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AN ANALYSIS OF US AND HONG KONG PRINT ADVERTISING OF SELF-IMAGE PROJECTIVE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Given the static condition of the global economy marketers are cutting advertising budgets commensurate with dismal sales. It is a longstanding belief that utilizing a standardized advertising approach not only controls good ideas and provides for a consistent image but it also has the benefit of controlling expenses through economies of scale. With this in mind, the purpose of the study was to determine the degree of standardization or lack thereof in advertising strategies in the cosmetics and fragrances advertising industries in the United States and Hong Kong. The findings of this study suggest that there is a high level of standardization in the advertising for perfumes because Hong Kong belonged to the British for a long time and individuals' needs and desires for love and acceptance are the same irrespective of geography. On the other hand, only a moderate form of standardization was noted in the advertising for cosmetics. This may be attributed to the fact that different beauty concepts are held among different regions. Implications of the findings are also noted.

Key words: print advertising, standardization, beauty industry JEL classification: M 37

1. Introduction

With aging baby boomers desire to forever maintain their youthfulness and good looks, it is no wonder that the U.S. is the largest market in the world for cosmetics and, France, the biggest exporter (Kumar, 2005). However, in recent years, growth in this industry has shifted from the Western hemisphere to developing regions in South America, Eastern Europe, and Asia (Kumar, 2005). For example, China reported a 10.4 percent growth in this product category during the past five years (Kumar, 2005). Overall, the cosmetic and fragrance industry have performed well in recent years with average growth of almost five percent across the industry irrespective of the economic crisis experienced around the world over the past few years (Kumar, 2005).

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In the Far East, specifically Hong Kong, cosmetics and toiletries sales increased four percent and reached \$1,107 million in 2006 (Euromonitor International, 2007). Further, color cosmetics sales increased five percent reaching \$112 million; and skincare sales increased four percent to \$509 million in the same year (Euromonitor International, 2007). Finally, fragrance sales increased three percent in 2006 reaching \$83 million with continued growth expected in years to come (Euromonitor International, 2007). Given the growing population and increased global travel, cosmetic sales will continue to grow as well (Australian Government, 2006).

But, unlike their Chinese neighbors, those living in Hong Kong are far more cosmopolitan and willing to try new products (Australian Government, 2006). Hui (2006) stated that after the transfer of power, the improvement in the economy and the job market had led to high consumer confidence and a strong reason for continuing to buy. Moreover, like many countries around the world, females in their 40's that are established in their professional careers, desire to buy branded cosmetics and fragrances that continue to drive sales in this industry ("The World Fact Book: Hong Kong," 2007).

Yet, individuals in the U.S. with sufficient discretionary incomes are the ones that are spending the most money on cosmetics (Feedback Research Services, 2004). According to Euromonitor International (2007), the sales of cosmetics and toiletries in the United States increased three percent reaching \$50,446 million in 2006; color cosmetics had total sales of \$8,601 million in 2006, a two percent increase. As well, fragrance sales reached \$6,126 million in 2006, an increase of two percent (Euromonitor International, 2007).

An instrumental part of driving sales in fragrances, skincare and cosmetics is advertising. In the U.S. one strategy has been to use real women or older looking models in ads (Rao, 2005). Baby boomer women have complained that they cannot relate to young 20' models shown in ads (Rao, 2005); hence, ads lacked believability. Following the glut of reality shows, as of late, real people have been deemed more credible (Champagne, 2007).

But how was the advertising industry in Hong Kong affected after the return of Hong Kong to China? The facts show that after the takeover, the Hong Kong advertising industry was affected but not as expected (Ha, 1998). Unlike other industries, the cosmetics industry did not change their practices after the takeover (Ha, 1998). In fact, since the takeover, advertising practices became more westernized supporting ideals and manners that are incongruent with the Chinese way of life (Ha, 1998).

Hence, given the above, the purpose of the study was to extend the research in crosscultural advertising by investigating the similarities and differences in cosmetic and fragrance advertising in Hong Kong and the United States. Specifically, the objective was to determine the extent of standardization or adaptation in cosmetic and fragrance advertising in Hong Kong and U.S. magazines.

2. Relevant literature

When multinational companies expand their products to foreign countries, they have to consider which kind of advertising methods they should use to best reach their chosen target markets (Madhu, 1995). There are three different possible approaches: 1) standardization, 2)

adaptation, and 3) glocalization to communicate messages in foreign markets (Madhu, 1995).

Standardization

Wei & Jiang (2005) state that standardized advertising messages have the same themes, positioning and illustrations for different countries regardless of local beliefs, social, legal, and religious factors except for translations of the copy. There are several advantages to standardization including economies of scale, a uniformed brand image (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004), control over positioning (Shoham, 1995), budget conservation (Tai, 1997), consistent message, and minimal effort by subsidiaries (Kirpalani, Laroche, & Darmon, 1988).

A global orientation suggests that a company's operations be applied globally instead of different countries having different systems (Zou & Cavusgil, 2002). When firms choose a global orientation, they require their subsidiaries to use a single advertising message around the globe, and hence, standardized or prototype advertising is preferred (Okazaki, Taylor, & Zou, 2006). When companies such as Proctor and Gamble sell their products around the world, it is likely that the company will engage in a form of standardized messages, which is patterned advertising (Gould, Lerman, & Grein, 1999).

Adaptation

Adaptation occurs when a company alters an advertisement to suit various markets and allows for adjustments to the creative strategy, positioning, and execution (Wei & Jiang, 2005). As opposed to standardization, adaptation is an individualized strategy for each country (Mueller, 1996).

Adaptation is preferred because different countries have different beliefs, lifestyles, economic situations, language, consumption patterns and preferences from food to clothing (Wang, 1996; Cutler & Javalgi, 1992; Tai, 1997; Kanso & Nelson, 2002; Samiee, Jeong, Pae, & Tai, 2003; Wei & Jiang, 2005). Other factors affecting company's use of adaptative advertising include whether the product can be used globally, competition in that country, company control over subsidiaries, media channels to promote the brand, and the legal constraints over advertising (Harvey, 1993). Adaptation works when education level and perceptions of the company differ (Samiee, Jeong, Pae, & Tai, 2003). Since advertising is a form of communication, it is difficult to standardize (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004). Adaptation may take the form of creative execution, media mix and scheduling (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004). For example, when marketing in Asia the choice of a dialect to use, the benefits of a product to tout, and the best medium to use, are all culturally defined (Boddewyn, Soehl, & Picard, 1986; Hite & Fraser, 1990). While multinational brands such as Georgio Armani and Chanel need little adaptation, new brands in foreign markets need far more adaptation (Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002) to achieve brand loyalty (Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002).

Glocalization

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While standardization and adaptation sit at each end of the advertising continuum, Glocalization sits at the middle (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1990). It is a matter of degree rather than being literally in the middle (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1990).

Coined by Featherstone, Lash, and Robertson (1995), Glocalization is a version of standardization and localization working together to communicate advertising messages to their target markets. Glocalization involves a creative theme given by the parent firm with execution and scheduling held by the subsidiary firm to suit different target markets (Featherstone, Lash, & Robertson, 1995). Multinational corporations usually apply a glocal strategy in several nations at once (Wei & Jiang, 2005).

The creative strategy is a guide to give subsidiaries direction regarding the advertising message (Frazer, 1983; Wei & Jiang, 2005). The major components of a creative strategy are the theme, positioning, and target market (Mueller, 1996). On the other hand, execution is a method used to express the theme and position such as slice of life (Mueller, 1996). Further, execution includes the picture selection, size, color, layout, headline, and use of copy (Whitelock & Chung, 1989; Wei & Jiang, 2005). In general, advertising strategy focuses on "what is said" while execution concentrates on "how it is said" in an advertisement (Mueller, 1996, p.150).

Tai and Wong (1998) note that glocalization allows the branch offices to have authority to decide tactics, such as size, color, and general layout, rather than receiving home office commands, hence, giving subsidiaries a sense of empowerment (Tai & Wong, 1998). However, because local offices can decide the execution for their countries' advertisements, they may become detached from home office' policies and corporate objectives (Tai & Wong, 1998).

Wei and Jiang (2005) show how multinational company like Nokia uses glocalization in an international campaign. The ads had the same creative components but were executed differently depending on the market (Wei & Jiang, 2005). Both U.S. and China used the same theme "Connecting people" but the Chinese execution contained more graphics while the United States contained more copy to communicate the benefits of the product (Wei & Jiang, 2005, p.849). Due to the Chinese being culturally different from the U.S., these changes were made to communicate effectively with the target markets (Wei & Jiang, 2005).

3. Methodology

Sample and data collection

Cosmopolitan was selected for content analysis since it is published in the United States and Hong Kong. Further, *Cosmopolitan* is the largest-selling young women's magazine in the world ("Cosmopolitan,"2007). Circulation figures for Cosmopolitan U.S. edition are 2,900,000 ("Cosmopolitan," 2006). Circulation figures for Cosmopolitan's Hong Kong edition is 60,000, that is higher than other magazines including Marie Clarie and COSMO girl with circulation figures of 22,044 and 46,000 respectively ("Media Coverage," 2006).

Instrument

The instrument used in this study followed Seitz and Johar (1993) guidelines, the modified model developed originally by Whitelock and Chung (1989) for sorting out differences when comparing advertisements. Mueller (1991) stated content analysis allowed a comparison of two advertisements to determine the degree of similarity/difference between them.

Six factors were examined including picture, color, size, general layout, slogan, and copy (Whitelock & Chung, 1989). A point was given for differences of each factor (Whitelock & Chung, 1989). For example, when an advertisement was totally adapted whereby the picture was entirely different from the other ad, the maximum points could be 10 (Whitelock & Chung, 1989). For differences in the general layout, color, and size, one point would be given; however, the differences of slogan and copy could score up to three points (Whitelock & Chung, 1989). For example, if the slogan or copy in advertisements had different meanings and were written in the language of the country, three points would be assigned (Whitelock & Chung, 1989). A higher score meant that the slogan or copy was less standardized (Seitz & Handojo, 1997).

The number 10 would be used to subtract the total points for each comparison to determine the degree of standardization (Seitz & Handojo, 1997). A high score like 10 meant the advertisements were completely standardized while a low score like zero suggested total adaptation (Seitz & Handojo, 1997).

4. Results

A total of 480 advertisements were collected from *Cosmopolitan* magazines for content analysis. Out of the 480 advertisements, 312 were collected from the Hong Kong editions while 168 were collected from their American counterparts. The samples were collected from the magazines published between May 2006 and October 2006. Analyzing the frequency that the advertisements appeared in the magazines, the top ten brands and products were chosen for comparison. For perfumes, Lancome "Hypnose", DKNY "Be delicious", and Calvin Klein "CK One Summer" were evaluated and for cosmetics, Revlon's foundation, Chanel's lipstick and Clinique's mascara were analyzed.

Standardization versus Adaptation Analysis

From the ten most prevalently advertised brands in Hong Kong and the U.S., the selection was narrowed further to six of the same brands in both U.S. and Hong Kong editions. This allowed the researchers to analyze the extent of advertising standardization and adaptation between the two countries. The six brands examined were Lancome, DKNY, Calvin Klein, Revlon, Chanel and Clinique, and the products examined were perfumes and cosmetics. For perfumes, Lancome "Hypnose", DKNY "Be delicious", and Calvin Klein "CK One Summer" were evaluated and for makeup, Revlon foundation, Chanel lipstick and Clinique mascara were analyzed. Six advertisements from each country were analyzed.

Perfumes

Lancome. Lancome Hypnose had a score of 8. Differences were found in the advertisement picture and layout between the two countries ads. The Hong Kong edition revealed the model's body more than the U.S. one. Specifically, the model's right arm could be seen in the Hong Kong's edition while not shown in the U.S. edition. In addition, the layout of the slogan was slightly different. In the Hong Kong edition, the slogan "the new hypnotizing fragrance" was displayed on the right side of the page while in the U.S. edition, the slogan was displayed at the bottom. Also, both countries' editions were 2 pages. In the Hong Kong edition, the advertisement was a 2 page spread while it was front and back with a scent strip in the U.S. edition.

DKNY. DKNY's Be Delicious had a score of 10, which is indicative of high standardization with no noticeable differences in the advertisements.

Calvin Klein. Calvin Klein's "CK One Summer" had a score of 6. The Hong Kong advertisement was one page while the U.S. advertisement was 2 pages front and back. The content in the first page of the U.S. advertisement was the same as the one page Hong Kong one. However, the Hong Kong advertisement did not have the content of the second page prevalent in the U.S. edition that showed a skin moisturizer and body wash. Another minor difference was that the U.S. ad had a scent strip while the Hong Kong edition did not.

Cosmetics

Revlon. The Revlon foundation advertisements received a score of 5 because there were differences in the pictures and copy. In the U.S. edition, a list of foundation colors were shown on the right side of the advertisement, however, the Hong Kong did not. Moreover, the headline was written in English in the U.S. edition and in Chinese in the Hong Kong edition. Also, the descriptions varied slightly. In the U.S. edition, the headline was "Now so comfortable, you'll forget you're wearing it", while in the Hong Kong edition was "Foundation that can last for a long time, it is so soft that you'll forgot you're wearing it". Finally, the copy was slightly different in both advertisements. In the U.S. edition, there were descriptions that did not appear in the Hong Kong advertisement that included "formulated for your skin type" and "20 luxurious, love-to-wear shades". However, in the Hong Kong edition, there were also descriptions that did not appear in the U.S. ads such as "The product includes herbal essence which moisturizes the skin to get a prefect result".

Chanel. Advertisements for Chanel lipstick scored 4. Differences in the advertisements were apparent in the layout, color, size and copy. When comparing the U.S. and Hong Kong editions, the layout of the advertisements varied slightly. In the U.S. edition the product image was placed in the middle of the page while in the Hong Kong edition it was on the right side of the page. Also, the headline "Seduction in just one click" in the U.S. edition was expressed at the top of the advertisement while it was on the left side in the Hong Kong advertisement. Moreover, the color of the lipstick in the U.S. edition, the U.S. advertisement was one page as opposed to a two page spread in the Hong Kong edition. Finally, aside from the English headline "Seduction in just one click" that appeared in both ads, the Hong Kong

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edition contained a sub-headline in Chinese "Shiny and sparkling lipstick". Also, in the Hong Kong edition, the copy written in Chinese mentioned that there were 22 colors available at HK\$185.

Clinique. For Clinique mascara, advertisements that appeared in both countries' editions had a score of 3. Differences in the advertisements were apparent in the picture, slogan and copy. For example, the mascara wand that was used for each country's product differed. In the Hong Kong edition the shape of the comb was S shaped while the comb in the U.S. advertisement was V shaped. Moreover, the slogan "New defining lengths" in both editions was the same; however, it was translated into Chinese in the Hong Kong edition. In addition, there were words that appeared in the Hong Kong advertisement that were not present in the U.S. edition. For example, "This mascara is specifically designed for Asians" and "warm water can remove the makeup". Also, different wording was used in both editions. For example, in the Hong Kong edition, "defining power mascara" was written on the mascara wand while "high definition lashes" was printed in the U.S. edition.

5. Discussion and Implications

The results from the present analysis suggest that Hong Kong advertisements tended to focus more on skincare while U.S. advertisements tended to focus more on makeup products. These products included whiteners, eye gels, masks and creams that were advertised only in the Hong Kong editions while face powders and concealers were advertised in U.S. ones during this period of the study.

The results from the analyses suggested that U.S. advertisements tended to focus more on image while Hong Kong ones tended to focus more on providing information. The findings were congruent with Sin, So, Yau, and Kwong (2001) who noted that Hong Kong females rated instrumental value rather than aesthetics as the most important product attribute in purchase decisions. This suggests that performance, product quality and value for money should be included in advertising messages rather more so than image and brand name when selling cosmetic products in Hong Kong(Sin, So, Yau, & Kwong, 2001). In the U.S., the magazine is a national medium that covers all 50 states and Puerto Rico (Ha, 1998). There are too many locations and different prices for different states to be listed in the ad (Ha, 1998). Therefore, U.S. advertisers might place more emphasis on product attributes that can be applicable to different locations across the country (Ha, 1998).

Scent strips were included in U.S. editions of fragrance advertisements but not in the Hong Kong ones. This may be because American firms believe advertising creates awareness and distinguishes themselves from competitors. However, by incorporating promotions such as samples, this strategy may increase sales.

In determining the extent of standardization of cosmetic advertising in Hong Kong and American magazines, findings showed that perfume advertisements were highly standardized with a mean score of 8 while cosmetics were in the middle of standardization and adaptation continuum with a mean score of 4. These findings were consistent with those found by Seitz and Johar (1993) regarding advertising standardization practices for perfumes and cosmetics. Their findings resulted in a score of 7 for perfumes implying a high degree of standardization while cosmetics had a score of 6.25 implying a moderate degree of standardization.

The moderate- to- high standardization of Hong Kong advertisements can also be explained by its Westernized culture (Neelankavil, Mummalaneni, & Sessions, 1995). Hong Kong for many years was under the influence of the British and thus industries grew from a pro-capitalistic environment (Neelankavil, Mummalaneni & Sessions, 1995). Hence, ads would mostly reflect Western ideals (Neelankavil, Mummalaneni, & Sessions, 1995). Further, given its history as a British colony for years, Hong Kong residents are likely to accept Western ideals and products readily (Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002).

As pointed out by Domzal and Unger (1987), and shown by Seitz and Johar (1993), standardization is most likely where little copy is necessary as in fragrances that are primarily image ads. Essentially, types of products and services that touch all individuals' needs and desires such as love and acceptance lend themselves to standardized advertising (Seitz & Johar, 1993).

Some say that as a result of the Internet, peoples' needs and desires are homogenized; yet that seems furthest from the truth (Kanso & Kitchen, 2004). Localization is necessary for products such as cosmetics as studied here. Although costs would be higher, a glocalized approach would be better suited to communicate messages since people are not the same around the world (Kanso & Kitchen, 2004). The findings of this study showed cosmetics fell somewhat in the middle of the advertising continuum where advertisements were localized to meet regional customers' taste. According to So (2004), peoples' needs and desires are different around the world. For example, flawless white skin is admired in many Asian countries where having tanned skin makes American women look especially beautiful in the summer ("Amway makes moves in China," 2004). Skin color is a reflection of social status in Asia whereby light skin implies rich people who don't need to work while darker skin means hard labor often work under the sun (Iy, 2005). Therefore, light skin is favored in Asian countries (Iv, 2005). As a result, Chinese women use whitening creams to avoid dark skin and prevent sun freckles (Foster & Yeh, 2006). Therefore, more advertisements for whitening products are presented in the Hong Kong magazines as opposed to other products. On the whole, differences in culture and beauty concepts do have an effect on the nature of brands and products advertised in printed media in both Hong Kong and the U.S.

Findings showed that standardization of advertisements is mostly found in perfume ads. In the case of perfumes, advertisers might best create and maintain a unified image through a standardized advertising campaign using either Caucasian or Asian models since both are accepted in Hong Kong and in the U.S. Besides maintaining a single image for the brand, standardized advertisements can take advantage of economies of scale. Given such advantages, standardized advertising for perfume is the recommended strategy for this product category.

Findings also showed that glocalization is the prevalent strategy in cosmetic advertising. In the case of cosmetics, advertisers would do best to take pattern standardization approach since the brand may be the same but consumers' needs and preferences are different. Factors that should be considered include different concepts of beauty in different countries that affect consumers' choice of cosmetic purchases. Therefore, when the home and host cultures are different, a more adaptive strategy is feasible. Findings in the present study indicated that the nature of the brands and products in these two countries had differences attributed to culture. Understanding the nature of brands and products in these two countries can assist marketers and advertisers in developing strategies and programs to attract these markets.

As China's economy is growing stronger, more multinational companies are interested to sell and advertise their products to that market; this study could act as guidelines for advertisers. According to Seitz, Razzouk, Lee, Yang, and Koh (2004), "Hong Kong, China and Taiwan advertising industries were at different levels of the advertising life cycle that Hong Kong was in the maturity stage, Taiwan was in the growth stage, and China was in the introductory stage" (p.240-247). "As China, Hong Kong and Taiwan cultures were similar, U.S. advertisers could use Hong Kong and Taiwanese advertising trends analysis to forecast future China's advertising trend to develop appropriate marketing strategies to reach target customers" (Seitz, Razzouk, Lee, Yang, & Koh, 2004, p.240-247).

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