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**Filozofická fakulta**

**Katedra asijských studií**

**MAGISTERSKÁ DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE**

**Medical Aesthetic Marketing in Chinese New Media**

Marketing estetické medicíny v čínských nových médiích

**Olomouc 2016**

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Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta

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**TÉMA ČESKY:**

Marketing esteticke medicíny v čínských nových médiích

**TÉMA ANGLICKY:**

Medical Aesthetic Marketing in Chinese New Media

**VEDOUcí PRÁCE:**

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**ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:**

Cílem práce je na základě analýzy vybraných článků z čínského internetu a sociálních sítí popsat specifika čínského marketingu v oblasti esteticke medicíny, čínského ideálu krásy a procedur, jejichž pomocí má být tohoto ideálu dosaženo. 1. Zmapování trhu esteticke medicíny v Číně. 2. Sběr článků (čínská sociální síť Wechat). 3. Kvalitativní analýza získaných článků (čínská specifika, zahraniční vlivy, kulturní aj. aspekty, fotografie "před" a "po"). 4. Vyvození závěrů.

**SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:**

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JOHANSSON, Perry. White Skin, Large Breasts: Chinese Beauty Product Advertising as Cultural Discourse. China Information. Autumn/Winter 1998, Vol. XIII, Nos. 2/3.


Podpis studenta:



Datum:

8. 6. 2016

Podpis vedoucího práce:



Datum:

19. 05. 2016.

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla veškeré použité prameny a literaturu.

Olomouc, 21. 6. 2016

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## **Anotace**

Cílem práce je na základě kvalitativní obsahové analýzy vybraných článků z oblasti marketingu estetické medicíny v čínských nových médiích popsat jeho specifika a také specifika čínského ideálu krásy, který je tímto marketingem prosazován, a procedur, které mají sloužit k jeho dosažení. Analýza se zabývá otázkami obsahového zaměření marketingu čínských estetických klinik, způsobu, jakým marketing vybízí k podstoupení estetických procedur, jednotlivými aspekty čínského ideálu krásy, postojem čínské společnosti k péči o pleť a tělo, zahraničními vlivy a obrazovou stránkou marketingu estetické medicíny, kterou představují fotografie „před“ a „po“. Kvalitativní obsahová analýza byla doplněna metodou zúčastněného pozorování, která posloužila k dokreslení celkového kontextu a pomohla k určení témat zkoumaných v obsahové analýze marketingových článků.

Klíčová slova: estetická medicína, marketing, ideál krásy, čínská společnost, kvalitativní obsahová analýza, nová média, WeChat

The aim of this thesis is to use the qualitative content analysis of a collection of articles from the field of medical aesthetic marketing in Chinese new media to describe the specifics of this marketing and also the specifics of the Chinese ideal of beauty promoted by this marketing, as well as the procedures that are aimed at achieving this ideal. The analysis is concerned with the general direction of the marketing of Chinese medical aesthetic clinics, the way marketing is encouraging customers to undertake the aesthetic treatments, the different aspects of Chinese beauty ideal, the attitude of the Chinese society towards skin and body care, foreign influence and also the visual aspect of the medical aesthetic marketing, represented by the “before and after” pictures. Qualitative content analysis was supplemented by the participant observation method, used to put the results of the analysis into a wider context and to help determine the topics to be covered during the analysis of the content of marketing articles.

Key words: aesthetic medicine, marketing, beauty ideal, Chinese society, qualitative content analysis, new media, WeChat

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Jozsef Szakos for the support and inspiration he gave me for my research. My sincere thanks also goes to my former English teacher Timothy Jones for helping me with the language proofreading.

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## Note

In this thesis, “China” means the People’s Republic of China and the term “Chinese market” includes neither Taiwan nor Hong Kong, even though all these markets are interrelated and the Chinese medical aesthetic market is in many cases influenced by the other two territories. However, the marketing of each territory has its specifics (both in language and content) and this thesis is concerned only with one of them.

The thesis uses the term “West”, “Western” or “Western countries” to describe what is related to the market and territory of North America and Europe. It is used in the same context where Chinese language would use the term *xifang* 西方.

Chinese words in the text are written in *pinyin* without tone marks and are written in italics. The Chinese simplified characters are attached next to the term in *pinyin* when it occurs in the text for the first time. In the analysis, specific terms are given both in *pinyin* and in characters. When sentences or phrases from the articles analysed are used, only the English translation and the version in characters are provided. The Chinese terms connected to the field of medical aesthetics which are used in the text are also listed in alphabetical order in the Appendix.



## **Introduction**

Beauty ideals vary in time and across different cultures. What we perceive as beautiful depends on personal taste and subjective perception. However, it might be possible to define a certain “mainstream” beauty standard which would represent the general taste of a certain group of people at a certain epoch. This ideal of perfect beauty serves as the driving force behind a new industry, developing particularly rapidly in recent years – the medical aesthetic industry.

The aesthetic market has been growing both globally and particularly in China, where the growth is one of the results of the economic development of the country. Medical aesthetic clinics and beauty salons have mushroomed in all major Chinese cities and their advertisements have flooded the public space. With new surgery and treatment techniques emerging both internationally and also specifically on the East Asian market, this industry segment is experiencing a period of dynamic development.

To a great extent, the aesthetic market is driven by fashion. Beauty advertising is acting as an important stimulus for increasing the demand for cosmetic and surgical procedures. Therefore, analysis of the marketing of medical aesthetic industry might serve as an important insight into the field, showing both what kind of beauty ideal the industry is promoting and how the industry is related to the thinking of Chinese society. With the aesthetic industry steadily developing and influencing the lives of a growing number of people, this topic is becoming more and more important, as it reveals a new aspect of the modern Chinese society.

The author of this thesis has had the opportunity to experience the functioning of the Chinese medical aesthetic industry on different levels and become aware of an important aspect of the contemporary consumerist society in China. The aesthetic market in China is an embodiment of the wealth of a certain group within the Chinese society, whose members see beauty care as an indispensable part of their consumption. The aesthetic market also represents the desire of the members of emerging Chinese middle class to further elevate their position in society. This realization has led the author to decide to study this topic deeper and to understand more about the character of the industry. For reasons mentioned

above, study of the marketing seems to be a good basis on which to build further research, which might follow this thesis.

The aim of this research is to describe the specifics of online Chinese medical aesthetic marketing, the way it communicates with its consumers and the message and beauty ideal it brings to them. It will be concerned only with procedures that lead to changing somebody's appearance for purely subjective aesthetic reasons; treatments with medical indication (for example reconstructive surgery) will not be discussed in the text.

The Chinese mobile social media platform WeChat has been chosen as the main source of data for analysis due to its dominant position among the Chinese new media. A qualitative analysis of textual and visual content of WeChat marketing will be performed in order to achieve this aim, as both text and pictures serve as an important tool in aesthetic marketing. Examples of the visual content are given in the Appendix.

The thesis will be divided into seven parts, with the first one briefly introducing the existing research in the field of aesthetic medicine and related topics. The introduction to Chinese medical aesthetic market and the new media in China will follow, in order to have a background for the analysis that will form the main part of the thesis. Before we start with the actual analysis, the research method will be presented. As for the analysis, it will be divided into six parts, covering different aspects of the marketing, namely the general content of the marketing, the encouragement for aesthetic procedures, Chinese markers of beauty, Chinese culture, foreign influence and "before and after"<sup>1</sup> pictures. The findings will then be summarized in Discussion and the final part of the paper will be the Conclusion. Pictures illustrating some of the topics discussed in the analysis can be found at the end of the thesis in the Appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis also uses the term "B&A pictures" in the text.

# 1 Terminology

For a deeper understanding of the research topic, it is necessary to define some basic terms before we start the actual analysis. The most general Chinese term for aesthetic procedures is the word *meirong* 美容, which is usually translated as “improve one’s looks” (*mei* meaning “beautiful”, *rong* in the meaning of “appearance”). The aesthetic (or beauty) industry is often called simply *meirong hangye* 美容行业. The *meirong* industry can be further divided into two fields, namely *yiliao meirong* 医疗美容 (medical aesthetics), abbreviated as *yi-mei* 医美, and *shenghuo meirong* 生活美容 (beauty salons)<sup>2</sup>, the first one being more high-end. In the English names of the Chinese hospitals and clinics we can often see the word “cosmetology”, or “medical cosmetology”, which is a slightly inadequate translation of the word *meirong*, which covers also treatments that cannot be counted as pure cosmetology. This paper uses the term “medical aesthetics” or “medical aesthetic market” as an English equivalent to the Chinese term *yiliao meirong*. This term covers the specialized clinics performing medical treatments to improve customers’ appearance. As the thesis will be concerned mainly with private medical facilities, the English term “medical aesthetic clinic” will be used in the text instead of the term “cosmetology hospital” used in China.

The field of *meirong* covers not only the regular skin care, but also different levels of non-invasive (*wuchuang* 无创), minimally-invasive (*weichuang* 微创) or even invasive procedures, such as aesthetic surgery. When talking about aesthetic surgery, the term is usually specified as *zhengxing meirong* 整形美容, where *zhengxing* stands for “plastic surgery” (the full term being *zhengxing waike* 整形外科). While “plastic surgery” (or “reconstructive surgery”) is focused on correction of facial and body defects (caused by disease, burns or other factors), the procedures aimed at improving somebody’s appearance without medical indication are usually labelled as “cosmetic surgery” (also called “aesthetic surgery”) and are elective. (see e.g. Wen 2010: 5, Gilman 1999: 9) The term *zhengxing meirong* can be understood as equivalent to the term “cosmetic surgery” used in Western

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<sup>2</sup> In Chinese language, the loanword “spa” is often used for this type of establishment, even though this translation is incorrect (spa being a location with spring water rich in minerals offering health treatments).

research. This paper uses the term “cosmetic surgery” or “aesthetic surgery” for the surgical procedures aimed toward permanently changing a person’s appearance.

Apart from cosmetic surgery, there are other less invasive procedures available on the market today, the most popular being included in the Chinese term *weizhengxing* 微整形, which is sometimes translated as “micro-plastic surgery”<sup>3</sup>. This term covers a wide range of procedures including Botox<sup>4</sup> (*roudusu* 肉毒素) injections (*zhushhe* 注射), dermal fillers (*tianchongji* 填充剂)<sup>5</sup>, lasers (*jiguang* 激光), radiofrequency (*shepin* 射频), ultrasound (*chaosheng* 超声) and other treatments. The character *wei* 微 suggests that these procedures lead to only slight changes in appearance and are less invasive than regular surgery. We will see later in the analysis that the *weizhengxing* occupies a notable portion of the aesthetic market and aesthetic marketing in contemporary China. As the term “micro-plastic surgery” is not very precise, given that the procedures are not actual “surgery”, the Chinese term *weizhengxing* will be used in the text of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “micro-plastic surgery” should not be confused with “microsurgery”, a type of surgery which requires operating microscope. The ambiguity of the term is one of the reasons why the term *weizhengxing* will be preferred in this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Botox is the commercial name for botulinum toxin type A that will be discussed in the later parts of this thesis. As the term “Botox” is widely used, it will also be used in this text.

<sup>5</sup> The term “dermal filler” is actually interconnected with the previous term “injections” (also the term “injectables” will appear in the text later), as fillers are injected into the face to help restore its volume and make it more full.

## 2 Literature Review

The rapidly developing market of aesthetic medicine has attracted the attention of both its consumers and researchers in recent years. With China being the most populous country and at the same time one of the fastest developing economies in the world, it is not surprising that also the Chinese beauty industry has also become a popular object of scholarly research. Among the most comprehensive works on this topic, two dissertations should be named: *Aching for the Modern Body: Chinese Women's Consumption of Cosmetic Surgery* written by Luo Wei in 2008 and particularly *Cosmetic Surgery in Post-Mao China: State Power, Market Discourse, and the Remaking of the Body* submitted by Wen Hua at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2010. As we can see from their titles, both of these papers are concerned mostly with the cosmetic surgery, i.e. invasive procedures such as blepharoplasty<sup>6</sup>, rhinoplasty<sup>7</sup> or breast augmentation surgery<sup>8</sup>.

Luo (2008) discusses the topic of cosmetic surgery from the perspective of feminism and consumerism. In her dissertation she addresses several topics, including the construction of beauty ideals by the cosmetic industry and Chinese women's motivation to undergo cosmetic surgery. She looks at the websites of the Chinese hospitals and clinics to analyse how their discourse portrays the female body and describes the Chinese ideal of beauty. She further explores the reasons that lead women to decide for cosmetic surgery, analysing the stories of ten real life cases of patients who have undergone aesthetic procedures.

Wen (2010) puts the cosmetic surgery in China into wider social and historical perspective. She presents an outline of the history of cosmetic surgery in China and performs an extensive research of the reasons that make women opt for cosmetic surgery, one of her respondents being the first “artificial beauty” (*renzao meinü* 人造美女) in China named

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<sup>6</sup> Blepharoplasty (*yanpi shoushu* 眼皮手术) is also called eyelid surgery, it is a type of surgery to change and improve the eyelids. The double eyelid surgery (*shuangyanpi shoushu* 双眼皮手术) (used to create a crease in the upper eyelid) performed in China and other Asian countries, is sometimes also called Asian blepharoplasty, the term being first used by Chen (1987: 135). While in the West blepharoplasty is considered a facial rejuvenation procedure, fighting against the signs of aging, in China the reason for surgery is purely aesthetic. It is also interesting to note, that Chinese discourse generally uses only the term *shuangyanpi shoushu* (“double eyelid surgery”) and very rarely the neutral term blepharoplasty or “eyelid surgery”.

<sup>7</sup> Rhinoplasty (*longbi* 隆鼻) is nose surgery, aimed at changing the shape and size of the nose to improve the harmony in facial contours.

<sup>8</sup> Breast augmentation (*longxiong* 隆胸) is a general term covering different techniques aimed at breast enlargement/lifting.

Hao Lulu 郝璐璐. She covers a variety of topics including double-eyelid surgery or the controversial “leg-stretching surgery”<sup>9</sup>.

Among the other works concerned with the topic of cosmetic surgery and related procedures, the paper by Davies and Han (2011) is particularly interesting in relation to the topic of this thesis. The authors discuss how the use of modern digital technology in Korea (especially the Internet) helps the normalization of cosmetic surgery in a country where digital communication is highly developed. Furthermore, they put a connection between the rising number of Internet users in China and the spreading of Korean culture and Korean cosmetic surgery among Chinese consumers. Wang (2015) studies the cosmetic surgery in South Korea in its historical and cultural context. The paper explains some of the most common aesthetic procedures in South Korea that can be traced also in Chinese marketing. Wang argues that the aesthetic industry in South Korea is driven by advertising, K-pop culture and also the desire to show superiority over the Japanese (2015: 25).

One topic that keeps appearing in academic papers is the “Westernization” of the Chinese beauty ideal. Many authors argue that the popularity of facial features such as double eyelids, high-bridged nose and fair skin is caused by the “import” of the Western ideal of beauty to China. According to Brown (2008), features currently pursued in China as ideal are actually the “antithesis of Asian physiognomy”. Brown further states that Chinese women adopt cosmetic surgery to imitate Western women. This type of thinking is quite common both in Western media news reports and in Western academic works. Alibhai-Brown (2010) from the *Independent* speaks about “de-orientalization” of the eyes of women in East Asia, Dr. Youn (2013) in a special report for *CNN* states that the facial surgeries performed in Asia are mostly considered as “Westernizing”, in particular the rhinoplasty and blepharoplasty. Youn expresses doubts about the claims of Asian plastic surgeons, who say that the goal of cosmetic surgery is to achieve a more attractive look, not to suppress ethnic facial features. Jiaravanon (2011) states that the Caucasian standard of beauty is set in Asia by the faces of Caucasian models on billboards and in magazines. A similar view is held by Zhang (2013) who says that Western models used in Asian

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<sup>9</sup> The Chinese term for “leg-stretching surgery” is either *duangu zenggao shu* 断骨增高术 (with the literal meaning “breaking the bones to get taller”) or *zhiti yanchang shu* 肢体延长术 (“limb lengthening surgery”). This painful high-risk surgery has now been strictly banned in China if performed for aesthetic reasons.

advertising set an “unrealistic Eurocentric ideal of beauty”, making Asian women use surgical methods to achieve this ideal.

A popular topic in the research of beauty ideals is skin-whitening, typical not only for China but also for many other Asian countries and other geographical regions. Pan (2013) analyses advertisements for skin-whitening products in Taiwanese and Chinese magazines and links them to the local cultural and historical context. Li *et al.* (2008) analyse the skin lightening products advertisements of four different Asian markets: India, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. Although the Chinese market is not among them, the authors include it in the context of their analysis. Johansson (1998) discusses two features that are often said to have origins in the Western culture: pale skin and large breasts. He describes the white skin ideal as indigenous to China but acknowledges the Western roots of the ideal of large breasts.

Kaw (1993) performed an ethnographic research project to explore the reasons leading Asian American women to eyelid and nose surgery, which she sees as influenced by racial and also gender ideologies. These two types of cosmetic surgery procedures, often labelled as creating Western facial features, are the most popular ones among Asian customers and many scholars aim their research in this particular direction. For example Motaparathi (2010) is concerned with the ethnic and ethical aspects of the double eyelid surgery among Asians.

Several authors did research on the perception of beauty and one’s own body among different groups of Chinese informants. Staley and Zhan (2011) compared the views of female Chinese students living in China and in the United States in order to see the influence of living in a Western cultural environment on the perception of beauty. They found that the group living in the United States puts more emphasis on the appearance of the whole body, not just the face, which is otherwise prioritized by the Chinese. Zhang (2012) further explored this topic through thirteen in-depth interviews with college women in mainland China, identifying not only the ideal for different physical features (oval facial shape, fair skin and others) but also the importance of *qizhi* 气质, similar in sense to “inner beauty”.

We can notice that cosmetic surgery aiming at a permanent change of a person's appearance plays an important role in most of these works. Several authors discuss the Chinese beauty ideals in their historical and cultural context, other papers are concerned with the perception of beauty. However, none of these works discusses the medical aesthetic market in its whole, including the non-invasive procedures aimed at simple long-term maintenance of one's looks. These will be a major point of concern of the analysis that will follow in the later parts of this thesis.



### 3 Aesthetic Market in China

During the era of Mao Zedong, cosmetic surgery, cosmetics and commercial advertising were all basically banned in China. (see Luo 2008: 12-13; Wen 2010: 87-91; Hung and Li 2006: 11) The aesthetic market has only started developing in China after the economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping. The dramatic development of aesthetic medicine is particularly visible if we compare the current situation with the Mao era which attempted to suppress femininity. (Wang 2012: 40-41)

The emergence of aesthetic medicine as a field that is very consumption- and individual-oriented can serve as one of the markers pointing at the transformation of the economy towards a market economy. (Gilman 1999: 106) However, the aesthetic procedures were still quite rare even ten years ago. (Wang 2016) This has started changing rapidly in recent years. In 2015, there were approximately ten thousand medical aesthetic clinics in China with a yearly income of 400 billion yuan. (Zhao 2015) Recently, the aesthetic procedures have become one of the most popular ways to spend discretionary income, together with real estate, cars and travelling. (LaFraniere 2011)

Even though precise figures are unknown, China is generally considered to be one of the largest medical aesthetic and cosmetic surgery markets in the world, surpassed only by the United States and Brazil. The ISAPS (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons) survey for the year 2011 estimates that a total of 415 thousand surgical procedures and 636 thousand nonsurgical procedures were performed that year in China. According to the same survey, China was among the top five countries in the world in all the procedures that were studied, both surgical and nonsurgical, and the country with the largest number of cases of rhinoplasty. The most popular procedures were Botox and hyaluronic acid<sup>10</sup> injections, the most popular surgery was lipoplasty<sup>11</sup>, followed by breast augmentation surgery and rhinoplasty. These results might have been influenced by the research method used by ISAPS, working with estimates rather than precise figures.

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<sup>10</sup> Two different Chinese translations are used for hyaluronic acid, the one more frequently used is *boniaosuan* 玻尿酸, the other is *toumingzhisuan* 透明质酸. Hyaluronic acid is a popular filler (for chin, forehead, temples and other facial parts) and will be further introduced in the second part of this paper.

<sup>11</sup> Lipoplasty is also called liposuction (*xizhi* 吸脂 or *chouzhi* 抽脂). Lipoplasty is used to remove excess fat deposits and improve body contours. It can be used on different body areas with unwanted fat.

According to other sources, among the surgical procedures the Asian blepharoplasty, rhinoplasty and jaw reshaping (*gai lianxing shoushu* 改脸型手术) are the most popular ones. (La Franiere 2011, Gilman 1999: 107) However, in recent years the aesthetic market is turning towards minimally invasive and non-invasive procedures, which have the potential to attract a wider range of customers. A total of 3.6 million nonsurgical procedures were performed in China in 2015 and the number is supposed to more than double by 2018. (Zhao 2015)

The aesthetic market in China can be divided into three different levels: public hospitals (*gongli yiyuan* 公立医院), privately run clinics (*minyong yiyuan* 民营医院) and beauty salons (*meirongyuan* 美容院). While beauty salons are usually supposed to be responsible only for cosmetology procedures such as skin care, massage or hair removal, the real situation is often slightly different. It is quite common that the beauty salons also perform procedures that should theoretically be the domain of the medical clinics only. (LaFraniere 2011, Gilman 1999: 107, Wang 2016) This is not just a Chinese issue, it has been reported by doctors abroad as well. (see Atiyeh, Rubeiz and Hayek 2008: 832) These procedures include treatments using non-invasive or even minimally invasive medical aesthetic devices and in some cases also cosmetic surgery. (Wen 2010: 98) Performing surgical treatments in the conditions of beauty salons is considered to be quite risky and there have been cases of such procedures having gone wrong. (Wen 2010: 126-127) Moreover, the Chinese law allows only licensed hospitals and clinics to perform surgical procedures. (Luo 2012: 76)

In public hospitals there is usually a specialized laser centre offering treatments for VIP clients. Apart from aesthetic treatments, the public hospitals generally also offer the treatment of regular medical conditions and are involved in clinical research. Privately run clinics can either be smaller scale facilities run by individual doctors, or, in most cases, large-scale clinics offering comprehensive care ranging from dermatology to dentistry<sup>12</sup>. In China, these clinics usually belong to one of a number of chains (brands), with each brand playing an important role either on the local regional market or even in the whole country. These clinics are at the same time the leaders of Chinese aesthetic marketing – this is why

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<sup>12</sup> Although aesthetic dentistry is offered by the clinics, interestingly it has not appeared in the articles collected for this analysis at all.

three of the main brands have been chosen for this analysis, namely MyLike, Yestar and Evercare groups.

MyLike (Meilai, 美莱)<sup>13</sup> group is the most famous chain of aesthetic clinics in China in 2016. Comprising of 26 aesthetic clinics, either under the name Meilai or Huamei (华美), it has established a foothold in 24 major Chinese cities distributed across 17 different administrative regions. MyLike billboard advertisements can be seen all over China and its clinics usually consist of several floors divided between different departments dealing with various parts of both face and body. The Shanghai branch established in 2015 is said to be the largest aesthetic clinic in Shanghai and the whole chain claims to be the largest one in Asia. (Zoujin Meilai n. d.) The level of prices in MyLike is mid- to low-range.

Yestar (Yixing, 艺星)<sup>14</sup> is a chain originally based in Korea, which similarly to MyLike specializes in “all-in-one” medical aesthetic clinics, meaning that patients visiting the clinics of these chains can find a complex medical solution according to their requirements, without the need to visit other places. However, it targets a different customer group than MyLike, as its prices are significantly higher (approximately double). Yestar entered the Chinese market in 2005 with the first clinic being established in Shanghai. In its marketing, Yestar stresses its international character, Korea being the main Asian center of cosmetic surgery. The Yestar group established its 10th clinic in China in 2014 in Chengdu.

Evercare (Yimei'er, 伊美尔)<sup>15</sup> group, originally established in 1997, has the longest history among the aesthetic clinic chains in China. Even though in its website introduction Evercare states that it comprises of almost 30 medical centres, the same website enumerates only 13 main branches, and of those five are in the Chinese capital Beijing and one in Korea. One of the branches, Beijing Evercare Jianxiang, was responsible for the creation of the first Chinese “artificial beauty” Hao Lulu, whose appearance was completely

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<sup>13</sup> The main website of MyLike brand can be found at [www.mylike.com](http://www.mylike.com) [Accessed 18 June 2016]. Different clinics belonging to the chain have their own websites as well.

<sup>14</sup> The main website of Yestar brand can be found at [www.yestar.com](http://www.yestar.com) [Accessed 18 June 2016]. Clinics in different cities also have their own websites, as in the case of MyLike.

<sup>15</sup> The main website of Evercare brand can be found at [www.evercare.com](http://www.evercare.com) [Accessed 18 June 2016]. Several other websites are connected to the brand.

transformed during a series of surgeries performed by the doctors of this clinic in 2003. (Luo 2012: 68) The level of prices in Evercare is the lowest among these three chains.

It is practically impossible to find precise statistics about the medical aesthetic market in China. Data such as number of clinics or their turnover are difficult or even impossible to obtain. The number is changing every day and a part of the income of the clinics probably belongs to the grey economy and would not appear in the official statistics even if such statistics existed. The monthly income of private clinics in Eastern China such as the ones belonging to the Yestar group may reach approximately twenty million yuan (approximately 3 million US dollars). The prices of treatments are generally set quite high, but the competition between official brands and smuggled goods or Chinese copies is pulling the prices of certain treatments (such as Botox or fillers) down. Out of the daily portion of visitors, paying customers represent only a small group, while most of the customers come for free (or very cheap) treatments offered as a promotion. Laser hair removal is often used in this way to attract more potential customers to the clinic.

When customers arrive to the clinic, they first meet the receptionists, whose main role is the customer service (including offering a drink etc.). The customer then meets an advisor (*zixunshi* 咨询师), whose task is to recommend procedures according to the customer's requirements and needs. A combination of different treatments is usually recommended, so that the clinic gets more revenue (and the advisor a higher bonus). The treatment is then performed by a treatment specialist or a doctor (especially in the case of more specialized procedures or when the customer is a VIP customer). Many treatments can be bought for a lower price as a yearly subscription. The clinics often have a set group of customers coming for regular treatments who form their customer base.

## 4 Aesthetic Marketing and New Media

Defining “new media” (*xin meiti* 新媒体) is a difficult task, as the definition is steadily changing with new media, applications and concepts emerging constantly in the fast developing Internet age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Wikipedia (2016), as a model example of a new media platform, defines new media as “content available on-demand through the Internet, accessible on any digital device, usually containing interactive user feedback and creative participation” (New media n. d.). The Internet has become an indispensable part of our lives and at the same time also an essential part of the Chinese society. The number of Internet users in China has risen to an estimated 688 million as of December 2015, representing more than half the Chinese population. (CNNIC 2016: 1)

Chinese people access the new media content mainly with the help of their smartphones, as can be noticed in the daily social interactions in all major Chinese cities. Mobile Internet users represent 90 % of the Chinese Internet population. (CNNIC 2016: 1) As some of the typical new media used in western countries are not accessible from China, the Chinese market has developed its unique platforms of Internet communication, the most popular one being WeChat (*Weixin* 微信), established in 2011 and currently boasting almost 600 million users (Johnson 2015, Burke 2015). WeChat started as a mobile application for instant messaging, but gradually developed a variety of functions including online payment, ordering taxi, booking cinema tickets and many others. This application dominant on the Chinese market has started spreading abroad together with the Chinese diaspora. There are currently 1.5 million WeChat users in Australia (Burke 2015) and approximately 5 million in South Africa (van den Heever 2016).

Apart from individual accounts that can be used for instant messaging to one or more friends and acquaintances, WeChat has also other functions that bring it closer to the new media definition as cited above. The first one is the possibility to create large groups for up to five hundred people that are used for discussion and sometimes even as a form of advertising. In the area of medical aesthetics, we can see such groups created around well-known doctors, which are used not only for expert discussion, but also for the promotion of manufacturers working in the industry. The second function that needs to be mentioned is the existence of so called “official accounts” (*gongzhong zhanghao* 公众账号) – accounts

belonging to companies, brands, shops and other types of organizations. These accounts are similar to blogs and have been completely “absorbed” by the WeChat messenger function, meaning that for the user there is not much difference between the accounts of their friends and the official account they have subscribed to. (Niu 2016) It seems that these official accounts are nowadays more important for the Chinese online marketing than the traditional websites. QR codes leading to these accounts have become one of the key parts of any kind of printed marketing material in China. According to CNNIC (2016: 3), as of December 2015 one third of the companies using e-marketing were doing so via mobile Internet and out of these 75 percent were using WeChat. It is interesting to note that Chinese consumers seem to be much more willing to be targeted by online advertising than their Western peers. (PWC 2014 :4)

Official accounts can be used for publishing articles or online promotion, but at the same time also for the direct communication with the customers – in a way similar to communication between individuals. Only in the case of official accounts, side A is the customer, side B is a member of the marketing team of the organization – account owner. As the importance of the new media marketing is growing, the medical aesthetic clinics in China are creating special teams responsible only for the online marketing and online communication with the customers.

Because of its popularity and importance in online Chinese marketing, WeChat has been chosen as the main source of material for the analysis that will follow in the next part of this thesis. However, other parts of online marketing should also be mentioned to have a more comprehensive knowledge about different ways of Internet promotion. When doing online research to learn about different aesthetic procedures, we come across several different sources of information. One is the websites of aesthetic clinics with content quite consistent with the content of the WeChat accounts of the said clinics. Sometimes WeChat promotion can bring additional information to the readers. An important part of the websites is the “real cases” section, where clinics present the stories of successful makeovers. These serve as a database for further WeChat promotion, which will be discussed in the later sections of this thesis.

Other important sources of information are online forums, blogs and other specialized websites. These do not usually serve as the direct promotion of the clinics, but they can perform effective marketing of the procedures, treatments and surgeries the aesthetic clinics have on offer. The aim of these websites is to create the market demand. Online forums are an example of an interactive platform where people exchange information about different aesthetic procedures. Online articles and blogs can be shared on social media and spread via the news feed. WeChat can therefore serve as a platform for displaying different types of content.

Apart from textual content, pictures and videos are also an important part of aesthetic marketing. Pictures used in aesthetic marketing serve primarily to show the clinical results of the treatments and will be discussed as a part of WeChat promotion in the later sections of this paper. They can serve as a good tool for aesthetic marketing, as they are a static result of a process where more factors (including graphic software) than just the reality displayed may play a role. Videos are relatively less used, the most popular videos on the server *Youku* 优酷 are actually television shows that were also uploaded online. For example the reality show (*zhenrenxiu* 真人秀) *Meidong Yazhou* 美动亚洲 serves as a direct promotion of MyLike group, the official sponsor. Experts from MyLike clinic choose a girl who will get the chance to have a series of treatments for free and change her life, becoming more beautiful and self-confident.

## **5 Research Methodology**

The aim of this research is to describe the specifics of online Chinese marketing in the field of aesthetic medicine, especially the way it communicates with its consumers and the message it conveys to them. Through the qualitative analysis of marketing content, both textual and visual, the Chinese ideal of beauty and procedures used to achieve it will be discussed. In the first stage of the research, participant observation method was used to have a deeper understanding of the Chinese medical aesthetic market in general and to be able to put the later findings in a wider context. The stage that followed was the actual analysis of the content of three WeChat accounts representing three major Chinese chains of private medical aesthetic clinics, introduced in the third chapter of this paper.

### **5.1 Participant Observation**

Participant observation in simple terms means collecting data for analysis through the researcher's own experience. (Russell Bernard 2006: 359) Immersing oneself in the environment that is studied, including learning the language of communication and acquiring a deep understanding of the culture, while at the same time keeping a certain distance to be able to analyse what is seen, is an important aspect of the participant observation method. (Russell Bernard 2006: 344) The problem of maintaining objectivity and emotional detachment is considered to be a major difficulty encountered during this type of research. (Iacono, Brown, Holtham 2009: 42)

Fieldwork performed during the participant observation can be done at different levels, depending on how much the researcher participates in the life of the group that is being observed. The researcher can take the role of either a complete participant, participant observer or a complete observer – the role of participant observer is used the most frequently. (Russell Bernard 2006: 347) This method was also used in this research, during the author's numerous personal visits to different Chinese clinics belonging to the category of privately run clinics taking place over 18 months during 2014-2016. The author was partially involved in the treatments performed in the clinics and was present during the interactions between doctors and their patients during the treatments, adopting certain



communication patterns in order to be able to observe the participants behaving naturally. “Building rapport with the participants” is considered an important stage in the process of participant observation. (Guest, Namey, Mitchell c2013: 76) During the course of participant observation, informal interviews with the doctors and patients alike were taking place. Even though other more structured interviewing methods are usually preferred in research, informal and unstructured interviews are a natural part of the participant observation fieldwork. (Russell Bernard 2006: 211)

The participant observation method was used for two reasons. The first one was to identify the themes that should be looked for during the analysis of the marketing content, especially the body and facial parts and their imperfections that the patients are the most concerned with. The second one was to link the content of the analysis to the daily routine of the clinics and put it into a wider context of the functioning of the clinics.

## **5.2 Qualitative Content Analysis**

The main method used will be the qualitative research based on content analysis of 120 marketing articles published during the first four months of 2016 on the WeChat accounts belonging to three of the most important chains of aesthetic clinics in China, namely Evercare, Yestar and MyLike introduced above. Each of these chains owns several different WeChat accounts serving different purposes that can be categorized either as publishing online promotion or as direct communication with the customers. The main purpose of the three accounts chosen for analysis is the publishing of online content serving as advertising. All of them publish content almost daily and represent the three main regions of medical aesthetic market in China – Beijing, Shanghai and Southern China (Guangzhou).

The Evercare account serves to post both articles containing direct promotion of treatments and also articles for pure amusement or contemplation. The articles consist of text and illustrations or diagrams, however there are no “before and after” pictures present. The Yestar account serves mainly to publish treatment promoting articles, so the treatment results are illustrated by “before and after” pictures. The articles published by these two accounts often contain detailed descriptions of treatments, including what the patients

should expect during and after the treatment. The account of the Guangzhou branch of MyLike chain is mainly concerned with the stories of celebrities or real people undergoing their aesthetic makeovers in the clinic and generally has more followers than the previous two accounts.

Qualitative research is sometimes overlooked by scholars. However, the qualitative approach can be a source of interesting data that might otherwise escape the attention of researchers relying only on quantitative methods. Qualitative research means “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification”. (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 10-11) The key part of any qualitative research is the process of interpretation of the data aimed at discovering the inherent concepts and relationships within the data. (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 11)

The main method that will be used in this research is the qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is often used as a quantitative method for analysing larger volumes of data. However, the qualitative approach has been gaining popularity among researchers in recent years. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as a “method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1278) Content analysis can be applied both to texts and visual representations. (Krippendorff 1989: 404)

The process of qualitative content analysis consists of several steps, which were summarized by Zhang and Wildemuth (2005: 3-5): data preparation, defining the unit of analysis, developing categories and a coding scheme, sampling (using the coding scheme on a sample), coding the whole text, assessing the coding consistency, drawing conclusions and reporting the methods and findings. In our case, the data preparation meant collecting the articles as described above. A microanalysis of the whole pool of articles was then performed and categories and codes for further analysis were inductively generated from the data acquired during the participant observation stage and the process of microanalysis of all the texts.

The categories and codes afterwards used for analysis were first body and face as separate categories and different body and facial parts as their subcategories. Other relatively wide

categories were set as “general encouragement for aesthetic procedures”, “cultural aspect”, “Western” and “Korean influence” and “before and after” pictures (as a key visual part of the medical aesthetic marketing). Several popular Chinese aesthetic procedures were also set as codes. The codes were adjusted during the reading process and then reassessed, so that the coding would remain consistent in the whole sample. The analysis and its conclusion are reported in the following chapters.

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 13) describe qualitative analysis as a mixture of science and art, where creativity needs to be applied in order to be able to obtain new revelations. Qualitative content analysis is not reduced to counting words and their frequency, it attempts at explaining social phenomena “in a subjective but scientific manner”. (Zhang and Wildemuth 2005: 1) Such analysis should be both descriptive and interpretative. (Zhang and Wildemuth 2005: 5)

Every research method has its limitations. In qualitative content analysis, the main limitation might be the personality of the researcher interpreting the data. It is important to be aware of the element of subjectivity and take appropriate measures so that it does not affect the result of the analysis. (Strauss and Corbin (1998: 43) In the case of this thesis, the researcher has been working in China as a clinical expert in the field of aesthetic medicine. The identity of a foreigner is helpful in maintaining a necessary distance from the research subject.

## 6 Analysis

### 6.1 General Content of the Articles

#### 6.1.1 Face versus Body

The treatments performed in aesthetic clinics can be generally divided into facial and body procedures. Judging from the proportion of articles aimed at either of these areas, we can see that the Chinese pursuit of beauty is very face-oriented. Out of 120 articles being analysed, 65 % were concerned with facial treatments, while only 26.7 % were aimed at body treatments (the rest of the articles were not specifically oriented). This is in accordance with the findings of Wen (2010: 284), who argues that “facial surgeries in general are more desirable than body surgeries in China”, unlike the United States, where liposuction and breast augmentation are the most popular procedures. According to Kaw (1993: 75), while the vast majority of white American patients demand liposuction, breast augmentation or wrinkle reduction, the patients of Asian origin demand mostly blepharoplasty (almost half of the patients) and rhinoplasty. Also Staley and Zhan (2011: 12) confirm that the face is more important than the body thinness for the Chinese.

If we look at the topics more closely, we can see which body parts are the main points of concern according to the Chinese aesthetic marketing. The topics mentioned the most often are the eyes and the skin (skin care, *pifu huli* 皮肤护理), with 13.3 % each. Other popular topics include body shaping (*shenti suxing* 身体塑形) or procedures aimed at body fat removal (*jianzhi* 减脂, 11.7 %), eyebrows (10 %), nose (7.5 %), breasts (6.7 %), jaw line (also 6.7 %) and hair removal (*tuomao* 脱毛, 5 %). It can be noted that the area around the eyes in general is covered by almost one fourth of the articles.

The “facial orientation” of the aesthetic marketing is also directly pointed out by the articles themselves. There are numerous mentions about the importance of (beautiful) face in the contemporary Chinese society, for example the era we live in is called “the era looking at the face” (看脸的时代). In one of the articles promoting semi-permanent make-up of the eyebrows we can read that “the level of attractiveness has direct influence on many aspects of one’s life” (颜值的高低直接影响着一个人的生活方方面面). According to the same

article, “when we look at somebody, we first look at their face” (看人先看脸). Another article suggests that “if we want to judge whether somebody is unrefined and unsophisticated, we should also look at their face” (判断一个人土不土 还得看脸! 看脸! 看脸!). In the context of this particular article it means that one’s face is more important for such judgments than the clothes somebody is wearing. On the other hand, at other places we can also read that both face and body are important nowadays: “we live in an era which looks both at the face and the body” (我们所处的是个看脸又看身材的时代).

We may notice the preference for facial treatments (as compared to body procedures) and the importance Chinese people put to the look of their face (while often ignoring their body) when getting involved in the daily operation of aesthetic clinics in China. Chinese women really care about the body parts that are visible to others (i.e. their face) but they often neglect the look of other body parts. This is especially valid for women who have already given birth. While they usually take good care of their face, they pay much less attention to what is hidden underneath their clothes – most of them suffer from serious skin laxity (*pifu songchidu* 皮肤松弛度) and striae (*renshenwen* 妊娠纹) in the abdominal area. According to Chinese doctors, Asian skin is generally more susceptible to striae. However, the level of skin laxity in some cases might be related to a certain negligence towards one’s body, including lack of exercise.

### **6.1.2 Surgical versus Nonsurgical Procedures**

When speaking about aesthetic medicine (and especially aesthetic medicine in Asia), the thing that probably comes to mind first is the complete makeovers that can be achieved through a series of plastic surgery procedures. South Korea is especially famous for plastic surgery tourism – there have been reports about Chinese women going to Korea for plastic surgery that need to prove their identity when entering China, as their face does not match their passport photo anymore. (Innes 2016) One of the controversial types of surgery performed in Korea is the jaw reduction surgery,<sup>16</sup> where part of the mandible bone is

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<sup>16</sup> Jaw reduction surgery is also heavily promoted in Korea, while in China it rarely appears in marketing, even though it is also performed.

removed, sometimes together with a part of masticatory muscle, causing the face to get a slender “V-line” (*V lian* V 脸)<sup>17</sup>. However, most of the treatments performed in Chinese aesthetic clinics are not surgical procedures. If we have a look at the composition of marketing articles on three WeChat accounts that were used for this analysis, we may notice that most of the time the marketing speaks only about “minimally-invasive” treatments (*weizhengxing*), that are acceptable for the wider public.

Only a limited space is dedicated to surgical methods, which contain four main types of surgery popular in China: double eyelid surgery, nose surgery, breast augmentation and liposuction. There was only one mention of jaw reduction surgery – the photographic documentation of one of the “real stories” shown by Guangzhou MyLike suggests that this type of surgery was performed on the patient. Otherwise only minimally-invasive *shoulian zhen* 瘦脸针 (“thin face injection” that will be introduced in chapter 6.3.1) is recommended for the reader who wants to get a V-shape of the jaw line.

As mentioned above, most of the articles are dedicated to the *weizhengxing* methods, such as hyaluronic acid and other fillers or Botox injections. It should also be noted that a large part of the marketing promotion is centred around something even less-invasive than “minimally invasive” treatments – semi-permanent makeup, especially of the eyebrows (*wenmei* 纹眉). Semi-permanent makeup is one of the most popular procedures offered by medical aesthetic clinics in China.

Last but not least, we should notice that most of the articles are aimed mainly at women, who thus appear to be the principal customer group of Chinese aesthetic clinics. This is in accordance with what is stated by Wen (2010: 6), who nevertheless adds that aesthetic surgery is not solely the domain of women anymore. Also in South Korea women represent the vast majority of the recipients of cosmetic surgery. (Davies and Han 2011: 149) According to Hung and Li (2006: 8), women are especially affected by marketing.

As for the male customers, the promotion is aimed mainly at hair transplantation (*maofa yizhi* 毛发移植). What might be interesting for a Western reader, in MyLike marketing there is a mention of a male patient who is bothered with the body hair covering his legs

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<sup>17</sup> V-line will be further introduced and explained in chapter 6.3.1.

and arms including the back of the hands, which is portrayed as undesirable in China, where male body hair is much less developed than in the Caucasian race.

## 6.2 Encouragement for Aesthetic Procedures

### 6.2.1 General Encouragement

Aesthetic surgery and other aesthetic procedures are becoming more and more common in China. Advertisements for aesthetic clinics can be seen on airports, train stations, public transport and even taxis. The demand for aesthetic procedures is rising and the clinics are trying to make it even higher. One part of their marketing strategy is to make *meirong* look like something normal, something one should not be afraid of; something close to doing make-up. The encouragement for cosmetic surgery is in contradiction with the traditional Chinese thinking, where one's body is viewed as a gift from parents and according to the principles of filial piety it should not be wilfully altered. (Staley and Zhan 2011: 4)

Evercare has quite a strong campaign for promoting liposuction – they publish many articles putting liposuction side by side with diet and exercise (which are at the same time labelled as not that effective – compared with liposuction). Liposuction is said to be more effective, because it can reduce the number of fat cells, so the results cannot “bounce back” (*fantan* 反弹 – one of the key terms of body shaping marketing), while other methods only shrink the fat cells, and therefore are susceptible to *fantan*.

Liposuction is described as a “healthy” (*jiankang* 健康) way of losing weight (*jianfei* 减肥) with “instant results” (*liganjianying* 立竿见影). It should be noticed that the Chinese word *jianfei* is usually used for “losing weight”, but actually if we look at the composition of the word, it means “to reduce fat”, so it can theoretically be used also for the aesthetic body shaping procedures like liposuction or some less-invasive methods, which claim to reduce fat but not to reduce weight. The previously mentioned term *jianzhi* is usually used for such fat reduction.

Liposuction is promoted especially during the period of the Chinese New Year, because the festival is closely connected to eating. Evercare even encourages people to eat more, saying

that “now we have it [liposuction], we can eat with ease, eat boldly” (有了它你就可以放心吃, 大胆吃). Liposuction is also presented as the most common and the most obvious way of losing weight (or, strictly speaking, “reducing fat”). The fact that it is an invasive technique with approximately three months recovery time is usually omitted.

We may also observe more general encouragement for aesthetic procedures, especially *weizhengxing*. Adding the word *wei* (“micro”) makes the procedures look more acceptable for a wider range of customers – most of the promotion is aimed at these customers. *Weizhengxing* is even presented as one of the ways of expressing love to your partner: “go for *weizhengxing*, appear beautiful in front of them; revive the happiness of when you first met” (去做个微整形, 美美的出现在 ta 面前, 重温初识的美好).

Among the articles encouraging people to undergo *weizhengxing*, one (published by the Yestar WeChat account) is especially interesting: “Don’t makeup, get a micro-plastic surgery” (别 “妆”了, 微整吧!). It describes plastic surgery as simply a higher level of makeup and skin care. One of the informants of Luo (2013: 8) makes a similar connection, not differentiating between cosmetic surgery and makeup. Also the respondents of Kaw (1993: 79) expressed similar views. Yestar further continues stating that cosmetic surgery is a way to become beautiful without the fear of losing one’s beautiful face when you remove makeup. It presents the example of South Korea, the “kingdom of plastic surgery” (整形王国), where people have a very open attitude towards cosmetic surgery, to such an extent that parents take their children for aesthetic treatments during school holidays. This practice of Korean parents taking their children for cosmetic surgery was indeed mentioned by Davies and Han (2011: 149). This practice is also getting more and more common in China. The article goes on to claim that people who have undergone cosmetic surgery live longer and have a higher salary. In brief, the text makes a very direct appeal to the readers not to be afraid and choose cosmetic surgery or *weizhengxing* to become beautiful.

Another article, this time published by Yestar, called “Don’t refuse plastic surgery, the attractiveness has nothing to do with the way how you make yourself beautiful” (不要拒绝整形, 颜值和变美的方式无关), brings a similar message to the readers. It shows understanding for celebrities (especially movie stars), who need to undergo aesthetic



procedures because of their work. When speaking about regular patients going for surgery, it suggests a direct connection between cosmetic surgery and self-confidence. As Zhang M. (2013: 154) shows, the belief that cosmetic surgery can increase one's confidence in different aspects is actually held by many women. Yestar further states that cosmetic surgery helps us to bring forward our strong points and hide our weak points. The article is very straightforward, saying that “artificial beauty” (*rengong mei* 人工美) is better than “natural ugliness” (*ziranchou* 自然丑). On the other hand, it teaches readers to choose a surgery uniquely suitable for them instead of trying to copy celebrities (as in Korean “assembly lines”). Korean cosmetic surgery is often said to make people undergoing surgery all look the same – Wang (2015: 53) shares an example of candidates for Miss Korea whose uniform appearance can serve as evidence for this claim.

In another article from Yestar, we can find another strong statement about the importance of makeup and other cosmetology procedures. It first cites a Chinese common saying (*suyu* 俗语): “In this world, there are no ugly women, there are only lazy women” (世界上没有丑女人，只有懒女人), which has been mentioned in academic papers concerning cosmetic surgery (see Wen 2010: 252). Every woman has the potential to make herself beautiful, if she dedicates time and effort. Cosmetic surgery is often portrayed as an efficient and simple way to become beautiful. (Wen 2010: 241)

What follows shows a certain disdain towards women who do not take proper care of their appearance – “a woman who does not take good care of herself has no future, a woman who does not take good care of herself and who does not know how to apply makeup has no prospects” (不保养的女人是沒有未來的，不保养又不会化妆的女人是沒有前途的). *Baoyang* 保养, meaning “to maintain” or “to take good care of one's health” is one of the key words of Chinese aesthetic marketing, where it means to take a good care of one's appearance, of the look of one's skin, so that one remains looking young and full of vitality, with firm skin and no wrinkles. The concept of *baoyang* is very strong in the minds of Chinese women and many of them undergo regular treatments at beauty salons or aesthetic clinics. Although the results of such treatments are very minimal compared to surgery, the psychological effect of *baoyang* seems to play an important role. As Wang (2012: 46)

states, beauty has become “something you have to work on by spending a huge amount of money”.

### **6.2.2 Encouragement to Choose Medical Aesthetic Clinics**

Apart from encouraging the patients to do *meirong*, the marketing of aesthetic clinics also needs to persuade the patients to choose medical aesthetic clinics and not beauty salons, as these are two distinct segments of the market, positioned on different levels. *Meirongyuan* are usually small beauty salons without proper medical background and qualifications, but they often perform treatments which should be the domain of the medical clinics (including not only injecting fillers and other minimally-invasive procedures, but often including also double eyelid surgery and other surgical treatments. Such treatments might lead to various consequences, including some serious failures, which then have to be repaired by regular medical means.

The patients are often ignorant of the risks they are undertaking when choosing a place without proper medical qualifications to perform their treatment. To protect the patients and to increase their own patient inflow and financial income, the medical aesthetic clinics keep reminding patients that to protect their safety and get the treatment results they are hoping for, they should choose a specialized clinic for their treatment. Such warnings are made not only when speaking about surgeries or injectables, but even in the case of semi-permanent makeup. Apart from these, a very specific warning was made by Guangzhou MyLike in one of their articles, where they stress they have a specialized team of anaesthesiologists, clearly trying to delimit themselves from what happened in Tian Mei clinic in Shenzhen in the same province, where a young female patient died in February 2016 during breast augmentation surgery when she was given an inappropriate dose of anaesthetics.<sup>18</sup>

What is stressed about different aesthetic procedures is the “scientific” (*kexue* 科学) aspect of the treatment. This is stressed verbally but it can also be felt from the professional photographs of the doctors employed at the clinic. To put even more emphasis on the

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<sup>18</sup> This incident led to a series of investigations in the whole province and strict punishments for the clinics that did not obey state regulations.

professionalism of their medical teams, Chinese clinics often add photographs of foreign doctors employed at the clinics. Many of these doctors come from Korea (see e.g. Davies and Han 2011: 153) and in many cases they are only employed as “visiting experts”. The word *zhuanye* 专业, which can be translated as “professional”, can be found in different contexts, such as “professional doctor” (*zhuanye yisheng* 专业医生), “professional care” (*zhuanye huli* 专业护理) or “professional breast augmentation” (*zhuanye longxiong* 专业隆胸) and others.

### 6.3 Beauty with Chinese Specifics

Beauty standards vary across continents and cultures. What is perceived as beautiful in one country might be considered very undesirable in a different country. People who have spent some time in the Chinese cultural environment usually have some basic understanding of what is viewed as beautiful in China, but it is still good to make a little summary and link the desirable physical traits to the particular aesthetic procedures.

#### 6.3.1 V-Shape

One of the main facial features that are in accordance with the current Chinese beauty standards is the so called “V-shape” or *shoulian* 瘦脸 (“thin” face). It is a facial shape where the lower part of the face is clearly narrower than the upper part and the chin is quite pointed. The ideal of *xiaolian* 小脸 (“little face”) was agreed upon by all the respondents in the research made by Zhang M. (2013: 138) However, it should be noted that *shoulian* has not always been the Chinese ideal of beauty, for example in 1930s the ideal facial shape was more round. (Wen 2010: 281) “V-shape” is often put in contrast with the so called “U-shape” – the letters U and V represent the facial contours. V-shape is characterized not only by the shape of the jaw line, but also by the firmness of the skin (loose skin changes V-shape into U-shape according to the Chinese marketing).

The analysis done by Luo in 2008 speaks about a “melon seed-shaped face” (*guazi lian* 瓜子脸), but nowadays the terms like *V lian* or *xiaolian* are preferred and the term *guazi lian*

has not appeared in the pool of articles chosen for this analysis. *Guazi lian* is relatively similar in meaning to *V lian*, but the usage of the letter V explicitly emphasizes the pointed shape of the chin, while “melon seed” shape is sometimes also called “goose egg” (*edan lian* 鹅蛋脸)<sup>19</sup>, suggesting that the facial shape is rather oval. Zhang (2012: 439) also speaks about “melon seed” or “goose egg” shape as the one generally accepted as the Chinese beauty ideal.

The desire of Chinese women to get a V-shape creates a huge market demand for treatments which could result in obtaining such a facial shape. The most popular and at the same time the most advertised treatment is the so called *shoulianzhen*, or “thin face injection” (see *Figure 1*). *Shoulianzhen* is a dose of Botox, which is in aesthetic medicine usually used for diminishing facial (mimic) wrinkles by weakening the muscles whose contraction has caused them to appear. The typical indication for a Botox treatment would be so called “crow’s feet” (wrinkles forming on the outer side of the eyes, in Chinese called *yuweiwen* 鱼尾纹, “fishtail lines”) or “frown lines” (deep wrinkles that appear between the eyebrows, in Chinese usually called *meijianwen* 眉间纹, “lines between eyebrows”).

However, in China the usage of Botox is much wider – the main indication being the *shoulian*. A dose of Botox is injected into the muscles of mastication (chewing muscles), causing them to relax and therefore contract, the whole treatment resulting in a more prominent V-shape. Injecting Botox brings only temporary results (lasting usually less than half a year), but is currently considered to be the most effective minimally invasive *shoulian* procedure on the Chinese beauty market. Such indication for Botox is definitely very Asian-specific, as in the western countries Botox is usually used only for wrinkle reduction (if we speak just about its aesthetic usage). The *shoulianzhen* procedure is generally among the most frequently advertised treatments in China and there is a huge

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<sup>19</sup> In Chinese beauty discourse it is quite popular to differentiate between different types of facial shape. Apart from the above mentioned “V-shaped” face, “melon seed-shaped” face or “goose egg-shaped” face, which is sometimes also called “duck egg-shaped” face (*yadan lian* 鸭蛋脸) or “oval” face (*tuoyuanxing lian* 椭圆形脸), there are other less popular or even undesirable types of facial shape, such as “square” face (*fangxing lian* 方形脸) – also called “face having the shape of the character *guo*” (*guo zi lian* 国字脸), “round” face (*yuanxing lian* 圆形脸), “triangle” face (*sanjiaoxing lian* 三角形脸) – also called “pear-shaped” face (*lixing lian* 梨形脸), “long” face (*changxing lian* 长形脸), “diamond-shaped” face (*lingxing lian* 菱形脸) or “heart-shaped” face (*xinxing lian* 心形脸).

interest among Chinese doctors for other procedures that could bring the patient a similar result. Injecting Botox might result in muscle numbness and even difficulties when eating,<sup>20</sup> but according to Chinese doctors it brings good results in the facial shape for Chinese customers who want to take more beautiful “selfies” (*zipai* 自拍)<sup>21</sup>. More invasive procedures such as jaw reduction surgery and chin implants can help patients achieve a similar effect in the photographs. (Zhang 2012: 444)

If we have a look at how exactly the *shoulianzhen* is promoted in the marketing, we will see how articles describe the ideal facial shape: “a thin delicate pretty face” (一张精致俊美的小脸), “a little V face” (小 V 脸). Big cheeks (*dalian* 大脸), on the other hand, can “reduce the attractiveness in a flash” (配个大脸瞬间降低颜值啊). *Shoulianzhen* can “make rigid facial features get back feminine softness and beauty” (让僵硬的面容重回女性的柔和美).

At the same time, the articles also contain a description of the feeling resulting from the treatment: “the patient will have a distinct feeling of losing chewing power when trying to chew powerfully and the chewing muscles might have a slightly sore and swollen feeling” (求美者会明显的感觉到在用力咀嚼时咀嚼力下降, 而且咬肌会呈现轻微酸胀的感觉). The same article encourages patients to get more treatments, so as to make the result more steady and long-lasting.

### 6.3.2 Double Eyelids

Judging from the Internet content and WeChat advertising, the most common aesthetic surgery in China is the double eyelid surgery. Different clinics have different methods of surgery, but all of them emphasize the importance of choosing a shape that would fit in with the other facial features and a “natural result” (*ziran xiaoguo* 自然效果). Evercare is

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<sup>20</sup> Marketing articles sometimes claim that several injections of Botox in the chewing muscles can already lead to a permanent result. The reason behind this is said to be the fact that muscle numbness and difficulty in chewing makes people change their eating (and) chewing habits and therefore not use the chewing muscles as much as before. This is supposed to make the muscles weaker and less prominent.

<sup>21</sup> The term “selfie” is used for a self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a mobile phone. Taking “selfies” is particularly popular in contemporary China.

promoting a “Korean style no-scar double eyelid” (韩式无痕双眼皮) surgery, while the type of surgery promoted by MyLike is called “Korean style raised eyelashes double eyelid” (韩式翘睫双眼皮). Yestar has their own technique called poetically “The Charming Eyes of Medusa” (美杜莎魅眼术), with the name referring to the Greek mythology, which can “rescue the eyes from being small and expressionless” (拯救无神小眼). The main feature which distinguishes between desirable and non-desirable eyes in Chinese aesthetic marketing is whether they do or do not have *jingshen* 精神 – “vitality“, which is even more important than whether the eyes have a single or double eyelid (meaning that sometimes even people with natural double eyelids might decide for blepharoplasty, if their eyes lack “vitality”).

Another important aspect is the size – the eyes should be big (but at the same time respect other facial features). Yestar uses a story of a real patient who has undergone a surgery in their Wenzhou branch – and who wanted to have “big and beautiful eyes of famous stars” (“我想拥有一对又大又美的明星眼”). However, big eyes with double eyelids were not always the beauty ideal in China. As Wen (2010: 78) points out, traditional Chinese paintings can serve as a testimony of the popularity of “long, thin, almond-shaped eyes with single-folded eyelids” in ancient China.

To achieve the effect of big eyes, marketing articles recommend surgery which will “open the corners of the eyes” (*kai yanjiao* 开眼角), where both the inner and outer corner of the eye can be opened, depending on each patient’s needs. Opening the corners of the eyes means removing the redundant skin from the inner corner and extending the eye opening, so as to make the eye look bigger. According to Guangzhou MyLike, opening the corners of the eye can make the eyes look more round and adorable (in the Japanese *kawaii* 卡哇伊 style)<sup>22</sup>, if both corners are opened, the eyes will look more mellow and full. However, Yestar also points out that we should not blindly follow the desire to have big eyes, it is more important to get a natural result (效果自然 – 不盲目追求大眼).

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<sup>22</sup> The Japanese term *kawaii* can be translated as “cute” or “adorable”. It is a cultural phenomenon that has been transferred also to other Asian countries.

Last but not least, the main goal of double eyelid surgery is, as we can see from its name, to transform the “single eyelid” (*danyanpi* 单眼皮) into “double eyelid” (*shuangyanpi* 双眼皮). Asians can have big variations in the shape of their eyelids, some are born with a single eyelid, which means that their upper eyelid does not have a crease, some are born with a double eyelid, with a crease dividing the upper eyelid into two distinct parts, but the crease can vary in size and shape. The percentage of incidence of natural double eyelid among the East Asian population varies in different sources. While according to Youn (2013), only about 15 % of East Asians have natural double eyelid, Chen (1999: 27) states that half of the Chinese population has a natural crease in their upper eyelid. Chinese women usually prefer the double eyelid, as it makes the eyes look bigger. According to Yestar marketing, “to have a pair of beautiful double eyelids can bring one some bonus points” (有一双漂亮的双眼皮很为自己加分), especially in the case of girls.

At the same place we can find three types of eye shape which suit East Asians: a double eyelid with parallel crease (平行型双眼皮), a double eyelid with a crease widening towards the outer corner of the eye (开扇型双眼皮) as in *Figure 2* – this type of eye is also called “red phoenix eye” (*danfengyan* 丹凤眼) and a double eyelid with a crease in the shape of the crescent moon (新月形双眼皮). According to MyLike, “European style” (and having *yangqi* 洋气, “foreign flavour”) double eyelid with parallel crease might not be suitable for everybody, so for Asians (taking the example of famous Korean celebrities) they would mostly recommend the other two types. Such distinguishing between Asian and European (or Caucasian) features as to what is more suitable for the Chinese customers can be noticed at many places in the Chinese marketing. “Korean-style” facial features are often recommended as preferable. However, there are some critical voices saying that actually these “Korean features”, admired by people in other East Asian countries, are features that are quite similar to the “Western” ones, such as double eyelids or a high-bridged nose. (Fairclough 2005)

Chinese marketing, indeed, often emphasizes that there is a difference between “Asian” and “Western” double eyelids, even though this might only be a question of verbally distinguishing the Chinese from the West and Western culture. While foreign authors often

tend to speak about “Westernization” of Chinese looks due to double eyelid surgery, Chinese consumers mostly refuse the idea that they would be imitating the west, saying it is more the question of their own perception of what is beautiful (see Wen 2010: 317-323) Chen (1999: 28) argues that Asians undergoing double eyelid surgery do not want to have Caucasian looks but rather want to have the looks of other Asians who have a natural upper eyelid crease. Kaw (1993: 85) mentions that many Asian patients in the United States even explicitly request a look that would not be “too Caucasian”. While in Asia the double eyelid surgery seems to be the most popular aesthetic procedure, in the United States the topic is much more controversial among the members of Asian community, for whom the feeling of ethnicity seems to play more importance. (Kobrin 2004)

If we stay in the region around the eyes, there is another highly desirable facial feature popular in China – called *wocan* 卧蚕, meaning “plump lower eyelids” (see *Figure 3*). *Wocan* are tiny bags just under the eyes (lower eyelashes), about 5 millimetres wide that resemble a silkworm (that is where the name has come from). They become more visible when the person smiles and are considered to be very attractive in women. This feature can also be seen in Korean advertising, Wang (2015: 34) labels it as an “auspicious eye shape”. According to Evercare advertising, “98 percent of men find women with *wocan* attractive” and “nowadays somebody without *wocan* can be hardly called attractive”. In China fillers can be used to create *wocan*, including hyaluronic acid or self-fat injections.

### 6.3.3 Eyebrows

Among the non-invasive methods in the eye area, the most frequent one is the semi-permanent makeup of the eyebrows. According to Evercare, “eyebrows are a very important facial feature” (眉毛是五官中很重要的部位). The Chinese word for facial features is *wuguan* 五官, *guan* meaning an organ (as a part of the body). There are different versions of which five elements actually constitute the *wuguan*. One of these includes eyebrows: ears (*er* 耳), eyebrows (*mei* 眉), eyes (*yan* 眼), nose (*bi* 鼻), 口 (*kou* 口). The eyebrows are labelled as “the organ of maintaining long life” (*baoshouguan* 保寿官). In Evercare’s promotion, it can even be read that eyebrows are the most important feature of



one's face: "Eyebrows are the step in makeup that you cannot omit, even if you do not have any makeup on your face, paint two beautiful eyebrows and you can go out" (眉毛是我们所有妆容中最不能缺少的步骤, 就算脸上什么妆都没有, 画上两条漂亮的眉毛就能出门!). Yestar also states, that eyebrows are "the chief among *wuguan*" (眉是五官之首).

Eyebrows play a very important role according to the Chinese, their shape can reveal one's character and determine one's luck or even values. An article from Yestar analyses different types of "lucky" and "unlucky" eyebrows, where the "unluckiness" is usually determined by the unsatisfactory length, thickness or untidiness of the eyebrows. The article further states, that because "Orientals" (meaning people from East Asia) have a bigger space between eyes and eyebrows, it means that they have a stronger attachment to their family, while "Westerners" (meaning Europeans and Americans) have a more narrow space between eyes and eyebrows and a weaker family attachment. It can be noticed that eyes and eyebrows are one of the elements where Chinese do not try to copy the West but rather to emphasize the unique East Asian facial features.

In the case of eyebrows, the current trend is to have rather thick "Korean-style" eyebrows. The shape of eyebrows is subject to fashion trends that can change even every year. An article from Guangzhou MyLike brings a comparison of the most fashionable eyebrows of 2015 and 2016. While in 2015 the trend was to have "misty eyebrows in the shape of character *yi*" (*yi zi wumei* 一字雾眉), which means straight and evenly thick eyebrows, in 2016 the popularity of the Korean television series "Descendants of the Sun" brought a new trend. "Shooting star eyebrows" (*liuxingmei* 流星眉) of the Korean actress Song Hye-kyo became the new beauty standard (see *Figure 4*). This type of eyebrows is more curved and according to Chinese beauty marketing it can underline the V-shape of the whole face. The article for MyLike shows how famous celebrities have already started changing the shape of their eyebrows according to the newest trend – this example is supposed to encourage the readers to follow the fashion. Davies and Han (2011: 146) argue that it is this celebrity culture that helps the normalization of *meirong* procedures.

Yestar further links the importance of eyebrows to ancient Chinese stories – to describe the beauty of a woman, the expression *qinshou emei* 螭首蛾眉 can be used. *Emei* can be

translated as “delicate and curved eyebrows” (of a woman), *qinshou* (literally “head of a cicada”) as “wide and square forehead” – these two elements in combination form a beautiful woman. The word *mei* alone already refers to a woman of peerless beauty.

#### 6.3.4 Full Lips

The importance of eyebrows according to Chinese aesthetic marketing has been shown in different examples. However, there are also other elements that play an important role – with these elements combined, beauty can emerge. The key to beauty according to Yestar marketing is the *mei yan chun* 眉眼唇 – eyebrows, eyes and lips. These three factors can together make the facial features look more “three-dimensional” (*liti* 立体). The “three-dimensionality” of the face is another of the highly desirable facial characteristics according to Chinese aesthetic standards, as we will see in other sections.

Eyes and lips are parts of the face where semi-permanent makeup is heavily promoted. Upper eyeliners (*wenyanxian* 纹眼线), the most important part of makeup in the eye area according to Evercare, are supposed to make the eyes look bigger and also brighter. The semi-permanent makeup can be also applied on the lips (*wenchun* 纹唇) to help improve their colour and contours, even though fillers are probably the most popular procedure for lips.

Different types of fillers can be injected into the lips to make them look fuller. This procedure is usually called lip augmentation, in Chinese simply *fengchun* 丰唇 (“abundant lips”). Probably the most popular filler is the hyaluronic acid, a polysaccharide occurring naturally in the human body that plays an important role in wound healing. Due to its ability to attract water molecules, hyaluronic acid can occupy a relatively large volume, making it possible to be used as a filler. (Gold 2007: 371) However, the filler effect is only temporary, lasting usually only for four to six months. Another possibility offered by the Chinese medical aesthetic clinic is the lip fat transfer (*ziti zhifang fengchun* 自体脂肪丰唇),

when the fat is taken out of some other part of the body and injected into the lips.<sup>23</sup> Lip augmentation is actually not a specifically-Chinese procedure, as it is quite common also in Europe or America.

### **6.3.5 Chin and Other Areas for Filler Application**

There are also other parts of face where fillers are frequently applied. The most popular areas are the chin (*feng xiaba* 丰下巴), the temples (*feng taiyangxue* 丰太阳穴), the cheeks (*feng mianjia* 丰面颊) and the forehead (*feng etou* 丰额头). The aim of using fillers in the temples, the cheeks and also in the chin is to enhance the effect of “V-shape”, making the upper part of the face look wider than the lower one. Injecting fillers in the forehead and the chin should improve the facial contours when looked at from the side. The forehead should look full and round, while the chin should be pointed and form a straight line with the contours of the nose and lips.

Evercare states that a full chin is essential for one’s beauty. The three factors determining whether the chin is beautiful are its length, the degree to which it sticks out and how it is curved. A beautifully curved pointed chin is the factor that makes a woman’s face look soft and graceful (*roumei* 柔美). Yestar points out the importance of the look of one’s face in profile (*celian* 侧脸), saying that eighty percent of women suffer from some degree of imperfection of their facial contours. Only a woman beautiful when looked at from the side can be called a “360° beauty” (*360° meiniu* 360°美女). There are three main elements which can make a perfect face in profile according to the Chinese; apart from the forehead and chin mentioned above, the third important facial part is the nose.

### **6.3.6 High-bridged Nose**

Rhinoplasty, or nose reshaping surgery, is among the most popular surgical procedures in China nowadays. There are even clinics which have rhinoplasty as their main specialization.

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<sup>23</sup> Fat transfer (*ziti zhifang yizhi* 自体脂肪移植) has recently become a popular alternative to fillers and implants. It can be used for improving facial contours, but also for breast or buttock augmentation.

The Chinese ideal is a high bridged nose (the word for high bridge of the nose is *gao biliang* 高鼻梁), often described as a “prominent” nose (*bizi ting* 鼻子挺), but there are also other factors apart from the height determining the “nose beauty standard”, especially the width of the wings of the nose (*biji* 鼻翼). According to a picture from Evercare, the width of the nose should not be bigger than the width of the eye, otherwise the nose is considered to be “fat” (*feida* 肥大). The flatness of the tip of the nose (*bijian bianping* 鼻尖扁平, also the expression *bizi tata de* 鼻子塌塌的 is often used) is often said to be interconnected with the “fatness” of the wings of the nose.

The nose is also one of the *wuguan*, five important facial features mentioned above. The high bridge of the nose and the tip of the nose slightly raised upwards are supposed to be among the factors that can make the face more “three-dimensional”. Yestar marketing compares the “three-dimensional” character of the nose to a diamond (像钻石般立体). The importance of the nose shape in the look of the whole face is stressed at many different places in the pool of articles analysed and for this reason, rhinoplasty is also one of the procedures frequently applied in the stories of facial makeovers.

### **6.3.7 Delicate Body**

In the first section of the analysis, the importance of the face over the body in Chinese marketing was mentioned. Therefore it is not surprising that the paragraphs above were all dedicated to different facial features and their ideal look according to the Chinese. However, there are a few parts of the body which are also worth mentioning in the context of speaking about “beauty with Chinese specifics”. The general desire for a slim body will not be discussed in this section, as it is nowadays similar to many other cultures. Nevertheless, there are a few parts of the body that should be mentioned at this place, namely the abdomen, the arms, the shoulders, the buttocks and the calves.

First, we start with what can be found in the pool of articles collected for this analysis, connect it to Chinese beauty concerns and compare it to the situation in other countries. The first topic discussed will be the usage of Botox for other body parts than the face. It was mentioned in the previous paragraphs that the primary usage for Botox is the

temporary reduction of mimic wrinkles in the face. However, other areas of usage have been developed in recent years. The two body parts Chinese marketing mentions as possible areas for Botox injections are the shoulders (namely the trapezius muscle) and the calves.

In medicine, botulinum toxin can be used for treating certain muscle disorders and it was even approved by FDA<sup>24</sup> for the treatment of migraines. In the treatment of migraines, both facial and neck muscles might be involved, including the trapezius muscle. (Oliver, MacDonald, Rajwani 2006: 267) However, the Chinese marketing suggests a different result of injecting Botox into trapezius muscle, a result purely aesthetic and sounding very controversial. This result is called *hudiejian* 蝴蝶肩, literally the “butterfly shoulders”.

A strong and developed trapezius muscle is said to make a tough and stocky figure, when one has “a back like a tiger’s and a waist like a bear’s” (*hubei xiongyao* 虎背熊腰). Injecting Botox into this muscle makes it relax and contract, supposedly making the shoulders look more delicate and sexy (*xinggan* 性感). In China, the ideal female figure is full, but at the same time delicate and weak (*rou ruo* 柔弱), it is not an athletic figure shaped up by physical exercise. The goal is to look delicate, gentle and soft. Having a delicate and soft figure is considered the beauty ideal also among Chinese beauty pageants, while in the West a more sporting figure is preferred. (Zhang M. 2013: 111)

A similar principle may be applied in the case of the procedure called calf reduction (*xiaotui suxing* 小腿塑形). The thickness of the calves seems to be one of the biggest concerns of Chinese women. They often attribute the size of their calves to fat (which could be removed by liposuction). However, the shape of the calf is mostly determined by the muscle. There are currently two main procedures on the medical aesthetic market that claim to affect the size of one’s calf. One is surgery which removes a part of the calf muscle, causing the calf to have a significant reduction in volume and a straight shape without any bulge. (Kim *et al.* 2000) Another less invasive way is, as in the previous case, botulinum

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<sup>24</sup> FDA is the abbreviation for the Food and Drug Administration, a federal agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It is responsible for the regulation of food safety, but also the efficacy and safety of drugs or medical devices and various other products. The Chinese version of FDA is called CFDA or SFDA.

toxin (see *Figure 5*). Botox injection paralyzes the nerves in the treatment area, causing the muscle to contract or even atrophy, thus making the calf thinner. This type of Botox usage emerged in Korea, nowadays the promotion for this procedure can be seen in the Western markets as well, even though it is quite rare. There have been news reports about women undergoing this procedure for example in the UK. (Sturgis 2014) However, Western doctors mostly do not approve of this procedure due to safety concerns (such a dose of botulinum toxin could cause muscle paralysis).

While in the West women's motivation seems to be the desire to fit into high boots and slim jeans (in case they have very chubby legs), in Asia the motivation seems to be slightly different. The women asking for calf reduction often only wish to have very thin legs without any sign of muscle they have developed through wearing high heels. The image of calf muscles atrophied by a dose of Botox might serve as a reminiscence of old China, where foot binding caused women not to be able to walk properly and probably also led to muscle atrophy. Zhang M. (2013: 111) argues that a lack of muscles makes the female body soft and weak, which fits into the Chinese cultural ideal of feminine beauty and the hierarchy between "strong men" and "weak women". Having a muscular body is therefore non-desirable according to the Chinese beauty ideals. While the treatment resulting in "butterfly shoulders" might be regarded as a curiosity, the calf reduction is getting more and more common and is often mentioned in the marketing.

Another topic which seems to be a big concern for the Chinese women is the buttocks. Evercare is promoting fat reduction through liposuction for this body part, even though excess fat does not seem to be the main issue of Chinese women. Liposuction is said to remove the excess fat from the lower part of the buttocks and reduce the circumference, while the real problem of many women as observed during the clinical practice seems to be rather a certain atrophy and laxity in the buttocks area.

Actually, Evercare is at the same time also promoting *fengtun* 丰臀, or buttock augmentation, although in the marketing it is still partly associated with the liposuction of the lower part of the buttocks. One Evercare article introduces solutions for different problems, with the first solution always being some type of exercise and the second solution being surgical, mainly liposuction. However, it also promotes the "fat transfer"

procedure, when fat from some other body area is transferred into the buttocks to make them look fuller. The results of surgical procedures are presented as equivalent to the results of physical exercise, but in reality these two approaches aim at different body tissues (fat versus muscle).

As for the abdomen, in the marketing articles collected for this analysis it is only mentioned in the context of liposuction and other fat reduction methods. However, it is interesting to note that there is no mention of the problem most of the Chinese women suffer from after childbirth, which is excessive skin laxity and the emergence of stretch marks, or striae, in the abdominal area. While many Chinese women complain about their abdomen being very “loose” (*song* 松), as the skin loses its elasticity during pregnancy, and many of them ask about possibilities of treating stretch marks, these two conditions seem to be completely omitted in the Chinese marketing. Thinking about the possible explanations, it might be suggested that the reason is stretch marks and excessive skin laxity are a medical condition where the demand for treatment does not have to be further stimulated by marketing.

Another possible explanation is that unlike facial or body contours, the stretch marks on the abdomen are not usually visible to the public, as they can be effectively covered by clothes, similarly the skin laxity is not apparent to an outside observer, as Chinese women (especially those after childbirth) usually tend to wear looser clothes (with shapewear underneath). Chinese society seems to be one that puts more emphasis on what is visible to other people, where it is more important to have a large and expensive car than to have a comfortable apartment that other people rarely see, unlike the car. If we try to apply similar logic to aesthetic values regarding the face and body, we might observe that the most popular treatments in China are the ones that bring results on body parts visible to the public, which is especially the face, followed by immediately visible body contours, such as breast shape.

Another body part that Chinese women often ask about is the upper arm. In Chinese the loose skin on the inner side of the upper arm is poetically called *hudiexiu* 蝴蝶袖 (“butterfly sleeves”), sometimes also the expression “bye-bye flash” (*baibai rou* 拜拜肉) can be used. Even though the chances of being exposed to the public are higher for the arms

than for the abdomen, *hudiexiu* is also not present in the marketing articles collected for this analysis. The reason might be simpler than for the abdomen – the key to tightening this body part is physical exercise, which is not the domain of medical aesthetic clinics.

## **6.4 Cultural Aspect**

In this section several interesting aspects of the marketing will be discussed. The first one is topics related to *baoyang*, a concept that has already been mentioned in the second section of this analysis. It is closely interlinked with skin hydration and aging, both of which will also be covered in this section. All of these topics will be discussed as for what they reveal about Chinese culture and way of thinking. The second aspect that will be mentioned is how the clinics communicate with their customers through the marketing and how this way of communication possibly differs from the one used by the marketing in Euro-American cultural sphere. After that a brief account of the fashion of internet “challenges” that is reflected in the marketing of Chinese medical aesthetic clinics will be made. The last part of this section will be dedicated to the concept of *qizhi*, or “inner beauty”.

### **6.4.1 Aging**

One of the very interesting parts of the Chinese aesthetic marketing is how it defines aging – what are the signs of aging and what is the age limit when our skin starts getting old. We can find articles that are solely dedicated to this topic. Evercare’s article called “Do you dare to measure the age of your skin?” (敢不敢测试你的皮肤年龄?) sets the parameters of skin getting old as following: wrinkles, bags and dark circles under the eyes, skin laxity, dry and coarse skin, dull and dark sin, double chin, pigmentation and sensitive skin. Similar parameters of “bad skin” were identified during the analysis of skin care advertisements performed by Li *et al.* (2008: 446), who found that the two major causes of bad skin are said to be aging and dryness. Evercare also defines different age categories (less than 25, 25-30, 30-35, more than 35 years old), all of these being labelled as “you in other people’s eyes” (别人眼中的你), suggesting that what matters the most is the image of us as seen by



the people around us. Wen (2010: 230) also states it is the interaction with other people and the media that set the standards for how we judge our appearance.

The border defining when the skin starts getting old is set at 25 years of age by Evercare. Before we reach the age of 25, the skin is said to be in its best condition. The only precautions that should be taken are “avoid the sun, do not stay up late and drink lots of water”. This is actually the only mention of “drinking lots of water” (多喝水) in the whole sample of articles being analysed, usually the skin hydration is linked only to various dermal procedures, as we will see later. The skin of the age group 25-30 is said to be “on the decline” (走下坡路), gradually losing hydration. Dry skin seems to be the main factor determining that the skin is getting old. However, there is no advice to “drink lots of water” anymore. The main advice is, that apart from daily skin care (twice a day), a weekly specialized care should be added. The article is thus mildly suggesting that the age when a woman should start at least thinking about visiting specialized clinics is 25. This is suggested even more explicitly for the age group 30-35, whose “skin elasticity and hydration have distinctly declined” (皮肤弹性和保湿性已明显衰退), therefore “regular medical aesthetic care” should be done (定期做医学美容护理). Finally, when reaching the age of 35, the skin is “clearly degenerating” (明显退化) and the only way to stop or slow down this process is to “use medical aesthetic means to repair the skin” (采取医学美容方式修复).

As a result of this kind of marketing, it is not uncommon to see women approximately 30 years old, and still very young looking, coming to the medical aesthetic clinics complaining that their skin is very loose and full of wrinkles. It has been observed by some authors that the age of women deciding for cosmetic surgery is actually lower in China than in Western countries. (Wen 2010: 161; Wang 2016) A significant portion of cosmetic surgery patients in China are in their 20s. (LaFraniere 2011) Among the makeovers presented in the marketing promotion of the clinics, young girls around 20 years of age prevail.

Among the patients the author had the chance to observe at different clinics all over China, the two facial problems that they complained the most about were nasolabial folds (*falingwen* 法令纹) and double chins (*shuangxiaba* 双下巴). The nasolabial fold is a skin

fold separating cheeks from the upper lip area which becomes particularly visible when we smile. The fold can get deeper and longer as the skin ages and skin laxity and sagging starts to occur, therefore it is one of the main signs of aging of the face. In China even the slightest sign of *falingwen* is already seen as something very undesirable and the word can be frequently heard at the Chinese clinics. However, interestingly, it is almost non-present in the sample of articles analysed, as well as the double chin.

The marketing of different clinics can set the age limits differently. The age categories set by Yestar are much less exaggerated. The age between 30 and 40 is labelled as the time when skin lacks hydration and becomes dry and the first fine wrinkles start to appear. Between 40 and 50 years of age, wrinkles start getting deeper, the skin starts looking dull and the skin laxity gets more evident. After the age of 50 is reached, deep wrinkles appear, the skin starts sagging and the pigmentation also has a deep influence on one's looks. The signs of aging are defined as following by Yestar: wrinkles, skin laxity, bags under the eyes, pigmentation and dry skin without proper hydration. Injectables are suggested as the main weapon to fight against aging: Botox and fillers can help with the wrinkles and hyaluronic acid can solve the problem with hydration according to the Chinese medical aesthetic marketing. This claim will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **6.4.2 Baoyang – “Forever Young”**

As mentioned in the section 6.2.1, Chinese women have a highly developed sense for *baoyang* (in the sense of “taking care of the look of one's skin”). The concept of *baoyang* is often interwoven with the concept of *kang shuailao* 抗衰老 (“anti-aging”). The aim is to maintain a youthful appearance, the young look of one's skin. The need for *baoyang* has been mentioned by numerous Chinese patients that I had the chance to observe during their facial rejuvenation (*mianbu nianqinghua* 面部年轻化) treatments. One of the most important parts of *baoyang* is maintaining skin hydration - we have seen in the above paragraphs that in Chinese marketing, aging is mainly associated with dry skin. With this in mind, we can look more closely at the marketing of a treatment called *shuiguangzhen* 水光

针 (literally “water light injection”, in marketing translated as “water injection” or “water shine injection”).

As its rather poetical name suggests, *shuiguangzhen* is supposed to bring the skin “water” and “light”, in other words skin hydration and brightness in the skin colour. That is, according to the marketing claims, the very core of maintaining a youthful appearance: “keep a young face through injecting *shuiguangzhen*” (通过注射水光针来留住年轻的面容). *Shuiguangzhen* is said to give skin proper hydration and nutrition, to let skin “drink water to the full” (让肌肤喝饱水). The main component of *shuiguangzhen* is hyaluronic acid, which has been already introduced as one of the most popular fillers used in aesthetic medicine. Other components often added to the injection include for example botulinum toxin type A or vitamin C. This mixture is not injected just to specific parts of the face as in the case of using hyaluronic acid as a filler but is evenly distributed into the dermis layer in the whole area of the face, presumably in a smaller dose than when used as a filler.

The procedure is marketed as skin hydration – a claim based on the fact that hyaluronic acid is hydrophilic (attracting water molecules). Yestar states that injecting *shuiguangzhen* four times makes your face “change from a strawberry into a tomato” (草莓脸变成番茄脸), thus pointing at the change in the skin quality. It also claims that after four injections, this effect becomes permanent. MyLike stresses that *shuiguangzhen* will bring the patient hydration (*bushui* 补水) and, if mixed with vitamin C, also whitening (*meibai* 美白) of the skin. Evercare states that hyaluronic acid can carry 500 times more water than is its own weight, which makes it able to “lock” the water molecules in the skin. However, ability to attract water molecules does not really fit in the definition of “hydration”. While hyaluronic acid might be capable of retaining water in the tissue, for genuine hydration an intake of fluids is necessary. The daily water intake recommended by the European Food Safety Authority (2010: 3) is 2 litres for women and 2.5 litres for men.<sup>25</sup> However, Chinese

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<sup>25</sup> This amount includes water intake both in liquid form (water or beverages) and as moisture content in food.

marketing is teaching its consumers that regular injecting of hyaluronic acid is enough to achieve the goal of hydrated skin.<sup>26</sup>

### **6.4.3 Straightforwardness of the Marketing Communication**

As for the general character of marketing communication, Chinese marketing tends to be very open and straightforward, making direct claims about being fat, ugly or hairy. In Chinese cultural environment, it seems to be acceptable to make this type of remarks about other people – conversations containing sentences such as “your hair is a mess today”, “you look fat recently” or “you have a new pimple on your face” are not uncommon in China. We can see such tendencies in the marketing also in different contexts.

The WeChat account of Guangzhou Meilai is very explicit when speaking about ugliness. It states that ugliness widens the distance between people, while beautiful people can take selfies just after they wake up, ugly people do not dare to share their photos with others. We can notice yet another mention of “selfies” – a very popular phenomenon in modern China, which is said to be one of the reasons behind the aesthetic surgery boom (Burkitt 2016). The article further makes a slightly exaggerated statement, that “if you are ugly when you are three years old, then at twenty you are a total loser” (就算我们 3 岁的时候很丑, 20 岁的时候很屌丝). It is difficult to imagine such a statement in the European cultural environment, but the Chinese are usually very direct when talking about imperfections of others – remarks about other people being fat or having problematic skin are very common among friends or even colleagues in China. Chua (2011) mentioned this phenomenon in her essay on Chinese parenting, where she gives an example of a Chinese mother who can easily tell her daughter: “Hey fatty – lose some weight”.

We can see another example of this cultural phenomenon in an article by Yestar serving as promotion for non-invasive body shaping. It makes very overt claims towards the reader, such as “you are so fat” (你好胖) or “in summer everyone is showing long legs and slender waist, while you only have the legs of an elephant and a waist like a bucket of water” (夏天

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<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that the producers of *shuiguangzhen* actually state during the clinical trainings that in order to achieve good treatment results, a daily intake of water needs to be at least 1.5 litres. Chinese people usually have an intake lower than this standard.

人家露的是大长腿水蛇腰，而你只有大象腿和水桶腰). The comparison between being slim and being fat uses a play on words *dachang tui* (“big long legs”, the word “big” is probably used to make a better play with the word *daxiang* – “elephant”) versus *daxiang tui* (“legs of an elephant”) and *shuishhe yao* (literally “the waist of a water snake”, used to describe a very slender waist of a woman) versus *shuitong yao* (“waist like a bucket of water”). We can imagine how such advertising would look in Western media – while in China it seems to be acceptable and quite frequently used.

When encouraging women to decide for aesthetic procedures, Yestar simply states in one of its articles that if the woman is not willing to invest in her beauty, her husband’s mistress (*xiaosan* 小三) will do it instead of her. The article makes a comparison between the beauty of the *xiaosan* and the neglected appearance of the wife. It warns the woman reader – “*xiaosan* is using your money to take care of her own face” (小三花你的钱保养她的脸). A certain aggressiveness or even a threat can be felt in such statement. However, the competition between middle-aged wives and their husbands’ young mistresses is no secret in contemporary China, where having a mistress is considered to be a symbol of one’s wealth. (Wen 2010: 211-213; Levin 2011)

During the participant observation in Chinese medical aesthetic clinics, the author has observed some real-life examples documenting that the above-mentioned advertising has its roots in reality. One of the treatment specialists in Chengdu Huamei Zixin Medical Cosmetology Hospital<sup>27</sup> shared with her colleagues that the young woman accompanying the male patient they had just been treating, is not even his *xiaosan*, it is his *xiaosi* 小四, thus suggesting that he also has a wife and a mistress different from the one we saw in the clinic. Another example of this phenomenon is revealed by Wen (2010: 210), when she discovers the reason for one of her respondents undergoing cosmetic surgery is that her husband has a mistress.

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<sup>27</sup> This clinic belongs to the MyLike chain and is an important player on the market in Sichuan province and has a high reputation among clinics in other regions as well.

#### 6.4.4 Fashion of “Challenges”

Another topic discussed in this section will be the fashion of “challenges” that is reflected in the marketing published by the medical aesthetic clinics in China. The Chinese Internet community of 2016 is an active one, posting and re-posting online content, commenting on other people’s posts, participating in contests and “challenges”, spreading throughout the Internet. Chinese clinics use this phenomenon for their own means, that is promoting the treatments and surgical procedures they have on offer.

A series of “challenges” became popular on the Chinese Internet during the period of 2015/2016. These campaigns are, in their own specific and slightly exaggerated way, showing what the “perfect body” ideal in contemporary Chinese society is – slim (even skinny)<sup>28</sup> with firm sizeable breasts. Four of them became especially popular on the Chinese Internet. The first of these “challenges” emerged in June 2015 and was called *fan shou mo qi* 反手摸脐 (“reach for your belly button from behind your back”, *Figure 6*) – it stressed the importance of having a thin waistline and was largely used by aesthetic marketing for the promotion of liposuction and other body shaping techniques. Approximately at the same time period, another challenge appeared online – the “collarbone challenge” (*suogu fang yingbi* 锁骨放硬币, “put coins on your collarbone”, *Figure 7*). Women were competing at how many coins they can put onto their collarbones, demonstrating how skinny they are.

At the beginning of 2016, another campaign originated in Japan and was called *xiong xia jia bi* 胸下夹笔 (“place a pen under your boob”, *Figure 8*). It was saying that only a woman who can hold a pen under her breast is a “real woman” and started spreading through Chinese social media. There are actually two possible explanations for this quest – according to the original meaning it can show whether one’s breasts are large enough, according to the Chinese discourse it can also suggest that one’s breasts are sagging. Both explanations can be used in promoting breast-related surgical procedures. The last campaign from March 2016 was called simply *A4 yao* A4腰 (“A4 waist”, *Figure 9*) and

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<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that the ideal of a skinny body is generally accepted in China to such an extent that Dove “Real Beauty” campaign displaying the “everyday” Western women (launched in the West to make women feel more comfortable with their imperfect bodies) proved ineffective in China, as the Chinese women simply perceived the Dove models as fat. (Pan 2013: 80-81)

was encouraging women to prove that their waist is as narrow as an A4 size paper. Campaigns such as “A4 waist” are quite regional-specific, as this kind of beauty standard (waist more narrow than 21 cm of width) can only work for people of a short stature, typical in East Asia.

#### **6.4.5 *Qizhi* – “Inner Beauty”**

Apart from physical appearance, another important aspect is the “inner beauty”, one’s character that can be further enhanced by beautiful looks. In Chinese, this kind of beauty is often expressed by the word *qizhi*, which can be translated as “temperament”, but in reality has a broader meaning. According to Zhang (2003b: 144), *qizhi* is the impression woman leaves on others, closely linked to her personal qualities, which can be “communicated through her outer appearance”. However, *qizhi* is not just the question of femininity. Chinese women also tend to see it in male counterparts that they consider attractive, without linking it to particular physical features. (Jankowiak, Gray and Hattman 2008: 256)

According to the marketing claims in the pool of articles analysed, *qizhi* can be enhanced by different physical features. Evercare states that double eyelids can “make charm and *qizhi* be emitted through a woman’s eyes” (使女性的魅力气质透过双眼散发出来). The shape of eyebrows can also show one’s character and *qizhi*. Yestar promises to design the shape of the eyes based on *wuguan* and *qizhi*. The marketing of the clinic promises that a high-bridged nose will also raise one’s *qizhi*, while in another article it claims that *qizhi* lies in one’s eyebrows, eyes and lips. One of the main results of various makeovers presented by MyLike is also enhancing of the *qizhi*. We can see that the ultimate goal of aesthetic procedures is not only to make different parts of one’s face beautiful but also to make one’s newly found beauty impress other people in the form of a higher *qizhi*.

### **6.5 Foreign Influence**

With Internet becoming more and more widespread, sharing information between different countries has become easier than ever before. As a consequence, the Chinese society is becoming more and more susceptible to foreign influence in many aspects, including

current fashion trends and beauty standards. Two distinct directions of such “cultural transfer” can be differentiated – one is the influence of other Asian countries, especially South Korea and Japan, the other is the penetrating of Western culture into China. In this section, we will look more closely at the elements of aesthetic marketing in China showing a certain level of foreign influence.

### **6.5.1 South Korean Influence**

South Korea is known as the Mecca for aesthetic surgery medical tourism. Korean doctors often experiment with different kinds of treatments and new procedures in the field of aesthetic surgery and other aesthetic treatments are often created here. The transmission of Korean beauty ideals is done mainly through the means of Korean pop culture – the phenomenon of the increasing popularity of Korean television series or music is often labelled “Korean wave” (*Hanliu* 韩流). (Wen 2010: 304) This export of entertainment was decided by the Korean government at the end of the 1990s and Korean pop culture has been spreading to other East Asian countries ever since, thus enabling also the spreading of fashion and beauty standards. (Fairclough 2005) With China situated in the immediate proximity of Korea and belonging to the same cultural sphere, it is not surprising that the Chinese marketing is directly adopting many Korean trends and standards of beauty. The word “Korean style” (*Hanshi* 韩式) occurs repeatedly in Chinese marketing. China is said to be the “largest export market for Korean cosmetic surgery”. (Davies and Han 2011: 146)

Evercare offers Korean style no-scar double eyelids (韩式无痕双眼皮), Korean style permanent makeup of the lips (韩式纹唇) and the eyebrows (韩式纹眉). Evercare also uses Korea as a positive example of a society open towards aesthetic procedures, where aesthetic surgery has already got to the same level as skin care products and makeup. Yestar makes references to the Korean television series (*Hanju* 韩剧), which are very popular in China. The main stars of these series set the current standards of beauty. The *shoulianzhen* is said to make one triumph over the feminine leads of Korean soap operas (完胜韩剧女主角), suggesting that the facial shape after the injection will be even more perfect than that of the Korean actresses.



*Shuiguang*, which was discussed in the previous section, is a treatment originating in Korea and is introduced as the “basic skin care of Korean stars” (韩国明星基本护理方式), again trying to persuade the readers that through undergoing this treatment, they will gain the beauty of the celebrities they admire. The example of Korean celebrities is also used quite often in the marketing of Guangzhou MyLike – for forehead fillers, double eyelid surgery and many other procedures.

On the other hand, Korea might also serve as a negative example of what is not desirable. Koreans are sometimes ridiculed for trying to fit in the same beauty ideal – the result is they all look similar after undergoing cosmetic surgery. A warning against “Korean assembly lines” (韩国流水线) has been mentioned in one of the previous sections.

### **6.5.2 Western Influence**

Western culture has also had a profound influence on the perception of beauty in China, even though the extent of this influence remains disputed, as it might be difficult to determine which features are actually “Western”. At this place only hair removal and breast augmentation will be discussed. Among the present Western influences, one of the most prominent ones is hair removal. The practice of depilation has deeper roots and is probably not purely Western, but it is quite normative in contemporary Western society. (Foo 2010: 30) As the trend has been particularly strong in China in recent years due to the contact with Western culture, we will count this practice among Western influences in this thesis. (see Yin 2015)

The way hair removal is being advertised in China is, as in some of the cases mentioned before, very straightforward and even slightly mocking. Evercare states that it is time to take off the *maoyi maoku* 毛衣毛裤, literally “woollen sweater and woollen pants”, using the fact that the word *mao* 毛 has either the meaning of “hair” or “wool” to create a pun – *maoyi* can either mean a “woollen sweater” or “body hair”, *maoku* can either mean “woollen pants” or “hair on one’s legs”.

With summer approaching, the frequency of articles promoting hair removal gets higher and so does the demand for these procedures. The clinics are attracting new customers to come by offering free (or almost free) hair removal treatments. According to the head of the dermatology department of MyLike clinic in Changsha, out of around three hundred patients of the department every day (as of May 2016), at least two hundred are coming for hair removal. During this period, Yestar publishes an article called “Say goodbye to ‘orangutan’ girl” (告别“猩”女郎), again using a rather sarcastic style of writing. It stresses the importance of the look of one’s body, as “even if you have the looks that can ‘make fish sink and birds alight’, a body full of hair almost destroys everything” (纵你有沉鱼落雁之姿，一身的毛毛几乎要毁所有). This statement uses the set expression (*chengyu* 成语) “make fish sink and birds alight” (*chenyu luoyan* 沉鱼落雁), which is used to describe feminine beauty. It is followed by a funny cartoon showing how inappropriate it is to have hair on legs and other body areas, making examples of various social occasions (such as wedding, work or a romantic date). Keeping the mocking tone, the article further states, that even though it is the Year of Monkey (*hounian* 猴年), the reader definitely does not want “hairy hands and feet” (*maoshou maojiao* 毛手毛脚) of a “monkey brother” (*houge* 猴哥). The usage of *maoshou maojiao* is again a play on words: the dictionary meaning of this word is actually “careless”, while in this article the word is used in its literal sense.

Yet another “monkey” joke can be found in another article by Yestar. It again uses cartoons and jokes to show the difficulties of life with body hair. One of the jokes suggests that if there is too much hair on our body, when we wake up during the night and touch our own hand, we might think we are actually a gorilla (*daxingxing* 大猩猩), not a human. In a different article, Yestar uses a similar joke, stating that if you have long body hair, other people might call you a “gibbon” (*changbiyuan* 长臂猿). For a foreign observer it might be hard to understand that marketing telling people “not to look like monkeys” can be attractive to so many customers (judging from the share of hair removal patients among all the patients of dermatology department mentioned above, even though the reason for having such number of patients might be also the cheap price of the treatment).

Another of the most distinct Western influences is the breast augmentation surgery (*longxiong* 隆胸). Chinese women generally tend to have rather small breasts and large breasts were never considered to be an ideal of beauty until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the past, Chinese women even used to wrap their breasts in order to make them look smaller. (Wen 2010: 78; Johansson 1998: 69) The Western ideal of large breasts entered China in cosmopolitan Shanghai of the 1930s (see Wen 2010: 80-84). However, during the Mao era body curves were supposed to be hidden in loose unisex “Mao suits”. (Johansson 1998: 69)

The modern marketing of breast augmentation surgery concentrates mainly on explaining how important it is to choose a size appropriate to one’s stature. An ideal breast size is the one that is in good proportion to the rest of the body, and the size is further defined by very concrete parameters as shown in many diagrams. As Luo (2008: 217) found out during her research, the main concern of the Chinese women might actually be to achieve a more balanced body, not to have a big “Western” breast.

Yestar states that the most beautiful shape of the breasts is the “drop-like” shape (*shuidi zhuang* 水滴状) as on the statue of Venus de Milo<sup>29</sup>. But at the same time it also says that round breast implants (*yuanxing longxiong jiati* 圆形隆胸假体) better fit the requirements of Asian customers. The breasts should be firm, not too large and with a nice cleavage (*rugou* 乳沟). Yestar stresses the natural look and feel of the breasts, the expression “naturally beautiful breast” (*ziran meixiong* 自然美胸) is repeated at many places in their marketing. Wen (2010: 239) has also noticed that some texts tend to normalize the surgery by stressing the “natural results”. Furthermore, Yestar even states that “the implants are softer and have a better feel than real breasts” (假体比真胸更柔软，手感更好), as if trying to encourage readers to opt for this surgery. Such preference of “artificial” over “natural” suggests that “artificial beauty” becomes a new norm. We might take such a statement as an exaggeration, but it makes an important message about the medical aesthetic market and discourse.

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<sup>29</sup> Venus de Milo is an ancient Greek statue, believed to depict Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of beauty and love). It is on display in Louvre Museum in Paris. It is interesting that Yestar clinic uses an example of a classical sculpture of Western culture to explain the beauty ideal.

As we have seen in the case of hair removal, Chinese marketing often uses a mocking style for promoting aesthetic procedures. This can be noticed also in the case of the breasts. A flat chest is compared to a mouse pad (*shubiaodian* 鼠标垫). Furthermore, we can also notice the straightforwardness that was described in the previous section. Large breasts are described as a way to get married easily or to keep the partner one wishes to have (可以让我们嫁得出或者留得住想留的男人). Guangzhou MyLike uses the example of a famous celebrity whose husband chose another woman with larger breasts to support this claim. MyLike further uses a “common saying” to underline the idea of the need for breast augmentation: “As the saying goes, ‘it is not one’s fault to have small breasts, the only mistake is not to want to have them bigger’” (俗语说“胸小不是罪过，不想变大才是错误”).

## 6.6 “Before and After” Pictures

The so called “B&A pictures” (pictures taken before and after the treatment or surgery)<sup>30</sup> are one of the most intriguing parts of the aesthetic marketing and they can also be a fascinating subject for analysis. The usage of “before and after” photographs serves as specific personalized marketing for the beauty industry. (Davies and Han 2011: 151) They bring a very direct visual message to the customers. Some authors express concern that due to the use of graphic software, these pictures create a distorted picture of reality. (Pan 2013: 34)

There are different levels of B&A pictures used in the marketing of Chinese aesthetic clinics. The most basic one is the pictures of particular facial or body parts that have undergone the treatment being advertised. These pictures are usually either taken by the clinic itself or provided by the manufacturer of the device or consumables in question. Another type of pictures similar to the first one is pictures of a whole face (or even the whole body) that are supposed to illustrate the effect of some treatment on the overall

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<sup>30</sup> The Chinese term for B&A pictures is *qianhou duibi zhaopian* 前后对比照片, which should be preceded by a specification of what the change in “before” and “after” is, for example *zhiliao* 治疗 (treatment), *shoushu* 手术 (surgery) etc.

appearance of the person. The last type is the pictures documenting “total makeovers”, stories of dreams about beauty coming true.

### **6.6.1 Pictures of a Specific Body or Facial Part**

Pictures of the first type usually present a detail of a certain body or facial part, for example eyes, nose, lips, breasts or abdomen. They show the customers how the body can be divided into different components to be treated. (Davies and Han 2011: 152) The pictures are usually without context and it can be supposed that there is a certain hidden manipulation to make the results more impressive. Actually, many people (including the clients) regard such pictures with suspicion nowadays, but they are still a very important tool in aesthetic marketing. For our analysis, the differences between “before” and “after” can be used to reveal some of the desirable body and facial features in the contemporary Chinese society. Some of them have been mentioned in other sections of this text, in this place only a brief summary based on B&A pictures will be made.

To start with the facial features, several different parts of the face can be seen in the B&A pictures. The ideal lips are of full shape and full colour, so that they can underline the three-dimensional look of the face. The lower part of the face is narrow, with the chin pointed to make the V-line even more visible. The nose is also narrow and pointed and the forehead is round, so that the face has nice contours when looked at from the side. The upper cheeks and temples are full, which can also further underline the V-shape of the whole face. The eyes with double eyelids look open and full of vigour with thick and tidy eyebrows just above.

As for the body, the current standard is to be slim, especially in the area around the waist. Other body parts that appear in the marketing are legs (especially thighs) or back (which should be delicate). The buttock should be slim and firm. The breasts should be full and larger in size, but their size should at the same time be in balance with the rest of the body. The body should be without unwanted hair in areas such as armpits, legs or bikini area.

### 6.6.2 Blending of Different Features

The characteristics mentioned above are usually mainly concerned with the shape and contours of different body parts and the face. However, in the B&A pictures of the second category mentioned above, another key beauty marker can be noticed – the skin colour. When studying the B&A pictures in the marketing of the Chinese aesthetic clinics, it can be found that they usually have one thing in common – in the picture “before”, the patient’s skin looks quite dark, while in the picture “after” it is white and even shining. No matter what the treatment result displayed by the picture is, the whiteness of the skin can always make it look even better (see *Figure 10*).

The white skin beauty ideal has a long tradition in Chinese culture (Wen 2010: 338) and it is an important marker of feminine beauty in many Asian societies (Li *et al.* 2008: 444). The preference for fair skin in Asia has older roots than the penetration of European colonial influence in this region, (Zhang L. 2013: 5) as we can see for example in the portrait of empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty (Pan 2013: 18). In Asian culture there exists a connection between social class and skin colour – pale skin is associated with higher class women who do not need to work in the fields. (Pan 2013: 6; Johansson 1998: 60) The importance of fair skin is demonstrated also by an old Chinese saying “white skin can cover ugliness” (*yi bai zhe san chou* 一白遮三丑). Apart from a short period of time during the era of Mao Zedong, when manual work and therefore also dark-tanned skin were appreciated, fair skin has usually been considered the beauty ideal. (Johansson 1998: 61) Even nowadays, white skin still remains highly desirable. The popularity of *meibai* cosmetics and treatments seems to be unfading, as *meibai* is omnipresent in Chinese aesthetic marketing, B&A pictures included. Guangzhou MyLike even claims that the hydration brought about by *shuiguangzhen* can cause the skin to become more *meibai*.

We can look more closely at two concrete examples from the pool of articles analysed. In the first one, white colour of the skin is used to enhance the results of hyaluronic acid injections. Hyaluronic acid is a filler that can improve facial contours but has little (or nothing) to do with the skin colour. However, the main difference in the B&A pictures is not the result of the filler but rather of the change in skin colour – the readers might feel that the filler will bring a big change to their overall appearance, as the overall appearance

is greatly influenced by the skin tone (see *Figure 11*). The second example looks even more interesting – the change in skin colour accompanies a breast augmentation surgery (*Figure 12*). The difference between B&A pictures should make the reader feel that the surgery will change not just the size of the breasts but also the overall appearance of the person, enhance their beauty, make them more vigorous and self-confident.

The main factor in the change in appearance in B&A pictures is usually the skin colour. However, we can also notice several other factors that may play a role in some cases. One example that is worth mentioning is the MyLike “real-case” section in an article about eye surgery (eye corner opening mentioned before), where in the “after” picture also other features than just the shape of the eyes change, in particular the eyebrows, cheeks or the chin (see *Figure 13*). In some of the pictures even the shape of the whole face changes (into “V-shape”) – that is again something unrelated to the eye surgery. Similar blending in advertising pictures has been noticed also by Jiaravanon (2011) who analysed an advertisement for face cream and found that at the same time it was promoting also “whiter skin, double eyelids, and a more three dimensional nose”.

Pictures showing the results of *shuiguangzhen* that is said to improve skin quality and especially skin hydration are merely showing the difference between a face with and without makeup. The result in *Figure 14* is further enhanced by a double eyelid surgery. Makeup seems to be widely used for improving or even creating the results in the “after” pictures in general. It is used to improve the results of injectables and even rhinoplasty. The use of makeup can largely affect the skin colour, one of the key factors in the Chinese perception of beauty, as has been mentioned above.

### **6.6.3 “Total Makeovers”**

The third category is the B&A pictures showing “total makeovers”. In reality, these makeovers might not have been that “total”. The change of one’s looks usually consists of a few procedures, mainly fillers that are injected to improve the facial contours. However, what matters the most for the marketing message is the story, the story of dreams coming true; the story of an “ugly duckling” becoming a beauty. As Wen (2010: 226) points out, in

a country undergoing such a rapid social and economic transition, people tend to believe that even their looks can suddenly change. The aim of such stories is to attract readers, overcome the taboos, make customers see the treatments from a closer distance and think about realizing their own dreams of becoming beautiful.

The WeChat account of Guangzhou MyLike is particularly rich in personal stories of successful makeovers. The website of MyLike group has a section dedicated only to successful patient cases; some of these cases appear on the WeChat of its Guangzhou branch, accompanied by a simple story. According to Luo (2008: 176) these patients are actually volunteers who have received aesthetic treatments for free in exchange for becoming a part of the clinic's promotion. The first such patient was Hao Lulu, who underwent a series of treatments in Beijing Evercare Jianxiang in 2003.

A Chinese model Zhang Xue'er 张雪儿 (*Figure 15*) is said not to be satisfied with her crooked nose which makes her look like a loser (*diaosi* 屌丝), and therefore chooses rhinoplasty. However, the result we see in the final picture is something beyond the effect of rhinoplasty only - Zhang Xue'er is described as now looking like the famous Chinese celebrity Fan Bingbing 范冰冰 (*Figure 16*), who is considered to be a representative example of the modern Chinese beauty ideal (Wen 2010: 281; Zhang 2012: 443). This change is thus similar to what was described in the second category of B&A pictures – the message marketing is giving is that a simple rhinoplasty can change you into a totally different – more beautiful – person. Zhang Xue'er has also been given the nickname “Angelababy – MyLike edition”. Angelababy is a Hong Kong model and actress and currently one of the most popular Chinese beauties (*Figure 17*).

There are also a few cases which do not appear on the website of the MyLike group, for example the story of a girl called Yang Xin 杨馨 (*Figure 18*). Before her makeover she was a regular Chinese girl with many facial features that are undesirable according to the Chinese beauty standards as they have been described in the previous sections: a slightly plump face, big flat and wide nose, small eyes and a rather short chin. She is said to have undergone jaw surgery to make her face look smaller, nose reshaping and fat transfer to adjust her facial contours. The story is presented as seen through her eyes and has the form



of a diary with “selfie” pictures attached. Yang Xin shares with the readers that she “loves her new self” and “cannot help but keep taking selfies of herself”. The time before the makeover is linked to an inferiority complex, while the period after the surgeries is associated with self-confidence.

Another interesting story is the one of an 18-year-old girl called Xiao Peiji 肖佩枝 (*Figure 19*), who “had the courage to change” (*ganyu gaibian* 勇于改变). She is said to have undergone nose reshaping and fat transfer to improve the contours of her face (that means this case is quite similar to the one of Yang Xin described in the previous paragraph). Xiao Peiji’s case is used to make a direct appeal on the readers: “The international experts in MyLike will help you to become the next Xiao Peiji” (美莱国际专家部助你成为下一个肖佩枝). MyLike promises it will help its customers in their efforts to become beautiful. In another successful case, a patient only two years older than Xiao Peiji confesses that the makeover done in MyLike “has changed her whole life”. Statements about “life-changing” cosmetic surgeries are quite common in beauty advertising. (Wen 2010: 245) All these remarks are supposed to encourage readers to follow the steps of these “courageous” young girls and become beautiful.

## 7 Discussion

The aim of this research was to describe the specifics of medical aesthetic marketing in China, with the focus on online marketing represented by the mobile social media application WeChat, the dominant player in the Chinese new media market. WeChat accounts can be used for everyday direct communication between the medical aesthetic clinics and their customers, either one-way communication where the clinic publishes content to be read by its followers, either two-way communication where WeChat account can also be used for exchange of messages between the clinic and the customer. In this paper the content of the first type of communication has been analysed.

The results of previous research done in this field and the participant observation method used during numerous visits to medical aesthetic clinics in China helped to understand the context of Chinese beauty industry and select the approximate range of topics for the following qualitative analysis of the textual and visual content of online marketing of three WeChat accounts representing three major chains of aesthetic clinics in China and at the same time three major geographical locations where the medical aesthetic market is the most developed in China – Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (Southern China).

In the previous research introduced in the Literature Review section, the cosmetic surgery was usually the main topic of research. Asian blepharoplasty (double eyelid surgery), rhinoplasty and jaw reduction surgery were identified as the three main types of surgery demanded by Chinese customers. The first two have been identified among the major topics of the marketing content during our research, confirming the previous studies. As for the jaw reduction surgery, in Chinese online marketing of 2016 it has been replaced by *shoulianzen*, injection of Botox applied on the muscles of mastication, causing them to contract, thus leading to narrowing the lower part of the face and creating the popular “V-shape”. Unlike jaw reduction surgery, the results of Botox are not permanent. However, the procedure is less invasive and therefore acceptable for a wider group of customers, thus creating a bigger business opportunity for the medical aesthetic clinics. That is probably the reason why this procedure is heavily promoted in the Chinese marketing. The facial shape seems to be among the biggest concerns of Chinese women.

The analysis of the marketing content also confirmed that the marketing of the beauty industry is mostly aimed at women and that the procedures advertised are mostly aimed at the face and not the body. The importance of facial appearance in Chinese culture has been discussed by various researchers. Although the thin body shape with sizeable breasts is also promoted, the main points of concern are the facial features and the overall facial appearance. The Chinese concepts of *wuguan* as the five main facial features important for one's looks and *qizhi*, the "inner beauty" that can be enhanced by beautiful appearance, also play an important role in the marketing discourse.

It has been mentioned that in the previous research cosmetic surgery (meaning invasive procedures aiming at a permanent change of one's appearance) was the main point of interest. However, analysis of the marketing of Chinese medical aesthetic clinics has shown that surgery, although still promoted, is not the main topic of beauty marketing in 2016. While surgical procedures such as double eyelid surgery, nose surgery, breast augmentation or liposuction are all present in the marketing, non-invasive techniques such as Botox, dermal fillers, semi-permanent makeup and skin hydration are gaining popularity both in the marketing and among the customers. These techniques do not result in a permanent change of one's looks but they promise instant results. Furthermore, treatments such as Botox or hyaluronic acid injections fit into the Chinese concept of *baoyang*, the maintenance of one's youthful looks, which is encouraged to be started as soon as possible. The promotion of skin maintenance and the encouragement to start this at a young age serves to open up to a wider range of customers. While surgery might not be for everyone (even though for example double eyelid surgery has already achieved the status of a very common procedure not even regarded as surgery by the consumers), skin care, skin rejuvenation and anti-aging are acceptable even for people afraid of surgery.

One of the important topics is the skin hydration – the main problem of aging skin is identified as its dryness, starting as early as at around the age of thirty. The massive promotion of skin hydration might be the result of the marketing campaign of the most widespread procedure of Chinese beauty market of 2015 and 2016 – *shuiguangzhen*. The treatment with origins in South Korea is a mixture of hyaluronic acid and other substances, promising to "lock" the water molecules in the skin and keep it hydrated. However, such

hydration would be impossible without the proper daily intake of fluids, often overlooked by Chinese consumers, persuaded by the marketing that injecting hyaluronic acid into the skin is the best approach to keep the skin hydrated.

Apart from the above mentioned procedures, some Chinese-specific, or more precisely East Asian-specific treatments have been revealed during the analysis. Injecting large doses of Botox into certain body muscles to make one's figure look more delicate instead of fit and healthy might be the sign of a long-term Chinese beauty ideal of a soft (some authors would say "weak") woman subordinated to the man in Chinese society. This practice seems to be of a similar nature as the tradition of foot binding in imperial China.

On the other hand, some of the major concerns of Chinese women as identified during the participant observation in the Chinese clinics, have not been found in the pool of articles collected for this analysis. Among these, the skin laxity and stretch marks Chinese women mostly suffer from after giving birth particularly stand out. The problem that usually remains hidden underneath one's clothes, also remains hidden in the marketing, as if it was concerned only with the body parts which can be seen by the public. This actually gives an important message about Chinese people who are also in other aspects concerned mainly with what can be seen by the people around them.

The analysis has been concerned not only with the marketing discourse but also with the visual content, represented by the "before and after" pictures. The pictures help not only to identify the facial features considered ideal by the Chinese, such as full and round forehead, double eyelids full of vitality, high-bridged nose, full lips and pointed chin, making the jaw line form a V-shape, but also show that the main feature differentiating between "ugliness" and "beauty" is the skin colour. While skin-whitening is, a little surprisingly, not directly promoted by the marketing as much as some other procedures, it is subliminally promoted by the B&A pictures, where the picture "before" shows a person with dark and dull skin, while the picture "after" shows the same person with white and radiant skin, thus enhancing the result of other treatments promoted, such as nose surgery.

White skin is considered by some authors as an example of Western influence on the Chinese beauty ideals, but others have shown that this Asian ideal, being a traditional

marker of one's higher social status, preceded the first contacts with Western culture. However, there are other popular procedures that can be considered as coming from the West. Among these, breast augmentation surgery and hair removal have been discussed. While in ancient China large breasts were not counted as a marker of beauty, in contemporary China the breast size is gaining more and more importance. As for the hair removal, judging from the marketing content and observation in the clinics, it is one of the most popular and demanded procedures nowadays. The trend of hair removal has only started in recent years in China.

While Western inspiration is not often mentioned in the marketing, Korean influence is much more prominent, at least as for the marketing discourse. Some researchers might argue that the facial features labelled as "Korean-style" are actually those that Koreans are trying to achieve in order to look more Western. However, what is important for this thesis is not whether the Chinese are attempting to look more Western, but what the marketing claims are. Chinese medical aesthetic marketing is in most of the cases not trying to persuade people to undergo procedures that would make them look more Western, but rather creating an "Oriental" beauty ideal that would be more appropriate for the Chinese.

Generally, the marketing puts emphasis on not imitating Western or any other beauty ideals, but rather maintaining and preserving one's own beauty. It states that all women have the potential to be beautiful, if they invest some effort. This effort is actually presented as a sort of obligation the women have towards themselves, their husbands and the people around them. The dichotomy between "beauty" and "ugliness" is expressed very directly by the Chinese marketing and might be responsible for creating a strong sense of imperfection among the Chinese consumers of beauty ideals.

## **Conclusion**

As stated above, the aim of this paper has been to describe the specifics of Chinese medical aesthetic marketing. The aesthetic industry is often viewed as the domain of surgical procedures, performed at high risk and leading to a permanent change of a person's appearance. There have been reports about unsuccessful surgical procedures or attempts to imitate the look of famous celebrities. However, the everyday reality of the industry might be different from the way it is usually perceived. This thesis attempted to describe the current situation on the Chinese aesthetic market through the means of analysis of the content of online marketing of three WeChat accounts representing three different chains of medical aesthetic clinics in China. The results of this analysis are presented in the Discussion.

It has been revealed that, unlike the common belief, medical aesthetic market is not concerned only with surgical makeovers, but that the majority of the procedures advertised and performed are minimally-invasive or even non-invasive techniques, acceptable for a wider range of customers. Most of the procedures currently promoted by the Chinese marketing are actually aimed at the maintenance of a youthful skin appearance and anti-aging. Putting emphasis of maintaining one's own youthful looks instead of transforming one's appearance into a different person enables the clinics to widen the customer base and diversify their business. This approach is also more in accordance with the traditional Chinese belief that the body is a gift from our parents and should not be wilfully altered.

Due to the restricted size of this thesis, only one form of online marketing was chosen for analysis, which is one of the research limitations. A more comprehensive analysis of different Internet content might be suggested for further study of this topic. However, WeChat, as the platform for sharing different content, which nowadays forms an indispensable part of the lives of a significant part of Chinese society, can be considered a very valuable and maybe even the most important source of information for such research. The other limitation is the range of articles selected for the analysis. For a qualitative analysis, selecting a limited number of articles is relatively sufficient to achieve the aim of the research. However, some topics otherwise present in Chinese marketing, might have not been present in the articles published during the given time period. To have a further

understanding of the content of medical aesthetic marketing in China, a quantitative analysis of a larger pool of articles might be suggested.

There have been several research projects analysing the reasons that lead women to choose cosmetic surgery. This thesis has shown other parts of medical aesthetic market than just the surgery. It might be interesting to continue with this research on a different level and study the views women have of their own bodies to see whether the message marketing delivers to women actually affects the way they see their own face and body.

## Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá marketingem estetické medicíny v čínských nových médiích, konkrétně na mobilní platformě WeChat. V první části práce je představena základní terminologie, za kterou následuje shrnutí dosavadního výzkumu v oblasti estetické medicíny a čínského ideálu krásy. Na tento přehled navazuje představení trhu estetické medicíny v současné Číně, který lze rozdělit na tři úrovně – státní nemocnice se specializovanými centry, soukromé estetické kliniky a kosmetické salony. Práce se dále zabývá pouze segmentem soukromých estetických klinik, konkrétně obsahem mobilního marketingu tří řetězců estetických klinik v Číně: MyLike, Yestar a Evercare. Pro analýzu byly sebrány články, které tyto řetězce publikovaly pomocí mobilní sociální sítě WeChat v průběhu prvních čtyř měsíců roku 2016.

V páté kapitole je představena výzkumná metoda. Výzkum byl rozdělen do dvou částí, v první z nich byla použita metoda zúčastněného pozorování, kdy autorka v průběhu 18 měsíců mezi lety 2014-2016 aktivně navštívila množství klinik spadajících do kategorie soukromých estetických klinik, kde se přímo účastnila denního fungování těchto klinik a interakcí mezi personálem klinik a klienty. Tato část práce pomohla poznat celkový kontext fungování trhu estetické medicíny v Číně a určit témata, kterými by se měla zabývat následující kvalitativní obsahová analýza vybraných marketingových článků.

Hlavní část práce tvoří právě kvalitativní analýza obsahu těchto článků, která je rozdělena do šesti hlavních témat: obecné zaměření článků (obličej/tělo, invazivní/neinvazivní procedury), pobídka k estetickým procedurám, specifika čínského pojetí krásy (na příkladu jednotlivých částí těla a obličeje), kulturní aspekty (postoje ke stárnutí, péči o pleť aj.), zahraniční vlivy (Jižní Korea, Západ) a fotografie „před“ a „po“. V průběhu analýzy jsou rozebrány jednotlivé aspekty čínského pojetí ženské krásy (muži jsou v marketingu estetické medicíny zastoupeni pouze okrajově) a také způsobu, jakým estetické kliniky ve svém marketingu komunikují se svými klienty. Závěry analýzy jsou shrnuty v diskuzi, přičemž v závěru práce jsou již pouze zmíněny limity tohoto výzkumu a nastíněn možný směr další výzkumné práce.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Marketing Images**

*Figure 1:* A B&A picture displaying the result of *shoulianzhen*.

*Figure 2:* A B&A picture displaying the result of double eyelid surgery.

*Figure 3:* An example showing the difference between not having and having *wocan*.

*Figure 4:* Korean actress Song Hye-kyo.

*Figure 5:* Picture illustrating the usage of Botox on calves.

*Figure 6:* “Reach for your belly button from behind your back”.

*Figure 7:* The “collarbone challenge”.

*Figure 8:* “Place a pen under your boob”.

*Figure 9:* “A4 waist” challenge.

*Figure 10:* A B&A picture displaying the result of rhinoplasty.

*Figure 11:* Change in skin colour in the picture “after”.

*Figure 12:* A B&A picture displaying the result of breast augmentation surgery.

*Figure 13:* An example of blending different features in B&A pictures.

*Figure 14:* A B&A picture displaying the result of *shuiguangzhen*.

*Figure 15:* Zhang Xue'er.

*Figure 16:* Fan Bingbing.

*Figure 17:* Angelababy.

*Figure 18:* Yang Xin.

*Figure 19:* Xiao Peiji.

### **Appendix 2: List of Medical Aesthetic Terminology**

## Appendix 1: Marketing Images



*Figure 1: A B&A picture displaying the result of *shoulianzhen*. Source: <http://www.mymylike.com/slz/> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 2: A B&A picture displaying the result of double eyelid surgery. This type of eyelid is sometimes called “red phoenix eye” in Chinese. Source: <http://www.nbmylike.com/htm/zx/ybzx/syp/28596.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*





Figure 3: An example showing the difference between not having and having *wocan*. Source: <http://m.shmeilai.cn/ybzx/wctc/61.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].



Figure 4: Korean actress Song Hye-kyo. These two pictures show the difference between two types of eyebrows: *yi zi wumei* (on the left) and *liuxingmei* (on the right). Source: [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_abc67e970102wnk6.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_abc67e970102wnk6.html) [Accessed 19 June 2016].



*Figure 5: Picture illustrating the usage of Botox on calves. Source: [http://www.xmylike.com/article/article\\_903.html](http://www.xmylike.com/article/article_903.html) [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 6: “Reach for your belly button from behind your back”. Source: [http://news.cnwest.com/content/2015-06/18/content\\_12777091.htm](http://news.cnwest.com/content/2015-06/18/content_12777091.htm) [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 7: The “collarbone challenge”. Source: <http://news.sina.com.cn/s/2015-06-17/104431960346.shtml> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 8: “Place a pen under your boob”. Source: <http://news.yxlady.com/201601/1060167.shtml> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 9: “A4 waist” challenge. Source: <http://news.wehefei.com/system/2016/03/18/010668005.shtml> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 10: A B&A picture displaying the result of rhinoplasty. The result is enhanced by the change in skin colour. Source: <http://m.hzmylike.net/ztrglb/7044.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 11: Change in skin colour in the picture “after”. The picture is supposed to display the result of hyaluronic acid chin filler, but there are other changes visible, especially in the skin colour and the shape of eyebrows.. Source: <http://www.gzmylike.com.cn/ask/wc/sx/695.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



*Figure 12: A B&A picture displaying the result of breast augmentation surgery. The skin colour is lighter in the picture “after” and the skin contours have also changed (forehead and chin fillers, rhinoplasty). Source: <http://www.hzmylike.com/zhuanti/ztzffx/> [Accessed 19 June 2016].*



Figure 13: An example of blending different features in B&A pictures. Source: <http://www.shmylikemr.cn/> [Accessed 19 June 2016].



Figure 14: A B&A picture displaying the result of *shuiguangzhen*. The result is enhanced by the use of makeup and a double eyelid surgery (and probably also rhinoplasty). Source: <http://wap.xmmylike.com/yyxw/1842.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].



*Figure 15: Zhang Xue'er.* In Guangzhou MyLike WeChat advertising she is said to have undergone rhinoplasty, the B&A pictures show that she also had fillers injected in the temples, chin and forehead and she had freckles removed. Some other MyLike sources list all of these procedures. Source: <http://www.hzmylike.net/dtyd/3662.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].



*Figure 16: Fan Bingbing.* Source: <http://www.baike.com/wiki/%E8%8C%83%E5%86%B0%E5%86%B0> [Accessed 19 June 2016].



Figure 17: **Angelababy.** Source: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/celebrity/2015-11/04/content\\_22366136.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/celebrity/2015-11/04/content_22366136.htm) [Accessed 19 June 2016].



Figure 18: **Yang Xin.** Source: [http://plastic.pclady.com.cn/137/1378184\\_all.html](http://plastic.pclady.com.cn/137/1378184_all.html) [Accessed 19 June 2016]





Figure 19: Xiao Peiji. Source: <http://m.zhyxzs.com/new/238.html> [Accessed 19 June 2016].

## Appendix 2: List of Medical Aesthetic Terminology

Chinese ( <i>pinyin</i> without tone marks)	Chinese (simplified characters)	Chinese ( <i>pinyin</i> with tone marks)	English	English - other
A4 yao	A4 腰	A4 yāo	“A4 waist”	
baibai rou	掰掰肉	bāibāi ròu	arm with skin laxity	“bye-bye flash”
baoyang	保养	bǎoyǎng	maintain (one’s looks)	
biyi	鼻翼	bíyì	wings of the nose	
boniaosuan	玻尿酸	bōniàosuān	hyaluronic acid	
bushui	补水	bǔshuǐ	hydrate (about skin)	
celian	侧脸	cèliǎn	face in profile	
changxing lian	长形脸	chángxíng liǎn	“long” face	
chaosheng	超声	chāoshēng	ultrasound	
chouzhi	抽脂	chōuzhī	lipoplasty	liposuction
dalian	大脸	dàliǎn	big cheeks	
danfengyan	丹凤眼	dānfèngyǎn	double eyelid with a crease widening towards the outer corner of the eye	“red phoenix eye”
danyanpi	单眼皮	dānyǎnpí	single eyelid	
duangu zenggao shu	断骨增高术	duàngǔ zēnggāo shù	leg-stretching surgery	leg-lengthening surgery
edan lian	鹅蛋脸	édàn liǎn	“goose egg- shaped” face	
falingwen	法令纹	fǎlìngwén	nasolabial folds	
fangxing lian	方形脸	fāngxíng liǎn	“square” face	
fan shou mo qi	反手摸脐	fǎn shǒu mō qí	“reach for your belly button from behind your back”	
fantan	反弹	fǎntán	“bounce back” (about fat, weight)	
feng etou	丰额头	fēng étóu	forehead augmentation	“full forehead”
feng mianjia	丰面颊	fēng miànjiá	cheek augmentation	“full cheeks”

feng taiyangxue	丰太阳穴	fēng tàiyángxué	temple augmentation	“full temples”
feng xiaba	丰下巴	fēng xiàbā	chin augmentation	“full chin”
fengchun	丰唇	fēngchún	lip augmentation	“abundant lips”
fengtun	丰臀	fēngtún	buttock augmentation	“full buttock”
gai lianxing shoushu	改脸型手术	gǎi liǎnxíng shǒushù	jaw reshaping surgery	jaw reduction surgery
gao biliang	高鼻梁	gāo bíliáng	high nose bridge	
gongli yiyuan	公立医院	gōnglì yīyuàn	public hospital	
guazi lian	瓜子脸	guāzǐ liǎn	“melon seed-shaped” face	
guo zi lian	国字脸	guó zì liǎn	face “having the shape of the character <i>guo</i> ”	
hudiejian	蝴蝶肩	húdiéjiān	“butterfly shoulders” (delicate shoulders)	
hudiexiu	蝴蝶袖	húdiéxiù	arm with skin laxity	“butterfly sleeves”
jianfei	减肥	jiǎnféi	lose weight	“reduce fat”
jianzhi	减脂	jiǎnzī	remove fat	fat removal
jiguang	激光	jīguāng	laser	
kai yanjiao	开眼角	kāi yǎnjiǎo	“open the corners of the eyes”	
kaishanxing shuangyanpi	开扇形双眼皮	kāishànxíng shuāngyǎnpí	double eyelid with a crease widening towards the outer corner of the eye	
kang shuailao	抗衰老	kàng shuāilǎo	anti-aging	
lingxing lian	菱形脸	língxíng liǎn	“diamond-shaped” face	
liti	立体	lìtǐ	three-dimensional	
liuxingmei	流星眉	liúxīngméi	“shooting star eyebrows”	
lixing lian	梨形脸	líxíng liǎn	“pear-shaped” face	

longbi	隆鼻	lóngbí	rhinoplasty	nose surgery
longxiong	隆胸	lóngxiōng	mammoplasty	breast augmentation surgery
maofa yizhi	毛发移植	máofà yízhí	hair transplantation	
meibai	美白	měibái	whitening (of the skin)	
meijianwen	眉间纹	méijiānwén	“frown lines”	“lines between eyebrows”
meirong	美容	měiróng	improve one’s looks	
meirong hangye	美容行业	měiróng hángyè	aesthetic industry	
meirongyuan	美容院	měiróngyuàn	beauty salon	“spa”
mianbu nianqinghua	面部年轻化	miàn bù niánqīnghuà	facial rejuvenation	
minyíng yīyuàn	民营医院	mínyíng yīyuàn	privately run clinic	
pifu baoshixing	皮肤保湿性	pífū bǎoshīxìng	skin hydration	
pifu huli	皮肤护理	pífū hùlǐ	skin care	
pifu songchidu	皮肤松弛度	pífū sōngchídù	skin laxity	
pifu tanxing	皮肤弹性	pífū tánxìng	skin elasticity	
pingxingxing shuangyanpi	平行型双眼皮	píngxíngxíng shuāngyǎnpí	double eyelid with parallel crease	
qizhi	气质	qìzhì	“inner beauty”	
rengong mei	人工美	réngōng měi	“artificial beauty”	
renshenwen	妊娠纹	rènshēnwén	striae	stretch marks
renzao meinü	人造美女	rénzào měinǚ	artificial beauty	
roudusu	肉毒素	ròudúsù	botulinum toxin	Botox
sanjiaoxing lian	三角形脸	sānjiǎoxíng liǎn	“triangle” face	
shenghuo meirong	生活美容	shēnghuó měiróng	beauty salons	“spa”
shenti suxing	身体塑形	shēntǐ sùxíng	body shaping	
shepin	射频	shèpín	radiofrequency	
shoulian	瘦脸	shòuliǎn	“thin” face	
shoulianzen	瘦脸针	shòuliǎnzhen	“thin face injection”	Botox injection for shrinking of masticatory muscles
shuangxiaba	双下巴	shuāngxiàbā	double chin	
shuangyanpi	双眼皮	shuāngyǎnpí	double eyelid	

shuangyanpi shoushu	双眼皮手术	shuāngyǎnpí shǒushù	Asian blepharoplasty	double eyelid surgery
shuiguangzhen	水光针	shuǐguāngzhēn	“water shine injection”	
suogu fang yingbi	锁骨放硬币	suǒgǔ fàng yìngbì	“put coins on your collarbone”	
tianchongji	填充剂	tiánchōngjì	filler	
toumingzhisuan	透明质酸	tòumíngzhìsuān	hyaluronic acid	
tuomao	脱毛	tuōmáo	hair removal	depilation
tuoyuanxing lian	椭圆形脸	tuōyuánxíng liǎn	“oval” face	
V lian	V 脸	V liǎn	V shape	V line
weichuang	微创	wēichuàng	minimally-invasive	
weizhengxing	微整形	wēizhěngxíng	micro-plastic surgery	
wenchun	纹唇	wénchún	semi-permanent makeup of the lips	
wenmei	纹眉	wénméi	semi-permanent makeup of the eyebrows	
wenyanxian	纹眼线	wényǎnxiàn	upper eyeliners (semi-permanent makeup)	
wocan	卧蚕	wòcán	plump lower eyelids	
wuchuang	无创	wúchuàng	non-invasive	
wuguan	五官	wǔguān	facial features	
xiaolian	小脸	xiǎoliǎn	“little” face	
xiaotui suxing	小腿塑形	xiǎotuǐ sùxíng	calf reduction	
xinxing lian	心形脸	xīnxíng liǎn	“heart-shaped” face	
xinyuexing shuangyanpi	新月形双眼皮	xīnyuèxíng shuāngyǎnpí	double eyelid with a crease in the shape of crescent moon	
xiong xia jia bi	胸下夹笔	xiōng xià jiā bǐ	“place a pen under your boob”	
xizhi	吸脂	xīzhī	lipoplasty	liposuction
yadan lian	鸭蛋脸	yādàn liǎn	“duck egg-shaped” face	

yanpi shoushu	眼皮手术	yǎnpí shǒushù	blepharoplasty	eyelid surgery
yi zi wumei	一字雾眉	yī zì wùméi	“misty eyebrows in the shape of character yi”	
yiliao meirong	医疗美容	yīliáo měiróng	medical aesthetics	
yi-mei	医美	yī-měi	medical aesthetics (abbrev.)	
yuanxing lian	圆形脸	yuánxíng liǎn	“round” face	
yuanxing longxiong jiati	圆形隆胸假体	yuánxíng lóngxiōng jiǎtǐ	round breast implants	
yuweiwen	鱼尾纹	yúwěiwén	“crow’s feet”	“fishtail lines”
zhengxing	整形	zhěngxíng	plastic surgery	
zhengxing meirong	整形美容	zhěngxíng měiróng	cosmetic surgery	aesthetic surgery
zhengxing waike	整形外科	zhěngxíng wàikē	plastic surgery	
zhiti yanchang shu	肢体延长术	zhītǐ yáncháng shù	leg-stretching surgery	
zhushe	注射	zhùshè	injection	injectable
ziti zhifang fengchun	自体脂肪丰唇	zìtǐ zhīfáng fēngchún	lip fat transfer	
ziti zhifang yizhi	自体脂肪移植	zìtǐ zhīfáng yízhí	fat transfer	