

Cultural Paradoxes Reflected in Brand Meaning: McDonalds in Shanghai China



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In China, Brands Can Take on Surprising Meanings. Why is This? □ □ □



- Due to the nature of traditional Chinese values and their interplay with modern Chinese values
- Due to the nature of Chinese psychology
- The function of brands in Chinese society

Research Objectives



- To investigate the various meanings a well-known Western brand can take on in urban China
- To identify how consumers psychologically perceive and interpret brands in relation to cultural values and interpersonal relationships
- To see if McDonald's really is a good place to go on a date



The Study

- A wide range of Shanghainese consumers were given three different scenarios regarding McDonald's patronage that brought up different cultural values and interpersonal relationships
 - Intergenerational Birthday Party
 - On a Date
 - Alone for Lunch



What Did We Find?

- Consumers form situational brand meanings based on the people they are with and the cultural values that are salient
- McDonald's as a brand is used by consumers as a way to stimulate social change AS WELL AS to uphold traditional values

What Does this Suggest about Brand Management in an Asian Context?



- To maintain control over a brand's image in the marketplace, it is imperative to ascertain how the brand is reacting to current cultural mores
- In societies where values are in flux and the emphasis of consumption is social, the marketer needs to accept there will be more than one meaning associated with the brand and try to manage the malleability
- When developing brand messages, context will be key to the interpretation of the message