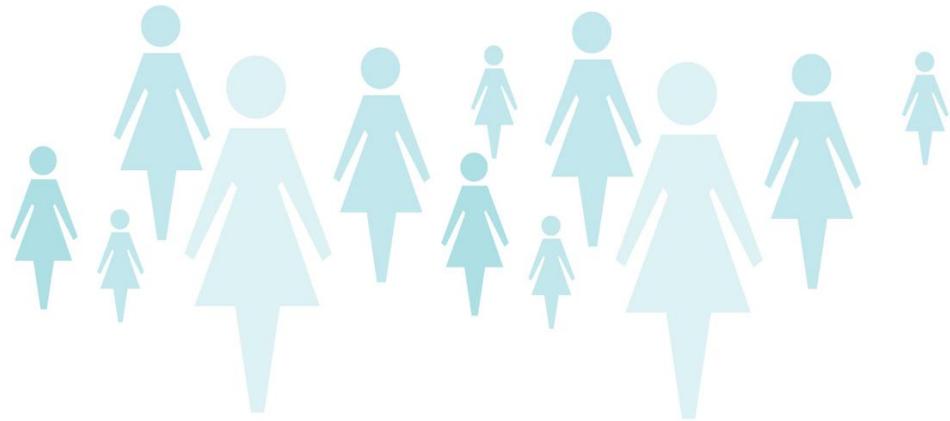




平等機會委員會  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION

# Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media



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# **Executive Summary**

## **Introduction**

The Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) of the University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission to conduct a study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media. The survey includes a face-to-face household survey of adults randomly selected from the general public, and a focus group survey of concerned parties. The fieldwork was conducted from June 2007 to January 2008.

## **Objectives**

1. To conduct a literature review on the existing studies on the subject of effects of media contents on gender perception in Hong Kong and overseas.
2. To elicit the public perception of female gender portrayal in the public media in terms of temporal and demographic differences, including but not limited to age, gender, marital status, children in family, education level, income and ethnicity.
3. To discern the acceptance level of the public over female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media.
4. To identify the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women, in relation to temporal and demographic differences.
5. To collect opinion from the public on the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioral development of future generation.
6. To collect public views on the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives.

## **Methodology**

- Literature review (Objective 1)
- Household survey (Objectives 2,3,4): 1,031 adults from randomly selected households interviewed using a bilingual questionnaire with a response rate of 62%

- Focus groups (Objectives 5,6): 322 participants in 46 single gender groups from 8 target populations (professionals, social workers, teachers, parents, media practitioners, students, concern groups, general public)

## **Key Findings of the Study**

### **Print Media Exposure**

- Median time spent reading newspapers amongst readers (87.7%) was 5 hours per week.
- Median time spent reading magazines amongst readers (53.7%) was 5 hours per week.
- Most popular type of magazines was Infotainment (77.8% of readers), followed by Fashion (14.2%).
- Search was most popular type of website (41.4%), followed by online sites for local print media (20.6%).
- Median time spent accessing those media sites was 3 hours per week.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Advertisements and news reports in Hong Kong and overseas***

- Decreasing local public satisfaction, arguably due to privacy invasion and pornographic pictures
- Overseas studies of gender portrayal
- Women often depicted in stereotypical occupations

#### ***Impact of media portrayal***

- Gender stereotypes and inequality through media portrayal
- Objectification leading to distorted aesthetic standards with low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with appearance, can influence sexual attitudes and beliefs

#### ***Regulations and guidelines***

- Media industry in most countries governed by independent self-regulatory agency, but often only covers privacy and press freedom
- Hong Kong Press Council ignored by 3 major papers, so public sees it as ineffective

### *Suggested strategies*

- Public campaigns for media monitoring, more media education, guidelines and codes of conduct for news and advertising organizations, redefining “freedom of expression”, consumer complaints, alternative media, professional ethics training, parent and family education, and critical discussion of media practice by girls

### **Advertisement and News Picture Samples - Gender Portrayal**

Respondents were asked to comment on three ‘advertisement picture’ samples related to ‘objectification’ (Ad O1-3), three ‘advertisement picture’ samples related to ‘sexuality’ (Ad S1-3), and three ‘news picture’ samples related to ‘sexuality’ (News S1-3). The samples are presented in Appendix A.

In focus groups, samples were presented as shown in Appendix B. The samples were categorized into four types: product advertisements, body beauty advertisements, magazine covers and newspapers.

### *Household Survey*

- The majority were uncomfortable with Ad O3 (59.6%) and Ad S3 (50.0%) and News S1 (79.7%) and News S3 (76.1%). Only for Ad S1 did more respondents feel comfortable (37.2%) than uncomfortable (7.4%).
- Interestingly, while only one advertisement had more respondents rating it as comfortable than uncomfortable (Ad S1), with the exception of one advertisement (Ad O3) and two news pictures (News S1 and S3), the others six pictures had more people rating them as acceptable to the community than as unacceptable.
- Only a quarter of the respondents were comfortable with the advertisements overall, while only 10% of the respondents were comfortable with the news pictures overall. The majority of the respondents thought the community would find the advertisements and the news pictures acceptable overall, in contrast to personal comfort.
- For comfort with the advertisements and news pictures, gender and age are the two factors most strongly associated, with females and older people more often uncomfortable.
- For community acceptability, age, marital status and education are associated with most variables, with those aged below 40, single or divorced, with higher education more likely to report that the community would find the samples acceptable.
- None of the advertisements were rated highly as appealing, with the best being Ad S2 (24.7%) and the worst being Ad O1 (13.1%).

- Only 5% of the respondents found the advertisements appealing overall, while only 10% of the respondents found the news pictures stimulated interest overall.
- For advertisement appeal, gender is the factor most strongly associated, with males finding them more attractive.
- More respondents, although only a minority, rated the news pictures as interesting, with News S3 rated interesting by 28.6% of the respondents. Age is the strongest factor, with respondents under 30 finding them more interesting.
- Except for News S3, all eight others had a majority of the respondents report that similar materials can be found at least once a week in the local print media. These high frequencies of exposure may explain why so many respondents believe that the advertisements and news pictures are acceptable to the community.

### ***Focus Groups***

- In the focus groups, some participants could not accept those samples of female gender portrayal especially in body beauty advertisements and magazine covers while others held opposite views on product and body beauty advertisements in particular.
- Negative comments (362 counts): “unacceptable”, “dislike”, and “disgusting” mostly referred to body beauty advertisements (112 counts) and magazines covers (129 counts)
- Positive comments (322 counts): “acceptable”, “beautiful in artistic sense”, and “OK”, mainly referred to product advertisement (214 counts). Some positive comments, such as “OK”, “attractive” and “like”, were more frequently expressed by males.
- Media practitioners expressed less negative views related to “dislike” and “disgusting feelings” while teachers and parents more commonly felt “bad” about the samples.
- Social workers, students, and media practitioners more commonly felt the samples were “OK” and “attractive”.
- Minority of neutral and mild perceptions particularly for product advertisements (52 counts) and body beauty advertisements (39 counts), such as “very nothing and nothing special”, “no feeling or comment”, and “boring”.
- Some felt anaesthetised by the flooding of sexual female images shown in the print media samples, which have been recognised as part of mainstream media culture in Hong Kong.

## **Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

Gender stereotypes were examined in order to help understand individual perceptions of “typical” masculine and feminine behaviours, traits and characteristics.

- For Leadership, Independent, Defends beliefs, Aggressive, Understanding, Assertive and Conscientious, the majority thought they were both masculine and feminine characteristics, but Sympathetic, Shy and Gentle were all seen more often as feminine.
- 25% of the respondents thought that Leadership, Defends beliefs, Independent, Aggressive, Assertive overall were feminine, while only 10% thought that Shy, Gentle, Understanding overall were masculine.
- Women were more likely to report most characteristics are both masculine and feminine.
- Younger people were more likely to report Gentle as very feminine.
- Older people were more likely to report Conscientious as both feminine and masculine.
- Changes over the past decade: most of the gender stereotypes have decreased, although some remain within genders. The most important masculine stereotype left is Leadership, although the strongest stereotype is Gentleness as feminine.
- Both genders still also often see Sympathetic, Shy and Understanding as feminine, while men also see Leadership and Assertiveness as masculine.

## **Self-assessment of Image**

The effect of objectification and dismemberment was measured to signify the extent to which a person monitors his or her body and views it as an outsider, feels shame when the body does not conform to cultural standards, and believes that people can control their appearance.

- Only 12 to 15% of the respondents agree that they often “compare with others” or “are ashamed about how they look”, while around a quarter often “think or worry about look” and around a third “worry about clothes”.
- Most respondents disagreed with “Ashamed not look best” and “Ashamed not right size” overall. Most respondents were neutral or disagreed with “Compare with others”, “Think often about looks”, “Worry about clothes” and “Worry about looks” overall. Yet most respondents agreed with or were neutral with “Could look good” and “Could weigh right” overall.
- Age and marital status are the most important demographic factors, with the under 30 years old and the divorced more concerned about how they look.

## **Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes**

The power of advertising to persuade, manipulate, and shape behaviour has long been recognized. Scales of sexual attitudes were used to gauge sexual aggression beliefs, rape-supportive attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours in a variety of settings.

- For “Woman goes to home implies sex”, “Men should fight if woman insulted”, “Women hope to be forced into sex”, “Men only out for sex when dating”, “Women manipulating men”, “Some women are too demanding sexually”, many more respondents disagree than agree.
- For “Women should leave if husband hits her” slightly more respondents agree than disagree, while for “Braless women are asking for trouble” and “Family should come before a career for women”, many more respondents agree than disagree.
- Only about a quarter of the respondents agreed with “Some women are too demanding sexually”, “Men only out for sex when dating”, “Women manipulating men” overall. There was no consensus on the items “Woman goes to home implies sex” and “Braless women are asking for trouble”. Most respondents agreed with “Family should come before a career for women” and “Women should leave if husband hits her” overall.
- Age and marital status are the most important factors, with younger and single respondents less likely to agree with the statements.

## **Media and Perceptions**

- Magazine non-readers score the acceptability of advertisements 0.7 lower (on a scale from 1 to 5), which is a meaningful difference.
- None of the demographics and media consumption combinations yield a model that predicts more than 14 % of the variability in the factor scales, indicating that views cannot be usefully linked to any simplistic demographic profile or print media exposure, possibly because the levels of exposure are very high and advertisements in public places alone may provide sufficient exposure so as to make media exposure of limited impact.
- Comments from focus groups help show the linkage made by the public between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women.
- The first impression of female gender portrayal in local media given by a majority of respondents explicitly referred to magazines.

- According to their first impressions, the most common female images shown in local print media were “figure”, “negative”, “female artist”, “appearance”, “sexy”, “photo of women’s body accidentally revealed”, “exposed”, “sex”, and “slim and beauty”.
- These are very different from their perceived female image nowadays that women have higher social status than the past and have more respect due to their multi-function roles, career achievement, independent financial status, education qualification, capability, as well as tough and aggressive character.
- This shows a gap between the perceived female images in print media and real life, which explains respondents’ negative perceptions towards female portrayal in local print media, including “negative description of female image”, “unreasonable implications to women”, “treating women’s bodies as objects”, “inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal”, “improperly implying sex” and “implications against social justice”.

## **Next Generation**

### ***General Picture***

- Nearly all were affected by those print media materials with only a few comments that claimed they had not been affected at all.
- Impacts included being conscious of personal appearance, distorted personal attitudes and values towards appearance and sex, change of personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards, imposing higher personal expectation on female appearance and adding self-psychological pressure.
- Impacts were mostly associated with body beauty advertisements while some came from product advertisements, indicating the strength of advertising media in constructing a defined perfect standard for women to aspire to, which adds pressure to individuals being women physically and psychologically while changes individual attitude and behaviour for sculpturing and shaping a “perfect” appearance.

### ***Youth & Peers***

- Young people or students would be mostly affected by those print media materials, followed by females and males.
- The impact of product advertisements, body beauty advertisements, magazine covers, and newspapers on young people was emphasized in terms of deterioration of social values and moral standards, conscious behaviour in achieving certain appearance standard, degraded social realm, psychological pressure on women, and casual attitude towards sex.

- Students would commonly apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other's figure, and again had low self-esteem in terms of their appearance and some tried extreme ways to reduce body weight at a young age.
- Based on the third person effect, respondents perceived that people (others), who lack of proper value judgement on these negative media message, are more likely to be influenced than themselves (self).
- The media impacts on individuals, peers and people in association, and the community overlapped and were consistent, showing that nobody can escape the impacts of female gender portrayal in local print.
- Case stories of respondents and peers and people in association provide strong evidence to prove and support their perceived media impact on the community, providing a comprehensive picture of the media impacts on society and the significant association between the practice of media female portrayal and the attitude and behaviour of the next generation.

### **Way Forward**

There is a clear imbalance between current media practice and what the public finds acceptable regarding female gender portrayal in local print media.

Respondents suggested these ways to counteract those negative impacts in the society:

- Stop purchasing or persuade others to stop purchasing and make complaints at personal level;
- Promote critical mind training via innovative education programme in school;
- Explain proper concepts about sex and gender, build up moral standards and strengthen ability of value judgement via family education;
- Strengthen critical mind training via workshops and discussions at community level and voice out the impact of extreme media female portrayal in the society;
- Review and revise the existing legislation and monitoring mechanism, formulate new legislation, and give financial support for publication of counter-mainstream print media by the government;
- Re-emphasize self-regulatory practice and strengthen training of professional ethics in the media industry and spread the counter message to current media female portrayal via the media itself; and
- Raise concern about the media impact in the public and government and create a complaint platform through the EOC.

## **Preface**

The EOC has the statutory responsibility to work towards the elimination of sex discrimination, sexual harassment and the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women. We believe that there should be mutual respect between individuals and between genders, which is a vital pre-requisite for social harmony. Our society needs to be more accommodating and less prejudiced. It is incumbent upon us to properly address the issue of gender dignity in earnest so that we may move forward to a healthier and more caring society.

The incident of online circulation of indecent photos has led us to reflect upon the issues arising from the objectification of the human body and its use for commercial gain. Long before this event, the case in which risqué pictures of a canto-pop singer taken by a hidden camera when she was changing clothes backstage during a concert overseas was published by a weekly magazine giving rise to public outrage. Alarmed by the increasingly explicit sexual content in the print media that would have a profound real-life effect in inducing co-evolution of media messages and social culture in the society in which our next generation will grow up, the EOC commissioned a survey study during 2007-08 to gain a better understanding on public perception of female gender portrayal in the public media, effect of media materials on such perception and sexual stereotyping of women, and relevance of the perception on future generational development.

It is evident that community standard on morality, decency and propriety changes with time. Comparison of attitudes towards gender stereotypes shows that there have been important changes over the past ten years, and most of the stereotypes have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is leadership, although the strongest stereotype overall is gentleness as a feminine stereotype. This suggests that the EOC could target these particular stereotypes in future educational campaigns.

The research findings also show that magazines and newspapers depicting sexual norms and stereotypes may have a profound influence on the public, particularly teenagers' perceptions about sex, body image and social norms. Many people are uncomfortable with gender representation in advertisements and news pictures, and yet they assume that the community would find them acceptable, possibly on the grounds that their broad and regular exposure to these types of media is an indication of common acceptance by society. It is a matter of concern that these sexual contents reinforce gender stereotypes of women as sexual objects and are valued by reference to their physical appearances. Worse, the phenomenon that people believe others are more influenced by media messages than they are, will anesthetize one's

awareness to potential impacts imposed by questionable media messages. There is a need to inform the public of the potential influence that comes from daily encounters with media sources and its impact on generational development. Much of the commonly seen gender representation that people assume as being acceptable to the community, may not be acceptable to the majority of people.

Raymond Tang  
Chairperson, Equal Opportunities Commission

## **Glossary/Acronyms**

### **Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI)**

It is an instrument developed by Bem in 1974 for measuring gender role perceptions. The BSRI is widely used in psychology and other fields because it measures masculine and feminine gender roles separately. The BSRI enables researchers to obtain a measure of psychological androgyny, or high levels of both masculinity and femininity.

### **Dismemberment of women**

It is the act of cutting, tearing, pulling, wrenching or otherwise removing, the limbs of a living thing. Advertisements showing dismemberment of women highlight one part of a woman's body, e.g. woman's breasts and legs, while ignoring all other parts of her body, and portray women with missing appendages or substitute appendages.

### **Gender stereotypes**

It presents a conventionally simplified and standardized conception or image concerning the typical social roles of male and female, both domestically and socially. Gender stereotypes are beliefs held about characteristics, traits, and activity-domains that are "deemed" appropriate for men and women.

### **Objectification**

It is the process by which people assign meaning to things, people, places, activities (or, in the case of self-objectification, themselves) that become parts of cultural constructions which inform and guide behaviour. This term also refers to behaviour in which one person treats another person as an object and not as a fellow human being with feelings and consciousness of his or her own.

### **Objectified Body Consciousness Scale**

It is a body satisfaction test designed to assess to what degree women see themselves as an object, how ashamed they are that their body does not measure up to cultural ideas, and how much they believe they are responsible for their body not meeting the cultural standards.

**Sexual objectification**

It is objectification of a person that occurs when a person is seen as a sexual object, which one's sexual attributes and physical attractiveness are separated from the rest of one's personality and existence as an individual, and reduced to instruments of pleasure for another person.

**Third-person perception**

It is commonly used for assessing the effect of media messages, which means individuals perceive that communications will exert a stronger perceived impact on others than on themselves, so most media messages have the greatest perceived effect – not on “me” (the first person) or “you” (the second person), but on “them” (the third persons).

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# **Chapter 1 Overview**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) of the University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission to conduct a study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

1. To conduct a literature review on the existing studies on the subject of effects of media contents on gender perception in Hong Kong and overseas.
2. To elicit the public perception of female gender portrayal in the public media in terms of temporal and demographic differences, including but not limited to age, gender, marital status, children in family, education level, income and ethnicity.
3. To discern the acceptance level of the public over female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media.
4. To identify the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women, in relation to temporal and demographic differences.
5. To collect opinion from the public on the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioral development of future generation.
6. To collect public views on the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives.

## **1.3 Scope of Study**

The scope of this study encompasses a survey of the adult population of the following:

- Media Consumption
- Masculine and Feminine characteristics
- Comfort with advertisements/pictures
- Appeal of advertisements
- Interesting news pictures
- Moral acceptability of advertisements/pictures
- Frequency of gender/sexual portrayal in local newspapers/magazines

- Self-assessment of Image
- Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes
- Importance of religious belief
- Demographics

The study also includes focus groups of the youth and adult population covering the above issues and also the following:

- Perception of female portrayal in local print media materials and reasons/ value judgments underlying this
- Shared impact of print media on personal level and peers and friends
- Perceived impact at community level
- Ways forward in balancing the negative impact of female portrayal in print media particularly on future generations

## **1.4 Organization of the Report**

The report is divided into Chapter 1, which contains the overview and background; Chapter 2, which contains the literature review to address objective 1; Chapter 3, which covers the household survey to address objectives 2, 3 and 4; Chapter 4, which covers the focus groups to address objectives 5 and 6, while Chapter 5 provides a summary of the integrated findings.

## **1.5 Research Team**

### **1.5.1 Core Members of the Team**

Professor John Bacon-Shone, Director of the SSRC

Ms. Mandy Lao, Research and Strategy Manager

Ms. Jenny Lee, Senior Research Executive

Mr. Kelvin Ng, Senior Research Executive

Mr. Dicky Yip, Fieldwork Supervisor

Ms. Olivia Chong, Research Assistant

### **1.5.2 Organization Structure of Research Team**

Professor John Bacon-Shone was responsible for overseeing the whole research project, the questionnaire and discussion guideline design, undertaking all the quantitative data analysis, presenting the research findings, as well as writing the report.

Ms. Mandy Lao coordinated the study and oversaw the Qualitative and Quantitative Teams. She was responsible for the literature review, designing the questionnaire and discussion guidelines, coordinating participant recruitment, facilitating focus group discussions, overseeing summary writing of the focus group discussions, creating the coding framework, analysing qualitative data, writing the summary of the focus group survey findings, as well as preparing progress reports and handling the key translation work.

Ms. Jenny Lee was responsible for participant recruitment, focus group discussion scheduling, facilitating focus group discussion or notes taking, as well as qualitative data coding and processing.

Mr. Kelvin Ng was responsible for survey data cleaning and preparing frequency tables.

Mr. Dicky Yip was the fieldwork supervisor of the household survey responsible for training, supervising interviewers on-site as well as monitoring interviewers' performance during the fieldwork.

Ms. Olivia Chong was responsible for participant recruitment, focus group discussion scheduling, notes taking and writing discussion summaries.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

#### **2.1.1 Understanding about Media**

Media is a truncation of the term media of communication, referring to those organized means of dissemination of fact, opinion, entertainment, and other information. Electronic media and printed media are two major types of media channels that include broadcasting (e.g. radio and television), discs or tape (e.g. music), film, the Internet, computer games, and publishing (e.g. newspapers and magazines). The types of media forms presented in different channels mentioned above are generally classified into news reports, advertisements and programmes. Although this study focuses only on the print media and its extension to the Internet, not broadcast media, this section will review existing studies on the subject of effects of the content in newspapers, magazines and television, on gender perception in Hong Kong and overseas.

#### **2.1.2 Current Trend of Female Gender Portrayal in Hong Kong Media**

The influence of media is undoubted, playing a crucial role in forming and reflecting public opinion of the community, communicating the world to individuals and reproducing modern society's self image. Media has the power to raise attention to certain issues while suggesting what individuals in the public should think, know and have feelings about. Portrayal of women in media and its impact in shaping image of women have long been discussed and recognized respectively. Hong Kong is no exception in that there is public concern over sexual stereotypical portrayal of women in different forms of media. The publication of pictures showing a local artist changing clothes backstage at a concert by a weekly magazine and the online vote for "The Actress whom You Most Desire to Assault" in a radio programme by a local radio company have caused an enormous volume of outraged responses from the public in 2006. A number of concern groups condemned this kind of attack on women's dignity and promotion of sexual violence against women while a considerable number of complaints were received by the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA). These issues reflected the lack of professional ethics in local media and aroused the demand for setting up self-regulating guidelines for and by the media in Hong Kong.

## **2.2 Public Perception of Female Gender Portrayal on News Reports and Advertisements in Hong Kong**

### **2.2.1 Perception towards News Reports**

In response to considerable reporting cases of sexual violence against women in local media in the past few years, surveys were undertaken by some non-governmental organizations and concerned groups in Hong Kong.

A survey of media ecology has been conducted yearly since 2002 by the Anti-Pornographic & Violence Media Campaign to investigate the perception of teachers, social workers, parents and students on the media status in Hong Kong. The 2006 survey findings showed that the satisfaction of the respondents with local news media was decreasing with a mean score of 5.23 (10 is the maximum) in which 57.9% of the responses scored below 5. More than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with “privacy invasion” and “promotion of pornography” imposed by the news media.

In the survey of education practitioners’ views on the influence of print media on teenagers (Education Convergence and The Boys’ & Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong, 1999), the respondents, including local primary and secondary teachers and principals, indicated that obscene and pornographic texts and pictures were most frequently found in two of the most popular daily newspapers (i.e. Apple Daily and Oriental Daily News) while nearly 90% of them felt this kind of content was unacceptable.

In order to investigate the public perception on pornographic reports in local newspapers, the Women’s Committee of the Democratic Party conducted a survey in 1999. The results indicated that nearly 80% of the respondents felt uncomfortable and insulted after seeing those pornographic pictures and text. Most respondents expressed that parts of the most popular local newspapers (i.e. Oriental Daily News, The Sun and Apple Daily) should be defined as obscene and indecent publications.

### **2.2.2 Perception towards Advertisements**

In the period of information explosion, advertising functions to deliver different kinds of message, so there is no way to escape from receiving advertising messages in everyday life. Some content analysis of sexual portrayal in advertisements showed that using decorative or sexy models in Asian advertising is increasingly popular while sexual illustrations are becoming more explicit and female models are more likely to be only partly clothed or even nude (Tai, 1999).

A study of Chinese people's perception towards the use of sexual appeals in advertisements by Tai (1999) indicated that most respondents found too much sexual appeal, too much exaggeration, too many deceptive claims and too many misleading ideas were present in print advertisements. The multidimensional ethical scale developed by Reidenbach and Robin that measured attitudes through eight statements related to different types of ethical advertising issues was employed. The use of a strong overt sexual theme in a print advertisement was viewed as less ethically "correct" than using a mild sexual theme. The overt sexual advertisement content was seen as traditionally and culturally unacceptable, as overemphasizing sex in the advertisement that was unrelated to the product might exert a bad influence on the younger viewers.

### **2.2.3 Perception towards Television Programmes**

Findings from Fung & Ma's baseline study (2000) showed that both males and females in Hong Kong were gender stereotyped. However, the public generally was quite weak in their awareness of the media stereotypes or not conscious of television's negative stereotypes of gender, and believed no serious media stereotypes of female gender existed in the society. There was a close relationship between television use and gender stereotypes and awareness that exposure to entertainment programmes tended to induce a higher stereotypic influence that might reinforce people's stereotypes (Fung & Ma, 2000).

## **2.3 Overseas Studies on Female Gender Portrayal in the Media**

In general, overseas studies about the media and women can be summarised in two main directions that are content analysis and perception and effect analysis.

### **2.3.1 Content Analysis**

Fung and Ma (2000) reviewed the overseas studies of media content analysis. It was found that women generally had few major roles on screen and were frequently confined to the role of a housewife, who were depicted as taking more traditionally "feminine" occupation. They appeared passive, dependent, submissive, subservient, emotional, weak, and sex symbols or objects (Kilbourne J, 2002).

The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) monitored totally 12,893 news stories on television, radio and in newspapers from 76 countries with the aims of promoting the balanced representation of women and men in the news media worldwide. Some of key

findings regarding female portrayal are: 1) women are more than twice as likely as men to be portrayed as victims; 2) female news subjects are more than three times as likely as males to be identified in terms of their family status rather than her own autonomous being; 3) women are much more likely than men to appear in photographs in relation to stories on crime, violence or disaster, because pictures of women are frequently employed for dramatic effect; 4) news stories are twice as likely to reinforce as to challenge gender stereotypes, particularly in the areas of celebrity news, sports and arts, and entertainment stories; 5) blatant stereotyping is alive and well in news reporting around the world while sexist reporting extends to a very wide range of stories including sport, crime, violence, and even politics; and 6) many news reports use language and images that reinforce gender stereotypes in a subtle way, like stories that embody unstated assumptions about the roles of women and men.

### **2.3.2 Perception and Effect Analysis**

In order to study the correlation between the gender role orientation and the stereotypical attitudes presented in the media, perception and effect analysis is required, which are generally assessed by using experimental settings and employing close-ended survey methods (Fung & Ma, 2000). This greatly alleviates variations induced by demographic, cultural and ethnical factors.

A summary of past overseas studies shows that low/mild sexual appeal advertisement contents, generally, are more acceptable to men while overt sexual appeal contents are not acceptable to either men or women (Tai, 1999).

## **2.4 Impact of Media Female Portrayal**

Media play a central role in the culture and phenomenon of the society, which are the subject of much scrutiny for their effect on the behaviours, emotions, and attitudes of the public. Extensive research has demonstrated the impact of media female portrayal on gender role stereotypes, objectification and dismemberment, and sex attitudes.

When assessing the effect of media messages, we need to account for the third-person perception and significant self/other distinctions. With evidence obtained from the past studies, Perloff (1993) concluded that individuals perceive that communications will exert a stronger perceived impact on others than on themselves, so most media messages have the greatest perceived effect – not on “me” (the first person) or “you” (the second person), but on “them” (the third persons). However, he suggested that the effect may be limited to messages leading to negative consequences only, because the available research evidence showed the effect is

particularly likely to emerge when the message advocates outcomes that are not perceived to be beneficial for the self or when it makes statements that give rise to the perception that “it is not smart to be influenced by that message”. So, people with high levels of self-assessed knowledge, such as students, might perceive the media to exert greater persuasive influence on other people than on themselves because they evaluate themselves as smarter than other people (Paul, 2000).

As suggested by Perloff (1993), third-person effects are magnified when the issue is personally important to the respondents, when the source is perceived to be negatively biased, when the respondent is well-educated, and when the hypothetical others are defined in broad and global terms. On the other hand, it was argued that the discrepancy between the self and others should be smaller if messages were perceived to be personally beneficial or advocated socially desirable outcomes. In this case, the third-person effect would fail to emerge. Also, an adverse effect was found in Chapin’s research (2001) that respondents were likely to believe a pro-social message would influence them more than others if they understood well both the knowledge and individual risk of the message. Therefore, the third-person effect might not emerge in all circumstances and for all people.

### **2.4.1 Gender Role Stereotypes**

Gender stereotyping refers to one of the most common tactics used by the media to generalize female and male characteristics, personalities and attributes (Lee & Fung, 2006). Although the image of women depicted in Hong Kong media seems to be relatively more positive than the past, gender stereotypes and inequality through the Hong Kong media is still a prominent phenomenon. A study by the Association for the Advancement of Feminism found that half of all the local commercials contained sexist imagery or content that promoted gender inequality and sexual stereotypes (Wu, 1995). A female identity was specifically connected not only with the consumption of women’s magazines but also with the capitalist consumption commonly practiced by a community of readers and promoted by the magazines (Fung, 2002). Fung and Ma (2000) stressed that the gender stereotypic notion diffused into or was unconsciously absorbed by audience who were exposed to television daily.

The baseline survey conducted by Fung & Ma in 2000 examined public attitudes and awareness and evaluation of gender stereotypes in television and explored the relationship between stereotypic perceptions and various media habits. The survey consisted of three sections: 1) a list of 17 items from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) were employed to assess individual perceptions of “typical” masculine and feminine behaviours, traits and characteristics; 2) degree of agreement to 6 description statements about the media were asked to measure the respondents’ awareness of the media stereotypes; and 3) media habit of the

respondents, i.e. television exposure and television use, was measured to assess how much the public was susceptible to television influence. Findings showed an association between the stereotype and daily media experience that was a “way of life” for the audience.

## **2.4.2 Objectification and Dismemberment – Distorted Aesthetic Standards of the Human Body**

### **2.4.2.1 Objectification**

The media reinforces gender differences and stereotypes, in that the ideal female image is depicted as thin and beautiful while the negative result of female objectification in the media has been recognized for long. In Hong Kong, the ubiquitous slimming advertisements and messages have serious implications for the self-conception, identity, and social values of women (Lee & Fung, 2006).

Greening (2006) suggested advertising is one of the most powerful sources of education in society that contributes to the cause of problems by fostering an environment in which the selling of women’s bodies is seen as acceptable. Many women feel pressured to conform to the beauty standards generally accepted in the society and are willing to go to great lengths to manipulate and change their faces and bodies. Therefore, they are conditioned to view their faces as masks and their bodies as objects, and discover that their bodies and faces are in need of alteration, augmentation, and disguise. Women are taught to internalize an observer’s perspective of their own bodies and more concerned with observable body attributes rather than focusing on non-observable body attributes such as feelings and internal bodily states. This is called objectification (Kilbourne, 2002).

Research shows that advertisements more often sexually objectify women’s bodies than men’s to sell merchandise, and women are more often depicted in a way emphasizing their sexuality (Roberts and Gettman, 2004). This cultural milieu of sexual objectification functions to socialize girls and women to evaluate their own value based on appearance, and become preoccupied with their own physical appearance as a way of anticipating and controlling their treatment, viz. an effect termed “self-objectification” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Generally speaking, women are overwhelmingly targeted more for sexually objectifying treatment than men. Exploring the implications of female self-objectification indicates that it may contribute to the development of several mental health risks, including body shame, eating disorders, unipolar depression, appearance anxiety and sexual dysfunction (Greening, 2006). Tiggeman and Kuring (2004) expressed that self-surveillance caused by self-objectification might lead to body shame and appearance anxiety, and both greatly

disordered eating and more depressed mood. Baker, Towel, and Sivyer (1997) also indicated that body dissatisfaction and abnormal eating attitudes are frequently affected by our culture's promotion of an unattainable beauty ideal (Greening, 2006). In addition, Roberts and Gettman (2004) demonstrated that self-objectification might contribute to women's sexual dysfunctions because inducing a state of self-objectification might lead to higher self-conscious state of mind and significantly higher level of appearance anxiety for women.

In Hong Kong, a survey of Self Figure and Image of Women conducted in 2004 by the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association found that female respondents were generally dissatisfied with their appearance and body figure. They also claimed that they needed to reduce their weight, even when their body weight met the WHO Body Mass Index (BMI) standard. This reflects a negative self-image of women because of the culture of slim body and beauty in Hong Kong.

#### **2.4.2.2 Dismemberment**

The prevalence and implications of the dismemberment of women were emphasized by Greening (2006) that dismemberment advertisements highlight one part of a woman's body, e.g. woman's breasts and legs, while ignoring all other parts of her body, and portray women with missing appendages or substitute appendages. Kilbourne (2002) argued that the dismemberment of women is a monstrous problem in advertising. Dismemberment advertisements promote the idea of separate entities by employing female body parts for the purpose of selling products, which overtly and covertly encourage a woman to view her body as many individual pieces rather than as a whole. As a result, many women compare their bodies and sexuality to the eroticized images that are plastered on billboards and television and in magazines and movies.

Dismemberment of women in the media may cause serious repercussions, including body shame, appearance anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. It produces negative effects comparable to that of objectification (Greening, 2006).

#### **2.4.2.3 Measurement of Objectification and Dismemberment**

The effect of objectification and dismemberment can be measured using the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) developed by McKinley and Hyde (1996) in the context of feminist theories. There is evidence that the OBC is linked to a number of negative outcomes, including low body esteem, depression, restrictive eating and eating disorder, sexual dysfunction and low psychological well-being. The OBC is measured by scales of surveillance, body shame and appearance control beliefs. The 24-item OBC scale is employed

for asking people's response on a 6-point score ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher scores indicate greater OBC while higher levels of OBC are theorized to lead to negative body experiences for women. These scales signify the extent to which a person monitors his or her body and views it as an outsider, feels shame when the body does not conform to cultural standards, and believes that people can control their appearance.

### **2.4.3 Sexual Attitudes**

As stated above, the power of advertising to persuade, manipulate, and shape behaviour has long been recognized. Evidence shows that the stereotypic portrayal in the advertisements of women as housewives and mothers has an impact on attitudes. Also, increased use of sexually exploitive women, sexually provocative and suggestive content in advertising as approaching pornography in some cases might cause effects on sexual attitudes supportive of sexual aggression that to some extent promote rape-supportive attitude and beliefs (Lanis & Covell, 1995).

#### **2.4.3.1 Measurement of Sex Attitudes**

Lanis & Covell's study (1995) employed Burt's (1980) four scales of Sexual Attitudes to assess the influence of sexist advertisement portrayals of women that have been used widely to gauge rape supportive beliefs, to predict various rape-related attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours in a variety of settings. The scales include the 9-item Sex Role Stereotyping (SRS) Scale, the 9-item Adversarial Sexual Belief (ASB) Scale, the 6-item Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) Scale, and 11-item Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) Scale. The 35 items were all scored on a seven point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The conclusion was that media portrayal of women can influence sexual attitudes and beliefs. Males who see print media advertisements in which women are presented as sex objects are more likely to have increased sex role stereotypic and rape myth beliefs. They are likely to be more accepting of interpersonal violence, than are males exposed to other types of advertisements. Thus, repeated exposure to pornography may socialize rape supportive attitudes while repeated exposure to advertisements in which women are presented as sex objects may also socialize similar attitudes that guide people's behaviours (Lanis & Covell, 1995).

## **2.4.4 Future Generations**

To understand the possible influence of the media on youth, a report published by the Commission on Youth in 1999 provides a comprehensive analysis of the issue by exploring youth usage patterns and perception of various media types, and correlate youth media exposure with their values and social attitudes (Leung, 1999). According to the study findings, 57% of the respondents said their friends, classmates or colleagues watched or read pornographic materials such as pornographic films and publications. Statistics generally illustrated that respondents who had contacts with pornographic materials were relatively less aligned with traditional values and more open to socially disapproved behaviours.

### **2.4.4.1 Sex Attitudes**

The survey by Leung (1999) also showed that the pornographic material users tended to be more agreeable to attitudes such as pre-marital sex, more open to homosexual marriage and women's initiative to court males.

Furthermore, as issues of sexual norms, gender stereotypes, double-standards, and sexual roles depicted by the media on teenagers have been widely discussed and recognized by different concern groups of the society, a number of local surveys and studies have been done to investigate the media impact on teenagers.

The media ecology survey in 2006 indicated that magazines (59.4%), Internet website (35.8%) and Internet games (34.6%) were highlighted as the top three media forms that were believed to have adverse and detrimental messages for teenagers. In another survey conducted in 1999, over 90% of local education practitioners believed that obscene and pornographic texts and pictures presented on newspapers would bring negative effects to teenagers in terms of weakening social moral standards and imposing incorrect sex education (Education Convergence and Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, 1999).

It is generally believed that sex attitude of teenagers might be influenced significantly by the prevalent sex images and knowledge promoted in the media. Therefore, surveys were conducted to investigate to what extent teenagers understood about sex and their source of sex education. A survey of sex attitude and sex inclination of youngsters undertaken by Hong Kong Caritas Organization in 1999 showed that 57% of the respondents received insufficient sex education. Students in focus group discussion expressed that coverage of sex education in school was not comprehensive enough. They obtained the knowledge of sex from newspapers (31%), schools (29%) and friends (24%). Most of them commented that their sources of information mainly came from newspapers and pornographic videos. Another study of

youngsters' sex education and peers' sexual harassment done by the End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation in 2004 indicated sex education was lacking among interviewed secondary students. Amongst them, male students, compared to female students, had relatively more accurate knowledge of sex education, less misunderstanding about sex, more open-minded attitude towards sex and more contact with pornographic information. The study also indicated that the interviewed primary students had poor knowledge about sex while topics about sex were rarely discussed at home. This suggests that exposure to pornographic materials does not necessarily provide incorrect sex education although it may cause problems with moral education.

#### **2.4.4.2 Objectification**

As discussed in the previous section, the significant negative outcomes of sexualized portrayal of women in the media affect not only adult women but also young girls. Under the inescapable daily influence of advertising and media programmes, young girls and women were taught consciously and unconsciously to be more concerned with observable body attributes rather than focusing on non-observable body attributes like internal body status and feelings, as depicted as self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Recent research exploring self-surveillance, body shame, and disordered eating tendencies in preadolescent females found that girls as young as seven are showing signs of disordered eating and self-surveillance (Good, Mills, Murnen, & Smolak, 2003) while women are buying cosmetics and beauty products at increasingly younger ages (Greening, 2006). In the survey undertaken by Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association (2004), the self-evaluation of young female respondents below 18 scored the lowest as their self-confidence and self-image were relatively lower than respondents from other age groups.

An age-appropriate measure for studying Objectified Body Consciousness (OBC) development during preadolescence and adolescence was developed by Lindberg, Hyde & McKinley (2006). It was called the 'Objectified Body Consciousness Scale for Youth'. One obvious impact of female portrayal in the media is the development of a negative body image amongst women. Research demonstrated that body dissatisfaction is prevalent among adults and children. Youngsters, especially adolescent girls are seriously affected in terms of negative body esteem, depression and eating disorder (Lindberg, Hyde & McKinley, 2006). When measuring children's OBC, 14 items were selected in the OBC-Youth scale to measure their body surveillance, body shame and appearance control belief in which the item wordings and sentence structures were designed to make the measure more accessible to children. The findings demonstrated strong internal consistencies as correlations were found between body

esteem, attitudes towards appearance, and public self-consciousness. The OBC was related to dieting behaviour.

## **2.5. Regulations and Guidelines**

### **2.5.1 International Experiences**

#### **2.5.1.1 The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, which is described as an international bill of rights for women. The convention consists of a preamble and 30 articles that define what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to “modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women (Article 5a).” Hong Kong, as part of China, is legally bound to put the provision of the CEDAW into practice and is committed to take measures to comply with its treaty obligation.

#### **2.5.1.2 Beijing Platform for Action – The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women**

The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995 in which the Beijing Platform for Action, i.e. an agenda for women’s empowerment, was adopted, aiming at removing all obstacles to women’s active participation in both public and private life and enabling them to take a full and equal share in economic, social, and cultural and political decision-making. One of its key concerns was “stereotyping of women and inequality in women’s access to, and participation in, all communication systems, especially in the media.”

The diagnosis of women and media was specified in Section J of Beijing Platform for Action based on the fact of gender-based stereotypes prevalent in the media depicting negative and degrading images of women. The strategic objectives of this section are 1) increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; and 2) promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. In order to achieve these, actions to be taken by different levels, like governments, national and international media systems,

non-governmental organizations and media professional association, advertising organizations, and private sectors etc., were highlighted in the Platform for Action. Its progress was assessed by the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

### **2.5.1.3 The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)**

The Global Media Monitoring Project is an extensive global research of gender in news media that has taken place at five yearly intervals since 1995. GMMP was initiated to reflect the concern of women activists to bring the issue of media accountability to the forefront of the debate on gender inequalities and were implemented by providing a research instrument to ensure comparable and accurate analysis of data collected and different settings by different individuals. The aims were to: 1) promote media literacy and gender awareness through media monitoring; 2) give a global overview that went beyond the findings of studies, demonstrating real pictures of male and women's presence in news; and 3) to provide a reliable GMMP results for groups in different countries to launch dialogue with media practitioners and policy makers, allowing them to move beyond one-sided complaints about the media to constructive dialogue with the media.

In the 2005 GMMP, almost 13,000 news stories on television, radio and in newspapers from 76 countries were coded. The result of this study provided a strong platform for promoting interaction and dialogue between gender specialists and media professionals. The strategies for the next five years are: 1) lobbying and advocacy of gender balance in media; 2) implementing gender balance media policy by enhancing accountability; 3) achieving organizational target of gender balance by in-house monitoring; 4) offering gender sensitive input to journalist training course; 5) strengthening media analysis skills and awareness; and 6) developing the monitoring tool for wider worldwide application.

## **2.5.2 Overseas Experiences**

### **2.5.2.1 UK**

All complaints about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines in the UK are handled by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), which is an independent body to investigate the complaints under the editors' Code of Practice.

The Code gives the industry a firm set of principles to guide it on one hand, and the commission a clear and consistent framework within which it can address complaints from members of the public on the other hand. All national and regional newspapers and magazines are bound by the Code drawn up by editors themselves to ensure the unswerving commitment of all sectors of the newspaper and magazine publishing sector to self-regulation and to the

PCC. Also, the Code is incorporated into editors' and journalists' employment contracts to ensure a self-regulation with a power sanction. Among the ethical principles set in the Code, it covers concerns of privacy and harassment but does not cover gender related issues in the press.

### **2.5.2.2 USA**

The Washington News Council is an independent, non-profit and state-wide organization in USA to deal with complaints made by readers, viewers or listeners who feel personally damaged by stories written or broadcast about them. The council is a non-government agency formed by a group of concerned citizens, whose members share a common belief that fair, accurate and balanced news media are vital to democratic society. As the Council has no legal authority to regulate, control or penalize the media in USA, the process filing complaint to the Council is an alternative to litigation. The media have strong incentives to participate in the Council's review process which is entirely voluntary. However, other than the concepts of accuracy, balance and fairness, it does not handle any gender related issues in the media.

### **2.5.2.3 Canada**

The Alberta Press Council is one of press councils in Canada, which is a non-profit organization to consider complaints regarding the conduct of the press in gathering and publication of news, opinion and advertising and defend the established freedom of the press. Presuming the member newspapers are responsible bodies with their codes of practice, the council does not describe what content is not allowed to be published on newspapers, periodicals and journalists who have duty of defending the press freedom in the interest of the public, and to resist censorship. In the Code of Practice, a few items might concern or cover the issue of female gender portrayal in the press, including privacy, sexual offences, pictures and discrimination.

### **2.5.2.4 Australia**

Complaints against the press in Australia are handled by the Australian News Council, a voluntary, independent and self-regulatory body of the print media to promote press ethics in Australia. The council has an objective of maintaining the character of the Australian press in accordance with the highest journalistic standards and preservation of freedom of the press. It is responsible to investigate and deal with complaints and concerns about material in newspapers, magazines and journals, published either in print or on the Internet.

The Council's authority rests on the willingness of publishers and editors to respect its views, to adhere voluntarily to ethical standards and to admit mistakes publicly. The Council is

guided by 9 principles contained in its Statement of Principles in which two of them are relevant to female gender portrayal in the press, i.e. respect for the privacy and sensibility of individuals; and avoiding gratuitous reference to race, nationality, color, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, illness, or age of an individual or group.

### **2.5.2.5 New Zealand**

The New Zealand Press Council is an independent organization formed by newspaper publishers and journalists to resolve complaints against the press. Other than complaints resolution, the Council has other objectives of promoting freedom of the press and maintaining the highest professional standard of the press.

The complaint resolution is guided by 13 Statement of Principles in which 3 of them may be relevant to gender portrayal in the press, which are protection of the right of personal privacy, no discriminatory emphasis on gender, and conveyance of accurate and fair headlines and captions. No rules are prescribed by the Council. The editors and publishers, instead, are presumed to have ultimate responsibility to their proprietors for what appears editorially in their publications, and to their readers and the public for adherence to the standards of ethical journalism that the Council upholds in these Statement of Principles. Also, these Principles are not a rigid code, but may be used by complainants should they wish to point the Council more precisely to the nature of their complaint.

## **2.5.3 Current Practice in Hong Kong**

### **2.5.3.1 Hong Kong Press Council**

Hong Kong Press Council is an independent and self-regulatory body of the newspaper industry to deal with complaints against newspapers from the public. The Council was incorporated as a limited company in 2000 and adopted the Journalists' Code of Professional Ethics promulgated by Hong Kong Journalists Association, Hong Kong Federation of Journalists, Hong Kong News Executives' Association, and Hong Kong Press Photographers as a code of ethics and guidelines for local journalists in carrying out their professional duties. A number of items relevant to gender portrayal in newspapers are mentioned in the code, including:

- Journalists should not pander to prurience, indecency and sensationalism when reporting news involving violence, sex-related crime or suicide;
- Journalists should respect the reputation and privacy of individuals; and

- Journalists in their reportage or commentary should not discriminate or encourage others to discriminate on ground of age, race, color, creed, religion, place or circumstance of birth, disability, marital status, gender or sexual orientation.

Also, a set of Guidelines for Practice is provided for photojournalists that two items may be crucial to female image portrayal in the media:

- Photojournalists should respect the privacy of people being photographed; and
- Photojournalists, including photographers and picture editors, should handle with caution pictures that are gory, violent, disgusting and pornographic. Before using this type of photographs, photojournalists should consider: 1) whether they are necessary for better understanding of a news event; 2) the impact on the society; and 3) the impact on the people involved and their families.

Member Newspapers of the Council in 2006 included Hong Kong Commercial Daily, Sing Dao Daily News, South China Morning Post, Hong Kong Economic Time, Ming Pao, Wen Wei Po, Sing Pao, China Daily, Ta Kung Pao, and The Standard. The top three popular local newspapers, i.e. Oriental Daily News, The Sun and Apple Daily, however have not signed up as members of the Council.

In 2006, the council received at a total of 57 complaints of which 18 cases relate to member newspapers, 30 cases to non-member newspapers, and 9 cases to magazines and other media. In these cases, 30% were complaints about report of indecency and sensationalism and 9% about intrusion of privacy.

### **2.5.3.2 Regulation of Obscene and Indecent Articles**

The publication and public display of obscene and indecent articles, including printed matters, sound-recordings, films, video-tapes, discs and electronic publications, is regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (COIAO) (Cap 390) that is enforced by the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), the Customs and Excise Department and the Police. Under the COIAO, an article may be classified as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (Indecent), Class III (Obscene). Class I articles may be published without restriction; publication of Class II articles must comply with certain statutory requirements; and Class III articles are prohibited from publications.

Determination of an article to be obscene, indecent or neither is made by the Obscene Articles Tribunal who shall have regard to standards of morality generally accepted by reasonable members of the community, the dominant effect of the article as a whole, the class and age of the likely recipients, the location at which the article is displayed and whether the article has

an honest purpose. In addition, submission of articles to the Tribunal for classification ruling is entirely voluntary.

### **2.5.3.3 Opinions on Media Monitoring and Regulations**

Most respondents of the Media Ecology Survey 2006 expressed the view that the news media should be monitored and the existing function performed by the local media authority, i.e. TELA, and other related government department was ineffective in monitoring the news media. Their prioritized resolutions of this unhealthy practice of local news media were strengthening enforcement, amending existing regulation, and promotion of education. In addition, three recommendations were made by the Anti-Pornographic & Violence Media Campaign that included consulting the public on amendment of existing statute, establishing a case complaint mechanism in TELA, and increasing money penalty proportional to media's circulation.

The survey of education practitioners also pointed out that an increased monetary penalty, strengthening of complaint mechanism and execution of media license marking scheme would be the most effective resolutions in lessening the negative impacts of obscene and pornographic content released on newspaper (Education Convergence and Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, 1999). In addition to these research findings, further recommendations were discussed in the report, including mobilizing a self-regulatory mechanism in media industry by establishing a statutory institute of professional media practitioners, establishing a joint committee in monitoring of text media by Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau, strengthening of penalty and complaint mechanism, revising the existing regulation of teenager protection, and re-emphasizing civic education in schools.

## **2.6. Actions to Counteract the Negative Impact of Media Female Portrayal**

In order to counter the negative influence of media female portrayal, strategies were suggested in a United Nations paper (Gallagher, 1995), including five broad areas described below:

- More women must be employed at all levels of the media industry to cause a change in media output;
- Monitoring and lobby groups should be developed to organize effective campaigns while consumer action should be taken to make an impact with the media and the public;

- Media education of the general public can help people to understand the subtle mechanisms which lead to patterns of gender stereotyping in media content;
- Media organizations are encouraged to adopt guidelines and codes of conduct about the fair portrayal of women; and
- International debate is required to reinterpret “freedom of expression” within the framework of women’s human rights and then develop a global code of ethics based on this new interpretation.

Furthermore, alternatives and approaches were suggested in the round table meeting convened by the Secretary of State for the Status of Women in Vancouver (Graydon, 1997), including:

- Media Education in Schools and Public: Supporting and maintaining media literacy as a mandatory component of the curriculum, introducing media education concepts relating to gender to both girls and boys, starting at the elementary school level, giving necessary training and support to those teaching critical media skills, and inviting people from the media industry to give talks to students, and giving media education to adults who are no longer in school, particularly to parents and media producers;
- Industry Involvement and Change: Enforcing the advertising guidelines of sex role stereotyping via members of the advertising industry;
- Consumer Complaints: Voicing complaints and taking boycott actions by consumers to object to those sexist and exploitive portrayals;
- Alternative and Publicly-funded Media: Providing more balanced gender portrayals than mainstream commercial media;
- Pro-social Programming: Advertising time on television to counteract some of the destructive messages from mainstream media;
- Government Initiatives and Regulatory Measures: introducing sex role stereotyping guidelines and making adherence to them a license condition; and
- Industry Education and Responsibility: Incorporating lessons on/ discussion about gender portrayal issues and ethical questions into the curriculum of journalism training programmes.

Concerning the consequences of the sexualization of girls, three levels of intervention were described in the report of the American Psychological Association (2007). At the school and formal education level, media literacy programmes are important to teach girls to criticize and understand the salience of sexualizing image in the media while comprehensive sex education for girls and boys can address the issue of sexualizing media, culture and peers, and importance of mutual respect in sexual relationship. At the family level, parents and other adults can help developing critical thinking and self-esteem of youth through co-viewing, discussion and moral education. The final level is working directly with girls who are

encouraged to critically discuss the media sexualizing or objectifying image in blogs, feminist magazines, books and websites, emphasizing they are more than the sexualized objects that are projected in most media.

## **Chapter 3 Household Survey**

### **3.1 Survey Research Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 Sampling Method**

The survey was conducted by face-to-face interviews of a random sample of households. A bilingual (Chinese and English) questionnaire was used to collect data. Fieldwork took place between the 25<sup>th</sup> June and 21<sup>st</sup> September 2007. A sample size of 1,031 successful interviews was achieved. The contact rate was 86.7% and the overall response rate was 62.1%. The width of a 95% confidence interval was at most +/- 3.1%. Weighting was applied based on age and gender in order to make our findings more representative, using the Hong Kong population data compiled by the Census and Statistics Department for mid-2007 as reference.

Where more than one eligible person resided in a household and more than one was present at the time of the contact, the 'Next Birthday' rule was applied to each successful contacted residential unit, i.e., the household member who has his/her birthday the soonest was selected. This reduces the over-representation of housewives in the sample.

#### **3.1.2 Target Respondents**

The target respondents were Cantonese, Putonghua or English speaking residents in Hong Kong (excluding domestic helpers) and aged at least 18.

#### **3.1.3 Questionnaire Design**

A bilingual (Chinese and English) questionnaire with 81 items was designed. These 81 items include 6 items assessing exposure to print media (including websites linked to print media) (Q.1-6), 10 items selected from the Bem Sex Role Inventory scale (1981) (Q.7) to assess masculine/feminine characteristics, 27 items to assess responses to advertisements and pictures adapted from Tai (1999) using the ideas of Reidenbach and Robin (1990) (Q.8-11), 9 items created to assess frequency of similar advertisements and pictures (Q.12), 9 items selected from the OBC scale of McKinley and Hyde (1996) to assess self-image (Q.13), 9 items selected from Burt's Sexual Attitude scales (1980) (Q.14) to assess gender stereotypes and another 11 demographics items. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix A.

### 3.1.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study comprising 31 successfully completed interviews was conducted from 28<sup>th</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007 to test the length, logic, wording and format of the questionnaire and the fieldwork arrangements. The data collected from these pilot interviews were not counted as part of the survey report.

### 3.1.5 Fieldwork

Fieldwork took place between 25<sup>th</sup> June and 21<sup>st</sup> September 2007. Fieldwork started at 4:00 p.m. and finished at 10:30 p.m.

### 3.1.6 Response Rate

Contact with a total of 3,366 households was attempted. The number of successful interviews was 1,031. Refusal and dropout cases amounted to 630. The cases that were ‘not available’ (1,050), and ‘not in’ (418) were attempted three times before being classified as non-contact cases. The contact rate was 86.7%<sup>1</sup> and the overall response rate was 62.1%<sup>2</sup>. Table 1 details the breakdown of final contact status.

*Table 1: Final status of household contact attempts*

Type	Final status of contacts <sup>3</sup>	Number of cases
1	Success	1,031
2	Drop-out	14
3	Refusal	616
4	Language problems	19
5	Invalid address	218
6	Respondent not available	1,050
7	Nobody at home	418
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,366</b>

<sup>1</sup> Contact rate = the number of answered visits divided by the total number of interviews attempted, i.e. from Table 1, Sum of (types 1 to 4 and 7) / (Types 1 to 4 and 6 to 7) = 2730/3148 = 86.7%.

<sup>2</sup> Response rate = the number of successful interviews divided by the sum of the numbers of successful interviews, drop-out cases and refusal cases, i.e. from Table 1, (type 1) / (type 1 + type 2 + type 3) = 1031/(1031+14+616)=62.1%.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Drop-out’: eligible respondents who initially accepted the interview but failed to complete the interview. ‘Refusal’: eligible respondents who refused the interview. ‘Language problems’: eligible respondents who were not able to speak clearly in any of our 3 languages. ‘Not available’: eligible respondents were busy at the time of contact.

### 3.1.7 Sample Size and Sample Error

A sample size of 1,031 successful interviews was achieved (target sample size was 1,000). The width of a 95% confidence interval is at most  $\pm 3.1\%$ <sup>4</sup>. This means that we can have 95% confidence that the true population proportion falls within the sample proportion plus or minus 3.1%.

### 3.1.8 Quality Control

All SSRC interviewers were well trained in a standardized approach prior to the commencement of the survey. All interviews were conducted by experienced interviewers fluent in Cantonese, Putonghua and English.

The SSRC engaged in quality checks for each stage of the survey to ensure satisfactory standards of performance. At least 10% of the questionnaires completed by each interviewer were checked by the SSRC independently.

### 3.1.9 Data Processing and Statistical Analysis

This survey revealed some differences in gender and age proportions when compared with the Hong Kong population data compiled by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) for mid-2007.

The proportion of male respondents was lower than for the population. The proportions of the respondents in age groups 18-29, and 60+ were lower than for the population.

Table 2 shows the differences in terms of age and gender.

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<sup>4</sup> As the population proportion is unknown, 0.5 is put into the formula of the sampling error to produce the most conservative estimation of the sampling error. The confidence interval width is:

$$\pm 1.96 \times \sqrt{\frac{0.5 * 0.5}{1031}} \times 100\% = 3.1\%$$

**Table 2: Distribution differences of age and gender between this survey and the Hong Kong population data compiled by the C&SD for mid-2007**

	<b>This Survey (%)</b>	<b>C&amp;SD data for mid-2007 (%)</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
<b>Male</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>46.7</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>53.3</b>
<i>Age</i>		
<b>18-29</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>20.0</b>
<b>30-39</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>19.7</b>
<b>40-49</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>22.9</b>
<b>50-59</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>
<b>60+</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>20.0</b>

In view of the demographic differences between this sample and the population, weighting was applied to gender and age in order to make the results more representative of the general population. The weights are the ratio of the age and gender distribution of the population to that of this sample.

Statistical tests were applied to study the significant differences between sub-groups. Associations between selected demographic information and responses of selected questions were examined. Given the large number of tests, significance testing was conducted at the 1% level (2-tailed). The statistical software, SPSS for Windows version 12.0 and JMP version 6, was used to perform all statistical analyses.

## **3.2 Findings from the Survey**

### **3.2.1 Overall Demographic Profile from the Survey**

This section briefly describes the characteristics of the respondents in this survey (Table 3).

#### **3.2.1.1 Gender and age**

Weighting was applied to gender and age in the survey such that the distribution of gender and age almost matches the Hong Kong population data compiled by the C&SD for mid-2007.

### **3.2.1.2 Marital status**

Nearly half of all respondents (42.5%) were married with child/children. Around one-third (28.1%) were never married. 22.4% were married without child while 3.5% were divorced or separated. There were also 3.5% of the respondents widowed.

### **3.2.1.3 Educational attainment**

A larger proportion of the respondents had an education level of secondary or above. 58.0% had either secondary education or matriculation. 19.6% attained tertiary education or above while the rest (22.5%) had an education level of primary or below.

### **3.2.1.4 Occupation**

More than one-third of the respondents were not working (44.8%). This included 6.4% students and 18.7% homemakers, 4.0% unemployed and 15.7% retired persons or other non-working persons.

For working respondents, the largest proportion was service/sales workers (11.4%), followed by clerks (9.0%).

### **3.2.1.5 Income**

In terms of monthly household income, a larger proportion of the respondents were from the category of under \$10,000 per month (31.7%), followed by \$10,000-\$19,999 (28.0%).

**Table 3 Demographic information (% of the respondents)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Base = 1,031</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Base = 1,024</b>
Male	46.4	Employers/ Managers/ Administrators	5.9
Female	53.6		
<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Base = 1,027</b>	Professionals	6.6
Hong Kong	56.9	Associate professionals	5.3
Mainland	39.5	Clerk	9.0
Others	3.6	Service worker & sales	11.4
<b>Age</b>	<b>Base = 1,025</b>	Skilled agricultural/ fishery worker	0.3
18-19	4.6	Craft and related worker	6.6
20-29	15.4	Plant and machine operator and assembler	3.5
30-39	19.7	Unskilled worker	6.4
40-49	22.9	Student	6.4
50-59	17.5	Home-maker	18.7
60-64	5.5	Unemployed person	4.0
65+	14.4	Retired person	15.7
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Base = 1,024</b>	<b>Years in Hong Kong</b>	<b>Base = 996</b>
Never married	28.1	Less than 10	7.7
Married, 1 child	12.4	10-19	11.5
Married, 2-3 children	25.6	20-29	20.8
Married, 4+ children	4.5	30-39	17.0
Married without child	22.4	40-49	20.1
Divorced/ separated	3.5	50+	22.9
Widowed	3.5		
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Base = 1,022</b>	<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	<b>Base = 892</b>
Primary or below	22.5	Below \$ 10,000	31.7
Secondary	50.6	\$10,000-\$19,999	28.0
Matriculation	7.4	\$20,000-\$29,999	20.0
Tertiary or above	19.6	\$30,000-\$59,999	14.2
		\$60,000 or above	6.1

### 3.2.1.6 Place of birth

Most of the respondents were born in Hong Kong (56.9%), with a significant minority (39.5%) born in the mainland and a small minority (3.6%) born in other places.

### 3.2.1.7 Years in Hong Kong

19.2% of the respondents had lived in Hong Kong for less than 20 years (cf 4.6% aged under 20).

### 3.2.2 Media Consumption

The median time spent reading newspapers amongst readers (87.7%) is about 5 hours per week (Table 4). The most popular paid newspapers were Oriental Daily News (49.0% of readers) and Apple Daily (38.2%) (Table 5). The most popular free papers were HK Headline (29.8%) and Metro (24.8%).

Similarly, the median time spent reading magazines amongst readers (53.7%) was about 5 hours per week (Table 4). The most popular type of magazines read by far was Infotainment (77.8% of readers), followed by Fashion (14.2%) (Table 6).

In terms of websites, search is by far the most popular type (41.4%), followed by online sites for local print media (20.6%) (Table 7). The median time spent accessing those media sites is about 3 hours per week (Table 4).

*Table 4: How many hours per week reading in the past 4 weeks? (% of the respondents)*

Time spent	Newspapers	Magazines	Websites
None	12.3	46.3	-
Less Than 1 Hour	8.0	16.5	19.7
1 to 3 Hours	26.0	26.0	36.0
3 to 5 Hours	18.8	6.6	16.2
5 to 7 Hours	10.3	2.4	8.0
7 to 10 Hours	13.8	.6	11.5
More than 10 Hours	10.8	1.7	8.6

**Table 5: Which newspapers did you read in the past 4 weeks?  
(Multiple responses)**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>% of the respondents</b>
Oriental Daily News	49.0
Apple Daily	38.2
HK Headline	29.8
Metro Hong Kong	24.8
The Sun	16.4
am 730	14.1
Hong Kong Economic Times	9.4
Sing Tao Daily	8.6
Ming Pao	8.0
Sing Pao Daily News	2.1
South China Morning Post	2.1
Hong Kong Economic Journal	1.6
Wen Wei Pao	1.1
Tai Kung Pao	0.5
The Standard	0.2
Hong Kong Commercial Daily	0.2
Others	3.3
Can't remember	0.3

**Table 6: Which types of magazines did you read in the past 4 weeks?  
(Multiple responses)**

Category	% of the respondents
Infotainment Magazine	77.8
Fashion/ Women / Men Magazine	14.2
Financial Magazine	11.2
Science & Technology Magazine	10.1
Travel Magazine	9.5
Current Affairs Magazine	5.4
Sports Magazine	4.2
Youth Magazine	2.1
Education Magazine	1.7
Others	7.8
Can't remember	0.5

**Table 7: Which types of websites did you read in the past 4 weeks?  
(Multiple responses)**

Category	% of the respondents
Information Searching Website	41.4
Online platform of local printed media	20.6
Multi-Media Website	8.0
Business Oriented Website	7.7
Blogs	7.3
Online Games	5.6
Music / Movie Download Website	4.0
Online Shopping Website	3.2
Women's Website	1.5
Adult / Pornographic Website	0.4
Others	16.7
Didn't visit any websites	47.1
Can't remember	0.2

### 3.2.3 Masculine and Feminine Characteristics

Table 8 provides a summary table, which shows that for Leadership abilities, Independent, Defends beliefs, Aggressive, Understanding, Assertive and Conscientious, the majority of the respondents thought they were both masculine and feminine. The exceptions were Sympathetic, Shy and Gentle, which were all seen more often as feminine.

*Table 8: Response to characteristics (% of the respondents)*

Characteristic	Masculine	Both	Feminine
Leadership abilities	40.7	55.0	4.1
Independent	27.7	54.6	17.7
Defends beliefs	29.5	53.9	16.7
Aggressive	33.1	53.5	13.4
Understanding	7.0	51.9	41.1
Assertive	34.7	50.2	15.1
Conscientious	44.3	46.9	8.8
Sympathetic	4.4	46.7	48.8
Shy	14.9	35.2	49.9
Gentle	3.1	17.0	79.9

### 3.2.4 Response to Advertisements/ News Pictures

Table 9 provides a summary of responses to the 6 advertisements and 3 news pictures presented (full details in Appendix A).

The majority of the respondents were uncomfortable with Ad O3 (59.6%) and Ad S3 (50.0%) and News pictures News S1 (79.7%) and News S3 (76.1%). Only for Ad S1, were more respondents comfortable (37.2%) than uncomfortable (7.4%).

None of the advertisements were rated highly as appealing, with the best being Ad S2 (24.7%) and the worst being Ad O1 (13.1%). More respondents, although still only a minority, rated the news pictures as interesting, with News S3 rated interesting by 28.6% of the respondents.

Interestingly, while only one advertisement had more respondents rate it as comfortable than uncomfortable (Ad S1), all but one of the advertisements (Ad O3) and two of the news pictures (News S1 and News S3) had more people rate them as acceptable to the community than rated them as unacceptable.

It is noteworthy that, with the exception of News S3 picture, all 8 others had a majority of the respondents report that similar materials can be found at least once a week in the local print media. These high frequencies of exposure may explain why so many respondents believe that the advertisements and pictures are acceptable to the community.

**Table 9: Response to advertisements and pictures (% of the respondents)**

Ad / Picture	Personal Comfort		Appealing Ad / Interesting news picture	Moral acceptability		At least once a week
	Y	N		Y	N	
Ad O1	19.8	11.0	13.1	65.9	8.3	92.9
Ad O2	13.8	39.6	17.1	52.6	20.8	87.5
Ad O3	9.6	59.6	17.3	33.0	38.8	66.1
Ad S1	37.2	7.4	23.3	68.7	6.6	79.9
Ad S2	21.3	27.5	24.7	49.9	18.6	79.6
Ad S3	11.3	50.0	19.1	41.4	30.2	91.1
News S1	1.9	79.7	18.3	20.1	60.5	57.4
News S2	7.9	49.7	16.4	36.4	35.4	78.4
News S3	2.8	76.1	28.6	25.0	48.8	40.7

### 3.2.5 Self-assessment of Image

Table 10 provides a summary of how respondents self-assess their image. This shows that only 12 to 15% agree that they often compare with others or are ashamed about how they look, while around a quarter often think or worry about look and around a third worry about clothes.

**Table 10: Self-assessment of Image (% of the respondents)**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Often compare with others	68.7	15.2
Often think about look	57.5	23.8
Worry about clothes	45.6	36.9
Worry about look	57.1	22.2
Ashamed not look best	75.9	12.1
Ashamed not right size	74.8	12.4
Could look good if worked	39.2	43.7
Genetics define weight	42.6	44.1

### **3.2.6 Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes**

Table 11 provides a summary of responses to provocative statements about stereotypical masculine and feminine stereotypes, which shows that for “Woman goes to home implies sex”, “Men should fight if woman insulted”, “Women hope to be forced into sex”, “Men only out for sex when dating”, “Women manipulating men”, “Some women are too demanding sexually”, many more respondents disagree than agree. For the statement “Women should leave if husband hits her” slightly more respondents agree than disagree, while for “Braless women are asking for trouble” and “Family should come before a career for women”, many more respondents agree than disagree.

**Table 11: Response to masculine and feminine stereotypes (% of the respondents)**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Home implies sex	66.9	17.4
Fight if insulted	66.8	19.8
Women hoping to be forced	59.5	12.7
Dating problems	53.0	23.7
Women manipulating	53.1	25.1
Women demanding sexually	39.5	16.8
Leave if hit	37.6	44.2
Braless asking for trouble	28.2	60.0
Family comes first	17.3	67.9

### 3.2.7 Importance of Religious Belief

Table 12 shows that 28.1% of the respondents stated that religious belief is important or very important in affecting their moral values.

*Table 12: Importance of religious belief in affecting your moral values (% of the respondents)*

Response	% of the respondents
No religious belief	14.0
Not important	24.9
Quite important	7.4
Fair	25.7
Important	17.3
Very important	10.8

## 3.3 Scales

### 3.3.1 Scale Construction

Factor analysis (using principal component analysis) was used to construct the following scales:

- Personal Comfort (two factors)
- Community Acceptability (two factors)
- Advertisement Appeal (one factor)
- News Interest (one factor)
- Masculine and Feminine Characteristics (two factors)
- Self-assessment of Image (three factors)
- Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes (three factors)

Each scale was constructed to use the original item range of 1 to 5.

In the following sections we report the distribution of these scales, which provide a useful summary of attitudes and behaviour.

### **3.3.2 Personal Comfort**

The first factor loads positively on the six advertisements and the second factor loads positively on the three news pictures.

Factor 1 has quartiles of 2.5 and 3.0, so only a quarter of the respondents were comfortable with the advertisements. Factor 2 has quartiles of 1.7 and 2.3 and a 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of 3, so only 10% of the respondents were comfortable with the news pictures.

### **3.3.3 Community Acceptability**

The first factor loads positively on the six advertisements and the second factor loads positively on the three news pictures. Factor 1 has quartiles of 2.8 and 4, so the majority thought the community would find the advertisements acceptable, which is in contrast to the personal comfort of the respondents. Factor 2 has quartiles of 2 and 3.3, and a median of 2.7, so the majority thought the community would find the news pictures unacceptable.

### **3.3.4 Advertisement Appeal**

This single factor loading on positively on all items is very skewed with 1 as the mode and 3 as the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, so only 5% of the respondents found the advertisements appealing.

### **3.3.5 News Interest**

This single factor loading positively on all items is extremely skewed with 1 as the mode and 3 as the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, so only 10% of the respondents found the news pictures stimulated interest.

### **3.3.6 Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

Factor 1 (which contains leadership, defends beliefs, independent, aggressive, assertive, labelled as Masculine) has quartiles of 2.4 and 3.0, so 25% of the respondents thought the first five items were feminine. Factor 2 (which contains shy, gentle, understanding, labelled as Feminine) has quartiles of 3.25 and 3.75 (3.0 is the lower 10th percentile so only 10% thought these characteristics were masculine).

### **3.3.7 Self-assessment of Image**

Factor 1 (which contains “compare with others”, “think often about looks”, “worry about clothes”, “worry about looks”, labelled as Worry) has 2 as the mode and quartiles of 2 and 3, so most respondents disagreed or were neutral with these four statements. Factor 2 (which contains “could look good”, “could weigh right”, labelled as Could) has quartiles of 3 and 4, so most people agreed with or were neutral towards these two statements. Factor 3 (which contains “ashamed not look best” and “ashamed not right size”, labelled as Shame) shows the overwhelming majority response was 2, so most respondents disagreed with these two statements.

### **3.3.8 Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes**

Factor 1 (which contains “women demanding”, “dating problems”, “women manipulating”, labelled as Relate) has quartiles of 2.25 and 3, so only a quarter agreed. Factor 2 (which contains “braless asking for trouble” and “home implies sex”, labelled as Sex) has quartiles of 2.5 and 3.5, so there was no consensus on these items. Factor 3 (which contains “family comes first” and “leave home if hit”, labelled as Family) has quartiles of 3 and 4, so only a quarter disagreed with these statements.

## **3.4 Demographic Differences**

Table 13 provides a summary of which variables have a statistically significant association with the demographic variables or importance of religious belief. As can be seen, there are many significant relationships. However, as will be seen in section 3.5, these associations are not strong, so the ability to predict behaviour and attitudes given these characteristics is small.

For time spent reading newspapers and magazines, nearly all the associations with demographic variables are significant, indicating the complexity of influences on time spent, with males (for newspapers), older people, married people, educated people, managers and non-workers, people with household income of at least \$10,000, born in Hong Kong spending more time reading local media.

For the questions asking whether characteristics are masculine or feminine, women were more likely to answer that most characteristics are both masculine and feminine, the exceptions being gentle, which younger people are more likely to report as very feminine and conscientious, which older people are more likely to report as both feminine and masculine.

For comfort with the advertisements/pictures, gender and age are the two factors most often associated, with females and older people more often uncomfortable.

For advertisement appeal, gender is the factor most often associated, with males finding them more attractive.

For news pictures triggering interest in the news issue, age is the strongest factor, with respondents under 30 finding them more interesting.

For community acceptability, age, marital status and education are associated with most variables, with those aged under 40, single or divorced, with higher education more likely to report that the community would find them acceptable.

For the frequency of similar advertisements/pictures in the local print media, age and education are the factors most often significant, with younger and more highly educated people reporting higher frequencies.

For the self-image, age and marital status are the most important factors, with the under 30 year olds and the divorced more concerned about how they look.

For the opinions about masculine/feminine stereotypes, age and marital status are again most important, with younger and single respondents less likely to agree with the statements.

Table 13: Significant associations with demographic variables

Scale	Sub-Scale	Variable	Gender	Age	Marital	Child	Education	Occupation	Income	Religion	Birth	Yrs in HK
Media Consumption	Newspaper	Newspapers	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	Magazine	Magazines	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S
Masculine and Feminine Characteristics	Masculine (Factor 1)	Leadership	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
		Defend Beliefs	S	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	N
		Independent	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	S	N
		Aggressive	S	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N
		Assertive	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Feminine (Factor 2)	Gentle	N	S	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	S
		Understanding	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
-	Conscientious	N	S	N	S	S	S	S	N	S	S	
Views on Advertisements and News Pictures	Comfort_Ads	Comfort Ad O1	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	S
		Comfort Ad O2	S	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N
		Comfort Ad O3	S	S	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N
		Comfort Ad S1	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	S	N
		Comfort Ad S2	S	S	N	N	S	S	N	S	N	N
		Comfort Ad S3	S	S	N	N	N	N	N	S	N	N
	Comfort_News	Comfort News S1	N	S	N	N	S	S	N	N	N	S
		Comfort News S2	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	S	N	N
		Comfort News S3	S	N	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	N
	Appeal	Appeal Ad O1	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
		Appeal Ad O2	S	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N
		Appeal Ad O3	S	S	N	S	S	S	S	N	S	N

Scale	Sub-Scale	Variable	Gender	Age	Marital	Child	Education	Occupation	Income	Religion	Birth	Yrs in HK
Views on Advertisements and News Pictures		Appeal Ad S1	S	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
		Appeal Ad S2	S	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	S	N
		Appeal Ad S3	S	N	N	N	S	S	N	N	N	N
	Interest	Interest News S1	N	S	N	N	S	S	N	N	N	N
		Interest News S2	N	S	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	N
		Interest News S3	N	S	N	S	S	S	S	N	S	N
	Acceptable_Ads	HK Moral Ad O1	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	N
		HK Moral Ad O2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	N
		HK Moral Ad O3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	N
		HK Moral Ad S1	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	N
		HK Moral Ad S2	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S
		HK Moral Ad S3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S
	Acceptable_News	HK Moral News S1	N	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	S	S
		HK Moral News S2	N	S	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	S
		HK Moral News S3	N	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	-	Freq Ad O1	N	S	N	N	S	N	S	N	S	N
		Freq Ad O2	N	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	S	S
		Freq Ad O3	N	S	N	S	S	N	N	N	S	N
		Freq Ad S1	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	N
		Freq Ad S2	N	N	N	N	S	S	N	N	S	N
		Freq Ad S3	N	S	N	N	S	S	N	N	S	N
Freq News S1		N	S	N	S	S	N	N	S	S	N	
Freq News S2		N	S	S	S	N	N	N	S	S	N	
Freq News S3		N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	S	N	

Scale	Sub-Scale	Variable	Gender	Age	Marital	Child	Education	Occupation	Income	Religion	Birth	Yrs in HK
Self Assessment of Image	Worry (Factor 1)	Compare look	N	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S
		Think about look	N	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	S	S
		Worry clothes	N	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	S
		Worry about look	N	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	S
	Shame (Factor 3)	Ashamed not best	N	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	N
		Size shame	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Could (Genetic Weight Excluded) (Factor 2)	Could look good	N	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	S	S
		Genetic weight	S	S	S	S	S	N	N	S	N	N
		Try hard weight	N	N	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	N
	Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes	-	Man fight insult	S	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Relate (Factor 1)		Demanding women	N	S	N	S	N	N	N	N	N	N
		Dating advantage	N	S	N	S	N	N	S	S	S	S
		Women manipulating	S	S	S	S	S	N	N	N	N	S
		Women hoping force	N	N	S	N	N	S	N	S	S	S
Family (Factor 3)		Family first	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S
		Wife move if hit	N	S	S	N	N	N	N	N	S	N
Sex (Factor 2)		Braless asking for trouble	S	S	S	S	S	S	N	S	S	S
	Go home means sex	N	N	S	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	

Notes: S denotes statistically significant at 5%, while N denotes not significant

### **3.5 Relationships between Media Consumption and Attitudinal Scales**

The correlations between hours per week spent reading newspapers and magazines and all the factor scales were examined. However, the correlations were all found to be so small (less than 0.2) as to be of limited usefulness in linking attitudes with exposure. As noted in section 3.2.4, the levels of exposure are very high, which may explain the difficulty. Indeed, it is possible to argue that advertisements in public places alone provide sufficient exposure as to make media exposure of limited impact.

In this light, the most interesting element is the correlations with magazine reading, which shows correlations of 0.14 with Comfort with Ads and 0.18 with Community Acceptability of Ads, although we have no way of telling which is the causal direction. Magazine reading also shows correlations of 0.12 with SelfImage factors 1 & 2 (Worry, Could). However, it needs to be emphasized that these are small correlations indeed and are only of weak predictive value. It is possible that media consumption effects vary with demographic characteristics (e.g. different for younger adults), so in the next section we examine what combination of media consumption and demographics together best predict attitudes.

### **3.6 Relationships between Demographics/ Media Consumption and Scales**

This section examines the models that best predict the scales using any combination of demographics and media consumption (see Table 14). This is important, as it identifies, in principle, target groups for the EOC. However, it is important to note that none of the demographic combinations yield a model that predicts more than 14% of the variability, indicating that views cannot be linked to any simplistic demographic profile or media exposure.

Gender, age and birthplace seem to be overall the most important factors relating to attitudes, while linkage of religion to moral beliefs is surprisingly unimportant.

However, it is interesting that magazine exposure is associated with several scales and in particular non-readers score the acceptability of advertisements 0.7 lower (on a scale from 1 to 5), which is a meaningful difference.

**Table 14: Best models for predicting attitude scales using demographic characteristics, religious importance and media consumption**

Scales & Subscales	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> *	Factors	Effect(lower) #
<b>Views on advertisements and news pictures</b>			
<b>Personal comfort - Ads</b>	9%	Gender (female) Age (40+) Age (60+) Birthplace (Mainland) Birthplace (HK) Yrs in HK (<40)	0.2 0.14 0.17 more <sup>^</sup> 0.09 0.2 0.13
<b>Personal comfort - News</b>	4%	Gender (female) Religious belief Birthplace (Mainland & HK)	0.17 0.17 0.17
<b>Community Acceptability - Ads</b>	14%	Magazine (non-reader) Gender (female) Age (40+) Age (60+)	0.7 0.25 0.16 0.15 more <sup>^</sup>
<b>Community Acceptability - News</b>	4%	Age (40+)	0.19
<b>Appeal - Ads</b>	5%	Magazine (<1 hr/wk) Gender (female) Occupation (blue collar/non-workers)	0.08 0.24 0.07
<b>Interest - News</b>	6%	Magazine (non-reader) Age (40+) Birthplace (Mainland)	0.1 0.13 0.06
<b>Masculine and Feminine Characteristics</b>			
<b>Masculine (Factor 1)</b>	10%	Gender (male) Birthplace (Mainland)	0.28 0.05 (more masculine)
<b>Feminine (Factor 2)</b>	1%	Magazine (<1 hr/wk) Religious belief	0.04 0.04 (less feminine)
<b>Self-Assessment of Image</b>			
<b>Worry (Factor 1)</b>	8%	Age (40+)	0.2
<b>Could (Factor 2)</b>	1%	Magazine (<1 hr/wk)	0.08
<b>Shame (Factor 3)</b>	-	-	-
<b>Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes</b>			

Scales & Subscales	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> *	Factors	Effect(lower) #
<b>Relate (Factor 1)</b>	6%	Age (<50)	0.11
		Marital (single)	0.15 higher
		Marital (widowed)	0.13
		Income (\$20,000+)	0.08
<b>Sex (Factor 2)</b>	-	-	-
<b>Family (Factor 3)</b>	3%	Education (>secondary)	0.07
		Yrs in HK (40+)	0.09

Notes:

\* In a multiple linear regression model, adjusted R<sup>2</sup> measures the proportion of the variation in the dependent variables (Scales & Subscales) accounted for by the explanatory variables (Factors) after adjusting for the number of variables.

# 'Effect' illustrates the impact of the significant factors in the best model. In this case if the effects are lower (the default), it means that the factor causes a decrease on the scale or subscale, while higher means it causes an increase

^ 'more' means an additional effect beyond that caused by being aged at least 40

### 3.7 Masculine/ Feminine Characteristics over the Past Decade

Table 15 shows some important changes in attitudes towards gender characteristics classified by gender of the respondents, over the last decade. The table has been scaled using a scale of -1 for very masculine, -0.5 for masculine, 0 for both, +0.5 for feminine and +1.0 for very feminine to make it easier to see the stereotypes. In 1997, there were clear gender differences in both the masculine and feminine stereotypes, some of which have been reduced or removed.

#### 3.7.1 Feminine Characteristics

It is very interesting that there is now little difference between men and women in terms of the degree of masculinity/femininity for the feminine characteristics, primarily because women are now rating those characteristics as being both masculine and feminine more often. However, gentleness is still seen strongly by both genders as a feminine characteristic, as are sympathetic, shy and understanding to a lesser extent.

#### 3.7.2 Masculine Characteristics

For the male characteristics, both men and women are now less likely to rate them as masculine, but this is more apparent for women, who now rate most of the characteristics as both masculine and feminine, with the only exception being leadership, which both men and women still see as primarily a masculine characteristic. Men still believe strongly that leadership and to a lesser extent assertiveness are masculine characteristics.

**Table 15: Changing male/female stereotypes**

<b>1997 Characteristics</b>	<b>Male Mean</b>	<b>Female Mean</b>	<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>Male-Female Mean</b>	
Having leadership abilities	-0.32	-0.22	-0.27	-0.21	
Defending own beliefs	-0.07	-0.01	-0.04	-0.11	
Independent	-0.30	-0.09	-0.19	-0.42	
Aggressive	-0.39	-0.29	-0.34	-0.20	
Assertive	-0.33	-0.23	-0.28	-0.20	
Masculine Characteristics Index	-0.28	-0.17	-0.22	-0.23	
Shy	0.23	0.30	0.26	-0.14	
Gentle	0.49	0.52	0.51	-0.06	
Sympathetic	0.17	0.24	0.20	-0.14	
Understanding	0.13	0.29	0.21	-0.31	
Feminine Characteristics Index	0.26	0.34	0.30	-0.16	
<b>2007 Characteristics</b>	<b>Male Mean</b>	<b>Female Mean</b>	<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>Male-Female Mean</b>	<b>p-value #</b>
Having leadership abilities	-0.30	-0.18	-0.24	-0.25	0.0001
Defending own beliefs	-0.12	-0.05	-0.08	-0.13	0.0035
Independent	-0.15	0.02	-0.06	-0.34	0.0001
Aggressive	-0.19	-0.06	-0.12	-0.25	0.0001
Assertive	-0.23	-0.02	-0.13	-0.40	0.0001
Masculine Characteristics Index	-0.19	-0.06	-0.13	-0.27	0.0001
Shy	0.19	0.21	0.20	-0.05	0.3800
Gentle	0.48	0.46	0.47	0.04	0.3600
Sympathetic	0.24	0.25	0.25	-0.02	0.5200
Understanding	0.16	0.21	0.18	-0.09	0.0270
Feminine Characteristics Index	0.27	0.28	0.27	-0.03	0.2400
<b>2007-1997 Characteristics</b>	<b>Male Mean</b>	<b>Female Mean</b>	<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>Male-Female Mean</b>	
Having leadership abilities	0.04	0.08	0.06	-0.04	
Defending own beliefs	-0.09	-0.07	-0.08	-0.02	
Independent	0.30	0.22	0.26	0.08	
Aggressive	0.40	0.45	0.43	-0.05	
Assertive	0.20	0.40	0.30	-0.20	
Masculine Characteristics Index	0.17	0.22	0.19	-0.04	
Shy	-0.08	-0.17	-0.13	0.09	
Gentle	-0.03	-0.13	-0.08	0.10	
Sympathetic	0.15	0.03	0.09	0.12	
Understanding	0.06	-0.16	-0.05	0.22	
Feminine Characteristics Index	0.03	-0.11	-0.04	0.13	

Notes:

Masculine and feminine characteristics use a scale of -1 for very masculine, -0.5 for masculine, 0 for both, +0.5 for feminine and +1.0 for very feminine.

# Significantly different between male and female perception at 5% if p-value < 0.05.

### **3.7.3 Conclusions**

Most of the stereotypes in the community have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is leadership, although the strongest stereotype overall is gentleness as a feminine characteristic. Both genders still also often see sympathetic, shy and understanding as feminine characteristics, while men see leadership and to a lesser extent assertiveness as masculine characteristics.

## **3.8 Conclusions and Implications**

### **3.8.1 Introduction**

The survey provides information that relates to three of the objectives, namely: public perception of female gender portrayal in the media including temporal and demographic differences; public acceptance of female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media; and identifying the association between media materials and public perceptions.

This information needs to be understood in the context of media exposure. The median time spent reading newspapers amongst readers (87.7%) is about 5 hours per week. The median time spent reading magazines amongst readers (53.7%) was about 5 hours per week. The most popular type of magazines read by far was Infotainment (77.8% of readers), followed by Fashion (14.2%). In terms of websites, search is by far the most popular type (41.4%), followed by online sites for local print media (20.6%). The median time spent accessing those media sites is about 3 hours per week.

For time spent reading newspapers and magazines, nearly all the associations with demographic variables are significant, indicating the complexity of influences on time spent, with males (for newspapers), older people, married people, educated people, managers and non-workers, people with household income of at least \$10,000, born in Hong Kong spending more time reading local media.

### **3.8.2 Public Perception of Female Gender Portrayal and Public Acceptance of Female Gender Portrayal and Sexual Stereotyping of Women in the Media**

#### **Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

For Leadership abilities, Independent, Defends beliefs, Aggressive, Understanding, Assertive and Conscientious, the majority of the respondents thought they were both masculine and feminine characteristics. The exceptions were Sympathetic, Shy and Gentle, which were all seen more often as feminine characteristics. However, 25% of the respondents thought that Leadership, Defends beliefs, Independent, Aggressive, Assertive overall were feminine, while there was 10% who thought that Shy, Gentle, Understanding overall were masculine.

Women were more likely to answer that most characteristics are both masculine and feminine, the exceptions being Gentle, which younger people are more likely to report as very feminine and Conscientious, which older people are more likely to report as both feminine and masculine.

When we examine changes over the past decade, most of the gender stereotypes of what are masculine and feminine characteristics in the community have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is Leadership as a masculine characteristic, although the strongest stereotype overall is Gentleness as a feminine characteristic. Both genders still also often see Sympathetic, Shy and Understanding as feminine characteristics, while men see Leadership and to a lesser extent Assertiveness as masculine characteristics.

#### **Advertisements and News Pictures**

The majority of the respondents were uncomfortable with advertisements Ad O3 (59.6%) and Ad S3 (50.0%) and news pictures News S1 (79.7%) and News S3 (76.1%). Only for Ad S1, were more respondents comfortable (37.2%) than uncomfortable (7.4%). None of the advertisements were rated highly as appealing, with the best being Ad S2 (24.7%) and the worst being Ad O1 (13.1%). More respondents, although still only a minority, rated the news pictures as interesting, with News S3 rated interesting by 28.6% of the respondents.

Interestingly, while only one advertisement had more respondents rate it as comfortable than uncomfortable (Ad S1), all but one of the advertisements (Ad O3) and two of the news pictures (News S1 and S3) had more people rate them as acceptable to the community than rated them as unacceptable. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of News S3 picture, all 8

others had a majority of the respondents report that similar materials can be found at least once a week in the local print media. These high frequencies of exposure may explain why so many respondents believe that the advertisements and pictures are acceptable to the community.

Only a quarter of the respondents were comfortable with the advertisements overall, while only 10% of the respondents were comfortable with the news pictures overall. The majority of the respondents thought the community would find the advertisements and the news pictures acceptable overall, which is in contrast to the personal comfort of our respondents.

Only 5% of the respondents found the advertisements appealing overall, while only 10% of the respondents found the news pictures stimulated interest overall.

For comfort with the advertisements/pictures, gender and age are the two factors most often associated, with females and older people more often uncomfortable.

For advertisement appeal, gender is the factor most often associated, with males finding them more attractive.

For news pictures triggering interest in the news issue, age is the strongest factor, with respondents under 30 finding them more interesting.

For community acceptability, age, marital status and education are associated with most variables, with those aged under 40, single or divorced, with higher education more likely to report that the community would find them acceptable.

For the frequency of similar advertisements/pictures in the local print media, age and education are the factors most often significant, with younger and more highly educated people reporting higher frequencies.

### **Self-assessment of Image**

Only 12 to 15% of the respondents agree that they often compare with others or are ashamed about how they look, while around a quarter often think or worry about look and around a third worry about clothes. Most respondents overall were neutral or disagreed with “Compare with others”, “Think often about looks”, “Worry about clothes” and “Worry about looks”. Most respondents overall agreed with or were neutral with “Could look good” and “Could weigh right”. Most respondents disagreed overall with “Ashamed not look best” and “Ashamed not right size”.

Age and marital status are the most important demographic factors, with the under 30 year olds and the divorced more concerned about how they look.

### **Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes**

The responses to provocative statements about stereotypical masculine and feminine stereotypes show that for “Woman goes to home implies sex”, “Men should fight if woman insulted”, “Women hope to be forced into sex”, “Men only out for sex when dating”, “Women manipulating men”, “Some women are too demanding sexually”, many more respondents disagree than agree. For the statement “Women should leave if husband hits her” slightly more respondents agree than disagree, while for “Braless women are asking for trouble” and “Family should come before a career for women”, many more respondents agree than disagree. Only about a quarter of the respondents agreed overall with “Women too demanding”, “Dating problems” and “Women manipulating”. There was no consensus on the items “Braless asking for trouble” and “Going to home implies sex”. Most respondents agreed overall with “Family comes first” and “Woman leave home if hit”.

Age and marital status are the most important factors, with younger and single respondents less likely to agree with the statements.

### **Importance of Religion**

Only 28.1% of the respondents stated that religious belief is important or very important in affecting their moral values. There are many significant relationships with the importance of religious belief. However, these associations are not strong, so the ability to predict behaviour and attitudes given these characteristics is small.

### **3.8.3 Identifying the Association between Media Materials and Public Perceptions**

The correlations between hours per week spent reading newspapers and magazines and all the factor scales were all found to be so small (less than 0.2) as to be of limited usefulness in linking attitudes with exposure. As noted earlier, the levels of exposure are very high, which may explain the difficulty. Indeed, it is possible to argue that advertisements in public places alone provide sufficient exposure as to make media exposure of limited impact. In this light, the most interesting element is the correlations with magazine reading, which shows small positive correlations with Comfort with Ads and Community Acceptability of Ads, although we have no way of telling which is the causal direction. Magazine reading also shows small positive correlations with SelfImage factors 1 & 2 (Worry, Could). However, it needs to be emphasized that these are small correlations indeed and are only of weak predictive value.

When looking for models that best predict the scales using any combination of demographics and media consumption, none of the demographic combinations yield a model that predicts more than 14 % of the variability, indicating that views cannot be linked to any simplistic demographic profile or media exposure.

Gender, age and birthplace are overall the most important factors relating to attitudes, while the linkage of religion to moral beliefs is surprisingly unimportant.

However, it is interesting that magazine exposure is associated with several scales and in particular non-readers score the acceptability of advertisements 0.7 lower (on a scale from 1 to 5), which is a meaningful difference.

### **3.8.4 Implications**

Overall, the survey provides considerable insight into the beliefs and attitudes of Hong Kong people relating to gender and its representation in the print media. It is clear that many people are uncomfortable with gender representation in advertisements and news pictures, but they assume that the community finds them acceptable, possibly on the grounds that advertisements and news pictures like the ones used in the study are believed to be so common. The high level of exposure makes it hard to find much linkage of exposure to attitudes, except that non-readers of magazines rate magazine advertisements lower, although it is arguable what is cause and what is effect.

While there are differences in attitudes across demographic groups, those differences are small, suggesting that there is little scope for a more demographically targeted approach by the EOC within the adult population.

Given the high levels of exposure to gender representations that people are uncomfortable with, there may be scope for educating the public that much of the gender representation that they assume is acceptable to the community because it is common, is in fact not acceptable to the majority.

Comparison of attitudes towards gender stereotypes shows that there have been important changes in the last ten years, and most of the stereotypes have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is leadership, although the strongest stereotype overall is gentleness as a feminine stereotype. This suggests that the EOC could target these particular stereotypes in future educational campaigns.

## **Chapter 4 Focus Groups**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The focus groups collected qualitative data about people's perception and feelings of female gender portrayal in the printed media and explored the reasons contributing to those feelings. They also collected views on the relevance of female portrayal in the printed media on attitudinal and behavioural development of oneself and different groups of people, especially young generation, and looked for solutions to balance the impact of media portrayal of females on the community particularly the young generation.

A total of 46 groups were conducted between October 2007 and January 2008 in which 322 people participated.

### **4.2 Research Methodology**

#### **4.2.1 Target Participants**

All data except demographic information was obtained via focus group discussion. There were 8 target populations while the criteria for each target group are described in Table 16 below. All participants were aged 18 or above except for students who were aged 14 or above while all participants in each group were of a single gender. The target proportion of both male and female participants in each target population was at least 40%.

**Table 16: Participant recruitment criteria**

	<b>Group</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
1	Professionals	People who were working in any particular field with expertise
2	Social workers	People who had been working in local social service organizations in the past year
3	Teachers	People who had been teachers of primary and secondary schools, or academic staff of tertiary education institutes in the past year
4	Parents	Parents with children below 18
5	Media Practitioners	People who had been working in press or advertising industry in the past year
6	Students	Full-time students aged 14 or above
7	Concern Groups	Representatives of local concern groups who share common interests in media industry, gender issue, young generation development, moral and culture of the society
8	General Public	People who were 18 or above

### **4.2.2 Participant Recruitment**

As the nature and recruitment criteria of each particular group was different, participants of the focus group discussion were recruited via sending letter invitations to diverse schools and organizations, direct invitation in the household survey and current telephone surveys undertaken by the SSRC, referral from different local NGOs and the EOC, advertisements posted in different tertiary education institutes and local websites, email networks of any interested parties, as well as participant referral.

### **4.2.3 Design of Discussion Guideline**

Bilingual (Chinese and English) semi-structured discussion guidelines were designed. The 12 topic areas cover an introductory section (Q.1-4), experience sharing of participants' media exposure (Q.5), comments on gender roles nowadays (Q.6), discussion on participants' perception and impact of female portrayal in local printed media (Q.7-11), and finally the ways forward when female gender portrayal in the printed media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives, with particular focus on the approach for the next

generation (Q.12). The discussion guidelines are attached in Appendix B. The topic order was not fixed, allowing the moderator to vary it according to the flow.

In addition, participants were asked to answer a demographic questionnaire that recorded participants' personal information, including age, gender, marital status, children in family, education, household income and ethnicity, etc. Four sets of print media samples (a total of 11 samples) were shown when asking questions 7-11. These samples might not cover all kinds of female portrayal in local print media but represented some popular and typical examples, including product advertisements, body beauty advertisements, magazine covers and court cases news report, including the samples shown in the household survey. Details of the samples are shown in Appendix B, and summarized in Table 17.

**Table 17: Details of the print media samples**

	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Features</b>
1	Product advertisement	Commercial	Picture
2	Body beauty advertisement	Commercial	Headline, text description, picture
3	Magazine cover	News reporting	Headline, picture
4	Newspaper	News reporting	Headline, text story, picture

#### **4.2.4 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted in Cantonese at HKU SPACE Admiralty Learning Centre on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007 to test the discussion guidelines and ensure that participants understood all questions asked during the discussion; the discussion could be properly managed by the moderator and did not have any biases affecting the survey results. A total of six male participants aged 18 or above participated. The discussion guidelines were revised according to the recommendations made in the pilot study report while the opinions obtained during the pilot were not included in the findings.

#### **4.2.5 Fieldwork**

Fieldwork took place between 6<sup>th</sup> October 2007 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Most discussions were conducted in HKU SPACE Learning Centres, but some groups took place in venues offered by schools and non-governmental organizations. Nearly all groups were arranged on either weekday evenings between 19:00 and 22:00 or weekend afternoons between 12:00 and 19:00.

The number of participants in each group was usually between 5 and 10, with a few exceptions of 4 or 11. The duration of each group ranged from 90 to 135 minutes.

#### **4.2.6 Quality Control**

The discussions were facilitated by a moderator (female or male, where possible matching the group gender) who was experienced in qualitative research and well trained with the required techniques in group discussion facilitation and good understanding of the discussion topics. All groups were conducted in Cantonese, although using some English terms. Checks were made at the first contact with each participant to ensure that the recruitment criteria was satisfactorily fulfilled while staff from the EOC observed some early groups to ensure that the discussion was running smoothly and proper techniques and manner were applied in the discussion facilitation.

#### **4.2.7 Group Composition**

A total of 322 participants participated in a total of 46 group discussions. Female participants made up 57% of the total. Details of the group composition and participant breakdown are shown in Table 18 below.

**Table 18: Group composition and participant breakdown**

	<b>Category</b>	<b>No. of groups</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of groups</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Total No. of participants</b>
1	<b>Professionals</b>	7	Female	4	25	42
			Male	3	17	
2	<b>Social Workers</b>	8	Female	4	30	59
			Male	4	29	
3	<b>Teachers</b>	4	Female	2	12	20
			Male	2	8	
4	<b>Parents</b>	4	Female	2	21	35
			Male	2	14	
5	<b>Media Practitioners</b>	4	Female	2	10	22
			Male	2	12	
6	<b>Students</b>	8	Female	5	42	60
			Male	3	18	
7	<b>Concern Groups</b>	3	Female	2	13	20
			Male	1	7	
8	<b>General Public</b>	8	Female	4	30	64
			Male	4	34	
<b>Total</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>322</b>
			<b>Male</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>139</b>	

#### **4.2.8 Data Recording**

All the discussion was audio recorded and summarized in bullet point format in Chinese with some terms or wordings directly quoted from the participants' spoken expression. A detailed summary was prepared for every discussion. A full set of summaries used in the qualitative analysis has been passed to the Equal Opportunities Commission for archiving.

#### **4.2.9 Data Coding and Analysis**

All qualitative data recorded in the discussion summaries was coded according to an analytical framework generated from the implicit structure of the focus group discussion guidelines and then extended using the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss to construct the rest of the framework from the data itself. Categories of sub-themes were developed under each theme. For instance, the theme of Printed Media Exposure contains two sub-themes covering Reading Channel and Reading Frequency. Sub-themes are counted by adding up the counts for each item under the sub-themes. The six core themes of the analytical framework are shown in Table 19.

**Table 19: Six core themes and their sub-themes**

Code	Core themes and sub-themes
1	<b>First impression about female portrayal in local media</b>
2	<b>Printed media exposure</b> 2.1 Reading Channel 2.2 Reading Frequency
3	<b>Perception on nowadays gender image/ role</b> 3.1 Female 3.2 Male 3.3 General comment on gender image/ role
4	<b>Perception on female portrayal in commercial advertisements and news reporting</b> 4.1 Product advertisements 4.2 Body beauty advertisements 4.3 Magazine covers 4.4 News stories 4.5 Perception/ Comment/ Feeling 4.6 Reasons
5	<b>Impact of female portrayal in commercial advertisements and news reporting</b> 5.1 Product advertisements 5.2 Body beauty advertisements 5.3 Magazine covers 5.4 New stories 5.5 Self impact 5.6 Influence to peer and other cognitive people 5.7 Influence to the community
6	<b>Ways forward</b> 6.1 At market level 6.2 At personal level 6.3 At school level 6.4 At family level 6.5 At community level 6.6 At government level 6.7 At media level 6.8 At EOC level

## 4.3 Findings

A total of 4,793 distinct views and opinions were coded and counted, which provides the basis for the analysis in the following sections. However, as the discussion content varied from group to group, the counts alone do not tell the whole story.

Strategy for choosing which counts to report:

In order to focus on important area of overall findings, any items with at least 10 comments are highlighted in the tables for analysis.

In order to highlight topics with high gender variation, any topic where the ratio<sup>5</sup> of comment rates between gender is greater than two or less than a half is noted. Similarly, for the target groups if the ratios relative to the rate for the general public is greater than three or less than a third.

### 4.3.1 Overall Demographic Profile from the Survey

The personal background of all participants and participants of the general public are briefly described in Table 20 and in Table 21 respectively.

#### 4.3.1.1 Gender and Age

Over half of participants overall were aged between 18 and 29 (53.3%) while around one fifth were aged between 30 and 39 (20.6%). Also, 7.2% of participants were below 18, who were students.

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<sup>5</sup> All counts are scaled by the number of groups and then shown as ratios to the reference group, i.e. male for gender and general public for the target groups.

**Table 20: Overall demographic profile of all the groups (% of the respondents)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Base = 322</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Base = 319</b>
Male	43.2	Employers/ Managers/ Administrators	5.3
Female	56.8		
<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Base = 322</b>	Professionals	36
Hong Kong	82.3	Associate professionals	10.2
Mainland	16.5	Clerk	9.9
Others	1.2	Service worker & sales	6.2
<b>Age</b>	<b>Base = 321</b>	Craft and related worker	0.9
Below 18	7.2	Unskilled worker	0.9
18-29	53.3	Student	21.1
30-39	20.6	Home-maker	5
40-49	12.1	Unemployed person	2.5
50-65	6.5	Retired person	0.3
65+	0.3		
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Base = 320</b>	<b>Years in Hong Kong</b>	<b>Base = 313</b>
Single	69.4	Below 18	14.4
Married	27.5	18--29	54.3
Divorced	3.1	30-39	16.9
		40-49	10.5
		50+	3.8
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Base = 321</b>	<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	<b>Base = 295</b>
Primary or below	2.2	Below \$ 10,000	11.9
Secondary	23.7	\$10,000-\$19,999	31.9
Matriculation	11.5	\$20,000-\$29,999	23.1
Tertiary	47	\$30,000-\$59,999	24.7
Master or above	15.6	\$60,000 or above	8.5

**Table 21: Demographic profile of the participants from general public groups  
(% of the respondents)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Base = 64</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Base = 64</b>
Male	53.1	Employers/ Managers/ Administrators	4.7
Female	46.9		
<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Base =64</b>	Professionals	21.9
Hong Kong	89.1	Associate professionals	7.8
Mainland	9.4	Clerk	37.5
Others	1.6	Service worker & sales	12.5
<b>Age</b>	<b>Base = 64</b>	Craft and related worker	1.6
Below 18	0	Unskilled worker	0
18-29	81.3	Student	9.4
30-39	12.5	Home-maker	0
40-49	1.6	Unemployed person	4.7
50-65	4.7	Retired person	0
65+	0		
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Base = 64</b>	<b>Years in Hong Kong</b>	<b>Base = 63</b>
Single	89.1	Below 18	6.3
Married	10.9	18-29	76.2
Divorced	0	30-39	14.3
		40-49	1.6
		50+	1.6
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Base = 64</b>	<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	<b>Base = 56</b>
Primary or below	0	Below \$10,000	10.7
Secondary	31.3	\$10,000-\$19,999	37.5
Matriculation	14.1	\$20,000-\$29,999	32.1
Tertiary	45.3	\$30,000-\$59,999	16.1
Master or above	9.4	\$60,000 or above	3.6

#### 4.3.1.2 Marital Status

Around a quarter of all participants (27.5%) were married while nearly 70% were never married. 3.1% were divorced or separated.

### **4.3.1.3 Education Attainment**

Nearly half of participants had tertiary education (47%) while 15.6% attained master or above education. Nearly a quarter of participants had an education level of secondary (23.7%) and around one tenth had matriculation (11.5%). Only 2.2% participants had an education level of primary or below. The education level of the public participants was quite similar to that of the overall participants, in that over 50% had tertiary or above education background. It seems that people with higher education background might be more concerned about media issues affecting their life and next generations, and might be more willing to participate in research to express their views and make contributions for improvement.

### **4.3.1.4 Occupation**

As the criteria for recruiting teacher, professional, social worker and media practitioner participants were based on their specific work nature, 71.1% of participants were working while professionals (36%) and associate professionals (10.2%) were nearly half of the overall participants. Less than one-third of the participants were not working (28.9%), including 21.1% students and 5% homemakers, 2.5% unemployed and 0.3% retired persons.

### **4.3.1.5 Income**

In terms of monthly household income, a larger proportion of the participants were from the category of \$10,000-\$19,999 per month (31.9%), followed by \$30,000-\$59,999 (24.7%) and \$20,000-\$29,999 (23.1%).

## **4.3.2 Perception of Gender Role**

In this section, participants were asked about their perception of current female image/ role and views on males. As the focus was the female gender, expressions about the female image/ role (326 counts) were much more common than for the male image/ role (34 counts).

The top 10 perceptions on current female image/ role were having higher status than in the past (53 counts), appearance-oriented (32 counts), playing dual roles (26 counts), independent (25 counts), capable/ smart (24 counts), tough/ hard/ strong (19 counts), carrying traditional expectations (17 counts), career-oriented (17 counts), well educated (14 counts), and more aggressive than in the past (13 counts).

The most common comment for both genders was also carrying traditional expectation/ bounded by traditional thoughts (28 counts), followed with sexual equality (27 counts),

blurred boundary between genders (21 counts) and diverse/ multiple roles played by both genders (20 counts).

Generally, gender variation on the perceptions of the current female image/ role is small. However, relatively more female participants expressed that the female image/ role is independent and carrying traditional expectation while both genders are limited by traditional thoughts, while more males expressed that the female image/ role is well educated and financially independent. Both genders considered that nowadays women are independent in different aspects as men emphasized the financial status but women stressed they are no longer depending on men and living for men. On the other hand, female participants had a strong feeling that women to some extent are limited by an ultimate goal of getting married within a certain age range, portraying a quite contradictory image/ role about women nowadays.

**Table 22: Perception on nowadays gender image / role**

Rank	Gender image / role of female	Count	Gender Variation
1	Higher status than the past	53	
2	Appearance-oriented	32	
3	Dual role in women	26	
4	Independent	25	F
5	Capable / smart	24	
6	Tough / hard / strong	19	
7	Career oriented	17	
8	Carrying traditional expectation	17	F
9	Well educated	14	M
10	More aggressive than the past	13	
11	Money-oriented / materialistic	12	
12	Have higher demand	11	
13	Financial independent	10	M
Rank	General comment on gender image / role	Count	Gender Variation
1	Carrying traditional expectation / bounded by traditional thoughts	28	F
2	Sexual equality	27	
3	Blurred boundary	21	
4	Diverse / multiple roles	20	
5	Same opportunity at work	15	
6	Shifting roles between man and female	15	
7	Different roles at work	10	
Total comments about male		34	
Total comments about female		326	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“M” indicates more comments expressed by male participants than female;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

There are some variations of perception on gender image/ role between groups. Compared with the public, the concern groups expressed more about diverse/ multi role of genders.

Social workers talked more about the dual role in women, while they perceived women are capable/ smart and well educated, as well as both genders carry diverse/ multi roles. Professionals, teachers and parents were highly inclined to perceive women as well educated while the teacher group also often perceived women as independent, capable/ smart and carrying traditional expectation.

**Table 23: Perception on nowadays gender image / role – Group variation**

Perception	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
<b>Gender image / role of female</b>									
Higher status than the past	53	1	L						
Dual role in women	26	1		H					
Independent	25	1					H		
Capable / smart	24	1		H			H		
Career oriented	17	1			L				
Carrying traditional expectation	17	1					H		
Well educated	14	1		H	H		H	H	
Money-oriented / materialistic	12	1							L
<b>General comment on gender image / role</b>									
Sexual equality	27	1		L	L				
Diverse / multiple roles	20	1	H	H					
Different roles at work	10	1		L	L				

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.3 First Impression on Media Portrayal of Female

In order to stimulate participants’ recall of female gender portrayal in local media, participants were asked their first impression when hearing the topic of female gender portrayal in local media.

The top 10 impressions that came first to their mind were showing the female figure (63 counts), negative (53 counts), female artist (53 counts), female’s appearance (41counts), headline/ word description (39 counts), sexy (37 counts), covert photo (31 counts), exposed (27 counts), sex (21 counts), slim beauty advertisements (19 counts). As explained by the

participants, their impressions were mostly relevant to magazines (87 counts) and newspapers (38 counts). In addition, among those top 10 impressions, 6 items explicitly referred to magazines, i.e. showing female figure (18 counts), negative (16 counts), female artist (19 counts), sexy (17 counts), exposed (14 counts), and photo of women’s body accidentally revealed (15 counts).

**Table 24: First impression about female portrayal in local media**

Rank	Impression	Overall counts	Magazines	Newspapers	Television	Radio	MTR	Gender Variation
1	Showing female figure	63	18	10	3	2	0	
2	Negative	53	16	9	1	1	0	
3	Female artist	53	19	7	1	1	0	
4	Female’s appearance	41	8	3	2	1	0	
5	Headline / word description	39	8	5	0	0	0	
6	Sexy	37	17	4	2	0	0	
7	Photo of women’s body accidentally revealed “走光照”	31	15	3	0	0	0	
8	Exposed	27	14	2	0	0	0	F
9	Sex	21	3	3	0	0	0	M
10	Slim beauty advertisements	19	5	2	0	0	5	
11	Smear female image	17	4	3	1	0	0	F
12	Expose women’s privacy	10	6	0	0	0	0	M
13	A recent news / case	10	2	1	0	0	0	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“M” indicates more comments expressed by male participants than female;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Counts in the subgroups are highlighted when they are  $\geq 10$ .

Some gender variations among the first impressions are found. More female than male participants claimed their first impression was “exposed” and “smearing female image” while vice versa for “sex” and “exposing women’s privacy”. This indicates males and females have quite different focal points in perceiving media messages about women portrayal as females are more likely to concentrate on external appearance while males are more likely to cover the image of women’s bodies.

Only a small variation across groups is found when compared to the public. There was less expression about female’s appearance given by concern groups and students. Also, professionals were less likely to relate sexy and slim beauty advertisements to the topic of media female portrayal.

**Table 25: First impression about female portrayal in local media – Group variation**

Impression	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Female’s appearance	41	1	L						L
Sexy	37	1			L				
Slim beauty advertisements	19	1			L				

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.4 Media Exposure

As this study is focused only on the local print media and its extension to the Internet, the question of media exposure asked about participants’ reading habit of newspapers and magazines in print and online formats.

Participants mostly shared an everyday/ regular basis reading habit (291 counts), followed with sometimes/ non regular basis (139 counts), but about one fifth of comments indicated that participants seldom (100) or never (28) touch print media. Participants’ habit of reading print newspapers was mostly everyday/ regular basis (165 counts). Compared to print newspapers, participants less often read online newspapers on an everyday/ regular basis (64 counts). Participants’ habit of reading print magazines was not as common as newspapers. Instead, about one third of comments indicated that participants read print magazine sometimes/ non-regular basis (84 counts) while one third claimed that they seldom (68 counts) or never (15 counts) read print magazines.

Gender variation is small, indicating both genders had a similar pattern of exposure to local print media.

**Table 26: Print media exposure – Media type & reading frequency**

Frequency	Overall counts	Hardcopy newspapers	Online newspapers	Hardcopy magazines	Online magazines	Gender Variation
Everyday / regular basis	<b>291</b>	165	64	62	2	
Sometimes / non-regular basis	<b>139</b>	31	25	84	0	
Seldom	<b>100</b>	19	15	68	0	
Never	<b>28</b>	13	0	15	0	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Little variation is found between groups except that the print media exposure on sometimes/ non-regular basis was less common for media practitioners. Also, in contrast to professionals and teachers, a small number of social workers, media practitioners, parents and students expressed they never read print media materials.

**Table 27: Printed media exposure – Overall reading frequency – Group variation**

Reading Frequency	Overall	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Everyday / regular basis	<b>291</b>	1							
Sometimes/ non-regular basis	<b>139</b>	1				L			
Seldom	<b>100</b>	1							
Never	<b>28</b>	1			L		L		

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.5 Perception on Female Portrayal in the Media

In order to understand people’s perception of female portrayal in local print media, a set of print media samples, including advertisements, magazine covers and news cuttings that included all those used in the household survey, were presented and participants were asked to express their comments and feelings on different presentation manners or reporting styles for female portrayal.

All 20 items of perception/ comment/ feeling were regrouped to 4 main categories. The first two categories were generally negative and positive comments/ feelings respectively while the other two categories were neutral or mild responses with no strong feeling. Participants responded actively. Negative comments (362 counts) and positive comments (322 counts) represented two major opposing positions while neutral (60 counts) and mild (46 counts) comments represented minority views whose expressions implied their weak feelings about current female portrayal in local print media.

In negative comments, the most common negative view was unacceptable (104 counts), followed with dislike (75 counts), disgusting (58 counts), cheap (38 counts), and bad (36 counts). There were significant numbers of negative comments referring to body beauty advertisements (112 counts) and magazine covers (129 counts) such as unacceptable (38 and 31 counts), disgusting (23 and 22 counts), and dislike (28 and 16 counts).

In positive comments, the most common positive view was acceptable (128 counts), followed with beautiful (90 counts), OK (42 counts) and attractive (40 counts). Over half of these comments referred to product advertisements with a small number referring to other types of samples (except a significant number of acceptable comments related to body beauty advertisements (30 counts) and newspapers (15 counts)).

In the neutral and mild categories, those weaker expressions mainly referred to product advertisements (33 and 19 counts) and body beauty advertisements (18 and 21 counts). Participants explained they were used to seeing this kind of commercial advertisements in the popular print media and had no strong feeling about these samples.

Gender variation on most negative comments is small. Some positive comments, such as OK, attractive and like, were more frequently expressed by male than female participants while vice versa in two negative comments of uncomfortable and not beautiful. Both genders had broad consensus in giving negative and neutral perceptions of female portrayal in local print media while male participants are more likely to give positive comments.

**Table 28: Perception / comment / feeling on female portrayal in local print media**

Perception / Comment / Feeling	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
<b>Negative Comment</b>						
Unacceptable	104	18	38	31	17	
Dislike	75	11	28	16	20	
Disgusting	58	5	23	22	8	

Perception / Comment / Feeling	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
Cheap	38	4	5	27	2	
Bad	36	4	7	11	14	
Negative	30	5	4	15	6	
Uncomfortable	21	4	7	7	3	F
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>70</b>	
<b>Positive Comment</b>						
Acceptable	128	76	30	7	15	
Beautiful, in artistic sense	90	77	13	0	0	
OK	42	24	8	5	5	M
Attractive	40	24	4	6	6	M
Like	14	12	1	0	1	M
Others	8	1	6	1	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	
<b>Neutral Comment</b>						
Very normal, nothing special	31	22	6	1	2	
No feeling / comment	29	11	12	4	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Mild Comment</b>						
Boring	17	8	7	2	0	
Not beautiful	15	3	11	1	0	F
Others	14	8	3	2	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“M” indicates more comments expressed by male participants than female;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Some variations can be found among groups when compared to the public. Media practitioners expressed less negative views related to dislike and disgusting feelings. Although

teachers expressed fewer negative views related to disgust, both teachers and parents more commonly felt bad about the samples of media female portrayal. Positive comments including OK and attractive were more commonly expressed by social workers, students and media practitioners respectively. However, both social workers and professionals rarely said they liked the sample materials. Also, concern groups, social workers, teachers and students were less likely to express a neutral feeling or very normal and nothing special in the discussions. Finally, concern groups were more likely to describe the sample materials as boring.

**Table 29: Perception / comment / feeling on female portrayal in local print media – Group variation**

Perception / Comment / Feeling	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
<b>Negative comment</b>									
Dislike	75	1				L			
Disgusting	58	1				L	L		
Bad	36	1					H	H	
<b>Positive comment</b>									
OK	42	1				H			
Attractive	40	1		H					H
Like	14	1		L	L				
<b>Neutral Comment</b>									
Very normal, nothing special	31	1	L	L			L		L
<b>Mild comment</b>									
Boring	17	1	H						
Not beautiful	15	1							L

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

As explained by the participants, those negative expressions were related to a variety of reasons shown in Table 30, which were regrouped to 6 categories. The first category was a negative description of women’s image shown in the samples (387 counts), followed by unreasonable implications to women (299 counts), treating women’s bodies as objects in the samples (247 counts), inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal shown in the

samples (224 counts), improperly implying sex in the samples (131 counts) and implications against social justice (75 counts).

In the category of negative description of female image, both reasons of poor/ unfair description to women (158 counts) and smearing female image (139 counts) were the major responses, while these reasons were obviously relevant to the participants' negative comments on magazine covers (175 counts) and newspapers (110 counts).

In the category of unreasonable implications to women, building and strengthening a particular aesthetic standard for women to follow (186 counts) was the most explicit reason contributing to those negative comments significantly on body beauty advertisements (147 counts) and on product advertisements (34 counts).

In the category of treating women's bodies as objects, the most obvious reason was using a woman's body as an attraction (139 counts) that was significantly related to the negative comments about product advertisements (79 counts) and fairly related to body beauty advertisements (24 counts) and magazine covers (35 counts) respectively. In addition, reasons of sales object not relevant to a woman's figure (42 counts) and objectification of woman's body (66 counts) represented a quite important count, where the former response was mainly associated with comments on product advertisements (34 counts) while the latter was linked to magazine covers (37 counts).

In the category of inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal, three distinct reasons about improper presentation manner were significantly associated with the negative comments about newspapers (149 counts).

In the category of improperly implying sex, using sex imagination/ sex issue as an attraction was the major reason related to the negative comments especially on magazine covers (53 counts), product advertisements (39 counts) and newspapers (29 counts).

In the category of implications against social justice, discrimination against fat people or people without "perfect figure" (34 counts) was directly associated with the negative comments about body beauty advertisements (33 counts) while the reason of paparazzi was directly related to the magazine covers (40 counts).

Nearly all reasons given across genders are similar except for the reasons of portraying women as weak and shifting the problem/ responsibility to women, which are more commonly expressed by female participants.

**Table 30: Reasons behind the negative comments on the print media samples**

Reason	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
<b>Negative description of women image</b>						
Poor / unfair description to women	158	2	11	75	70	
Smear female image	139	9	21	87	22	
No need to be such sexy/ exposed	69	41	16	12	0	
Portrait women as weak	21	2	0	1	18	F
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>110</b>	
<b>Unreasonable implications to women</b>						
Building and strengthening a particular aesthetic standard for women to follow	186	34	147	5	0	
Not respect women	40	3	1	32	4	
Shift the problem / responsibility to women	28	0	0	6	22	F
Expose women's privacy	19	2	0	13	4	
Ignore intrinsic value of women	14	1	8	5	0	
Others	12	2	4	6	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>30</b>	
<b>Treating women's bodies as objects</b>						
Using woman's body as an attraction	139	79	24	35	1	
Objectification of women body	66	12	16	37	1	
The sales object and women figure are not related	42	34	0	8	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal</b>						
Over-detailed description, with simulated picture	81	0	1	5	75	
Make up a story, not	79	0	16	33	30	

Reason	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
telling the truth						
Present in a way for attracting readers only, not in a formal way	64	1	1	18	44	
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>149</b>	
<b>Improperly implying sex</b>						
Using sex imagination / sex issue as an attraction	112	35	6	46	25	
Stimulate sexual desires of men	19	4	4	7	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>Implications against social justice</b>						
Paparazzi	41	1	0	40	0	
Discriminate against fat people or people without “perfect figure”	34	0	33	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>	

Notes:

In the column of Gender variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Generally, the reasons given by groups were quite similar. Slight variations can be found among social workers, professionals and teachers who rarely claimed stimulating sexual desires of men, ignoring intrinsic value of women, paparazzi and not respecting women were the reasons behind the negative perceptions. Variations among media practitioners and students are obvious. Media practitioners rarely claimed that smearing female image, objectification of women body, no relationship between sale object and women figure, not respecting women, and shifting the problem/ responsibility to women were associated with the negative perceptions of media female portrayal shown in the samples. Similarly, students rarely suggested that not respecting women, exposing women’s privacy, stimulating sexual desires of men and ignoring intrinsic value of women were associated with those negative comments.

**Table 31: Reasons behind the negative comments on the print media samples – Group variation**

Reason	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Smear female image	139	1				L			
Objectification of women body	66	1				L			
The sales object and women figure are not related	42	1				L			
Paparazzi	41	1					L		
Not respect women	40	1				L	L		L
Shift the problem / responsibility to women	28	1				L			
Expose women's privacy	19	1							L
Stimulate sexual desires of men	19	1		L	L				L
Ignore intrinsic value of women	14	1		L					L

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.6 Impact of Media Portrayal of Females

Participants were asked to make comments on the impact of media portrayal of females based on their past experiences of reading print media materials and relate stories and experiences from peers and people in association. Participants also discussed media impact on the community in particular the influence on groups and their perceived impacts. Widespread evidence given by the participants illustrated that the impact of female portrayal in local print media was significant at the personal, peer and community levels.

#### **4.3.6.1 Impact at Personal Level**

Impact at personal level can be classified into six categories. The first category was impact of increased consciousness of appearance (53 counts) that was the most popular category of comments. The other two major impacts were personal attitudes and values towards appearance and sex (37 counts) as well as personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards (36 counts). Higher personal expectation on female appearance (29 counts) and psychological impact (19 counts) also contributed to a considerable amount of views. Impact on social behaviour contained a few comments (not included in Table 32), like applying headline wording in describing people and/or not being respected by others (5 counts). Finally, there were 28 comments of no influence from product advertisements (12 counts) and body beauty advertisements (10 counts) in particular.

In the category of increased consciousness of appearance, most expressions of more demanding on own figure (21 counts) and low body esteem by applying the portrayal model to compare own figure or others' figure (20 counts), were mainly linked to body beauty advertisements (18 and 12 counts).

In the category of personal attitude and value towards appearance and sex, most comments about impact on distorted personal aesthetic standards (25 counts) were related to body beauty advertisements (19 counts). The major comment in impact of personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards was trying hard to keep fit (25 counts) as influenced by body beauty advertisements (24 counts).

In the categories of higher personal expectation on female appearance and psychological impact, the most common impacts were higher expectation from partner/ others (18 counts) and adding pressure to women (17 counts) that were associated with body beauty advertisements (17 and 14 counts).

Gender differences in the media impact at personal level are obvious in that women are more likely to be affected by the media portrayal in a sense of being more demanding on self-figure, low body esteem by applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other figures, higher expectation from partner/ others, and adding pressure to women, indicating the full range of media impacts on women.

**Table 32: Impact of media female portrayal at personal level**

Impact	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
<b>1. Increase consciousness on appearance</b>						
More demanding on self-figure	21	3	18	0	0	F
Low body esteem by apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or others' figure	20	8	12	0	0	F
Affect self-confidence/ image and develop body shame	11	5	5	1	0	
Others	1	16	0	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>2. Personal attitude and value towards appearance and sex</b>						
Distorted aesthetic standard	25	6	19	0	0	
Others	12	8	4	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>3. Personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards</b>						
Try hard to keep fit	25	1	24	0	0	
Others	11	0	11	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>4. Higher personal expectation on female appearance</b>						
Higher expectation from partner / others	18	1	17	0	0	F
Others	11	1	9	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>5. Psychological impact</b>						
Add pressure to women	17	2	14	1	0	F
Others	2	0	1	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>No influence</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders; "F" indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

It is quite surprising that views from social workers show a stronger feeling about the media impact at personal level, including distorted aesthetic standard, low body esteem by applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure or others' figure, and affecting self-confidence/ image and development of body shame. However, it is not so surprising that teachers commonly claimed that the media has no impact on them while students would commonly apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or others' figure, leading to low body esteem.

**Table 33: Impact of media female portrayal at personal level – Group variation**

Impact	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Try hard to keep fit	25	1		L					
Distorted aesthetic standard	25	1		H					
More demanding on self-figure	21	1							
Low body esteem by apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or others' figure	20	1		H					H
Higher expectation from partner / others	18	1					L	L	
Add pressure to women	17	1							
Affect self-confidence/ image and develop body shame	11	1		H					
No influence	28	1					H		

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.6.2 Impact at Level of Peers and People in Association

The media impact on peers or people in association was reviewed. Stories and cases about the overall impact on females (94 counts) and young people (69 counts) were numerous, while comments about males were relatively less common (29 counts).

More comments given by female than male participants illustrated the media impact on women, young people and men. Although male participants did share the views, female participants seemed to be more sensitive and active in exploring the impact among different groups by sharing the fruitful experiences of peers and people in association.

**Table 34: Impact of media female portrayal on different groups at level of peers and people in association**

Category	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
Female	94	6	84	4	0	F
Young People	69	12	43	12	2	F
Male	29	5	19	5	0	F

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Except for the concern group and media practitioners, all groups expressed stronger views about the media impact on young females. Also, the comments about the impacts on children and youth were a shared concern of parents, teachers and students respectively. In addition, the impact on males was more commonly recognized by professionals, parents and students.

**Table 35: Impact of media female portrayal on different groups at level of peers and people in association – Group variation**

Category	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Young female (student)	27	1		H	H		H	H	H
Children	19	1						H	
Male (in general)	15	1			H			H	H
Youth	11	1					H		H

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

Similar to the personal level, the category of impacts on behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards (86 counts) and category of impacts on attitude towards women appearance/ image (76 counts) were the most common while the categories of impacts on social behaviour (21 counts) and of attitude towards sex (8 counts) were in the minority.

The common impact items of each category were relevant mainly to body beauty advertisements, such as trying hard to keep fit (49 counts), more demanding on self-figure (27 count), receiving/ thinking of receiving the treatment (24 counts).

Some impacts were more frequently stressed by female participants than males, including more exposed dressing style, receiving or thinking of receiving body beauty treatment, and more conscious/ open discussion about female body.

**Table 36: Impact of media female portrayal at level of peers and people in association**

Impact	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
<b>1. Behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards</b>						
Try hard to keep fit	52	2	49	1	0	
More exposed dressing style	10	5	2	3	0	F
Receive or think of receiving body beauty treatment	24	0	24	0	0	F
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>2. Attitude towards women appearance/ image</b>						
More demanding on self-figure	29	2	27	0	0	
More conscious/ open discussion about female body	18	6	9	3	0	F
Others	29	2	26	3	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>3. Social behaviour</b>						
Apply those texts / wordings in describing people that raises their appearance anxiety	13	0	7	4	2	
Others	8	2	0	5	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>No influence</b>						
No influence	1	0	0	1	0	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Also, some impacts were more commonly highlighted by professionals, parents, and students respectively by reviewing experiences from peers and people in association, including receiving or thinking of receiving the treatment, more conscious/ open discussion about women body, and applying those texts/ wordings in describing people that raises their appearance anxiety.

**Table 37: Impact of media female portrayal at level of peers and people in association – Group variation**

Impact	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Try hard to keep fit	52	1.0				L			
More demanding on self-figure	29	1.0							
Receive or think of receiving body beauty treatment	24	1.0			H			H	
More conscious/ open discussion about women body	18	1.0						H	H
Apply those texts / wordings in describing people that raises their appearance anxiety	13	1.0							H

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.6.3 Impact at Community Level

Participants, based on their background and observation, commented on the extensive influence of media on the community. The most popular concern was the impact on young people (285 counts), while a considerable number of comments represented the impact on females (120 counts) and males (88 counts). Also, there were specific comments about the impact of body beauty advertisements on fat people (2 counts).

Comments about the impact of body beauty advertisements on young people (59 counts), females (68 counts) and males (49 counts) were quite evenly distributed, indicating the influence was seen in all parts of the community because people have been taught to be more concerned with their body and appearance. Comments about the impact of magazine covers (90 counts) and newspapers (80 counts) concentrated on young people. As explained by the participants, adults should be more capable of making judgment on those female news stories, so the influence on them should be relatively less than on young people. Finally, the response to the influence of product advertisements was relatively mild while the main emphasis was on young people (56 counts).

The variation of comments among genders is small as both male and female participants reported the media impact on the community.

**Table 38: Impact of media female portrayal on different groups at community level**

Category	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
Youth	285	56	59	90	80	
Female	120	27	68	22	3	
Male	88	18	49	17	4	
Fat people	2	0	2	0	0	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Groups commented on impact similarly except that teachers were more concerned about the impact on youth while media practitioners were less active to talk about the impact on children and young females.

**Table 39: Impact of media female portrayal on different groups at community level – Group variation**

Category	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Youth	154	1					H		
Children	91	1				L			
Young female (student)	34	1				L			

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

Participants were most concerned about the impact on social values and moral standards (388 counts), including that people might have distorted concepts towards gender/ female image/ body/ sex (190 counts), deteriorated moral and ethical standards (63 counts), as well as misinterpreting general belief on human values (61 counts). Also, most impacts were associated with magazine covers (170 counts) and newspapers (109 counts).

Responses in the category of the impact on people’s behaviour in achieving a certain appearance standard (187 counts) and category of impact on social realm (175 counts) were numerous. In the prior category, most comments were relevant to body beauty advertisements (115 counts) while participants were concerned about the impact on distorted aesthetic standards (102 counts) leading to actions in achieving a particular standard of beauty or perfection. In the latter category, comments were mainly related to the impact of magazine covers and newspapers, such as imitating the subject of the reported cases (84 counts), forming a negative/ poor social atmosphere (38 counts) and applying those texts/ wordings in describing people that raises their appearance anxiety (31 counts).

Other categories of psychological impact on women (95 counts), impact on attitudes towards sex (70 counts), and impact on the victim(s) (51 counts) were significant as well. Finally, there were still some responses to indicate that product advertisements generally had no impact on the community (13 counts).

Similar to the gender variation at the personal level, impacts of affecting self-confidence/ self-image and developing body shame, adding pressure to people without “perfect figure”, and adding pressure to women were more frequently expressed by female participants. However, comments on the media impact at community level were quite evenly distributed across genders. Participants assessed the impact based on similar grounds, such as social

judgment and concept of third-person effects, indicating the media portrayal of female is more influential at the community level than at personal and peer levels.

**Table 40: Impact of media female portrayal at community level**

Impact	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
<b>1. Social values and moral standards</b>						
Distorted concepts towards gender / female image / body / sex	190	24	18	81	67	
Deteriorated moral and ethical standard	63	15	2	31	15	
Misinterpret general belief on human value	61	9	10	36	6	
Focus more on women's figure/ appearance and ignore their intrinsic value	31	4	19	8	0	
The reported cases seems to be normal and commonly accepted	30	5	0	7	18	
More open discussion on females body / sex	13	1	2	7	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>109</b>	
<b>2. People's behaviour in achieving certain appearance standard</b>						
Distorted aesthetic standard	102	29	65	8	0	
Try hard to keep fit	40	4	36	0	0	
Dressing fashion tends to be more exposed	33	20	6	7	0	
Consider to receive the body treatment	12	3	8	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>3. Social realm</b>						
Imitate the subject of the reported cases	84	5	1	22	56	
Form a negative / poor atmosphere	38	2	5	22	9	
Apply those texts / wordings in describing people that raises their appearance anxiety	31	0	6	17	8	
Depreciate the	12	0	1	2	9	

Impact	Overall counts	Product advertisement	Body beauty advertisement	Magazine cover	Newspapers	Gender Variation
credibility / value / profession of news reporting						
Others	10	0	0	5	5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>87</b>	
<b>4. Psychological impact on women</b>						
More demanding on self-figure	49	10	36	3	0	
Affect self-confidence/ self-image and develop body shame	17	3	13	1	0	F
Add pressure to people without “perfect figure”	12	2	10	0	0	F
Add pressure to women that raises their appearance anxiety	11	0	11	0	0	F
Other	6	0	5	1	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>5. Attitude towards sex</b>						
Stimulate sexual desires	48	13	11	14	10	
Early age sexual relationship	13	1	1	6	5	
Other	9	1	0	1	7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	
<b>6. Victim (reported person)</b>						
Unfair to / hurt victim	42	0	1	8	33	
Other	9	0	1	0	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>41</b>	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

Large counts in the subgroups are highlighted.

Except for the general public, professionals and parents, all other groups were more conscious about people’s dressing fashion that tends to be more exposed. Also, except professionals, parents and students, all groups stressed that the sex violence cases seem to be normal and commonly accepted by the public due to the current reporting manner of newspapers. In addition, concern groups and teachers were more worried about the influence on self-confidence/ self image leading to body shame and early age sexual relationship

respectively while media practitioners and parents rarely expressed concern about the impact of forming a negative/ poor atmosphere and being unfair to the victim.

**Table 41: Impact of media female portrayal at community level – Group variation**

Impact	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
Unfair to / hurt victim	42	1						L	
Form a negative / poor atmosphere	38	1				L			
Dressing fashion tends to be more exposed	33	1	H	H		H	H		H
The reported cases seems to be normal and commonly accepted	30	1			L			L	L
Affect self-confidence / self-image and develop body shame	17	1	H						
Early age sexual relationship	13	1					H		

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

### 4.3.7 Ways Forward

The final discussion was a brain storming section to ask for ideas about balancing the negative impact of female portrayal in local print media on the community, with particular emphasis on possible ways to counteract the impact on the development of the younger generation. The broad and extensive ideas suggested by participants were classified into 8 levels shown in Table 42. Any ideas with at least 10 comments are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

At the personal level, participants suggested to stop purchasing those local print media materials (22 counts), use peer influence to persuade people not to purchase (17 counts), and make complaints/ write to corresponding organizations (14 counts). Some professionals expressed that they would use their money to vote in order to put those local media products

under a boycott while a concern group participant said it is possible for readers to express their appreciation or discontent with the reporting manner of local print media via making complaints and letters to the editor.

At the school level, sex and gender education (38 counts), general education (13 counts), ethics and moral education (12 counts), and media education (14 counts) were highly recommended and prioritised while participants emphasized the need to review and restructure their course content and teaching style in schools in order to make these consistent and realistic. As suggested by a public participant, change of people's perception towards sex and gender could start from education. Sex and gender education as well as media education could be included in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. Some teachers emphasized the importance of ethics and moral education in schools to help students develop proper attitudes towards sex and gender as well as their self-identity. Also, proper critical thinking training for students should be emphasized in school (17 counts). A teacher claimed open discussions about the media topics in general education classes were helpful in training students' critical mind. However, some students commented that the ethical topics discussed in class as well as sex and gender education given in school assembly were out-dated and unrealistic. They suggested teachers using current controversial media topics as case studies to discuss with students in ethics class. Also, media education that started earlier in secondary school was preferred by students.

At the family level, sex and gender education shared by parents is required (19 counts). Participants stressed that parents should not purchase print media materials with negative messages or should not bring those "problematic" media materials back home (18 counts). Some students stressed that parents should act as good role models for children, who should not read those print media materials at home. Also, parents should guide their children how to choose magazines and newspapers that are suitable for them and develop their ability to make value judgments from an early age (11 counts). Some students preferred to learn sex and moral education from parents rather than teachers. Concern groups and social workers also highlighted the importance of family education and communication that can help their children to build up self-identity and value.

At the community level, social or community services could play a supplementary role to the school and family to strengthen the critical thinking minds of young people while offering support to them when necessary (34 counts). It can also help to promote civic education among the youth and give them guidelines in receiving messages from local print media materials (17 counts). Some students and participants of general public suggested non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can help to promote a proper value of female and self-identity in the society via organising workshops or campaigns. Media practitioners felt it

is necessary to promote good conduct of the media industry through civic education in order to guide people making proper moral judgement on media messages. Social workers suggested it is possible to organise public forums to discuss the social impacts of media female portrayal, slim beauty culture or sexual representation of print media, etc., so as to arouse public awareness towards media messages. Furthermore, the society should have more voices from concern groups and NGOs to explicitly express their views and comments on the current print media materials (19 counts). Some professionals claimed that local NGOs have the obligation to make complaints of improper media female portrayal to the TELA in order to make their voices heard against the misconduct of the media industry.

At the governmental level, existing legislation on print media materials (40 counts) should be reviewed and revised to incorporate more precise and vigorous standards while formulation of new legislation for media industry could be considered after consultation. The concern groups raised that the Regulation of Obscene and Indecent Articles should be tightened to restrict people below 18 from access to these media materials while the penalty should be substantially increased and accumulated to avoid repetition of the misconduct practice. Some media practitioners indicated the interpretation of “obscene” and “indecent” could be redefined as clearly as in the regulation of broadcasting media, which could remove the grey area being challenged by the print media. Also, the existing monitoring mechanism for print media should be reviewed to ensure a smooth and efficient operation in handling cases of complaints and enquiry (39 counts). Government financial resources like subsidy and funding are helpful for supporting the publication of non-mainstream print media to spread positive messages about gender and sex, reconstructing and safeguarding the profession of media and press industry (17 counts). Finally, the government should play an important role in promoting civic and media education to the general public. Participants of the public suggested the government can produce programmes like “Action Blue Sky Campaign” to promote positive message about sex and gender relationships as well as media education.

At the media level, many supported making use of media influence to spread media education or sex and gender education, which might be possible via radio or TV (55 counts). As suggested by students and public participants, broadcasting media and artists have a social responsibility to promote sex and media education by producing programmes of relevant topics or issues. Also, the self-regulatory practice about ethics and conduct of media industry should be reemphasized and expanded, applying to the whole community of the print media industry (28 counts) while media professional ethics should be strengthened in the tertiary training of media practitioners (14 counts). Some students claimed reporters and editors have an obligation to review their practices and behave better when reporting news. Social workers said it is required to provide on-job training to media practitioners so as to build up their professional attitudes in news making and reporting.

Last but by no means least, participants emphasized a critical role should be played by the Equal Opportunities Commission in communicating with representatives of print media industry, raising public concern about the impact of media female portrayal in the government, arousing public concern about human rights, creating a platform to handle complaints of improper media portrayal of females, and actively promoting the education of gender and equality in the community (17 counts).

Some differences among genders are found at the personal and school level respectively. Female participants supported to stop purchasing, make complaints/ write to corresponding organizations, and enhancing ethical and moral education in school to lessen the media impact while males preferred to strengthen the critical thinking of students in school, reflecting the instinctive difference in sense and sensibility of males and females in the discussion.

**Table 42: Possible ways to balance media impact**

Suggestion	Overall counts	Gender Variation
<b>At market level</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>At personal level</b>	<b>62</b>	
Stop purchasing	22	F
Peers influence	17	
Making complaints / write to corresponding organizations	14	F
Others	9	
<b>At school level</b>	<b>147</b>	
Sex and gender education	38	
Critical thinking	17	M
Media education	14	
General education	13	
Ethic and moral education	12	F
Others	53	
<b>At family level</b>	<b>79</b>	
Sex and gender education	19	
No purchasing printed media materials with negative messages / don't bring "problematic" media materials back home	18	
Teach children how to choose / criticize newspapers / magazines	16	
Educate value judgment, e.g. health and beauty	11	
Others	15	
<b>At community level</b>	<b>83</b>	

<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Overall counts</b>	<b>Gender Variation</b>
Social / community services (especially youth and family)	34	
Voices from concern groups and NGOs	19	
Civic education (including media education)	17	
Others	13	
<b>At Government level</b>	<b>111</b>	
Legislation	40	
Monitoring mechanism	39	
Resources (like subsidy and funding)	17	
Educate the public	12	
Others	3	
<b>At media level</b>	<b>102</b>	
Make use of media influence to give media education / sex and gender education (e.g. radio, TV)	55	
Media self-regulatory practice (ethics and conduct)	28	
Media practitioners training	14	
Others	5	
<b>At EOC level</b>	<b>17</b>	

Notes:

In the column of Gender Variation, a blank indicates limited variation between genders;

“M” indicates more comments expressed by male participants than female;

“F” indicates more comments expressed by female participants than male.

A rather obvious variation can be found among groups in the brainstorming. Basically, nearly all groups, except parents, were more supportive and stressed the importance of the work/ actions taken at school, community and government levels. It is quite unexpected that parents were not very proactive in those three areas but emphasized only the works/action taken at the family level, so the importance of family education was well recognized by parents.

**Table 43: Possible ways to balance media impact – Group variation**

Impact	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
<b>At personal level</b>									
Stop purchasing	22	1			L				
Making complaints / write to corresponding organizations	14	1			L				L
<b>At school level</b>									
Critical thinking	17	1	H	H	H	H			H
Media education	14	1				H	H		H
General education	13	1		H		H	H		
Ethic and moral education	12	1					H		
<b>At family level</b>									
Sex and gender education	19	1			H	H		H	
No purchasing printed media materials with negative messages / don't bring "problematic" media materials back home	18	1						H	
Teach children how to choose / criticize newspapers / magazines	16	1						H	
<b>At community level</b>									
Social / community services (esp. youth and family)	34	1	H	H	H		H		H
Voices from concern groups and NGOs	19	1	H	H		H	H		H
Civic education (including media education)	17	1	H	H		H		H	
<b>At Government level</b>									
Monitoring	39	1						L	

Impact	Overall counts	Public	Concern group	Social worker	Professional	Media	Teacher	Parent	Student
mechanism									
Resources (like subsidy and funding)	17	1	H	H		H	H		H
<b>At media level</b>									
Media self-regulatory practice (ethics and conduct)	28	1	L						
Media practitioners training	14	1							L

Notes:

A blank indicates limited variation between groups;

“H” indicates the group had a higher ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1);

“L” indicates the group had a lower ratio of comments when compared with the public (defaulted as 1).

## 4.4 Conclusions and Implications

### 4.4.1 Introduction

The main focus of focus group discussion was to give detailed information on the objectives that were not covered in the household survey:

- collecting opinion from the public on the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioural development of future generation; and
- collecting public view on the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives

However, the focus group discussion also provided some additional qualitative comments on the public perceptions on female gender portrayal in local print media, the public acceptability of female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media, as well as the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women.

Both the youth and adult population were covered in this study. A total of 46 focus group discussions were conducted, involving 322 participants drawn from 8 different sectors in the society, including professionals, social workers, teachers, parents, media practitioners, students, concern groups and the general public. All discussions were recorded as a detailed

summary while all qualitative data was coded and analysed by a three layer hierarchical framework (refer to Section 4.2.9).

#### **4.4.2 Public Perceptions on Female Gender Portrayal in the Public Media**

There were two main opposing categories of comment about participants' perceptions on media female portrayal. The negative comments (362 counts), such as “unacceptable”, “dislike”, and “disgusting” mostly referred to body beauty advertisements (112 counts) and magazines covers (129 counts) while the positive comments (322 counts) such as “acceptable”, “beautiful in artistic sense”, and “OK”, mainly referred to product advertisement (214 counts). Some positive comments, such as “OK”, “attractive” and “like”, were more frequently expressed by male than female participants. Media practitioners expressed less negative views related to “dislike” and “disgusting feelings” while teachers and parents more commonly felt “bad” about the samples. However, social workers, students, and media practitioners more commonly felt the samples were “OK” and “attractive” respectively.

A minority expressed their neutral and mild perceptions particularly on product advertisements (52 counts) and body beauty advertisements (39 counts), such as “very nothing and nothing special”, “no feeling or comment”, and “boring”. As explained by some participants, they felt anaesthetised by the flooding of sexual female images shown in those print media materials, which have been recognised as part of mainstream media culture in Hong Kong.

#### **4.4.3 Public Acceptance of Female Gender Portrayal and Sexual Stereotyping of Women in the Media**

In the discussions, participants were not directly asked to assess their acceptance of the sample media materials, however some participants expressed that they could not accept those female gender portrayal especially in body beauty advertisements (38 counts) and magazine covers (31 counts) while others held opposite views on product (76 counts) and body beauty (30 counts) advertisements in particular.

#### **4.4.4 Association between Media Materials and Public Perception of Female Gender and Sexual Stereotyping of Women**

Although the discussion did not directly address to this objective, some qualitative comments help to depict the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women. The first impression of female gender portrayal in local media given by a majority of the participants explicitly referred to magazines. According to

their first impressions, the most common female images shown in local print media were “female figure”, “negative”, “female artist”, “appearance”, “sexy”, “photo of women’s body accidentally revealed”, “exposed”, “sex”, and “slim and beauty”. These are very different from their perceived female image nowadays that women have higher social status than the past and are more likely being respected due to their multi-function roles, career achievement, independent financial status, education qualification, capability, as well as tough and aggressive character. This inconsistency indicates a gap between the perceived female images in print media and real life, which forms a ground for participants’ negative perceptions towards the female portrayal in local print media, including “negative description of female image” (387 counts), “unreasonable implications to women” (299 counts), “treating women’s bodies as objects” (247 counts), “inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal” (224 counts), “improperly implying sex” (131 counts) and “implications against social justice” (75 counts).

#### **4.4.5 Public Opinion on the Relevance of Female Gender Portrayal in the Media on Attitudinal and Behavioural Development of the Future Generation**

According to the comments from eight target groups, the attitudinal and behavioural development of the future generation is influenced by female gender portrayal in the media in both direct and indirect ways. Participants generally perceived that young people or students (285 counts) would be mostly affected by those print media materials, followed by females (120 counts) and males (49 counts). The impact of product advertisements (56 counts), body beauty advertisements (59 counts), magazine covers (90 counts), and newspapers (80 counts) on young people was emphasized in terms of their attitude and behaviour. The impacts could be found in deterioration of social values and moral standards (388 counts), conscious behaviour in achieving certain appearance standard (187 counts), degraded social realm (175 counts), psychological pressure on women (95 counts), and casual attitude towards sex (70 counts). Except for the general public, professionals and parents, participants were conscious about the more exposed dressing fashion especially the young generation. Also, concern groups and teachers were more worried about the influence on self-confidence or self-image and early age sexual relationship respectively.

The media impact on female (94 counts) was also significantly highlighted when participants recalled stories from peers or people in association, while the impact on young people (69 counts) and men (29 counts) was still important but relatively less mentioned. The impacts found among peers or people in association were similar to participants’ perceived impacts mentioned above, which were conscious behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards (86 counts), distorted attitude towards women appearance/ image (76 counts), deteriorated

social behaviour (21 counts) and casual attitude towards sex (8 counts), while most of them were directly related to body beauty advertisements (145 counts). The impacts like exposed dressing style, receiving or thinking of receiving the body beauty treatment, and more conscious or open discussion about women body were more frequently discussed by female participants than male. Also, some impacts on peers were more frequently mentioned by professionals, parents and students, who were receiving or thinking of receiving the body beauty treatment, more conscious or open discussion about women's body, and applying those text or wordings in describing people.

Apart from the impacts on others, participants discussed the impacts of media female portrayal at a personal level. Nearly all participants indicated to some extent they were affected by those print media materials with only 28 comments claimed they had not been affected anyway. The impacts included being conscious of personal appearance (53 counts), distorted personal attitudes and values towards appearance and sex (37 counts), change of personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards (36 counts), imposing higher personal expectation on female appearance (29 counts) and adding self-psychological pressure (19 counts). These impacts were mostly associated with body beauty advertisements (136 counts) while some came from product advertisements (36 counts), indicating the strength of advertising media in constructing a defined perfect standard for women to aspire to, which adds pressure to individuals being women physically and psychologically while changes individual attitude and behaviour for sculpturing and shaping a "perfect" appearance. Compared with men, media impact on women seems to be more obvious and well recognised especially being more demanding on self-figure, applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other figures that leading to low body esteem, higher expectation from partner or others, and adding pressure to themselves. As for students, they would commonly apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other's figure, and again, many students claimed they had low self-esteem in terms of their appearance and some of them even tried some extreme ways to reduce body weight at a younger age. Also, social workers had stronger views on the impacts of affecting personal aesthetic standard, applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure and affecting self-confidence or image. However, it is not surprising that teachers more commonly expressed the media has no impact on them.

The third person effect that appeared in this study was that the media female portrayal generally had a stronger perceived impact on the community (others) than individuals or peers and people in association. Although the third person effect of advertisements has been commonly identified as affecting people's aesthetic standard, self-confidence or image, as well as ethical and moral values, the effect was more likely to emerge when participants assessed the social impacts of magazine covers and newspaper on the community because participants might have a feeling that it is not smart to be influenced by those negative

messages from magazine covers and newspapers. Based on the third person effect, participants perceived that people (others), who lack of proper value judgement on these negative media message, are more likely to be influenced than themselves (self).

In this study, the media impacts on individuals, peers and people in association, and the community were fully discussed while most of them overlapped and were repeatedly found among themselves and others. This indicates the impacts of female gender portrayal in local print media were pretty well recognised and nobody could escape from its direct or indirect influence. Also, the real experiences of participants and case stories from peers and people in association provided strong evidence to prove and support their perceived media impact on the community. In other words, the participants of female and students groups are able to elaborate a factual picture of those perceived media impact on females and students in particular. Thus, the three levels of media impacts could reinforce themselves, giving a rather comprehensive picture of the media impacts on the society and highlighting a significant association between the practice of media female portrayal and the attitude and behaviour of the young generation.

#### **4.4.6 Public Views on the Way Forward where Female Gender Portrayal in the Media is at Variance with Public Acceptance of Gender Perspectives**

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that there is an imbalance between current media practice and what the public finds acceptable regarding female gender portrayal in local print media because of the negative impacts on the society especially the young generation and women. Thus, some possible ways were discussed to counteract those negative impacts in the society, which cover the following seven levels:

- 1) stop purchasing or persuade others to stop purchasing and make complaints at personal level (62 counts);
- 2) promote critical mind training via innovated education programme in school (147 counts);
- 3) explain proper concept about sex and gender, build up moral standard and strengthen ability of value judgement via family education (79 counts);
- 4) strengthen critical mind training via workshops and discussions at community level and voice out the impact of extreme media female portrayal in the society (83 counts);
- 5) review and revise the existing legislation and monitoring mechanism, formulate new legislation, and give financial support for publication of counter-mainstream print media by the government (111 counts);

- 6) re-emphasize self-regulation practice and strengthen professional ethics training in media industry and spread the counter message to current media female portrayal via media itself (102 counts); and
- 7) raise concern about the media impact in the public and government and create a complaint platform by the EOC (17 counts).

Finally, it is interesting that female participants expressed more support to stop purchasing, make complaints or write to corresponding organizations, and enhance ethical and moral education in school to lessen the media impact while males preferred to strengthen the critical thinking of students in schools, reflecting the instinctive difference in sense and sensibility of male and female. Also, except parents, nearly all groups were more supportive of the work or actions taken at school, community and government levels. Parents instead preferred the works or actions taken at family level only, implying they had relatively less expectation from schools and society.

## **Chapter 5 Integrated Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we present the combined findings from the literature review, household survey and the focus group survey, organized in terms of the six objectives set for this study, namely: (1) a literature review of the effects of media contents on gender perception in Hong Kong and in countries overseas; (2) public perception of female gender portrayal in the public media in terms of temporal and demographic differences; (3) public acceptance of the female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media; (4) association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women, in relation to temporal and demographic differences; (5) public opinion on the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioural development of future generation; and (6) public views on the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives.

The household survey provides information that relates to three of the objectives, namely: public perception of female gender portrayal in the print media including temporal and demographic differences; public acceptance of female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media; and the association between media materials and public perceptions.

The main focus of focus group discussion was to collect detailed information from the public on the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioural development of future generation and collect views on the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives. However, the focus group discussion also provided some additional qualitative comments on the public perceptions on female gender portrayal in local print media, the public acceptability of female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media, as well as the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women.

This information needs to be understood in the context of media exposure. The median time spent reading newspapers amongst readers (87.7%) is about 5 hours per week. The median time spent reading magazines amongst readers (53.7%) was about 5 hours per week. The most popular type of magazines read by far was Infotainment (77.8% of readers), followed by Fashion (14.2%). In terms of websites, search is by far the most popular type (41.4%), followed by online sites for local print media (20.6%). The median time spent accessing those media sites is about 3 hours per week.

For time spent reading newspapers and magazines, nearly all the associations with demographic variables are significant, indicating the complexity of influences on time spent, with males (for newspapers), older people, married people, educated people, managers and non-workers, people with household income of at least \$10,000, born in Hong Kong spending more time reading local media.

It also needs to be noted that because of the focus of the study, it measured exposure to the print media alone which people can freely choose whether to read, whereas there are many other forms of exposure in Hong Kong to gender portrayal, including broadcast media, advertisements on public transport, etc., which may be much harder to avoid in normal daily life.

## **5.2 Summary of Literature Review**

### **5.2.1 Public Perception of Female Gender Portrayal in News Reports and Advertisements in Hong Kong**

#### **News Report**

Surveys of last 10 years in HK showed the satisfaction level of people with local news media or the most popular local newspapers was decreasing and part of the reason might be privacy invasion and the presentation of pornographic text and pictures that gave rise of uncomfortable feeling to the public and negative impacts on teenagers.

#### **Advertisements**

Findings of a local survey showed that the print advertisements presented too much sexual appeal, too much exaggeration, too many deceptive claims and too many misleading ideas. Overt sexual advertisement content, which was traditionally and culturally unacceptable, might exert a bad influence on the younger readers.

### **5.2.2 Overseas Studies of Female Gender Portrayal in Media**

A summary of overseas studies of media content analysis found that women were frequently depicted as taking more traditionally “feminine” occupations, passive, dependent, submissive, subservient, emotional, weak, and sex symbols or objects. Past overseas studies of perception and effect analysis showed low/mild sexual appeal advertisement contents, generally, are

more acceptable to men while overt sexual appeal contents are not acceptable to either men or women.

### **5.2.3 Impact of Media Female Portrayal**

When assessing the media impact, the third-person perception was applied that individuals perceive that media message would exert a stronger perceived impact on others than on themselves. However, a reverse effect would exist if the media messages were perceived to be personally beneficial or advocated socially desirable outcomes, or if the respondents understood well both the knowledge and individual risk of the message.

#### **Gender Role Stereotypes**

Studies showed gender stereotypes and inequality through media is still a prominent phenomenon in Hong Kong that has diffused into or unconsciously been absorbed by audience. Gender stereotypes can be examined using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (17 items) that can help to understand individual perception of “typical” masculine and feminine behaviours, traits and characteristics (an abbreviated version was used in the survey).

#### **Objectification and Dismemberment – Distorted Aesthetic Standard of Human Body**

In Hong Kong, women are overwhelmingly targeted more than men for sexually objectifying treatment in those ubiquitous slimming advertisements and messages that have serious implications for the self-conception, identity, and social values for women. Female self-objectification may contribute to the development of several mental health risks, including body shame, eating disorder, unipolar depression, appearance anxiety and sexual dysfunction. A survey in 2004 found that females were generally dissatisfied with their appearance and body figure while the self-evaluation of young female respondents below 18 scored the lowest, reflecting a negative self-esteem of women in Hong Kong. Research found that body dissatisfaction is prevalent among undergraduates, adult, and children, especially adolescent girls.

#### **Dismemberment**

Dismemberment of women is a large problem in advertising that may cause body shame, appearance anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders, producing negative effect comparable to that of objectification.

The effect of objectification and dismemberment can be measured by using the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS), i.e. scales of surveillance, body shame and appearance control beliefs, which is linked to low body esteem, depression, restrictive eating and eating

disorder, sexual dysfunction and low psychological well-being (the survey used some items from this scale). Children's OBC can be measured by OBC-Youth scale.

### **Sexual Attitudes**

Media portrayals of women can influence sexual attitudes and beliefs. Increased use of sexually exploitive women and sexually provocative content in advertising as approaching pornography might promote rape-supportive attitude and beliefs. The influence of sexist advertisement portrayals of women can be assessed by Burt's four scales of Sexual Attitudes (items from this scale were included in the survey). Sex attitude of teenagers might be influenced by the prevalent sex image and knowledge promoted in the media, however, studies indicated there was lack of sex education among secondary and primary students in Hong Kong.

### **5.2.4 Regulations and Guidelines**

International experiences about media regulation and guidelines was reviewed, including the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, Beijing Platform for Action – The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Global Media Monitoring Project.

Experiences in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were reviewed. The media industry in most of these countries is regulated by an independent and non-government organization that is a voluntary and self-regulatory body to handle complaints. About the guidelines for professional ethics, only Canada, Australia and New Zealand cover sex and gender issues but the others only mentioned privacy or press freedom.

In Hong Kong, complaints about newspaper industry are, in principle, handled by Hong Kong Press Council that is an independent and self-regulatory body. However, while some of local newspapers have signed up as members, the three most read (Oriental Daily News, The Sun and Apple Daily) have failed to join. Also, the publication and public display of obscene and indecent articles is regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (Cap 390) that is enforced by the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority. Submission of articles for classification ruling is entirely voluntary. The Media Ecology Survey 2006 indicated that the existing authority is ineffective in monitoring the news media. Suggestions for improving the existing mechanism included increasing penalties, strengthening the existing complaints mechanism, establishing a media statutory institute, revising existing regulation and reemphasizing civic education.

### **5.2.5 Actions to Counteract the Negative Impact of Media Female Portrayal**

Suggested strategies for counteracting the negative influence of media female portrayal include more women employees in the media industry, public campaigns for media monitoring, more media education, adopting guidelines and codes of conduct by news and advertising organizations, redefining “freedom of expression” via international debate, making complaints by consumers, alternative and publicly funded media, pro-social programming, government initiative and regulatory measures, professional ethical training programmes, parent and family education, and critical discussion about media practice by girls.

## **5.3 Public Perceptions and Public Acceptance of Gender Portrayal and Gender Stereotypes in the Print Media**

### **Media portrayal of women**

In the focus groups, there were two main opposing categories of comment about participants’ perceptions on media female portrayal. The negative comments, such as “unacceptable”, “dislike”, and “disgusting” mostly referred to body beauty advertisements and magazines covers while the positive comments such as “acceptable”, “beautiful in artistic sense”, and “OK”, mainly referred to product advertisement. Some positive comments, such as “OK”, “attractive” and “like”, were more frequently expressed by male than female participants. Media practitioners expressed less negative views related to “dislike” and “disgusting feelings” while teachers and parents more commonly felt “bad” about the samples. However, social workers, students, and media practitioners more commonly felt the samples were “OK” and “attractive” respectively.

A minority expressed their neutral and mild perceptions particularly on product advertisements and body beauty advertisements, such as “very nothing and nothing special”, “no feeling or comment”, and “boring”. As explained by some participants, they felt anaesthetised by the flooding of sexual female images shown in those print media materials, which have been recognised as part of mainstream media culture in Hong Kong.

### **Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

In the survey, for Leadership abilities, Independent, Defends beliefs, Aggressive, Understanding, Assertive and Conscientious, the majority of the respondents thought they were both masculine and feminine characteristics. The exceptions were Sympathetic, Shy and Gentle, which were all seen more often as feminine characteristics. However, 25% of the

respondents thought that Leadership, Defends beliefs, Independent, Aggressive, Assertive overall were feminine, while only 10% thought that Shy, Gentle, Understanding overall were masculine.

Women were more likely to answer that most characteristics are both masculine and feminine, the exceptions being Gentle, which younger people are more likely to report as very feminine and Conscientious, which older people are more likely to report as both feminine and masculine.

When we examine changes over the past decade, most of the gender stereotypes of what are masculine and feminine characteristics in the community have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is Leadership as a masculine characteristic, although the strongest stereotype overall is Gentleness as a feminine characteristic. Both genders still also often see Sympathetic, Shy and Understanding as feminine characteristics, while men see Leadership and to a lesser extent Assertiveness as masculine characteristics.

### **Advertisements and News Pictures**

The majority of survey respondents were uncomfortable with Ad O3 (59.6%) and Ad S3 (50.0%) and News pictures S1 (79.7%) and S3 (76.1%). Only for Ad S1, were more respondents comfortable (37.2%) than uncomfortable (7.4%). None of the advertisements were rated highly as appealing, with the best being Ad S2 (24.7%) and the worst being Ad O1 (13.1%). More respondents, although still only a minority, rated the news pictures as interesting, with News S3 rated interesting by 28.6% of the respondents. Interestingly, while only one advertisement had more respondents rate it as comfortable than uncomfortable (Ad S1), all but one of the advertisements (Ad O3) and two of the news pictures (News S1 and News S3) had more people rate them as acceptable to the community than rated them as unacceptable. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of News S3 picture, all 8 others had a majority of the respondents report that similar materials can be found at least once a week in the local print media. These high frequencies of exposure may explain why so many respondents believe that the advertisements and pictures are acceptable to the community.

Only a quarter of the respondents were comfortable with the advertisements overall, while only 10% of the respondents were comfortable with the news pictures overall. The majority of the respondents thought the community would find the advertisements and the news pictures acceptable overall, which is in contrast to the personal comfort of our respondents.

Only 5% of the respondents found the advertisements appealing overall, while only 10% of the respondents found the news pictures stimulated interest overall.

For comfort with the advertisements/pictures, gender and age are the two factors most often associated, with females and older people more often uncomfortable.

For advertisement appeal, gender is the factor most often associated, with males finding them more attractive.

For news picture triggering interest in the news issue, age is the strongest factor, with respondents under 30 finding them more interesting.

For community acceptability, age, marital status and education are associated with most variables, with those aged under 40, single or divorced, with higher education more likely to report that the community would find them acceptable.

For the frequency of similar advertisements/pictures in the local print media, age and education are the factors most often significant, with younger and more highly educated people reporting higher frequencies.

In the focus group discussions, participants were not directly asked to assess their acceptance of the sample media materials, however some participants expressed that they could not accept those examples of female gender portrayal especially in body beauty advertisements and magazine covers while others held opposite views on product and body beauty advertisements in particular.

### **Self-assessment of Image**

Only 12 to 15% of the respondents agree that they often compare with others or are ashamed about how they look, while around a quarter often think or worry about look and around a third worry about clothes. Most respondents overall were neutral or disagreed with “Compare with others”, “Think often about looks”, “Worry about clothes” and “Worry about looks”. Most respondents overall agreed with or were neutral with “Could look good” and “Could weigh right”. Most respondents disagreed overall with “Ashamed not look best” and “Ashamed not right size”.

Age and marital status are the most important demographic factors, with the under 30 year olds and the divorced more concerned about how they look.

### **Maculine and Feminine Stereotypes**

The responses to provocative statements about stereotypical masculine and feminine stereotypes show that for “Woman goes to home implies sex”, “Men should fight if woman

insulted”, “Women hope to be forced into sex”, “Men only out for sex when dating”, “Women manipulating men”, “Some women are too demanding sexually”, many more respondents disagree than agree. For the statement “Women should leave if husband hits her” slightly more respondents agree than disagree, while for “Braless women are asking for trouble” and “Family should come before a career for women”, many more respondents agree than disagree. Only about a quarter of the respondents agreed overall with “Women too demanding”, “Dating problems”, “Women manipulating”. There was no consensus on the items “Braless asking for trouble” and “Going to home implies sex”. Most respondents agreed overall with “Family comes first” and “Women leave home if hit”.

Age and marital status are the most important factors, with younger and single respondents less likely to agree with the statements.

### **Importance of Religion**

Only 28.1% of the respondents stated that religious belief is important or very important in affecting their moral values. There are many significant relationships with the importance of religious belief. However, these associations are not strong, so the ability to predict behaviour and attitudes given these characteristics is small.

## **5.4 Identifying the Association between Media Materials and Public Perceptions**

The correlations between hours per week spent reading newspapers and magazines and all the factor scales were all found to be so small (less than 0.2) as to be of limited usefulness in linking attitudes with exposure. As noted earlier, the levels of exposure are very high, which may explain the difficulty. Indeed, it is possible to argue that advertisements in public places alone provide sufficient exposure as to make media exposure of limited impact.

In this light, the most interesting element is the correlations with magazine reading, which shows small positive correlations with Comfort with Ads and Community Acceptability of Ads, although we have no way of telling which is the causal direction. Magazine reading also shows small positive correlations with SelfImage factors 1 & 2 (Worry, Could). However, it needs to be emphasized that these are small correlations indeed and are only of weak predictive value.

When looking for models that best predict the scales using any combination of demographics and media consumption, none of the demographic combinations yield a model that predicts

more than 14 % of the variability, indicating that views cannot be linked to any simplistic demographic profile or media exposure.

Gender, age and birthplace are overall the most important factors relating to attitudes, while the linkage of religion to moral beliefs is surprisingly unimportant.

However, it is interesting that magazine exposure is associated with several scales and in particular non-readers score the acceptability of advertisements 0.7 lower (on a scale from 1 to 5), which is a meaningful difference.

Although the focus group discussion did not directly address this issue, some comments help depict the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women. The first impression of female gender portrayal in local media given by a majority of participants explicitly referred to magazines. According to their first impressions, the most common female images shown in local print media were “figure”, “negative”, “female artist”, “appearance”, “sexy”, “photo of women’s body accidentally revealed”, “exposed”, “sex”, and “slim and beauty”. These are very different from their perceived female image nowadays that women have higher social status than the past and are more likely being respected due to their multi-function roles, career achievement, independent financial status, education qualification, capability, as well as tough and aggressive character. This inconsistency indicates a gap between the perceived female images in print media and real life, which forms a ground for participants’ negative perceptions towards the female portrayal in local print media, including “negative description of female image”, “unreasonable implications to women”, “treating women’s bodies as objects”, “inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal”, “improperly implying sex” and “implications against social justice”.

## **5.5 Public Opinion on the Relevance of Female Gender Portrayal in the Media on Attitudinal and Behavioural Development of the Future Generation**

According to the comments from eight target groups, the attitudinal and behavioural development of the future generation is influenced by female gender portrayal in the media in both direct and indirect ways. Participants generally perceived that young people or students would be mostly affected by those print media materials, followed by females and males. The impact of product advertisements, body beauty advertisements, magazine covers, and newspapers on young people was emphasized in terms of their attitude and behaviour. The impacts could be found in deterioration of social values and moral standards, conscious

behaviour in achieving certain appearance standard, degraded social realm, psychological pressure on women, and casual attitude towards sex. Except for the general public, professionals and parents, participants were conscious about the more exposed dressing fashion especially the young generation. Also, concern groups and teachers were more worried about the influence on self-confidence or self-image and early age sexual relationship respectively.

The media impact on females was also significantly highlighted when participants recalled stories from peers or people in association, while the impact on young people and men was still important but relatively less mentioned. The impacts found among peers or people in association were similar to participants' perceived impacts mentioned above, which were conscious behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards, distorted attitude towards women appearance/ image, deteriorated social behaviour and casual attitude towards sex, while most of them were directly related to body beauty advertisements. The impacts like exposed dressing style, receiving or thinking of receiving the body beauty treatment, and more conscious or open discussion about women body were more frequently discussed by female participants than male. Also, some impacts on peers were more frequently mentioned by professionals, parents and students, who were receiving or thinking of receiving the body beauty treatment, more conscious or open discussion about women's body, and applying those text or wordings in describing people.

Apart from the impacts on others, participants discussed the impacts of media female portrayal at a personal level. Nearly all participants indicated to some extent they were affected by those print media materials with only a few comments that claimed they had not been affected at all. The impacts included being conscious of personal appearance, distorted personal attitudes and values towards appearance and sex, change of personal behaviour in achieving certain appearance standards, imposing higher personal expectation on female appearance and adding self-psychological pressure. These impacts were mostly associated with body beauty advertisements while some came from product advertisements, indicating the strength of advertising media in constructing a defined perfect standard for women to aspire to, which adds pressure to individuals being women physically and psychologically while changes individual attitude and behaviour for sculpturing and shaping a "perfect" appearance. Compared with men, media impact on women seems to be more obvious and well recognised especially being more demanding on self-figure, applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other figures that leading to low body esteem, higher expectation from partner or others, and adding pressure to themselves. As for students, they would commonly apply the portrayal model to compare self-figure or other's figure, and again, many students claimed they had low self-esteem in terms of their appearance and some of them even tried some extreme ways to reduce body weight at a younger age. Also, social workers

had stronger views on the impacts of affecting personal aesthetic standard, applying the portrayal model to compare self-figure and affecting self-confidence or image. However, it is not surprising that teachers more commonly expressed the media has no impact on them.

The third person effect that appeared in this study was that the media female portrayal generally had a stronger perceived impact on the community (others) than individuals or peers and people in association. Although the third person effect of advertisements has been commonly identified as affecting people's aesthetic standard, self-confidence or image, as well as ethical and moral values, the effect was more likely to emerge when participants assessed the social impacts of magazine covers and newspaper on the community because participants might have a feeling that it is not smart to be influenced by those negative messages from magazine covers and newspapers. Based on the third person effect, participants perceived that people (others), who lack of proper value judgement on these negative media message, are more likely to be influenced than themselves (self).

In this study, the media impacts on individuals, peers and people in association, and the community were fully discussed while most of them overlapped and were repeatedly found among themselves and others. This indicates the impacts of female gender portrayal in local print media were well recognised and nobody could escape from its direct or indirect influence. Also, the real experiences of participants and case stories from peers and people in association provided strong evidence to prove and support their perceived media impact on the community. In other words, the participants of female and students groups are able to elaborate a factual picture of those perceived media impact on females and students in particular. Thus, the three levels of media impacts could reinforce themselves, giving a rather comprehensive picture of the media impacts on the society and highlighting a significant association between the practice of media female portrayal and the attitude and behaviour of the young generation.

## **5.6 Public Views on the Way Forward where Female Gender Portrayal in the Media is at Variance with Public Acceptance of Gender Perspectives**

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that there is an imbalance between current media practice and what the public finds acceptable regarding female gender portrayal in local print media because of the negative impacts on the society especially the young generation and women. Thus, some possible ways were discussed to counteract those negative impacts in the society, which cover the following seven levels:

- 1) stop purchasing or persuade others to stop purchasing and make complaints at personal level;
- 2) promote critical mind training via innovated education programme in school;
- 3) explain proper concept about sex and gender, build up moral standard and strengthen ability of value judgement via family education;
- 4) strengthen critical mind training via workshops and discussions at community level and voice out the impact of extreme media female portrayal in the society;
- 5) review and revise the existing legislation and monitoring mechanism, formulate new legislation, and give financial support for publication of counter-mainstream print media by the government;
- 6) re-emphasize self-regulation practice and strengthen professional ethics training in media industry and spread the counter message to current media female portrayal via media itself; and
- 7) raise concern about the media impact in the public and government and create a complaint platform by the EOC.

Finally, it is interesting that female participants expressed more support to stop purchasing, make complaints or write to corresponding organizations, and enhance ethical and moral education in school to lessen the media impact while males preferred to strengthen the critical thinking of students in schools, reflecting the instinctive difference in sense and sensibility of male and female. Also, except parents, nearly all groups were more supportive of the work or actions taken at school, community and government levels. Parents instead preferred the works or actions taken at family level only, implying they had relatively less expectation from schools and society.

## **5.7 Implications**

Overall, the survey provides considerable insight into the beliefs and attitudes of Hong Kong people relating to gender and its representation in the print media. It is clear that many people are uncomfortable with gender representation in advertisements and news pictures, but they assume that the community finds them acceptable, possibly on the grounds that advertisements and news pictures like the ones used in the study are believed to be so common. The high level of exposure makes it hard to find much linkage of exposure to attitudes, except that non-readers of magazines rate magazine advertisements lower, although it is arguable what is cause and what is effect.

While there are differences in attitudes across demographic groups, those differences are

small, suggesting that there is little scope for a more demographically targeted approach by the EOC within the adult population.

Given the high levels of exposure to gender representations that people are uncomfortable with, there may be scope for educating the public that much of the gender representation that they assume is acceptable to the community because it is common, is in fact not acceptable to the majority.

Comparison of attitudes towards gender stereotypes shows that there have been important changes in the last ten years, and most of the stereotypes have decreased overall, although some remain, particularly within genders. Arguably, the most important masculine stereotype remaining is leadership, although the strongest stereotype overall is gentleness as a feminine stereotype. This suggests that the EOC could target these particular stereotypes in future educational campaigns.

The focus group discussion helps illustrate the association between media materials and public perception of female gender and sexual stereotyping of women. The first impression of female gender portrayal in local media given by a majority of participants explicitly referred to magazines. According to their first impressions, the most common female images shown in local print media were “figure”, “negative”, “female artist”, “appearance”, “sexy”, “photo of women’s body accidentally revealed”, “exposed”, “sex”, and “slim and beauty”. These are very different from their perceived female image nowadays that women have higher social status than the past and are more likely being respected due to their multi-function roles, career achievement, independent financial status, education qualification, capability, as well as tough and aggressive character. This inconsistency indicates a gap between the perceived female images in print media and real life, which forms a ground for participants’ negative perceptions towards the female portrayal in local print media, including “negative description of female image”, “unreasonable implications to women”, “treating women’s bodies as objects”, “inappropriate presentation manner of female portrayal”, “improperly implying sex” and “implications against social justice” .

In these focus groups, the media impacts on individuals, peers and people in association, and the community from female gender portrayal in local print media were well recognised and nobody could escape from its direct or indirect influence. The real experiences of participants and case stories from peers and people in association provided strong evidence to support their perceived media impact on the community. Thus, the three levels of media impacts reinforce themselves, giving a comprehensive picture of the media impacts on the society and highlighting a significant association between the practice of media female portrayal and the attitude and behaviour of the young generation.

Focus group participants made it clear that they find an imbalance between current media practice and what the public finds acceptable regarding female gender portrayal in local print media because of the negative impacts on the society especially the young generation and women. They suggested action at the following seven levels:

- 1) stop purchasing or persuade others to stop purchasing and make complaints at personal level ;
- 2) promote critical mind training via innovated education programme in school;
- 3) explain proper concept about sex and gender, build up moral standard and strengthen ability of value judgement via family education;
- 4) strengthen critical mind training via workshops and discussions at community level and voice out the impact of extreme media female portrayal in the society;
- 5) review and revise the existing legislation and monitoring mechanism, formulate new legislation, and give financial support for publication of counter-mainstream print media by the government;
- 6) re-emphasize self-regulation practice and strengthen professional ethics training in media industry and spread the counter message to current media female portrayal via media itself; and
- 7) raise concern about the media impact in the public and government and create a complaint platform by the EOC.

## **5.8 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research Methodology Used**

**The methodology chosen for this study has important strengths:**

- Literature Review done first ensures that the research builds on existing knowledge in Hong Kong and elsewhere, which is significant.
- Household survey ensures a representative sample of the population and the face-to-face nature allows the use of picture and advertisement samples (not possible in a telephone survey). The reasonable response rate suggests that non-coverage bias should be limited.
- The focus groups provide rich data about the thinking behind public responses and allow targeting of concerned groups, and other key stakeholders including parents,

teachers, social workers and media workers (who might be an insignificant sample of the household survey).

**The weaknesses appear to be:**

- Less than 100% response rate means that there may be some bias in the household survey responses.
- Doing all the focus groups after the household survey meant that any new topics raised in the focus groups could not be included in the questionnaire.
- Ethnic groups that might have different views due to different cultural background were not included in the focus group plan.

**Lessons for the future:**

It is an excellent idea to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods following a literature review, but in future, it might be even better to do a small number of focus groups before the survey to ensure that all important areas are included in the survey questionnaire. It would also be an improvement to highlight any specific groups in the community whose views might differ for cultural (or other) reasons and ensure that their views are included.

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# **Appendix A**

## **Household Survey Questionnaire**

**(with Advertisements and News Pictures Samples)**

## Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media

### Section 1

- 10918 
1. How many hours per week did you read newspapers in the past 4 weeks? (excluding website version)
 

<input type="radio"/> Less Than 1 Hour	<input type="radio"/> 1 to 3 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 3 to 5 Hours
<input type="radio"/> 5 to 7 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 7 to 10 Hours	<input type="radio"/> More than 10 Hours
<input type="radio"/> 0 Hour $\longrightarrow$ Skip to Q3	<input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
  2. Which newspapers did you read in the past 4 weeks? (Multiple responses)
 

<input type="radio"/> Oriental Daily News	<input type="radio"/> Apple Daily	<input type="radio"/> Sing Tao Daily
<input type="radio"/> Ming Pao	<input type="radio"/> The Sun	<input type="radio"/> China Daily
<input type="radio"/> Tai Kung Pao	<input type="radio"/> The Standard	<input type="radio"/> HK Economic Journal
<input type="radio"/> Sing Pao Daily News	<input type="radio"/> HK Economic Times	<input type="radio"/> Wen Wei Pao
<input type="radio"/> South China Morning Post	<input type="radio"/> Hong Kong Commercial Daily	<input type="radio"/> am 730
<input type="radio"/> HK Headline	<input type="radio"/> Metro Hong Kong	<input type="radio"/> Others, please specify _____
  3. How many hours per week did you read magazines in the past 4 weeks? (excluding website version)
 

<input type="radio"/> Less Than 1 Hour	<input type="radio"/> 1 to 3 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 3 to 5 Hours
<input type="radio"/> 5 to 7 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 7 to 10 Hours	<input type="radio"/> More than 10 Hours
<input type="radio"/> 0 Hour $\longrightarrow$ Skip to Q5	<input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
  4. Which type of magazines did you read in the past 4 weeks? (Multiple responses)
 

<input type="radio"/> Infotainment Magazine, e.g. East Touch, East Magazine, TVB	<input type="radio"/> Fashion/ Women Magazine	<input type="radio"/> Youth Magazine, e.g. Yes
<input type="radio"/> Travel Magazine	<input type="radio"/> Sports Magazine	<input type="radio"/> Education Magazine
<input type="radio"/> Adult / Pornographic Magazine	<input type="radio"/> Current Affairs Magazine	<input type="radio"/> Financial Magazine
<input type="radio"/> Science & Technology Magazine, e.g. Audio, photography, computer, car etc.	<input type="radio"/> Others, please specify _____	
  5. Which types of website did you visit in the past 4 weeks? (Multiple responses) If answers do not include "online platform of local printed media, please skip to Section 2.
 

<input type="radio"/> Online platform of local printed media, e.g. Mingpao.com (Please answer question 6)	<input type="radio"/> Information Searching Website, e.g. Yahoo, Google, Sina etc.	<input type="radio"/> Women Website, e.g. She.com
<input type="radio"/> Multi-Media Website, e.g. You-Tube	<input type="radio"/> Adult / Pornographic Website	<input type="radio"/> Online Games
<input type="radio"/> Blogs	<input type="radio"/> Business Oriented Website, e.g. Online Banking Website	<input type="radio"/> Online Shopping Website, e.g. Ebay
<input type="radio"/> Music / Movie Download Website	<input type="radio"/> Others, please specify _____	
  6. How many hours per week did you access any print media website in the past 4 weeks?
 

<input type="radio"/> Less Than 1 Hour	<input type="radio"/> 1 to 3 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 3 to 5 Hours
<input type="radio"/> 5 to 7 Hours	<input type="radio"/> 7 to 10 Hours	<input type="radio"/> More than 10 Hours
		<input type="radio"/> Don't Know

### Section 2

7. How masculine or feminine do you think the following characteristics are, using the scale "very masculine", "masculine", "both", "feminine" and "very feminine"?

	Very Masculine	Masculine	Both	Feminine	Very Feminine
Has leadership abilities	<input type="radio"/>				
Defends own beliefs	<input type="radio"/>				
Independent	<input type="radio"/>				
Aggressive	<input type="radio"/>				
Assertive	<input type="radio"/>				
Shy	<input type="radio"/>				
Gentle	<input type="radio"/>				
Sympathetic	<input type="radio"/>				
Understanding	<input type="radio"/>				
Conscientious	<input type="radio"/>				

## Section 3

Please focus on assessing the overall image, wording, and message presented in the following pictures.

8. How comfortable do you feel with these advertisements/pictures (rotate order)?

	Strongly Uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Neither Uncomfortable Nor Comfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Dont' Know / No Comment
Ad O1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How appealing do you find these advertisements?

	Not Appealing At All	A Little Appealing	Appealing	Quite Appealing	Very Appealing	Dont' Know / No Comment
Ad O1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. How interesting do you find these news pictures such that you want to read the messages / details?

	Not Interesting At All	A Little Interesting	Interesting	Quite Interesting	Very Interesting	Dont' Know / No Comment
News S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How morally acceptable do you think the Hong Kong community would find these advertisements / pictures?

	Totally Unacceptable	Quite Unacceptable	Neither Unacceptable Nor Acceptable	Quite Acceptable	Completely Acceptable	Dont' Know / No Comment
Ad O1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. How often do you think the gender/sexual portrayal shown in these advertisements / pictures can be found in local newspapers and magazines?

	Seen once a year	Seen once a month	once a week	Seen several times a week	Seen Everyday	Don't Know / No Comment
Ad O1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad O3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News S3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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#### Section 4

13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know / No Comment
I often compare how I look with how other people look.	<input type="radio"/>					
During the day, I think about how I look many times.	<input type="radio"/>					
I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.	<input type="radio"/>					
I often worry about how I look to other people.	<input type="radio"/>					
I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made an effort to look my best.	<input type="radio"/>					
When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.	<input type="radio"/>					
I think I could look as good as I wanted to if I worked at it.	<input type="radio"/>					
I think my weight is mostly determined by the genes I was born with.	<input type="radio"/>					
I can weigh what I'm supposed to if I try hard enough.	<input type="radio"/>					

14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know / No Comment
A man should fight if the woman he's with is insulted by another man	<input type="radio"/>					
It is acceptable for a woman to have a career, but marriage and family should come first.	<input type="radio"/>					
Many women are so demanding sexually that a man just can't satisfy them.	<input type="radio"/>					
In a dating relationship a woman is largely out to take advantage of a man. Men are out for only one thing.	<input type="radio"/>					
Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man.	<input type="radio"/>					
Many times a woman will pretend she doesn't want to have intercourse because she doesn't want to seem loose, but she's really hoping the man will force her.	<input type="radio"/>					
A wife should move out of the house if her husband hits her.	<input type="radio"/>					



- | 14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  | Strongly Disagree     | Disagree              | Neutral               | Agree                 | Strongly Agree        | Dont' Know / No Comment |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble.        | <input type="radio"/>   |
| Woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex. | <input type="radio"/>   |

**Section 5**

15. Record Respondent's Gender

- Male  Female

16. How old are you?

- 18 - 19  20 - 29  30 - 39  
 40 - 49  50 - 59  60 - 64  
 65 or above

17. What is your marital status?

- Single  Married  Divorced  
 Others \_\_\_\_\_

18. How many children do you have?

- None → Skip to Q20  1  2 - 3  
 4 - 5  6 or above

19. If yes, how many of your children are under the age of 18?

- None  1  2 - 3  
 4 - 5  6 or above

20. What is your education level?

- Primary  Secondary  Matriculation  
 Tertiary (Degree)  Post-graduate  Tertiary (Non-Degree)  
 Below Primary (including never educated in school)

21. What is your occupation?

- Managers and administrators  Professionals  Associate professionals  
 Clerks  Service workers and shop sales workers  Craft and related workers  
 Plant and machine operators and assemblers  Elementary occupations  Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; and occupations not classifiable  
 Students  Retirees  Home-makers  
 Unemployed  Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22. How much is your monthly domestic household income (HKD)?

- <2,000  2,000 - 3,999  4,000 - 5,999  
 6,000 - 7,999  8,000 - 9,999  10,000 - 14,999  
 15,000 - 19,999  20,000 - 24,999  25,000 - 29,999  
 30,000 - 39,999  40,000 - 59,999  60,000+  
 Refuse to answer

23. How important is religious belief in affecting your moral values?

- No religious belief  Not important  Quite important  
 Fair  Important  Very important

24. Where is your place of birth?

- Hong Kong  Mainland  Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_



25. How many years have you lived in Hong Kong?      
 999 = Refuse to answer

SN:       Int:

Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media

Household Survey

Samples of Advertisements and News Reports

Ad O1 – O3



Ad O1



Ad O2



Ad O3

Samples of Advertisements and News Reports

Ad S1 – S3



Ad S1



Ad S2

**豐胸豐得起**  
全由謝沅淇做起

謝沅淇豐胸纖體專門店 專業精神 震撼美容界

愛美是人的天性，因為愛美而創立自家豐胸纖體專門店的謝沅淇，累積多年經驗，精心研究了一套豐胸美體的獨門配方。早於廿年前，謝沅淇已經深的經驗，到女性追求完美體態是終身事業；而不同年齡的女性對美態層次的要求亦有所不同，正因如此，謝沅淇全副心研究豐胸纖體技術，不時到日本以至歐美取經，多年來，即使其下訓練出來的美容專才不少，只要一有機會，她都樂意為每位客人度身訂做最健康、最快捷、因應個人需要的豐胸服務，專業精神極度可靠。

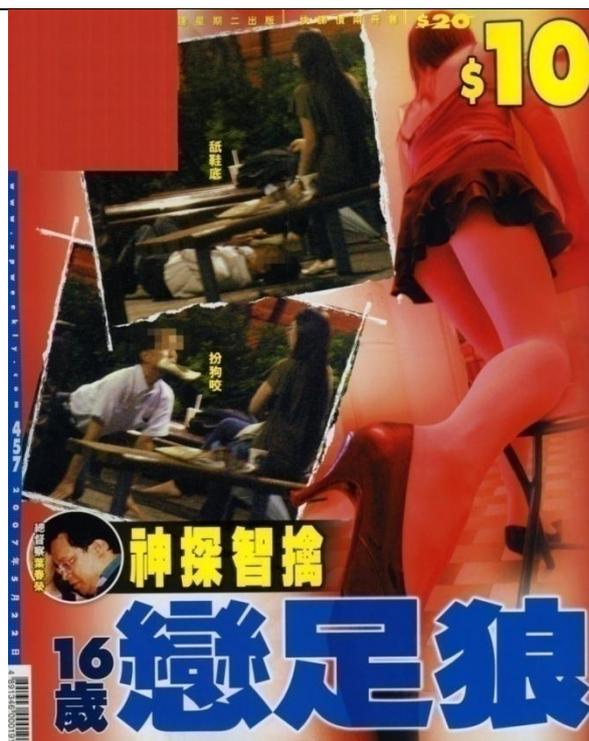
謝沅淇 Josephine 創辦人

- 具10年研究豐胸纖體經驗
- 多年前往日本及歐美研究深造，獲長聘婦女胸部發育及美體
- 結合日本豐胸技術及瑞士醫學，榮獲日本醫藥界之最高榮譽。

Ad S3

Samples of Advertisements and News Reports

News S1 – S3



News S1



News S2



News S3

## **Appendix B**

### **Focus Group Survey Discussion Guidelines and Demographic Questionnaire**

**(with Advertisements and News Pictures Samples)**

**Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender  
in the Hong Kong Media  
Focus Group Survey - Discussion Guideline**

**Demographic information**

Ask participants to record their age, gender, marital status, children in family, educational level, income, ethnicity, etc., on a form at the beginning of the discussion.

**Introduction and welcoming**

1. Introduce moderator.
2. Introduce the discussion topic and objective of the study.
3. Describe the rules that should be followed by the participants during the discussion session, participants' rights, recording process and protection of personal privacy.
4. Recognize participants and understand their background.

**Discussion key points**

5. Understand participants' habit of reading newspapers/magazines.
6. Understand participants' perception on gender image and role in society.
7. Prompt participants to review female gender portrayal in media.
8. To understand participant perception of female gender portrayal in the public media, i.e. acceptance level of female gender portrayal and sexual stereotyping of women in the media. And then probe for reasons contributing to those feelings, e.g. privacy, religion, morality, women's rights etc. (A list of advertisements and news picture samples that includes all those used in the household survey plus news stories will be shown when asking this question.)
9. Discuss the relevance of female gender portrayal in the media on attitudinal and behavioral development of future generation in terms of their sex attitude and sense of objectification.
10. Highlight this question (Q.9) in the parents, teachers and social workers groups.
11. Summarize the discussion key points.
12. Discuss the way forward where female gender portrayal in the media is at variance with public acceptance of gender perspectives, i.e. find out related solution if negative views are found.

**Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender  
in the Hong Kong Media**

**Focus Group Discussion**

**Personal Information Questionnaire**

(Information will be collected anonymously.)

1. Respondent's Gender

- Male  Female

2. How old are you?

- Below 18  18 - 29  30 - 39  
 40 - 49  50 - 65  Above 65

3. What is your marital status?

- Single  Married  Divorced  
 Others \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many children do you have?

- None (skip to Q6)  1  2 - 3  
 4 - 5  6 or above

5. If having children, how many of them are under the age of 18?

- None  1  2 - 3  
 4 - 5  6 or above

6. What is your education level?

- Primary or below  Secondary  Matriculation  
 Tertiary  Master or above

7. What is your occupation?

- Managers and administrators  Professionals  
 Associate professionals  Clerks  
 Service workers and shop sales workers  Craft and related workers  
 Plant and machine operators and assemblers  Elementary occupations  
 Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; and occupations not classifiable  
 Students  Retirees  
 Home-makers  Unemployed  
 Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How much is your monthly domestic household income (HKD)?

- |                                       |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> <2,000          | <input type="radio"/> 2,000 - 3,999   | <input type="radio"/> 4,000 - 5,999   |
| <input type="radio"/> 6,000 - 7,999   | <input type="radio"/> 8,000 - 9,999   | <input type="radio"/> 10,000 - 14,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> 15,000 - 19,999 | <input type="radio"/> 20,000 - 24,999 | <input type="radio"/> 25,000 - 29,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> 30,000 - 39,999 | <input type="radio"/> 40,000 - 59,999 | <input type="radio"/> 60,000+         |

9. How important is religious belief in affecting your moral values?

- |   |                                     |                                       |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> No religious belief | <input type="radio"/> Not Important | <input type="radio"/> Quite important |
| <input type="radio"/> Fair                | <input type="radio"/> Important     | <input type="radio"/> Very important  |

10. Where is your place of birth?

- |                                 |                                |   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Hong Kong | <input type="radio"/> Mainland | <input type="radio"/> Other, please specify |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How many years have you lived in Hong Kong? \_\_\_\_\_

Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender  
in the Hong Kong Media

Focus Group Discussion

Samples of Advertisements and News Reports



Product Advertisement



Product Advertisement



Product Advertisement

謝光韻無痛推脂技術，助你輕輕鬆鬆  
**推走啤梨身型**  
回復完美好身段

優惠開放日  
**免費試做**  
淋巴推脂瘦身療程  
30分鐘  
優惠只限每日10名新客戶  
\*由星期一至四

詳情請致電  
各分店查詢

想減肥又唔反彈？必選人手淋巴推脂！

無痛  
無痕

8星期可減去  
3至5吋腰圍  
10至30磅

豐胸界權威專家·謝光韻 Josephine

- 具18年研究豐胸經驗
- 多年於日本BAA研究深造，擅長開發女性胸腺發育及無痛淋巴推脂體態
- 結合日本豐胸技術及瑞士醫療科技，自創卓效豐胸秘方
- 榮獲日本豐胸界之最高權威

1個月  
無限次任做  
只需\$998

淋巴推脂  
試做價\$0  
原價\$580  
(優惠只限每日10名新客戶)  
\*由星期一至四

Body Beauty Advertisement

Samples of Advertisements and News Reports

信心保障  
如不見效  
原銀奉還  
(只適用於原價購買)

憑此廣告 (S)  
**4折大優惠**  
有效期至4月25日

面部  
右鬆弛收緊晒

頸部  
右鬆弛收緊晒

手臂  
右鬆弛收緊晒

肚胸  
右鬆弛收緊晒

臀部  
右鬆弛收緊晒

大腿  
右鬆弛收緊晒

由內至外發揮緊肌完美效果 蘊含獨特抗鬆抗皺緊肌因子

Body Beauty Advertisement

**豐胸豐得起**  
全副謝沈鎮做起

謝沈鎮豐胸纖體專門店 專業精神 震撼美容界

愛美是人的天性，因為愛美而創立自家豐胸纖體專門店的謝沈鎮，累積多年經驗，精心研究了一套豐胸美體的獨門配方。早於廿年前，謝沈鎮已經深深領略到女性追求完美體態是終身事業；而不同年齡的女性對美態層次的要求亦有所不同，正因如此，謝沈鎮全心研究豐胸纖體技術，不時到日本以至歐美取經，多年來，即使其下訓練出來的美容專才不少，只要一有機會，她都會為每位客人度身訂做最健康、最快捷、因應個人需要的豐胸服務，專業精神極度可嘉。

謝沈鎮 Josephine 創辦人

- 具18年豐胸經驗
- 多間分店及專科中心開設，獲具聲譽及衛生牌照
- 親自到日本歐美取經及進修

Body Beauty Advertisement

紙鞋底

扮狗咬

神探智擒

16歲 **戀足狼**

\$10

Magazine Cover

麻用勁祿  
瀟心雙妹

起碼價 \$20000

\$8000 有交易

陳法拉  
鍾嘉欣

**賣肉**  
搵快錢

43歲張曼玉  
康城驚嚇

張柏芝賣定奶擦

34E 賣擦牌

\$8

Magazine Cover





**Equal Opportunities Commission**

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Website : <http://www.eoc.org.hk>