Original Paper

Idealization of Motherhood in Advertisements of Maternal and Child Products

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Abstract

Advertisements both reflect and shape ideology; they influence motherhood ideology without failure. This study aims to examine the mother images in advertisements of maternal and child products in China and then investigate the social meanings behind the representations. First, advertisements were collected from TMALL.com, the largest e-commerce platform in China; then a multimodal discourse analysis method with a content analysis method was adopted to explore the details of the advertisements. Through the analysis, the study found that mothers in the advertisements were typically portrayed as attractive, well-groomed middle-class women, which can be termed as "yummy mummy". In addition, intensive mothering is emphasized among mothers, in which mothers are primarily caregivers. Several reasons contribute to this phenomenon. First, the prevalence of idealized mothers is due to the emergence of a new generation of mothers, who grew up in a more affluent era in China. Second, it is propelled by consumerism in contemporary consumer culture, though the trend indicates aesthetic freedom.

Keywords

motherhood, multimodal discourse analysis, yummy mummy, intensive caring, idealization, consumerism

1. Introduction

Views on good motherhood and mothering practices have changed dramatically over time and follow their natural history (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). These views have been strongly shaped by social and economic development, time, and place (Arnup, 1994; Hays, 1996). Therefore, ideologies of

motherhood are reflections of political, cultural, economic, and social forces, with distinctive characteristics exclusive to a certain era. In a consumer culture, mothers play an active role (Cross, 2004; Taylor et al., 2004; Cook, 2011). Varied depictions of mothers as consumers are presented in advertisements; therefore, the analysis of representations of mothers in advertisements offers clues about the mechanisms at work which have created and transformed a motherhood ideology, thereby offering valuable insights into dominant cultural schemas for gender, agency, and identity (Lynch, 2005). At the same time, it helps to understand the roles consumption plays in facilitating and constraining contemporary motherhood (Laat & Baumann, 2014). Scholars deemed advertisements as symbolic vehicles that offer insights into the dominant cultural schemas and the ensuing reproduction of beliefs about gender and motherhood (Dow & Condit, 2005). Scholars from different fields contribute to the analysis of mother representations. Media scholars focused on the shifts of motherhood reflected in magazine advertisements and TV commercials (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Lynch, 2005); linguists analyzed the discursive frames and strategies to understand the mother images in advertisements. These studies provide an insightful analysis of the characteristics of mother images and emphasize the influence of consumption and hyper-consumption on motherhood.

However, scant literature can be found about motherhood in advertisements in China. Chinese scholars in gender studies have also pointed out the close relationship between motherhood in media and consumerism (Chen, 2014; Liu, 2014). However, only some articles are available to document and analyze the specific features of motherhood promoted in advertisements. Therefore, this study aims to summarize the specific characteristics of mother representations in advertisements; and then theorize the popular motherhood promoted by advertisements. Lastly, with above results, the paper discusses on the social meanings behind these representations. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse method is used in this paper to analyze the visual images in ads. Empirically, a content analysis method was used to code the collected data and summarize the features of mother representations. Theoretically, this paper examines the cultural schemas revealed through the portrayals and assesses the implications these images of mothers hold for cultural beliefs about motherhood and consumption in China.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Schemas of Motherhood in Media

2.1.1 The Intensive Mothering

Motherhood is not biologically determined or socially ascribed but is a social and historical construction (Kaplan, 1992; Risman, 1998). The "traditional family" with a bread-earner father and a stay-at-home mother is a historical and cultural aberration (Coontz, 1992). Traditionally, in advertisements, mothers were portrayed as housewives, doing housework or caring for the whole

family. However, with more and more women joining the workforce, women, especially mothers, navigate among a host of competing demands for their time and emotional energy (Hays, 1996; Blair-Loy, 2001, 2009; Douglas & Michaels, 2004). In her book *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Hays (1996) summarized a new type of motherhood that emerged in late 20th-century America as "intensive mothering." She argues that this schema for motherhood in fact reveals a deep-seated cultural ambivalence towards economistic principles and behaviors. She defines "intensive mothering" as "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally-absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive" (1996, p. 8). For mothers, the essential responsibility is childrearing, characterized by large investments of emotional time and energy into children's development. Lynch (2005) used five decades of magazine advertisements to examine the relationship between the ideology of motherhood presented in the ads and patterns of consumption. Through her investigation, she concluded that during these decades the presentation of motherhood shifted from domestically centered to child-centered expertise. In addition, she argued that the shifts in consumption patterns are closely linked to "intensive mothering," which emerged as a central focus and force in modern consumer culture. Propelled by the schema of intensive mothering, advertisers attempt to strike a "cultural deal" for mothers who try to ease the guilt and anxiety of not spending enough time with their children. The advertised goods claimed to fulfill the demands of intensive reading, thus helping to achieve intensive mothering (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Pugh, 2005; Prothero, 2006).

Similarly, in traditional Chinese cultures, motherhood has been related to the stay-at-home stereotype. In her quantitative study, Liu (1997) pointed out that 50.1% of the female images in advertisements were portrayed as housewives, doing housework, or caring for family members. Liu (2014) analyzed mother images in television commercials through the perspective of archetypes. She categorized mother images into Chinese advertisements in two types: one is represented through the "mother's love ceremony": mothers are gazing at, cuddling, or smiling at their children, showing endless love; the other is represented through the "labor ceremony": mothers are depicted as housewives, taking care of children, cooking in the kitchen with an apron, or cleaning the floor. Both ceremonies reflect the dominant motherhood ideology in Chinese culture. These studies provide insights into understanding motherhood but do not take the products advertised into consideration.

2.1.2 The "Yummy Mummy"

Yummy mummy, which first appeared in celebrity guidebooks and "hen literature" narratives, has a wide currency across various media. Originally referred to as glamorous celebrity mothers in media, the term is then extended to refer to a higher classed, White, heteronormative cultural configuration of the maternal, tied to practices of consumption and self-grooming (Malatzky, 2017), and has become a social type in western cultures. With its popularity and dominance in advertisements, "yummy mummy" exerts great influence on women's perceptions of their bodies, consumption choices, and

relationships with their children. Feminist scholars center on the neoliberal context of the birth of the yummy mummy and its regulatory influence on young women. Young, middle-class white women are depicted as ideal neoliberal subjects who are successful in the marketplace and empowered with choice, independence and the self-discipline. The yummy mummy represents good and "responsible" motherhood for young, middle-class, successful career women (Allen & Osgood, 2009). However, some scholars argue that the trend of "yummy mummy" promotes fetishization of the maternal (Littler, 2013) and undermines women, thereby imposing restrictions on motherhood.

Under the influence of consumerism in a global context, Chinese advertisements also present similar trends in representing motherhood. Mother images and consumerism are closely related factors in advertisements. The beauty of mothers is determined by the products they consume, such as fashionable clothes, perfume, make-up, and accessories. The "soft texts" in advertisements appeal to mothers emotionally as consumers (Chen, 2004; Wu, 2017).

2.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (abbreviated as MDA in the following) was first proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). It focuses on studying several semiotic modes or all of the various semiotic modes in a communicative event or a text. MDA aims to explain and integrate the representational, interactive, and textual meanings realized by the semiotic modes. Therefore, traditional discourse analysis is suitable for analyzing text language, while MDA extends the analysis to the study combined with other resources, including images, expressions, sounds, and so on (O'Halloran, 2004). Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) offer various ways to conduct MDA, such as conversation analysis, content analysis, and social semiotic analysis. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, representational meaning is defined as the ability of semiotic systems to represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system or the semiotic systems of a culture. As regards the interactive meaning of images, there are four aspects to creating or maintaining the social relation between the viewers and the image: contact, social distance, attitude, and modality. The compositional meaning of images is how the representational and interactive elements are made to be related to each other and are integrated into a meaningful whole. It covers three systems: Information Value, Salience, and Framing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

After Li (2003) introduced Kress & Van Leeuwen's social semiotic framework for analyzing the visual image to China, many scholars have shown great interest in this academic field. Theoretically, Hu (2007) and Zhu (2007) discussed the nature and theoretical basis of MDA and pointed out its significance in doing MDA. Empirically, MDA has been used to analyze poems (Wang, 2007) advertisements (Li, 2013; Wang, 2007), and predominantly female images in magazines and advertisements (Li, 2013; Jin, 2013). Their research used different ways to conduct MDA and has enriched its research methods. In summary, MDA has been widely applied in the field of literary

discourse and media discourse. Therefore, MDA is used in this study, as the study focuses on advertisements, a typical media discourse.

3. Method

3.1 Research Questions

The present study aims to investigate the characteristics of mother representations in advertisements of childcare products in China and explore the reasons behind such representations. Specifically, the major research questions are:

RQ1. How are the mothers portrayed in advertisements for maternal and child products?

RQ2. What are the social meanings behind these representations?

The study adopted a multimodal discourse analysis method to analyze the characteristics of the images selected. A content analysis method is employed to give a detailed analysis. The content analysis aims to give a subjective interpretation of the text with a systematic approach to classifying, coding, and identifying key themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2004). It is a flexible method for analyzing data; as the data were coded and recorded according to the method outlined by Krippendorff (2004), the codes become more refined. Moreover, with a copy of the study's aims kept on hand, the coding procedure was conducted to keep the researcher focused.

3.2 Data Collection

According to Iresearch.com.cn, the total revenues of maternal consumption online in China reached 2525.7 billion yuan in 2019 and were expected to increase in 2020. Therefore, to sample which brands to analyze, the study started with Tmall.com, the largest e-commerce platform in China. The brands were chosen from the category of Maternal and Kids Products since TMALL can reach a large audience and offer a reliable source of sales quantity and consumers' brand satisfaction. Thus, its list of brands can represent consumers' choices to a certain extent. Unlike TV commercials, online advertisements, especially those on e-commerce platforms are circulating more widely in both public and private domains. They can be accessed by viewers more easily and read as many times as they want. Therefore, online advertisements are quick to adapt to market changes and audiences' tastes.

This study examined advertisements featuring mother representations. A systematic sampling was used to select the print advertisements, which involves first selecting categories on TMALL.com.cn and then selecting the brands under each subcategory. Since maternal and child products cover a large variety and the brands are numerous, the brands were selected based on the subcategories on TMALL, namely, maternal care, baby care, baby strollers and beds, milk powder, and diapers. The advertisements are chosen from their TMALL shops and also their official websites in China.

Most of the products are baby-centered, which means that in some advertisements, there are only babies; so, these advertisements were removed, and only advertisements with mother images in them

were selected. Detailed coding was restricted to those containing females depicted as mothers, including pregnancy, post-partum, and women interacting with their children. The interaction was defined as breastfeeding, food shopping for babies, bathing, playing, nurturing, dressing, and driving children out.

One Hundred and six pictures were saved in a Word file for detailed analysis. Maternal care products include maternity dresses, maternity cosmetics, maternity pillows, and such, which are designed for pregnant women exclusively. Nursing pillows are also contained in this category since these products are designed to help new mothers feed their babies. Baby care products cover a large variety, ranging from milk powder, diapers, and baby oil to baby food. The third category is baby beds and strollers, which have gained popularity for their convenience and efficiency. It includes a baby's waist chair, highchair, beds, and various strollers. Table 1 presents the distribution of each category of products.

Table 1. The Distribution of each Category of Products

Product Category of ads	Number (Percentage)
Maternal care products	26 (24.5%)
Baby care products	38 (35.8%)
Baby strollers and beds products	42 (39.7%)
Total	106 (100%)

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Coding

After samples have been chosen, the next step is to consider how to explicitly and unambiguously define categories and values and code them effectively (Krippendorff, 2018). The coding was conducted by the researcher and examined by two other researchers, and the reliability score across other coders is 90%. Those advertisements that did not have unanimous consent were further discussed to reach a consensus and they were then classified into what was deemed the appropriate category. Drawing on the research questions put forward above, the author lists five categories to analyze the visual features of every mother image in the chosen advertisement. The theory of multimodal discourse was used to define each category and unit.

Based on Hall's (1996) definition of social distance and visual grammar proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) and also the key areas of interest of this study, four categories have been defined, with several units on each, as is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Define Categories and Units

Categories	Units
1. Social distance	1.1 intimate
	1.2 close personal
	1.3 far personal
	1.4 impersonal
2. Behavior	2.1 offer-ideal
	2.2 demand-affiliation and equality
	2.3 demand-submission
	2.4 demand-seduction
	2.5 none of the above
3. Models	3.1 celebrity models
	3.2 white models
	3.3 non-white/local models
	3.4 none of the above
4. Activities	4.1 caring
	4.2 laboring
	4.3 Presenting products
	4.4 No clear indication

The social distance and behavior can reveal the interactive ways between the mother figures and their potential viewers. The categories of models can reflect the sexuality of mothers, and the activities reveals mothers' roles in the advertisements. The analysis is conducted both at a numerical level and a connotative level. The frequency and proportion are calculated numerically based on the categories and analysis based on the categories is provided. Besides, mother figures' facial expressions, dressings, and make-ups were also noted to interpret the meanings.

3.3.2 Example Data Analysis

First is the analysis of the different interactive ways between the potential viewers and the mother images in the advertisements, which includes social distance and the behavior of the mother images. The behavior is affected by the gaze of the represented participants, or to be specific, the mother images in the advertisements. As reviewed in Literature Review part, if the image demands it, the represented participants hold a direct gaze at potential viewers directly. Then the contact is established by the eye line, through which the represented participants establish a certain kind of social relations with the potential viewers. While the "offer" image means that the represented participants do not gaze at the viewer directly; they only offer information.

As presented in Figure 1, the figure is not gazing at the potential viewer. Instead, she is looking at somewhere else, which is indicated by a vector (red). It is an "offer" image, which means the image only offers information, suggesting no interrelation with the viewer.

Figure 1. An Ad for Postpartum Hats

Figure 2. An Ad for Fetal Heart Rate Monitors

Figure 3. An Ad for Baby Strollers

In Figure 2, the expectant mother is presented in a near-close shot, which means the body part above the knees is shown. This reveals a close personal relationship. The long shot shows a human figure about half the height of the frames, which reveals impersonal relations. Figure 3 is such a case. Both in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the figures are gazing at the viewers directly, thus belonging to the "demand" type. The expectant mother in Figure 2 is presented in an amicable way. She is gazing at the potential viewers in a friendly manner, hoping to let the viewers enter into a social relation of affinity with them. So, Figure 1 is grouped as demand-seduction. While in Picture 3, though the mother figure is holding a baby in her hand, her gaze is directed at the viewers. She poses confidently and mighty and is staring at the view from the top without a smile, which indicates that the viewers are likely to be positioned in an inferior place. In addition, the figure in Figure 2, the pregnant woman, is wearing a short top, showing the prominence of her bare belly. The figure in Figure 3 wears a fashionable dress and high-heeled shoes. Both models are slim and attractive, with delicate skin and exquisite makeup. In a word, they are well-groomed.

As for the activities, though the second figure is holding a baby, she is not looking at or interacting with the baby. She is doing neither caring activity nor laboring activity; instead, she is presenting the product. For pregnant women, if their attention is directed at their unborn baby, whether through gaze or touching, their activity is defined as caring. So, in Figure 2, the expectant mother is holding her belly with care and love and thus grouped as caring activity.

4. Results

4.1 Attractive, Hot Mothers

After the coding, each advertisement was numbered and analyzed in detail according to the categories and units. Due to space limitations, a detailed analysis of all images will be presented in the appendix. The analysis results were then calculated accordingly and shown in the following tables.

Table 3 and Table 4 show the interactive meanings of mother representations in the advertisements.

Table 3. The Results of Category 1

Units	Frequency	Proportion
Intimate	30	28.3%
Close personal	41	38.7%
Far personal	30	28.3%
Impersonal	5	4.7%
Total	106	100%

Table 3 presents the total number of social distances of mother images in advertisements. As shown in the figure, the majority of mothers (95.3%) suggest a "personal" social relation with the potential viewers. A personal relation can narrow the distance between the images and viewers, thus evoking interest from viewers. Especially when the viewers are mothers, the images with "personal" relations are more appealing.

Table 4. The Results of Category 2

Units	Frequency	Proportion
Offer-ideal	6	5.7%
Demand-affiliation and equality	55	51.9%
Demand-submission	2	1.9%
Demand-seduction	36	33.9%
None of the above	7	6.6%
Total	106	100%

Table 4 presents the total number of behaviors of mother images. An overwhelming majority of the images belong to the "demand" type. Thirty-six of all advertisements suggest a seduction to potential viewers, which means the images are related to viewers in an amicable way. Through frequent and friendly gazes, the contact between the mother images and the potential viewers is established.

Table 5. The Results of Category 3

Units	Frequency	Proportion
White models	74	69.8%
Celebrity models	8	7.5%
Non-white/local models	24	22.7%
Total	106	100%

Table 5 shows the distribution of model types in the advertisements. Surprisingly, a number of 64 (60.4%) are portrayed as white women, regardless of the brands and product categories.

Regardless of the different subcategories, there are several striking similarities in the presentation of motherhood in the overall sample. For instance, the physical appearance of the maternal figures is surprisingly consistent. She is typically depicted with long hair or a fashionable style. Though not identified numerically in the images, her age is either young-looking or middle-aged. There are no images of mothers with apparent wrinkles or without delicate make-ups. Besides, her appearance is neat and well-groomed, with a slim figure dressed in decent clothes. Even the pregnant women are not

overweight or sloppily dressed, with delicate make-up and face radiant with a glow. Nor are there images of mothers depicted with grey hair or wrinkles.

Interestingly, though some figures are women of color (brown), a large number of figures are white women (60.4%), seemingly middle-class women, and eight figures are represented by Chinese celebrities (models and actresses). This result is in alignment with the "yummy mummy" cultural schema of motherhood, suggesting a sexually desirable maternal body. Especially in those ads of maternal care, such as body lotion/oil, pillows, and radiation suits, the mother is typically depicted as attractive (in 24 of 26 cases). Pregnant women's bodies are also presented in a fashionable manner, not wearing loose clothes. Take an ad for pillows for pregnant women as an example.

The pregnant woman is a beautiful white woman. Her skin is delicate and radiant with a glow. She is lying on the bed with a big, soft pillow around her body. Wearing a soft dress, she shows a delicate figure. Though we can see her swollen belly, her hands and legs uncovered are slim and tender. She is smilingly gazing at the viewers and suggesting a very seductive manner. From her smiling facial expression, we can judge that she enjoys lying on this pillow and feels comfortable. Pregnancy seems to give her no burden or suffering.

Figure 4. An Ad for Pregnancy Pillows

There are some extreme cases of sexy/hot mothers. In some advertisements, mothers wear fashionable clothes and even high-heeled shoes. Mothers are portrayed as modern, young females in three ads for baby strollers (including highchairs and cradle chairs). They are wearing high-heeled shoes, no matter indoors or outdoors.

This finding is consistent with the yummy mummy type (Littler, 2013; Malatzky, 2017). Though these advertisements are for Chinese consumers, and even some are Chinese brands, the models are white middle-class women. Furthermore, eight of the models are celebrities in China, namely, actresses and supermodels, who, of course, have perfect bodies and appearances. As shown in the example, these mothers are attractive and seem materially rich, judging by their clothes and groom.

4.2 Intensive Caring from Mothers

In most cases (83%), the maternal figure, alone or accompanied by one or two children, is depicted as a caring or laboring mother. This held true across all subcategories. Fathers appear in only a small number of advertisements (3 of all 106 advertisements). The number is shown below:

Table 6. The Results of Category 4

Units	Frequency	Proportion
Caring	64	60.4%
Laboring	24	22.6%
Presenting commodities	16	15.1%
None of the above	2	1.9%
Total	106	100%

Among the eighty advertisements for baby products (subcategories two and three), mothers and children appear together in seventy-three advertisements. The maternal figure in this sample most often appears in the presence of a single child (with two children in three cases). Mothers' attention is directed toward their child/children, cuddling or smiling at them, which are included in caring activities. Specifically, among the seventy-three ads, fifty are portrayed as cuddling or holding their babies or playing with them; twenty-three are showing their love by doing some labor-consuming work, such as feeding, bathing, or taking babies out in a stroller. Typically, they are all gazing lovingly at their children, no matter what they are doing. In all, only three advertisements show the presence of a father. This finding echoes what Hays (1996) defines as "intensive mothering" in which mothers are supposed to be responsible for the care and well-being of children. They are depicted as caregivers.

4.3 Life-enjoying Mothers

Another interesting finding is that mothers in these advertisements are enjoying their life and their status as mothers. For example, among indoor settings, mothers are depicted in different activities. Though some activities are labor-consuming, such as bathing babies or taking babies out, mothers are all depicted as enjoying what they are doing or enjoying the benefits of the advertised products. This is quite evident in the advertisements. For example, for baby diapers, mothers are portrayed as sleeping soundly with babies since they are not disturbed by the worries of changing diapers if they choose the advertised product.

It should be noted that even though the products include baby food, nutrition and clothes, no one mother is portrayed as cooking in the kitchen or doing laundry laboriously. They all show a pleasant atmosphere filled with love and ease. As for the baby strollers, which are designed for outdoor activities, the settings are various, including the streets, seaside, or parks. In such settings, mothers are

enjoying themselves with their children, wearing light-hearted smiles. Take the advertisement of Good Baby Stoller, a leading brand of baby strollers in China, as an example:

The setting is an airplane. The mother, who is young and elegant, is wearing a happy smile. She is standing up, reaching her hands out to take the stroller off the luggage rack. She seems to enjoy her trip with her baby because the stroller is light, foldable, and easy to carry. But we cannot see the baby in the ad. Instead, we see many passengers on board, all happy and light-hearted. The woman in the ad has a slim figure and is well-groomed and dressed in a white dress. She is looking at the product with a content smile.

Figure 5. An Ad for Good Baby Stroller

This ad indicates that if you choose this stroller, you will enjoy your journey out with your child, even to a faraway place by plane. The efficiency of the stroller will free customers from the worries of carrying a baby exhaustingly or spoiling their beauty. In another ad, a mother is wearing fashionable clothes with high-heeled shoes. She is happily pushing a stroller forward with an expensive handbag on her shoulder. She is in a good mood and may be happy for shopping or dinning out. However, interestingly, there is no baby in the stroller. What is emphasized in the ad is just the conveniences brought by the product. The mother, who has the financial power to purchase it, is enjoying her life.

5. Discussion

Advertisements reflect social and cultural concepts of motherhood. Informed by multimedia discourse analysis and a content analysis method, this study analyzed the characteristics of motherhood propagated by online advertisements. It can be seen that new motherhood has emerged in advertising, characterized by sexy figures, a life-enjoying mentality, and providing intensive caring at the same time. The following section explains the reasons behind the new characteristics of motherhood in contemporary China.

5.1 The New Generation of Mothers in China

Advertisements both reflect and shape ideology. When articulating middle-class ideals, they provide a window into an era's mainstream conceptions of motherhood. The analysis of mother representations on TMALL offers clues to understanding the contemporary cultural schema of motherhood in China.

The images in the advertisements reflect public aesthetic conception. A visual semiotic in popular media has to fulfill the purposes of 1) offering sensory pleasure; 2) interacting with viewers (Van Leeuwen, 2005). Specifically, in an advertisement, a visual symbol needs to fulfill three tasks: 1) offering people sensory pleasure; 2) the women in the advertisements should be outstanding enough to catch viewers' eyes; 3) Advertising for the products. Therefore, to attract target customers, the advertisements must use images that mothers can easily accept in modern China. Entering the twenty-first century, post-80s or 90s generation females have become mothers. Being the first generation of the "only child" in China who grew up in a more affluent time, they hold different attitudes toward consumption. Especially those young females influenced by "she-power" who strive to balance between a career and child-caring. They spend more on products that help to improve efficiency and personal look (CBNdata, 2019). This explains the booming of maternal care products, which help reduce pregnancy discomforts and better their maternal bodies. Besides, in modern China, with more women receiving education and the increase in social equality, women have more freedom to present their feminine charm. Women are admired for their beautiful looking, wisdom, and consumption level (Liu, 2013). Mothers, as well, have more choices compared with those of the previous generation. So, images that bear such similarities naturally attract them. That could explain why younger generation of mothers are easily attracted by yummy mummy figures, mothers who look young, beautiful, and materially successful. They are no longer confined to the traditional stay-at-home mothers who devote all their energy to household chores.

Moreover, the analysis of mother representations suggests that the depiction of ideals of motherhood is in line with the relationship between mothers and products in advertising. If products can provide care and convenience to mothers who are supposed to be responsible for their babies, they are more likely to be accepted by potential consumers. These images not only represent what mothers can obtain by purchasing the products but also suggest a possible lifestyle attractive to mothers. Thus, the ads focus on the enjoyment of products, and mothers are portrayed as beautiful, light-hearted, and enjoying the comforts provided by the products.

5.2 Idealization of Motherhood by Hyper/Consumerism

Advertisements shape how people perceive reality by presenting full images and text that communicate cultural expectations for specific social groups. The pervasiveness of advertising increases the likelihood that advertisements shape ideals of motherhood. Advertising is a determinate element of the economy and a mediator of cultural transformations; therefore, it is a useful indicator of the broader

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culture's motherhood ideologies. The mother representations in advertisements have demonstrated ideal motherhood in modern society.

The idealized portrayal of maternal bodies in advertisements-via their sexually desirable bodies, well-groomed figures and heartfelt enjoyment of commercial products-is best described as hyper consumerism. Hyper-consumption is characterized by experiential and emotional consumption, intended to provide instant gratification, and is increasingly an excessive, individualistic practice (Freund & Martin, 2008). The evidence can be found in maternal care products; even pregnant women can be beautiful with radiant skin and also can dress in fashionable clothes. It is different from traditional perceptions that pregnant women are puffy, exhausted, and most important, not sexy. But this glamour is displayed with the assistance of products advertised, which indicates an encouragement of consumption.

Yummy mummy positions the mother as a sexually desirable being, a substantial cultural shift. In traditional Chinese culture, mothers were always positioned as asexual, as enshrined by the figure of the Earth Mother Archetype (Liu, 2014). Consequently, mothers were portrayed as sacrificing, domestically centered, and laboring. However, the yummy mummy type might be considered an emancipation of the history of maternal asexuality and oppressed laboring housewives. The yummy mummy of today is hard to neglect not only because the pregnant body is allowed to look sexy but also the post-pregnant ideal is allowed to look hot.

The implications of intensive mothering ideology and yummy mummy social type not only lie in the emergence of a new cultural schema to understand motherhood but also in its shaping forces of social trends. These types are actively used within a particular context (consumerism) to shape ideas about what a mother's role is and should be.

6. Conclusion

Advertising images of motherhood are not only simply an aggregation of disconnected ideas; they form a fully elaborated, logically cohesive framework that molds motherhood in contemporary society. Implicitly or explicitly, advertisements supply ideas about what mothers are/should be like and how they can be them. From the overall sample of ads, we can conclude that mothers in the maternal and child products are primarily portrayed as attractive and well-groomed with sexually desirable bodies. They may have a job or not, but their motherhood is strengthened through their intimacy and intensive caring with their children. This motherhood is realized by hyper-consumerism, through which the ideal motherhood can be achieved and maintained. Though the advertisements are for Chinese customers, and some are from local brands, mothers are still portrayed as white, middle-class women, indicating a yummy mummy social type prevalent in western cultures. The reasons behind this are 1) a new generation of mothers who grow up in a more affluent era and have more purchasing power. In addition,

they enjoy sizeable social equality and receive more education, so they are more likely to be attracted by these fashionable and efficient advertisement representations 2) Idealization of motherhood by consumerism. Under the globalization context and consumer society, motherhood ideology in Chinese culture is also influenced by intensive caring and yummy mummy social type, closely related to hyper/consumerism, thereby shaping the young generation's perceptions towards motherhood.

Due to the time limits, the advertisements only focus on maternal and child products. In future research, more product types can be considered for a more comprehensive understanding.

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