

DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF BRANDS IN CHINA

GUEST EDITORIAL

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The development and management of brands in China has emerged as an area of considerable and growing interest among branding scholars and practitioners owing to the rise and significance of brands within China. As such, this special edition provides an interesting range of articles which speak to the above theme and marshals research and scholarship undertaken by Chinese scholars along with scholars from England, Continental Europe and the USA. The special edition includes an overview of the development and management of brands in China; a case study of a centuries-old and greatly-loved Chinese Corporate heritage brands (Tong Ren Tang); includes two studies of luxury brands in China and another examining two prominent cultural brands and a study on corporate retail brand image.

The opening article: “*China’s Brands, China’s Brand development strategies and Corporate Brand Communications in China*” by John M.T. Balmer and Weifeng Chen provides a broad overview of the above. In particular it identifies different modes of brand development; details seven reasons why there has been a growth of interest in brands in China; reveals seven core themes in the literature on China’s brands and brand management in China; and, significantly, provides a distinct Chinese corporate brand communications framework. This opening article provides a broad context for the other five articles of this special edition.

The second article: ““*Corporate Heritage Brands in China: Consumer engagement with China’s most celebrated corporate heritage brand-Tong Ren Tang: 同仁堂*” also by John M.T. Balmer and Weifeng Chen breaks new ground becomes it considers a non-western (a Chinese) corporate heritage brand and for the first time within the corporate heritage brand/corporate heritage canon, adopts an explicit consumer perspective. The article’s focus is on Tong Ren Tang (TRT) – founded in 1669-one of China’s most celebrated corporate heritage brands. TRT was found to be attractive to consumers owing to its core corporate heritage along with its augmented role identities following Balmer’s augmented role identity theoretical perspective.

The third article: *“The images of foreign versus domestic retailer brands in China: a model of corporate brand image and store image”* by Zhibin Lin and Xinming He focusses on consumer perceptions of indigenous and overseas retail corporate brands. To date, this area has not been subject to in-depth empirical research. The study is informed by cognitive associative network and categorisation theories with data collected from 338 department store customers in Peking. Both store image and corporate brand image were found to be meaningful and the results showed the overseas brands had a more positive corporate brand image.

In the fourth article: *“Luxury Brand Building in China: Eight Case Studies & Eight Lessons Learned”* by Klaus Heine and Michel Gutsatz considers the challenges facing the development of luxury brands in China. In particular, the study contemplates the success factors vis-à-vis the market entrance of eight, well-known, luxury brands. The research findings have an instrumental utility for the management of luxury brands in China.

Moving on to the fifth article: *“The Market for Luxury Brands in China: Insight Based on a Study of Consumer's Perceptions in Beijing”* by Keith Walley draws on insights from the literature and from a survey of 200 Chinese consumers. The research seeks to address key questions relating to the what, where, when, how and why Chinese consumers buy luxury goods. As with the previous article, this study is timely and significant owing to the importance of luxury brands within China.

In the sixth and final article: *“A brand culture approach to Chinese Cultural Heritage brands ”* by Borgerson, Wu and Schroeder-taking a broad brand culture/heritage brand perspective-examines how consumers co-create meanings with two prominent Chinese brands: Shanghai Tang and Shang Xia. This article is significant from a brand management perspective since brand culture is an integral of the branding strategies of both brands. Readers familiar with the brand culture literature will know that Dr Borgerson and Professor Schroeder are leading exponents in the brand culture domain.

As guest editors we thank everyone who submitted manuscripts for this special edition and congratulate the authors whose articles have been accepted: the standard was high and we appreciate that many authors were disappointed in not having their manuscripts included in this special edition. We also thank the reviewers for providing helpful and insightful feedback to authors. It is our hope that this special edition meaningfully informs and advances our comprehension of the development and management of brands in China. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as guest editors of this special edition and on a topic which is both fascinating and of growing significance. *Read on and enjoy!*

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