

# Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Evolution of Female Representation in Advertising

Rui Wang

Department of Foreign Languages, Jilin University, Changchun, 130000, China

---

**Abstract:** This study examines the evolution of female representation in Chinese advertising, focusing on the shared characteristics of female images across different types of advertisements. Utilizing a multimodal discourse analysis framework, the study explores the distinctive features and transformations of female representation in Chinese advertisements. From a critical discourse perspective, it scrutinizes gender discrimination embedded in advertising discourse and seeks to eliminate bias and discrimination against women in advertising representations. Furthermore, the study investigates how the shaping of female images in advertising has evolved with the development of the internet, highlighting its role in promoting gender equality awareness within the advertising industry.

**Keywords:** Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Gender Discrimination, Female Representation, Advertising.

---

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the rapid advancement of the commodity economy has led an increasing number of businesses to rely on advertising to attract consumers. The proliferation of exaggerated and flamboyant advertising slogans has given rise to a series of issues. In this era of information explosion, cultural influence is subtle yet profound and long-lasting, making it crucial to address the latent problems embedded in advertising discourse. Language in modern society functions as a social semiotic system, representing value relations and inherently embodying economic and social attributes. It is also ideologically charged, capable of intervening in social structures, driving economic activity, and disseminating cultural norms. This study focuses on the linguistic aspects of advertising and adopts a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) approach to examine and summarize the representation of women in advertisements that we have encountered throughout different stages of life. During the development of China's advertising industry, brands have often assumed an authoritative role, imposing normative expectations on female consumers—encouraging them to dedicate themselves entirely to their families and invest money, time, and effort in enhancing their appearance to embody an idealized version of themselves. Such advertisements frequently reinforce gender stereotypes, employing straightforward and visually impactful messaging to deliberately shape consumer perceptions, ultimately fostering discrimination and bias against women. The advertising industry should refrain from reinforcing gender inequality and instead promote a more diverse representation of women. Brands should depict women in multifaceted roles, such as scientists, entrepreneurs, and athletes, rather than limiting them to the stereotypes of the "beautiful consumer" or the "caretaker of the household." Achieving gender equality in advertising requires the collective efforts of brands, advertisers, consumers, and public discourse. Only through inclusive and diverse advertising narratives can social perceptions evolve, allowing advertisements to become a driving force in fostering gender equality. Therefore, conducting a multimodal critical discourse analysis of advertising discourse is of significant importance in

mitigating gender discrimination in advertising and eliminating bias and prejudiced portrayals of women in media representations.

## 2. Overview of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is a subfield of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that applies a socio-semiotic approach to the analysis of multimodal discourse. The media and channels through which human communication takes place are referred to as "modes." Multimodality encompasses discourse forms that extend beyond textual elements to include images, graphics, and any other meaning-making systems that rely on multiple semiotic resources. As an analytical approach, multimodal discourse analysis provides a fresh perspective on understanding complex semiotic systems and has evolved into a significant discourse analysis methodology. Similar to linguistic signs, visual and auditory signs may appear neutral or ordinary, yet they often carry implicit biases, discrimination, and social injustices shaped by individuals or social groups. Therefore, within multimodal discourse analysis, it is essential to adopt a critical stance, giving due attention to non-verbal semiotic resources and uncovering their underlying ideological meanings—particularly those that have become normalized within society. MCDA emerges at the intersection of multimodal discourse analysis and CDA, drawing upon insights from both disciplines. With the advancement of the internet and the increasing multimodal nature of mass communication, multimodal discourse analysis has become highly relevant for research in advertising and communication studies, offering significant methodological implications.

In contemporary advertising research, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) plays a crucial role in uncovering underlying ideologies, particularly the construction of gender stereotypes. Advertisements often employ linguistic, visual, and symbolic representational strategies to construct and reinforce traditional gender roles. Women are frequently depicted as passive, ornamental, or objectified figures, whereas men are portrayed as dominant,

confident, and authoritative. By deconstructing these representational practices, MCDA reveals how advertising discourse perpetuates gender stereotypes and socio-cultural hierarchies.

### 3. Issues and Case Analysis

#### 3.1. Overview of Issues in Advertising

In the development of China's advertising industry, stereotypical representations have frequently been employed as a means to attract consumers, encompassing issues such as gender discrimination and racial bias. Throughout the historical trajectory of Chinese advertising, the portrayal of women has been consistently inundated with entrenched stereotypes. Advertisements often depict women in a one-dimensional, biased, and stereotypical manner, thereby reinforcing societal cognitive biases and discriminatory perceptions toward women.

For an extended period, female representations in advertisements primarily revolved around domestic roles, physical beauty, and emotional dependence. For instance, women have frequently been portrayed as virtuous wives and devoted mothers, primarily engaged in household labor and committed to serving family members. Furthermore, female figures have often been objectified, with their bodies utilized as tools to attract male attention, reinforcing a male-centered gaze. This phenomenon is widespread in advertising and has often sparked social criticism and controversy.

The perpetuation of stereotypes in advertising discourse can be detrimental to women. By oversimplifying and misrepresenting female identities, advertisements may solidify negative stereotypes in society, leading to discrimination and marginalization. Certain advertisements reinforce gender biases through inappropriate stereotypical portrayals, further entrenching prejudices and influencing fair societal evaluations of women. The presence of overt stereotypes in advertising often provokes public backlash and social debate, drawing widespread attention and criticism. This, in turn, can result in commercial losses for advertisers and, in some cases, legal repercussions.

Moreover, public criticism of stereotypes in advertising fosters greater awareness of ethical concerns within the industry, compelling advertisers to engage in self-examination and reform. The critique of stereotypes in advertising not only affects the targeted groups but also generates broader societal discussions regarding media ethics and gender representation. Therefore, advertisers must exercise greater prudence and responsibility when crafting advertising messages, avoiding stereotypical depictions while promoting diversity and inclusivity to facilitate social progress. Simultaneously, consumers should remain vigilant about stereotypes in advertisements, actively participate in advertising oversight, and advocate for their rights and social equity.

At different stages of development, the portrayal of women in Chinese advertising has been fraught with various issues. However, with the awakening of female consciousness, the overall trend has shifted toward greater independence, diversity, and self-empowerment for women. In recent years, some brands have begun to challenge traditional gender stereotypes by producing advertisements centered on the female perspective.

For instance, certain advertisements no longer emphasize that "women must be gentle, virtuous, and slender," but

instead advocate for the idea that "women can freely choose their own way of life," encouraging them to break free from societal expectations. Moreover, public service advertisements have increasingly addressed real-life issues faced by women, such as workplace gender discrimination, reproductive pressures, and the double standards imposed by society.

#### 3.2. Female Representation in Early Advertising During the Development of the Advertising Industry

During the two decades following the Reform and Opening-Up in 1978, China's advertising industry experienced rapid growth. However, throughout this period, female representation in advertisements remained largely uniform, with women consistently portrayed as homemakers responsible for virtually all household duties. In nearly all advertisements, the individuals engaged in laundry, cooking, cleaning, and serving food at the table were invariably women. If a child fell ill or faced academic difficulties, it was always the "mother" who was depicted as the primary caregiver, expressing concern and taking responsibility. Even in public service advertisements, the mother figure was persistently shown managing household affairs, both large and small, while the "father" was typically portrayed as passively waiting alongside the children to receive care and enjoy the services provided.

**Table 1.** Occupational Comparison of Male and Female Roles in Advertisements

Occupation	Female Percentage	Male Percentage
Commercial Service Workers	11%	3.4%
Science, Education, Culture and Health	14.6%	29.0%
Company Employees/Secretaries	12.9%	12.0%
Manual Laborers	0.05%	12.8%
Leaders and Managers	0.05%	18.0%
Housewives/Househusbands	51.6%	0
Students	4.7%	18.0%
Others	4.0%	6.8%

**Data Source:** Liu Bohong & Bu Wei, *Research Report on Female Representation in Chinese Television Advertisements*

In the development of China's advertising industry, gender inequality has remained a persistent issue, with the construction of the "good girl" stereotype serving as a manifestation of this unequal power dynamic. Within the narrative framework of advertising marketing, men consistently occupy a position of absolute dominance—they are the decision-makers, the mentors, and the symbols of authority. In contrast, women are often relegated to secondary roles and are frequently depicted as dependent figures in need of male guidance and assistance. This stereotype is not only evident in the visual representation of advertisements but is also deeply embedded in the social relationships constructed through advertising discourse.

The "good girl" image in advertising is typically characterized by several defining features: submissiveness, reliance on men, a lack of independent decision-making ability, and even a portrayal of clumsiness in everyday life. Whether in household product advertisements, workplace commercials, or even technology-related promotions, female

characters are often depicted as incapable or inexperienced, requiring male figures to teach them how to properly use products or solve problems. This narrative mode not only diminishes women's perceived competence but also reinforces the implicit positioning of men as "mentors" or "saviors." Despite significant advancements in women's professional development in modern society, the portrayal of women in workplace-related advertisements remains confined to traditional gender roles. Female characters are rarely depicted as managers, entrepreneurs, or industry leaders; instead, they are more commonly shown in subordinate positions such as secretaries, sales assistants, or administrative staff. In advertisements for finance, technology, and business sectors, men often occupy the central roles as successful professionals and industry elites, while women are positioned in the background, serving as supporters of male success. Such stereotypical representations not only

undermine women's professional authority but also reinforce societal biases that suggest women are less suitable for leadership positions.

Furthermore, many advertisements subtly convey an implicit patriarchal discourse, implying that women are uninformed or incapable in certain domains and therefore require male intervention to accomplish tasks. For instance, in home appliance advertisements, female characters are frequently depicted as struggling to operate electronic devices, only to have male figures step in to solve the problem. Similarly, in automobile advertisements, women are often portrayed as lacking driving skills, while men assume the role of experts and instructors. These narratives influence public perceptions of gender-based competencies and further entrench the stereotype that women lack expertise in fields such as technology, finance, and business.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Male and Female Character Roles in Advertisements

Active Role	Female(%)	Male(%)	Passive Role	Female(%)	Male(%)
Instructor	1.9%	8.2%	Instructed	6.3%	3.0%
Enjoyer	0	3.9%	Allows Others to Enjoy	2.6%	0.5%
Permitter	0.5%	3.9%	Permitted	2.8%	0.5%
Protector	0	1.9%	Protected	1.4%	1.9%
Being Adored	0.5%	9.8%	Adorer	7.2%	1.4%
Observer	0.9%	15.5%	Observed	19.2%	0.5%
Approaching Others	0.5%	8.2%	Approached	2.6%	1.9%
Payer	0	3.0%	Spender	2.3%	0
Responder	3.2%	6.8%	Questioner	4.4%	3.8%
Being Served	4.4%	33.5%	Server	29.6%	3.0%

**Data Source:** Liu Bohong & Bu Wei, *Research Report on Female Images in Chinese Television Advertisements*

When examining the construction of gender roles in contemporary advertising, it is essential to return to reality and reassess the gap between advertising portrayals and social realities. In fact, while many advertisements continue to reinforce the traditional stereotype of "men as breadwinners and women as homemakers," the gendered division of labor in Chinese society has undergone profound transformations. Statistical data indicate that women now constitute 40% of the workforce, playing indispensable roles across diverse industries and professional fields, ranging from scientific research and finance to manufacturing and the internet sector. Their contributions extend far beyond traditional support roles. Simultaneously, within the context of increasingly diversified family structures, an increasing number of men have begun actively participating in domestic responsibilities, including household chores and child-rearing. Family obligations are no longer the exclusive duty of women. However, many advertisements persist in adhering to conventional gender roles, neglecting these structural shifts in society. This not only diminishes the visibility of women in public spheres but also disregards the contributions of men in the domestic domain.

The far-reaching influence of advertising is not limited to its function in consumer market guidance; it also plays a pivotal role in shaping social perceptions and even in the transmission of cultural values across generations. Advertising, as a highly frequent form of communication, seizes audience attention through powerful visual and linguistic stimuli, reinforcing specific ideological narratives through continuous repetition. When advertisements persistently disseminate the notion that "women should be caregivers while men are responsible for financial provision," such a discourse gradually becomes ingrained in the

audience's gender cognition, eventually solidifying into the collective subconscious. This not only affects contemporary consumers' perceptions of gender roles but also has the potential to entrench these stereotypes in cultural inheritance, making it increasingly challenging for future generations to break free from traditional constraints.

It is crucial to recognize that advertising is not merely a commercial activity; it also bears significant social responsibility. Consequently, advertisers and marketing strategists should align advertising content with contemporary social realities and refrain from excessively catering to outdated gender stereotypes. Brands should adopt more diversified advertising narratives, ensuring that individuals of different genders and social roles are represented authentically and with dignity. For instance, some enterprises have begun portraying professional women in advertisements, highlighting their expertise rather than confining them to the roles of "gentle and virtuous mothers" or "elegant and refined consumers." Similarly, certain brands have shifted away from the traditional portrayal of women as the sole caretakers of the household, instead presenting men as active participants in domestic labor, thereby conveying a more contemporary and inclusive family dynamic.

As audiences, we must also engage in critical analysis when consuming advertising messages, avoiding the passive internalization of gender stereotypes that may shape personal values unconsciously. In an era of rapid information dissemination, consumers are not merely passive recipients of messages but also active agents within the communication chain. Through critical thinking, we can proactively identify implicit gender biases embedded in advertisements and contribute to the advancement of a more equitable and inclusive advertising landscape. Ultimately, advertising

should serve as a vehicle for reflecting societal progress rather than perpetuating antiquated ideologies.

### 3.3. The Representation of Women in Advertisements During the Mid-stage of Advertising Industry Development

From 2005 to 2020, with the rise of social media, women's voices began to gain strength, leading to a transformation in their portrayal in advertisements. However, this shift also introduced new issues, as men continued to dominate the industry. A positive change was the diversification of female images in advertisements. Women were no longer confined to domestic roles but were instead represented across various professions, including female students, athletes, and leaders. Women in advertisements were shown living dynamic and fulfilling lives, and in some narratives, they even appeared more competent and powerful than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, new problems emerged. The beauty standards

for women in advertisements became increasingly narrow, with young and slim women dominating the representation. In 2005, middle-aged and elderly women were still a major presence in advertising, but by 2016, the number of young women featured in ads had more than doubled that of older women. Previously, advertisements included portrayals of elderly women selling sesame paste or neighborhood committee members delivering back scratchers. However, in the past decade, such representations have significantly declined. Instead, 90% of female figures in advertisements are slender, while only 8.9% have an average physique. In contrast, male figures in advertisements show a broader range of body types—only 2% are slim, 95% are of average build, and even 3.6% are slightly overweight. This strict and uniform portrayal of women's bodies in advertisements has gradually been internalized as a new beauty standard through repeated exposure. Consequently, many women in real life have developed increasing anxiety about their body image, fueling an unhealthy trend of excessive dieting.

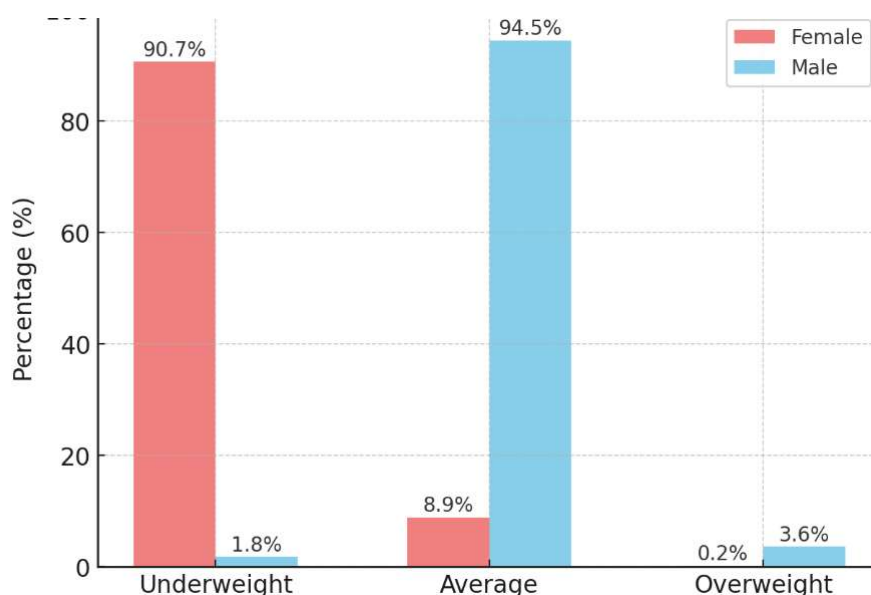


Figure 1. Distribution of Male and Female Body Types in Advertisements

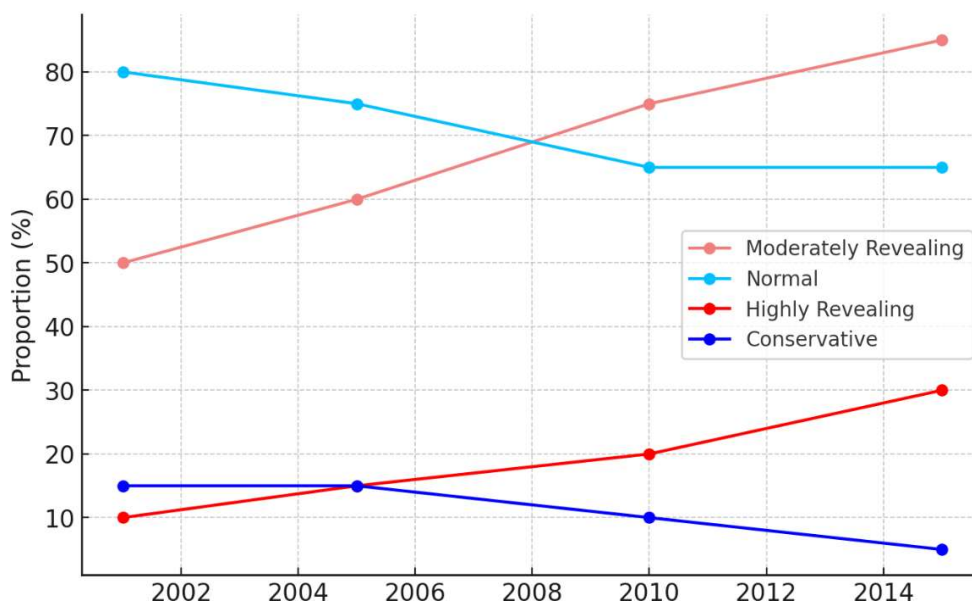
According to surveys, 94% of female university students in China are dissatisfied with their body shape, and 67% are actively trying to lose weight. However, only 11% of them actually exceed the healthy weight range. Under the influence of such aesthetic standards, the objectification of women as visual spectacles has become increasingly prevalent. Over the past two decades, female characters in advertisements have been depicted wearing increasingly revealing clothing. While some of this may reflect a shift toward more open-minded attitudes and greater freedom in women's dress choices, a significant portion is driven by the strategic use of the female body to capture attention. For instance, in scenarios where nudity is entirely unnecessary, female characters are often dressed in extremely short skirts. Advertisements frequently include close-up shots of specific female body parts or portray women displaying expressions of pleasure. Even some sanitary pad brands in recent years have incorporated strong sexual innuendos into their advertisements, seemingly aimed at capturing male viewers' attention rather than genuinely addressing women's needs.

During this period, the rapid development of online media led to a significant transformation in advertising, which was no longer confined to television but increasingly proliferated

across various social media platforms. Due to the virtual nature of the internet and the lack of effective online regulation, the commodification of the female body became pervasive, reinforcing the consumption and objectification of women. Many websites and advertisements were inundated with images of attractive women, some even carrying explicit sexual content. When browsing popular social media platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Instagram, one is constantly bombarded with advertisements that overtly or subtly emphasize women's physical appearance. These ads are predominantly male-centered, highlighting the ornamental value of women while neglecting their intrinsic worth. This reflects a deep-rooted objectification of women, where their appearance is placed at the forefront while their individual agency and value are marginalized. In May 2017, Tencent Video released an advertisement for Audi's certified used cars, in which a mother-in-law aggressively inspected the bride's body at a wedding—pinching her nose, pulling her ears, flipping her lips to check her teeth, and examining her chest—accompanied by the voice-over: "Only with official certification can you have peace of mind." The ad drew a parallel between concealed quality issues in used cars and cosmetic surgery in women. However, while selling second-

hand cars with hidden defects violates regulations, a woman's choice to undergo cosmetic surgery is a personal pursuit of beauty and does not breach any legal or ethical boundaries. Similarly, BMW also released a used-car advertisement employing a comparable metaphor, likening second-hand cars

to women by associating a car's first owner with a woman's first sexual experience. This framing reduced women from autonomous individuals to mere objects-commodities that could be purchased, used, and traded-reinforcing the notion that their primary value lies in serving male desires.



**Figure 2.** Evolution of the Degree of Female Body Exposure in Advertisements

**Data Source:** Zhao Sihui, *Research on the Changes in Female Advertising Images from the Perspective of Consumerism*

Even more concerning is the emergence of a deeply ingrained gender stereotype in recent years' advertisements—the "love-brained" woman. Around 2010, a trend emerged where advertisements were structured as mini-dramas, portraying women as if they were infected with an obsession for romance. Regardless of their identity, time, or place, these female characters were depicted as perpetually preoccupied with love—either being irresistibly drawn to men or consumed by anxieties over romantic relationships. At first glance, some of these narratives may appear sweet, yet upon closer examination, they reveal disturbing implications. For instance, in one advertisement, a professional woman is shown entering a convenience store alone late at night after work. The store is empty except for a male shop assistant, who fixates his gaze on her. In real life, this scenario would likely evoke unease and fear for the woman. However, within the advertisement's narrative, she inexplicably falls in love with the male clerk. Even more extreme examples exist, where a man simply sprays on a particular cologne, and the female characters in the advertisement become overwhelmingly infatuated with him. Such portrayals propagate a highly problematic stereotype: that women are inherently prone to falling in love, that men can effortlessly attract women regardless of their actions, and that even unsettling behaviors—such as voyeurism and suggestive advances—could be romanticized as irresistible allure, leading women to willingly embrace them.

In response to this emerging form of stereotype, the advertising industry must engage in deeper reflection and strategic adjustments. On one hand, brands should transcend the constraints of a singular aesthetic standard and embrace a more diverse representation of women. This entails acknowledging and showcasing women of different ages, body types, and lifestyles, ensuring that the portrayal of women in advertising is not confined to those who merely conform to conventional ideals of beauty. In recent years, a

handful of brands have begun challenging the dominance of a monolithic aesthetic. For instance, certain sports brands have introduced female ambassadors with varying body shapes, while some skincare brands have shifted their messaging to emphasize healthy skin rather than equating beauty with fair complexion. Such initiatives set a valuable precedent that more brands should consider adopting.

On the other hand, the advertising industry should actively work to mitigate the influence of the male gaze in shaping female representation. Advertisements should not cater solely to male-centered aesthetics but instead prioritize an understanding of women's actual needs and lived experiences. Women should no longer be portrayed merely as passive objects of visual consumption; rather, they should be depicted as individuals with authentic emotions, independent thought, and multidimensional personalities. Brands can adopt more female-centric narrative strategies that genuinely reflect the perspectives and aspirations of women consumers, rather than relegating them to subsidiary roles designed to appeal to a male audience.

Furthermore, the industry should foster a more mature and rational representation of women. Women are not merely sentimental beings driven by romantic pursuits; they are also scientists, entrepreneurs, athletes, and intellectuals. Advertisements should highlight women's intelligence, professional competence, and multifaceted contributions to society rather than reducing them to emotion-driven or overly sentimentalized figures.

### 3.4. The Evolution of Female Representation in Recent Advertising

In recent years, the Chinese advertising industry has remained embroiled in controversies regarding gender representation, particularly in its persistent objectification and lack of respect for women. Some advertisements continue to

reinforce outdated gender stereotypes, sparking criticism and public backlash. For instance, certain brands have employed sexually suggestive language when naming women's cosmetic products, not to cater to female consumers' actual needs but rather to attract male attention. Additionally, a well-known instant noodle brand once objectified women in its advertisement by using an eye chart metaphor, likening women to "objects for male selection," thereby reinforcing existing gender biases. The emergence of such advertisements has not only provoked widespread criticism and social discontent but has also led to public relations crises for brands accused of gender discrimination, with some companies even experiencing negative impacts on their market performance. However, despite these brands facing backlash, many prominent corporations still fail to internalize the principles of gender equality, continuing to rely on traditional gender stereotypes in subsequent marketing campaigns.

With the rise of gender awareness among the public and overall improvements in education levels, the advertising industry has begun to see the emergence of campaigns advocating for gender equality. For example, a skincare brand introduced the concept that "gender is not the boundary—prejudice is," encouraging consumers to break free from the constraints of gender stereotypes and reevaluate individual worth beyond societal expectations. The presence of such advertisements reflects a deeper engagement by brands with social responsibility while also fostering a more critical perspective among consumers regarding gender justice in advertising.

At the same time, public service advertisements (PSAs) have been gradually dismantling the overly idealized "filter" often applied in traditional advertising, shifting their focus toward the real-life challenges women face. Some PSAs have directly addressed issues such as workplace inequality, childcare pressures, and gender discrimination in professional settings, aiming to provoke deeper societal discussions. By authentically documenting women's lived experiences, these advertisements seek to bring public attention to the actual needs of women and drive improvements in relevant policies and the broader social environment.

The growing awareness of women's rights has also been reshaping the discursive landscape of the advertising industry. Looking back at the past few years, advertisements related to International Women's Day have undergone significant transformations. Around 2017, many brands still positioned women as the "other" in their campaigns, reinforcing stereotypes such as being "too weak to open a bottle cap," "overly sensitive and suspicious," or "always going to the restroom in groups." As awareness of gender equality grew, such portrayals faced increasing criticism. Subsequently, some brands attempted to shift toward a more "service-oriented" approach to targeting female consumers. However, these advertisements still predominantly operated within a male-centric perspective, emphasizing messages such as "a man's companionship is the best gift" or "household appliances make the perfect holiday present," ultimately failing to break free from the constraints of traditional gender roles.

By 2019, advertisements for International Women's Day had finally begun to portray women as central figures. However, their representation remained relatively one-dimensional. For instance, some advertisements depicted women as "queens" who were adept at consumption and self-indulgence, while others sought to highlight professional

independence while simultaneously reinforcing the expectation that women should maintain a "fair-skinned and sweet" appearance. This dual portrayal of women as both "goddesses" and "career-oriented strong women" marked a shift away from the traditional emphasis on domestic roles. However, it continued to impose rigid standards on women's appearance, purchasing power, and definitions of success, inadvertently reinforcing the societal expectation that women must strive for perfection.

Over the past five years, societal perceptions of women's value have undergone further transformation. The advertising industry has shifted from treating women as passive objects to recognizing their agency and questioning the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Increasingly, advertisements no longer confine women's success to a singular domain but instead encourage them to define their own paths in life. Simultaneously, public discourse has begun to challenge the marketing concept of "Goddess Day," arguing that women should not be constrained by predetermined labels but should instead enjoy equal rights based on their inherent gender identity rather than as a "reward" contingent on meeting societal expectations.

Women's demands have evolved from seeking preferential treatment as "goddesses" to advocating for equal treatment as women. Their representation in advertisements has also become more diverse, realistic, and independent. The dominant discourse has gradually shifted away from traditional gender stereotypes toward the promotion of female empowerment and self-determination, prompting the advertising industry to engage in deeper reflection and exploration of gender representation. However, achieving true gender equality in advertising requires the collective efforts of advertisers, corporations, and consumers to continuously drive societal progress and challenge entrenched norms.

## 4. Conclusion

Advertising not only reflects the development of a society but also actively shapes social change and constructs new cultural paradigms. However, when advertisements convey misleading messages, they reinforce stereotypes and confine people's perceptions within narrow ideological frameworks. A well-crafted advertisement should not merely capture attention—it must also demonstrate care and respect for consumers. Brands, when creating advertisements, should uphold social responsibility by integrating gender equality consciousness into their campaigns, thereby fostering progressive values. As consumers, we must also critically examine advertisements through the lens of gender equality and actively influence the industry's direction through our responses and choices. The culture we consume does not merely serve as a source of entertainment—it subtly constructs our emotional responses, shapes our value systems, and defines our ways of life. It influences our aspirations, fears, and desires, quietly altering China's social landscape, restructuring the fabric of society, and transforming interpersonal relationships. Moreover, it reshapes our fundamental perceptions of life, love, hatred, and even death. It is precisely those seemingly casual and entertaining cultural products that, imperceptibly, reshape the collective consciousness and structure of society.

The multimodal critical discourse perspective plays a crucial role in advertising analysis, as it helps unveil underlying issues embedded within advertisements, exposing

stereotypes and gender inequalities. Through multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), we gain a clearer understanding of the intentions and objectives behind advertisements, as well as the potential ethical dilemmas they may entail. The significance of MCDA in advertising lies in its ability to assist consumers in comprehending the true implications of advertisements, preventing them from being misled or manipulated by the values these advertisements promote. Many advertisements employ the objectification of women-either by displaying female bodies as commodities or by demeaning women to elevate another group's status-in order to attract consumers and reinforce deeply ingrained gender biases within patriarchal societies. The multimodal critical discourse perspective enables us to critically examine such content, evaluating its authenticity and the degree of gender equality it upholds. Moreover, MCDA serves as a reminder for consumers to cultivate critical thinking skills, encouraging them to engage in deeper reflection and analysis of advertisements to resist the influence of misleading ideologies.

Given its capacity to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and objectives of advertising, MCDA enhances consumer awareness and strengthens their ability to safeguard their own interests. When engaging with advertisements, consumers should maintain a critical mindset, refraining from blind acceptance and instead applying multimodal critical discourse analysis as a tool for evaluation and judgment.

## References

- [1] Xiang Qiang. Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Models and Its Methodological Significance in Cross-Media Cultural Communication Research [J]. *Journal of Wuhan University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2017(6): 126-134.
- [2] Liu Dianhong, Xia Shang. A Study on the Representation of Female Images in Chinese Television Advertising [J]. *Journalism & Communication Research*, 1997,(01): 45-58+96.
- [3] Zhao Sihui. Research on the Changes in Female Advertising Images from the Perspective of Consumerism [D]. *Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics*, 2022.
- [4] Feng Mengyuan. A Study on the Changes in Female Image Representation in Chinese Advertisements Over the Past Decade [D]. *Hainan Normal University*, 2019.
- [5] He Dan, Cui Huihui. An Analysis of the Evolution and Implicit Meanings of Female Representations in Advertising [J]. *Journal of News Research and Guidance*, 2018,9(03): 232+234.
- [6] Liu Shuting. The Evolution of Female Representations in Commercial Advertising [J]. *Journal of Jilin Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 2014,35(S2): 87-90.
- [7] Wang Ting. The Influence of Post-Feminism on the Evolution and Creativity of Female Images in Advertising [J]. *Journal of Xibu (Theoretical Edition)*, 2011,(10): 107-108.
- [8] Gao Nuan, Chen Zhuo. The Evolution of Female Representations in Advertising [J]. *World of Journalism*, 2010, (11): 123-124.
- [9] Wang Dan. A Study on the Evolution of Female Representations in Print Advertising (1990-2000) [J]. *China Advertising*, 2002,(03): 42-45.
- [10] Zhang Yanlü. An Integrated Theoretical Framework for Multimodal Discourse Analysis [J]. *Chinese Foreign Languages*, 2009, 6(1): 24-30.
- [11] Lin Yong. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Exploration, Methodological Considerations, and Future Prospects [J]. *Journal of PLA Foreign Languages Institute*, 2019, 42(5): 31-39.
- [12] DOROTHY E. S. *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* [M]. London: Routledge, 1990: 163.
- [13] Ringrow H. Book review: David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction* [J]. *Discourse & Society*, 2024, 25(2): 284-286.