capitalism, consumption and marketization. As Wallis and Shen wrote, in the case of the video *Marriage Market Takeover*, there is an overrepresentation of middle-class, heterosexual, Han Chinese women, while unfortunate, non-Han, and migrant women are hardly visible.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, women in the commercial are urban, educated, ideal consumers. Therefore, the feminist message of the SK-II video may attempt to break gender stereotypes only for some women, yet rural ones are left out completely. And the result can be that audience may perceive a further message, such as middle-class urban women are the ones that have the chance to change their destiny through consumption. Although the new beauty product of the campaign is never shown in the video, the subtext shows that modern women not only resist marriage but also should consume high-end luxury products if they want to defy the signs of ageing.

In the end, this spot from the *#changedestiny* campaign remarked the importance of advertising as a powerful means for influencing the public opinion. We can also notice how companies are able to reflect an emotional feeling and describe an important social subject in their advertising spots. Moreover, brands need to be aware of the complexity of the subjects when portraying them in advertising. Indeed, for reaching the ultimate aim such as consumers, marketers and advertisers should study hard on a specific topic before creating a commercial, because every sign, symbol or feeling can really affect the way people see and experience it.

### **Analysis of Weibo users' posts of the campaign *#changedestiny***

According to this case study, I have analysed some Weibo users' posts through content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative research technique which is used for studying, interpreting and coding textual materials. It is employed to determine the presence of certain concepts, words,

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<sup>155</sup> WALLIS, SHEN, "The SK-II *#changedestiny* campaign...", cit., p. 385

themes or categories within texts, and it focuses on the content and other internal features of media.<sup>156</sup>

Weibo is a popular social media which is playing a significant role in transforming the Chinese consumer values. It represents a means through which netizens can share their personal consumption experiences as well as their own thoughts regarding major topics. In this case, the issue analysed refers to some users' comments about the SK-II campaign.

## Methodology

This study concerns the use of an interpretative content analysis method on some Weibo posts. For this analysis, I have followed the framework used in the paper of the authors Jingyi Duan and Nikhilesh Dholakia as a basis.<sup>157</sup> I have selected a post from SK-II official Weibo account which dealt with the matter of leftover women.<sup>158</sup> This post was published on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016 on the SK-II account, and it soon had a lot of success among netizens, with almost 23,000 shares, 2,200 comments and over 5,100 likes.

This is the first post published on SK-II page which talks about the *#changedestiny* campaign. It reassumes the focus of the campaign promoted by SK-II, such as the fact that every choice women make should be respected, whether they are enjoying being single or waiting for true love. Moreover, the company reinforced the idea of women's independence and self-confidence, and the belief that every woman can be beautiful. The post encouraged Weibo users to express their opinions on the topic, and use the hashtag *#改写命运 gaixie mingyun* (*改写 gaixie* literally means "to rewrite", but SK-II has adapted it using *#changedestiny*) on their posts.

Following the hashtag *#改写命运*, I have identified the posts with this tag among the most popular ones. I have selected the texts which received a lot of comments and likes between 2015 and 2018 and I have analysed the engagement, the comments and the number of likes. The total number of the Weibo posts analysed is 50. Before coding the texts, the Chinese posts were translated into English in order to interpret the contents. Then I have analysed the contents and from this examination, I have obtained the following thirteen categories:

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<sup>156</sup> Hsiu-Fang HSIEH, Sarah E. SHANNON, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis", *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 9, 2005, p. 1277.

<sup>157</sup> Jingyi DUAN, Nikhilesh DHOLAKIA, "The reshaping of Chinese consumer values in the social media era", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 18, 4, 2015, pp. 409-426.

<sup>158</sup> The post of SK-II campaign is: "27岁未结婚的女性被称为“剩女”，但SK-II相信每一位女性都可以独立、自信和美丽。为了解单身女性对自己现状的真实想法，SK-II走进上海人民公园相亲角，记录这群女性的声音。一起倾听她们的故事，分享影片支持所有独立女性#改写命运#" (See Appendix).



- Beauty
- Marriage
- Family
- Independence
- Freedom
- Self-love
- Age pressure
- Time pressure
- Destiny
- Anxiety
- Respect
- Leftover
- Age label

According to these categories, four main themes have emerged:

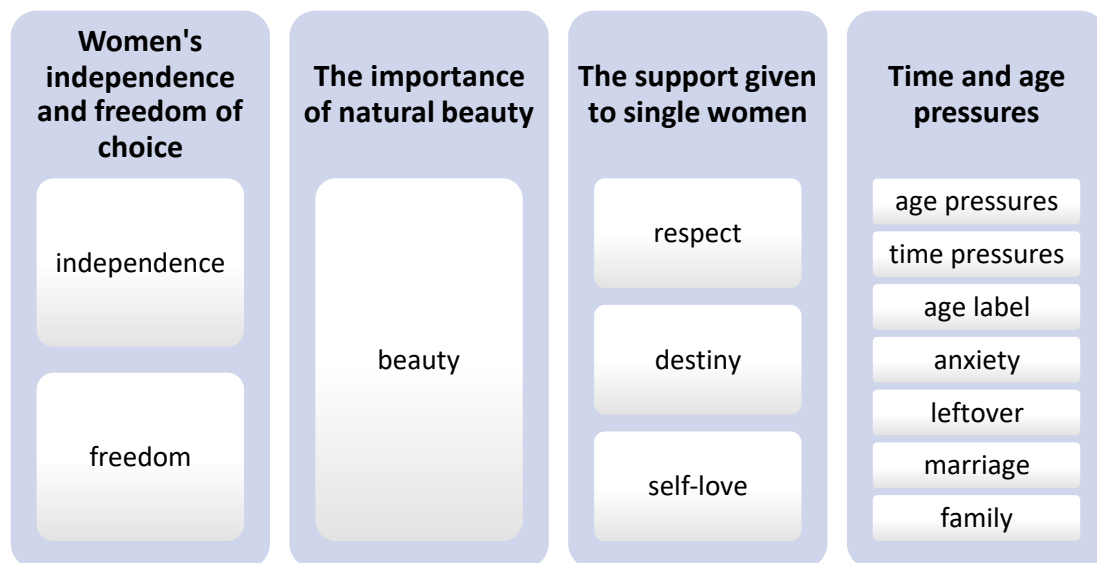


FIGURE 12. Content analysis framework.

The majority of Weibo users which have written a post for the campaign are magazines, the others are bloggers and fashion magazines. Moreover, almost the totality of users has the “V” icon which designates VIP status; they are users with a lot of people following them. Thus, they can be opinion leaders and they can influence others’ judgements.

The four themes recurring in the posts I have analysed are:

1. Time and age pressures;
2. Women's independence and freedom of choice;
3. The support given to single women;
4. The importance of natural beauty.

I have developed a framework for each theme with an example of post for reference.

THEME	CHINESE POST EXAMPLE	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<b>1. Time and age pressures</b>	人生该按部就班吗？30岁该结婚，35岁该生子，40岁该事业有成，这些“应该”是否真的合理？看看汤唯怎么说。当她面临众多“时间节点”，也曾焦虑难安。但事实证明，时间无法定义命运，命运属于自己，该由自己#改写命运#，时间不过是种提示，#别让时间捆绑你的人生# 点击视频，看@SK-II 对话汤唯	Should life be step by step? Should we get married at the age of 30, have a child at the age of 35 and have a successful career at 40? Are these "should" reasonable? Let's see what Tang Wei said. When she faced many "time nodes", she was anxious. But it turns out that time can't define destiny, destiny belongs to ourselves and it is time to #changedestiny. Time is just a reminder to not let time bundle your life. Click on the video, see Tang Wei dialogue with SK-II.
<b>2. Women's independence and freedom of choice</b>	27岁未结婚的女性被称为“剩女”，但 SK-II 相信每一位女性都可以独立、自信和美丽。为了解单身女性对自己现状的真实想法，SK-II 走进上海人民公园相亲角，记录这群女性的声音。一起倾听她们的故事，分享影片支持所有独立女性#改写命运#。	27 years old unmarried women are called "leftovers", but SK-II believes that every woman can be independent, confident and beautiful. In order to find out what single women really think about themselves, SK-II went to the Marriage Market of Shanghai People's Park to record the voices of these women. Listen to their stories together and share the film to support all independent women #changedestiny

<p><b>3. The support given to single women</b></p>	<p>#改写命运#无论是享受单身状态还是坚持等待真爱，每一种选择都应该被尊重。SK-II 希望每一位女性作出的选择都是忠于自己，听从内心。影片中哪句话最能触动你勇敢选择的神经？</p>	<p>#changedestiny Whether it is enjoying being single or waiting for true love, every single choice should be respected. SK-II hopes that every choice women make for themselves is true and comes from their heart. Which sentence in the video has touched the nerve of your brave choice?</p>
<p><b>4. The importance of natural beauty</b></p>	<p>在镜头面前，女孩们总是会费尽心思地去修饰自己的面容，以可能会被别人认可的样貌去面对，许多姑娘们更是无美颜滤镜不照。这次 SK-II 发起的 #BareSkinProject # 邀请六位女星大胆拍摄无底妆大片，看似反其道而行之，但肌肤散发的自然美感以及女星们自若的神态却证明了美有千万种，未经修饰的美同样可以充满力量，为这份勇敢、自信、随性与率真点赞</p>	<p>In front of the camera, girls will always try their best to decorate their faces, because [they know] they will face the approval of other people, many girls do not take pictures without beauty filters. This #BareSkinProject launched by SK-II invited six actresses to take bold shots without makeup, it seems to do the opposite, the natural beauty of the skin and the self-contained expression of the actresses prove that there are ten million kinds of unmodified beauty that can be full of strength, and for that reason they are brave, confident, casual and honest.</p>

## Discussion

The most recurring topic in the posts is parents' pressure on daughters. Users criticise this behaviour and claim women's freedom of choice and independence. Their main request is to avoid the social conventions and age pressure.

The *#changedestiny* campaign is a form of reaffirmation for all women around the world who are fighting against social and gender stereotypes. "Don't let time bind your life" is another sentence used by users in their posts. Thanks to this slogan they encourage Chinese women to free themselves from life and time boundaries and to regard their age just as an ordinary number. The contents of the Weibo posts describe and denounce this widespread phenomenon in the Chinese society in different ways. Some users talk about their experience, others express their personal opinions on the topic to the web community, and others let the matter open asking some questions to users in order to involve them in the discussion.

This analysis demonstrates how Weibo constitutes a dialogue window and a way of expressing one's thoughts. Moreover, it gives the possibilities to raise people's awareness through conversations and exchanged views.

In the first theme of the framework, users want to give to the community their personal opinions on the social pressures single Chinese women are experiencing due to the "leftover women" label. Moreover, they are trying to give these women some suggestions in order to overcome time and age pressures. They feel the anxiety among Chinese single women because parents are always asking them about their relationships, and they are pushing them to get married as soon as possible. Some recurring sentences in the posts are "Age is just a number" and "Don't let time bind your life", which mean that despite all the difficulties, women have to be strong and try to overcome those social pressures.

The second most recurring topic is women's independence; it is also linked to the third one which is female support. Weibo users supported female independence and freedom of choice. They tried to alleviate single women discouragement by giving some examples of women's success and encouraging them to listen to their heart and emotions. 30-years-old women are able to understand which is the best choice for their lives and which path they should follow in order to find achievement. The last theme regards the natural beauty. Through these contents, Weibo users show their appreciation for women's pure beauty without filters or makeup covering their skins. The pure and unmodified beauty can also be a sign of women's freedom from social mores and aesthetical values.

## Conclusion

China is a country with a long history, a strong cultural background and its people have experienced significant social and economic changes over the time. Chinese women have been, and are today, the spokespersons of those cultural and social transformations; they are the bearer of important values, but they are also guided by new, and sometimes revolutionary, objectives. Advertising has targeted Chinese women above all urban women and the millennials as huge market segments. Even though nowadays family care is considered one of the main purposes for a woman or a daughter, Chinese women are seeking their independence and autonomy. They study, work and constitute an essential resource for the Chinese society, and also for the consumer's market.

Nowadays, Chinese women have gained professional and personal success; they are entrepreneurs, managers, models, actresses, filmmakers, and there is no economic or cultural sector within which they do not emerge. Education has enabled them to move up the social hierarchy, to acquire roles and positions of greater responsibility, and consequently to increase their disposable income. They are sensitive to advertising contents and stimuli; furthermore, women are always more interested in sectors and activities that in the past were reserved to the male environment, such as the car industry, luxury consumption and high-tech products.

SK-II and IKEA case studies prove that Chinese society is forward-looking. The images and the messages these short videos portrayed also emphasise the challenges this country is facing in order to dismantle the gender stereotypes representation in modern advertising. If a multinational company can admit a mistake and consequently, it removes the Weibo post and the advertisement which portrayed women in a gender discriminatory way, changes are clearly happening. This outdated vision of the society and family relationships depicted in advertising have raised awareness about this issue. Thus, Chinese people, especially the web community, have contributed with discussions and comparisons between the past and the present. They are highly involved in this matter, and this situation results into a positive outcome thanks to their support.

In the case of SK-II, it is a company which becomes representative of a significant movement of complaint against a male-dominated and conservative society and specifically, against the sometimes-sexist advertising industry which does not give voice to the authentic role of contemporary women through representation. However, this is not only a matter of Chinese society, but also other countries, particularly the Western ones, have experienced this situation and, in this case, they should take a lesson from the Chinese context.

Women in China have improved their social conditions, they reached a high level in professional and educational fields, and they became the primary consumers for several products. Their success is not only linked to the external environment; indeed, they have developed a strong self-consciousness also within their own homes. Their major role in the family decision-making process made it possible the improvement of strong influence and control over the primary decisions, moreover, the Chinese woman has become the main purchaser of the family consumption goods and she is also aware of the preferences of family members. Her role as a principal consumer and her consumption behaviour stress the importance of the female Chinese consumer as an essential channel to carry out market researches. Concerning this point, China represents a huge market, not only for the geography scope but also in terms of demographic structure. Young Chinese people express their consumption behaviour showing a propensity toward international products and modern styles represented by Western influences. They follow new trends in the fields of fashion, technology, and they are always near to these global inclinations also thanks to the increasing presence of social media in China.

Today, Chinese women should be more aware of gender equity, and they need further support from the Chinese society. Perhaps, an involvement in high-ranks of the professional fields and significant working roles in the advertising sector could allow them to develop a new sensibility regarding stereotypes and women representation. Furthermore, this could also involve the part of women which has not been touched by this change yet, such as women living in the rural areas or adults who are linked to the past models and ideas. Thus, advertising should be focused on this matter, in order to act in favour of female emancipation and to eliminate gender stereotypes.

Another important factor is related to the audience; thus, educating the consumers on gender equality through advertising can be a solution. Finally, it is necessary to improve the policies and the laws concerning advertising in China and encourage academic institutions or women organisations to study this major problem and to take part in this social challenge.

The consumer behaviour of Chinese women is changing becoming more mature than before, they are becoming more rational, and their own taste and preference on the products' style and design is becoming more redefine than previously. Variability and complexity represent today's China and these factors also highlight the consumer's differences in behaviour, attitudes and values. Moreover, the fast development of technology, internet, education and communication in China has led to changes in consumers' motivations, habits and preferences

which need to be investigated by international marketers in order to make predictions on the future and formulate effective marketing and sales plan for the Chinese market.

Finally, studies on female consumers and women's behaviour should be undertaken by companies' retailers and marketers who want to target this primary market segment. They have to understand not only that women are important purchasers of goods in China, but they also have to consider the emotional component which is associated with their activities and capabilities.

What is happening in China today should be inspirational also for those women living in other countries; moreover, advertising should become a means for creating culture, ameliorate women's condition as well as a vehicle to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in China.

## Appendix

	Weibo posts	English translations
1	简直说到我心里！剩女怎样？不结婚怎样？又没说放弃爱情！自食其力过自己想要的生活，这就是我要决定的未来！	It's about my heart! What about leftover women? What about not getting married? I didn't say give up on love! Living on my own the life I want, this is the future I want to decide!
2	人生该按部就班吗？30岁该结婚，35岁该生子，40岁该事业有成，这些“应该”是否真的合理？看看汤唯怎么说。当她面临众多“时间节点”，也曾焦虑难安。但事实证明，时间无法定义命运，命运属于自己，该由自己#改写命运#，时间不过是种提示，#别让时间捆绑你的人生# 点击视频，看@SK-II 对话汤唯。	Should life be step by step? Should we get married at the age of 30, have a child at the age of 35 and have a successful career at 40? Are these "should" reasonable? Let's see what Tang Wei said. When she faced many "time nodes", she was anxious. But it turns out that time can't define destiny, destiny belongs to ourselves and it is time to #changedestiny. Time is just a reminder to not let time bundle your life. Click on the video, see Tang Wei dialogue with SK-II.
3	最近又被各种“你已经不是小孩子啦，把自己嫁出去吧”的说法催个不停……每当这时候我就会想起去年刷爆屏的SK-II短片《她最后去了相亲角》，现在回看依然满满的感动。即便面临各种压力，她们不甘于命运安排，反而选择独立自主、#改写命运# 这个标签也是我的愿景。愿全天下的小仙女们，都因为爱而结婚。无论什么时候，都只做喜爱的自己。	Recently there has been a variety of "you are no longer a child, marry yourself out" topics. Every time I think about last year SK-II short film "She finally goes to the Marriage Market", and now watching it again I am still full of feelings. Even if they face a lot of pressures, they are not willing to accept the arrangement of their destiny, but they choose to be independent and #changedestiny this label is also my vision. May all the fairies of the world marry because of love. Always be the one you love.
4	有人说女人过了30岁就像人生过了保鲜期，你是否也感觉到了年龄的压力？全新升级为辣妈的汤唯复出之后接受了SK-II的采访，谈论了自己对于年龄与时间的一些看法，她认为与其因此而焦虑不如将它看做普通的数字，重新认识世界，“开发”自己年轻的细胞，才能真正#改写命运#。最后的那句“别让时间捆绑你的人生”也充满力量。所以，关于“年龄”，你又是怎样的看法呢？	Some people say that a woman over the age of 30 is like a life that has passed the shelf period, do you also feel the age pressure? Tang Wei was interviewed by SK-II after the new upgrade to popular mom, they talked about her own thoughts on age and time. She thought that instead of being anxious, she would regard it as an ordinary number, a way to recognizing again the world, and developing her own young cells, and really #changedestiny. The last sentence #don't let time bind your life is also powerful. So, what do you think about "age"?



5	<p>这两天被#欢乐颂 2# 中五美的婚恋话题刷屏了，剧中父母纷纷登场搞事情，五美都压力山大~有时候想，面对压力，是不是要妥协将就，让对方和父母高兴才能换来幸福？想起去年大火的《最后她去了相亲角》，同样是女性权益话题，SK-II 在视频里展示的，希望每个女性都勇敢#改写命运#的态度是我欣赏的。不知道今年还会不会有新大片出炉？</p>	<p>These days have been flooded by the topics regarding Wumei's love and marriage in #OdetoJoy2. In the play parents appear in succession to make things, pressure on Wumei is high. Sometimes I think, to face pressure, is it necessary or not to accept a compromise and exchange one's happiness for the others and parents' happiness? Thinking of last year hot topic that SK-II showed in the video "She finally goes to the Marriage Market", It is also a topic regarding women's rights. What I appreciate is the hope that every woman has the brave attitude of #changedestiny. I don't know, will there be any new big movie coming out this year?</p>
6	<p>“人生玩家”汤唯从来不设限自己的可能，空降到大众面前又远赴英国求学，成为最受关注的演员却又选择结婚生子，无论什么时候她都在用自己的方式#改写命运#，掌握自己的人生才能按照自己的节奏面对未知，而时间从来不是障碍。@SK-II 支持每一位女性都不该被“年龄”和“时间”束缚，想做就去做，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#</p>	<p>"Life player" Tang Wei never set limits on her own possibilities, she has been airborne to the public and she went to the UK to study, she became the most popular actress and chose to get married and have children. Regardless of the time, she is #changedestiny in her own way. Only taking control of her own life according to her own rhythm, she can face the unknown, and time is never an obstacle. @SK-II claims that every woman shouldn't be bound by "age" and "time"; If you want to do it, so do it! #Don't let time bind your life!</p>
7	<p>从一出生，父母献给女儿最好的礼物，就是教她学会自爱，女生爱自己，才懂得在无数个决定面前，遵从内心，勇敢选择。我个人就很喜欢去年 SK-II 的大片《她最后去了相亲角》中，鼓励女性倾听内心声音，#改写命运#这个 tag 也是三观超正~据说 SK-II 的最新大片也准备推出了，不知道这次又是什么话题，想想还有些小期待呢。</p>	<p>From birth the best gift parents give to their daughter is to teach her self-respect, to love herself, the countless decisions she faces, to know how to follow her heart and choose bravely. I personally liked the last year SK-II blockbuster "She finally goes to the Marriage Corner", which encourages women to listen to their inner voices. #changedestiny this tag is also said to be the same for the next SK-II video to be released. I don't know what the topic is this time, I think there are still some small expectations.</p>

8	<p>接近 30 岁的女性，总觉得自己在被年龄“追着跑”。所有人都在提醒她们：该结婚生孩子了，一切都该定下来了... 似乎过了 30 岁就很难再改变现状。刚复出的汤唯却不这么看，在近日与@SK-II 的对话中，她认为“年龄是一个数字”，关键是#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，跟随内心#改写命运#，你会发现，自己人生的可能性绝不仅限于此。</p>	<p>Women who are close to 30 years old always feel they are "chased" after their age. Everyone is reminding them that it is time to get married and have children and everything should be settled... It seems that it is difficult to change the status after 30. Tang Wei who has just returned, doesn't think so. In her recent conversation with @SK-II, she thought that "age is a number", the key is #don't let time bind your life, follow your heart #changedestiny. You will find that the possibility of one's life is not limited to this.</p>
9	<p>30 岁这个年纪，是否让你忧心忡忡？社会的压力、父母的期望、自己的抱负，好像都会在这个时间节点同时爆发。但汤唯用亲身经历告诉你：年龄只是一个数字。没有重复他人道路，跟随自己节奏前行的她，内心的收获与幸福却一点都没有少。@SK-II 想告诉所有女性，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，#改写命运# 什么时候开始都不晚！</p>	<p>Are you worried about the age of 30? Social pressure, parents' expectations, your own ambitions, all seem to erupt at this time. But Tang Wei uses her experience to tell you: age is just a number. She didn't follow others' paths, she followed her own rhythm, but her inner harvest and happiness are not at all. @SK-II wants to tell all women #do not let time bind your life, #changedestiny, it is never too late to start!</p>
10	<p>30 岁，是顶住社会压力向往爱情，还是妥协自己嫁给婚姻？#改写命运#</p>	<p>30 years old, is it to withstand social pressure yearning for love, or to reach a compromise to get married? #changedestiny</p>
11	<p>20+的时候，期待 30 岁的时候成为人生赢家，可原来这才是 30 岁的真相。别怕，逆境里才能#改写命运#</p>	<p>At 20 and more, I look forward to becoming a life winner when I'm 30 years old, but actually this is the truth of a 30 years old. Don't be afraid, within adversities you can #changedestiny.</p>
12	<p>听说 30 岁成了女性的“分水岭”，新陈代谢的减慢让维持美貌与身材需要更努力；工作与生活的平衡最难处置，事业与爱情真的要二选一？人际交往与友情也充满难题，更有源自家庭的压力多方夹击，都说 30 岁的女人不容易，真的是这样吗？</p>	<p>It is said that 30 years old has become women's "watershed", the slowing down of metabolism makes it harder to maintain beauty and body; dealing with the balance between work and life has become more difficult, and do you really have to choose between career and love? Interpersonal relationship and friendship are also full of difficulties, there is also more pressure from the family, all said that for a 30-years-old woman is not easy, is it really so?</p>

13	<p>最近看到一条 @SK-II 超有态度的短片：三个不同国家的亚洲女性讲述年龄、婚姻与压力的关系：害怕年龄、想要隐藏、直到失去信心……但是年龄怎么会是一种负担？对于自己，千万不要失去信心，要做的是不断充实自己，选择自己想要的人生，这才是生活该有的态度。 #改写命运# 你认同吗？</p>	<p>Recently, I saw a SK-II attitude short film on Asian women from three different countries talking about the relationship between age, marriage and life pressure: fear of age, want to hide, until losing confidence...But how can age be a burden? For yourself, do not lose your confidence, what you have to do is to constantly enrich yourself and choose the life you want. This is the attitude that life should have. #changedestiny Do you agree?</p>
14	<p>分享 SK-II 《人生不设限》这部十分有意义的短片，做自己说起来简单做起来难，一年又一年的生日叠加起来的数字让人惶恐。但数字终究是数字，25岁就该结婚，30岁要事业有成，35岁回归家庭？为什么人生要按别人设定的剧本走？别畏惧年龄，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，按照自己的节奏，一起勇敢#改写命运#吧。</p>	<p>Share SK-II "Life without limits" meaningful short film, it is easy to say but difficult to do, and the numbers that add up to the birthdays, year after year, are frightening. But numbers are numbers after all. At 25 years old, should you get married, at 30 your career should have success, at the age of 35 will you return to your family? Why should life follow the scripts set by others? Don't be afraid of age #don't let time bind your life, follow your own rhythm and together bravely #changedestiny.</p>
15	<p>当亲戚和邻居开始不断询问，当周围的人开始用不同的眼光看你，当父母开始旁敲侧推，当“剩女”这个词频繁出现，站在社会定义的“尴尬年龄”上，你想过#改写命运#吗？不同人有不同观点，有人认为，年龄不能定义婚姻，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，你认为呢？</p>	<p>When relatives and neighbors started asking questions, when people around you started looking at you differently, when parents began to push, when the word "leftover woman" appeared frequently, standing on the socially defined "awkward age", have you ever thought of #changedestiny? Different people have different views, some people think that age cannot define marriage, #don't let time bind your life, what do you think?</p>
16	<p>【SK-II 全新态度视频吐露女性心声：三十岁，就应该被结婚吗？】在中国，30岁如果还未婚的女性，就会被冠上「剩女」的头衔，父母的期望、世俗的目光，时刻提醒着她们：你该结婚了。《人生不设限》短片最后，女孩们终于释放压力，从心选择#改写命运#。对于#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，你有什么看法？</p>	<p>(SK-II's new attitude video reveals women's voices: should they get married at 30 years old?) In China, if a woman is still unmarried at the age of 30, she will be crowned with the title of "leftover woman", parents' expectation, the eyes of the world always remind them: you should get married. At the end of the short film "Life without limits", the girls finally release their pressure and, following their heart, they choose to #changedestiny. #don't let time bind your life. What's your opinion?</p>

17	<p>【三十岁的女性该结婚了?】最近 SK-II 全新态度视频占据各大头条, 舆论高峰一波接一波, 女性年龄到了三十岁, 世俗眼光下无法#改写命运#吗? 其实并不是, 这条《人生不设限》短片, 鼓励女性不再畏惧年龄, #别让时间捆绑你的人生#. 那么问题来了, 年龄与婚姻, 你怎么看?</p>	<p>(Should a 30-years-old woman get married?) The latest SK-II new attitude video has dominated the headlines, with waves of public opinion rising, and women reaching the age of thirty, it is possible to #changedestiny under the eyes of the world? Not at all. As a matter of fact, this short film "Life without limits" encourages women to no longer fear the age. #do not let time bind your life. Then the question arises, age and marriage, what do you think?</p>
18	<p>对很多女生来说, 到达 30 岁似乎有了莫名的危机感? 甚至出现缺乏自信心、焦虑等等年龄“病症”。看了这个最近刷屏的 @SK-II 视频让我觉得, 女性为什么活得这么累, 年龄只是一个数字, 心态随之改变, 反而活得轻松。 #改写命运# , 做自己想做的事。如果你也有这样的困惑, 看完你会有所启发。</p>	<p>For many women reaching the age of 30 seems like an inexplicable sense of crisis? Just when appear lack of self-confidence, anxiety and other age-related "symptoms". I have watched this recent video of SK-II, which made me think of the reasons why women live so tired, age is just a number, the mindset changes and they live more easily. #changedestiny, do what you want to do. If you have this kind of confusion, you'll be inspired by watching it.</p>
19	<p>《人生不设限》: 年龄压力下, 三十岁的女性, 该被结婚 or 该#改写命运#? 在中国社会舆论下, 女人 30 岁, 似乎是“婚界点”。到了年龄仍未婚, 便被冠以「剩女」「黄金剩女」等标签, 笼罩在世俗偏见、父母期待、及年龄压力下的女性, 该被结婚? 还是勇敢#改写命运#? SK-II 这部全新短片中, 拒绝被安排的人生。如果是你, 会选择#别让时间捆绑你的人生#吗?</p>	<p>"Life is not limited": under age pressure, 30-year-old woman should be married or #changedestiny? For Chinese public opinion, a woman at 30 years old seems to be at a "marriage point". When they are still unmarried at that age, they are labeled "leftover women" and "golden leftovers", and so on. Women who are under pressure of secular prejudice, expectation of parents, and age, should they get married? Or should they #changedestiny? In the new SK-II short film, life arranged was refused. If it is you, would you choose #don't let time bind your life?</p>
20	<p>他们说女人是有保质期的; 他们说在 30 岁之前要结婚生子; 他们说你应该这样、应该那样……但你真的愿意被“他们的言论”绑架人生吗?! SK-II 在 2017 年聚焦“年龄”和“时间”给女性带来的压力和束缚, 带来全新短片《人生不设限》。一起来看片中女性如何#改写命运#, 做自己人生的主宰。</p>	<p>They say that women have a shelf life, they say they should get married and have children before they are 30 years old, they say that you should be like this, you should be like that...but are you really willing to be kidnapped by "their words"? In 2017, SK-II focused on the pressure and restriction that "age" and "time" brought to women, bringing a new short film "Life is not limited". Let's see how women can #changedestiny in the video and become masters of their own lives.</p>

21	<p>有人说女人是有“保质期”的，你相信吗？继去年感动无数人的短片《她最后去了相亲角》之后，SK-II 又带来#改写命运#的新故事《人生不设限》。三个分别来自中国，日本和韩国带着“30岁生日标签”的女孩，经历着我们可能会遇到的迷茫……不如再勇敢一点吧！#别让时间捆绑你的人生。</p>	<p>Some people say that women are having a "shelf life", do you believe it? Following the short film "She finally goes to the Marriage Corner" that touched countless people last year, SK-II also brought a new story of #changedestiny "Life is not limited". Three girls from China, Japan, and South Korea, with the "30-years-old mark" experienced the confusion we are all likely to encounter. It's better to be more brave! #don't let time bind your life.</p>
22	<p>最近，想必你也被一条名为《人生不设限》的短片刷了屏。这条短片出自 SK-II 发起的#改写命运#公益活动，意在呼吁人们，尤其是女性自身正视年龄的问题。短片中，三位来自中国、日本、韩国的女性，生来就带着三十年的时间印记。当时间逼近最后期限，她们深受着社会、家庭，和自我的压力。随着积压已久的勇气倾泻而出，她们的年龄印记消失了，随之而来的是前所未有的轻松和释然。唯有放下，才有获得。尊崇内心的选择，改写命运，像 SK-II 所传达的信念一样，敢于正视自我、不被时间所限，过属于自己的人生。</p>	<p>Recently, you have probably been touched by a short film called "Life is not limited". This short film is from SK-II's #changedestiny public welfare activity, which is intended to appeal to people, especially women themselves to face the problem of age. In the short film, three women from China, Japan, and South Korea were born with the imprint of the 30 years. As time approaches the deadline, they were under social, family, and self-pressure. As their long-accumulated courage poured out, their age marks disappeared and this was accompanied by unprecedented ease and relief. Only when you let it go, you can get it. Respect the inner choice, rewrite destiny, and like the belief conveyed by SK-II, have the courage to face up to oneself, not limited by time, live your own life.</p>
23	<p>如果你身上也有“年龄标签”，用你的独立撕掉它吧！</p>	<p>If your body also has an "age tag", tear it off with your independence!</p>

24	<p>30 岁，是不是女性一个“分水岭”？SK-II《人生不设限》的态度短片，讲述了三名 30 岁的女孩在工作、情感、生活，处处倍感社会压力，直到她们听从内心，才得以#改写命运#。有网友认为，年龄并不是女性的“分水岭”，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#。对此，你怎么看？</p>	<p>30 years old, is it a watershed for women? SK-II "Life is not limited" attitude short film tells the story of three 30-year-old girls at work, showing their affection, and life, everywhere they feel the social pressure until they listen to the heart, they were able to #changedestiny. Some netizens believe that age is not a "watershed" for women, #don't let time bind your life. What do you think about it?</p>
25	<p>前段时间 SK-II 在全球发布了一支关于三十岁女性年龄压力的短片，引起了众多讨论。日本的网友俨然分成了两派：支持派鼓励女性追求自己的生活，坚决撕掉年龄标签。反对派认为女性本身就是有“保质期”，需要在三十岁之前完成生育使命。截取了一些网友的评论和观点。。。你们怎么看？</p>	<p>Some time ago, SK-II released a short film about the age pressure of 30-year-old women, which caused a lot of discussions. Japanese netizens have been divided into two groups: the support group encourages women to pursue their own lives and resolutely tear off the age label. The opposition believes that women themselves have a "shelf life", and need to complete the birth mission before the age of thirty. Take out a part of netizens' comments and opinions...What do you think?</p>
26	<p>针对亚洲女性的真实调查中反映出，大部分女孩儿定义黄金年龄是 27 岁，认为社会/他人对女生设定了「时间表」，使她们内心受困于无形压力。这是 SK-II 的新洞察，基于此她们展开了 2017 年#别让时间捆绑你的人生#全新活动，讨论了关于女性年龄压力的问题。其实早在 2015 年，SK-II 就开启了#改写命运#品牌活动，2016 年以一支《她最后去了相亲角》引起社会轰动，还在戛纳崭露头角……不论是纵向时间上长期关注女性议题，还是「命运」、「婚姻」到「年龄」等话题的本土化考虑，SK-II 一直在输出关于女性话题的正向思考，在树立品牌形象的同时，也给国内女性营销带来了一些启示。</p>	<p>According to a real survey of Asian women, it reports that most girls define the age of 27 as the golden age, saying that society/others have set "timetables" for girls, which make them feel trapped in invisible pressures. This is SK-II's new insight, based on which in 2017 they launched a new campaign called #Don't let time bind you to life in which they discussed the female age pressure question. In fact, in the early 2015, SK-II started the #changedestiny campaign, in 2016, it caused social sensation with "She finally went to the Marriage Corner", and it made its appearance in Cannes. Whether it is long-term attention regarding women's vertical time issue, or it is a matter of "destiny", "marriage" and "age" and other local topics, SK-II has been exporting positive thinking on women's topics while building a brand image. It has also brought some inspiration to domestic female marketing.</p>

27	第一次无底妆示人的她，就这样豁出去地卸下心防，事事都力求完美的她，在拍摄前夕做足了万全准备。在那个艳阳高照的上海街头，@SK-II #BareSkinProject# 拍摄正在进行，摄影大师 Jim Goldberg 的镜头中，真实而生动的#汤唯# 跃然眼前，你们喜欢这样的她吗？	The first time she had no makeup, her heart was relieved, she tried to make everything perfect, on the eve of the shooting everything has been prepared. SK-II #Bare Skin Project filming is taking place in the sunny Shanghai streets, through the lens of photographer Jim Goldberg, real and vivid #Tang Wei in front of his eyes, do you like her?
28	汤唯为 SK-II 拍摄的一组无底妆素颜照片。好看，耐看。	Tang Wei's set of no-makeup photos for SK-II. Look good, look at it.
29	在镜头面前，女孩们总是会费尽心思地去修饰自己的面容，以可能会被别人认可的样貌去面对，许多姑娘们更是无美颜滤镜不拍照。这次 SK-II 发起的 #BareSkinProject #邀请六位女星大胆拍摄无底妆大片，看似反其道而行之，但肌肤散发的自然美感以及女星们自若的神态却证明了美有千万种，未经修饰的美同样可以充满力量，为这份勇敢、自信、随性与率真点赞。	In front of the camera, girls will always try their best to decorate their faces, and their appearance will face the approval of other people, many girls do not take pictures without beauty filters. This #BareSkinProject launched by SK-II invited six actresses to take bold shots without makeup, it seems to do the opposite, the natural beauty of the skin and the self-contained expression of the actresses prove that there are ten million kinds of unmodified beauty that can be full of strength, and for that reason they are brave, confident, casual and honest.
30	27岁未结婚的女性被称为“剩女”，但 SK-II 相信每一位女性都可以独立、自信和美丽。为了解单身女性对自己现状的真实想法，SK-II 走进上海人民公园相亲角，记录这群女性的声音。一起倾听她们的故事，分享影片支持所有独立女性#改写命运#。	27 years old unmarried women are called "leftovers", but SK-II believes that every woman can be independent, confident and beautiful. In order to find out what single women really think about themselves, SK-II went to the Marriage Market of Shanghai People's Park to record the voices of these women. Listen to their stories together and share the film to support all independent women #changedestiny
31	#改写命运#无论是享受单身状态还是坚持等待真爱，每一种选择都应该被尊重。SK-II 希望每一位女性作出的选择都是忠于自己，听从内心。影片中哪句话最能触动你勇敢选择的神经？	#changedestiny Whether it is enjoying being single or waiting for true love, every single choice should be respected. SK-II hopes that every choice women make for themselves is true and comes from their inner heart. Which sentence in the video has touched the nerve of your brave choice?

32	<p>美啊！汤唯演绎美丽蜕变，为 SK-II 拍摄全新#改写命运#独白大片发布！汤唯用英语表达，她曾说在英国游学读莎翁的舞台剧时，英文根底很差，甚至被其他同学嘲笑，于是疯狂锻炼英文，最终被她的老师，一位资深英国舞台剧导演邀请她当新戏剧的女主角！命运就是掌握在自己手里！</p>	<p>Beautiful! Tang Wei's interpretation of the beautiful transformation for SK-II shooting for the new #changedestiny monologue big release! Tang Wei expresses herself using English. She once said that when she was studying Shakespeare's stage play in the UK, her English background was so poor that she was even laughed at by other students. So she practiced English crazily and she ended up being taught by her teacher. A veteran British stage director has invited her to become the heroine of the new drama! Destiny is in your own hands!</p>
33	<p>30 岁意味着什么？30 岁那天有人哭泣，有人焦虑，有人彻夜未眠……生日蛋糕上的 30 岁越看越刺眼。是否过了 30 岁女性就过了“保质期”呢？@SK-II #改写命运# 的最新篇章《人生不设限》，里面会有你要的答案。无关年龄，每个人都应该跟随自己的节奏前行，不应被社会强加的“保质期”束缚，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#。</p>	<p>What do 30 years old mean? At 30 years old someone is crying, someone is anxious, someone stays up all night...The 30 years old on the birthday cake look more and more dazzling. Has a woman in her thirties passed her "shelf life"? SK-II #changedestiny, in the latest chapter of "Life without limits" there will be the answer you want. Regardless of age, everyone should follow their own rhythm and should not be bound by the "shelf life" imposed by the society. #Do not let time bind your life.</p>
34	<p>许久不见的汤唯重新出现在镜头前，带来了对于女性年龄压力与#改写命运#的新看法。短片中汤唯完美而从容。“每一秒，我们都有机会，让下一秒变得更好”。不管是影片里还是生活中，复出的汤唯都反璞归真、从内到外散发摄人自信。#别让时间捆绑你的人生#你是谁，只因为你想成为谁。这便是汤唯带给我们的人生信念</p>	<p>Tang Wei, who was not seen for a long time, appeared again in front of the camera bringing new views on women's age pressure and #changedestiny. In the short film, Tang Wei is perfect and calm. "Every second we have a chance to make the next one better" Whether in the film or in life, Tang Wei, who came back, returns to original purity and simplicity, and disseminate self-confidence from inside to outside. #do not let time bind your life. Who you are is just because you want to be the person you are. This is the belief in life that Tang Wei brings to us.</p>



35	看了#欢乐颂 2#, 看到邱莹莹爱上了“传统”的应勤, 还卑微地认为是自己的错, 好令人心疼... 想起去年看过的一个 SK-II 的短片, 正好打破了“邱莹莹式”的迷思, 短片里的她们拥有强大的内心, 充分掌控自己的选择权, 最后出现的#改写命运#也是超有力量。学会爱自己, 才能得到别人尊重。美好的姑娘们哪, “但愿你会懂, 该何去何从。”	I watched "Ode to Joy 2", and saw that Qiu Yingying fell in love with the "tradition" and I was humbled to think that it was her fault. It was so distressed...I am thinking of a SK-II clip seen last year which broke the myth of "Qiu Yingying", in the short film women have a strong heart, full control over their choices and the finally #changedestiny is also powerful. Learn to love yourself, so you will be respected by others. Beautiful girls "I hope you will understand which path to take"
36	SK-II 一直倡导女性#改写命运#, 听从自我选择, 不被外界声音左右。这次, 关于年龄与婚姻, 汤唯说: “年龄是一个数字, 数字等同于这阶段会做的事情。” SK-II 认为, 年龄不应该成为婚姻的压力, #别让时间捆绑你的人生#。即刻转发这条微博, 评论留下你对女性年龄的想法。	SK-II has always advocated women #change destiny, listen to their choices and do not be influenced by the voices of the outside world. This time, regarding age and marriage, Tang Wei said: "Age is a number, and the number is equal to what it will do at this stage". SK-II believes that age should not be the pressure for marriage #do not let lime bind your life. Post this Weibo immediately, leave your thoughts on the women's age.
37	【30岁, 你焦虑了吗】现在的你, 可能在焦急地等待航班, 可能在忙碌着送孩子上学, 可能在手忙脚乱地为自己布置新房……分享你的 30 岁故事#改写命运#to be continued	(30 years old, are you anxious?) Now you may be anxiously waiting for the flight, may be busy taking the children to school, may be scrambling to set up a new house for yourself. Share your 30-year-old story #changedestiny to be continued
38	女生到了 30 岁, 气质更成熟? 经济更独立? 品味更高雅? 恋爱更得心应手? 其实这才是 30 岁女生的真相……看完以后, 我只想要#改写命运#	When a woman is 30 years old, is temperament more mature? Has she more economic independence? Has she better taste? Love is more handy? In fact, this is the truth of the 30-year-old woman...After reading, I just want #changedestiny

39	发布了头条文章：《30岁，才是女人真正开挂的开始》 都30岁了，还折腾什么？过了30岁，女人就是过季的打折品。别太挑剔了，差不多就行了。……30岁的你，人生就该定下来了吗？30岁，的确是女人一生的一个分水岭。可做什么样的自己，过什么样的后半生，决定权在自己手中。#改写命运#	The headline article was published: "30 years old is the beginning of a woman's real opening". At 30 years old, what is the trouble? After 30 years old, women are over-season discounted products. Don't be too picky, it is almost right... The 30 years old you, life is settled? Indeed 30 years old is a watershed of a woman's life. What kind of self can be, what kind of second half of life, the right to decide is in your own hands. #changedestiny
40	去过向往的生活，年龄永远不是你的标签 #改写命运#	The life I have been yearning, age is never your label #changedestiny
41	【你是如何评价女性年龄的？】“女人二十一枝花，三十豆腐渣”，#改写命运#似乎真的很难？聚焦女性年龄与婚姻，SK-II 全新《人生不设限》短片，倡导女性#别让时间捆绑你的人生#。对此，你有什么想法？	How do you evaluate women's age? "Women at the age of 21 are flowers, and at the age of 30 are bean dregs", #changedestiny seems really difficult? Focus on women's age and marriage, SK-II new short film "Life without limits" advocates women #do not let time bind your life. What do you think about this?
42	这是一部能引起所有女生共鸣的走心视频，请把手腕上的“年龄标签”擦去，为这样拍的广告点赞！#改写命运#	This is a heart-warming video that can resonate with all girls. Please wipe the "age tag" on your wrist and like this ad! #changedestiny
43	女生#改写命运#，或许就差一次听从心的选择。30，它是个数字，不是产品，也没有保质期，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#	Girls #changedestiny, perhaps it is time to listen to the choice of the heart. 30, it is just a number, it is not a product, it has not a shelf life #do not let time bind your life
44	如果有人跟你说：“30岁了，该结婚，该生孩子了！”你会怎么做？反驳？敷衍？还是内心真的感觉到压力？最近看了一个视频，是讨论女人是否应该被年龄所束缚的一个小短片，分享给大家。#改写命运# #别让时间捆绑你的人生#。	If someone says to you, "30 years old, it is time to get married and have a baby!" What would you do? Refute? Act in a perfunctory manner? Or do you really feel the pressure inside? Recently I saw a video about whether a woman should be bound by age and I have shared it with everyone. #changedestiny #don't let the time bind your age

45	<p>我觉得自己一定要看 6 月 28 日 20 点的直播辩论，“女性是否应该惧怕三十岁的到来？” 奇葩大咖们：马东，姜思达、肖骁、颜如晶、傅首尔都集体发声，这组合不能更服了！也许，你和 #改写命运# 之间，就差这一场 @SK-II 直播呢。</p>	<p>I feel I must watch the live debate at 20.00 on June 28th. "Will women be afraid of the arrival of thirty years old?" Wonderful important people: Ma Dong, Jiang Sida, Xiao Wei, Yan Rujing, and Fu Seoul are all collectively speaking. This combination cannot be more convincing! Maybe between you and #changedestiny, there is nothing like this live broadcast of SK-II.</p>
46	<p>30 岁，是女生的梦想绊脚石？女性应该惧怕三十岁的到来？NONONO，答案还可以这样... 奇葩议长马东，带领王牌辩手姜思达、肖骁、颜如晶、傅首尔直播出新招，解答女性 #改写命运# 难题！想知道会有怎样的惊喜？6 月 28 日，@SK-II 直播等你来听！</p>	<p>30 years old, is it a stumbling block for women's dreams? Should women be afraid of the arrival of thirty years old? NONONO, the answer can be like this...The wonderful speaker Ma Dong, leading the trump card debaters Jiang Sida, Xiao Wei, Yan Rujing, Fu Seoul live broadcast a new move, explains the #changedestiny difficult problem! Do you want to know what kind of surprise is? On June 28th, SK-II live broadcasting is waiting for you to listen!</p>
47	<p>大家都知道，2015 年@SK-II 在全球范围内开启#改写命运#品牌活动，为了鼓励女性摆脱束缚，活出自己的精彩人生。2016 年，SK-II 带来刷爆朋友圈的《她最后去了相亲角》，为女性争取更多的情感自由。而今年，SK-II 聚焦年龄压力，推出短片《人生不设限》，期待鼓励更多女性打破 30 岁魔咒。年龄并非丈量人生的标准，#别让时间捆绑你的人生#，你是不是也做好准备#改写命运#了呢？</p>	<p>Everyone knows that in 2015 SK-II has launched the #changedestiny brand campaign around the world in order to encourage women to get out of the bondage and to live a wonderful life. In 2016, SK-II brought a group of friends of the "She finally went to the Marriage Market" for gaining more emotional freedom for women. This year, SK-II has focused on age pressure and launched the short film "Life is not limited" expecting to encourage more women to break the 30-years-old spell. Age is not the standard for measuring life #do not let time bind your life. Are you ready to #changedestiny?</p>
48	<p>2017 年，SK-II 延续#改写命运#主题活动，全新篇章《人生不设限》自发布起，便引发各界人士热议。现#别让时间捆绑你的人生#话题影响量已超 20 亿，再次感谢每位爱用者的支持。SK-II 相信，跨越年龄与时间的界线，每个人都可以追寻自己的非凡人生。</p>	<p>In 2017, SK-II continued #changedestiny theme activities, the new chapter "Life is not limited", since its release has aroused heated debate from all public figures. Now #don't let time bind your life topic influence has exceeded 2 billion, thanks again to the support of each user. SK-II believes that by crossing the line between age and time, everyone can pursue their extraordinary life.</p>

49	<p>在意大利的秋日山林，我们与@倪妮 v 相约。高清镜头前，她的美无懈可击，除天生丽质外，长久以来坚持不懈的日常保养同样功不可没。这份美正如她一路走来的无畏姿态，时刻听从自我，勇于#改写命运#。在她挚爱的@SK-II 相伴下，让我们与倪妮一起，漫步于异国无限秋色之中</p>	<p>In the autumn mountain forest of Italy, we have an appointment with Ni Ni V. In the front of the HD lens, her beauty is invulnerable, besides natural beauty, long-lasting perseverance in daily appearance maintenance has also contributed. This beauty is just like the fearless posture she has taken along the way, always obeying herself and courageously #changedestiny. Accompanied by her beloved SK-II, let us walk with Ni Ni in the infinite autumn colors of this foreign country.</p>
50	<p>#改写命运#上海人民公园的相亲角被占领！SK-II 这次真的好酷！</p>	<p>#changedestiny The blind date corner of Shanghai People's Park is occupied. SK-II is really cool this time!</p>

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