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**Chinese Women's Makeover Shows: Idealised Femininity,
Self-presentation and Body Maintenance**

Xiaoyi Sun

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Declaration

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Abstract

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Chinese television industry has witnessed the rise of a new form of television programme, Chinese Women's Makeover Shows. These programmes have quickly become a great success and have received enormous attention from growing audiences. The shows are themed on educating and demonstrating to the audiences the information and methods needed to beautify their faces and bodies and consume products accordingly. The shows are different from earlier Chinese fashion television programmes in format, and are also different from western makeover shows that have personal transformations of external appearance as their subject. The importance of adopting these shows as a research topic lies in the fact that the shows not only represent the images of contemporary Chinese women and propose a series of standards that a modern Chinese woman is advised to abide by in terms of body presentation and appearance, but also reflect the characteristics of Chinese female consumers and the rising consumer culture of China in general. It concerns the challenges and anxieties that have been brought to every woman in China.

The thesis starts with an overview analysis of this flourishing genre of television programme and outlines its status quo, format and production techniques. In the following three chapters, it takes three years (2010-2012) of episodes of the three most popular Chinese Women's Makeover Shows, *Queen*, *Pretty Women*, and *I am a Great Beauty* as the main samples for analysis, aiming to scrutinise 1) the idealised femininity represented in the shows and the cultural context from which the features derive; 2) the self-presentation promoted as appropriate in the shows and how it relates to the reality of Chinese women's daily life; 3) the body maintenance that the shows urge upon their audiences as regards consumption for the female body and to what extent this epitomises and functions in constructing a consumer society with Chinese characteristics. The thesis intends to fill a gap in academic research with a systematic analysis of the prevailing phenomenon of the Chinese Women's Makeover Shows and an in-depth study concerning the shows' meaning-making process within their cultural context.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In early 2000, when there was a rising tide of Taiwan infotainment television appearing on China mainland web television, the first of the Chinese Women's Makeover Shows (referred to here as CWMS), *Queen* (*Nüren wo zui da* 女人我最大, TVBS, 2000-Present), burst into public view. It claimed to aim to 'help young women in getting rid of boredom and melancholy, providing solutions to those who have problems with relationships and sexuality, offering fashion information and helping women restore their confidence'.¹ The show immediately became a huge success throughout the mainland internet. Contemporaneously, female stars in Hong Kong and Taiwan scrambled to publicise their beauty manuals (writing beauty books was not a fashion for Chinese female stars and celebrities before that). The result was that slogans such as 'recommended by *Queen*', 'recommended by Beauty Queen xxx' became a ubiquitous way of advertising for both online shopping and stores.² The beauty industry was not the only one to whose notice women's makeover shows came to. Television production teams in mainland China, being aware of the show's huge influence, started to copy the Taiwan format and a batch of makeover programmes were produced, such as *Pretty Women* (*Meili qiao jiaren* 美丽俏佳人, The Travel Channel, 2006-2012; Heilongjiang Satellite TV, 2013-Present), *Becoming a Butterfly* (*Hua die* 化蝶, Tianjin Satellite TV, 2006), *Wear and Pair* (*Meili pei pei* 美丽搭配, Southeast Satellite TV, 2006-2009), *I am a Great Beauty* (*Wo shi da meiren* 我是大美人, Hunan Satellite TV, 2010-Present), *Fashion Star Experts* (*Shishang xing daren* 时尚星达人, Ningxia Satellite TV, 2009-2011), and so on.

As a new format of lifestyle television programmes, CWMS have a format dramatically different from earlier Chinese fashion programmes. Comparing with the latter that merely impart fashion information and news to Chinese audiences, CWMS deploy elements from talk shows, reality shows, and screen classrooms, to be an

¹ Translated from the introduction of the official Bulletin Board System of *Queen*, http://discuss.tvbs.com.tw/discuss_manager/DISCUSS_titles.asp?opt=1&p=1&k=0&DISCUSS=91120901200309095505&win=, accessed on 18th September, 2010.

² The 'xxx' here refers to the names of celebrities who are the authors of the beauty manuals.

‘advanced’ hybrid format – more interactive with the audiences, more didactic in conveying consumer information and knowledge, and more intermingled with daily life. The shows rely on interviews among main figures³ through the episodes to discuss the necessity of the makeover and to demonstrate and explain the makeover processes. The studio setting is decorated with shelves as in a shopping mall, fitting rooms, as an exercise studio, a massage room, kitchen, etc. to accommodate the different makeover themes. The same experts of the shows (celebrities, stylist gurus, beauty physicians, etc.) appeared on the shows produced by different TV stations or companies. They became regular icons of CWMS, fashion magazines and site activities of cosmetic brands (some of them even established their own brands after becoming popular on CWMS); they are authoritative figures of the ‘makeover world’. Uniquely, the most popular CWMS have expanded their influence by conglomerating with their websites (including Bulletin Board System, B2C online shopping websites where the customers can purchase products introduced by the shows), eponymous magazines, and fast-growing Chinese microblogs. Its penetration into daily life no longer relies on the shows themselves, nor is it represented by the audience ratings of the television programmes, but on the frequent references that companies (including online shops or distributors of beauty products) use for advertising and consumers use for guidance.

In the process of establishing the shows as guidance for women consumers, certain selected images were constructed and repeated in order to justify the rules, or the logic of CWMS; to be more specific, to justify women’s consumer behaviour as regards their bodies. In some senses, those images on the shows are the epitome of the women consumers in everyday life in contemporary China: they represent the mass opinions of what a woman wants to/should look like and how a woman consumer wants to/should behave in our society. So what are the images? What are their characteristics? And, especially, are there certain Chinese characteristics? These are the questions that I am interested in exploring further.

³ By main figures here, or figures/television figures thereafter, I mean the personnel of the shows that appear in front of the camera, mainly including the presenter(s), the guests and the experts. If I refer to specific identity, I will use the specific name instead of ‘figures’. In the earlier Chinese fashion television programmes, presenter(s) is normally the only figure. A more detailed analysis on the television figures of CWMS will be given in 2.2.2.

With regards to the content of CWMS, themes are more focused on women's appearance and consequent consumption behaviours than on anything else. It teaches how to deal with varied skin problems; it trains in how to dress appropriately; it informs the audiences of the latest fashion on the market; it instructs on how to consume wisely; it reveals celebrities' commodity choices. Generally, CWMS' themes could be summarised into two categories despite the variety of the titles: 'woman and her body' and 'women as consumers'.⁴ From another angle, the shows function as beauty handbooks and shopping manuals. In this sense, CWMS are part of the forces that have clout with people's lifestyle consumer choices.

Along with the popularity of CWMS, the themes of the shows have been incorporated into other media forms. More and more lifestyle television programmes began to add makeover sections, e.g. introducing how to choose the best attire for interviews/professional looks, how to lose weight after a national holiday, however they do so without a settled format like CWMS. Sometimes the content of CWMS can be found in fashion magazines while at other times, it becomes the content of fashion magazines. The fluidity of the content enables the presentations of women appearances within the media field to overflow into everyday life – people's ways of looking, talking and interpreting women's appearances have been changing.

CWMS are new in format and authoritative in body consumerism knowledge for the audiences. However, this is not the whole story. The meanings behind all the images and consumption behaviours promoted by CWMS are of paramount importance. The most significant one is that the concept of women as social gender has been supplemented. The new concept proposed new requirements for modern Chinese women in terms of appearance and consumer behaviour. Women are instilled with consumer knowledge and behaviour to strive for a better appearance. This 'education' has been changing their daily life practices – more and more Chinese women have been getting used to visiting places, for example, shopping

⁴ There were also episodes titled with keywords such as 'house-keeping', 'family' and 'working relationships'. However, most of the problems of the episodes were solved in the end by means of makeovers. There were also very few episodes concerning makeovers for men.

malls, gyms, beauty and hair salons – which can better support their social roles as wife/partner, mother, employee and so on. The presentation of one's body and knowledge of consumer choices for one's body became of great concern for Chinese women. With the proliferation of social media for the last decade, the internet became a great platform that enabled women with similar interests in beauty and fashion to get together virtually communicating about problems, knowledge and desires.

The importance of including CWMS as a research subject consists in the challenges that it brought to every average woman in China. The cultural context has it that a Chinese woman, despite one's background, education or career, should pay attention, as much as she can, to her appearance and body (Jung & Forbes, 2007; Kuhn, 1994; Y. Luo, Parish, & Laumann, 2005). Yet Chinese academia was not so productive in studies on the Chinese women's makeover shows as their western counterparts were about their makeover shows, nor is there any research that systematically analyses this form of show in terms of content and the meanings behind it. This research is trying to fill this gap: it will not only be about a television programme, but also about the rising consumer culture with Chinese characteristics in contemporary China.

1.1 Studies on makeover television shows

In Chinese academia so far, there have been mainly journal articles only on CWMS study.⁵ Over half of them are giving a general analysis of the programmes in two ways.⁶

1) A large part of CWMS studies are concerned with the reasons why the programmes are popular and how they can be developed. In terms of the success of

⁵ Interestingly, there are many master's theses focusing on this type of shows. Generally, they outline the background of the upsurge of CWMS, format, television figures, narrative patterns and narrative modes (to sell the products to the audiences), and discuss development strategies for the programmes. In this literature review, I will not include these papers.

⁶ A number of the journal articles are written by media personnel. The authors offer opinions and suggestions on producing CWMS on the basis of their experiences. They are not included here either.

the programmes, some approach the basic designs of the shows, such as format, broadcasting time, presenters and themes, Wang Jingjing (2010) for example; others, such as Zou and Zhang (2011), emphasise the importance of building the images of the presenters so as to support the branding of the television programmes. In the meantime, the reasons have also been attributed to a broader media and social environment. Zhou Xi (2011) examines the boom in respect of the targeted audiences and consumer attitudes of Chinese people, in addition to the aesthetics of the female bodies and creative formatting of the programmes. Liu (2009) indicates in her article that the success is a result from the accurate positioning of the programme, the comprehensive and practical content, the appropriate choices of format and presenters, and the role-model effect of celebrities and beauty experts; the shows are rooted in the needs of the market and the rapid development of the Chinese internet. Collectively, these studies give positive opinions to the advent of CWMS and focus their studies on the formatting of the shows.

2) Criticism and suggestions. Some scholars are worried about the continuity of the popularity of CWMS. Jiang (2010) expresses her ideas on how to keep the programmes creative and advises that more attention should be paid to the feedback from the audiences and that more audience participation should be involved. Meng (2009) believes the programmes should duly remove advertisements but maintain reasonable marketing strategy. Others frankly articulate their negative opinions. Zhang (2009), for instance, criticises the programmes in “Probe for Fashion and Cosmetology Female Television Programmes” from four perspectives: blindly copying Hong Kong and Taiwan counterparts; neglect of the fashion needs of average women; publicising women’s privacy; and being with overloaded by a consumer-oriented tendency. Jing (2009) in “Fashion does Not Take it All” states her oppositions to the phenomenon of the Chinese TV screen being crowded with fashion programmes, which produces a misleading impression that fashion is the only interest for Chinese women. Li Bing (2008) holds the opinion that female television programmes bear the responsibility for constructing images of new women: they should not only emphasise the beautification of the externals of female body, regardless of internal/spiritual training and development; she is critical of the

fact that the programmes entirely cater for advertisers, and do not assist real audiences with life information; the programmes merely strive to be ‘fashion leaders’ among women audiences while completely ignoring practicality.

In addition to general analysis, the other studies explore the construction of images of women on CWMS. Xu (2010), in her paper, tries to combine the represented meanings of the television texts with the interpretations from the audiences, and explores how the shows built women’s spending patterns in Taiwan from the perspectives of consumerism and the paramount importance of the consumer. Her paper aims to warn the audiences to see the programmes critically when they are consuming the texts and commodities. Liao and Feng (2011), from the feminist perspective, investigate the construction processes of the standard feminine beauty in *Queen*. According to them, *Queen* represents part of Chinese mass media that take the externals as the measurement of female beauty and thereby become a tool by which males control the female body.

From the studies above, we can see that CWMS have raised a certain attention from domestic academia; the studies have covered extensive topics. At the same time, however, what they discuss is limited in breadth and depth. Few of them explore the political, social and cultural contexts within which CWMS reside, nor the influence, signification, and transformation to current China as a consumer society.

In western academia, though it seemingly has little interest in CWMS, there are studies of Chinese new styles of television programmes, which offer a general view of the status quo of the television productions in contemporary Chinese consumer society. *TV China*, for example, responded to the changes in the nature of Chinese-language broadcast in the era when television established itself as the medium of ‘marketised’ China. One of the essays especially, “Building a Chinese ‘Middle Class’: Consumer Education and Identity Construction in Television Land” (J. H. Xu, 2009), is closely related to the social and cultural context of CWMS. The paper scrutinises the topics that the contemporary consumer-guided television programmes on Chinese TV produce a series of images of ‘modern’ Chinese

lifestyles, and familiarise the audiences with the awareness of both the limitless choices on the market and the identity of a modern Chinese consumer. The author further contends that the emergence of the consumer-guided programmes represent a new relationship between TV and its users in China with the latter becoming greatly involved in the symbolic productions of the former. In “Lifestyling Asia? Shaping Modernity and Selfhood on Life-advice Programming”, Lewis, Martin and Sun (2012) study the lifestyle television programmes in Singapore, Taiwan and mainland China. They examine the possibility of the application of the ‘Anglo-American concept of neoliberal selfhood’ to the Asian context. According to these writers, lifestyle television in mainland China exists in a scattered form with *shenghuo* (生活) themes embedded in a range of television programmes, which has contributed greatly to producing the private self. Also, they mention one of the CWMS, *Queen*, although in the context of Taiwan, by arguing that this show reflects the gender-specific anxieties arising around contemporary Chinese femininity.

Besides, there have been several publications on western makeover shows coming forth since mid-2000. The first monograph is Dana Heller’s (2006b) *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Released in 2006, the collection not only traces back to the origin of the American makeover and how the shows have been developed, but also investigates the makeover shows spanning the past fifty years on the US TV. Especially one chapter, regarding a makeover show in the 1950s, *Glamour Girl*, points out that commercial television and female beauty converge in the show. The television programmes with makeover elements meet the ends of both the shows that need to be sponsored by the beauty and fashion companies and the audiences who wish to beautify their bodies (Cassidy, 2006), which is quite similar to the situation of CWMS in the Chinese context. In 2007, Heller published her own book to extend the concept of ‘power of transformation’ of the makeover shows. She challenges the reality in makeover shows. She notes that makeover television retains the most significant characteristic of reality show, attempting to capture reality and remodel it. Particularly, she focuses on the issues of social identity, or the gendered, sexualised, nationalised, and class-based elements of makeover narratives that deliver the ethos of transformation. The concern with

makeover shows and the construction of self-identity are examined by other scholars too. Lewis (2008) points out that makeover shows offer a rich site for the shifting dynamics of selfhood and cultural value today, where self becomes a site of ‘good’ consumption, moral regulation and identity formation. The malleable nature of the shows, with the representations of the malleable self, enables people to reinvent their class status, gender and race. This maze of dislocating identity in makeover shows is the main theme that American scholars generally have interest in.

In addition to makeover television study and related studies on Chinese television programmes, it is also helpful to look into studies on constructing the female ideals, the representation of female body and female identity in the consumer culture to organise the theoretical framework.

The cultural ideal of female images exist in different countries and in different forms. The media display the ‘perfect’ images that make women strive for what is actually impossible and unattainable (Coward, 1984). By studying the cultural ideal of female images, the scholars review the meanings of femininity and examine influences dominant in sustaining myths of femininity. Creedon (1989) deals with the transformation of gender in mass communication and its potential to challenge traditional values. He also discusses changing concept of sexism and economic equity in current mass communication practice. The feminisation through mass communication and subsequent construction of ‘real world’ of women audiences are both related topics for CWMS. In *Representing Women*, MacDonald (1995) illuminates four myths of femininity in contemporary popular culture in the West: being enigmatic and threatening, being nurturing and caring , and other two on women’s sexuality and bodies. The four myths are, in some sense, associated with the femininity constructed in CWMS though certain revisions are needed considering Chinese situations. What the two works inspire here is the necessity of investigating the formation of femininity, rather than merely being references of certain opinions. *Postfemininities in Popular Culture*, being one of the latest academic works in this area, endeavours to evaluate women’s contemporary situation and representation by scrutinising a range of theoretical and popular texts that have influenced and formed

contemporary understandings of the modern female self of the majority. It aims to address the interplay between feminist polemical writing and popular culture in order to provide a representational history of femininity spanning its particular period of time (Genz, 2009). In parallel, Hung, Li, and Belk (2005) study the socialised female ideals in Chinese context. They analyse four groups of competing femininity that compose the image of the 'modern Chinese women': 'flower vase', 'urban sophisticate', 'cultured nurturer', and 'social climber'. According to the scholars, the four feminine ideals further represent the desires of contemporary Chinese women for beauty, talent, sophistication and so on in order to achieve the 'modern femininity'. All the studies above demonstrate that femininity is always socially constructed, demanding of mulling over the whole cultural background where the viewing pleasure of the female audiences have been generated.

Conjointly, the female body in public space has received growing attention and therefore been studied in varied fields. For instance, Chong (2013) argues that the contemporary feminine ideal reflected on the body of female athletes of Olympic champions is a beautiful, attractive and desirable image that appeals to the market. The androgynous look that erases gender differences featured previous female athletes is not so charming anymore. It is seen the stress of physical beauty outside the fashion area. Additionally, the aesthetics of the Chinese female body tend to adopt both western and national beauty standards. Kuperberg (2003) finds the westernisation of Chinese body by studying Chinese magazines while Luo notes that, in terms of body alterations, the female body is expected to present the specific national and cultural identity with very few western features (Luo, 2012).

Furthermore, studies on Chinese consumption development contribute to the background of the research subject of this thesis. Since the Economic Reform, a consumer revolution has taken place in China which brings about changing consumer patterns and expanding consumer powers (Chao & Myers, 1998). The notion of Chinese consumption, agreed by many scholars, should be seen as a fundamental component of contemporary Chinese cultural practices, taking into account of both the continuities and the raptures between different contexts in

Greater China and beyond (Latham, Thompson, & Klein, 2006). Deborah's (2000) edited book, *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*, also verifies this. The articles of the book amount to a comprehensive study on the daily lives of the urban residents in contemporary China. Though no single author argues for a triumph of the private over the public, they agree that the consumerising society that the Chinese are experiencing has changed urban residents thoroughly. They argue that people enjoy more freedom in consumerism. But at the same time, the freedom of choices of commodities does not necessarily lead to gender equality in the consumer market. Women's favour for purchasing cosmetics, for instance, might not be identified with their favour for the products; rather, it involves an urban lifestyle that 'associates a beauty-based femininity with modernity' (Hopkins, 2007, p. 302).

1.2 Research questions

Comparing CWMS with western makeover shows, there are similarities and differences. The similarities are largely on the basis of commercialisation of the world that we live in as a whole while the differences are more interesting in that CWMS show the media forms and content with Chinese characteristics – for example, how Chinese women consume for their body, how they behave as consumers at the present time, and how women's appearances are decoded within consumer society – these are the topics I would like to explore further in my thesis.

Before I go into more detail, there are three major differences that need to be listed (further analysis of the three aspects will be given in the pertinent chapters). Firstly, the studies of western makeover shows are based on the recognition among scholars that the makeover show is a subgenre of, or at least, has a large intersection with reality television (Heller, 2007b; Moseley, 2000; Weber, 2009). For CWMS, the reality television elements are not so prominent since reality television itself is still something new in China. That is to say, the western reality shows and makeover shows are in a chronological sequence – the advent of the latter is a mark of the mature phase of the earlier in the West; Chinese reality shows and makeover shows have appeared contemporaneously since the early twentieth century, against the backdrop of the marketisation and industrialisation of the Chinese television

industry. The situation at that stage was that the TV stations could not produce sufficient programmes to fill the broadcasting time allotted to them (C. Cai, 1995). Further, almost all the TV stations had fairly recently been compelled to be financially self-supporting due to the transformation of the Chinese television industry. Both reality shows and CWMS in China are the products of this period. Therefore, I would consider CWMS to be a new style of consumption-oriented show that contains elements of reality shows, instead of a sub-genre of Chinese reality shows.

Secondly, makeover shows in the West are more aware of the niche market, so as to cater for the specific needs of differentiated audiences. They have a wide range of subjects for ‘making over’, from one’s garage to the management group of a company while the Chinese Women’s Makeover Show accounts for the majority of the content of Chinese makeover shows.⁷ The significance of taking western makeover shows as the point of reference rests in that they are part of the globalised cultural environment from where Chinese makeover shows flourished. There are similarities between the two, and influences and localised transformations from the western makeover shows.

Thirdly, the American social ideology, such as the American dream, the melting-pot and the immigrants, is embedded in their makeover shows according to the studies conducted by the US scholars whom I mentioned above, indicating that self-realisation, romance and success are attainable through acquiring services and goods for the self (Anonymous, 2003; Heller, 2006b). Similarly, CWMS have the

⁷ According to Heller (2007a), the makeover show has already established a ‘genre power’ in UK, US, Australia and other countries. The varied themes are as follows: ‘...beyond the private space of the home (e.g. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *Design on a Dime*, *Trading Spaces*, *While You Were Out*), makeover television is transforming the body by means of cosmetic surgery or rigorous self-discipline (e.g. *Extreme Makeover*, *The Biggest Loser*, *The Swan*, *I Want a Famous Face*). It is reconfiguring the dynamics of intimacy, heterosexual courtship, and family life (*The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Supernanny*, *Wife Swap*, *Nanny 911*). It is remaking ordinary people into celebrities and well-known celebrities into ordinary people (*American Idol*, *I Want to Be a Hilton*, *the Osbournes*, *Britney & Kevin: Chaotic*, *Newlyweds*, *The Simple Life*, *Ashlee Simpson*). It is performing a virtual overhaul of consumer principles, strategies and lifestyle (*Pimp My Ride*, *Made*, *Camp Jim*, *ToddTV*). And it is recasting critical elements of social identity, in particular gender, race, and class (*Faking it*, *The Apprentice*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy/Girl*, and the soon-to-première *Black. White.* in which ‘two families – one black and one white – come together under one roof in Los Angeles’ [2006] as they prepare to trade races and experience the world through the eyes of the other)’ (p. 2).

idea that happiness is attainable through improvement of personal looks. Yet the local context from which the women's images that CWMS constructed needs to be further explored.

This research will be conducted on three levels: firstly, CWMS will be defined and an introduction to this type of television programme in China will be given. The word makeover, in fact, has not yet appeared in Chinese academia. The show itself is not sufficiently developed to establish a television genre though its features have already been dispersed within many other television programmes in China. The topics of women's appearance and manners were frequently referred to in news, lifestyle television, talk shows and other women's TV programmes. The first and foremost step of my research, therefore, is to discuss this nascent television format in China from an academic point of view and explore the features of how the shows are programmed in terms of televisual language.

Secondly, to analyse what information is given prominence in CWMS so as to be more likely to become the 'preferred reading' of images of women. Western critics have long explored the impact of normative standards of the female body moulded by media and its result in the contemporary obsession of individual body construction (Wolf, 1991; Zoonen, 1994). Scholars in China also saw the tendency of stereotyping women on Chinese media, especially in advertisements (B. Liu & Piao, 1997; Piao, 2001). CWMS, in this sense, are certainly part of the impact force in constructing the standardised feminine beauty for contemporary Chinese women. It would be, however, relatively biased to criticise the wide spread of the images and the huge influence of the shows in this way. In CWMS, the success of any single image of femininity cannot be due to the shows themselves. Rather, the images should be analysed respectively on account of their correlations with the cultural elements, for example, gender discourse, celebrity culture and so on. They represent indigenous femininity under a globalised tide and further ensure gender roles in the society.

Thirdly, the thesis aims to examine to what extent CWMS reflect Chinese consumer culture and how the meanings of the images circulate within media and society in general. It cannot be denied that the reason for CWMS' popularity consists partly in answering the needs of the audiences. As Hall (1996) puts it, 'before the message in television can have an "effect", satisfy a "need" to be put to a "use", it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded by its audience' (p. 53). The television content only works for those who find meanings in it. For women audiences, as well as other consumers of the fashion industry, many of them did obtain pleasure by watching the shows (as well as reading magazines or consuming other forms of information-providing products) and buying commodities accordingly (S. Xu, 2010, p. 124). The capability of gaining pleasure has something to do with the process of learning social conventions (e.g. the beauty standard for women), giving oneself a makeover and then obtaining consent from others after practicing the makeover. The desire CWMS have created is fulfilled in daily life practices through make-up, shopping and other body maintenance. It is in this way that the television reality of CWMS can obfuscate audiences with the reality they inhabit. The pressure of competition on women's exterior looks may come not only from the shows themselves, but also from corresponding social and cultural context, and the interactions between the two. Television texts extract from life while people imitate the television texts in daily life (Fiske & Hartley, 1978).

To clarify, my main concern throughout this thesis is from the perspective of mainland audiences – or more precisely, women in mainland China who pay attention to CWMS. Though I use 'Chinese Women' in CWMS, the users of the shows, especially when I refer them as female audiences in the later analysis, cannot be identified with Chinese women as a whole nor all the women in PRC. Though the demographic characteristics of the audiences have not been studied academically, certain features can be deducted. In terms of geographic distribution, the potential audiences dwell in the area where they can either receive the signals of the TV stations that broadcast CWMS or have internet access to watch the shows online. The way that the television figures address the audiences and the identity of the guests also give some indications. Frequently, the shows concern problems that belong to,

say, an office lady – for example, the health problems caused by long time sitting indoors, fashion guide for and after eight-hour working days. From the identities of the audiences who are chosen to be on the shows or whose questions are selected to be answered in the shows, it can be surmised that a great number of the audience are women working in offices and (university) students. The products and services recommended by the shows certainly represent the consumption level of the urban, middle-class and (potential) white collar group – the later is the primary target audiences of the shows. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that 1) women who cannot afford the consumption patterns encouraged by the shows are the (loyal) audiences – for some body maintenance, little or no money is needed – and the viewing process for them is more about aspiration than practicing; 2) women from middle or upper class may reject or even disdain the taste of the shows so as not to join the fixed audiences. The suggestions and solutions offered in the shows surely cannot satisfy the needs nor attract the attention of all women in China. However, the consistency and variations of the themes and contents confine the composition, allowing for the fluidity of the audiences.

1.3 Consumer society and television texts

As I mentioned before, the significance of the content of CWMS consists in two aspects: the images of contemporary Chinese women that have been constructed by the shows and how the shows in general reflect China as a consumer society at the current stage. Before going further, it is helpful to illustrate the relationship between the television texts and the social and cultural environment as the context of the texts. Especially, how the television texts could be meaningful to the audiences who reside in the same cultural processes as the texts. Although content analysis has been somewhat disparaged and specific audience analysis on communication effects has become significant in media studies for the past few decades, indubitably, television content is still of paramount importance in representing and influencing the culture from which it stemmed and to which its audience accommodated. The texts have changed culture and been changed by the culture. They constantly communicated with the audiences, with cultural focus to keep its very existence and popularity. The continuance of a television programme, especially a lifestyle one, is identified with

its capability of presenting the concerns of its audiences. The continuance itself suggests the meaning of the content analysis of a television programme.

1.3.1 The consumer society

More than forty years ago, the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard wrote *The Consumer Society* as an extension of the Marxist critique of capitalism (Poster, 1988, p. 1). Though having been criticised for using abstract language, which easily led to ambiguity of understanding and sometimes arbitrary observations and conclusions, his work is inspiring and invaluable in analysing media phenomena in an era of consumerism. His thoughts, in my eyes, can serve appropriately either as guidance for research on consumer-oriented television programmes and offer many explanations to be considered.

Baudrillard believes that consumer society is a society of signs. Living in a world surrounded by signs, people tend to pay more attention to the looks and symbolic meanings of things rather than to the use value: in the earlier sense, people are trained to be visual and to care more about the external; for the latter, people consume in order to obtain anything but the practical functions (Baudrillard, 1998). The commodity, as one of the concrete forms of signs, serves people in a different way in the consumer society from in the producer society. Function is no longer the premiere reason for purchasing; people expect more from commodities that can symbolise distinction, taste, and social status (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 44). By possessing certain commodities/signs, people can easily change the appearance of their identity – one does not have to belong to a certain class to have the commodities representing this class. There is no real identity; society is imbued with the looks of an identity. People's desire for a commodity is more than about facilitating life; 'who you are' is tied to 'what you consume'.

From the other side, symbolic consumption creates the illusion that all men are equal in the front of the consumption. People are 'tempted to regard consumption and the growing participation in the same(?) goods and the same(?) products, both material and cultural, as a corrective to social disparities, social hierarchy and the ever increasing level of discrimination where power and responsibilities are

concerned' (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 59). Consumption demonstrates that everyone can enjoy the same product no matter which class they originally come from. What it brings to the consumers is a superficial egalitarianism.

Besides, Baudrillard introduces a concept of 'cultural recycling', which means that there is a tendency that people are subjected to up-to-date knowledge in a consumer society (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 100). The up-to-date knowledge, in some sense, is similar with professional training that prevents people from becoming deskilled or left behind as a consumer in a consumer society. People must be updated with new information on commodities to maintain their proficiency. The essence of the knowledge is a learning process to be a 'qualified' consumer, or say, to know how to consume. However, the 'knowledge' is not new, unique or creative – it is as arbitrary as that we have seen in the fashion industry (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 100). The extolment of consumer knowledge enthrones a group of people who possess the 'knowledge' in a consumer society. They have been called 'senior practitioners', or 'experts' in those consumption related areas/industries. They are those who are closer to the 'knowledge' sources because of their occupations, experiences or social status.

On promoting signs in consumer society, the media certainly play a significant role, whereas Baudrillard has a highly disdainful opinion on modern media. He argues that media in consumer society have created a world which acts as a simulacrum of reality where the real world has been substituted (Poster, 1988, p. 6). Media is idealistic and snobbish, especially when it colludes with the fashion industry. It exalts the signs 'on the basis of a denial of things and the real' (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 99). The more unrealistic or the more impossible the things are, the more favoured and the more glorified they are in the media world, e.g. eternal youth, perfect body.

In sum, desire and fantasy are two main arguments of Baudrillard's work on 'the consumer society'. Media is the catalyst to promote the two things. For Chinese women who live in the fourth decades of the Economic Reform, consumption has become one of the core components of their daily life. According to a report

compiled by the magazine *Women of China* (*Zhongguo funü* 中国妇女), Huakun Women's Life Survey Centre and Huakun Women's Consumption Guidance Centre, Chinese women's consumerism has been rising steadily. Clothes, cosmetics and digital products are ranked as the top three goods that Chinese women consume most (Anonymous, 2010b). Against the globalised consumption environment, with more opportunities to access foreign goods (not only more foreign goods enter into Chinese market, but also more Chinese go shopping abroad or online for foreign goods), Chinese consumers seem to be lost in front of so many choices. Then the consumer-oriented programmes are produced and broadcast to help them vision and fancy, and give them know-how in dazzling consuming world.

1.3.2 Edited reality and hegemonic texts

Media texts never simply mirror or reflect 'reality', but instead construct hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as 'reality'.

(Carter & Steiner, 2004a, p. 2)

To analyse television content, especially one with elements from reality shows, we should firstly interrogate the very nature of it – what is on the programme? Is it reality or television reality? Are there differences between the two? If there are, what is the substance of television reality? To answer these questions is to understand more about the television texts that are experienced by the audiences.

Television as a media form, first and foremost, cannot present things without 'frames'. What we see on television is the processed results of televisual technology. As Fiske & Hartley (1978) elaborate, a television programme cannot be made without recasting the televisual language and adding some 'fictionalised' elements (p. 59). Bill Nichols also concludes in his study that television, specifically the non-fiction, 'is not able to represent an unmediated reality', but 'is always signifying a processed, selected, ordered, interpreted, and incomplete reality' (Butler, 2001, p. 61). Given this nature, an omnipotent presentation of reality can never be expected on television as editing is the kernel of televisual images. The 'frames' are produced both by men and techniques. In addition to the editing, the fundamental principle is that television images conform to televisual language – they could only present those

that are televisually presentable. Television has its own system to highlight and omit, which results in certain features that are visible and certain are not. It is by this nature that television gives its own definitions and meanings of the world.

Specifically to what we will discuss here, television has contributed greatly to contemporary aesthetics of feminine beauty in China. CWMS, allied with other forms of media, e.g. fashion magazines, celebrity news, have been setting rules of how to judge women in terms of beauty/appearance, and pleading for their aesthetic authority by repeating ‘the photogenic images’ in the television content. They have kept educating the audiences about what is beautiful and therefore enable them to appreciate ‘the beautiful’ both on ‘small screen’ and in daily life. What needs caution here is that the tastes that the audiences have learned from media are generated from and confined by media itself. To display a women’s body according to the aesthetic rules, media content must include certain features and exclude others to be adaptable with media language and technology. Hence, the ‘photogenic’ images on CWMS are created on the basis of the characteristics of the television – they have been edited and do not embrace the whole variety of feminine beauty. Television chooses what it can present and plays down what it cannot; it prefers to explain concepts visually other than in any other forms.

Of course, it is sometimes difficult for audiences to differentiate television reality from the real world. 1) The way that one perceives televisual images is similar to that in which one perceives reality. 2) Television collects materials from reality before producing them in a programme. Some elements are preferred over others to meet the interests of television production; and reality is reproduced before being displayed on television. 3) For the audiences who have no direct sources from reality, they are informed of ‘reality-as-described’ by the media. At the same time, ‘the alternatives to the media’s description of reality are other descriptions generated by other media’ (Butler, 2001, p. 61). In this way, all that the audiences can receive is second-hand information unless they can experience the reality in person.⁸ Now that

⁸ For example, a celebrity’s life as a consumer is always collected, edited and then exposed to the audiences by media unless the audiences can witness the life themselves.

the resources can be provided only by media and different media forms share similar depictions, it is no wonder that the audiences assume media reality to be actual reality.

Reality is the 'primary resource' of television reality. However, it is not the only reason why the audiences take everything on television for granted. The very reason that television content has similarity with real life is that the televisual languages are designed on the basis of general acknowledgment of the world to be received as easily and widely as possible by the audience. In other words, television broadcasts to transform the social recognition of the majority by means of perceivable televisual codes and signs. In this way, media, as one of the ISA (ideological state apparatuses), produces 'in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways' (Fiske, 1992, p. 216). By watching a popular television programme, people are assured that they have similarity in observing and understanding the reality of the world with others.

The identity that the audiences gain from watching television is also due to hegemonic texts in television contexts. As many scholars of television and cultural studies believe, television texts are structurally produced and therefore, are in no way neutral or objective. In his famous encoding/decoding analysis mode, Hall (1996) demonstrates that television texts always attempt to have certain information protruding over others to form the 'preferred reading'. The dominant group in a society, under most circumstances, have stronger voice on the media over the subordinate. That is to say, the hierarchy of a society, in some sense, is reflected by the media. Other media studies scholars also agree with the arbitrary dimension of television content, which dissembles the extent to which it is aligned with the interests of powerful groups in society (Carter & Steiner, 2004a; Fiske, 1990; Morley, 1995; Williams, 1996). They warn that the seeming naturalness of television texts cannot overshadow the hegemonic features immanent within it. What's more, the hegemonic elements residing in televisual images will ultimately be identified by the audience through repetition. The result is that as McLuhan (1994) remarks, 'the effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense

ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance' (p. 18). The media changes the way that people understand and makes people get used to living with technological developments: it is not only about how technology manifests televisual contexts, but it is by technology that people have been educated to see, to express and to understand. Overall, television is in favour of the opinions of the powerful and is confined by its own technology.

The most distinctive features of the hegemonic television texts of CWMS are in the interests of consumption and patriarchy. In the shows, for example, the female body is normally seen in a fragmented way so that each part of the woman's body will match certain products to be consumed; the shows urge that women should take care of their bodies all the time, especially when with their partners, so as to maintain or even save their relationships or marriages in the long term. The female body and feminine presentation are largely held in the hands of both commercial power and male power (there will be more analysis on these points in later chapters). No matter what reasons the shows give to the audiences to fulfil the makeover tasks, the logic is that one has no other choices but to change, to modify, and to consume. It is not a question of 'to change/consume or not' – the answer is in the affirmative, 'Yes'; nor is it a question of what or how to change/consume – this will be told through the shows. However, what is at stake is that CWMS, with the way paved by three decades of the Economic Reform in China, seem to be functional and meaningful to modern Chinese women. The fashion magazines and related beauty industries have been producing and naturalising the needs of women in beautification of their appearance. The concept has penetrated into the daily life of Chinese women, being part of the latter's daily practices. In addition, new media has made interaction between the producing teams and the audiences more convenient and accessible. A great many opinions from the audiences are being taken into consideration while the producing teams are making their next episodes. Once the suggestions or questions of the audiences have been reflected in the shows, it will make the audiences feel empowered through the interaction, and therefore make it more difficult for them to be aware of the hegemony in television texts.

1.3.3 Circulation of meaning

[...] it is worth remembering that the opinions and attitudes of most people are chosen from a set which is circumscribed very largely by the modes of thought, the ways of seeing which a culture negotiates for itself. Television cannot easily step outside this central set of choices, and if it did its influence would no doubt be marginal.

(Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 76)

In *Reading Television*, Fiske and Hartley (1978) point out that the screen images of television allow the audiences to decode selectively. Despite being aware of the programme as a whole, the audiences have aberrant personal decodings, which means that 'the message is individually decoded, but still retains a broad generality of meaning which makes it a popular cultural experience' (pp. 135-136). The capability of admitting multi-interpretations is one of the characteristics of television programmes texts as popular cultural products: the more viewers a television programme attracts, the more likely it is that its meanings have been openly understood. At the same time, however, to function as broadcast as opposed to narrowcast media, television must represent broadly shared common sense and acceptable aspects of a society. Television literally cannot be so democratic as we have imagined in the interests of gaining public consent. Its texts are of illusive variety. They are varied but common in order to be popular: their variety mists their commonness.

Fiske and Hartley (1978) further argue that television as the meaning-making medium and the audiences as the making-meaning subjects are both within the same cultural process. On the one hand, the texts generate meanings by interacting with other cultural and media forms. On the other, the audiences have 'porous' experience between television messages and other cultural experiences. While watching television, people bring their own experiences from daily life to understand the texts. It is the interactions between people and the cultural environment that form their awareness, and then the 'awareness is itself produced in people by what they have experienced hitherto' (p. 68).

Here, it is seen that the circulation of meaning-making works among television text, the cultural environment and the audiences. The potential of making meaning from a television text depends on the selections of the individual audience whose decoding is based on their own cultural and subcultural background. As Hall (1996) demonstrates, ‘if no “meaning” is taken, there can be no “consumption”; if no “meaning” is articulated in practice, it has no effect’ – that is to say, a discourse in media cannot be as effective as one in social practices without the recognition and transformation of the audiences, and vice versa. Television messages are more ambiguous than the signs and codes sent to the audiences, especially after being reproduced by the viewing process of the audiences. That is why it is essential to discuss further beyond the texts and the audiences. The viewing process involves how the ideology of a culture is reflected both on TV and audiences, and negotiations that lead to a dynamic development of meaning.

Meantime, the ‘polysemous’ television texts cannot be equated with ‘semiotic democracy’. According to Murdock (1989), there is no ‘perfect competition’ in constructing television texts. Understanding the workings of the cultural field is similar to that of ‘economic analysis, since it is obvious that some discourses (like some firms in the market) are backed by greater material resources and promoted by spokespersons with preferential access to the major means of publicity and policymaking’ (p. 438). The powers to construct media representations are never evenly distributed and the audiences generally belong to the weaker side. In sum, it should be meticulous about not underestimating the capability of television to exclude marginalised opinions nor overestimating the capability of the subversiveness of the audiences. Television is, after all, the site containing different voices and displacing them according to the social stratification of respective powerfulness.

1.4 Semiotic and structuralist textual analysis

[...] This strategy involves a close reading of the signifiers of the text – that is, its physical presence – but recognizes that the signifieds exist not in the text itself, but extratextually, in the myths, countermyths, and ideology of their culture. It recognizes that the distribution of power in society is paralleled by the distribution of meanings in texts, and that struggles for social power are paralleled by semiotic struggles for meanings. Every text and every reading has a social and therefore political dimension, which is to be found partly in the structure of the text itself and partly in the relation of the reading subject to the text.

(Fiske, 1992, p. 6)

Semiotics is the study of signs. It believes that all signs and codes can be studied as verbal language has been. Since media texts are composed of signs, a TV episode can be analysed, in a similar way to analysing an article, in terms of narratives, rhetoric, structure, and so on. Signs could be, for example, images, sounds and words. Arranging them into a television text is like composing a story in televisual form, from which can be derived possible meanings (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 12).

Also, semiotics deals with how meaning is socially produced through various forms of signs – e.g. a dialogue, a certain framing of a photograph, an arrangement of colour and so on. Specifically applied to a television programme, the signs are based on those elements which could be perceived during the viewing process – in CWMS for example, how does the camera move to shoot certain characters and properties; what are the costumes and make-up the figures in the shows wear and how do they present and represent the latter accordingly; what are the relationships between the figures' language and the background music – these are just a few elements among the many that could be discussed.

As the language of a system of meaning, signs would change, gain or lose certain meanings through negotiation and circulation within the society for the reason that signs are understood on the basis of agreement on how things are defined by the majority. Therefore, the primary intention of using semiotics to analyse

television, is not to value whether a programme is a good visual product or not. Its concern, is in fact more about how a meaning is constructed through a process where signs are produced, disseminated, then received and widely understood. The world constructed by the signs is not one of reality, nor an illusion made up by individuals in their own mind; rather, people's understanding 'is itself constructed or shaped by the words and signs they use in various social contexts' (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 13). The fluctuation of signs, in this sense, represents the dynamic meaning-makings of people within a society.

According to semiology, what the signs can present is called the signifier while what they can represent called the signified (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 13). For televisual signs, it is impossible to make an index that equates the signifiers with the signifieds. And the signification relationships between the two are not always the same. Hence, when it comes to the meaning of a sign, one should always put it into related cultural context in order to study it. The conception of 'anchoring', introduced in semiotics, is one of the features of signs that prevent disruptive polysemic understandings. In newspaper editing, for example, captions have been used to give a 'guide' to the readers of the photographs. Certainly, the televisual signs are constructed in a way that is much more complicated than a single picture with a caption. It is certain, however, that 'anchoring' also works here as the elements of a frame – e.g. from background music to figures' speech, from the camera's angle to its movement – which are not organised randomly; considerations of producing socially recognised meanings and inter-anchoring relationships are involved to ensure the audiences will understand the frames with certain 'allowable errors'.

Semioticians stress that meaning is achieved largely through the combination and contrast of signs (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 344). Individually analysed, a sign distinguishes itself by showing the differences from other signs. By referring to or comparing with other signs, a sign explains itself within the systematic structure and therefore increases the possibility that it can be fully understood by people. Levi-Strauss, who influence semiotics greatly, has an important concept, that of binary

oppositions, which means that it would be easy to form key dual oppositions in a myth system or language.⁹ This concept is manifested in CWMS for the reason that the show is, in the first place, based on the binary oppositions between ‘before’ makeover and ‘after’ makeover. In CWMS, almost every makeover is half completed and a shot allowing the contrast to be seen is displayed at the end – the ‘before’ is usually associated with the ‘bad’ and the ‘after’ with the ‘good’. Other sets of major oppositions, for instance, are:

Before	After
Bad	Good
Female	Male
Ordinary people	Female celebrities
Old	Young
Asexual	Sexy (Curvaceous)
Fat	Slim
Global Brands	Open shelf products

By displaying the oppositions repeatedly, CWMS establish the contrast between the ‘high/low’ tastes concerning women’s appearance, and then further between ‘high/low’ social classes. In this sense, the signs within the system are always making meanings from the relationships with other signs and the comparisons and contrasts are the key resources of analysis (Seiter, 1992, p. 24).

In semiotics, there are two cardinal ways of combining signs: the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic.¹⁰ Specifically, signs could be shots or scenes (the smallest narrative unit) for a television programme as an analysing sample. The syntagmatic way purports the linear or temporal way to arrange scenes, which indicates that, in a television programme, if the sequence of a series of shots/scenes were rearranged, the meaning produced would be different. For instance, figures in CWMS would talk about the life or story of a young lady of note, or a star/celebrity who is married to a

⁹ On dual oppositions, cf. Branston & Stafford, 2010, pp. 19-20.

¹⁰ On the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic mode, cf. Butler, 2001, pp. 344-356.

rich man, and then the experts would conduct a makeover to mimic their styles. The arrangement of the scenes might be understood in a cause/effect way: the underlying message is that a better look leads to better marriage and a better life.

Comparing with the syntagmatic, the paradigmatic is vertical and atemporal. The paradigmatic is constituted by what we associate the signifiers with the signified. As mentioned before, the meaning-making system of the signs is not a rigid index with the signifiers at one side and the signifieds at the other. Yet there are 'codes' to the system just as there is grammar in language where the former governs the latter. According to Fiske (1996), codes consist of 'rules', i.e., culturally based conventions, that govern sign systems. Codes are abstract and metamorphic. However, the decoding process is bound within certain historical and cultural contexts. Television programmes make use of certain codes based on cultural convention: by repetition they enable other codes to become more conventional to the audiences so as to increase the probability that they will be decoded similarly by different receivers (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 63). In CWMS, we can find both codes that are part of the general culture that television inhabits and those that are specific to the medium. The codes of fashion in the show, for example, come partly from Chinese contemporary societal life, and partly add new meanings to fashion in China by reiterating certain codes derived from analogous images/signs/shots/scenes. In all, semiotic and structuralist textual analysis would benefit this research in studying how the meanings have been constructed in the shows and how they refer to the general social and cultural conventions and practices.

1.5 Data selection

This thesis uses a methodology combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative approach is to build a sample database of episodes, and then categorise and select them into a sample collection with multi-themed categorisations for further analysis. The qualitative approach, based on semiotic and structuralist textual analysis, includes a close reading and in-depth analysis of the sample collection. This section will focus on how the data have been collected and selected and whereas form the sample database.

In this research, three CWMS are chosen as the samples for analysis: *Queen*, *Pretty Women*, and *I am a Great Beauty*.¹¹ The reason to include them as the samples depends on their influence over contemporary China: 1) they have to be still on air. Though there have been many CWMS broadcast, the majority of them had been cancelled after two to five years. Those currently broadcasting ensure that they are still part of the culture and have impact on the society; 2) the broadcasting platform of the shows have to be in national or provincial level; 3) the main presenter of the shows has to be popular in mainland China.¹²

Queen

Queen is the very first CWMS. Its debut was on TVBS, Taiwan in 2000 and it started a new series in 2005. Through the re-programming it changed to the current format, with a more narrow focus of content primarily on women's appearance, from a talk show. The presenter Lan Xinmei is a well-known singer, actress and presenter in the Chinese TV world. As early as the 1990s, she established her fame among mainland audiences by hosting *Throw an Egg at a Rock* (*Jidan peng shitou* 鸡蛋碰石头, 1991-1995) on Star Chinese Channel. Having grown in fame with *Queen*, she had been called the 'beauty-making machine' by the press and had promised to 'remodel all Taiwanese women from head to toe' (Atong, 2007).

However, *Queen* did not only remodel females in Taiwan, it directly and indirectly influenced mainland women too. It started to wield influence with the re-launch of the programme in 2005, when it was the only Chinese Women's Makeover show that mainland fans could watch (Ren, 2010).¹³ In addition, since it had not been convenient for non-Taiwanese citizens to purchase the goods recommended by

¹¹ Both on its official website and on air programmes, *Wo shi da meiren* is translated as *Queen*. To distinguish it from *Queen* (*Nüren wo zuida*), I am using *I am a Great Beauty* (the literal translation of its Chinese name) throughout my thesis.

¹² The TV presenter is an important constitutive element for branding Chinese television programmes. Especially famous presenters, are powerful in attracting advertising and they have great social influence (G. Gao & Bai, 2010). For CWMS, the (main) presenter is decisive in branding building and effects of Chinese female fashion television programmes (Zou & Zhang, 2011).

¹³ There are other CWMS – broadcast in Taiwan or Hong Kong at that time, *Beauty* (*Meili yi neng jie*, 美丽艺能界, CTi Entertainment, 2005) for example. However, *Queen* is the only one that can be accessed by mainland audiences.

Queen on its own official shopping website, it opened a mainland distribution centre ‘Charming, Beautiful and Quirky’ (*mei li qi* 魅丽奇) in 2009.¹⁴ Additionally, the official website of the programme established an internet search engine to facilitate mainland consumers in locating the goods on Taobao/TMall, the most widely used personal trading online platform in China.¹⁵ When searching ‘*nüren wo zui da tuijian* (女人我最大推荐, recommended by *Queen*)’ as keywords on Baidu search engine (the Chinese equivalent to ‘Google’), 2,640,000 results will appear compared with 2,110,000 results of ‘*meili qiao jia ren tuijian* [美丽俏佳人推荐, recommended by *Pretty Women* (the most popular mainland Chinese Women’s Makeover Show)]’.¹⁶ As *Queen* became the ‘beauty consultant’ of female consumers, there have been a great many shows imitating *Queen* broadcast in the mainland, several of which proclaimed themselves as the mainland version of *Queen* to enhance their reputation. Thus, the production team of *Queen* could do nothing but complain that there were too many copycats (everlee, 2010). It was not until the end of 2010 that *Queen* announced that they would cooperate with Channel Young (*Xing shang chuanmei* 星尚传媒, a subsidiary company of Shanghai Media Group) in producing *New Queen* [*Xin nüren wo zuida* 新女人我最大, now called *Love You, Love Beauty* (*Ai ni ai meili* 爱你爱美丽), 2011-Present]. Lan said in her interview, ‘I have heard and seen many mainland television programmes that imitate *Queen*. Why not import the copyright? From next January, mainland audiences can see the ‘copyrighted’ *Queen* (J. Luo, 2010). Due to the great influence on CWMS as a whole, it is therefore indispensable to include *Queen* into the analysis, even though it is not a mainland television programme and is merely transmitted online (the importance of online viewing will be analysed in 2.1).¹⁷

Pretty Women

¹⁴ The official shopping website of *Queen* is http://www.payeasy.com.tw/wqueen/new_wq/index.shtml; the mainland distribution website is <http://www.payez.cn/>.

¹⁵ The link of the search engine is <http://wqueen.biz/>.

¹⁶ Searched on 15th January, 2013.

¹⁷ Generally, a Chinese mainland family cannot receive TVBS signals. However, following the boom of web TV, e.g. PPLive, PPS, Funshion, Pipi, most programmes can be watched online.

Started in 2006, this programme can be regarded as one of the most successful women's makeover shows in mainland China. It has been the winner of different domestic media awards every year: it won 'annual programming brand awards of lifestyle and fashion television programmes' and 'best programmes chosen by TV personnel' respectively awarded by *Media & Entertainment Industry Reporter* (*Zongyi bao* 综艺报) of SARFT¹⁸ (The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television) in 2008 and 2009; it also received 'the most web-influential non-state-produced programmes in China' four times. It had been transmitted on the The Travel Channel (*Lüyou weishi* 旅游卫视) from 2006-2012 and was therefore widely received not only by internet users but also by 'real' television audiences in mainland China.

Among all discussion of CWMS, *Queen* and *Pretty Women* are the two which are most frequently compared by the mainland media and audiences. The formats of the two shows are similar with slight distinctions in the usage of main figures (further analysis will be given later in 2.2.2). The most notable difference consists in how they use sponsored products on the show. In *Queen*, two ways of brand sponsorships are used: 1) testing of the samples to decide whether to use the products on the show; 2) displaying the products on the show with credits of sponsorship added at the end (Que, 2012). Comparing it with *Queen*, *Pretty Women* has adopted the name of its sponsors and recommends the sponsor's products conspicuously, sometimes even designating a 5-10-minute segment specifically to introduce the sponsor's products, which has led to criticism from the audience questioning the heavy commercial elements of the show.¹⁹

¹⁸ SARFT is a ministerial-level institution affiliated to Chinese State Council. It is responsible for regulating all the radio and TV media in mainland China.

¹⁹ *Pretty Women* was called 'CHANDO *Pretty Women*' (*Ziran tang meili qiao jiaren* 自然堂美丽俏佳人) in 2009, 'DOOV Female Cell Phone *Pretty Women*' (*Duowei nüxing shouji meili qiao jiaren* 朵唯女性手机美丽俏佳人) in 2010 & 2011, and 'Herbal Life *Pretty Women*' (*Kang bao lai meili qiaojia ren* 康宝莱美丽俏佳人) in 2012 & 2013.

In terms of audience feedback, there is not much difference between both shows, as both receive praise and/or evoke disputes.²⁰ Yet it is these discussions and the attention received that has made these two shows to be the longest running CWMS. During the first three to four years, *Pretty Women* is frequently criticised for copying too much without adding original and useful information. In a BBS poster in 2009 asking ‘Are you watching *Pretty Women*, or *Queen*?’, the replies show that *Queen* is their first choice.²¹ Comments on pps.com also show a similar judgment and some audiences even pinpoint the parts of *Pretty Women* copied from *Queen*. Gradually, however, the situation changes. More views start to emerge. In the eyes of its loyal audience, *Queen* begins to be seen as more open and of higher entertainment value than the mainland makeover shows, while *Pretty Women* is closer to mainland women’s lifestyle. One comment says that

I think *Queen* is for those with good economic conditions and who don’t need to go to work. And the clothes it introduces are not suitable for northern weather. *Pretty Women* is relatively mass-based and practical. They are both good. PS: The celebrity guests on *Queen* are very money-focused. An average man could not afford their lifestyles.²²

The opinions above are representative of those who believe that *Queen* and *Pretty Women* are catering to different groups of women. Of course, there are opposing comments too: some think *Queen* is too noisy with exaggerated TV figures and sometimes seems to express superiority over mainland people, while others think *Pretty Women* is not convincing enough with overt advertisements and that it has pretentious presenters. But overall, the commentators either indicate fondness for the programmes or request solutions to beauty and fashion problems in their daily life. In this sense, the majority of the audiences find *Queen* and *Pretty Women* worth following no matter whether they are simply a viewer or also a consumer.

I am a Great Beauty

²⁰ The audiences’ opinions were gathered from the comments area of *Queen* (2836 entries) and *Pretty Women* (889 entries) on PPS, <http://bk.pps.tv/ct400034028/>, <http://bk.pps.tv/ct202568825/>, accessed on 18th May, 2013. Almost all the comments on the two websites have been reviewed. There are 20 entries for each page. Generally speaking, there are 2-3 entries appraising the shows, 5-6 entries asking for the exact names of the products, 4-5 entries complaining about the advertising feature on each page. A few of them are selected here to give examples.

²¹ <http://www.boohee.com/posts/view/72696>, accessed on 18th June, 2011.

²² http://comment.bk.pps.tv/comment_202568825.html, accessed on 18th May, 2013.

This show launched on 24th January, 2010, on Hunan Satellite TV. It is representative because 1) Hunan Satellite TV excels among domestic satellite television stations at making entertaining programmes. It has been the bellwether of provincial TV stations and stayed among the ‘top six’ of national TV stations audience ratings for the past decade (X. Wen, 2012). Its hit programmes, including *Super Girls* (*Chaoji nüsheng* 超级女声, 2004-2006) – which has a western counterpart, *American Idol*, *Happy Camp* (*Kuaile da ben ying* 快乐大本营, 1997-Present), and *Day Day Up* (*Tian tian xiang shang* 天天向上, 2008-Present), all share high audience ratings in the mainland (Hunantv.com, 2008). Besides, the TV shopping website of Hunan Satellite TV, Happigo.com, provides the platform to sell the products introduced by *I am a Great Beauty*. 2) *I am a Great Beauty* shares the same programming team with *Queen* and claims to be the companion edition of *Queen*. It is produced by Wen Huaizhi, known as the godfather of Taiwan fashion and producer of *Queen*, and is endorsed by Lan Xinmei and other famous experts/gurus – who also appear on *Queen* – from time to time (J. Sun, 2010). Its opening sequence used to be an imitation of *Queen* where a girl with a strikingly good figure walked away from the audience in a pink hyperspace accompanied by a sexy sigh from a woman (both programmes have now changed their opening sequences). The show was an instantaneous success and earned highest audience ratings among same-time programmes upon its debut (CVSC-SOFRES MEDIA, 2010). 3) The presenters, He Jiong, Hu Xin and Xie Nan, are very popular in mainland China.²³ Both He and Hu are the presenters of *Happy Camp*, the most popular and influential entertainment show in China.²⁴ All the above elements guarantee both influence and popularity of the show.

Preparing the data for analysis

The sample database is composed of the episodes of these three shows between 2010-2012. In order to include the episodes of the three shows within the same

²³ This is the original team of presenters, which now changes to He and Hu as the main presenters with other guest presenters.

²⁴ In 2005, *New Weekly* (*Xin zhou kan* 新周刊) named ‘The Most Influential 30 TV programmes and 30 TV Presenters for the 15 Years’ Chinese TV Industry (1990-2004)’. *Happy Camp* ranked 3rd of the top 30 TV programmes.

period, when all of them were broadcasting normally, 1st January, 2010 is chosen as the starting date of the period (*I am a Great Beauty* debuted in that year, so the starting date cannot be earlier) and 31st December, 2012 is chosen as the end date (*Pretty Women* changed its broadcasting TV station at the end of 2012, so that the programming of episodes of this show later than 2012 is slightly different from those between 2010-2012). According to my internet data collection (episodes can be found either by names/titles only or the full episodes), there are in total 1523 episodes broadcast during the period of observation – 755 episodes of *Queen*, 615 episodes of *Pretty Women*, and 153 episodes of *I am a Great Beauty*.

The approach to categorising the sample database is in two levels. The preliminary categorisation uses keywords in the titles to target the content of the episodes.²⁵ The keywords are divided into three groups with their respective sub-themes (see the following categorising list). The numbers in the brackets show the amounts of the episodes with according key words:

1) On feminine beauty (369):

- Body parts (161): *lian* (脸, face, 52), *yan* (眼, eyes, 41), *tui* (腿, legs, 31), *yao* (腰, waist, 12), *xiong* (胸, breasts, 7), *tun* (臀, hips, 13), *jing* (颈, neck, 2), *bi* (臂, arms, 3), etc.;
- Body features (208): *quxian* (曲线, curvaceous, 4), *shou* (瘦, slim, 76), *meili* (美丽, beautiful, 64), *nianqing/nen* (年轻/嫩, young, 29), *lao* (老, old, 26), *bai* (白, white, 3), *wuxia* (无暇, flawless, 6), etc.;

2) On self-presentation on social occasions (158):

- Occasions (73): *gongzuo* (工作, work, 5), *zhichang* (职场, workplace, 14), *juhui/weiyapaidui/party* (聚会/尾牙/派对, social/party, 17), *qiuzhi/mianshi* (求职/面试, job-hunting/interview, 7), *hunli/xinniangu* (婚礼/新娘, wedding/bride, 11), *jiapai/hongtan/zhaozipai* (街拍/红毯/照/自拍, street snap/red carpet/photo/selfies, 10), *yuehui/xiangqin* (约会/相亲, date, 9), etc.;

²⁵ This is done with all Chinese original titles.

- Effects (57): *xijing/meili* (吸睛/魅力, attractive, 12), *hao ren yuan/haogan/renqi* (好人缘/好感/人气, popular, 8), *shanliang* (闪亮, glamorous, 10), *zhao taohua* (招桃花, lucky in romance, 27), etc.;
 - Heterosexual relationships (28): *shengnü/danshen* (剩女/单身, women who left on the shelf/single, 7), *nanren/nanyou* (男人/男友, men/boyfriend, 11), *lian/ganqing* (恋/感情, fall in love/relationships, 10), etc.;
- 3) On women as consumers (510):
- Commodities (165): *caizhuang* (彩妆, make-up cosmetics, 20), *hufu* (护肤, skin-care, 4), *(xiao)wu* [(小)物, (small) goods/products/commodities, 24], *xie* (鞋, shoes, 25), *bao* (包, bags, 26), *shi* (饰, accessories, 12), *mao/wa/qun/ku/yi* (帽/袜/裙/裤/衣, hats/socks/skirts/dresses/pants/trousers/leggings/jeans, 47), *mianmo* (面膜, masks, 7), etc.;
 - Features of consumers (114): *lan* (懒, lazy, 13), *kuai* (快, quick, 20), *xuepin/guangjie/gou* (血拼/逛街/购, shopping, 31), *sheng* (省, save, 9), *bimai/bibei* (必买/必备, must-have, 24), *dapai/mingpai* (大牌/名牌, big brands, 17), etc.;
 - Identities (103): *mingxing* (明星, star/celebrity, 63), *mingyuan* (名媛, a young lady of note, 13), *guifu* (贵妇, a well-off lady, 12), *mote/mingmo* (模特/名模, model/super model, 15), etc.;
 - Nation (27): *ri* (日, Japan, 16), *han* (韩, Korea, 8), *oumei* (欧美, Europe & USA, 3), etc.;
 - Fashion (101): *shishang* (时尚, fashion, 71), *chaoliu/chao* (潮流/潮, trend, 14), *quanqiu/chuguo* (全球/出国, global/abroad, 16), etc.

In this way, the sample database is categorised into three main themes and related sub-themes which assists in structuring chapter 3-5.

This categorisation by keywords has a disadvantage of vagueness: the samples are occasionally overlapping among the three groups, i.e., one title of an

episode may have more than one keyword so as to support different themes. A more important fact is that this categorisation also has a problem in the accuracy of associating the titles with the targeted material for analysis. That is to say, sometimes, the keyword of the title of an episode corresponds to a sub-theme while the content actually does not.

Therefore, the result of the first categorisation needs to be adjusted according to the content of each episode so that some episodes can be moved into more fitting categories. However, because this categorisation is conducted by searching each episode online and then watching the respective content, it is impossible to categorise the whole database of more than 1500 episodes. The difficulties consist in: 1) the online resource of the episodes is incomplete; 2) there are sometimes multiple themes within one episode. Thus, for each sub-theme, every one out of five episodes is randomly chosen to have secondary categorisation.²⁶ Those episodes, around one fifth of the total database, are searched online, watched and marked down the potential exemplary sections/dialogues/scenes. Through this process, the chosen episodes are identified with the lists of themes/sub-themes again by content and prepared for further in-depth analysis. They form a data collection labelled with themes/sub-themes, which is ready for the qualitative analysis (Appendix I lists the episodes from data collection that have been quoted through the thesis).

The categorisations give a rough idea that what subjects are repeatedly discussed and what features of the subjects are consistently promoted in CWMS. Turning back to the categorising list, '1) On feminine beauty' centres on the physical beauty of women. After studying the episodic contents of this part, it can be seen that 'face' and 'figure' are the two topics most frequently brought up. In terms of 'face', the shows concern facial shape and skin while in terms of 'figure', the shows concern the proportion, shape and skin of the body. As a whole, there are three distinctive questions on the ideal look: what a beautiful Chinese woman should look

²⁶ One of every five episodes is randomly chosen to search the video version online. If the online version is not available, another one out of the rest four will be chosen to be searched, and so on. If the sub-theme has less than five episodes, e.g. *jing* in "Body parts" of "On feminine beauty", *hufu* in "Commodities" of "On women as consumers", all of the episodes will be searched online.

like in terms of facial shape, skin and figure. Also, there are two body features closely related to those two topics: ‘youthful’ and ‘sexy/curvaceous’ – they are keywords of a great many episodes on face and figure; the standards that they represent and the meanings behind their definitions are worth exploring further. These five parts compose the sections of chapter 3.

In ‘2) On self-presentation on social occasions’, the key words on occasions can be divided into four aspects for chapter 4: those for work (e.g. *zhichang* 职场, *qiuzhi/mianshi* 求职/面试), those for causality (e.g. *juhui/weiya/paidui/party* 聚会/尾牙/派对, *hao ren yuan/haogan/renqi* 好人缘/好感/人气), those on how to deal with men (e.g. *zhao taohua* 招桃花, *yuehui/xiangqin* 约会/相亲, *nanren/nanyou nan* 男人/男友) and those on presenting oneself through photos (e.g. *jiapai/hongtan/zhao/zipai* 街拍/红毯/自拍). The first three are about social interactions in real life while the last one is about oneself in virtual life. The content of the episodes will be studied respectively to see how a Chinese woman is requested to present oneself on those occasions or situations, and by the result of which to probe the functionality of women’s beauty/bodily presentation in social life.

Though the key words in ‘3) On women as consumers’ are identified with five points: commodities, features of consumers, identities, nation and fashion, they can be expounded in two perspectives: the ways that women conduct body maintenance and the features of women acting as consumers. ‘Commodities’ and ‘features of consumers’ offer sources for the first perspective. The attitude of women as the ‘maintainers’ of their body constructed by the shows can be summarised and therefore discussed from two angles: how they put effort to body maintenance and how they are asked to treat their body – especially for the latter, the shows emphasise the recognition of a more detailed body maintenance [e.g. *(xiao)wu*], a more hedonistic method (e.g. *lan, kuai*) and the difference between Chinese/eastern body and western body. With regards to the consumption patterns, examples can be found in all the five bulletin points. A ‘smart’, ‘fashionable’ and ‘brand-conscious’ consumer image is revealed. However, the standards and definitions of the three words need to be further examined.

1.6 Chapter review

Chapter 2 gives an overall view of CWMS. It starts with an introduction of the development of Chinese makeover shows in general and then the status quo of CWMS within mainland China. Following this, it accentuates three CWMS, which are the main data resources for the analysis of this research. It then analyses the generality of the formatting of CWMS in terms of narrative structure, main figures, production techniques and the interactions between the producing teams and the audiences. Chapter 3 focuses on physical makeovers of female bodies on CWMS in terms of normativity, beauty and femininity, i.e., what are the definitions that the shows have given as regards Chinese beauty, what are the features of the feminine physique that the shows have promoted, and how these features, to some extent, reflect the newly established female culture in contemporary China. In Chapter 4, the research outlines the requirements and disciplines that the shows have set to Chinese women in term of presenting the self. It is not only a summary of the characteristics of the presentation of the female body, but also refers to the management of the self-identity for Chinese women in the Chinese Economic Reform era, and further aims to see the meanings of the presentation of the body for women in their daily life. Chapter 5 turns to the instructions that CWMS have given to Chinese women on body maintenance. It scrutinises the pertinent content in the shows with the characteristics of Chinese (female) consumers in general, such as how women are expected to consume, what are the promoted consumer behaviours, who are the consumer idols in our current society, who are setting the standards of taste for the women's consumption, especially the consumption for their bodies and appearance and so on. Chapter 6 situates the conclusion of this research in a broader context and further develops the arguments on the social forces and structures behind CWMS.

Chapter 2 Chinese Women's Makeover Shows: An Overview

The word ‘makeover’ (*gaitou huanmian*, 改头换面) was still unfamiliar to Chinese people when I started to do this research project on what I call ‘Chinese Women's Makeover Shows’. As early as the first few years of this century, when *Queen* became known to Chinese mainland audiences, it was categorised as a ‘Taiwan variety/entertainment show (*Taiwan zongyi yule jiemu*)’ along with other popular Taiwan infotainment shows, e.g. *Kangxi Coming*²⁷ (*Kangxi lai le* 康熙来了, CTiTVch36, 2004-Present), *Guoguang Group Help* (*Guoguang bang bangmang* 国光帮帮忙, Sanlih E-Television, 2005-Present), and so on. After the success of the most popular mainland Chinese Women's Makeover Show, *Pretty Women*, it was followed by the advent of a great number of similar television programmes, and both the media and academia began to give these shows classified names. The most common ones were ‘female fashion television programmes (*nüxing shishang jiemu* 女性时尚节目)’, or ‘cosmetic/beauty fashion shows (*meirong shishang jiemu* 美容时尚节目)’, which were widely seen in media coverage that reported the news related to the shows. At the same time, there were also other descriptions of this kind of show. In 2009, when *Pretty Women* was awarded as one of ‘the most web-influential non-state-produced programmes in China’, it was introduced in the news report by sina.com as a ‘large on-site fashion television programme (*daxing xianchang lei shishang jiemu* 大型现场类时尚节目)’ (Anonymous, 2009a). *New Queen*, upon its on-air promotion, defined itself as an ‘experiential female cosmetology programme (*tiyan shi nüxing meirong lanmu* 体验式女性美容栏目)’ (Anonymous, n.d.). Recently, ‘beauty and make-up television programmes (*meizhuang jiemu* 美妆节目)’ became the widely adopted nomenclature in news reports for those shows.

²⁷ This show's title is a pun of the most famous Emperors of the Qing Dynasty, Kangxi (1662-1722), comprising parts of the name of the host (Cai Kangyong) and the hostess (Xu Xidi). The English translation is adopted from the name on the background props of the show.

In Chinese scholarship these shows are categorised in more general term as ‘cosmetic/beauty fashion shows’ or under the category of more general genres, e.g. fashion television programmes, female television programmes – as seen in 1.1 Studies on Makeover Television Shows;²⁸ articles on lifestyle shows and reality shows seldom adopt the word ‘makeover’. Yin & Lu (2007) classify reality shows into nine types in terms of content and format: a number of western makeover shows are exemplified and are identified as being similar to Chinese counterparts: *American Idol* (Fox, 2006- Present) vs. *China Dream* (*Mengxiang Zhongguo* 梦想中国, CCTV-2, 2005-2007) as in performing and talent shows, *The Apprentice* (NBC, 2004-Present) vs. *Absolute Challenge* (*Juedui tiaozhan* 绝对挑战, CCTV-2, 2003-2007) as in professional and business shows, *Simple Life* (Fox, 2003-2007) vs. *Special 6+1* (*Feichang 6+1* 非常 6+1, CCTV-3, 2003-Present) as in identity exchange shows, *What Not to Wear* (TLC, 2003-2013) vs. *Big Supermarket Winner* (*Chaoshi da yingjia* 超市大赢家, CCTV-2, 2004-2008) as in life skills show [they also mention *The Swan* (Fox, 2004), *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (Bravo, 2003-2007) in this category]. While no fashion and beauty programmes in China are mentioned, *The Swan* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, which are western television programmes about body and appearance transformations and which have been studied by scholars under the genre of makeover shows, e.g. Deery (2006), T. Lewis (2008), can be seen as the their counterparts. Therefore, in Yin & Lu’s logic of classifications, the current fashion and beauty programmes should be counted as life skills reality shows.

In English publications, ‘makeover shows’ are rarely used though the scholars are certainly including CWMS as their research subjects. In Xu’s studies on ‘newly emergent Chinese television programmes’, for example, CWMS certainly fall within what she describes as the increasingly popular lifestyle and service programmes that ‘package useful information and practical knowledge with entertainment’ (Xu, 2009, p. 160). Yet she positions them respectively within consumer-oriented programmes (2007) and lifestyle and service programmes (2009). Lewis et al. (2012) choose life-

²⁸ There is one master’s thesis using ‘makeover fashion show (*gaizao shishang lei jiemu* 改造时尚类节目)’ to name them.

advice programmes with *shenghuo* themes to name their study subject – the Taiwan context analyses one of CWMS, *Queen*. They believe that those television programmes are defined in terms of content ranging from cooking to body care; they are the Asian counterparts of ‘lifestyle television’ in Anglo-American contexts. Clearly, none of them gives a specific name to beauty and fashion programmes.

‘Makeover’ as a noun, according to the Cambridge dictionary, means a set of changes that are intended to make a person or place more attractive. ‘Makeover shows’, accordingly, are television programmes with makeover themes (gradually, the makeover objects²⁹ have extended from people and place to other things, e.g. cars, parenting, management strategies, etc.). For western scholars generally, makeover shows are part and parcel of the newly burgeoning television formats of reality shows, and they have emerged as responses to political, social and cultural developments in specific national contexts. As early as 2000, Mosley recognises makeover shows as reality television/lifestyle programmes responding to their particular environment. She believes that the shows suggest ‘some possibility of change for the better – of home, of garden, of lifestyle generally, and even of self’, going along with the ‘things can only get better’ ethos of the New Labour government of the UK (p. 300).³⁰ In the States, scholars also connect the makeover craze with the need for transformation. Dancey (2005) claims that obsessions with ritualised physical transformation in American culture are known as the makeover (p. 1). Heller (2006a), in the very first sentence of her edited symposium, states that makeover shows are the subgenre of reality television that is arranged around the theme of self-transformation, with the invitation for the audience ‘to participate in fantasies of the individual as well as national transformation and advancement’ (p. 1). In *Destruct This: Makeover Shows* (Anonymous, 2003), three scholars give their opinions on contemporary makeover obsessions in the US. Robert Thompson claims that the makeover shows represent ‘reinvention’, an adequate word to describe the American mythos. He further argues, ‘in a very real sort of way, the history of the

²⁹ For the purpose of this dissertation, I intend to retain this term even though the objects in CWMS are people and might be termed as ‘makeover subjects’.

³⁰ ‘Things Can Only Get Better’ is a popular song by D:Ream used by the Labour Party in their successful 1997 campaign, considered as part of the Cool Britannia cultural movement of the 1990s.

United States was one big fat makeover show'. Virginia Blum comments that the American culture is a transformational culture with an ongoing before-and-after story; the makeover phenomenon is the result of an immigrant culture. She perceives these shows as antidotes to a culture of deprivation, a culture of insufficiency: the more the transformations have been emphasised, the more desire people have for what they do not have. Lizabeth Cohen concludes that the makeover shows deliver the message that one can buy a hipper, happier identity – self-improvement through consumption. According to her, consumption has served people in a therapeutic way. Later, Weber (2009) points out that the makeover is the pillar theme of advice culture and the majority of objects of making over are women. The television programmes with makeover themes indoctrinate 'the pleasures and possibilities of transformation, rejuvenation, and alteration for everyone' (p. 1).

From the above, we can see that 'reality show' and 'makeover theme' are the keywords to define makeover shows in western literature. The reality show is defined as factual television about real people in the West (Hill, 2005, p. 2);³¹ while it is summarised by Chinese scholars as a television programme recording and processing the competitive behaviour of voluntary participants who are fulfilling pre-given goals under certain rules in a fixed scenario (H. Yin, 2005, p. 14). CWMS, however, do not entirely tally with either definition. In the western sense, CWMS is neither documenting actual events nor are its main figures on the show ordinary people (in a few instances, the shows invite members of the audience to be the objects of the makeover; however, it is difficult to say whether the people selected are random or designated members of the audience).³² CWMS are more similar to western reality shows that only cast celebrities instead of ordinary people, e.g. *The Celebrity Apprentice* (NBC, 2007-Present), *Celebrity Come Dine With Me* (Channel 4, 2005-Present). The Chinese definition seems to be abstract enough to embrace CWMS,

³¹ Hill (2005) notes that 'reality TV is a catch-all category that includes a wide range of entertainment programmes about real people. Sometimes called popular factual television, reality TV is located in border territories, between information and entertainment, documentary and drama' (p. 2).

³² For example, a media company used to recruit audience members as the guests for *Pretty Women*. It states that they want potential guests who are 'young, beautiful, good-looking and refined, and taller than 160cm'. The company is also recruiting models in the same advertisement. <http://beijing.edeng.cn/xinxi/39860818.html>, accessed on 17th August, 2013.

apart from the scarcity of distinctively competitive elements³³ and voluntary participants in the beauty and fashion programmes.

However, the absence of those elements of the western reality show is plausible in the Chinese context and does not preclude them being included as makeover shows. As I mentioned earlier, the western makeover shows emerged during the mature stage of the development of reality shows (Heller, 2007b) while both reality shows and makeover shows started to appear on Chinese TV around early 2000. In terms of time sequence, there should be caution about putting CWMS into the category of reality subgenre as western scholars did with their makeover television shows. Even so, ‘makeover show’ is still the best way of defining this kind of television programmes from every aspect. Makeover is the central theme, the very core of these fashion and beauty television programmes. The makeover motifs in Anglo-American contexts also appear in Chinese shows, especially those on cosmetics, body care and home renovation (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 548). Televisually, the show’s climax of visual effect consists in the contrast of ‘before’ and ‘after’ makeover looks (Figure 2.1). The ‘moment of revelation’ is the whole point of the discussion among the people on the show, the appearance transforming procedures and the varied episodes. In terms of narrative, ‘change’ is the reason, the incentive and the goal of performing a makeover; the shows’ whole logic is based upon it. Ideologically, the shows indicate that the makeover results determine happiness – a more prosperous career, more harmonious family, and even a luckier life are waiting for the person who has undergone the makeover. It corresponds that makeover television, though an imprecise category according to scholars around world on the cases of different countries, demonstrates an unequivocal character, by referring to Annette Hill and Caroline Dover’s idea, ‘in its tendency to eliminate “real life” from lifestyle television’ (Heller, 2007b, p. 4).

³³ Only some shows have overt elements of competition. For example, there are episodes on competitions about masks, cosmetics and other products. There are also competitions among makeover objects/guests while they are sharing their make-up tips and belongings, or presenting their after-makeover looks.



Figure 2.1: The typical 'moment of revelation' with contrasts between 'the before' (left half of face) and 'the after' (right half of face).³⁴

2.1 Mapping makeover in China

Comparing them with the western counterparts that have been gradually taking over their national television (Moseley, 2000, p. 299), the Chinese makeover shows have expanded with difficulty. Most Chinese makeover shows that copied western versions were very ephemeral. They stopped broadcasting within two years from their debuts owing to negative responses from either the public or SARFT. For instance, copying *Wife Swap* (Channel 4, 2003-2009), Shandong Qilu TV station broadcast a television programme, *Housewife Swap* (*Jiaohuan zhufu* 交换主妇, Shandong Qilu TV, 2007). Two wives from two families – normally one from the city, one from the countryside – exchanged places for two weeks. The programme aroused a great deal of controversy (M. Xiao & Wang, 2007) and was off the air after only two months (Y. Li, 2007).³⁵

³⁴ *Queen* (29/08/2012), *Wufa piekai tou! Rangren mubu zhuanjing de meili miji* (Can't Look Away! The Beauty Tips that Make People Stare at You).

³⁵ According to M. Xiao & Wang's report (2007), the programme was judged differently. Some hold the opinion that it challenged Chinese ethics. Y. Li (2007) reported that the leaked news had it that *Housewife Swap* was criticised during a regular internal meeting of SARFT and was compelled to be taken off air. But both SARFT and Shandong Qilu TV Station denied this. The producer of *Housewife Swap* expressed a slight possibility of the programme rebroadcasting.

Not only was copying formats unsuccessful for the development of Chinese Makeover Shows, but also anything seeming ‘excessive’ in content appeared to find difficulty in being accepted by Chinese audiences, or more often, by SARFT. Cosmetic surgery programmes are among the most typical. Commencing from 2005, there were a great number of television programmes appearing on Chinese television, including *Beauty Dream Works* (*Meili meng gongchang* 美丽梦工厂, 2007-2008) by the Scientific & Education Channel of Nanjing Satellite TV, *New Beauty Contract* (*Meili xin yue* 美丽新约, 2007) by Guangdong Public Channel, *Butterfly Morph: New Life* (*Diebian: xinsheng* 蝶变: 新生, 2007-2012) by Chengdu City Life Channel, *Charming 2007: Beauty Winner* (*Meili 2007: meili yingjia* 魅力 2007: 美丽赢家, 2007) by Liaoning Satellite TV, *Angel Loves Beauty* (*Tianshi ai meili* 天使爱美丽, 2005) by Hunan Economics Channel, *Cinderella and the Swan* (*Hui guniang yu tian'e* 灰姑娘与天鹅, 2006) by Shandong Qilu TV and so on (Anonymous, 2007a, 2007b; Q. Cai & Mao, 2008; Fan & Liu, 2008). This boom did not last long, in fact until 23th August 2007 when SARFT called a halt to broadcast programmes of plastic surgery and criticised *New Beauty Contract* by name in a “Notice”. SARFT believed that

‘Those programmes did not offer sound guidance; the frames were bloody, terrifying, showing scantily clad people and vulgarity; the organisations of those shows were luxurious and extravagant; the censorship at broadcasting station level was not adopted appropriately, displaying a lopsided pursuit of audience ratings – which led to strong dissatisfaction from the audience’ (SARFT, 2007).

From then on, cosmetic surgery makeover shows were almost left out of public sight (plastic surgery could still be discussed on television; but since then there have been very few programmes documenting the procedures).

Despite such obstructions, there were sporadic makeover shows with longevity. *Trading Spaces* (*Jiaohuan kongjian* 交换空间, 2005-Present) by CCTV-2, for instance, has maintained high audience ratings since its debut and is still broadcasting. It won ‘best lifestyle television programme reward’ in 2005 (Shi, 2006)

and gained the highest ratings in CCTV-2 in 2007 (Xie, 2012).³⁶ The most recent successful makeover show is *Varied Headliner Show* (*Baibian daka xiu* 百变大咖秀, 2012-Present) by Hunan Satellite TV, a Chinese version of *Your Face Sounds Familiar*, which is an entertainment series commissioned from Endemol.^{37,38} Invited celebrities are divided into two groups in the show. They imitate stars and icons from all over the world (see Figure 2.2) and compete by means of the scores that they have earned from their imitation performance. The mixture of music, comedy, and entertainment, in addition to a celebrity cast, has attracted much public attention. The show won highest audience rating seven times out of eleven broadcasting weeks in its first season among same-time-programmes (Anonymous, 2012b) and was awarded one of the ‘2012 Ten Best New Programmes on Satellite Channels’ in *Report of TV Landmarks (2012): Research Report of National Television Programmes on Radio, Film & Television*, a semi-monthly report by SARFT (B. Sun, 2012).



Figure 2.2: Makeover characters, screenshots from *Varied Headliner Show*.³⁹
(Left): Ning Caichen (宁采臣, hero of *A Chinese Ghost Story*, *Qian nü you hun* 倩女幽魂)

³⁶ Following its success, some local TV stations telecasted similar programmes, e.g. *My Heart's Home* (*Wo de xin jia* 我的心家, 2007) by The Travel Channel, *Space Movement* (*Kongjian da nuoyi* 空间大挪移, 2008) by Hangzhou Life Channel. Both are now off air.

³⁷ Endemol is an independent television and digital production company. Its international hits in entertainment, reality and game shows include *Big Brother*, *Deal or No Deal*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *Wipeout*, *The Money Drop* and so on. Official website: <http://www.endemol.com/>.

³⁸ According to the introduction on Endemol, *Your Face Sounds Familiar* is a show combining talent show and identity makeover. By definition, it cannot be counted for an ‘authentic’ makeover show; but it contains makeover elements.

³⁹ The pictures were downloaded from <http://www.yoka.com/star/topic/2012/0920713899.shtml>, and <http://ent.sdchina.com/show/2400612.html>, accessed on 10th December, 2013.

and Smurf

(Right): Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉, hero of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Hong lou meng* 红楼梦) and Elvis Presley

Among a modicum of makeover television programmes, the makeover shows on beauty and fashion, viz., CWMS, seem to be a relatively powerful sub-group. It is the only type of Chinese makeover shows with constantly emerging new members, as well as being a perennial winner of audience ratings. Table 2.1 lists most of CWMS on major *mainland* televisions over the last decade (Jan, 2004-Jan, 2012).⁴⁰

Table 2.1: CWMS on mainland TV (Jan, 2004-Jan, 2012)

English Name/ Pinyin	Broadcast Year*	TV Station/ Producing Company	Broadcast Time**	Official Websites
Pretty Women <i>Piaoliang nüren</i> 漂亮女人	May 2004- Nov 2004	Qinghai Satellite TV		
Becoming a Butterfly <i>Hua die</i> 化蝶	2006	Tianjin Satellite TV	Sat 19:30	http://blog.sina.com.cn/huadie
Beauty Lecture Room <i>Meili da jiangtang</i> 美丽大讲堂	2006-2008	Beijing Satellite TV 3 (Science and Education)	Sun 15:00	
Wear and Pair <i>Meili pei pei</i> 美丽搭配	27 th Mar 2006-2009	Southeast Satellite TV	Sat 22:45	http://you.video.sina.com.cn/lovelpp
Pretty Women <i>Meili qiao jieren</i> 美丽俏佳人	8 th Jul 2006- Present	The Travel Channel (2006-2012); Heilongjiang Satellite TV (2013- Present) / Funshion Media Company	Mon-Fri 23:15	http://www.lefeng.com/mlqjr.html http://www.weibo.com/meiliqiaojiaren
Fashion Billboard: Perfect Modelling Squad	Nov 2007-Jan 2009	CETV-3 (China Entertainment TV)	Everyday 23:00-23:30	http://blog.sina.com.cn/starstyle

⁴⁰ The table only lists the shows broadcast on TV. However, there are a great number of shows broadcast online only.

<i>Shishang fengyun bang zhi wanmei zaoxing tuan</i> 时尚风云帮之完美造型团		SHETV (Shanghai Education TV)	Everyday 17:40-18:00	
Becoming a Butterfly <i>Hua die</i> 化蝶	1 st Jan 2008-2008	Qinghai Satellite TV	Sat 19:30-20:20	http://blog.sina.com.cn/xinlanghuadie
Fashion Star Experts <i>Shishang xing daren</i> 时尚星达人	Jul 2009 - 2011	Ningxia Satellite TV	Sat 19:35	http://star.zdface.com/ http://e.weibo.com/ssxdr?type=0 http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1647110981
Beauty <i>Meiren wo zuida</i> 美人我最大	5 th Dec 2009-2011	Hubei Satellite TV	Sat 22:10/ Mon-Thu 21:10 (since 5 th Jul 2010)	http://blog.sina.com.cn/fglady001 http://www.weibo.com/p/1002061764382092/weibo?is_search=0&visible=0&is_tag=0&profile_ftype=1&page=10#feedtop
Keep Up with Fashion <i>Xiang shang kanqi</i> 向尚看齐	1 st Jan 2010- Jul 2012	The Travel Channel	Sun 16:58	http://xiangshangkanqi.blogspot.com/ http://www.weibo.com/xiangshangkanqi
Crazy for Beauty <i>Wo wei meili kuang</i> 我为美丽狂	9 th Jan 2010-2011	Jiangsu Satellite TV/Channel Young of Shanghai Media	Mon 22:50	
I am a Great Beauty <i>Wo shi da meiren</i> 我是大美人	24 th Jan 2010- Present	Hunan Satellite TV/Qinghai Stelellite TV	Sat 00:50/ Mon- Thu 22:20	http://dameiren.happigo.com/ http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1671416800 http://e.weibo.com/woshidameiren
Pan with Fun <i>Yue tao yue kaixin</i> 越淘越开心	18 th Apr 2010- Present	Hunan Satellite TV	Sun 00:15	http://ent.hunantv.com/v/hunantv/hitao/index.html http://www.hitao.com/
Love You, Love Beauty/New Queen <i>Ai ni ai meili /Xin nuren wo zuida</i> 爱你爱美丽 / 新女人我最大	1 st Jan 2011- Present	Channel Young of Shanghai Media Group	Sat 22:00	http://www.anni.com/article.php?id=alljiemu http://e.weibo.com/u/1919163305?type=0
Having Fashion <i>Gou shihang</i> 购时尚	30 th Jan 2011- Present	CCTV-2	Sun 18:30-19:30	http://cctv.cntv.cn/lm/goushishang/index.shtml http://e.weibo.com/cctv2gouushishang?type=0
Just Have My Heart in Beauty <i>Jiushi ai piaoliang</i> 就是爱漂亮	21 st Mar 2011-2012	Dragon TV of Shanghai Media Group	Mon-Wed 23:45-00:30	http://fgtv.fglady.cn/ http://www.weibo.com/fgtv

Beauty Mafia of tonight <i>Jinye nüren bang</i> 今夜女人帮	1 st Jul 2011-2013	Shaanxi Satellite TV/ Funshion Media Company	Mon-Fri 23:30-23:45	http://active.lefeng.com/act_optimize/jynrb02.jsp http://www.weibo.com/jinyenvrenbang
Perfect Beauty Mafia <i>Weimei nüren bang</i> 唯美女人帮	1 st Jan 2012-May 2012	China Entertainment TV	Mon-Fri 22:30-23:15	http://www.kpbeauty.com.cn/wmnr/index.asp http://e.weibo.com/weimeinvrenbang?type=0

*The broadcast year is sequenced chronologically by on-air time. If the on-air time is not clear but within same year, it will be sequenced chronologically by off-air time.

**It shows the broadcast times in 2012 (for those which are off-air in 2012, it shows the most recent broadcast times), which might have been different in the past or different currently. Also, the column of 'Broadcast Time' only shows the starting times of the premieres. The episodes can be watched later either at the rebroadcasting times or online. The varied time slots of premiere and rebroadcasting make the shows very likely to be seen when an average Chinese family is flipping the channels.

Here, I only list CWMS on mainland television. However, the video websites serve an indispensable role in broadcasting the shows. All the official websites of the shows above include links to video clips/online versions of their episodes, enabling the viewers to watch the shows in a way that tailors their own needs. Besides, there are also CWMS produced for websites only, e.g. *Beauty Online* (*Zaixian meizhuang shi* 在线美妆室) for Youku, *Beauty Show* (*Meizhuang xiu* 美妆秀) for PIMEI.com. It means that the viewers are not necessarily TV audiences. Finally but most importantly, it is the online viewing environment that has made the shows known and popular. Earlier when there were no other mainland CWMS, online viewing provided mainland audiences with the very first CWMS, *Queen* – women's makeover as a theme started to be realised and then became more prevalent. Even now, the internet is still the source that exposes mainland audiences to new elements in women's makeover culture. For instance, *Get it Beauty* is a Korean cosmetic makeover show and can be easily accessed by mainland audiences through major Chinese video websites, e.g. Youku, TV Sohu. The screenshots of makeover subjects and their stories became hot topics several times online (Anonymous, 2014). Thus, online viewing is one of the major channels that the audiences watch the shows, which should be taken into consideration upon doing the analysis of the audiences viewing experiences. The video websites contribute greatly to the continuity and popularity of CWMS.

The continuity of CWMS is partly in respect of the fact that it has been in a 'safe zone' in terms of its content. Having commercial pressure to be financially self-sufficient since the 1990s, Chinese television broadcasters have turned their main concern to advertising revenue and audience loyalty (L. Zhu, 2011). The concern has been largely solved by what Lewis et al. (2012) called 'lucrative "soft" TV content, providing life information and entertainment, as opposed to the 'hard' content of news and current affairs' (p. 548).

The lucrative 'soft' TV content, on the one hand, needs to meet the marketisation trend of the Chinese television industry; on the other hand, it is still obliged to be under surveillance from state organisations. In other words, being controversial in terms of television content in an era of marketisation gives a programme the chance to be popular (L. Xiao & Yu, 2010); at the same time, it increases the chances of it being challenged by SARFT. In an early episode of what is presently the most celebrated Chinese dating show, *You are the One* (*Fei cheng wu rao* 非诚勿扰, Jiangsu Satellite TV, 2010-Present), one female guest, Ma Nuo turned down the offer from a male guest who asked 'do you fancy hanging around on a bicycle with me?' by answering that she 'would rather be crying in a BMW'.⁴¹ She became the target of public criticism as an evil moneygrubber; but the show also received unprecedented attention (Zhihao Zhang, 2010).⁴² However, not all were so lucky in attracting large audiences without attracting SARFT's supervision. *Super Girls*, for instance, stopped for three years after its first three seasons' success and changed its name to *Happy Girls* (*Kuaile nüsheng* 快乐女生) because of interference from SARFT. SARFT believed that the interference was a measure to guard against the pan-entertainment tendency, to avoid star hype and pursuit of celebrities, and to encourage programme producers to make the contests more positive, healthy, and refined (Y. Zhu, 2006). *Super Girls* in 2006 was given orders such as giving full scope to the themes of the time, confining the broadcasting time into a certain period and length; there were also restrictions on the TV figures: TV presenters should not

⁴¹ *You are the One*, on 17th January, 2010. The male guest is a jobless bicycle lover.

⁴² In an interview with Marie Claire China (2010), Ma says she is often recognised in the street, being joked about and criticised behind her back. She admits that she will deny it if people ask her whether she is the female guest in *You Are the One*.

give any contentious comments, judges should not create hype by over-expressing themselves. According to SARFT's "Approval to the Event of Super Girls by Hunan Satellite TV", the programme should 'favour the promotion of cultural morality for the whole nation and discipline rather than vulgarity' (sinaentertainment, 2006). *Voice China (Zhongguo hao shengyin 中国好声音, Zhejiang Satellite TV, 2012-Present)*, to give another example, had to broadcast its episode in a way that did not follow its recorded episode because of the regulation that entertainment programmes should be contained within the four-hour length allowed for a single day.

For CWMS, there has been no conspicuously immoderate content that could be identified by SARFT as having excessively silly amusing/entertaining content or being low-brow, low quality or without moral sense (Z. Hu, 2006; SARFT, 2011), nor have the shows been very controversial. Yet CWMS were not totally immune from SARFT's control over television programmes. At the end of 2011, SARFT issued "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Management of the Satellite TV Programmes". In the "Opinions", it stated that it would control both the number and time of broadcasting programmes on marriage and dating, talent and competition, emotional stories, games, entertainment, and other talk shows and reality shows: during 19:00-22:00, the total number of the above-mentioned television programmes on all national satellite TV daily should not be more than nine and on each satellite TV weekly there should not be more than two; during 19:30-22:00, the broadcasting time of the above-mentioned television programmes on each satellite TV daily should not be more than 90 minutes (SARFT, 2011). That is why we can see from Table 2.1 that almost all the broadcasting CWMS are outside prime-time.

2.2 Format of the shows

The majority of CWMS are weekly broadcast programmes with the exceptions of the most popular ones (e.g. *Queen, Pretty Women, Perfect Beauty Mafia*: five days per week). Each episode is about one hour in length (including advertisement intervals). By giving a brief analysis of the format of CWMS, I will present some general features concerning narrative, the main figures and production techniques and from this examine how the shows build intimacy with and authority over the audience.

2.2.1 Narrative structure

Firstly, the televisual effect of CWMS is essentially accomplished by the use of ‘binary oppositions’, which I have introduced in section 1.4. Visually speaking, Chinese Women’s Makeover Show is a television programme about transformations of images themed with female beauty and fashion. To emphasise the changes, or say, the power of transformations, the comparisons between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images are at the very core of the shows. The explicit differences between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images convince the audience of the effectiveness of the makeover methods introduced by the shows. The ‘after’ images are equated with the better presentation of femininity. In the narrative, the two-group signs of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images form ‘the binary oppositions’ that embody categories of a value system for femininity, from which could the audience make sense (Fiske, 1990, p. 116). They have distinguishable features from each other so as to enable the audience to make meanings of the idealised beauty/femininity conveyed by the shows. The ‘before’ represents ‘what is wrong’ and the ‘after’ represents ‘what is right’ in terms of feminine presentation. They are labelled as oppositional features such as ‘bad-good’, ‘wrong-correct’, ‘inappropriate-appropriate’ as long as they can be named in terms of value judgments of appearances. For instance, the ‘before’ body/look might be humiliated or rejected while the ‘after’ body is acclaimed and appraised. The dichotomy indicates what the shows promote and what they do not.

One episode is taken to illustrate the logic of the contrast of ‘the before’ and ‘the after’. Table 2.2 records five makeovers from one episode of *Queen* that introduces how to wear T-shirts properly to look slim.⁴³ The look, the reason to have the look, and the responses of others are recorded respectively according to the ‘before’ and the ‘after’. At the very beginning, the guests are asked to wear loose T-shirt outfits of their own choices and to present these in front of others. Their looks are then judged or criticised by other people attending the show and they defend themselves by giving the reasons for their choices. Finally, the experts choose new outfits for them, explaining the techniques and skills and responding to questions

⁴³ *Queen* (22/06/2011), *Bi kai dileiqu! Shishang xian shou tixu chuan da shu* (Avoid Minefields! Fashion Slim-look T-shirt Outfits).

and, very rarely, challenges.

From the table it is seen that there are two oppositions and linear logics of CWMS:

before – guests (makeover objects)’ choices – humiliated presentations – wrong

after – experts’ choices – appraised presentations – right

From the ‘Responses’⁴⁴ of the ‘Before’ group, negative words appear frequently to describe or judge the ‘Looks’ within the same group; however the ‘Reasons’ does not seem unacceptable. The harsh words given in the ‘Responses’, refer to the ‘Looks’ as being problematic, or to the imperfect bodies of the guests that need to be modified or rediscovered. Comparatively, the ‘After’ images are seemingly very well presented and receive only positive words. The ‘Responses’ are largely positive or accepted. Overall, the binary meaning system of the table indicates that the makeover is a process of improvement; the pre-makeover body is the one that should be discarded while the post-makeover body is the one that should be embraced. By the repetition of appraising certain images and deprecating others, the shows suggest what is the ideal and what is deviant.

⁴⁴ The words with the first letter capitalised in single quotes in this paragraph refer to the names of the columns in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: a comparison between the narrations of ‘the before’ and ‘the after’ images: based on *Queen* (22/06/2011).

		Before	After
Guest A	Look	Pink sleeveless knee-length T-shirt with white tank top underneath.	Add a belt around the waist. Or wear a T-shirt with princess sleeves.
	Reason	I wear this so that I could stuff myself full of food. It is very comfortable. It is colourful, matching my nail polish, right for spring. It is like a dress. And the pink colour fits me.	Small girls should not ‘block up’ themselves as high as they can. As long as you have fine proportion, you will be the most beautiful. To create the fine proportion means you need to make your lower body look longer than upper body. So short girls can wear any type of T-shirt length as long as you show your waistline.
	Response	Are you pregnant? It’s like an apron. You can only go to the beach or dump trash by wearing this. Because she has very slim limbs, it looks like she has no curves and very short legs by wearing this. No boy would like to look at you because you have no breasts, hips, nor height.	Oh. (indicating they understand what the expert has said). Yes. (indicating they agree with the expert on the reason). Wow!/Oh! (indicating there is a great difference and the after-look is good). Ask questions about the match.
Guest B	Look	A long thick material T-shirt with belt around waist.	Light and hard material normal length T-shirt with a vest.
	Reason	I use butterfly sleeves to cover my strong arms. And the loose outfit makes me look smaller.	Thick materials make girls look even bigger. In addition to the choices of prints, style and material are important.
	Response	Your legs are like you should be in a national sport team. Why you want to destroy yourself like this? She is the representative of the whole person going wrong with wrong choice of T-shirt. You can endorse Michelin (automobile tyres).	She looks a lot thinner.
Guest C	Look	Multi-coloured Short sleeve T-shirt and ragged denims.	Add a bright yellow scarf/a clay red tote to her outfit.
	Reason	The T-shirt doesn’t easily get dirty like a white one. I have very big pelvis. So I need these umbrella-like shaped clothes to cover it.	If you have healthy skin colour, you should choose pure colour.
	Response	It’s like the hostess’s ⁴⁵ mom’s clothes. The colours make her look dirty.	You see that how many more items you have to buy if you buy one piece wrong.

⁴⁵ The hostess was born in 1965.

Guest D	Look	Ruffled T-shirt with denim vest.	Above-knee length big T-shirt with asymmetrical shoulder and a belt around the waist.
	Reason	I want to look like a symbol of sexiness and leisure. Although the T-shirt has a round neck, you see (the camera turns to her cleavage when she leans forward to show). I wear the vest so people will turn their attention away from my fat.	Asymmetry is in fashion this year. Plump girls should avoid complicated clothes. And loose clothes give the illusion that people can't tell whether the girl is fat or not.
	Response	Why did you become so fat recently? Just wear it as long as you are happy with it.	Very good looking! Who's that girl!? So skinny! Especially the profile.
Guest E	Look	White T-shirt with prints at the front and lace material around back shoulder, hip length, long necklace with pink bowknots and pearls	Fitted T-shirts with simple designs.
	Reason	As the goddess of otakus, my outfit is cute and sexy as well with the lace.	Fitted T-shirts show her waistline. She should keep the designs simple because her image is of 'the goddess of otakus'; people want to see simple things in a hot and dry summer. She is an easy-going girl; the T-shirt expresses that and makes everyone think she is a friendly girl. If you wear loose clothes to make one part 'big', you should make everything else 'small' and fitted.
	Response	I can't understand the garb. It is too complicated. It makes her a five-five body. ⁴⁶ And the tight T-shirt around the hip makes the hips look wide. If you had a perfect figure, you could wear everything loose. But you are not.	Oh. (indicating they understand what the expert has said). Yes. (indicating they agree with the expert on the reason). Wow!/Oh! (indicating there are much differences and the after-look is good). Ask questions about the match.

⁴⁶ A five-five body means that the upper part of the body is the same length as the lower part of the body.

From another aspect, it is very typical for an episode of CWMS to start with a problem (e.g. how to match the clothes, how to do make-up on certain occasions, how to solve skin problems, etc.), be it a problem that has already been socially recognised or a newly mentioned problem. For five to ten minutes the television figures discuss the nature of the problem and what concerns and troubles it would bring to people's lives. For the remaining duration of the episode, makeovers will be carried out as solutions offered to this problem. Each episode normally involves at least three makeovers – these can involve making over different people to achieve similar effects or using different methods to strive for the same goal. For example, an episode on presenting a 'small face' may introduce exercises, skin care products to make the face smaller, and also teach that how the face looks smaller by wearing the right clothes. At the very end of each episode, the 'after' makeover results are revealed – normally comparing them with the 'before' image or the undone-makeover part, which brings closure to the question proposed at the very beginning of this episode.

With the development of the shows, more elements have been applied to break the rigid or consistent formulaic regularity to prevent the audience from becoming tired of the platitudinous nature of the episodic routine. However, the dominant routine is still that of proposing a problem concerned with beauty and/or fashion, TV figures sharing experiences, the carrying out and completion of the makeover, comparisons of 'before' and 'after' concluded by final comments. Still, the programmes/episodes do not always follow this format. Some episodes omit the sections of sharing experience and introduce all the hands-on makeover procedures immediately; some bundle a few continuous episodes together into a 'special' or pageant episode/series;⁴⁷ some are designed with most parts of the programme shot outside the studio.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For example, *I am a Great Beauty* on 08th November, 2010 is an episode on a dance contest cooperating with the magazine *Women's Day* (*Jiankang zhi you* 健康之友).

⁴⁸ For example, *Queen* on 24th December, 2010 is about the flats of celebrity guests. Most of the scenes are filmed at their respective flats.

Returning to the regular narrative routine of the shows, the realisation of the format and its effectiveness can be interpreted in two ways: a story-based narrative mode and an emotional fluctuation mode. Though CWMS is a non-narrative television programme, its narration of the makeover is ‘story based’, in the language of the narrative theory of Todorov. According to Todorov, all stories develop from a beginning where there is a status of ‘equilibrium’, followed by the breaking-down of the balance and revelation of conflicts, and then forming into another ‘balanced state’ at the end of the story.⁴⁹ For CWMS, the narration can be seen in a balance-unbalance-balance sequence if it is looked at in a way that is centred on the makeover-objects. From proposing a problem at the very beginning, to solving it at the end, CWMS produce the ‘unbalanced situation’ for the presentation of a makeover object. It identifies inappropriateness and works it out into appropriateness through makeover methods. In this way, one episode finishes its narrative and reaches ‘temporary balance’ until the next time when the show again throws up another or a similar problem. This mode can be used repeatedly as long as the makeover world can keep raising endless problems of women’s self-presentation.

However, there is also another way to interpret the narration structure. This interpretation can be that the structure manifests itself to ensure the story-telling and dramatic elements in this non-narrative television programme. For each makeover, the makeover objects will experience emotional highs and lows while the makeover is being carried out:⁵⁰

- worried: ‘problems’ of which the makeover objects may have already been aware or are publicly identified by other television figures;⁵¹
- ashamed: scrutinised and criticised by other television figures;

⁴⁹ On Todorov, cf. Branston & Stafford, 2010, p.46.

⁵⁰ This mode is a result of my analysis and summary from watching episodes, but is also inspired by Weber’s (2009) original description of the routine of American makeover shows. Her formula is: ‘1) the initial shaming of the pre-made-over “ugly” subject, 2) moments for surveillance by audiences and experts, 3) pledges from the subjects that they will put themselves fully in the hands of the authorities, 4) the actual work of the transformation (sometimes with didactic teaching moments included for benefit of subject and audience), 5) the mandatory “shock and awe” of reveals, and 6) the euphoria of the new-and-improved subject and satisfied experts’ (p. 31).

⁵¹ In some situations, there is a ‘cocky’ part before ‘worried’, i.e., the makeover objects are too confident about their presentation to identify the problems pointed out on the show.

- surrendered (to the experts/programmes): with slight objections on makeover procedures;
- and satisfied/joyful/elated: upon seeing the impressive change.

The first two emotions function in enhancing the seriousness and urgency of the makeover while the next two promote the positive outcomes of the makeover and contribute to promotion of the makeover as the panacea for all problems.

2.2.2 Main figures

There are three main types of television figures in CWMS: presenter(s), guests and experts. The presenter(s) of CWMS either appear alone, (e.g. *Queen*) or in a group (e.g. *Pretty Women*). Most of them are women, but occasionally male presenters appear, too. Basically, their role is to bring the whole episode together, which is similar to the roles of the presenters on shows of other genres. They organise the guests and experts to centre on the topics of the episodes, e.g. guide their movements to cooperate with the camera, or interview them on the problems covered in the episode. They constantly whip up the audience's awareness of problems concerning the body and appearance, encouraging everyone to confront and overcome them. They seem to stand at the side of the audience making information offered in the show more practical, although the problems are not originally problems until they are being exaggerated and presented as such on television. Uniquely, their role is interchangeable (except for the main presenter) with those of the other two figures – sometimes they become makeover objects or ask advice from the experts as the guests do, sometimes they comment on the guests and share their experiences as the experts do.

The guests are either celebrities or what presenters called *suren* (素人, ordinary people). The selection of the *suren* does not follow a standardised public procedure – some are lucky members of the audience or fans (e.g. those in “Master XiaoP’s Micro-blogging Fans Meeting”);⁵² some are competitors of events

⁵² *Pretty Women* (03/06/2010), *XiaoP weibo fensi jianmian hui*.

collaborating with enterprises (e.g. in “Invincible Blind-date Photogenic Make-up”,⁵³ the three guests are contestants in the ‘ASTALIFT best photogenic girl’ competition) and others’ identities are merely introduced without further explanation. They serve as models or carry out the makeover procedures. The celebrities are comprised of a makeover group and a non-makeover group. The non-makeover group refers to those who do not join in the transformation but give opinions on problems raised in the episode; they are well-known celebrities who endorse certain products, celebrities as experienced beauty consumers or fashion followers who share their successful or failed practices in the past, and male celebrities who commented on women’s body and appearance from the male perspective. The celebrities of the makeover group as makeover objects are mostly young, or at least young looking women (some shows use magazine models). They are lively, relatively flighty and demonstrative so as to exaggerate the show’s atmosphere of *renao* (热闹), hot and noisy (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 558); they chime in whenever the presenters or the experts judge a guest in terms of the problem being discussed in the particular episode to reassure everyone of its seriousness; they help in intensifying the cheering at the finish of the makeovers to evince the ‘triumph’.

The experts are the most significant group in the makeover shows. They are senior cosmeticians, make-up artists, stylists, and nutritionists offering pertinent information and carrying out makeovers for the shows. As the advisers, they make choices for the audience by using their extensive knowledge. Normally, none of them has a very strong personality or aggressive characteristics. They rarely use extremely ‘mean’ words to criticise the person being made over compared with the presenters and the guests – if they do, it is usually for comic effect. They adopt a light or fair tone that keeps them in a standpoint of relative fairness. They are gentle and unflappable with calm behaviour compared with the guests who build the frenetic atmosphere of excitement. By spreading their extensive knowledge of consumer matters, they assure the audience of the beauty standards and urge the latter to reshape themselves closer to the normative body. They are often addressed as

⁵³ *Pretty Women* (21/07/2011), *Xiangqin bisheng shangjing zhuang*.

‘master(s)’ (*dashi*, 大师), a super-being that with the power to ‘save’ or ‘rescue’ the before-makeover objects. On their authority concerning makeover procedures and increased consumer behaviour, fashion and taste will be discussed in later chapters.

2.2.3 Production techniques

The presentations of television images are vital in revealing the relationships among the television figures. In the following paragraphs, I am going to analyse some specific techniques of CWMS with regard to setting and camera work, sound and word balloons to disclose how the programmes use televisual technology to guide the audience to the focal points.

1) Setting and camera work

CWMS are mainly recorded in studios. Though this varies in different women’s makeover shows, studios are common in 1) no audience being present, which means that the effect of the shows will be largely created through television figures and post-production work; 2) leaving space for the displaying of products, for the makeover procedures, and the after-makeover revelation. The studios can be easily transformed into a kitchen, shelf-display, dance classroom and so on to accommodate the various themes of episodes. This kind of shallow space constrains the movements of the television figures (Bignell, 2004). In this shooting environment, the television figures are inclined to move from side to side instead of from back to forth or from up to down; also, the camera operators are in favour of very still, slow-moving filming that reveals every detail. The studio serves as a space for scanning the female bodies with the camera. Meantime, the camera work can shape and direct audiences’ points of view. The camera works like the viewers’ eyes and controls what can be seen. The images that have been chosen for filming influence the meaning they therefore create. The framing, focus, position, angle, and movement of the camera – all have certain impacts to limit the viewers’ understanding of the television images.

The authority of the experts over the guests is presented with designs of setting and camera work in CWMS. In most cases, the experts are directed to sit or stand at a point that keeps a certain distance from the guests. If the experts and guests are sitting symmetrically besides the presenter(s), then they are often given higher chairs. If the studio is designed as a classroom setting, the experts will be arranged to sit besides the board, like teachers, as contrasted to the guests who sit in the ‘student’ positions will. The arrangement of the space ensures that the experts are shot in accordance with the viewing habit of watching the juxtaposition of the professionals and the interviewers/learners. Besides, the guests are often shown in a group shot listening carefully to the experts or in close-ups during the interviews. Whenever being filmed with the experts in the same frame, they seem to be the ‘ongoing works’ of the latter – they sit or stand still besides the experts while the latter are explaining how the makeover has been done (see Figure 2.3 as an example).



Figure 2.3: the expert You Siqi is showing how to perfect different face shapes by using make-up.⁵⁴

(Left): the expert and makeover subject are at the right side. The three hostesses are in the middle, and the rest are guests as ‘students’ and potential makeover subjects sitting at the left side.

(Right): the expert is explaining the makeover to other TV figures.

The ways that the camera ‘describes’ the female bodies in CWMS adopts techniques that Chinese audiences have already become familiar with – it integrates photographic techniques of news of the stars, pageants, fashion shows, fitness programmes, and even candid videos. The shooting especially, focuses on details of female bodies and is interested in picking out the imperfect parts. The close-ups and

⁵⁴ *Pretty Women* (05/01/2011), *Buyong kaidao yeneng yongyou shangjing lian* (Have a Photogenic Face without Having Cosmetic Surgery).

extreme close-ups of the ‘flaws’ on female bodies broached on the show more or less entice the audiences into paying attention to a more detailed female body and then valuing it against the standards set by the shows. In this respect, it would be arbitrary to say that the women’s body parts are captured in a purely male gaze. Rather, synthetic viewing habits of the audiences have resulted from an accommodation between what they have inherited from past viewing experience and what they have learned. Many shots are similar with those of red carpets, catwalks, and TV commercials; also, the televisual presentations contribute in teaching and rehearsing the ways that people watch a women’s body in daily life.

2) Sounds

Both voice and music assist in establishing the images of TV figures. Firstly, the voices of television figures of CWMS have influence on presenting their personality. The figures in the show are presented as rational experts, irrational guests, and neutral presenters who rotate between the two. Accordingly, the experts have an acceptable and comfortable voice in terms of pitch, volume, texture, and rhythm to establish authority, be convincing, superior, and likeable while more leeway is given to the voices of the guests. Penetrating voices among the guests are accepted as this creates an ambience of hilarity. Moreover, the ambient sound in the shows is used to either assure that the shows deliver coherently or affect the audience in an indicative way. Distinctively in CWMS, it imitates the ‘imagined’ ups and downs the audience should experience during viewing. For instance, whenever the experts are delivering the information about the makeovers, the background music becomes lower to make a quieter environment; the audiences are expected to listen carefully. If there is a TV figure telling an amusing story, the background music becomes light-hearted, or even clamorous with, sometimes, a laughing track added; it is time to be amused. At the end of each makeover, there is always carnival-like sound reminding the audience that the transformation has been very successful and everyone should learn and practice now. Therefore the sounds used in the shows highlight the televisual content for the audiences and direct their attention to where it is supposed to be.

3) Word balloons

Influenced by Japanese variety shows, the current Chinese television content has shown a tendency to add Manga elements. Word balloons are a series of ‘pop-up coloured images and words exploding onto the screen accompanied by comic sound effects’ (Lewis, 2011, p. 27). This technique was first sinicised by Taiwanese television programmes and is now widely adopted by Chinese entertainment programmes (Iwabuchi, 2002). Its function is to add complementary information to televisual images or in other words, it is an ancillary televisual effect. It can be a repetition of a figure’s sentences, the addition of several explanatory words to a certain part of the picture, or a possible response from the potential audience (for instance, if a character in a programme had told a bad joke, there might be a cartoon raven flying through the screen to move the situation on). Its effects include 1) amplification of the affective ambience; 2) reminders for the audience pointing out where the show tries to be fun, where it deserves more attention; 3) tone-setting for the entertainment shows in general (see Figure 2.4 as an example).



Figure 2.4: the word balloons to highlight and repeat the sentences of the TV figures⁵⁵
(Left): relationship expert Zhou Simin is suggesting that ‘girlfriend does not necessarily need make-up while the wife must wear make-up (pink screen words: the wife must wear make-up).
(Right): the wife of the guest couple is refuting her husband that ‘she does not need make-up because she is the wife’ upon his complaint that she no longer dresses up for his parties after they were married as the girlfriends of his friends do. (Blue screen words: I am wife!)

⁵⁵ *I am a Great Beauty* (12/02/2012), *Ai yeyao lijiu mixiu* (Love Needs to Remain Fresh as Time Goes by).

2.2.4 Interactivity

To analyse the interactivity between the television figures and the audience, there are two concepts which need to be clarified. The first one is the concept of ‘social actor’. It is a term used by Bill Nichols in his study on documentary to work to refer ‘individuals’ or ‘people’ appearing on non-fiction television programmes and who are not television employees. He also emphasises that the term is used to ‘stress the degree to which individuals represent themselves to others, which can be construed as a performance; it is also meant that social actors, people, retain the capacity to act within the historical arena where they perform’ (Butler, 2001, pp. 61-62). To consider the social actors in CWMS is to see how the shows involve the audience through the television figures. Second, Butler (2001) introduces four main modes of representation that non-narrative television programmes use to represent reality and to address the audience by modifying Bill Nichols and Julianne Burton’s strategies.⁵⁶ CWMS mainly use two of them: the expository/rhetoric mode and the interactive mode (the other two are the observational mode and the reflexive mode). The expository mode is a mode usually seen in news broadcast and advertisements, where the audience are informed of an argument or an attempt at persuasion in the way of direct address. It largely involves announcements. The interactive mode means that social actors are brought into the programmes, which results in enabling the audience to confuse the television world with the real world. The way this is presented is that when a conversation is being made between the television figures, it seems as if they are going through a historical reality without being watched. This mode is commonly seen in narrative or diegetic texts without referring out of their performance world, such as in TV series. While the expository text is governed by the logic of the argument and gathering evidence, the interactive texts are largely shaped by how the interview is structured.

With regard to CWMS, the social actors refer both to the guests and to the experts, who ‘enter into’ the television world from the real world with their original identities. They are recognised by the audiences intuitively as social beings who act according to conventional rules of social behaviour. Especially those who are

⁵⁶ On the four modes of representation, cf. Butler, 2001, pp. 62-71.

makeover objects in CWMS are the textual representatives (Butler, 2001, p. 65) of the audiences: the audiences feel they can exchange places with the makeover objects. On the one hand, the makeover objects are identified by the audiences as the members of their group who are concerned about appearances in the real world. The audiences sympathise with the makeover objects if the latter have similar problems. Even the makeover objects are celebrities: they seem to be the forerunners in fashion and in the area of cosmetics, or they are people with the same experience as others who share their past success and failure of cosmetic choices (more details will be given in later chapters). On the other hand, the after-makeover looks of the makeover objects show the possibility for the audience members themselves to look like stars. The transformations especially of *suren* display interchangeability from the ordinary to be like a celebrity through having a makeover. The producer Li Jing holds that she will not recruit very pretty presenters because ‘the pretty presenters will affect the audience ratings. Audiences reckon they are pretty, so they are good-looking no matter what they wear’ (Q. Xu, 2013). The social actors, especially the makeover objects, work as intermediaries that enable the audiences to become involved in the makeover procedures.

To further consummate this sense of community for the audience, CWMS use the expository mode and interactive mode strategies, integrating the ways of addressing news reports and narrative programmes to deliver information. In CWMS, the expository mode is chiefly employed by the presenters and experts. Both of these TV figures speak directly to the audience to introduce the facts/information. The legibility of this mode is based on the previous proliferation of TV shopping in China dating from the early 90s (Lou, 2008). The similarities of camera framings – the close-ups of commodities for example – between CWMS and TV shopping reinforce the commercial elements of the former (see Figure 2.5). Yet comparing the communication between the TV figures and audiences in the two genres, those in CWMS are not so ostensibly persuading the audiences to purchase the specific products recommended as do those in TV shopping shows (Lou, 2008, p. 12, p. 39). Figures in CWMS add dialogues to merely direct address to the audience so as to give the audience intervals during which they jump out of the TV shopping context

and give back some innocence to the collusion with consumerism in the makeover show. This is completed by interactive mode. The TV figures discuss the problems of the episode and tell their stories as they are conducting their own conversation. However, it needs to be kept in mind that any one of the addressees in a conversation might simultaneously be representing the audiences. For example, whenever the experts quiz the presenters or the guests on the makeover procedure, they target not only the television figures, but also the audience. Thus the sender/the TV figures communicate with the receiver/the audience indirectly.



Figure 2.5: a close-up of a set of jewellery in CWMS – similar to the camera framings in TV shopping.⁵⁷

Further, it should be noted that the relationship between the presenters plus experts and makeover objects/audiences is not based on equality. The presenters act as keepers of order, who instruct the social actors; and the presenters-experts match constitutes a power representing an alliance of media and consumerism. On the contrary, the guests, representing the audience, are obviously in a subordinate position, listening to the instructions of the first two. They barely have their own voices as makeover objects nor do they defy the opinions of the presenters and

⁵⁷ The shot is from *Queen* (14/10/2010), *Faxing vs. shipin: dazao shishang xiao V lian* (Hair Style vs. Hair Accessories: Have a Small Fashionable V Shape Face). The set of jewellery is introduced as suitable for short hair to modify the face shape.

experts. For the most of time during the makeover procedure, they are in silence. They are told where they should stand, when they could comment without any assertion of their own ego.

On the whole, there are three different ways in which CWMS address the audience: directly (the presenters greeting the audience, experts ‘teaching’ the makeover to the camera, the TV figures informing the audience of dos and don’ts), indirectly (through the conversations among the TV figures), and a combination of the two (the questions posed by the presenters and experts to the guests that can also be responded to by the audience). In those ways, the communications between the shows and the audience are realised through the ‘performance’ of television figures.

The above section has dealt with the interaction within the duration of the show. However, due to the increasing prevalence of social media in recent years in China, the sites for the interactions between the shows and the audiences have changed. According to the “Statistical Reports of China Internet Development” by China Internet Network Information Centre, the microblog substituted internet news as the major source for Chinese netizens to access information in 2011 (CNNIC, 2012, p. 28). Later on in 2012, the user scale of the microblog reached more than 0.3 billion; B2C shopping and group buying became the 3rd and 4th fastest developing internet applications for Chinese netizens just behind internet banking and online paying (CNNIC, 2013, pp. 30, 31). These all have opened increasing opportunities of interactivity between the shows and the audiences outside the shows. Table 2.3 below summarises this new convergence of different media by giving basic information, influence and content of social media used in the three samples of analysis. For each makeover show, different types of social media were used, but at different times different media were most dominant and the newly emergent took over from the comparatively ‘traditional’ type, following their popularity.

Table 2.3: new convergence of different media: CWMS and their related press media and social media⁵⁸

	Queen	Pretty Women	I am a Great Beauty
Official website (B2C shopping Website)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P@yeasy for Taiwanese since 2001. • CBQ (Charming, Beautiful and Quirky) for mainlanders since 2009. CBQ has ‘recommended by experts XXX’ columns at the side and products with screenshots of related episodes in the middle on the homepage.⁵⁹ 	<p>LAFASO (<i>le feng wang le’feng</i> 乐蜂网):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established in 2008. The full explanation of LAFASO means ‘lady fashion solution’ and <i>le feng</i> 乐峰 in Chinese not only has similar pronunciation with ‘Lafa’ but also means ‘happy bees’. According to iresearch.cn, LAFASO was the no. 1 B2C e-commerce website on cosmetics in 2011 China (Yuanpu Huang, 2012) and 2nd fastest growing of all independent B2C e-commerce sites in the first half of 2012 (iResearch, 2012). At the homepage, it has links to the homepage of the show, the page that summarises the latest episode with points, screenshots and products list like a coloured lecture notes, and homepages of the experts. 	<p>dameiren.happigo.com:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the top of the homepage, it has the links of the latest episode and promo of the next episode. • It has four parts: web TV of the episode (on its own website platform), beauty tips (articles on fashion), beauty gurus (pages of all the gurus appeared on the show before and where all the visitors can have Q&A with them), and beauty society. • Bulge (the beauty board) is used to announce the lucky audiences and other interactive events on other social media websites.⁶⁰ • happigo.com (<i>kuai le gou</i> 快乐购): established in 2006, the website targets at all the consumers of TV shopping of Hunan Satellite TV. Though being introduced at the homepage of <i>I am a Great Beauty</i>, the links malfunctioned from time to time.

⁵⁸ All the webpage information and data in the table based on access on 15th January, 2013.

⁵⁹ In analysing the content of these websites, I will only mention those pertinent to the shows or interactions between the shows and the audiences.

⁶⁰ For example, renren.com (Chinese Facebook), kaixin.com.

<p>BBS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBS of ‘many women, many talk’ (<i>qizuibashe taolun qu</i> 七嘴八舌讨论区): the official BBS of <i>Queen</i> since 2003. The sticky notes are from production team, including the notice of programming time, recruiting gurus and models for their magazines, announcing lucky audiences, etc. • BBS of Women Health (<i>nüren jiankang taolun qu</i> 女人健康讨论区):⁶¹ mainly on weight loss, Chinese regimen and other health topics. 	<p>Feng Trend Community (<i>fengxiangbiao shequ</i> 蜂向标社区):⁶²</p> <p>It has multifarious plates interacting with visitors/consumers/audiences – it creates a Q&A plate that allows everyone to ask anything on fashion; it offers samples and attached reviews of previous free gifts from LAFASO; it links with the pages of lecture notes, similar with that on LAFASO, and web TV on youku.com.</p>	<p>Membership of Beauty Society:⁶³</p> <p>Once they have become members of ‘beauty society’ of the website, the audiences will benefit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being sent the latest information of the show and subscribing to <i>Beauty Society Magazine</i>; • Having the chance to be made over/instructed by the experts in person; Free samples or special offer consumer opportunity.
<p>Magazine</p>	<p>Name: <i>Nüren wo zuida</i> (女人我最大 Queen)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing year: 1st November, 2005-Present, quarterly • Publishing Press: Interface Communication Co., Ltd. • The magazine contains columns of almost all the experts on <i>Queen</i>. This Magazine and the show mutually refer to each other. <p>Name: <i>Nūhai wo zuida</i> (女孩我最大 Big Girls)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing year: April, 2007 • Publishing Press: Interface Communication Co., Ltd. 	<p>Name: Pretty Women, Pretty Women II</p> <p>Publishing year: 2007, 2009</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing Press: Tianjin Science and Technology Press, CITIC press <p>They compile content from the previous episodes and invite the experts to give answers. The presenter and producer, LI Jing wrote in the preface that she published the book because of the show (J. Li, 2008).</p>	<p>N/A</p>

⁶¹ The web address of the BBS of Women Health is http://www.tvbs.com.tw/project/tvbs_g/program/woman_new/03.aspx.

⁶² The web address of the Feng Trend Community is <http://www.lefeng.com/>.

⁶³ The web address of the Membership of Beauty Society of dameiren.happigo.com is <http://dameiren.happigo.com/meirenhui/>.

<p>Social media (Facebook, Twitter/, Micro Blog)⁶⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Queen</i> has Facebook and Twitter pages. However, the two websites theoretically cannot be accessed by mainland people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its Sina blog started on 9th September, 2009 and the last entry was 30th November, 2011 with more than 223,000 visits. The blog was largely for publishing the news and content of the show, recruiting guests and experts, uploading behind the scenes, and occasionally transferring posts on stars and fashion. • Its Sina microblog started on 2011 with more than 284,000 followers. In addition to the similar content on its blog but in shorter version,⁶⁵ it reposts microblogs of experts who share the tips on fashion, of audiences who are using the products recommended by the show. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its Sina blog started from 30th December, 2009 and the last entry was 18th December, 2012 with almost 962,700 visits. The blog was closely updated with the summary of the contents and stills. The few exceptions were columns by the experts, interactive events, and announcements from the show and beauty tips from other presenters of Hunan Satellite TV. • Its Sina microblog started from 30th December, 2009 with almost 270,000 followers. It publicises the on-site shootings and activities of the show with the presence of some of the experts; it organises competitions showcasing the make-up and hairstyles done by the members of the audience and selecting the best either directly on microblog or by the experts on the show. It is also an original source of fashion information, including new trends, diet recipes, beauty tips, etc.
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⁶⁴ Though there are different microblog platforms in China, I will only discuss those based on sina.com. According to *Blue Book of China MicroBlog* by DCCI (Data Center of China Internet), microblog users accounted for 88.81% of Chinese netizens; Sina proportioned 87.86% and has more users comparing with other platforms.

⁶⁵ The word limit of Sina microblog is 140 characters.

From the table, we can see that the use of social media boosted the development of the forms of communication between the production teams and the viewers. However, what I am concerned with here is not the increasing numbers of interactive activities around CWMS, but rather how the designs have helped in building closer bonds with the audience.

It is beyond question that the audiences are driven closer to the shows by social media. Social media makes ‘the makeover’ omnipresent in the front of the audiences/non-audiences during the off-air time of the show. Experts publicise vigorously on microblogs to establish and maintain their authority and popularity. The information and knowledge of lifestyle and consumption (especially that which had been disseminated in the show before) are circulated continuously so that they become embedded into people’s lives. The makeover results from ordinary people are exhibited frequently to ameliorate the visibility of everyday practices of makeovers of ordinary people (e.g. the followers are encouraged to upload their makeover photos and so they can have the chance to be reposted by the microblogs of the shows or to be chosen as lucky audience members). By repetition, replication and reproduction, the essence of the makeover is being transmitted through various media covering different times, by which the shows can create a much stronger presence and impact on the audience.

To sum up, the programming of CWMS, as I have shown, is not uniquely new in format or design. The problems that the women audiences might be confronted with, the camera designs for shooting women bodies, and even the column-like way in which the whole show is organised are very similar to what could be seen in Chinese fashion magazines, TV shopping and other related media forms. From this point, I would not count the establishment of this format of television programmes as a televisual transformation in China. Rather, it is a proliferation of personalised techniques of cosmetics, consciousness of consumption and awareness of appearance through the interactions between the celebrities/TV figures and the audiences. The narrative structure justifies the needs and desires for transformations and reassures that makeovers, especially the consumer aspects, are

the solutions to each problem. The design of the television figures and their interactions with the audience further impose the commercial elements however ingeniously they attempt to distance themselves from TV shopping programmes. The set of the *mise-en-scène* assists in the realisation of the narration and the presentations of the figures. The use of social media enhances the interaction between the shows and the audiences, increases accessibility and facilitates real purchases. All these facets contribute to serve the logic of the shows, i.e., the necessity and applicability of the makeover.

Chapter 3 Contents: Idealised Femininity

With the media constantly providing ‘ideal beauty’, people are consciously or unconsciously seeking the ‘ideal’. [...] Bombarded with ideal images, women become self-conscious of their own imperfection, and the pressure to try to conform to the ideal is enormous.

(H. Wen, 2013, p. 129)

In the preface to *Pretty Women II* (2008), Li Jing, the author of the book, who is also the producer and main hostess of *Pretty Women*, says that her ‘declaration of beauty’ is ‘I am not perfect, but I am looking for changes (*wo bing bu wanmei, dan wo xunqiu gaibian* 我并不完美, 但我寻求改变)’. From the sponsor of *Pretty Women* (2009-2010) CHCEDO’s advertising slogan ‘you could be more beautiful’ (*ni keyi geng mei de* 你可以更美的)⁶⁶ to one of *Queen*’s experts Roger’s (also known as Zheng Jianguo) book *You Deserve to Be More Beautiful* (2010) (*ni zhide geng mei* 你值得更美), *bian* (变 changes) and *mei* (美 beauty) might be the most used key words for the beauty and fashion content of Chinese media. The nation’s biggest female fashion community, *meilishuo.com*, for example, welcomes its users with the slogan, ‘discover, collect and share my beauty details, and let changes happen’ (*faxian, shoucang, fenxiang wo de meili diandi, rang gaibian fasheng* 发现, 收藏, 分享我的美丽点滴, 让改变发生).⁶⁷ The two Chinese characters ‘*bian* 变’ and ‘*mei* 美’ here propose two questions: how to change and what is the standard for beauty as the goal to be achieved by the changes. Back to CWMS, for the television programme itself is about ‘becoming beauty’, or as they say, ‘making over to be beautiful’, it directly addresses the aforementioned two questions: what the goal of the makeover is, and how to conduct the makeovers accordingly. The first one is about body presentation – the images that the shows are promoting; the second is about body maintenance – the knowledge, techniques, and forms that one should take

⁶⁶ The slogan has been changed to ‘you are beautiful as you are’ (*ni benlai jiu henmei* 你本来就很美).

⁶⁷ The website *meilishuo.com* claims itself as the nation’s biggest female fashion community in its *About us*, <http://www.meilishuo.com/aboutus?sl=h3>.

to achieve the first one. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine the first question; Chapter 5 will deal with the second. To study the body presentation, in essence, is to study the repeated ‘after makeover body’ emphasised in the shows. This chapter will discuss the physique beauty – the idealised looks represented in CWMS.

3.1 Normative beauty

Beauty is a product of culture, history, and time. The social regulatory ideals with which Chinese women’s bodies are trained to keep up varied from time to time (Man, 2000a). A thin waist during the Chu period, bound feet in late imperial times and so forth are well-known instances of the standardised beauty for Chinese women. For the past century, the vicissitudes of Chinese women’s images in the media was so great that little continuity can be seen. For example, feminine beauty during the Yan’an Period could imply moral degeneration or ideological impurity (Evans, 1997, p. 135), while now it is part of being a Chinese woman and a goal to strive for. It became a qualification through which Chinese women are judging themselves or being judged (H. Zhang, 1999). Only some thirty years ago, the Chinese people were a sea of ‘blue coats’; now Chinese women need television programmes to help them in making choices.

‘A beauty’ (*meinü* 美女) is one of the most frequently used words seen in current Chinese media.⁶⁸ According to Xu and Seiner (2007), ‘*meinü*’ belongs to the new vocabulary that was brought into being by the economic growth of China. The ‘beauty economy’ points to business activities developed around beauties, e.g. beauty pageants, the beauty industry, etc. (X. Yang, 2005). In daily life, *meinü* becomes a generic term for women, especially those working in the beauty service industry such as salons and cosmetic departments. Beauty is also prone to be embodied through women. For example, ‘the most beautiful community competition’ in Beijing in 2008 was won by the Dong Wang Zhuang community who put much effort in organising events to help older women to look good (J. Yang, 2011, p. 338). In this

⁶⁸ To distinguish *meinü* from *mei* (美, beauty), I use *meinü* instead of ‘a beauty’ thereafter.

context, beauty in the community is about nothing other than the beauty of the female in the community. Many conceptions of beauty are materialised through feminine beauty alone.

Media have contributed greatly to the establishment of beauty standards for females. In 2005, *China Beauty Fashion Magazine* (*Zhongguo meirong shishang bao* 中国美容时尚报) and *eladies.sina.com.cn* organised a special event for 2005 Chinese international beauty and fashion week named ‘discussion of the Chinese standard beauty’.⁶⁹ The discussion involves a survey among netizens (participants around 17,400) about standards of Chinese beauty in their eyes. The survey gives twenty multi-choice questions on features of Chinese beauty: height, weight, BWH (breasts-waist-hips), breasts, waist, hips, face, eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, teeth, ears, neck and shoulder, hair, arms, legs, feet, skin, and refined aura (*qizhi* 气质). The response to each of the questions apart from those on skin and refined aura, is a ‘choice of the majority’ voted for by more than 50% of the participants, e.g. 91.8% participants choose that BHW should be 90-60-90 (cm), 82.9% think that the willow leaf-like eyebrows (arch eyebrows, *liuyemei* 柳叶眉) are a crucial component of Chinese beauty.⁷⁰ Despite the limitations of the design of the survey, it reflects the centrality of the beauty standard. It is very clear that Chinese have a collective imagination of standard female beauty.

During the same period, *China Beauty: The First Pink Book with Standard Beautiful Woman in China*, written by Zhang Xiaomei, the editor-in-chief of *China Beauty Fashion Magazine* was published, and much acclaimed and recommended by many experts, scholars and celebrities.⁷¹ The postscript of the book explains the intentions and the process of its compilation. The idea originated from the 2000 World Super Model Contest, when a Chinese girl Lü Yan won second place. Lü’s presentation strongly contradicts the traditional beauty in Chinese eyes: she has a

⁶⁹ The webpage of this event is <http://eladies.sina.com.cn/z/chinabeauty/>.

⁷⁰ About skin, 48.6% choose refined and smooth skin, and 33% choose with ruddy healthy glow. For the temperament, 38.2% choose pure and fresh, 36.8% choose elegant and fashion, and 24.6% choose pretty and charming.

⁷¹ Though it is shown on the cover that the author is Zhang, from the postscript it seems to be a collective work.

pair of small eyes, a flat nose, a flat face, thick lips and lots of freckles. However, she quickly became a favourite of magazines and advertisements and a Chinese fashion symbol on the world stage. Her success triggered wide discussion among Chinese people. The opinions on her appearance varied from ‘being stunning’ to ‘being ugly’; it can be said that she totally subverted the concept of Chinese beauty (Netease Lady, 2009). Because of this phenomenon and controversy, *China Beauty Fashion Magazine* started to frame the project discussing ‘what kind of beauty is Chinese beauty’. It regards it as their responsibility to ‘search back the lost spirit of Chinese beauty in our materialistic world’ (X. Zhang, 2005, p. 239). Respectively, the book discusses eighteen parts of the female body – face, eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, teeth, ears, hair, breasts, waist, hips, neck, shoulder, arms, hands, legs, feet, and skin, giving ‘a standard’ to each part. According to the book, a Chinese beauty should have features such as a melon-seed shape-like face, white skin with pink complexion, good proportions between breasts, waist and hips and so on. Some of the features are explicitly echoed in CWMS, to which I will add a further related analysis in this chapter.

The standardisation of feminine beauty in the book conveys a mixed attitude toward Chinese beauty. Predominantly, it indicates an opinion of denial of western assimilation in terms of Chinese beauty standards. It emphasises that globalisation is not a process of unification, but of learning to respect the differences. It stresses the uniqueness of Chinese beauty with ‘Chinese features and spirit’ and preaches that ‘only the national can be global’ (*zhiyou minzu de, caishi shijie de* 只有民族的, 才是世界的), suggesting keeping the ‘Chineseness’ in an increasingly globalised social and cultural environment. Chinese beauty standards here are not only applied to the presentation of the feminine body, but also to the question of what are specifically Chinese attributes, adding a nationalist element to the discussion. Though emphasising the feminine beauty with Chinese characteristics, the book does not present a comparison between Chinese beauty and Western beauty, nor is it a conservative account referring back to traditional views on Chinese beauty. Rather, it uses different resources to support their own standards they set for feminine beauty. On the one hand, the book traces examples from Chinese literature, from the ancient

to the modern, from *Occasional Enjoyment in a Free Mood* (*Xian qing ou ji* 闲情偶寄) by Li Yu 李渔 to *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils* (*Tian long ba bu* 天龙八部) by Jin Yong 金庸, to advocate the proposed standards. On the other hand, it uses data researched by international organisations, findings from the sciences, such as physiology, anatomy and medicine, and western philosophical theories such as Kantian, as well as solutions provided by cosmetics to justify their standards. Hence, the book is making an effort to combine Chinese tradition with modern knowledge so as to explore Chinese beauty standards in a hermeneutic way.

CWMS, jointly with other media forms, have helped in disseminating idealised women's images for the past decade and in nurturing them into the audience's mind (Richins, 1991). The latest trends show that beauty is increasingly standardised and homogenised. Female stars look more alike by undergoing cosmetic surgery, being satirised by the media as 'face clash' (cqnews, 2013), while ordinary people also strive to be like these stars through cosmetic surgery (Z. Chen, 2013).⁷² A recent piece of news on new students of the Beijing Film Academy, puts their 'meiniu' photos online. However, netizens criticise them as all looking the same and long for the female stars and alumni of the academy from previous decades (Duan, 2013). Their assimilated looks acknowledge what Wen (2013) finds out in her research on cosmetic surgery in China – Chinese women value 'double eyelids', 'big eyes', 'a high bridged nose', 'fair skin' and so on. However, even if currently screens are full of similar looks, not all the audiences have a positive view of that.

Turning back to CWMS, what I am concerned with in the following sections is whether the shows follow these trends in the same way. What constitutes the idealised beauty in the shows and to what extent does this resonate with the globalisation of the white/Western beauty? Equally important to this analysis is how the figures on the shows interpret these questions and how the texts present them. The following five parts certainly do not cover all the beauty standards put forward

⁷² The news reports several women have difficulties in getting through the border because they do not look the same as their passport photos. However, several of them look like female star Fan Bingbing as they had plastic surgery to make them look like her.

in CWMS. What I choose are the most frequently popular themes over the last three years within the most popular shows.

3.2 Facial shape

In regarding the beauty of face, the focus of the shows are on eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips and skin, among which the V-shape small face is the most emphasised, e.g. “Choose the Right Accessories in Winter: Make a Perfect Small Face Instantly”, “Have a Small Barbie Face Overnight”, and “Change Hairstyles Before Changing Faces”.⁷³ Those episodes present the small V-shape face as the norm and as readily accepted by the audience and they offer make-up, accessories choices and hairstyles to meet the standard face:

Hostess Xiaomi: What we discuss today is every girl’s pain; i.e., there is no perfect facial shape in the world!

Hostess Linda: But while the facial shape was born naturally, we could change your hairstyle to change your fate.⁷⁴

The proposal of the problematic facial shapes is regarded as being common in Asia. Expert Jiahong, for instance, points out that some 70% of Asian women are not satisfied with their facial shapes.⁷⁵ Expert Niuer, in another episode, addresses the three parts that women want to slim down the most, the third of which is face.⁷⁶ The hostess Lan Xinmei also voices, on behalf of many women’s opinion, that ‘the rotund face makes us at a disadvantage. [...] we always want our faces to be thinner because we are thought to be thin with small face sizes’. From the other side, as obviously no one is born meeting the standard completely, the message is that one can always turn to styling for help. For example, to achieve the perfect V-shape small face, a lady with a long face is advised to brush the blusher horizontally to shorten the face visually; one with relatively big cheekbones should pay attention to hair curving around temples or jaws; a high bridged nose helps minimise the face

⁷³ *Pretty Women* (23/12/2010), *Xuan dui dongtian peijian, liji chuangzao wanmei xiaolian!*; *Queen* (23/12/2010), *Yiye yongyou babi xiaolian*; *I am a Great Beauty* (02/06/2012), *Bianlian xian bianfa*.

⁷⁴ *Pretty Women* (17/03/2011), *Lianxing zhiming shang* (The Fatal Defects of Facial Shapes).

⁷⁵ *I am a Great Beauty* (15/09/2012), *Xiaolian dayan meirongshu* (Beauty Methods of Small Face and Big Eyes).

⁷⁶ *Queen* (11/10/2010), *Zhongdian buwei diaosu! Mian jianfei kanqilai jishou 5kg* (The Key Shaping Parts! You Look 5kg Thinner Without Losing Weight).

visually; a pair of dark eyebrows and big eyes divert the focus of attention of the spectators from the imperfect face.⁷⁷

The small face or face slimming industry came into vogue around 2000 when ‘small face (*xiaoyan* 小颜) culture’ entered China from Japan (T. Wang, 2001). The devotion to a smaller face became a part of beautification regimen of Chinese women from then on. In 2005, one of the current guests of *Queen*, Ding Xiaoqin, published a book named *Small Face Beauty* (Ding, 2005). In the preface, she confessed that her childhood dream was to have a small face in order to become a super star like her idol Namie Amuro.⁷⁸ Amuro was very popular at that moment throughout China, and her palm-size face had great influence upon young people and became the norm to be sought after. Around the same time, actress Fan Bingbing distinguished herself with a bodkin-shaped face (*zhuizi lian* 锥子脸).⁷⁹ Her face shape is regarded as an important beauty element for a *meinü*; and before long it is even widely believed that the bodkin-shaped face is a prerequisite to being a star (Feng, 2009). The extensive recognition of the relationship between *meinü* and small V-shape face is further proved by recent research on attractive faces of different races (Rhee & Lee, 2010). In Rhee and Lee’s project, they display computer-generated images resulting from pictures of twenty attractive famous female entertainers and analyse the standard facial attractiveness of different races. The Chinese ideal, the result of a sample study of twenty Chinese female stars,⁸⁰ has a slim and thin face with a lantern jaw (p. 801). The attractiveness of a small face consists in that a small face is part of a slim body and belongs to a petite and dainty (*jiaoxiao de* 娇小的) woman. The promotion of the small face is a result from both western and Chinese traditional ideals. Slimming down the face is part of the body-shape work. The

⁷⁷ *Queen* (15/03/2012), *Roublinglian out: Liyong zhuang + fa, shunjian bian xiao V lian* (Fat Face Out: Instantly Change to Small V-shape Face by Make-up and Hairstyles).

⁷⁸ Namie Amuro is a famous singer, actress and pop icon in Japan. She was titled as ‘Teen Queen’, ‘Queen of Japanese Pop Music’ and etc.

⁷⁹ In a singing contest recently, Fan even teased another judge that she, as the ‘ancestor of the bodkin-shapes’, would like beat the square shapes [*Happy Boys (Kuaile nansheng* 快乐男生), 9th August, 2013, Hunan Satellite TV].

⁸⁰ It includes Gong Li, Li Bingbing, Fan Bingbing, Xu Ruoxuan, Xu Jinglei, Xu Xidi, Tang Wei, Liu Yifei, Li Xiaolu, Lin Chi-ling, Jiang Qinqin, Zhang Manyu, Zhang Baizhi, Zhang Yuqi, Zhang Zilin, Sun Feifei, Huang Shengyi, Zhou Xun, Zhong Xintong, and Zhang Ziyi (Rhee & Lee, 2010, p. 801).

figures in the shows realise the ‘disadvantage’ of the Asian physique is that it is prone to be bloated in the morning or after tiring work and hence cannot achieve the same ‘wide-awake’ face as westerners have. Making one’s face not so round and fleshy increases the facial contrast and facial contrast is closely related to facial gender. According to Russell (2009), women with greater facial contrast are regarded as being more feminine and femininity is strongly related to attractiveness. It is for that reason that most of the cosmetic application is manifested to enlarge the facial contrast.⁸¹ For the other, a small face builds a weak feminine image that is upheld by the figures of the shows. Hostess Lan in one episode, for instance, grumbles that ‘small faces have advantages: they look so cute that everyone wants to protect them; nobody wants to protect a “big head”’. A small face indicates a small figure of a woman so as to betoken a weak and delicate femininity.

3.3 Skin

In terms of skin, whiteness is still a main theme in CWMS. The shows bear the opinion that the concept of the white skin of Chinese women is so widespread that it is embedded within everybody’s mind and daily life. In “Snow White’s Beauty Treatment” on 4th March 2010, the hostess Li Siyu opens the episode, ‘spring’s almost gone; summer is not far away.’⁸² Whitening becomes the problem that each of us should overcome’. Two years later, in another episode, she repeats almost the same opinion ‘women, of the whole world, no, I mean our whole nation, or at least over 99%, are concerned with whitening upon the arrival of summer’.⁸³ With a similar aim, hostess Lan puts out three groups of ‘before-’ and ‘after-’ pictures, each ‘after-’ of which have utilised the whitening skin technique of Photoshop, to justify the necessity of being white.⁸⁴ Each time she shows the contrasting pictures, the crowd of guests start to exclaim, saying that the ‘after-’ pictures are much more beautiful than the ‘before-’. Clearly the majority support the view ‘the whiter the

⁸¹ Facial contrast refers to luminance contrast between the eyes, lips, and the surrounding skin. According to Russell’s (2009) research, facial contrast is a sexually dimorphic attribute (p. 1211).

⁸² *Pretty Women*, *Baixue gongzhu meirongfa*.

⁸³ *Pretty Women* (05/06/2012), *Meibaikong daodi bai jidu cai manyi* (Whitening OCD: How Many Degrees of Further Whitening Could You be Satisfied with).

⁸⁴ *Queen* (22/03/2012), *Mian xiupian bian baixi meiren!* (PS Free, Make You a White Beauty!).

skin, the more beautiful it is'. To stress further the importance of skin whitening, there are episodes regarding how the advantages of white beauty influence the lives of 'flawed' (*duanban nü* 短板女) not-so-white women.⁸⁵ Some guests state that they have been 'discriminated' against because they are not white enough. One says that she got fired from her job as a presenter because she is not white enough and the leader of the TV station doesn't like her; another is aggrieved at being substituted by people with whiter skin in a fashion show, which results in her being jobless for a whole season.⁸⁶ While white skin has been an essential beauty standard, in recent years it advances from an aspiration to the fundamental criterion for defining the *meinü*. Expert Liu Yan raises the point that 'A white complexion used to be powerful enough to hide three faults (*yi bai zhe san chou* 一白遮三丑); now a white complexion highlights nine merits (*yi bai chen jiu mei* 一白衬九美). Your merits of beauty will be more prominent because of your whiteness'.⁸⁷ This indicates the new priority of white skin over all other features of beauty.

The importance attached to the whiteness of skin is of course not a new phenomenon, but can be traced back to ancient China. Both in Confucius and Taoist texts, white skin is remarked upon as one of the qualities of a beauty (Man, 2000b). Traditionally, refined white skin signified staying away from hard toil and being brought up in a good family, and was frequently related to higher social class (Johansson, 1998). Despite changing concepts of Chinese female beauty in the 20th century, whiteness as a criterion for beauty returned in contemporary China's tide of reform and consumption. Foreign beauty companies had already noted Chinese women's desire to have whiter skin at the end of last century, and started to invest in the production of whitening products (Qiu, 1998). The traditional idea of creamy skin⁸⁸ was brought up again (G. Yu, 1999) and the importance of being a white beauty

⁸⁵ *Duanban nü*, literally means 'short-board woman', was coined by *Pretty Women* as the title of its series episodes "Short-board/Flawed Girl in Summer" (*Xiari duanban nü* 夏日短板女) from 8th June, 2011 to 16th June, 2011.

⁸⁶ *Queen* (22/03/2010), *Baituo heirou di, rang ni gen shuizhudan yiyang baipaopao* (Get Rid of Black and Chubby Base, Make You as White as Boiled Eggs).

⁸⁷ *Queen* (22/03/2010), *Baituo heirou di, rang ni gen shuizhudan yiyang baipaopao* (Get Rid of Black and Chubby Base, Make You as White as Boiled Eggs).

⁸⁸ *Fu ru ning zhi* 肤如凝脂, in *The Book of Poetry*.

became commonplace. In 2012, *Baifumei* [白富美 white, rich and beautiful (girl)] became a popular term in internet jargon in China.⁸⁹ It describes a lady with good skin, affluent family background and pleasant appearance (Asiafinance.cn, n.d.). According to a recent survey, over 81.2% of interviewees believe that young people's spouse preferences in China are 'gaofushuai' [高富帅 tall-rich-handsome (guy)] and 'baifumei' (S. Xiao & Lu, 2012). Thereby, white skin is again connected with higher economic status.

Apart from whiteness, flawlessness, good complexion, hydration etc. are also qualifications that constitute a good skin. A series of episodes deal with those problems, e.g. "Give You Pure Flawless White Skin", "Fight for Zero-flaw Skin", "Give My Spotless Baby Skin Back" and so on.⁹⁰ Their main appeal to the audience is that it is crucial to check every corner of one's face; even if everything is right at the present, the consumer has to think about the future and be aware of the importance of precaution, e.g. sun care, anti-wrinkle, exfoliation. Additionally, the face is not the only part that women should whiten. One episode lists the four parts of the female body that most need to be whitened among Taiwanese women:⁹¹

Face	96%
Neck	81%
The back of hands & insteps	74%
Elbows & Knees	63%

The whiteness of these parts would not only bring about a younger look, but also show the consumers a refined and comprehensive approach of treating her body well.

⁸⁹ It originates from a *Baidu tieba* (百度贴吧 Bulletin Board, Post Bar) called *Liyi ba* (李毅吧), and became a popular word both on internet and in daily life. With *baifumei* came also *gaofushuai* [高富帅 tall, rich and handsome (guy)], and *diaosi* (屌丝 loser, or poor, ugly and incapable guy). *Diaosi* and *gaofushuai* can be regarded as opposites. For *diaosi*, the opportunities with good girls, like *baifumei*, always belong to *gaofushuai*. This is just one question raised from this cultural phenomenon. For further discussions on this collective identity, see Anonymous, 2012a; W. Wei, 2012.

⁹⁰ *Queen* (25/05/2010), *Rang ni yongyou qingtou wuxia meibai ji*; *Pretty Women* (08/02/2012), *Pifu ling xiazi da tiaozhan*; *I am a Great Beauty* (06/09/2010), *Huanwo wuxia yinger ji*.

⁹¹ *Queen* (22/03/2010), *Baituo heirou di, rang ni gen shuizhudan yiyang baipaopao* (Get Rid of Black and Chubby Base, Make You as White as Boiled Eggs).

Unproblematic skin, or its flawlessness, can be interpreted in two ways. Whiteness and flawlessness (*jiebai wuxia* 洁白无暇) per se used to describe women's beauty and skin. In the past, it was related to the virginity of the female body (Johansson, 1998). In contemporary society, pureness (*chunjie* 纯洁) is still a favourite female attribute, embodied by a young and innocent look, both in CWMS, and more broadly, in the beauty industry (I will elaborate this further in a later section). Though the attitude towards sex has changed greatly over the last few decades, and pre-marital sex is much less directly associated with female immorality, it does not mean that the collective idealisation of female pureness/purity has disappeared.⁹² On the contrary, the pure, clean, fresh look is still a staple of public presentation of female body. In the year of Beijing Olympics, OLAY launched a piece of advertisement starring Lin Chi-ling with the theme 'Chinese beauty • porcelain doll'. In the advertisement, Lin says that her understanding of the 'porcelain doll' is that 'she must have a bright and smooth appearance despite time and experience. [...] She has a flawless and pure appearance and a transparent heart'. Here, the driving force from the beauty industry comes into play. The concept of the ideal skin look is commoditised: for each problem of the skin – be it acne, wrinkles, unevenness, spots, or for each skin type – be it dry, combination, or oily, one can resort to at least one type of skin care product for help. With the marketing of a wide range of products, the standard for skin care spiralled. For instance, the 'nude look' (*luozhuang* 裸妆) came into vogue in 2006 (Yinger, 2006) and contemporaneously Blemish Balm cream became a must-have for Asian women (Adkins, n.d.) – the product aids to creating an ideal look of flawlessness. Eventually, local cultural symbols and ideals of beauty merge with the commercial interests. For example, the well-known saying that 'a woman is made of water'⁹³ (Cao, 1964, p. 34) can lead to the promotion of skin hydration care in beautification schemes.⁹⁴ The standards for ideal skin care are hence the results from both culturally inherited and commercial demands.

⁹² According to "The Report of Chinese Sexual Health Experience" (*Zhongguoren xing jiankang ganshou baogao* 中国人性健康感受报告) by *Xiaokang Magazine* (小康) in 2012, over 70% Chinese have pre-marital sex.

⁹³ *Nüren shi shui zuo de* (女人是水做的). This sentence was said by the hero of the novel, Jia Baoyu.

⁹⁴ *Pretty Women* (02/03/2011), *Nüren shi shui zuo de* (A Woman is Made of Water).

3.4 Body figure

The lower part of the body from the belly button should be longer than the upper part. The lower thigh should be a little longer than the upper thigh with the shape of the legs slim and slender. The difference between the size of the breast and the waist should be 22-24 cm while that between the breast and the hip should be equal or 2-4 cm.

(Man, 2000b, p. 192)

Referring back to Table 2.2 and the reasons provided by the experts on their choices in terms of the body makeover, the makeover effects that the experts have proposed and tried to achieve are in repeated themes. Table 3.1 firstly relists the ‘Reasons’ in the ‘After’ columns (with the comments made after the makeover by the expert) in Table 2.2 and then translates them into repeated themes of the makeover goals.

Table 3.1: makeover goals in terms of body presentation (based on Table 2.2)

Guest	Reasons for ‘the after’ body	Makeover goals
A	Small girls should not ‘block up’ themselves as high as they can.	Look slim
	As long as you have fine proportion, you will be the most beautiful. To create the fine proportion means you need to make your lower body look longer than upper body.	Fine proportion
	So short girls could wear any type of T-shirt length as long as you show your waistline.	Show curves
B	Thick materials make girls look even bigger.	Look slim
	In addition to the choices of prints, style and material are important.	Fashion
C	If you have healthy skin colour, you should choose pure colour.	Fashion
D	Asymmetry is in fashion this year.	Fashion;
	Plump girls should avoid complicated clothes. And loose clothes give the illusion that people can’t tell whether the girl is fat or not.	Look slim
E	Fitted T-shirts show her waistline.	Show curves
	She should keep the designs simple because her image is of ‘the goddess of otakus’; people want to see simple things in a hot and dry summer. She is an easy-going girl; the T-shirt expresses that and makes everyone thinks she is a friendly girl.	Fashion
	If you wear loose clothes to make one part ‘big’, you should make everything else ‘small’ and fitted.	Look slim

From the above table, the makeover goals have been summarised into four reasons for the actions taken: 1) make the guest look slim (Look slim, four times); 2) make

the guest look as if she has fine body proportions (Fine proportion, one time); 3) make the guest have a curvaceous look (Show curves, two times); 4) make the guest have a fashionable look (Fashion, four times). These four categories can be seen as the main goals of what a beautiful Chinese feminine body offers in CWMS. An ideal female body should look slim and curvaceous, have a finely proportioned figure and be presented fashionably. Almost all the makeover methods are devoted to accomplishing this effect in the shows. In this section, I will focus on the slim body and fine proportions, while the curvaceous body will be analysed in a later section along with sex and gender relations.

It is not surprising to see that that slimness is part of the ideal body. Ideals of thinness and fragility as a precondition for female beauty have a long history in China. Though different classes might have different expectations of the ideal presentation of women, the ruling class always preferred the slender female body and certainly the ruling class had exerted more impact on the beauty standards of female body (Leung, Lam, & Sze, 2001, p. 346).

Among the episodes of CWMS spanning three years, there are more than one hundred episodes about slimming down or looking thinner, e.g. “Post Festival Vigorous Training Camp”, “Get Rid of Puffiness and Lose Five Kilograms in Weight”, “Weight Loss Liar Terminator”, etc.⁹⁵ The main discourse of slimness in those episodes is constituted by pursuing a thinner body unconditionally (largely achieved by presenters and guests) and by refusal to sanction any abnormal weight-loss methods (largely achieved by experts and presenters). The former one by the presenters and guests, as the representatives of those seeking help, normally express themselves in two ways: articulate the wish to be thinner and self-criticise/share the unhealthy methods being used by themselves and/or others. As hostess Xiaomi of *Pretty Women* enunciates, ‘weight loss is a timeless topic for women. From the time that I became aware of beauty to maybe I am very, very old, my whole life has been, is and will be on diet’. Host He Jiong and Shen Ling in one episode also quote the

⁹⁵ *Queen* (22/02/2010), *Nianhou chao mogui xunlian ying*; *Pretty Women* (04/04/2011), *Jiandiao shuizhong shou shijin*; *I am a Great Beauty* (26/11/2011), *Jianfei huangyan zhongjiezhe*.

popular saying on the internet ‘a spring epicurean, a summer moaner, an autumn moaner and a winter moaner’.⁹⁶

With the obsession with a thin body, a variety of abnormal weight loss methods are revealed and discussed in the show – e.g. fast, emetic method causing nausea, ‘arcane beverage’ triggering diarrhea, or even diets of cotton and paper to minimize calorie ingestion. Certainly most of these are not recommended to be applicable following the principle of ‘providing health knowledge’. To counter deficient and unhealthy practices, CWMS introduce ‘sound’ ones combining both commercial and nutritionally healthy aspects. On the one hand, slimming products, meal replacements and training programmes are suggested. The studio scenes change into massage rooms, open kitchens, and fitness centres providing a background to the lectures by the experts. The programmes try to make a consumer’s lifestyle ones that will combat excess weight. On the other hand, healthy body maintenance procedures, as opposed to the sale of quick and efficient products, also take up a large part of the shows. Scientific diet strategies and low-calorie dishes are presented by the nutritionists; aerobic exercises are led by star trainers; channels-collaterals therapy is conducted by doctors of traditional Chinese medicine. Particularly in the slimming episodes, the experts are not only gurus in the beauty industry, but also doctors. Pan Huaizong, for instance, a well-known health expert, a pharmacology professor and a councillor in Taipei city government, is a familiar spokesman for *Queen* on weight loss episodes. He repeatedly stresses the importance of losing weight healthily by lecturing on the consequences of unsound weight loss methods using simple words and warning the guests of the unexpected side effects. He once concludes an episode by saying that

There is no short-cut for weight loss. If you live a life with an irregular schedule, there is no way you can slim down successfully. And don’t pursue instant solutions. Keep it step by step. Don’t think you can lose weight without doing exercises. It’s not going to happen. Move your body.

⁹⁶ *I am a Great Beauty* (07/04/2012), *Yao shou buyao rou* (Only Slimness No Fat). The saying quoted by He and Shen derives from the Chinese old saying ‘a young idler, an old beggar’ (*shaozhuang bu nuli, lao da tu shangbei* 少壮不努力, 老大徒伤悲). Here, it means literally that one would feel sorry for oneself in summer, autumn and winter if one doesn’t lose weight in spring.

The health discourse is thus juxtaposed with the slim body discourse. Losing weight is propagated to be as a compulsory but stepwise and sustainable practice, just as the title of one episode of *Pretty Women* says, “Weight Loss is a Running Battle” (*Da chang jianfei chijiu zhan* 打场减肥持久战).⁹⁷

In addition to a slender body, ‘perfect ratio/fine proportion’ (*wanmei bili* 完美比例) is another qualification for an ideal female body. The ratio is mostly about the face and legs in proportion to height – small face and long legs are the ideal. And the reference models are largely models or stars who have such features, no matter whether they are from the East or the West.

The episode “Wear Out Nine-head Body and Long Legs Proportions: Super Magic Mix & Match Tips” is a good example of the shows that narrate this standard, showing concern for the differences between the proportion of ordinary people and the ideal.⁹⁸ This episode starts with scenes of figure measurements of the guests to see the ratio of their head to body. The concept of the ‘nine-head body’, i.e., one’s height is nine times the length of the head, is proposed as the benchmark.⁹⁹ The method applied is as follows: each guest has a dozen cardboards cut-outs of her head photo in real size. They put the cardboard cut-outs onto their body, from the neck to the instep, to see how many they need to make up the total length of their body. After that, the ‘standard’ cardboard of the head, one-ninth length of her body, is shown and compared with the real sized one, to see how big or long the guest’s head is above the standard (Figure 3.1). Contrarily, the episode gives statistics that the average eastern person has 6.75 same-size heads whole body length and the average western measurement is 7.15; even star Lin Chi-ling has only 7.8. None of the guests have the perfect size, and all of them are normally around 6.5-7 same-size heads. The guests are joked about by hostess Lan as ‘big-heads’, or ‘the Hobbits’. Obviously, the episode is chasing after an unachievable goal. The references here are stars,

⁹⁷ *Pretty Women* (03/08/2010).

⁹⁸ *Queen* (16/05/2012), *Chuan chu jiutoushen chengtui bili: shenqi chuandashu*.

⁹⁹ Nine-head body beauty (*jiutoushen meinü* 九头身美女) is used in Chinese entertainment news to praise a female star who has good body proportions, especially small head and long legs. Taiwanese female star Wu Peici is one of the stars famous for being called a ‘nine-head body beauty’.

models and celebrities who still have not reached ‘perfection’. The search for fine proportions is an unachievable mission; the goal set by CWMS is out of reach. This unachievability of perfect proportions leads the natural average female body into being perpetually deficient form; the natural average female body is regarded as being inadequate.



Figure 3.1: (Left): put the same-size heads onto body; (Right): comparison between the one-ninth (perfect) head and same-size (actual) head.

From another angle, the statistics given on this episode show that the western body is closer to the standard proportion and thereby seems to be closer to ‘perfect proportion’ than the eastern body. The conversation between expert Meilin (referred hereafter as M) and expert Youqun (referred hereafter as Y) in the same episode illustrates this:

Y: For the ancient Greek, an eight-head body is already beautiful. So a nine-head body is admirably beautiful.

M: Right, so when it comes to choosing models for the international catwalk, the perfect body means the upper body and lower body should be in the ratio of four to six.

Y: How many heads make your body length is not important; upper-lower body ratio is. Four-six makes you look tall. One with five-five needs to be ‘rescued’. Your proportion can always be changed by clothes, even to three-seven. Namie Amuro, for example, she is only 158cm; but she has a very small face, high waistline and long legs. So what we have been emphasising on our show is that no matter whether tall or short, you must have good proportions. We are not choosing models; we are shaping the figure of a perfect woman.

M: Yes. Among western models, for example, Kate Moss has been popular for almost twenty years. She’s not tall but has a harmonious proportion. Liu Wen is the shortest yet in all three – Milan, Paris and New York – international fashion shows. She is also in the advertisement of Marc Jacobs. Don’t worry about your height; pay attention to your proportions. It is ok even you are fat (voiceover from two or three guests: I am going to live!). We can use hairstyles, or clothes to change us.

The conversation between the experts shows that the definition and importance of a perfect ratio is highlighted in the shows. The perfect ratio is based on aesthetic standards from both western classic aesthetics and modern international fashion. It exists likewise in different entertainment industries in different countries. Also, the ideal of perfect proportions is recognised in the shows; and it is recognised that it is an ideal. However, it is made clear that it is always possible to make one's body visually closer to the ideal. The shows suggest that the concerns between the ordinary and the ideal fundamentally lie in creating the right visual effect of a smaller face and longer legs. According to the experts, beautiful proportions will be achieved as long as one makes the right choices of body adornments. Essentially it can all be overcome and resolved by consumption. In other words, the body is always a good resource for commercial aesthetics in a consumer society (O'Neill, 1985).

3.5 Eternal youth

Age is another frequently repeated theme in CWMS. These episodes are about how to prevent ageing or getting wrinkles, as well as how to look young by wearing certain make-up and clothes. Old vs. young is a major pair of binary oppositions in makeover shows. It is, nevertheless, not a simple 'young-good, old-bad' relationship. In this section, I will give an analysis of the theme of age in CWMS.

For the majority of the episodes, having an (relatively) old face/body is more-or-less humiliating. The antipathy to an old body is expressed both through camera perspectives and the words used which create a sense of panic about being old throughout the episodes. The following is the opening of the episode "Female Celebrities Teach You How to be Ageless in One's 30's".¹⁰⁰ When the hostess Li Jing asks the age of everyone in the studio, no one admits they are over thirty. They express their opinions as follows:

Hostess1: What's wrong with being thirty-year-old? I think twenty something lacks femininity (*weidao* 味道).

¹⁰⁰ *Pretty Women* (07/09/2010), *Nü mingxing jiaoni 30 sui bulaoshu*.

Expert 1: Em, we are not afraid of being old, but we cannot be unafraid of wrinkles.

Hostess 1: Yes, we are not afraid of being old, but we cannot be saggy.

Expert 2: The thirty-year-old is one that has the most lingering charm (*zui you yunwei* 最有韵味); she is the one who knows herself the most. But I don't think anyone wants their appearance to be beyond thirty.

The most straightforward understanding of the requirement here is to keep youthful looks: older age is not a problem; looking older is. Certainly, the glorification of youth is a result of consumer culture. According to Baudrillard's (1998) opinion, the thing that cannot be held permanently will be cherished the most in the consumer culture – the signs that represent youth have been exalted so as to deny the reality, the law of nature, the deterioration of human body (p. 99). Nonetheless, in this part, I would like to put aside the power of commercialism and the beauty industry and focus on the contradictions arising from the conversations presented above. Hostess 1 and Expert 2's words articulate the desire for an ideal femininity that combines youthful looks with graceful maturity that could be appealing to the older audience of the show, in addition to the existent pure, fresh (*qingchun* 清纯) beauty, which speaks to the younger groups. The two images, aiming to include different ages as targeted audience, respond to two different gendered representations in contemporary Chinese popular discourses – *nennü* (嫩女) and *shunü* (熟女) (J. Yang, 2011). *Nennü* (tender-looking women) points to a younger group and feminine youth while *shunü* (literally ripe women) signifies older and mature femininity (p. 334). The two gendered representations in CWMS suggest a cross consumption of the two images by the two groups of women. Xu Jiaying, for instance, born in 1984, a new singing star in the Chinese music industry, fancies an elegant makeover to be like star Lin Chi-ling, born in 1974, or star Yi Nengjing, born in 1969.¹⁰¹ The look of gracefulness, maturity and intellectuality is her goal in the makeover. It is seen that the makeover of age works not only one way but can also be bidirectional.

As individual idealised women images, *nennü* and *shunü* are embedded in cultural expectations of femininity. *Nennü*, firstly, is the representation of ideal feminine youth. It is not a novelty that the young body is worshipped and most appealing within a consumer culture (Notar, 1994, p. 31). CWMS also comment

¹⁰¹ *Pretty Women* (17/03/2011), *Lianxing zhiming shang* (The Fatal Defects of Facial Shapes).

critically upon the fact that only youthful looks are acceptable in our ‘cruel and snobbish’ society.¹⁰² Following with a voiceover ‘let’s freeze in our 20s’, host He Jiong says ‘today we are discussing women’s topic. One idea has it that men are ridiculous and way out of line. A 20-year old man likes a 20-year old woman; a 30-year old man likes a 20-year old woman; a 40-year old man still likes 20-year old woman...so we need to talk about freezing the age’.¹⁰³ In another episode, expert Niuer comments when he applies anti-age essence to a 27-year old celebrity’s face, ‘why I am putting an anti-age product onto such a young face? It is because currently everyone wants to be young. Nobody wants to look like a 30 year old. Take me for example, I’m 40; but I still want others to think I’m 18’. And then he also asks around other guests how old they want others to guess they are; all of them answer 18.¹⁰⁴

The contemporary sense of *nennü* also has an international context as it is associated with Japanese *kawaii* and *luoli* culture. ‘*Kawaii*’ means cute in Japanese, but it more generally hails the physical appearance and social behaviour of being ‘sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine, gentle vulnerable, weak and inexperienced’ (Kinsella, 1995, p. 220). The ‘*kawaii*’, or cute, look reached the pinnacle of its popularity around the 1990s and became a cultural symbol of East Asian popular culture (Botz-Bornstein, 2008, p. 96). *Nen* 嫩, in Chinese, also has similar connotations as the Japanese word *kawaii*. *Nen*, according to Xinhua dictionary, means young, vulnerable, childish, and green hand in the phrase *nennü*. Therefore, *nennü* partly features cuteness. The more recent influence of the ‘Lolita complex’ (*luoli qingjie* 萝莉情结) in Japanese sub-culture adds another dimension. A *luoli* is identified with an innocent, prepubescent look of the girl next door; the mature womanhood traits are rejected in this sub-culture (Miller, 2006, p. 80). The essence of *luoli* is to *maimeng* (卖萌, the person looks and is genuinely cute in

¹⁰² It is often mentioned by the presenters in the show, acting like the representatives of the audience, yelling for youthful looks. It is also justified by the miserable stories due to their aged bodies told by the guests.

¹⁰³ *I am a Great Beauty* (14/04/12), *Riben bu lao xianqi de meirong mimi* (The Beauty Secrets of Japan Ageless Wife).

¹⁰⁴ *Queen* (23/09/2010), *Bugan buyang bu tuo xie, yici saochu huanji de fannao* (No Dryness, No Itch and No Scurf, Get Rid of the Seasonal Annoyance at One Time).

appearance and in behaviour), alluding to and highlighting the cute and innocent characteristics of the female. When *luoli* as a word and concept entered into China, it did not only refer to the 12-year-old heroine in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, but even to much younger age groups.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, the emotion roused by looking at a girl with *luoli* characteristics is similar to looking at a baby or toddler and is free of any sexual connotation linked to the original figure of Lolita. Hence, in the term and concept of *nennü*, a merge of the existing concepts of *keai* (可爱, cuteness in Chinese) and *kawaii* plus the more recent Lolita concept can be observed, but with a much stronger emphasis on purity and cuteness and less emphasis on the sexual connotation.¹⁰⁶

Apart from cuteness, the weakness represented by *nennü* is related to psychological vulnerability that is identified by many women and influenced their views of the opposite gender. In contrast to *luoli* for girls/women, for men the term *dashu* (大叔 literally means uncle, or the Chinese honorific title used to a non-kinship man who is of the same age as the parents' generation) was created to designate mature, older men (with an age gap of 5-20 years or even more than the *luoli* group). In a survey by magazine *Rayli* (*Ruili* 瑞丽), 50.6% participants would like to date a *dashu* (Rayli, 2011).¹⁰⁷ They believe that *dashu* have charming characters such as being generous, soft; make them feel secure and have masculinity; are considerate and give them help.

Shunü, the combination of youthful looks and feminine maturity, is of more eye-catching, encouraging functionality represented in CWMS. These years have seen several ageless housewives become celebrated as the representatives of *shunü*.

¹⁰⁵ There are a number of internet entries with key words 'luoli' and 'meinü'. For example, people.com put on a news entry introducing the most popular beautiful *luoli* girls who are only around six years old (people.com, 2013). Women's favouring of *luoli* is normally because of cuteness, but not with sexual connotation.

¹⁰⁶ *Nennü*, is still largely about young looks, and what the consumer culture generated by this concept. Though both *kawaii* and *luoli* cultures have influenced the idea of *nennü*, and have been accepted so warmly among Chinese women, they are not a mainstream part of Chinese aesthetic culture and have shrunk in meanings (W. Yang, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ Of course, there are 18.9% who say that they will never date a *dashu* no matter how great he is; and 30.5% are not sure.

Jung Da Yeon, for example, born in 1966, a Korean mother of two children, had slimmed down from 70kg to 49kg. Her aerobics exercises, choreographed by herself, are so famous online that she even has a personal website in Chinese.¹⁰⁸ She has been invited to many variety shows in China mainland, e.g. *Day Day Up*, *The Generation Show* (*Niandai xiu* 年代秀, Shenzhen Satellite TV, 2011-Present), and so on. She was also in *I am a Great Beauty*, teaching her rubber band aerobics in her episode.¹⁰⁹ Masako is a Japanese housewife who is over forty years old and looks like a twenty something. She became popular online because of news stories about her, and then opened a Chinese microblog sharing her beautification schemes with followers. In the episode of *I am a Great Beauty* featuring Masako, the production team films her during a typical day in her life, recording everything she does regarding body maintenance. The glorification of ‘amortality’¹¹⁰ underlines the importance of staying firm in physique and preserving the youthfulness of the female body.

After all, no matter whether being a *nennü* or *shunü*, youthful appearance is the preliminary condition for a *meinü*. Women are seeking a body which bears no trace of time passing. The functionality of body as a mnemonic device attracts little attentions in a consumer society (Brownell, 2000, p. 124). Signs of memories such as wrinkles are not desirable, especially for the feminine body. Moreover, adding cuteness, *kawaii* or *luoli* elements into youthful look indicates that gender relationships in contemporary China as proposed in these mainstream media programmes are still similar to old stereotypes of weak young women matching strong old men. Though cuteness may not be an overall central theme of the CWMS, it is clear that the influence from Japan and their female beauty discourses play a prominent role in CWMS, and address a specific audience of the shows.

Thus, the requirement for a youthful look again is a combination of influences from the global commercial industry, regional cultural contexts and national cultural tradition.

¹⁰⁸ The homepage of Jung’s personal website is <http://zhengduoyan.org/>.

¹⁰⁹ *I am a Great Beauty* (22/09/2012), *Zheng Duolian lai la!* (Jung Da Yeon is Coming!).

¹¹⁰ The word is coined by Catherine Mayer (2011) in her book *Amortality: The Pleasures and Perils of Living Agelessly*. It describes a phenomenon that modern people live to stay agelessly.

3.6 Sexiness

‘Sexiness’ (*xinggan* 性感) is still a very ambiguous term in contemporary China. In the early 1980s, at the beginning of the Economic Reform period, *xinggan* had more negative connotations due to both the restrictions on sexuality and confusion around the meaning of the word (L. He, 2002). More recently, in both *The China Encyclopedia of Sexology* (The Editorial Board of the China Encyclopedia of Sexology, 1998, p.549) and *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Linguistics Dictionary Editing Room, 2002, p.1412), *xinggan* is defined as being closely related to the driving force of sexuality, and arousing erotic feelings (T. Hu & Lai, 2012, p. 85).

Xinggan is a word translated from ‘sexy’ in English and could be easily confused with pornography (*seqing* 色情) during the earlier and more conservative period around the 1980s (He, 2002, p. 12). In Chinese, *seqing* is related to many unfavourable words such as *yinhui* (淫秽 obscene), *xialiu* (下流 indecent), *disu* (低俗 pulp), so it is more or less a taboo in public occasions (L. He, 2002, pp. 12-14). Pornographic (*huangse de* 黄色的) content is also the major focus of Chinese censorship in the media. It is for those reasons that *xinggan* or being ‘sexy’ is regarded more in a derogatory sense and people tended to hesitate to use it to describe a female. However, in recent years and in the context of globalised media presence, it has been accepted as a neutral or even positive word. Scholars and intellectuals have produced writings to defend the concept, attributing positive elements to it, also from a feminist perspective. For them, *xinggan* is not only physical attractiveness and a function to seduce males. Rather, it is a spiritual aesthetic; it is an art or a philosophy for women’s own sake (T. Hu & Lai, 2012; W. Li, 2005; W. Wang, Fan, & Wang, 2009). ‘Being sexy’ has hence been more widely accepted as an element of female agency.

In CWMS, ‘being sexy’ is definitely a positive attribute of feminine presentation; it is both an appraisal and a goal for women. ‘Sexy looks’, which may

embarrass people when discussed in public in the past, e.g. styles of bras, women's vital statistics and strategies of seduction, are topics open for discussion in CWMS. In the following part, I will address how 'sexiness' is construed in the CWMS.

Firstly, being sexy is to show one's femininity (*nürenwei* 女人味). According to the shows, to make a body more feminine is to emphasise the secondary sex characteristics of the body. The secondary sex characteristics of the body are reflected in two aspects: a curvaceous figure and firm skin. These two aspects which form the ideal feminine body and 'sexiness' are ubiquitous in almost every episode on body shape. Fundamentally, the two aspects are describing the sizes and positions of the related body parts. To be more specific, the curvaceous figure mainly refers to the proportion between breasts, waist and hips, or as they are called BHW ratios. According to expert Kevin, the golden ratio of women's vital statistics (measurements of chest, waist and hips) is 1:0.7:1. He says, 'the waist and hips should have almost the same measures; the waist is the most important, should be very thin; so a gourd-shaped body or S-shaped will be the best'.¹¹¹ The firm skin is identified with the youthfulness of skin, however more stress is placed on the tightness of the pertinent parts, e.g. breasts, hips and so on. Emphasis on these elements is not a Chinese particularity but part of wider trend of an anti-aging regime of the body in the modern consumer society. It can be argued that the sexiness expressed through physical appearance promoted by the shows can actually be reduced to adornments of related female body parts such as breasts, waist, and hips, explicitly notable in titles such as "Big Makeover for Flawed Girl in Summer: Rescue the A-cup Girl", "Cultivate Practice for the Super Sexy Waist", "Beautiful Legs and Tight Bottoms Training Camp".¹¹² What is worth noting here is that those two aspects are almost impossible to achieve, quite similar to the 'perfect proportion' as I have mentioned in the section 'Body figure'. In the same episode where Kevin proposes the 'golden ratio', three models have their measurements taken as guests and none of them have the 'right' ratio – their breasts are around 10 cm smaller than

¹¹¹ *Pretty Women* (22/07/2010), *Dazao huangjin bili* (Golden Ratio Makeover).

¹¹² *Pretty Women* (08/06/2011), *Xiari duanban nü da gaizao, zhengjiu A zhaobei nüsheng*; *Pretty Women* (24/05/2010), *Chao xinggan yaofu xiulian fa*; *I am a Great Beauty* (02/05/2011), *Meitui qiaotun xunlian ying*.

hips. Nonetheless, it is because of these gaps between the perfect (golden ratio) and the natural body (even one belonging to a model) that the desire for bigger breasts, a thinner waist and firmer hips can be created, and the consequent body maintenance procedures effectively introduced. A variety of products are suggested, including body shape cream, shapewear, body shape machines/tools, and other novelties, such as inflatable bra push-ups, fake hip shapes wear for evening wear, shading powder used for making up cleavage and so on.

The reason rendered by CWMS in magnifying the S-shape of the female body is to feel glamorous through attracting others' attention. In "Three Simple Steps Give You a Voluptuous Figure and Full Femininity", the hostesses, guests and the expert suggest this explicitly.¹¹³ The hostess Li Ye opinions that 'hot' girls are most eye-catching; they attract attention from both men and women. Guest Zhang Yuxin worriedly expresses that her child-like body shape intrigues little interest from men. After the makeover, when the guest has changed clothes to achieve a visually better S-shape body, hostess Li Siyu acts as if she is enchanted with Zhang's new look, saying 'is that really you? As a woman, I can't help but staring at your profile. You are not the same person anymore'. Zhang herself also articulates that 'I feel more confident after changing. I feel men are going to pay more attention to me.' This is a typical narration about the changes in the appearances that lead to the changes in the inner feelings because of others', especially men's gazes. There is no doubt that being sexy could attract more attention from men, and women enjoy the feelings of their gazes (I will come back to this point of self-presentation for others/male in 4.1.3). Also, it is seen that aesthetic properties, rather than medical properties, are given as the motives in CWMS to explain why women should have a sexy body.¹¹⁴ The standard of curviness here is not about offering a scientific resolution for the aesthetics but to reinforce the cultural discourse that low waist-hips ratio and an 'hourglass' shaped figure are more attractive than others (Dixson, Li, & Dixson, 2010). From this angle, Chinese aesthetics of the sexiness of the female body do not

¹¹³ *Pretty Women* (16/08/2012), *Jiandan sanzhaorang ni shencai fengman nürenwei shizu*. The episode invites two press media models as the makeover objects, one of whom is the winner of 2011 *Rayli* magazine cover girl. They worry that their slim body will not wear curvy shapes to advantage.

¹¹⁴ Scientifically, both large breasts and low waist-to-hip ratios are predictors of susceptibility of pregnancy.

differ much from the international cognition of the female body in terms of femininity, sexiness and attractiveness (Dixson, Li, & Dixson, 2010, p.179). The curvaceous body belongs to the globalised standard of female beauty and is now widely acknowledged in China, too.

Besides, sexiness is also associated with appropriate bareness in the shows. The appropriate bareness is contrasted with nudity or excessive bareness which are over-exposing women's body and which has been criticised as 'looking like a prostitute' (*fengchen qi* 风尘气) or 'not classy' (*bu gaoji* 不高级) by the experts. However, 'what is appropriate' is not clearly identified in the show. In one episode about choosing bras, a model wears only a bra and underwear standing in the middle of the studio for the expert to explain the materials and designs of the bra.¹¹⁵ Here too, as in most episodes, the exposed parts of the female body are scrutinised by the cameras.

Meantime, almost all the experts agree on displaying the body sexually by wearing an 'imaginative outfit'. Expert Meilin supports this point by using the *qipao* (旗袍 *cheongsam*). He says that 'we Chinese have the tradition that combines conservativeness with sexiness. The *cheongsam* is elegant and self-restrained; modest and dignified but at the same time, it shows off a female's curves'. He further argues that sexiness ought not be identified with exposure (*luolu* 裸露) but can be achieved through special designs of clothes or accessories. Expert Kevin, in another episode, has a similar opinion when commenting on his choice of over-knee socks for a makeover object, saying 'don't expose all your legs, but only some parts. It turns men on.' In the same episode, star trainer Kimico also stresses that 'no more than 30% exposure of your body is regarded as being sexy for men'.¹¹⁶

That dressing up by veiling parts of the body as a concept of sexiness is also highlighted by Bao (1999). In his book on fashion, he views the 'sexy look' as

¹¹⁵ *Pretty Women* (11/04/2012), *Xuan dui xinggan cuihuaji* (Choose the Right Catalyst of Sexiness).

¹¹⁶ *Queen* (13/12/2010), *Cong tou dao jiao dou meili, 7 ri wanmei bianshen jihua* (Beautify from Head to Toe, 7 Days' Perfect Makeover Plan).

indicating or emphasising certain parts of the human body; the aim is to guide attention or create imagination around the emphasised parts. While certain parts of the body are sexually attractive, the attire used to cover those parts is sexually attractive too – e.g. lace on bras, different styles of socks. Different parts of the female body become the point of focus at different times; they are emphasised in fashion and there is associated pressure from the beauty industry to change or improve them. For CWMS, interests in the female body are focussed on the secondary sex characteristics, and sexiness is expressed by displaying those parts with ‘appropriate exposure’.

Chapter 4 Functions: Self-presentation

Just as in the consumer cultures of the industrial and post-industrial world, female beauty and youth have, at least among the urban Chinese, become important assets.

(Johansson, 1998, p. 59)

In the following chapter I will outline the standards that the shows have set to Chinese women in term of presenting the self. Rather than simply summarising specific characteristics of the presentation of the female body, I will also refer to the management of the self-identity for Chinese women, and further examine how meanings of the presentation of the body for women translate into and influence their daily life. I will start with an illustrative example from the episode “Money-saving Invincible Secret Techniques for Big Eyes”.¹¹⁷ This episode starts with a video clip of street interviews, conducted by the TV crew, on the theme ‘why every woman should have make-up to have big charming eyes’. The clip is composed of eleven shots of interviewees who are giving their reasons for having a ‘big eyes effect’ make-up:

- 1) to look more spirited (*jingshen* 精神);
- 2) to be seductive (*mei* 媚) and able to attract others (*fangdian* 放电) with bigger eyes;

¹¹⁷ *Queen* (16/06/2009), *Shengqian dayan wudi miji*.

- 3) to be polite when going out;
- 4) to look more spirited and more confident;
- 5) the eye make-up make her look more spirited and her eyes bigger;
- 6) she has to turn her single-lid eyes into double-lid to make them look bigger and make herself like a doll;
- 7) it is what her boyfriend would like her to do;
- 8) to look decent (*timian* 体面, by a male interviewee);
- 9) it is easier to be singled out in night clubs;
- 10) to look spirited so that her teacher won't think she is asleep during school time;
- 11) her male classmates would love to help her when she wears make-up.

According to the voiceover of the video, around 90% of women want to have a pair of big charming eyes according to the results from their street interviews with hundreds of women. Following the video, the hostess introduces six guests, who are popular beauty and fashion bloggers and master making up a pair of eyes that suggest glistening, dewy (*shuiwangwang* 水汪汪) and innocent eyes. They share their stories on how differently they have been treated by others when with or without their make-up. Benefits they have received after being made up include being given a discount at the supermarket, a free taxi ride, or a bus driver stopping as one almost missed the bus – the latter example is contrasted to another situation when the same person is not wearing make-up and the bus driver rolls his eyes, shakes his head and drives away.

The narratives mentioned above are exemplary in giving meaning to targeted femininity in CWMS. Looking back at the eleven interviews included in the opening video clip, the reasons that they give can be classified into two categories: to express one's personality through make-up, e.g. to look spirited, seductive, confident and so on; and to please or attract others in social relations so as to be liked and favoured, such as pleasing one's boyfriend, being popular in social life. The stories told by the guests elaborate further on the second category, and at the same time stress the possible benefits that may be received by women in their daily life when their

appearance has been enhanced by make-up. The two categories represent the dual attributes of the body: we express ourselves through the body and are seen by others through the body. The body is the connection between inner self and external world: 'we have a body and we are a body' (Featherstone, 2006, p. 233).

Both subjectivity and objectivity in communication by body appearance are embodied as two major phases according to Goffman (1956) theory on self-presentation: what the subject wants to be seen and what others see from the presentation. Specifically to the cases of CWMS, the interpretation of self-presentation combines both aspects. On the one hand, the outer presentation carries the information of one's characteristics. The external view of the body is a public property, allowing others to judge without the necessity of approval from the subject (Seymour, 1998). In the opinion of some people, appearance is decisive in the understanding of one's inner self, or even identical with the self: the externals directly reflect the internals (p. 31). Hence, the 'before' (wrongly presented) body could lead to misunderstanding, or suppress the real self, and the 'after' (the correctly presented) body could complement what one doesn't actually have. On the other hand, one's presence serves to fulfil the 'ego-drive', defined by social psychologists as a need to make the self to be noticed, recognised, and accepted (Fiske, 1990, p. 14). To prevent possible misunderstandings of the intentions of the self-presentation and thereby avoid negative opinions on themselves, CWMS encourage women to look at their bodies in an instrumental way. Physical improvements are successfully affiliated to other aspirations of the social life of Chinese women, which are explicitly seen from the second category of reasons given by the interviewees. Accordingly, women seem to be receiving 'rewards' from others when they are paying more attention to their appearance.

This chapter will examine how CWMS have rationalised the self-presentations on the basis of the idealised beauty that I have described in the previous chapter. This is not only about guidance for makeover behaviours, i.e. how to present oneself, but also about the vision behind the made-over images portrayed

by CWMS. The ‘after-body’ is not only a series of images; rather, it is a yearning for an improved life.

4.1 Self-presentations in different occasions

For the appearances as expressions of self, CWMS present a series of images which are appropriate to different occasions that makeover objects might attend and to different people with whom they might interact. One should know how to change from a work suit for an after-duty party because the former is too formal for a casual occasion; during the pre-wedding period, one needs to make a schedule of body maintenance procedures, e.g. skin care, lose weight, manicure, in order to be the most beautiful bride on that all-important D-day. A wrong make-up method will result in appearing one with an unfriendly and distant personality in interpersonal relationships. Those schemes of self-presentation have created, as Lewis et al. (2012) describes, ‘a rich and complex set of broader cultural anxieties around young modern femininity’ (p. 558). The anxieties have been developed around impression management within a situational context with which women are confronted in daily life. In my analysis and categorisations, I will mainly focus on three aspects: the workplace, social events, and heterosexual relationships.

4.1.1 The workplace

In regard to makeovers for the workplace, CWMS aim to present the makeover objects as professional, affable, and pleasing. One should look prepared in front of interviewers (e.g. “Upcoming Bloom of Youth: Interview Attire, Graduate Job-hunting Attire”), experienced with clients, friendly and less threatening to colleagues (e.g. “Wear Floral Prints to Have Popularity in the Workplace”) and efficient in order to be favoured by superiors (e.g. “Don’t be a Moron at the Office! It is Easy to Win the Boss’s Heart”).¹¹⁸ On that account, appearance is part of one’s profession: the look is decisive in presenting capability; it influences others’ understanding of the employee and helps working relationships in the office. In one episode, the guest

¹¹⁸ *I am a Great Beauty* (17/07/2011), *Jijiang zhanfang de qingchun: mianshi zhuozhuang, biye qiuzhi zhuozhuang*; *Pretty Women* (17/04/2012), *Suihua chuanchu zhichang hao renyuan*; *Queen* (16/09/2011), *Bie dang zhichang tianbing! Gaoding laoban jiushi name jiandan*.

XiaoCall allegedly has dressed herself in a typical office worker look that can also appear as seductive (*zhao taohua* 招桃花).¹¹⁹ She wears a semi-transparent shirt of a pale pink-brown colour, a dark brown leather look waistcoat, a pair of high waist black pants and white high heels. The outline of her black bra can be vaguely seen through the shirt and is exposed completely if she stoops to pick up dropped items. Expert Kevin criticises the attire, saying it makes her ‘too calculated to be liked by any female colleague in the company’.¹²⁰ He further remarks that it is due to this appearance that other female colleagues would expect her to make mistakes and assume that she have had obtained this job because of her attractiveness or personal connections. During the makeover procedure her dress is changed to a chiffon dress and short knitted cardigan creating a ‘sweet’ (*tianmei* 甜美) image, with the effect of making all the TV figures finding her loveable, and reassuring her that now everyone would help her in the office. The shows assume that appropriate body appearance enables women to reconcile themselves with their colleagues, or with the whole work environment when conflicts emerge, and further, would help make friendly interpersonal relationships in general.

In addition, re-styling oneself is to hide disadvantageous characteristics and display the advantageous in the workplace. In “Use ‘Coloured’ Eyes to Know People: Makeover to Become Workplace Charmers”, hostess Wang Jing plus guests Wang Xiang and Wang Zizi take a colour psychology test that could indicate their personality.¹²¹ According to their choices, expert XiaoP rematches their outfits. Wang Xiang chooses the graph that represents people with thoughtful and well-planned minds, and leadership traits. XiaoP explains that this group of people tend to give the impression of being aloof, distant and proud, in step with what Wang Xiang is wearing: a bright dark blue striped sweater, fitted blue jeans and black high heels. He advises that she should add something pinkish to her look, such as carrying a peach-glow tote, or changing to a pink blazer to contrast the dark colours. He warns also

¹¹⁹ *Queen* (16/01/2012), *Xiyin li UP! Nanren buhui chajue de toutou bianmei miji* (Attractiveness UP! The Secrets for Beautification that Men Cannot Detect).

¹²⁰ The shows often create a competitive relationship among beautiful women. They also indicate that women who are pretentious, sultry, or scantily dressed would be favoured by opposite sex, but raise negative opinions from the same sex.

¹²¹ *Pretty Women* (17/09/2012), *Se yan shi ren, dazao zhichang wanren mi*.

that this type of persons need warm colours to display affinity with others and competence in teamwork; however, overuse of warm colours would lead to the other extreme: a loud, over-confident person.

The expert's suggestions address the inner and outer self on two levels: 1) the inner self is constrained by what can be expressed by the outer self. One's outfit choice might mask part of the beautiful self. In other words, if one makes wrong choices, one can provoke misinterpretations and misunderstandings. 2) The outer self is adjustable: the true self can be uncovered through the cult of the body; at the same time, the outer self should present what it is necessary to present as a qualified staff member in the working environment. To carry out the makeover from these two respects requires the makeover objects to have a clear self-understanding of their merits and demerits as well as their roles in their workplaces so as to deduce what needs to be adjusted and how to adjust it by clothes and make-up. The self-understanding, however, largely derives normally from popular sources, such as an online personality test, horoscopes and so on, the accuracy of which is very questionable.¹²² And the complementary makeover procedure is credited to the expertise of the experts who can magnify the virtue and veil any deficiency in one's personality through making over and changing the presentation. However, the choices of the experts, in the name of perfecting the presentation of personality, is not entirely independent of influences from current fashion or trends, or specific forms of sponsorship, which I will come back to in the next chapter.

Appearance and office interpersonal relationships make up what is called the new 'workplace culture' (*zhichang wenhua* 职场文化) in contemporary China; this 'workplace culture', is represented in a specific new literary genre, the workplace novels (*zhichang xiaoshuo* 职场小说), e.g. *A Story of Lala's Promotion* (*Du Lala shengzhi ji* 杜拉拉升职记), and more broadly, in popular films and TV series (L. Zhou, 2011). While the earlier workplace had been the 'danwei' (单位)

¹²² There has been research on the Barnum effect and personality descriptions, showing that people tend to endorse certain very general and abstract personality descriptions, which are essentially bogus, such as horoscopes, as very accurate descriptions of themselves. However, this is not within the scope of discussion in my dissertation.

unit/organisation/institution), the new workplace is identified with ‘*gongsi*’ (公司 company), as a result of China’s new marketised and globalised economy. The Chinese Women’s Makeover Show is an important force in the promotion of the new workplace culture and in giving advice on how to adjust to it. According to Zhang et al. (2010), this is essential for managing one’s personal life and under new national historical circumstances. Situated primarily within the company against the backdrop of transnational capitalised and globalised expansion, being part of a workplace culture, in the narrow sense, involves cautiously dealing with subtlety and details in order to cope with possible conflicts and misunderstandings in the workplace. The self-presentation in CWMS meets the needs of employees who are now accountable for their own risks, competitions, and anxieties that they are confronting and which they strive to overcome every day. It responds to the rise of the white collar class, as well as the complicated networks within professional fields (Y. Zhang, Xu, & Xu, 2010, p. 24).

4.1.2 Social events

Self-presentation is also about etiquette in different social occasions. It requests appropriateness (*deti* 得体) that depends on the places one is going to and the people one is meeting. It is necessary to choose the proper attire to prevent oneself from being ‘tasteless, tacky and impolite’, according to the experts’ narrations. For example, as a guest at a wedding banquet, one should present oneself in a modest manner that is neither too casual, which would show disrespect, nor so conspicuous as to overshadow the bride (e.g. “Red Bombs are Coming! Master Stroke for Wedding Banquet: You Will Win both Face and Heart”, “Invincible Hairstyle for Important Occasions! Reveal Super Eye-catching Tips”).¹²³ In this sense, CWMS give assistance to post-80s and post-90s so that they can fit into traditional events and win approval from older generations. Such helpful themes include dressing up for traditional festivals and ceremonies, for example, “Wear Red to Celebrate the New Year”, where the taste of the elderly should also be taken into account.¹²⁴ Guest

¹²³ *Queen* (26/07/2011), *Hongse zhadan lai la! Rang ni mianzi lizi douyou de hunyan juezhao*; *Queen* (05/12/2012), *Zhongyao changhe bisheng fazhuang! Chao xijing miji da gongkai*.

¹²⁴ *I am a Great Beauty* (07/02/2010), *Honghong huohuo guo da nian*.

Huniu shares an anecdote about her failed meeting with her boyfriend's parents.¹²⁵ Though she had been very meticulous about her appearance, she was regarded as not the same person in the photo that he had shown to his parents; they preferred the person in the photo to her. According to other guests and the expert's analysis, the overdone adornment she chose contribute to the unsatisfactory impression she gave to the parents. They warn that the older generation is in favour of a fresh-faced look, rather than heavy make-up and too much styling. The above examples echo the residual etiquette culture in contemporary Chinese society, dealing with the customs that should be followed as a guest or a visitor. It also reveals a generational gap in the fast changing transitory society. While some occasions are seen as having a ceremonial sense by elder generations, some people of the younger generation may not view this in the same way. The cultural norms have been changing in order to reconcile different cognitions from different generations (Fox, 2008). CWMS therefore present themselves to offer guidance in this process and prevent possible social conflicts.

Similarly with self-presentation in the workplace, the external self is used by CWMS to improve personal relationships in social life. However, the two ideal presentations imagined by CWMS for interpersonal relationships suggest opposing appearances. On the one hand, to create an image which makes others well disposed, one should avoid a princess-y, slutty, or distinguished but distant look. The key words such as having 'good impression' (*haogan* 好感) and 'popularity' (*hao ren yuan* 好人缘) exemplify the effect that CWMS have instructed the audience to achieve. These episodes, e.g. "Girls Who Make a Good Impression are IN Right Now", appeal to women who think that adopting sweet, cute, or street styles and keeping make-up simple would increase one's friendliness, especially to female attendees.¹²⁶ On the other hand, other episodes that provide information on how to present at parties propose an eye-catching image, a high-profile style that demonstrates feminine sexiness such as S-shape curviness with dazzling accessories.

¹²⁵ *Queen* (14/09/2010), *Wo de di yici! Zheyang daban neng mei dao renren kua* (My First Time! Dress Up Like This that Everyone would Appraise You).

¹²⁶ *Queen* (27/03/2012), *Haogan xi nüsheng zheng liuxing*.

Through this image, the makeover object commands the gaze of others, standing out from the crowd. The spectacular public display, or the willingness to be the focus of the social field, is interpreted as wanting to earn the admiration or envy in return, or *you mianzi* (有面子 have face) in some cases. In one of the episodes of *I am a Great Beauty*, for example, three celebrity guests of different ages (representing women who were born in the 70s, 80s and 90s respectively) are invited to the show to discuss the topic of what to wear to a student reunion.¹²⁷ Interestingly, their makeover goals are not only about appropriate appearance, but also display a sense of competitiveness about showing that ‘one has lived a good life’ (by hostess He Jiong) and ‘who looks like the youngest and most beautiful among others’ (by the voiceover). The figures stir up the feeling that everyone has the resolution to win the ‘reunion competition’. The sense of competition relates self-presentation to the concept of ‘face’ (*mianzi* 面子), an important element in Chinese personal relationships that refers to the social dignity or public image that is claimed by an individual and is recognised by others (M. Zhou & He, 1997). According to CWMS, people win and lose *mianzi* through the presentation of decency and impropriety as part of communicative behaviour. The functionality of the makeover of self-presentation, in this sense, is identified with what Goffman (1972) called ‘face-work’, which is carried out intentionally for others in order to fabricate certain impressions, and with which Chinese are very familiar. The face-work in the Chinese *mianzi* culture is sanctioned in terms of etiquette norms on the one hand, and internalised as self-evaluation and self-judgment on the other (R. Zhu, 1993). Of course, the *mianzi* culture mirrored in CWMS is not confined within the impression management of self-presentation through ‘face-work’. The shows are also associated with a wide array of pertinent social consumption behaviours of individuals with the ‘symbolic function of the presentation of body within the *mianzi* culture’ (J. Jiang, 2009). It emphasises competitiveness, for instance, to show social status through consumption, to which I will come back later in 5.2.3 in more details.

¹²⁷ *I am a Great Beauty* (30/12/2012), *Hold zhu ni de tongxue juhui* (Hold Your Classmate Gathering).

4.1.3 Heterosexual relationships

Women are depicted in a quite different way from men. [...] because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him.

(Berger, 1972, p. 64)

A man is great because of his strength, a woman is beautiful because of her weakness.

(Ban Zhao, *Nü Jie*)

There is an old Chinese saying from *Stratagems of the Warring States* (*Zhan guo ce* 战国策) that 'a woman beautifies herself for the man who likes her' (*nü wei yue ji zhe rong* 女为悦己者容) (X. Liu, 1985, p. 597). It expresses the need for a woman to please her husband in the domestic environment and to please male beholders in public places. Some women, or perhaps, many women, still adhere to this principle in presenting their bodies in front of men. According to recent scholarship, about two decades ago, the phrases such as 'pleasing yourself before pleasing others' (*yue ren xian yue ji* 悦人先悦己) start to appear on Chinese media. Women are encouraged to beautify themselves for themselves and those who only dress up for others, especially for men, are regarded as not being in tune with the times nor with the identity of 'new women' (Han, 2004). Given that, a survey conducted by a women's channel of sina.com.cn in 2007, asks the question 'in the present day, when women are independent in economy, thinking and personality, for whom do women dress up?'.¹²⁸ It transpires that over 75% of female participants acknowledge that they support the idea that 'a woman beautifies herself for the man who likes her' and around a similar percentage of female participants admit that the opinions of husband/boyfriend on their appearance are very important for them. The survey further explains that 'a woman always wants to be more beautiful no matter for whom her body is displayed'; and a beautiful woman should appreciate the gazes and admiration from others that have pushed her to become a beauty. Both the proposed question and the result reveal that female body is not solely a subject for male spectators, however men's views on their bodies are crucial for women.

¹²⁸ The webpage of this survey is <http://eladies.sina.com.cn/z/nwyjzr/>.

Likewise, the presentation of the female body in CWMS is directed to please the male gaze; the figures in CWMS express this point explicitly. They affirm the audience that men are ‘animals of vision’ (*shijue dongwu* 视觉动物). It is critical to know what styles tend to be noticed, liked or admired, and then the shows will provide the answers to how to change appearance accordingly. Hostess Linda of *Pretty Women*, for example, is selected to represent a ‘tomboy style’ woman and remarks on the disadvantage of lacking femininity (*nürenwei* 女人味), which leads to turn the admired male friend to a ‘dude’ (*ge menr* 哥们儿). She says that

In the past, I didn’t listen to others. I thought I could do whatever I liked. I believe a man who likes me does so because of my personality. Later, I find this is not so certain. I think you should hang out more often with friends like teacher Yeting¹²⁹ and be influenced by her femininity. Men, after all, prefer women with femininity.¹³⁰

Also, expert Kevin, in another episode, concludes that

No matter whether you are married or unmarried, you should keep yourself in the most perfect state and be confident in yourself. I’ll tell you what, how could your husband be willing to leave you then?¹³¹

These are examples of persuasion that situate self-appearance at the centre of heterosexual relationships: the appearance of the female body is prioritised above any other elements in attracting men. Femininity, as the most important factor of attractiveness in this case, seems to contribute greatly, or even entirely, to a man’s choice of a woman.

The attractiveness of self-presentation is, in the first place, achieved on the basis of learning ‘what men want to see’ in the shows. According to the narratives of CWMS, ‘what men want to see’ consists of femininity, which can be epitomised by two aspects: a sexually erotic body and weakness. The requirements for a sexually erotic body are principally associated with ‘sexiness’, as I have analysed in the section on the idealised female body, which shows femininity through the presentation of the female body, giving prominence to the secondary sex

¹²⁹ Lin Yeting, a styling guru from Taiwan. She was titled as ‘ageless skin beauty’ by Taiwanese media and has a sweet look.

¹³⁰ *Pretty Women* (07/12/2010), *Zhao hui qieshi de nürenwei* (Find Back the Femininity).

¹³¹ *Pretty Women* (09/02/2010), *Xinnian hufu daojishi* (Skincare Countdown for New Year).

characteristics, especially breasts with cleavage, firm hips, long legs with fair skin, and so on, or through showing of the body that arouses sexual imagination in the beholders of the female body. Showing weakness, on the other hand, is to reveal so-called 'feminine' character aspects such as gentleness, softness, tenderness, and fragility that stir men's instincts to protect. The necessity to show 'weakness' through the female body emphasises the male-centred perspective and places men in a position of superiority over the female body. Besides, any strong-woman aura is not favoured. Women who have not had relationships for years are imputed to have a 'superwoman look that gives impression of being distant and makes men keep away from them'. The absence of femininity will not attract men. However, a coquettish look would give the impression of being too frivolous; it makes men feel insecure. In this sense, CWMS have been constructing extremely stereotypical images of women for the sake of pleasing the male gaze and taste. A woman's body and its presentation do not have to satisfy the self as the goals, but to satisfy the others as the means (quote Rong in Tong, 2001, p. 529).

Apart from 'what men want to see', 'how to reveal what men want to see' is another main strand in CWMS. The shows teach how a woman should reveal her body so as to attract men, which may include methods of seduction. For instance, to give the reason why a woman should wear big earrings despite the fact that they might be invisible under her long loose hair, expert Youqun explains:

The pendants make women more popular and attractive to the opposite sex. [...] Men are perceptive of the things that he doesn't/can't have. As the girl ruffles with her hair, the earrings hidden within the long hair will be noticed. So when you speak, you ruffle the hair; let the pendants of your earring sway. It is very attractive.

We sit for most of the time, for a meeting, an interview, or a dinner with your boyfriend. Will your boyfriend notice your clothes? Not likely. He may pay more attention to your make-up and necklace. If you choose the right thing: very elegant with something swaying vaguely, you will 'win some points'. If a woman wears a very thin necklace, it attracts men to look closer, to see her collarbones.

By expatiating the guidance of subtlety, CWMS encourage a woman to monitor her deportment so as to 'optimise' the look of her body. The right way to display one's femininity leads to winning in the interaction between the two sexes.

As stated above, it is obvious that the aesthetics of the female body have fallen almost fully into men's hands.¹³² The narratives of CWMS call the attention of the audience to the significance of erotic attractiveness in attracting glances from men. Female beauty is recognised and bestowed by the male; the male is the beholder, appreciator and the commentator of female beauty. Yet the mode of 'male-subject-looker' and 'female-object-looked at' of course did not originate from CWMS, but has its precedents in other forms of the media such as commercials. The oppositions of 'looker-looked at' between male and female further indicates a relationship of 'active-passive', 'strong-weak', and 'manipulate-manipulated' in gender relations (X. Yu, 2006). It is an example of the ignorance of women's individuality and subjectivity and lays emphasis on the patriarchal cultural vision within media content (Guo, 2008, p. 110).

CWMS undoubtedly are part of the media that not only prove the penetration of patriarchal domination into our ideology, but also helps in reinforcing the male gaze (Wolf, 1991). However, this is not the whole story. Even if the female body is demarcated by masculine concepts and there seems to be no way to escape from this, women can interpret the behaviours in their own interests. Firstly, there are examples in CWMS where women have been voluntarily demanding a modified rather than original natural presentation, which is regarded as being too problematic to show to their partners. In "The Good Complexion Beauty Manual for Those Not Born with Good Complexion", guests who are popular bloggers on fashion and make-up share stories on the experiences of their beautified/unbeautified presentations on dates.¹³³ The synopsis of narratives is as follows:

Guest Junjun: I have had a boyfriend for four years. Yet I have never shown my face without make-up to him. When we went swimming together, my boyfriend tried to remove my eye shadow with water. I just pushed him away. Because I have such a yellow face complexion that I can't live without brightening primer.

¹³² Comparatively, the male experts are more inclined to offer suggestions on 'what men want to see' and 'how to reveal them'. However at the same time, there is little contradiction or challenge to their instructions throughout the shows. More often than not, the guests cooperate with the experts to present 'perfect' images that would appeal to men. For some episodes, male guests are invited to the shows to demonstrate men's opinions of the presentations of the female body, which are agreed with by other figures as a way of knowing 'what men are thinking'.

¹³³ *Queen* (25/06/2009), *Houtian meinü hao qise quan gonglüe*.

Guest Xiaocaomei: I don't have eyebrows when my face is bare. My boyfriend calls me 'toad' when I have no make-up.

Guest Coco: I have very serious dark circles and open pores. So I don't want to be very close to my boyfriend.

Guest Liz: (everyone else praises her for her white skin colour). It is because I am too white, my boyfriend says I am like a ghost when I don't have my make-up on. Gradually, because we have dated for a long time, I wear make-up less and less, and my boyfriend takes me out shopping less and less.

Guest Xiaotao: (hostess: what's your sad story?) We just broke up. (Because you don't wear make-up?) Because I have dark circles. He thinks I am old. (After knowing that Xiaotao is 29-years old, most of those figures express disbelief that she is younger than 30.)

With the assistance of other figures and with word balloons, the guests 'moan about' the compulsion to beautify themselves, not so much in terms of the over-emphasis on the female appearance by male beholders as in terms of the flaws of their bodies. This is typical in the narrations of CWMS that the display of femininity, though evidently following masculine ideas, is rarely challenged; rather, there is no alternative for a woman who has an imperfect body but to improve the externals. The non-makeover image, as an inappropriate self-presentation, is conceived as the fateful factor and has the power of veto in relationships in the CWMS. Hostess Lan Xinmei once articulates on behalf of women:

For women, the most helpless thing is not that you can't lose weight no matter how you strive; you can't be thinner even you don't have dinner anymore. This is not helpless enough. What is helpless is that your man doesn't appreciate the look that you have spent so much time on; yet he will complain about your look of a 'drab face wife' (*huang lian po* 黄脸婆) if you don't take care of yourself at all.¹³⁴

Secondly, it is acknowledged in CWMS that the feminine body is critical to having a harmonious marriage, or long-term relationships. However, to display the body with femininity, e.g. intentionally dressing it into a curvy figure, should not be believed as oppression for women; rather, it is advantageous for the female sex. The female body, in this sense, is not an object being gazed at but a subject being admired. Following this logic, the female body and the male gaze in CWMS are largely articulated in a subjective rather than an objective way: it is an active,

¹³⁴ *Queen* (29/05/2012), *Nansheng gen ni xiang de bu yiyang: zui shou huanying paihangbang* (Men Think Differently from You: The Most Popular Ranking List).

voluntary behaviour to attract men’s attention and to enjoy the gazes thereafter. Women are encouraged to recognise the physiognomic and biological differences of the female body from the male body, making use of it as a gender advantage, or as a sexual weapon that could serve personal interest in social life. The interests of consumerism and sexism are all under the disguise of private benefits. In some episodes, men are compared to ‘prey’, while women are ‘hunters’. It indicates that women can hold the initiative in the relationships between the two sexes and suggests that they can use subtle methods to seduce men in an inconspicuous way.¹³⁵ The episode “Are You Ready for Chasing Men?”, for instance, talks about the topic that ‘women take the initiative in heterosexual relationships’ with three female and three male guests.¹³⁶ The three female guests represent three styles of women: cute (*keai* 可爱), enchanting (*yaorao* 妖娆) and pure (*qingchun* 清纯). The episode commences by introducing the common idea that ‘women pursuing men is more likely to succeed than in reverse’, centring on which conversation develops among the guests and hosts on the successful and failed cases of women pursuing men. After this conversation, three male guests are asked to vote for their favourite female type from those of the female guests and give descriptions of their ideal female type (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: male guest and the ideal type

Male guest	Their choice	Their ideal type
Sibo	Wenqian (pure)	Look pure, have dimples
Laobai	Wenqian (pure)	Look pure, have white skin
Weizi	Youxuan (enchanting)	Big eyes, white skin and have femininity

From the answers of the three male guests, the hosts conclude that ‘men prefer a woman who looks pure’ and the experts conduct makeovers: 1) Wenqian to have ‘an advanced version’ of the pure look; 2) Youxuan to remove all her make-up so that she had a purer look. In the end, all the male figures, including one expert and one

¹³⁵ According to a great number of episodes of the shows, women should beautify themselves in a scheming (*you xinji de* 有心计的) way, i.e., that men could not perceive – it can be seen in the titles such as *Queen* (16/02/2012), *Rang ni yaoyue bu duan de meili xinji shu* (Beautiful Subtle Technique/Beautification Schemes Give You Endless Date Offers), *Pretty Women* (12/07/2011), *Nanren kanbutou de meiren xinji* (Beauty Subtlety That Men Cannot Recognise), *I am a Great Beauty* (16/06/2012), *Mote xinji siwu da gongkai* (Unveil Models’ Personal Items of Subtlety).

¹³⁶ *Pretty Women* (26/09/2011), *Nü zhui nan ni zhuibei hao le ma?*.

guest-host in addition to the male guests, come to the agreement that ‘they don’t mind that it is a female who takes the first step but that they have feelings with certain favourite types at first sight’. Through the episode, women are encouraged to take the position of an initiator in the same way as men in gender relations. Yet it seems that the success of the initiation mainly depends on the decision of the men as the beholders to female body. In other words, though women are making their own meanings out of their presentations, the female body is to please the male gaze and the male is the judge of female appearance.

Episodes like this, along with others such as “Take the Initiative If You Love Him! Get Him Hooked”, aim at coaching women how to seduce men by ‘making over’ according to certain images and naturalising the activity of such behaviour.¹³⁷ The makeovers and initiatives in CWMS are justified as rescuing single women, especially the group of *shengnü* (剩女 women who are left on the shelf) – women having reached an age older than the socially preferred marriageable age.

Shengnü has been a popular word in China for the past decade.¹³⁸ It broadly refers to all single/unmarried women, however it targets, more often than not, those in their late twenties and early thirties. In addition to age, *shengnü* is also closely affiliated to ‘high education, high income and high position’ to account for being single (Ning, 2008). *Shengnü*, according to many scholars, is an outcome of China’s social transformation and globalisation; and it is a common trend in the process of industrialisation and urbanisation of any developing country (Eshleman, 1994). This situation has led to a rapid increase in the numbers of the unmarried population and the postponing of their first marriages. Under such circumstances, the majority of young singles are confronted with the public opinion of being ‘left on the shelf’, where the single women attract more attention and struggle with more pressure because of their single status.¹³⁹ According to the census of the Chinese population

¹³⁷ *Queen* (07/09/2012), *Ai juyao zhudong chuji! Rang ta guaiguai shanggou*.

¹³⁸ The word was contained in the *Report of Chinese Language and Living Situation (Zhongguo yuyan shenghuo zhuangkuang baogao 中国语言生活状况报告)* in 2006.

¹³⁹ According to the new revised Elderly Protection Act enforced in July, 2013, it is illegal for citizens not to visit their parents frequently. Later, in an interview about opinions on this Act, an old man angrily refutes that ‘it is nothing that they don’t come home; it is illegal that they don’t get married

over the past twenty years, the proportion of single people in terms of gender has generally two features: 1) *shengnan* (剩男 men who can't find a wife) outnumber *shengnü*; 2) *shengnan* are largely in the countryside while *shengnü* are largely in cities and have good education (Y. Zhang, 2013). However, both features have been used to bring negative opinions on *shengnü* within the public sphere. In the domestic media, *shengnü* precede *shengnan* as a 'problematic' group for public discussions; also, *shengnü* have been constructed into stereotyped images (Fang, 2012; C. Li, 2008; Q. Wei, 2010). It is deemed that *shengnü* remain single due to their own reasons, e.g. they are perfectionist, plain looking, cowardly in love or marriage, or too strong in the workplace. Clearly, the focus is unbalanced and reveals discriminatory opinions on female and male singles, fuelling more anxieties for Chinese women.

CWMS claim to be able to identify the very reasons for those being *shengnü* and to give them assistance so as to prevent them from being 'left'. It seems that they are standing at the side of the single women; however, the basic point of the assistance is problematic. Firstly, the premise of the shows is that it is a failure for a woman to remain single at a marriageable age and not be able to get married. Mostly, their single state is attributed to their body and appearance in the shows – which is not too surprising since the intention of the shows is to conduct an appearance makeover. This point is explicitly articulated in “The Lost Lady War” by quoting from *The Lost Dogs Bark from Far Away* by female Japanese author Junko Sakai

The over-30 unmarried female, no matter how successful she is in her career, and how all-powerful she may be in the workplace, as long as she is single, she is a lost dog in life's battleground.¹⁴⁰

Women tend to be labelled as losers if they cannot get rid of their status and identity as singles. The shows present themselves as acting in the interests of the makeover

before the age of 30'. The original online video, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTgxNzIyOTky.html, alone has a click number of over 1,300,000 and 15,000 'likes' comparing with less than 3,000 'don't like', accessed on 12th September, 2013.

¹⁴⁰ *Pretty Women* (09/03/2010), *Baiquan nü da zuozhan*. 'Lost dog' is the literal translation of 'baiquan' 败犬; it actually means 'lost lady'. 'Baiquan' became well-known because of the hit Taiwanese drama *My Queen* (*Baiquan nüwang* 败犬女王) contemporarily. This drama is also mentioned by this episode.

objects – both the guests in the shows and the audiences outside the shows – helping the ‘lost lady’ to break away from ‘*shengnü*’, or we could say, from being a loser. However, it is itself problematic to agree that being single is a failure. It is more exactly in alliance with the idea that women have to be in a relationship to be complete; this outlook further strengthens the anxiety about the single identity. Secondly, to help the *shengnü* get rid of her single identity, the shows stress what Connell (1987) conceptualises as ‘emphasized femininity’, which make women comply with subordination and accommodate the interests and desires of men (p. 183). The ‘emphasized femininity’ is in accordance with the dominant view of female attractiveness in a society and suppresses other forms of femininity from being appreciated. This univocal and culturally valued form of femininity does not in any way indicate women having a free will. From pleasing males subordinately to seducing males dominantly, the narrative of CWMS seems to put women in an active role in the relation of self-presentation and heterosexual relationships. Nonetheless, the notion of being attractive can never be defined without the intervention of masculine ideas. Activity and passivity essentially have no difference; they are two sides of the same coin.

4.2 Performing self

Apart from conforming to the gazes of others, one’s appearance should also be considered as a vehicle for showing the self. Different clothes, make-up and accessories, according to CWMS, will give different impressions to others. To have an appropriate presentation, be it more corresponding to the true self, or more fitting to the social environment, is needed to perform the desired part of the self – this is the meaning of having a makeover. In “Changing Characters Starts From Eyebrows and Eyes”, for example, three groups of ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos of three stars are used for the expert to lecture on how crucial the shapes, colours and make-up methods of eyebrows are for expressing one’s character and impressing others (Table 4.2).¹⁴¹ The expert believes that the eyebrows themselves can impart the nature of one’s personality. Thus, the process of modifying the body is not only about a better

¹⁴¹ *Pretty Women* (30/11/2011), *Gaibian xingge cong meiyan zuoqi*.

look, but also about manipulating the self-impression. Moreover, the table graphs out the significance of facial features: certain outer appearances run parallel with certain characteristics, a physiognomic way to judge people through assessing the outer appearances.

Table 4.2: eyebrows and personalities: ‘the before’ and ‘the after’.

Star	Before	After
Zheng Xiuwen	Thin eyebrows: exclusive and aloof (<i>qinggao</i> 清高的)	Normal thick: fresh and cool (<i>qingshuang</i> 清爽的)
Lin Yichen	Short and light eyebrows: cute	Prolonged, darker with high arches, Japanese-style actress eyebrows: femininity
Ruan Jingtian (male)	Very thick and dark eyebrows that are more obvious seen than his eyes: funny (<i>gaoxiao</i> 搞笑的), like <i>Crayon Shin-chan</i> . ¹⁴²	After shaping, the eyebrows have angles: still look masculine, fresh and cool, and his eyes have more spirit.

According to the theory of physiognomy, the features of the body, essentially of the face, can reflect a person’s characteristics or personality (Twine, 2002). For Chinese physiognomy, it is not only that the face is the index of the heart (*xiang you xin sheng* 相由心生), which has allegedly been applied in choosing a wife since the Qin Dynasty; it can also foretell the health, luck and future of a person (H. Zhuang, 2009). Both of these functions are reflected in CWMS as reasons to conduct makeovers. On the one hand, the ‘before’, or the problematic body, is regarded as lacking the features of a lucky physiognomy. A guest with sunken cheeks is conceived to be gaunt, wizened and to have a bad relationship. Her face suggests a mean person and a frustrated life, and might never be assumed to be a lady who was born with a silver spoon in her mouth or who marries well into to a rich family.¹⁴³ On the contrary, the after-makeover look meets the standard of a good physiognomic face, bringing good luck to the people who have them. However, the physiognomic standards applied in CWMS are not necessarily following ancient Chinese physiognomy.¹⁴⁴ In Taoist texts, female physiognomy is not only focused on a

¹⁴² Crayon Shin-chan is the hero of a famous Japanese Manga. He is a five-year-old kindergarten boy that features a pair of very thick and dark eyebrows.

¹⁴³ *Queen* (15/11/2009), *Jiuyao gen ta yiyang! Dajia dou xiang xue de da mingxing zaoxing* (Must be Like Her! The Big Star Look that Everyone Wants to Learn).

¹⁴⁴ The shows sometimes refer to the basic terms of Chinese physiognomy, such as *San Ting* (三停 three sections of the face that could tell a man’s whole life), *Fuqi Gong* (夫妻宫 husband and wife

beautiful outer look, but is also about one's inner traits: the conventional ideal has it that one's goodness or evilness will reflect on the appearance (Wile, 1992, p. 46). Yet the physiognomy in CWMS has little to do with virtue. The transformed appearances aim at obtaining good complexions, the signals of physical and mental health that assure a successful presentation of the self in social space, regardless of the loyalty to the inner self.

Moreover, the requirement of a beautiful representation prevails not only in daily life, but applies also to digital forms. Being photogenic is another desire for self-presentation of women, to be able to send out beautiful self-images in the virtual world. It is typically seen in episodes on selfies, street snaps and so on. The shows teach, for example, how to prepare the look to be caught by a street snap website, or the postures for the camera. The aim is to overhaul oneself into an image close to the idealised form of beauty and is consequently narcissistic: 'everyone wants to be living in the photo; and everyone wants to look like a PSed image' (expert Kevin).¹⁴⁵ What is at stake here is that the narcissistic images are essential for women to complete her identity as a netizen. The wide spread of social media in China has offered more platforms for people to display themselves and has made necessary the attribute of being a performer online, of which appearance, clothing and looks with poise and charm are of paramount importance (Susman, 1984, p. 280). The selfies, especially, is a product that has emerged against the backdrop of contemporary cyberspace. Selfies, formerly a camera function, now means self-portrait photos, often taken of oneself by smartphone or webcam, and ready for uploading to social media. The popularity of selfies is mirrored in the huge sales of new innovative photography technique apparatus in China. In 2011, for instance, Casio produced a new autofocus camera TR-100, which used a rotating LCD and frame configuration, resulting in facilitating the takings of selfies. It became so fashionable among young

area on face that could tell the relationships between the couple), or Tianzhai Gong (田宅宫 Farmland and Property area that could tell one's wealth on farmland and property), or other basic signs such as that narrow space between eyebrows and eyes stand for melancholy character. However, the standard of beautiful face is not in accordance with good physiognomic face. For example, it is said 'plump chin and cheeks, prosperous husband and family' (*feng han zhong yi, wang fu xing jia* 丰颌重颐, 旺夫兴家); yet the beauty standard in CWMS is to have a V-shape face and to get rid of the double chin.

¹⁴⁵ *Queen* (22/03/2012), *Mian xiupian, bian baixi meiren!* (PS Free, Make You a White Beauty!).

Chinese women that its price went up from 1500 RMB to 4000 RMB due to huge demand; it was worshipped as the ‘magical apparatus for selfies’ (J. Zhang, 2013). In February 2013, a new Apple app called ‘camera for beautiful faces’ (*mei yan xiangji* 美颜相机) launched in China’s Apple stores. It accumulated 30,000,000 downloads within only six months, an unprecedented record in the non-game category. The reason for the enthusiasm, remarked on by the founder of the app, Wu Xinhong, is that ‘the camera is like a virtual make-up for women to exhibit themselves online; as long as they are willing to spend money on cosmetics, they will spend time and energy on the app’ (X. Zhang, 2013, p. 52). The eagerness to display a beautiful self in photos is what Susan Bordo (1993) warns of: the illusionary associations between the digital modifications of the body and real flesh and blood. The static images within media besiege us with two-dimensional photos of physical appearances of the body, a ‘mirror-vision’ that trains people to see themselves through others’ eyes on the basis of a series of photos of postures (Featherstone, 2006, p. 234). These are good examples of the interaction between commercial culture, beauty standards and social practices, which the CWMS have been producing and promoting. Accompanying real life with virtual life, the self-presentation is identified with the two-dimensional image space, which creates a fantasy for people who are obsessed. Notwithstanding, as Blum (2003) warns, ‘it is the image itself with which we are infatuated, and whatever it pictures for us may in the end be irrelevant in the larger context of our general yearning for identification with the two-dimensional’(p. 61).

4.3 Beauty as currency

By the repeated thematic storytelling by the figures, especially the guests and experts, CWMS convey that the chances for a better life for a woman are greatly determined by their looks. It requires the right choices of self-presentation to cope with all circumstances, first impressions, job interviews, work relationships, family and marriage, and so on. Expert Liu Jihui, celebrated as having the highest level of expertise in managing colour and images within Asia, is introduced along with her professional motto that ‘appropriate attire will enable people to fulfil their wish with half the effort and double result’. She articulates confidently in one episode

Do you think appearances are not important as long as you are cultured? – Most people think this way. You have to know, however, if you can't even take good care of your appearances, where do you present your culturedness? So appearances are very important.¹⁴⁶

Further, she tries to convince the audience throughout the episode that changing their attire enables the makeover objects to gain promotion. Two levels of meanings are indicated here: 1) the functional presentation of the body is the fundamental connection between the self and the world; 2) women can benefit by taking advantage of their external look. Thus, if 'it's only human to love beauty' (*ai mei zhi xin, ren jie you zhi* 爱美之心, 人皆有之) has been embedded in Chinese culture, CWMS solidify the concept by acquainting the audience with the idea that external beauty is crucial for women as a competitive power in realising a beautiful life.

Correspondingly, 'judging people from appearance' (*yi mao qu ren* 以貌取人), which used to be considered as a negative attitude in social relationships in China, became justified in CWMS.¹⁴⁷ It represents the belief that the idealised body enormously increases the opportunity to be successful in terms of career and in relationships and therefore can bring success, wealth and happiness. This idea is certainly not new but is already prevalent in social norms. As research has shown, women are facing a world in which how the body is presented is the major criteria by which to watch other women and to be watched; and the similar cognition of the relationship between beauty and fate is seen universally in other media contents. For instance, in a piece of news female university students express their emphasis on appearance, and among them some are not only strict with themselves about beautification regimes, but also demand anyone around them to be visually delightful, e.g. only dated good looking guys or will change seats in library if they

¹⁴⁶ *I am a Great Beauty* (21/03/2011), *Zhichang zhuozhuang wenti* (Workplace Attire).

¹⁴⁷ 'Judging people from appearance' is a Confucian proverb. According to *Records of the Grand Historian* (2005), one of the students of Confucius, Ziyu, who was very ugly, wanted to serve Confucius. However Confucius refused him, thinking that he would not be promising because of his appearance. Later, Ziyu returned to his hometown, became a decent and respected man and had a very high reputation among different fiefdoms. Having heard this, Confucius sighed with feeling, 'judging people by appearance, I lost Ziyu' (p. 2206). In Ming Dynasty, the sentence 'a man cannot be judged by his appearance, nor can the water in the sea be measured by a bucket' (*ren buke mao xiang, haishui buke dou liang* 人不可貌相, 海水不可斗量) appeared in one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, *Journey to West*, and became a common saying. It is used to advise that people cannot be judged from their looks.

cannot stand the look of the person sitting opposite to them. In other words, paying much attention to and investing in one's appearance have become compulsory for these young women. They believe that being beautiful means to be at an advantage in heterosexual relationships and in job hunting (Z. Zhuang & Zhang, 2010). Hence, the habit of 'judging people from appearance' is becoming more and more prevalent and socially accepted.

Moreover, a beautiful appearance is closely paired with fortune, both in media spheres and further in social spheres. In the early stages of the Economic Reform, when a great many people left their jobs in the state sector moving into the business sectors, they handed in their iron rice bowl (*tie fanwan* 铁饭碗), lifetime employment, and sought for other ways of making a living.¹⁴⁸ It is since this time that the phenomenon of the youth rice bowl (*qingchun fan* 青春饭) came up, which means that young beautiful women are able to obtain well-paid positions, such as models, bilingual secretaries, in the new open-market society. It made the symbols of youth and beauty become dominant in the public imagination and even a significant underlying qualification in the job market (Zhen Zhang, 2000). Besides, the Chinese traditional view of a good union between men and women – 'the talented and beauty' (*lang cai nü mao* 郎才女貌) – still prevails, although 'the talented' has been gradually replaced by 'holding fortune' or being well-off. The combination of the female star and the wealthy man is recurrently reported in the entertainment sections of newspapers and websites, reinforcing the validity of the idea. Another example is a report about a group of millionaires in southern China who held a dating contest to look for potential mates, the requirements including age (28-30-year-old), looks that suggest they would help the husband's life (*wang fu xiang* 旺夫相), manners and character. Over one thousand women took part in the event, wishing a date with a single millionaire (Frank, 2010). The piece of news is not only a manifestation that physiognomy is important in wife choice as I mentioned in 4.1.3 in real life, it is also emblematic in demonstrating that a beautiful appearance is a real asset for

¹⁴⁸ The 'iron rice bowl' refers to the employment system in the early stage of New China under the state-planned economy. It also stresses the life-long tenure of the employment and stability of the salary.

contemporary Chinese women. This is what Deborah Sullivan terms as the ‘beauty bonus’ or Weber’s warning of ‘the way that beauty works as a powerful form of social currency’ (Weber, 2009, p. 259). Beauty has hence become a capital that could be traded, or at least the catalyst that could accelerate the process of achieving goals, whether in work or in marriage.

4.4 Presenting the female body

The ‘before’ and ‘after’ body in CWMS stand in line with what one should be and what one should not in terms of appearance. The deficiencies of the ‘before body’ are attributed, as Marwick (2010) remarks, into two categories of problems: ‘problems with their bodies, and problems they believe were caused by their bodies’ (p. 256). The ‘problems with their bodies’ are rooted in the gap between the natural body and the idealised body, which echoes the culturally constructed hierarchy of body appearances in terms of sizes, shapes, looks, etc. (McGannon, 2003). For the second, body faults would influence everyday life in how one represents the self and what feedback is received accordingly. The inappropriate presentation of the body seems to be the seat of all lack of confidence and annoyance in life. To makeover the inappropriate to the appropriate, according to CWMS, is to makeover the feminine appearance into having 1) idealised beauty of body; 2) socially acceptable self-presentation.

The discussions of the idealised beauty in CWMS are developed on the basis that beauty is a compulsory part of being a woman. The shows have been disseminating this concept and the personnel who produce the shows appear to believe it without a shadow of doubt. Li Jing, the hostess and producer of *Pretty Women*, holds that ‘women must be beautiful’: although women are different, beauty should be the important component of their spiritual life (Zeng, 2012). Li Sihui, producer of *Beauty (Meiren wo zuida 美人我最大)*, Hubei Satellite TV, 2009-2011), upon being asked whether the shows that she brought from Taiwan to the Chinese mainland will be accepted or not, also conceives that ‘there is only one thing that has no difference for women around the world – becoming beautiful; every woman wants to be prettier’ (X. Chen, Wang, & Li, 2010). The acknowledgment of women

as beauty-lovers implies that women are always striving for the ideal body; and the unachievability of the ideal body reassures the everlasting modifications of women's body and appearance. Moreover, beauty in CWMS mainly refers to beautiful body. The meaning of the word is closer in meaning to the 'beauty' in the beauty economy that has little bearing upon the soul: 'it seems to be less of the soul that inhabits the body and more of the body that inhabits the soul' (J. Yang, 2011, p. 342). Beauty should be more about the interior yet is all about exterior in CWMS. A woman's exterior, as an indivisible part of her femininity, requires her to 'play a role of actress, whose body is a form of theatre full of décor' (Sontag, 1972, p. 34). The performing character of the female body, therefore, is interpreted in CWMS in terms of both transformation of body appearance and assumptions of inferences from others.

In the latter sense, the makeover is what Goffman (1956) terms 'impression management'. The aim of the beautification of body is to express a socially acceptable image through self-presentation. For one thing, it is seen that the emphasis on appearance could convey the inner messages of oneself. The construction of one's appearance, therefore, is to send out the message that one would like to be seen and provide clues for others to understand the self: you are what you look like; what you present is truer than your inner self for others. For example, a woman's hands, neck, nasolabial folds are leaking information of her real age. Therefore, one needs the makeover to conceal the negative signs, such as the deterioration of body, or a disliked appearance. Meanwhile, the self seeks for a makeover that is used to uncover the better self, or reveal the true self that has been veiled by the 'before'/non-beautified body. The makeover, in this sense, is a process of self-realisation or self-discovery. In addition, the transformed body is striving for the positive opinions from others, which is key in maintaining social relationships. The presentation of self is chiefly about 'safe images' in others' eyes. Being safe means appropriateness: reveal what one should reveal and hide what one should hide to cast away from the humiliated 'before' body. Contemporary people are awakened to be conscious of the instrumental function of body and to utilise it in construction one's own public images (Featherstone, 2010, p. 195). Essentially, the problem is what Turner illustrates as 'the representation of bodies in social space as a task facing

the surface or “exterior” of bodies’ (Shilling, 1993, p. 89). CWMS position the body as the crux of self-presentation for contemporary people. The body is identical with the self: it represents what a person really is; it is the mirror of the heart and soul.

Last but not least, the shows construct a female image that resists the traditional ideology that ‘men are superior to women’ (*nan zun nü bei* 男尊女卑), but at the same time the image shows that women are aware of the strategic advantages of their femininity, and make use of it. The femininity of the female body is stressed in a way that it had never been before, for it has become an irreplaceable resource that can earn both opportunities and efficiencies for women in current China, which legitimates the whole process of commodification of the female body. The regression to pre-feminist positions benefit from the acceptance, absorption and utility of female consciousness by the market economy (Wu, 2009, p. 168). The contemporary Chinese female consciousness as represented in the CWMS, after developing for more than a century through liberation movements and campaign, is rather deconstructing the discourse of ‘men and women are the same’ (*nan nü dou yiyang* 男女都一样) than the traditional discourse of ‘men are superior to women’ (Wu, 2009, p. 168). It is for this reason that the market economy can easily integrate the traditional discourse and develop it further in its own interests. Division of labour, gendered consumer culture, as the characteristics of market economy, have all contributed to promoting a more traditional role of women, yet under the disguise of beautification and modernisation. The obsession with body and appearance dooms the passivity of women. Voluntarily, women join the forces that prepare them to be the consumers for their bodies and their bodies to be consumed. As it were, the market economy discourse has allied with traditional discourse to form a commercial sexist discourse (Wu, 2009, p. 172), to which both the public and women themselves have agreeably acceded.

This chapter is about the body as the object for others. However, the body is also a lived reality for the subject (Man, 2000a, p. 159). To attain the ideal look one must learn and practise accordingly. It is only through the training of techniques on appearances and practising them in daily life, that one can have the pleasing look,

accompanied by a popular personality that ensures one's success in social relationships. Given this, it is interesting to see how CWMS narrate how to train the viewers to adorn a female body, especially in a way that encourages consumption. Accordingly, how are women making meaning out of the consumer identity, not only in the shows but also in a more general sense? Ultimately to what extent do the narrations reflect the characteristics of contemporary Chinese society as a consumer culture? Particularly, is there anything concerned with these questions which is specifically Chinese? These are questions that I would like to discuss further in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Messages: Body Maintenance

The tendency to transform free time into maintenance work imposes even greater demands on the individual and makes the monitoring of the current state of bodily performance essential if individuals are to get the most out of life: the hectic life increases the need for 'human servicing'.

(Featherstone, 1982, p. 24)

While half of CWMS is about what a Chinese woman should look like, the other half is about how to achieve the desired looks. The procedure of transformation is a significant part of the shows, taking up, more than often, over half of the broadcast time of an episode. During the transformation procedure, it is shown in detailed steps how the body maintenance, e.g. make-up, styling the clothes, massage and exercise, is carried out. Close-ups are given to the application of make-up; medium shots are made of scenes where an expert explains the choice of outfit for the makeover objects; the camera pans across the studio during keep fit exercises; extreme close-ups are used to show the acupuncture massages. Those how-to sections function in disseminating information and knowledge of body maintenance.

Body maintenance for women grew with the rise of commercialisation in China. It used to be regarded as a taboo topic until the last few decades. In revolutionary times, Chinese women were required to be patriotic, politically correct and their independence was embodied with the absence of self-adornment (Ip, 2003). Later, during the new PRC period, self-adornment was regarded as individualistic or bourgeois, being against the collective interests. In Cheng Nien's (1995) memoir on the Cultural Revolution, she recalled that 'Chinese women avoided wearing anything conspicuous in public space; it was very hard to know one's identity at that time since everyone was wearing similar clothes like a proletarian' (p. 8, p. 12). A body with the slightest hint of sexuality could be connected with immorality and the feminine body was totally denied (Evans, 1997, p. 134). Contemporary China, on the contrary, has seen a gradual change in the attitude toward women's body maintenance. As many scholars have argued, the Chinese have waved off the era of

uniformity of blue clothes, and welcomed one with multiple images of women (Croll, 1995; Evans, 2000). The period of the Economic Reform has been normally considered as the second time that women's bodies have been liberated in the history of new China – the first was during Mao's time when women were free to work so as to help to build the nation. The recent liberation made it possible for women's bodies to be open to self-adornment (J. Yang, 2011). More and more types of attire, make-up and beauty services are available for Chinese women to consume for their body and for their image.

The multifarious possible ways to transform a woman's looks signify the potential of the female body to be varied, plastic, and inventive within a consumption-oriented society. This occurs alongside the body transformation literature readily available within a consumer culture, e.g. advertising, magazine articles, self-help leaflets, advice columns, etc., in presenting the body (Featherstone, 1982). It sees the body as a processual entity that is dynamic, always extending beyond itself by body maintenance; the body, as cited in Bergson's (2004) *Matter and Memory*, is the 'centre of indetermination' (p. 28). The instability of body images originate from and further boost constant visual comparisons between 'the before' and 'the after' images, which resonates what Bonner (2003) regards as 'endless project of the self' (p. 104). The selfhood is understood as malleable in the personal hands of consumer choices; the body requires to be maintained and invested in constantly (Bell & Hollows, 2005; Bonner, 2003; McGee, 2005; Redden, 2007; Wood & Skeggs, 2004).

According to Munshi (2001), the capitalist commercial culture in contemporary China, paralleled with the West of the early 1900s, is concluded as contributing greatly to the 'project of self' where appearances and images are of most significance. Johansson (1998) also notes that one of the main discourses for being a modern Chinese woman is to be a consumer who cares about her looks. Body maintenance, as the means of executing 'the project', has become a crucial part of life for people within the mass-consumption and image culture of the 'Economic Reform China'. In this context, it is evident that the advice on how to achieve an

individual project, such as by means of products, services, DIY treatments and styling, which make up the critical content in CWMS, is urgently needed.

Body maintenance in CWMS refers to the acts that one should perform to attain the idealised body and appropriate self-presentation. As the body is perpetually evaluated and re-evaluated, there is always space for improvement that obliges the body to be ready for transformation. The more problems are highlighted and proposed in the shows, the more problem solvers are needed to be in service of the projects concerned with the self. Those services include both consumer and non-consumer ones, which equip the viewers with pertinent knowledge and cultivate 'self-governing' and 'self-engineering' subjects within a consumer society (Lewis et al., 2012). The shows inform the audiences of existing products, reveal 'secrets' utilised by stars and celebrities, and remind the viewers of the constant need to pay attention to one's body. To analyse how to conduct the makeovers in CWMS, is not only to study the body maintenance promoted in the shows, but also to see how Chinese women are expected to train, manage and maintain their body within contemporary consumer society in China.

Generally speaking, the makeovers through body maintenance offered by CWMS are largely consistent with the 'living conditions' of contemporary Chinese women, especially of the urban middle class. 'Living conditions' determine how to be a consumer for body maintenance against the fast-paced and stressed modern life and globalised consumer culture. From the requirements proposed by CWMS, the interactions and conflicts between Chineseness and globalisation can be distinctly seen in terms of consumer features. The narrations of body maintenance, to some extent, insinuate the cognition of body and consumption by contemporary Chinese women. More detailed analysis of this idea will be explored in the following sections.

5.1 Modern women and consumption for the body

Makeovers through body maintenance are not a new theme introduced by CWMS. Rather, it has been at the centre of consumer culture. As Featherstone (2010) put it, we identify ourselves – what we are, what we are not, and what we want to be, through comparisons against images. The differences between images, from which the comparisons derive, are the subjects that ‘the consumer culture, body maintenance, cosmetic, fashion and advice industries are able to work on’ (p. 197). Both the makeover processes and the post-makeover images correlate with the interests of the system of consumer society.

According to J. Dong (2007), the femininity of Chinese women was constructed by three different discourses in three different phases in the twentieth century: early 20th century as culturally constructed, post-1949 until the end of Cultural Revolution as politically constructed, and the post-Reform period as economically constructed. With the booming of consumer culture, women’s images in Chinese mass media have been constructed as both ‘consumers and sexualised objects of consumption’ to manipulate desires (Hooper, 1998, p. 167). Through the beautiful faces and bodies displayed on the mass media, especially advertisements, commercial imperatives have been instilled into modern consumers. People see the ‘improvements’ of the bodies in the media and then buy the products and treatments to improve their own bodies. Makeover shows, as part of the latest media trend, further amplify the charisma of ‘to purchase in order to improve’ (Deery, 2006, p. 160). The contrasts between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images in CWMS, normally very explicit – either intuitively in visual terms or circled out by balloon words (Figure 5.1) – display the effect of transformation and strengthen the power of consumption. The apparent/not so apparent changes in appearance and images promise the viewers the improvement of self-adornment and body maintenances.



Figure 5.1: A half massaged face to display the contrast between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ and demonstrate the effect of the transformation.¹⁴⁹

To justify the makeover behaviours, CWMS identify the ‘indulgence with body beautification’ with self-love. Comparing with the denial of self-adornment during May-Fourth time, which symbolised the independence of women at that time (Ip, 2003), the shows attribute women’s preoccupation with appearance to love for and caring for oneself. In “Beauty Tips for New Women”, the figures develop a conversation on the ‘new good women’ (*xinhao nüren* 新好女人):¹⁵⁰

Hostess Lan Xinmei (referred to hereafter as LAN): Back to the time when I was younger, husband was our sky and son was our earth; we ourselves were like gas. We were treated differently before and after wedding, let alone before and after giving birth. Is it right? Sweet words were with us 24 hours while we were dating, as well as love ‘hotline’...

(Followed by) one guest: It’s true. Before marriage, I have all the merits; after, I have all the defects.

LAN: New good women should love themselves, shouldn’t they?

Expert Liu Yan (referred to hereafter as LIU): I think the new good women can keep a little of the traditional virtue that ‘husband is her sky and son is her earth’; yet they can’t let themselves go. I think they should be self-disciplined and treat themselves well. If you don’t treat yourself well, who will?

LAN: You should treat yourself well even if you don’t have time.

LIU: You bet. You must live well so that others will treat you well.

¹⁴⁹ The words besides the eyes are ‘before massage’ (right face) and ‘after massage’ (left face). The broken red lines are used to remind the audiences that the skin around the eyes of the makeover objects have been lifted after massaging with the product. The subtitle is ‘it is so obvious; you look at the monitor’ said by the hostess to alert all the viewers to recognise the subtle difference between the ‘before’ and the ‘after’.

¹⁵⁰ *Queen* (15/06/2012), *Xinhao nüren de meili miji*.

In the following part of the episode, the guests and expert introduce their ways of ‘treating oneself well’, all of which are about caring for the body, e.g. applying a mask, or having a collagen drink. Similarly, in another episode of *Pretty Women*, all the figures share their ‘rewards for self after a year’s hard work’ – some were travelling abroad; others bought themselves luxuries.¹⁵¹ Distinctively, self-love in these episodes is realised through consumption; pampering is identical with enjoying life as a consumer. The narcissistic attitude towards one’s body, after all, corresponds with the idea of consumer culture that the ‘body needs to be viewed more than merely functionally for its owner to adorn it with objects and to consume commodities, services, and technologies to pamper it’ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 13). It testifies that the process of becoming beautiful, or the resort to consumer behaviour, can bring love and happiness, which reinforces the logic of the body transformation in a consumer culture that believes ‘look good, feel good’ (Featherstone, 2010, p. 202). Guest Yang Liuqing, a first year university student and one of the five lucky viewers of *Pretty Women* said, ‘I was attracted by the idea of the show the first time I watched it: it said, we should become beautiful and cute; at the same time, it makes us love life’.¹⁵² Conceptually, beautification and body maintenance are regarded as ways by which women can embrace life, which in turn gives meaning to their lives.

5.1.1 Desperate women

For this reason, the beautification processes and body maintenance rituals are constructed as a necessity for Chinese women in CWMS and the figures in the shows are fanatical about everything pertinent to it. The guests in the shows are willing to try any grotesque methods to perfect their body and appearance, and not afraid of any hardship and pain they have to go through. The figures in the shows express that ‘losing weight is a life-time task for women’; the expert inculcates ‘no pain, no beauty’ while massaging a moaning makeover object; the host exclaims that ‘women really can stand anything as long as she will become more beautiful’. Those expressions portray the image of a frantic woman beautifying herself. Even more, the slogan of lefeng.com for 2013 is ‘cannot live without being beautiful’ (*bu mei bu huo*

¹⁵¹ *Pretty Women* (09/01/2012), *Shi shihou haohao chongai ziji* (It is Time to Pamper Yourself).

¹⁵² *Pretty Women* (08/01/2010), *Meiren xiulian fa* (Beauty Training).

不美不活).¹⁵³ The slogan consequently has run through episodes of *Pretty Women* the whole year round. The idea is based on the claim that all women can achieve beauty as long as they make efforts according to the shows' guidance. For the shows, everyone has a feminine or celebrated side, as long as she expresses it out through the 'correct' methods of external presentation – the ways that are introduced by the shows. Accordingly, it is a particular shame that a woman cannot display her femininity because of her poor choices in presenting herself. Both the tomboy and the childlike look are due to lack of awareness of the problem and being untrained in the skills of beautification. It conveys the importance of self-responsibility of women for their bodies. For anyone who fancies being closer to the idealised image, it is critical to improve 'what you are' now. Managing beauty, according to the logic of CWMS, is a life-long task for women.

From another angle, CWMS express frankly the importance of commodities for women. There are many episodes about must-have items and how to use them effectively. It seems that the success of makeover procedures relies greatly on the goods and products; some of them are even declared as the only means to achieve the ideal effect. The women figures, within the episodes, are unabashed to express themselves as commodity fetishists, zealous in their purchasing behaviour. For instance, when it comes to high heels, the hostesses say dreamily that¹⁵⁴

High heels are the love of women around the world. Marilyn Monroe once said, 'I don't know who invented high heels, but all women owe him a lot!'

– Hostess Li Siyu

In the film *Sex and the City*, the heroine Carrie said, 'standing on high heels, you could see further and your life would be more exciting'¹⁵⁵.

– Hostess Wang Jing

The suggestion of women's passions for commodities is further highlighted by the reaction of spectators. In a great many other episodes, the figures on the shows

¹⁵³ Thanks to *Win in China* (*Ying zai Zhongguo* 赢在中国, Jiangsu Satellite TV, 2013), a Chinese version of *The Apprentice*, to which L Jing participates, the image that women are crazy for beauty extends its influence out of the audience of *Pretty Women*. The mission of one of the episodes of *Win in China* is to film virus videos themed 'cannot live without being beautiful' to put online. This episode ranked 2nd place in audience ratings within same time period.

¹⁵⁴ *Pretty Women* (14/08/2012), *Rang ni jianjiao de shishang jiantou xie* (The Pointy-toes that Make You Scream).

¹⁵⁵ The original quote is 'standing on high heels, I can see the whole world'.

exclaim with excitement whenever they see a famous brand bag, or a limited edition of a make-up gift package. Women in the shows are constructed as being curious and enthusiastic about the behaviours of body maintenance. It is totally beyond question that it is an integral part of a woman's life. Cosmetics and their benefits are especially emphasised. It is seen and indicated that the commodities complete womanhood and bring joy. Li Jing once refuted the attitude that 'it is sometimes annoying being a woman who has to wear make-up everyday' at '2009 Sina.com summit forum of Chinese cosmetics', saying 'man could betray you; but cosmetics would give you good confidence' (Anonymous, 2009b). The 'intimate' and indispensable relationship between women and commodities leaves women in an embarrassing status in the consumer culture. In view of the body in capitalist consumerism, women have to be the desiring subject to maintain a desirable object (B. S. Turner, 2008, p. 32).

5.1.2 Fragmented body

[...] women are frequently represented in a 'fragmented' way. [...] Women are signified by their lips, legs, hair, eyes or hands, which stand, metonymically – the part for the whole – in this case, the 'sexual woman'. Men, on the other hand, are less often 'dismembered'.

(Walters, 1995, p. 55)

Furthermore, CWMS produce the urgency for Chinese women to recognise, explore and rediscover their bodies in keeping with the requirements for a woman in a consumer culture. The constant explorations of the female body have been allied with commercial interests. The more time, money and energy that women are spending on their bodies, the more potential profits are waiting for the related beauty, fashion and health industries. CWMS emphasise the body maintenance procedures in terms of frequency and fragmentation. For one thing, women are asked to take care of their bodies at all times and in all places; they have to assume the liability for the risk of negligence in maintenance. Women are expected to have perfect presentation everywhere and on every occasion. For example, to avoid having a 'drab face wife' - look at home, a woman should manage to present a bare-effect face by using care products and cosmetics in an indiscernible way. Women should keep up a good

appearance even if they are within the domestic space or busy juggling between family and work.

The shows also produce many problems for women in different seasons and situations, emphasising more and more trivial parts of the female body to be looked after, which is being meticulously recorded by the camera and discussed by the figures in the shows. The usage of camera in CWMS is teaching the audiences how to evaluate a female body by noticing subtle details. The camera normally pans over female bodies capturing nuances so as to enable the viewers to identify the problematic area treated in the episodes as in the following example of a *Queen* episode.¹⁵⁶ Table 5.1 records the televisual language of four shots on targeting the problems in the legs of a guest (A).

¹⁵⁶ *Queen* (13/10/2008), *Nüxing meitui miji da gongkai* (Female Stars' Tips for Legs Beautification Exposed).

Table 5.1: the televisual language of four shots on targeting the problems in the legs of a guest (A)

Shot	Movement of the figures	Camera movement	Sound	Balloon words
1	(A) stands facing to the camera. The hostess stands beside her and squats down.	The camera gives close-ups synchronously with the hostess's index finger from (A)'s ankles to knees.	Disappointing effect.	'Dry', 'Chaps' (<i>junlie</i> 龟裂) by the side of body of the guest.
2	The hostess's index finger stops at the knee.	Extreme close-ups to (A)'s knees.	Hostess (off-screen voice): You have to pay attention to this. They (the knees) are wrinkling. There will be wrinkles lines here if you constantly gain and lose weight back and fro.	A red circle with striking characters 'crizzle wrinkles appeared'.
3	(A) turns to the back. The hostess nips the fat of (A)'s thigh.	Extreme close-ups to (A)'s thighs.	Another guest (off-screen voice): You've never put on body lotion, have you? (A) (anxiously refutes): I did.	Thighs are circled with striking characters 'cellulite comes into being'.
	(A) stands still with the back to the camera.	Full view.	Hostess: She has cellulite here, doesn't she? And she doesn't have very good circulation here.	N/A.
4	(A) stands still with the back to the camera.	Camera pans to (A)'s heels. Extreme close-up.	Hostess (off-screen voice): I dare not see such kind of heels. Girls wear sandals. Your heels are too dehydrated. Group voice (off-screen voice): Right. Right.	Heels are circled with striking characters 'serious chapping on heels'.

The shots above are exemplary in CWMS to televisualise the female body. Typically, the exposure of the problematic body serves the purpose of underlining the urgency of body maintenance and later the effects of related products. Yet the way that the camera leads the viewers to scrutinise fragmented parts of the body manipulates them to develop a harsh critical attitude towards the even smaller aspects of the female body. The 'cellulite on the thighs' or the 'chaps on the heels', which might not have been even noticed before, become a concern and a new focus of attention in daily life.

The camera language dissects the female body. The body is split into miscellaneous parts to be assessed; the woman as an individual entity is dissolving. This is another significant feature of the way that CWMS interpret the female body.

Women are expected to have a totally perfect look by purging all flaws of the body.¹⁵⁷ Those episodes ‘enlighten’ the viewers with new concepts and recognition of female bodies and encourage female audiences to re-examine and discover the ‘flawed’ details from their bodies. In a sense, they also create flaws, which before had not been recognised as such. In “What Mirror Has Been Cheating You”, expert Jiahong instructs that a great many problems of the female body are not recognised by the women and are invisible to them.¹⁵⁸ He explains that ‘according to scientific research, the mirror-self is 30% better looking than the real self’. He is of the opinion that, as the mirror cannot reveal the complete self, women cannot be aware of all the signs of defects on their bodies. Expert Liu Yan, in another episode, introduces a new concept of body care to the audience – ‘sub-zone maintenance’ (*fenqu baoyang* 分区保养), saying that ‘not only does the face need to be cared for with emphasis on different zones, the body also has to be similarly cared for.’¹⁵⁹ In this sense, CWMS function as the enlightenment and correction of the concepts of body maintenance among the audiences. By enlightenment, they aim to make Chinese women audiences aware of the ‘uncharted territories’ of the body for which they need to care and buy products. By corrections, they contrive to establish the authority of consumption by competing with the audiences’/makeover objects’ own coping strategies towards the beauty and fashion problems.

The rediscovery and re-examination of the female body are tied closely with locating the profitable products. The new definitions of the female body are used to convince the audience of the justification of their need and desire, by which the most suitable products can be sold (Carter & Steiner, 2004a, p. 17). In this way, the shows assure that there are unlimited themes that can be discovered and rediscovered, infinite problems that can be explored and re-explored, more and more detailed body parts that can be transformed and retransformed. The female body, plainly, is a

¹⁵⁷ The exemplary episodes include “This is Me: zero-blind Corner Beauty” (*I am a Great Beauty*, 13/08/2011, *Ling sijiao meiren jiushi wo*), “White Young Armpit Caring Tips” (*Queen*, 20/07/2010, *Bainen yexia baoyang juezhao*), “Celebrities Can be Awkward Too: Cleaning the Details” (*Pretty Women*, 05/03/2012, *Mingxing ye ganga, xijie da saochu*), etc.

¹⁵⁸ *Pretty Women* (18/12/2012), *Jingzi pian ni de naxie shi*.

¹⁵⁹ *Queen* (23/08/2010), *Baituo xiaji menre – nixing simi chu baoyang* (Get Rid of Sultriness – Intimate Care).

resource of commercial interest that must be modified ceaselessly to match the desires created by the consumer culture.

5.1.3 In the name of modern life

To accommodate the conception of body maintenance into modern Chinese life (*xiandai ren shenghuo* 现代人生活), CWMS advocate a ‘lazy’ way of body maintenance that saves women’s time and energy. In contrast to the popular saying ‘there are no ugly women, only lazy ones (*meiyou chou nüren, zhiyou lan nüren* 没有丑女人, 只有懒女人)’ in the Chinese context,¹⁶⁰ CWMS design episodes such as “Stay in Bed for Half an Hour More: Quick Make-up for Lazy Bones Before Leaving”, “Lazy Ladies Can Have Thin Waistline Too”, and “Makeover Lazy Lady to Party Queen”.¹⁶¹ They legitimise women’s desire for pleasure in body transformation and supply the audience with consumer solutions which are quick and effective. This does not mean to suggest reducing efforts to transform the body, but choosing consumer methods, which can also be pleasant or less stressful to the makeover objects. Hostess Lan Xinmei says, ‘we are tired and we are stressed; we hope we could lie there with our size dropping down’. Thus, the shows examine a series of ‘short-cuts’ to assist women in their body care. The titles of these episodes are notably similar to commercial slogans: “Lightening Weight-loss and No Yo-yo Effect”, “Good News for Couch Potatoes: You Can Easily Get Thinner by Sitting There”, for instance.¹⁶² In parallel, the easiest, quickest, and most pain-free solutions of achieving the goals in caring, making-up and losing weight given by the shows are commercial ones. The method that expert Kevin recommends to solve the problems of legs in winter in only one step is to introduce a variety of socks with different

¹⁶⁰ ‘There are no ugly women, only lazy ones’ is a famous mantra of Madame Helena Rubinstein, the founder of Helena Rubinstein, the beauty company (Green, 2004). The saying has been widely mentioned in news, academic books, e.g. *Buying Beauty: Cosmetic Surgery in China* (H. Wen, 2013), and other beauty and fashion online content in China. It is also mentioned in CWMS by expert Niuer in [*Queen* (01/10/2010), *Baoyang yao chenzao, laole mei fannao* (Care Your Skin as Early as Possible, Worry Free When You are Old)].

¹⁶¹ *Queen* (17/11/2010), *Duo shui ban xiaoshi, lanren kuaisu chumen shu*; *Pretty Women* (07/07/2010), *Lan meiren yeneng yongyou xiao manyao*; *I am a Great Beauty* (10/12/2011), *Lan nüren bianshen Party Queen*.

¹⁶² *Pretty Women* (11/12/2012), *Shandian shoushen bu fantan*; *Queen* (19/01/2010), *Lanren fuyin zuozhe ye neng qingsong shou*.

functions such as slimming down the legs, massaging tired legs and protecting knees;¹⁶³ one solution to constipation is having a Soyjoy high fibre bar;¹⁶⁴ the quickest method to go to bed after late night clubbing turns out to be OSEQUÉ mask facial that needs no further skin care after applying it.¹⁶⁵

The pleasure offered by consumption seems to contradict the ‘pain’ that women endure to achieve beauty, which I have discussed in 5.1.1. Yet the pleasure and the pain can be seen as one of the ‘thematic paradoxes’ contained by makeover TV (Weber, 2009, p. 3). In another way, they are dual forces from consumer culture to propel body maintenance: discipline for the body depends primarily on a consumer fix; the purchasing of products can facilitate a hedonistic approach. However, this does not mean that hedonism is replacing the discipline. Consumer solutions as the short-cut for body maintenance is a ‘calculated hedonism’ in a ‘controlled de-control’ emotion for people within a consumer culture (Featherstone, 2007, p. 58). Therefore, hedonism and discipline converge at the functionality of body as the communicative signs of the self. They co-exist in a compatible way (Featherstone, 1982, p. 18). The two seemingly contradictory routes juxtapose in the same name, which is the service of the modern self.

From the other aspect, maintaining the body through consumption is a process of building oneself into an idealised beauty or presentation to fit modern life. According to cultural theories of consumer culture, the body is the vehicle of expression in consumer society. The self can be managed so as to ‘make an enterprise of its life, seek to maximise its own human capital, project itself a future, and seek to shape life in order to become what it wishes to be’ (Rose, 1996). CWMS, in this sense, are appealing to the audiences to profit from their purchases and optimise the capability of the body to be the vehicle of expression. Body

¹⁶³ *Pretty Women* (07/12/2011), *Yiju jiejie dongji tui bu kunrao* (Solve the Problem of Winter Legs in One Step).

¹⁶⁴ *Pretty Women* (07/12/2011), *Yiju jiejie dongji tui bu kunrao* (Solve the Problem of Winter Legs in One Step).

¹⁶⁵ *Pretty Women* (22/12/2010), *Zhongxi hebi niandi liwu da paisong* (Sending Out Gifts by the End of Year: Combining the Chinese and Western).

maintenance, especially consumption for the body, is to add value to the current status of the self, a course of self-branding (Lewis, 2008, p. 444).

5.1.4 'Our' Chinese/Asian body

Though CWMS preach the necessity of conducting body maintenance, one of the significance features is that the shows are always making the audience conscious of specifically Chinese ways of treating the makeover bodies, thus fostering and promoting a national consumer culture.

A recurrent theme of the episodes is that Chinese bodies are being compared with bodies of other nationalities, especially western ones; the audiences are warned that their bodies should be looked after in a different ways. The comparisons are, on the one hand, narrated to highlight the criteria of the idealised beauty. Lower noses, bigger jaws, or shorter legs, for instance, are pointed out by the experts and celebrities as the 'disadvantages' of Chinese or Asian bodies, which create a demand for 'rescue' maintenance. On the other hand, the comparisons call for specifically Chinese ways of body maintenance, localising the meanings of health and beauty consumerism for bodies of Chinese ethnicity.

The main emphasis in solving problems of Chinese bodies is on the rejection of mainstream western methods and products and on advising to the substitution of Chinese traditional medicine for modern industrial products. The Chinese medicine expert Gao Rongrong in "Lose Three Grams in Three Days: Reveal the Super Diet Methods", for example, criticises the three most popular methods of losing weight within the entertainment industry which have been widely circulated on Chinese internet:

We have to notice that the three methods are copied over from the West. We have to understand that the earth of different regions raises different types of people (*yifang shuitu yang yifang ren* 一方水土养一方人). The methods that are suitable for them are not necessarily applicable for us. We are eastern people; we have completely different physiques. For example, the carbohydrate-free diet is not suitable for Asians for we've grown up having cereals. And Madonna's salad-diet is not suitable for us either because it might cause 'uterine cold (*gong han* 宫寒)' resulting in infertility if we have cold food like salads for a long time.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ *Pretty Women* (18/06/2012), *Santian shou sanjin chaoji jianfei fa da gongkai*.

The passage exemplifies the prevailing idea of a dichotomy of bodies in CWMS – Chinese body as we-ness and western body as otherness. This dichotomy is not established nor supported through ideas of nationalism or ideology; rather, it is more about rediscovering, reinterpreting and integrating traditional or national ideas into a consumer society. Introducing the Chinese hand clinic, expert Lu Jingshuo from Beijing University of Chinese Medicine says that the hand clinic is used to ‘predict the diseases or illnesses one might have through scrutiny of hands, including fingers, nails, palms, palm colours and so on. The principle is based on *The Yellow Emperor Classic of Internal Medicine* (*Huangdi neijing* 黄帝内经, 475-221BC) – the inside shapes the outside (*you zhu yu nei, bi xing yu wai* 有诸于内, 必行于外)¹⁶⁷. Later, he further proposes that ‘western medicine relieves the symptoms while Chinese medicine cures the root cause’¹⁶⁸ (*xiyi zhibiao, zhongyi zhiben* 西医治标, 中医治本). Chinese medicine is advocated in the shows as having the ability to change the bodies fundamentally while western medicine only removes the symptoms. In both of the instances above, Chinese medicine is regarded as surpassing other methods, especially western ones, in maintaining Chinese bodies.

Further, the Chinese medicine methods represent healing and non-aggressive methods of body maintenance. They are tagged with health preserving (*yangsheng* 养生) qualities in the shows and therefore viewed as safe and natural. Hostess Linda comments that ‘Chinese medicine is really our national treasure of health regimes... As I have said, the ultimate secret of the regimen is to protect yourself from inside to outside’.¹⁶⁹ Chinese medicine practices are deemed to be long-term and secure, and this view is further stressed through comparing with modern ‘aggressive’

¹⁶⁷ *Pretty Women* (10/02/2010), *Yuce lainian jiankang yun* (Predict Your Luck in Health for Next Year).

¹⁶⁸ It is a popular Chinese folk saying. In *Pretty Women* (20/10/2011), *Zhongshi xishi qiu dong quhuo miaozhao* (Chinese and Western Heat-reducing Tips in Autumn & Winter), for example, the guests give their opinions on Chinese and western treatments. It is regarded that ‘if you have headache, western medicine treats your head; if your feet hurt, western medicine treats your feet. On the contrary, Chinese medicine checks your internal organs while you have pain on hands and feet; so it can cure the root causes’. These years have witnessed several tides of controversies on ‘whether Chinese medicine is a pseudoscience or not’. However, it doesn’t fall within the scope of the discussion here. Obviously in CWMS, Chinese medicine is a recommended way of body maintenance.

¹⁶⁹ *Pretty Women* (09/02/2010), *Xinnian hufu daojishi* (Skincare Countdown for New Year).

technological methods. What is shown in CWMS, including *tuina* (推拿 therapeutic massage), acupuncture, herbal medicine treatment, and healing rituals, are regarded as gentle and ‘mild’. Contrarily, cosmetic surgery, as the representative of modern technology, is largely rejected in the shows. For the majority of episodes, the television guests rarely admit that they have had cosmetic surgery; meanwhile, the shows promote the idea that cosmetic surgery is risky and even lethal, and one can achieve a similar result by other inexpensive and non-aggressive ways, e.g. applying make-up, massage.¹⁷⁰ For example, the whole episode “Needle Free, No Large Expense, You Can Have the Perfect Face Shape by Using Make-up” is about how to replace micro plastic surgery by expert-recommended makeover ways.¹⁷¹ Within the episode, the guest Yujie tells her story about shrinking back from a contouring cheekbone operation after one of her friends died from the same operation. At the same time, the methods used to replace the operation are based on daily routine, non-invasive, effective in long-term techniques, compared to cosmetic surgery.

In both of the ways outlined above (Chinese medicine is more suitable for Chinese bodies and safer and less aggressive in general), Chinese medicine has become the opposite of the deficient methods of body maintenance, either in terms of the physique of the Chinese body (western ways) or of safety and health (‘radical’ scientific ways). In other words, Chinese medicine has been constructed as an adequate, healthy and safe guaranteed method rather than a consumer method. However, the knowledge of herbal medicine, traditional/folk regimes, and the body maintenance of Chinese medicine which have substituted other more recognisable consumer methods in CWMS, are de facto another form of consumer behaviour that has been presented. For example, traditional medical ideas and concepts are being changed in the service of promoting consumer lifestyles: ‘inner beauty’ (*neizai mei* 内在美), which used to describe a standard beauty combining outer beauty with inner morals, is employed in a context which now has nothing to do with heart or

¹⁷⁰ Of course, there are a few exceptions about micro plastic surgery. In *Pretty Women* (11/02/2010), *Meili da shengji* (Beauty Upgrade), expert Siqin, a professional plastic surgeon, talks about micro plastic surgery. Hostess Linda is reluctant to admit that even she has had only once IPL (Intense Pulsed Light).

¹⁷¹ *Queen* (18/01/2010), *Mian dazhen mian hua daqian, kao huazhuang jiuneng you wanmei lianxing*.

mind, but is entirely a means of body maintenance, ‘take internally and maintain externally’ (*neifu waiyang* 内服外养).¹⁷² According to the shows, *neifu waiyang* means that a beautiful appearance can be obtained through maintaining the health of one’s inner organs – e.g. better liver health can reduce Chloasma and results in a more glowing white spotless skin.¹⁷³ The traditional idea that ‘the beauty should shine from the inside to the outside’ repeated in the shows turns out to be again introducing new beauty and health-nurturing food and other products, e.g. Chinese herbal medicine and traditional therapy. Chinese medicine and traditional knowledge have been utilised to advocate a commercialised practice in terms of body maintenance disguised in a successful camouflage.

In short, body maintenance with emphasis on the uniqueness of the Chinese body and Chinese medicine represent one of the dominant tendencies for Chinese to choose ‘conservative’ ways in beauty and health regimens. Combining manufactured consumer products for the body with Chinese specific methods, the body maintenance practices syncretise both traditional and modern values, an index of the process of Chinese modernisation (Hung, Li, & Belk, 2007, p. 1035). Also, Chinese medicine allies with mass media, to which CWMS belong, in instilling the consumer consciousness of traditional knowledge and further establishing its own consumer community (M. Wang, 2010). It signifies the localised cultural form of consumerism for the body in the tide of worldwide consumerism.

5.2 The female consumers

The boost of consumerism in China has seen women becoming the main consumers (Hooper, 1998). As early as 2004, *Modern Women (Xiandai funü 现代妇女)* published an article titled “‘For Her Service’: The Advent of Female Consumerism”, in which the author pointed out that ‘The bachelorette economic era has arrived!’ (Yong Huang, 2004). Huang regards that the service industry begins to be inclined to

¹⁷² Under the influences of both Taoism and Confucianism, the Chinese beauty is defined as being embodied in the women who have both external attractive appearance and good moral sense (Man, 2000b). Inner beauty is identical with beautiful souls.

¹⁷³ *Pretty Women* (19/11/2012), *Zhongyi jiejiu! Jiuchan nüren yisheng de ban* (Traditional Chinese Medicine to Rescue! The Spots that Entangle Women for a Lifetime).

please women since ‘the purse is in her hand’. Ernst & Young in 2007 disclosed its investigation report showing that the economic capability and decision-making strength of Chinese women had progressed at an incredible rate. It reports, ‘almost 100% women can have a great influence on the final decision of a household even if sometimes they cannot make decision independently’ (Ernst & Young, 2007). It is seen that China has entered into ‘Her Era’ (*ta shidai* 她时代) where more and more manufacturers and retailers are aware of meeting the demands specifically of female consumers (Horizon ELab, 2013).

‘Her Era’ does not only mean that females represent the dominant power in purchasing; before any other significant social roles of a modern woman, she is, first and foremost, a consumer. Also, it means that female consumers form the pioneer group that assimilates the new meanings of consumption bestowed by the contemporary Chinese consumer culture. Back in the 1930s and 40s, the National Products Movement was initiated and expanded through the publicity of politically correct nationalist consumption among women (Gerth, 2003).¹⁷⁴ Women who bought national products would be glorified as patriotic consumers, models for emulation by other women and a sanctioned object of male desire (p. 287). Similarly in post-Reform, consumerism womanhood is related to the national project of achieving modernity (Johansson, 2001). The ‘modern Chinese women’ images on the media at an earlier stage of Chinese consumer culture reflected the interests of both the beauty industry and Communist leadership, requesting the feminine quality of investing in beauty and Oriental femininity (Johansson, 2001, p. 95). In both examples, consumption with its specific historical characteristics centres on female consumers.

Current press coverage suggests that female consumers are again the leading force in the consumer world. No matter whether it is in terms of new forms of shopping such as e-commerce (Shen, 2013), or of new types of consumer concepts – e.g. medical insurance, beauty and health regimes, tourism, education, environmental protection, safeguard health, green, safe, low-carbon (Ma, 2013), women are

¹⁷⁴ The National Products Movement is a nationalist movement that commenced from 1920s and then continued for more than forty years, in which, a large scale of organisations and people join to help in publicising, marketing and supporting the national products.

regarded as socially adaptive and with a passion for consumption that can bring about new trends, creativity and consumer revolution. In CWMS, these consumer features of contemporary Chinese women are reflected, too. They do not only echo the consumers with Chinese characteristics in a broader perspective, but also the current development of China's social transformation (*shehui zhuanxing* 社会转型) from modernisation to a transcended modernisation, of which economic marketisation and globalisation are a great part (Barlow, 2001). The images of female consumers on CWMS, on the one hand, substantiate the Chinese concept of globalisation as 'becoming international' (*zouxiang shijie* 走向世界); on the other hand, they show the 'parallel evolution' at the national level in terms of localising the global capital (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 562).

5.2.1 Smart consumers

The makeover objects in CWMS, in the first place, are cultivated to be good consumers for their body maintenance. To begin with, they must be very familiar with information about shopping to be a smart shopper. They should know, for example, how to purchase items at the lowest possible price – sales from shopping malls, good bargains from trade shops or online shops, DIY advice to convert the plain clothes into an expensive look.¹⁷⁵ The shows claim to teach the audiences how to identify 'inexpensive yet good products' (*pianyi ye you hao huo* 便宜也有好货); or to use small expenditure to become a big beauty.¹⁷⁶ The guests within these episodes, normally celebrity singers, actresses, beauty and fashion bloggers and members of related e-commerce (e.g. of lefeng.com), show their personal belongings that they have bought at a good price. The displaying of the goods is presented as a competition, so that those who have items of best value or above value for money are praised and applauded by the others. In this way, women compete to be smart consumers with an eye for a good purchase. Hence, cleverness and shrewdness are being presented as high quality features of contemporary female consumers.

¹⁷⁵ *I am a Great Beauty* (23/08/2011), *Shuqi dazhe gonglüe* (Summer Vacation Discount Manual).

¹⁷⁶ *Pretty Women* (12/08/2010), *Hua xiaoqian, da meili* (Small Expenditure, Big Beauty).

Besides, the shows convey a sense of making use of existing resources, for example, how to make use of what is in the wardrobe to dress up for a party and avoid purchasing a new garment, which might be worn only once.¹⁷⁷ The producer of *Pretty Women* and founder of LAFASO, Li Jing says that she has a slogan for her, as well as for all the audiences from the first day of producing the show, ‘we only buy what is right, not what is expensive’. *Pretty Women* wishes to ‘turn all the audiences into smart consumers episode after episode; and turn them into being experts for themselves’ (Anonymous, 2009b). It is thus suggested that women will be ‘better’ customers through the education and training delivered by those episodes.

Further, being a smart consumer is primarily about knowing oneself and knowing the commodity world: on the one hand, it is important to know what products are suitable for oneself; being suitable means the products are functional in constructing the desired self-images onto the idealised body and valued self-presentation, e.g. clothes with light and loose material that would embellish defective body shapes or hairstyles should be chosen according to one’s face shape to achieve the small V-shape face. On the other hand, one has to observe the market so as to identify products that are new, advanced, and trendy, not only domestically but also worldwide. The shows guide the audiences as consumers in their local cosmopolitan area, but also in overseas cities. In “Reveal the Itinerary of Smart Shopping Abroad”, two experts respectively introduce the shopping environments in New York and Seoul, revealing their purchasing experiences of ‘how to buy’, ‘where to buy’ and present ‘what one should buy’.¹⁷⁸ This episode, along with others similarly themed, demonstrates that the makeover objects adapt themselves to the globalised consuming environment and should keep up with global trends. The shows, as they state, are more than ‘how-to’ sections; they are providing information about novelties around the world, which enables the audiences to be synchronous with consumer societies in the United States, Japan, France and other countries (X. Chen et al., 2010). At the same time, the information about consuming abroad also corresponds to the growth in numbers of Chinese travellers in recent years. In 2012, China

¹⁷⁷ *I am a Great Beauty* (27/12/2010), *Baiyuan dazao party queen* (Makeover to a Party Queen with One Hundred Yuan).

¹⁷⁸ *Queen* (11/09/2012), *Chuguo congming saohuo luxian da gongkai*.

became the biggest outbound market with the highest international expenditure. In the past year alone, China has grown 31% in spending in overseas countries (World Tourism Organization, 2013). The growth of purchasing power of Chinese people overseas shows their increasing desire for world commodities and their own integration into world consumption.

5.2.2 Fashion

Two main features characterise the fashionable consumer in CWMS: individualisation and assimilation. To be an individual consumer is not merely to target the correct consumer behaviour in accordance with the body shape, but also to differentiate oneself from others within a mass-produced market. To stand out from others who are wearing similar attire, the majority of solutions presented by the shows are to ‘play’ with clothes and accessories. In “They are Wearing the Same Clothes: Female Celebrities’ Unhappy Experiences”, four celebrities bring to the studio their own clothes that had clashed with other celebrities’ (e.g. one guest Weiweian bought a pair of moccasins that were worn by almost everyone in the street soon after a pop singer had worn them in her MTV appearance) and ask the expert Lin Yeting for help.¹⁷⁹ The guests express that ‘they dislike clothes being the same as others; they dislike anything that is owned by everyone; however they care greatly about what is in fashion’. To ‘rescue’ them, the expert Lin points out that ‘clothes have different faces’: one can achieve different looks by pairing them with other clothes and accessories. For example, she adds a mesh dress, a pair of knee-high motorcycle boots, black leather gloves and a black/grey cropped hoodie to a silver sequined dress, converting the slutty into a punk look. In another episode “Use Shining Gold Colour, Change the Plain look” of *Pretty Women*, the show themes how to wear ‘earth tones’ with individuality; Kevin, the expert, introduces to the audience a great many golden items, such as a belt, brooch, scarf, necklace, and clutch, to go with clothes to create individual looks that would make the wearer different from the crowd.¹⁸⁰ Individuality (*gexing* 个性) is here realised through commodities. By skilfully selecting from the plethora of small items and accessories, the makeovers of body appearance are completed, whether it be a style that is changed, or the

¹⁷⁹ *Queen* (16/02/2010), *Nü mingxing chao bushuang zhuangshan jingyan shi*.

¹⁸⁰ *Pretty Women* (14/12/2010), *Qiao yong shanshan jin, gaibian pingyong xiang*.

individuality that is shown. After all, it is the commodity that is decisive in body transformation and self-invention.

Besides, new trends (*xin chaoliu* 新潮流) presented in the shows are always connected with foreign regions, cities, and institutions. Experts are regularly invited to talk about global trends with regard to star looks, fashion weeks and street snaps, normally with a focus on two broad regional areas and their respective styles: European & American (*Ou-Mei* 欧美) and Japanese & Korean (*Ri-Han* 日韩), e.g. “The Most Fashionable Goods from Japan and Korean! Reveal the Novelties”, “Japanese vs European New Make-up”.¹⁸¹ In an episode about how to become the objects of street snaps, two experts that respectively represent *Ri-Han* and *Ou-Mei* styles help to create the looks emulating the photos of fashionable people in the street.¹⁸² For some other episodes, even if not clearly stated as being about those two styles, the experts in them are from transnational magazines, such as *Vogue China* (USA), or *Mina* (Japan). The make-up, scents and clothes for the two styles help the makeover objects construct their identity as stylish consumers in a globalised consumer environment. In CWMS, when it comes to fashion, it is clear that the look is from a foreign country; the commodities are produced in foreign countries, the styles are seen outside international fashion shows, the limited editions of big brands are invariably presented proudly or received with screams from the TV figures. The fashionistas, or trendsetters, who appear on the shows, without exception, bring concepts from foreign countries or goods with foreign brands. Fashion in the shows, is always about being international and global.

Although fashion in CWMS is nearly all exotic, or in other words, only foreign styles are embraced as fashion, the differences between real fashion and real life are always recognised. At the beginning of “Look Grotesque, Wear Gloriously”, the episode poses three questions: could the clothes on the catwalk be worn in daily

¹⁸¹ *Queen* (03/07/2012), *Rihan zui hong! Xinxian huo da gongkai*; *Pretty Women* (28/09/2010), *Ri xi ou xi zui xin caizhuang da PK*. The shows also mention national style (*minzu feng* 民族风) on a few occasions, such as accessories from Tibet, or embroidery from minority nationalities. However, taking them as the themes arises normally from the global trend of the season or specific cooperative designs for certain magazines.

¹⁸² *Pretty Women* (08/06/2010), *Quanqiu jiepai quan gonglüe* (Global Street Snaps Manual).

life? What are the rules for pursuing individuality while still being fashionable? Tall girls with perfect proportions never wear the wrong clothes, but what about short girls, can they also challenge?¹⁸³ The episode then introduces the fashion looks of that season, which are dominated by exaggerated designs or clothes with big blocks of colour, and fashion icons such as Agyness Deyn¹⁸⁴ whose style is too creative and bold to be worn by ordinary people. Both the expert and the hostesses are of the opinion that ‘the audiences must feel that the fashion looks we introduce exceed what is proper and could not be used in daily life...however, we are not saying that you should wear things like that since it is overkill (*kuazhang* 夸张); you could use some elements from them to be fashionable’. The above reveals that, firstly, *gexing* in fashion for Chinese women is not identical with being quirky (*chuwei* 出位) or bizarre (*guguai* 古怪) to stand out from the crowd. For most of the time, the shows reject anything that is too much to be applied into everyday life. Fashion in CWMS, similarly to western makeover programmes such as *What Not to Wear*, is a banal reality (Min, 2011, p. 64). At the same time, recommended fashion looks in CWMS convey the dominant attitude of fashion users. Overkill in fashion is not practical and is inappropriate in certain occasions, such as at the office, or at family gatherings where older members of the family will be present. The concepts of ‘peace, harmony and balance’, essentialised in the works of fashion producers from China (W. Luo, 2013; Tsui, 2013, p. 55), are also found being embraced by fashion users in CWMS.

At the same time, fashion is about being in line with the times, always knowing the latest trend. Along with information on global stars, ‘it’ girls, and other celebrities, it is shown that one needs to ‘upgrade’ one’s wardrobe with ‘what’s in season’ or makeover the classic pieces that cater to new fashion. To stay with fashion, it is required to be prepared for constant replacement and renewal of one’s own wardrobe. Meantime, new vocabulary and terminology must be grasped to be able to describe everything in fashion. Both ideas and the glossary demand constant updating and refreshment. For instance, expert Youqun explains the new expressions for the fashion in season in one episode

¹⁸³ *Pretty Women* (26/03/2009), *Jian guai chuan bu guai*.

¹⁸⁴ An English model.

[...] Beige used to be called 'rice colour' (*mise* 米色) but now should be called nude colour (*luose* 裸色); light pink is macaroon colour. [...] The return of prints, high waists and narrow trousers, previously only worn by mothers or grandmothers, can also be seen.

Obviously, one cannot have so-called 'fashion with individuality' without being confined by what is for sale or a seasonal trend. Fashion is, as Simmel (1957) says, 'the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation' (p. 543). Fashion, involving the means by which the body is decorated so as to be understood, is unavoidably in collusion with prevailing ideas (Seymour, 1998, p. 32). For fashion, differentiation and emulation are two sides of same coin. Even though the transformations in CWMS represent, more or less, individual needs or are based on individual physiognomy, the makeover goals in terms of fashion are somewhat assimilated as the products of social demands. As expert Xiaokai says, 'everyone looks so different after removing their make-up; however, everyone wants to look the same'. This is exactly what Baudrillard (1998) remarks: fashion is always 'arbitrary, transient, cyclical', and never reflects the intrinsic nature of individuality; it is a requirement for modern people to continuously recycle their stuff as if it can prove them to be qualified citizens (p. 100).

5.2.3 Symbolic consumption

Consumption is the virtual totality of all objects and messages presently constituted in a more or less coherent discourse. Consumption, in so far as it is meaningful, is a systematic art of the manipulation of signs.

(Baudrillard, 1998, p. 21)

In addition to the primary identification of women as consumers that is revealed on CWMS, the characteristics of Chinese consumer culture are further accentuated through the interpretation of symbolic meanings of many products and through the details of female consumer behaviours. Commodities are chosen for their specific symbolic meanings through which one can redefine one's identity. This section will discuss how the shows attempt to trumpet commodity consumption to assist in construction of identity for female consumers.

Identity is to position oneself within a society according to certain conventions. The concept is applied not only for distinguishing oneself as to who one is or is not, but also in communicating with others in the social field (Jenkins, 2008). In a consumer society, the self-identity is partially constructed through the consumption, involving personal creativity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). The concept of personal identity is open, dynamic and incomplete, and actively constructed by the self. Thus, consuming commodities is an important act of identification. On the one hand, the plethora of commodities in a consumer society is closely related to the plasticity of personal identity and the possibility of re-creation and productions of the self (T. Turner, 1994, p. 27). The consumer behaviours are, in some sense, ruled by the point of view 'we are what we have'. One's possessions, as the extended self, are utilised to define the self; one's identity can be transformed through control and manipulation of one's possessions (Belk, 1988). On the other hand, commodities that have been consumed are not only used as resources to construct identity, but also act as expressive signs and significations of one's identity. While one constructs its images through consumption, at the same time one disseminates symbolic signs to represent this image. According to Baudrillard, the practicality of products is less important than their signification in a consumer society. The commodity 'is no longer to be used for something, but to signify, no longer to be manipulated as an instrument, but as a sign' (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 118).

For all the potential makeover objects in CWMS, the commodities recommended by the shows function to signify two aspects: beauty and fashion. The product-consumptions serve to establish one's identity as a beautiful and fashionable contemporary Chinese woman. Visible products, for example make-up, bags, shoes, are signifiers that can constitute an idealised feminine representation. A fashionable beauty is constituted by what she wears and how she wears it; her belongings are part of her beauty. The idea that a beauty is only complete with the materials surrounding her is not new in China. According to Man (2000b), female beauty in ancient China was also reflected through other signifiers such as the substances within her room or courtyard, clothes, leaves on the ground, or the embroidery on her attire (p. 183). A

beauty is therefore also determined by what she owns and where she is. For the images of contemporary Chinese women in CWMS, the components in make-up bags and wardrobes constitute the femininity of the ‘new woman’. The completion of beautification of a woman is always achieved through makeovers of the items on and around her body. Additionally, the invisible products – face and body care products, food regimens, in combination with the visible products, instantiate the lifestyles of fashionable women. The contemporary chic Chinese women are hence closely related to the commodities and services that they use. Their spending patterns are decisive in the process of establishing their identity, or more specifically, as Xu (2009) contends, they fantasise ‘their subjectivities as citizens in an “advanced,” global, capitalist world’ (p. 154). ‘I shop, therefore I am’, as the ethos of consumerism, seems to be widely shared by Chinese women engaging with the shows; and it is distinctively reflected and reinforced in the shows.¹⁸⁵ Now, which consuming practices have been promoted in the shows? Whose opinions matter with regard to the lifestyle-oriented choices? And what does symbolic consumption mean to the consumers? The next section will discuss these questions.

Consuming foreign products

Large portions of the shows involve the presentation of information about foreign products, services and related historical and cultural background through the experts’ story-telling, photo-presentations and outdoor scenes. Experts disclose the ‘myths’ behind the products, e.g. a mask invented by Marie Antoinette, a rose essential oil favoured by Cleopatra, the last pharaoh of Egypt, or skin-care products with extracts of Rooibos tea only grown in South Africa. The hostess is shown visiting Kyoto searching for the ‘magic weapon against anti-ageing’, which turns out to be a Japanese tea ceremony and the Shu Uemura workshop.¹⁸⁶ The experiences and knowledge of consuming in foreign countries are salient in CWMS to signify their synchronicity with trends and tastes around the world and showcase the commodities and services available for Chinese people as global consumers. It not only echoes the

¹⁸⁵ The sentence became well-known because of Barbara Kruger’s montage photographic work in 1987.

¹⁸⁶ Shu Uemura is a well-known Japanese skincare company, and also very popular in China. The workshop is about learning the history of Shu Uemura and using its products.

phenomenon that Chinese women join other Asians in having a ‘bottomless appetite’ for things Western (Appadurai, 1990, p. 3), but also shows their curiosity about commodities from all over the world.¹⁸⁷

Those scenes, or say, information and signs in foreign countries, convey a sense of exoticness to the audiences, which the Chinese consumers perceive or construct as ‘otherness’. However, ‘the exotic’ is no longer a western-centric conception of the eastern, and/or the developed world consuming the other, but becomes multi-directional in that the Chinese are both the subjects and objects of consuming exoticness (Hung et al., 2007, p. 1036). Expert Liu Yan once visits ELEGANCE, a private technical school of aesthetics and cosmetics, the institute and spa of which are open to the public in Nice, France. She introduces in the voiceover that the school is the biggest institute of beauty and was established in 1969. She also says, ‘the private aromatherapist of the famous Oscar-winning actress Gwyneth Paltrow graduated from here. Enjoying their services, you are experiencing the life of European riches’.¹⁸⁸ In another episode, expert Xiaobu while explaining the so-called ‘black gold’ anti-aging ingredient, caviar, mentions that ‘the Emperor of Iran loved to eat caviar. Later, caviar was imported to Europe and became known as a great delicacy for the nobility. Even today, caviar is very precious’. The ways adopted by the experts to introduce foreign goods indicate an illusory equality that can be achieved by consuming the same merchandise. It appears as if one could join the virtual/imagined community of upper class people by using the same products or services. This creates both the illusion and aspiration for a potential ‘upward mobility’.¹⁸⁹ Consumption makes imaginary upward mobility possible.

¹⁸⁷ Apparently, the desire for foreign goods is not a contemporary feature of consumers, but has examples spanning right through Chinese history. For example, S. Zhou (2013) contends that ‘worship of foreignness’ was the fundamental nature of the consumer culture in the Republic of China.

¹⁸⁸ *I am a Great Beauty* (29/09/2012), *Guoqing chuyou dai shenme* (What You Should Bring During National Day Holiday Trip).

¹⁸⁹ Baudrillard (1998) uses ‘potentially upwardly mobile’ to describe the demand for the consumers to consume certain products, especially the cultural products. He queries whether those who subscribed to the magazine *Science et vie*, were actually more interested in getting the membership, which would be a mark of social identity, than in reading the content (p. 107).

In other words, the ‘exoticness’ displayed in the shows is not so much about satisfying curiosity as about vesting social status, ‘dignity’, or *mianzi*, that comes with the consumption. The commodity has symbolic value and through it conveys the identity of its owner: it releases information concerning their distinction, taste and class, which is a great concern for Chinese consumers. As I have discussed in the last chapter, *mianzi* is a very important factor in Chinese consumption behaviour. As concurrently the group most powerfully engaging in luxury consumption in the world, Chinese consumers value the visibility and showcasing of luxury or their consumer behaviour most (X. Zhang, 2012); ‘the designer label syndrome’ is prevalent among women of big cities in China (Hooper, 1998).¹⁹⁰ For them, the brands signify the quality and reputation of the commodities, and indicate the personality, social status and the identity of the consumers (C. Jiang, 2008); logos, on the other hand, seem to be the most efficient way to erase anything vulgar, or which reveals a humble history. Both the products and brands have been utilised as, using Veblen’s (1912) term, ‘conspicuous consumption’, of which the essence is ‘showing off’. In addition to consuming for having *mianzi*, conspicuous consumption is also the effect of a greater range of self-identifications and wider possibilities of class mobility in contemporary China. While a country is experiencing dramatic social transformation, according to Fornäs (1995), self-identity and social-identity are also experiencing great changes. China’s reform, for the past three decades, has produced increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, uneven development among different social groups, which has resulted in ‘instability of personal identities as well as aspirations for upward mobility’ (J. H. Xu, 2007, p. 363).

Consumer idols

The make-up and caring solutions provided by CWMS tend to follow the tastes of a certain group of people, female stars, models, ‘it’ girls, *guifu* (贵妇 a dowager, or a well-off lady), *mingyuan* (名媛 a social celebrity, or a young lady of note) and even

¹⁹⁰ Though the liking for big brands/logos is still a dominant characteristic of Chinese consumers, recent years have seen certain change. According to Bruno Lannes, the China partner of Bain & Company, the Chinese luxury brands shoppers becomes more sophisticated than before and conspicuous consumption is no longer the only reason for them to shop (Lannes & Hoffmann, 2013).

sometimes politicians¹⁹¹ that are not confined within entertainment industry but whose jobs/lives involve much time before the camera.¹⁹² They are described in the shows as makeover goals or pioneers in appearance and consumption. Compared with the guests (especially when they are in before-makeover looks), the makeover goals are always associated with positive evaluations of looks, manners – everyone wants to be like them and everyone wants to know how they do things.

The makeover goals can be divided into those absent and those present. The absent are those who do not appear in the shows but their information is passed through the hosts, guests and experts. For those present celebrities, their functions are more interesting to discuss. Some celebrities are invited to the shows as ‘models’ or makeover goals; they usually sit or stand beside the experts and their views are rarely criticised even if they are obviously offering the solutions opposite to the experts. Few of them become the makeover objects but instead they function as a reference of excellence most of the time. They are established as fashion icons, role models, and gradually as ‘life examples’ by the shows.¹⁹³

Though they are celebrities, the relationships between their images and the images of the audiences are not always clear-cut. Rather, makeover practices made the interchangeability of their identities possible. On the one hand, celebrities shared similar concerns with the ordinary people on body maintenance, e.g. skin problems, consumer options. For example, in “Reveal Celebrities’ Weight Loss Methods”, all the female celebrities talk about their wrong ways of treating their body in order to lose weight; in “Tragic Stories of Female Celebrities’ Cosmetic Surgeries”, the female celebrities use their own experiences to give advice to the audiences about

¹⁹¹ For example, the attire of the First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama was also regarded as a model of elegance that could be followed by professionals.

¹⁹² While the *mingyuan*, *guifu* are associated with specific persons in Taiwanese CWMS - such as Aimee Sun Yun Yun, daughter of the founder of taiwanmobile, S Daocun, Terri Kwan, daughter of the Honorary Chairman of JihSun Holdings Chen Guohe, the identities/concepts are referred in mainland shows only as certain looks, i.e., dressing up or making up to be like a socialite or well-off lady without identifying any names.

¹⁹³ For example, in one episode “Only Stars Can Marry into Rich and Powerful Families? Grasp the Golden Luck in Romance – it Makes You Enter the Door of Riches” [*Queen* (03/12/2010), *Mingxing caineng jia haomen? Zhangwo jin taohua rangni zoujin fugui men*], the programme invites several female celebrities who had married into rich families as consumer/makeover models.

having cosmetic surgery.¹⁹⁴ In this sense, the celebrities can be seen as the ‘representatives’ of ordinary people or audiences that are ready for transformation. On the other hand, an ordinary person can appear like a celebrity through a makeover. The shows have themes on how to wear clothes like a star, or how to be madeover from being plain to a celebrity look, which helps the ordinary people transform their appearance into that of a celebrity. Tang Tunling, a 28-year-old high-school teacher participated in the event *Search for the Trendsetter Show: A Blockbuster Plan by LAFASO*, organised by *Pretty Women*.¹⁹⁵ She was filmed visiting hutongs in Beijing, taking body building classes, being offered a makeover having her false lashes applied for the first time and was photographed by professionals in the studio. She thinks that the makeover not only enables her to relax from her busy life, but also fulfils her dream. She agrees with the slogan that she once watched on *Pretty Women* that ‘changing appearance is only a start; do it to dream and make things possible’. Imitating celebrity styles, for an ordinary person, is not only about having the looks of a star, but also about aspiring to a fascinating life (coached by personal trainer, made over by celebrated experts, and followed by cameramen all day in Tang’s case).

In either way, the makeover models serve the pedagogical function in the self-presentation makeover. These identities as the consuming idols and their relationships with the audiences/consumers did not originate from CWMS. Within a consumer society, the celebrities themselves are good resources for marketing the commodities. First of all, the private life of celebrities are partly unfolded to maintain their connections with the public (Marshall, 2010, p. 37). Especially, their body maintenance regimes and their appearances are of great interest to the fans and audiences (Featherstone, 2010, p. 201). They are often interviewed on how they keep fit, stay young and maintain their bodies. Their confessional texts are part of their celebrityhood (Redmond, 2008).

¹⁹⁴ *Pretty Women* (11/05/2011), *Mingxing jianfei fa da gongkai*; *Queen* (30/10/2008), *Nüxing zhengxing xueleishi da gongkai*.

¹⁹⁵ This video clip was broadcast as the last section of *Pretty Women* on 4th March 2010.

Secondly, ‘the star recommendations’ have been enthusiastically appreciated by the potential consumers of the Chinese beauty industry (McPherson & Li, 2013) and publicised widely by different commercial entities. Apart from the advertisements on traditional media, a new form of combining the new media with the celebrity endorsements has emerged. For most of the Chinese websites, no matter whether beauty-related or not, their floating ad windows or the advertisement-recommended sidebars contain contents of star-recommended products. Some are even disguised in the form of news with titles such as “What is Fan Bingbing’s Secret of Being So White”, or “The Secret of How Zhang Ziyi Became Freckleless”.¹⁹⁶ On microblogs, celebrities post pictures of the products that they use, or of themselves using certain products. Evidently, some of this is new media marketing;¹⁹⁷ in other cases, the sellers exploit the celebrities to promote their sales, without the stars’ knowledge. For example, online shopping owners made use of Photoshop techniques so that Hollywood stars were ‘wearing’ the clothes from their shops, claiming to sell the same styles of those international stars. The shop had a great reputation and large volume of sales before being revealed by the newspapers (Y. Gao, 2010). The new form of celebrity endorsement, conducted through ‘soft advertisements’ on new media, be it real or not, has had great influence upon the consuming practices of the masses. It has been well received as the tacit mode in term of celebrity endorsement in China (S. Liu & Yao, 2014).

The valued identities in CWMS, such as *guifu*, *mingyuan* and female stars, are explicitly different from the public image idols whose styles were emulated by the masses in the past. Studying the influence of public female figures on women’s

¹⁹⁶ For example, in the ‘news’ of “What is Fan Bingbing’s Secret of Being So White” on <http://meirong.guimi.com/by/28264.html>, there are two sentences that have hyperlinks: one is that ‘How Fan Bingbing has realised the anti-age growth’, the other is that ‘What has made Fan Bingbing become an international star with a leap?’. By clicking either of the sentences, the ‘news’ page will be redirected to the same webpage, the home page of a skin care brand, SoMaruis, <http://www.kexin.2014331053.sister2014.tk:800/A1/sky/?bguimi4-965468>, accessed on 7th March, 2014.

¹⁹⁷ For example, the celebrities Guo Tao (actor) and Wang Yuelun (director) became even more well-known due to the huge success of the reality show *Papa, where are we going?* (*Baba qu nar* 爸爸去哪儿, Hunan Satellite TV, 2013-2014) that they joined in. On 5th and 9th of December 2013, Wang and Guo respectively posted a microblog that they had used Leelan Herbal Intensive Revitalizing & Whitening Mask to boost their complexions (<http://www.weibo.com/1497005993/AIR9yoxuD>, <http://www.weibo.com/1243667280/AmsMZAmdh>, accessed on 20th February, 2014.).

fashion and appearance during the Chinese communist revolutionary era, Ip (2003) contends that Song Qingling, represented the contemptuous idol among women's images with 'dignified grace, sophistication, fragility, and tasteful but simple clothing'. Her influence 'derived from her public persona, of which moral prestige was an important ingredient' (p. 339). In other words, though partly attributed to her political position, Song's influence had been established by both her moral and physical model.

In comparison, the identities valued in makeover shows are nothing more than physical models with the imagined luxurious lifestyles behind them. It is their exterior looks or consumer lifestyles that the audiences are more concerned with. Their public images are collected from the looks on red carpets, street snaps, and images behind entertainment news. To consume what they have consumed, intuitively, is to imitate their looks and lifestyles. The makeover is the channel through which the signs, originally belonging to the celebrities and ordinary people respectively, could exchange mutually – an ordinary person may feel like a celebrity because of a pair of luxury brand glasses while a celebrity could become an ordinary person because of her appalling clothes. It is for this reason that the new models like celebrities could be easily imitated through consumptions; models for women in the past, like Song Qingling could not be. Moreover, celebrities and their lifestyles are there not merely to be replicated for specific purchases; but more generally, they articulate 'a way of thinking about individuality and producing the individual self through the public world' (Marshall, 2010, p.46). They influence the ordinary people on the ways that one presents the self through consumption.

Identity mobility

The last two sections encapsulate two ways by which identity mobility is realised through symbolic consumption promoted in CWMS. The first one is the consumption of the foreign products. It is seen that there are multitudinous products from the western fashion industry which have caught the public eye through CWMS as well as its homologous 'symbolic value'. For many female consumers, buying goods from global/foreign brands does not necessarily lie in their quality or function,

but in the meanings behind the products as signs, which distinguishes them in taste and social status. In other words, the foreign products are used as the communicative signs to display a fashionable and eminent image.

Secondly, the consumer idols in the shows are not only for imitation; they represent higher classes (or economically they are in higher classes) and their consumer choices represent higher taste. By associating certain commodities and images with these makeover models, CWMS have instituted a system of signs of classification that encode the consumer behaviours among different social groups. For ordinary people, the shows, which have themes such as how to wear like a social celebrity, or from a plain-looking to a celebrity make-up, are attractive as they promise to help them transform their identity through the change of their outer appearance – e.g. “Entry Level Classics: The Outfits that Make You Over to Socialites and Dowagers”, “Make Over Middle-age Women into Fashionable Dowagers”, “Learn Quickly! Socialites and Dowagers are Using These Secretly”.¹⁹⁸ Those episodes inform the ordinary people of the commodities and the identical/similar outfits used by the consumer models.

Playing with the signs, people situated in the lower classes of the social hierarchy can create an image that is beyond their social class, and thus ‘jump’ into the higher class without any real qualification for it. If different consumptions correspond to different identities – the former serves to signify the social status of the latter, the interchangeability of the consumptions could bring about a change of identity. One could masquerade as a member of a higher class in order to conceal one’s original social class background. This leads to the second feature of identity makeover. This kind of identity makeover happens only at the exterior level – the presentations of the self-image – and is not connected to real appearance, attitude and demeanour in everyday life. Yet this makes alterations to identities even easier. For instance, an office lady might learn how to appear like a *guifu* even if she wears relatively inexpensive clothes and make-up from the supermarket. That is to say,

¹⁹⁸ *Queen* (26/09/2012), *Rumen jingdian, dazao mingyuan guifu xingtou*; *Pretty Women* (25/04/2011), *Zhongnian funü bian shen shishang guifu*; *Queen* (18/08/2011), *Kuai xue qilai! Mingyuan guifu sixia dou toutou yong zhe kuan*.

what one looks like is more important than who one really is. The aim of the makeover is to look like someone; it is not necessary to be so.

Very often, the tastes of the higher classes are disseminated for imitation but in the interests of the lower classes – the identity mobility realised through consumption retains the makeover objects in a relatively lower social status. Self-identity is an interpretation of a situation resulted from a person's own attitude towards his/her self-identity (Giddens, 1991). That is to say, the alteration of self-identity is based on the self-cognition of one's relative position in a society. According to both Veblen and Bourdieu's models of the transmission of taste, the middle-class tend to imitate the upper class and the lower class imitate the middle-class.¹⁹⁹ People are prone to follow the consumption patterns that belong to the higher points of the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, for those from the upper stratum to maintain their position, they must ensure that their taste evolves so as to keep themselves distinguished from others. Thus, it is a constant process to seek social status through signs of consumption. New signs are chosen and old signs discarded in order to differentiate oneself within the population.

In sum, the symbolic consumption in the shows, on the one hand, creates a superficial equality for the female consumers in terms of appearance. It assumes that the distinctions could be elucidated as long as the signs could be interchangeably consumed. On the other hand, the endless episodes, which expound on acquiring taste from a higher social class illustrate that the habitus of CWMS have been well received and expanded simultaneously.²⁰⁰ For the shows to sustain the current numbers of audience, they have to choose lifestyle information according to spread of classes within their audiences. In other words, they have to 'grow up' with the audiences synchronously in consumer knowledge.

¹⁹⁹ Veblen's model is a one-directional one with the transmission from the upper class, through the middle class to the lower class. Bourdieu's model is a 'trickle-round' one with the upper class occasionally accept tastes from the working class/mass culture. For detailed analysis, see Trigg (2001).

²⁰⁰ By 'habitus' I am using the term defined by Bourdieu, 'which is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

5.3 Cultural intermediaries

The cultural intermediaries is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu to describe the group of people whose professions are closely related to symbolic goods and services (Nixon & Du Gay, 2002). In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu (1984) exemplifies ‘the producers of cultural programmes on TV and radio or the critics of “quality” newspapers and magazine and all the writer-journalists and journalist-writers’ as the most typical personnel of cultural intermediaries (p. 325). Later, the term included more professions in various industries germane to the ‘bourgeoning of the consumer sectors of the economy and the associated consolidation of large broadcasting and media organizations’ (Nixon & Du Gay, 2002, p. 497). Though there is still controversy about conceptualising the term, scholars have reached agreement on the understanding of the functionality of these groups of people. According to Maguire and Matthews (2012), the cultural intermediaries are to

[...] construct value, by framing how others – end consumers, as well as other market actors including other cultural intermediaries – engage with goods, affecting and effecting others’ orientations towards those goods as legitimate – with ‘goods’ understood to include material products as well as services, ideas and behaviours (p. 552).

They interpret the symbolic meanings of goods, have their own field of expertise and impact the consumers or other cultural intermediaries as regards knowledge of signs.

Though Bourdieu’s work seems irrelevant to the experts in lifestyle shows, their performances on the shows certainly share similarity with the role of cultural intermediaries, especially those experts from fashion fields, e.g. cosmeticians, stylists, and fitness coaches, who are part of the forces which shape people’s views of the aesthetics of the female body and femininity in life and influence mainstream tastes accordingly. Like a beholder of the arts who knows the specific codes for decoding an artwork, beauty/fashion experts are believed to have the knowledge to see, to value the presentation of a female body. Their voices have been disseminated and then magnified through the platform of CWMS and thus they establish their authority over the consumerist dispositions. From another perspective, they are not

tastemakers with their own individual will. Their rise was associated with the contemporary era of ‘relative uncertainty and social fluidity where people look to popular forms of advice for guidance and a sense of assurance’ (T Lewis, 2008, p. 442). The enormous number of options available within a consumer society has made information and symbols highly extolled but sometimes they dazzle and overwhelm the consumers. Therefore, they are in need of the experts who are familiar with the pertinent knowledge to assist in appropriating consumer behaviours. They have grown with and therefore act on the advice culture. In this section, I would like to discuss the role of the experts as the cultural intermediaries, especially how they have been working as ‘spokesmen/spokeswomen’ of their industries and the rule setters of body maintenance.

5.3.1 Authoritative social actors

The beauty and fashion experts are largely constituted by the professionals in cosmetics, hairstyling, bodybuilding and other related industries. In the shows, they have been referred to as master (*dashi* 大师), aesthetician of life (*shenghuo meixuejia* 生活美学家), gatekeeper (*baguanren* 把关人), leader of inspectors (*jicha duizhang* 稽查队长) and so on as regards their interferences in the appearances of the female body. The earliest group of these experts obtained their fame with the popularity of *Queen*, including Niuer, Kevin, XiaoP, etc. They are mainly Taiwanese, very experienced and have for many years styled numerous stars in Taiwan; they have moved from ‘behind the scenes’ to ‘the front stage’ (Ren, 2010). Later, they visited mainland China and became regular guests in mainland CWMS. Some of them even established their own brands, relying on the platform of bigger electronic business.²⁰¹ For this reason, they were called ‘gold-diggers’ in the mainland (Ren, 2010). The most successful of them is Niuer, who has been respectfully called ‘Taiwan Beauty Godfather’ by the media. He established his own brand Naruko in 2010, reaching a turnover of 0.3 billion RMB in less than one year. It was then believed by many that he could be the 2nd Shu Uemera in the world (R. Chen, 2011).

²⁰¹ For instance, Kevin’s Beauty Maker on P@yeasy (<http://shopping.payeasy.com.tw/ECatalog/cms/mainAction.do?ppcNum=51979>), XiaoP’s JMIXP on LAFASO (<http://jimei.lefeng.com/?biid=sy-star-list-00>), and so on.

Though Taiwanese people are the leading members of the experts, CWMS in mainland China also invited ‘local experts’: they were either already well-known make-up artists before they attended the shows, such as Li Dongtian,²⁰² or new faces with expertise in beauty or fashion, e.g. Shasha, the editor-in-chief of the fashion magazine *Scawaii* and Xiaonini, a beauty blogger known to many.

It is the popularity of the shows that has produced this new form of stardom, the celebrity experts. The new form of stardom brought about two new phenomena. Firstly, with the experts and their fame emerged the ‘*daren* (达人, guru, experts) economy’, around which the new feature of B2C online shopping industry in China emerged (T. Tang, 2014). ‘*Daren* economy’, to be concise, is a business model that is mainly based on the *daren* recommended products and fans/followers’ consumptions.²⁰³ Lefeng.com is the pioneer of this business model, which has already accounted for 40% of the total income of the online shopping website (J. Wang, 2013). The *daren* economy brought not only profits, but also scandals. Some celebrity gurus were notorious for doing nothing creative for the fashion industry but merely promoting certain products for beauty and fashion companies who had bribed them (S. Tang, 2013). Secondly, the popularity of the experts has benefited a number of grass root celebrities who are smart shoppers, cool fashion hunters, beauty bloggers and so forth. They are ordinary people but are beauty and fashion lovers – and might even be ‘fanatics’, as they sometimes call themselves; they have not received professional training on the subjects of their recommendations. For example, a 24-year-old university student called Sun Ni became famous because of her wonderful make-up techniques (Figure 5.2). She is very keen to explore different images made-over by make-up. After putting a poster of twenty-six different ‘before’ and ‘after’ images of herself online, she received more than 100,000 follow-up posts and became widely known as the ‘painted skin sister’ (*huapi jie* 画皮姐). She has opened an online shop and has a monthly income of more than 10,000 RMB (N. Zhang, 2011). The interest in makeover images and the universality of social media

²⁰² Li Dongtian has been a great many times as the chief stylist for TVs and films. He was named as the ‘father of make-up’ in China.

²⁰³ The western counterparts include, Paula Begoun, also known as The Cosmetics Cop, who has a brand called Paula’s Choice, Martha Stewart, the queen of lifestyles, and the like.

offer the possibility for any grass roots person to become a celebrity. In this sense, this group of people does not only blur the boundary between the ordinary and the celebrity, but also blurs the boundary between the amateurs and the professionals in a consumer society.



Figure 5.2: the 'before' and the 'after' looks of Sun Ni.²⁰⁴

5.3.2 Performance

As the cultural intermediaries on female beauty and fashion, the experts take up their responsibilities in three aspects. 1) They use their expertise to give advice on beauty and fashion to Chinese women. For the audiences, they are the 'opinion leaders' of consumer choices, working in a similar way to word of mouth opinion (Liao & Feng, 2011). Also, their purpose is to diminish the stresses resulting from the difficulty in choosing commodities and assist the progress of decision-making (Powell & Prasad, 2010, p. 116). The experts here play the role of the redeemers to rescue the makeover objects from bad choices. 2) They interpret and explain the beauty and fashion codes to the audiences. As I have mentioned in the earlier section, CWMS impose fashion codes on the audiences to equip them with 'taste' that guides them to consume. Experts, especially beauty and fashion experts, are de facto the experts of commodities/signs to interpret the codes and to judge and play with them. By shuffling the signs and regrouping the codes, they delocalise the (potential) makeover objects from the group of people who have 'defective' bodies and

²⁰⁴ The pictures were downloaded from Sun's blog, <http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1883519444>, accessed on 26 November, 2013.

appearances, and redesignate them into the group having idealised beauty and appropriate presentation. 3) They influence others on defining feminine beauty, appearance and manners. The power of influence is closely related to the authority that they have established through the shows and other pertinent cultural contexts.

The above demonstrates that what the experts are doing, especially in their role as possible influencers, is critically based on their authority. Among the episodes of the shows, there are three elements crucial in building their authoritative power. First and foremost is the logic of the shows. According to the shows, the makeover object would have a satisfactory result of the change to her appearance as long as she believed in the experts. She is asked to surrender to the experts; any opposing or challenging voices would be stopped either before the makeover procedure by the persuasion of other figures, or on the 'revelation time' when everyone is appraising her post-makeover look. This put the makeover objects into a status inferior to that of the experts. It is by maintaining this structural relationship that the audiences are assured of the essential role of the experts in their makeovers.

Secondly, their knowledge, a composition with contradictory elements, is the currency that grants their authoritative roles (Lury, 1996, p. 88). As the taste makers or the fashionistas, they should remain in the minority. They should be in line with the 'real' fashion, constantly overthrowing the existing styles to maintain their position in the upper stratum of the hierarchy of the fashion tastes. The experts are requested to update consumer information for the audiences, discovering 'uncharted' parts of the consumer lifestyles. Yet at the same time, they have to cater for the popularised interests by introducing mass-consumption commodities. Their knowledge should be practical for the majority of the audiences. Therefore, their knowledge, in some sense, is not constrained by any principles; ideally, they should know both the tastes of the minority and the majority. And because of the dynamic nature of the 'trendy' consumer knowledge, they need to constantly update their knowledge of both novelties and bestselling items.

Thirdly, the experts established their authority on the basis of their identity as ‘the insiders’ who could access the powerful circles (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000, p. 170).²⁰⁵ The insiders in the context of CWMS are people who have capacity to monopolise the information or sources of the consumer idols. This is very important for television programmes which have ‘media-centred’ content, like CWMS.²⁰⁶ The ‘media-centred’ content, as regards in CWMS, means that the names of and news about the media celebrities and the products they use are included in occasional commentaries in the shows. Some stylists, known as frequent collaborators with famous film stars or *mingyuan*, would share the latters’ anecdotes, or ‘glamour secrets’, e.g. products or caring methods used in their daily life. In other cases, the shows assure the audiences that they are indeed revealing the behind-scenes aspects of celebrity culture and the entertainment industry. For example, some female celebrities go to the shows with bare faces, moaning that they are ‘sacrificing their careers for the shows’ to let the audiences see the ‘real’ them²⁰⁷ and witness the processes of how they became camera-ready.²⁰⁸ The experts are responsible for repeating the processes as well as for adding information to the audiences’ viewing experiences of consuming the images of the celebrities. While it is about ‘the production and circulation of information and symbolic materials’, the job of the experts also entails ‘the concealment of knowledge, deception and manipulation’ (Negus, 2002, p. 508). The experts, as the established insiders collectively engaged in related industries, are not likely to embrace the diversified opinions of the audiences –other than those belong to their ‘circle’ (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000, p. 171).

²⁰⁵ The original term of ‘insiders’ is used to refer to the experts in the news discussing political events.

²⁰⁶ According to Croteau and Hoynes (2000), a great amount of media content, such as the content of talk shows, is the about the media itself. They are self-referential – or at least media-centred, to make the audience become ‘deeply engaged with the culture of media’ (p. 177).

²⁰⁷ *Queen* (29/08/2012), *Wufa piekai tou! Rang ren mubuzhuanjing de meili miji* (Can’t Look Away! The Beauty Tips that Make People Stare at You).

²⁰⁸ *I am a Great Beauty* (21/04/2012), *Wangluo nüshen suyan liangxiang leifan zhainan, zhuangqian zhuanghou da PK* (Net Goddesses Show Their Bare Faces and Scare Off Otakus – Before and After Make-up PK).

5.3.3 Function

The meteoric rise of these experts, in another sense, epitomises how highly knowledge about how to consume is valued in contemporary China. According to Powell and Prasad (2010), the domination of signs and related information ‘allow for those who specialise in such culturally specific materials to increase their standing based not on their education but rather on their knowledge of the aesthetic in all its forms’ (p. 112). Being in the possession of consumer knowledge in contemporary China means seizing certain power.

In terms of transmitting the lifestyles to the audiences, the experts have an important function. They make the audiences aware of the possibility of improving themselves to a better life through self-reliance. Self-reliance, as Ong and Zhang (2008) propose, is the result of the Chinese social transformation which has taken place since the Economic Reform period when people were expected to transfer from depending on the state (*kao guojia* 靠国家) to depending on oneself (*kao ziji* 靠自己) in different aspects of their personal lives (p. 8). This situation increasingly required self-help knowledge and witnessed a re-evaluation of self-interests against collective interests. The expert Lu pointed out while he was lecturing about hand diagnosis to the audiences:

We, as ordinary people, should know the basics of self-diagnosis. We can't go to hospital so frequently for complicated checks. What I am going to introduce is a very simple and practical method allowing us to see symptoms of our future illness. (Once it develops) we should see a doctor. So the advantage of hand diagnosis is to make a preliminary judgement.

Likewise, the experts in CWMS, like Lu, offer ideas on their personal issues, which are not restricted to the domain of medical care. The makeover objects and the audiences are taught to arm themselves with more information and knowledge to be capable of coping with the personal issues by which an individual might be confronted in daily life. This also reflects and responds to the new role of Chinese people as citizens in a market economy, where people are expected to take care of their own matters, such as work, housing and medical treatment. In this sense, the experts in CWMS, with those in other lifestyle television programmes, ‘fill the gap left by the retreat of the Reform Era state from the care of its citizens’ (T. Lewis et.

al., 2012. p. 541). Born in this specific time, they in return serve, function for and change that specific time.

5.4 Middle class taste?

The explosion of makeover shows builds upon the new prevalence of the concept of 'lifestyle' in China.²⁰⁹ 'Lifestyle' is a western concept, which caught the attention of both the Chinese public and academia around the early 1980s. The discussion of this concept in the Chinese context, to some scholars, reflected the longing of Chinese people for change in their living conditions after the ten-year period of turmoil and bitterness of the Cultural Revolution, inspiring them to commit themselves to the project of modernisation and to the pursuit of a better life (Yalin Wang, 2004, p. 95). Lifestyle since then has become an important topic of Chinese modernisation. It is closely related to the question for Chinese society of 'how to live' in the Economic Reform era. After more than three decades of reform and opening-up policy, attributes of different lifestyles and living conditions of Chinese people have become very visible. The characteristics of the tendency that the traditional Chinese lifestyles have been gradually taken over by the new, modern ones, according to Wang Yubo (1995), are the transformations of lifestyles from being state-dependent to autonomous, from closed to open and from the rigidly unilateral to dynamically colourful. According to other scholarship, Chinese lifestyles have been developing in combining individualism and collectivism, with a growing tendency towards individualism (J. Liu, 2003). The rise and changes of Chinese modern lifestyles, have been recorded, transmitted and shaped by domestic media accordingly. The growth of the audiences of lifestyle television programmes indicates that knowledge and information about lifestyles are in great demand. It suggests that the content centred on personal lives is being regarded as 'useful' and valued by many.

According to western scholars, lifestyles cannot be dissociated from social class. The key words associated with lifestyles, e.g. tastes, aesthetics and fashion, are all class-based subjects and therefore produce differentiations and distinctions (Fiske, 1996; Palmer, 2004; Simmel, 1957). In a consumer society, the classes are

²⁰⁹ Here, I am using the concept 'lifestyle' in the Chinese context, which means the catch-all themes related to personal lives.

understood in terms of people and their relationships with consumer goods (Lury, 1996). People within the same class are assumed to share similarities in relation to production and the ability to consume goods and services. Makeover shows, as television programmes, aim to please as large a number as possible of groups or classes of the mass population. In the western developed countries, the majority of the population is middle-class. The middle-class of these countries expanded forcefully after WWII, and the result was that the material products and cultural products they consumed were widely shared and accepted. For this reason, their makeover shows are viewed as representing ‘competent middle class taste’, which has successfully survived as the result of the power/class struggles within the popular culture (Taylor, 2005, p. 115).

From another angle, that the ‘taste’ is controlled and directed by the minority of experts, reveals the social positions of the users of the makeover content as inferior status as regards lifestyles. As Fiske and Hartley (2003) put it, ‘television articulates the responses of people to their class condition, not the class condition itself’ (p. 79). More specifically, the makeover shows with class-based lifestyle knowledge are not so much about the idiosyncrasies of the middle class itself as about aspirations for better lifestyles, which are obviously ones that belong to a higher level of the social hierarchy. As good taste is retained in the hands of the minority, the makeover for the middle class is always a process of ‘catching up’, and as a result reaffirms their relatively subordinate position.

Turning back to China, it is meaningful to discuss both the status quo of the Chinese middle class and the taste that they represent to see how the Chinese middle class taste is related to CWMS. The recent new Chinese middle class has only recently but quickly started to grow since the Economic Reform. However, its denotation is different from that in the West and its connotation is still contested. Firstly, the middle class in a Chinese context is closer to ‘middle strata’, which acknowledges the existence of different classes or class fractions within the stratum, rather than its original definition which suggests a unified homogenous social class (Stivens, 1998, p. 15). In other words, the Chinese middle class is a miscellaneous

congregation, the collective features of which are difficult to outline. Secondly, it is highly discordant when it comes to the approaches and opinions on conceptualising the Chinese middle class in both official documents and public debates. The phrase ‘middle class’ (*zhongchan jieji* 中产阶级) has often been confused with ‘middle-income groups’ (*zhongdeng shouru renqun* 中等收入人群) in Chinese public discourse (Jin, Tu, & Bao, 2013). Especially, finance-related institutions have tended to define the Chinese middle class by setting numerical standards of levels of income or disposable income. However, their definitions have not reached consensus. Once those definitions became public, a large number of people complying to these standards complained that they had been ‘middle-classed’, while they themselves had reckoned that they belonged to the lower social classes or even to the bottom of the society in real life (Anonymous, 2010a; J. Wang, 2011). Apparently, no agreement on a clear definition has been reached. The cultural awareness of this new class is still ambiguous. But meanwhile, the middle class has been an important social force that cannot be ignored. It has been expanding quickly and its members are taking their places as active producers and consumers. According to *Blue Book of World Cities (2011)*, the Chinese middle class will account for 40% of the Chinese population in 2020 (L. Li, 2012). This new social class shows similar characteristics with their western counterpart in symbolic consumption for status and positions while at the same time, and as mentioned, the Chinese-specific *mianzi* motivated consumption adds another dimension to it (S. Li, 2009).

The question arising from this situation is whether or not the newly developed format of CWMS is also targeting or representing the taste of the new Chinese middle class, as their counterparts in the West are said to do. Or they are connecting to other groups and in another manner?

Scholars have already proposed that lifestyle shows in China, notably their ‘soft’ content, exhibits ‘middle-class values and tastes to urban socio-economic elites’ (Lewis et al., 2012, p. 539). Yet the ‘middle class values’ presented here are more or less internationalised values mainly based on western middle class tradition culture. Undisputably, the Chinese middle class consumers have been integrated and

are further integrating into the global consumer environment on a greater scale. However, to examine strategies of CWMS to also potentially target a Chinese middle class, both their specific social context, as well as the specific politically charged terminology developed from it, has to be taken into account.

At the 2002 Academic Frontier Forum, the deputy director of the National Bureau of Statistics, He Keng, whose position indicates that he represents official opinion, stated that the ‘middle class should account for the majority of citizens of a *xiaokang* (小康 well-off) society’.²¹⁰ He further proposed that the Chinese middle class should 1) be comparatively financially well-off; 2) have relatively high ideological quality (*sixiang suzhi* 思想素质) and cultural quality (*wenhua suzhi* 文化素质); 3) be civilised, honest and law abiding (Guanren Chen & Yi, 2005). This means that the Chinese middle class is expected to be comprised of citizens who are more advanced in both wealth and thinking and therefore be suitable role models. Thereby, they can fulfil the expectation of being a consumer that represents the ‘Chinese advanced culture’ (*Zhongguo xianjin wenhua* 中国先进文化) (G. Chen & Yi, 2005).

In popular culture discourse, the Chinese middle class is constructed as an appealing identity, with ‘all that is desirable and tasteful in life’ (Donald & Yi, 2009, p. 503), setting an imagined image for what a Chinese middle class *should* be. In other words, in public imagination, the Chinese middle class has already been associated with good education, exquisite taste, sophisticated lifestyle etc., at a much higher level than they really are. The disparity between the normative and real image propels people to conduct self-training, accumulate personal economic and cultural capital in order to come closer to the ‘fancied’ identity.

At the same time, the Chinese middle class is still in a very nascent state and has not developed distinct features of a ‘Chinese middle class culture’. CWMS, in

²¹⁰ *Xiaokang* society is a concept brought forward by Deng Xiaoping in 1979. The earlier stage of *xiaokang* society was to provide people with adequate food and clothing. In Hu Jintao’s report to the 18th Party Congress, he furthered the goal as ‘completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and deepening reform and opening up in an all-around way’ (J. Hu, 2012).

this respect, contribute greatly to this transitional phase of establishing a middle class in disseminating a consumer culture with *imagined* Chinese middle class taste. The shows provide training to eliminate the ‘illiteracy’ of bourgeois lifestyles as well as responding to the rise of consumer practices in contemporary China. On the one hand, they endorse the globalised consumer culture reproduced within the Chinese context; on the other, they assist in integrating local and traditional culture to be in the service of the Chinese-specific consumer culture. Compared with the western lifestyle programmes, which accustom the audience to the lifestyles of the modern middle class, CWMS represent an approach that frames the lifestyles of a middle class with Chinese characteristics.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: CWMS in Broader Contexts

This thesis aims to complete an analysis of a burgeoning format of Chinese television programme, Chinese Women's Makeover Shows. The shows have become widely known as televisual guidance on beauty and fashion for their female audiences. They provide pertinent information and consumer-oriented knowledge in a didactic style by using experts, who are beauticians, stylists and other gurus from the beauty and entertainment industry, who conduct the makeover procedures to the guests, designated for the purposes of this thesis as makeover objects. However, the shows are not confined to presenting the how-to videos of makeover procedures; rather, they put both the preferred images of women and the patterns and modes of women's consumption in contemporary China onto the television screens. Both the bodies and the consumer behaviour of women have been closely scrutinised, valued and judged. The shows are advising on appropriate feminine presentation and informing the viewers of the 'reasonable' consumption for a female body. It is in this way that the audiences learn how to examine the female body and therefore the examinations have been utilised to shape the presentation of the female in daily life.

6.1 A television programme of advertisements?²¹¹

Advertising presumes and promotes a culture of consumption, normalizing middle- or even upper-middle-class lifestyles and making buying power a measure of both virtue and freedom.

(Croteau & Hoynes, 2000, p. 186)

The most significant element in CWMS is the advertising element. Though in an entertainment-oriented way, the shows are essentially promoting products or services. They combine a variety of approaches of television programmes applied to the beautification of the female body, with overt or covert advertisements included. The advertising substance of the shows is related to the marketisation of the Chinese

²¹¹ Though advertisements as a related form of media has been mentioned in earlier chapters, this section focuses on that how CWMS apply advertisements to their episodes, how they cooperate with companies or websites to conduct advertisements within their episodes and how the advertising elements of CWMS influence their users and audiences.

television industry. Seeking economically profitable and politically safe television content, lifestyle content became a good choice to fill the great gaps left by the shortage of both programmes and funding.

To reveal the advertising elements of the shows, firstly, is to probe into the sources of the products presented in them. According to the production team, there are three sources of the products introduced: personal belongings of the TV figures, free samples from companies, and product placement (Que, 2012). No matter whether advertising in a direct or a ‘soft’ way, the close relationship between the shows and the products offer great opportunities for companies to promote their products and services.

For many shows, the way that the products are presented to conduct the makeover is very similar to advertisements. The skin tester s used to check ‘the before’ and ‘the after’ skin condition and to prove that the skin problems have been ‘statistically’ alleviated after the application of a piece of mask;²¹² the experts demonstrate how to massage the Clarins Shaping Facial Lift by its special manual auto-lifting method according to its instruction manual;²¹³ while introducing Yue Sai White Ling Long BB base, the accompanying comment is that ‘if you use this for one month, the problem of dullness or unevenness of your skin will be greatly improved’.²¹⁴ Obviously, the clips of CWMS share similarity with other formal television advertisements.

For the other episodes, a ‘soft’ method of advertising is applied. ‘Soft’ advertising means that the brand names are not displayed directly (mosaic or stickers are used to cover the names), nor are their names mentioned by the figures. For example, intending to introduce a LANCOME product in an episode, the experts of *Queen* repeatedly stressed that the product was from a brand with the trademark of a flower; the audiences were by this way to be indirectly informed of the brand names.

²¹² *I am a Great Beauty* (24/03/2012), *Jin fang chu lao zheng* (How to Cure Early Aging Symptom).

²¹³ *I am a Great Beauty* (15/09/2012), *Xiaolian dayan meirong shu* (Beauty Methods for a Small Face and Big Eyes).

²¹⁴ *Pretty Women* (14/12/2011), *Jiandan yangzhuang dazao paidui zaoxing* (Make Simple Dresses into Party Styles).

Unexpectedly, the discussion around the product attracted over 70,000 people on the official BBS (X. Chen et al., 2010). This way of promotion not only avoids the suspicion of merchandising, but also rouses the curiosity of the audiences. The fans and followers of the shows spontaneously establish an online forum to discuss the sources, price and effect of the products (Ren, 2010). The concealment of the brand names does not necessarily lead to the failure of advertisements.

As well as using product placement, CWMS also cooperate with companies in marketing events. For example, *Pretty Women* produced an episode specifically for Chance X Chance shoes, and the endorsing star, Xu Jinglei²¹⁵ was invited onto the episode as the only guest;²¹⁶ *Pretty Women* also jointly established ‘Beauty Lab’ with Brand’s chicken essence drink, encouraging the audiences to take part in the ‘30-day tasting event’;²¹⁷ one of the founders, Carley Roney, of the ijie.com (Chinese branch of The Knots²¹⁸) appeared in one episode, introducing global trends and ending her talk with the words, ‘if you would like to know more on New York fashion, please go to ijie.com’.²¹⁹ It can be seen that there are various ways of cooperation between the shows and the companies.

With regard to the commercial alliances embedded in the shows, the producers adopted different strategies when confronting interviews from the media. Some admitted it unreservedly. Xie Yousheng, the founder of Fashion Guide²²⁰, granted that joining media production was only a ‘springboard’; their aim was to sell products (Y. Wang, 2011). Some producers also acknowledged the commercial intention of the shows but articulated that they were cautious not to impact on the quality of the shows (Ren, 2010). However, not all the producers preferred to reveal their cooperation with commercial interests, and continued to appear to be

²¹⁵ A famous Chinese actress, director and publisher.

²¹⁶ *Pretty Women* (10/05/2012), *Lao Xu jiao ni wanzhuan zhichang gaogenxie* (Lao Xu Teaches You Play with Office High Heels).

²¹⁷ *Pretty Women* (19/06/2012), *Daretian quhuo you miaofang* (Heat Reduction Recipes for Hot Days).

²¹⁸ A leading brand of information on weddings and fashion.

²¹⁹ *Pretty Women* (06/10/2011), *Gaogenxie lianwu nü da duijue* (High Heels Fetish Girls Contest).

²²⁰ The company also participate in producing *Beauty* (*Meiren wo zuida*, Hubei Satellite TV, 2009-2011), *Just Have My Heart in Beauty* (*Jiushi ai piaoliang* 就是爱漂亮, Dragon TV of Shanghai Media Group, 2011-2012).

disassociated from them. Li Jing, in her interview, told a story on her show, which benefitted a sales person by accident:

I went to a cosmetics counter after one episode on masks had been aired. The beauty consultants took my hand, saying that ‘thanks to your recommendation in xx episode, our sales of this mask have been excellent’. And later I know they have commission from the sales, so that’s why they were excited to hold my hand. We had no intention to do this at the very beginning and the brand did not sponsor us (Anonymous, 2009b).

In other media coverage, she rarely responded to the critics of excessive advertising and product placement in *Pretty Women*, although this issue is not a secret. One celebrity frankly expressed her refusal to be the guest of *Pretty Women*, ‘it is not to be a guest of a television programme; it is to help Jing to sell her products’ (Anonymous, 2012c). Also, due to its strong entanglement with different companies, *Pretty Women* once faced a time of crisis. The key to its success was also the reason for emerging fissures. The audience rating of *Pretty Women* dropped to an unprecedented low point in 2012, with the loyalty of many of its audience wavering. The news also reported that this was the very reason that *Pretty Women* left The Travel Channel for Heilongjiang Satellite TV at the turn of 2012/2013: the management of The Travel Channel discussed excessive product placement in the show several times with Li’s team but in vain (W. Chen, 2012).

In addition to numerous independent companies, it is obvious that CWMS are very strongly allied with e-commerce. The three shows (*Queen*, *Pretty Women*, *I am a Great Beauty*) chosen as the examples of the genre for this thesis all have self-run, or financially related, online shop websites, as do most other CWMS. For example, *Wanna be a Dream Girl* (*Jiu xiang zhuang meini* 就想妆美女, 2010-2013) is a Chinese Women’s Makeover show broadcast on the web platform of ku6.com and the e-commerce behind it is yintai.com. The intimate relationship influences the pattern and content of the shows. With the flood of product placement in the shows to support the interests of the respective e-commerce website, the competition among the similar products emerged. The brands owned by the online beauty and cosmetics retailers that are affiliated with the shows would gradually substitute similar products, given priority to their own products being introduced in the shows. Also, as the majority of the own brands are grassroots products compared with famous global

brands, when they take over a greater proportion of the content, this also alters the tone of the show and appeals to different audiences.

Moreover, as the televisual mode of CWMS became familiar to the audiences/consumers, their format has been integrated into the marketing strategy of the beauty industry. During the period of the event that lefeng.com held for Benefit, a series of 'Benefit beauty classroom' videos were produced and shown online as well as at the beauty counters of department stores. Within the videos, celebrities and experts taught potential consumers how to use the Benefit products, and offered solutions to make them more beautiful, in a very similar way to the makeover shows. The use of makeover clips to promote products distinguished Lefeng.com from other cooperative agencies and received satisfactory feedback from Benefit (Netease Lady, 2013).

6.1.1 The power of advertising

As outlined in previous chapters, the formulaic narration of CWMS is to propose a problem, conduct the makeover, and display the makeover results. Accordingly, the body of a makeover object experiences three phases of the makeover. It is firstly scrutinised by all the other figures (certainly as well as by the audiences) in the light of the proposed problem; very often, the makeover object is humiliated so as to give prominence to the severity of the problem and the necessity for change. Then in the process of the makeover, the modified body/makeover object is exalted to reinforce the correctness of the conduct of the transformation. At last, the 'after-body' is presented in contrast to the 'before-body' (the non-modified body, or the very natural one) to achieve certain visual effects, which feature a part or parts of the normative body. The normative body is the ultimate goal of the makeover. Yet it has to remain unachievable in order to repeatedly trigger the desire for commencing a new makeover.

Apparently, the 'before' and the 'after' images in CWMS have a televisual effect similar to commercials. By comparing the bare half-face with the made-up half, the contrast is great and the effects of the commodities are clearly seen. The

comparison, to some extent, displays the ‘miraculous power’ of the products, which urge the audiences to devote time and energy to them.

Because of their advertising features, the shows also have developed similar influence as advertisements. According to Lin and Yeh (2009), advertisements have the ability to create needs and change the cognition of the viewers. The viewers want the promises of the advertisements to be realised in daily life, which they most certainly cannot be. Similarly, the idealised femininity and perfect bodily presentation in CWMS are what the audiences long for, but which are yet unattainable. All physical features in the shows are constructed to create the ‘perfect’ woman’s look and the goal of almost every episode is to achieve this ‘perfect’ look by conducting a makeover. The audiences discern their own imperfections by watching the shows and then consume to achieve ‘perfection’ in daily life. This is in an indefinitely ongoing process since the desired ‘perfection’ will never be achieved.

The strong pedagogical elements of CWMS are their advantage over the commercials, especially over those very short advertisements on television. The process of obtaining idealised beauty and self-presentation are recorded in the shows for the audiences to master. The shows hence suggest that beautifying the self is also a learning process. In this sense, self-adornment for beauty could be compared to reading for acquiring knowledge: the more one has endeavoured, the more one will gain. This point is further upheld by the use of media technology. CWMS with their how-to sections support a culture of ‘replay and a slow-motion take on things’ for the audiences (Hansen, 2004, p. 591). That is to say, the consumers can watch the videos repeatedly and freely afterward to perfect their use of commodities.

Certainly, what has been brought by CWMS into the social culture is not only consumer knowledge, but also the makeover phenomenon and its images. The transformation of women’s looks, especially the dramatic scene of the ‘before’ and the ‘after’, are circulated to be consumed by the public. By the end of 2012, a video called “Taiwanese Girls and Make-up (Before and After)” had been viewed more

than 3,000,000 times on Youtube.²²¹ In the clip, two Taiwanese girls showed the whole process by which they used make-up to become almost different persons (Figure 6.1). Makeover has become a phenomenon that challenges visual acceptability of Chinese people; at the same time, people are getting used to the discrepancy in terms of women's body and appearance. In this sense, the images are not so much functional to us as coexistent with us. The relationship between the images displayed on media and the world that the viewers dwell in is that the former 'is no longer representative, but genetically constitutive' of the latter (quote Lazzarato in Toscano, 2007, p. 86).



Figure 6.1: One of the invited girls is showing her half-done/half made-up face.

²²¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mu_betPexI.

6.1.2 Building a dream

Consumer guide and lifestyle programmes bring their viewers a land of fantasy and create a myth that they can achieve the lives they dream of through personal consumption.

(J. H. Xu, 2009, p. 164)

As shown in the previous analysis of advertising elements, the shows conglomerate with online platforms, and function to link all the audiences/consumers. Especially, the online platforms enable the audiences/consumers to establish a virtual community to communicate about the products and their desires. Women are magnetised into the community centred on the objects of their consumptions: only those who themselves fancy, use and consume can participate in the discussion, just as at a literary salon only those who are readers can participate in the discussion. Typically among the behaviours of exchanging their views is to *shai* (晒, display, share) the belongings of those participants.²²² *Shai* derives from *shaike* (晒客, people who share and display things online), who ‘from sharing clothes and photos at the very beginning to sharing payroll, bills, stocks, etc.’ (Xia, 2007). It reveals the psychological need of people to share and exchange ideas with others as regards consumption. Those who *shai* the items that they bought or use, have a strong desire to make their consumption visible and to connect with others through commodities. People are making friends through commodities and commodities are linking people from all over the world. A perfect circle has been formed for consumers where they learn from the shows, purchase products and display them online. The collaboration, in this sense, has opened up a public space for the discussion of the desire to consume.

The above analysis on the virtual community shows that content such as presentation of the body, the efforts to achieve, and desires all can connect people together. It successfully guides people’s cognition of normalised femininity and propels the desire to realise higher standards of beauty. The desire is incorporated

²²² *Shai* is one of 171 Chinese new words that were introduced into *Zhongguo yuyan shenghuo zhuangkuang baogao* (2006) [中国语言生活状况报告 (2006) Report of Chinese Language Situation (2006)] by Ministry of Education.

into daily practices in the form of consumption and thus consolidates the status of the commodity. The shows use the signs that have already become familiar to the audiences through other media, especially fashion magazines, and contribute significantly to building and maintaining cultural identity. Makeover shows are, in fact, an assemblage of signs with a much broader meaning than body and beauty alone.

Last but not least, makeover shows provide a consumerist fairy tale for contemporary times (Heller, 2007a, p. 2). Through the shows, ordinary people as members of the audience could become a celebrity (look), and to the effect that most romantic proposal could happen,²²³ for instance. They create a dream by capturing details and contrasts, which meets the logic of the consumerism. This form of television programme plays a role in portraying an unachievable dream and provides plausible and practical consumer solutions. Consequently, women will be always on the road to the dream of ‘a perfect body’ and the variants of consumer behaviour are endless. In a market-driven environment like China, television does not only deliver the audiences to the advertisers, but is also ‘uniting the world within an equation of television, consumerism, and “reality”’ (Newcomb, 2000, p. 7). The media confuses the presence with absence, the imaginary with the real for its audience; ‘it undermines any contrast to the real, absorbing the real within itself’ (Heller, 2007b, p. 2). It extracts from reality and impacts on reality; but it is also part of the reality. Makeover shows, no matter in terms of a television programme or a piece of academic research, are marginal; however, what they articulate concerns mainstream recognition of gender or aspirations of lifestyles. It is not a new form of show training people to be consumers but the logic of these shows has become the logic of our everyday life.

²²³ *Pretty Women* (04/05/2010), *Shiai qing zai hunli qian* (Show Your Love Before the Wedding).

6.2 Women and beauty

Throughout history, women have had an intimate relationship with beauty: women represent beauty and women are eager for beauty. However in China, this has not always been the case. Due to the upheaval of 20th century China, especially the political interventions after the founding of the PRC, Chinese culture has witnessed both absorption of features inherited from the past, but also rejection of them in phases of political turmoil. Therefore it is difficult to establish any consistency regarding Chinese female beauty, nor of women's self-beautification behaviour. In light of this complicated situation, it makes sense to see the Economic Reform period in China as a relatively independent context in which to explore the process where Chinese women have been embracing self-adornment and consumption for their bodies.

The policy of reforming and opening-up marks a broader social background against which the Chinese women are able to consume for their body and appearance – attainable commodities increase, as well as disposable spare money for personal expenditure. Nonetheless, a great leap forward in women becoming consumers and focussing on beauty happened in the late eighties and early nineties of the last century with the changes in employment known as the 'laid-off tide' (*xiagang chao* 下岗潮). It greatly prompted women's participation in the beauty industry and thus caused it to expand. Since the majority of the layoffs were women (Selden & Perry, 2010), the nation looked for a proper way to place the huge group of the unemployed. Beauty salons, backed by All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), became the main agencies for those women to settle again. Plus, ACWF organised training for those women, encouraging them to establish self-run beauty parlours so as to create new jobs (J. Yang, 2011, p. 346). The result was that a great amount of women were working for the beauty industry. Later, the advent of beauty contests, fashion shows, and increasing job opportunities as models had further drawn women closer to the beauty industry. Female beauty started to be associated closely with commerce. The images of beauties in the mass media, have been utilised to sell commodities – not only to women, but also to men; they signify both the labels of 'sale' and 'commodity' (Brownell, 2001; Johansson, 2001). The commodification of

women's images received little opposition from official, governmental forces; rather, the movement has been supported by Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference members so far as to be included into the state plan of economic development: the prosperity of the beauty economy was believed to be closely linked with the improvement of people's living standard and inevitably consumption for the female body is part of the project (Netease Lady, 2006). At the same time, the beauty economy was also pushed by non-state efforts. Some justified the logic that 'beautiful faces grow rice' and embraced it as 'the inevitable product of the development of human society' (Lu, 2004). In general, it created a context in which on the one hand, a great number of women participated in building the beauty economy; on the other, the beauty economy targeted women as consumers.

The beauty economy has brought a series of beauty standards to the attention of the rising powers of Chinese consumers in the interest of commercialisation. Manufacturers and retailers from all over the world have been well aware of the soaring Chinese consumer power and 'were desperate to stimulate the Chinese appetite' (Watts, 2010). For them, the market in developed countries is too saturated to be able to make a great leap in selling branded goods while the consumer force in China is booming in a way that is beyond anyone's expectation. At the 'Go global summit' titled 'go global, think London', held by *China Business News* and London & Partners, Gerard Lyons, currently the economic adviser to the Mayor of London, said that

While the three words that have been most important for the last ten years are 'made in China', the three words that are going to be most important in the next ten years are 'bought by China'...it is about China becoming truly international (Y. Jiang & Wang, 2013).

The consumer power of Chinese people has been widely recognised and new meanings have been added to normative beauty to help to sell the products.

My previous analysis has shown that the idealised femininity and consumer patterns of Chinese women have been interpreted in a globalised way. In a broader sense, the Chinese situation is very similar with that of Korea, where the standards for beauty and fashion are more about conformity rather than individuality – a

conclusion reached by Taeyon Kim (2003) in her paper on the Korean female body. To be more specific, it seems that the cultural impact of mainland China is the weakest in commercialising the bodies of Chinese women compared with those from other Asian areas, such as Taiwan, Japan and South Korea, as well as those from Europe and America.²²⁴ The Chinese mode closely follows the trend from Japan and Korea because of its ethnic similarity, and simultaneously assimilates western feminine standards, such as big, double eye-lidded eyes, a high-bridged nose, long legs and big breasts of its global status. Though it would be debatable which parts of the ideal images are and are not the results of westernisation, it is obvious that the Chinese ideal has been tinged with globalised characteristics in order to satisfy the demands of globalised capitalism. As the cultural ideology of globalised capitalism, consumerism promoted through mass media has become the major cultural force of the expansion of capitalism.

6.2.1 Gender

Idealised femininity, in the face of different forces from globalisation and localisation, became a site where all the powers function collaboratively in forming gender identity.

Gender is a product of society. Though people are born to be female or male biologically, femininity and masculinity are social products (Seymour, 1998, p. 29). According to some feminist political theories, biological differences do not necessarily lead to behavioural and emotional differences (Young, 2005). To give an example pertinent to my topic here, women's pursuit for looks and appearance cannot be regarded as a consequence determined by the natural structure of their sex. Generally speaking, women have been more constrained in their appearance than men in the social field and therefore received more pressures and burdens in terms of displaying one's body (Su, 2004). In heterosexual spouse choices, one study shows that physical attractiveness is more valued by men to women than women to men

²²⁴ The traditional discourse has developed in a way that is demanded by marketisation. For example, some beauty standards, e.g. white skin, small face (head), 'nine-head' body, are supported by health discourse in media (W. Xu, 2013). Still, it cannot be compared to the discourse of globalisation.

(Mazur, 1986). Women are more subject to the impact that is brought by external presentation.

In a society of consumerism and capitalism, gender identities are embodied in gendered consumption and the consumption for gender. On the one hand, consumption is part of womanhood. The attitudes and patterns of female consumer behaviours are inevitably labelled with the symbols of the gender. In the West, education about being a consumer takes place already in an early stage of the girls' development (Carter & Steiner, 2004b, p. 12). A girl is brought up to be a better consumer, not only for herself but also for others, such as family members. The training continues to adulthood with the assistance of social institutions, such as media. On the other hand, consumption, as a matter of fact, impedes the stability of gender identities. It requires people to be engaged in 'constant search for and the construction of the "new", including new identities' (Stivens, 1998, p. 5). In pursuit of gender identities, needs to consume are continuously to be produced.

In constructing gender, the media plays an important role. Media is powerful in producing and reproducing the gender norms and its receivers are normally perplexed and seduced into following gender identity that is depicted by the media (Carter & Steiner, 2004b, p. 28). Within a consumer culture, the overabundant idealised images provoke people, especially women, to make comparisons. According to theories of social comparison, women tend to compare to the young and beautiful images suffused within the consumer society, evaluating their own bodies in terms of beauty, attractiveness, and sexiness (Shaw, 1995). The idealised feminine beauty represented on the media, in this sense, may bring about women's dissatisfaction with their bodies – in some serious cases, it may lead to psychological disturbance and eating disorders (Mondini, Favaro, & Santonastaso, 1996). According to Cash and Smolak's (2011) summary of the research of earlier scholars, more and more Asian women became dissatisfied with their bodies and images and there is now the trend that the phenomenon is surpassing that of women from other regions. The research of Zheng et al. (2013), as an example of an empirical study, reveals that Beijing has a high incidence of eating disorders among female college

students: the main manifestation is that they seek to have a thinner body and are remarkably dissatisfied with their body shapes. Women's anxieties and dissatisfactions with their bodies and appearance make their consumption of gender identity effective in daily practice: the former is believed to be eliminated by the latter.

6.2.2 Makeover and Female Agency

The commercialisation of the female body and femininity is a great part of the consumer movement of China. The market economy encourages people to monitor their bodies constantly and work on them endlessly. According to CWMS, as a modern Chinese woman, one should spend more time and energy at those places that could help to beautify the body, such as one's own dressing room, beauty salon, and shopping mall. The shows foster the cultural awareness of not only what a Chinese woman should look like, but also where she should go and what she should do in her spare time. The cultural meaning of the women's makeover shows and its correlative beauty and fashion knowledge to the adult female is similar to dolls for little girls.

However, it would be unfair to see that women's desire for consumption is completely manipulated by patriarchal discourse. Dominant discourses are being internalised as to represent an individual's will. A good example is that contemporary Chinese television culture for females has been regarded as a 'neck culture' (*bozi wenhua* 脖子文化) by the producers: anything taken 'above-neck' as the topic of the TV programme will receive high ratings (Anonymous, 2009b). Apart from this, there are also differences between women's own sense of their bodies and others' sense of their female bodies. According to a survey by the women's section of Netease, entitled 'ladies want to know: what men are thinking when they see their girlfriends without make-up for the first time', though men recognise drastic differences between the made-up and bare faces of women, they are not so susceptible as to rejecting the before-make-up images: 44% regards that 'she is not so good looking. But I will still date her'; 41% thinks that 'I was so shocked at that time. She's more beautiful without make-up'; and 7% says 'it is totally a different person. But I will

still date her'.²²⁵ This data contrasts with the predominant narrations in CWMS that the made-over images are decisive in maintaining relationships. At least this data shows that in real life, opinions are not so extreme as those on the shows.

Therefore, it can be said that self-adornment has been publicised, or even amplified in the media, in order to legitimise putting the women in the service of consumerism. The more requirements are proposed by media images, the more variability is applied to the female body and consumption. The makeover objects in CWMS have undergone examination at two levels: the external looks should survive the test for femininity, such as never getting old, being attractive, being acceptable for others' gazes; the consumer behaviour should respond to both the globalised and local situations: one should be shrewd, treat oneself well in body maintenance and live to be like a celebrity, or even a star. The crux of the makeover is that people should change all the time. While the ideal is illusionary and unachievable, it creates a sense of inferiority of the natural body and the urgency to overcome this. Taking this a step further, what the makeover shows and all the fashion magazines offer are not simply images, recommended commodities, or an atmosphere that inspires women to devote themselves to consumer culture; they are changing the ways that people treat their own and others' bodies – how to examine, how to judge, how to alter and how to fix. The concept of the amenability of a woman's body, which has successfully embedded itself into both individual consciousness and ideology, is in compliance with the beauty economy, and even the whole neoliberal economy (J. Xu, 2007).

²²⁵ The web address of this survey is <http://lady.163.com/special/sense/2010lady10.html>. Apart from the results shown in the main texts, certainly, there are 6% regarding that 'she looks so different and I would like to break up right away' and 2% thinking that 'she is not so good-looking and I start to think about breakup'.

6.3 Consumption: disciplining for the female body in China

The gendered consumption in CWMS, as well as in broader cultural context, cannot be simplified to being a hegemonic process in which the media merely tames the female audiences to be the consumers for their bodies; rather, education and transformation occur to everyone in whatever role. First of all, the public has been cultivated to understand and support women's consumption for their bodies. In the shows, men are instructed to get accustomed to women's self-beautification routines, for example, be patient while waiting for a girlfriend's or wife's preparation before going out. The hostess Linda, in one episode, persuaded all the male guests present to try blemish balm cream, explaining that 'you will realise one day that what are silly things for you might be true love for her (the partner)'. The host He Jiong was overwhelmed by an unexpected honour when he was chosen as the presenter of *I am a Great Beauty*. Though he considered himself knowledgeable about fashion, he found himself a complete newcomer to beauty and fashion throughout the first episode of the show and thus was humiliated several times by the producers and experts. The episode ended with him calling it a 'catastrophe of his hosting career'. At the same time, however, he appreciated the learning experience from the show. He said in an interview that

Paying attention to becoming beautiful is not specific to women; it is also men's responsibility. It enables us to care about the women beside us. I am honoured (F. Dong, 2010).

Besides, men are not only being convinced to comprehend women's needs for beautification, but also exhorted to join in the process of body maintenance and consumption through women. For example, a fitness coach was invited as a guest and was taught how to use cleanser and lotions;²²⁶ the male guests were criticised regretfully by comments such as 'why is such a mature man, (who is) so outstanding, so humorous, not in fashion!'²²⁷ Men, too, are being reminded to be more concerned with their looks and to pamper their bodies by consuming products for important occasions as women do. The groom-to-be, for instance, was advised to wear make-up to achieve a natural look on his wedding day. Expert Kevin expounded, 'one should

²²⁶ *Pretty Women* (11/01/2010), *Nanren mianzi nüren gu* (Men's Face, Women Take Care).

²²⁷ *Queen* (26/07/2011), *Hongse zhadan lai la! Rang ni mianzi lizi douyou de hunyan juezhao* (Red Bombs are Coming! Master Stroke for Wedding Banquet: You Will Win Both Face and Heart).

be beautiful regardless of one's sex. And then you will enter into the new chapter of life more beautifully and more happily'.²²⁸ The phenomenon of beauty culture has witnessed body investment being expanded to be the level of the entire population;²²⁹ body maintenance and consumption are not a feminine privilege.

In daily life, men also join the forces that have boosted women's consumption for their bodies. According to the report of Tian, Zhu, and Xu (2010), there has been a role transformation for men with the rise of female consumer power. More and more men have become employees of the beauty industry, serving female costumers in, e.g. hairstyling, cosmetics purchase and so on. Though working in a 'feminine' industry, some of them do not seem to be afraid of being labelled as effeminate; rather, they try to approach the female consumers in a way that help them to understand the latter's needs, for example, watching CWMS so as to have knowledge of topics that they could chat about with female clients (Yong Huang, 2004).

Moreover, the consumption of images and related commodities has been bringing power and pleasure to Chinese women. Women are believed to be smarter consumers and surpass men in consumer knowledge. The empowerment of women as members of consumer society further advances the consumerisation of society. It has encouraged women to request the visual pleasure of watching the presentation of the male body. According to certain media texts, China was regarded as entering an era of *nanse* (男色, male beauty) around early 2000 (Guchuan Chen, 2002; Z. He & Yang, 2003).²³⁰ In 2002 specifically, an extremely popular TV show called *Meiren guan* (美人关, *For the Beauties*) started to broadcast.²³¹ In each episode, the on-site

²²⁸ *Pretty Women* (11/09/2009), *Xiang mingxing yiyang jia dui lang* (Marry the Right Man Like the Female Celebrities Did).

²²⁹ For example, the shows also suggest that women purchase nutrients for their babies. According to the expert, infants older than six-month can take dietary supplement [*Queen* (01/10/2010), *Baoyang yao chenzao, lao le mei fannao* (Care for the Skin Before it is Too Late)].

²³⁰ *Nanse* is a derivative from the traditional term *nüse* 女色, which means female beauty.

²³¹ *Meiren guan* is a phrase from *yingxiong nanguo meiren guan* (英雄难过美人关 A hero often falls for a beauty). It originates from the story of the King You of Zhou. To amuse his concubine Baosi, he lighted warning beacons several times to confuse his nobles about the potential attacks. Due to the frequent abuse of the warning beacons, he lost trust among his nobles. He was killed later in an attack without a rescue attempt although he had lit the warning beacon.

200 female audience members were expected to be entertained by ten male participants displaying their bodies and talents. The show was awarded as ‘the most entertaining variety show’ by *New Weekly* (*Xin zhoukan* 新周刊) in 2002 (S. He, 2003). Some analysts notes that *Meirenguan* should be regarded as ‘men’s performance, women’s carnival’; its popularity represents the vigorous growth of female culture (X. Tang, 2004). Women’s desire for body presentation and consumption does not only revolutionise their own bodies – at an individual level, but also changes the world. In a deeper sense, it implies that other forms of capital are also welcome to be translated into a form that can be utilised as a resource for enhancing the visibility of the body, which epitomises the capitalisation and marketisation in Chinese modernisation (Lindridge & Wang, 2008, p. 504).

6.3.1 Individualism and the elasticity of the body

According to Li Yingtao (2005), one of the core ideas of the Economic Reform in China is to establish the personal responsibility of individuals. The concepts such as ‘public good’ or ‘community’ have been abandoned; the self has been positioned at the centre of the economy and the individual has become the ultimate bearer of responsibility. The transformation of the relationships between the individuals and the state has taken place and continues to operate on two levels: on the one hand, the collectivism of the past under which the individuals conformed to the state unconditionally is transformed into emphasis on national modernity that prioritises personal improvement and development; on the other hand, individuals have transformed from being passive objects protected by the state, to subjects (though still in a relative sense) that are more autonomous in the choices of marketisation (Wu, 2009, p. 175). People’s attention is being diverted to pay attention to the private sphere.

Besides, both globalisation and industrialisation propel the consumer ethos of ‘radical individualism oriented around a ceaseless quest for personal distinctiveness and autonomy in lifestyle choices’ (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). It demands an elasticity of the body that is constantly examined and scrutinised. The body has

become the site that ‘at which national modernity was imagined, often through a language of crisis’ (Hershtatter, 2004, p. 1028).

CWMS, as part of the consumer culture, encourage people to ‘combat deterioration and decay’ of the body on the one hand, and conceptualises the body as the ‘vehicle of pleasure and self-expression’ on the other hand – both of them emphasise the predominance of body presentation (Featherstone, 1982, p. 18). This type of show is nothing more than a visual game played on the body essentially to make it look like what it should rather than what it naturally is, just as Turner (1994) contends, ‘a propensity to ignore the primary character of the body as material activity in favour of an emphasis on the body as a conceptual object of discourse’ (p. 28). The use of ‘body maintenance’ is treating the body similarly to a machine: it is emphasised that the body needs to be maintained regularly to maximise its efficiency (Featherstone, Hepworth, & Turner, 1991, p. 182). The transformation of the body legitimises consumption for the body and vice versa. By inspiring the audiences to question about themselves, makeover shows, fundamentally, reinforce the discourse of body consumption in terms of its rhetoric and convention.

6.3.2 In control of her body?

Disciplinary power [...] was first and foremost about bodily control. It was the human body which for the first time in history was made, on such a massive scale, an object of drill and regimentation. Later consumerism was a product of failed resistance to such drill and regimentation. But what negated could not but determine the substance and the form of its negation.

(Bauman, 1983, p. 40)

In her paper exploring feminist elements in Taiwanese variety shows, Xu Duo (2010), notes that those shows such as *Queen*, *Beauty Gurus*, taking beauty maintenance as a subject from a female perspective, in fact accomplish the restoration and reconstruction of feminism. She further points out that the two shows have expressed out women’s dissatisfaction with the dominance of patriarchal discourses in the media and explored a position for women; women utilise their body

images and symbols to fight for gender equality, which explains why this new form of show would take female audiences as their main target audience. However, can it be maintained that the shows have assisted women to obtain a more equal position? Do contemporary Chinese women have real autonomy in building their bodies? This part will discuss these questions.

Essentially, the problem consists in that the not so obvious control over the body is a new form of disciplinary power in contemporary society: it juxtaposes freedom with governmentality with the latter internalised and subjectified at the individual level. People are unconscious of the governmentality because it seems to be derived from their personal needs in the service of one's life in terms of personalities and identities (Rose, 1996, p. 17). Shilling (1993) also points out that 'there was a reduction in the achievement of control through repression, and an increased focus on maintaining control through the stimulation of desires' (p.78). The contemporary control over the body is not exerted through a fierce or visible force; rather, it is through camouflaged discipline and surveillance. Moreover, the body, at any time of history, is a site that represents the relation of social forces. It manifests the essential forms of social control and inequity, 'as well as some of its characteristic forms of mystified social consciousness' (T. Turner, 1994, p. 28). For Foucault, the contemporary body, as the vehicle of pleasure, is transformed by power into manipulateable desire (T. Turner, 1994). It is a boundlessly malleable object in the hands of the contingent combination of powers.

In a consumer culture, the discriminatory forms of body regulation prevail in the service of their economic effects. Foucault remarks that, for the body, there was 'a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. "Get undressed but be slim, good looking, tanned!"' (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 57). The modern discipline over the body is anonymous in its origin but penetrates into people's daily lives. There is no formal institution dedicated to it, nor granted authority to execute it (Bartky, 2006). Both the multi-dimensional publicity and interactivity speed up the diffusion of the discipline.

The dominant and manipulative forces for the body in the consumer society, as stated by many scholars, are capitalism and patriarchy (Carter & Steiner, 2004b). They form the most influential ideology that functions in producing norms, values and beliefs of the mainstream media texts. This ideology justifies the disciplinary power that inscribes feminine beauty onto the female body. Consumerism, with mass-produced commodities and symbolic consumption as the vitality to sustain its development, create 'false needs', which contrives women into social conformity and subordination (Nava, 1987). The female body is expecting a plethora of modifications under the reign of consumerism. If women adopt ideas of standardised beauty that has been constructed by commercial and traditional culture as the ultimate goal of lifestyle and values, they lose their individuality after enjoying a momentary 'freedom' of body transformation.

Consequently, the images of women on media, according to Winship (2002), are presented in a way of 'double regime of signification' (p. 34). On the one hand, women seem to declare their own willingness to beautify themselves and the beautified body brings them advantageous assets in social situations. On the other hand, the body is inexorably handed over to the gaze of others, especially of men, under the normativity of consumerism. The premise that women have to buy and consume does not necessarily result in rigid images of women. On the contrary, it might allow various forms of women's looks to augment possible economic interests. Evans (2006) quotes Karen Hutchings's view, arguing that 'the consumption of images and products manufactured by economic interests that demonstrate little commitment to challenging conventional gender hierarchies does not, in itself, mean a simple acceptance of the hierarchical gender relations inscribed in those images' (p. 185). The diversification of women's images and consumer choices support this point. Women can, in some sense, be given concessions in shaping their external appearance as long as it results in a further ramification of the market and increase of profit. But on the other side, these concessions still work within the current power structure of Chinese society and therefore help to sustain it. The freedom brought by consumption veils the power to discipline the female body. Women's longing for

ingratiating themselves with men will inevitably lead to assure their subordination to the latter. Women do not have a real space to voluntarily create their own images and their empowerment has become the commodity manipulated by both consumption and patriarchal ideology, to which women's resistance might exist at micro-level to enable people to change their consciousness of gender, but not at macro-level to subvert gender roles (Andrews & Talbot, 2000).

Returning to makeover themed media, the personalised and assimilated nature of body maintenance likewise exemplifies a superficial freedom and immanent imprisonment. According to Heller (2006a), the makeover theme can be regarded as the twin virtues of 'unrealized desire for belonging': self-realisation within a consumer culture would inevitably lead to conformity to cultural ideas. The 'use value' of the media for its audience itself squarely reflects the probability of conformity – for example, to fulfil the requirement of being fashionable, one must look like everyone else. The nature of this type of media has nothing to do with questioning the risk and insecurity that has been brought by the social transformation; instead, it assists people to adapt to the situation that everyone should confront in daily life.

In addition to all the above, women's subjective consciousness in China is still at stake. Views on women's liberation issues in modern China, have predominantly been expressed through official discourses while the self-awareness of real Chinese women has lagged behind (Zhai, 2006). Equality propagated in policy documents does not necessarily lead to equality in real life. The struggle for feminist goals in the China's current situation is similar to that in some other socialist countries, where

'many of the political and economic issues relevant to women have been legally addressed by state feminism, but many of the social, sexual, and psychological dimensions of women's emancipation remain unexplored in formal channels' (quote Prazniak in Yang, 2011, p. 345).

Besides, there has been little spontaneity from women themselves to fill the gap left by the state, and women did not fully realise the meaning of official policies. The CWMS makeover objects, as the representatives of potential consumers, are a perfect

reflection of this. On the whole, the makeover objects of CWMS are very much invisible and remain anonymous compared with those in western fashion makeover shows: there are no pseudomonologue interviews introducing their personal background; nor are the narratives constructed in a way that reveals an individual's makeover journey. Experts or other figures are rarely challenged by the makeover objects in terms of their willingness to subject themselves to the makeover procedures. And in general, more emphasis is laid on the makeover processes than the makeover objects throughout the shows. The passivity and invisibility of the makeover objects resemble the status of the women as makeover objects in daily life. They are quiet receivers, rather than regime challengers.

In sum, though Chinese women seem to pursue their desire for a modernised look freely and with self-assurance, they are still controlled and dominated by the beauty and fashion industries, which discipline their bodies in an inconspicuous way. The enhancement of the consuming power of women cannot be identified as autonomy of the self. The eagerness to rationalise the beautification of women's bodies has to be seen in the context of profit-making of the cosmetics and fashion industries. In the process of Chinese modernisation, individuals are not only subjects that have actively participated in societal reform, but also objects that have been rehabilitated for the sake of the interests of the reform in deeper and broader level. Women and their bodies, in this sense, participate in both subjectification and objectification: while women consume they are being consumed.

6.4 Conclusion

This thesis conducts a media study of a newly developed television programme – the Chinese Women's Makeover Show. Chapter 2 demonstrates that 'Chinese Women's Makeover Shows' is a more accurate nomenclature than 'beauty and fashion programmes' for this type of shows – both the format and spirit of makeover are the essence of the shows. And then it outlines the status quo of makeover shows in China and CWMS broadcast on TV from January 2004 to January 2012. The vitality of CWMS consists mainly in the relatively 'safer' content and prevalence of online viewing. The chapter then turns to the format of the shows. It finds that 1) the

narrative structure can be interpreted in story-telling ways; 2) the presenters, guests and experts as the main TV figures of the shows use expository and interactive modes communicating with the audiences; 3) the production techniques of the shows assist in developing episodes and enhancing the televisual effect; 4) CWMS employ other forms of media, especially social media to strengthen the bond with the audiences.

Chapters 3 to 5 are concerned with the television texts of CWMS in terms of idealised femininity, self-presentation and body maintenance. Chapter 3 firstly argues that there is a tendency to have a collective recognition of Chinese beauty in contemporary Chinese culture. Specific to CWMS, the shows equate idealised femininity as featuring a V-shape face, white, flawless and smooth skin on face and body, youthfulness, sexiness with perfect body proportions. The normative beauty has roots in the Chinese tradition of female bodily aesthetics, and has also been influenced by the images circulated within the global consumer environment, commercial imperatives and gender perspectives. It is shown that with the tide of globalisation, the concept of Chinese beauty has integrated features from different cultures and nationalities, for instance, the small face from Japan or perfect body proportions from western aesthetics.

Chapter 4 studies the content on presenting the body of Chinese women in CWMS. It contends that the shows acquaint the audiences with the etiquettes, principally as regards external appearance, required for a variety of social occasions. The appropriateness of female appearance does not only represent the requirement of impression management for modern Chinese women, but also indicates the possibility that women could utilise their external looks to improve their achievement in the workplace, in social life and in relationships and the family. Beauty, in this sense, is regarded as one of the forms of personal asset that can be traded for other forms of capital. And it is in this way that Chinese women acquiesce in, or even voluntarily pursue, the disciplining of their bodies consolidated by the forces of both market economy and traditional patriarchy.

From chapter 5, it is seen that the discipline has been manifested in the shows through training in the knowledge and practices of maintaining the female body. Inextricably, it involves women's attitudes and behaviours toward consumption for their body and appearance. Firstly, the shows construct Chinese women as a group who strive for beauty and fashion. Meanwhile, they inform the female audiences of 'uncharted territories' of the body that should be taken care of, the energy- and time-saving ways of body maintenance and the particulars of how Chinese women should treat their body. Secondly, the characteristics of Chinese female consumers are reflected on the shows and the latter further contribute to shaping the former: the insight into the commodities is the major course that one should learn. The price, origin and trend of commodities all over the world are what a qualified Chinese female consumer should be familiar with. There is no indigenous Chinese fashion, but the fashionable fad is, without exception, exotic. Also, the shows make the audiences aware of the symbolic meaning of certain commodities, consumer idols such as dowagers, socialites and celebrities whom one should imitate and the possible class mobility that the commodities and styles can bring about. Thirdly, the chapter scrutinises the 'experts' as a group who have been earning reputation through the shows. Especially, the authority of the experts established by the shows has had an effect of dislocating the configurations of the beauty industry and its marketing strategies: for example, products labelled with 'experts/gurus-recommended' as a popular way of endorsement, own-brands of the experts or the brands favoured by the show-related e-commerce have taken over a share of the market from previously successful brands. They, in many ways, remodel the relationships between the merchandisers and the consumers by the intervention of the shows, the experts and guests – the narrations of the experts have become a possible way of promoting products and so on. Fourthly, the consumer-oriented content appertains to the lifestyles, or the quality of the living conditions, of contemporary Chinese people. It inevitably associates with the reality and imagined reality of social class defined in its broader context: the television texts convey people's aspirations, and at the same time they present a vision for them. Specifically, CWMS, rather than familiarising the audiences with the lifestyles of the modern middle class, portray the lifestyle that the Chinese middle class long to emulate.

Sections 6.1 to 6.3 are centred on the conclusions from chapter 3 to chapter 5, strengthen and investigate further those issues in the broader context of society in terms of the interactions between women, CWMS and the beauty industry. First of all, it scrutinises the advertising features/functions imprinted in the show: CWMS are closely linked with beauty and fashion industry on and out of the shows. The ‘before’ and ‘after’ makeover images are widely used for promotions in daily life and disseminated in the media content. The users of the shows establish a virtual community of communicating their consumptive desire through the makeover act. In addition, makeover is not only in female preserves. A growing number of men participate in the work of beauty and fashion, and men’s body images are being consumed too. On the other side, women, who have been intimately involved with beauty throughout history, now are seen to be more zealous in the transformation of externals – sometimes even beyond the reasonable range. Despite all the efforts have been made to give comprehensive study, the limitation of this thesis consists in that the receivers and users of the shows can only be glimpsed through content analysis. Thus, interested scholars are invited to contribute more to the missing empirical part of this subject.

In sum, the Chinese Women’s Makeover Show is a powerful force in constructing femininity in contemporary Chinese culture. Though their constant popularity proves the ‘use value’ of the shows for the audiences, which reveals a seemingly reciprocal state, the relationship between the shows and the audiences is not a mono-directionally manipulative one, nor does the self-adornment themed in the shows represent the free will of contemporary Chinese women. The consumption, with the freedom and individuality that it promises to bring, which has been exalted in the shows, is another form of governmentality of the female body: the proactive and passive sides of consumption are tied together. In the process of seeking beauty, women are inescapably influenced and constrained by many factors.

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Appendix I Samples of Analysis (collection)

This table includes episodes from *Queen*, *Pretty Women*, and *I am a Great Beauty* that have been used as examples through this thesis. The episodes are ordered by their appearances. The column of “Key Words” shows the keywords of the title of each episode that has been identified (see pp. 37-38). The column of “Potential Chapters/Sub-themes by Key Words” shows the result of first categorisation while “Revision by Content” shows the second. In those two columns, the chapters are abbreviated as C1-6; the results are recorded in the format of “(potential) chapters that the episode belongs - the (potential) sub-theme that the episode belongs” (the sub-themes can be referred both in pp. 37-38 and headings/sub-headings of the thesis). The entries in “Revision by Content” revise the categorisation by keywords and locate the episodes within the thesis (the entries with numbers in brackets mean where the episodes are assigned to).

Table A1.1: Data collection and categorisation

Show/Date	Episode Title	Key Words	Potential Chapters/Sub-themes by Key Words	Revision by Content
<i>Queen</i> (29/08/2012)	Can't Look Away! The Beauty Tips that Make People Stare at You 无法撇开头！让人目不转睛的美丽秘技	Stare	C4-social events; performing self	C2-general (figure 2.1) C5-cultural intermediaries (5.3.2)
<i>Queen</i> (22/06/2011)	Avoid Minefields! Fashion Slim-look T-shirt Outfit 避开地雷区！时尚显瘦T恤穿搭术	Fashion, slim	C3-body figure C5-fashion	C2-narrative structure (2.2.1)

<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (08/11/2010)	Women's Day Dance Contest '健康之友'健康热舞选拔赛	N/A	N/A	C2-narrative structure (2.2.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (03/06/2010)	Master XiaoP's Micro-blogging Fans Meeting 小 P 微博粉丝见面会	Fans Meeting	C5-cultural intermediaries	C5-cultural intermediaries C2-main figures (2.2.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (21/07/2011)	Invincible Blind-date Photogenic Make-up 相亲必胜上镜妆	Blind-date, Photogenic	C4-heterosexual relationship; performing self	C4-heterosexual relationship C2- guests of main figures (2.2.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (05/01/2011)	Have a Photogenic Face without Having Cosmetic Surgery 不用开刀也能拥有上镜脸	Photogenic, Face, Cosmetic Surgery	C3-facial shape	C2-production techniques (2.2.3) C3-facial shape
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (12/02/2012)	Love Needs to Remain Fresh as Time Goes by 爱也要历久弥新	Love, Fresh	C4-heterosexual relationship	C2-production techniques (2.2.3) C4-heterosexual relationship
<i>Queen</i> (14/10/2010)	Hair Style vs. Hair Accessories: Have a Small Fashionable V Shape Face 发型 vs. 饰品 打造时尚小 V 脸	Accessories, Small, Fashionable, V-Shape	C5-commodities; fashion C3-facial shape	C2-interactivity (2.2.4) C5-commodities; fashion C3-facial shape
<i>Pretty Women</i> (23/12/2010)	Choose the Right Accessories in Winter: Make a Perfect Small Face Instantly	Accessories, Face, Instantly	C5-commodities C3-facial shape C5-hedonism	C5-commodities C3-facial shape (3.2)

	选对冬天配件 立即创造完美小脸!			
<i>Queen</i> (23/12/2010)	Have a Small Barbie Face Overnight 一夜拥有芭比小脸	Face, Overnight	C3-facial shape C5-hedonism	C3-facial shape (3.2)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (02/06/2012)	Change Hairstyles Before Changing Faces 变脸先变发	Face	C3-facial shape	C3-facial shape (3.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (17/03/2011)	The Fatal Defects of Facial Shapes 脸型致命伤	Face	C3-facial shape	C3-facial shape (3.2) C3-Eternal Youth (3.5)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (15/09/2012)	Beauty Methods of Small Face and Big Eyes 小脸大眼美容术	Face, eyes	C3-facial shape	C3-facial shape (3.2) C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Queen</i> (11/10/2010)	The Key Shaping Parts! You Look 5kg Thinner Without Losing Weight 重点部位雕塑! 免减肥 看起来激瘦 5kg	Thinner	C3-body shape	C3-facial shape (3.2)
<i>Queen</i> (15/03/2012)	Fat Face Out: Instantly Change to Small V-shape Face by Make-up and Hairstyles 肉饼脸 out 利用妆+发 瞬间变小 V 脸	Face, Fat, Instantly	C3-facial shape C5-hedonism	C3-facial shape (3.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (04/03/2010)	Snow White's Beauty Treatment 白雪公主美容法	White	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3) C5-symbolic consumption (5.2.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (05/06/2012)	Whitening OCD: How Many Degrees of Further	Whitening	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)

	Whitening Could You be Satisfied with 美白控到底白几度才满意			
<i>Queen</i> (22/03/2012)	PS Free, Make You a White Beauty! 免修片 变白皙美人!	White	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3) C4-performing self (4.2)
<i>Queen</i> (22/03/2010)	Get Rid of Black and Chubby Base, Make You as White as Boiled Eggs 摆脱黑肉底 让你跟水煮蛋一样白泡泡	Black, Chubby	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)
<i>Queen</i> (25/05/2010)	Give You Pure Flawless White Skin 让你拥有清透无暇美白肌	Pure Flawless White	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (08/02/2012)	Fight for Zero-flaw Skin 皮肤零瑕疵大挑战	Zero-flaw	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (06/09/2010)	Give My Spotless Baby Skin Back 还我无暇婴儿肌	Spotless	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (02/03/2011)	A Woman Is Made of Water 女人是水做的	Women, Water	C3-skin	C3-skin (3.3)
<i>Queen</i> (22/02/2010)	Post Festival Vigorous Training Camp 年后超魔鬼训练营	Training	C3-body figure	C3- body figure (3.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (04/04/2011)	Get Rid of Puffiness and Lose Five Kilograms in Weight	Puffiness, Lose Weight	C3-body figure	C3- body figure (3.4)

	减掉水肿瘦十斤			
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (26/11/2011)	Weight Loss Liar Terminator 减肥谎言终结者	Weight Loss	C3-body figure	C3- body figure (3.4)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (07/04/2012)	Only Slimness No Fat 要瘦不要肉	Slimness, Fat	C3-body figure	C3- body figure (3.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (03/08/2010)	Weight Loss is a Running Battle 打场减肥持久战	Weight Loss	C3-body figure	C3- body figure (3.4)
<i>Queen</i> (16/05/2012)	Wear Out Nine-head Body and Long Legs Proportions: Super Magic Mix & Match Tips 穿出九头身长腿比例: 神奇穿搭术	Proportions, Match tips	C3- body figure C5-female consumers	C3-eternal youth (3.5)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (07/09/2010)	Female Celebrities Teach You How to be Ageless in One's 30's 女明星教你 30 岁不老术	Celebrities, Ageless	C5-consumer idols/identity mobility C3-eternal youth	C3-eternal youth (3.5)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (14/04/2012)	The Beauty Secrets of Japan Ageless Wife 日本不老仙妻的美容秘密	Japan, Ageless	C5-foreign impact C3-eternal youth	C3-eternal youth (3.5)
<i>Queen</i> (23/09/2010)	No Dryness, No Itch and No Scurf, Get Rid of the Seasonal Annoyance at One Time	N/A	N/A	C3-eternal youth (3.5)

	不干不痒不脱屑 一次 扫除换季的烦恼			
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (22/09/2012)	Jung Da Yeon is Coming! 郑多莲来啦	N/A	N/A	C3-eternal youth (3.5)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (22/07/2010)	Golden Ratio Makeover 打造黄金比例	Ratio	C3-body figure	C3-sexiness (3.6)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (08/06/2011)	Big Makeover for Flawed Girl in Summer: Rescue the A-cup Girl 夏日短版女大改造 拯 救 A 罩杯女生	Flawed, A- cup	C3-body figure	C3-sexiness (3.6)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (24/05/2010)	Cultivate Practice for the Super Sexy Waist 超性感腰腹修炼法	Sexy, Waist	C3-body figure; sexiness	C3-sexiness (3.6)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (02/05/2011)	Beautiful Legs and Tight Bottoms Training Camp 美腿翘臀训练营	Legs, Bottoms	C3- body figure; sexiness	C3-sexiness (3.6)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (16/08/2012)	Three Simple Steps Give You a Voluptuous Figure and Full Femininity 简单三招让你身材丰满 女人味十足	Simple, Voluptuous, Femininity	C5-hedonism C3-sexiness C4-heterosexual relationship	C3-sexiness (3.6) C4-heterosexual relationship
<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/04/2012)	Choose the Right Catalyst of Sexiness 选对性感催化剂	Sexiness	C3-sexiness	C3-sexiness (3.6)
<i>Queen</i> (13/12/2010)	Beautify from Head to Toe, 7 Days' Perfect Makeover Plan	Beautify	C3-general	C3-sexiness (3.6)

	从头到脚都美丽 7 日完美变身计划			
<i>Queen</i> (16/06/2009)	Money-saving Invincible Secret Techniques for Big Eyes 省钱大眼无敌密技	Money-saving, Eyes	C5-female consumers	C4
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (17/07/2011)	Upcoming Bloom of Youth: Interview Attire, Graduate Job-hunting Attire 即将绽放的青春: 面试着装、毕业求职着装	Youth, Interview, Job-hunting	C3-eternal youth C4-workplace	C4-Workplace (4.1.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (17/04/2012)	Wear Floral Prints to Have Popularity in the Workplace 碎花穿出职场好人缘	Popularity, Workplace	C4-workplace; social events	C4-workplace (4.1.1)
<i>Queen</i> (16/09/2011)	Don't be a Moron at the Office! It is Easy to Win the Boss's Heart 别当职场天兵! 搞定老板就是那么简单	Office, Win Heart	C4-workplace	C4-workplace (4.1.1)
<i>Queen</i> (16/01/2012)	Attractiveness UP! The Secrets for Beautification that Men Cannot Detect 吸引力 UP! 男人不会察觉的偷偷变美秘技	Attractiveness, Men	C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-workplace (4.1.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (17/09/2012)	Use 'Coloured' Eyes to Know People: Makeover	Workplace, Charmers	C4-workplace; social events	C4-workplace (4.1.1)

	to Become Workplace Charmers 色眼识人 打造职场万人迷			
<i>Queen</i> (26/07/2011)	Red Bombs are Coming! Master Stroke for Wedding Banquet: You Will Win Both Face and Heart 红色炸弹来啦！让你面子里子都有的婚宴绝招	Wedding, Win Face	C4-hetrosexual relationships C5-symbolic consumption C6-building dream	C4-social events (4.1.2) C6-gender (6.2)
<i>Queen</i> (05/12/2012)	Invincible Hairstyle for Important Occasions! Reveal Super Eye-catching Tips 重要场合必胜发妆！超吸睛秘技大公开	Important Occasions, Eye-catching	C4-social events; performing self	C4-social events (4.1.2)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (07/02/2010)	Wear Red to Celebrate the New Year 红红火火过大年	N/A	C4-social events	C4-social events (4.1.2)
<i>Queen</i> (14/09/2010)	My First Time! Dress up Like This that Everyone would Appraise You 我的第一次 这样打扮就能美到人人夸	Appraise	C4-workplace; social events; heterosexual relationship	C4-social events (4.1.2)
<i>Queen</i> (27/03/2012)	Girls Who Make a Good Impression are IN Right Now 好感系女孩正流行	Good Impression	C4-workplace; social events; heterosexual relationship	C4-social events (4.1.2)

<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (30/12/2012)	Hold Your Classmate Gathering Hold 住你的同学聚会	Classmate Gathering	C4- social events	C4-social events (4.1.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (07/12/2010)	Find Back the Femininity 找回缺失的女人味	Femininity	C3-general C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (09/02/2010)	Skincare Countdown for New Year 新年护肤倒计时	Skincare	C3-skin	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3) C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Queen</i> (25/06/2009)	The Good Complexion Beauty Manual for Those Not Born with Good Complexion 后天美女好气色全攻略	Good Complexion, Not Born	C3-skin C5-female consumers	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Queen</i> (29/05/2012)	Men Think Differently from You: The Most Popular Ranking List 男生跟你想的不一样 最受欢迎排行榜	Men, Popular	C4-heterosexual relationship; social events	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Queen</i> (16/02/2012)	Beautiful Subtle Technique/Beautification Schemes Give You Endless Date Offers 让你邀约不断的美丽心机术	Subtle, Date	C4-heterosexual relationship C5-fragmented body	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (12/07/2011)	Beauty Subtlety That Men Cannot Recognise 男人看不透的美人心机	Subtlety, Men	C5-female consumers C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)

<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (16/06/2012)	Unveil Models' Personal Items of Subtlety 模特心机私物大公开	Models, Subtlety	C5-consumer idols C5-female consumers	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (26/09/2011)	Are You Ready for Chasing Men? 女追男你准备好了吗?	Men	C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Queen</i> (07/09/2012)	Be the Initiative If You Love Him! Get Him Hooked 爱就要主动出击! 让他乖乖上钩	Initiative	C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (09/03/2010)	The Lost Lady War 败犬女大作战	Lost Lady	C4-heterosexual relationship	C4-heterosexual relationship (4.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (30/11/2011)	Changing Characters Starts From Eyebrows and Eyes 改变性格从眉眼做起	Characters	C4- performing self	C4-performing self (4.2)
<i>Queen</i> (15/11/2009)	Must Be Like Her! The Big Star Look That Everyone Wants to Learn 就要跟她一样! 大家都想学的大明星造型	Big Star	C5-consumer idols	C4-performing self (4.2) C5-consumer idols
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (21/03/2011)	Workplace Attire 职场着装	Workplace	C4-worlplace	C4-(4.3)
<i>Queen</i> (15/06/2012)	Beauty Tips for New Women 新好女人的美丽秘技	Tips, New Women	C5-female consumer	C5-modern women (5.1)

<i>Pretty Women</i> (09/01/2012)	It is Time to Pamper Yourself 是时候好好宠爱自己	Pamper	C5-female consumers	C5-modern women (5.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (08/01/2010)	Beauty Training 美人修炼法	Beauty, Training	General	C5-modern women (5.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (14/08/2012)	The Pointy-toes that Make You Scream 让你尖叫的时尚尖头鞋	Pointy-toes, Scream	C5-commodities; desperate women	C5- desperate women (5.1.1.)
<i>Queen</i> (13/10/2008)	Female Stars' Tips for Legs Beautification Exposed 女星美腿秘籍大公开	Female Stars, Tips, Legs	C3-body figure C5-female consumers; consumer idols	C3-body figure C5-fragmented body (5.1.2), consumer idol
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (13/08/2011)	This is Me: Zero-blind Corner Beauty 零死角美人就是我	Zero-blind Corner	C5-fragmented body	C5-fragmented body (5.1.2)
<i>Queen</i> (20/07/2010)	White Young Armpit Caring Tips 白嫩腋下保养绝招	White, Young, Armpit	C3-skin; eternal youth C5-fragmented body	C3-skin C5-fragmented body (5.1.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (05/03/2012)	Celebrities Can Be Awkward Too: Cleaning the Details 明星也尴尬 细节大扫除	Celebrities, Details	C5-consumer idols; identity mobility; fragmented body	C5-fragmented body (5.1.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (18/12/2012)	What Mirror Has Been Cheating You 镜子骗你的那些事	N/A	N/A	C5-fragmented body (5.1.2)
<i>Queen</i> (23/08/2010)	Get Rid of Sultriness – Intimate Care	Intimate Care	C5-fragmented body	C5-fragmented body (5.1.2)

	摆脱夏季闷热——女性 私密处保养			
<i>Queen</i> (01/10/2010)	Care Your Skin as Early as Possible, Worry Free When You are Old 保养要趁早 老了没烦 恼	Skin	C3-skin	C5-modern life (5.1.3) C6-gender (6.2)
<i>Queen</i> (17/11/2010)	Stay in Bed for Half an Hour More: Quick Make-up for Lazy Bones Before Leaving 多睡半小时懒人快速出 门术	Lazy	C5-hedonism	C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (07/07/2010)	Lazy Ladies Can Have Thin Waistline Too 懒美人也能拥有小蛮腰	Lazy, Thin Waistline	C5-hedonism C3-body figure	C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (10/12/2011)	Makeover Lazy Lady to Party Queen 懒女人变身 Party Queen	Lazy, Party Queen	C5-hedonism C4-social events	C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/12/2012)	Lightening Weight-loss and No Yo-yo Effect 闪电瘦身不反弹	Lightening, Weight-loss	C5-hedonism C3-body figure	C5-Chinese body C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>Queen</i> (19/01/2010)	Good News for Couch Potatoes: You Can Easily Get Thinner by Sitting There 懒人福音坐着也能轻松 瘦	Couch Potatoes, thinner	C5-hedonism C3-body figure	C5-modern life (5.1.3)

<i>Pretty Women</i> (07/12/2011)	Solve the Problem of Winter Legs in One Step 一举解决冬季腿部困扰	Legs, in One Step	C3-body figure C5-hedonism	C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (22/12/2010)	Sending Out Gifts by the End of Year: Combining the Chinese and Western 中西合璧年底礼物大派送	Gifts	C5-commodities	C5-modern life (5.1.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (18/06/2012)	Lose Three Grams in Three Days: Reveal the Super Diet Methods 三天瘦三斤超级减肥法大公开	Lose, in Three Days	C3-body figure C5-hedonism	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (10/02/2010)	Predict Your Luck in Health for Next Year 预测来年健康运	N/A	N/A	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (20/10/2011)	Chinese and Western Heat-reducing Tips in Autumn & Winter 中式西式秋冬去火妙招	Chinese and Western	C5-Chinese/Eastern body	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/02/2010)	Beauty Upgrade 美丽大升级	Beauty	C3-general	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Queen</i> (18/01/2010)	Needle Free, No Large Expense, You Can Have the Perfect Face Shape by Using Make-up 免打针 免花大钱 靠化妆就能有完美脸型	Perfect Face Shape	C3-facial shape	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (19/11/2012)	Traditional Chinese Medicine to Rescue! The	Chinese	C3-skin	C3-skin

	Spots that Entangle Women for a Lifetime 中医解救! 纠缠女人一生的斑		C5-Chinese/Eastern body	C5-Chinese/Eastern body (5.1.4)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (23/08/2011)	Summer Vacation Discount Manual 暑期打折攻略	Discount Manual	C5-smart consumers	C5-smart consumers (5.2.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (12/08/2010)	Small Expenditure, Big Beauty 花小钱大美丽	Small Expenditure, Big Beauty	C5-smart consumers	C5-smart consumers (5.2.1)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (27/12/2010)	Makeover to a Party Queen with One Hundred Yuan 百元打造 party queen	Party Queen, with One Hundred Yuan	C4-social events C5-smart consumers	C4-social events C5-smart consumers (5.2.1)
<i>Queen</i> (11/09/2012)	Reveal the Itinerary of Smart Shopping Abroad 出国聪明扫货路线大公开	Smart, Abroad	C5-smart consumers; foreign	C5-smart consumers (5.2.1)
<i>Queen</i> (16/02/2010)	They Are Wearing the Same Clothes: Female Celebrities' Unhappy Experiences 女明星超不爽撞衫经验史	Female Celebrities	C5-consumer idols	C5-fashion (5.2.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (14/12/2010)	Use Shining Gold Colour, Change the Plain look 巧用闪闪金改变平庸相	Plain look	C5-commodities; identity mobility	C5-fashion (5.2.2)

<i>Queen</i> (03/07/2012)	The Most Fashionable Goods From Japan and Korean! Reveal the Novelties 日韩最夯! 新鲜货大公开	Fashionable, Japan, Korean, Novelties	C5-fashion; foreign; commodities	C5-fashion (5.2.2); foreign; commodities
<i>Pretty Women</i> (28/09/2010)	Japanese vs European New Make-up 日系欧系最新彩妆大PK	Japanese, European, Make-up	C5-foreign, commodities	C5-fashion (5.2.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (08/06/2010)	Global Street Snaps manual 全球街拍全攻略	Global, Street Snaps	C5-foreign C4-performing self	C5-fashion (5.2.2) C4-performing self
<i>Pretty Women</i> (26/03/2009)	Look Grotesque, Wear Gloriously 见怪穿不怪	N/A	N/A	C5-fashion (5.2.2)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (29/09/2012)	What You Should Bring During National Day Holiday Trip 国庆出游带什么	Holiday Trip	C5-foreign	C5-consuming foreign products (5.2.3)
<i>Queen</i> (03/12/2010)	Only Stars Can Marry into Rich and Powerful Families? Grasp the Golden Luck in Romance that Makes You Enter the Door of Riches 明星才能嫁豪门? 掌握金桃花 让你走进富贵门	Stars, Romance	C5-consumer idols C4-heterosexual relationship	C5-consumer idols (5.2.3) C4-heterosexual relationship

<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/05/2011)	Reveal Celebrities' Weight Loss Methods 明星减肥大法大公开	Celebrities, Weight Loss	C5-consumer idols C3-body figure	C5-consumer idols (5.2.3)
<i>Queen</i> (30/10/2008)	Tragic Stories of Female Celebrities' Cosmetic Surgeries 女星整形血泪史大公开	Tragic Stories, Female Celebrities	C5-identity mobility; consumer idols	C5-consumer idols (5.2.3)
<i>Queen</i> (26/09/2010)	Entry Level Classics: the Outfits that Make You Over to Socialites and Dowagers 入门经典 打造名媛贵妇行头	Classics, Socialites, Dowagers	C5-consumer idols; identity mobility	C5- consumer idols; identity mobility (5.2.3)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (25/04/2011)	Make Over Middle-age Women into Fashionable Dowagers 中年妇女变身时尚贵妇	Dowagers	C5-consumer idols; identity mobility	C5-identity mobility (5.2.3)
<i>Queen</i> (18/08/2011)	Learn Quickly! Socialites and Dowagers are Using These Secretly 快学起来! 名媛贵妇私下都偷偷用这款	Socialites, Dowagers	C5-consumer idols; identity mobility	C5-identity mobility (5.2.3)
<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (21/04/2012)	Net Goddesses Show Their Bare Faces and Scare Off Otakus – Before and After Make-up PK 网络女神素颜亮相雷翻宅男 妆前妆后大 PK	Goddesses	C5-consumer idols	C5-cultural intermediaries (5.4)

<i>I am a Great Beauty</i> (24/03/2012)	How to cure early aging symptom 谨防初老症	Aging	C3-eternal youth	C3-skin C3-eternal youth C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (14/12/2011)	Make Simple Dresses into Party Styles 简单洋装打造派对造型	Party	C4-social events	C4-social events C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (10/05/2012)	Lao XU Teaches You Play with Office High Heels 老徐教你玩转职场高跟鞋	High Heels	C5-consumer idols; commodities	C5-consumer idols, commodities C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (19/06/2012)	Heat Reduction Recipes for Hot Days 大热天去火有妙方	Heat Reduction	C5-Chinese/Eastern body	C5-Chinese/Eastern body C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (06/10/2011)	High Heels Fetish Girls Contest 高跟鞋恋物女大对决	High Heels	C5-commodities	C5-commodities C6-advertisement (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (04/05/2010)	Show Your Love Before the Wedding 示爱请在婚礼前	Wedding	C4-hetrosexual relationships C6-building dream	C4-hetrosexual relationships C6-building dream (6.1)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/01/2010)	Men's Face, Women Take Care 男人面子女人顾	Men	C6-gender	C6-gender (6.2)
<i>Pretty Women</i> (11/09/2009)	Marry the Right Man Like the Female Celebrities Did 像明星一样嫁对郎	Marry, Celebrities	C4-hetrosexual relationships C5-consumer idols; identity	C6-gender (6.2)

			mobility; beauty as currency	
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Appendix II List of television programmes

This appendix is composed of four tables that list the majority of the television programmes used for the analysis of this research (those mentioned as examples to categorise the reality show or to support specific arguments are not included here). The first table is a list of CWMS including those broadcast online. The second table is a list of makeover shows in China but with themes other than beauty and fashion. Specifically, this table is divided into two parts with the second part focused on the theme of the cosmetic surgery. The third table lists influential variety shows which are contemporaneous with the booming of CWMS and are pertinent to the latter. The fourth table lists the makeover shows in the UK and the US that are closely related to CWMS in one or more aspects. The first two tables are sequenced by the debut year of each show (those that started from the same year are sequenced alphabetically) in attempt to present the development of CWMS and other Chinese makeover shows. The other two tables are sequenced alphabetically. The column of ‘Theme of Transformation’ in Table A2.2 corresponds to Heller’s (2007) categorisation of the shows with makeover themes (quoted in the footnote on p. 9 of this thesis) with necessary revision. And the column of ‘Theme of Transformation’ in Table A2.4 uses Yin & Lu’s (2007) categorisation of the reality shows as quoted on p. 32 of this thesis in addition to Heller’s.

Table A2.1: Chinese Women’s Makeover Shows

Programme	<i>Pinyin</i>	Channel/Web	Year
Queen	<i>Nüren wo zuida</i>	TVBS	2000-Present
Pretty Women	<i>Piaoliang nüren</i>	Qinghai Satellite TV	2004
Beauty Lecture Room	<i>Meili da jiangtang</i>	Beijing Satellite TV 3 (Science and Education)	2006-2008
Becoming a Butterfly	<i>Hua die</i>	Tianjin Satellite TV	2006

Pretty Women	<i>Meili qiao jiaren</i>	The Travel Channel; Heilongjiang Satellite TV	2006-Present
Wear and Pair	<i>Meili pei pei</i>	Southeast Satellite TV	2006-2009
Fashion Billboard: Perfect Modelling Squad	<i>Shishang fengyun bang zhi wanmei zaoxing tuan</i>	CETV-3 (China Entertainment TV) SHETV (Shanghai Education TV)	2007-2009
Becoming a Butterfly	<i>Hua die</i>	Qinghai Satellite TV	2008
Fashion Star Experts	<i>Shishang xing daren</i>	Ningxia Satellite TV	2009-2011
Beauty	<i>Meiren wo zuida</i>	Hubei Satellite TV	2009-2011
I am a Great Beauty	<i>Wo shi da meiren</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	2010-Present
Keep Up with Fashion	<i>Xiang shang kanqi</i>	The Travel Channel	2010-2012
Crazy for Beauty	<i>Wo wei meili kuang</i>	Jiangsu Satellite TV/Channel Young of Shanghai Media	2010-2011
Pan with Fun	<i>Yue tao yue kaixin</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	2010-Present
Wanna Be a Dream Girl	<i>Jiu xiang zhuang meinü</i>	ku6.com	2010-2013
Love You, Love Beauty/New Queen	<i>Ai ni ai meili /Xin nüren wo zuida</i>	Channel Young of Shanghai Media Group	2011-Present
Having Fashion	<i>Gou shishang</i>	CCTV 2	2011-Present
Just Have My Heart in Beauty	<i>Jiushi ai piaoliang</i>	Dragon TV of Shanghai Media Group	2011-2012

Beauty Mafia of tonight	<i>Jinye nüren bang</i>	Shanxi Satellite TV/ Funshion Media Company	2011- 2013
Perfect Beauty Mafia	<i>Weimei nüren bang</i>	China Entertainment TV	2012

Table A2.2: Other makeover shows in China

Programme	<i>Pinyin</i>	Channel	Dates	Theme of Transformation
Trading Spaces	<i>Jiaohuan kongjian</i>	CCTV-2	2005-Present	Private space of the home
Housewife Swap	<i>Jiaohuan zhufu</i>	Shandong Qilu TV	2007	Intimacy, heterosexual courtship, and family life
My Heart's Home	<i>Wo de xin jia</i>	The Travel Channel	2007	Private space of the home
Space Movement	<i>Kongjian da nuoyi</i>	Hangzhou Life Channel	2008	Private space of the home
Varied Headliner Show	<i>Baibian daka xiu</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	2012-Present	Celebrity identity
<i>On Cosmetic Surgery</i>				
Programme	<i>Pinyin</i>	Channel	Dates	
Angel Loves Beauty	<i>Tianshi ai meili</i>	Hunan Economics Channel	2005	
Cinderella and the Swan	<i>Hui guniang yu tian'e</i>	Shandong Qilu TV	2006	
Beauty Dream Works	<i>Meili meng gongchang</i>	the Scientific & Education Channel	2007-2008	

		of Nanjing Satellite TV	
Butterfly Morph: New Life	<i>Diebian: xinsheng</i>	Chengdu City Life Channel	2007-2012
Charming 2007: Beauty Winner	<i>Meili2007: meili yingjia</i>	Liaoning Satellite TV	2007
New Beauty Contract	<i>Meili xin yue</i>	Guangdong Public Channel	2007

Table A2.3: Variety shows as in Chinese context

Programme	Pinyin	Channel	Dates
Day Day Up	<i>Tian tian xiang shang</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	2008-Present
Guoguang Group Help	<i>Guoguang bang bangmang</i>	Sanlih E-Television	2005-Present
Happy Camp	<i>Kuaile da ben ying</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	1997-Present
Kangxi Coming	<i>Kangxi lai le</i>	CTiTVch36	2004-Present
Super Girls	<i>Chaoji nüsheng</i>	Hunan Satellite TV	2004-2006
The Generation Show	<i>Niandai xiu</i>	Shenzhen Satellite TV	2011-Present
Throw an Egg at a Rock	<i>Jidan peng shitou</i>	Star Chinese Channel	1991-1995
Voice China	<i>Zhongguo hao shengyin</i>	Zhejiang Satellite TV	2012-Present
You are the One	<i>Fei cheng wu rao</i>	Jiangsu Satellite TV	2010-Present

Table A2.4: Makeover shows in the global context

Programme	Channel	Dates	Theme of Transformation
Celebrity Come Dine With Me	Channel 4	2005- Present	Life skills/ Identity (celebrity vs. ordinary)

Glamour Girl	NBC	1953-1954	Beauty/Misery/Identity (celebrity vs. ordinary)
Queer Eye for the Straight Guy	Bravo	2003-2007	Life skills
The Apprentice	BBC	2004- Present	Professional and business
The Celebrity Apprentice	NBC	2007- Present	Professional and business/Identity (celebrity vs. ordinary)
The Swan	Fox	2004	Cosmetic surgery or self- discipline
Trading Spaces	TLC & Discovery Home	2000-2008	Private space of the home
Wife Swap	Channel 4	2003-2009	Identity exchange/ Intimacy, heterosexual courtship, and family life
What Not to Wear	TLC	2003-2013	Life skills