Gender representation in Cambodian television advertisements

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Abstract

This study analyzes 157 unduplicated Cambodian television advertisements for differences in gender representation. The findings indicate gender differences for several variables, including the degree of dress (more men than women were fully dressed and more women than men were suggestively dressed), the setting (more women than men were at home and more men than women were in the workplace), voiceovers (male voiceovers clearly outnumbered female ones), and product categories (women were featured in advertisements for body care/toiletries/cosmetics/beauty products, and men were in advertisements for alcoholic drinks and automotive/vehicles/transportation/accessories products). Most of these gender differences were expected in the patriarchal society of Cambodia, where there are traditionally strict codes of conduct for men and women. However, some results (equal numerical representation, age) ran counter to most previous research. The potential effects of such representations on audiences are discussed based on social cognitive theory and cultivation theory.

Keywords: television advertising, gender representation, content analysis, Cambodia, stereotypes

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Introduction

The representation of genders in advertising has been an issue in academia for many years (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010) due to its potential to influence culture and restrict women's opportunities (Bandura, 2009; Gerbner, 1998). The majority of studies have examined Western and more developed countries, and relatively few studies have focused on developing countries (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Thus, this study on Cambodia helps close this gap in the literature and provides readers an analysis of the present situation of gender representation in a developing Asian country. Cambodia is an especially interesting case for studying gender because Cambodian culture still keeps traditional gender roles in high regard.

In the following introduction, we first outline the gender situation in Cambodia and Cambodian media, and then conclude with an overview of the different theories that are relevant for this research. Subsequently, we outline the methods employed in this study and present the results that were determined. At the end of the paper, we discuss the results and contextualize these results by situating them firmly within the cultural context of Cambodia and comparing them to previous related research before addressing both the limitations of the current research and suggestions for future research.

Gender in Cambodia

Gender relations in Cambodia are defined by culture, norms, and values that have been set for hundreds of years. Such practices clearly penetrate the gender roles in society wherein both men and women enjoy separate rights with strong gender gaps still existing between them (Evans, 2019). Traditional Cambodian gender roles are based on Hinduism and Buddhism. Codes set for men and women are an example of how Cambodian culture imposes the gender division of labor, the status of women in private and public spaces, and the clearly distinctive behaviors of women and men (Dom, 2017). Unequal gender relations in Cambodia are also often blamed on these traditional codes of conduct for each gender, which are called *chbab srey* (codes for women) and *chbab pros* (codes for men). These codes prescribe the appropriate behaviors for both genders. The appropriate behaviors for women include being submissive, subordinate, shy, cooking and cleaning the house, taking care of children, serving other family members, and never challenging their husbands (no matter how they may act). In short, women are perceived as being inferior to men and having lower status in the community and Cambodian society. In addition, particularly women over 40 must not wear colorful and revealing dresses or use much makeup. Not following these cultural rules can lead to social exclusion. However, in the patriarchal Cambodian society, the codes are enforced more for women

than men, who often do not follow the codes, which explicitly mention addiction to gambling, women, and alcohol, as examples (Sokhan, 2015). However, men often lack self-control and especially for "successful" men it is expected that they express their masculinity by being surrounded by large numbers of women. Men have to be tough, strong, and powerful as it is a sign of patriarchal domination and the ability to discipline their families, if necessary, even with violence (Lilja, 2013). The social norms further encourage such behavior, since women are taught to accept whatever behavior men display and obey them and never dispute them or their behaviors (Jacobson, 2012; Lilja, 2013). Thus, nearly half of Cambodian women believe that violence against women is sometimes acceptable and even necessary, for example, when they do not obey their husbands, question their husbands' money spending or their girlfriends, or try to stop them from visiting sex workers (Lilja, 2013).

During the last few decades, however, changes have occurred in gender relations both in the private and public spaces after a series of reforms in both policy and education (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2014). Codes for women and codes for men were at the center of considerable harsh criticism and were finally pulled from the school curriculum in 2017 (Grace & Eng, 2015). Gender pay gaps are also closing, and the participation of women in politics, education, and economics are on a promising rise (World Economic Forum, 2021). The UNESCO Gender Parity Index for tertiary education also rose from .46 to .62 between 2006 and 2011 (Perez-Felkner et al., 2020). Although changes are now clearly evident, challenges remain since the Cambodian culture and its norms have existed for centuries.

Thus, these codes are still regarded as socially relevant, especially for the division of labor with men being the breadwinners and women staying at home (Hillenbrand et al., 2014). While the impacts of codes can be still seen, they are less influential today (Hillenbrand et al., 2014), particularly in cities where social change is occurring faster than in the countryside and where "modern" women are now influenced by Western ideals but still face a challenging balance between traditional and "modern" values (Brickell, 2011; Hoefinger, 2016; Lilja, 2013). Nevertheless, the outcomes of these traditional values can be still seen, for example, in the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2016), where Cambodia ranks 112 out of 144 countries near the bottom of that ranking. The Global Gender Gap Report examines the gap between men and women across four categories based on 14 indicators for Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In 2021, the top ranked countries were Iceland, Norway, and Finland; the lowest ranking countries were Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan (World

Economic Forum, 2021). This study also addresses the question of whether gender representation in Cambodian television advertisements reflect the gender divide associated with the *chbab srey* and *chbab pros* or whether television advertisements are reflecting recent changes in Cambodian culture.

Gender in Cambodian Media

Cambodian media is a reflection of the traditional gender norms but also of the changes and current challenges. Cambodian media often portray women as symbols of progress and modernity whenever they are moving from the countryside for work to cities, particularly to Phnom Penh, thereby encouraging more women to do so and help national development (Lilja, 2013). Cambodian dramas reflect mostly traditional norms, but they also show some modern elements, which is naturally also true for imported drama that is now playing an increasing role in the country. In contrast, female announcers in TV shows and other events are often scantily dressed. Similarly, in television advertisements, women are increasingly scantily dressed following a trend found in imported ads, particularly those from Thailand. For example, the ad for the Cambodian beer brand, Ankor Beer, depicts a light-skinned woman with revealing clothing implying that it is fun and modern to drink, even for women, a view that clearly goes against traditional Cambodian values (Hoefinger, 2016).

However, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts will warn too scantily dressed women by emphasizing that such an appearance might affect the behavior of society and inspire others to dress in a like fashion/style of dress. In fact, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts has enacted an Artists Ethical Code of Conduct in 2017, which encourages women to dress modestly and in accordance with national culture and identity, including not showing legs to attract men, which is deemed to be shameful (Muong et al., 2016; Vuthy et al., 2017). The ministry also called in "misbehaving" women to educate them about what appropriate clothes to wear. Several Internet celebrities and actresses were called in, and some were suspended from working in the entertainment industry for a period of time (David & Maza, 2016; Muong et al., 2016; VOA, 2020; Vuthy et al., 2017).

Advertising, Culture, and Its Possible Effects

Representations in advertising are constructed (Goffman, 1976) and a segment of a bigger social process that strengthen and construct some meanings of powerful groups over others. For example, gender in advertisements is represented and constructed based on hierarchical gender stereotypes. Thus, such representations are socially and historically situated and not universal, timeless, or natural. Janis S. Bohan (1993) emphasized

that gender is fluid and depends on what we agree on in a social context. Scholars indicated that advertising reflects culture (Frith & Mueller, 2010), which is in line with social constructionism claiming that gender is constructed based on social and cultural contexts.

Media effects cannot be analyzed by using content analysis, but it is still a first step to understand possible media effects (Riffe et al., 2005). Researchers suggest that good content analysis should not only be purely descriptive, but hypothesize how the content might affect people's attitudes and behaviors (McQuail, 2010). Thus, to understand the possible impacts of media content, this study uses the two media effect theories that are most often applied as a theoretical framework for content analysis: cultivation and social cognitive theory.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2009) states that behavior is learned via two forms of observation: direct as well as vicarious, such as observing behaviors in television content. Based on these observations, people model their behaviors—this is also the case for gender roles and behaviors, which people learn by consuming advertising and other media. Cultivation theory's (Gerbner, 1998) claim is similar and argues that television cultivates perceptions of social reality. These perceptions of social reality are often distorted, especially for so-called heavy viewers (traditionally defined as watching more than four hours a day). Such heavy viewers perceive the real world through their media lens (i.e., in ways similar to the represented world shown on television). For example, they might believe that women should only work in the home because they are rarely seen doing other work on television. Since the media landscape has also changed due to the introduction of new media, some of the premises of cultivation theory and specific definitions like the amount of time watched might be questioned. Cultivation theory can also still be applied nowadays, particularly in a country like Cambodia where television plays an important role in society. In addition, the majority of media are still using recurring persistent patterns of gender representations, which are partly connected to the fact that a relatively small number of media companies lead the production of most messages and thus produce less diverse content than seemingly is the case (Morgan et al., 2015).

Both theories are supported by empirical research, although it is mostly conducted in Western countries. For example, a meta-analysis found that heavy viewing is related to gender role stereotyping (Oppliger, 2007). Another study found that watching stereotypical representations of occupations leads to interest in jobs that are gender stereotyped, while counter-stereotypical representations can lead to the opposite effect (Smith & Granados, 2009).

In conclusion, the goal of this research is to analyze the representation of gender in TV ads in Cambodia and examine whether that gender representation reflects recent changes within the Cambodian culture or whether it reinforces the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Finally, the possible effects of gender representations will be discussed in the context of several theories, including cultivation and social cognitive theory.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Gender representation in television advertisements have been studied for many decades (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), starting in the United States in the 1970s (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974), while published English-language research on Asian countries started in the 1990s, including Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia (Furnham et al., 2000); Malaysia (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Tan et al., 2002; Wee et al., 1995); the Philippines (Prieler & Centeno, 2013); Singapore (Lee, 2004; Siu & Au, 1997; Tan et al., 2002; Wee et al., 1995); and Thailand (Paek et al., 2011). Because of the extremely large number of studies conducted on gender representation in advertising, this literature review focuses on studies on Asia (particularly Southeast Asia) and on variables that have been widely used in analyzing gender representations. Making such references is not to claim that all Southeast Asian countries are the same, although there might be some regional similarities, particularly with neighboring countries like Thailand.

Gender Predominance and Age

Most studies on gender representation in television advertisements investigate which gender is predominant. Cultivation theorists argue that the predominance of a group is a sign of the group's relevance and potential recognition in society (Gerbner et al., 1980; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Subsequently, as argued by social cognitive theory, the audience might learn this information about social groups (such as importance) from media. Gender predominance is analyzed by the ratio of men versus women, which has led to mixed results for television advertisements (Matthes et al., 2016). This is also true in research on East Asia, where studies found contradicting results (Arima, 2003; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Paek et al., 2011; Siu & Au, 1997). However, the majority of studies on Southeast Asia showed a higher number of men than women. This is true in Malaysia (Bresnahan et al., 2001), Indonesia (Furnham et al., 2000), the Philippines (Prieler & Centeno, 2013), and Thailand (Paek et al., 2011). In contrast, studies in Singapore (Lee, 2004; Siu & Au, 1997) found more women represented in advertisements. Based on the prevailing thought of women's inferiority compared to men

in Cambodian patriarchal society and the predominance of men in most Southeast Asian studies, we put forth the following hypothesis:

> *H1: More men than women will appear in Cambodian television advertisements.*

While an analysis of the numerical representation is valuable, such an analysis does not necessarily tell us about the quality and type of representations, which may indicate respect for a particular group within a society (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). For example, by presenting gendered age differences, the audience might learn what the "proper age" for each gender is. Generally, more younger women than men are shown. Only a few studies in Southeast Asia have analyzed this question. A study on Indonesia found that women were mostly shown to be younger than 30 (74.1% versus 36.9% men), while men were mostly middle aged between 30 and 60 (61.5% versus 25.9% women), and nearly no people were shown in the older age segment (Furnham et al., 2000). Another study on Singapore found similar results with 73.2% of women being younger than 35 (men: 49.2%), 21.4% between 35 and 50 (men: 41.7%), and 5.4% older than 50 (men: 9.1%) (Siu & Au, 1997).

These results confirm findings from other parts of the world in which more younger women (under 35) than men were used. In contrast, men were more often shown in the middle (35-49) and oldest age segments (50+) (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). This age imbalance between men and women was criticized as early as the 1970s as the "double standard of aging," in which society is more tolerant of aging in men (Sontag, 1972). Based on these findings, we propose the following hypotheses:

> *H2a: More women than men will appear in the youngest age segment.*
> *H2b: More men than women will appear in the middle-aged age segment.*
> *H2c: More men than women will appear in the oldest age segment.*

Degree of Dress and Setting

The degree of dress of men and women in TV ads has been analyzed in few studies in the United States (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000; Nelson & Paek, 2008; Signorielli et al., 1994), which showed that women were more likely to wear suggestive clothing in advertisements. Only two studies on Southeast Asia investigate this variable. In a multinational study examining Brazil,

Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States, Michelle R. Nelson and Hye-Jin Paek (2008) found that Thai ads had the highest levels of "nudity" for women and the second highest for men (after Germany). In the Philippines, Michael Prieler and Dave Centeno (2013) found men to be primarily fully dressed (88.7% versus 44.6% for women) and women primarily suggestively dressed (52.7% versus 6.6% for men). The degree of dress warrants more analysis because such representations may reinforce unrealistic standards of beauty in a society and possibly lead to self-esteem issues, objectification, and other related harm (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) as evidenced in a Belgian research that found viewing scantily dressed models compared to fully clothed models led to more negative impacts on body esteem (Dens et al., 2009). While *chbab srey* stresses modest dress for women in Cambodia and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts also encourages modest dress, attitudes are changing (Hillenbrand et al., 2014) and more women are dressing in a suggestive way (Muong et al., 2016). Considering that most studies show more women in higher degrees of undress than men and the changes occurring within Cambodian society, we offer the following hypotheses:

> *H3a: More women than men will be suggestively dressed.*
> *H3b: More men than women will be fully dressed.*

Previous literature has shown that settings are often divided by gender. Most studies find more portrayals of women at home and men at work (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Martin Eisend's (2010) meta-analysis found that women were 3.5 times more likely than men to be presented at home (vs. at work). This is also true in Southeast Asia, where more women were shown at home in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham et al., 2000; Prieler & Centeno, 2013; Siu & Au, 1997), and more men were portrayed in the workplace in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore (Furnham et al., 2000; Lee, 2004; Prieler & Centeno, 2013). However, some studies found nearly no gender differences for the workplace setting (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Siu & Au, 1997). Based on social cognitive theory, audiences will learn from this representation, such as in which places a particular gender should be found and what typical actions they are doing in those places. Such representations may influence an audience's gender-typed occupational schemas—subsequently, this schema might lead to gender-stereotypical life choices in the future (Geis et al., 1984). The same can be assumed for the Cambodian context. Considering these findings and the importance of traditional gender roles

of male breadwinners and women at home in Cambodia, we suggest the following hypotheses:

> H4a: More women than men will be shown in a home setting.
> H4b: More men than women will be shown in a workplace
>   setting.

Voiceover and Product Category

The variable voiceover has produced one of the most consistent findings with predominantly male voiceovers, which has been confirmed by nearly all studies to date (for literature reviews, see: Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; for multi-country studies, see: Matthes et al., 2016; Paek et al., 2011). Arthur Jay Silverstein and Rebecca Silverstein (1974) interpreted the voiceover as the "voice of authority and trust" (84) giving recommendations and advice—based on their results, women are seemingly presumed to lack these qualities. Thus, the stereotypical male voiceover may teach the audience which gender has authority in society (Bandura, 2009). Related to this study in Asia, Adrian Furnham and Stephanie Palzer (2010) found that male voiceovers are even more predominant in Asia than in Europe. This result is in accordance with studies on Southeast Asia, which all reported more male voiceovers, sometimes with staggering numbers of more than 80% male voiceovers in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Paek et al., 2011; Siu & Au, 1997). Because no previous study in Southeast Asia showed a majority of female voiceovers, and men are traditionally regarded as superior in Cambodian culture, we propose the following hypothesis:

> H5: There will be more male than female voiceovers.

Which gender uses which product category are important indicators of whether these associations limit gender representations. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2009) suggests we might learn from such associations. For example, the association between women and the product category cosmetics/toiletries highlights the relevance of beauty for women in society, which might lead to their sexualization (Luyt, 2011). Indeed, previous research has shown that the most prominent difference between men and women is within the product category cosmetics/toiletries, which are mostly advertised by women (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). These findings have been also true in several studies of Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia (Furnham et al., 2000), Malaysia (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Tan et al., 2002), the Philippines (Prieler & Centeno, 2013), and Singapore (Lee, 2004; Tan et al., 2002). In addition to the association of women with cosmetics and toiletries, there are few other persistent results for gender differences

within product categories. This may be due to the use of different product categories in different studies. One association that was found in several studies around the world (e.g., Ganahl et al., 2003), including Southeast Asia, is the association between men and cars (Furnham et al., 2000; Tan et al., 2002). Based on these findings, we formulate our final hypotheses as follows:

> H6a: There will be more women than men in advertisements for the body care/toiletries/cosmetics/beauty products category.
>
> H6b: There will be more men than women in advertisements for the automotive/vehicles/transportation/accessories product category.

Method

Sample of Advertisements

The sample in this research comprises one constructed week in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in April 2016. We recorded three Cambodian commercial television stations with the highest market share (CTN, market share: 30%; Hang Meas, market share: 23%; My TV, market share: 16% as of 2015). The stations were recorded during prime time/golden time, which is the period between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. in Cambodia (Cambodia Media & Research for Development, 2015; Sovuthy, 2015). The advertisements broadcast during prime time are the most consumed and thus potentially the ones from which people are most likely to learn. We randomly assigned the three TV channels to one of the seven time slots to produce a representative sample (see also Cheng, 1997). This procedure led to a sample including six hours of CTN, four hours of Hang Meas, and four hours of My TV. In accordance with previous studies (e.g., Kim & Lowry, 2005), the sample excluded repeated ads, political campaign advertisements, entertainment product advertisements (e.g., DVDs, movies, and music concerts), advertisements for festivals, local advertisements, public service announcements, and self-promotional advertisements for television networks. This procedure led to 180 unduplicated television advertisements, of which 157 included primary characters.

Coding Procedure

To begin, we analyzed the advertisement for the appearance of a human primary character and the character's gender (0 = none, 1 = male, 2 = female). Primary character was defined as one who is 18 years or older, has a prominent exposure of at least three seconds, or a speaking role. In case

there were several characters in an advertisement, we adapted a procedure from a previous study to decide the primary character (Nassif & Gunter, 2008). The coders selected the primary character as the character who (1) appeared at the center of the story, (2) appeared in close-ups for the longest, (3) appeared for the longest period of time, (4) provided substantial information about the advertised product or service, (5) used or held the product, and/or (6) had the more extensive speaking part (in this particular order of decision criteria).

The coders were two Cambodian students who were trained for approximately 15 hours, were blind to hypotheses, and received a monetary incentive for their work. We used Klaus Krippendorff's (2013) alpha coefficient for measuring intercoder reliability for the pilot test (which consisted of 50 TV ads not included in the sample) as well as the final sample. The intercoder reliability for the pilot test was above .80 for each reported variable. Coders coded all units and all variables in the final sample, which had Krippendorff alpha values above .90 (the exception was age with a value of .87). As suggested by Hayes (2005), disagreements between the coders were resolved to obtain a final dataset.

Variables

We used variables from our previous work that were developed based on a large-scale literature review (Prieler, 2016; Prieler & Centeno, 2013). These variables include the gender of the primary character, their age and degree of dress, the setting in which they are shown, and the product category for which they are advertising.

Age. A character's age was determined based on the character's physical appearance (hair color, thinning of hair, and wrinkles) and coded in three ways: (1) 18–34, (2) 35–49, and (3) 50 years or older. When unsure, the coders considered whether the character was more typical of the mean age for a particular category. For instance, to decide between the categories of 35–39 years (mean 42) or 18–34 years (mean 26), a coder would ask themselves whether the person seemed closer to 42 years old or closer to 26 years old.

Degree of Dress. The character's degree of dress was divided into (0) fully dressed, (1) suggestively dressed, (2) partially dressed, and (3) nude. When the primary character was shown in different degrees of dress, the lowest degree of dress was coded. Fully dressed included, for example, wearing casual clothes, including shorts, but excluded short shorts and underwear. Sleeveless shirts, unbuttoned blouses, or miniskirts are examples of suggestively dressed, which includes any clothing that partially exposes the body. Lingerie, bikinis, and briefs are examples of partially

dressed. Finally, nude was defined as actual or suggested nudity, including translucent lingerie or wearing only a towel (adapted from Nelson & Paek, 2008).

Setting. The setting is the place where the primary character is shown. This variable was coded in the following ways: (1) a workplace (inside or outside), (2) a home (inside a residential space), (3) other indoor settings (e.g., a store or restaurant), (4) outdoors, or (5) other (e.g., an artificial background). When several settings were shown in the advertisement, the most dominant setting was coded.

Voiceover. Voiceovers were divided into (0) no voiceover, (1) male voiceover, (2) female voiceover, or (3) both (male and female voiceovers). A voiceover is the voices of people who cannot be seen in an active speaking role—the voice is heard, but no person is visible. Singing or voices of children were not counted as voiceovers.

Product Category. Based on previous research (Prieler, 2016; Prieler et al., 2015; Prieler & Centeno, 2013), the 18 product categories in Table 1 were investigated.

Results

We used chi-square analysis of the final sample to analyze significant differences between men and women. To also understand which subcategories contributed to significant differences, we used adjusted standardized residuals (ASRs) for post-hoc tests.

Gender Predominance and Age

H1 states that more men than women will appear in Cambodian television advertisements. Our sample included more women (n = 84, 53.5%) than men (n = 73, 46.5%), although this difference was not statistically significant (χ^2 = 0.771, df = 1, p = .380). As a result, H1 was not supported. For the age of the characters (see Table 1), we found overall gender differences (χ^2 = 6.844, df = 2, p = .033; Cramer's V = .209). More women than men appeared in the youngest age segment (18–34; 65.5% vs. 52.1%), but the adjusted standardized residuals showed that this difference was not statistically significant (ASR = ±1.7). Thus, H2a was not supported. There were also no significant gender differences (35.6% vs. 32.1%; ASR = ±.5) when analyzing whether more men than women appeared in the middle-aged age segment (35–49), meaning H2b was not supported. Finally, our analysis showed that more men than women appeared in the oldest age segment, and this gender difference was statistically significant (12.3% vs. 2.4%; ASR = ±2.4), which supports H2c.

Table 1. *Relationship between gender and miscellaneous variables*

Variables		Male (n = 73)		Female (n = 84)		Chi Square
		n	%	n	%	
Age	18–34	38	52.1	55	65.5	6.844* (df = 2)
	35–49	26	35.6	27	32.1	
	50+	9	12.3	2	2.4*	
Degree of Dress	Fully Dressed	57	78.1	21	25.0***	46.631*** (df = 2)
	Suggestively Dressed	11	15.1	56	66.7***	
	Partially Dressed or Nude[a]	5	6.8	7	8.3	
Setting	Workplace	20	27.4	8	9.5**	18.362** (df = 4)
	Home	14	19.2	31	36.9*	
	Other Indoor	16	21.9	13	15.5	
	Outdoors	21	28.8	20	23.8	
	Other	2	2.7	12	14.3*	
Voiceover	None	5	6.8	11	13.1	53.369*** (df = 3)
	Male	62	84.9	24	28.6***	
	Female	3	4.1	40	47.6***	
	Both	3	4.1	9	10.7	
Product Category[b]	Body Care/Toiletries/ Cosmetics/Beauty Products	11	15.1	31	36.9**	34.507*** (df = 6)
	Pharmaceuticals/ Health Care Products/Medicine/ Food Supplements	10	13.7	15	17.9	
	Non-Alcoholic Drinks	16	21.9	10	11.9	
	Alcoholic Drinks	12	16.4	0	0.0***	
	Foods/Snacks	6	8.2	6	7.1	
	Automotive/Vehicles/ Transportation/ Accessories	9	12.3	1	1.2**	
	Other	9	12.3	21	25.0*	

$N = 157$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

Note: The significance levels for differences between sub-categories are based on post-hoc tests using adjusted standardized residuals. If the value of a residual lies outside ±1.96, then it is significant at $p < .05$;

if outside ±2.58, then p <.01; if outside ±3.29, then p <.001.

[a]We have merged the categories partially dressed and nude due to low cell counts.

[b] Due to low cell counts, we have added several product categories that did not show significant gender differences in the adjusted standardized residuals and accounted for less than 5% to the "other" category. These included household cleaning products/kitchenware, household appliances/furniture/ interior, mobile phones/providers, computer/information/communications, finance/insurance/legal, and retail outlets. In addition, several product categories did not appear in our sample, including home entertainment, real estate/housing, travel/hotels, fashion/clothing/accessories, and restaurants/coffee shops.

Degree of Dress and Setting

Chi-square analysis of the degree of dress also led to significant results (χ^2 = 46.631, df = 2, p< .001; Cramer's V = .545). More women than men were suggestively dressed, which confirms H3a (66.7% vs. 15.1%; ASR = ±6.5). More men than women were fully dressed, thus confirming H3b (78.1% vs. 25.0%; ASR = ±6.6). Partially dressed and nude characters were scant in our sample, and no significant gender differences emerged.

We also found overall gender differences in terms of the setting (χ^2 = 18.362, df = 4, p = .001; Cramer's V = .342). More women than men were in the home setting, which supports H4a (36.9% vs. 19.2%; ASR = ±2.4). More men than women were in the workplace setting, which supports H4b (27.4% vs. 9.5%; ASR = ±2.9). In addition, slightly more men than women were found in other indoor settings and outdoors, but the results did not produce statistically significant gender differences (see Table 1).

Voiceover and Product Category

Male voiceovers (54.8%) clearly outnumbered female ones (27.4%) in Cambodian television advertisements, which supports H5 (χ^2 = 14.333, df = 1, p< .001). In addition, 10.2% of advertisements had no voiceover and 7.6% had both male and female voiceovers. Further, an association between the gender of the primary character and the gender of the voiceover was found (χ^2 = 53.369, df = 3, p< .001; Cramer's V = .583). Thus, ads with male primary characters featured mostly male voiceovers (84.9%, ASR = +7.1), and advertisements with female characters had more female voiceovers (47.6%, ASR = +6.1).

There was an association between different product categories and different genders (χ^2 = 34.507, df = 6, p< .001; Cramer's V = .469). This was especially true for the category of **body care/toiletries/cosmetics/ beauty products** (ASR = +3.1), which was associated with female primary characters, as well as for alcoholic drinks (ASR = +3.9) and automotive/ vehicles/transportation/accessories products (ASR = +2.9), which were associated with male primary characters. Therefore, H6a and H6b are supported.

Discussion

The results of this study showed gender differences in accordance with the extant research, but some results also countered those findings. Several variables (degree of dress, setting, voiceovers, and product category) showed strong gender differences. However, the equal numerical representation of women and men was in contrast with previous research and expectations in a patriarchal society. The same was true for the age of the primary characters, which only showed significant gender differences for the older age group.

Gender Predominance and Age

Numerical representations might be regarded as an sign of the relevance or importance of a group in society (Gerbner et al., 1980). The equal number of women and men is in contrast not only to the expectations of a patriarchal society like Cambodia but also other studies in Southeast Asia (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham et al., 2000; Prieler & Centeno, 2013). While women who are not being underrepresented could be a sign of their recognition in society (Gerbner et al., 1980; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999), there might also be other reasons, such as the practical reason that if women are the target group of a product, often the gender of that target group is used in advertisements (Paek et al., 2011). Considering that the majority of products being advertised in Cambodian television advertisements seem to target women, women are not surprisingly rarely used in these ads as primary characters. In terms of gender representation, we also should mention that we have not identified any non-cisgender characters in our sample, which also confirms previous research in other countries (Rapanot et al., 2021) and might be related to advertisements that are generally targeting the majority population, particularly in a country where the LGBT community is still mostly discriminated against and excluded (Pausacker & Whiting, 2019; Salas & Sorn, 2013). Finally, the equal representation of men and women in terms of numbers does not tell us anything about the possible effects of gender representation. As women are often portrayed, but in mostly stereotypical ways, such representations increase the effects of such portrayals (Collins, 2011). As a result, we analyzed the variables that address the exact type of representations, which can reveal society's general respect of a group (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999).

The analysis of the character's age indicated that significantly more men than women were depicted only in the older age segment. Cambodian advertisements are thus exceptional in Southeast Asia and many other parts of the world (Eisend, 2010; Furnham et al., 2000; Siu & Au, 1997) in that they do not portray significantly more young women than they do young men. This pattern might be connected with an overall young population

that is often the target group of advertisements, both young women and young men. The invisibility of older women in television advertisements, however, confirms the so-called "double-standard of aging" in Cambodia (Sontag, 1972), where a society is much more tolerant of aging in men than in women. Older women's underrepresentation implies that older women are not as highly valued as younger ones (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner et al., 1980). This might subsequently influence society's thoughts about older women and influence how other age groups perceive older people (Gerbner et al., 1980) and how they perceive themselves (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy, 2005). While these effects have been found in Western countries, we cannot automatically assume that the same is true in Cambodia. Cambodian society has its own specific pressures for how to behave based on age and gender. Furthermore, while the results from Western research studies might be mostly true for the elite in Cambodian cities, the situation for older women living in the countryside and from lower classes, which are still more based on their traditions, is not the same (Evans, 2019). Thus, women over 40 should, for example, not wear colorful or revealing dresses and not put on much makeup. Similarly, all people over 40 should follow the five precepts, namely, no killing, no stealing, no drinking, no telling of lies, and no sexual misconduct—and for those over 50, no eating dinner on a holy day and no singing and dancing. While these rules apply to both genders and might have slowly changed or lessened during the last few years, women are still more negatively judged if not following them.

Degree of Dress and Setting

The result for the degree of dress confirmed nearly all studies on the topic, with more men being fully dressed and more women being suggestively dressed. These findings are in contrast to *chbab srey*, which states that women should dress modestly, and reflects changes within Cambodian culture (Hillenbrand et al., 2014). Western scholars have interpreted these gender differences as a way to sexually objectify women, who are generally regarded as bodies "that exist for the use and pleasure of others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 175). Using women as sex objects is still common in advertising in many parts of the world (Lloren, 2017) and may still be regarded as an expression of patriarchy. Such representations may have a variety of effects on viewers (Bandura, 2009). For example, objectification can lead to various negative outcomes, such as eating disorders, anxiety, and depression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). However, scantily dressed models may also have an effect on the opposite gender. Research has explained that such models might be regarded as an unattainable sexual partners, which lowers the confidence of others about

their own bodies (Dens et al., 2009). Overall, it is interesting to observe that advertising as a form of "Westernized" consumer culture is not following the local traditions of modest dress, but instead more follows the Western, globalizing standards that "sex sells." However, we do have to be careful to apply the standardized interpretations of the degree of dress. While effects of such portrayals may be similar in Cambodia to those in Western countries, the underlying meaning of such clothing styles might be different. Cambodian women may instead use revealing clothing to emphasize that they are "modern," potentially elite, and more Westernized. Such representations can be particularly appealing to Cambodian women and to those advertisers that want women to buy into that particular lifestyle. Thus, it is difficult to draw any final conclusions on the meaning of the degree of dress in the Cambodian context, and thus, more audience research should be conducted on that particular issue.

The results for the setting show significant gender differences, with more women at home and more men at work, which is in line with most previous studies (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). These differences reflect Cambodia's codes for men and women, where women should stay at home and men should be the breadwinner (Hillenbrand et al., 2014). From the perspective of social cognitive theory, such advertisements might influence each respective gender's interest in future occupational choices and lessen their interest in jobs that are traditionally regarded to be done by the opposite gender. On the other hand, research has shown that counter-stereotypical portrayals can increase acceptance of women who are working in non-stereotypical careers, such as women as engineers or pilots (Geis et al., 1984; Smith & Granados, 2009) and that these effects can also be assumed for the Cambodian context. These representations, however, contrast certain other media depictions that celebrate modern and hardworking women who come from the countryside to cities and thus help national development (Lilja, 2013), possibly indicating that advertising is indeed a lagging social indicator (Kim & Lowry, 2005). Another interpretation of this contradiction might be that even though "modern" women who appreciate the many changes taking place in society, still have the role of being a mother and caring for their families (in addition to working outside the house) and possibly want to fulfill this portion of the traditional values of Cambodian society, while still questioning others at the same time. There is not necessarily a contradiction in being traditional in some parts of one's life, while being modern in other parts of life, and advertisers know that distinction well.

Voiceover and Product Category

The predominance of male voiceovers was consistent with most previous studies, globally (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), and our findings are also consistent with research showing an association between the gender of the primary character and the gender of the voiceover (Prieler & Centeno, 2013; Uray & Burnaz, 2003). The predominance of male voiceovers is problematic since the gender of the voiceover—or the so-called voice of authority (Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974)—influences the perception of authority for audiences and might reinforce existing perceptions that men hold greater authority than women in Cambodia. It is striking that there has been little change over the last several decades, despite studies showing that there are no gender differences in terms of the effects of the voiceover (Whipple & McManamon, 2002). Thus, overall, such representations might actually further reinforce the dominance of men in Cambodian society.

Most studies to date have found that women often advertise for cosmetics and toiletries (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). This is also true in Southeast Asian studies in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore (Bresnahan et al., 2001; Furnham et al., 2000; Prieler & Centeno, 2013; Tan et al., 2002). Such depictions tell each gender which products to use and thus also communicates behaviors and qualities that are desirable for each gender. For instance, advertisements emphasizing the importance of women's beauty might contribute to women's sexualization (Luyt, 2011), which has been associated with negative thoughts about one's own body (Dens et al., 2009). Again, according to social cognitive theory, the audience learns from such depictions (Bandura, 2009). The same is true for the product categories associated with men. Both alcoholic drinks and automotive-related items are stereotypically male products, which was documented in numerous other studies (Furnham et al., 2000; Ganahl et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2002), and thus reinforces the expectations of what males should be interested in and how they should behave. While such associations can be assumed in Cambodia, their particular meanings might vary, as in the case of the degree of dress and where traditional women should not put on much makeup, thus do the opposite. For example, putting on much more makeup can be a form of rebellion against traditional culture or showing that one is indeed a modern woman. Thus, advertisers might be particularly interested in targeting women who aspire to be more modern and less traditional by providing key associations of cosmetic products to the description of the "modern" woman. Women can be told that they can buy into this new lifestyle by buying their products.

Practical Implications:
Possible Effects of Gender Representations

Previous research in predominantly Western countries has shown that gender representations do teach and cultivate stereotypical attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 2009; Gerbner, 1998) and may solidify gender stereotypes, and even have potentially negative effects on women (Oppliger, 2007). For example, the sexualization of women has been linked to negative thoughts among women about their bodies (Dens et al., 2009). However, advertising and other media could also have the opposite effect and change existing attitudes and behavior (Bandura, 2009). Research has shown that counter-stereotypical advertisements can reduce stereotypes (Smith & Granados, 2009) and can be a factor in behavioral changes, particularly in women (Jennings-Walstedt et al., 1980). While most of these theories and studies are based on Western research, one can assume that similar effects of Cambodian media on its audience also occur. As previously outlined, these same representations might, however, be differently interpreted in Cambodia and certain Western countries. What Cambodian women learn from analyzed television advertisements shows a negotiation taking place between the traditional and more modern values in Cambodian society. On the one hand, women should still stay at home, and men should be the breadwinners and be the authority (voiceovers). Yet, on the other hand, women should display signs of "modern" women, such as wearing more revealing dresses and reasonable makeup. Thus, Cambodian society and its roles for women are currently in flux. Even television advertising, which has been accused to being a lagging indicator of social change (Kim & Lowry, 2005), also provides women with knowledge of some of the social changes. A reason for such representations, despite government regulations, might be not only the unstoppable social change, but also that several advertisements in Cambodian media are imported (particularly from Thailand). Producing television advertisements for only the comparatively small market of Cambodia is often too expensive. Thus, it is potentially not only locally produced media and advertisements, but also foreign media and their advertisements that will influence the public and the image of women in Cambodia.

Conclusion

Overall, most of the current findings agree with the expectations of Cambodia's patriarchal society and its traditional codes of conduct for both men and women, even though some significant changes have been observed. These findings are also in line with most recent literature and thus indicate global gender representations are similar in both the developed and

the developing countries. Such representations should be examined and improved, however, since theories as well as the related empirical studies have indicated that gender representations teach stereotypical attitudes and acceptable behavior (Bandura, 2009; Gerbner, 1998), both of which can have potentially negative effects on women (Oppliger, 2007). These stereotypical portrayals are even more surprising considering that such representations can also have a negative effect on business from a profit perspective. Research has indicated that when women do not feel well represented in advertising, it might lead to negative company images and, in the worst case, product boycotts (Ford & LaTour, 1996). Similarly, research has shown that depicting scantily dressed women in ads led to women's negative attitudes toward the ad (Dianoux & Linhart, 2010), and voiceovers by women were at least as effective (Whipple & McManamon, 2002). Thus, there seems to be little business justification to continue using stereotypes.

Limitations and Future Research

This research provides insights into gender representation in Cambodian television advertisements. However, like every study, it has its limitations. The conclusions are limited by the characteristics of content analysis. As a result, we do not know how representations potentially influence the audience and what advertisers had in mind when creating the ads. While we did use two native coders to ensure intercoder reliability, it is still possible that some audience members did read and interpret the advertisements they were shown very differently. Thus, we suggest more research on advertising effects (Whipple & McManamon, 2002) as well as more research on the production side (Baldo-Cubelo, 2021; Fedorenko, 2015). What is more, we have analyzed only primary characters and adults, which limits the inferences that can be made for other characters. As a result, research should also analyze minor characters and children in the future. We also only analyzed primetime television advertisements. While this is in line with most other studies (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), we cannot assume the same results for other parts of the day and for other media. As a result, future research should also consider comparing different times of day and include comparisons between different media. On a final note, we would also like to caution that most of the previous research has been based in Western countries or at least not in Cambodia. Therefore, we cannot automatically assume that similar interpretations and possible effects would be the case in the Cambodian context. As a result, more research should be undertaken in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia in general that goes beyond the current content and include additional research on the possible effects on specific audiences. These could include quantitative

(surveys, experiments) as well as qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, etc.). While this study has some limitations, we are confident that it shows that representations in Cambodian television advertisements are highly gendered and mostly in accordance with traditional codes of conduct for men and women in the country.

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Grant Support Details

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