



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

**Department
of Management**

Working Paper Series

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magazine: a comparison between
Italy and China**

**Working Paper n. 5/2013
May 2013**

ISSN: 2239-2734



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Advertising in a luxury fashion magazine: a comparison between Italy and China

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May, 2013

ABSTRACT. In the general framework of globalization and internationalization, the paper focuses on the advertising strategies adopted by top companies in the luxury sector. The article reports on the preliminary data of a study to determine the importance of local culture in advertising content by comparing Chinese and Italian ads. In particular, this research analyses the content of advertisements from *Vogue*, one of the most popular and influential fashion and beauty magazine, both in China and Italy: the focus is on three industries, namely clothing, cosmetics and jewellery. The selected ads of 'product pairs' allow to shed a light on the choices in terms of communications messages and conveyed image by top brands in both countries. The content analysis points out visual and textual elements contributing to the standardization-adaptation discussion: this research reveals that strategies are both affected by the country and the product category.

KEYWORDS: brand communication, Cross cultural marketing, advertising strategies, China, Italy

JEL Classification Numbers: M31, M37, N30

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Introduction

Chinese economy has been growing rapidly since the start of reform and opening in 1978, when a new era in contemporary Chinese history began. In the last decade we have been witnessing the East Asia's shifting position from periphery to prominence: China is the last "miracle" and the world's most dynamic centre of economic and commercial expansion (Arrighi, 2008: 2). China has experienced a transition from a planned and centralized economy to a market economy, and this transition has been accompanied by unprecedented social change and implies reforms in different industries (Zhao, 2008). In particular, media are affected by this economic transformation, and they are also agents and drivers of this shift: they sustain marketing, advertising and consumerism (mass market). The dual and mutual relationship between economy and media should be explained through the role of advertising. Advertising and media contents are agents of change: on one side they reflect culture and the increasing consumers' desires and new consumption aspirations; on the other side they influence behaviour and beliefs.

Since China opened its door to the world, many foreign brands have flocked in and local brands have also developed rapidly in response to competition (Yifan, 2007). The economic reforms and development are evident in the increasing per-capita income—from 345 euro in 2000 to 695 euro in 2006 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008)—and as a result advertisers are more and more interested in capturing recipients' attention (Rochet and Tirole, 2002): brand awareness of Chinese people is growing; branded products are produced because of demand from the business and/or the buyers' side (Yifan, 2007). Even if Chinese per capita GDP is quite low, the social consumption structure is moving towards an enjoyment and commercial oriented pattern, more and more people can move beyond the basics: we assist to the rise of consumerism strictly linked to mass media development.

There has been a growing interest in consumer behaviour in China as a result of the growing significance of the Chinese market and seemingly paradox consumer purchasing patterns (Wang and Lin, 2009).

Culture is often considered as all pervasive, and affect the Chinese consumers moreover, conceptualizations of Chinese cultural values are numerous (Wang and Lin, 2009; Fan et al., 2010).

Chinese consumers are increasingly looking beyond the basic functional attributes of a product and are now concerned with various other dimensions of appeal in line with more sophisticated consumer habits commonly found in developed

economies. They are more able to use personal choice in their spending and are purchasing independently and intelligently as opposed to dictatorially (Euromonitor International, Dec. 2010).

Studies have shown how Chinese people endorse both traditional and modern values, and these values co-exist in contemporary Chinese advertising (Zhang and Shavitt, 2003). It is natural to investigate more how Chinese people are negotiating conflict values in magazine advertising and how international marketers could identify appropriate ads for the firm's brand strategy in China.

Since advertising is one of the main issues in the international marketing and communication strategies and at the same time it reflects the cultural values of consumers; many studies have analyzed the appeals of Chinese advertising in comparison with other countries (Nelson and Paek, 2007; Ji and McNeal, 2001).

This paper contributes to the standardization-adaptation discussion by providing an empirical analysis that compares the print advertisements findings in the same magazine (Vogue) in two Countries: Italy and China.

Literature Review

National cultural differences can influence advertising practices and this influence can be observable at the component level of individual advertising (Cutler et al., 1992). Some western advertising conventions have been transferred to Asia through international version of global magazines (Cheng and Frith, 2006). On the other side, especially in China, a glocal advertising approach has been pursued: a mix of standardization and specialization (Mueller, 2004). Yin (1999) pointed out that some local elements, such as local cultures, local languages, localized product attributes and models are relevant.

According to a research on print advertisements by Cutler et al. (1992) visual elements of advertisements can be: the size, the frequency of black and white vs. colour pictures, photographic visual (illustrations vs. photographs), the size and frequency of product portrayal and the mention of price in the adv. Also visual process appeals (e.g., description, association, metaphor, and storytelling approaches) are considered advertising elements and has been analysed (Javalgi et al., 1995) in a cross-cultural perspective.

Other research concerns the visual elements of the advertising and compare, for example, the characteristics of the models involved in the pictures. In particular, in cross cultural studies the difference among the portrayal of women across cultures has been analysed (Maynard and Taylor, 1999), with interesting studies about Asian advertisements, which revealed how the race of the models used in each culture did not reflect the radical mix of that country's population (Frith et al., 2004).

Some studies try to identify the informative content of advertising, using specific categories such as packaging, taste, nutrition, warranties, and presence of independent research information (Abemethy and Franke, 1996).

Elements can also be specifically related to the textual part of the message such as the claim, analysed for example in Javalgi et al. (1995), and the language, which varies according to the extent to which it is localized (Nelson and Paek, 2007)

Other elements, which have been analysed in current Chinese advertising, are cultural values such as modernity, tradition, individualism and collectivism (Zhang and Shavitt, 2003).

Some other studies compare advertisings in terms of emotional appeals, information content, and use of humour and sex (Biswas et al., 1992). Cross-cultural differences in the use of intrinsic and extrinsic products cues, such as physical quality, design, brand name and price have been analysed as well (Forsythe et al., 1999).

Cross cultural research not only analyse a lot of different advertising elements but also involves a lot of different Countries.

Many studies compare the US advertisings with other countries such as the United Kingdom and India (Frith and Sengupta, 1991), France (Biswas et al., 1992), Japan (Belk and Pollay, 1995; Maynard and Taylor, 1999; Javalgi et al., 1995) and China (Wang and Chan 2001). But there are also studies between two European countries – such as the research by Nelson and Paek (2007) that compare British and French television commercials and revealed differences with respect to customization between the two countries – or between Asian countries, Fam and Grohs (2007) have compared cultural values in advertisement among China and other Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, India and HK.

Research questions

More than three decades of cross-cultural comparative research results have suggested that advertising content varies between countries which are culturally dissimilar (Albers-Miller, 1996). Especially in luxury industries, advertisers promote a 'beauty ideal' (Greer, 1999) which can vary across cultures and time periods (Frith et al., 2005).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare the portrayals and the choices made by luxury brands in different cultural and social settings. More in detail, we seek to discern and investigate the:

- degree of standardization of touch points, language and advertising models used in advertising within two local editions of the same global media brand;

- extent to which degree of standardization is affected by the product category (namely clothing, cosmetics, and jewellery).

Based on the literature review and available market data, we can formulate the following research questions:

RQ1: are the visual and the textual contents of Chinese advertisements different from the Italian ones?

Regarding to the visual contents (images), we would compare a) models used by the brand, in particular we analyse the number of models, race, type, colour, and length of hair, b) photographic characteristics (colours vs. black and white). Concerning the textual elements, we would compare the language used in the claim and in the body copy.

RQ2: Does Chinese market need different information and touch-points for brands and products?

The Italian is a mature and capillary market with a higher awareness of luxury brands and products and therefore it does not need so much information.

In fact Chinese people are the new big spenders in the luxury sectors and they do not have enough information about these kinds of products. As each country has its own values (Hofstede, 1997) and each culture has a set of general beliefs about beauty (Frith *et al.*, 2005), we expect that information and touch-points could be more numerous in Chinese advertisings than in the Italian one.

The acceptance of “standardization” across countries is different. The use of “standardized” models, language or content may depend on several cultural factors, and results from past research suggest that some countries and/or firms may tend to use one strategy over another (Nelson and Paek, 2007). We analyse this issue on our sample looking for the existence of global campaign.

Methodology

Consistently with previous research—which are usually focused on specific media such as television, newspapers, magazine, etc.—our study is based only on magazines because this vehicle is one of the main media for fashion. Moreover in China, magazines, and the fashion ones in particular, are increasing their success in the so-called white-collar segment (Scotton and Hachten, 2010) that are consumers interested in foreign brands. Considering the magazines in the analysed industries, *Vogue* is the leading one¹ and it is distributed both in Italy (since 1964) and in China (since 2005) so it has been chosen for the study. As Hartley and Montgomery (2009) pointed out, the launch of *Vogue* China in 2005 also reflected the growth of fashion and luxury brand consumption. It is an important catalyst for

¹ For Italy the data are provided by Audipress (<http://www.audipress.it/>).

the further development of fashion values and a consumer culture linked to global trends. *Vogue* deals exclusively in “fashion, beauty, art and the fashionable lifestyle” (Cheung, 2005), which makes it the ideal setting for our research, focused on luxury products.

The content analysis approach has widely been used in social science studies, especially in advertising (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991; Okazi and Rivas, 2002). Contents of each advertisement related to a selected sample of brands found in four issues of *Vogue for each country*, which were chosen from within the 7-month period January 2012 to September 2012 (i.e. January, March, May and July 2012), were codified to trace their appeals and the Italian samples were compared to the Chinese ones to verify if messages and cultural values were different.

To define our sample, we first listed all the brands which appeared in the selected issues' advertisements, then we choose for the present research only the brands which had at least one advertising in both countries. This in order to limit the bias related to the frequencies of local/global brands that invest in advertising in the magazines. To answer our questions we adopt two levels of analysis: first we investigate analytically each advertisements in order to code the single elements and compare the Italian sample with the Chinese one; second we make an overall comparison of advertising of each brand, each Italian adv has been compared with the Chinese version in order to define the standardization strategy

So we investigate the degree of standardization of advertising contents used in advertising within the two local editions of the same global media brand we choose. Which is the percentage of single multinational brands ads that will be more likely to use standardized advertising copy rather than different ones? It is important to notice that we recognized two different levels of standardisation: the first level, that we called *absolute standardization*, includes the same ads content, published in the same issue for the two local editions of the magazine (i.e., March China and March Italy); the second level, that we called *lag standardization*, includes the same ads content, but presented in two different issues for the two local editions of the magazine (i.e., March China and July Italy).

This last part represent a new way to investigate the adaptation-standardization strategies, since previous research has been focused on the single elements, without carrying about which brands are involved in the magazine's they analyzed.

Content Categories

In the magazine there are advertisings related to more than one sector, thus we can observe different involvement levels of the product which could have an impact on advertising appeal (Mueller, 1987). In particular, we compared companies in the

Clothing industry with a sample of Cosmetics (mostly facial beauty products) and Jewels brands.

The reason why we choose these three categories is due to the fact that they all represent far-sighted examples of luxury products, and they also represent the majority of products displayed in the analysed magazine.

The unit of analysis was twofold: 1) the advertising slot of a brand, which can be made of one or more advertising subjects which consists in at least a full-page ad (and a maximum of three continuous pages) and 2) the single advertising subject. As a result, a total of 191 advertising slots containing 280 subjects were collected from the above-mentioned four *Vogue* issues, published in the two countries under study. In the Chinese issues the researchers found several ads titled “*Vogue Promotion*”: these ads information were not inserted in our sample since they combine the ads with articles or more detailed information about products.

Variables

The variables of our analysis allow the comparison of ads elements concerning the three aspects we identified above. The main analysed aspects are the visual ones, we consider models characteristics (number, race, type, length and hair colour), price, and photographic characteristics (black and white vs colour)

The textual analysis regards claim and language. Finally we look at relational aspects, identifying which touch-points have been chosen by the analysed brands.

Coding

Three independent researchers carried the advertisements coding, two in Italy and one in China. They have lived for more than 3 years in the country for which they coded and they are proficient in the language of that country, with common proficiency in English, which was used as promotional language for few advertisements in the analysed *Vogue* issues. When disagreements arose, coders discussed their interpretation and a final decision was made by consensus.

Results

We collected the data from 191 advertising slots, almost equally distributed (53% in China and 47% in Italy). As shown in table 1 most of them belongs to the clothing industry. It is evident that the Chinese edition contains a large proportion of cosmetics and facial beauty products whereas the Italian ads are dominated by clothing. Jewellery plays a marginal role in both editions.

The first area concerns advertising contents. At the visual level, we pay attention on the characteristics of the chosen models. Generally, ads show only one model and a female one: clothing ads use only one model in 58.82% of analysed subjects in China and 62.86% in Italy; models are less frequent in cosmetics ads, however

the presence of a single model is the preferred choice (36.36% in China and 50.0% in Italy); and in both countries, considering all the jewellery ads, if there is a model it is a woman alone.

Table 1: Advertising slots and subjects per product category in China and Italy

Number of adv	Apparel and accessories	Cosmetics	Jewels
China	52	43	6
# of single subjects	68	66	6
Italy	56	28	6
# of single subjects	105	28	7

As illustrated in Table 2, female models are far more frequently portrayed in ads and this is consistent with the gender orientation of the magazine. Caucasian models are the majority in all industries in both countries.

Table 2: Models race (data in %)

Female models	Apparel and accessories		Cosmetics		Jewels	
	China	Italy	China	Italy	China	Italy
Caucasian	83.75	89.13	84.62	100.00	100.00	100.00
Asian	12.50	7.97	15.38	0.00	0.00	0.00
African	3.75	2.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Male models						
Caucasian	87.50	100.00	-	-	-	-
Asian	0.00	0.00	-	-	-	-
African	12.50	0.00	-	-	-	-

Table 3 presents the image of female models focusing on their hairstyle. In this case it is not possible to identify a preferred style. Results show that all types are present in both countries but to varying degrees.

Table 3: Models hairstyle (data in %)

	Apparel and accessories		Cosmetics		Jewels	
	China	Italy	China	Italy	China	Italy
Straight	88.75	86.67	96.15	92.86	50.00	100
Curly	11.25	13.33	3.85	7.14	50.00	0.00
Blonde	55.00	46.67	50.00	50.00	25.00	40.00
Brown	42.50	51.85	50.00	42.86	75.00	60.00
Red	2.50	1.48	0.00	7.14	0.00	0.00
Long	35.00	38.81	50.00	57.14	50.00	60.00

Short	31.25	20.15	15.38	35.71	25.00	0.00
Bun	33.75	41.04	34.62	7.14	25.00	40.00

Testimonials are mentioned more in China than in Italy: 11.63% of Chinese cosmetics advertisings mention the name of the model in the picture versus only 3.57% of Italian ones. In the clothing advertisements the difference is not so high (7.69% vs. 5.36%). No one testimonial appears in the Jewellery ads.

Coloured pictures are prevalent: in the jewellery ads there are only coloured pictures because of the characteristics of the product; white and black pictures are rare in cosmetics and represent the minority for clothing (31.75% in China and 29.52% in Italy).

The second analysed area concerns how the brand prefers to communicate, that means which channels are used to enter into contact with readers (see Table 4): from physic places to the virtual reality, considering all the options offered by new and social media.

Table 4: Touch points (data in %)

	Apparel and accessories		Cosmetics		Jewels	
	China	Italy	China	Italy	China	Italy
Point of sales	34.62	1.79	9.30	0.00	50.00	14.29
Web site	92.31	64.29	83.72	67.86	83.33	57.14
E-commerce web site	11.54	12.50	23.26	14.29	0.00	0.00
Applications	0.00	1.79	2.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
Qr code	5.77	1.79	2.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
Social media	1.92	0.00	2.33	10.71	0.00	0.00
Telephone number	25.00	21.43	16.28	57.14	50.00	14.29

Note: each advertising can have more than one information information refers to the advertising slot and not to a single subject

It is interesting to notice that price information is rare: less than 2.0% in the clothing sector both in Italy and in China and less than 4.0% in the cosmetics one. Moreover, claims and textual information appear more in cosmetics than in the other categories. Concerning language, it is interesting to note that brand name is translated in Chinese only once in the clothing, while in the cosmetics about 70% of brands are translated. It is even interesting that brands which advertise in both categories have used different behaviour. For example, Chanel appears only as “Chanel” in the clothing, while in the cosmetics it appears both as “Chanel” and “香奈儿” (read *xiang nai'er*, which is the phonetic translation of the brand name).

In the Chinese ads, only in few cases we have found the use of claims in clothing, and if present the language is English or, in one case of Italian brand, Italian. Additional information is present only in three cases, two follow the claim language, one uses Chinese language. For cosmetics, claims are present in almost

all of the ads. In Italy claims are frequent for cosmetics and they are mostly in Italian (75%), on the contrary they are rare for clothing and they are in English; there are no claims for jewellery.

The last area we observed is the degree of standardization in the two Countries comparing the advertisings of the same investor brand in the Italian and Chinese editions of *Vogue*. For example we compare advertisings that Valentino used in the both countries in order to evaluate if the same visual and textual elements are used, thus to define the standardization of communication.

In the clothing sector, we noted that among the 56 advertisements analysed in the Italian *Vogue*, only 15 of them (26.7%) appear to have a level of *absolute standardization* when compared with the Chinese *Vogue*, showing the same product in the same issue of the two local editions. Analysing the *lag standardization* advertisements examples in the same sector, only 11 of the total 56 Italian ads (19.6%) appear with the same content in the Chinese edition, but always in two different local issues of the magazine.

It is interesting to note that in the clothing sector one brand appears with slight differences in the two countries' edition: it choose the same internationally known model (Naomi Campbell) for the two countries, but preferred different poses (Pinko) in the two countries' issues. As we do not know the entire advertising campaign, we can explain this difference both as an adaption due to the culture, but also due to the image size, that is different (one page in China, two pages in Italy). In both of the cases we can state that there is a different behaviour in terms of brand management, in the first related to the willingness to fit the culture, in the second related to the adv investment/pressure it decide to make in the two countries, that is lower in China.

In terms of comparison, the cosmetics sector presents itself as a higher variable sector. Being the *absolute standardization* level 0% and the *lag standardization* level only 7.1 % (2 ads among the 28 Italian analyzed in this category), it shows itself with a little margin of standardization. This might be due to several factors, such as the different products typologies presented in the two local editions and the two countries' systems of values, which differ both in term of product/brand knowledge and customers' personal preferences.

One cosmetic brand (Helena Rubinstein) adopted the same technique of the clothing brand Pinko and decided to modify slightly the two countries' ads editions: the product displayed remained the same, using the same background (laboratory setting with round-bottom flask, and a radiant light behind the product - Prodigy) and changing only some small details (different flask model and longer ads in the Italian edition: two pages instead of one page in the Chinese edition).

The jewellery sector presents itself as the sector with the lowest level of standardization: among the 6 Italian ads compared, none of them appeared using the same subjects on the Chinese editions, nor in the same issue neither in a different one.

Even in this sector we have found out an interesting case: the brand Chaumet Paris decided to display a similar ad in the May issue (Italian and Chinese) using the same model, but changing the ads content that promote the same category (rings) but different product. We can thus see three rings in both the ads (golden, bronze and white) but displayed in different positions (on the right side of the page for the Italian issue and on the left side of the page, after the Vogue indexes, for the Chinese one) and the same model, who wears the ring in the Italian issue, while a silver coronet in the Chinese one. The presence of the coronet appears quite often in Asian ads, since it is considered to give a royal feature to the person who wears it. In China Chaumet Paris likely decided to use the ads and product that fit more with its culture.

Even though the general presence of *absolute* and *lag standardization* is revealed to be generally low in all the three analysed product categories, we note that the clothing products' category has the highest peak of standardization among the two countries' *Vogue* editions, with its 26.78% of *absolute standardization* in the compared ads.

Discussion

Concerning the visual and textual contents, (RQ1) findings are different among single element analysed and among sectors. In general, brands use a not standardized advertising strategy. Only 16.6% of Italian advertisings present *absolute standardization* in the Chinese version, but all the standardized ads are in the clothing industry. The same occurs for the *lag of standardisation*, that appears in 14.4% cases, 84.6% of them are in the apparel sector.

Analysing the single element related to visual contents (RQ1), concerning hairstyle we cannot find huge differences among models' hair, but it is necessary to confirm this quantitative part of results creating a greater sample of advertisements and using properly statistical tests.

Results related to visual contents in all the sectors reveal that the Caucasian models are the most portrayed both in Italy and in China and this confirms the Frith *et al.* (2005) findings: Caucasian models are used more often across cultures than models of other ethnic groups in women's beauty and fashion magazine advertising.

Concerning RQ2 we can state that the touch-points used by brands in the two countries are different. It is evident that Chinese advertisements in all the sectors invite their target to be in touch with them using more than one point. Chinese ads refer to brand points of sales (likely flagship stores) more than the Italian one. The

reason could be twofold: first, in Italy there are too many points of sales for each brand (capillary distribution) to be listed in an ads, instead in China the limited number of stores makes brands able to highlight them; second, as stores communicate the brand image without interferences by other brands or spoke persons and they represent a tangible evidence of brand strength, these communication tools could be more important for luxury brands in markets where brand is not already known rather than in a mature one. This is consistent with Moore, Doherty and Doyle (2010: 154) findings: luxury companies use flagship stores “as a signal of the strength of their brand to prospective consumers and as a means of assuring partner companies of their commitment to China”. This is also consistent with the difference we have found related to the three analysed sectors: the lowest rate of point of sales citations in the cosmetics is due to the retailing formats used that usually are not flagship stores.

From our analysis it is also evident that web is the favourite communication channels for all industries in both countries; however its use as a selling platform is more limited, in particular e-commerce is absent for jewellery. Internet is widely used both in China and in Italy² and it represents an easy and cheap way to interact with customers (Efendioglu and Yip, 2004) providing them more product information (Guo *et al.*, 2011).

Social networks are mentioned only few times both in China and in Italy: few brands promote their Youtube and Facebook pages in Italy, however it is not a standardized decision. For example, in the Chinese cosmetic advertisings, Elisabeth Arden is the only brand mentioning social media, and of course it is a local one: the microblog Weibo, which was launched by the domain Sina (t.sina.com.cn) in 2009 and the popularity of which is now similar to that of Twitter in the rest of the world (Deans and Miles, 2011). The same brand does not promote this kind of new media in Italy.

For jewellery, in both countries phone represents a preferred communication channel as companies privilege a direct contact in order to provide a better pre-sales and post-sales customer service.

Much of the literature on the representation of women in advertising is built on the feminist argument that media are patriarchal, and that in patriarchal societies, men watches women and women watch men watching women (Berger, 1972). Yet, as Frith *et al.* (2005) suggested, in Western societies, women may think it is mainly their bodies to get noticed by men, whereas in Asia, women think it is their faces that are most important. Beauty products that are aimed at improving women’s skin, hair and face in *Vogue* China are represented by Asian models, with white

² <http://www.internetworldstats.com>

and bright skin: more than 20% of crème and sierum ads were related to skin whitening products.

Advertisers often make a concerted effort to select credible and attractive celebrities, who are well suited to particular products and the characteristics of the target audience (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994), and this happened in our research as well. In general we can say that the use of well-known Chinese celebrities as spokes-people and testimonial represent a bid to enhance the popularity of the brands being advertised and has become increasingly popular as companies recognize the added value and increased sales that such a practice may bring to their products, irrespective of the fact that some products may not have a clear link with the celebrities concerned (Leung 2003).

Language reflects a particular culture since the spoken language manifests beliefs and attitudes. The main issue concerning language in terms of brand name is widely discussed in international advertising literature (Terpstra and Sarathy, 1997) and language is one of the most important factors influencing international advertising in China (Hite and Fraser, 1988). Moreover, the language used in global advertising varies according to the extent to which it is localized (Nelson and Paek, 2007). When it comes to China, Dong and Helms (2001) brightly pointed out that, because Chinese customers purchase these products not only for personal consumption but also as gifts for holidays and special occasions, the symbolic meaning of a brand name and a brand ad may greatly influence their purchase decision. We will not further investigate in the present research the most effective way to translate brands or ads content, but we would like to notice how English language was used only superficial in the ads contents, and only in certain parts (i.e., headlines, slogans), whereas other parts of the ads (i.e., body copy) were almost always written in the local language.

Looking at the usage of language in general, among the brands considered and the three categories analysed, this research notices how international brands present in Chinese issues in clothing and jewellery categories are not translated in local language and they do not use any textual information, therefore showing a greater standardization.

Cosmetics category greatly preferred the usage of textual communication and translation. This might be due to the intrinsic features of clothing and jewellery products, which tend to sell themselves without any verbal or textual expression, but cosmetics products need instead textual expression to be explained.

Concerning products we have found a huge difference in the product typology advertised across the two countries in the cosmetic sector. While Italian *Vogue* focuses more on foundation products, the Chinese editions are clearly focusing more on two typologies of products: whitening products and anti-aging products.

Moreover while in Italy the cosmetics brands generally prefer to advertise a single product, it has been noted that in China the preference goes to a portfolio of different products within the same brand. Nevertheless, both the Italian and the Chinese editions pay equal attention to the explanation of the products' benefits and characteristics, even if the overall products range differ appreciably.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

Although our findings cannot be generalized across all countries or cultures, they do provide critical insights to practitioners who pursue market penetration in the two examined countries: concerning Italian market penetration for Chinese Brands and Chinese market penetration for Italian brands. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the debate on standardized versus specialized approaches to international advertising through a cross-cultural content analysis comparing print advertising.

Italian firms that are used to invest in advertising locally and would like to invest in China should first understand the sector in which they are entering and the embedded cultural values. For example a lot of Chinese advertisements in cosmetics are related to products that are not typical in the West: the whitening creams and this depends to the culture that refers to a white and pure skin as a symbol of beauty. The implication are many: firms have to promote different products, that means create ad hoc advertisements, select credible and attractive celebrities, and highlight values and benefits unimaginable in the West (i.e. white skin).

In China information related to the point of sales are mentioned in the adv on the contrary in Italy it is missing, so our analysis come to light the high important of the physical presence, that is an evidence of the authenticity and the strength of the brand. In emerging countries where people are not used to compare brands this is an important issue.

There is no need to change all the copy in the apparel, just adapt some elements. Indeed, languages can be mixed to adapt the advertising and original language can be used for the headlines or claims if the firm wants to point out the country of origin. From our analysis we suggest to use both languages (Chinese/Italian) in the body copy.

Reading our results, it is important to remember the target of *Vogue*. In particular, in China it targets open-minded urban young people with high purchasing power and desire for fashionable life. In Italy readers are mostly women who get enjoyment from advertisements, are elegant and have a high level social status.

We hope our study opens new possibilities for future studies that not only will analyse international brands, but could also include local brands, both Italian and

Chinese ones, especially for the jewellery sector, which seemed to reveal a considerable presence for local brands in the Chinese edition.

Moreover, further investigations about the most effective way to use local language into these brands' marketing strategy would be of great help for marketers who want to approach the peculiar Chinese market in the next future.

Our study confirms that the strategy changes according to the country of origin of the analyzed brand as already shown in literature (Graham, Kamins and Oetomo, 1993).

We present preliminary and partial results of an ongoing research project that takes into account a wider data set along one year. In this first phase we select ads on the basis of whether they advertised 'product pairs'.

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