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Cross-Culture Product Hybridization in Pre-Communist China (1912-1949)

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Cross-Culture Product Hybridization in Pre-Communist China (1912-1949)

Structured Abstract

Purpose: Studies on cross-culture marketing often focus on either localization or globalization strategies. Based on data from pre-communist China (1912-1949), product hybridization—defined as a process or strategy that generates symbols, designs, behaviors, and cultural identities that blend local and global elements—emerges as a popular intermediate strategy worthy of further inquiry. After examining the mechanisms and processes underlying this strategy, a schema for classifying product hybridization strategies is developed and illustrated.

Design/methodology/approach: Critical Historical Research Method is applied to historical data and historical ‘traces’ from pre-communist China’s corporate documents, memoirs, posters, advertisements, newspapers, and secondhand sources.

Findings: Strategic interactions between domestic and foreign companies in pre-communist China fostered products and a city (Shanghai) containing Chinese and non-Chinese elements. Informed by historical traces and data from pre-communist China (1912-1949), a 2 x 2 classification schema relating company type (i.e., foreign or domestic) to values spectrum endpoint (i.e., domestic versus foreign) was formulated. This schema reflects the value of communication, negotiation, and cultural (inter)penetration that accompanies cross-culture product flows.

Research implications: Cross-culture marketing strategies meant to help companies satisfy diverse marketplace interests can induce a mélange of product design elements. Because product hybridization reflects reciprocity between domestic and foreign companies that embodies multiple interests and contrasting interpretations of product meanings, researchers should examine globalization and localization synergistically.

Practical implications: Strategies adopted by domestic and foreign companies in pre-communist China (1912-1949) can help contemporary companies design effective cross-culture marketing strategies in a global marketplace infused with competing meanings and interests.

Originality/value: Examining historical strategies adopted in pre-communist China (1912-1949) can inform contemporary marketers’ intuitions. Understanding product hybridization in global marketplaces can improve marketing efficiency.

Article classification: General review

Keywords: Globalization, Localization, Hybridization, China, Cross-culture marketing, Advertisement designs

Introduction

Cross-culture marketing—which entails exchanging commodities and services as well as communicating values, symbols, and cultures across national borders—has enhanced global marketers' profitability. However, consumers may snub a foreign product overly reflective of an incongruent country-of-origin (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993) (i.e., a country with a contrary culture or morality) (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Tomlinson, 1991, 2005; Usunier and Lee, 2005; Vrontis and Vrontis, 2004). Accordingly, local companies can attract consumers by embracing the snubbed product's locally attractive elements, whereas foreign companies can cater to local consumers by infusing their products with local cultural elements. Hence, competition between local and foreign companies may inspire co-created hybridized products embodying a *mélange* of local and foreign values.

Four economic and political reasons motivated this study of hybridized products in coastal pre-communist China from 1912 to 1949, which is an era Chinese historiography calls 'old China' or the Republic of China. First, uneven coastal versus non-coastal economic development during that era (i.e., Chinese coastal areas were more developed and interacted more frequently with foreign economies) makes coastal China—especially Shanghai—more interesting from a consumer perspective (e.g., conspicuous consumption). As a locus for most cross-culture transactions in the Republic of China, these coastal areas provide a revealing venue for examining the processes, mechanisms, and results of cross-culture interactions among multiple interests, norms, and values.

Second, the Chinese (Kuomintang) government allowed and occasionally encouraged a somewhat free economy during that era (Wang, 2010). After 1949, the communist government gradually banned private enterprises, with full-scale nationalization of the private economy completed by 1956, and suppressed free market transactions until 1979 (He, 1997). As a result,

free cross-culture business transactions between China and other countries decreased meaningfully. Hence, the transition from a relatively free market system with cross-culture transactions (1912-1949) to a socialist economy offers an interesting macroeconomic case.

Third, competition between Chinese and non-Chinese products was intense from 1912, when China was open, sought to engage other countries, and welcomed foreign products (Dikötter, 2008; Wang, 2010), until the early 1950s, when foreign companies were pressured to vacate China. The exception: products from socialist countries such as the U.S.S.R., which the Chinese national government deemed economically beneficial due to its political affiliations (He, 1997; Shen, 2007). Nonetheless, this cross-culture competition should provide historical insights into the domestic marketing implications of non-domestic products.

Fourth, political circumstances strongly influenced competition between Chinese and non-Chinese products during this era. The rapid development of Chinese national enterprises from 1912-1949 encouraged nationalists to believe China could regain its ‘lost grandeur’ through technical innovation and economic competition with foreign companies. In addition to enhancing China’s economic power, competition symbolized Chinese resistance to foreign suppression (Fan, 2005). Although the Qing government began enacting laws and administrative orders in 1903-1904 to encourage private enterprise (Li *et al.*, 1994), and pre-communist China after 1912 introduced policies to support these enterprises, most pre-1912 Chinese companies lacked the ability or desire to compete with non-Chinese companies. Chinese companies’ competitiveness increased when many European and Japanese companies shifted their attention temporarily from Chinese to European customers during WWI (Wang, 2010).

Hybridity is a social artifact and process that comprises multiple elements and multilayered meanings driven by cross-border or cross-cultural exchanges (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). To study hybridity fully requires using three types of analysis: discursive (i.e., find deeper

meanings of symbols and signs situated in specific political, social, economic, and other contexts), textual (i.e., analyze literal and manifest meanings of texts), and empirical (i.e., identify underlying patterns in historical data) (Kraidy, 2005). As CHRM (Critical Historical Research Method) allows all three types of analysis, it is ideal for exploring marketing activities and meanings embedded in their historical contexts (Yan and Hyman, 2018).

CHRM helps to unravel historical complexities immersed in historical ‘traces’, such as corporate documents, memoirs, posters, advertisements, newspapers, and secondhand sources (Burke, 2001). Here, the evaluated primary materials range from local newspapers (e.g., *Shen Bao* and *Xinwen Bao*) to corporate documents (e.g., Nanyang Brothers and BAT materials (ISECAS and SASS, 1958; SASS, 1983)) to artifacts (e.g., posters and advertisements for domestic and foreign products from pre-communist China) stored in Chinese historical archives (e.g., Tianjin Archive collections and China Online image archives).

By helping marketing scholars delve into the specificities and complexities of historical events, CHRM circumvents ahistorical explanations of events, meanings, and processes (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003; Yan and Hyman, 2018). Historical data can provide (counter)examples for contemporary marketing practice or marketing theory building. Conversely, such data can reveal whether contemporary marketing concepts and theories can ‘explain’ historical events. CHRM differs from historical presentism, which uncritically uses contemporary theories to examine and interpret historical events. Instead, CHRM facilitates theory building by assessing historical data grounded in their historical contexts.

For example, pre-communist Chinese businesses and foreign owners adopted product names meant to attract consumers by signaling attractive characteristics of producers, product functions, quality, and cultural meanings (Zhang, 2009). Such product names were called ‘*Shangbiao*’, ‘*Shangpai*’, or ‘*Paizi*’—which contain multiple meanings referring to tradename,

trademark, logo, or product design—in Chinese business history and they functioned similarly to contemporary brands (Fan, 2005; Tianjin Archive, 2013; Wang, 2016; Zuo, 1999, 2002, 2006).

Although brand is a more recent term, *Shangbiao*, *Shangpai*, or *Paizi* connoted aspects of it.

Although international marketing scholars have studied globalization and localization, they generally overlooked hybrid products (Yim Wong, Polonsky, and Garma, 2008) resulted from the interaction between globalization and localization as well as local companies' 'hybridization' responses to these strategies. The hybridity literature contains few studies on cross-culture marketing. Although the global marketing literature contains theoretical analyses about glocalization, few studies have (1) focused on the strategic interactions between local and global agents working in a socio-historical context, or (2) pertained to pre-communist China (1912-1949) and its intensive cross-culture transactions and meaning exchanges.

To close this scholarship gap, the responses and outcomes of pre-communist (1912-1949) Chinese companies to non-Chinese companies' globalization and localization strategies are explored via a critical analysis of historical data (i.e., advertisements, posters, corporate materials, newspapers, memoirs, and other historical materials). A 2x2 schema (Figure 1) helps to depict the underlying rationales that drive companies to adopt specific marketing strategies, leading to different scenarios of product hybridization. This schema outlines how competing domestic and foreign companies shape product hybridization by incorporating both local and foreign cultural elements into product or advertisement designs.

The exposition proceeds as follows. After introducing cross-culture marketing and justifying its study via historical methods, a schema for classifying product hybridization in pre-communist China (1912-1949) is developed and illustrated. Next, compradors and advertisers—the primary agents of product hybridization in pre-communist China (1912-1949)—and hybridized product designs (especially in Shanghai, a city known for embracing coastal, urban,

and modern Chinese subcultures) are discussed. Then, transposed and pure native products are considered briefly. Conclusions as well as scholarly and practical implications follow.

Understanding Cross-culture Marketing via Three Theoretical Perspectives

Globalization, localization, and hybridization are three theoretical perspectives for exploring the meanings, processes, influencing factors, and formation of cross-culture marketing. Whereas the globalization perspective entails standardizing values or merging various value sets into a universal value set, the localization perspective accommodates diverse regional values and suggests their demarcation. Globalization and localization are two endpoints on a cultural interaction continuum. Hybridization lies between these endpoints, which suggests multicultural commonalities or syncretism and idiosyncrasies can exist concurrently. Hybridization discourages delineating different values and implies the boundaries between these values often are blurred. Table 1 outlines the major properties of the three strategic perspectives, which are now discussed in turn. The hybridization perspective is surmised as superior for understanding cross-culture consumer marketing.

----- Place Table 1 here -----

Globalization Perspective

The globalization perspective posits multifaceted processes and multiple stakeholders with contrasting interests and preferences produce cross-national flows and exchanges of commodities, knowledge, values, modes of production, and meanings (Albrow, 1990; Beck, 2003; Ervin, 2016; Robertson, 2001; Wood, 1998). Globalization works between and occurs among more and less developed countries. It proliferates Western as well as non-Western values (with both value types an amalgam of cultures or values from multiple sources) and integrates diverse world cultures (Albrow, 1990; Smith, 1990). Through ‘cultural logic’ (Kraidy, 2005) that accentuates cultural differences and intensifies cultural conflicts, globalization rejects the

homogeneous culture hypothesis by embracing the coexistence and flow of multiple cultures, values, or meanings across political, ethnic, and cultural boundaries (Canclini, 1995; Huntington, 1996; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Rutherford, 1990). Globalization need not yield the stabilized cultural dominance presumed by Westernization proponents. It neither embodies the process of cultural standardization nor yields a set of uniform values; instead, globalization fosters mixed cultural forms or negotiated meanings that contain complementary or possibly conflicting sources.

Globalization can explain cross-culture marketing and consumer behavior such as product quality assessment, purchase intentions, and identity-based consumer perceptions from a commodity inflow/outflow perspective or as an exchange of values, norms, or meanings accompanying cross-culture business transactions (Gupta, 2011; Khan, Ashraf, and Malik, 2019; R. Massey *et al.*, 2013; Yim Wong, Polonsky, and Garma, 2008). Practically and epistemologically, globalization acknowledges the dynamic nature of commodity and culture exchanges, implying the need to scrutinize the shifting boundary of shared values created by multiple values and multileveled interests.

Localization Perspective

The localization perspective explains how highlighting the histories, cultures, and emotions associated with national and local values can dispel foreign values. Local cultural resistance--often in the form of brand avoidance, ads (dis)likability, and consumer boycott (Fam *et al.*, 2013; Friedman, 1985, 1999; Gupta, 2011) -- pressures foreign value purveyors engaged in cross-culture exchanges to embrace select local values through acculturation. If globalization provides a platform for the cross-culture flow and motivates value exchanges, then localization implies a strategic option for companies entering foreign markets.

For global firms, localization generally entails inserting local elements into their products, production, promotion, or distribution (Ghauri *et al.*, 2016; Jain, 1989). ‘Advertising localization’ means including local cultural elements to arouse local customers’ cultural identification. Here, product and advertising localization is the focus (i.e., reduce local resistance by incorporating local cultural elements into global products or advertisements) (Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Douglas and Craig, 1997; Torelli and Cheng, 2011; Vrontis and Vrontis, 2004).

A deluge of foreign products coupled with new cultures and values may cause cultural clashes (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, 2009; Scholte, 2000; Sklair, 2002). In response, foreign firms may adopt local cultural elements to reduce product alienness and boost local consumer acceptance (Torelli and Cheng, 2011; Usunier and Lee, 2005). For example, McDonald’s customizes its recipes to accommodate local tastes in many Asian countries (Lascu, 2008; Watson, 2006), whereas British American Tobacco (BAT) promoted its products by relying on local advertising intermediaries (Chen and Ping, 1984; Cochran, 1999; Ping and Chen, 1984; SASS, 1983).

Consumers may resist localization efforts by foreign companies with ‘culture jamming’, which downplays the cultural power dominance of foreign advertisements and products by “satirizing advertisement campaigns or transforming advertising images or texts to point to companies’ harmful policies” (Stillerman, 2015, p.186). Local companies may reinforce such nationalistic concerns with localization-resisting strategies (de Grazia, 1998). For example, local companies may disclose the real owners of foreign products to dissuade consumers from buying quasi-national products (aka localized foreign products) (Chen, 1964; SASS, 1983).

To quell local consumers’ nationalistic concern that foreign product inundation will cause native industries’ economic and political subordination to foreign powers (Castelló and Mihelj, 2018; Frank, 1999; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2016), foreign firms often stress ‘mades’ to obscure

their product's alienness or highlight its localness. These firms may stress their product is manufactured locally (made in) by local workers (made by), designed to serve local customers (made for), constructed from local raw materials (made of), and produced via joint ventures (made with). These 'mades' can reduce local nationalistic resistance and make consuming foreign products morally and socially acceptable (SASS, 1983).

Although foreign companies often benefit from implementing localization strategies, their efficacy may be diminished by local competitors' responses (Calantone and Benedetto, 1990; Montgomery *et al.*, 2005; Shankar, 1999). Such strategies may trigger cultural and economic resistance from local competitors threatened by values, identities, economic performances, and production modes introduced by foreign products (Homburg *et al.*, 2013; Milanovic, 2016; Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, 2009; Robins, 1997; Sklair, 2002; Steenkamp *et al.*, 2005). Such resistance can foster efforts to protect local business, maintain domestic employment, and address political and cultural concerns about foreign products believed to threaten national identification (Terrio, 2000).

Local companies may respond to foreign competition through imitation or initiation. Imitation means mimicking foreign competitors' successful strategies, which mitigates risks associated with fielding new strategies. This leader-follower approach is ideal for local companies embedded in risk-averse cultures (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). In contrast, initiation means introducing revamped products based on new ideas or values rooted in traditional cultures. Analogous to using old bottles to convey new wine, societies may borrow foreign values and transmit them via local means to local consumers. Although products representing new ideas or values create first-mover advantages for local companies (Brown, 2005), initiation introduces uncertainty, as accepting novel product designs may challenge risk-averse consumers (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

Hybridization Perspective

Words and phrases such as globalization, indigenization, think globally-act locally, global-local nexus, global localization, and global meets local capture the hybridization perspective (Appadurai, 1996; Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2003; Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, 2009; Ritzer, 2004; Robertson, 1995, 2001; Teo and Li, 2003; Thorns, 1997). These words imply hybridization is multifaceted and encompasses communication, confrontation, and negotiation across multipronged interests and various cross-culture interpretations; hence, cultural value connotations are dynamic and created by multiple authors with differing and possibly conflicting goals and preferences. For example, localization counterstrategies often yield products with hybridized domestic and foreign cultural elements. As the chosen proportion of these element types depends on their interaction and influence within a marketing strategy (Giesler, 2013), hybrid product compositions may vary, with a similar proportion (balanced) meaning foreign and local cultural elements contribute equally and a dissimilar proportion (unbalanced) meaning either foreign or local culture elements dominate.

Drawing from inside and outside influences, hybridization follows multidimensional processes and presents an amalgam of diverse cultural elements as a new culture (Bhabha, 1994; Canclini, 1995; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Kraidy, 2005; Nederveen Pieterse, 1995, 2009). Inside influences refer to domestic social, political, cultural, or economic changes that reshape a society's cultural context. Outside influences derive from global economic, political, or cultural exchanges that introduce old-culture-toxic values or more efficient production modes.

People or social agencies situated within a socio-historic context can create hybridities accidentally or intentionally (Bakhtin, 1981; Kraidy, 2005). Hybrid products embody designs, customer preferences, meanings, and geographic communities that reflect different or possibly contrary meanings and values. For example, foreign companies entering local markets often give

their products attractive and easily remembered localized names. Subway's Chinese name *Sai Baiwei* (i.e., much more delicious than one hundred other dishes) adds new meaning to its product while targeting well-educated, middle-class, and novelty-seeking Chinese who prefer healthful fast food. *KeKou Kele* (i.e., tasty, happiness, and good fortune), the Chinese name for Coca-Cola, also provides additional meaning to Chinese consumers.

Hybridities obscure the origins of their components (Yim Wong, Polonsky, and Garma, 2008). "The notion of hybridity invokes the fusion of two (or more) components into a third term irreducible to the sum of its parts" (Kraidy, 2005, p.66). For example, Chinese-styled food in the U.S. retains traces of its origins yet is 'Americanized' to accommodate U.S. diners' tastes, and McDonald's Indian menu excludes beef items and incorporates local seasonings and vegetables (Coe, 2009; Lascu, 2008; Mendelson, 2016). Hence, hybridity derives from multiple sources and incubates multilayered and shifting meanings.

The historicity (i.e., time-boundedness and shifting connotations that shape and are shaped by certain historical contexts of hybridization derives from the historicity of its participants, sites, spaces, and changing interpretations and meanings (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Yan and Hyman, 2018). That is, hybridization's meanings and implications are malleable and demand regular reinterpretation from physical (e.g., mixed product designs) and symbolic (e.g., mixed meanings) perspectives. Thus, hybridization is an enduring social phenomenon that requires research tools designed to capture its dynamic and multilayered connotations (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009).

Understanding Cross-culture Marketing through a Historical Lens

CHRM measures objects and processes that shape and are shaped by socio-historical specificities and complexities via "a concern with causal analysis, the exploration of temporal processes, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison" (Mahoney and

Rueschemeyer, 2003, p.14). CHRM can reveal underlying mechanisms and influencing factors that mold social events and artifacts within their social contexts (Yan and Hyman, 2018).

Exploring temporal processes means assessing historical sequences, which can expose the trajectory of dynamic changes and identify underlying factors or mechanisms that drive such changes. Contextualized comparison demands all analyses consider social and cultural contexts. By ensuring within-context scrutiny, CHRM can suggest meanings at literal and deeper levels, which requires assessing spatial and temporal conditions (Golder, 2000; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003; Tuchman, 1998; Yan and Hyman, 2018).

CHRM encourages comprehensive interpretations of marketing systems that may evolve as companies and their environments evolve (Day, 1996; Firat, 1988; Nevett and Hollander, 1994; Wilkinson, 2001). Because marketing-related cross-culture practices diffuse over time and hence reveal their historicity (Curtin, 1984; Kapur, 1998; de Mooij, 1998), such analyses delineate trajectories and suggest reasons for shifts in consumers' cultural identification and preferences. As a result, past marketing strategies can inform contemporary and future marketing strategies.

CHRM can provide insights into hybridized products. By defining hybridization as a dynamic outcome of social practices, CHRM recognizes the historical context and underlying mechanisms, processes, and factors that shaped these products. Because CHRM can explore connotations of 'product texts' in social contexts, it is useful for scrutinizing the pre-communist Chinese markets that inspired product hybridization by Chinese and foreign companies.

The cultural and historical connotations of many products marketed in pre-communist China (1912-1949) are explored here. For example, pre-communist Chinese in many inland areas deemed it unpatriotic to dress in foreign-styled suits. However, the same behavior is acceptable now because the symbolic meanings and historical interpretations of such suits have changed.

Also, Japan's pre-WWII aggression explains why Chinese companies embraced nationalistic advertising appeals against Japanese products during the 1930s (Gerth, 2003; Jordan, 1991).

A Schema for Classifying Product Hybridization in Pre-communist China (1912-1949)

Pre-communist China (1912-1949) enjoyed a generally free market system that encompassed cross-culture transactions. Intense competition between Chinese and foreign firms facilitated hybridization-related processes and outcomes. Many Chinese firms viewed foreign products as symbols of modernization as well as challenges to China's national economy and threats to traditional Chinese culture and values (Huang, 2009; Spence, 1990). Hence, these firms competed against foreign products via nationalistic appeals or mimicked designs.

In contrast to pure imitations of foreign styles, which tended to elicit local resistance (Gerth, 2003), nationalistic appeals often spurred consumer overreactions to foreign products and increased government regulations. As a result, Chinese firms preferred product hybridization strategies meant to incorporate foreign and local elements. Such strategies meshed with nationalistic appeals yet helped these firms offer consumers 'something new' (i.e., modern).

Hybridization reflects the communications, confrontations, and compromises of globalization participants. It is a marketing strategy motivated by a desire to narrow differences between domestic and foreign products, to align with foreign cultures (as occurred in post-WWII Japan), and to make foreign products seem more domestic (e.g., make U.S. products seem 'more Mexican' with Spanish renames) (Campbell and Heyman, 2009; Pleck, 2000; Tobin, 1994).

Different rationales drove hybridization in pre-communist China. For example, compradors (i.e., agents for non-Chinese entities engaged in Chinese economic, social, or political activity) assumed mixed designs would reduce Chinese customers' resistance to foreign products, whereas Chinese nationalists preferred domesticating foreign products and their associated cultural meanings to serve Chinese interests (*Yang Wei Zhong Yong*) (Qi, 2003, 2010). That is,

by ‘creolizing’ product designs and their connoted meanings, Chinese companies transformed foreign cultural elements into their cultural elements (Schutts, 2003).

Hybridization was a major marketing strategy in pre-communist China (1912-1949) for three reasons. First, politically and militarily weak pre-communist China was home to a large and profitable consumer market that was attractive to foreign companies. Second, traditional Chinese culture, with its cherished ‘Old Grandeur’ past and ‘World-center’ mindset, spurred the Chinese to resist foreign penetration (Spence, 1990) and foreign companies to adopt reactive hybridization strategies. Third, the strong national identification of pre-communist Chinese, as mirrored by nationalistic boycotts, pressured foreign and domestic companies to develop strategies sensitive to Chinese nationalistic concerns (Gerth, 2003).

Consumption or non-consumption of most hybridized products in pre-communist China enabled consumers to consolidate social networks, signify social ranking, strengthen social identification, and learn socially acceptable behavior (Cochran, 1999; Gerth, 2003; Stillerman, 2015). For example, only wealthy households could afford foreign or foreign-element-infused products that hinted higher income, refined social tastes (Bourdieu, 1984), and superior social status. From 1905 to 1931, various boycott movements—mobilized by Chinese customers to protest China’s believed political oppression by the U.S., Japan, and Britain—consolidated Chinese national identification by urging consumers to avoid products associated with these countries (Chen, 1964; Jordan, 1991; SASS, 1983; Wang, 2002; Wang, 1981). Thus, hybridized products often provided extra-utilitarian meanings or purposes.

The multilayered meanings of hybridized products in pre-communist China implied assimilation and acculturation (i.e., cultural exchange aspects reflecting strategies often adopted concurrently by domestic and foreign companies). These aspects were critical to hybridization, which was shaped by foreign companies infusing local elements into global products (mainly via

acculturation but also via assimilation) and Chinese companies infusing foreign elements into local products (mainly via assimilation but also via acculturation). For example, advertisements run in major newspapers from the early 1920s to the late 1940s show foreign companies generally tended to localize their product designs, whereas Chinese companies chose to adopt non-native elements into their product designs (*Shen Bao* and *Xinwen Bao*, various issues).

In pre-communist China, product hybridization emerged from interactions between foreign and domestic values, making hybridization-related processes multifaceted and dynamic. Although hybridized brands reflected an amalgam of foreign and Chinese values, a classification schema for branding strategies can be constructed based on firm type (i.e., foreign or domestic) and values spectrum endpoint (i.e., domestic versus foreign) (see Figure 1). This 2 x 2 schema shows four basic scenarios (S1 to S4), tied to a firm's strategic choices, that reflect the value of communication, negotiation, and cultural (inter)penetration to cross-culture product flows (Andreasen, 1990). That is, the competition between domestic and foreign cultural elements shapes product hybridization. S1 and S3 are more domestic-value-centric (i.e., cater to domestic values), whereas S2 and S4 are more foreign-value-centric (i.e., cater to foreign values). Typically, S1 is depoliticized and pro-business, S2 is imperialistic, S3 depicts a nationalistic reaction to foreign competition, and S4 sacrifices domestic culture to foreign values.

----- Place Figure 1 here -----

Foreign firms that incorporated local cultural elements into their products were converging on a localization (S1) scenario; in contrast, when they infused foreign elements into local products, often through economic or political pressures, they were converging on a value colonization or cultural imperialism (S2) scenario (Day, 2008; Tomlinson, 1991, 2005). S1 follows an assimilationist orientation that favors central or mainstream cultural values (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). It can lower resistance from local customers because it makes

foreign products appear local or it signifies values preferred by local customers, meaning hybridization through foreign companies' adaptation to local conditions. This approach can help to build a sense of 'sameness' for local customers and reduce resistance via nationalistic appeals. Many foreign companies entering the Chinese hinterlands adopted this strategy to facilitate their brand's acceptance by Chinese consumers.

Under S2, hybridization works through cultural penetration or value domination that spreads foreign values through political, economic, or military dominance (Day, 2008; Tomlinson, 1991). That is, local society succumbs to new values due to outside pressures or newfound preferences for foreign tastes (Bourdieu, 1984; Day, 2008; Ping and Chen, 1984; Tomlinson, 1991). For example, some domestic (especially inland) Chinese consumers resisted cultural contamination by foreign brands, yet conspicuous consumption facilitated these brands' acceptance.

Local companies that assimilated/reinterpreted foreign products through a local cultural lens and downplayed the original versions' foreign aspects were converging on an interpolation (S3) scenario (Lin, 2011). Interpolation also occurred via joint efforts with foreign companies meant to create product images embodying a blend of meanings, interpretations, values, and identities (Cochran, 1999). Under S3, domestic values dominated and foreign cultural elements, which were assimilated through a 'local culture discursive lens' into a brand's 'meaning package', served as a secondary complement. Local customers knew that such products predominantly were domestic but were 'strengthened' by foreign elements.

To cope with economic, cultural, and political pressures from foreign companies, many local companies adopted a reactive and defensive strategy best described as imitation (S4), which entailed modernizing products by adding foreign elements (Cochran, 1999; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). Under S4, the structure of meaning or cultural dominance is blurred. That is, domestic

values need not dominate, so foreign and domestic elements complemented each other. Local consumers believed that ‘imitation local brands’ were of better quality, especially when the foreign elements entailed superior technologies or values. Many coastal Chinese companies adopted this strategy, which offered consumers new styles, tastes, or technologies that signaled higher social status.

S1 and S4, which apply to multicultural companies, embody adaptation. To outperform competing products and boost their own products’ acceptability, foreign and domestic companies incorporated new elements into their product or advertisement designs, generating hybridized products or creolized meanings comprised of foreign and domestic elements. In contrast, S2 and S3 reflect pre-communist China’s social or cultural tableau via value interpolation, meaning manipulation, and cultural colonization.

Because S1 through S4 suggest hybridization is subject to many underlying forces, understanding demands analyses from multiple perspectives. For example, analyses related to S1 and S4 may require focusing on corporate- or product-level interactions between foreign and local firms, whereas analyses related to S2 and S3 may require exploring the social, political, and cultural backdrops that shape and are shaped by foreign and local firms’ marketing strategies. Although the foci of S1 through S4 differ, local intermediaries operating in any of these four scenarios can create a competitive advantage.

All four scenarios help explain product hybridization in pre-communist China. Comparing and contrasting these scenarios with historical examples elucidates interactions between domestic and foreign companies, which should inform solutions to contemporary cross-culture marketing issues.

Product Hybridization Brokers in Pre-communist China (1912-1949)

Product hybridization in pre-communist China was co-created by multiple social agents—domestic and foreign companies, consumers, advertisers, and compradors—who facilitated cross-culture ideas, meanings, and value exchanges. To compete, companies ensured their brands neither symbolized nor reflected radical meanings that could offend local consumers (i.e., companies targeted mass markets rather than fringe consumer segments with extreme preferences). Although market success compelled companies to sell brands with foreign elements local consumers desired, these could be either new or revamped brands.

In pre-communist China, Chinese companies infused foreign elements into their products to signal modernity or to satisfy customers' curiosity about 'outside things' (Ping and Chen, 1984; Lin, 2011). Foreign products adopted Chinese elements to make them friendlier to local consumers. Compradors and advertisers spurred product hybridization by schematizing a broad range of preferences, values, and meanings into creolized posters, newspaper advertisements, and newly created lexicons (e.g., Yangjingbang or Shanghai-style English).

Compradors coupled the needs of foreign companies, Chinese companies, and Chinese consumers. Leftists lampooned compradors as mere henchmen of foreign bourgeoisie bent on exploiting Chinese consumers, yet agreed compradors helped introduce, often unintentionally or indirectly, new technologies and new ideas that transformed Chinese social structure and enhanced China's national power (Du, 1984; Nie, 1979; Yan, 1986a,b). Because these compradors occasionally extended their interests at their principals' expense, they were not always full agents of foreign companies (Cochran 1980, 1999; SASS, 1983).

Advertisers in pre-communist China promoted hybridized interests and tastes through product designs marked by transnational artwork (Cochran, 1999; Zhang, 2009). They often deployed non-Chinese promotional devices such as neon signs, radio commercials, airplane banners, and pre-movie commercials (Ping and Chen, 1984; Zhu, 2000). Some of these

advertisers were expatriates familiar with local Chinese culture; others were local artists influenced by non-Chinese art styles and predisposed to non-native product designs.

Hybridizing Product Designs in Pre-communist China (1912-1949)

From a cultural perspective, a ‘good’ Chinese product design must (1) be recognizable and memorable, (2) offer stories that stimulate consumers’ curiosity, (3) link to positive features such as national glory, new technology, or high quality, and (4) be detached from negative symbols that represent immoral or illegal meanings. Hybridized products in pre-communist China met these requirements.

Localization of foreign products and globalization of local products drove product hybridization in accord with S1 through S4. Foreign companies hired Chinese artists to design products that espoused traditional Chinese culture (Cochran, 1999, 2000; Huang, 2009; Zhao and Belk, 2008a,b). These companies often gave Chinese names to their Chinese subsidiaries; for example, Shell (Dutch) named its Chinese branch Asian Kerosene. To mitigate widely supported Chinese economic nationalism (Gerth, 2003), Lever Brothers (U.K.) registered its Chinese subsidiary as China Soap Company and renamed it *Li Hua* (Benefit China). Similarly, BAT named its major Chinese branch *Yi Zhong* (Be Friend with China) (SASS, 1983; SHERI, 1960).

Foreign companies localized their products through ancient Chinese legends (i.e., via S1). Standard Oil (U.S.) used Dongfang Shuo, a Chinese sage, to imply buying its products was ‘wise’ (Huang, 2009). Foreign product or advertisement designs borrowed from Chinese folklore, such as *Sanguo Yanyi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), *Xi You Ji* (Story of a Journey to the West), and *Shui Hu* (Water Margin) (Feng, 1998). In 1924, BAT portrayed historical figures from a well-known Chinese novel—*Hong Lou Meng* (Dream of the Red Chamber)—in an advertisement (Cochran, 1999; Huang, 2009; Lin, 2011; SASS, 1983; Zhang, 2009). Bayer (Germany) depicted traditional Chinese ladies (*ShiNv*) and applied traditional Chinese medical

terms, connoted by Chinese national culture as peaceful and reliable, in advertisements meant to ease patients' concerns about its aspirin's therapeutic efficacy (see Figure 2).

-----Insert Figure 2 here-----

The localization strategies of several foreign companies—such as BAT, Bayer, China Soap, Colgate (U.S.), Qingdao Beer (Germany), Melchers (Germany), Riqing Match (Japan), Great Brittan Pharmacy (U.K.), and Harbin Beer (Russian)—included production or assembly in China (Luo, 1996; Zhang, 1987). Although local production might have lowered production cost, it also instigated Chinese nationalism that posited foreign products exploited Chinese consumers and helped other countries achieve their imperialistic goals (Huang, 2009; Xu, 2006; Zhao, 2003).

Many Chinese cherished the 'old grandeur'—believed destroyed by a series of post-Opium War (1839-1842) treaties with foreign countries (Hunt, 1993)—yet increasingly acknowledged foreign technological prowess. Somewhat reluctantly, many Chinese companies infused non-Chinese values and figures into their products (i.e., S4). For example, Nanyang Brothers Tobacco (NBT) inserted Western warriors, belles, and technologies (e.g., electric appliances) into advertisements meant to communicate modernity (Feng, 1998; Huang, 2009; ISECAS and SASS, 1958; Lin, 2011). To imply its modernity and convince consumers its medicines were therapeutically equal to their foreign counterparts, Chinese pharmaceutical company Great Eastern Dispensary inserted Western-styled swimming suits and umbrellas into its advertisements (i.e., S3).

In major coastal cities (e.g., Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, Tianjin, and Qingdao) open to non-indigenous commercial cultures and other values, consumers developed positive attitudes toward foreign products (Huang, 2006; Huang, 2009; Lin, 1991; Zhang and Sun, 2006). In response, Chinese companies enhanced their products' perceived value by incorporating non-indigenous cultural elements. For example, to signify its shoes could

compete successfully against foreign products, Chinese footwear manufacturer Zhengtaixingji renamed its product *Huili* as *Warrior*—its pronunciation in some Chinese dialects is similar to the English pronunciation of warrior—and added Hercules' image to its logo to evoke the conventional Chinese notion of bravery (Lin, 2011).

Due to foreign companies' localization strategies (i.e., S1) and Chinese companies' globalization strategies (i.e., S4), many pre-communist Chinese brands became hybridized products characterized by foreign and local cultural elements. For example, BAT's advertisements contained cultural elements originating from New York's Times Square and local Chinese regions (Cochran, 1999). The so-called *Shanghai Style* of graphic art, widely adopted by Chinese and foreign products, merged Cubism with traditional Chinese decorative arts (Waara, 1999). A recent review of 716 foreign, Chinese, and joint-ventured products marketed in pre-communist China showed roughly 80% could be considered hybridized, making it difficult to judge from mere appearance whether the product was foreign or Chinese (Yan, 2013).

Shanghai: Hybridized Metropolis

Shanghai is a huge and highly developed economic center that hosts and exemplifies hybridized coastal Chinese and non-Chinese cultural elements (Lee, 1999; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Xu, 1985). Fueled by business activities between China and other countries, pre-communist Shanghai housed most of China's sophisticated financial services, which helped advance its globalization efforts (Coble, 1979, 1980; Cochran, 1999; Dong, 2001; Huang, 2009; Lee, 1999; Yang, 2001). Even then, the infrastructure included trolleybuses, paved roads, skyscrapers, and a large seaport (Cochran, 1999; Taylor, 1999). Most brands were registered in Shanghai after China initiated its brand registration system in 1904 (Huang, 2009; Zhao, 2005). Of the roughly 50,000 brands registered in pre-communist China, 80% were registered in Shanghai, and of the roughly 14,000 modern industrial companies, 55% were in Shanghai (Chen

and Qian, 1984; Huang, 2009; Zhao, 2005). Shanghai's many wealthy consumers enabled it to become pre-communist China's mass consumption center. Wealthy people and retailers from inland areas also visited Shanghai to purchase desired products.

Partly resulting from value colonization (i.e., S2) and meaning interpolation (i.e., S3), Shanghai created *Haipai* or *Shanghai Style* culture, which blended foreign and local Chinese cultural values (i.e., both value types are a mixture of multiple cultural sources) (Bergere, 1986; Chan, 1999; Cochran, 1999; Luo and Song, 2005; Taylor, 2000; Waara, 1999). Shanghai's hybridized culture fostered its reputation as "Half Oriental, half Occidental; half land, half water; neither a colony nor wholly belonging to China; inhabited by the citizens of every nation in the world but ruled by none" (Dong, 2001, p.2). As a locus of modernity epitomizing material prosperity, a hub offering resources and opportunities for economically ambitious Chinese and foreign investors, and a center for new ideologies and values, Shanghai was central to advancing and reifying hybridization in pre-communist China.

Foreign and Chinese companies' strategic activities often were concentrated in Shanghai; specifically, foreign companies' efforts to advance foreign products (i.e., S1 and S2) and domestic companies' efforts to compete with foreign products (i.e., S3 and S4) (Cochran, 1999; Ping and Chen, 1984). Through political treaties (i.e., S2) or market transactions (i.e., S1 and S4), foreign products, lifestyles, and values diffused from Shanghai to all of China (Cochran, 1999; Spence, 1990).

Due to their differing political and economic standing, local businesspeople, intellectuals, students, workers, peasants, compradors, and government officials held contrasting views about hybridizing native and foreign values. Although most Chinese believed hybridization was inevitable, some anticipated it would help modernize China while others dreaded it would impose meaningful sociopolitical costs (Cochran, 1999). Intellectuals and students worried

hybridization would compromise China's cultural independence (Lu, 1999; Nie, 1979). Because Shanghai often was demonized as a corrupt city that ignored conventional values and as a beachhead for international imperialism, leftists argued hybridization would propel China down the slippery slope of economic and political submission to foreign powers (Hu, 1981, 1996; Lu, 1999). Chinese consumers fretted hybridization would broaden their consumption choices at the expense of Chinese cultural purity. In short, Shanghai was a city of contrasting interests, values, meanings, and lifestyles that exemplified how commodifiable cultural elements can create a locale that embraces hybridity.

Beyond Hybridization: Pure Native Products and Product Transposition

Although hybridization may result from political, cultural, and economic competition as well as negotiations among powers, interests, and interpretations, it partially reflects inter-element balances. That is, no single element can dominate other product elements, making feasible a balanced although dynamic hybridized blend of multilayered meanings or multi-perspective interpretations (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). Nonetheless, unbalanced products, such as pure native and wholly transposed products, are viable.

'Pure native products' were marketed by Chinese companies that adopted local elements into their designs or strictly followed production processes, styles, or modes associated with local values, rituals, or cultures meant to resist globalization (de Grazia, 1998; Terrio, 2000). For example, some Chinese pharmaceutical companies advertised Chinese herbal medicines through traditional Chinese posters coupled with Chinese calligraphy or folktales (see Figure 3). Such products targeted local consumers by advocating Chinese historical and philosophical values or by reinforcing global element adoption as unnecessary and unpatriotic. This strategy provided cultural resistance to foreign influences, especially cultural imperialism (i.e., S2) by highlighting the cultural idiosyncrasies or cultural indigenoussness of local brands.

-----Insert Figure 3 here-----

Despite the localization of foreign products and globalization of local products, some foreign companies transposed their products' image through product or advertisement designs that obscured country-of-origin. This strategy is a special case of S1 achieved by vacating the original context and switching to a context that differs by locale, chronology, and cultural values (Giddens, 1990). Through one type of product transposition—extreme localization of foreign products—many Chinese were misled that some foreign products were pure Chinese products.

Extremely localized foreign brands signify their 'sameness' with authentic local brands. For example, the British and Dutch company Asiatic Petroleum attracted Chinese consumers with images of *Yuanbao* (i.e., the shoe-shaped golden or silver ingots, which implied good fortune and wealth) in its kerosene advertisements (see Figure 4). These advertisements extolled the product's money-saving advantages, which conforms to the Chinese value *Qin Jian Chi Jia* (managing the house with hardworking and thrifty). The depicted little boy represents *Zhao Cai Tong Zi* (The boy who brings in fortune and wealth). The brand name in Chinese is *Yaxiya* (Asia), which suggests regional production. To induce purchases by Northern Chinese farmers, British-owned Imperial Chemical Industries incorporated a Chinese cabbage (*Da Baicai*; the main Chinese vegetable) image into its fertilizer posters (see Figure 5). The brand name in Chinese is *Feitianfen* (enrich-the land-fecundity powder), which relates to traditional Chinese agriculture and farmers' social identity. Thus, companies can transform a foreign brand into a pseudo-local brand by embedding its elements (and their signified meanings) into local culture.

-----Insert Figure 4 and 5 here-----

The second type of product transposition—extreme foreignization of Chinese products, termed *Xihua* or *Yanghua* in Chinese historiography—caused Chinese consumers to believe globalized Chinese products were foreign-made products (i.e., radicalized version of S4).

Because foreign products represented modernity and advanced technology, some Chinese companies globalized their products by incorporating foreign languages, values, and personal images into their product designs. One example was *Ziyou Nvshen* (Goddess of Liberty) (see Figure 6), who appeared in posters meant to convince consumers it was produced in the U.S. This brand was marketed mainly during the early 1940s, when most Chinese viewed the U.S. and its values favorably. To convince consumers it is selling a foreign brand, producers of an extremely foreignized local brand can highlight its distinctiveness relative to compatriot brands.

Extremely foreignized or localized brands in pre-communist China were rare; for the former, because Chinese culture discourages deviation from conventional values, and for the latter, because foreign companies experienced difficulties capturing the subtleties of Chinese cultural meanings. In response to 256 foreign brands marketed in China from 1912 to 1949, Chinese competitors adopted an extremely foreignized strategy for one of 443 local brands; in contrast, foreign competitors adopted a localized strategy for eight of 256 foreign brands (Yan, 2013). Despite these strategic rarities, both extremes imply that companies can obscure their brand's country-of-origin by infusing select cultural elements into their product or advertisement designs.

-----Insert Figure 6 here-----

Discussion

Studying marketing's past can enhance understanding of current and future market-related systems and activities (Fullerton and Nevett, 1988). Because marketing and market systems evolve (Hirschman, 2009), historical marketing practices and ideas can inform current marketing strategies. Unlike natural science explanations, acontextual accounts of social events often replace true social science understanding with a false sense of generalizability. By embracing discursive, textual, and empirical analyses, CHRM can help social scientists identify

deeper meanings, complex mechanisms, and dynamic processes that condition historical events (Kraidy, 2005). CHRM can help marketing scholars reveal and scrutinize historical ‘traces’ useful for explaining why companies designed and implemented certain marketing strategies within given political, social, and cultural contexts. It also can explain consumers’ (dis)similar responses to marketing strategies across (dis)similar contexts. Hence, CHRM allows contextual and chronology-sensitive analyses of marketing strategies and helps to “infuse our [marketing] databases with souls” (Sherry & Kozinets, 2001, p.182).

Historically shaped informal institutions—such as norms, values, and social preferences—regulate marketing’s social and practical aspects (Fam *et al.*, 2013; Layton, 2009; North, 1990). Identifying and espousing local values can boost product acceptance in cross-culture markets. For example, Chinese consumers in pre-communist China (1912-1949) preferred products that included or expressed local Chinese values. Incorporating local values into products boosts local consumers’ cultural identification or social identity building (Khan, Ashraf, and Malik, 2019), which eases product entry into local markets. Furthermore, competing interests and contrasting interpretations of cross-culture meanings help to co-create products in global markets. Hence, to boost local product acceptance, foreign companies must recognize and infuse desired cross-culture elements into their products (i.e., hybridization).

Hybridization theory suggests foreign firms’ localization strategies and local firms’ adaptive responses foster hybridized products with local and foreign cultural elements. This process may induce product transposition, under which consumers mistakenly view some foreign products as purely local and some foreignized local products as foreign. Product transposition suggests a need to explore the boundary conditions for international marketing strategies; for example, over-localization or over-adoption of foreign cultural elements into products may cause disassociations between products and their cultural roots.

Rather than a marketing strategy limited to historical Chinese markets, hybridization is a widespread phenomenon studied by anthropologists, ecological economists, organizational behaviorists, linguists, and fine arts scholars (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). The exchange of business values or meanings concomitant with cross-culture business transactions may induce it. For example, hybridization pertains to brands sold along the U.S.-Mexico border (Campbell and Heyman, 2009), obfuscating the origin of 'Belizean Food' (Wilk, 2002), mixing cultural elements of mainland Chinese food in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia and Philippines (Wu and Cheung, 2002), and creolizing the branding and consumption of foreign products in West Germany during the Cold War (Schutts, 2003). All these hybridizations differed by historical context. U.S.-Mexico hybridization occurred within a somewhat confrontational context. Immigrants and tourists visiting Belize facilitated 'Belizean Food' hybridization. Chinese emigrants' openness to local cultures and business flexibility spurred the mixing of Chinese food elements. Consumers' longing for material prosperity, nostalgia, and the diffusion of U.S. economic and political values after WWII triggered hybridized branding in West Germany. Hence, the universality of hybridization in marketing calls for a deeper and broader study of multiple social factors that affect the processes, mechanisms, subtypes, and shifting connotations of hybridization in international marketing.

Hybridized products are consistent with the value co-creation, which assumes co-production of designs, value-in-use, shared meanings, and product knowledge gleaned through company-consumer interactions (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Ranjan and Read, 2016; Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal, 2012). For example, depicting traditional Chinese heroes (e.g., Guan Yu and Yue Fei) on packaging and in advertisements reinforced traditional Chinese ethical values (e.g., Zhong [loyalty] and Yi [righteousness]) marginalized by imported Western values (e.g., democracy and modernization) (Cochran, 1999; Yan, 2013). BAT's packaging depicted the

Great Wall because it was a widely accepted symbol of Chinese resistance against foreign aggression (SASS, 1983). Such signaled meanings encouraged Chinese consumers to interpret hybridized products positively. Thus, companies and consumers coauthored cultural meanings, social preferences, and social bonds by producing, purchasing, and consuming hybridized products.

Borrowing elements from different cultures to increase a product's attractiveness signifies 'imagination' (Zaltman, 2016). A recently introduced concept to marketing scholarship, imagination in this context refers to "fill[ing] vacant spaces (in knowledge) by providing insights that missing facts would presumably provide" (Zaltman, 2016, p.100). In cross-culture marketing, imagination means marketers provide new interpretations or product meanings (cultural, social, or political) meant to attract consumers through creative product or advertisement designs. Unlike homogenization, which induces stagnation, hybridization spawns creativity and stimulates innovation (Kraidy, 2005; Zachary, 2000).

Hybridization strategies in pre-communist China comprised two basic elements of imagination: originality and appropriateness (Sasser, Koslow, and Kilgour, 2013; West, Caruana, and Leelapanyalert, 2013). For example, Chinese and foreign companies in pre-communist China created hybridized product designs by incorporating meanings, figures, and stories from local and foreign cultures. Such designs, which connoted new cultural formats or meanings that were neither purely local nor foreign, reduced the alienness of foreign products and enhanced Chinese customers' acceptance of them.

Conclusion

Marketing history studies can improve present and future marketing decisions and behaviors. By examining dispersed historical data about pre-communist China (1912-1949), this research shows how historical strategies (e.g., adopting local values, meanings, and historical

figures into product designs or offering culture-based interpretations of product attributes such as the ‘mades’) eased local customers’ acceptance of foreign products. The findings suggest cultural hybridization results from strategic interactions between local and global agents embedded within socio-historical contexts.

Whether to adopt a globalization, localization, or hybridization strategy depends on contextual specificities (i.e., culture, history, meanings, norms, and their (re)interpretations) that practitioners should scrutinize when making and implementing cross-culture marketing strategies. Historical ‘traces’ (e.g., advertisements, posters, corporate documents, newspapers, memoirs, and other historical materials) indicate local and foreign producers converged onto hybridity strategies by absorbing local and foreign cultural elements. In pre-communist China (1912-1949), interactions between foreign and domestic companies translated into hybridization strategies, with foreign (Chinese) companies adding local (foreign) cultural elements to their product designs. Hence, the hybridization perspective best explains global marketing activities in pre-communist China.

Rather than a monocentric and Western-centered interpretation, this research relied on a non-Western-centric interpretive framework to examine marketing strategies across contexts. Scrutinizing the factors that influenced product hybridization within their historical context avoids presentism (i.e., using contemporary strands to evaluate historical events) and the uncritical application of marketing strategies to understand brands, meanings, or values across contexts. By espousing a hybridization rather than homogenization perspective, this research also enhances current marketing scholarship by supporting relatively new marketing notions like imagination and value co-creation.

Contemporary marketers wanting to enter or enhance their presence in Chinese markets can adapt strategies that once enhanced foreign products’ acceptability. In practice, comparable

ambivalent attitudes of pre-communist and contemporary Chinese consumers towards local and foreign products suggest historical marketing strategies may inform processes and outcomes of cross-culture marketing and offer guidelines for effective foreign market entry (Cochran, 1999; Zhao and Belk, 2008a,b).

Standardized marketing strategies that ignore context-bound elements are inefficient. To improve such strategies, an understanding of ‘local specificities’ within a polycentric and multidimensional approach is needed. In practice, standardized strategies are defined more by the globalization of supply than the globalization of demand. Nevertheless, these two globalizations often are disjointed because the former is driven mainly by cost-reduction, market share enhancement, and supportive manufacturing and transportation technologies, whereas the latter is shaped mainly by shared needs and fashion-seeking that ignore local specificities (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). Although the globalization of production may reduce cost, its failure to satisfy local needs may depress revenue and net profit. By revealing the underlying factors, processes, and mechanisms that drive markets, customers, norms, and preferences, CHRM can help marketing practitioners better match supply and demand across contexts.

Future Research

Further research on hybridity in international consumer marketing can help to satisfy Belk’s (2009) request for alternatives to the global homogenization perspective that drives much research about global consumers and consumption. For example, identifying the optimal blend—depending on local economic and social conditions—of local versus foreign cultural elements comprising hybrid products should create a win-win situation for companies and consumers. From a practical and scholarly perspective, the historical circumstances surrounding such blends may inform current optimal blends by region or country.

Subsequent research could explore historical interactions between macro contexts and micro decision-making in global marketing. Macro contexts condition micro decision-making and micro preferences shape the spread and acceptance of certain social values (e.g., the values of Zhong (loyalty) and Yi (righteousness) in traditional China) through (non)purchasing and (non)consumption. Because the synergy between macro contexts and micro decisions shifts over time, it behooves marketers to identify when and how the composition of hybridized product designs should change in response to shifting value preferences or interpretations.

Marketing or branding involves the creation, transferring, and (re)interpretation of meanings associated with brands (McCracken, 1988, 2005). Hence, marketing historians might explore (1) how product or advertising elements shaped the meanings that shifted consumers' attitudes towards cross-culture brands, (2) longitudinal changes in the relative importance of different meanings on consumers' brand perceptions, and (3) the perceptual gap between marketers and consumers across historical contexts. For example, the influence of different unintended meanings (positive or negative) for brands or advertisements may vary by context.

Finally, this historical analysis suggests two strategic questions about cross-culture marketing that require a polycentric view of meanings, implications, designs, and strategic interactions. First, how do the rationales and cultural implications of foreign companies' cross-culture marketing strategies help or hinder local companies' efforts to enhance their competitive advantage? Second, how should global companies incorporate local responses (e.g., nationalistic resistance, cultural needs, traditional value advocacy) into their cross-culture marketing strategies and identify the cultural elements they should incorporate into their product designs?

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