

## **Exploiting Femininity in a Patriarchal Postfeminist Way: A Visual Content Analysis of Macau's Tourism Ads**

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This study uses visual content analysis to examine gender images in the tourism print ads of Macau's casino complexes. It introduces an important tourism destination neglected before by tourism research, which will expand understanding of gender roles and relations involved in the Asian tourism industry, especially that of the Greater China Region. Results show that Macau's casino complexes are constructed like a multifunctional minicity celebrating consumerism's desires. The gender representations in tourism ads are confined to the ideological mix of patriarchy and postfeminism. The mixing patterns vary according to contexts. In the context of tourism service, the gender division of labor within the patriarchal structure is usually a reliable predictor of the different working roles of men and women. In the context of tourism consumption, the postfeminist discourse defines the relationships between women and consumption. Femininity is exploited and manipulated to cater to potential tourists, which implies that the patriarchal discourse is persistently entrenched in the advertising production process.

*Keywords: gender, femininity, tourism advertising, postfeminism, casino complex*

Gender, as an omnipresent social dimension, defines and structures almost all aspects of the tourism industry (Pritchard, 2001). The gender power relations reflected in tourism construction, presentation, and consumption have been an increasing interest among tourism researchers. Nonetheless, according to an extensive bibliometric analysis of tourism publications in the last four decades, gender inquiries remain a marginalized research area (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, & Villacé-Molinero, 2015). The four gender issues involved in tourism processes noted by Swain (1995) decades ago, namely, gendered hosts, tourists, marketing, and objects, still deserve more academic attention.

Although past studies have documented gender issues in tourism, most of them have concentrated on the tourism industry in a non-Asian context (Brown & Osman, 2017; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000), with little attention paid to Asia at large or the Greater China Region. Asian countries and regions have undergone remarkable tourism-led economic growth (Ludlow, 2017). As a result, gender patterns in tourism destinations may be altered and the gender identities of locals, tourism employees, and tourists

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reconstructed (Jucan & Jucan, 2013). These changing situations call for in-depth research to provide a more complete picture of the relationship between gender and tourism.

This study sampled the gambling city Macau to examine the gender issues in tourism. Macau, as the world's foremost casino market, is among the fastest growing tourist destinations in the world. The gender patterns in Macau's tourism are undergoing great changes mainly for the following reasons: First, the global capital investment and the continuous expansion of tourism market have reshaped the economic structure and the gender division of labor. Second, tourism offers local women plenty of employment opportunities (Macau Statistics and Census Service, 2015). Third, as a total tourism and leisure complex, Macau casinos integrate a variety of services and consumption situations into one grand venue, as male- or female-dominated tourism activities coexist in the casino world. Fourth, Macau casinos, under the ideologies of neoliberalism and global tourism, actively adjust their promotional strategies to cater to tourists of both genders. The heteropatriarchal and colonial gender roles have been challenged by the ideas of neoliberal consumerism and postfeminism in postcolonial Macau.

The changing dynamics of gender are usually reflected in the fragments of social-cultural artifacts. The gender images in tourism advertisements allow us to observe the construction and representation of gender in tourism. Print brochures and leaflets are the primary marketing tool that Macau casino complexes use to draw tourists and leisure seekers worldwide. This study used visual content analysis to examine the represented images of men and women in the print ads produced and circulated by Macau casino complexes.

The theoretical and practical significance of this study is threefold. At first, the study introduces an important tourism destination neglected before by tourism research, which will expand understanding of gender roles and relations involved in the Asian tourism industry, especially that of the Greater China Region. Second, this study examined to what extent patriarchal ideology, stereotypes, and the male view have been ingrained in tourism practices and advertising, contributing to prior literature on the portrayal of gender across cultures (Sirakaya & Sönmez, 2000; Vanolo & Cattani, 2016). Finally, gender images in advertising have been viewed as a mirror to reflect sociocultural constructions of gender. Therefore, the study provides insights into the status of women's rights and gender equality in global tourism destinations such as Macau.

The analysis of cultural fragments in interrelationships among gender, tourism, and leisure should be based on the structural power relations and social-cultural processes (Aitchison, 2003). Thus, the following section explicates the forces of globalism and neoliberalism underlying the quick expansion of Macau's casino industry and the changing gender ideology in postcolonial Macau to build a cultural and theoretical framework for the study.

## Theoretical and Social Contexts

### *Casinopolitan Macau*

Macau is known as a world-famous gambling city and among the best leisure venues in Asia and the globe. The city had been colonized by Portugal since 1557 and was handed over to China in 1999. In 2002, the new government of Macau, as a Special Administrative Region of China, liberalized the gaming industry and allowed the entry of global entertainment conglomerates. Since then, Macau's economy has become greatly dependent on the gaming industry. In 2015, despite the falls of gross gaming revenue, Macau's gambling industry still contributed approximately 231 billion patacas (US\$29 billion) to the economy (Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau Macau Special Administrative Region, 2015). Transnational investors are still swarming into the city with an ambition to reformat casino complexes into family-friendly leisure destinations.

The neoliberal ideology of "big market, small government" and the fast-growing inflows of global direct investment have not only rapidly reshaped the urban infrastructures and images of Macau but also have created *casinopolitanism*, which is characterized by a complex socioeconomic network of gaming, shopping, and leisure industries (Luke, 2010). The casinopolitan culture has attracted global tourists, has transformed the everyday lives of local people, and has affected the gender landscape in Macau.

### *The Changing Gender Ideology in Macau*

The gender ideology in casinopolitan Macau is shifting from Confucian patriarchy and Western colonialism to neopatriarchy and postfeminism. The growing tourism industry has performed an important role during the shift since the beginning of the century. The gender power relations in colonial Macau are the consequence of the interplay between Chinese traditional culture and Western colonialism. China's Confucianism, as a long-lasting and deeply entrenched ethical system, has shaped the Chinese way of life for the past 2,000 years (Yao, 2000). The masculine and feminine gender norms in Confucian teachings have formulated Chinese perceptions of gender. At the core of Confucian patriarchy is the fundamental doctrine of male superiority and female inferiority, under which Chinese women are subordinate to significant male roles (i.e., father, husband, and son) during different stages of their lives. The severe gender inequality is persistent in the regions under the Confucian tradition. Contemporary Chinese women, even those living in colonies, tend to internalize the Confucian gender ideology to different extents (Ng, 2009).

Tourism has been shown to have an increasingly powerful impact on the sociocultural system (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). In the postcolonial era, Macau has seen the rise of neoliberal postfeminism in relation to a global tourism destination. Postfeminism appears not only as a depoliticized response to second-wave feminism but also a powerful resonance with the neoliberal changes of economy and society (Gill & Scharff, 2011). Although there are still many disputes over the connotations of postfeminism, scholars agree on the point that the concept encompasses both feminist ideas and neoliberal market values. As McRobbie (2004) argues, postfeminism can be better understood through the term *double entanglement*, referring to the concomitance of neoconservative values and liberalization processes in

terms of gender, sexuality, and domestic life. Gill (2007) further interprets it as the entanglement between "feminist and anti-feminist ideas" (p. 161). On the one hand, women have increasingly integrated into the labor market, which is a logical outcome of the global neoliberal economic system. They find empowerment through economic independence and entrepreneurship and are encouraged to embrace the values of individualism, free choice, self-assertion, and self-fulfillment (Rottenberg, 2014). On the other hand, the gender inequality in the labor market has not actually changed very much (van Gellecum, Baxter, & Western, 2008). Moreover, women are not completely liberated from patriarchal familial and sexual values. Women engaged in the workplace are still expected to carry most of the responsibility at home, such as housekeeping, childbearing, and caregiving (Gideon, 2006).

The employed women in Macau's tourism are struggling with their new roles. The booming casino and hospitality industry offers a great variety of gainful employment opportunities for local women. According to the 2015 labor market statistics, more than 56% of casino employees were women whose occupations included dealers, salespersons, service providers, and other types of clerks (Macau Statistics and Census Service, 2015). Nonetheless, previous studies have disclosed that the inequality in earnings between men and women occurs at almost all levels of employment in Macau (Morrison, 2009). Women in Macau are more likely than men to undergo emotional exhaustion and physical pressure resulting from family-work conflicts (Chan, Kwok, & Siu, 2015).

The gender roles of women as tourists and consumers also have been reshaped by the ideology transition. Within the conventional patriarchal society, tourism spaces are generally constructed to privilege men's right of access and welcome the male heterosexual gaze (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). Women who are intimately bound in domestic spaces are disenfranchised to participate in a variety of tourism activities. Things have changed for women who have achieved economic independence and empowered themselves through embracing individualism and consumerism. Recent statistics show that women make the majority of travel decisions and contribute more to the global travel economy than men do (Rodriguez, 2014).

### ***Gender Portrayals in Advertising: Old or New Stereotypes?***

The shift in gender ideology has had an impact on the construction, presentation, and consumption of tourism destinations and thus has reconstructed the gender roles involved in tourism processes. The gender images represented in tourism advertising can be taken as a lens for observing and revealing the gender complexities in tourism during this ideological shift.

Gender stereotyping in advertising has been an oft-visited research area since Goffman's (1979) early observations on gender images in ads. As stated earlier, a great deal of literature has illustrated the prevailing patriarchal portrayals of gender in media representations (de Cabo, Gimeno, Martinez, & López, 2014; Wolin, 2003). Women are primarily related to traditional family roles and are depicted as hyperfeminine, submissive, dependent, and sexually available to men, whereas men are frequently assigned a dominant role in gender relations and are associated with hypermasculine characteristics (Wolin, 2003). Similar stereotypes have been reported for tourism ads across cultures. Prior studies have noted that tourism ads usually follow patriarchal stereotypes and privilege a masculine gaze (Edelheim,

2007; Mireille, 2014; Pritchard, 2001; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Sirakaya & Sönmez, 2000; Vanolo & Cattani, 2016).

During the past decades, there has been a clear trend toward new stereotypical representations of women in advertising, which highlights the values advocated by neoliberalism and postfeminism, namely, economic independence, freedom of choice, and self-sovereignty (Lazar, 2014). Postfeminism has challenged both second-wave feminist essentialism and poststructuralist feminist discursive determinism. It tends to reduce women's liberation, which feminism has strived for, to the freedom of consumption and aspiration. Gill (2007) uses the concept of "postfeminist sensibility" to describe the gender discourse in the contemporary media, which encompasses a range of changing representational practices: (1) Femininity is increasingly portrayed as a bodily property rather than a socially constructed one; (2) women sometimes are represented in a sexual subjectification rather than objectification way; (3) women are depicted as individual, autonomous, empowered, and self-surveilling subjects serving their own wills and desires; (4) there is a resurgence of ideas of natural gender difference, which reerotizes gender relations; and (5) consumerism is celebrated as a woman's right to choose.

This study examined whether the changing representation practices have been incorporated in tourism advertising, which has been rarely explored in previous literature. Under the foregoing research context and theoretical framework, this study reviewed prior empirical studies on gender roles in tourism processes, which, in turn, laid a foundation for defining the research questions and hypotheses for the study.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

### ***Gender and Tourism Participation***

Men and women have been unequal in their opportunities to participate in tourism and leisure (Khan, 2011). In traditional patriarchal societies, masculinity is viewed as a "passport for travel" (Enloe, 1989, p. 28), and being feminine means staying home. Tourism spaces have been conventionally defined as masculine and appealing to the heteropatriarchal gaze (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). Casinos, as a gambling-centered tourism and leisure complex, have been historically and cross-culturally a public domain for masculine performance and ritual (Hing & Breen, 2001).

Tourism ads rely on general presumptions of masculinity and femininity to construct destination realities and convey expectations about tourist behaviors. According to previous findings, men are more often depicted in different outdoor physical or sports activities, such as swimming, water-skiing, golfing, and taming wild nature, whereas women are commonly shown in hotel rooms, by pools, or involved in cultural or art activities. The feminine values of beauty, grace, and elegance are often embodied in women's roles, whereas the characteristics of physical and mental toughness are reflected in men's roles (Bowen, 2002; Edelheim, 2007; Sirakaya & Sönmez, 2000). Women are overwhelmingly portrayed as decorative, sexually attractive, and subservient to men. For example, in the ads for wild-nature tourism, women's images are used to signify the attractiveness and conquerability of natural destinations (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). In gambling ads, women are more likely to be portrayed as sexy spectators receiving the patriarchal gaze from male gamblers (McKahan, 2009).

The past decades have witnessed some changes in women's entitlement to tourism and leisure. Women in some countries are getting more opportunities and resources to enter tourism domains and engage in leisure activities conventionally dominated by men (Svensson, Romild, Nordenmark, & Mansdotter, 2011). Even the gambling domain is not exclusively for male players. Recent research has noted a worldwide feminization of gambling (van Ingen, 2008). This study attempted to take a snapshot of current gender portrayals in tourism ads and thus posed the following questions:

*RQ1: Is there a difference between the numbers of men and women portrayed in tourism ads of Macau casino complexes?*

*RQ2: How are men and women depicted in their associations with the promotional themes of Macau's tourism ads?*

### ***Gendered Work in Tourism***

Previous studies have consistently found universal feminization of the workforce in the labor-intensive tourism industry (Kusluvan, 2003). Most jobs in tourism that demand secondary labor, emotional labor, and aesthetic labor have long been dominated by female workers (Hochschild, 1983; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003). Due to the long-lasting gender segregation in domestic and public work domains, women are regarded as naturally capable at domestic-style work (Enloe, 1989). That is why they cluster in low-paid service jobs, such as chambermaids, waitresses, bartenders, and salespersons (Kusluvan, 2003). They are viewed as more effective than men in performing emotional and aesthetic labor, which are the desired capabilities of service workers. When dealing with people, women are supposedly capable of managing feelings and creating a pleasant and delightful ambience (Veijola & Valtonen, 2007).

The gender composition and structure in tourism workplaces are changing with the expansion of international tourism and the transmigration of the labor market. A growing number of women have entered management and leadership positions (Brooks, 2006). In the meantime, the service sectors traditionally dominated by female hosts have also seen an increase of male hosts (Takeyama, 2016). Little research has examined the gender composition of tourism hosts represented in ads. Therefore, I proposed the following question and hypothesis:

*RQ3: What are the roles played by men and women in the tourism ads?*

*H1: Men and women are portrayed differently in terms of their tourist and host roles in the tourism ads.*

### ***Gender and Social Relations in Tourism Processes***

Previous studies have had less interest in the portrayals of people in groups, as compared with those of individuals. Bowen's (2002) analysis of gender images in U.S. tourism magazine ads revealed that heterosexual couples consistently predominated tourism ads. Other social groups, particularly homosexual couples and friendship groups, have been underrepresented. With the growth of LGBT social

movements and homosexuals' strong motivations for travel, there has been a historic rise in gay and lesbian travel in the past two decades (Guaracino, 2007). Recent statistics about the U.S. tourism market show that LGBT people travel more frequently than their non-LGBT counterparts (Community Marketing and Insights, 2015). An increasing number of global travel companies have plunged into the promising homosexual tourism market.

The tremendous spending power and the responsibility in making travel plans and arrangements have made women another big focus of tourism marketing. The penetration of neoliberalism and postfeminism into relationships among young women has created a "girlfriends' getaway" trend in the tourism industry. Women who expect to temporarily escape from the hectic pace of everyday life tend to travel together in close female friendship groups (Myers & Hannam, 2008). Some travel companies customize their travel packages to attract getaway girlfriends. Previous literature has noted that mass media texts have depicted and celebrated postfeminist sisterhood or girl friendship since the turn of the century (Hamad, 2015). Nonetheless, little research has been conducted to examine the images of getaway girlfriends in tourism ads. Thus, I proposed the following question and hypotheses:

*RQ4: What are the social relations of people in groups portrayed in the tourism ads?*

*H2: Romantic relationships shown in the tourism ads are more often heterosexual duos than same-sex duos.*

*H3: Female friendships are more often portrayed than male friendships in the tourism ads.*

### **Method**

I adopted visual content analysis to obtain answers to the research questions, which offers a series of techniques for analyzing large numbers of ad pictures. The rules and procedures for data collection, coding process, and analysis, to a certain degree, guarantee the validity and reliability of the study.

### ***Sampling***

The tourism brochures and leaflets were collected from two major entry ports to Macau (Macau Barrier Gate and Macau Maritime Ferry Terminal) and five casino centers (Venetian Macau, Galaxy Macau, City of Dreams, Sands Macau, Grand Lisboa Macau), which are the distribution points of casino print ads. The time frame included the second weeks of May, September, and December 2015 and January 2016, which were determined based on two factors: (1) the observations on the regular replacement cycle of casino print ads and (2) the issuance of new brochures and leaflets during the Christmas and New Year seasons to attract large numbers of visitors. As a result, 439 ad pictures that portray human images in the foreground were collected. Those portraying three or more people were excluded from the sample in accordance with the purpose of this study and because a careful reading of these pictures showed that they usually presented multiple promotional themes and human roles, which did not fit in the current coding scheme.

As a result, 320 pictures including one or two human images in the foreground of the pictures were sampled. Marketers often reuse some pictures in different promotional time periods for cost saving and marketing consistency. As informed by prior research, I retained the duplicate ad pictures in the sample to represent the actual incidences of male and female models (Taylor & Stern, 2007) to give a more accurate picture of the overall exposure of tourists to the casino ads. The sample ads, both in Chinese and English, were produced and disseminated by Macau casino complexes to attract and inform global tourists and vacationers, especially those from Mainland China. Statistics show that almost two thirds of visitors to Macau in June 2016 were from Mainland China (Macau Statistics and Census Service, 2016). There were two related units of analysis for the coding: the ad picture and the represented human image in the picture.

### *Coding Scheme*

There were four variables in the study: gender composition, promotional theme, role, and social relation. All the sample pictures were coded on the first two variables. First, gender composition referred to the gender of people represented in the foreground of ad pictures and consisted of six categories: (1) one male, (2) one female, (3) two males, (4) two females, (5) male and female, and (6) unable to determine. The categories were then combined into four bigger ones: (1) males, including the categories of one male and two males; (2) females, including the categories of one female and two females; (3) male and female; and (4) unable to determine. When the picture featured only one part of a human body (i.e., a hand or a leg), its gender was identified based on the represented masculine or feminine attributes. For example, a pair of white and slim hands with long and slender fingers was coded as a woman's hands.

Second, the variable of promotional theme meant the primary tourism and leisure activities, amenities, and situations promoted in the ad pictures. It was coded as (1) shop, when the picture showed the interior or exterior of a fashion arcade, shop, or store, tourists' shopping or window-shopping activities, or other scenes or situations related to shopping; (2) game, when the picture showed the interior or exterior of a casino gambling hall, promoted specific types of gambling games, celebrated gambling winners, or showed other scenes or situations related to gambling; (3) food, when the picture portrayed gourmet or delicious foods or wines or people cooking or admiring foods and wines; (4) hotel, when the picture depicted the interior of a casino hotel or people enjoying hotel room services; (5) spa/massage, when the picture showed the interior of a spa or massage place or people providing or enjoying spa and massage; (6) party, when the picture depicted people in a club, partying or enjoying the nightlife, or other scenes related to parties or clubs; (7) show, when the picture depicted the scenes of entertainment, music, dance, drama show, which might be on the stage or in the interior street of a casino; (8) building, when the picture presented only the exterior of casino buildings; (9) others; and (10) unable to determine.

The third variable was role, which meant the primary role played by the portrayed people and applied only to pictures containing one person or two persons who played the same role. It consisted of the following categories: (1) casino dealer; (2) performer, including all types of professional performers and entertainers; (3) hospitality assistant, including casino usher, front desk staff, shop assistant, and sales representative; (4) waiter/waitress; (5) chef; (6) massage therapist; (7) shopper; (8) gambling

player; (9) diner/drinker; (10) spa/massage customer; (11) model, who was neither a host nor a tourist, but was shown in the picture as a role model to embellish the casino space or present specific tourism products, services, or awards; (12) other tourists; (13) other hosts; and (14) unable to determine. The variable of role was then recoded into (1) host, which combined the categories of casino dealer, performer, hospitality assistant, waiter/waitress, chef, massage therapist, and other hosts; (2) tourist, which combined the categories of shopper, gambling player, diner/drinker, spa/massage customer, and other tourists; (3) model; and (4) unable to determine.

The fourth variable was social relation, which applied to pictures portraying two persons. The coding categories included (1) romantic couples, who were shown in a love scene or a romantic atmosphere (i.e., a candlelight dinner) and/or being engaged in physically intimate behaviors (i.e., touching, kissing); (2) parent and child; (3) friends; (4) coworkers, who were shown in a working scene (i.e., at hotel front desk) and/or wearing the same style working suit; (5) serving and being served, which meant that one person provided services to the other (i.e., a waiter serves a diner); (6) strangers, referring to the indication that represented tourists did not know each other and no interaction of any form was displayed; (7) others; and (8) unable to determine.

#### ***Coder Training***

Two Chinese graduate students were employed to code the entire sample. They were trained by the researcher for more than 20 hours on a set of practice ads collected in January 2015, which were not included in the research sample. The coders were first provided a codebook in English explicating the coding scheme and guidelines. They were asked to get familiar with the descriptions of each variable and category, apply them to the practice ads, and then record the coding results for each ad in a coding sheet. They worked independently of each other.

#### ***Intercoder Reliability***

Intercoder reliability was assessed using the coefficient of reliability (Cohen's kappa) on the coding results of the two coders. The coder agreements were 99.2% for gender composition, 89.0% for promotional theme, 87.3% for role, and 91.3% for social relation. The agreement level for each variable exceeded the critical level of 80%, which is acceptable for the method of content analysis (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2014). Any disagreement between the two coders was resolved through discussions with the researcher until a final consensus was reached.

#### **Results**

RQ1 asked about the frequency difference between men and women portrayed in the tourism ads. As shown in Table 1, the ads featured significantly more women than men ( $\chi^2 = 75.231, p < .001$ ). The most frequently portrayed category was one female (42.19%), followed by male and female (26.56%), one male (15.31%), two females (13.44%), and the least portrayed category was two males (2.50%). More than half of the pictures portrayed women.

RQ2 asked whether the promotional themes of the ads would differ by gender. The frequency and percentage of each item are shown in Table 2. It is not astonishing to find that the most frequently occurring theme was game (20.63%), followed by shop (19.69%), food (14.06%), show (12.81%), and spa/massage (11.25%). A chi-square test disclosed a significant difference between the items ( $\chi^2 = 92.594$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Men were primarily related to the theme of food (43.86%), game (22.81%), and show (19.30%), which totally accounted for 85.97% of the occurrences. Women were frequently related to the theme of game (20.79%), shop (19.66%), spa/massage (19.10%), and show (14.61%). For the pictures featuring the category of male and female, the highest percentage occurred in the theme of shop (31.76%), followed by game (18.82%), party (12.94%), and food (10.59%).

**Table 1. Gender Composition.**

Gender	Gender composition	<i>n</i>	%
Male	One male	49	15.31
	Two males	8	2.50
	Total	57	17.81
Female	One female	135	42.19
	Two females	43	13.44
	Total	178	55.63
Male and female		85	26.56
Total		320	100.00

**Table 2. Promotional Themes by Gender.**

Theme	Male		Female		Male and female		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Game	13	22.81	37	20.79	16	18.82	66	20.63
Shop	1	1.75	35	19.66	27	31.76	63	19.69
Food	25	43.86	11	6.18	9	10.59	45	14.06
Show	11	19.30	26	14.61	4	4.71	41	12.81
Spa/massage	1	1.75	34	19.10	1	1.18	36	11.25
Party	1	1.75	13	7.30	11	12.94	25	7.81
Building	1	1.75	14	7.87	6	7.06	21	6.56
Hotel	3	5.26	7	3.93	4	4.71	14	4.38
Others	1	1.75	1	0.56	7	8.24	9	2.81
Total	57	100.00	178	100.00	85	100.00	320	100.00

There were significant differences existing among the three gender categories in terms of their associations with the theme of game ( $\chi^2 = 15.545$ ,  $p < .001$ ), shop ( $\chi^2 = 30.095$ ,  $p < .001$ ), show ( $\chi^2 = 18.488$ ,  $p < .001$ ), spa/massage ( $\chi^2 = 60.500$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and building ( $\chi^2 = 12.286$ ,  $p < .005$ ). Specifically, compared with the other groups, women were significantly more often portrayed under these themes. Men were rarely seen in relation to the themes of shop, spa/massage, and building.

RQ3 pertained to the different roles played by men and women in the ads. As shown in Table 3, men were usually engaged in the role of chef (28.57%), performer (16.07%), model (16.07%), gambling player (12.50%), and diner/drinker (10.71), which accounted for 83.92% in total. Women were most often engaged in the role of model (30.57%), followed by shopper (18.47%), performer (18.47%), and spa/massage customer (7.01%). The most likely portrayed role of male and female was shopper (31.33%), followed by diner/drinker (24.10%), and gambling player (16.87%). A comparison showed that women were significantly more likely to play the role of performer ( $\chi^2 = 25.000, p < .001$ ) and model ( $\chi^2 = 52.286, p < .001$ ). The category of male and female was significantly more often to play a diner/drinker role ( $\chi^2 = 8.667, p < .05$ ). Men dominated the chef role, but were never portrayed as a shopper unless they were with women.

**Table 3. Roles by Gender.**

Role	Male		Female		Male and female	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Performer	9	16.07	29	18.47	4	4.82
Hospitality assistant	0	0.00	8	5.10	2	2.41
Casino dealer	1	1.79	2	1.27	1	1.20
Waiter/waitress	4	7.14	3	1.91	4	4.82
Chef	16	28.57	1	0.64	0	0.00
Massage therapist	0	0.00	4	2.55	1	1.20
Shopper	0	0.00	29	18.47	26	31.33
Gambling player	7	12.50	9	5.73	14	16.87
Diner/drinker	6	10.71	10	6.37	20	24.10
Spa/massage customer	0	0.00	11	7.01	0	0.00
Other tourists	4	7.14	3	1.91	5	6.02
Model	9	16.07	48	30.57	6	7.23
Total	56	100.00	157	100.00	83	100.00

H1 predicted that men and women would be portrayed differently in terms of their tourist and host roles. According to Table 4, there were significant differences among the gender categories in terms of all three roles. Women were more likely to be portrayed as a host ( $\chi^2 = 20.652, p < .001$ ) and model ( $\chi^2 = 52.286, p < .001$ ). The tourist roles were predominantly assigned to the gender group of females and male and female ( $\chi^2 = 30.125, p < .001$ ). The hypothesis was supported.

**Table 4. Host and Tourist Roles by Gender.**

Role	Male		Female		Male and female	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Host	30	53.57	47	29.94	12	14.46
Tourist	17	30.36	62	39.49	65	78.31
Model	9	16.07	48	30.57	6	7.23
Total	56	100.00	157	100.00	83	100.00

RQ4 asked about the social relations represented in the ads portraying two people. A chi-square test revealed a significant difference among the categories ( $\chi^2 = 119.706, p < .001$ ). As Table 5 shows, the most frequently occurring one was the category of romantic couples (49.26%), followed by serving and being served (17.65%), coworkers (15.44%), and friends (11.76%).

H2 predicted that romantic relationships would occur more often in heterosexual duos than same-sex duos. As shown in Table 6, the romantic relationship completely occurred in a male and a female duo. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

**Table 5. Social Relations.**

Relationship	<i>n</i>	%
Romantic couples	67	49.26
Parent and child	3	2.21
Friends	16	11.76
Coworkers	21	15.44
Serving and being served	24	17.65
Strangers	5	3.68
Total	136	100.0

**Table 6. Social Relations by Gender.**

Relationship	Two male		Two female		Male and female	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Romantic couples	0	0.00	0	0.00	67	78.82
Parent and child	2	25.00	1	2.33	0	0.00
Friends	1	12.50	13	30.23	2	2.35
Coworkers	4	50.00	8	18.60	9	10.59
Serving and being served	1	12.50	21	48.84	2	2.35
Strangers	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	5.88
Total	8	100.00	43	100.00	85	100.00

H3 predicted that female friendships would be depicted more often than male friendships. According to Table 6, two men were less likely to be shown in the ads. Half of the pictures showing two men presented a coworker relationship. Two women were usually in the relationship of serving and being served (48.84%), friends (30.23%), and coworkers (18.60%). More than three fourths of the heterosexual duos (78.82%) were portrayed as romantic couples. Two women were significantly more likely to be portrayed as friends ( $\chi^2 = 16.625, p < .001$ ). Thus, the hypothesis was supported.

## Discussion

The primary promotional themes of the ads were related to a variety of tourism amenities and experiences that Macau casino complexes can provide, for example, gambling, shopping, and enjoying

massage services. Casinos, which used to be a centralized and legalized gambling space, have been transformed into a complex space that offers tourists and locals rich consumption and enjoyment experiences. They are more like a multifunctional minicity legitimizing and celebrating the desires of consumerism all day and all night, which to a great extent characterizes the neoliberalism-driven casinopolitan Macau. The major points about gender portrayals emerging from the results are discussed as follows.

#### ***Feminization of Casino Gambling***

In the old days, the gambling hall was seen as a public performative arena for masculinity (Mercer, 2013). In the past decade, casino gambling has shown its potential economic contribution to regional tourism development (Wu & Chen, 2015). Conforming to the market-oriented philosophy, gambling has been reconstructed as a popular leisure activity appropriate for both men and women to draw in as many consumers as possible. Women have been seen increasingly entering the gambling hall, which used to be exclusively dominated by men (Lyons & Willott, 2008). The feminization trend in gambling can be observed in the tourism ads. This study's results disclose that men and women almost equally played the role of gaming player. People may take it as one of the symbols of gender equality in public domains. However, what appears to be behind this so-called equality is neoliberal market ideology in action and the exploitation of women's consumption potential.

#### ***Empowering Women With Fashion Shopping***

Not surprisingly, I found that the ads never featured one man or two men in the shopper role. Fashion and luxury shopping was primarily carried out by women (e.g., see Figure 1). Due to the gender-based division of labor initiated in early times and strengthened in the modern era, women have a long-lasting and close association with all kinds of shopping activities. Gender seems to be a strong predictor of shopping behavior and experience. It has been estimated that about two thirds of everyday household shopping is undertaken by women (Pooler, 2003). With regard to fashion shopping, for men, it is only a task-oriented activity, and what they need is a well-targeted, quick, and convenient experience, whereas for women, it is a regular leisure activity other than a purposive task. Women would like to spend more time shopping and enjoy the hedonistic, social, and mentally healthy aspects of the shopping process (Shephard, Kinley, & Josiam, 2014). The absence of individual or duo male shoppers in the ads seemingly reflects the historically constructed gendered nature of shopping and helps perpetuate it.



**Figure 1. A female shopper.**

Furthermore, results disclosed that the primary tourism activity performed by the heteroromantic couples is shopping, which means that men shopped only when they were with their female romantic partners. What this implies is that women rather than men are empowered to determine what to do to have fun in a heteroromantic relationship. Fashion consumption is apparently celebrated as an important means through which women perform their decision-making power and prioritize their own desires. Depictions of women as fashion consumers with power and freedom of choice are typical in how postfeminist media discourses represent and reconstruct the postfeminist femininity.

#### ***Feminized Massage Experiences***

Women, either in a massage therapist or customer role, dominated the pictures promoting spa/massage services (e.g., see Figure 2). Under this promotional theme, only one man was shown: The ad portrayed a male massage therapist serving a female customer. Jobs are rarely gender neutral, but are constructed as appropriate for either men or women. Massage therapy has long been taken as feminized labor because of its caring and nurturing nature (Couch & Sigler, 2001). The almost complete absence of male massage therapists in the tourism ads reflects the persistent gendered perception of the occupation. Furthermore, *massage labor is emotionalized given that women are supposedly more capable of creating a pleasant and relaxing ambience* (Veijola & Valtonen, 2007).



*Figure 2. Massage therapy.*

It is unusual to find ads without featured male massage customers. Massage therapy is historically associated with prostitution and often perceived to be a sexualized labor (Calvert, 2002). Hence, the image of female massage therapists serving male customers might be thought to be imbued with sexual innuendos. The lack of male customers in the ads to some extent desexualizes the occupation and focuses people's attention on its professionalism.

Although massage as a physical and mental healing process is beneficial for nearly all people, its therapeutic function and cultural meaning have been constructed in different ways for different genders. For men, it usually means an after-work full-body relaxation, whereas for women, it is more like a "treating yourself well" leisure activity, as suggested by Wylde (2013) in her survival guide for women: "Pamper yourself. Treat yourself well. Have a facial or get a massage, if you can afford it" (pp. 13–14). Many variations of massage therapies, for example, beautifying facials and skin beautifying treatments, are mainly designed for female customers to acquire and preserve beauty and confidence. Massage has been taken as a self-body management and surveillance project integrated into the modern beauty system. Seemingly, the tourism ads implicitly redefine massage experiences by manipulating the presence and absence of male and female roles.

### ***Masculinized Cooking and Feminized Hospitality Hosting***

Women were found to be more often portrayed than men across three role categories—tourists, hosts, and models. When focusing on the specific host and model roles, this study revealed four gendered patterns in tourism processes. First, previous studies have noted that the majority of extended mothering roles in the tourism industry (i.e., waitresses and cleaners) are performed by women (Biswas & Cassell, 1996). However, this study showed that men and women were almost equally portrayed in the role of waiter/waitress.

Second, in line with prior literature, this study found that women dominated the work of hospitality, such as sales representatives, casino ushers, and front desk staff, which requires emotional labor, whereas men were never shown in a hospitality assistant role unless they were with women. Generally, in the gender-segregated market of the tourism industry, women are viewed as more capable of managing feelings and creating a pleasant ambience (Veijola & Valtonen, 2007).

Third, women were found to dominate the decorative model role, appearing in ads to embellish tourism spaces and present tourism products. Their physical attractiveness was used to symbolize the glamorous and desirable attributes of what was promoted in the ads. It is not only a typical patriarchal way of depicting women in tourism ads, but one of the postfeminist manners of representing female roles in the current media, that is, advocating heteronormativity and reobjectification of women's bodies.

Fourth, the study noted that the professional chef role was primarily performed by men (e.g., see Figure 3). Women who conventionally occupy the kitchen at home were excluded from the cooking spaces of casino complexes. The increasing masculinization of professional cooking has been discussed in recent studies (Bullaro, 2006). The stereotypical perceptions of the gender division of labor apply to the cooking area; specifically, domestic cooking is low-status work and a female domain, whereas restaurant cooking is a high-status vocation and a male domain (Shaw, 2014). The close association between men and cooking in the ads not only accords with the masculinization trend but also perpetuates the stereotype.



*Figure 3. A male chef.*

### *Womantic and Heteroromantic Tourism*

Men were rarely found to be in a same-gender group in the tourism ads, whereas women were more likely to be shown with a same-gender friendship. The activities that women were often engaged in were fashion shopping and dining/drinking, the same as what a heteroromantic couple usually did. The close relationship between women was termed by Winch (2013) as *womance* characterized by an intimate, loyal, and nonsexual association. Within the patriarchal construct of society, female friendships or sisterhoods usually play the role of buffer zone, enabling women to support and comfort each other.

The second wave of feminists sees *womance* as a power of solidarity and equality to silently challenge the patriarchal society. Nevertheless, in neoliberal-oriented media texts, *womance* has become an ideal endorser of consumerism. As usually seen in typical "chick flicks," female friendships are stereotypically expressed and strengthened through communal consumption practices (i.e., shopping, going to the movies, and dining together) that have traditionally shaped gender identity (Winch, 2013). Images of girlfriends represented in tourism ads just reproduce the clichés. The salient portrayal of *womance* rather than *bromance* in the ads taps the shopping potential of women. A large portion of the profits of Macau's casinos comes from luxury and upscale shopping centers. *Womance* has been used to redefine casinos as a tourism and leisure destination for women to escape their roles defined by the patriarchal mores, specifically, efficient housewives and mothers who rarely take a vacation and expend on their own entertainment and leisure.

Besides womance, the ads also put great emphasis on presenting the heterosexual romance. The results disclose that the most common relationship represented in the ads was romance, which existed only in a heterosexual duo. Although the tourism industry in many countries has accepted LGBT tourists, the images of homosexual romance have rarely been depicted in ads (Guaracino, 2007; Morgan & Prichard, 2000).

### Conclusion

This study examined the gender portrayals in Macau tourism ads and disclosed the gender representation patterns in tourism. Generally, the gender roles and power relationships presented in ads are confined to the ideological mix of patriarchy and postfeminism. The mixing patterns vary according to context. In the context of tourism service, the gender division of labor within the patriarchal structure is usually a reliable predictor of the working roles of men and women. In the context of tourism consumption, postfeminist discourse determines the relationship between gender and tourism spaces and products.

Some findings are broadly consistent with previous studies. As noted herein, images of women are significantly more often used to endorse tourism spaces and products. Women's close association with shopping, decoration, and hospitality roles, men's association with the professional chef role, and the dominance of heterosexual couples in tourism ads have been substantiated by the study. Contrary to expectations from prior literature, the study notes the feminization of gambling and degendering of waitering jobs. Furthermore, this study is among the few that explores the power of female friendship portrayed in tourism ads. The study has not only updated our understanding of the stereotypical gender representations in tourism, but has provided new insights into gender relations in tourism by introducing an important tourism destination that has previously been neglected in the literature.

It is obvious that images of women in the ads are constructed in a more complicated manner as compared with those of men. When women are put in the roles of model and hospitality assistant, advertising producers rely on the stereotypical association between femininity and glamorous, emotional, and caring labor. The ads comply with the patriarchal construction of femininity and perpetuate gender objectification and the patriarchal gaze. Khan (2011) notes that gender is an unfavorable factor for women to participate in travel for leisure, which does not fit with the findings of this study. Apparently, advertising producers place women in nearly all kinds of consumption spaces, including those conventionally dominated by men. Women suddenly become autonomous agents who exert their consumption power to please themselves and step across the gender barriers to tourism and leisure. The selective emphasis on the patriarchal or postfeminist femininity reflects neoliberal philosophy. It is femininity rather than masculinity that has been typically manipulated to cater to potential tourists, which implies that patriarchal discourse has persistently been entrenched in the advertising production process.

The tourist identity is increasingly important for the modern subject (Urry, 2002). The socially constructed gender roles have long defined tourists' identities and activities. Moreover, given that women are better than men at interpreting nonverbal cues, women seem more likely to be negatively influenced by the stereotypical images imposed on them (Sirakaya & Sönmez, 2000). Thus, this study attempts to

draw people's attention into the still-marginalized area of tourism and make them, especially women, reflect on their gender identities in tourism. The visual content analysis method concentrates on the image itself and analyzes the image in a fragmented way. The methodological limitations make it impossible for the study to interpret a tourism ad as a whole and analyze the dynamics between the textual and visual elements. For example, the content analysis indicates that men and women almost equally played the role of gambling player but cannot tell how their roles were visually presented to viewers. Future studies may use a qualitative method (i.e., semiotics or visual discourse analysis) to give a closer examination of advertising images of gender.

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