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**The Influence of Global Mass Media and Reference Group on
Consumer Attitude toward Global Brands:
The Case of College-Educated Chinese Youth**

PUBLICATION SUMMARY

This paper investigates how the college-educated Chinese youth evaluates global brands. We draw upon the uses and gratifications theory and reference group theory to examine the motivations of global mass media usage, the role of exposure to global mass media, and the influences of reference group in shaping Chinese young consumers' attitudes toward global brands. A significantly positive relationship is hypothesized between the motivations of global mass media usage and exposure to global mass media. Furthermore, both global mass media exposure and reference group influences are hypothesized to have positive, significant relationships with the attitude toward global brands. The methodology, implications, and future studies are also discussed.

KEY WORDS

Brand attitude, media use, reference group, China, global brand

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has been conceptualized by Leslie (1995) as "the interrelatedness of different places around the globe" (p. 412). Globalization is an emerging market phenomenon (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; Leslie, 1995), and it indicates that contemporary nations have shared common characteristics in terms of culture, consumption and segmentation. Several factors have contributed to globalization, for example, the development of multinational corporations, the diffusion of global consumer culture, and the growth of global media and institutions, which draw people from different cultural origins into close relationships (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Appadurai, 1990; Lee, 2003). Roth (1995) suggests that globalization in its broadest sense offers marketers new opportunities by increasingly involving the creation and integration of locality (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). For example, the emergence of fast food enterprises, such as McDonald's and KFC, seeks global markets in China and focuses on introducing many Chinese items to meet local taste (China Today, 2004). In sum, intercultural borrowing and exchange lead to globalization, which interrelates different places around the globe (Leslie, 1995; Holton, 2000).

Holton (2000) contends that globalization is generally formed by converging toward a common set of cultural practices. Global brands are the globalization's cultural consequences, which have been defined as a brand "achieving more than a third of its sales outside of its home country and have a visible external market presence" (Best Global Brands, 2006). Global brands target global segments which share sets of consumption-related symbols that are meaningful to segment members (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). For example, Nike employed Michael Jordan to target young generation globally. Similarly, European brand Benetton has a major global presence, and markets to global segments with its "United Colours of Benetton" theme, which implies that people all over the world can overcome cultural boundaries through purchase and consumption (Leslie, 1995). This development of the global consumer is not only based on global brands' utilitarian function, but also on symbolic meanings those brands create (Holton, 2000).

Scholars have suggested that youth consumption practices are an index of the presence and reach of globalization (Lukose, 2005). Youth is seen as a consuming social group, and youth culture is viewed as a market ideology by tracing the emergence of youth culture in relation to marketing (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006) indicate that this young generation, on a global scale, values an active and youth lifestyle that appreciates for future trends and foreign cultures. Multinational marketers and advertisers find young consumer segments the most valuable because these young consumers, such as college students, are better educated, have greater purchase power, and are acquiring the appreciation for global brands (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006).

With China's open door policy in 1979 and its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in recent years (Chi, 2003), globalization is an irresistible trend in China. The young generation, among all, has been found to be the main consumers of global brands, using these commercial symbols to make socially acceptable yet "unique" statements about themselves, that is, the college-educated Chinese youth in the single-child generation (Wang, 2005; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). Multinational corporations such as Motorola has developed creative marketing campaigns with product placements in films targeting the youth segments, and has successfully generated positive responses in China's saturated mobile phone market (Wang, 2005). While hundreds of multinational corporations are currently targeting educated young Chinese consumers (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Chen, 2003; Chi, 2003; Zhang & Shavitt, 2003), few empirical efforts have been made to study how college-educated Chinese youth responds to global brands (Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997), as well as their media consumption patterns on the global scale (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006; Holton, 2000).

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to understand how college-educated Chinese youth tends to evaluate global brands, and what factors affect their attitudes toward global brands. We draw on the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) and reference group theory (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) to examine the impacts of global mass media and reference group on college-educated Chinese youth's attitude toward global brands. Specifically, we investigate the motivations of global mass media usage, the role of exposure to global mass media, and two types of reference group influences in relation to the attitudes toward global brands. This observation will help researchers to better understand the role of media and reference group in shaping young consumer's brand attitudes, and provide insights for advertising and marketing managers in multinational corporations to effectively communicate brand equity messages through appropriate vehicles (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999, 2006; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Substantial studies have indicated that mass media play a major role in creating and sharing consumption symbols such as global brands (Appadurai, 1990; Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). For example, Appadurai (1990) proposes that "mediascapes," one of the five paths of global cultural flow, provide images to audiences throughout the world, and certain consumers (e.g. youth) will adopt their consumption practices in order to connect to the more cosmopolitan global consumer culture communicated by the media (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). The fast growth of mass media and foreign programming in local channels have also acquainted consumers with global products and seemingly superior consumer lifestyles, which could lead to the change of consumers' desires and values (Lee, 2003). On the other hand, the idea that certain groups influence individual behavior has been fully supported in the literature of behavioral science and marketing (Stafford, 1966; Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Consumer's brand preferences might be influenced by the perception and evaluation of brands among membership groups (Stafford, 1966) as well as non-membership groups (Cocanongher & Bruce, 1971). Specifically, Alden and her colleagues (1999) suggest that consumers in developing countries, like teenagers, are more likely prone to reference group influences. They conclude that the use of global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) strategies in advertising may target young generation more effectively and achieve the meaning transfer from brands. Therefore, the discussion of global media from the uses and gratifications theory and the interpretation of reference group influences on young consumers provide a theoretical framework for the present study.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory (U&G theory) is one of the most frequently adopted theories in the communication discipline, and could help to gauge the motivation and usage behavior of global mass media among the college-educated Chinese youth, as well as the linkages with their attitudes toward global brands. The main objective of U&G theory is to explain why people use media and what social and psychological needs motivate them to engage in certain media-use behaviors for the gratifications to fulfill those intrinsic needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rubin, 1993; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). In other words, the gratifications attract and hold the users to the types of media and the kinds of contents that best satisfy their needs (Ruggiero, 2000; Bartsch et al., 2006). The importance of U&G theory lies in the proposition of the platform to explain psychological and behavioral aspects of mediated communication, which permits us to investigate these situations through needs, motives, channels, contents, and gratifications within a cross-cultural context (Ruggiero, 2000; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005).

In the uses and gratifications theory, it is stressed that basic needs interact with personal characteristics and the social environment to produce perceived problems and solutions, which constitute the different motives to use media (Ruggiero, 2000). Likewise, the globalization trends in China could create a different culturally situated social environment for the college-educated youth, and thus result in their distinctive media usage motivations and patterns. The study of Chinese students' media use conducted by Cui et al. (2004) lends support to this presumed impact of globalization; moreover, it suggests that the strength of the students' motivations to acquire foreign-country information is an important mediating variable between the need to become "globalized" and their global mass media usage behavior. In addition, while some scholars suggest that the young college students are characterized by their lively mental activity and constant interest in information, others propose that younger people in the age of 12-34 are more likely to be entertainment-oriented (Chi, 2003; Bartsch et al., 2006). Altogether, it could be suggested that those college-educated Chinese youths, who have strong motivations to acquire foreign-country information or entertainment, are likely to expose themselves to the global mass media.

The theory of expected gratifications, also known as prospective gratifications, provides another perspective delineating the college-educated Chinese youth's motivation to use global mass media. The theory of expected gratifications suggests a chain of events regarding media consumption; that is, through the observation of others' behaviors and behavioral consequences along with the self-observation of past experiences, consumers generate the

expected outcome of certain media exposure which, if positive, becomes the psychological origin of media attendance and media use, and therefore would cause further exposure of the media in the future (LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Peters, Rickes, Jöckel, Criegern, & Deursen, 2006). In consistent with that, Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) propose the expectancy-value model, explaining how the repeated process of identifying needs based on past experience could build a set of future performance expectations for the media. These propositions stress the weight of previously held beliefs in determining the gratification sought, namely the perceived needs. In other words, it could be said that the past experience and observation of others' behaviors contribute to a current belief toward the expectation of the outcome of global media exposure. This positive expectation, along with the globalization trends in China, could motivate these college-educated youth to acquire foreign-country information or entertainment, and thus make them consume more global mass media. Hence, the hypothesis one is posited as follows:

H1: The stronger the motivation to acquire foreign-country information and/or entertainment, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will expose themselves to the global mass media (the mass media influences from other countries).

Various types of categorization have been proposed under U&G theory, such as the separation of surveillance needs and diversion needs, the corresponding media with information content and entertainment content, and the two dimensions of content and process gratifications (Albarran & Umphrey, 1993; Ruggiero, 2000; Song et al., 2004; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). Nevertheless, with the new breed of programs like infotainment and edutainment, the line between different media contents might be blurred, and it is possible that certain media behaviors could fulfill different types of needs and gratifications. Therefore, the theory of gratification opportunities is proposed to emphasize the importance of consumer's belief and perceived opportunities provided by a specific medium for satisfaction based on the perceived characteristics of that medium (Dimmick, Yan, & Zhan, 2004). In particular, the special attention has been paid on nontraditional media as opposed to the traditional counterparts because of the perceived differences in the media attributes like content, time, and space (Dimmick, Yan, & Zhan, 2004). Therefore, we categorize the global mass media into these two types, the traditional media and nontraditional media, to further discuss the college-educated Chinese youth's media usage behavior toward these two categories.

According to Lyle and Hoffman (1972), the time spent with television reaches its peak at the age of twelve, and then declines gradually but still maintains a high proportion among all media consumptions. Many global programs are now available through television, such as the

television series produced overseas, the entertainment news about Hollywood celebrities, and the NBA basketball competitions broadcasted by China's television programs. In spite of that, a proportion of Chinese college students don't have television sets in their dormitories, and the radio stations have become one of their main sources for information about international events (Chen, 2003). In contrast, newspapers and magazines usually contain the mix of information and entertainment, and are differentiated according to the extent of content like political, socioeconomic, cultural, and show business. Many researchers indicate that print media usually serve more information, whereas broadcast media like television and radio primarily serve entertainment function (Elliott & Quattlebaum, 1979; Bartsch et al., 2006; Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Since the need for information about social and personal matters as well as the curiosity about the globe have been suggested to increase at the late adolescence stage, the influence of print media on college-educated Chinese youth should also be considered (Avery, 1979).

On the other hand, the nontraditional global media, such as imported Western film and music, are known to serve as entertainment vehicles equipped for the subtle promotion of global brands, and aim to satisfy the global youth's need for relaxation, belongingness, and social activities (Avery, 1979). The results from Chi's study (2003) indicate that the imported Western films have enormous effect on Chinese people, especially the young generation represented by college students, with 54% preferring European and American films. Since the films in general are entertaining and subtle, it is less likely to arouse aversion from this segment, and thus becomes a delicate way to communicate global culture and promote global brands. Similarly, music has been considered a source of relaxation, entertainment, and relief from loneliness. Besides, it provides foundation for conversation and development of interpersonal relationships (Avery, 1979). Therefore, listening to imported music could make the Chinese college students more accessible to foreign cultures, Western values, as well as the brands from numerous foreign countries.

Internet is another new communication medium that enjoys the rapidly growing popularity around the world (Dimmick, Yan, & Zhan, 2004; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). It offers easier information seeking, broader entertainment context, and more personalized interaction, which could contribute to the Chinese youth's increasing reliance on the Internet, and thus make it an advantageous tool for global brand communication. Moreover, the attribute of interactivity calls for stronger motivation to make purposive choices, and provides consumers with better opportunity to process information to meet their intrinsic needs, which could result in the increased production of product-related thoughts, and thus lead to more

positive evaluation of advertisements and brands (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). Last but not least, the mobile phone was initially a form of interpersonal mediated communication, but now a mass medium that provides information and entertainment services comparable to electronic media (Leung & Wei, 2000). Besides serving as a personal search vehicle for weather updates, news, and information, it has become the platform for Chinese people to show their conspicuous consumption and fashion taste through fancy phone kit and ringing-signals in pop songs. In fact, mobile phone has gradually become the information-gathering device plus the social and entertainment tool to the youth in the Asian society (Leung & Wei, 2000; Schiano, Elliott, & Bellotti, 2007).

All in all, the global mass media not only distributes the global consumption symbols to the college-educated Chinese youth, but also leads to the change of their desires and values (Lee, 2003). Similarly, Alden et al. (2006) suggest that the more the exposure to global mass media, the more likely the consumers will hold positive attitudes toward global consumption orientation, become more materialistic, and therefore could hold more positive attitudes toward global brands. Hence, the hypotheses 2, 2a, and 2b are proposed below:

H2: The more the exposure to global mass media, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

H2a: The more the exposure to traditional global mass media including television, radio, newspaper, and magazine, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

H2b: The more the exposure to nontraditional global mass media including movie, music, Internet, and mobile phone, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

Reference Group Theory

A reference group is a person or group of people that designated as important by the individual and influences an individual's behavior (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Mannheim, 1966). Reference groups can yield a diversity of functions (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). From a consumer-behavior perspective, scholars contend that individuals' brand choices can be affected by their reference groups (Stafford, 1966; Witt & Bruce, 1972; Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971; Bearden & Etzel, 1982). That is to say, consumers' brand preferences might be conditioned by the perception and evaluation of brand preferences conveyed by the reference group members, influencing the formation of their purchase decisions. Past research has found that in the interpersonal situation, group structure and the symbolic involvement of products influence group brand choice (Witt & Bruce, 1972). Witt and Bruce (1972) indicate that social

involvement mediates the effect of reference group on brand choice and suggest that, for products high in social involvement (e.g. car), the effect of group congruence in predicting brand choice is stronger than for products low in social involvement (e.g. toothpaste).

Early studies have also investigated the differences between students and housewives in terms of their susceptibility to reference group influences (Park & Lessig, 1977). The authors have found that students are more susceptible than housewives to group influences for a variety of products. In their study, Park and Lessig (1977) conclude three types of reference group influences: informational, utilitarian, and value expression in a purchase decision context. The concept of informational influence focuses on the desire to make informed decisions. Utilitarian reference group influence, on the other hand, is associated with the attention to act in accordance with the wishes of pledges to achieve rewards or avoid punishments. Lastly, the need for psychological association with a person or group conceptualizes value expression, which reflects the acceptance of positions expressed by others. In other words, the students could be highly susceptible to all these types of group influences when forming the purchase decisions toward different products.

Substantial evidence suggests that marketers and advertisers use reference groups, which have potential influence on consumer behavior, in their communication campaigns (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Tee1, 1989; Childers & Rao, 1992). Such practice is based on the assumption that certain referents can have impacts on consumers' product aspirations or formulation of their ideal self-images (Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971). For example, advertisers use reference groups to persuade consumers to purchase products and brands through depicting products being consumed in socially pleasant situations and using attractive people to endorse the products (Kotler, 1980). In addition, by using the group members as spokespersons in advertising, these individuals to whom others aspire can generate the influence on brand attitude, purchase intention, and consequent behavior.

Two primary types of reference groups have been identified in the literature, "comparative reference groups" and "normative reference groups" (Kelley, 1947; Childers & Rao, 1992; Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971; Stafford, 1966). Overall, comparative reference groups are used as standards of comparison for self-appraisal, while normative reference groups are used as sources of personal norms, attitudes, and values (Kelly, 1947; Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Members in comparative reference groups, such as sports heroes and entertainment celebrities, serve as a point of comparison and provide standards of achievement to which individuals aspire (Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Tee1, 1989). Thus, individuals do not directly interact with the referents and are only able to

observe the behavior of them. On the other hand, normative referents such as parents, teachers, and peers provide individuals with norms, attitudes, and values through direct interaction. Most previous studies have investigated the impact of small groups on individuals' perceptions of group norms and values (Cocanongher & Bruce, 1971). The results of these studies provide evidence that individuals comply with certain behavior rules based on norms and values of small groups. This concept is similar with utilitarian reference group influence suggested by Park and Lessig (1977) that individuals act in the ways social groups expect in order to achieve rewards or avoid punishments.

Similarly, Cocanongher and Bruce (1971) distinguish between reference groups as “socially distant reference groups” and “socially proximal reference groups.” Socially distant referents, those exist on the outside edge of the individual's social domain, allow for little or no direct interaction. In contrast, socially proximal referents, existing in the individual's social network, allow for a significant amount of interaction. Despite the fact that individuals do not regularly interact with socially distant reference groups, it is vital to note that these referents provide significant opportunities for scrutiny of public behavior if individuals hold favorable attitudes toward the referents or activities of that group (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Therefore, different types of reference groups will exercise distinct degrees of influences on consumer behavior depending on the extent to which the consumption process is observable (Childers & Rao, 1992).

In the context of Chinese society, there is a widely held belief that China is a country with a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1980). That is, Chinese people have historically centered on social interests and collective actions which might lead to the formation of consumption and purchase behavior (Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997). Moreover, Chen (2003) suggests that channels from direct interpersonal contact, like people's verbal accounts, to mass media provide information that influence college-educated Chinese youth's perception about the global culture and brands. Furthermore, this young segment may purchase certain global brands to reinforce their membership in specific reference groups (Hannerz, 1990).

Upon the review of different types of reference groups, it can be argued that both groups, one that consumers have little or no interaction with (e.g. comparative reference groups and socially distant reference groups) and another that consumers have regular interaction with (e.g. normative reference groups and socially proximal reference groups), can have influence on consumers' purchase decisions as well as perceptions of global brands. In this study, we conceptualize the former as “non-interacted reference group” and the latter as “interacted reference group.” It is suggested that the greater the influence of reference groups, both the

non-interacted reference group and interacted reference group, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

H3: The greater the influence of reference groups, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

H3a: The greater the influence of interacted reference group such as parents, teachers and peers, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

H3b: The greater the influence of non-interacted reference group such as sports heroes and entertainment celebrities, the more likely that the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands.

THE STUDY

An online survey is proposed to understand the roles of global mass media and reference group influences in shaping consumers' attitudes toward global brands. In China, college students who are under the age of 30 account for 70 percent of Internet users (Barboza 2005). Since the purpose of the study is to examine the college-educated Chinese youth's evaluations of and attitudes toward global brands, the use of an online survey is deemed appropriate.

Sample

Prospective participants for the sample in the study are recruited from college students in China. The two cities select for sampling include Beijing and Chengdu, which reflect different levels of cultural development and accessibility to global brands, and could allow for better understanding and generalization of the results of the present study.

Data Collection Procedure

Professors in the targeted universities announce this study in the lecture. Students receive an invitation email message including the URL that they can click on to take part in the study. The study website begins with an informed consent statement. Participants provide their consent by clicking on the "NEXT" button where they are directed to a secure server and shown an online survey. Participants then are asked to answer a series of questions containing the measured constructs. They are also asked to provide their demographic information. Upon completing each session, they are thanked for their participation.

Measures

The questionnaire consists of five main sections and is translated into Chinese through rigorous back translation process by two bilingual students. The first part of the survey focuses on the motivations of global mass media usage. Global mass media are operationalized as mass-mediated events involving information about foreign people (Appadurai, 1990; Alden,

Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006). Motivations of global mass media usage are measured on an 11-item, seven-point Likert scale. The scale is adapted from Mulder (1980) and Elliott and Quattlebaum (1979), ranging from “(1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.” Measure statements such as “I use global media to obtain useful information for daily life” are used. The second section of the survey is designed to assess respondents’ exposure to global mass media. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent they use traditional global mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and nontraditional global mass media such as movie, music, Internet, and mobile phone using a 16-item, seven-point Likert scale ranging from “(1) very seldom or never to (7) very often” (Appadurai, 1990; Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006). The third part of the survey investigates the influence of reference group on respondents’ perceptions of global brands. Using six-item, seven-point Likert scale ranging from “(1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree” (Bearden et al., 1989; Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006), the extents to which the college-educated Chinese youths are susceptible to the influences of interacted reference groups like parents, teachers, and peers, as well as non-interacted reference groups like sports heroes and entertainment celebrities are measured. Statements like “I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same global brands that sports heroes and entertainment celebrities purchase” are used to measure the influence of reference group. The fourth part of the questionnaire gauges respondents’ attitudes toward global brands in general. A four-item, seven-point semantic differential scale anchored by “good/bad,” “positive/negative,” “pleasant/unpleasant,” and “favorable/unfavorable” is used (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Lastly, information on respondents’ demographic characteristics like gender, age, school classification, and school city are asked. Appendix presents all the items used.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In sum, the purpose of this study is to understand how college-educated Chinese youth tends to evaluate global brands, and what factors affect their attitudes toward global brands. We draw on the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) and reference group theory (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) to examine the motivations of global mass media usage, the role of exposure to global mass media, and two types of reference group influences in shaping Chinese young consumers’ attitudes toward global brands.

We expect this study to produce the results that corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous works in this field. The uses and gratifications theory has long established that the media user’s behavior is usually goal-oriented, and that various needs and motivations could trigger the related media usage (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rubin, 1993). The

globalization trends in China, in particular, create a different culturally situated environment for the college-educated youth, and generate a new set of social and psychological needs in their minds, namely, the needs to acquire foreign-country information and entertainment. By suggesting a positive relationship between this motivation and the exposure to global mass media (H1), this study not only supports the uses and gratifications theory, but also opens a new door with the attempt to incorporate various needs (e.g. information, entertainment, relaxation) into a general globe-oriented pursuit among the Chinese youth. The study also attempts to support Alden et al.' (2006) findings which show the positive relationships between the exposure to several global mass media and the attitude toward global brands, and aims to expand the scope of global mass media into eight types in question. In other words, the more the exposure to both traditional and nontraditional global mass media carrying foreign-country messages, the more likely the college-educated Chinese youth will hold positive attitude toward global brands (H2, H2a, H2b).

Equally important, the study also suggests that the influence of reference group will have a positive relationship with the college-educated Chinese youth's attitude toward global brands (H3), as indicated earlier by Hannerz (1990) and Chen (2003). More specifically, both the interacted (parents, teachers, and peers) and non-interacted (sports heroes and celebrities) reference groups contribute to this effect on the respondents' attitude (H3a/b). While the non-interacted reference group provides a standard of achievement and aspiration for the college-educated Chinese youth, the interacted reference group offers a potentially more intimate interaction with the expressions of norms and values through the social networks (Cocanongher & Bruce, 1971; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Tee1, 1989). Furthermore, China is a country that appreciates the value of collectivism (Hofstede, 1980), and the young generation in China still respects traditional ethics and believes in boundaries (Wang, 2005), which explain for our expectation to find positive relationship between the interacted reference group and the college-educated Chinese youth's attitude toward global brands. In addition, since the literature has suggested that the Chinese advertising and personal values are under a considerable influence from the Western culture (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Zhang & Shavitt, 2003; Egri & Ralston, 2004), it is expected that the aspiration value derived from the non-interacted reference group can also have a positive influence on the college-educated Chinese youth's attitude toward global brands.

Taken collectively, these theories and factors provide a rationale for the study of college-educated Chinese youth as an important segment in the global market, as well as the interpretation of the impacts of global mass media usage and reference group on the tendency

to consume global brands. This study not only enhances the researchers' understanding on how these factors help to shape the college-educated Chinese youth's attitude toward global brands, but also provides closer insights into this powerful consumption force in China for multinational corporations to effectively communicate brand messages through appropriate vehicles (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). Understanding the influence of reference groups on college-educated Chinese youth can also yield valuable insights about the role of referents in the process of attitude formation. While the study on interacted reference group provides insights into the use of interpersonal communication in marketing campaigns, such as using Word of Mouth to deliver positive messages for the brands, the study on non-interacted reference group suggests the careful selection of global celebrities as product endorsers to convey beneficial messages for marketers and advertisers.

Future research can further investigate the dimensions proposed in this study in greater details, and collect data in various cities in China that could showcase the different levels of cultural development and accessibility to global values. This can not only enrich our knowledge about the young consumers in China as a whole, but also assist global marketers to develop effective and localized communication plans. Moreover, future study could examine how consumers respond to global brands across various cultures; that is, to understand the similarities and differences of global mass media usage and reference group influences among young generations in China and in other Western countries, which could yield valuable insights about the roles of cultural and individual differences in the process of attitude formation. Lastly, globalization is a phenomenon that evolves over time; therefore, the longitudinal study is needed to closely monitor the impact of these factors and the relative changes of the young generation's attitude toward global brands.

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APPENDIX

List of Measurement Items

Motivation of global mass media usage

1. I use global media to keep up with latest events around the world
2. I use global media to obtain useful information for daily life
3. I use global media to help form opinions about things going on around me
4. I use global media to feel I am participating in current events
5. I use global media to get away from the usual cares and problems of everyday life
6. I use global media to be entertained
7. I use global media to overcome loneliness
8. I use global media to release tension
9. I use global media to get the feeling that I'm involved in important events
10. I use global media to kill time
11. I use global media to help learn about myself

Exposure to global mass media

Exposure to traditional global mass media

1. How often do you watch fictional or non-fictional television programs (other than standard news programs) that are about people who live in other countries of the world?
2. How often do you watch television programs that are produced in other countries and shown in your country?
3. How often do you listen to the fictional or non-fictional radio programs (other than standard news programs) that are about people who live in other countries of the world?
4. How often do you listen to radio programs that are produced in other countries and broadcasted in your country?
5. How often do you read features, reports or stories in magazines (other than standard news) that are about people who live in other countries?
6. How often do you read magazines that are produced in other countries and published in your country?
7. How often do you read features, reports or stories in newspapers that are about people who live in other countries?
8. How often do you read newspapers that are produced in other countries and published in your country?

Exposure to non-traditional global mass media

9. How often do you see movies in a theater or rent one for home with fictional or non-fictional stories about people who live in other countries?
10. How often do you see movies that are produced in other countries and shown in your country?
11. How often do you listen to music that is about people who live in other countries?
12. How often do you listen to music that is produced in other countries and shown in your country?
13. How often do you browse the Internet to read features, reports, stories, or discussions that are about

people who live in other countries?

14. How often do you browse the Internet websites that are produced in other countries and shown in your country?

15. How often do you use mobile phone to read features, reports, stories, or discussions that are about people who live in other countries?

16. How often do you use mobile phone to browse the information that are produced in other countries and shown in your country?

Reference group influence

Interacted reference group influence

1. If I want to be like my parents, teachers, and peers, I often try to buy the same global brands that they buy

2. When buying brands, I generally purchase those global brands that I think my parents, teachers, and peers will approve

3. I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same global brands that parents, teachers, and peers purchase

Non-interacted reference group influence

4. If I want to be like sports heroes and entertainment celebrities, I often try to buy the same global brands that they buy

5. When buying brands, I generally purchase those global brands that I think sports heroes and entertainment celebrities will approve

6. I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same global brands that sports heroes and entertainment celebrities purchase

Attitude toward global brands

1. good/bad

2. positive/negative

3. pleasant/unpleasant

4. favorable/unfavorable
