HOW TO BUILD A TRANSCULTURAL BRAND- A FUSION STRATEGY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how an emerging-market company built a transcultural brand with a fusion strategy. Through an in-depth case study of a Taiwanese company, we found that a transcultural brand can be crafted by applying a fusion strategy across three different organizational levels: the firm's management philosophy, as well as their brand and product development strategies. In short, a fusion strategy entails an organization wide effort that must be planned and managed from the top. The finding not only provides insights into how fusion marketing can be used to develop a cultural branding strategy, but also highlights the importance of applying the processual perspective on international branding. Specifically, study findings indicate that marketers can sustain the growth of their evolving global brand by alternating between the use of a global and local consumer culture positioning strategy. Marketers will therefore no longer have to choose between a global or local consumer culture positioning strategy.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to greatly thank FRANZ Collection chairman Francis Chen and his staffs for their fully support and assistance with this study. They were very kind enough to share invaluable experiences in their success of building a transcultural brand.

Keyword: fusion marketing, cultural branding, global consumer culture positioning, local consumer culture positioning
INTRODUCTION

Brands from emerging markets are changing the international market landscape and an increasing number of emerging-market brands have gained important positions in many product categories which once were dominated by brands from developed countries (Fan, 2008; Huang & Hsieh, 2011). For example, Samsung (from South Korea) has become a dominant player in the smartphone market, while Haier (from China) has become the world's largest white goods manufacturer. These changes to the marketplace has provided us with a fresh research direction in international marketing.

Following the rise of major emerging economies such as China and India, Sheth (2011) calls for a shift in international marketing research from “the Westernization of emerging markets” to “the Easternization of the world”. Specifically, Sheth suggests for researchers to reinvestigate the conventional “global-local debate” in international marketing by examining the strategies and tactics used by these global players from emerging markets. In line with this perspective, “fusion marketing” has emerged as a topic of growing interest. Fusion marketing refers to “the fusioning of marketing practices between advanced and emerging markets (Sheth, 2011: p.177)”. The concept and practice of fusion marketing stems from recognition that cultures and values vary significantly across countries. Therefore, it is important for any fusion marketing related research to be undertaken from cultural perspective of the consumer.

From a consumer culture perspective, global brands are usually regarded by consumers as a cultural symbol which represents a unique culture or identity. As such, global brands also serve as an effective means to connect a geographically dispersed group of likeminded consumers (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008; Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2004). Global brands can draw their positioning strategy based on the idea of consumer culture. For example, marketers can position their brand based on their local cultural roots and identity systems (Local consumer culture positioning), or establish a distinctive global identity for their brand (Global consumer culture positioning) (Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 1999). The latter strategy, global consumer culture positioning, has proven itself to be an effective way to build a global brand.

However, achieving cultural intricacy at an international level is a difficult task for marketers as it entails a close match between the country-culture and brand-culture (Banerjee, 2008; Craig & Douglas, 2000). Aside from this, global brands must also cope with the challenge of keeping their brand consistent even as enters new markets with different cultural contexts. However, although abundant research has focused on international branding strategy (for a review see Whitelock & Fastoso, 2007), few studies have examined how a global brand evolves and transcends national borders and cultures; hence necessitating the need for more research on international branding.
based on a consumer culture perspective (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). By incorporating a
different view on international branding, the fusion marketing approach offers a
promising means for gaining new knowledge on how to build a global brand which can
transcend national boundaries and cultures. To narrow this knowledge gap, this study
explores how Franz Collection Inc., a Taiwan-based company, located in the East,
established a global brand using a cultural fusion strategy.

THEORECTICAL BACKGROUND

Global and International Branding

Branding at international level has received increased attention in recent years,
and the terms global branding and international branding are often interchangeably
used to describe this phenomenon. However, it is important to note the subtle
difference between these terms. Specifically, global branding refers to a standardized
branding strategy across all brand related practices and decisions, while international
branding refers to more adaptive branding strategy. A review article in this area by
Whitelock and Fastoso (2007) also summarize that international branding research
seeks to examine the challenges that companies face when their brands cross national
borders.

The definition of branding itself also varies widely across scholars. For example,
some researchers sought to explain the concept of international branding by examining
their participant firms' brand name selection and decision process in an international
context (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1989; Wong & Merrilees, 2007); while others broadened
the concept of branding by also taking into account the brand visuals (e.g., logo,
colors), sound elements (e.g., jingles, music), and brand personality (e.g. Whitelock &
Fastoso, 2007). Some researchers have also extended the scope of international
branding to encompass the whole process of branding (de Chernatony, Halliburton &

Based on a processual view of international branding, this study argues that brand
element decision and brand strategy making process are equally important in the
establishment of an international brand. This study also asserts that organizational
context has a significant influence over the success of a firm's branding strategy.
Based on these assertions, the study defines global branding as a process in which a
series of organizational decisions and activities subsequently led to the establishment
of a global brand. These include the planning and implementation of strategies that are
related to the global brand.

Brand as Cultural Symbol
Culture can be used as a tool to help shape the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. Arnould and Thompson (2005) argue that brands are symbolic forms that can be used to inspire consumers to act, think or feel differently. Brands also reveal a lot about how their users live, look and perceive things. As such, brands can be viewed as cultural forms. Global brand may be perceived as symbols of cultural ideals by consumers (Holt, Quelch & Taylor, 2004). Apart from enabling a firm to offer standardized products across the world and in doing so, achieve economies of scale via standardization; global brands also serve to connect consumers who have the same ideals and beliefs by inculcating a global culture or identity (Holt et al., 2004).

To build a transnational brand based on symbolism of the brand, Cayla and Eckhardt (2008) proposed three strategies to form a transnational identity. The three strategies are synchronicity, deterritorialization, and multicultural collage, which correspond to three dimensions of time, space, and culture each. The three strategies explicitly describe how a transnational brand can be created using cultural fusion. To gain additional insights Cayla and Eckhardt (2008) highlight the need for researchers to take the historical, geographical and social context of the business into account (Cayla & Arnould, 2008).

**Global Consumer Culture Positioning and Local Consumer Culture Positioning**

Consumer culture can serve as an effective tool to position a global brand. Alden, Steenkamp and Batra (1999) were amongst the first to advocate the use of consumer culture to create a strong brand position. The two main types of consumer culture positioning strategies proposed by them are global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) and local consumer culture positioning (LCCP). Accordingly the GCCP strategy asserts that brands should be symbolized as a given global culture. Therefore, to connect consumers from all over the world, marketers will need to identify some common cultural elements or characteristics that are shared across countries or regions. These findings should then be used to develop globalized products and brand strategies. On the other hand, the LCCP strategy seeks to associate a brand with the local culture. Therefore, the essence of a LCCP strategy is to determine the unique cultural preferences or characteristics of a certain country or an area, and use these findings to develop a localized product and brand strategy.

Because of the importance of cultural complexity in global branding strategy, researchers highlight the importance of using a culturally responsive positioning strategy that is based on the degrees of cultural congruence (Craig & Douglas, 2000a). In other words, the effectiveness of a firm's brand strategy is very much determined by the level of compatibility of the country and brand culture (Banerjee, 2008).
In summary, when incorporating consumer culture into international marketing research, two major perspectives on consumers need to be considered: (1) consumer differences in terms of their local context; and (2) consumer similarities in terms of global context (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). In line with the above discussion, an international branding strategy often entails the need to seek a balance between local differences and global similarities or to focus on either end. This is especially the case when the global brand grows and encounters different cultures as it moves into new markets. During this process, brand managers will be faced with the challenge of keeping their brand image consistent, and at the same time seek to gain more markets (i.e. hence the dilemma of having to choose between a GCCP or LCCP strategy). Despite the challenges and difficulty of managing the positioning of brands on a global scale (Andrews & Kim, 2007), few studies have examined the strategies that marketers used to keep their brand image consistent as it continues to evolve across different cultural contexts (Cayla & Arnould, 2008), therefore it is valuable to examining how a global brand evolves and transcends different cultures and countries.

**METHOD**

**Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach because the phenomenon under investigation is complex and context-dependent (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin 2003). Additionally, Whitelock and Fastoso (2007) suggest that the qualitative research method is suitable for studying international branding strategies as the research subject is still in its infancy. Various types and sources of data were collected to provide a rich and solid foundation for theory development and data triangulation (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2003). Based on the research question and context, Franz Collection Inc. was selected as the focal company because the company not only hails from an emerging economy (Taiwan) in the East, but also has positioned itself as a leading cultural brand.

**Purposive Sampling**

Using a purposive sampling strategy, the fieldwork includes personal interviews with sixteen employees from Franz’s headquarters in Taipei. The interviewees include Franz’s CEO, senior managers, prized artisans and new elites representing the firm’s design, research and development, marketing, planning and sales departments. Preliminary analysis of the data collected in the first round led to a second round of interviews. Key participants were interviewed twice above to track how their perspectives have evolved over time.
Data Collection

Various types of data were collected for this case study. Most of this data was collected through in-depth interviews with the management and staff of Franz Collection. This data collection process was formally approved and facilitated by the president of FRANZ Collection Inc..

Researchers engaged in two rounds of data collection. The first round of Franz data was collected over a six month period. Subsequent analysis of this data took place over the next three months. Results from the preliminary analysis were used to guide in the second round of data collection. Based on the preliminary data, the researchers were able to narrow the scope of data collection to specific processes, identify and interview key interviewees and come up with more pertinent interview questions. The second round of data collection was conducted over the next two months.

Each in-depth interview lasted 90-150 minutes. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher asked interviewees to answer general questions about FRANZ, the firm's history, international branding and product strategy, with particular emphasis on its cultural fusioning thrust. Subsequent interviews focused on themes that emerged in the first round of interviews, that researchers selected for more detailed study. Brief follow-up interviews via email and telephone were used to gain more information and to clarify any ambiguities in earlier round of data collection. Finally, to track the progress and evolution of Franz's branding, researchers continued to follow-up on the firm's development via the telephone, email and subsequent interviews.

(Please refer to Table 1 for a brief description of the data collection methods).

**TABLE 1  DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND DATA DESCRIPTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Detailed Descriptions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>Founder-cum-CEO of Franz Collection Inc. (Three times)</td>
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<td>Designers (six interviews with six representatives including the leader of Franz’s design team)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other senior members of staff (seven interviews with six individuals representing Franz’s R&amp;D, projects, public relations and marketing departments)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Observations</td>
<td>New product design &amp; cross-functional meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Owner cum President’s public speeches on FRANZ’s global market strategy (twice at different occasions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Visits</td>
<td>Factory visits, marketing events and promotions &amp; new product press conferences.</td>
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</table>
**Data analyses**

Researchers used an iterative process to analyze the collected data. A case database, comprising of transcripts, field notes and archival material was generated after data collection. The researchers coded and analyzed transcripts for specific concepts that explained and gave meaning to the international branding strategy at work. Notes summarizing the emerging themes and issues after each interview were also prepared. This information was subsequently coalesced into broader categories and themes, which researchers then used to build a specific narrative to articulate the fusion strategy conducted by the company.

**BRIEF CASE DESCRIPTION**

**The Company and the Brand’s Debut**

Taiwan-based Franz Collection Inc. first entered into the international scene in 2002 (about 10 years ago) with their collection of fine porcelain tabletop and decorative items. Franz went on to win ‘Best in Gift’ at the 2002 New York International Gift Fair with its “Papillon Butterfly” masterpiece (see Figure 1 for a vase of “Papillon Series”) in the first year of its debut.

The “Papillon Butterfly” is a hallmark characteristic of FRANZ designed products. Most of Franz art pieces aim to tastefully capture and synthesize the cultural elements of both the East and the West. For example, the wings on the award winning vase from the “Papillon Butterfly Series” not only bears an uncanny resemblance to the wings of the “Victoire de Samothrace” statue at the Louvre Museum; but also looks like the wings painted on the flying Goddess in the Dunhuang caves in China.

*Our biggest competitive advantage lies in our ability to create products that appeal to customers from the East and the West.* ~Chen, CEO of Franz Collection Inc.

**Franz - Establishing a Global Presence through a Cultural Fusioning Strategy**

Positioned as a bridge between the Eastern culture with the Western world, Franz has successfully penetrated into the international market despite tough competition from century old brands with formidable reputations, i.e. Wedgwood of England, Germany’s Meissen and Royal Copenhagen of Denmark. Franz has also won many international awards, such as “The Best for Ceramic Gift” in UK, and “Excellence for Handicraft Products” of United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture, just to
name a few. These highly acclaimed international awards attest to Franz's global brand status.

FRANZ's success thrives on the firm's effective fusion marketing strategy. This fusion concept also serves a foundation for the company's management, branding and product development strategies. Franz's management philosophy is based on the ancient Chinese wisdom of “Jen” as well as the Western principle of “respect for the individual”. With regards to the firm's branding strategy, Franz's brand, theme, positioning and personality also reflect a cultural fusion between the East and the West. Likewise, Franz's product development process - from the firm's choice materials, design and production methods - also synthesized the modern technologies of the West (i.e. 3 dimensional prototyping and mass production) with Eastern materials (porcelain), techniques and craftsmanship.

Moving Forward and Embracing the China Market

In terms of performance, FRANZ’s fusioning strategy has led the firm to achieve great results. Since its debut in 2002, FRANZ has continued to grow and expand into new markets. The firm experienced two-digit sales growth even in the wake of the financial crisis in 2008, which forced the legendary brand Wedgewood into bankruptcy.

FRANZ resilience to the global crisis can be attributed to the firm's prompt response to the changes in their strategic environment. For example, at the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, Franz quickly introduced many new products that were specifically tailored to a growing number of affluent Chinese consumers. Part of Franz’s nimbleness stems naturally from the firm's cultural heritage - Taiwan and China share a similar history, culture and ethnicity. It is this innate understanding of the Chinese culture that enabled Franz to launch a series of wildly popular products in China. For example, products that feature the auspicious bat (see figure 3) were very well received in China. To the Chinese, the bat is an auspicious animal, but in the West, bats symbolize evil and brings bad luck. This shift back to a more local focus enabled the Franz to secure new market share and drive revenue growth for the past five years.

Franz - A Thriving Business in 2012

Today, Franz porcelains are sold in over 6,000 retail establishments across the United States, Europe, Australia, Russia, Japan and China. The firm has also moved into the business of designing and manufacturing high-end fixtures and fittings. Apart from retail, design and manufacturing, Franz has also established a cafeteria chain, the Franz Café. Franz opened their first cafeteria in China, in 2012.
FINDINGS

Case findings indicate that the positioning of the brand may transition from GCCP to LCCP as it evolves, and that a fusion strategy of global branding takes place at three different levels within firms. Table one provides a summary how a fusioning strategy may be applied at three different levels of a firm. In the next section, we will explain how these fusion strategies were used at Franz and discuss how firms can adapt these strategies for other initiatives.

The Three Levels of a Fusioning Strategy

First Level: Management Philosophy. Carefully positioned as a cultural and innovative brand, Franz's management believes that both rationality and cultural sensitivity are key to the firm's success. Based on this mindset, Franz not only employed the use of new technology to enhance the quality of their designs and products, but also spent a lot of efforts to enhance their employees' awareness and cultural sensitivities to their business environments.

Franz shapes its management philosophy by blending the best and most valuable management concepts from the East and West. From the East, FRANZ's management philosophy emphasizes on maintaining “harmony between man and nature”, which is based on the concept of “Jen” in Confucianism. In fact, this concept of "Jen" has been painstakingly woven into every aspect of Franz's business strategy. For example, Franz's management values mutual respect and trust between employees. The company also shows their respect for nature by using environmentally friendly materials, i.e. porcelain for their products, as well as by using the most energy efficient production processes (e.g., low-temperature firing), so as to harmonize the relationship between man and nature.

“I believe that “Jen” is the most practical and truthful virtue in Chinese philosophy...when “Jen” (in Chinese character) is broken down is “two people”, it symbolizes the interaction between two parties, i.e. between man and man, man and nature.” ~Chen, CEO of Franz Collection Inc.

From the West, FRANZ adopted the ideas of scientific management, market orientation, quality control and innovation. For example, Franz often uses a “round table management” strategy to solve problems. This “round table” concept was inspired by the Knights of the Round Table from the legendary story of King Arthur. Franz's management would usually bring together employees with different skill sets and expertise to share ideas and solve issues. This "round table strategy" also bears testament to the firm's philosophy of respect not only for the individual, but also for
their contributions. Although this management approach is somewhat different from the hierarchical style of management that most Chinese managers are used to, it clearly reflects the traditional Chinese philosophy of “Jen”, because it emphasizes the importance of human relationships and mutual respect.

Second Level: Brand Strategy. FRANZ’s brand strategy can be decomposed into the systematic development of a brand name, brand theme, brand positioning and personality. These branding efforts were consistently developed along with the company’s management philosophy. Franz's transnational brand name and logo (see figure 2), which ingeniously combines the company's English name with an ancient Chinese seal character, appeals to consumers from the East and West. The parallel placing of Chen (Chinese character) and FRANZ character is also used to represent a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures (see figure 2).

Franz's brand theme of “nature and humanity” not only appeals to consumers from different cultures, it is also synchronically-cultural because both themes have been embraced by the arts and crafts community for centuries. Positioned as a purveyor of “functional art”, Franz insists on delivering artistically crafted products that are beautiful and functional. To achieve this, Franz's products are usually designed in accordance to the trans-century- Art nouveau style, which has a universal appeal.

Finally, Franz's brand personality, as decreed by the firm's CEO, has five dimensions: uniqueness, sincerity, fashion, humanity and artistic. Together, these five brand principles have streamlined the design of Franz's products and helped to deterritorialize Franz's brand image. For example, Franz deliberately downplays the national origin of their products by developing products that have a universal appeal and of an impeccable quality.

Third Level: Product Tactics. Franz also chose to use porcelain as their base material because consumers usually associate it with royalty. Porcelain is also prized as a high-end material thus giving the brand a prestigious image. Another successful product strategy of FRANZ is the idea of “affordable luxury”. This concept of making affordable luxury porcelain products was very appealing, however the difficulty and costs associated with mass producing these high quality Art Nouveau style’s products, made it impossible. Nevertheless, FRANZ overcame these difficulties by synthesizing product development and manufacturing techniques from the East and West.
At the product level, Franz’s fusioning strategy is applied during the product design stage. The company employs a disciplined way to manage creativity by making sure that their designers adhere to the five dimensions of Franz's personality. Aside from this, the company places no other restrictions on their designers’ creativity. It is this principled approach that has enabled Franz to deliver a consistent brand experience through their porcelains. Franz’ designers are also expected to introduce contemporary fashion elements into their designs to strengthen the appeal of their products to people of all ages. Ultimately, each and every piece of Franz's porcelains also convey the firm's management philosophy of creating fusionized subjects/identities that connects consumers from different cultures.

In addition to product development and design, Franz's fusioning strategy is also incorporated into the firm's production process to help them to meet their goal to deliver fine porcelain ware at affordable prices. These fusioning activities include strategic synthesis of mass production techniques from the West with traditional porcelain craftsmanship from the East. This synthesis of modern technologies from the West with traditional handicraft techniques from the East, not only enabled FRANZ to overcome the difficulties of mass-producing fine works of porcelain, but also enabled them to establish an efficient standard operating procedure for their product development and production processes. Therefore, by incorporating their fusioning strategies throughout the product development process, FRANZ was able to produce quality and exquisite porcelain ware at a much lower cost than their competitors.

Table two summarizes the three levels of FRANZ’s fusion strategies and activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Fusion</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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</table>
| Level 1 Management Philosophy | • Emphasis on rationality and cultural sensitivity.  
|                         | • Employ the use of cultural values that are shared by people from the East and West. i.e..Franz's management philosophy is based on the concept of humanity. | • Employ the use of modern technologies to ensure product consistency & quality.  
|                         |                                                                           | • Encourage employees to be creative and sensitive to market needs.  
<p>|                         |                                                                           | • Base key management decisions on the concept of “Jen” from teachings of |</p>
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<th>Confucius.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use “round table” discussion to solve problems and generate new product ideas.</td>
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<th><strong>Level 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Brand Strategy</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transnational brand name.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brand themes revolve around subjects, i.e. “nature and humanity” that have a universal appeal.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Position the firm as a purveyor of “functional art”.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Five dimensions(principles) of brand personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Franz's logo combines features from the East and West.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Focus on developing products that combine function with aesthetics.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Established five unique brand principles to ensure that products have a universal appeal. For example, most of Franz's products are based on geographically- and temporarily-crossing themes</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Level 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>Product Tactics</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Product material choice.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• “Affordable luxury” product idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fusion in designing and production.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chose porcelain as a base material because many consider it to be a prestigious material and environmental-friendly.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Employed a disciplined way to manage designers' creativity.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Combined mass-production techniques with traditional craftsmanship.</strong></td>
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**DISCUSSION**

**Cultural Fusion as a Core Strategy**

The case result shows a three-level fusion approach to the building of a transcultural brand. These findings show that firms can employ the use of a
culturally-based fusion strategy to achieve differential advantages in their product and marketing strategies. Scholars propose that a global brand can serve as a symbolic medium to unite consumers from all over the world and to shape their cross-cultural identity and group (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt et al., 2004). Case findings demonstrate how marketers can establish and achieve a transnational brand identity through the use of a fusion marketing strategy.

Previous study suggests that a transnational brand can be crafted through synchronicity, deterritorialization and multicultural collage (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008). This case study provides elaborates on how these three strategies can be combined and used to build a transcultural brand in a global setting. For example, synchronicity and multicultural collage at the brand strategy level, and deterritorialization during the product development and manufacturing process. As such, this case has widened the application of these three strategies from a regional to global context. Furthermore, to ensure brand consistency, the firm's international branding strategy should be applied throughout the whole branding process (de Chernatony et al., 1995).

Study findings also show that a cultural-based fusion approach facilitates the development of a transcultural brand. Results also suggest that a fusioning concept should also be applied at a higher-level within the organization, i.e. management philosophy. Specifically, study findings reveal that a cultural-fusion management philosophy has a significant influence over the establishment and success of a transnational brand. The management philosophy has a significant influence of the firm's branding strategy, which is in turn conveyed though firm's product to their global consumers. This three-level fusioning strategy is interconnected and key to establishing a transcultural brand.

**Alternation Between GCCP and LCCP**

Global consumer consumption positioning (GCCP) is a branding strategy that is usually used by firms that want to sell their products around the world. When used effectively, a GCCP strategy (which entails the marketing of standardized products all over the world) can help to speed up a firm's internationalization process and lower their operating costs. Nonetheless, firms that use GCCP strategy must come up with a product which transcends all markets and appeals to everyone's preferences (a cross-border or cross-region consumer culture positioning), and will be subject to intense competitive pressures when global competition increases.
On the other hand, a local consumer culture positioning (LCCP) strategy is usually employed by firms whose products are tailored to meet the needs of a specific country or area. Firms that use a LCCP strategy can focus their resources on a specific area. By customizing their products to meet the demands of a particular niche, firms that use a LCCP strategy tend to enjoy a high degree of customer loyalty. However, firms that use LCCP strategy will have limited opportunities to grow.

Case findings reveal that firms pursuing a cultural positioning strategy should base their GCCP - LCCP decision on the amount of resources they have. However, because a firm's resources and abilities will evolve and change over time, management should reassess and adapt their GCCP-LCCP strategy accordingly. Previous researchers highlight the importance of cultural congruence in the strategy and implementation of an international brand (Banerjee, 2008; Craig & Douglas, 2000), case findings also suggest that when an international brand evolves (Cayla & Arnould, 2008), the alternate use of GCCP and LCCP strategy can help to sustain brand growth. Therefore, GCCP-LCCP can be interchangeably adopted or even simultaneously used by a company to cope with the changes to their environment.

The finding shows that the ability to manage a combination of consumer culture positioning strategy is essential to firm growth. Due to the lack of resources and capabilities, the case firm (Franz) used a GCCP strategy during its critical and formative years because by pursuing a "least-common denominator" Franz was able to enjoy economies of scale (Holt et al., 2004). This case finding is consistent with the argument that a consumer culture positioning serves as an effective branding tool (Alden et al., 1999), but also complements this theory with an additional insight, that is, a GCCP strategy can be used to help a firm to identify the “greatest-common divisor” of market, that is, an aggregated and largest numbers of markets which the brand can appeal. In summary, a GCCP strategy facilitates the development of an international brand from both ends - production and consumption sides.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigates the development of a transcultural brand originated from the East by a cultural fusion perspective. Two lessons can be learned from Franz's transnational brand building efforts. First, a fusion strategy entails an organization wide effort that must be planned and managed from the top. This study extends current knowledge on global brand management by showing how firms can build a global brand through a three step fusion strategy framework. This three step fusion strategy framework clearly describes how a firm's management philosophy, brand and
product strategies need to work hand in hand to ensure brand consistency. This is important because brands have a significant influence on how consumers perceive the company.

Firms that pursue a fusion strategy must be able to closely identify and understand the cultural differences between countries. Based on this knowledge of their consumers, firms will be better able to determine the “greatest common divisor” of consumers across nations. And once this unique global identity is determined, the firm will be able to put their transcultural branding strategy into action.

Second, a GCCP strategy enables a company to take advantage of standardization by using minimum resources and, simultaneously, helps the company to leverage its limited resources to effectively serve the most-widely numbers of consumers. Therefore, contrary to the common misconception that only large global companies can pursue a GCCP strategy, this case study shows that a small start up firm with scarce resources can also use a GCCP with the help of a fusion strategy. Finally, this study asserts that firms need to alternate between the use of a GCCP and LCCP strategy to ensure the growth and survival of their brand as it continues to evolve over time. Therefore, this study asserts that a firm's GCCP/LCCP strategy should no longer be seen as an either/or decision.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has some limitations that could benefit from further research. Above all, the findings of this study are based on one case, and this bears the flaw that the proposed fusion strategy may not be generalizable to other types of companies. For example, firms that sell different types of products. Although the findings from a single-case study should be applied with caution, we argue that this paper contributes to research by generating new knowledge on the impact of a fusioning strategy on a firm's global branding efforts. These findings may serve as a basic framework for future research to explore how a cultural branding strategy can be developed/enhanced with a fusion marketing approach.

REFERENCES


