

Gender and Working Roles in Television Commercials: A Comparison between Japanese and Thai Television Commercials

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Abstract

The research objective is to examine the similarities and differences of gender and working roles in Japanese and Thai television commercials. The research methodology focuses on content analysis. Seven hundred and sixty advertisements shown during 2016 in Japan and Thailand were analyzed. As a result, this comparative content analysis suggests a possible reversal from traditional patterns in the literature. Though the proportion of working women in Thailand is higher than the proportion in Japan, the proportions of working women in Japanese and Thai television commercials are insignificantly different. Moreover, this research result reveals the new appearance of non-stereotypical gender images in terms of the type of gender and working roles in commercials in these two Asian nations. These research findings support the supposition of a decrease in gender stereotyping in advertisements and suggest progress in stereotyped portrayals in advertising.

Keywords

television commercial – advertising – gender roles – Japan – Thailand

1 Introduction

Television advertisements are a rich source of data for social scientists to investigate as they can be seen as a reflection of prevailing cultural values. Gender

value is also one of the critical factors in developing marketing strategies via advertising messages.

Gender-role stereotyping in advertising has been a prominent topic in the literature since the 1970s (Arima 2003; Zotos, Grau, and Taylor 2018). Gender stereotyping in television commercials has received particular attention over the past decade (Wolin 2003). Gendered advertising research shows that gender stereotyping in advertising still exists and is prevalent in many countries around the world. Most studies reveal that men and women are depicted differently in TV ads, and the differences are by traditional gender roles and reflect the construction of gender roles in society (Milner and Collins 2000; Sengupta 1995; Siu and Au 1997; Tan, Lin and Theng 2002). For instance, Sengupta (1995) examined the influence of culture on portrayals of women by comparing television commercials from the United States and Japan and found that, since the status of working women in Japan is inferior to that of working women in the United States, women in American advertisements are more likely to be seen in working roles especially as high-level business executives than women in Japanese advertisements. The proportion and status of working women in the United States are higher than in Japan, and the number and status of working women portrayed in American advertisements are higher than in Japanese advertisements. Therefore, as Sengupta (1995)'s conclusion, this content analysis showed that advertisements in these two countries are to a large extent a reflection of society.

Grau and Zotos (2016) have examined the scholarship related to gender portrayals in advertising in the last five decades and found that women are generally presented in more decorative, family-oriented roles, and in fewer professional roles, while men are typically shown as more independent, authoritarian, and professional. Ads depicted sexes in more traditional roles and presented women's potential and capabilities as inferior to those of men.

Though the research cited above found similarities in gender roles in advertising, it has been noted that there is a culture lag (Grau and Zotos 2016). Gender roles differ from country to country due to cultural differences and social situations and are to be considered as something local or specific to a particular socio-cultural construct.

Furthermore, several studies examining changes in gender roles suggest increasing gender bias. Milner and Higgs (2004) found that the portrayal of women in Australian television commercials related to traditional gender roles seemed to increase. Lovdal (1989), and MacLin and Kolbe (1984) also confirmed that stereotypical gender images in advertising had not changed for 10 years. Similarly, Sakamoto, Kitou, Takahara, and Adachi (2003) discovered that the portrayal of traditional gender stereotypes had not decreased in Japanese

television commercials for 33 years (1961–1993). Further, Knoll, Eisend, and Steinhagen (2011) found that gender stereotyping was still prevalent in German television commercials.

In contrast, several other studies suggest that gender stereotyping does exist but seems to be decreasing over time. Eisend (2010) examined 64 studies in a meta-analysis of gender stereotypes in advertising and found that the degree of stereotyping has decreased over the years. Furnham and Skae (1997) analyzed advertising in the United Kingdom for 25 years and found that gender stereotypes decreased over time. Milner and Higgs (2004) stated that traditional gender stereotypes in Canadian advertising had likewise decreased. Bretl and Cantor (1988) discovered that though gender stereotyping in advertising in the United States still exists, it had decreased for 15 years. Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingsley (1988) also examined changes in advertising in the United States over the same period and confirmed the conclusion. Also, Hatzithomas, Boutsouki, and Ziamou (2016) conducted a content analysis of 20 years of Super Bowl advertising (1990–2009) in the United States and discovered that both female and male images are becoming less traditional. Additionally, work by Rubies-Davies, Liu, and Lee (2013) found that in their examination of television advertising in New Zealand, men and women were less often depicted in stereotypical roles than in the past.

The literature above suggests a stronger argument for decreased stereotyping. However, there is no clear conclusion, and this long-lasting debate about changes in stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising remains a necessary issue, due to social and cultural differences. Since the structure of gender roles and media usage behavior seem to change from one country to another, it is important to continue to track changes in gender stereotypes in advertising in many other areas of the world.

Moreover, the majority (76.9%) of research on gender issues in advertising has focused on print advertising, whereas television accounts for only 15.4% and other media for just 7.7%, according to a review of articles published from 1970 to 2000 by Wolin (2003). In light of the relatively low proportion of studies focused on television commercials despite higher spending and potentially greater impact of moving images on audiences, the study of gender roles in television commercials would appear to be crucial.

Although research on gender roles in advertisements is plentiful in the United States and western societies, our understanding of sex-role portrayals in an international context is limited because there are so few studies. Though it would seem that gender roles in Asia are also becoming less traditionally stereotypical, it has been difficult to confirm this as reflected in Asian advertising. In addition, there has never been any comparative research concerning

gender roles in current television commercials between Japan and Thailand. Therefore, this paper compares gender roles in current television commercials between these two countries.

This research aims to contribute to the study of gender representation in advertising while promoting the achievement of gender equality, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States (United Nations Development Programme 2020). Women are still paid less, have fewer working opportunities, are less likely to be managers, and have fewer property rights than men. Women hold only 27 percent of senior business positions. And although there are more women in public office today than ever before, much greater encouragement of women leaders is needed to achieve true gender equality.

Representations of empowered women in advertising and other media can also contribute to a perception of gender equality. As ads which portray women as men's equals proliferate, a growing number of women can be expected to identify with the images they see, which then has a direct impact on their self-esteem. In this way, the media and advertising can play a key role in achieving the global goal of gender equality.

In 2016, the proportion of working women in Thailand (60.8%) was higher than in Japan (50.3%). Additionally, in figure 1, data from the International Labor Organization (2017) shows the proportion of working women by age in Japan and Thailand in 2014, the shape which is also different. In Japan, its shape is what is called an M curve, while in Thailand, its shape is a U curve, as in western society. This paper will attempt to determine whether television commercials accurately reflect the realities of gender roles in these countries. Therefore, the research objective is to examine the similarities and differences of gender and working roles in Japanese and Thai television commercials.

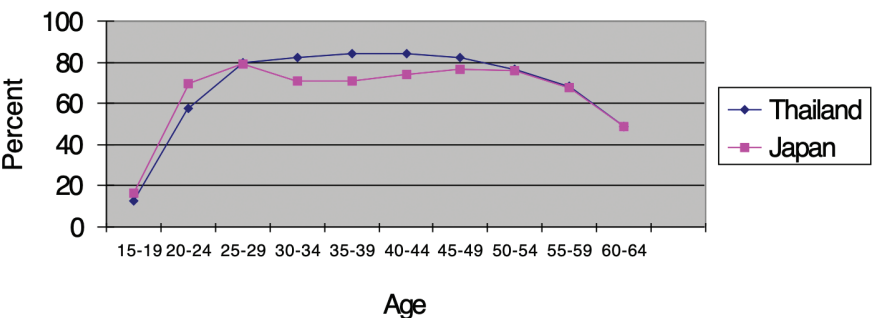


FIGURE 1 Proportion of working women in Japan and Thailand
SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (2017)

2 Methodology

The research methodology focuses on content analysis. 760 advertisements broadcast in 2016 in Japan (446 advertisements) and Thailand (314 advertisements) were collected, coded, and analyzed using an SPSS program, a computer program used for statistical analysis, to discover the relationships between their analyzed variables, for example, gender of main character and age/ role/ type of working role/ type of non-working role.

To examine the similarities and differences between Japanese and Thai advertising, according to previous comparative studies of international advertising (Lin 1993; Ramaprasad and Hasegawa 1990; 1992; Taylor, Miracle, and Chang 1994), ad samples were collected randomly between June and July 2016 (Table 1). Samples were collected from the three highest-rated commercial channels in Japan (channels 4, 5, and 8) and Thailand (channels 3, 7, and 9). For each day, one channel was picked randomly for each country. Since competition for ratings on the weekend is quite high, samples were gathered on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays during prime time to avoid the bias of television programs sponsored by a single company. The same sampling days were used for both countries, and samples were recorded from programs aired from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. local time. All commercials were coded and analyzed using an SPSS program.

Content analysis was used to examine the advertising data. Following previous research (Arima 2003; Grau and Zotos 2016; Milner and Collins 2000; Sengupta 1995; Tan, Lin and Theng 2002; Wolin 2003), each sampling was coded into 7 categories: narration, gender, role, type of working role, type of non-working role, age of the main character, and product type. The coding schemes of all categories were adjusted for analysis reliability. In each commercial, only the main character that appeared most often was selected and coded.

TABLE 1 Recording schedule in Japan and Thailand (*ch = channel)

| | June | | | | July | | | | |
|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 4 (Sat) | 10 (Fri) | 19 (Sun) | 25 (Sat) | 1 (Fri) | 10 (Sun) | 16 (Sat) | 22 (Fri) | 31 (Sun) |
| Japan | 4 ch | 5 ch | 8 ch | 5 ch | 8 ch | 4 ch | 8 ch | 4 ch | 5 ch |
| Thailand | 9 ch | 3 ch | 7 ch | 3 ch | 7 ch | 9ch | 7 ch | 9 ch | 3 ch |

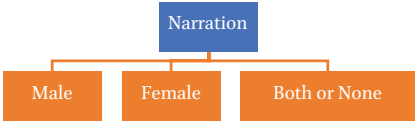


FIGURE 2 Categorization of the gender of narrator

First, the narration of all television commercials was coded as male, female, or both/ none (Figure 2). If the overall narration was male or female, it was coded as male or female. When the narration was both male and female or no narration, it was coded as both/ none. Since the number of both and no narration was not high, and this would have affected the cross-tabulation analysis to find the relationship of variables, both male and female narration, and no narration were combined into one category.

Second, the main character of the commercial was classified as male or female (Figure 3). The character appearing for the most time and having the most dialogue was selected in each commercial as the main character.

Third, the role of the main character appearing in each sample was coded as a working or non-working role. The type of main role of the main character in each commercial was categorized as a working role or non-working role.

Fourth, if the main character was working, the type of working role was categorized as high-level, middle-level, or other kind of work. High-level work includes business owner, executive, director, manager, chief of group, head of group, doctor, dentist, professor, lawyer, engineer, architecture, and other professional occupations. Middle-level work consists of official, general affairs, accounting, planning, sales administration, clerk, staff, retailer, shopkeeper, etc. In addition, other kinds of work include entertainment, labor, blue-collar work, etc.

Fifth, if the main character was not working outside the home, the type of non-working role was categorized as household (cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare, etc.), recreation (traveling, shopping, eating, drinking, sleeping, reading, playing sport, etc.), or product introduction role.

Sixth, the age of the main character was coded into four groups: 0–18, 19–35, 36–50, or over 50 years old.

Seventh, to standardize the characteristics of *advertised products*, as a concept of product types in marketing theory (Kotler 1991), all samplings were separated into 2 groups (Figure 4): tangible and intangible products. Tangible products were categorized by product involvement theory as the following: high involvement: auto/parts, appliances/furniture; medium involvement: entertainment/toys, cosmetics/fashion apparel, and alcohol/cigarettes; low involvement: household supplies, food/ beverage.

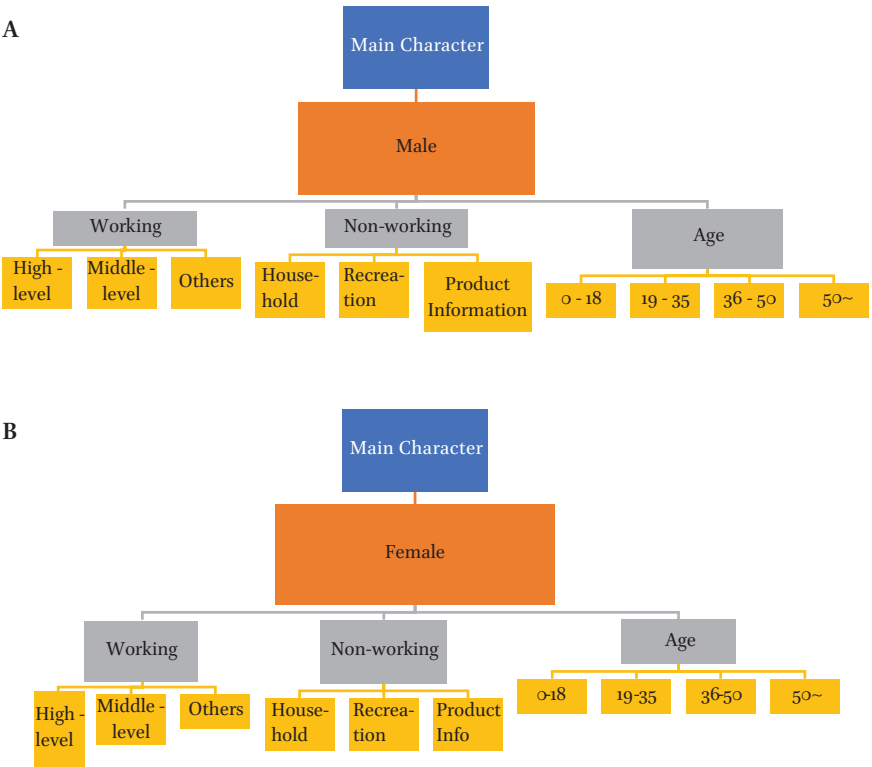


FIGURE 3 Categorization of gender, role, type of working role, type of non-working role, and age of the main character

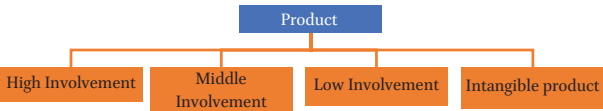


FIGURE 4 Categorization of Product

As in previous research, the selected product types in the medium involvement level were only entertainment/toys and alcohol/cigarettes. However, in Thailand, there is a regulation prohibiting cigarette and alcohol advertising in all media, under the Tobacco Product Control Act and Alcohol Control Act 2008. Smoking and alcohol drinking scenes are also not permitted in television commercials in Thailand. The researcher decided to add cosmetics/ fashion apparel in this section. In the low involvement level, the researcher also added the beverage category to the food category.

On the other hand, intangible product (services) samplings were grouped for analysis. They were composed of services, image improvement, and retail.

Other categories (such as television program promotion) were not included in the analysis since they could not be compared between the two countries.

In addition, a *chi*-square test was used to analyze the relationship among variables. If the *p*-value is greater than .05, the variables are independent and there is not a significant relationship among variables. In contrast, if the *p*-value is less than .05, the variables are dependent and there is a significant relationship among them. After the coding and the analysis were completed, no cell contained less than five observations. Therefore, all cases were meaningful data for *chi*-square testing in this study.

Moreover, to determine the reliability of the coding scheme of the television commercial samples, 10% of the data was collected in Japan and Thailand through twenty in-depth interviews with Japanese audience members and twenty in-depth interviews with Thai counterparts. Gender and age of interviewees were the criteria for selection. In each country, 10 male and 10 female interviewees of a variety of ages from the 10s, 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s were invited for this in-depth interview. The results show that the percentage of reliability is more than 85%. This attests to the reliability of the data for analysis.

3 Research Findings

Research findings are divided into three parts: 1) general findings, 2) comparison between male and female roles within each country, and 3) comparison of gender roles between Japan and Thailand.

First, in terms of general findings, in both countries' commercials, the proportions of male and female main characters do not significantly differ. The proportions of male and female main characters appearing in Japanese commercials are 49.9% and 50.1%. In Thai commercials, they are 50.5% and 49.5%. Moreover, young women (18–35 years old) in both countries appear more frequently than young men. However, young people appear in Thai commercials more frequently than in Japanese commercials, while middle-aged and older people appear in Japanese commercials more than in Thai commercials, due to Japan's super-aging society and low birthrate. For example, the proportions of young women and men in Thailand are 85.6% and 50.7%, whereas they are 65.6% and 44.7% in Japan. Additionally, the proportions of male voice-overs in Japanese and Thai television commercials are higher than those of female voice-overs. The proportion of male voice-overs in Thai commercials (65.9%) is higher than in Japanese commercials (52.0%).

Second, a similarity between male and female roles in television commercials in each country exists. The proportions of working males and females in

Japan (6.9% and 4.8%) and Thailand (16.2% and 10.1%) are significantly similar (Table 2). Additionally, the proportions of non-working males and females in Japan (93.1% and 95.2%) and Thailand (83.8% and 89.9%) are significantly similar, too. Since both *p*-values of males and females in Japan and Thailand are greater than .05, these variables are independent.

Moreover, there is no significant difference in the type of working roles between males and females in both countries and the type of non-working roles in Japan (Table 3 and 4). For instance, the proportions of middle-level business males and females in Japan (84.6% and 77.8%) and Thailand (13.0%

TABLE 2 Gender and Roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by country

| | <i>Japanese</i> | | <i>Thai</i> | |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) |
| Working roles | 13 (6.9) | 9 (4.8) | 23 (16.2) | 14 (10.1) |
| Non-working roles | 175 (93.1) | 180 (95.2) | 119 (83.8) | 125 (89.9) |
| Total | 188 (100) | 189 (100) | 142 (100) | 139 (100) |

p > .05, (χ²) Japanese = .795, df = 1 ; *p* > .05, (χ²) Thai = 2.305, df = 1

TABLE 3 Gender and Type of Working Roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by country

| | <i>Japanese</i> | | <i>Thai</i> | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) |
| High-level business | 1 (7.7) | 1 (11.1) | 8 (34.8) | 1 (7.1) |
| Middle-level business | 11 (84.6) | 7 (77.8) | 3 (13.0) | 4 (28.6) |
| Others | 1 (7.7) | 1 (11.1) | 12 (52.2) | 9 (64.3) |
| Total | 13 (100) | 9 (100) | 23 (100) | 14 (100) |

p > .05, (χ²) Japanese = .167, df = 2 ; *p* > .05, (χ²) Thai = 4.067, df = 2

TABLE 4 Gender and Type of Non-Working roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by country

| | <i>Japanese</i> | | <i>Thai</i> | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) |
| Household role | 17 (9.4) | 17 (9.5) | 13 (10.9) | 22 (17.6) |
| Recreation | 69 (39.4) | 54 (30.2) | 77 (64.7) | 52 (41.6) |
| Product Introduction | 50.9 (89.0) | 108 (60.3) | 29 (24.4) | 51 (40.8) |
| Total | 175 (100) | 179 (100) | 119 (100) | 125 (100) |

$p > .05$, (χ^2) Japanese = 3.617, $df = 2$; $p < .05$, (χ^2) Thai = 13.070, $df = 2$

and 28.6%) are significantly similar (Table 3). The proportions of males and females in household role in Japan (9.4% and 9.5%) are also significantly similar (Table 4). These results show that non-stereotyping images appear in terms of the type of role and working role in commercials in these two Asian markets and non-working roles in Japan.

However, the proportion of females in household roles (17.6%) in Thailand is significantly greater than for males (10.9%). The chief role of female characters in Thai advertisements is that of a “housewife.” For instance, male characters appear dressed in suits and neckties in the work sphere, whereas female characters appear to do housework in the domestic sphere in Thai commercials. Traditional gender stereotyped images of non-working roles still appear in Thai advertising. As explained in the methodology section, the types of non-working roles are household, recreation, and product introduction role.

Third, from the viewpoint of a comparison of gender roles between Japan and Thailand, the proportion of working men in advertisements of both countries accurately reflects the construction of gender roles in reality. The proportion of Thai working men (77.6%) is comparatively higher than that of Japan (70.4%) in 2016. Table 5 shows that the proportion of working men in Thai commercials (16.2%) is higher than that for Japan (6.9).

However, this comparative content analysis suggests a possible reversal from traditional patterns in the literature. Though the proportion of working women in Thailand (60.8%) was substantially higher than that of Japan (50.3%) in 2016, these proportions in Thai (10.1%) and Japanese (4.8%) commercials are insignificantly different (Table 5). Since the p -value in the female category

TABLE 5 Gender and Roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by gender

| | <i>Male</i> | | <i>Female</i> | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Japanese CM | Thai CM | Japanese CM | Thai CM |
| | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) |
| Working roles | 13 (6.9) | 23 (16.2) | 9 (4.8) | 14 (10.1) |
| Non-working roles | 175 (93.1) | 119 (83.8) | 180 (95.2) | 125 (89.9) |
| Total | 188 (100) | 142 (100) | 189 (100) | 139 (100) |

$p < .05$, (χ^2) Male= 7.172, df = 1 ; $p > .05$, (χ^2) Female= 3.464, df = 1

is more than .05, the variables of the female category between Japanese and Thai commercials are independent. On the other hand, images of the roles of female characters in ads in these two countries are similar.

Additionally, there are significant differences in the types of working roles and non-working roles between females and males in both countries (Tables 6 and 7). All p -value is less than .05. For example, the proportions of middle-level work of females in Japan and Thailand are 77.8% and 28.6%, respectively. Further, the proportions of males are different in Japan and Thailand at 84.6% and 13.0%, respectively.

TABLE 6 Gender and Type of Working Roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by gender

| | <i>Male</i> | | <i>Female</i> | |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Japanese CM | Thai CM | Japanese CM | Thai CM |
| | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) | <i>n</i> (%) |
| High-level business | 1 (7.7) | 8 (34.8) | 1 (11.1) | 1 (7.1) |
| Middle-level business | 11 (84.6) | 3 (13.0) | 7 (77.8) | 4 (28.6) |
| Others | 1 (7.7) | 12 (52.2) | 1 (11.1) | 9 (64.3) |
| Total | 13 (100) | 23 (100) | 9 (100) | 14 (100) |

$p < .05$, (χ^2) Male= 17.929, df = 2 ; $p < .05$, (χ^2) Female= 6.435, df = 2

TABLE 7 Gender and Type of Non-Working roles in Japanese and Thai Television Commercials by gender

| | <i>Male</i> | | <i>Female</i> | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Japanese CM | Thai CM | Japanese CM | Thai CM |
| | <i>n (%)</i> | <i>n (%)</i> | <i>n (%)</i> | <i>n (%)</i> |
| Household role | 17 (9.4) | 13 (10.9) | 17 (9.5) | 22 (17.6) |
| Recreation | 69 (39.4) | 77 (64.7) | 54 (30.2) | 52 (41.6) |
| Product Introduction | 50.9 (89.0) | 29 (24.4) | 108 (60.3) | 51 (40.8) |
| Total | 175 (100) | 119 (100) | 179 (100) | 125 (100) |

$p < .05$, (χ^2) Male= 21.597, df = 2 ; $p < .05$, (χ^2) Female= 11.896, df = 2

The appearance of male and female main characters in non-working roles also differs significantly between Japan and Thailand. The proportions of males and females in household and recreation roles in Thailand (10.9%, 64.7% and 41.6%, 17.6%) are higher than in Japan (9.4%, 39.4% and 9.5%, 30.2%), while the proportions of product introduction (celebrity) of both in Japan (89.0% and 60.3%) are much higher than in Thailand (24.4% and 40.8%). This result confirms the prevalence of celebrities and talent in Japanese advertising to create a corporate image and bolster consumer trust as important in the Japanese market.

4 Discussion

Most of the findings of this research are similar to previous results in the literature (Arima 2003; Duff 2003; Eisend 2010; Grau and Zotos 2016; Milner and Collins 2000; Pongsapitaksanti 2008, 2018; Sengupta 1995; Siu and Au 1997; Tan, Lin, and Theng 2002; Wolin 2003) in terms of the gender of voice-overs, and gender and age of main characters. For instance, the greater proportion of male voice-overs and the higher appearance of young females than young males held in the current study. However, the results regarding gender in working roles in both countries are different.

The roles and types of working roles between males and females in both countries and the types of non-working roles in Japan do not differ. These research results also suggest the appearance of new non-stereotyping gender

images in terms of roles and types of working roles in commercials in these two Asian countries. This research result supports the supposition that gender stereotyping in advertising is on the decline.

In Japanese society, though the proportions of working women and high-level working women are comparatively low and the proportion of full-time housewives is comparatively high, the gender equality of roles and type of working roles as seen in Japanese TVC might reflect the current government policy concerning work life. This policy seeks to encourage and provides support for Japanese women to work outside the home in light of the shrinking working-age population, the country's low birthrate, and the burgeoning aging population in Japan's super-aging society.

Second, for decades, employees in Japan had, by and large, been clocking in long hours, took a fraction of their annual leave, and remained stuck in a rigid work schedule. These problems led to work-related stress, gender and power harassment in the workplace, and suicide. The Japanese government is attempting to transform the way people work by adopting a set of policies that cut overtime, encourage a healthier work-life balance, and solve problems in the workplace. The research findings of the low proportion of males and females in working roles, and the similarities of roles, types of working roles, and non-working roles between male and female in Japanese television commercials reflect the policy of reform pursued by the Japanese government. The increase of male images in the home sphere, such as cooking, washing clothes, child rearing, and house cleaning in advertising is a good example to create a new non-stereotypical lifestyle in society. In Japan, the status of males is superior to that of women. The proportion and income of working men and the number of men in management-level positions are higher than those of women in Japanese society. The results in Japan show that the degree of stereotyping has decreased due to improvements in the status of women and greater gender equality in Japanese society.

In Thailand, images of gender equality appear in terms of roles and types of working roles in advertising. This is a good sign which reflects people's awareness of gender equality and the equality of social status between men and women. However, the higher proportion of females in household roles suggests that society still expects and forces women to do housework more than men. Gender stereotyping images of non-working roles still appear in Thai advertising. This stereotyped imagery might reflect Thai social expectations placed on women to assume household roles.

Moreover, though the proportions of working women in Japan (50.3%) and Thai land (60.8%) differ, the proportions of working women in television commercials in both countries do not differ (Figure 5). On the other hand, though the proportion of working women in Thailand is very high, Thai advertisements

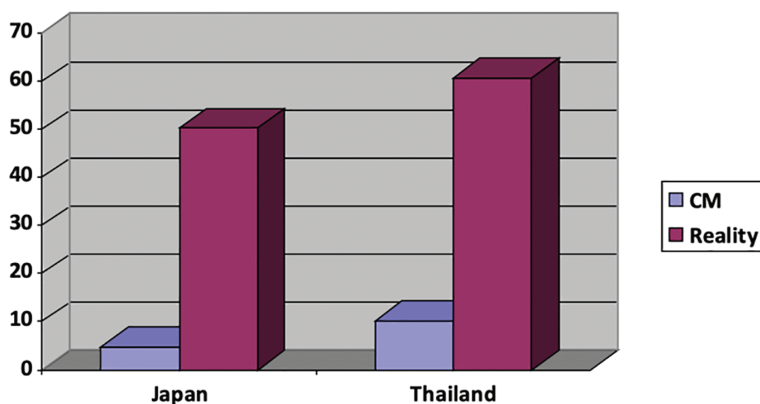


FIGURE 5 Proportion of working women in television commercials and reality in Japan and Thailand

reflect a tendency to construct an idealized image of the non-working woman and housewife in an urban area. Thus, this advertising and marketing process marginalizes the nearly 60% of Thai women who work in the agricultural sector. This might reflect the idea of centralization and urban orientation in Thai society.

Furthermore, another reason for the decrease in gender stereotyping in advertising in both countries may be the change in consumer media usage. Currently, people spend more time on social and digital media. These consumer-generated media allow people to show their opinions toward social phenomena immediately. If an advertiser creates advertising that is sensitive to gender stereotype issues, the power of social and digital media assigns that product or brand a negative image. Therefore, advertisers and marketers must be more sensitive to controversial gender issues in their marketing communications, accounting for the decrease in gender stereotypes in advertising.

In addition, 89.0% of male and 60.3% of female product introduction in non-working roles confirms the high proportion of celebrities and talent in Japanese advertising. The use of talent in advertising creates trust and a positive corporate image, which are very important in the Japanese market. Corporate familiarity, rather than specific product merits, is emphasized in Japanese advertising to preserve the psychological tie between corporations and consumers. Additionally, the proportion of male celebrities and talent is comparatively higher. Currently, the use of male talent for female products (such as cosmetics and apparel) is popular in the East Asian market. This might reflect the trend toward cross-gender appeal in Japanese advertising.

In addition, the lower proportion of young people and the higher proportion of the elderly in Japanese advertising than in Thai advertising reflect the declining birthrate and growing elderly population in Japan. For example, the

proportion of elderly people (over 65 years old) in Japan at 28.4% is much higher than that (over 60 years old) in Thailand at 16.7% in 2019.

5 Conclusion

In summary, though the proportion of working women in Thailand is relatively higher than in Japan, these proportions in Thai and Japanese commercials are remarkably similar. Therefore, this analysis refutes the conclusion that the roles of males and females in advertising correspond accurately to the construction of gender roles. In contrast, advertisements reflect an ideal image of gender roles in society. Gender roles in Japanese advertising reflect the ideal image of society and government policy towards gender roles and working style. On the other hand, gender roles in Thai advertising reflect the ideal image of an urban lifestyle due to the social gap between rural and urban areas, urban orientation, and a policy of centralization.

In addition, the similarities in roles and working roles between males and females in these two countries show the presence of non-stereotyping gender images in both Japan and Thailand. These research findings support the assumption of a decrease in gender stereotyping in advertising and suggest progress in stereotyped portrayals in advertising.

Moreover, as to whether Asian society as a whole is moving toward greater “gender equality,” this research suggests further study of the appearance and changes of males and females in television commercials in other Asian countries as well. Additionally, since people spend more time online and little research has examined gender portrayals in online platforms, more research needs to examine the role of gender stereotypes in digital advertising and social media advertising formats. This analysis also suggests that an understanding of the background and situation of gender roles in each society is crucial in interpreting and analyzing statistical results in this field.

Further, since this study points to a significant difference regarding gender roles in Japan and Thailand due to social and cultural differences, the study suggests that gender roles should be considered in international ad campaigns. Since gender roles in advertising can reproduce the systematic gendered hierarchy in audience attitudes, how gender roles are portrayed in advertising should be a matter of social concern.

Furthermore, Chu, Lee, and Kim (2016) examined non-stereotypical gender role representation and found that consumers do see this advertising in a positive light. This is used to achieve marketing objectives like increasing attention, gaining interest, and increasing sales. This research suggests that

non-stereotypical gender roles in advertising have a positive effect on brand image in both Thai and Japanese contexts. Advertisers should create non-stereotyped gender images as a means of improving product and brand image and should be responsible for promoting more gender equality. This will support achieving the gender equality goal, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

Additionally, Van Hellemonst and Van de Bulck (2012) argue that less restrictive literacy programs and awards for positive advertising are more effective at reducing gender stereotyping as opposed to increasing legislation and regulations. To keep encouraging gender equality in our society, awards should be given for positive non-stereotypical gender images in advertising, and campaigns should emphasize greater visibility of “working women” in advertising, TV dramas, movies, and other media. These efforts would lend support to people’s perception of gender equality as a desirable and sustainable development goal in our society.

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 18K01979 and 21K01934, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.

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