Cultural differences in Body Image Perception and its importance in Consumer Marketing

Dagmar Skokanova
University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic
January 4th 2011, Ho Chi Minh City

Grant project:

“Importance of Body Image in Marketing”

Grant Agency of the Czech Republic

GACR 402/09/0311 (2009-2011)

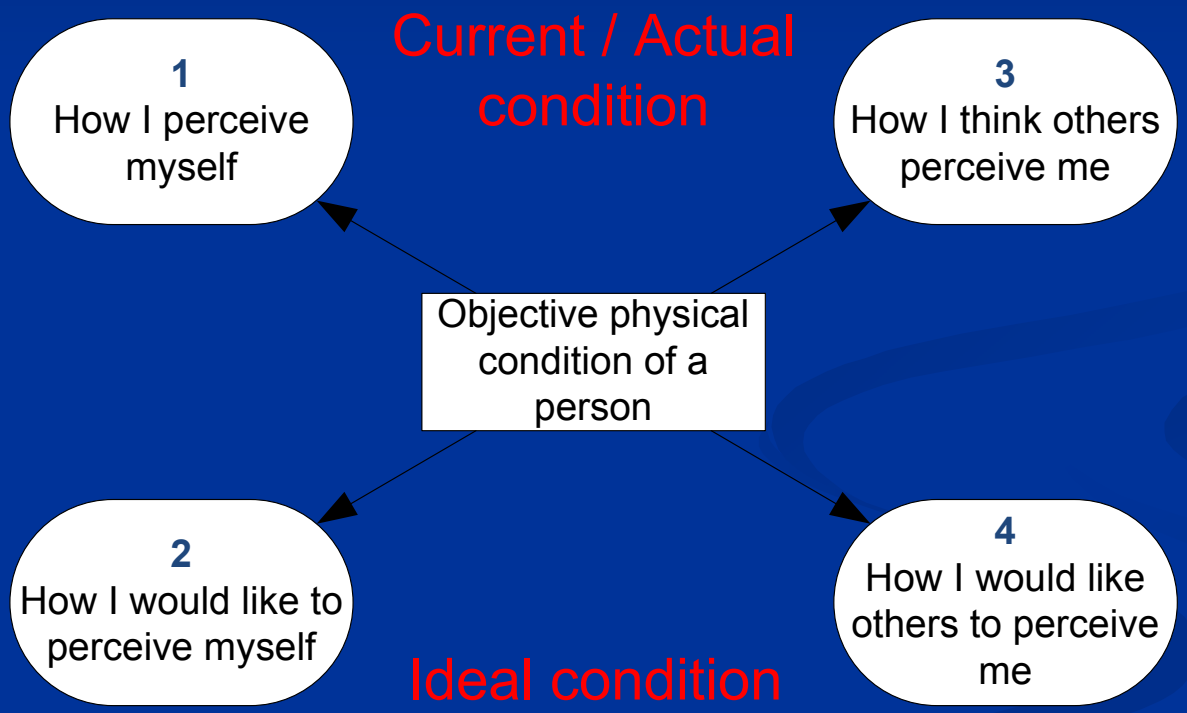
Definition of Body Image

Body image refers to a person's perception of their own physical appearance, usually in relation to some „ideal."

Body image as consumer's subjective evaluation of his physical self. (Michael Solomon)

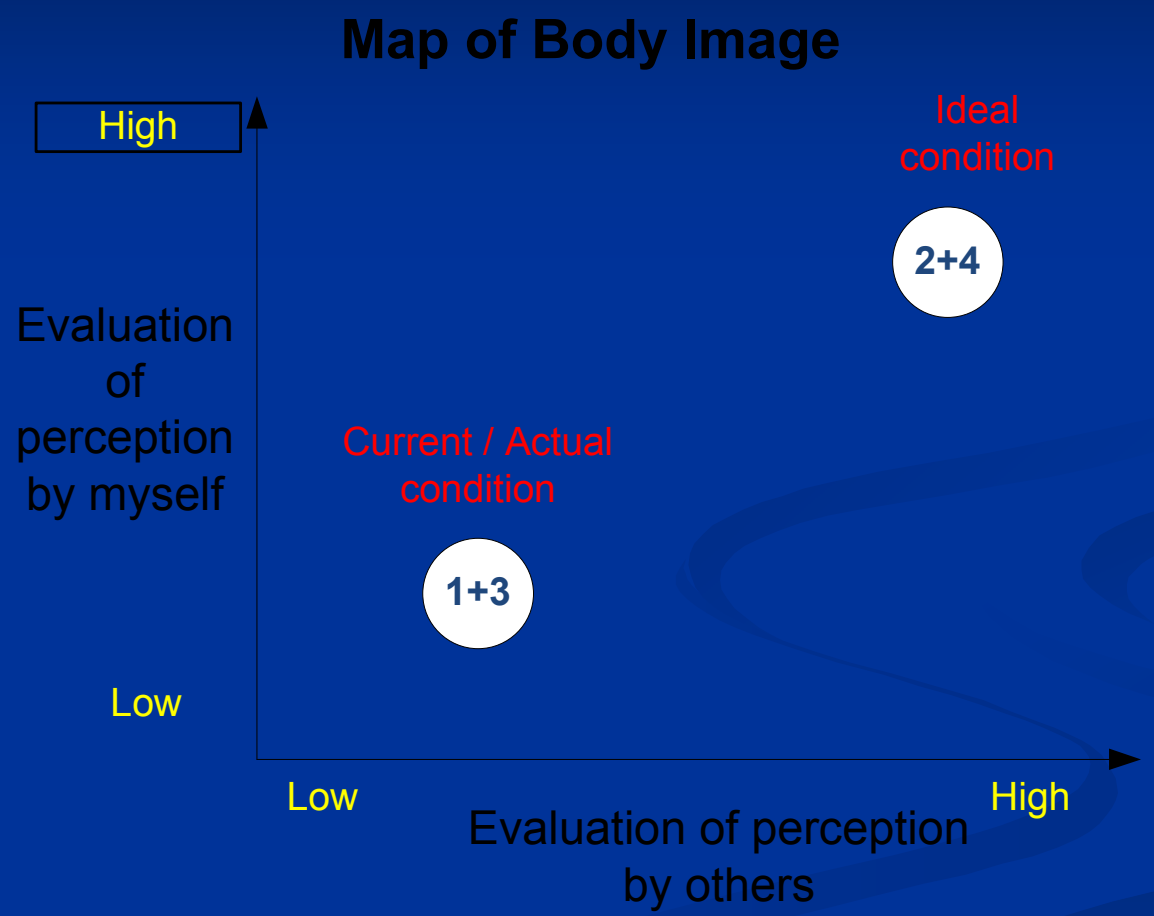
Schematic model of Body Image

Diagram of Body Image



Source: Own diagram

Graph of Body Image



Source: Own graph

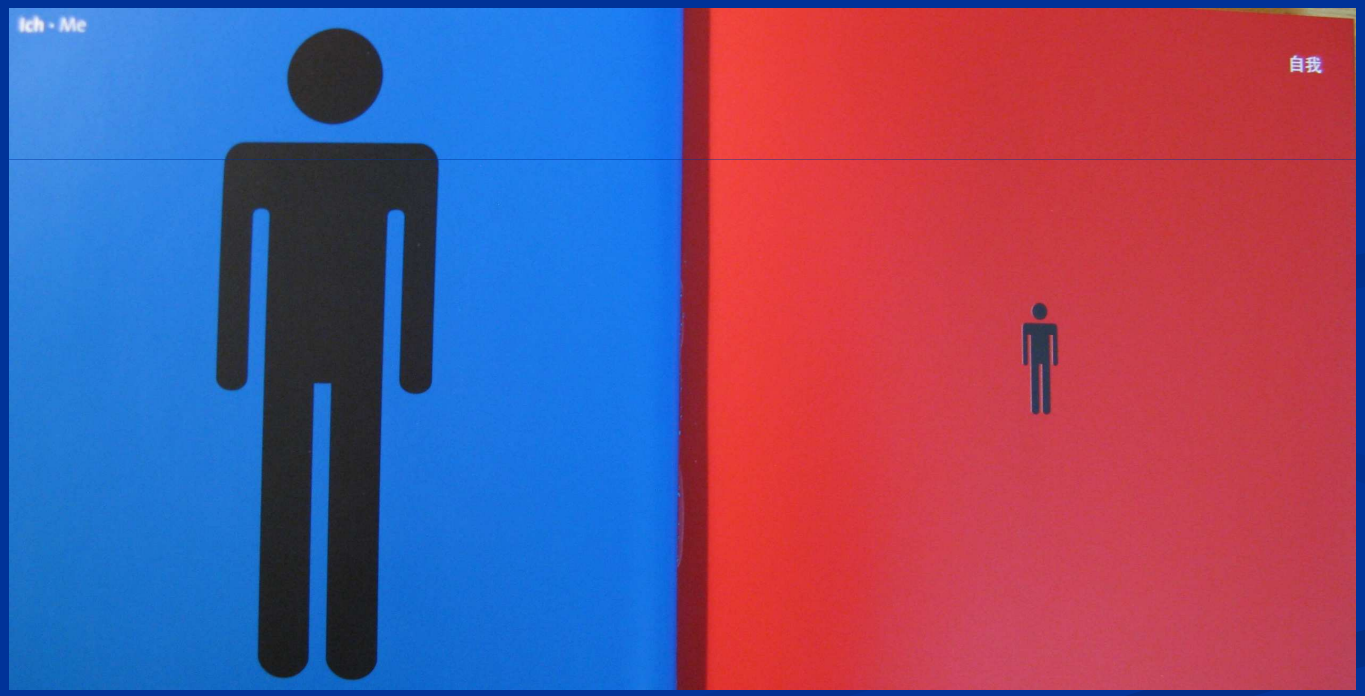
Body Image

(ideal) body image is culturally conditioned by the particular environment

Cultural Differences in Body Image Perception

USA

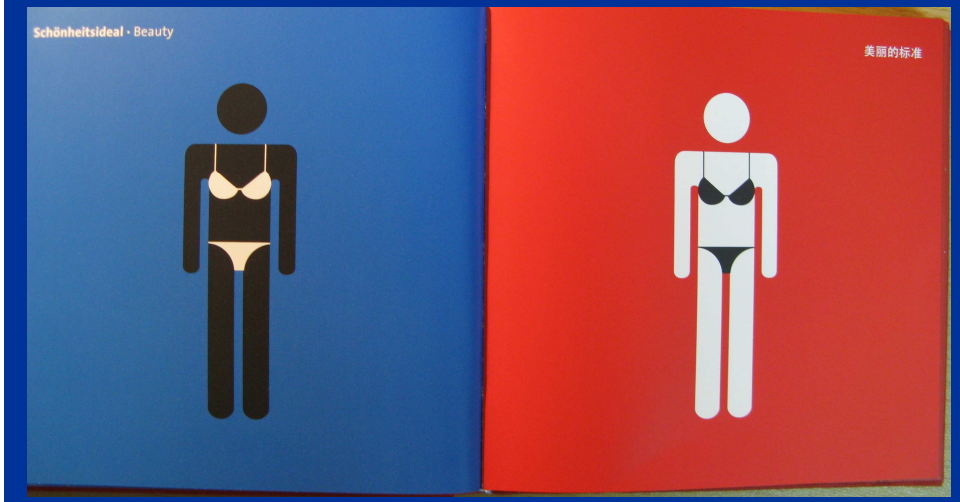
China



Source: Yang, L. (2007): Ost trifft West, Germany, Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz

Differences in skin tone color

USA China



USA China

Source: Yang, L. (2007): Ost trifft West, Germany, Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz

Body decorations

- Tattoos
- Body piercing
- Tongue forking
- Henna painting

Cultural Differences in Body Image perception (China vs US)

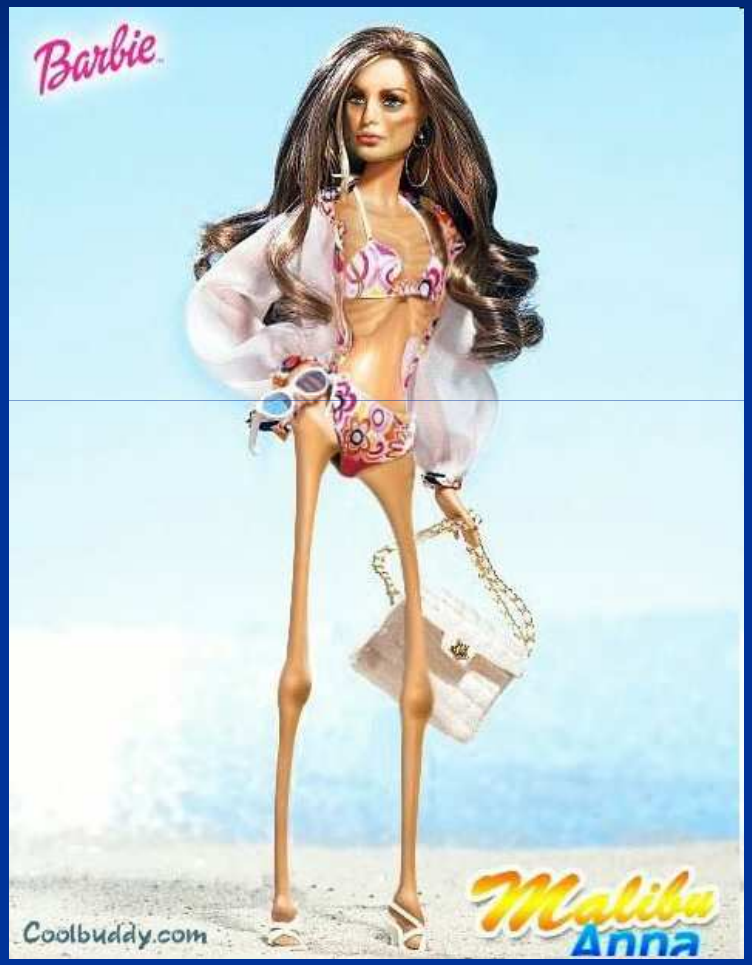
Research explores:

1) Questionnaire - the way consumers perceive (ideal) body image in a particular culture (China vs. US)
2) Content analysis - the way body image is portrayed in advertising in such cultures (China vs. US)

Body Image in advertisement

- Increasing interest in one's own bodily apprearance
- in evaluating our body, we compare it with other bodies, especially bodies in advertisements

Problems related to BI advertisement



Plastic surgery

Source: China Daily, European Weekly: Showing Face:Looks Can Kill. December 3-9, 2010, p.3

Research Methodology

- Online questionnaire (September 2009 – November 2009)
- 24 questions (Chinese and English version of Questionnaire)
- N = 220 (Chinese respondents)
- N = 254 (American respondents)

Body Image Parameters:

- Size/shape of eyes
- Size/shape of lips
- Skin complexion
- Body shape
- Body ornamentation (tattoo, piercing)

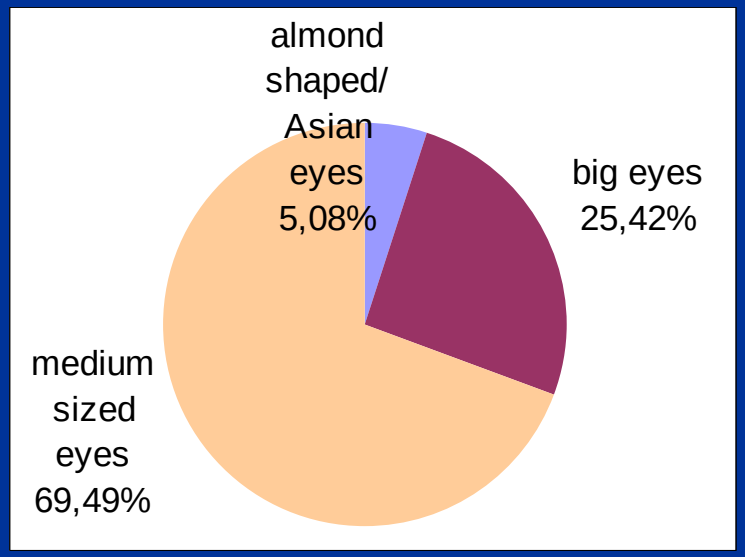
Popular stereotypes

Most attractive eyes on women?

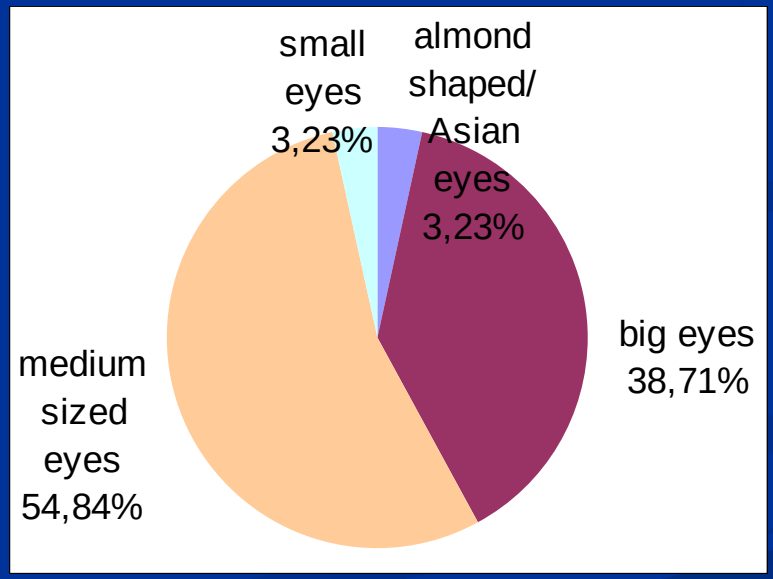
Research Results

Considering eyes, what kind of eyes do you consider the most attractive on women?

USA



China



Popular stereotypes

Most attractive lips on women?

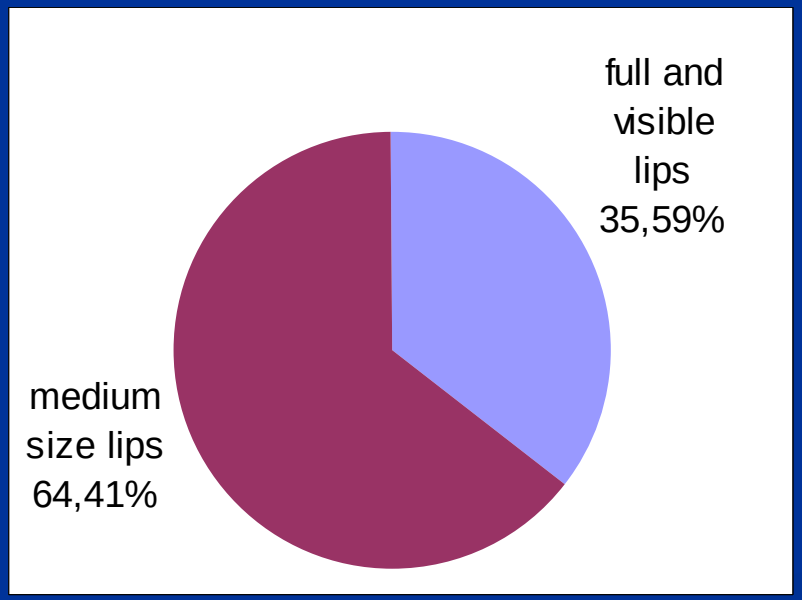
USA

China

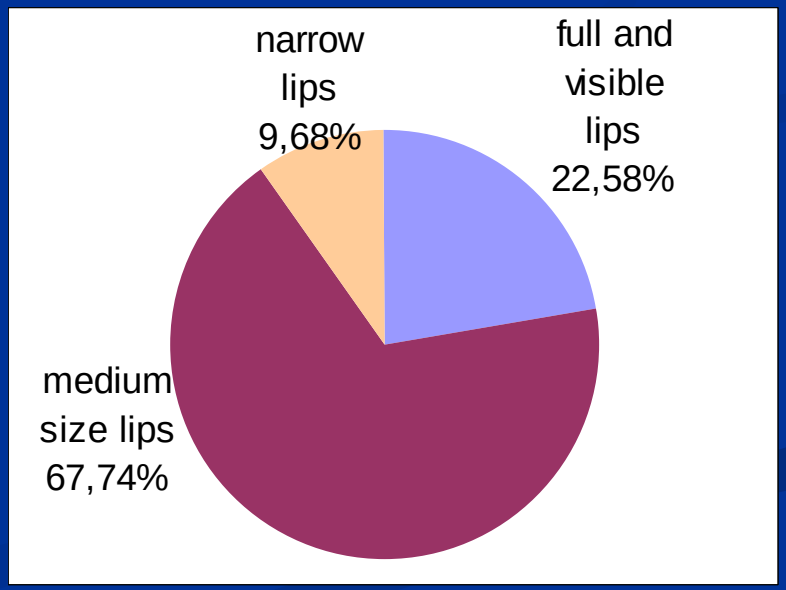
Research Results

Considering lips, what kind of lips do you consider the most attractive on women?

USA



China

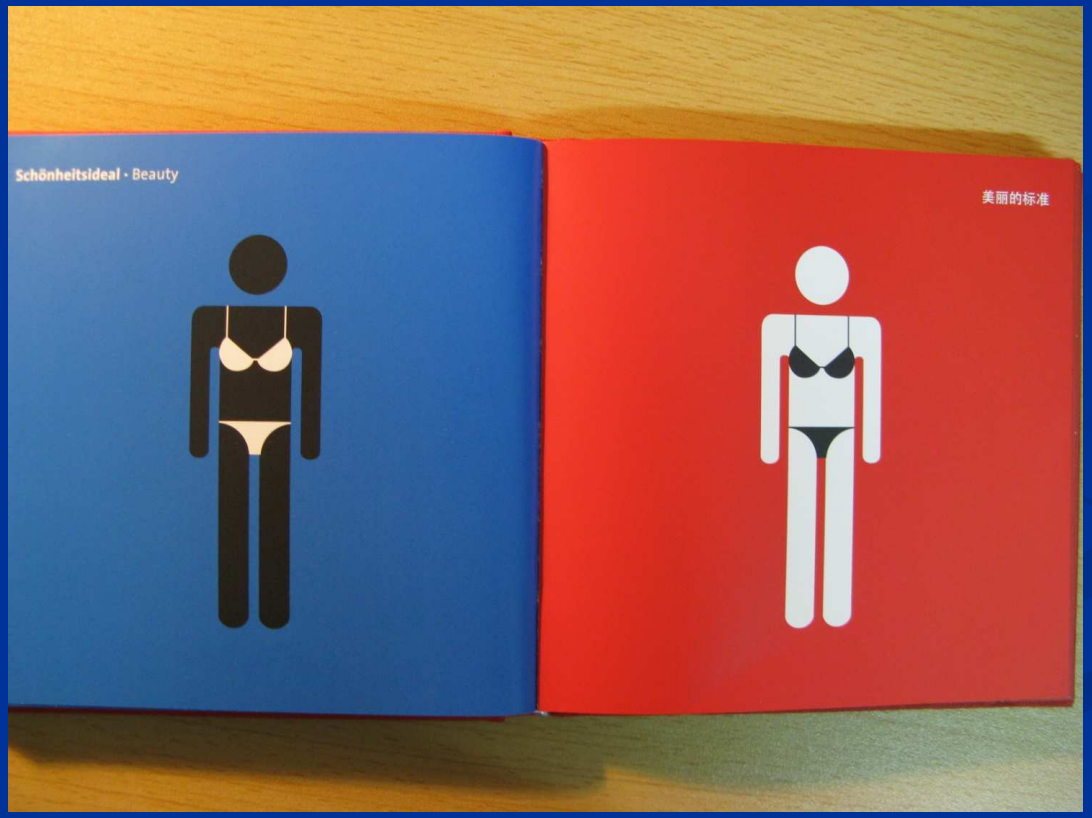


Popular stereotypes

Skin complexion

USA

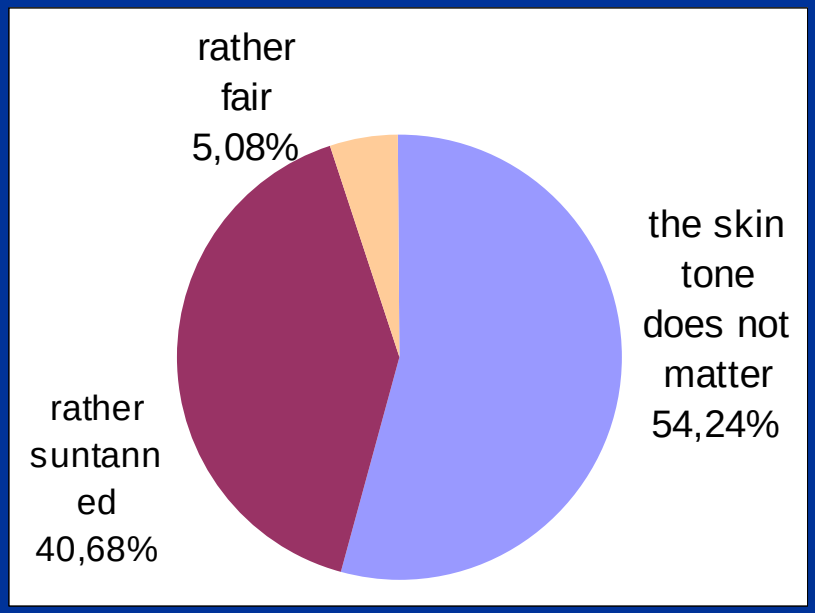
China



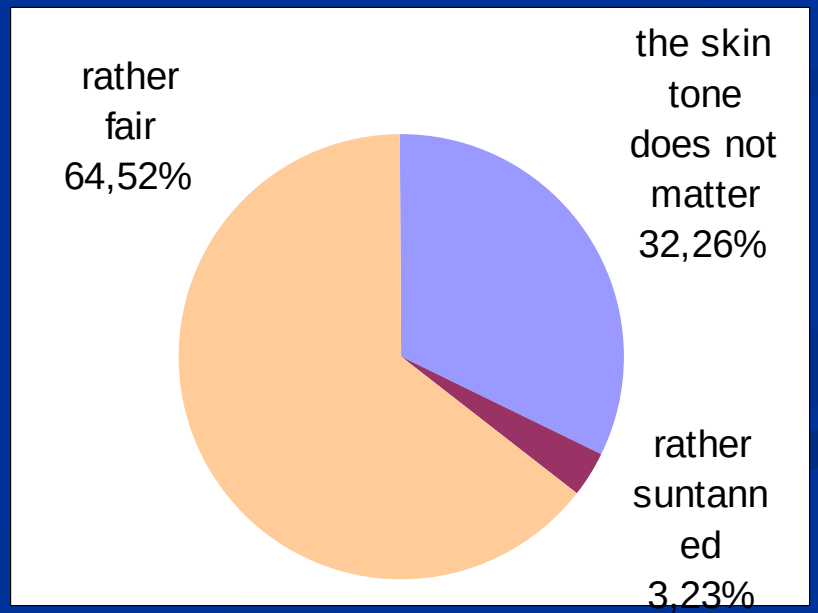
Research Results

Do you believe that people with the following skin complexion look well:

USA



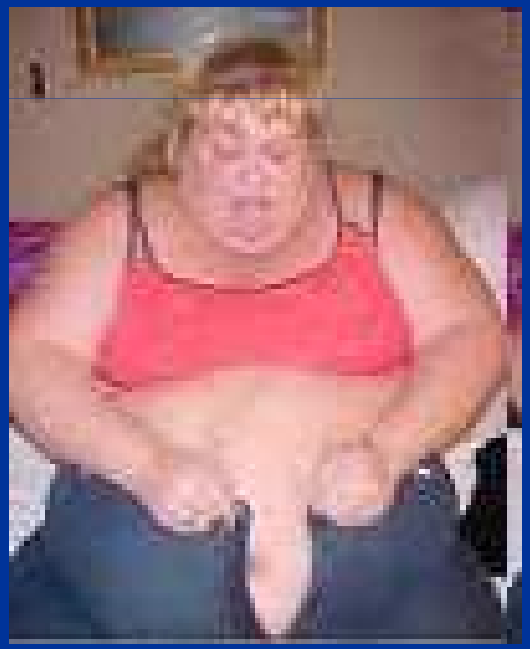
China



Popular stereotypes

Body shape

USA

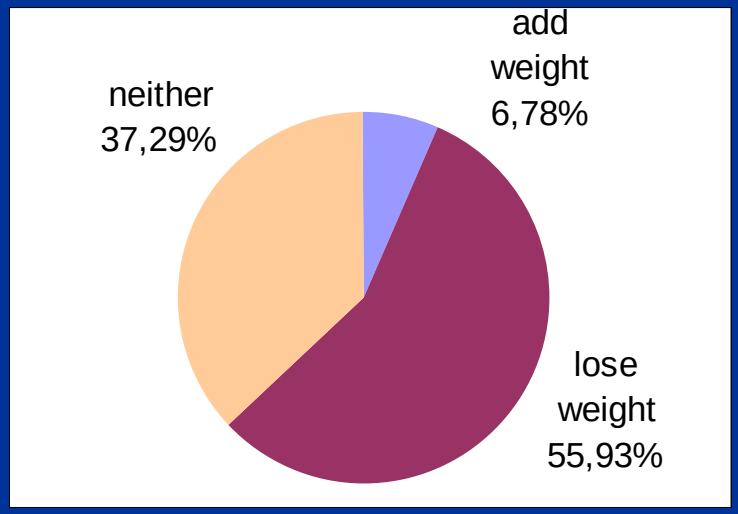


China

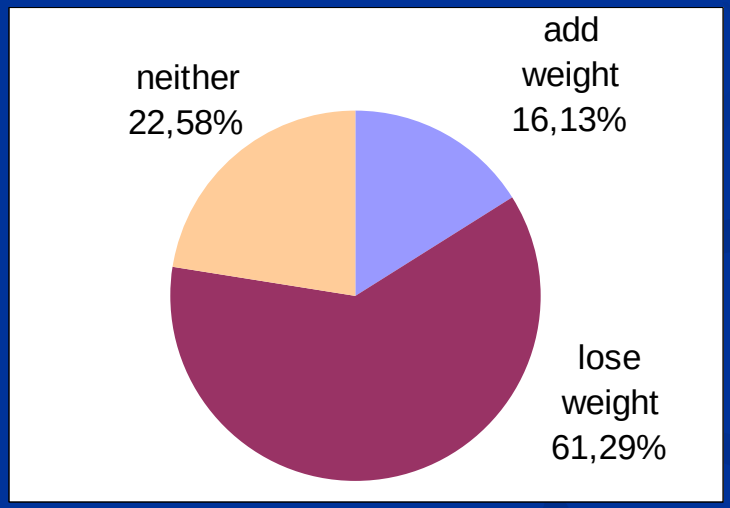
Research Results

Are you happy with your body shape? Would you like to:

USA



USA



Content Analysis

American and Chinese version (2009)

Ethnical background of the portrayed persons

Ethnical background	State		
Etnikum	USA	China	Average
N/A	0,00%	0,57%	0,37%
Europoid	86,43%	68,07%	74,47%
Mongoloid	1,43%	29,83%	19,93%
Afroamerican	3,21%	0,00%	1,12%
Nordic	6,07%	1,34%	2,99%
Mulat	0,36%	0,00%	0,12%
Latino	2,50%	0,19%	1,00%
Součet	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)

Comparison of Body Weight in Portrayed Persons in the USA and China

State	Gender	Weight			Summary
		Under	Normal	Above	
USA	Woman	39,84%	59,76%	0,40%	100%
	Man	6,67%	93,33%	0,00%	100%
Total USA		**36,30%**	**63,35%**	**0,36%**	**100%**
China	Woman	19,61%	79,96%	0,43%	100%
	Man	7,69%	88,46%	3,85%	100%
Total China		**18,41%**	**80,81%**	**0,78%**	**100%**
Summary		**24,72%**	**74,65%**	**0,63%**	**100%**

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)

Skin Complexion in Portrayed Persons in the US and Chinese Print media

State	Gender	Skin Complexion						
		Pale	Normal	Tanned	Racially tanned	Racially yellow	Racially black	Summary
USA	Woman	29,32%	49,40%	20,08%	0,40%	0,00%	0,80%	100%
	Man	6,67%	50,00%	20,00%	0,00%	0,00%	23,33%	100%
Total USA		**26,88%**	**49,46%**	**20,07%**	**0,36%**	**0,00%**	**3,23%**	**100%**
China	Woman	50,21%	39,57%	6,38%	0,21%	3,62%	0,00%	100%
	Man	14,29%	65,31%	18,37%	0,00%	2,04%	0,00%	100%
Total China		**46,82%**	**42,00%**	**7,51%**	**0,19%**	**3,47%**	**0,00%**	**100%**
Summary		**39,85%**	**44,61%**	**11,90%**	**0,25%**	**2,26%**	**1,13%**	**100%**

Source: own data processing (results of primary research)

Thank you

and

Happy New Year 2011