

**Research Report on**

**Gender stereotypes in the Hong Kong media: a scoping  
study**

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## 1. Executive Summary

This scoping study was undertaken by The Women’s Foundation and sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission under its Funding Programme for Research Projects on Equal Opportunities 2013/14. The report examines whether and how Hong Kong’s media creates and exacerbates gender stereotypes. It explores the potential associations between the portrayal of women and men, girls and boys in the media and the ensuing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of media consumers.

In particular, it explores the potential correlation between the objectification of women in media and four important social issues facing Hong Kong today: first, the persistence of gender stereotypes which are particularly entrenched for men and boys; second, the increase in cases of harassment of, and violence against, women, with offenders getting younger; third, the rise in eating disorders and body image issues particularly among young women and girls; and fourth, the under-representation of women in policy and decision-making roles. To our knowledge, this is the first study, to date, to conduct a literature review of existing local research on these important themes and that collates the key findings from the existing local research and provides global comparisons where relevant.

### Background

Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the vast majority of films, TV programmes, advertising and video games – to cite a few examples – have and still depict women in a non-objective and often demeaning light. This has prompted academics and researchers around the world to strive to identify associations between media exposure and societal perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. This literature review was conducted against the backdrop of international research that has established causal links between: (1) accessing violent and/or stereotypical media (such as pornography, advertisements, and video games) and corresponding harmful perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards women; and (2) exposure to fashion and beauty advertisements and other media that promotes unrealistic and unhealthy body images on the one hand, and eating disorders, body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem particularly amongst women on the other.

In conducting our scoping study, we were particularly cognisant of the following social issues affecting Hong Kong which motivated us to try and uncover potential links between these issues and media exposure as identified in the existing research:

- Hong Kong’s female workforce participation at 54% lags behind many developed countries – e.g, 71% in the UK and 67.6% in the US
- Despite women being more educated and more prevalent in the workforce than ever before, women continue to be under-represented on Hong Kong corporate boards and in senior management roles. Women make up just 11% of the total director pool of Hong Kong’s listed issuers and comprise just 33% of senior management roles.
- Eating disorders are increasing exponentially in Hong Kong with the number of individuals between the ages of 20 and 29 who are clinically underweight doubling from 1995 to 2010.
- Sex offenders in Hong Kong are getting younger and younger. Half of the juvenile sex offences committed in the New Territories in 2013 involved 11-14yr olds which is three times the number of cases committed by the same age group in 2009.

## Key Findings

There has been very little significant research conducted in Hong Kong on the causal links between media consumption and corresponding perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. We discovered that a large gap exists in terms of comprehensive, quantitative and longitudinal studies compared with other developed economies. For instance, the US has several leading organisations like the Geena Davis Institute that are tracking media exposure and its impact on society. Meanwhile, there is a substantial body of UK research on a range of issues from the effect of pornography on young consumers to the correlation between media exposure and stress and anxiety levels among girls.

Nonetheless, from the data that is available, we managed to identify some key trends and areas of concern that we believe warrant further in-depth research and analysis:

- **Gender stereotyping and social expectations:** Gender stereotypes remain very prevalent in Hong Kong and are exacerbated for both sexes after media exposure like watching certain television programmes. Specifically, men have more entrenched stereotypical beliefs and are more prone to negatively judge different personality traits and behaviours. This is particularly worrying since studies conducted in Hong Kong and China have found links between traditional gender beliefs on the part of men and potential aggression against women. Meanwhile, working women feel pressure to conform to societal expectations of women as home-makers and care-givers in order to be considered successful.
- **Body image and self-esteem:** Women who are saturated in media that idealises specific body images and perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are more likely to experience body image dissatisfaction, a lower sense of self-worth and eating disorders.
- **Limited female role models:** In the vast majority of programmes and advertisements, men are featured in roles of authority and male voices tend to be used for commentaries and voice overs whereas women tend to be depicted in domestic roles. More than other developed territories, the representation of gender-specific professions (secretaries and nurses being depicted by women for example) is still very apparent in Hong Kong media. By contrast, in recent years, analyses of Hong Kong English and Chinese school textbooks have showed a marked decrease in gender stereotypical representation.
- **Greater permissiveness in sexual coercion and higher proclivity towards sexual harassment:** Exposing boys and girls to sexually explicit materials has harmful consequences. Boys who are exposed to pornography have more negative stereotypes of women and a greater proclivity toward sexual harassment. Girls who are exposed to pornography believe sexual coercion is more permissible in relationships. This is particularly concerning given reports estimating that 40% of Hong Kong teens aged 15 to 17 routinely access pornographic materials.

## Recommendations

From this scoping study, we have generated a set of initial recommendations for government, private sectors, and individuals. We present these as preliminary recommendations since in many cases they need to be corroborated with further research.

Our findings suggest all media consumers in Hong Kong, particularly women and young girls, are absorbing a plethora of mixed messages that play a significant role in shaping professional choices, interpersonal relationships, sense of self and perception of others. To temper these consequences, we need to train media consumers, both men and women and boys and girls, to filter what they see and to embrace a set of healthy and positive core values and aspirations. This requires joined-up and co-ordinated efforts across government, the education sector, media, civic society and society.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsible Stakeholders</b>	<b>Issues to be addressed</b>
1. Introduce media literacy programmes to train children and young adults to filter the media messages they are absorbing and to embrace a set of healthy and positive core values. This should include sex education and advice on forging balanced relationships based on mutual respect	Government; Educators; Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Generally, there are very few media literacy programmes available for children and young adults. Meanwhile, sex education in Hong Kong is largely outmoded and piecemeal.
2. Review guidelines governing what is appropriate content for all forms of media including TV programmes and advertisements. Create awareness and promote responsibility among media platforms about the impact of stereotyping on societal norms and behaviours	Government; Advertising companies; NGOs	There is a lack of consensus between stakeholders - i.e., the Government, regulators, parents, educators, and media platforms on what constitutes appropriate content. More engagement is also needed with media platforms to create promote self-regulation with respect to inappropriate content.
3. Review existing practices of monitoring access to pornographic materials and implement measures to control the ease of access by underage viewers	Government; Media	It is unclear what restrictions currently apply to prevent underage viewers from accessing pornographic materials particularly online, and who is responsible for enforcement.

Recommendations	Responsible Stakeholders	Issues to be addressed
<p>4. More in-depth local research (particularly longitudinal/ quantitative) is needed to determine the scope, impact and related effects of media on various aspects of society including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The correlation between exposure to media and the strongly entrenched gender stereotypes held by men and boys</li> <li>- The correlation between video games and violence and aggressive attitudes towards women</li> <li>- The correlation between exposure to advertising for beauty – e.g., whitening and slimming products and lower self-worth and body image issues on the part of women and girls Potential associations between culture, media and career aspirations of women in Hong Kong</li> <li>- Targeted studies on the impact of different types of pornography (e.g. non-violent vs violent)</li> <li>- The correlation between exposure to media and lower career aspirations of women and girls</li> </ul>	<p>Researchers; NGOs</p>	<p>Most studies included in this review were descriptive and correlational in nature, not allowing any determination of causality.</p> <p>Many studies omitted to provide full demographic account of their samples, making it difficult to understand the results in context. For example, it would be valuable to understand variables such as socio-economic status and education level.</p>
<p>5. Encourage a more equal representation of roles for women and men in television/ films / advertisements</p>	<p>Advertisers; Producers</p>	<p>Women in television and films are often in stereotyped jobs (e.g. secretaries, nurses, teachers) or in stereotypical roles (e.g. housewives, child carers) that reinforce gender biases about women not having the same leadership aptitude as men</p>

## 2. Background and Objectives

Media reflects gender-related values, beliefs and norms, and can lead to an understanding of how a society constructs its members (Fung and Yao 2012). There is a general consensus that media products are among the most pervasive and influential forces of gender role socialisation (Fung and Yao 2012). Individuals, particularly children learn how men and women ought to behave (Scharrer 2005, Ward 2002). According to several local studies, the media exerts a massive influence on consumers (Chiu et al. 1998, Fung and Ma 2000) and in the reinforcement of stereotypes among the young and in particular, impressionable young girls (Chan 2011a, Chan et al. 2011).

At the time of writing, no report to our knowledge has attempted to collate findings from existing studies conducted in Hong Kong with the principal aim of exploring associations between gender stereotypes in the media and attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. Specific objectives of this scoping study included:

- (1) A comprehensive literature review of over 20 years of research on the impact of print and non-print media
- (2) Summary and analysis of research published on media use and gender stereotyping in Hong Kong with the aim of exploring the potential associations between the scope of exposure to/ use of media sources objectifying women and (i) body image issues affecting women and girls in Hong Kong (ii) violence against, and harassment of, women and girls in Hong Kong and (iv) perceptions of and attitudes towards women leaders
- (3) To compare local findings with overseas research results
- (4) To identify the critical research gaps
- (5) To discuss any local policy implications and to provide initial recommendations for Government, regulators, parents, educators and other stakeholders.

First, we will describe the methodology employed for this report. What follows are the results of the literature review, differentiated by media type, with local findings and statistics presented (where available), which are then compared with relevant seminal international literature. The report goes on to identify the gaps in available research and concludes with policy implications and recommendations.

## 3. Methodology and Scope

Perhaps a useful way of thinking about this literature review is to describe it as a ‘scoping study’. A type of literature review developed by Arskey and O’Malley (2005), a scoping study is usually undertaken to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity, as well as to summarise and disseminate research findings in order to identify research gaps. As such, the study draws conclusions from existing literature regarding the overall state of research activity in this particular field. Arskey and O’Malley (2005) also developed a potential framework for conducting a scoping study which we have also adopted for this study.

### 3.1 Step 1: Identifying the research questions

Again, the core research questions are: *What is known from the existing literature about the impact of gender stereotypes in the Hong Kong media? What are the potential associations with behaviours, attitudes and perceptions?*

### 3.2 Step 2: Identifying relevant studies

In order to be as comprehensive as possible in identifying primary studies and reviews suited to answer the research questions, a recommended strategy (see Arskey and O'Malley, 2005) was adopted which drew from five different types of sources:

- Three electronic databases: Google scholar, the Hong Kong University Library and the London School of Economics Library
- Bibliographies from relevant articles and literature reviews conducted in Hong Kong
- Hand-searching of relevant authors' publication lists
- Existing networks and relevant organisations such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Gender Research Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Grey literature search

The following search terms syntax was inputted into the three electronic databases mentioned above: *(women OR woman OR man OR men OR girl\*) AND (media OR magazine OR video\* OR game OR print OR porno\* OR sex\* OR image\*) AND (attitude\*) AND (violen\* OR aggress\* OR ang\*) AND "Hong Kong"*. The majority of the search terms were identified by consulting influential international, systematic reviews of the topic, for example: Anderson and Bushman (2001), Bensley and Van Eenwyk (2001) and Sherry (2001). Initial perusal of search results indicated that the search strategy had picked up a large number of irrelevant materials resulting in around 12,000 hits.<sup>1</sup> This was expected, due to the large number of search terms as well as a great variety of databases, and also relatively general terms employed for the search.

Thereafter, selected article bibliographies were checked for further relevant materials until the point of saturation, when no new articles were being identified. Publication lists of authors who had published extensively in the particular subject were also reviewed in case any articles had been missed from the previous exercises. Finally, grey literature was searched using Google, and relevant organisations contacted. Copies of the full articles were obtained for those studies that appeared to be relevant to the research questions.

In total, 28 peer-reviewed studies were included in this scoping study and their results are discussed and compared to the existing literature. This reports presents the results from charting the data from the articles, compiled into relevant and distinct themes (e.g. media use, associated gender representations) which are then summarised and compared with the international literature.

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<sup>1</sup> Titles of peer-reviewed articles were scanned and relevant articles were imported into an Endnote database as a first step. Abstracts were then scoured with inclusion and exclusion criteria applied, where the article aided or not in answering the research questions. An example of an exclusion criterion is where the survey sample was not drawn from Hong Kong.



## 4. Gender Stereotypes in the Media

### 4.1 Theoretical perspectives and an international overview

Since time immemorial, the arrival of each new medium of communication has heralded interest and concern about its impact on society. In terms of women and gender, magazines, pornography, and video games – to cite a few examples – have and still depict girls and women in a non-objective and often negative light, prompting academics and researchers to strive to identify associations with the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of media consumers. Findings have spanned the plethora of media types and for the most part have found significant correlations, even from a very young age: for example, children who are exposed to gender stereotypes on television are more likely to endorse real-life gender stereotypes (Eisenstock 1984).

For this initial overview, it is perhaps more useful to focus on and discuss the literature that has received the most attention from scholars. An initial search of the worldwide literature on gender stereotypes in the media revealed some distinct themes: *unrealistic female images in magazines and links with body satisfaction and eating disorders*, as well as the *depiction of women in sexually explicit materials and video games*, and *their association with aggression and gender roles*.

These issues have not been limited to the scientific and academic literature – they have been extensively covered by the press as well, given the nature of the impact. Indeed, the body-thin ideal is frequently discussed. Similarly, many news organisations reported on the launch of the Grand Theft Auto game, in which a player can choose to engage in a sexual act with a prostitute and then kill her (Cook 2014), and discussed the potential impact of extreme depictions of violence against women (Stuart 2014).



(Cook 2014)

#### **Body image**

The media has played a significant role in transmitting thinness-oriented norms and values (Garfinkel and Garner 1982). The perpetuation of unrealistic and unhealthy body images, and specifically the thin-ideal in the media has spawned a huge body of literature about its effects on behaviours and attitudes (Stice and Shaw 1994, Harrison and Cantor 1997) especially amongst females. Although it has been shown that males are not immune to its effects neither (Harrison 2000), studies have shown links with increased body dissatisfaction amongst females (Heinberg and Thompson 1995) and eating disorders (Thompson et al. 1999) as well as body image disturbance (Grabe, Ward, and Hyde 2008). Eating disorders are not only a Western issue but are also very prevalent in Hong Kong (Lee 1991).

## **Video games**

In video games, a medium that has been growing exponentially in popularity, female characters are commonly portrayed as hyper-sexualised while male characters are dominant and aggressive (Beasley and Collins-Standley 2002, Dill and Thill 2007). Indeed, a large and robust body of literature exists with regard to video games and their links to negative attitudes towards women (Dill 2009) as well as gender-specific aggression (Bensley and Van Eenwyk 2001, Anderson and Bushman 2001, Sherry 2001). The important meta-analytic review by Anderson and Bushman (2001) also found that exposure was negatively associated with pro-social behaviour and positively related to the main mechanism underlying long-term effects of the development of aggressive personality and aggressive cognition. A positive correlation was also found between body image dissatisfaction and watching music television programmes (Prendergast et al. 2002). This finding is also supported by international literature (Englis et al. 1994, Tiggemann and Slater 2003).

## **Sexually explicit material**

With regard to sexually explicit material (SEM), a number of studies have shown links between exposure to pornography containing sexual aggression and corresponding aggressive and sexually aggressive behaviour towards women (Malamuth et al. 2012, Ybarra et al. 2011). More generally, exposure to sexual content in various media (TV, music, movies and the internet) is associated with sexual precociousness (Pardun et al. 2005) as well as biased perceptions of gender roles (Brown and L'Engle 2009).

For the purposes of this report, it is important to note the process by which the association between exposure to gender stereotypes and negative behaviour occurs. Possibly the most comprehensive framework to explain how this phenomenon occurs is the General Aggression Model which has suggested “the enactment of aggression is largely based on the learning, activation and application of aggression-related knowledge structures stored in memory” (Anderson and Bushman 2001). This means recent exposure to violent media is associated with violent behaviour through their effect on a person’s internal state. It also teaches them how to aggress, priming aggressive cognitions by increasing arousal or by creating an aggressive affective state.

## **4.2 The state of the media in Hong Kong**

Hong Kong can be described as a highly Westernised Chinese society. While British colonial rule and the reversion of Hong Kong to the Mainland have greatly shaped this region, Hong Kong has generally maintained a market-oriented society with open economic and media systems. Nearly all of Hong Kong media titles and platforms are privately owned, and research points to limited governmental interference in media content (So et al. 2000). Nevertheless, Hong Kong still retains some attributes of a Chinese collectivist society (Lo et al. 2010), where for example sex, especially pre-marital sex and pornographic materials, are considered as taboo (Lo et al. 1999), and traditional gender roles still apply.

Some scholars (for example Fung and Ma, 2000) have suggested that existing gender stereotypes in Hong Kong are the vestiges of Chinese tradition, formed due to peer group influence or after media

messages are processed. For example, Hong Kong men are likely to subscribe to the following characteristics: willingness to take risks, leadership abilities, strong personality, defends own beliefs, independence, willingness to improve, aggressiveness and assertiveness. On the other hand, Hong Kong Chinese women are likely to regard women with the 'feminine' traits positively, such as being maternal, shy, sensitive, gentle, compassionate, affectionate, sympathetic, and understanding. Fung and Ma (2000) concluded that people from Hong Kong still hold strong gender stereotypical beliefs (this study will be discussed at length later). The entrenched nature of gender stereotypes particularly on the part of men and boys in Hong Kong is particularly worrying since studies conducted in Hong Kong and China have found links between traditional gender beliefs on the part of men and potential aggression against women and their partners (Tang and Lai 2008, Shen, Chiu, and Gao 2012).

With regard to media access coverage, Hong Kong is generally a very well-connected city. The latest data from the Census and Statistics Department (2014a) shows that 79.9% of households in Hong Kong have a personal computer that is connected to the internet, a high proportion compared to the rest of the world (World Bank 2015). More specifically, a survey of adolescents in Hong Kong (Chan and Fang 2007), highlighted the importance of the internet with regard to information-driven activities, especially with regard to accessing sensitive material, due to its anonymity. Boys and girls also use the internet differently: male respondents use it more frequently to play games and for social activities, while females use it for homework, obtaining information about further education and the latest fashion trends, as well as travel. Furthermore, Hong Kong also has one of the highest 3G/4G subscribers per capita in the world, enabling them to access to online media at their leisure.

In terms of print media, Hong Kong has one of the highest newspaper readerships in Asia (Hong Kong Government 2014). More than half of respondents (aged 12 to 34) reported that they had read a magazine in the last week in a survey conducted by Nielsen in 2009.

The extent of advertising expenditure is similar in level to that of the United States (Frith and Mueller 2003). Advertising for the most part endorses Western values and is significantly different from neighbouring Taiwan and China (Chan and Cheng 2002).

Fung and Yao (2012) found that past studies on gender stereotyping in the media have mainly revolved around three main themes: (1) the depiction of women as sex objects; (2) idealised portrayals of the human body that promote unrealistic and/or unnatural beauty standards; and (3) the depiction of women in 'traditional' gender roles as domestic, weak and submissive.

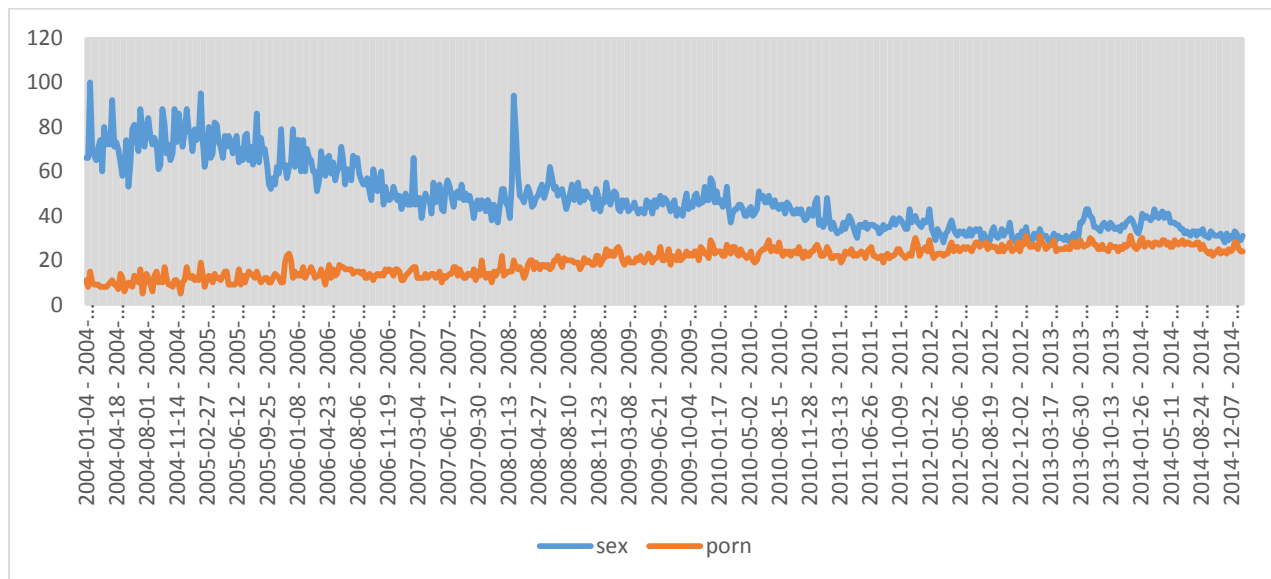
The next section will present the results of this scoping study, the emergent themes of which coincide with those described by Fung and Yao (2012).

#### 4.2.1 The use of sexually explicit materials in Hong Kong: statistics of Google Trends and literature review

##### Google Trends statistics

A macro-level method of analysing access to sexually explicit materials can be found through Google Trends: it calculates how many times a particular search-term is entered relative to the total search-volume over time. For example, some of the trending search terms (in English and Chinese) for Hong Kong in 2014 were (in descending order of popularity): the World Cup, the ice bucket challenge, the Oscars, Wimbledon (Google 2014). Entering sex and porn\* into Google Trends can give some insight into their popularity in Hong Kong since 2004 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Google Trends data for sex and porn\* since 2004 in Hong Kong



(Google 2015)

Figure 1 suggests that the frequency of “sex” as a search term on Google is decreasing over time, whereas that of “porn\*” has been increasing since 2004. It is possible that society’s views on sex have become more diversified as more varied sex-related terms have been generated over the last decade. Concurrently, more users are looking for information about pornographic materials. The following tables by Google Trends shows as of January 26, 2015, the relative frequency of sex-related search terms in Hong Kong:

**Table 1: Sex-related search-terms in Hong Kong**

Top searches for sex	
video sex	100
free sex	85
porn sex	60
Porn	60
sex in sex	55
sex movie	50
Hong Kong sex	40
sex videos	35
sex girl	35
141 sex	30
sex tube	30
141	30
hot sex	25
Japanese sex	25
Sexy	25
sex movies	25
Indian sex	25
Japan sex	25
sex girls	25
Girls	25
sex stories	20
teen sex	20
gay sex	20
HK sex	20
Cerita sex	20
sex xxx	20

Top searches for sex	
xxx	15
free sex video	15
sex fuck	15
Asian sex	15
Fuck	15
sex scene	15
sex av	15
Av	15
sex tape	15
sex massage	15
adult sex	15
sex game	10
sex story	10
sex photo	10
Lesbian	10
free sex movie	10
sex games	10
anal sex	10
lesbian sex	10
sex scandal	10
animal sex	10
sex porno	10
sex pictures	10
live sex	10

**Table 2: Porn-related search-terms in Hong Kong**

Top searches for porn	
porn free	100
sex	70
sex porn	70
porn video	50
porn tube	35
Japanese porn	35
you porn	30
gay porn	30
porn hub	25
Asian porn	25
porn movie	25
porn videos	20
porn movies	20
japan porn	20
teen porn	20
Hong Kong porn	20
porn star	15
av	15
av porn	15
free porn sex	15
free porn video	15
Indian porn	10
hot porn	10
porn xxx	10
Chinese porn	10
hentai porn	10
hentai	10
best porn	10
mobile porn	10
sex video	10
porn sex video	10
Korean porn	10
HK porn	10
pornhub	10
HD porn	10
adult porn	10
lesbian porn	5

Top searches for porn	
young porn	5
free porn videos	5
porn pics	5
black porn	5
Youporn	5
porn site	5
free porn movies	5
porn sites	5
free porn movie	5
tube8	5
pron	5
iPhone porn	5
massage porn	5

**Tables 1 and 2** provide some fascinating insights into Hong Kong society based on search habits and interests in terms of sexually explicit content. The most searched-for term was 'free sex'. Thereafter, users who searched the term 'Hong Kong sex' might mean they were looking for pornographic materials featuring Hong Kong women or information about local sex workers. This was closely related to the search for '141', which is a website where female sex workers advertise their services. The site provides their photo, price per hour and location (the address is freely disclosed on the website). Other searches focused on ethnicity (Japanese being a popular choice) or were age-specific (e.g. teen, young). There were more searches for 'gay' than 'lesbian' porn, reinforcing the hypothesis that men are more likely than women to use the internet to access sexually explicit materials (Lo and Wei 2005).

### **Literature review**

This section will review the existing academic literature in terms of access to, and consumption of, sexually explicit materials (SEMs). Adapting the definition provided by To et al. (2013), SEMs are defined as any erotic materials or messages distributed via traditional means (magazines, books, etc.) or the internet, with the purpose of creating sexual arousal in their users. More specifically, these materials can depict forced sexual activity, sexual intercourse or depictions of nudity. A study by Lo et al. (1999) about the situation in Taiwan found that SEMs frequently depict the subordination, degradation or humiliation of women.

In total, seven peer-reviewed articles dating back to 2003 were found pertaining to the use of SEMs in Hong Kong. All these studies were correlational and non-experimental, prohibiting any interpretation of causal relationships. Sample sizes were on the larger side (mean  $N=1,159$ ;  $SD=1,054$ ) and most studies employed self-reported survey methods (see **Appendix A**).

All studies presented prevalence rates of accessing SEMs. Direct comparisons are not viable due to the varying distributions of participants of different genders and ages, as well as their timeframe of accessing SEMs.

A concerning statistic that emerged from the studies that examined the online behaviours of girls and boys aged 15- 17 is that about 40% of respondents had accessed SEMs in the previous year, preferring the internet over traditional media.

Gender differences in rates of access were also reported in four studies with male participants more likely to have accessed SEMs. This finding is consistent across other Western and Asian studies (Hald 2006, Kim 2001, Lo et al. 1999, Brown and L'Engle 2009). More importantly, accessing SEMs, as well as frequency of access, was positively correlated with more relaxed attitudes to premarital sex and sexual permissiveness. Content analyses of 50 pornographic films revealed that the sexual desires and prowess of men was constantly highlighted, while in parallel, women were portrayed as sexually willing and available (Brosius, Weaver, and Staab 1993).

Another important finding across several studies was the acceptance of, and beliefs in, stereotyped gender roles. Lam and Chan (2007) found an association between accessing SEMs with a proclivity towards sexual harassment among males, while To et al. (2012) reported an association with amplified beliefs in sexual coercion. Interestingly, To (in press) found that female consumers of SEMs were found

to be more accepting of sexual coercion in relationships. Moreover, To et al. (2012) commented that accessing SEMs was linked to the acceptance of power imbalances in sexual relationships, and a preoccupation with sexual desires and fantasies. This phenomenon is particularly worrying given that females in Hong Kong may lack bargaining power in order to negotiate safe sex (To et al. 2013). A relevant study conducted in Taiwan (Chiao and Yi 2011) also found negative associations between accessing SEMs, adolescent premarital sex, and poor health (namely increased likelihood of drinking and smoking).

On a more positive note, accessing SEMs contributed to a greater knowledge with regard to sex education in some cases. This is in line with international research findings that mass media can play a role in providing sex education (Trostle 1993, Duncan 1991).

#### **4.2.2 Women in the media in Hong Kong**

Leung et al. (2001) commented that beauty standards in Hong Kong are shifting towards Western ideals. By collecting information on physical characteristics (age, height, weight and body measurements) of Miss Hong Kong Beauty Pageant contestants from 1975-2000, they found a downward trend with regard to BMI (Body Mass Index). This is a phenomenon that has been observed in the US and Europe as well (Mazur 1986, Garner et al. 1980, Morris et al. 1989).

The body-thin ideal promoted by the media is clearly unrealistic and sets impossible standards for women. The launch of the Campaign for Real Beauty by Dove (2011) made huge waves in the worldwide media by featuring un-retouched images of average-sized women. In Hong Kong, the media promotes the concept that women can have higher self-esteem if they are thinner since a slim body is attractive to the opposite sex and is also appreciated by members of the same sex (Lee and Fung 2009). In Western media, thinness has become associated with self-control and success (Garfinkel and Garner 1982). Body-thin images and slimming products are frequently featured in women's magazines such as Jessica, Cosmopolitan, Elle and Marie Claire.

Meanwhile, a study by the Equal Opportunities Commission (2009) on public perceptions of the portrayal of women in the Hong Kong media reported that the most common themes surrounding female images shown in local print media were 'negative'. Specifically, images of 'female artists' were perceived as 'sexy', 'exposed' and 'slim and beautiful'.

#### **Literature review**

This review identified 21 studies about how women and men are portrayed in consumer media in Hong Kong. The studies were mainly qualitative, comprising content analyses and interviews. Gender portrayals in the media were examined by means of content analysis in 12 studies, spanning from television and magazine commercials to photobooks and textbooks. The studies reveal an association between gender-specific cues and gender stereotype activation. A summary of these studies is shown in ***Appendix B***.

#### **Women in advertising**



Furnham et al. (2000) conducted content analyses of 175 commercials shown in Hong Kong and found that men are more likely to be depicted in central roles and used in voice overs to imply authority. Women are more often illustrated in home settings and as playing dependent roles. Chan and Cheng (2012) analysed 215 advertisements from a popular lifestyle magazine in Hong Kong ('Next' magazine which has a 57% female readership). Women were found to be portrayed as classic/feminine (65% of the cases), followed by sex kitten (13%), casual (9%), trendy (7%) and cute (5%).

### **Depictions of gender roles**

Stereotypical gender roles were apparent in two studies which analysed commercials in Hong Kong. Women were more likely to be depicted as staying at home (Furnham and Chan 2003, Mak et al. 2000) whereas men were more likely to be portrayed in professional and working roles in 513 Hong Kong advertisements studied by Moon and Chan (2006). In addition, women were assumed to have 'gender typical' occupations such as secretarial positions. In a EOC study of teaching materials from the 1990s (2001), several instances were found where women were 'invisible' in contrast with a preponderance of men while occupational stereotyping of type and range of jobs was largely reinforced. In an analysis of textbooks used in Hong Kong from the 1980s to the 2000s by Lee and Collins (2008), depictions of female-monopolised roles - such as receptionists being solely represented by women - and the absence of men engaged in domestic chores were commonly observed.

Encouragingly, in recent years, analyses of Hong Kong English and Chinese school textbooks have showed a marked decrease in gender stereotypical representation (Law and Chan 2004, Lee and Collins 2008, Yang 2011, Yang 2012), making way for more realistic portrayals of women. These results are particularly reassuring given the association for children between exposure to stereotyping media and their endorsement of real-life gender stereotypes (Eisenstock 1984, Gunter 1992). For the coming decade, further investigation is needed in order to ascertain whether there has been a corresponding decrease in depictions of stereotypical gender roles in the wider media, given that the most recent study in our survey (Chan and Cheng 2012) found very few women were depicted in professional roles by print media.

### **Women in erotica**

In 2010, Chu (2012) analysed photobooks (N=2,205 photographs) featuring teenage models published in Hong Kong and interviewed six publishers with the aim of understanding the local erotica industry. Most models were featured in casual clothing (46.4%), but many wore underwear and swimwear (34.8%). Over a third of the photographs were characterised as "sexy" (38.5%) and having "sexual connotations" (42.8%). The sexual theme and the objectification of the girls were seen as a deliberate tool to draw in audiences, boost sales and sell products. Several factors were manipulated by the publishers to obtain a certain 'look', which was often a combination of an innocent facial expression and an intentionally sexy pose. Many photographs also intentionally conveyed a certain intimacy between the model and the reader.

### **Women in power**

Only one study analysed how women in power were portrayed. Lee (2004) examined the coverage in Hong Kong newspapers on local female officials and the emphasis on whether and how they were

'perfect women'. Successful female leaders were assessed on whether they combined 'masculine' traits of rationality, decisiveness and strength, with 'female' characteristics such as being caring, tender and considerate. According to Lee (2004), in order to be considered a 'successful' and 'well-rounded' leader, female officials had to promote this duality, and be recognised as being good mothers, wives and daughters while being effective in their work.

The former chief secretary of Hong Kong, Anson Chan, was cited as an example. The media showed admiration for her ability to 'balance' work and family life: she was praised for being *"loyal to her duty while [...] insisting on not employing domestic helpers, doing everything herself, never relying on other people to do the household chores."*

Analyses of interviews with women leaders in Hong Kong (Cheung and Halpern 2010) uncovered an emphasis on the importance of having support at home: husbands who were self-assured and confident, and who endorsed egalitarian values towards women, as well as extended family members and domestic helpers.

### **Consumer perceptions**

In a series of four studies, pre-adolescents and teenagers were asked to collect media images that depicted what girls/women should do or be (Chan 2011a, 2011b; Chan et al. 2011, 2012); these findings were then supplemented with content analyses and interviews with participants. The studies underscored how women - regardless of age group - are intrigued by the cult of beauty, specifically having a slim body, flawless skin and perfect face (Chan et al. 2011, 2012), and are consistent with the findings from Thompson et al. (1999).

However, even pre-teens also showed an awareness of the commercial rationale of the images to boost consumption and sales (Chan 2011b). The teens also showed an appreciation for the struggle of women in society (Chan et al. 2011). Interestingly, most adolescents scorned and vehemently rejected the portrayal of women in the media as unnatural, unrealistic and exaggerated (Chan 2011b, Chan et al. 2011, 2012), and were critical of excessive make-up and plastic surgery. They were also critical of images that were overtly sexual (Chan 2011a, 2011b; Chan et al. 2011). The studies showed that girls in Hong Kong possess a combination of traditional and contemporary female role stereotypes: they believe women should be physically presentable, be kind and well-mannered while also pursuing their dreams to be independent, ambitious and financially independent (Chan 2011a, 2011b; Chan and Ng 2012).

More specifically, Chan (2011a) concluded that the pre-adolescent participants assimilated gender roles partially from celebrities whom they regarded as brave, courteous, self-confident, expressive of their feelings, well-educated and ambitious. They were particularly critical of female role models who appeared promiscuous, superstitious, or who consumed alcohol and drugs. Finally, participants in the Chan et al. (2012) study mostly chose pictures of Caucasian models, reinforcing findings by Frith et al. (2004) and Chan and Cheng (2012), that Caucasian models emulate modernity and 'trendiness'.

In general, the public is dissatisfied with how television currently depicts gender and sex (Fung and Ma, 2000). Most people use TV for information purposes, followed by entertainment. Interestingly, people who use TV primarily for entertainment purposes tend to have more pronounced stereotypes about women, while viewers who use TV for information purposes exhibit more awareness of stereotyped

depictions. This important finding for Hong Kong mirrors the seminal work by Gunter (1992), who found that children's gender-role socialisation was reinforced by watching specific types of television programmes.

Similarly, Chan and Ng (2012) uncovered conservative values with regard to gender roles and ideal female images from a survey of 355 female secondary school students. One distinct cluster of adolescent girls identified through their study was the 'conservatives', who aspired to be traditional women, who considered that marriage would "give them a home", and regarded housekeeping and childrearing to be their main responsibilities. They valued family over a career, and were more likely to choose homemakers and cute images as depicting their ideal woman. They also placed a higher value on flawless skin and a slim body.

Finally, 'Kong Girls' (港女) and 'Lang Mo' (靚模) are two archetypes of girls in Hong Kong that have received significant media attention. While 'Kong Girls' is a seemingly general term for girls brought up in Hong Kong, it has nonetheless taken on pejorative connotations, denoting 'troublesome and nasty Hong Kong women'. 'Lang Mo' literally translates to inexperienced young models. They are teenagers who have been depicted as "bad girls with large breasts and empty brains". To gauge public perceptions of these particular girls/women, Chu (2014) distributed a questionnaire to 922 students (51% female; mean age=14.9 years old). Gender differences among respondents were significant and interesting: males were more likely to cast 'Lang Mo' in a positive light, while 'Kong Girls' were judged as vain, ill-tempered and dependent on men. Females disagreed with this depiction of 'Kong Girls' and commented that they had an outgoing personality and were independent. Interestingly, they were relatively more likely to dismiss 'Lang Mo' as professional models, and showed disapproval for their sexy and revealing clothing. Similar attitudes towards revealing clothing were also shared by the pre-teen girls in the study by Chan (2011b).

## **5. Discussions and Policy Implications**

This scoping study allowed for the mapping and analysis of existing research conducted in Hong Kong with regard to gender stereotypes in the media, as well as the exploration of the impact of media stereotypes on perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. This next section will examine the limitations of the study and identify emerging research gaps. We will then discuss implications for the formulation of policies and related measures.

### **5.1 Limitations of the study**

Although a concerted attempt was made to be as comprehensive as possible with regard to the literature search, with such a large and varied subject matter, it is possible that some studies were inadvertently omitted in this report.

### **5.2 The research gaps**

The studies included in this report highlight how under-researched this area is in Hong Kong, namely the effect of the media on gender stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours in Hong Kong. According to Fung and Yao (2012), when compared to research in other regions of the world such as the United States,

there are few empirical studies with a representative scale that systematically examine gender stereotypes in Hong Kong.

### **Methodological gaps**

Most studies included in this review were descriptive and qualitative in nature and could therefore only identify correlational relationships. Similarly, most research studies focused on qualitative methods such as content analyses of textbooks and advertisements, at the expense of obtaining views directly from consumers.

While it is understandable that surveys need to be designed so as to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in order to obtain valid and reliable rates of accessing SEMs (e.g. online survey conducted by Lam and Chan, 2007), a large number of the studies also based their conclusions on convenience samples, preventing any form of generalisation to the wider population of Hong Kong. It would be preferable if more random sampling methods, such as stratified random sampling, were to be employed in the future. Future samples should also be better defined and described: very few studies provide a full demographic account of their samples, rendering it more difficult to understand the results in context.

### **Substantive gaps**

As discussed, Hong Kong society is diverse and multi-faceted, combining both Eastern and Western cultural influences and collectivist and individual tendencies. It is difficult to disaggregate the effects of culture in any discussion of how gender stereotypes are created or exacerbated by the media. Future studies should seek to include controls for the contributory factor of culture, and there is a need for empirical investigation of the potential associations between gender stereotypes, media and culture in Hong Kong.

The international literature draws a distinction between 'ordinary' SEM and violent SEM. Malamuth and Ceniti (1986), in their seminal work, established links between exposure to violent pornography and aggression towards female women and a greater likelihood to rape. Equivalent experimental studies have not been conducted for Hong Kong, and there are no studies that describe or differentiate between different types of SEMs. Given the richness of the different types of pornography searched for in Hong Kong (Google 2015), it is important for future studies to take this into account, and to distinguish the type of SEM accessed, as well as to test for differences between the different types.

International studies have uncovered long-lasting effects on young children and adolescents who are avid consumers of video games (Colwell and Payne 2000). Dill and Dill (1998) in their review of the empirical literature have suggested that exposure to violent video games may be the strongest precursor of later aggression because the player identifies with the character perpetrating the violence and actively engages in role play. Local research studies are required to examine the impact of video games on youth in Hong Kong.

Finally, there is only one study, which was conducted more than 10 years ago, which investigates the links between the media and body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. New in-depth studies are required to investigate the relationship between media consumption and body image issues.

## 5.3 Recommendations

### 5.3.1 Media Literacy Programmes

**Key Issue:** Generally, there are very few media literacy programmes available for children and young adults. Meanwhile, sex education in Hong Kong is largely outmoded and piecemeal.

**Recommendation:** Introduce media literacy programmes to train children and young adults to filter the media messages they are absorbing and to embrace a set of healthy and positive core values. This should include sex education and advice on forging balanced relationships based on mutual respect.

### 5.3.2 Media Self-regulation

**Key Issue:** There is a lack of consensus between stakeholders - i.e., the Government, regulators, parents, educators, and media platforms on what constitutes appropriate content. More engagement is also needed with media platforms to create promote self-regulation with respect to inappropriate content.

**Recommendation:** Review guidelines governing what is appropriate content for all forms of media including TV programmes and advertisements. Create awareness and promote responsibility among media platforms about the impact of stereotyping on societal norms and behaviours

### 5.3.3 Review Underage Access to Sexually Explicit Material

**Key Issue:** It is unclear what restrictions currently apply to prevent underage viewers from accessing pornographic materials particularly online, and who is responsible for enforcement.

**Recommendation:** Review existing practices of monitoring access to pornographic materials and implement measures to control the ease of access by underage viewers

### 5.3.4 More Research

**Key Issue:** Most studies included in this review were descriptive and correlational in nature, not allowing any determination of causality. Many studies omitted to provide full demographic account of their samples, making it difficult to understand the results in context. For example, it would be valuable to understand variables such as socio-economic status and education level.

**Recommendation:** More in-depth local research (particularly longitudinal/ quantitative) is needed to determine the scope, impact and related effects of media on various aspects of society including:

- The correlation between exposure to media and the strongly entrenched gender stereotypes held by men and boys
- The correlation between video games and violence and aggressive attitudes towards women

- The correlation between exposure to advertising for beauty – e.g., whitening and slimming products and lower self-worth and body image issues on the part of women and girls Potential associations between culture, media and career aspirations of women in Hong Kong
- Targeted studies on the impact of different types of pornography (e.g. non-violent vs violent)
- The correlation between exposure to media and lower career aspirations of women and girls

### 5.3.5 Equal Gender Representation in Media

Key Issue: Women in television and films are often in stereotyped jobs (e.g. secretaries, nurses, teachers) or in stereotypical roles (e.g. housewives, child carers) that reinforce gender biases about women not having the same leadership aptitude as men.

Recommendation: Encourage a more equal representation of roles for women and men in television/ films / advertisements

## 6. Conclusion

Recent studies by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women’s Commission underscore the extent to which gender stereotypes and biases continue to exist in Hong Kong. Meanwhile eating disorders on the part of young women in particular are on the rise, as is violence and harassment against women and girls. Working women are also under pressure to conform to traditionally caregiver and home-maker roles while pursuing their professional ambitions.

As this scoping study shows, Hong Kong lags behind in understanding how and where negative gender stereotypes are formed and the potential correlation between media exposure and societal issues like eating disorders affecting women and girls, an increase in harassment cases against women, and the under-representation of women in policy and decision-making roles. We hope this research will encourage the Government, regulators, businesses and the media to promote greater responsibility and sensitivity when it comes to the portrayal of women and girls in the media. At the same time, we need to introduce media literacy training particularly for children and young adults so they are able to filter what they see and embrace a set of healthy and positive core values and aspirations. Only in this way can we achieve a more gender balanced society for the benefit of women and men, girls and boys, in Hong Kong.

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## Appendix A: Studies exploring the use of sexually explicit materials in Hong Kong

Authors	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Use of sexually explicit materials	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Janghorbani & Lam (2003)	Correlational	N=964; 54% male; mean age 21.8 years.	Prevalence of reading, watching or listening to any type of sexual media	Socio-demographic characteristics, life satisfaction and sexual media use.	83% had accessed sexual media in last 6 months (more men than women). Correlates of using sexual media: being male, older, with no religion or traditional Chinese religion, being married, out of school, smoker, living away from both parents, to have had sexual intercourse, to have lower life satisfaction, to have had single or multiple sexual partners, used prostitutes in the past 6 months, visited brothels, perception of adequate sex education, to have masturbated, to have family problems, cohabited before marriage, to have peers who have had premarital sex, to have travelled in last 4 months.	Low response rate (39%). Study design does not allow for determination of causality.

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Study design and method</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>	<b>Use of sexually explicit materials</b>	<b>Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Lam & Chan (2007)	Correlational; self-administered questionnaire	N=229 male participants; mean age 21.5 years.	Online pornography viewing	Peer influence, susceptibility to peer pressure, parental monitoring, parental involvement, openness to experience, sexual permissiveness, perception of sexual harassment, sexual harassment proclivity.	93% had accessed SEM: 15% frequently, 47.6% sometimes. Association between online SEOM viewing and sexual permissiveness and sexual harassment proclivity. Offline pornography viewing still important in accounting for differences in sexual permissiveness and sexual harassment proclivity. No association between SEM and openness to experience, as well as parental involvement.	Very low response rate; rectified with online questionnaire. Higher educated men overrepresented. Study design does not allow for determination of causality.
Lo, So and Zhang (2010)	Correlational; self-administered questionnaire	N=1573 (HK sample); 62.4% female and mean age 20.7 years (total sample)	Participants reported on how often they had viewed pornographic pictures, films and stories on the internet.	Individualism/collectivism, attitudes towards extramarital sex, attitudes towards premarital sexual permissiveness, sexually permissive behaviour.	Compared to Shanghai and Taipei, HK respondents have the lowest exposure to internet pornography, and are the least accepting of premarital and extramarital sex.	Study design does not allow for determination of causality. College student sample.
Shek and Ma (2012)	Part of longitudinal study	N=3328; 48% girls, mean age 12.6	Access to the consumption of internet and traditional photography.	Chinese Positive Youth Development Scale, Chinese Family Assessment Instrument, perceived academic and school performance.	Over 90% reported never having viewed pornography, but significantly high exposure to online pornography compared to traditional. Correlates of higher consumption: being older, being male, born in mainland China, negative youth development and family functioning,	Study design does not allow for determination of causality. Self-reported, so social desirability cannot be eliminated.

Authors	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Use of sexually explicit materials	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
To (in press)	Correlational; experimenter-administered questionnaire	N=1016; 51% female, grade 10 and 11 students	Frequency of accessing SEM, patterns of exposure to SEOM (age of first access, sources and channels of exposure, venue of access).	Intrapersonal reactions to SEOM, beliefs about gender role equality and body-centred sexuality, agreement with restrictions on erotica and its perceived harmfulness, sexual beliefs in sexual coercion, permissiveness of premarital sex.	40% of respondents had viewed SEM in past year (62% male). 93% reported having their first exposure before 14 years of age. 30.4% accessed it nearly every day (55% 1-2 times in the last 6 months). Gender-biased messages and sexist portrayals of women maybe internalized in participants beliefs. Compared to non-viewers, male SEM viewers had a higher level of acceptance of gender inequality, while female viewers had higher levels of acceptance of sexual coercion in sexual relationship and permissiveness of premarital sex. Male SEM viewers had a lower level of agreement with restrictions on SEM and a weaker recognition of its harmful effects.	Small sample size, low response rate. No causal effect. No real description of SEOM accessed and whether these contained violence or degrading images vis-à-vis women.

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Study design and method</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>	<b>Use of sexually explicit materials</b>	<b>Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
To et al. (2012)	Correlational	N=503 secondary school students; 49.5% females; mean age 15.8	Frequency of accessing SEOM	Reactions to SEOM, sexual attitudes, sexual beliefs, premarital sexual permissiveness scale, sexual knowledge, sexual behaviour, sexual daydreaming scale of the imaginal processes inventory.	44.1% accessed SEM in last year. Frequency and responses to SEM positively linked to agreement with beliefs of stereotyped gender roles and power imbalance in sexual relationships, acceptance of premarital sex, and preoccupation with sexual desires and fantasies; also reactions to SEM mediate and amplify the effects of the frequency of accessing SEM in the aspects of sexual beliefs in sexual coercion, sexual compulsivity and daydreaming.	Study design does not allow for determination of causality.
To et al. (2013)	Correlational	N=503; 47.5% male; mean age 15.7	Frequency of accessing SEOM.	Intrapersonal reactions to SEOM, communication with parents about sexuality, feeling of peer pressure regarding viewing of SEOM, Chinese cultural beliefs on sexuality, gender role equality, body-centred sexuality.	36.6% reported having accessed SEOM in past year, mostly male (65.2%). Frequency of accessing SEM and adolescents' communication with parents about sexuality had a negative interaction effect on gender role equality and positive interaction on body-centred sexuality. Positive interaction between access to SEM frequency and adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure on body-centred sexuality.	Study design does not allow for determination of causality. Sampling method probabilistic.



## Appendix B: Studies about how women and men were portrayed in consumer media in Hong Kong

Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Chan (2011a)	Descriptive: content analysis of pictures and interviews	16 preteen girls, 2 Caucasian and remaining Chinese.	Pictures from the media	Gender roles. Images about what girls or women should or should not be, or what girl/women should do or not	Admiration for achievements of celebrities, gentleness, caring acts; inspired by both masculine and feminine traits of celebrities. Disapproval of female celebrities having pre-marital sex.	Small convenient sample. No comparisons. No information on demographics.
Chan (2011b)	Descriptive: content analysis of imagery and interviews	16 preteen girls, 2 Caucasian and remaining Chinese.	Pictures from the media	Tween (about 9-14 years old) girls' understanding of the process by which female images are created in the media, as well as intentions. Satisfaction with current portrayals of girls in the media. Kind of media images tween girls would construct if they could.	Some girls understood the process of creating trendy images to encourage idol worship and increase consumption and profits. Some participants were aware that images in the media are embellished than reality but some perceived them as close to reality. Dissatisfied with images that are exaggerated, sexy or rude. If they were in charge, they would endorse more pictures of sporty, natural, healthy and brave women. Would like more diversity in female images.	Small convenient sample. No comparisons. No information on demographics.
Chan et al. (2011)	Descriptive: content analysis of pictures and interviews	16 female 'tweens'	Pictures from the media that they consume	Gender roles. Images about what girls or women should or should not be, or what girl/women should do or not	Gender roles/identities based on a mixture of traditional and contemporary role models. Being egalitarian, independent, and ambitious but maintaining a presentable appearance, good manners and being kind to others. Demonstrated an awareness of the struggles of women in society. Heavy makeup etc. considered rude and inappropriate, collectivist identity. Aspired to natural beauty and rejected practices that claimed to reduce weight drastically. Deemed sexually suggestive photos indecent, yet still took photos and seemed intrigued. Showed interest in global as well as domestic agendas.	Small convenient sample. No comparisons. No information on demographics.

Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Chan & Cheng (2012)	Descriptive: content analysis	215 advertisements	Magazine advertisements	Beauty types, occupational roles of female figures, comparisons with Caucasian figures, comparisons with gender portrayals with male products	Classic/feminine beauty type dominated the sample of advertisements. Caucasian models were more likely to be featured as trendy beauty types compared to Chinese. Dominant occupational roles of females were decorative and as 'celebrities' in 90% of cases. Seldom shown in professional/recreational/housewives roles. Over-representation of Caucasian female models. Skin care, facial beauty, slimming products/services dominated. Caucasians most likely modelled clothing and accessories; Chinese slimming services. Females portrayed as 'sex kittens'.	Only one magazine sampled. Second author coded one-fifth of sample.
Chan & Ng (2012)	Descriptive; self-administered questionnaire	355 female secondary school students; mean age 15.8	Female images depicting 8 global brands	Gender roles and identities: physical appearance, family and marriage, work, study, community service and the environment	Majority of the sample were either 'conservatives' or 'middle of the roaders'. They endorsed active agency, being professional, caring, independent, achieving financial independence and educational qualifications. Both clusters were caring about others and the environment, and felt that women should accept their bodies and be natural. Conservatives however were more likely to endorse traditional housekeeping and childcare roles; also slim body and flawless skin was more important to them. The two clusters did not differ on brand preferences, however sporty images appealed less to conservatives. Gender role identification linked to brand endorsement.	Choice of brands should have been more contemporary perhaps. Little information on how participants were recruited. No age differences tested. No information on schools and their ethos (religious/etc.)

Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Chan et al. (2012)	Descriptive: content analysis of pictures and questionnaire	20 adolescent girls	Newspapers, magazines, outdoor posters, television programmes, mass transit railway posters, websites, books etc.	Images about what girls or women should or should not be, or what girl/women should do or not.	15% of images were from advertisements: 22% from cosmetics/skin care/personal care; 14% slimming; 37% clothing; 21% retail shops, demonstrating that these are important to them. Mostly Caucasian models. Schoolgirls mostly drawn to commercials advertising a slim body, flawless skin and a perfect face. However, they reject them as unnatural, unrealistic and even ridiculous. Also scorned images of females with heavy makeup, or who have undergone cosmetic surgery. Although girls seemed to reject the skinny ideal, the high proportion of ads capturing this ideal perhaps shows that these are influential. Very few participants took pictures of women in professional roles.	Small sample, and also only pooled from 2 secondary schools. Interviews conducted in English.
Chiu et al. (1998)	Experimental	74 men and 43 women college students in Experiment 1A, 122 men and 120 women college students in Experiment 1B, 113 male and 114 female school students (mean age=15.4 years) in Experiment 2	Gender-related pictures (from advertisements in popular fashion magazines) or gender-neutral pictures (advertisement for food festival or for environmental protection)	Gender stereotype activation of perceptions of male/female target who either displayed dependent or aggressive behaviour	Gender stereotype activation from pictures increased the cognitive accessibility of gender stereotypical traits as well as the likelihood of applying such traits to categorise gender-stereotypical behaviour. This however only applied to one's gender category: activation of gender stereotype affected only the judged dependency of a female target and the judged aggressiveness of a male target. In experiment 2, male participants presented a more masculine (or less feminine) self-image than did female participants. In the stereotype activation condition, males presented themselves as more masculine, and vice-versa.	No detailed description of stereotype activation.

Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Chu (2012)	Descriptive: content analysis, textual analysis, interviews with producers	17 photobooks; 2,205 photographs	Photobooks of teenage models	Kind of clothing, shooting location, whether models were pictured with 'wet' look, whether models looked into camera, focus of the picture, overall look, and sexual connotations.	Dominant sexual theme in photo books, and was used as a tool to draw in audiences, boost sales and sell other products. Production of erotica characterized by these features: emphasizes the creation of a look of innocence, sexual element conveyed through a focus on the body parts of the models, yet often presented unintentionally. Intimacy also highlighted between model and reader.	No perspectives taken from models or consumers.
Chu (2014)	Descriptive: questionnaire distributed in class with research assistant or teacher present	922 secondary school students; 51% female; average age 14.9 years	Perceptions of gender stereotypes in the media	Perceptions of Kong Girls and Lang Mo; gender differences in perceptions.	Most expressed neutral attitude towards Kong Girls; 50% found the term Lang Mo positive. Gender differences: for Kong Girls, more girls took a neutral stance; male respondents more likely to cast Lang Mo girls in a positive light. General perceptions of Kong Girls: full of vanity, bad-tempered, reserved. Also: men more likely to say Kong Girls are full of vanity, not independent, dependent on men and agree that it is common to find these characteristics among Hong Kong women. Girls on the other hand, were more likely to disagree that Kong girls were bad-tempered, and had an outgoing personality. Lang Mo women general perceptions: young, have gorgeous bodies, are not professional models, wear sexy and revealing clothing, have sweet and beautiful faces. Gender differences: boys tend to agree that the outfits Lang Mo wear are fashionable and not problematic. Also view their modelling as a job where they work hard and earn money in a legitimate manner. Less likely to dismiss them as unprofessional models. Mass media are forming new stereotypes of HK women, which are predominantly negative, and impose rules and expectations on personality and appearance. Also shows that media has influenced how youth perceive these women.	No comparisons with age or other demographic variables. Observer effect.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Study design and method</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>	<b>Type of media</b>	<b>Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Chu & McIntyre(1995)	Descriptive: content analysis	31 cartoon programmes aired in Hong Kong but produced abroad.	Cartoon programmes	Male and female representations, gender roles, character traits, Western versus Eastern gender stereotypes.	Male outnumbered females 2.4:1. No significant gender differences between occupational roles. Males significantly more likely to be depicted as aggressive, rough, sloppy, and strong, while women were emotional. Male characters tend to get the most important job in the shows, but are not necessarily the final decision makers. Japanese programmes contained more male characters compared to Western cartoons, and women wore dresses more often in them. Females and males as equally likely to be protagonists in cartoons.	No causal relationship, type 1 error
Fung (2002)	Descriptive: content analysis and interviews	Amoeba magazine's letters to the editor and responses from November 1997 to October 1998; 5 in-depth interviews	Magazine's letters to the editor and responses	Female identity construction and relation to consumption	Women's identity reinforced through magazine consumption. Models featured in magazines were natural and realistic, and permitted readers to identify through them, by imagining communal relationships with them. Commodities advertised were seen by readers to have the power to 'transcend' them from the ordinary to the 'glamorous'. Material consumption of goods, in particular beauty products prefaces female readers' desire to gain recognition among their peer group.	Weak study design

Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Fung & Ma (2000)	Descriptive: structured interviews	2,020 respondents aged 16 or above	Television viewing	Gender and sex roles in relation to media, socioeconomic variables, frequency of media exposure.	Hong Kong people held stereotypical beliefs regarding gender traits (for example assertive, independent, gentle, shy etc.). Quite weak in their awareness of stereotypes, yet males more aware. With regard to stereotypes in the media, male stereotypes believed to be serious with nearly 73% agreeing (or strongly agreeing) that "mass media always describe men as belonging to the workplace than to family" and 71% agreeing that "mass media always portray men as protecting women", and 62% agreeing that "mass media always describe men as capable of making their own decisions". More women than men disagreed that "mass media always describe family as the place for women". Most people used TV for information purposes, followed by entertainment. People who used TV more for entertainment tended to create a stronger female stereotypes. People who were more exposed to informational type, exhibited more awareness of male stereotype depictions. Public not satisfied with current television quality regarding gender and sex.	Low response rate; very large number of interviewers (N=469); construction of questions. No detailed information on demographic characteristics
Furnham & Chan (2003)	Descriptive: content analysis	English and Chinese TV commercials shown in Hong Kong	Commercials	Portrayal of men and women; country comparisons	The Chinese channel had significantly more gender stereotypical adverts compared to the English channel.	No real description of how commercials were selected
Furnham & Li (2008)	Descriptive: content analysis	45 commercials produced in Hong Kong and 45 produced in a Western country show on TVB Jade channel.	Commercials	Time of day, age, mode of presentation, credibility-basis, role, location, argument, reward type, background, end-comment.	No statistically significant differences between how gender is portrayed in specific food and beverage commercials. No significant effect of gender on central figures in the advertisement itself, and no effect on role.	Only one coder? Small sample.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Study design and method</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>	<b>Type of media</b>	<b>Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Furnham et al. (2000)	Descriptive: content analysis	175 commercials produced in Hong Kong and 45 produced in a Western country show on TVB Jade channel.	Commercials	Time of day, age, mode of presentation, credibility-basis, role, location, argument, reward type, background, end-comment.	Men more likely to be depicted in central roles. Men usually used as voice overs more than women, and women more likely to be visually portrayed. Women more likely to be depicted as product users, while men were the authorities on products. Women more likely to be depicted in dependent roles as well as in the home. Even if female is the main character, end comment more likely to be given by male.	No real description of how commercials were selected
Law & Chan (2004)	Descriptive: content analysis	5,180 pictures in 108 Chinese language textbooks used in primary schools in Hong Kong	Textbooks	Proportion of male and female characters represented, settings, portrayals in domestic/non-domestic roles, occupational roles.	Gender stereotyping is still present but has decreased to some extent over time.	Pictures analysed over syntax.
Lee (2004)	Descriptive: content analysis	Newspaper articles in Ming Pao and Apple Daily from 1998 to 2001	Newspaper articles	Portrayal of female officials as perfect women.	Female leaders seemed to possess both masculine and feminine personality traits. Emphasis on keeping work-family balance.	Top-down analysis; one-tailed.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Study design and method</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>	<b>Type of media</b>	<b>Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Lee & Collins (2008)	Descriptive: content analysis	20 English language textbooks used in Hong Kong secondary schools in the 1980s-2000s	Textbooks	Gender characters, gender social and domestic roles, visual representations of men and women, generic pronouns, titles, order of mention	Comparisons with earlier textbooks show a significant reduction in numerical dominance of male characters, both in terms of character types and frequency (ratio for female to male characters was 1:1.48 and now is 1:1.14). However closer inspection demonstrated that men were allocated more active roles such as committing and fighting crimes, while women played more experiential roles, concerned about their friendship and appearance. Female-monopolised roles still existed (e.g. receptionist); also stereotypical notion still present about women serving as homemakers, engaging in domestic chores etc. Male pictorial representations were still higher than those of women. Difference of women depicted at work between the two time periods was not significant; men were still depicted at work more frequently.	Sample selection
Moon & Chan (2006)	Descriptive: content analysis	512 commercials aired in Hong Kong (613 in Korea)	Commercials	Gender of central character; age of central character; type of role of central character; productivity (working/non-working); type of occupation; credibility of the central character	Males more likely to be older, and depicted as working. Both male and female characters equally depicted as managers/administrators and professionals, but compared to men, women were more likely to assume a secretarial role. Compared to Korea, TV commercials in Hong Kong depict women as being younger and more in high-level occupations, as well as working.	Method



Paper	Study design and method	Sample characteristics	Type of media	Outcome measures (behavioural/attitudinal)	Findings	Limitations
Prendergast et al. (2002)	Descriptive: questionnaire	232 female undergraduates from business	Frequency of reading magazines and watching TV programmes, content of media (health and fitness, beauty and fashion, entertainment and gossip, news and current events).	Eating Attitudes Test: measures cognitions, emotions and behaviours associated with bulimia and anorexia. Body dissatisfaction.	Most frequently viewed programmes were news and drama. Gossip magazines most popular. Respondents showed some interest in dieting and fitness. Fitness magazines reading significantly related to eating disorder symptomatology (although this is probably confounded by the fact that people who are interested in dieting would more likely have an interest in). Overall, advertising and editorial content exposure (TV music programmes and fitness magazines) are contributing factors to eating disorders among young Chinese women, as well as to body image dissatisfaction.	Confounding effects. No causality tested. No other demographic variables taken into account, such as age, BMI etc.
Yang (2011)	Descriptive: content analysis	English textbooks series	English textbooks used in Hong Kong primary schools	Male and female characters in illustrations, male and female mentions, male and female occupational and domestic roles, male and female activities, male and female descriptions, order of mention of males and females, utterances by male and female speakers, functions of the mixed-gender dialogues	Male and females almost equally represented. Teaching represented as a primarily female activity: no male representation of male teachers. Males and females were portrayed in a similar range of activities: making food for example. In terms of lexical and physical representations, male and female characters were portrayed with stereotyped images: men portrayed in suits for example. No extensive gender bias and female invisibility, apparent in the early 1970s, did not exist.	No real sample description
Yang (2012)	Descriptive: content analysis	12 English textbooks of which 72 reading passages were analysed	English textbooks used in Hong Kong primary schools	Collocates used for males and females	Very little evidence of gender stereotyping. Female not depicted as a delicate or weak. Women no longer portrayed only as housewives, but working in a society as doctors or school principals. Men share the housework. Of course women still wore dresses etc.	Only one passage analysed.

