

# ***Research on Branding and Cross-Cultural Communication Based on Chinese Culture***

## ***--Taking Florasis as an Example***

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**Abstract:** In recent years, Chinese cultural elements have become an important element for Chinese brands to rely on in order to enter the world market. However, the use of this element is still a major challenge for the new Chinese brands. The rise of Chinese brands in the global market has been the focus of many scholars and practitioners. This paper uses surveys, literature research, and case study methods to draw up cross-cultural communication strategies that are culturally appropriate for China. It is necessary to maintain the brand's core culture in a changing market environment and adapt the product strategy to the local culture of different markets to appeal to a wider audience. However, the laws of the market in new scenarios cannot be studied and generalised by simple conjectures and individual cases, and many of the details and conjectures have not been tested in this paper. Therefore, this paper is more interested in providing new ideas and basic theoretical support for Chinese cultural brands with cross-cultural communication needs, while more in-depth theories will need to be developed and studied in the future.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural communication, Florasis, Chinese culture, branding

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

In recent years, Chinese cultural elements have increasingly become important in Chinese companies' branding and communication strategies. As a rising star in the Chinese cosmetic industry, Florasis was founded on 8 March 2017 and exceeded RMB 5.4 billion in total transactions in 2021 [1]. It has gained popularity among consumers because of its excellent use of traditional Chinese culture. However, building a brand based on Chinese culture and communicating effectively with consumers from different cultural backgrounds is a major challenge for all Chinese cultural brands represented by Florasis.

The rise of Chinese brands in the global market has attracted significant attention from scholars and practitioners. Many studies have examined Chinese companies' strategies to compete with multinational corporations, particularly in branding and marketing. Some consider using Chinese

elements in branding a key success factor for Chinese companies, as it can help brands develop a unique brand identity and resonate with consumers' cultural values.

## 1.2. Literature Review

Scholars highlight the importance of cultural factors in brand building and communication, especially in cross-cultural marketing. In the case of brands based on traditional Chinese culture, Birbeck and Ian found that cultural symbols can help companies differentiate themselves from competitors and create deeper emotional challenges with consumers [2]. And Xu analyzed that Chinese brands should pay attention to material cultural strategy and symbolic culture in entering internationalization and cross-cultural communication to gain more recognition from consumers. Only by absorbing more diverse cultures and providing a continuous source of culture for the brand can the brand go further [3]. Lin proposed that Chinese cultural products have unique rules for dissemination in the international market, and the audience that can accept complex spiritual products must have certain qualities. In order to enhance the competitiveness of Chinese cultural products in the international market, to travel the scale of consumption of Chinese cultural products in the highly segmented international cultural market, and to have real consumers, a more in-depth research is needed. Formal innovation and content innovation are needed [4].

Despite the growing interest in Chinese cultural branding and communication, non-Chinese cultural circles still lack insight into how Chinese companies can effectively use cultural elements in their branding and communication strategies, especially in cross-cultural marketing. In addition, the persistent perception of Chinese products as 'China no famous brand' has severely limited the perception of Chinese brands in international markets.

## 1.3. Research Framework

This paper aims to fill this research gap by explaining how Florasis, a Chinese cosmetics brand, can effectively use Chinese cultural elements in its brand promotion and communication strategies to appeal to consumers from different cultural backgrounds, pointing out the shortcomings in its strategies and then drawing out the conditions for a culturally appropriate cross-cultural communication strategy based on the research data. This study will adopt a qualitative research design using primary and secondary data sources. The paper will consist of three main sections, firstly introducing the research methodology that will be used, followed by a status quo analysis through Florasis and the problems that exist and the causes of the problems that are explored. This is followed by examining consumer perceptions of the brand and its cultural elements from the consumer's perspective. Finally, based on the results, a cross-cultural communication strategy is concluded that is broadly applicable to brands based on Chinese culture.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Survey Method

The survey is a primary data collection method that involves using questionnaires to collect data from a sample of respondents. In this paper, a survey will be conducted to investigate different consumer attitudes toward Chinese cultural elements in brand identity and cross-cultural communication. The survey will be distributed online and offline to a representative sample of target consumers, and the collected data will be analyzed to identify the most effective strategies for brand building and cross-cultural communication based on Chinese cultural elements. This method will provide insights into consumer preferences and help to develop effective branding strategies.

## 2.2. Literature Research Method

The literature research/analysis method is a secondary data collection method that analyzes existing textual data, such as articles, reports, and online content. In this paper, literature research will be conducted to investigate the use of Chinese cultural elements in brand building and cross-cultural communication. The study will review literature, including journal articles, theses, industry reports, and websites, to identify the current practices and trends in using Chinese cultural elements in branding and cross-cultural communication. The literature research will provide valuable insights into successful cases and best practices for incorporating Chinese cultural elements into branding and communication strategies.

## 2.3. Case Study

The case study method is a research approach that involves an in-depth analysis of a specific case, such as a company, organization, or event, to gain insights into a particular issue or phenomenon. This paper will use the case study method to examine the branding and cross-cultural communication strategies of Florasis, a Chinese cosmetics brand, to understand how it has successfully created a brand image that resonates with Chinese cultural values and expanded into the global market. This paper will thoroughly analyze the company's branding and marketing campaigns and its communication with consumers both in China and abroad to gain insights into the key factors that have contributed to its success. This analysis will examine the cultural factors that have influenced the brand's development and compare them with other successful Chinese and international brands in the cosmetics industry. The findings of this case study will provide valuable insights for other Chinese companies seeking to expand into the global market through effective branding and cross-cultural communication strategies.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. What is Branding

Matthew Healey in the UK said in "What is branding?": "The word 'Brand' holds its roots in the old Germanic language, which means 'burn'. We cannot choose a better definition than that when it comes to making something become memorable. This good reputation will generate customer loyalty which is vital for the survival of the brand [5]." And the Norwegian word "brandr" is probably Old English "brand", "brond", "biernan", and "brinnan". The word 'brand' is thus directly related to fire. Using a brand (hot stamp) to distinguish livestock and indicate ownership has been around for over 5000 years and is not a new concept in the West and the East.

The first industrial revolution began in the 1860s, and in the mid-19th century, more countries were affected by the industrial revolution. Businessmen began using the brand to sell their products more effectively. In the business world, Procter & Gamble is considered to be a pioneer in the use of this strategy. The study of branding theory, however, originated in the United States. After the Second World War, the United States benefited from its rapid economic growth, and many famous scholars such as Ralph Star Bulter, J. E. Hagerty, Arch.

By 1960, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defined a brand as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers [6]. Then in 1963, Ogilvy proposed the brand image theory, which established that the role of a brand is to differentiate a product from the market and to occupy a special place in the minds of consumers. The role of the brand was to differentiate the product from the market and to occupy a special place in the minds of consumers.

Today, branding is not just about driving sales; it is about providing consumers with self-defined choices. Branding facilitates management for companies and their businesses, allowing sellers to communicate a highly consistent image more efficiently and accurately. For consumers, brands provide them with a unique spirit, personality, and cultural identity. As a result, brands have become a cultural vehicle.

### 3.2. The Current State of Industry and Trends in Chinese Cultural Branding

Due to the differences in the development process between East and West and the different branding strategies caused by different countries' different histories, Chinese brands have significantly lagged behind developed regions such as Europe, the US, and Japan in their development status since entering the modern era. Most iconically, the Chinese market was inundated with a large number of modernised, westernised, and internationalised non-Chinese cultural local brands in the early years. Mature Western brands quickly dominated the Chinese market with their strong capital and marketing skills and succeeded in suppressing the development of local Chinese brands for some time afterward. Even under the influence of foreign cultures, Chinese brands began to be named in English and based on Western culture. So much so that even now, with the globalisation of culture, there are still many Chinese brands exporting Western values and culture.

While the global market has influenced most Chinese brands born in modern times, the older Chinese brands, with their long history, have persisted and are rich in traditional Chinese cultural connotations. On the other hand, however, these brands have not kept up with the fast-moving trends of the times, and their audience reach has been severely affected, making it difficult for them to compete with modern, commercially powerful Western brands.

### 3.3. C-beauty Goes Global

Jeffree Star, a well-known YouTuber in YouTube's beauty category with 16.1 million followers, released his first review video in 2022 featuring Florasis, a beauty brand from China. The video was once in the top four of the global trends chart, with 2.36 million views, and stated that Florasis was "the most beautiful beauty brand in the world", as shown in Figure 1



Figure 1: Vedio by JeffreeStar.

(Source: Trying The World's MOST Beautiful Makeup... Is It Jeffree Star Approved?! - YouTube )

This event reflects the growing maturity of Chinese beauty products in recent years and the opportunities that COVID-19 has brought to the e-commerce industry, with Florasis representing the C-beauty brand that is beginning to go global.

C-beauty means the beauty of China. And the international popularity of C-beauty represents that Chinese aesthetic culture is gradually spreading across cultures and gaining worldwide recognition.

Now, Florasis has a considerable number of followers on internationally renowned social media platforms, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics on the number of Florasis followers on each platform.

Brand	TikTok	YouTube	Instagram	Twitter
Florasis	771, 500	2100 followers	3253, 000 followers	1430 followers

### 3.4. Analysis of Consumer Behavioural Characteristics

#### 3.4.1. Product Preferences

Florasis' consumers predominantly purchase skincare products, with face cream, essence, eye cream, and toner being the primary products sold. Consumers pay close attention to the quality and performance of the products, such as workmanship, materials, service life, and packaging.

#### 3.4.2. Demographic Characteristics

Florasis consumers are mainly females aged between 18 and 35. As they grow older, consumers tend to increase the frequency and amount of their Florasis purchases. This indicates that consumers are more likely to develop brand loyalty and trust in the brand as they continue to use the products.

#### 3.4.3. Price and Brand Reputation

While price is a consideration for Florasis' consumers, it is not the most critical factor. Product quality and brand reputation are more important considerations for consumers. Florasis consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a product with excellent quality and reputation.

#### 3.4.4. Sales Channels

The majority of Florasis' consumers buy their products from online platforms such as the official website, Tmall flagship store, and JD flagship store. The proportion of online purchases has increased year by year. Consumers also purchase products from offline counters/stores.

#### 3.4.5. Stable Consumer Behavior

Florasis consumers exhibit a stable purchasing behavior, accumulating brand loyalty over time. Some consumers have become loyal fans of the brand and show a high level of identification with Florasis' products and brand culture.

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior:

Besides the product quality and reputation, several factors influence Florasis' consumers' purchasing decisions. These include:

**Price:** Price is a crucial consideration for Florasis' consumers, influencing their purchasing decisions.

**Advertising and Promotion:** Advertising, promotions, and word-of-mouth marketing are essential factors influencing Florasis' consumers' purchasing decisions.

**Service Quality:** Florasis' consumers expect excellent pre-sales and after-sales service, and a high service quality enhances consumers' trust and loyalty to the brand.

**Brand Image and Reputation:** The brand image and reputation significantly affect consumers' trust and acceptance of the brand. A brand with a good reputation is more likely to gain consumers' trust and loyalty.

**Personal Preferences and Needs:** Florasis' consumers have diverse preferences and needs, such as color, style, and usage, that affect their purchasing decisions.

According to the definition of "Generation Z" mentioned in the short article "The Newest Cohort - The Survival of "Generation Z"" published in the fifth issue of China Youth Studies in 1999, and the new criteria specified by the researcher afterward, the generation born between 1995 and 2009. The generation born between 1995 and 2009, and this generation was born seamlessly into the online information age and has been influenced by digital information technology, instant messaging devices, smartphones, and other products, and is therefore also known as the "Internet Generation" and "indigenous to the digital media world" [7]. According to 2018 data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the total number of people born in mainland China between 199 and 2009 was about 260 million, accounting for about 19% of the total population in 2018 [8]. And in 2019, the number of Generation Z in the world's population accounted for 32% of the world's 7.7 billion people. Generation Z is a large consumer group with significant consumption characteristics and high consumption potential.

Some scholars believe that Generation Z, born in an era of material abundance and influenced by the mass media and hedonistic consumer culture, has low self-control and thus has formed the habit and preference of early consumption [9]. From the point of view of the analysis of the market consumption, the main group with high consumption impulse is the middle-income consumer group and the young consumer group, of which Generation Z accounts for no less than 50%. According to research, Generation Z has a unique and diverse consumer mindset that focuses on consumer experience, refuses to spend extravagantly, pays attention to consumer class, and accepts consumer symbols [7].

The target audience of Florasis is the young consumers represented by Generation Z. The above evidence, combined with data from a questionnaire survey of 80 Florasis consumers from different cultural circles and age groups conducted in March 2023, shows that Florasis consumers have the following behavioural characteristics.

Florasis is a Chinese cosmetic brand known for its elegant oriental style and high-end cultural connotations [10]. Florasis consumers have Generation Z consumer behavioural characteristics such as circle culture, spiritual consumption, labelling, focus on quality and data, preference for interest communities, and face valueism. They buy products simply and straightforwardly, have high spending power, have more vertical, diverse, and individualistic interest groups, see consumption as an expression of identity, and are independent and curious about the world [10].

In addition, Florasis consumers are also characterised by the following:

1. Keen on social sharing: they are receptive to the opinions of KOLs and KOCs and are keen to build communities on social media platforms to exchange opinions. Therefore, they are also concerned about the word-of-mouth and freshness of the products.

2. Focus on self-satisfaction: prefer high-end products with Chinese cultural characteristics and cultural connotations. Also, focus on value and wellness.

3. Prefer specialised and artistic products: Florasis products are made from flowers and natural extracts and have both skincare and make-up benefits. Its products include engraved eyeshadow palettes, locking lipstick, foundation, make-up remover wipes, and more. The product designs are artistic and creative, such as the Eye Palette's floral motif and the lipstick's heart-shaped switch.

In conclusion, Florasis' consumers exhibit unique characteristics influencing their purchasing behavior. Consumers pay close attention to product quality and reputation and are willing to pay a higher price for products that meet their expectations. Florasis' advertising, promotions, and excellent



service quality influence consumers' decision-making. Furthermore, personal preferences and needs also affect Florasis' consumers' purchasing decisions. These insights can help Florasis to develop effective marketing strategies and enhance customer loyalty and brand reputation.

## **4. Discussion**

Florasis has achieved great success in the Chinese market, winning the love and recognition of many consumers with its unique brand positioning and high-quality products. However, the performance of Florasis in the international market is not as satisfactory as it should be. Its internationalization strategy has some problems and shortcomings, making it difficult for Florasis to stand firmly in the international market with complex consumer culture background. This paper analyses the current situation and problems of Florasis' internationalisation strategy and suggest suggestions for optimisation and improvement.

### **4.1. Current Status and Problems of Florasis' Internationalisation Strategy**

Florasis' internationalisation strategy consists of the following main aspects:

Selecting suitable overseas markets, Florasis is currently targeting Japan, Europe, North America, Australia, and Russia, all of which have certain consumer groups that are interested in or identify with Chinese culture and a certain level of demand and ability to consume cosmetics.

Using cross-border e-commerce platforms for sales, Florasis currently sells overseas mainly through e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Xiaohongshu, which can help Florasis save logistics, warehousing, and taxation costs and can also use the traffic and reputation of the platforms for promotion and publicity.

Maintaining its Chinese-inspired brand image and product features, Florasis has not made too many changes or adjustments to its brand image and product features in overseas markets but rather sticks to its traditional Chinese culture as inspiration to showcase its unique Chinese-inspired charm.

However, Florasis has some problems and shortcomings in its internationalisation strategy, the main ones being the following:

Lack of differentiated marketing strategies for different markets Florasis does not segment and position itself in overseas markets according to the characteristics, needs, preferences, and habits of consumers in different markets but adopts a consistent marketing strategy. This may result in Florasis having difficulties meeting the expectations and needs of consumers in different markets and differentiating itself from local competitors.

Lack of effective brand communication and promotion channels Florasis has not established effective brand communication and promotion channels in overseas markets, relying mainly on word-of-mouth and social media to promote its products. This may result in Florasis having difficulties increasing its brand awareness and reputation and building relationships with consumers.

### **4.2. Suggestions for Optimising and Improving Florasis' Internationalisation Strategy**

In response to the problems and shortcomings of Florasis' internationalisation strategy, this paper proposes the following suggestions for optimisation and improvement:

Differentiate marketing strategies according to the characteristics and needs of different markets Florasis should segment and position itself according to the characteristics, needs, preferences, and habits of consumers in different markets and develop corresponding marketing mixes in terms of products, prices, channels, and promotions to meet the expectations and needs of consumers in different markets, and also differentiate itself from local competitors.

Establish effective brand communication and promotion channels Florasis should establish effective brand communication and promotion channels, such as official websites, social media

accounts, blogs, videos, live streaming, etc., to increase its brand awareness and reputation and to build interaction and trust with consumers. At the same time, Florasis can also use partners such as netizens, celebrities, magazines, agencies, etc., to expand its brand reach and influence.

Florasis should conduct adequate and systematic overseas market research and analysis, such as collecting and processing data, information, and feedback from overseas markets, to grasp the dynamics and trends of overseas markets and deal with the risks and challenges of overseas markets. At the same time, Florasis can also learn from the experience and case studies of successful international brands such as Perfect Diary and L'Oreal to learn from the advantages and methods of their internationalisation strategies.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on Chinese culture, this article explores the history of the birth and introduction of branding to China, using Florasis, an iconic C-beauty brand that has gone global from China, as an example. We then use examples to demonstrate the high level of recognition Florasis has received worldwide, confirming that it is an excellent example of a cross-cultural communication strategy for Chinese culture. We then conducted a behavioural analysis of Florasis consumers based on secondary data and surveys to identify the characteristics of a Chinese cultural brand audience represented by Florasis consumers. They are mostly young people belonging to Generation Z, keen on social sharing and receptive to the opinions of KOLs. These people no longer choose products based on parameters such as functionality and value for money but are more concerned with deeper cultural values. If the branding of a product meets the expectations of these consumers in certain aspects, they are willing to pay a price that far exceeds the cost of the product. These characteristics are reflected in the cross-cultural communication strategy of brands whose main strength is Chinese culture, which corresponds mainly to the growing worldwide interest in Chinese culture.

However, in order to build a successful brand, it is necessary to target not only people who love Chinese culture but also to explore more potential audiences who will successfully develop an interest in Chinese culture after using the brand's services. This requires a more targeted cross-cultural communication strategy for Chinese culture.

The first step is to select countries with a certain interest in or identification with Chinese culture and then take advantage of China's unique and developed cross-border e-commerce platform to advertise with as comprehensive a coverage as possible. This is followed by adapting to the local culture of the overseas market to ensure that the charm of Chinese culture is communicated effectively and unambiguously.

This paper provides a reference framework for Chinese brands to guide them on choosing an appropriate cross-cultural communication strategy based on their own characteristics and target markets and how to effectively utilise Chinese cultural resources to create a unique brand advantage. It also provides a new perspective for the study of intercultural communication with reference to outstanding cases, demonstrating the possibilities and value of Chinese culture in the world market and providing new ideas for the innovation and development of intercultural communication theory.

There are also some limitations and shortcomings in this paper. Firstly, the paper only selects Chinese brands in a few fields as case studies and cannot cover all types and industries of Chinese brands, which is a somewhat biased sample selection. Secondly, the paper only analyses the effectiveness of the cross-cultural communication strategy and consumers' reactions at a macro level, taking Florasis as an example, without considering the cultural differences and preferences at an individual level.

Finally, the paper does not specifically compare and analyse the intercultural communication strategies of brands in different countries or regions and does not discuss the interaction and mutual



influence of intercultural communication. Therefore, future research could be expanded and deepened in the following ways:

1. expand the number and scope of cases to increase the representativeness and universality of Chinese brands' intercultural communication strategies.

2. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, collect and analyse the evaluation of Chinese cultural brands by different audience groups to reveal the influencing factors of cross-cultural communication of Chinese brands.

3. Introduce the cross-cultural communication strategies of brands from other countries or regions as a comparison, compare and analyse the modes and characteristics of brand communication in different cultural contexts, and explore the commonalities and differences of cross-cultural communication.

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