The Co-creation and Circulation of Brands and Cultures:

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Signature: 吴志艳
Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the possibilities and processes of constructing strong Chinese brands in the global marketplace. It investigates conceptual and strategic relationships between brands and cultures, focusing specifically on the issue of the unprivileged position of Chinese brands vis-à-vis that of other famous global counterparts. Accordingly, it deploys three illustrative cases from the Chinese context – Jay Chou (a successful Chinese music artist), the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, and Shanghai Tang (a global Chinese fashion brand). In so doing, it moves away from the general trend to study the managerial aspects of Western brand building in Chinese contexts, and instead examines how Chinese brands express cultural aspects of their own well-known brand development models in the global marketplace. In short, this study uses a Chinese vantage to examine the emergence of cultural branding (using historical culture and global fashion systems to develop global brands), and its capacity to function as a useful complement to existing models of brand globalisation and global brand culture.

The function of the three cases is illustrative and analytic. Collectively, they serve as a lens through which to study Chinese brand development in the global marketplace and examine global brand culture. Each case was fleshed out through various multi-sited ethnographic studies, which consisted of interviewing and observing consumers and managerial workers, the results of which shed light on several important but under-studied aspects of global brand culture. These include Chinese cultural branding in the global context, the cultural approach to branding among various brand actors, and relationships between brands and cultures across branding cultures. Drawing on these examinations, this study not only demonstrates ways in which brands and cultures circulate and construct each other in global brand culture. It also uses these insights to argue for the development of Chinese culture or Chinese-ness into a global brand resource by Chinese brand builders.
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