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# Asian models in advertising after the movie Crouching tiger, hidden dragon

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ASIAN MODELS IN ADVERTISING AFTER THE MOVIE *CROUCHING TIGER,*  
*HIDDEN DRAGON*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Helen Wu

December 2008

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The Undersigned Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

ASIAN MODELS IN ADVERTISING AFTER THE MOVIE *CROUCHING TIGER,*  
*HIDDEN DRAGON*

A Content Analysis

by

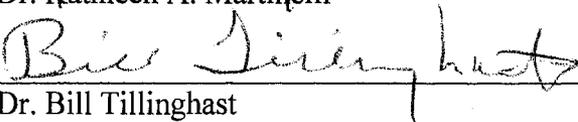
Helen Wu

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## ABSTRACT

### ASIAN MODELS IN ADVERTISING AFTER THE MOVIE *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*

By Helen Wu

This study examines how Asian models were portrayed in general interest and industry magazines before and after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The study concludes that after the film's release, the number of Asian models in advertisements did not increase. However, Asian models appearing in advertisements in women's magazines decreased the least, while in technology, business, and general interest magazines the rate decreased the most. This finding differs significantly from what previous researchers have noted. In addition, the present study reveals that after the film's release, the number of Asian models featured in certain categories increased. These categories include advertisements for household products, fashion and cosmetics, banking and financial services, and technology-based electronics. Finally, after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the number of primary roles for Asian models increased, especially in women's magazines. At the same time, secondary and background roles decreased.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	1
Problem Statement .....	4
Purpose of this Study.....	4
Research Design.....	5
Research Questions .....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	9
The Portrayal of Non-Asian Models in the Media.....	9
The Portrayal of Minority Models in the Media .....	12
The Portrayal of Asian Models in Television and Magazines.....	19
Advertising and Movies.....	22
Summary of Literature Review.....	23
Chapter 3: Method.....	25
Selection of the Research Approach .....	25
Selection of the Time Period.....	25
Selection of the Magazines .....	26
Sampling Method .....	27
Definition and Category Construction.....	27
Results of the Pilot Test and Scott’s Pi Formula .....	29
Chapter 4: Results .....	31
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	37
Asian Models in Four American Magazines .....	37
Product Categories .....	37
Role Portrayal .....	38
Direction for Future Research.....	39
Conclusions.....	40
References.....	41

## List of Tables

<u>Table 1</u> : Asian Models in Four American Magazines, 1996-2000 to 2003- 2007 .....	31
<u>Table 2</u> : Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models in Four American Magazines .....	32
<u>Table 3</u> : Percentages of Asian Models in Product Categories, 1996-2000 and 2003-2007.....	33
<u>Table 4</u> : Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models.....	34
<u>Table 5</u> : Representation of Asian Models in Role Portrayals from 1996-2000 and 2003-2007.....	35
<u>Table 6</u> : Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models in Role Portrayals .....	36

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Overview*

Asian Americans are Americans of Asian ancestry with origins in China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Delener and Neelankavil (1990) note that Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing minority group in the United States. The first significant Asian American population was recorded in 1980, when it amounted to about 1.5 percent of the U.S. total. That date marked the first time that the Asian American population equaled more than 1 percent of Americans (Daniels, 1990). Most of these Asians emigrated from China and the Philippines, choosing to leave their home countries because of economic hardship. The early immigrants made a significant contribution to building America's transcontinental railroad, but they, nevertheless, faced discrimination and severe hardship in the United States (Lowe, 1996).

In 1924, the U.S. government chose to support national restrictions on the immigration of most groups of Asians. The government adopted the National Origins Act, a U.S. deferral law that prohibited Asians from immigrating into the United States. These restrictions remained in effect until 1965 when the Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act, which replaced the previously highly restrictive National Origins system. The official reason for this change was to introduce provisions to allow for "family reunification" (Pyong, 2006). After the National Origins system was abolished, many Asians who were already living in the United States saw an opportunity to bring spouses, children, siblings, and parents into the U.S. Once these family members arrived and became permanent residents and, eventually, citizens, they sponsored the

immigration of other family members. As a consequence of this repeated process of immigration, America's Asian population has been growing rapidly (Pyong, 2006).

According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Asian Americans totals 13,100,095. This number makes Asian Americans one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States, just behind whites, Hispanics, and African Americans. Most Asian Americans have successfully integrated into the educational system and economy. By 2007, 87 percent of Asian Americans had earned a high school diploma. Currently, many work as professionals or in management and hold positions as financial managers, engineers, teachers, and registered nurses. They also work in sales and office occupations, service occupations and production, transportation, and material shipment (Bernstein, 2007).

While Asian Americans have successfully integrated into the labor market, in other respects their role in American life remains less certain. For instance, Banks (2005) has noted that in the 1970s and 1980s scholars began researching how female Asian models were represented in the print media. Most of the studies concluded that Asian models were underrepresented, and when they were represented, they were associated with a tone of seriousness (Banks, 2005). Studies showed that Asian Americans were more likely to appear in advertisements for technology-related products. In films and on television, Asians also tended to play supporting instead of leading roles. In addition, sexist stereotypes were common. Asian female models appearing in commercials, for example, were frequently portrayed as "seductive China dolls with long straight hair and bangs, a narrow slit skirt and small dark eyes" (Banks, 2005, p. 14).

Despite these negative portrayals, contemporary films have helped alter America's image of Asian women. In light of this observation, this study will examine the changes in public perception of Asian women in recent years by examining popular impressions that followed the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in 2000. Because of this film, the general public has become more aware of and more open minded toward Asian cultures. With this change in attitude, there will be more opportunities for Asian Americans to participate in popular American life and culture. For example, advertisers may be willing to give Asian models more spots in fashion and in non-scientific product promotions. Furthermore, non-Asian American groups may look beyond stereotypes and see Asian-American citizens as unique individuals.

Produced on a \$15 million budget, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* became an international success and the highest-grossing foreign-language film in U.S. history. Although the dialogue was written in Mandarin (Chinese) with English subtitles, the film grossed more than \$200 million. Since foreign films are usually not welcomed by mainstream America, it was surprising that the movie became a worldwide triumph with half of its box office receipts earned in the United States (Klein, 2004). The movie won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for numerous other awards (Klein, 2004).

The movie's principal actress, Zhang Ziyi, who is mainland Chinese, plays a strong, self-assured free spirit and feminist. In her outspoken role, Ziyi shattered the traditional perception of Asian women as submissive, obedient, obliging, self-sacrificing, mysterious and innocent (Chang, 2006; Prasso, 2005). Because of the movie's success,

Ziyi became an international figure. According to Ziyi's official website, many advertisers joined a Zhang Ziyi movement shortly after her performance in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. She appeared not only in other films, but was also sought for endorsements by fashion and merchandising giants and became the representative of both Western and Asian corporations including among other, Lenovo Computers, Coca Cola, Pantene, Tag Heuer, Mercedes, Got Milk?, Christian Dior, Ferragamo, Louis Vuitton, and Maybelline. Many magazines also nominated Ziyi as the most beautiful woman in the world (The International Movie Database, n.d).

#### *Problem Statement*

Studies by Lee and Joo (2005), Taylor and Lee (1994), and Mastro and Stern (2003) show that Asian models are underrepresented in advertising. Often appearing in supporting roles, they are likely to be found mostly as endorsers of hi-tech products and banking/financial services and less often in advertisements for domestic and fashion products. Often consumers perceive Asian as smart, diligent, technically skilled, and serious, and, at the same time, they may not be as likely to be viewed as socially adept or out going. According to Lee and Joo, "Asians were rarely seen in social settings or family situations--clearly important aspects of U.S. and Asian cultures" (2005, p. 244). These limited portrayals have since become popular stereotypes.

#### *Purpose of this Study*

The purpose of this study is to examine how Asian models were portrayed in general interest and industry magazines before and after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Taylor and Stern (1997) have suggested that Asian Americans often

appeared in supporting roles and are unlikely to be shown in the foreground of advertisements, holding the product. Furthermore, Colfax and Sternberg (1972) claimed that Asian models are more likely to appear in technology magazines. Therefore, this study will consider whether since the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* there have been more Asian models in magazines advertisements; whether the number of Asian models in primary roles has increased; and, whether there have been more Asian models appearing in women's magazines as well as fewer in technology magazines.

### *Research Design*

Lee and Joo's (2005) research was based on eight selected magazines. The authors studied the advertisement in each magazine and coded them. A similar content analysis was used in the present study; however, only four publications were studied. For purposes of this study, four categories of magazines were identified: women's fashion, business, general interest, and technology. The sample magazines are *Vogue*, *Business Week*, *Time*, and *PC World*. According to Echo Media's (2007) website, these publications enjoy the highest circulation in their respective categories. This study will covered portrayals of Asians in these magazines five years before and five years after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The time periods are 1996-2000 and 2003-2007. The coding system for the content analysis followed the system generated by Taylor and Lee (1994) for Role Prominence and Product Type (discussed in Chapter 3).

### *Research Questions*

Earlier studies reveal that Asian models have been underrepresented in the media and, when represented, have appeared as stereotypes. Furthermore, the products that

Asians have advertised have been frequently limited to stereotypical expectations (Lee & Joo, 2005; Taylor & Lee, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997). However, the success of the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* encouraged positive views of Asians all over the world (Wu & Chan, 2007) and made advertisers more willing to employ more Asian models to represent their products. In addition, Hollywood introduced audiences to more diverse types of female characters and drastically revised the Asian stereotypes that had characterized studio films. Three research questions were used to explore the portrayal of Asian Americans in magazine advertisements before and after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The research questions are:

*Research Question 1:* Did the number of Asian models used in magazine advertisements in the five years after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* exceed the number used during the five years before the movie?

*Research Question 2:* Did the relationship between Asian models in magazine advertisements and the products being advertised change in the five years after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?

*Research Question 3:* Did the relationship between Asian models in magazine advertisements and the roles they portrayed change in the five years after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?

To find answers to these questions, the researcher examined magazines published during the five years prior to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and five years after the film, recorded the total number of advertisements, recorded the number of Asian models appearing in them, classified the type of product being advertised, and classified the

models' roles in the advertisements.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Theory and empirical evidence suggests that the ethnicity of advertising models has an impact on recipients' views and behaviors (Appiah, 2001; Bandura, 2001). These effects can be interpreted according to various theoretical frameworks, including cultivation theory and expectancy theory.

*Cultivation Theory:* Shanahan and Morgan suggested that "cultivation is about the implications of stable, repetitive, pervasive and virtually inescapable patterns of images and ideologies that television especially dramatic, fictional entertainment provides" (1999, p. 5). Cultivation theory was originally proposed to explain the relationship and consequences of accumulative exposure to television over a long period of time. Introduced by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, and Shanahan (1993), cultivation theory provides a method for studying the relationship between audiences and media messages: "The point is that the cultivation role is to examine broad patterns of relationships between the social consumption of media messages and stable, aggregate belief structures among large groups of people" (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, p. 6).

Lee and Joo (2005) give reasons that justify applying the cultivation theory to this study. Because Asian Americans are consistently portrayed in specific ways in magazine advertisements, readers develop stable, if stereotypical, images of Asian Americans. Cultural theory may be also applicable because there are some areas in the United States, such as, West Virginia, Montana, and North Dakota, where there are few Asians (Bernstein, 2007). When Americans are less likely to have personal interaction with

Asian people, the lack of such contact may make these people more likely to perceive Asians in the same way as they have been portrayed in the media.

*Expectancy-Violation:* Stereotype Threat Theory implies a negative stereotype, where the expectation of performing well can place pressure on an individual. In some situations, poor performance may result from the pressure of being judged or being seen as proving a negative expectancy (Steele, 1997). According to Keller and Bless, “the STT stereotype threat effects on performance are particularly likely to emerge in persons who are identified with the relevant ability domain (e.g., math or spatial ability), and when the target persons are confronted with difficult test items” (2008, p. 188). Thus, even if a person is an expert in a particular field, that person may feel the pressure of not being able to perform satisfactorily on a test. This pressure can, in turn, lower performance.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In consumer-oriented societies advertising is an integral part of citizens' lives. However, the images in advertisements do not reflect reality; rather, they misrepresent, magnify, exaggerate and select reality (Giaccardi, 1995). Advertisements promote false stereotypes and can create an inaccurate perception of ethnic groups, including Asians.

Donovan and Leiver (1993) argue that mass media advertising can easily modify an audience's beliefs. In contemporary advertising, Asian models often play unrealistic roles or remain underrepresented. For instance, most Asian models appear in work settings or demonstrate technology products reflecting how the public perceives Asians in general. Asian models, for instance, are unlikely to be advertised in general interest or women's magazines (Taylor & Lee, 1994).

### *The Portrayal of Non-Asian Models in the Media*

Gilly (1988) examined gender roles in advertising and compared content analysis findings for U.S., Australian, and Mexican television commercials. The author videotaped twelve hours of programming from each country. American, Australian, and Mexican female models tended to be depicted as engaged in the house, a store, or outdoors, while men tended to be shown in work settings. There was a significant difference in the roles assumed. American and Latin American females were unlikely to be portrayed performing labor since such roles were fulfilled by male models. However, Australian female models were more likely to be portrayed as working, even though the number of workers was less than that for male models. Results also differed between countries regarding the gender of characters that received or provided physical assistance

or verbal advice. In Mexican commercials, women were portrayed as more likely to be recipients of help, and men were portrayed as providers. In American commercials, women were portrayed more often as receiving advice and men as giving advice.

Ganahl, Prinsen, and Netzley (2003) studied 1,337 prime time commercials on 3 major networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, which had been recorded in 1998. Primary and secondary characters were coded for gender, age, acting, and product advertised. Even though women made the most purchases of goods and services, they were still underrepresented as primary characters during most of the prime time commercials, except for health and beauty products. Furthermore, advertisers cast younger women and men as supportive of older men while older women remained the most underrepresented group. Overall, television commercials portrayed women and men in traditional roles (Ganahl, et al., 2003).

Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) conducted a content analysis of 729 advertisements that were in eight general interest and news magazines during 1970. The authors compared occupational and non-working roles of men and women as portrayed in the advertisements. They found that only a few women were depicted as working outside the house. Most of these working women were involved in the entertainment industry and had no professional or executive roles. The study concluded that some of the advertisements were insulting to women. General magazines had been selected because it was expected that they would represent women in meaningful occupations. However, the advertisements did not represent the full range of roles that women actually played in American society, and, in fact, some of them reproduced sexist clichés. Such

advertisements were considered by feminists to be unappealing and offensive.

Wagner and Banos noted the problems with the way women are portrayed in media generally: “The stereotypes reflected in the advertisements studied were: a woman’s place is in the home, women do not make important decisions or do important things, women are dependent and need men’s protection, and men regard women primarily as sex objects—they are not interested in women as people” (1973, p. 1).

Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) suggested that magazines advertisements reflect mainly stereotypes of women. The authors found that female models were often depicted as nonworking homebodies. Occasionally, they were featured as low-income earners. Because they are unemployed, women are assigned supporting roles and idle situations. Frequently, the female model was not connected to the product advertised in any meaningful way.

Soley and Kurzbard (1986) examined the percentage of women portrayed as sex symbols in advertising between 1964 and 1984. The researchers found that the percentage of women depicted as sex symbols did not increase over the 20-year period. However, the style of the sexual portrayals changed significantly, becoming more blatant. The study considered 1,698 full-page and large-size advertisements, which were selected from *Time* and *Newsweek* (general interest); *Cosmopolitan* and *Redbook* (women’s magazines); and *Playboy* and *Esquire* (men’s magazines). The study focused on the use of sexual content (degree of dressed or undressed models) and interactions between male and female models.

Reichert and Carpenter (2004) conducted a similar study, providing an update on

the frequency of sex in advertising by assessing the degree of sexual explicitness in magazine advertisements in 1983, 1993 and 2003. The results suggested that, overall, in women's magazines, the number of women models portrayed sexually had increased from 1983 to 2003; however, from 1993 to 2003, the incidence of sexual imagery did not change. The only difference between 1993 and 2003 was that the 2003 models had less physical contact with men. Men's magazines revealed trends similar to those discovered in women's magazines except that the women in the men's magazines were more provocatively displayed between 1993 and 2003.

#### *The Portrayal of Minority Models in the Media*

Coltrane and Messineo (2000) studied how different nationalities were depicted in television commercials between 1992 and 1994. The study indicated that 86 percent of the actors were white, 11 percent African American, two percent Asian American, and one percent Latino. Asian characters tended to be children and non-white models were less likely to assume authority positions: "Whites are significantly more likely than African Americans to be shown as passive/emotional, in cross-sex interaction, as sex objects, as spouses, or in a home setting" (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000, p. 376).

Larson (2002) reviewed broadcasting on weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings, finding 892 commercials during children's television programming. Of the children shown, 680 were white, and 212 were African American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American children. Commercials for restaurants primarily utilized white and minority children, while toy commercials were more likely to feature white children only. Furthermore, white children were more likely to be in a home or indoor setting while

minority children were more likely to be in an outdoor setting (Larson, 2002).

Mastro and Stern (2003) found that among all racial/ethnic groups, black and white models appear the most often in television commercials. Black models are frequently found in financial services or food advertising and are usually physically striking. Latino models rarely have speaking roles in commercials. However, they are presented as beautiful, young adults with accents and are often seen in sexual poses. The Latinos in these advertisements generally seem unintelligent. In contrast, Asian models were represented in technology commercials as young, passive adults. As a result, viewers may perceive Asian Americans as hard working, compliant and achievement oriented. Native Americans are rarely seen in television advertising.

Licata and Biswas (1993) studied black models in television commercials, emphasizing institutional and service advertising. The models were considered authority figures if they had any interaction with the product, such as, holding, using or speaking about the product. The study indicated the number of black models in major roles remained relatively stable during 1991, but the number of black models touching or holding the product decreased between 1968 and 1991. The data also showed that 35 percent of commercials had black models in a dialogue role and that 20 percent of the advertisements showed the models talking about the product. Black models acting by themselves are also a significant issue: “Another interesting note about the 1991 study is the comparison to prior studies for ads with black models seen alone” (Licata & Biswas 1993, p. 872). Although there are now more integrated advertisements on television, black actors are not interacting more with whites than are other minority groups.

Wilkes and Valencia (1989) reviewed three hours of primetime programming for one week. Their study included the commercials from three major United States television networks, namely ABC, CBS, and NBC. They found that Hispanics appeared in only 53 of 904 commercials. Latino males had more exposure than Latino female models. Latinos were given supporting roles or functioned as part of a group during these commercials.

Taylor, Lee, and Stern (1995) examined advertisements in several mainstream magazines. The categories included the business press (*Business Week*, *Fortune*), women's magazines (*Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*), general interest magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*), and technical publications (*Scientific American*, *Popular Science*, *Popular Mechanics*). The purpose of this study was to focus on frequency of representation by ethnicity, quality of ethnic portrayals, and changes in these portrayals over time. The findings revealed that African Americans were slightly underrepresented in magazine advertisements (based on the size of the total black population in the United States) and were not shown in technical categories, as Asians were. The insinuation is that African Americans either do not comprehend or are not concerned with learning about technological products. Since African Americans are often portrayed as uneducated in the media, the rare appearance of African Americans in scientific product advertising appears to confirm stereotypes regarding their academic and professional status. Hispanics were seriously neglected in the magazine advertising as well, but they were often shown as family oriented. Finally, to correct negative stereotypes, the researchers recommended that advertisers portray Hispanics using products, Africans Americans

operating technical devices, and Asians enjoying recreational settings and personal relationships in advertisements for food, clothing, and other nonscientific product categories.

Similarly, Paek and Shah (2003) conducted a content analysis of images of Asians in print advertising to determine how these images might affect the public. The authors studied 526 advertisements from mainstream magazines—*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U. S. News and World Report*. The results indicated that out of 526 advertising models, 10.3 percent were Asian, 17.7 percent were African Americans, and 8.0 percent were Latino. Paek and Shah found that African American and Latino models were frequently limited to supporting roles while Asian models tended to play the main roles. In terms of occupation, Asian, African, and Latino models were equally depicted as professionals, technicians and businesspersons.

Banks (2005) found that Black and Hispanic models often appeared in more upscale advertisements. The costs of products in these advertisements were higher than the costs of products in those featuring Asian and white models. Between Asian and white models, there was no difference in product values. Advertisements featuring minority models typically contained products that cost \$50.00. Further, light skin minority models appeared more often in clothes, skin care, makeup, perfume, and shoe advertisements than did dark skinned minorities.

Sengupta (2006) studied three teen-fashion magazines, *YM*, *Seventeen*, and *Fashion 18*, and found that Asian models remained underrepresented. In contrast, black models were overrepresented. Black and white models frequently appeared in beauty and

clothing-related advertisements, but Asian models were usually absent. Instead, Asian models were included in advertisements for technology. In addition, white models were given more major roles than were other ethnic models. Overall, even among minority models, Asian models were underrepresented.

Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates (2006) examined advertising in magazines with ethnic readerships from October 2004 to December 2004. The readership categories included African Americans (*Black Enterprise, Ebony*), Hispanics (*TV Novelas, People en Espanol, Vanidades*), Asians (*Fortune, Business Week, and Fast Company*), and whites (*Better Homes and Gardens, National Geographic, Good Housekeeping*).

In total, 1,553 models, including African Americans, Latinos and Asians, were analyzed. The researchers found that “the magazine clustered with substantial ethnic readership also features significantly more models of the ethnic group in their advertising” (Knobloch-Westerwick, et al., 2006, p. 606). The authors concluded that advertisers utilize different types of ethnic models depending on the advertisers’ ethnic targets. As a result, advertisers tend to exclude certain minorities from magazines when these minorities do not represent the target audience.

Shuey, King, and Griffith (1953) concluded that magazine advertisements frequently stereotyped black models as servants. In addition, television commercials often stereotyped blacks as primitives, professional sportsmen, or entertainers. Black models were also excluded from leisure advertising. Advertisers in black magazines have been using black celebrities for a long time, but white advertisers may not want to associate their products with black celebrities, especially in premier markets for Middle

America and the South. Supporting research concluded that out of 173 advertisements, only 10 featured black celebrities. Only one black celebrity advertised for a consumer item (Colfax & Sternberg, 1972).

Plous and Neptune (1997) studied 1,800 advertisements published in *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*, which have high white female readership, and in *Ebony* and *Essence*, which have high black female readership. The authors found evidence of racial bias in magazine advertisements. African Americans in the white magazines remained underrepresented. Furthermore, African American models used animal prints, a symbol of African pride, more often than white models did. However, although animal prints signify African pride, none of the black male models wore animal prints - - only black female models wore them. The authors also found that animal prints can take on a sexual meaning. When a model wore an animal print, she tended to pose more provocatively and reveal more of her body.

Thomas and Treiber concluded that “the use of stereotypical images in magazine advertising confirms to the readership that subordinate groups should remain in a lower status” (2000, p. 15). The authors’ study was based on four different magazines geared towards specific racial audiences. *Ebony* and *Essence* are targeted to black readers, and *Cosmopolitan* and *Life* are targeted to white readers.

Mayo, Mayo, and Mahdi found a different result that challenges some of the findings of prior studies: “While a few studies suggest that there has been an overuse of African American models with light complexions, this study reveals that dark-skinned and medium-skinned African Americans are more dominant in both fashion and sports

magazines” (2005, p. 56). Because this study is more recent than some of the other studies mentioned here, it may indicate growing acceptance of diversity within American culture as a whole.

Contemporary research has offered other positive findings about the representation of racial/ethnic minorities in popular media. Millard and Grant (2006) compared black models and white models in advertisements and fashion spreads. On the one hand, they found that in advertisements black models were featured as less violent and more intellectual, more achievement oriented, and more outgoing than were white models. Also, black models were judged to be as beautiful as or more beautiful than white models. On the other hand, the fashion spreads depicted black models as less attractive than white models through the use of color and design. Presentations of the two racial groups reflected stereotypes in the fashion spreads, whereby black models adopted a passive pose and white models assumed a sexual pose. White models were depicted as more intellectual and achievement oriented than were black models (Millard & Grant, 2006).

Bowen and Schmid (1997) found that the contact between white and minority models was infrequent. In the advertisements surveyed, there were only a few face-to-face interactions. Most of them displayed either no or minimal interaction. Within product categories, black models were most highly represented in public service, finance/insurance, automobile, and travel advertising.

After examining women’s magazines, the popular business press, and technical publications, Taylor and Bang (1997) determined that Latino models were

underrepresented in magazine advertising. Out of 21 advertisements, only one contained Latino models, and only one in 45 featured a Latino as an authority figure. It has been suggested that Latino models are rarely portrayed in U.S. magazines because advertisers prefer to employ such models in advertisements for Spanish language media audiences even though many Latinos are exposed to English language media. Some advertisers may think that Latino models cannot properly communicate the message or image of their products or corporation. Other advertisers may worry that majority and other minority groups would reject their advertisement's message if it included Latino models.

#### *The Portrayal of Asian Models in Television and Magazines*

Taylor and Stern (1997) studied four television networks, including 1300 prime time commercials. They found that Asian models were overrepresented in these commercials, especially in business settings. Nevertheless, Asian models often appeared in supporting roles. The advertisers associated Asian actors with a strong work ethic and rarely placed them in home environments or in the context of family or social relationships.

Similarly, Taylor and Lee found that “magazine advertising tends to portray Asian Americans in advertisements for technology-related products, in popular business press publications, and in business settings” (1994, p. 6). In addition, the study found that Asian Americans may be impacted by two potentially negative stereotypes. First, if Asian Americans are viewed as diligent, smart, and serious, it is possible that they will not be seen as capable of affection. Second, popular images of Asian Americans as high-achieving math and science professionals can lower some Asian American children's

interest in these fields because of the pressure to be as successful as the characters portrayed in such advertisements.

In their study of ethnic models, Hoy and Wong found that “white male subjects viewed the product claims to be more truthful, believable and convincing when a white model was used to advertise the product than when an Asian model was used” (2000, p. 56). The ability of the audience to identify with the presenter on a racial basis can affect an advertisement’s persuasiveness.

Cohen noted conflicting attitudes among whites: “White Americans have had ambivalent attitudes toward Asians and Asian-Americans. On one hand, the accomplishments of Asians and Asian Americans cannot be ignored. On the other hand, discrimination and resentment are also present” (1992, p. 18). In her research, Cohen studied the reaction of white consumers toward Asian models. She concluded that white consumers had positive responses toward Asian models in advertisements for engineering technology and products associated with Eastern manufacturing, while the response to white models was less favorable. In advertisements for products related to social status, white consumers had more positive responses toward white models while Asian models had less impact on white consumers. This result may confirm the bias Asians have experienced in American popular media. Some products, such as, pantyhose, children’s vitamins, and pain relievers, showed no differences in audience enthusiasm. Here, the responses to Asian models were the same as those to white models (Millard & Grant, 2006).

In a comprehensive study of Asian and ‘Western’ (i.e. white) models in women’s

magazine advertisements, Frith, Cheng, and Shaw (2004) found that these models were likely to be portrayed as sexy, while Asian models tended to be portrayed as cute, girl-next-door types. Because of cultural differences, the authors expected that white models would tend to have more eye contact with the camera while the Asian models would try to avoid it. But the results indicated the opposite. The researchers discovered that while both Asian and white models looked at the camera, Asians in the sample tended to look more often at the camera than did white models. The white models were more frequently seen wearing sexy clothes than were Asian models. Furthermore, Asian models were associated with beauty products, while white models were typically associated with clothing.

Lee and Joo (2005) studied advertisements published during 2001. They evaluated 1834 advertisements from *Popular Mechanics*, *PC World*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, *Time*, *US News & World Report*, *Women's Day*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. The authors found that technology and business magazine advertisements were more likely to include Asian Americans than were general interest and women's magazines. Furthermore, the magazines portrayed Asian Americans as diligent and smart professionals in mathematics and science. However, Lee and Joo's research suggests that compared to previous studies the number of Asian models in non-business settings is increasing.

It remains to be seen how far such racial integration will go. Taylor and Stern have suggested, "Asian-Americans are victims of tokenism, for they are the minority most likely to be depicted as anonymous figures in the background. Their presence as

token faces in a crowd has negative consequences for both first-generation immigrants and the United States-born” (1997, p. 12). The stereotypes that Asians encounter in advertising may impact their self-concept.

### *Advertising and Movies*

Mukerji and Schudson stated that “popular culture refers to the beliefs, practices, and objects through which they are organized, that are widely shared among a population” (1991, p. 3). Popular culture is often presented as a story, performance, or as a visual display. Popular culture includes television series, Hollywood films, comic books, romantic novels, and pop songs. Fowles (1996) noted that elements of popular culture are often included in advertising in order to attract consumers.

According to Raney, Arpan, Pashupati, and Brill, “a notable trend in marketing communication over the last few years has been the growing convergence of media entertainment and advertising” (2003, p. 39). In order to attract the consumer’s attention, advertisers try to enhance attitudes toward the brand and stimulate purchase intent. To accomplish this, many advertisers design their advertisements as mini movies, using famous actors and directors to present products. However, today’s consumers are more aware of persuasion attempts by marketers. When advertising comes in the form of a mini movie, consumers may find it entertaining and become less resistant to the advertiser’s message.

Sometimes, successful films and commercials converge. For instance, in 1984, Ridley Scott (1991) directed an Apple commercial derived from his movie *Alien*, a science fiction story. The commercial was aired during Super Bowl XVIII on January 22,

1984. Scott took elements directly from *Alien* and incorporated them into his commercial. The director is known for filming movies with high-tech settings. Therefore, it is not surprising that his Apple commercial resembled a futuristic mini movie (Scott, 1991).

James McTeigue directed both *The Matrix*, a 1999 science fiction-martial arts film, and a commercial for POWERade, an energy drink. The commercial featured an agent much like Neo, the main character of the *The Matrix*, who tried to persuade viewers to drink more POWERade. The commercial also introduced the sequel to the first *Matrix* movie and a future *The Matrix* video game (The International Movie Database, 2008).

Often times, advertisers prefer utilizing the visibility of celebrities. According to Friedman and Friedman, “a celebrity endorser is an individual who is known to the public (actor, sports figure, entertainer, etc.) for his or her achievements in areas other than that of the product class endorsed” (1979, p. 3). For example, the cosmetics manufacturer Chanel uses the actress Nicole Kidman to endorse its perfume. Many advertisers prefer to use actresses to represent their products instead of a professional or a typical consumer because audiences think that advertisements that contain famous actors are more believable (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

#### *Summary of Literature Review*

This literature review reveals that Asian models are underrepresented in contemporary media and, when they are represented, are often stereotyped as diligent, clever, and highly skilled in mathematics and science. The research suggests that within advertising Asian Americans are still limited to narrowly defined roles. Advertisers tend

to use simplified and generalized images of Asian Americans, which can easily deceive mass audiences into buying into popular stereotypes. Employing stereotypes to their promotions, advertisers reinforce existing prejudice. Additionally, the literature reviewed here reveals that films have a significant influence on advertising, especially as ever more directors have incorporated film components into advertising campaigns. In this regard, the experience of watching commercials has become more and more like watching popular Hollywood films, which, like other forms of popular media, relies on popular stereotypes.

## Chapter 3: Method

### *Selection of the Research Approach*

Lee and Joo (2005) studied the portrayal of Asian Americans in magazine advertising. The authors applied content analysis to four genres of magazines, reviewing and coding each advertisement within the publications. Content analysis has been defined as “a method of quantitative text analysis in which the researcher categorized textual units onto categories that have been inductively or deductively established” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 4). The same method has been used in the current research. Content analysis was the method of research chosen for this study because of my aim to examine the portrayal of Asian models in magazine advertisements.

The unit of analysis in the study was magazine advertisements featuring Asian models in selected publication for 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000 (before the release of *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*) and for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 (after the film’s release.)

### *Selection of the Time Period*

This content analysis examined the portrayal of Asian models in advertising for 1996-2000 and 2003-2007. A span of five years before and after *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon* is a reasonable time frame to observe changes in the portrayal of Asian models; for this reason, 1996 was chosen as a starting point. The year 2007 was chosen as an ending point because it provided a current point of reference for the study as well as a period during which recent material was available. 2001 and 2002, the years

immediately following the movie's release, were omitted because they would have revealed only short-term results.

### *Selection of the Magazines*

A content analysis of advertisements from four different types of magazines was performed. The categories and magazines are: business (*Business Week*), technology (*PC World*), women's magazines (*Vogue*), and general interest (*Time*). These four magazines reach a large, definable audience and provide the researcher with a wide range of samples. These magazine categories are the same as Lee and Joo's (2005). However, there are some modifications. For women's magazines, the original publication, *Woman's Day* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, was replaced by *Vogue*. *Woman's Day* and *Ladies' Home Journal* focus more on women's lives from the perspective of home, parenting, and health, culture, and personal finance. *Vogue*, as a fashion magazine, better indicates whether Asian models became more fashionable after the movie than they had been before. The publications considered here are ranked among the top 10 in circulation within their respective categories (Echo Media, 2007).

*Vogue* is one of the most popular women's magazines. *Vogue's* content includes the latest information on beauty, style, glamour, and celebrities. 91 percent of the readers are female, and their average age is 37. *Vogue's* circulation is 1,273,546 (Echo Media, 2007).

*Business Week* targets highly affluent senior managers and leading decision-makers. Its articles focus on business resources and offers commentary about many facets of the business world. 85 percent of *Business Week's* readers are male, and their

average age is between 25 and 52. *Business Week's* circulation is 970,000 (Echo Media, 2007)

*PC World* is one of the world's largest computer magazines. It targets tech-savvy managers. *PC World* provides special reports about computers and helps its readers plan what to buy, where to buy, and how to best use computer technology. The average age of *PC World's* readership is 42, and 73 percent of the readers are male. The circulation is 745,525 (PC World, 2007).

*Time* focuses on current events and targets general readers. The readership age ranges from 25 to 54. 69 percent of the readership is male, and 31 percent is female. *Time's* average weekly circulation is 525,000 (Time, n.d).

#### *Sampling Method*

*Vogue* and *PC World* are monthly publications, while *Business Week* and *Time* are weekly. To ensure comparability in this study, a random sample of weekly editions, equivalent to monthly editions, was made. To create a monthly sample, *Business Week's* and *Time's* first issue of the month was used.

The selected magazine advertisements were restricted to those that featured Asian models. Only real people were coded. Advertisements with cartoons, animation, drawings, silhouettes, blurred images, children, teenagers, or fragmented human bodies were omitted. For the sake of a complete analysis, all advertisements that contained Asian models were analyzed, even if there was duplication.

#### *Definition and Category Construction*

According to Taylor and Lee:

Asian Americans were defined as persons whose ancestry is rooted in any Asian country other than those on the Indian subcontinent, those countries that Americans refer to as the Middle East (e.g., Saudi Arabia), or those that are former members of the Soviet Union. This includes people from Cambodia, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Hong Kong. (1994, p. 241)

The exclusion of other countries was based on the perception that the U.S. public views immigrants from these countries as belonging to a separate category. For instance, Saudi Arabians are viewed as Arabs. Similarly, Indians are viewed as a distinct group and not stereotyped as a category of Asian Americans (Taylor & Lee, 1994).

This study followed Lee and Joo's research design (2005) and duplicated coding categories in the research of Taylor and Lee (1994), specifically Role Prominence and Product Type.

*Role prominence* was analyzed using three categories, primary, secondary, and background. They decide whether Asian models were depicted in central or peripheral roles (Taylor and Lee, 1994).

*Primary Role:* This designates the character that is essential to the advertising theme or layout. The character is shown in the foreground or holding the product.

*Secondary Role:* This indicates a character that assumes a less prominent role than the primary character in an advertisement theme or layout. Generally, such characters are neither spotlighted in the advertisement, nor do they touch the product. The 'secondary role' character is, nevertheless, easily spotted through casual observation.

*Background Role:* This is a character that is difficult to find in an advertisement, that is, a character not likely to be noticed by a reader casually glancing at the advertisement, and who is not important to the advertisement's theme or layout.

*Product Type* determinates whether magazine advertisements featured Asian models in some product categories more than others. In addition to coding the role characters play in advertisements using role prominence definitions, I organized my sample according to 9 product types, including:

- Technology-based electronics
- Telecommunications products/services
- Banking and financial services
- Automobiles
- Food and beverages
- Household products
- Fashion and cosmetics products
- Nonprofit organizations/PSA
- Other

#### *Results of the Pilot Test and Scott's Pi Formula*

Before beginning the content analysis for this study, I conducted a preparation session with the second coder and a pilot test was done to ensure that the coding met the necessary coding reliability. After coding 10 percent of the sample, Scott's Pi formula was used to calculate intercoder reliability for all categories coded in the study.

I trained a second coder on what advertisements to code and provided a brief explanation of the coding categories. The two coders coded 10 percent of the sample for the study. The Scott's Pi formula was used to calculate intercoder reliability as it takes into account that some agreement between coders occurs because of chance and also

covers the number of categories used and probable frequency of use (Wimmer and Dominick, 1994). The Scott's Pi showed that intercoder reliability was in the acceptable range. For such studies, it is recommended that intercoder reliability achieve at least 80 percent agreement. The Scott's pi for this study showed intercoder reliability of 95 percent. The results of the test showed consistency in the levels of agreement for two independent coders, who coded the same content using the same coding definition.

## Chapter 4: Results

Based on the research design outlined in the previous chapter, I coded a total of 1352 advertisements. The study focused on issues before and after the movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The data provided in the tables below reveals important observations about, 1) whether the number of Asian models increase or decrease after the film, 2) whether after the movie there would be more Asian models in fashion than technology advertisements, and 3) whether the number of Asian models in primary role would increase after the film.

Table 1: Asian Models in Four American Magazines, 1996-2000 to 2003- 2007

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Business Week n=382	PC World N=352	Time N=222	Vogue N=396
28%	26%	17%	29%

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The results presented in Table 1 indicate that during the 10-year sequence *Vogue* featured more Asian models than did the other magazines. *Business Week* came in second, *PC World* third and *Time* last. The results are completely different from those reported by Lee (1994) and Taylor and Lee's (1994). In their results, technology and business magazines had the highest portrayed of Asian models and women's magazine and general interest had the least. This is a surprisingly finding since it was expected that *PC World* and *Business Week* would contain the most number of Asian models. The data of my study suggests that this is not the case.

Table 2: Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models in Four American Magazines

Magazines	Before the film (1996-2000)	After the film (2003-2007)	% Change
Business Week	199	183	- 9%
PC World	196	156	-26%
Time	125	97	-29%
Vogue	202	194	-4%
Total	722	630	-15%

Table 2 provides data that suggest answers to the first research question, was the number of Asian models used in magazine advertisements greater during the five years after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* than during the five years before the movie? The table indicates that after the film, there has been a decrease in the number of advertisements in all publications that featured Asian models. Among all publications, *PC World* and *Time* experienced the greatest decrease. *Business Week* and *Vogue* had the least decrease. These findings challenge those of previous studies that found East Asian men and women to be overrepresented in technology magazines and underrepresented in fashion magazines (Taylor et al., 1995). Therefore, after the film, one can assume that technology magazines suffer the least decrease and fashion magazines the greatest decrease.

Table 3: Percentages of Asian Models in Product Categories, 1996-2000 and 2003-2007

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Technology-based electronics	33.7 %
Other	19.2%
Fashion and cosmetics products	18.3%
Telecommunication products/services	10.8%
Banking and financial services	8.3%
Nonprofit organizations/PSA	3.1%
Household products	2.6%
Automobiles	2.1%
Food and beverages	1.8%

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According to the nine product categories that I used to code my sample of advertisement, Asian models were found to be heavily associated with technology-based electronics. This finding concurs with previous studies, namely Sengupta's (2006) study. Sengupta found that Asian women were prominent in advertisements for electronic products, while fashion cosmetics advertisements rarely employed Asians in advertisements. However, the table also suggests that Asian models are appearing more frequently in fashion and cosmetic advertisements.

Table 4: Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models

Product categories	Before the film 1996-2000	After the film 2003-2007	% Change
Technology-based electronics	224	232	+3%
Telecommunications products	98	48	-104%
Banking and financial services	53	59	+10%
Automobiles	20	9	-122%
Food and beverages	14	11	-27%
Household products	13	22	+41%
Fashion and cosmetics	116	131	+11%
Nonprofit organizations/PSA	37	5	-640%
Other	147	113	-30%

Table 4 provides data that suggest answers to the second research question, did the relationship between the appearance of Asian models in magazine advertisements and the products being advertised change in the five years after *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*? Interestingly, after the film, the instances of Asian models appearing in household product advertisements increased the most, followed by fashion and cosmetic,

banking and financial, and technology-base electronic advertisements. Previous studies found that household products and fashion and cosmetic advertisements were the least likely to feature Asian models. After the film, however, Asian models' appearances in these advertisements increased by 41 and 11%, respectively. As mentioned earlier, Asian models are heavily associated with technology-based electronic advertisements, but this number only increased by 3%. On the other hand, telecommunication products, automobiles and nonprofit organization/ PSA show the largest decrease.

Table 5: Representation of Asian Models in Role Portrayals from 1996-2000 and 2003-2007

Primary Role (n=863)	Secondary Role (n=287)	Background Role (n=210)
63.9%	21.2%	14.9%

There were three categories for Asian models: Primary Role, Secondary Role, and Background Role. The findings revealed that over the 10-year period, Asian models were much more likely to be represented in primary roles than in secondary and background roles. The numbers of the last two roles are much closer than to the primary role number.

Table 6: Difference in Number of Advertisements Featuring Asian Models in Role Portrayals

Role Portrayals	Before the film 1996 - 2000	After the film 2003 - 2007	% Change
Primary	422	442	+4%
Secondary	162	125	-30%
Background	138	63	-119%

Table 6 provides data that answer the third research question, did the roles of Asian models change in the five years after the movie? In the years following the film, the upward shift is minimal with the general trend being steeply downward. The primary role was the only role that increased even though the gains were small. Most importantly, instances of Asians in background roles decreased substantially more than those occupying secondary roles.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the observations made earlier in the content analysis. To contextualize the data, I will consider the general trends of Asian models in the magazine advertisements I studied. Then I will consider how the two parameters, Product Category and Role Prominence, further explain my observations.

### *Asian Models in Four American Magazines*

According to Taylor, Landreth, and Bang (2005) and Taylor and Lee (1994), Asian models in advertising have limited representation. Typically, they have been skewed toward technology-based products, business environments, and science publications. Therefore, *PC World* and *Business Week* were expected to have the most Asian models, while *Vogue* was expected to have the least. However, as the data show, throughout the 10-year period, *Vogue* had the most Asian models of the four publications. These results contradicted Taylor, Landreth, and Bang's findings.

Although the movie *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon* was a success, all publications after the film's release showed a decrease in advertising with Asian models. *Time* decreased the most, followed by *PC World*, *Business Week*, and *Vogue*. Therefore, the movie did not serve to increase the number of Asian models in the magazine advertising described here.

### *Product Categories*

The research showed that from 1996 through 2000 and from 2003 through 2007, Asian models were heavily associated with technology products. The observation suggests that Asian Americans frequently appear in fashion magazines, but it is possible

that the actual advertisements in which they appear are still for technology and business products/services.

Taylor and Lee (1994), among others, found that Asian models were heavily associated with technology-related products and business settings. The models were viewed as intelligent, hardworking, technically skilled, and serious. As my data show, after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, banking and financial services and technology-based electronics advertising that included Asian models increased slightly in all four magazines. However, this increase was surpassed by the increase in Asian models appearing in advertisements for household products, fashion, and cosmetics ads. On the other hand, advertising for food and beverages, automobiles, nonprofit organizations, telecommunications products, and miscellaneous products decreased. After the film, the general public has had more opportunity to observe more Asian models in fashion, cosmetics, and household product advertisements, which suggests that the typical stereotypes of Asian Americans are weakening.

### *Role Portrayal*

This study shows Asian models were important to advertisers' themes. Even when the models were not spotlighted, they were not difficult to find in the advertisements. In fact, during the 10-year interval, Asian models were more and more frequently portrayed in primary roles. Lee and Joo's (2005) study had similar results. The authors noted that when Asian Americans appeared in publication advertisements, they were more likely to be featured in a primary role, suggesting that they were marginalized less than in the past when they were unlikely to appear in the foreground.

This study has revealed that, contrary to historical patterns, Asian models appeared frequently in *Vogue* in primary roles, in *Time and Business Week* in secondary roles, and in *PC World* in background roles.

Previous studies have shown that Asian models were most likely to appear in *PC World* and *Business Week*, so it could be assumed that Asian models were more likely to appear in these publications in primary roles. After *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*'s release, the instances of Asian models assuming primary roles increased, while instances of their appearance in secondary and background roles decreased. According to my findings, one could argue that this is a new trend in magazine advertising. We might expect that in the future there would be even more Asian models occupying primary roles compared to secondary and background roles.

#### *Direction for Future Research*

After the research was completed, I evaluated the procedures that were used. Upon re-examination, content analysis remains the best way to approach the research topic. The categories I used appeared most useful for the purpose of coding advertisements. Nevertheless, I did encounter a few advertisements in which it was difficult to distinguish the ethnicity of the models and the product categories. When dealing with these questionable advertisements, I relied heavily on the coding categories to make my distinctions as accurate as possible.

For future research, I recommend that the findings of this study be replicated with other media, especially television commercials. Currently, Taylor and Stern's (1994)

study is the only one of its kind. Clearly, more research is needed to replicate and update their findings, especially since my data suggest much has changed since their 1994 study.

A survey of public attitudes regarding the way Asian Americans are portrayed in magazines or on television would also be useful. Further, researchers should investigate whether public perception reflects the ways Asian Americans are portrayed by advertisers, or if increased instances of Asian models in advertising change the typical Asian American stereotypes.

### *Conclusions*

In this study, we find that, after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the number of Asian models in advertisements decreased in all publications examined here. Advertising with Asian models decreased the least in women's magazines, while in technology, business, and general interest magazines, it decreased more. This finding differs significantly from that of previous researchers. Still, the study reveals that, after the film's release, the number of Asian models featured in certain categories increased. These product categories included household products followed by fashion and cosmetics, banking and financial services, and technology-based electronics. The number of Asian models in advertisements for food and beverage, automobiles, nonprofit organizations, telecommunications products, and other suffered a reduction. Finally, after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the number of primary roles for Asian models increased, especially in women's magazines. At the same time, secondary and background roles decreased.

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