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 Ruekert (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 (Hanzer 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...
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.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Semiotics Theory**

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**The Emergence of Global Consumer Culture**

Hannertz (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,
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 theoretical 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: GCCP, FCCP, and LCCP 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 (Jennett 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 theoretical 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.

H2: GCCP 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, fashion, 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, modern, 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:

H3: GCCP will be identified less frequently in television advertisements in the United States relative to advertisements in other countries.

H4: 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). In addition, because image-oriented psychological concepts are typically more abstract than feature-based informational concepts (Johnson 1988; LeKoff-Hagiwara and Mason 1993), soft-sell advertisements that use imagery instead of features are also, by implication, usually more abstract than hard-sell advertisements.

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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)

H₆: 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.

H₇: 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.

H₈: 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 kth 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

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

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the exception of India, for which 120 advertisements were selected. 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. 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 coded 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

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4Thus, 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.

5See 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.

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brand) or “hard-sell/direct” (sales-oriented, verbal, strong message arguments, comparative content; cf. Bradley, Hitchon, and Thorson 1994; Mueller 1996). To test $H_2$–$H_8$, 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 nondurable care goods include shampoo, makeup, toothpaste, and deodorant).

### Results

**Identification of Consumer Culture Positioning**

$H_1$ 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 (Gifi 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.

\(^6\)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 scored. However, missing data present no problems for HOMALS, and there is no need to discard the missing observations (Gifi 1990). The analysis was carried out on the incomplete data matrix. Gifi (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. Gifi (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.

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 focus 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 (Gifi 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 1 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 ($p < .0001$).

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, only 1.0 (p < .0001).

\(^8\)A cluster analysis on the category quantifications depicted in Figure 1 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.
FIGURE 1
Results of Multiple Correspondence Analysis: Consumer Culture Positioning Measure

TABLE 1
Consumer Culture Positioning by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCCP</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(88.5)</td>
<td>(40.5)</td>
<td>(66.5)</td>
<td>(85.0)</td>
<td>(45.4)</td>
<td>(46.0)</td>
<td>(48.4)</td>
<td>(59.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCCP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(41.5)</td>
<td>(22.0)</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
<td>(32.4)</td>
<td>(21.6)</td>
<td>(19.4)</td>
<td>(22.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCCP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.5)</td>
<td>(6.5)</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>(.8)</td>
<td>(5.9)</td>
<td>(8.5)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dominant</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumer culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positioning</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(11.5)</td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
<td>(4.2)</td>
<td>(16.5)</td>
<td>(23.9)</td>
<td>(30.6)</td>
<td>(14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

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ever, 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

H$_2$ states that GCCP would be employed more frequently than either of the other two strategies. This hypothesis received strong support. Overall, GCCP 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 1 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

H$_3$ 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 H$_4$, 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%).

Advertising Content Differences

H$_5$ 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 H$_5$ ($\chi^2(1) = 4.33, p < .05$).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type by Consumer Culture Positioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dominant consumer culture positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

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9It 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 H$_4$ 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, non-durables, and low-tech durables serving as baselines. H$_4$ predicts a significant negative effect of the country dummy, which was indeed the case ($p < .001$). We performed the same analysis for H$_5$, using LCCP rather than GCCP as the dependent variable. H$_5$ predicts that the country dummy is positive and significant, which was also the case ($p < .001$). Thus, controlling for product type, the same conclusions were reached.

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relevant information for testing $H_6-H_8$. 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 durable consumer products. Thus, $H_6$ 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 $H_7$. Finally, in support of $H_8$, 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 ($H_1$). It enables managers and researchers to distinguish GCCP from two other types of consumer culture positioning, that is, FCCP and LCCP. Support was found for predictions regarding the overall use of GCCP versus LCCP ($H_2$), the use of GCCP and LCCP in U.S. advertising ($H_3$ and $H_4$), the use of GCCP in conjunction with hard or soft sales themes ($H_5$), and the use of GCCP and LCCP across product categories ($H_6-H_8$). These results acquire added value from the nature of the data used (a random sample of television advertising) and relates that content to alternative positioning strategies. For example, as the quality of local goods improves and imported goods lose scarcity value, markets initially favoring GCCP could determine whether a shift to GCCP (or even LCCP) is 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 Maclnnis 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

**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.
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), Amrutanjan (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.

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.

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*We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.*

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