

Gender Roles in Television Commercials in Asia

—A Comparison of Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Thailand, and Singapore—

京都産業大学 ポンサピタックサンティピヤ

Television advertisements are a rich source of data for social scientists to investigate as they can be seen as a reflection of prevailing cultural values. Gender value is also one of the critical factors in developing marketing strategies via advertising messages. Although research of gender roles in advertisements is plentiful in the United States, our understanding of sex-role portrayal in an international context is limited because there are so few studies. This study's objective is to examine the similarities and differences of gender roles in Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, Thai, and Singaporean television commercials. The research methodology focuses on content analysis, and advertisements in 2018 were collected, coded, and analyzed. Samples were collected from the three highest-rated commercial channels in each country. For each day, one channel was picked randomly. The dates included Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays to avoid the biases of television programs that were sponsored by a single company, since the competition for ratings during the weekend is quite high. In addition, each sampling was coded into 7 categories: narration, gender, role, type of working role, type of non-working role, age of main character, and product type. In each commercial, only the main character that appeared the most often was selected and coded. As a result, most of the findings of this research are similar to previous results in the literature. However, the analysis refutes the conclusion that the roles of males and females in advertising correspond accurately to the construction of gender roles in reality. Conversely, the advertisements analyzed seem to reflect an ideal image of gender roles in society. Moreover, the results of gender roles in television commercials in some countries show equality in gender roles, and this supports the concept of a decrease of gender stereotyping in advertisements. Additionally, from the research findings, the characteristics of gender roles in Asian advertising can be classified into three groups as outlined below. 1) Non-stereotypical gender roles. 2) Stereotypical gender roles, but equality in working and non-working roles. 3) Stereotypical gender roles, but equality in working roles. 4) Stereotypical gender roles, but equality in non-working roles. Moreover, according to the trend of "being housewife" in Asian society, this research suggests further study to pursue the appearance of the housewife in television commercials in other Asian countries as well. This analysis also suggests that an understanding of the background and situation of gender roles in each society is crucial in interpreting and analyzing statistical results in this field.