

BRAND POSITIONING THROUGH ADVERTISING IN ASIA, NORTH AMERICA, AND EUROPE: THE ROLE OF GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE

In this study, the authors examine the emergence of *brand* positioning *strategies* in *advertising* that parallel the growth of the global marketplace. A new construct, global consumer culture positioning (GCCP), is proposed, operationalized, and tested. This construct associates the *brand* with a widely understood and recognized set of symbols believed to constitute emerging global consumer culture. Study results support the validity of the new construct and indicate that meaningful percentages of *advertisements* employ GCCP, as opposed to positioning the *brand* as a member of a local consumer culture or a specific foreign consumer culture. Identification of GCCP as a positioning tool suggests one pathway through which certain *brands* come to be perceived by consumers as "global" and provides managers with strategic direction in the multinational marketplace.

Globalization is a relatively recent phenomenon that affords *marketing* managers new opportunities (Roth 1995a) as well as threats (Duncan and Ramaprasad 1995). One opportunity is the growth of global consumer segments (Dawar and Parker 1994; Hassan and Katsanis 1994) that associate similar meanings with certain places, people, and things (Caudle 1994). Paralleling the growth of global segments is the emergence of global consumer cultures, shared sets of consumption-related symbols (product categories, *brands*, consumption activities, and so forth) that are meaningful to segment members (Terpstra and David 1991). Mass media programming, flowing primarily from the United States, has played a major role in the creation, learning, and sharing of such consumption symbols (Appadurai 1990; Walker 1996).

Building on the emergence of globally shared meanings, this study presents a new *brand* positioning *strategy* designed to assist international managers who seek to strengthen their *brand's* equity in an increasingly competitive marketplace (Aaker 1991; Kapferer 1992). We label this *strategy* "global consumer culture positioning" (GCCP) and hypothesize that GCCP can be contrasted with two other types of consumer culture positioning: local consumer culture positioning (LCCP), in which the *brand* is associated with the local consumer culture (e.g., Budweiser's association with small-town *American* culture in its U.S. *advertising*), and foreign consumer culture positioning (FCCP), in which the *brand* is associated with a specific foreign culture (e.g., Singapore Airline's use of the "Singapore Girl" in its global media *advertising*). The potential contributions to *brand* equity that flow from associating a *brand* with global consumer culture have long been recognized (Aaker 1991; Kapferer 1992). Buzzell (1968) argues that a global image is a powerful means of increasing sales, and Duncan (1992) and Shocker, Srivastava, and Ruckert (1994) hypothesize that building a global image gives a *brand* more power and value. In part, *brands* with a global image may derive their additional power and value from consumer attributions of enhanced self-worth and status through purchase of the *brand* (Friedman 1990). That is, consumers may purchase certain *brands* to reinforce their membership in a specific global segment, such as teenager, business, governmental/diplomatic, elite, and so forth (Hannerz 1990), and/or their self-image as cosmopolitan, knowledgeable, and modern (Friedman 1990). In addition, globally positioned *brands* are likely to have special credibility and authority (Kapferer 1992).

The proposed conceptualization of GCCP should not be confused with globally standardized *advertising* (cf. Duncan and Ramaprasad 1995). Such *advertising* entails the use of similar content around the world (Johansson 1997). Although GCCP can be employed in a standardized *advertising* campaign, so can FCCP (e.g., Louis Jadot wine positioned globally as a "taste" of

France). At the other extreme, a manager may position the *brand* using GCCP in one national *market*, FCCP in a second, and LCCP in a third. Finally, GCCP may be communicated (somewhat) differently in each *market*. For example, P&G's "all-in-one" shampoo with conditioner, Wash & Go, has been positioned globally as a time saver in a busy world. In the United States and Europe, this was signified by a woman rushing into a gym locker room and slamming the locker door, but in Thailand, the creative content was toned down, though it still communicated convenience in a hectic world (The Economist 1992). Thus, though GCCP may be used in standardized *advertising*, we view it as a distinct construct.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to conceptualize, measure, and examine the use of a new *brand* positioning *strategy* referred to as GCCP. In addition, GCCP is contrasted with LCCP and FCCP, and other factors influencing its use are tested. To this end, we first draw on semiotics and communication theories to conceptualize culture-based positioning *strategies* that might be used in *advertising*. We next develop and test several hypotheses regarding the use of GCCP. Finally, implications are discussed and directions for further research suggested.

Theoretical Framework

Semiotics Theory

The hypothesized positioning framework focuses on the use of verbal, thematic, and visual signs in *advertising* to associate the *brand* with global, foreign, or local consumer culture, a process that McCracken (1993) refers to as "meaning transfer." Given our focus on signs, semiotics theory provides an appropriate foundation. Semiotics is devoted to the study of signs and their meanings (cf. Mick 1986). Sherry and Camargo (1987) apply a semiotics approach in their analysis of the visual symbolism of Japanese packaging. They note that use of kanji (Chinese ideograms) represents tradition and formality, hiragana (simplified one or two stroke characters) connotes femininity and softness, and katakana (used to express foreign words) implies newness, foreignness, and directness.

Related to this visual aspect of semiotics is a broader category referred to as "visual aesthetics." Examples of aesthetic signs used to create *brand* associations include colors, shapes, and materials used in *advertising* and packaging, as well as aesthetic styles such as complexity (minimalism versus ornamentalism) or representation (realism versus abstraction; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). Aesthetic values vary culturally, and therefore, certain signs are likely to be preferred over others. For example, Asians value complexity and decoration, balance and harmony, and naturalism (Schmitt and Pan 1994).

Advertising themes also serve as signs to communicate meanings associated with the *brand*. Schmitt, Simonson, and Marcus (1995) note that themes aesthetically communicate *brand* positioning, and they provide examples, including the professionalism theme used by many investment houses and the high-tech theme used by many electronics manufacturers. Cheng and Schweitzer (1996) report that themes in Chinese television *advertisements* tend to signify family values, tradition, and technology, whereas themes in *American advertisements* tend to symbolize the importance of enjoyment, cost savings, and individualism.

Finally, verbal sounds also can symbolize certain *brand* associations. For example, Corey and Williams (1994, p. 211) note that knowledge of social class language differences has enabled *marketers* to use appropriate language in segmenting *markets*. Heath, Chatterjee, and France (1990, p. 38) refer to this as "phonetic symbolism" and argue that the sounds of *brand* names can symbolize attributes and strengthen *brand* positioning. Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dube (1994) investigate the effects of foreign *branding* (pronunciation or spelling of a *brand* name in a

foreign language) on consumer *brand* perceptions and attitudes in the United States. French, as opposed to English, pronunciation of the same *brand* name enhanced *brand* attitudes for hedonic products but not for utilitarian or hybrid products. French spelling of the *brand* name produced more positive *brand* attitudes for hedonic *brands* than did country-of-origin information alone (i.e., "Made in France").

As we noted previously, it is our contention that visual, thematic, and verbal signs reflecting the emergence of global culture are likely to be found in *advertising* around the world. A fairly well-developed literature exists to account for the general development of a global consumer culture from which such signs arise.

The Emergence of Global Consumer Culture

Hannerz (1990, p. 237) notes that "world culture" is emerging as a result of the "increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory." Appadurai (1990, p. 299) proposes a particularly relevant framework of diffusion for global consumer culture using five paths of global cultural flow, including mediascapes, which "provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and 'ethnoscapes' to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of 'news' and politics are profoundly mixed." From these sources, "scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places" (Appadurai 1990, p. 299). From the semiotics perspective, it can be argued that certain consumers (e.g., elite, post-World War II [WW II] consumers, teens) will desire consumption experiences and objects that they consider "signs" of these scripts in order to act out imagined or real participation in the more cosmopolitan global consumer culture communicated by the media.

Walker (1996) provides evidence of the extent to which mass media in general and television in particular are playing central roles in the creation of global consumption symbols. He notes that MTV alone reached 239 million viewers in 68 countries in 1996. Among teens in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Asia, eight out of their top ten activities are media related. In a semiotics sense, the direct influence of such programming is evidenced by teens who watch MTV or similar channels being more likely to display the signs of teen global culture, such as jeans, running shoes, and denim jackets (Walker 1996). Walker (1996, p. 42) concludes that worldwide access to television is creating a global culture of consumption, what he refers to as a "global mall."

Because of the diffusion of such imagery and the desire for real or imagined participation in the consumer culture it creates, certain product categories become signs of global cosmopolitanism and modernity (e.g., air conditioners, CDs, the hamburger, business suits). Simultaneously, it is likely that *brand* managers seek to capitalize on the semiotic nature of the product category by positioning their *brand* as symbolic of global consumer culture—for example, the jeans *brand* worn by adult, upper-middle-class men who are globally cosmopolitan. The objective would be to have consumers identify the *brand* as a sign of membership (real or imagined) in the globally cosmopolitan segment. With this review in mind, we now turn to a formal definition of our constructs.

Global, Foreign, and Local Consumer Culture Positioning

On the basis of the foregoing review, a GCCP *strategy* is defined as one that identifies the *brand* as a symbol of a given global culture—for example, the post-WW II, cosmopolitan segment. It does so using meaning transfer (McCracken 1993), an *advertising* process through which the

brand is associated with other signs that reflect this cultural orientation (e.g., language, aesthetics, themes). Globalization has been defined by Robertson as the "crystallization of the world as a single place" (1987a, p. 38) and "the emergence of the global human condition" (1987b, p. 23). By implication, **advertising** featuring the idea that consumers all over the world consume a particular **brand** or appealing to certain human universals might invest the **brand** with the cultural meaning of being a conduit to feeling at one with global culture. Examples of **brands** that apparently have used such **strategies** include Sony ("My First Sony"), which positioned one of its products as appropriate for young people around the world; Philips ("Let's Make Things Better"), whose **advertisements** explicitly feature people from different countries; and Benetton ("The United Colors of Benetton"), whose slogan emphasizes the unity of humankind. As we noted previously, GCCP should be distinguished from at least two other **strategies** that involve cultural meaning transfer. First, LCCP (local consumer culture positioning) is defined as a **strategy** that associates the **brand** with local cultural meanings, reflects the local culture's norms and identities, is portrayed as consumed by local people in the national culture, and/or is depicted as locally produced for local people. For example, Chevy Trucks and Dr Pepper soft drinks have been positioned in U.S. **advertising** as part of the "**American**" way of life. Second, FCCP (foreign consumer culture positioning) is defined as a **strategy** that positions the **brand** as symbolic of a specific foreign consumer culture; that is, a **brand** whose personality, use occasion, and/or user group are associated with a foreign culture. For example, Gucci in the United States is positioned as a prestigious and fashionable Italian product.

Dimensions of Consumer Culture Positioning

Three central components of a cultural symbol set are language, aesthetic styles, and story themes. Although it may have originally reflected Anglo-**American** culture, English has come to represent something more. As the primary language of international business, the mass media, and now, the Internet (Business Week 1996), English has come to signal modernism and internationalism to many consumers.

For example, Sherry and Camargo (1987) note that English symbolizes modernization, social mobility, and an internationalized outlook when used on packaging in Japan. Furthermore, Ray, Ryder, and Scott (1994, p. 251) hypothesize that the extensive use of English in print **advertisements** around the world occurs primarily to suggest to consumers that they are cosmopolitan. In this case, the denotative meaning attached to the words is often secondary. What is more important is an appreciation of the language's implicit, symbolic meaning. Therefore, one way for a **brand** to communicate GCCP is to use English words, written and/or spoken, in its communications. In contrast, a **brand** manager wanting to use LCCP might emphasize the local language. Finally, a **brand** could associate itself with a specific foreign consumer culture (FCCP) by employing spoken and written words from that culture in its **advertising** and/or **brand** name. For example, Volkswagen has used the slogan "Fahrvergnügen" in U.S. **advertisements**.

As with the English language, certain aesthetic styles are becoming recognized as part of global consumer culture. As an example, consider the use of spokespersons in **advertising**. Just as certain aesthetic characteristics of a spokesperson are associated with local culture prototypes (cf. Mehta and Belk 1991), it is likely that a distinct set of spokesperson characteristics is coming to reflect GCCP, and use of such spokesperson characteristics is likely to give the **brand** a more global image (e.g., Michael Jordan for Nike, Pierce Brosnan for Omega). To the extent that the spokesperson embodies aesthetic characteristics that reflect the local culture (e.g., a French

businesswoman driving a Peugeot in a French television *advertisement*) or a specific foreign culture (e.g., a German engineer spokesperson for Audi in a U.S. television *advertisement*), consumers are likely to associate the *brand* with that culture.

The aesthetic construction and display of *brand* logos also may reflect alternative consumer culture positionings. For example, some logos may be tied less to specific cultures in terms of their appearance, such as the logos for AT&T (abstract globe), Nike (swoosh), Royal Dutch/Shell (shell), Mercedes-Benz (star), and so forth. Others may be more symbolic of specific cultural traditions. Cathay Pacific, for example, recently changed its logo to a white Chinese calligraphy stroke that suggests the wing of a bird to "give itself a more Asian air" (The Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly 1994, p. 11). Of course, it is likely that most consumers would view the logo in its aesthetic entirety (including shape, color, texture, and overall design) and form linkages to global, foreign, or local consumer culture on the basis of the symbol's gestalt-like familiarity (cf Grunert 1996).

Finally, certain story themes are likely to be identified generally as symbolic of global consumer culture. For example, the young, professional businessperson who is on the rise uses a Toshiba laptop whether in New York, New Delhi, or Paris. Thus, the story theme implies that ownership of this *brand* signifies that the consumer is a member of the "transnational commerce culture" (Hannerz 1990). Other story themes are more likely to be associated with a specific foreign positioning, such as the purple cow in the Alps in the *advertisements* for Milka chocolate, or with local themes, such as scenes from the characteristic landscape of Tyrol for Tirolmilch. Thus, depending on the story-related themes in an *advertisement*, consumers are more or less likely to associate the *brand* with a specific consumer culture.

One additional point should be considered as we conclude the review. In this study, we adopt an "etic-emic" approach (Poortinga and Malpass 1986). From a theoretic perspective, we investigate the hypothesis that the basic structure of the global-foreign-local positioning framework, namely, language, aesthetics, and story themes, is etic and applies to *advertising* around the world. However, the detailed expression of that structure can be influenced by local culture (emic). For example, Nescafe's *advertising* projects the image of a *brand* consumed globally. However, in the Netherlands, this positioning is executed by featuring an old man from South America enjoying the coffee. In Greece, the *advertisement* setting portrays several young people on a raft with a small hut for a cabin at the sea shore. Thus, local culture members should determine whether signs in their country's *advertising* symbolize global, foreign, or local consumer culture. This empirical approach enables the researcher to test hypotheses regarding a universal positioning framework while remaining sensitive to variations across cultures.

Research Hypotheses

Identification of consumer culture positioning. The preceding discussion indicates that GCCP, LCCP, and FCCP should be identifiable as distinct *brand* positioning constructs in television *advertising*. With this in mind, our first hypothesis states:

H₁: LCCP, FCCP, and GCCP are meaningful positioning constructs in television *advertising*.

This hypothesis does not assume that mixed consumer culture positioning *strategies* (e.g., GCCP and FCCP signs in the same *advertisement*) cannot occur. A *brand* can be (1) uniquely positioned on GCCP, LCCP, or FCCP; (2) positioned predominantly on one of the three types while incorporating elements of other types of positioning; or (3) not positioned predominantly on any of the dimensions. The *advertising* series in which Tina Turner sings the Pepsi-Cola

theme song with local bands in different countries to provide local identification in a global campaign is an example of a mixed *strategy* (Jeannet and Hennessey 1995).

Relative frequency of GCCP. Despite mass exposure to certain similar signs of consumption, there appears to be fairly strong consensus that global consumer culture is still in its infancy (cf. Samli 1995). Some scholars, such as de Mooij (1998), even argue that global consumer culture is essentially nonexistent, that it is a concept that exists only in the minds of corporate strategists.

However, we believe that this is an extreme position and that there is ample theoretic justification, as well as empirical evidence (referred to previously), to conclude that certain consumption symbols and meanings have diffused globally as a result of the substantial increase in intercultural interaction since the end of WW II (Appadurai 1990; Hannerz 1990). At the same time, given the continued importance of local culture to individual identity (Johansson 1997) and the relatively early stage of global consumer culture diffusion (Featherstone 1990), it is expected that the *brands* in each country sample most often will be positioned as local *brands*, employing language, aesthetic, and thematic signs that are symbolic of the home culture.

H[sub 2]: LCCP will be used more frequently than FCCP or GCCP as the *brand* positioning *strategy* in television *advertising*.

Consumer culture positioning in the United States. Based on our literature review, it appears that there may be a substantial overlap between *brand* symbols that constitute global consumer culture and those found in the United States (Domzal and Kernan 1993; Ray, Ryder, and Scott 1994). From fast food to furniture to fashions, consumer culture meaning systems (language, aesthetics, and lifestyle themes) are transmitted from the United States to the rest of the world through the mediascapes described previously (Appadurai 1990; Hannerz 1990). Over time, certain *brand* symbols are likely to become disassociated with the United States per se, becoming associated with something that is larger than any single country--the global consumption set. However, within the United States, many symbols (e.g., fried chicken) in all likelihood continue to be viewed as local. Because of the number of global symbols that were originally *American*, *brand* managers may believe that GCCP has more differentiating power outside the United States and therefore use it more in other *markets*, such as in developing countries, where consumers may seek to enhance self-perceptions of status, competence, and esteem by acquiring *brands* that are perceived as cosmopolitan, modem, and global (Friedman 1990). If these observations are true, then fewer (more) television *advertisements* should employ GCCP (LCCP) in the United States relative to other countries. Based on this logic, our next two hypotheses state:

H[sub 3]: GCCP will be identified less frequently in television *advertisements* in the United States relative to *advertisements* in other countries.

H[sub 4]: LCCP will be identified more frequently in television *advertisements* in the United States relative to *advertisements* in other countries.

Advertising content differences. Turning to *advertising* format/style, there are strong reasons to expect *advertisements* employing GCCP to use more often a "soft-sell" instead of a "hard-sell" approach. Soft-sell *advertisements* use more visual imagery and are more subtle and ambiguous than hard-sell ones, which are relatively more informational and focus on tangible product features (Bradley, Hitchon, and Thorson 1994, p. 143). Furthermore, because soft-sell *advertisements* typically use a lot of visual imagery, they lend themselves to messages that require implicit, rather than explicit, communication (Messaris 1997, p. vi). [n addition, because image-oriented *psychological* concepts are typically more abstract than feature-based informational concepts (Johnson 1988; Lefkoff-Hagius and Mason 1993), soft-sell

advertisements that use imagery instead of features are also, by implication, usually more abstract than hard-sell *advertisements*.

These features of soft-sell *advertisements* (subtlety, implicitness, and abstractness) would seem to make them more suitable for *advertisements* using GCCP. Because global consumer culture is an emerging and rapidly changing phenomenon, with differing sets of signs in differing global segments (Hannerz 1990), *advertising* using this positioning should be more effective if it communicates in a subtle, indirect, and abstract fashion. A more direct and tangible approach runs a greater risk of misspecifying the symbols that are reflective of GCCP. It is also plausible that *advertisements* using GCCP are more often image oriented than informational because of linkages between the *brands* and the imagined membership in a global consumer segment (Appadurai 1990). These factors provide the rationale for our next hypothesis:

H₅: Television *advertisements* using GCCP will more frequently use indirect, image-oriented content approaches (soft-sell) than direct, strong message argument appeals (hard-sell). Product category differences. Recall that GCCP involves associating a *brand* with globally shared, consumption-related symbols that signal membership in global consumer segments (Dawar and Parker 1994; Hannerz 1990). It also may involve appeals to certain human universals (Robertson 1987b), especially the urge to appear modern and cosmopolitan (Friedman 1990). It follows that the use of GCCP should be easier and more frequent in product categories for which consumers exhibit common behaviors, rather than in those consumed in locally idiosyncratic ways. In addition, GCCP should be potentially more relevant in product categories that have come to symbolize modernity and cosmopolitanism rather than tradition.

Because of its deep connections to local culture, food generally is regarded as the product category that is most often consumed in traditional and locally idiosyncratic ways. Fischler (1988) maintains that foods play a crucial role in the process of enculturation. What we eat, how it is prepared, and the rules and meanings that permeate every aspect of food consumption practices are all sociocultural matters, irrespective of their biological, *psychological*, or economic dimensions. Even what is considered edible or not is largely a local cultural matter (Fischler 1988; Murcott 1986). Although there are exceptions (e.g., global fast-food *brands* such as McDonald's), because of such strong ties to local traditions and meanings, food *brands* appear least likely to be associated with GCCP.

Consumer high-tech durables (such as cameras and computers), however, are used worldwide in similar, if not identical, ways. Yip (1995, pp. 30-32) argues that commonality of consumer needs across countries is highest for higher-tech durables and lowest for foods, with household and personal care products near the middle of the spectrum. Such high-tech durables also satisfy universal consumer needs such as the demand for superior technology (Levitt 1983).

Furthermore, many higher-tech durable *brands* have come to symbolize the essence of modernism and internationalism, as well as membership in global consumer segments (such as cellular phones for businesspeople). Together, these characteristics should facilitate the use of GCCP in high-tech product categories. It thus seems likely that GCCP will be used most frequently for products that are durable, fairly complex, and highly technological and least frequently for foods, with the other goods categories in between. The converse should be true for LCCP.

In comparing goods with services, it has been argued that services are more difficult to homogenize than goods, in part because of variations in local consumption patterns (e.g., Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1990). As a result, services generally tend to be positioned

more frequently as local in comparison with goods (Meffert and Bolz 1993). If this is the case, then LCCP is likely to be used more often in *advertisements* for services than in those for goods. Based on this review, our next hypotheses state that (relative to use with other goods)

H[sub 6]: GCCP will be used least frequently in television *advertising* for food products and most frequently for durable, high-technology goods, with household, personal care, and low-tech durable consumer products in between.

H[sub 7]: LCCP will be used most frequently in television *advertising* for food products and least frequently for durable, high-technology goods, with household, personal care, and low-tech durable consumer products in between.

H[sub 8]: LCCP will be used more often in television *advertising* for services than for goods.

Method

Sampling--National cultures. Seven countries were selected to represent broadly Asian and Western cultures as well as developed and developing economies: India, Thailand, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the United States. Comparison of the countries on demographic and economic characteristics, as well as on Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, indicated considerable variation within each region and between regions.[1] This enhances the generalizability of our findings.

Sampling--*Advertisements* within country. Randomized cluster samples of national-*brand* television *advertisements* shown on major networks in each country were collected. Local *advertising* (e.g., for small, local retailers) and duplications of national-*brand advertisements* were eliminated, along with *advertisements* that contained more than 50% sales promotion information (e.g., a tie-in promotion for Pepsi with a local supermarket). *Advertisements* for the same *brand* that differed in terms of 50% or more of the content remained in the sample.

Sampling was conducted during a three- or four-day period in the winter or spring of 1995. On each day (randomly chosen), a major, national network (randomly assigned to each day) was recorded from 6 A.M. to midnight. All *advertisements* then were logged. A systematic random sample (i.e., every *k*th *advertisement*) was taken from the overall data set to achieve a random sample of 20% to 25% of all *advertisements* collected. For most countries, this resulted in samples of 175 to 200 national-*brand advertisements*, with the exception of India, for which 120 *advertisements* were selected.[2] This process produced a total sample of 1267 unduplicated, national-*brand* television *advertisements* from seven countries.

In-depth coding procedures. In each country, two native coders used a standard coding form that was double back translated into their own language (if needed) to evaluate the *advertisements*. With the exception of India, graduate student research assistants, all natives living in their home country, were employed as coders. For the Indian *advertisements*, coders were recently arrived graduate students living in the United States.[3] Research assistants rather than large samples of native subjects were used because the coding task was complex and time-consuming. This approach is regularly employed in cross-cultural research involving *advertising* content analyses (cf. Alden, Hoyer, and Lee 1993; Bradley, Hitchon, and Thorson 1994; Cheng and Schweitzer 1996).

All coders received extensive training using practice *advertisements* prior to the actual coding task. Much of this training was conducted in the coders' native languages, though foreign researchers were usually present. The coders worked independently and took approximately ten minutes to code each *advertisement*. For all items in all country samples, interjudge agreement

exceeded 80%. Disagreements were resolved with the assistance of a third research assistant or project coordinator when the two coders were unable to reach consensus on their own.

Measures. Previously in this article, three broad cultural categories from which signs arise were identified, namely, language, aesthetics, and story themes. Reflecting each of these cultural categories, the measure of consumer culture positioning in television *advertising* was composed of five indicators. Signs of consumer culture positioning were (1) pronunciation of *brand* name, (2) symbols used and/or spelling of visually displayed *brand* name, (3) symbol used for *brand* logo, (4) central themes, and (5) appearance of spokesperson(s). Although there are other sign categories that could have been coded (cf. Caudle 1994), these categories form a reasonable initial subset that represents multiple semiotic dimensions without being too onerous for coders to use. If coders found that one or more of the signs were present in the *advertisement*, they determined whether the indicator(s) reflected global, local, or foreign consumer culture.

In carrying out their task, coders were told that the signs should be coded as (1) local, if they reflected their own native culture (e.g., use of the Thai alphabet to write the *brand* name in Thailand); (2) foreign, if they represented another individual, identifiable culture (e.g., use of the southern French countryside in an *American advertisement* for wine); and (3) global, if they represented a cultural element that was not associated with a single country (local or foreign), but rather a larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures (e.g., an airline *advertisement* featuring businesspeople from multiple countries interacting in business class on an international flight). Beyond these etic instructions, coders were left to determine emically which elements were local, global, or foreign.

Therefore, on each of three dimensions (GCCP, LCCP, FCCP), ad content scores could range from 0 to 5. *Advertisements* with three or more of any single consumer culture positioning element were labeled as emphasizing that positioning *strategy*; for example, an *advertisement* with three or more local elements was categorized as emphasizing LCCP.[4] Our coding procedure is consistent with our position that GCCP, LCCP, and FCCP are separate constructs that can occur simultaneously and to different degrees in specific *advertisements*. This multi-item measurement procedure enables us to arrive at a more reliable classification and validate the structure of the items.[5]

Other characteristics of the *advertisements* relevant to testing our hypotheses also were coded. For H5, (soft-versus hard-sell and GCCP), a dichotomous scale was applied. Coders were asked to determine whether the overall sales appeal of the *advertisement* should be labeled as "soft-sell/image" (image-oriented content that does not emphasize reasons to buy, but rather general associations with the *brand*) or "hard-sell/direct" (sales-oriented, verbal, strong message arguments, comparative content; cf. Bradley, Hitchon, and Thorson 1994; Mueller 1996). To test H6-H8, products displayed or referred to in the *advertisements* were classified as follows: food Nondurables, personal Nondurables, household Nondurables, lower-technology consumer durables, higher-technology durables, consumer services, business goods, business services, and other. Following discussion among the research coordinators about functional and conceptual equivalence across countries, similar examples of each product category were provided in all countries (e.g., personal non-durable care goods include shampoo, makeup, toothpaste, and deodorant).

Results

Identification of Consumer Culture Positioning

H[sub 1] states that LCCP, FCCP, and GCCP would be found as meaningful but distinct *brand* positioning constructs in television *advertising* from countries around the world. The five items used to measure the extent to which an *advertisement* employed LCCP, FCCP, or GCCP were scaled categorically. Therefore, classical (metric) factor analysis could not be used to validate the structure of the categorizations. Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), which, conceptually, can be regarded as principal components analysis on categorical data, is a more appropriate analytic technique (Gir1 1990; Hoffman, de Leeuw, and Arjunji 1994).[6]

The MCA approach, using the versatile HOMALS program (SPSS 1989), was applied to the matrix of 1267 *advertisements* by five items. The analysis was performed in two dimensions based on elbow and interpretability criteria. The fit was .857, indicating that 85.7% of the variance was explained (after optimal scaling).[7] Figure 1 shows the quantitative results for the three categories of local, foreign, and global for each item. Clear regions of categories are revealed in this plot.

FIGURE 1 Results of Multiple Correspondence Analysis: Consumer Culture Positioning Measure

For all items, the category "foreign" is located in the upper-right quadrant. The upper-left quadrant contains the category "global" for all items, and the lower-right quadrant has the category "local" for all items. The cluster of foreign categories is relatively loose. In contrast, the clusters of the local and global categories are tight, and these two categories constitute the main foci of our study.[8]

The HOMALS program offers an additional, powerful test on the discriminability of the three cultural positioning concepts. If the concepts clearly represent unique perspectives, a single underlying continuum from local to foreign to global (indicating an increasing degree of remoteness from native culture) should not be obtained. This assumption was tested by imposing monotonic constraints on the quantification of the categories by item (Gir1 1990). Imposing the monotonic constraint led to a substantial decrease in fit from .857 to .664. Imposing a linear constraint further decreased the fit to .640. Thus, the three categories of local, foreign, and global appear to constitute unique constructs that should be treated separately, rather than being placed on a continuum. These results provide further evidence regarding the validity of distinguishing among LCCP, FCCP, and GCCP.

The results of the MCA analysis provide support for the convergent validity of the items selected to measure culture positioning. Thus, a sum measure was created on the basis of the extent to which similar consumer culture positioning elements were present in a given *advertisement*. In particular, *advertisements* with three or more similar identifiers (out of five) were classified as emphasizing that approach. Table I lists the overall frequencies for type of consumer culture positioning based on the sum score. More than 85% of the *advertisements* had a dominant cultural positioning and were classified as GCCP, LCCP, or FCCP.

Employing the sum score measures, an additional check on the measures' discriminant validity was undertaken. Simple correlations were calculated between the number of consumer culture positioning identifiers found in each *advertisement* for each of the three dimensions (e.g.,

Advertisement 33 might have three global identifiers, one foreign, and one local). As we expected, the relationship between the total number of local and global items was negative ($r = -.77, p < .001$). It was also negative for local and foreign items ($r = -.57, p < .001$). At the same time, the correlation between global and foreign items was not significant ($r = -.03, n.s.$). All three correlations were also significantly below 1.0 ($ps < .0001$).

Given these results, LCCP and GCCP are meaningful as separate individual *brand* positioning constructs. Use of the sum measures for GCCP and LCCP therefore is justified. The results for the FCCP measure are encouraging in that the imposition of monotonic constraints and the correlations indicate that FCCP is a meaningful separate construct. However, the graphical MCA results are less clear-cut than for the other two constructs. This may be due to the small number of FCCP *advertisements* (48 total) in this sample, which renders the results for FCCP less stable (cf. Gifi 1990). Results involving the FCCP construct are, therefore, viewed as strictly exploratory.

Relative Frequency of GCCP

H₂ states that LCCP would be employed more frequently than either of the other two *strategies*. This hypothesis received strong support. Overall, LCCP was used in 59% of the *advertisements*, versus 22.4% for GCCP and 3.8% for FCCP. The difference in frequency of occurrence among the three consumer culture positioning *strategies* was highly significant [$\chi^2(2) = 704.62, p < .001$]. Analysis of the frequency of use of LCCP, GCCP, and FCCP for each country supported this basic conclusion (see Table I for the frequencies). In six of seven countries, significantly more *advertisements* employed LCCP than either GCCP or FCCP ($p < .001$). Only in Thailand was the percentage of *advertisements* using LCCP not significantly greater.

Consumer Culture Positioning in the United States

H₃ states that GCCP would be identified in fewer television *advertisements* in the United States than in other countries. Chi-square analysis indeed revealed a significant association between country (United States versus other countries) and consumer culture positioning (GCCP versus LCCP, FCCP, or no dominant positioning): [$\chi^2(1) = 39.07, p < .001$]. Only 5.5% of the *advertisements* in the U.S. sample were found to use GCCP versus, on average, 25.6% in the other countries (see Table 1). In line with H₄, 88.5% of the *advertisements* in the U.S. sample employed LCCP versus an average of 53.5% in the other countries [$\chi^2(1) = 85.25, p < .001$]. The only country where the percentage of GCCP and LCCP *advertisements* was close to the United States was India (GCCP: 10%, LCCP: 85%).^[9]

Advertising Content Differences

H₅ proposes that *advertisements* employing GCCP would use soft-sell messages more frequently than hard-sell ones. Whereas 56.3% of the GCCP *advertisements* employed a soft-sell approach, 43.7% employed hard-sell. This difference is significant in the predicted direction and provides support for H₅ [$\chi^2(1) = 4.33, p < .05$].

Product Category Differences

Table 2 provides a general overview of the frequencies of the three types of consumer culture positioning for the different product types distinguished. This table provides the relevant information for testing H₆-H₈. A significant association was found between the use of GCCP (versus any other positioning *strategy*, including no dominant culture positioning) and the type of good involved [$\chi^2(2) = 11.64, p < .01$]. As Table 2 shows, GCCP was used in 18.6% of the food *advertisements*, 24.2% of the *advertisements* for household, personal care,

and low-tech durable consumer products, and 33.3% of the *advertisements* for high-tech consumer durables. Thus, H[sub 6] is supported. However, 63.1% of the food *advertisements*; 58.4% of the *advertisements* for household, personal care, and low-tech consumer durables; and 34.3% of the *advertisements* for high-tech durables used LCCP. The difference in percentages was again significant [$\chi^2(2) = 28.86, p < .001$], in support of H[sub 7]. Finally, in support of H8, LCCP was used relatively more often in *advertisements* for services (72.3%) than in those for goods [57.9%; $\chi^2(1) = 8.71, p < .01$].

Discussion and Implications

Although scholars agree that the perception of a *brand* as global enhances equity (Kapferer 1992; Shocker, Srivastava, and Ruekert 1994), efforts to identify pathways through which such associations diffuse have been limited. In this study, we conceptualized a theoretical framework in which the advent of global consumer cultures gives rise to global signs (i.e., language, aesthetic systems, and story themes) and hypothesized that these signs would be used in *advertising* to associate certain *brands* with global consumer culture through a process of meaning transfer (McCracken 1993).

Applying this framework, we proposed and validated a new measure of GCCP in television *advertising* (H[sub 1]). It enables managers and researchers to distinguish GCCP from two other types of consumer culture positioning, that is, LCCP and FCCP. Support was found for predictions regarding the overall use of GCCP versus LCCP (H[sub 2]), the use of GCCP and LCCP in U.S. *advertising* (H[sub 3] and H[sub 4]), the use of GCCP in conjunction with hard or soft sales themes (H[sub 5]), and the use of GCCP and LCCP across product categories (H[sub 6]-H[sub 8]). These results acquire added value from the nature of the data used (a random sample of television *advertisements* from diverse countries) and the nature of the analyses conducted on the data (such as the MCA used to test the discriminant validity of GCCP, FCCP, and LCCP, as well as the additional test of the robustness of the measurement model; see Footnote 4).

Previous research has given substantial attention to comparative analyses of *advertising* content--for example, information level, humor use, and materialistic themes. Yet few comparative studies have examined strategic, *brand*-related issues such as positioning. Furthermore, to date, a framework that supports analysis of cultural content in television *advertising* (as opposed to cultural effects on *advertising* content) and relates that content to alternative positioning *strategies* has been missing. As an initial test of the culture-based *brand* positioning concept grounded in semiotics theory, this study is encouraging.

Managerial Implications

A key strategic issue for managers involves identification of country, consumer segment, and product category factors that favor the use of GCCP, FCCP, or LCCP. For example, the manager of a beer *brand* employing GCCP in many national *markets* might analyze competitive *advertising* in a newly targeted country and conclude that none of the *brands* already in that *market* uses FCCP. If the foreign culture historically tied to the beer *brand* has a positive image among consumers in the targeted country, the manager might choose to employ FCCP initially (cf. Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dube 1994). If so, *brand advertising* would emphasize aesthetic, spokesperson, and thematic signs associated with a specific foreign country. At some future date, the manager could determine whether a shift to GCCP (or even LCCP) is warranted. It is possible that GCCP might work better than LCCP in *markets* that are characterized by lower levels of economic development. This could be the case because consumers in these *markets*

may admire the "economic center" and believe that production technologies in their own countries are less advanced (Appadurai 1990). This is consistent with some of the research on country-of-origin effects (cf. Heslop and Papadopoulos 1993, p. 45). In line with this, Friedman (1990) and other cultural anthropologists report that ownership of *brands* from the West increases the owner's status in many developing countries. Therefore, tangible and thematic signs that connote enhanced status from GCCP *brand* ownership may achieve meaning transfer more effectively for consumers in developing countries who are prone to reference group influence, such as teenagers (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Park and Lessig 1977).

Longitudinal trends in aggregate *market* behaviors also might affect perceptions of positioning *strategies*. For example, as the quality of local goods improves and imported goods lose scarcity value, *markets* initially favoring GCCP *brands* may turn inward and favor LCCP *brands* (cf. Ettenson 1993). Firms using GCCP thus must track its effectiveness, because changing *market* sentiments may suggest alternative positioning *strategies*.

This framework can be used for other analyses as well. According to previous work regarding *brand* positioning (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986; Roth 1992, 1995a), it is possible that certain *brands* are sending mixed messages to their target *market* by communicating multiple consumer culture identities in their *advertising*. That is, *advertisements* employing too much breadth (e.g., one FCCP element, two GCCP elements, and two LCCP elements) may confuse consumers and/or create negative *brand* attitudes. Managers could therefore benefit by using the framework developed herein to examine previous communication *strategies* to ensure they err on the side of depth rather than breadth.

In terms of the tactical question--how best to communicate GCCP in situations in which it is strategically the best positioning option--we offer the following hypothesis, based on theory discussed previously regarding participation in global experience: GCCP executions should accomplish meaning transfer more effectively when they (1) feature the idea that people all over the world consume the *advertised brand* (e.g., Benetton) and (2) appeal to certain human universals or depict consumer segments that share similar attitudes, lifestyles, and aspirations around the world (e.g., Sony).

The first idea might be communicated by providing evidence of consumers in several diverse cultures consuming the *advertised brand*, the second through depiction of relevant symbolism-laden visual signs (such as laptop-wielding business people; cf. Caudle 1994). Some locally based *marketers*, fighting global *brands*, have begun to use GCCP to imply to local consumers that their products are "world-class" for quality and acceptability. Thus, in the Indian *market*, *advertising* for local *brands* such as Videocon (consumer durables), Amrutanjana (pain reliever), and Kenstar (appliances) shows data on exports or visuals of foreign consumers consuming their products. *Advertising* in the Netherlands for *Brand*, a well-known local beer, portrays a U.S. setting and uses English. The use of GCCP apparently is not limited to multinational *brands*.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Similar to any study, this one has limitations. First, the measures used to assess positioning types may benefit from further refinement--for example, identification of additional coding measures such as color scheme and aesthetic style or alternative weighting schemes. Second, our coders were local consumers; however, it is possible that they interpreted *advertising* content differently than "ordinary" consumers in their countries. Additional research could use larger samples of ordinary consumers to validate our findings. Third, despite attempts to control for potential confounds (such as that between product and positioning type; see Footnote 9), some may

remain, such as the possibility that multinational *advertisers* in some countries also may have the largest share of voice. Because multinational *advertisers* often use local *brand* names, partialing out this factor would be challenging, but further research should investigate methods of doing so. In a similar vein, though the correlation between GCCP and global *brand* standardization is likely to be positive, the strength of that relationship is unclear. This certainly represents an interesting empirical question for additional research. Fourth, because of our sample size and theoretic focus, we did not model higher order interactions. Further research should consider these as well.

There are several other potentially fruitful avenues for additional research and theory development. First, more detailed semiotic analysis of the signs associated with GCCP, FCCP, and LCCP might prove worthwhile. As we noted, Robertson (1987a, p. 38) defines globalization as the "crystallization of the entire world as a single place." By implication, showing that consumers all over the world consume a particular *brand* may be one recurring GCCP sign--for example, a direct visual image in individual *advertisements* (e.g., Benetton's "United Colors of Benetton"). Other thematic signs used to symbolize GCCP might include appeals to "freedom," "individual rights," or "democracy," which Appadurai (1990) argues constitute the emerging global ideoscape. In addition, there may be a variety of aesthetic (color, complexity, and so forth), spokespersons (sports figures, actors, models, and so forth), and place signs (soccer stadiums, modern urban centers, and so forth) associated with GCCP (cf. Caudle 1994).

Second, further research could involve identifying which consumer segments are most responsive to GCCP *strategies*. As we noted previously, Hannerz (1990) suggests that global cosmopolitans perceive themselves as less provincial and more competent with regard to foreign cultures. These consumers are often younger, more educated, and less ethnocentric. Thus, tangible as well as thematic signs that specifically connote international and/or intercultural competence and control may be particularly effective in accomplishing meaning transfer for this group. In contrast, signs that are rich in local culture meaning (e.g., traditional clothing) may achieve meaning transfer more effectively for consumers who are higher in ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma 1987). In summary, understanding the effectiveness of different types of positioning in different countries may require the analysis of complex, higher order interactions that involve product type, country, and characteristics of the target segment.[10]

A final area for future theoretic development involves managerial use of GCCP, FCCP, and LCCP. Surveys of local and multinational *brand* managers could begin to address these issues. Building on Roth's (1992, 1995a) work, managerial reports would help determine whether the effectiveness of depth versus breadth *strategies* for GCCP, FCCP, and LCCP also vary by target *market* and other macrolevel factors. Over time, such research will enhance the competitive tools that *brand* managers can apply to the global marketplace.

1 Tables showing the position of each country on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions and several economic and demographic characteristics are available on request.

2 It is possible that the sampling procedure yielded fewer *advertisements* in India because the proportion of broadcast time devoted to *advertising* may have been smaller there than in other *markets*, though we have no way to confirm this hypothesis. Although the number of Indian *advertisements* was still substantial (120), this may limit the extent to which our findings can be generalized to the universe of all Indian television *advertisements*.

3 The Indian *advertisements* were coded in the United States instead of in India because of resource limitations with the Indian research partner. However, because the coders employed

were native Indian graduate research assistants recently arrived from India, there is little reason to expect India-based coders to have coded the *advertisements* any differently than they did. Note that graduate students are regularly employed as coders for *advertising* content analyses (Alden, Hoyer, and Lee 1993; Bradley, Hitchon, and Thorson 1994; Cheng and Schweitzer 1996).

4 Thus, our coding scheme categorizes an *advertisement* as emphasizing a particular consumer culture positioning if the majority of the five signs belong to one particular type of consumer culture positioning. It also uses equal weighting of each cultural indicator. The use of equally weighted indicators is common in *marketing*. However, other types of assignment schemes are also possible. One reviewer suggested the following scheme: An *advertisement* is classified as using a particular culture positioning only when at least four of the signs including the theme are supportive of that culture. The rationale for this approach is that *advertisements* for some *brands* might be classified as using GCCP because of their *brand* name, logo, and symbols, rather than because these *advertisements* (explicitly) are trying to convey that the *brand* is used around the world and is part of the global consumer culture. We also tested H2-H8 with this alternative *branding* scheme. The results were always in the same direction as that for our classification scheme. For six of eight hypotheses, the results reached statistical significance ($p < .10$), and another hypothesis was close to significance ($p = .12$). Thus, our results are robust across two different classification schemes, which increases confidence in our findings.

5 See also Roth (1995b), who uses a closely related procedure but employs single rather than multiple items to identify functional, social, and sensory *brand*-image *strategies*. In his work, *brands* could be positioned uniquely along one of these image *strategies*, or a *company* could employ a hybrid approach by combining several *strategies*.

6 The MCA approach deals with the analysis of interdependence among a set of categorical items. It quantifies categorical data by assigning numerical values to the *advertisements* and the categories of the items (for all five items, the categories were "local," "foreign," and "global"). In addition, MCA provides an interpretation in terms of distances in a multidimensional map. Categories of different items that tend to share the same *advertisements* are relatively close to one another in the map. Thus, categories of different items are located relatively close to one another if they occur jointly in the same *advertisements* (Hoffman, de Leeuw, and Arjunji 1994). The validity of combining scores across items is therefore supported if the relevant items are close together.

7 Some of the *advertisements* had missing data for one or more items because none of the categories was applicable. For example, if the *brand* logo was not displayed visually during the *advertisement*, this item could not be coded. However, missing data present no problems for HOMALS, and there is no need to discard the missing observations (Giri 1990). The analysis was carried out on the incomplete data matrix. Giri (1990, p. 138) refers to this treatment of missing data as "missing values passive." Another option is to add the category "missing" to each item. Giri (1990, p. 138) calls this "missing values single." We also analyzed the data using the "missing data single" approach. The category quantifications for local, foreign, and global were virtually the same.

8 A cluster analysis on the category quantifications depicted in Figure I revealed four clusters. One cluster consisted of the five global categories, and a second cluster contained the five local categories. The five foreign categories were divided in two clusters. The category "foreign" (items 1, 2, and 5) composed one cluster, and the foreign categories of items 3 and 4 were the

other cluster. The former items dealt with the *brand*, whereas the latter dealt with theme and characters.

9 It is possible that the difference in the use of GCCP in the United States versus the other countries is due to differences in the relative frequency of product types across countries rather than the intrinsic differences suggested in this study. Therefore, we examined whether H3 also was supported when we controlled for product type using logit modeling. The dependent variable was whether an *advertisement* used GCCP, and the country involved (the United States [= 1] versus the other countries [= 0]) and the product types were included as independent dummy variables. Three product-type dummies were created: food, high-tech durables, and services, with personal care, Nondurables, and Low-tech durables serving as baselines. H[sub 3] predicts a significant negative effect of the country dummy, which was indeed the case ($p < .001$). We performed the same analysis for H[sub 4], using LCCP rather than GCCP as the dependent variable. H[sub 4] predicts that the country dummy is positive and significant, which was also the case ($p < .0131$). Thus, controlling for product type, the same conclusions were reached.

10 We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.

TABLE 1 Consumer Culture Positioning by Country

Country

- A = United States
- B = Thailand
- C = Korea
- D = India
- E = Germany
- F = Netherlands
- G = France
- H = Total

Culture
Positioning
Strategy

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
LCCP	177 (88.5)	81 (40.5)	133 (66.5)	102 (85.0)	84 (45.4)	81 (46.0)	90 (48.4)	748 (59.0)
GCCP	11 (5.5)	83 (41.5)	44 (22.0)	12 (10.0)	60 (32.4)	38 (21.6)	36 (19.4)	284 (22.4)
FCCP	1 (.5)	13 (6.5)	4 (2.0)	1 (.8)	11 (5.9)	15 (8.5)	3 (1.6)	48 (3.8)
No dominant consumer	11 (5.5)	23 (11.5)	19 (9.5)	5 (4.2)	30 (16.5)	42 (23.9)	57 (30.6)	187 (14.8)

culture
positioning

Total 200 200 200 120 185 176 186 1267

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

TABLE 2 Product Type by Consumer Culture Positioning

Product Type

- A = Food Nondurables
- B = Personal Nondurables
- C = Household Nondurables
- D = Low-Tech Consumer Durables
- E = High-Tech Consumer Durables
- F = Consumer Service
- G = Other

Culture
Positioning
Strategy

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
LCCP	275 (63.1)	185 (58.3)	85 (63.0)	68 (53.6)	36 (34.3)	81 (72.3)	18 (51.4)
GCCP	81 (18.6)	76 (24.0)	32 (23.7)	32 (25.2)	35 (33.3)	18 (16.1)	10 (28.6)
FCCP	25 (5.7)	11 (3.5)	2 (1.5)	6 (4.7)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.8)	1 (2.9)
No dominant consumer culture positioning	55 (12.6)	45 (14.2)	16 (11.8)	21 (16.5)	33 (31.4)	11 (9.8)	6 (17.1)
Total	436	317	135	127	105	112	35

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

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