Cultural differences in Body Image Perception and its importance in Consumer Marketing

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Grant project:

“Importance of Body Image in Marketing”

Grant Agency of the Czech Republic
GACR 402/09/0311 (2009-2011)
Definition of Body Image

**Body image** refers to a person’s perception of their own physical appearance, usually in relation to some „ideal.“

**Body image** as consumer’s subjective evaluation of his physical self. (Michael Solomon)
Schematic model of Body Image

Diagram of Body Image

1. How I perceive myself
2. How I would like to perceive myself
3. How I think others perceive me
4. How I would like others to perceive me

Objective physical condition of a person

Current / Actual condition

Ideal condition

Source: Own diagram
Map of Body Image

Evaluation of perception by myself

Evaluation of perception by others

High

Low

Current / Actual condition

Ideal condition

Source: Own graph
Body Image

(ideal) body image is culturally conditioned by the particular environment
Cultural Differences in Body Image Perception

Source: Yang, L. (2007): Ost trifft West, Germany, Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz
Differences in skin tone color

USA
China
USA
China

Source: Yang, L. (2007): Ost trifft West, Germany, Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz
Body decorations

- Tattoos
- Body piercing
- Tongue forking
- Henna painting
Cultural Differences in Body Image perception (China vs US)

Research explores:

1) Questionnaire - the way consumers perceive (ideal) body image in a particular culture (China vs. US)

2) Content analysis - the way body image is portrayed in advertising in such cultures (China vs. US)
Body Image in advertisement

- Increasing interest in one’s own bodily appearance
- In evaluating our body, we compare it with other bodies, especially bodies in advertisements
Problems related to BI advertisement
Plastic surgery

Source: China Daily, European Weekly: Showing Face:Looks Can Kill. December 3-9, 2010, p.3
Research Methodology

- Online questionnaire (September 2009 – November 2009)
- 24 questions (Chinese and English version of Questionnaire)
- N = 220 (Chinese respondents)
- N = 254 (American respondents)
Body Image Parameters:

- Size/shape of eyes
- Size/shape of lips
- Skin complexion
- Body shape
- Body ornamentation
  (tattoo, piercing)
Popular stereotypes

Most attractive eyes on women?
Research Results

Considering eyes, what kind of eyes do you consider the most attractive on women?

USA

- Medium sized eyes: 69.49%
- Almond shaped/Asian eyes: 25.42%
- Big eyes: 5.08%

China

- Medium sized eyes: 54.84%
- Almond shaped/Asian eyes: 38.71%
- Big eyes: 3.23%
- Small eyes: 3.23%
Popular stereotypes

Most attractive lips on women?

USA

China
Research Results
Considering lips, what kind of lips do you consider the most attractive on women?

USA
- Medium size lips: 64.41%
- Full and visible lips: 35.59%

China
- Medium size lips: 67.74%
- Narrow lips: 9.68%
- Full and visible lips: 22.58%
Popular stereotypes
Skin complexion

USA
China
Research Results

Do you believe that people with the following skin complexion look well:

USA
- Rather fair: 5.08%
- Rather suntanned: 40.68%
- The skin tone does not matter: 54.24%

China
- The skin tone does not matter: 32.26%
- Rather suntanned: 3.23%
- Rather fair: 64.52%
Popular stereotypes

Body shape

USA

China
Research Results

Are you happy with your body shape? Would you like to:

USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neither</td>
<td>37.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add weight</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose weight</td>
<td>55.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neither</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add weight</td>
<td>16.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose weight</td>
<td>61.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content Analysis

American and Chinese version (2009)
# Ethnical background of the portrayed persons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnical background</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etnikum</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0,57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europoid</td>
<td>86,43%</td>
<td>68,07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongoloid</td>
<td>1,43%</td>
<td>29,83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afroamerican</td>
<td>3,21%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>6,07%</td>
<td>1,34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulat</td>
<td>0,36%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>2,50%</td>
<td>0,19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Součet</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)
Comparison of Body Weight in Portrayed Persons in the USA and China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Under</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Above</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>39,84%</td>
<td>59,76%</td>
<td>0,40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>6,67%</td>
<td>93,33%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total USA</td>
<td></td>
<td>36,30%</td>
<td>63,39%</td>
<td>0,36%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>19,61%</td>
<td>79,96%</td>
<td>0,43%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>7,69%</td>
<td>88,46%</td>
<td>3,85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total China</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,41%</td>
<td>80,81%</td>
<td>0,78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,72%</td>
<td>74,65%</td>
<td>0,63%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)
### Skin Complexion in Portrayed Persons in the US and Chinese Print media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pale</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Tanned</th>
<th>Racially Tanned</th>
<th>Racially Yellow</th>
<th>Racially Black</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>29,32%</td>
<td>49,40%</td>
<td>20,08%</td>
<td>0,40%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0,80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>6,67%</td>
<td>50,00%</td>
<td>20,00%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>23,33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total USA</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,88%</td>
<td>49,46%</td>
<td>20,07%</td>
<td>0,36%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>3,23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>50,21%</td>
<td>39,57%</td>
<td>6,38%</td>
<td>0,21%</td>
<td>3,62%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>14,29%</td>
<td>65,31%</td>
<td>18,37%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>2,04%</td>
<td>0,00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total China</td>
<td></td>
<td>46,82%</td>
<td>42,80%</td>
<td>7,31%</td>
<td>0,18%</td>
<td>3,47%</td>
<td>0,80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>39,85%</td>
<td>44,61%</td>
<td>11,90%</td>
<td>0,25%</td>
<td>2,26%</td>
<td>1,13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)
Thank you
and
Happy New Year 2011