

Social Groups in South Korean Television Advertising: Foreigners and Older People

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Introduction

This article analyzes the representation of varying social groups in South Korean television advertising. This study focuses on two social groups, foreigners and older people.¹ An investigation of these two rather different social groups is of interest because representations in advertising influence the way in which these groups are perceived (affecting self-perception and the perceptions of others). This topic is becoming increasingly important in countries such as South Korea, where both social groups are growing rapidly. In addition, a comparison between the two groups may reveal particularities of representation that are not otherwise evident. The results of this research will be examined in the context of previous research, especially on East Asia. A comparison with research on other East Asian countries seems most appropriate given their historical and cultural similarities, including the influence of Confucianism on South Korea, Japan and China.

South Korea is a fascinating context in which to study foreigners and older people. It is currently one of the most rapidly aging societies in the world. Currently, only 11% of the population is 65 years or older. However, by 2050, that figure is predicted to be 38.2%, which will make South Korea the most aged society worldwide (Korea Times 2009). The volume of foreign residents in South Korea is also rapidly increasing. Whereas only approximately 2% of residents were foreigners in 2009, this figure is estimated to increase to 10% by 2050 (Korea Times 2011). These rapid changes within Korean society make it even more important to analyze the representation of foreigners and older people in the Korean context.

Advertising plays an influential role in society. Advertising not only reflects the social norms in a society (Fowles 1996; Frith & Mueller 2010) but also plays a role in their production (Holden 2004), teaching us about social roles and values (Pollay 1986). Two main theories indicate the possible influence of the media and advertising on its audience. *Social cognitive theory* (Bandura 2009) states that learning about the social environment can occur through both direct and vicarious

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observation (e.g., through watching television). People model their behavior on these observations, which provide information, for example, about appropriate age roles. *Cultivation theory* (Gerbner 1998) argues that television has an even stronger influence because it plays an important role in creating (distorted) views of reality, especially for heavy viewers. Watching television produces a worldview consistent with the one provided on television. Research has confirmed these theories and has shown that the media has an influence on how older people regard themselves (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy 2005; Korzenny & Neuendorf 1980; Mares & Cantor 1992) and are regarded by younger people (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan 1980; Passuth & Cook 1985). Research has also shown that the media affects how people of different ethnicities perceive themselves and how they are perceived by other ethnic groups (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz 2008; Mastro & Tukachinsky 2011).

Clearly, the representation of foreigners and older people influences perceptions regarding these social groups. The same can be assumed regarding images of foreigners and older people in South Korea. This study analyzes the representation and roles of foreigners and older people in Korean television advertisements and discusses the possible effects of these representations on their audience. Although the results of this research cannot claim to prove the effect of representation on audiences, content analysis is an important first step in understanding the possible impacts of media and helps to establish a starting point for studies on the influence of the media (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico 2005; Wimmer & Dominick 2010).

Literature Review

There has been a vast amount of literature produced on foreigners, race, ethnicity and older people in television advertising. In this literature review, the focus will therefore be only on the most recent research and particularly on the few existing studies on these issues in East Asia. Although there have been several studies on foreigners in Japanese television advertising (Hagiwara 2004; Hiyoshi 2001; Kozakai 1996; Prieler 2010), none was found for television advertising in China and South Korea. However, there have been studies of the representation of older people in China (Zhang, Song, & Carver 2008), South Korea (Lee, Kim, & Han 2006; Ong & Chang 2009) and Japan (e.g., Hagiwara, Prieler, Kohlbacher, & Arima 2009; Yamanaka 2000).

Numerical Representation

Numerical representations of social groups in the media are considered a possible indicator of their importance within society and can also affect knowledge about and public perceptions of these groups—e.g., young people may come to

believe that fewer older people exist than there are in reality if the number of older people represented on television is disproportionately low (Gerbner et al. 1980). Several researchers have studied the numerical representation of foreigners and people of different ethnicities and races in television advertisements. However, there have only been a few recent studies in the United States that have investigated the representation of multiple ethnic groups in television advertising. For example, Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found that 86% of people in advertisements were white, 11% African American, 2% Asian American and 1% Latino. Mastro and Stern (2003) reported similar findings (83.3% white, 12.4% black, 2.3% Asian, 1.0% Latino and 0.4% Native American). Thus, the distribution of individuals represented on television is similar to the demographic reality in the United States except that Latinos are clearly underrepresented. For this article, however, representations of foreigners in advertising within Asia are of special interest. There have been several studies of Japan in this regard. The most detailed study was conducted by Hagiwara (2004) who revealed that 18.6% of commercials in 2003 and 15.0% in 1993 included foreigners. Representations of white foreigners dominated in both years, amounting to more than 70%, followed by East Asians at approximately 10% and black people at approximately 3%; approximately 10% of ads included other categories of foreigners. The foreigners were predominantly young or, in the case of males, middle aged. Hiyoshi (2001) discovered similar results, indicating that in advertisements, 70.6% were whites in 2000 and 64.1% in 1995, 5.8% were blacks in 2000 and 6.4% in 1995, and 10.3% were Asians in 2000 and 19.8% in 1995. Hiyoshi's research also indicated the predominance of young foreigners in advertisements. Similarly, an earlier study by Kozakai (1996) found that nearly 25% of television commercials included foreigners. In summary, given that only approximately 2% of the Japanese population is foreign born and that these individuals are mostly of Asian descent, (white) foreigners were clearly overrepresented in Japanese television advertisements during these years (Prieler 2010).

Nearly all studies focused on older people found that they, unlike foreigners, were underrepresented in television advertisements. This result was found in more recent research in the United States (Lee, Carpenter, & Meyers 2007; Peterson & Ross 1997; Roy & Harwood 1997; Zimmerman 2001), Australia (Higgs & Milner 2006), Germany (Kessler, Schwender, & Bowen 2010), and both Japan (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima 2009) and South Korea (Lee et al. 2006; Ong & Chang 2009). In contrast, a few studies reported results that were more consistent with the demographic reality for the United Kingdom (Simcock & Sudbury 2006), the United States (Lee et al. 2006), and China (Zhang et al. 2008). A study on Japan revealed the underrepresentation of older people, especially those older than 65, who were included in only 6.1% of television commercials in 2007 but comprised 20.2% of the actual population (Prieler et al. 2009). However, such

underrepresentation was less prevalent for the age group 50-64, which was present in 21.4% of commercials with people in 2007. In China, 12.3% of television ads included older people, and this figure was approximately the same as the percentage of the actual population comprised of such individuals at the time of the investigation (Zhang et al. 2008). In South Korea, only 8.6% of people represented were ages 60 or older, whereas at that time, this age group represented 13.3% of the population (Ong & Chang 2009). Another study of South Korea found 8.0% of commercials included older people but that they represented 12% of the population (Lee et al. 2006).

Gender, Celebrities, and Role

The representation of gender has yielded a vast amount of literature (Eisend 2010; Furnham & Paltzer 2010), and a meta-analysis of previous studies confirms that television teaches sex role stereotyping and that heavy viewing is positively associated with sex-role stereotyping in both children and adults (Oppliger 2007).

Gender-based differences in the representation of ethnic groups were revealed by Coltrane and Messineo (2000) in the United States. More whites and blacks were male, whereas more Asians and Hispanics were female. In contrast, Mastro and Stern (2003) found more males represented for all racial groups except Latinos. In Japan, an equal gender distribution in the representation of foreigners was reported (Hagiwara 2004; Kozakai 1996). However, Hiyoshi (2001) discovered a tendency to use more white and black males and more Asian females in advertisements. Hagiwara (2004) and Prieler's (2006) research also revealed the predominance of black males in representations of foreigners. In studies of older people, it was almost always found that television ads featured a higher percentage of older males than older females. This result was also found in a study in Japan, in which the majority of females were found to be young; older females were rarely represented (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima 2011a). Similarly, in a study on South Korea, 81.5% of older people used in advertisements were male (Ong & Chang 2009).

Celebrity is an important factor to consider when studying television advertising in South Korea. Generally, South Korea and Japan are considered the countries with the highest celebrity usage with figures of more than 50% (Praet 2009). In Japan, Hagiwara et al (2009) found that more than 60% of commercials from 1997 and 2007 included celebrities. Similarly, Choi and associates (2005) found celebrities in 57% of commercials in South Korea. There is little data on the representations of foreign celebrities. A few studies on older people, however, have investigated celebrities in television advertisements (Hajjar 1997; Higgs & Milner 2006; Simcock & Sudbury 2006). In Japan, the research of Prieler and colleagues (2010) found that 65.7% of older people in 1997 and 61.2% in 2007 were celebrities.

The roles in which people are portrayed can indicate their perceived social value; for instance, a major role can indicate importance. Through watching television, the audience learns what roles are “appropriate” for certain groups, thus cultivating an image of what roles those people should play in their actual society. Regarding the roles of individuals of various ethnicities, Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found that whites were featured more prominently than other racial groups in the United States. In Japan, Hagiwara (2004) showed that the majority of foreigners were depicted as central characters. Whereas there have been only a few studies of the roles of people of various ethnicities or those of foreigners, more research has been done on the roles of older people. The overall trend in the United States and the United Kingdom has been to position older people in minor or background roles rather than major roles (Roy & Harwood 1997; Simcock & Sudbury 2006). In contrast, research on South Korea and Japan revealed that more older people were positioned in major roles than in minor or background roles (Lee et al. 2006; Ong & Chang 2009; Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima 2011c) except in one study (Yamanaka 2000).

Interaction, Setting, and Product Category

The ways in which television advertisements depict people’s interactions with others provide additional information about people’s image within society as portrayed by advertising. As with the type of roles they play, the perceived value of people may be inferred from whether they are shown alone or together with other social groups (and if so, with which social groups). In the United States, Maher et al (2008) discovered that Hispanics and African Americans predominantly appeared with other ethnic groups, whereas the majority of Caucasians and Asians appeared without another ethnic group. In Japan, Hagiwara (2004) reported that 72.7% of foreigners portrayed in 2003 (and 80% of those portrayed in 1993) did not interact with other foreigners. Approximately 8% of ads featured an interaction in which the Japanese individual was depicted as superior; in approximately 10%, the different people represented were portrayed as equal; and in 5.3% of advertisements in 2003 and in 1.8% in 1993, foreigners were shown as superior. Although the categories used varied, some studies concluded that older people appeared with those from age groups other than their own in more than 70% of ads (Greco 1993; Roy & Harwood 1997; Zimmerman 2001). In contrast, in Japan older people predominantly appeared with adults younger than 50 years old, and they also increasingly appeared alone, whereas multiple generations were only depicted in approximately 10% of television ads with people (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima 2011b).

An important category in content analyses of social groups is the setting (Furnham & Mak 1999), which can communicate to the television audience that the

lives of foreigners or older people are confined to certain settings and associated activities. In the United States, blacks and Latinos were mostly outdoors, whereas Asians were at work and whites at home (Mastro & Stern 2003). There were no available data on the settings in which foreigners were depicted in the Asian context. The research findings regarding the settings in which older people were depicted were mixed. Whereas some research indicated that a high number of older people were portrayed in home settings (Greco 1993; Swayne & Greco 1987; Tupper 1995), others found that older people were predominantly portrayed in outside settings (Robinson 1998; Zimmerman 2001). Outside settings also proved to be common in South Korea and Japan (Ong & Chang 2009; Prieler et al. 2011b).

The products associated with particular social groups also indicate the preoccupations, competencies, and values associated with them (Mastro & Stern 2003). Such associations might lead to limited portrayals of some social groups and thus to distorted perceptions of those groups. In studying the representation of people of various ethnicities in the United States, Mastro and Stern (2003) found that black people were mostly represented in commercials for financial services and food, whereas Asians appeared in ads for technology and Latinos in ads for soap or deodorant. Whites were mostly used in commercials for technology and food. In Hagiwara's (2004) study on Japan, the automobile product category was most prevalent (in 51.1% of advertisements in 2003), followed by clothing/personal items (in 42.1% during the same year), and electronic goods (in 25%). Hiyoshi (2001) found drink advertisements to be common in 1995 (27.7%) and in 2000 (16.1%). Another common category was automobiles, which were represented in 13.7% of advertisements in 1995 and 18.5% in 2000. Older people most often promoted foods and beverages. This result was found for the United States (Greco 1993; Hajjar 1997; Lee et al. 2006; Lee et al. 2007; Miller, Leyell, & Mazachek 2004; Roy & Harwood 1997; Zimmerman 2001), the United Kingdom (Simcock & Sudbury 2006), China (Zhang et al. 2008), Japan (Prieler et al. 2009; Yamanaka 2000), and South Korea (Lee et al. 2006). Other product categories that heavily featured older people (also in South Korea) were those focused on financial or insurance products (Hajjar 1997; Lee et al. 2006; Ong & Chang 2009; Zimmerman 2001) and medications or health-related products (Lee et al. 2007; Ong & Chang 2009; Robinson 1998; Zimmerman 2001).

Method

Sample of Advertisements and Coding Procedure

The sampling took place in Chuncheon, South Korea, during the week of October 19-25, 2009. Of the five major television networks in South Korea, three were selected (MBC, GTB/SBS and KBS) because they all broadcast advertisements. Recordings were made during prime time, which is referred to as

Super A (SA) in South Korea. Super A includes the time periods from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on weekends (KOBACO 2006). So that advertisements from all three channels would be represented, the total recording time was divided into one-hour blocks, and the television channels were randomly assigned to one-hour time slots and rotated (Lee et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2008). This process yielded 415 commercials, of which 372 commercials included people, and the latter group served as our primary sample. Duplication was not controlled for because such duplication also occurs in real television viewing (Roy & Harwood 1997; Zhang et al. 2008). Moreover, this decision was also consistent with social cognitive theory, which suggests that repeated exposure may “function as a form of cognitive rehearsal” (Smith & Granados 2009: 349).

Two South Korean students were trained for 10 hours on a separate sample. After sufficient intercoder reliability had been attained, they coded the entire sample independently. The intercoder reliability coefficients, as measured using Cohen’s kappa, were above .60 for all variables and were therefore sufficient (Neuendorf 2011). Disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion to obtain the final data set.

Variables

Several variables only applied to one of the two social groups. These included the following:

Race/Ethnicity. The race/ethnicity of foreigners was analyzed using the following categories: (1) white, (2) black, (3) East Asian (but not Korean), (4) other, and (5) multiple races/ethnicities.

Age (for foreigners). Age for foreigners was estimated using the following groupings: (1) 0-17, (2) 18-34, (3) 35-49, (4) 50 or older, and (5) multiple age groups in cases in which foreigners of different ages appeared.

Age (for older people). The ages of the older people were further subdivided as follows: (1) 50-64, (2) 65 or older, and (3) both.

The following variables were applied to both older people and foreigners:

Gender. The characters in the commercial were categorized as (1) male, (2) female or (3) both if older people or foreigners of both genders appeared.

Celebrity. The character was coded as (1) a non-celebrity or (2) a celebrity. A celebrity was defined as a person who is well known in a society or culture.

Role. This variable was adapted from previous literature on older people and on race/ethnicity (Lee et al. 2006; Lee et al. 2007; Taylor & Stern 1997). A character was defined as having a major role if the character was very important to the theme or layout of the advertisement—for instance, if the character was shown in the foreground or was holding the product. For the role of an actor to be considered a major one, one of the two following criteria had to be met: (a) the actor

had to be the most prominent individual in the advertisement, the person speaking about the product or service; or (b) if there was a narrator speaking throughout the advertisement, the actor had to be the most prominent visual representative of the product or service. A character with a minor role was of average importance to the advertising theme or layout. Generally, such characters were not difficult to identify in the ad through casual observation. To be coded as having a minor role, an actor could not have met the criteria for a major role and had to meet at least one of the following three criteria: (a) the actor had to have a minimal speaking role but support the spokesperson in representing the product or service; (b) the actor had not to speak at all but be important to the effect of the advertisement; or (c) the actor had to be present for more than 3 seconds at one time or be present more than once in the advertisement. A character with a background role was difficult to find in the ad (i.e., not likely to be noticed by a viewer glancing at the ad) and not important to its theme or layout. To be coded as having a background role, an actor had not to have met the criteria for either a major role or minor role actor and had to meet at least one of the following criteria: (a) the actor had to be shown for 2 seconds or less at a time and not appear again in the advertisement, or (b) the actor had to be positioned in the background and be able to be replaced by virtually anyone without affecting the promotion of the service or product.

Interaction. The analysis of the interactions between foreigners and Koreans or between older people and individuals from other age groups was adapted from research on older people (Swayne & Greco 1987; Greco 1993; Roy & Harwood 1997). Interactions were categorized as follows: (1) the advertisement includes just one person (the individual is alone), (2) all people are older people/foreigners (no interaction takes place between foreigners and Koreans or between individuals of different age groups), or (3) the advertisement represents a mix of individuals (including foreigners and Koreans or older people and people of other age groups interacting in one shot).

Setting. On the basis of previous research (Mastro & Stern 2003), the place where the character predominantly appeared was categorized as (1) a workplace (inside), (2) a home (inside a residential space), (3) other indoor settings (e.g., a store or restaurant), (4) outdoors, or (5) other (e.g., against an artificial backdrop).

Product Category. On the basis of the results of a pilot test, 16 product categories were investigated: (1) foods/snacks, (2) non-alcoholic drinks, (3) alcoholic drinks, (4) cosmetics/toiletries, (5) pharmaceutical/health products, (6) cleaning products/kitchenware, (7) household appliances, (8) home entertainment products, (9) real estate/housing, (10) automotive/transportation products, (11) finance/insurance/legal products, (12) restaurants/retail outlets, (13) fashion/accessories, (14) mobile phones/providers, (15) computer/communications equipment (not including mobile phones), and (16) other. Product categories that seldom appeared were collapsed into the category "other".

Results

Of the 372 television commercials including people, 65 commercials (17.5%) included foreigners, out of which 80.0% (n = 52) of commercials included white people, 7.7% (n = 5) included black people, 1.5% (n = 1) included East Asian people, and 10.8% (n = 7) featured multiple racial groups. At 17.5%, foreigners are clearly overrepresented given the demographic reality; South Korea is currently one of the most ethnically homogenous nations, as approximately 2% of residents are foreign born (Korea Times 2011). The foreigners were mostly young, with 49.2% (n = 32) in the age group 18-34, 16.9% (n = 11) in the age group 35-49, 9.2% (n = 6) 50 or older, and 7.7% (n = 5) in the age group 0-17. In 16.9% (n = 11) of commercials, foreigners of different age groups appeared.

In contrast, there were 44 commercials (11.8%) that included older people, of which 59.1% (n = 26) included older people in the age group 50-64, 22.7% (n = 10) depicted older people ages 65 or older (or 2.7% within commercials with people) and 18.2% (n = 8) included both age groups. Thus, older people were clearly underrepresented given the demographic reality, as individuals in the age group 65 or older comprise 11% of the population (Korea Times 2009), whereas they were represented in only 2.7% of television ads with people.

As shown in Table 1, most foreigners and older people were male (60.0% vs. 63.6%); only a relatively small number were female (12.3% vs. 9.1%), and in some advertisements, male and female foreigners and older people appeared together (27.7% vs. 27.3%). The predominance of males, however, did not carry over into the overall sample of commercials with primary characters, in which 58.1% of such characters were females (Prieler 2011).

The foreigners and older people were rarely celebrities (13.8% vs. 15.9%); they were more often non-celebrities (86.2% vs. 84.1%). Again, this finding was in stark contrast to the results found for the overall sample of commercials with primary characters, in which 62.7% of those individuals were celebrities (Prieler 2011).

In contrast, the “role” showed the differences between foreigners and older people. Foreigners were mostly depicted in major roles (73.8% vs. 31.8%), whereas older people mostly played minor roles (52.3% vs. 21.5%). Older people also appeared in background roles in fewer cases (15.9%), but foreigners almost never did (4.6%).

The results for the “interaction” variable also differed for foreigners and older people. Foreigners were predominantly alone (64.6%); they were only rarely with other foreigners (21.5%) and interacted with Koreans even less often (13.8%). In contrast, older people mostly appeared with individuals from multiple age groups (72.7%) and rarely appeared alone (20.5%) or only with other older people (6.8%).

Foreigners and older people were also depicted in different settings. The foreigners were predominantly outdoors (46.2%) or at home (27.7%). The older people were outdoors (38.6%), at work (25.0%) or, to a lesser extent, at home

(13.6%) and in other indoor settings (11.4%). The greatest percentage difference between the two groups was found for work settings; foreigners only accounted for 4.6% of characters in such settings.

Older people were found in advertisements for products in the finance/insurance/legal categories (56.8%) and pharmaceuticals/health care category (22.7%). Foreigners were also used in advertisements for products in the finance/insurance/legal category (18.5%) and, to a lesser degree, in advertisements for foods/snacks (13.8%), restaurants/retail outlets (13.8%), and mobile phones/providers (12.3%).

Table 1: Relationships between Social Groups and Different Variables

Variables		Foreigners (N = 65)		Older People (N = 44)	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	39	60.0	28	63.6
	Female	8	12.3	4	9.1
	Both	18	27.7	12	27.3
Celebrity	Non-Celebrity	56	86.2	37	84.1
	Celebrity	9	13.8	7	15.9
Role	Major	48	73.8	14	31.8
	Minor	14	21.5	23	52.3
	Background	3	4.6	7	15.9
Interaction	Alone	42	64.6	9	20.5
	Only Foreigners or Older People	14	21.5	3	6.8
	Koreans and Foreigners/Multiple Age Groups	9	13.8	32	72.7
Setting	Home	18	27.7	6	13.6
	Work	3	4.6	11	25.0
	Other Indoors	3	4.6	5	11.4
	Outdoors	30	46.2	17	38.6
	Other	11	16.9	5	11.4
Product Category	Finance, Insurance, Legal	12	18.5	25	56.8
	Pharmaceuticals/Health Care	0	0	10	22.7
	Foods/Snacks	9	13.8	1	2.3
	Restaurants, Retail Outlets	9	13.8	0	0
	Mobile Phones, Providers	8	12.3	3	6.8
	Real Estate, Housing	5	7.7	1	2.3
	Home Entertainment	5	7.7	0	0
	Nonalcoholic Drinks	5	7.7	0	0
	Automotive, Vehicles, Transportation	4	6.2	1	2.3
	Other	8	12.3	3	6.8

Discussion and Conclusion

This article illustrates how foreigners and older people are represented in South Korean television advertising. Although the representation of these groups was sometimes consistent—for instance, mostly males and non-celebrities were used—they were represented quite differently overall. This result is not surprising given that the two social groups play rather different roles within the society under examination. Nevertheless, this comparison revealed particularities of these groups that would not have become evident otherwise. Foreigners were highly overrepresented given the demographic reality, appearing in 17.5% of TV ads (80% of which were white people). Older people, in contrast, only appeared in 11.8% of TV ads (and were mainly in the 50-64 age group). This percentage is considerably lower than the actual percentage of older people in the population. Foreigners were predominantly young, played major roles, and were mostly depicted alone and separate from Korean people. In contrast, older people almost never appeared alone; instead, they appeared in groups featuring people of multiple ages and were predominantly depicted in minor roles. Most often they advertised finance/insurance and health/pharmaceutical products. In the sections that follow, these findings will be considered in the context of the previous literature, and possible reasons for and effects of the representation of both groups will be discussed.

Numerical Representations of Social Groups

Foreigners were clearly overrepresented in South Korean television advertisements at 17.5%. Of the different types of foreigners, white people appeared most often. These findings are consistent with research on Japan (Hagiwara 2004) but inconsistent with those of studies of the United States, where television advertisements properly reflected the demographic reality (Mastro & Stern 2003; Coltrane & Messineo 2000). However, it is problematic to compare these two sets of results. In the case of the United States, these social groups are strongly present within society and have long struggled (as in the case of African-Americans) for adequate representation in television; thus, the representation of such groups has increased over time (Bush, Solomon, & Hair 1977; Zinkhan, Qualls, & Biswas 1990). However, in Japan or South Korea, individuals of other ethnicities (i.e., non-Japanese/non-Korean individuals) can be in most cases equaled with foreigners. Still, it is striking that foreigners—especially white foreigners, who are essentially absent from Korean society—are so often present in television advertising. However, this phenomenon is not exclusive to South Korea and Japan and is not limited to television advertising. Research on South Korean print ads showed that white models were more commonly used than Korean models (Nam, Lee, & Hwang 2011). Similar results were obtained by Frith and associates (2005) in their

research on print advertisements in Singapore and Taiwan.

Prieler (2006) names two major reasons why foreigners are heavily used in Japanese television advertisements: (1) to attract attention and (2) to imbue the product with the same qualities that are associated with the foreign people featured. The latter concept is similar to McCracken's meaning transfer model (McCracken 1989). Meaning transfers are possible in Japan because of the credence of both positive and negative ethnocultural stereotypes. For example, the French language is associated with high elegance or refined taste (Haarmann 1984), white foreigners are bearers of innovation and style (Creighton 1995), and modernism and newness are associated with the West (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa 1990). Generally, foreigners and cultures with positive associations are used in advertising. This brings us to Prieler's (2010) explanation for why white foreigners are predominant in Japanese advertising. Prieler states that this predominance is based on the artificial "racial hierarchy" created by the "ladder of civilizations" (Sugimoto 2003) adopted from the West. The same argument also seems to be valid in the Korean context, in which white foreigners are also greatly overrepresented in television advertisements. Such representations might reinforce the dominance of white people within the hierarchy of foreigners.

Consistent with previous research, our study found that older people were underrepresented. As in Japan (Prieler et al. 2009), this underrepresentation was even more pronounced for the 65+ age group. Whereas 11.8% of commercials included older people (those 50 or older), only 2.7% included those 65 or older, even though this age group accounts for 11% of the actual population (Korea Times 2009). These results show that older people are neglected in television advertising and that such advertising communicates an unfortunate message about their importance within society.

The question that such different representations of foreigners and older people naturally raise is why some social groups are highly overrepresented while others are highly underrepresented. There is no simple answer to this question, but there are some issues to consider. Like Japanese society, Korean society traditionally demands respect for its elders; however, this demand does not necessarily mean that older people will be highly represented in television advertisements (although might possibly influence the particular roles that they play in the television ads). Television advertisements depict a "dream world," using beautiful people and fantasies to sell products. Older people may not be able to be used for such purposes given that they are associated with the end of life. In addition, older people (especially older females) are not generally considered beautiful in society (see also: Prieler et al. 2011b). This may be even more true in South Korea, where plastic surgery now plays an increasingly important role in society (Kim 2003). In contrast, (white) foreigners are considered the standard of beauty in many Asian countries (Creighton 1995), perhaps because of the influence of the Western media,

the predominance of Western fashion models and, to a certain extent, the persisting artificial racial hierarchy of beauty in South Korea. South Korean society has clearly changed, and the Westernization of its beauty ideals is evident (Jung & Forbes 2006; Kim 2003).

Nevertheless, although the numerical statistics may to some degree indicate importance, as Gerbner and associates (1980) claimed, the extensive portrayal of certain groups has not necessarily had a positive effect on them. Such outcomes depend on the actual portrayals of the various social groups in question; in fact, very common stereotypical or negative depictions may even have negative effects on the groups being portrayed (Collins 2011). The existence of these types of negative effects was revealed in a study of the United States that found that black people were represented as commonly as they should be given their proportion of the actual population but that subtle racism nevertheless existed in television advertisements (Bristor, Lee, & Hunt 1995). Similarly, a study in Japan (Prieler 2010) demonstrated that white people were clearly overrepresented but were portrayed in rather stereotypical and sometimes negative ways.

Gender, Celebrities, and Role

Gender is an important consideration in this type of research, as it can tell us a great deal about gender relations and gender images within the society under analysis. In South Korean television advertisements, older people were predominantly male. These findings are consistent with those of most previous research conducted in most countries around the world. One reason for these findings may be the so-called double standard of aging: society is more permissive in its response to male aging than it is in responding to female aging (Sontag 1997), and females are generally chosen in the media for their youth and looks (Prieler et al. 2011a). Interestingly, the foreigners were also generally male in this study. These results are inconsistent with those of studies of Japan, where mostly similar numbers were found for the two genders (Hagiwara 2004; Kozakai 1996), and suggests the need for further research. Overall, the gender results tell us something about foreigners and older people in South Korea, especially given that the overall sample was actually dominated by females. Older people and foreigners are expected to be males rather than females in South Korea. Such representations might shape the expectations of the audience regarding these groups.

Similarly, the usage of foreign and older celebrities also ran contrary to the trend displayed by the overall sample. Only approximately 15% of the two social groups were celebrities, whereas they comprised more than 60% of the overall sample. These results are consistent with those of previous research on Japan, which revealed that only 0.9% of commercials included foreign celebrities (Mueller 1992). One reason for these results may be that anonymous foreigners are said to

have the same effect as domestic celebrities but can be hired for a much smaller fee. In contrast, the finding that only a few celebrities were older people is rather surprising. Using celebrities who are older is a common strategy in Japan (Prieler et al. 2010). Korean advertisers might adopt the technique employed in Japan to further increase the amount of older people represented in advertisements without alienating younger potential target groups.

As previously argued, the number of people represented from various social groups does not necessarily indicate their real importance. The type of role in which they are depicted, whether major, minor or background, may provide a better picture of their perceived significance. For instance, foreigners were predominantly portrayed in major roles in South Korean television advertising, as in previous research in Japan (Hagiwara 2004). This result may be because when a foreigner is used to attract attention, he or she is positioned in the center rather than in the background. In short, foreigners have enough value and importance to be shown alone and attract attention. In contrast, this research found older people in minor roles, which is problematic and might suggest to the audience that older people have limited importance in society. Older people in South Korea were also often depicted as interacting with people from different age groups. This result may indicate that older people were often only added to advertisements to indicate that the product in question could be used or appeal to different age groups. This phenomenon was also visible in Japan in people ages 60 or older (Prieler 2008). However, this finding is inconsistent with the results of previous research on South Korea, in which older people were mainly found to play major roles (Lee et al. 2006; Ong & Chang 2009). Instead, it is more consistent with the results of research in the United States and Great Britain (Roy & Harwood 1997; Simcock & Sudbury 2006). This discrepancy requires further attention and research.

Interaction, Setting, and Product Category

Interactions between social groups can tell us a lot about their degree of acceptance and image within society. Foreigners were mostly alone in South Korean television advertisements, as also occurred in Japan (Hagiwara 2004). This result might indicate that foreigners are still “aliens” and that interaction between Koreans and foreigners is rare. Such representations certainly do not encourage interaction with foreigners and might suggest that foreigners are different from Koreans. However, the depiction of foreigners alone also indicates their value to Korean advertisers. In contrast, older people were mostly depicted with people from multiple age groups, as was also found in previous studies of the United States (Greco 1993; Roy & Harwood 1997; Zimmerman 2001). Whereas interactions between foreigners and Koreans could have been considered positive, it is problematic that older people never appeared alone in these television

advertisements. This result might indicate that older people are not considered sufficiently important to be shown alone and that they are only included to augment the effect of presenting other age groups. Thus, older people alone may not be considered sufficient to sell a product. The situation is similar in Japan, where older people were also rarely shown alone. However, their appearance alone has increased dramatically during the last decade (Hagiwara et al. 2009; Prieler et al. 2011b), and such developments may also occur in the increasingly aging South Korean society.

The setting in which social groups appear may communicate to the audience what behavior should be expected of various social groups. Thus, it is significant that foreigners were predominantly depicted outdoors or at home rather than at work. These results are consistent with what Prieler (2010) found in Japan: namely, white foreigners are commonly associated with leisure activities. Older people were often outdoors but were also depicted at work (unlike foreigners). These findings are consistent with those of previous research on South Korea and Japan (Ong & Chang 2009; Prieler et al. 2011b) and indicate that older people were not portrayed stereotypically as inactive and sitting at home, which is a positive sign. However, this result may be associated with the fact that the majority of the older people portrayed were in the 50-64 age group.

The product categories associated with social groups can indicate what stereotypes are associated with those groups. Foreigners were mostly associated with finance/insurance/legal products, foods/snacks, and mobile phones/providers. Overall, these findings are quite different than those obtained in previous research in Japan (Hagiwara 2004; Hiyoshi 2001). In contrast, the findings for older people were somewhat similar to those obtained in previous research. Finance/insurance/legal products were again the products most commonly associated with older people, followed by pharmaceuticals/health care products, which were stereotypically associated with older people in previous studies. Older people are often used to show that a financial or insurance product has long-term value and to suggest how one might spend one's retirement if using such a product. Pharmaceuticals/health care is a stereotypical product category associated with older people, who are assumed to have more health issues than younger people. Such product associations might develop and reinforce stereotypes about older people.

Recommendations, Limitations and Further Research

This article has revealed similarities and differences between representations of foreigners and older people. Given that such representations affect how the audience perceives these groups (Bandura 2009; Gerbner 1998), improvements in these representations should be made. Such improvements are even more important

now given that the populations of older people and foreigners are rapidly increasing in South Korea. The results of this article yield several recommendations for advertising practitioners:

- The numerical representations of older people should be increased in a country that is rapidly aging. In contrast, the dominance of (white) foreigners in these advertisements and the underlying reasons for their prevalence should be critically examined, and the representation of Asians should be increased.
- More female foreigners and older people should be represented to provide a more realistic picture of reality.
- More interactions between foreigners and Koreans should be employed to show that such interactions are not unnatural. In addition, more older people should be represented alone and in major roles to show their importance in society.
- The variety of product categories in which older people are used for advertising should be increased; older people should not be limited to advertising stereotypical products.

Like all research, this study has limitations. One general limitation of content analysis is that researchers may not be able to use it to predict the effects of media representations. Thus, further research should be conducted to determine the effects of the representation of foreigners and older people in South Korea. In addition, the sample used in this study is only taken from prime-time advertisements, and thus, the results cannot be used to determine the representation of these groups in daytime advertisements, which may be different in this respect. Moreover, the samples of foreigners and older people were rather small. With these limitations in mind, future research should employ larger samples and record advertisements during different times of day. Nevertheless, this study provides initial insight into the representation of foreigners and older people in South Korean television advertisements and can be used as the basis for future research in this area, as well as to spur on thinking about the theory and rules underlying the representation of social groups in television advertising.

NOTES

1. In this study, “older” people were defined as those 50 years old and older (50+) in accordance with recent research on the topic (Prieler et al. 2009; Simcock & Sudbury 2006). In studies such as those in the United States, terms like “ethnicity” or “race” were used; however, the term “foreigner” seemed most appropriate for this study because other ethnicities and races are nearly equal to foreigners in the Korean context.

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