Sex appeal in advertising: What consumers think

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ABSTRACT. The current study examined consumers' attitude toward the use of sexual content in advertisements among there different cultural groups; i.e. individualistic sample (White American), collectivistic sample (US temporal visitors from Asia), and acculturation sample (Asian immigrants). Sixty participants were asked about cultural acceptability of sexual content ads and the favourable attitude toward those ads by using Q-methodology. Asian participants reported less cultural acceptability for sexuality, than either Asian American or North American participants. The findings also revealed that North Americans are more likely to prefer the use of sexual content in advertisement than Asians. Asian-American participants agree with North American participants in regard to sexually explicit advertising. Implications and limitations were discussed.

The author dedicates this study to Dr. William Bill Frederickson, PhD, from the Department of Psychology, University of Central Oklahoma, USA, who recently passed away.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the globalisation, advertisers became to realise that using sexual content in advertisement can increase the advertising effectiveness, i.e. consumers' attention and sells products (Aaker and Stayman, 1990; Brown and Stayman, 1992). Consequently, sexuality, as nudity, sexual imagery and satire, is used in advertising goods ranging from personal-care products to heavy industrial machinery (Berkowitz, 1997). Previous empirical studies have indicated that the use of sexual content in advertisements has met with a somewhat mixed consumer response (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994). The use of sexual content in advertisements and consumers' responses to those advertisements could be influenced by culture (Upul & Dinuka, 2005). The current study examined consumers' attitude toward the use of sexual content in advertisements among there different cultural groups; i.e. individualistic group (North American), collectivistic group (US temporal visitors from Asia), and acculturation group (Asian immigrants).

Cultural Paradigm: Individualism, Collectivism, and Acculturation

The study of advertising across cultural boundaries is difficult and challenging, since it is heavily influenced by cultures. The term "culture" encompasses a wide range, including knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morality and customs, capabilities and habits of humans as members of society (McCort & Malhotra, 1993). Culture sets boundaries (however loose) for individual behaviour and influences the functioning of consumers and mass media, so a successful advertising campaign must take cultural differences into account (Hill, 1999).

Breaking down the complexity of culture, one of its most basic dimensions is the value placed on individualism versus collectivism. Individualism, at core, is giving priority to personal goals over the goals of the in-group, whereas collectivism is just the opposite

(Marsella, Devos, & Hsu, 1985; Schwartz, 1990). As an example: in individualistic cultures, such as in some European countries or in America, the pressures involved in independent relationships arise from the ways that individual goals take precedence over group goals. American individualism means not just being self-sufficient, but also striving for self-sufficiency so as to be successful, choosing to control one's own destiny without enlisting help from others (Hsu, 1983). Because of this, individualism is considered central to the American character; in addition, American values that encourage individual achievement and the attainment of material prosperity are rooted in this concept. This is also evidenced in theories of ego and moral development that postulate that autonomy is the highest attainable stage, higher than acceptance of, and conformity to, society's standards (Spence, 1985). In marked contrast, people in Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) have an interdependent relationship within a collectivity, and group goals tend to take precedence over individual goals(Chan, 1986). Historically, Asian cultures have emphasized family, social interests and collective actions, while personal goals and accomplishments have been de-emphasized (Chan, 1986; Schwartz, 1990).

Previous research has demonstrated that this individualism and collectivism framework has important implications for the content of advertisements. Content analyses of magazine advertisements suggest that Korean and Japanese advertisements tend to use more collectivistic appeals, whereas U.S. advertisement tend to use more individualistic appeals (Frith & Sengupta, 1991; Han & Shavitt, 1994). Frith and Sengupta (1991) found that a high score on the individualism index should correlate with a large percentage of ads containing only a single person, while a low score implied primarily group portrayal and infrequent portrayal of a person alone. In summary, advertisement contexts tend to reflect the dominant cultural orientation of the country in which the advertisements are run.

Due to dynamic society, people from one culture migrate to another. The process of the intermingling of cultures is called acculturation. Acculturation happens when original cultural and ethnic identities are integrated with a new culture, which is then assimilated into the original (Buriel, 1993). For example, Vietnamese-Americans who migrated to the United States during 1860-1920 were integrated; their original culture and identity was blended in and became an inherent part (even if a subordinate one) of the culture and identity of the United States. An illustration of this is that these Vietnamese-Americans continue to maintain their own community and to celebrate special Vietnamese events and holidays (Do, 1999). Unlike their parents, immigrants' children are greatly attracted to American behaviour models both in school in particular and in society as a whole. One reason for this is strong peer pressure from classmates, and pressure from the mass media, to become Americanized (Do, 1999). A rapidly expanding literature on acculturation has accompanied the increase in international migration. Some studies in the area of consumer acculturation have shown that immigrants who come to the U.S. are not a homogenous group and their consumption patterns and advertising perceptions vary within the immigrant groups (Durriya & Zahid, 1999). Therefore, the cultural combination between their cultural background and cultural host could affect how immigrant consumers in the U.S. perceive and accept advertising messages. To illustrate, Citibanks' advertisement aimed at Asian-Americans used a dragon to portray celebration rather than corks from champagne bottles which were considered inappropriate (Khairullah, 1995).

Culture and Sexual content in Advertisements

Violation of cultural norms results in sanctions or penalties ranging from mild social disapproval to banishment from the group. Therefore, the use of sexual content in advertising might succeed in one culture, but fail in another; Asian culture tends to be more conservative

and collective than Western (Bochner, 1994). There have not been many studies of the use of sexually appealing advertising in Asian culture. Another study (Mastor, Jin, & Cooper, 2000), note that Islam has influenced Malaysian culture; for example, a female should dress so that her entire body is covered. Dressing improperly is a violation to the Quran (the sayings of the prophet Muhammad). In Western Canada, dogs are popular pets, treated extremely well; however, in Islamic countries, dogs are considered dirty and not to be kept as pets (Bryson, 1996). Researchers indicate that different cultures seem to emphasize various advertising appeals (Pollay & Gallagher, 1990). French culture is perceived as being an individually glamorous society with great openness in sexual expression that tends to have fewer sexual hang-ups than do most other societies. Biswas and Olsen (1992) tested the hypothesis that French advertisers use sexual content more than North American advertisers; their research revealed that 24% of French advertisements used sexual content, as compared to only 8.6% of the North American ones (a statistically significant difference), showing that French consumers are thought more receptive to sexual content than North Americans.

In summary, each culture has inherent values and beliefs that help formulate its ideas of what is right and what is wrong. The current study presents an understanding of culture, including acculturation, and individualism versus collectivism. In society today, sexually explicit advertising is fast approaching the norm, rather than the exception; therefore, the premise for the current study is concerned with the perception of sexual-oriented advertisements based on the particular cultures as in hypotheses below.

The hypotheses utilized herein as a means of demonstrating that sexually explicit advertising does affect people in different cultures are:

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in perception of marketing effectiveness and acceptability level of sexually explicit advertising due to three cultural aspects (Individualism, Collectivism and Acculturation).

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in favourableness (likeability) of using sexual content in advertising due to cultural aspects, such that White-Americans are more likely to prefer advertisements using sexual content than Asian participants.

Hypothesis 3: Asian-American participants will tend to agree with Asian participants in regard to sexually explicit advertising, such that Asian-American participant Asian are more likely to prefer it when sex appeal in advertisement is not used than when it is used in advertising.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study assembled a convenience sampling of 78 participants from Oklahoma City, in addition to various cities throughout the state of Oklahoma. The sample includes Asians, Asian-Americans, and White-Americans; each of the three groups has 26 participants, comprised of 13 males and 13 females. Ages range from 18 to 35 years, with 39 females and 39 males. Asian is defined here as: Thai, Malaysian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Taiwanese. These particular Asians came to the United States for the purpose of visiting, travelling or for studying. They have remained in the United States no more than five years. They can speak their own language as a mother language and English as a second language. Asian-Americans are Asian immigrants (including Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotians and Taiwanese) who have migrated to Unites States since 1975. Also included are their children who were born in the United States. Some Asian-Americans lived

in their home country for a portion of their lives, thus both the parents' generation and their children's generation can speak their own language as well as English. White-American refers to White American citizens who were born in the United States, speak only English, and have never been to Asia.

Materials

The materials utilized in the questionnaire were 50 print advertisements with physically attractive females or males serving as the model(s). Additionally, 50 print advertisements were used without physically attractive females or males used as model. Each of the one-hundred advertisements used were full page in length, in color and cut from magazines such as "Vogue", "Gourmet", "Fortune", "Elite Home", "Lifestyle, "Oklahoma Today", "Teen", "GQ", and "YM". The publication dates of magazine publication for all 100 advertisements ranged from 1991-2000.

Six Asians (three female and three male), six Asian-Americans (three female and three male) and six White-Americans (three female and three male) were chosen from a convenience sample of 78 people (these participants would not participate in the phase two-Q-sorting). These 18 participants were each asked to view the 100 print advertisements and to value each on the rating sheet. Fifty of the advertisements included the use of a sexually content scene with a physically attractive model with physical characteristics, such as full-lipped, big breasted, slim bodied, small waist and big-hipped. Fifty of the advertisements did not include a sexually content. The rating sheet included the following instruction: "Below is a 9-point scale. Indicate how much you think that the advertisement, which you just viewed, is sexually attractive. Place a check in the space in each scale that best represents your feeling. The respondent will designate his or her response by using this example: mark -4, if you find

the particular advertisement to be the least sexually attractive and mark +4, if you find it to be the most sexually attractive."

The next step was to determine the average score for the advertisements, by ranking them from highest to lowest score. The 18 advertisements that were designated by the respondents as having the highest score based on sexual content; and the 18 that have the lowest score, based on lack of sexual content, were chosen as the Q-sample for Q-sorting; the 64 ads that received the middle scores were removed. Thirty-six advertisements were chosen from Phase One (the 18 selected as the most attractive, and the 18 selected as the least attractive). Phase One laid the groundwork for Phase Two. The next step was to laminate each of the selected advertisements, and then to place a number for each on the front.

Design

The concept of the design portion dealt with the predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to particular advertising stimulus (use or non-use of sexual content) during a particular exposure situation. Favourable or unfavourable attitudes would be evidenced in terms of dimension, and two dimensions were specified: the most likely and the least likely. The type of measurement used was an interval level measurement, based on the Q Methodology because it permits the drawing of all the inferences allowed by ordinal and nominal scales; another use of the Q Methodology is to provide additional information regarding the distance between advertisements. A forced sort procedure was used, with nine points in this distribution (36 items using a -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 frequency scale values distribution). The forced nature of the distribution dictates that each participant places two advertisements on each of the extreme ends of the continuum, three advertisements on the next two inner points, and so forth. The two advertisements the participant placed on the extreme left are the advertisements that he or she feels the least-liked. The two

advertisements the participant placed on the extreme right are the advertisements that he or she feels the most-liked. The centre pile with eight advertisements is the neutral designation.

Following Q Methodology, each participant was asked to designate which of the pictures he or she found to be the least attractive based on sexual content (shown by –4) and those that he or she found to be the most attractive, based on sexual content (shown by + 4). This is when FANOVA (Factor Analysis and ANOVA Analysis) becomes useful—predictions regarding differences in points-of-view must be deduced from theory. The FANOVA Model is a three phase sequential program that gives support to tested theory, as well as providing specific detail for interpreting (understanding) each factor's viewpoint. Each factor is a cluster of related items, in this case, pictures. A concourse is the gathering of stimulus elements, this means putting together a group of similar items (in this research study, pictures were used) that were viewed by both males and females to obtain the point-of-view (opinion) of each gender, regarding each picture viewed. FANOVA designates that a special restriction is forced on the analysis, which is that the solution will reflect that there are only two factors, a male and a female factor, regarding the appeal of sexually explicit advertising. In other words, how do males versus females tend to rate advertising that is sexually explicit versus that which is not sexually explicit? Factor analysis is a statistical technique that allows researchers to determine the relationships among large number of items, such as pictures.

Procedure

Sixty participants were assigned into the group based on their ethnicity (Asian, Asian-American and White-American). There were 30 females and 30 males. While viewing the advertisements, they were given the following instruction; "choose (two) of those advertisements that you like the most", "choose (two) of those advertisements that you like the least" and so on, until all thirty-six ads had been rated by each participant.

After they had viewed all 36 advertisements, which entailed rating each according to the degree of, or lack of, likeability, the participants were then asked to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire was comprised of two sections, the first dealt with the advertising effectiveness and acceptability of use sexual content in advertisements; and the second was a demographic survey, which asks for personal information, such as age, gender, educational background, marital status, and religion.

RESULTS

The first set of analyses examined the participants' acceptability and perception of advertising effectiveness of the using sexual content. Three questions were asked, based on the following statements:

1) The usage of sexual content in advertisement is effective.

2) Personally, the sexually explicit advertisement is acceptable.

3) The sexually explicit advertisement is acceptable in your culture.

Responses were coded on a Likert scale (strongly agree=6, moderately agree=5, slightly agree=4, slightly disagree=3, moderately disagree=2, strongly disagree=1 and N/A=0) and were analysed using a 3 (Questions) x 3 (Ethnicity) between-subjects MANOVA.

Take in Table 1

For perceptions about the advertisement effectiveness of sexual content in advertisement (QUEST1), the results revealed a significant Ethnicity by gender interaction (F (2,54)=4.63;

p=.01). For personal acceptability (QUEST2), the 2 x 3 MANOVA revealed a significant effect for gender ($F(1,54) = 5.12$; $p<.03$). Regarding cultural acceptability (QUEST3), the 2 x 3 MANOVA revealed a significant effect for Ethnicity ($F(2,54)=25.13$; $p<.001$).

Examination of mean scores revealed that men believed sex was more effective in advertisements than women (M=4.77; SD=.90), and in particular, Asian women believed sexuality in ads was less effective than the other groups. Overall, men found sexuality in ads was more acceptable than women. Examination of the means showed Asian participants reported less cultural acceptability for sexuality, than either Asian American or American participants. The findings supported hypothesis 1 that there is a difference in perception of marketing effectiveness and acceptability level of sexually explicit advertising due to cultural aspects.

A FANOVA procedure was used to analyse the underlying pattern of favourable responses to the pictures. Data for the FANOVA came from the 60 participants' ratings of the 36 advertisements. To start, the Q-sort responses from the participants were factor analysed. Using the 60 subjects as the variables, and the 36 ad ratings as the items, a total of 3 factors were extracted. To aid in interpretation, these factors were then rotated using a Varimax procedure.

The Principal Components Analyses extracted three factors that accounted for 81% of the total variance (Factor 1=65%, Factor 2 = 10%, and Factor 3 = 6%). Final communalities across the 30 Female participants were examined to check for inconsistent participants. The communalities ranged widely, and were generally acceptable.

The Principal Components Analyses extracted three factors that accounted for 83% of the total variance (Factor 1=58%, Factor 2 = 19%, and Factor 3 = 6%). Final communalities

across the 30 Male participants were examined to check for inconsistent participants. The communalities ranged widely, and were generally acceptable.

Take in Table 2 and 3

Asian-American females and Asian-American males scored highest on factor 1 (M=.782; M=.939). On factor 2, both Asian females and males scored highest (M=.626; M=.596). Interestingly, on factor 3 American females scored highest (M=.236) while Asian males scored highest (M=.318).

According to the results, in the area of Ethnicities, three factors extraction might not be the best solution, because of the ANOVA mean score on factor 3. The highest ANOVA mean score of factor for males is Asian, but for females is American. These results clearly rejected my third hypothesis that Asian-American participants will tend to agree with Asian participants in regards to sexually explicit advertising. Therefore, I decided to adjust the design in order to find better results. Thus, Asian-Americans and Americans as a group were combined; therefore there are two groups for analyses. The genders were separated at the beginning of Principal Components Factor Analyses to insure more sensitive results.

 The Principal Components Analyses extracted two factors for females that accounted for 75% of the total variance (Factor 1=65%; Factor 2 = 10%). Final communalities across the 30 Female participants were examined to check for inconsistent participants. The communalities ranged widely, and were generally acceptable.

The principal Components Analyses extracted three factors that accounted for 77% of the total variance (Factor 1=58%; Factor 3=19%). Final communalities across the 30 Male

participants were examined to check for inconsistent participants. The communalities ranged widely, and were generally acceptable.

Take in Table 3 and 5

Two Factors ANOVA Mean Table revealed that Factor 1 was referred to as Asian-American and American, shows that the highest mean score for Asian-Americans/Americans is both male and female ($\underline{M}$=.859; $\underline{SD}$=.215) and American ($\underline{M}$=.774; $\underline{SD}$=.144). Factor 2 was referred to as Asian, shows that the highest mean score for Asians is both male ($\underline{M}$=.667; $\underline{SD}$=.369) and female ($\underline{M}$=.671; $\underline{SD}$=.254).

To test the second hypothesis (there is a difference in favourableness (likeability) of using sexual content in advertising due to three cultural aspects, such that White-Americans are more likely to prefer advertisements using sexual content than Asian and Asian-American participants), the Fisher's Zs scores were used to differentiate between the Asian participants and the Asian-American and North American participants on their viewpoints to the 36 print advertisements.

Discussion

This research has explored consumer attitudes toward the use of sexual content in advertising among three different cultures. The findings reveal that North Americans are more likely to prefer the use of sexual content in advertisement than are Asians, supporting hypothesis 2. North American males chose as their five most popular advertisements those have sexual content (numbers 7, 17, 21, 23, and 25-refer to appendix). As the study of Severn and

colleagues (1990) shows, the use of sexually explicit appeals can result in more favourable attitudes in participants. A female model particularly enhanced the recognition of print advertisement (Reid & Soley, 1981). In considering the female models from advertisements which American males chose, the common elements were models with low waist-to-hip ratio, wide bust, and makeup. These characteristics are considered attractive attributes for American females (Psychology Today, 1993). Why do males prefer females with these characteristics? Where do these characteristics stem from? According to Miller's sexual selection study (cf. Crawford, 1998), it substantiates that the human face and breasts have been the primary focus of American males. The human face, in particular, is a major target of selective mate choice during all phases of courtship. The study of Perrett, May, & Yoshikawa (1994), reveals that females with more childlike faces, large eyes, small noses, full breasts and lips are more attractive. These studies were some of the main influences why Mattel decided to produce the Barbie doll in 1958 (Gross, 1999). The buxom breasted Barbie doll has become the paradigm for girls (Synders, 1999). However, cultural differences result in changes in the perception of female attractiveness, which is stereotyped differently between Caucasians and Asians (Wheeler & Kim, 1997). That is why the first five most popular advertisements for White-American males were those that did not depict Asian-like female models with black hair and eyes, yellowish skin, small bodies, and less well defined noses. In contrast, Asian males chose three out of five pictures that depicted Asian-like female models. When considering the two most popular advertisements for White-American males, such as numbers 23 and 21, the criteria for forming this group's favourable attitudes are the depiction of more sexual imagery and being quite suggestive.

The findings also show that North American females are more likely than are the Asian female group to favour the use of sexual content in advertisements. The findings obviously support the opposite-sex effect (Simpson, Horton, & Brown, 1996), that is female viewers

responded more positively to sexy male models than male viewers did. The four most popular advertisements, numbers 33, 32, 34, and 35, for North American females are ones that show the following attributes on male models: "V"-shaped bodies, high cheekbones, strong jaws, strong chins, and prominent noses. One of the five ads that North American females chose is ad number 29, which shows three female models. Why should North American females be interested in this advertisement? There is a study revealing that the models on commercials, including actresses and singers, have a definite effect on females' self-perceptions (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). The three women shown on this particular ad each have a different dominating style of attractiveness, and these points can attract female viewers to focus on, and then to select this advertisement as a favourite.

As to negative attitudes toward advertisements, the five least popular for North American males are ones that use male models, such as numbers 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35. These particular advertisements are both sexual non-sexual content. These same ads attracted female viewers, so why did the males view them negatively? According to Hupka and Bank (1996), as men evolved, sexual jealousy was used to assure paternity confidence. They noted that since American manhood is based on success and autonomy—the ideal of the masculine achiever—this is why North American males described those advertisements as the least-liked ones.

For North American females, the five least-liked advertisements, numbers 35, 31, 32, 33, and 34, were those that had sexual content combined with sexy female models. Why do these advertisements succeed among male viewers, but not with woman viewers? This is because of the sex-role stereotypical effect (Mackay and Covell 1997). There is much evidence to suggest that exposure to gender-role stereotyping, which is common in advertising, is associated with more gender-typed views of the world. In turn, this appears to be associated

with heightened aggressive attitudes toward women, with women's concern about body image, and with gender-role values. Exposure to stereotyped gender portrayals in advertisements actually may engender negative gender-role attitudes, as the findings attest.

The findings for Asian participants also support the hypothesis that Asians are less favourable to use of sexual content in advertisements. Three ads that display sexual content that were selected by Asians, numbers 3, 25, and 29, are those in which the models' breasts are not visible. Compared with the most popular advertisements for North American males, which show body attractiveness by the female models wearing closely fitted clothes, these particular ads do not explicitly contain either sexual imagery or suggestiveness. More interestingly, two of the five most-liked advertisements are free of any sexual content, numbers 10 and 20. These two have the appearance of being professional and charming for Asian males. This illustrates that the effective degree of sexual content in advertising is different between North American males and Asian males. Both groups of viewers approve the use of sexual content in advertising; however, Asian males prefer it to be less overt. Unlike North American males, nudity, sexual imagery and suggestive advertisements are not as effective for Asian male viewers as they are for North American males. Moreover, Asian males found Asian-like female models more attractive than American female models, such as when comparing the factor score of number 3 (sexy Asian-like female) which is higher than number 29 (sexy American females), and the factor score of number 10 (non-sexual Asian-like female) is higher than number 20 (non-sexual American female). The findings of the five least-liked advertisements for Asian males, numbers 5, 7, 15, 21, and 27, also support this statement. The findings for Asian females are consistent with those of Asian males' findings. Four of the five least-liked advertisements for Asian females, numbers 5, 15, 17, and 19, depict nudity and sexual imagery. These particular advertisements tend to create a negative image of female viewers in line with the sex-role stereotypical effect (Mackay and Covell 1997).

However, ad number 19 seems to utilize less sexual content, so why it did become one of the least-liked ads for Asian females? The researcher had the opportunity to get back with some of the Asian participants who chose ad number 19 as a negative in order to discuss with them precisely what they felt about it. Overall, they did not like the milk stain on the model's lip and her posture. One particular participant gave this opinion, "It seems semen-like, isn't it." Reactions such as this should be a consideration for advertisers. The use of ambiguities in advertisements may actually generate negative evaluations by consumers, as shown in the study of Perrachio and Meyers-Levy (1994).

One of the five least-liked advertisements among Asian females is number 14 (depicting a woman in soccer clothing). This may be due to the effect of female ideology in the Asian cultures (Steinberg et al., 1985), with greater expectations of equality between the sexes in Western cultures, such as the United States and England, than in Asian cultures, such as China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan. In these Asian countries, women tend to accentuate domestic activities, such as preparing food, caring for children, and managing the household economy. Men in Asian cultures dominate some careers or activities such as engineering or soccer. In Western cultures, like the U.S. and England, this ideology has gradually changed, but it has taken a long time. This is particularly true in Asian cultures such as China, Japan and Thailand, in which the parents teach their daughters about their standards of femininity (Hoden, 1989 & King, 1988). Because of this type of teaching, a woman dressed in athletic attire in an ad tends to create a negative attitude from the cultural perspective.

Which ads did Asian females select as the most favourable? The five most-liked advertisements among Asian females are the ones that depict caring and enjoyable emotion, such as numbers 3, 28, 30, 35 and 36. Although numbers 3 and 35 are considered to have

sexual content—the enjoyable emotion is more attractive to them than the model's body is. Moreover, Asian females are more likely to prefer Asian-like models than American type models.

The third hypothesis: that Asian-American participants will tend to agree with Asian participants was rejected. This could be explained by the pattern of acculturation. Immigrant group may have low commitment to the home country's culture and high commitment to host culture, or have an equal preference for both cultures, or have high commitment to home country's culture and low commitment to host culture (Durriya & Zahid, 1999). These patterns could be influenced by social environment. Thus, socialization can affect children's thoughts as well as their way of life. Borman (1982) found that sociolegals, such as parents or guardians, siblings, and other members of the kinship system and socio-others, such as the sociability network that surrounds the sociolegals, affect children directly. However, peer-groups and the public also have a major affect on children. There are many studies that reveal that Asians, who have lived in the United States for a long time or who were born there, tend to be Americanized (Abu-Ali, 1999; Damji & Lee, 1995; Nydell, 1996). According to the acculturation concept (Buriel, 1993), an original culture is blended with a living culture. In a case such as this, one of the cultures has to be dominant. This study revealed that American culture dominates attitudes toward the use of sexual content in advertisements among Asian-American participants.

The use of sexual content in advertisement has been controversial for some time. Some studies revealed that the usage of sexual content is positive effect, such as consumers' recall, consumers' attention and sales (Baker & Churchill, 1997; Miller, 1992; Morrison & Sherman, 1992; Steadman, 1969; Stern, 1993); other studies have shown a negative effect, such as negative emotion (Baker & Churchill, 1997; Judd & Alexander, 1983; O'Connor,

Baher, Gong, & E., 1986). The current study focused on positive advertising effectiveness in general. We found that men believed using sexual content was more advertising than women, and in particular, Asian women believed using sexuality was less advertising effective than the other groups. Moreover, advertisements which use sexual content seemed to be acceptable among three different participating cultures—regardless of the degree of the use of sexual content. However, the findings from the questionnaire regarding the acceptability of the use of sexual content in advertising revealed that men found sexuality in advertisements more acceptable than women did. In the area of cultural acceptability, the study findings showed that Asians showed less cultural acceptance of sexual content in advertising than Americans and Asian-Americans. Perhaps even more interesting, the findings found that participants, reporting negative acceptability to sexuality chose ads with a sexual content as favourable. What do these results tell advertisers?

Clearly, perplexity about whether or not to use a sexual content has no simple solution. After all, the use of sexual content in advertising remains useful for the advertising industry. An implication of this study is that advertisers should keep in mind the cultural aspect. Advertising across cultural boundaries is a difficult and challenging task. Many Asian countries are concerned about Westernization, and in particular Americanization, of their cultures; and this has led to their attempts to ban advertising from America, which includes the corresponding advertised products. Global advertisers, such as those for Gucci, Marlboro and Pepsi-Cola, need to be awakened to the need for general cultural sensitivity, particularly in regard to the use of sexual content in advertising. Fragrance advertising provides an interesting example—as the majority of this type of product advertising seems to open the door to the use of strong overt sexual appeals. This type of advertisement has proved successful over time to Americans and Europeans. However, in Asian countries, particularly those that are predominately Muslim or Buddhist, the preference is that advertisers should not

portray women in sexual poses. The subject of international advertising raises many ethical issues; including the fact that ethical societal considerations tend to change over time; therefore what is considered appropriate and acceptable in advertisements must also change. For those advertisers who advertise their products across cultural lines, perhaps a good starting point for change could be with a reduction of sexual content in the Asian markets; this could be a possible outcome of this study. Moreover, emotional content could be utilized as a replacement for the current trend towards using sexual content; and this could prove effective when dealing with those from rigid cultures—emotional advertising is designed primarily to elicit a positive affective response rather than causing needless problems and complications (Batra & Stephens, 1994).

The limitations of this study are as follows: (1) Asian participants might be unduly influenced by the American culture since the study used Asians living in the United States as participants, and (2) The materials (advertisements) need to have a wider variety of Asian female and male models. Therefore, an extension study of the use of sexual content in advertisement should be considered, this time gathering the data from the participant's countries of origin in order to minimize the effect of other cultures on the input of each participant. Moreover, the study would be in depth to allow for the impact of each respective subculture and use stimuli (advertisements) that offer more variety, particularly in the areas of Ethnicity and gender of models. Comparing advertisements from Asian magazines with American magazines should be another variation in any further study.

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Appendix: advertisements used in the study

The following are short descriptions of the advertisements used, as referred to by number in the text:

3: Female, very young, Asian, skimpy brief pink and red swimsuit, long brown hair, looks to be having a good time.

5: Female, white, Scandinavian or European, slender, gold body make-up, see-through gold dress, otherwise nude, hair smooth style, lavish jewellery, looks still and somber.

7: Female, European, late thirties, looks anorexic, naked to waist, tight skirt, gold body make-up, Egyptian face make-up, lavish jewellery, breasts partly covered, one nipple visible.

10: Female, Asian, late twenties, professional suit and blouse, olive skin, raven black short hair, made up, earrings.

11: Female, extremely skinny, young, European or American, sheer black bra and panties, large, black felt hat, brim turned down, wisps of blonde hair peeking out, unhooking bra, thoughtful.

14: Female, young, athletic, tanned, brown brows and eyes, short hair looks wet, white Nike soccer uniform (United States Olympic women's soccer team), tall glass of milk on knee, white milk moustache on upper lip, exudes power and energy.

15: Female, nude, silver nipple clamp, breast partly covered, body very dark and gleaming.

17: Female, young, nude, blonde, American, long hair, eyes closed, made-up, breasts partly covered, on orange sign.

19: Female, (Ivana Trump, extremely wealthy American), European extraction, approximately 55, extremely well preserved, milk moustache, eyes huge and dark green, long bleached blonde hair with bangs, ornately dressed, elaborate expensive jewellery, exudes power, elegance and money.

20: Female, young, white American, (Sarah Michelle Gellar), pale, slight tan, fully clothed, long, straight dyed dark blonde hair, made up, large dark green eyes, elegantly dressed.

21: Two lovers embracing, white, tan, man naked to waist; female shorter, eyes closed, made-up, hair long, tousled, brown.

23: Female, white, young, blonde, in water, partial nudity, breasts mostly covered, long straight hair.

25: Female, American, clothed, full figure, long brown straight hair, brown eyes, form fitting dress, silver watch, pensive, expectant.

27: Female, young, dark-skinned, naked except for panties, tattoo on right shoulder, hair is black and long, eyebrows and eyes are also quite dark. lips heart-shaped, attractive, looks.

28: Females, four, (ad for Singapore airline), beautiful, young, in ceremonial national dress, two possibly from India or Malaysia, a Chinese opera singer, one perhaps from Indonesia, all vibrantly and elaborately dressed and made up, extensive jewelry.

29: Females, three, ("Charlie's Angels", from movie), smiling with eyes and mouths, arms around one another, black slacks; straight hair - one short, two long; two with no jewellery, one with; one Asian, two American.

30: Female, young, Asian extraction, wrapped up in soft towel, teenager, dark brown hair and brown brows and large brown eyes, nose round, cheeks full, pretty mouth, contented, at peace.

31: Male, young, muscular, American, white jockey shorts, three images of him in picture, light brown hair, finely chiseled facial features, appealing.

32: Male slim, light skinned, very tall, early thirties, hazel eyes, strong facial features, thick curly sandy hair, pale blue shirt, gray sweater.

33: Male, darkly tanned, muscular, mid-twenties, bare to waist, in water, hair, eyebrows, eyes all very dark, lips full.

34: Male, white, energetic, possibly European, large green eyes, about thirty years, dressed warmly for winter, seen waist up, straight white teeth, brown furry hat, no hair showing.

35: Male, smiling, young, bare to waist, thick brown wavy hair, large eyes, good nose, white teeth, body oiled.

36: Male, light-skinned, young, American or European, hair straight, dark blonde, eyebrows bushy, brown, eyes large and brown, long nose, full lips, freckles on face, shirt and slacks, deep in thought.

Table 4: The participants' beliefs about the use of sex in advertisement
2x3 between-subjects MANOVA

Question 1: The usage of sex appeal in advertisement is effective.				
Female			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	4.200	1.229
		Asian-American	5.000	0.471
		American	5.100	0.568
Male			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	5.300	0.483
		Asian-American	5.000	0.471
		American	5.100	0.316
Question 2 : Personally, the use of sex appeal in advertisement is acceptable.				
Female			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	4.600	0.966
		Asian-American	4.900	0.316
		American	4.200	1.751
Male			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	4.900	0.738
		Asian-American	5.200	0.422
		American	5.200	0.422
Question 3 : The use of sex appeal in advertisement is acceptable in my culture.				
Female			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	2.700	1.494
		Asian-American	5.300	0.483
		American	4.900	1.449
Male			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	3.400	1.578
		Asian-American	5.300	0.483
		American	5.400	0.516

Table 5: Three factors ANOVA 3x3 BW (Ethnicities x Three Factors) for females.

VariableFACTOR1			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.228	0.265
		Asian-American	0.782*	0.063
		American	0.760	0.251
VariableFACTOR2			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.626*	0.328
		Asian-American	0.471	0.087
		American	0.289	0.106
VariableFACTOR3			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	-0.163	0.352
		Asian-American	0.118	0.150
		American	0.236*	0.173

Table 6: Three factors ANOVA 3x3 BW (Ethnicities x Three Factors) for males.

VariableFACTOR1			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.191	0.235
		Asian-American	0.939*	0.020
		American	0.762	0.326
VariableFACTOR2			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.596*	0.429
		Asian-American	0.157	0.063
		American	-0.102	0.073
VariableFACTOR3			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.318*	0.320
		Asian-American	0.110	0.035
		American	0.228	0.195

Table 7: Two factors ANOVA 2x3 BW (Ethnicities x Two Factors) for females.

VariableFACTOR1			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.139	0.352
		Asian-American/ American	0.774*	0.144
VariableFACTOR2			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.671*	0.254
		Asian-American/ American	0.412	0.133

Table 8: Two factors ANOVA 2x3 BW (Ethnicities x Two Factors) for males.

VariableFACTOR1			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.180	0.311
		Asian-American/ American	0.859*	0.215
VariableFACTOR2			Mean	Std. Dev.
	ETHNICITY	Asian	0.667*	0.369
		Asian-American/ American	0.121	0.131