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AUTHENTICALLY DISNEY, DISTINCTLY CHINESE: A CASE STUDY OF GLOCALIZATION THROUGH SHANGHAI DISNEYLAND'S BRAND NARRATIVE

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AUTHENTICALLY DISNEY, DISTINCTLY CHINESE:
A CASE STUDY OF GLOCALIZATION THROUGH SHANGHAI DISNEYLAND'S
BRAND NARRATIVE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Chelsea Michelle Galvez
June 2018

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ABSTRACT

In 2016, the Walt Disney Company launched Shanghai Disneyland--the company's first theme park in mainland China. Entering mainland China poses significant political and cultural challenges for American companies. To address these challenges, Disney pursued a "glocalization" strategy -- it accounted for local norms and values in launching Shanghai Disneyland. This paper examines how Shanghai Disneyland constructed its brand narrative to negotiate tensions in this glocalization process. A semiotic analysis of two Shanghai Disneyland commercials illustrates the ways in which Disney tapped into culturally meaningful themes of harmonic balance and collective identity to produce the park's brand narrative--"China's Disneyland." A thematic analysis also considers how Chinese citizens engaged with that brand narrative on the popular Chinese social network, Weibo. Citizens engaged with this brand narrative in ways that deviate somewhat from Disney's messaging, such as by avoiding depictions of people in the park. Still, even these deviations aligned with and reinforced the cultural values in the "China's Disneyland" brand narrative. The study underscores the importance strategically adjusting brand narratives for new markets and accounting for users' engagement with those narratives.

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This thesis is dedicated to the people who have helped me grow and develop into the person I am today. It's dedicated to the family and friends that understood and encouraged me to do my best work, even when it meant I couldn't attend family gatherings and events. Your patience and understanding meant the world.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On June 13, 2016, Walt Disney Company (Disney) CEO, Robert (Bob) Iger sat down for an interview with *USA Today* reporter, Arthur Levine. It was just three days before Disney opens Shanghai Disney Resort (Shanghai Disneyland) -- the sixth Disney theme park, and the company's first in mainland China. Similar to other interviews and press coverage, Iger used the same statement to describe the park and what made it different from the company's others. He explains to Levine that Shanghai Disneyland is "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese" (para. 8). When Levine prompts Iger to explain what that means, Iger responded:

I didn't want to build Disneyland in China. I wanted to build China's Disneyland for a number of reasons. From the very beginning, I wanted to act like we were respectful, invited guests in China. One way to show respect was to infuse this place with elements of the familiar, with elements of Chinese culture. (Levine, 2016, para.9)

Iger's statement acknowledged that Disney did not pursue this Shanghai venture by replicating what worked in U.S. markets. Instead, Disney took a "glocal" approach (Choi, 2010); it treated Shanghai as a unique target market, and it adjusted its services -- even the Disney brand, itself -- to fit Shanghai consumers' local needs and cultural assumptions. Iger explains to

Levine that traditional Disney elements, such as a Tarzan theatrical performance, were adapted to Chinese culture. A Chinese woman directed the performance, which featured Chinese acrobats and performers speaking in the Mandarin language (Levine, 2016). Indeed, the very statement “authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese” fuses global commerce (authentically Disney) and local culture (distinctly Chinese) to signal a glocalized approach.

In a general sense, globalization occurs whenever organizations enter new, international markets. The specific ways organizations accomplish this has varied over time, though. For decades, many organizations pursued a “one size fits all” approach, of taking a product, service, or business model and introducing it elsewhere, without adjustments. Such an approach is attractive from the perspective of costs and efficiencies however, many American businesses that took such globalized approaches in the past are now facing a “downward spiral” in overseas sales and revenue (Rothfeder, 2015). For instance, the *Washington Post*'s Jeffrey Rothfeder blames Cisco's 2013 decline in foreign markets on their use of globalization, claiming that the organization was yet another victim of this “tantalizing but perilous” strategy (Rothfeder 2017, para 2). In fact, in the 1990s and 2000s, Disney, itself, engaged in a handful of very public and costly globalization follies -- particularly Disneyland Paris and Disneyland Hong Kong (Yue, 2009). In these ventures, Disney was faced with both criticism and lack of profit as a result of not accounting for local norms and culture.

Business analysts at the *Washington Post* (Rothfeder, 2015), *Forbes* (Vorhauser-Smith, 2012), *Bloomberg* (Fox, 2016), and the *Harvard Business Review* (Wind, 2013) all suggest that conducting overseas expansion is not hopeless. If companies are to succeed, though, they need to take glocal, rather than global, approaches (Rothfeder, 2015). This is because glocalization incorporates target marketing strategies on a global scale, thus adjusting the organization to fit the needs of the marketing segment. These efforts to glocalize have been facilitated by innovations in digital media and marketing, which have made it increasingly possible to implement target marketing overseas. When digital media and marketing are effectively employed, firms can glocalize by identifying and understanding local markets, which in turn should inform organizational decision-making, and facilitate communication between the organization and consumers.

Shanghai Disneyland is important in that it represents a cumulation of parks from the past. In an interview with *Bloomberg Business* (Palmeri, 2016), Iger noted that Shanghai Disneyland, “combines all of the things we’ve learned over the years, from all the other parks that we’ve operated for 60 years,” (para. 6) making it “the smartest park we’ve ever built-from our own learning” (para. 6). Iger also stressed this to the *New York Times* (Barboza & Barnes, 2016) as well, saying that, “We are taking everything we’ve learned from our six decades of exceeding expectations-along with our relentless innovation and famous creativity-to create a truly magical place that is both authentically Disney and

distinctly Chinese” (para. 3). Shanghai Disneyland also represents the first time Disney has taken an intentional, glocalized approach to a new park from conception to execution. And as a leading media conglomerate and global brand, Disney’s glocalized approach to the Shanghai market will likely shape the practices of other transnationals as they enter China and other emerging markets. However, Disney’s emergence into mainland China is not seamless, as Disney had to negotiate tensions that were likely to arise between Disney, the Chinese government, and Chinese culture.

Opening China’s Closed System

Iger noted in an interview with *Bloomberg Business* that the Chinese economy is in the process of moving from a 20th century manufacturing economy to a 21st century consumer economy (Bloomberg, 2015). This presents a great opportunity for Disney, and global capital generally, in that it has turned the world’s largest population into the world’s largest new market. This shift is not without tensions, though, as China has traditionally operated as a closed society, resistant to social and economic influence from the west. (“The original and unique culture of China,” n.d.).

Traditional Chinese culture is based widely on the philosophical teachings of Confucius, a Chinese Government Official, who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. Confucianism established a “system of social and ethical philosophy” that stressed respect for community and social hierarchy (“Confucianism | Asia Society,” n.d.) in the political spectrum. Han Emperor Wu (141 B.C.-89 B.C.),

then expanded Confucianism from a political mindset to an ideology and social law throughout China. This lasted until the Communist party ascended to power in 1949, and sparked the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1966. Through this socio-political revolution, Confucianism was replaced with Maoism; however, Maoism reflected aspects of Confucian ideology, such as emphasis on the idea of obedience to authority (Lu, 1999). While Confucian cultural values had long been in place, even during Maoist rule, the ideology was re-introduced to Chinese society in 2003, when Chinese Communist Leadership began to fully re-invest in Confucianism by talking about “building a harmonious society” (Reynolds, 2009, para. 9), which is the core of Confucianism. This sparked the re-adoption of Confucian moral teachings among Chinese citizens. Confucianism today is a moral code organized around values such as harmony (lack of conflict), benevolence (kindness and good will), righteousness (morality), courtesy (modesty and prudence), wisdom (distinguish right from wrong/resourcefulness), honesty (trustworthiness), loyalty (faithfulness to family/friends, respect and protection for one’s country), and filial piety (respecting those of greater age) (Lihua, 2013).

Of these values, harmony (lack of conflict) is the core value of Chinese culture. It is defined as, “the proper and balanced coordination between things” (Lihua, 2013, para. 2). Harmony is also demonstrated through the Chinese philosophical concept of Yin and Yang. This refers to the equilibrium and steadiness of the natural cycles that coordinate dichotomy between two objects

that in turn exposes their interconnectivity (Huang, 2016). Yin and Yang's interconnectivity are seen in the way that one season ends, so another begins, coordinating balance and harmony among them. Through the other key cultural values (e.g., benevolence, courtesy, etc.), harmony can be obtained (Lihua, 2013). For example, when filial piety is achieved, meaning that a child respects his parents and elders, Chinese culture contends that peace will exist among the relationships, stimulating harmony (Chan, Tan & Tan, 2004). This focus on relationships and identifying one's self as a part of a group is referred to as collectivism. Collectivism is also constitutive of harmony, as it focuses peoples' attention on the well-being of the group and the broader society (Wang & Chen, 2010).

With a shift to a consumer economy the harmonic balance, established by Confucian teachings, is threatened. This is so as a consumer economy directly opposes Confucian teachings and impress value on resource extraction, competition, individualism, and the acquisition of consumer goods (Eckersley, 2006). To address these tensions, the Chinese government has worked to restrict the encroachment of outside influences on their traditions and values. China's censorship of the Internet and other media channels, for instance, is famously referred to as "the great firewall." This type of closure and emphasis on control and separation from the external environment is referred to as a closed system ("Organizational Communication" n.d.). At the same time, the Chinese government has attempted to conduct business with foreign corporations looking

to enter the Chinese market. For example, foreign organizations have strict restrictions when operating in China. These restrictions include limited access to all media platforms (e.g., social media, digital media, and print media) and a requirement of joint-owned ventures between foreign and domestic business. Through this partially closed system, then, China has been successful in maintaining its communist regime and traditional values while remaining an active participant in global affairs (Denyer, 2016).

This makes advertising and marketing a challenge for non-Chinese businesses and requires enhanced Chinese government reliance for all business ventures (“Chinese Culture & Shanghai Traditions,” 2017). For example, in 2016, Uber’s failed Chinese globalization attempt was blamed on Uber’s lack of recognition and regard for the political and cultural context, causing them to fail to obtain harmony with China (Schell, 2016). Chinese citizens felt that Uber had put their business before the common good of the people, as the organization exhibited unsafe services and demonstrated aggression in its non-compliant business moves. Moreover, Uber operated by “asking (Chinese officials) for forgiveness, instead of permission” into their markets (Salomon, 2016, para. 8). Uber’s experience demonstrates that companies who seek to operate in China must attend traditional Chinese values, such as courtesy, respect, and coordination with others, including the Chinese Government (Salomon 2016).

China is not a monolith, though. Shanghai’s culture and values differ from that of traditional Chinese culture, as Shanghai is referred to as a “hybrid city of

eastern and western social traditions” that emphasizes fun and glamour in China (You, 2014, para 5). Shanghai citizens commonly prefer to speak English over Mandarin and are increasingly interested in culture beyond China’s borders (Stone, 2015). Shanghai is also known for being the largest and wealthiest city in China, which explains and facilitates their expanding consumer economy, including entertainment spending (“Chinese Culture” n.d.). Chinese cultural norms still play an important part in the city, including the value of “face.” This refers to the development of a reputation through wealth and generosity and avoiding emotional displays in public, such as affection, expansive gestures, and sarcasm (Li & Li, 2015). Still, the city is often criticized for losing touch with Chinese culture and falling victim to cultural imperialism (Xu, 2010). Xu (2010) suggested that Shanghai, once a global cultural capital, has shifted to nothing more than a city of monopoly enterprises that is unable to produce culture and only able to imitate it.

In this case, then, Disney is entering an environment where international capital investment and associated cosmopolitan culture already operate in an uneasy tension with political structures and traditional cultural norms. Thus, Disney needed a tool to maintain harmonic balance; it needed a brand narrative, a curated story that shares the values and premise of the organization’s value to consumers. Through the distribution of a brand narrative, companies like Disney are able to tell their story to consumers, and, in doing so, communicate their value proposition. Companies that effectively communicate their values and

cultural norms in a way that resonates with consumers can establish common ground with those consumers. This common ground is valuable, as it results in a relationship with the brand, leading to sales and profits. Thus, the brand narrative can set the scene for the way a company interacts with consumers and how that brand will make a difference in consumers' lives. Because the brand narrative illustrates cultural values and norms, a company's glocal brand narrative is expected to vary from region to region, as cultural norms and values do (Hanlon, 2016). This means that Disney, in launching Shanghai Disneyland, would have to adjust its traditional American brand narrative in order to enter the Chinese market for both political and cultural reasons.

This raises a number of questions about Disney's Shanghai venture: What is the meaning behind Iger's phrase, "authentically Disney, distinctly Chinese?" How has this vision been executed and communicated? What marketing strategies has Disney used? And how have those efforts been received by Chinese consumers? To explore these questions, this study examines how Shanghai Disneyland's brand narrative was constructed and communicated by analyzing two of Shanghai Disneyland's first commercials. This study also examines how Chinese citizens engaged with that brand narrative on social media, by analyzing the types of photos shared on social media. Ultimately, Shanghai Disneyland provides a contemporary example of how Disney is trying to implement a glocalized approach by using past experiences as a guide, and

by employing digital media and marketing to facilitate communication, foster connectivity with consumers, and launch a new, profitable, overseas venture.

In Chapter 2, this study will, first, review relevant literature on globalization and glocalization, uses of digital media by glocalizing firms, and the use of organizational enactment to implement strategic marketing, externally. Moreover, by sifting through the literature on these processes, the relationships between them can be better understood. Digital media can support a firm's glocalization efforts by communicating their value proposition to consumers, which is dependent on the enactment process. All of which results in a brand narrative. Next, a brief history of Disney's past theme park ventures will illustrate how Disney has approached its national, global, and now glocal expansion. While Disney's U.S. parks have enjoyed enduring success, the company's Paris, Hong Kong, and Tokyo parks each initially produced mixed results, and Disney eventually had to adjust their global approach to fit local markets and cultures. This history helps explain why Disney took a glocal approach to Shanghai Disneyland, and why that approach operates the way that it does.

Based on this literature and history, the following research questions are posed: How has Shanghai Disneyland used its brand narrative to negotiate tensions in the glocalization process (i.e., being "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese")? And how have Chinese citizens engaged with this brand narrative on social media? To answer these questions, a qualitative, case study method is articulated in Chapter 3. Given limitations of access, this method relies

principally on Disney Shanghai's digital marketing materials and Chinese citizens' social media posts related to the park. Specifically, a semiotic analysis is conducted on two Shanghai Disneyland commercials. This analysis identifies themes of harmonic balance and collective identity, which produce the brand narrative of "China's Disneyland." To study citizens' engagement with that brand narrative on social media, this study thematically analyzes posts on the Weibo social network that are tagged with "Shanghai Disneyland." Chinese citizens engaged with this brand narrative in ways that deviate somewhat from Disney's messaging, but overall, these engagements align with and reinforce the cultural values in the "China's Disneyland" brand narrative. The study concludes by considering the aspects of Disney's American brand narrative that were discarded, amended, or simply replaced as the company sought to communicate Shanghai Disneyland as "China's Disneyland." Contextual factors, from history to politics to culture are considered to make sense of this negotiation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalization and Glocalization

Globalization, coined by Theodore Levitt in 1983, is the way in which markets can reach multinational and global economic levels. This business strategy dates back to at least 1492 when Christopher Columbus “found” the Americas. However, it has since been used for decades by companies all over the world, including American companies like Coca-a-Cola, McDonald’s, and Walmart. Levitt defines globalization as the means by which various nations can interact and integrate norms in a system enhanced by both technology and international trade. In short, globalization describes a process of expanding one’s business from one country to another (Levitt, 1983).

There is no one way to accomplish global expansion, as an organization can expand through various methods, like grobalization and glocalization (Ritzer, 2003); however, one popular globalization strategy has involved taking one’s business and moving it to another country with limited alterations. This approach is attractive to organizations because it involves limited innovation, and pulls from existing concepts and ideas, making it easier and in many cases, cheaper than other forms. This “the one size fits all” globalization strategy has not always produced great commercial success, though (Rothfeder, 2015). As Kansara (2016) explains, in order be a profitable company globally, “you have to be a great local company because you have to touch people where they live” (para.

7). For example, when McDonald's first expanded to Paris in 1972, the organization originally implemented globalization's "one size fits all" approach by taking their American menu overseas. French citizens worried about the health hazards of the fast-food chain, its American management system, and disruptions to French culture. The negative press and their inability to fit into French culture forced McDonald's to make adjustments with local culture in mind. This included adjustments in their food offerings, employment system, and their business model (Debouzy, 2006).

Attempts like McDonald's in Paris have led to the development and increase of "glocalization" – the application of target marketing strategies on a global scale (Crawford, et. al). In this model, organizations penetrate new markets while consciously adjusting to the particularities of those markets. Starbucks, McDonald's, and *Vogue* have all utilized glocal strategies as sustainable approaches to their businesses overseas. For example, *Vogue* recognized that American standards of beauty were not the same as those in Paris, Asia, or England. Therefore, in order to resonate with French, Asian, and British consumers, *Vogue* altered their publication's representation of beauty to fit the needs, interests, and norms of those markets (Singh, 2011).

Organizations have found that in order to survive in new markets, they must engage with audiences through the distribution of effective, culturally-specific communication that is based upon the specified market. This is referred to as target marketing. Cahill (2013) defines target marketing as the process in

which a firm aims its marketing efforts to a specific group of people. These efforts concern the product (tangible or intangible good), placement (locations of distribution), promotion (communication of product information to consumers), and price. In order to execute a targeted, glocal campaign, organizations need to gain a data-driven understanding of a culture's norms and values and develop a culturally resonant strategy for each marketing effort (Khondker, 2004). Like glocalization, data-driven target marketing strategies are not new. In the 1930s, General Motors' Henry Weaver employed target marketing at one of the first consumer research departments (Boler-Davis, 2016). However, with the rise of digital media, target marketing and communication is increasingly possible on a global scale. This is because digital media not only facilitate the seamless collection of granular, individualized data based on users' clicks, searches, purchases, and posts, but also allows organizations to communicate with these markets directly (Childress 2014; Drori, Höllerer, & Walgenbach, 2013; Rice and Leonardi, 2012).

For instance, in 2005, McDonald's expanded its locations in Brazil. But rather than globalize (as it had in Paris in 1972), the company sought to glocalize and they used their digital media to execute this strategy. To do this, McDonald's Brazil launched a McInternet System, which offered customers free internet services with their purchase of an item (Sacchi, Giannini, Bochic, Reinhard, & Lopes, 2009). While this system was convenient for customers who used it to pay bills, complete homework, and to read daily news, it also allowed

McDonald's a direct way to both collect data about their customers and to communicate with them. Those data were used to inform McDonald's decision making and actions, allowing them to not only integrate into Brazil, but to thrive in Brazil. This was done by making cultural adjustments to the menu, such as offering fresh fruit juices throughout the day and heavily marketing their healthier options to consumers. Although McDonald's adjusted some aspects of their business, they were able to do so while maintaining many traditional elements, such as the golden arches. Thus, by taking a glocalization approach, McDonald's took a global idea (a fast food restaurant) and adapted it to local traditions and norms by considering local tastes (Crawford, Humphries, & Geddy, 2015).

Costs and Benefits of Globalization and Glocalization

Glocalization can be differentiated from the common, "one size-fits all" globalization strategy by considering the costs and benefits of each approach. A "one size fits all" strategy is attractive in that it requires fewer expenses, including investments in research, analysis, and the creation and implementation of new products and campaigns. Indeed, this globalization model does not require many additional expenses beyond those required to open a business in a new location (Levitt, 1983). Moreover, an organization's marketing and brand narrative can remain consistent from market-to-market. On the other hand, the health of the organization can suffer, as long-term profits in foreign markets are typically lower than profits in domestic markets (Rothfeder, 2015). Salomon (2016) explains that being an outsider in a market automatically puts organizations at a disadvantage

because there is a lack of familiarity and trust between the consumer and organization.

By comparison, expenses can be much higher under a glocalization model, as effective, local adjustments to products and campaigns require substantial investments in research, analysis, conceptualization, and implementation (Rothfeder, 2015). However, the revenue benefits of glocalization make it an attractive strategy. A major benefit of glocalization, besides increased profits, in theory, is the increased familiarity and trust that can result from the brand's communication and alignment with norms and values. This is because glocalization's targeted approach allows organizations to understand what is important to a group of people (such as norms, values, and beliefs) and tailor their products and services to meet those expectations, leading to increased profit (Khondker, 2004). Importantly, these benefits have become increasingly easier and cheaper for organizations to pursue through the use of digital media. Digital media increases the speed, convenience, and granularity of data collection and analysis, and they provide new, targeted means of communicating with consumers.

Digital Media

Digital technologies, such as the Internet, social media, computers, and smartphones, can help organizations better understand, communicate to, and foster connections with consumers. Digital media are defined by Grenados (2016) as extensions of traditional forms of media, such as television and print;

however, van Dijk (2012) explains that “new (digital) media” merge telecommunication, data communication, and mass communication. This media “convergence” means that all communication can now be produced and consumed using the same devices (e.g., computers and smartphones) and distributed over the same platform (i.e., the Internet). Additionally, new media make it easier for users to communicate back to producers and for users to communicate with one another (van Dijk, 2012).

While technological advancements such as digital media did not create glocalization, digital media do provide an abundance of support and leverage to organizations that are attempting to glocalize. As Paolo Sigismondi (2011) explains, “successful digital media texts crossing national and cultural borders incorporate global, glocal and local elements enriched by customized elements made possible by the digital media environment” (p. 3). This occurs in two ways.

First, digital media can enhance an organization’s ability to “obtain knowledge and apply known knowledge to various aspects of the organization” (Rice & Leonardi, 2012, p. 427). With digital media, large quantities of granular consumer data can be gathered in a fast, cost-effective, and unobtrusive way, and those data can be used to make culturally-informed marketing decisions. A now-dated, but relevant, 2001 PBS Frontline series, “Merchants of Cool,” illustrates the gravity of this shift. The series showed how “Coolhunters” once studied and analyzed the teen market using largely pre-digital techniques, including focus groups, ethnography, and the use of teenage “cool informants.”

Such techniques were time- and energy-intensive, in that they often required direct observation and interaction with subjects (Goodman, Goodman, & Rushkoff, 2003). Fourteen years later, Frontline's Sarah Childress published "The Future of Marketing is You" – an article that describes how marketers now rely on digital tools to collect and analyze marketing data. Organizations collect data based on an individual's activity online, including e-mail, online shopping, and Web browsing, among others; our online habits are, in essence, the new focus group. These data are so granular and the targeting so precise that, in one famous example, Target was able to predict whether shoppers were pregnant based on the items they purchased (Childress, 2014).

Importantly, these data can facilitate both individualized and large-scale marketing decisions. For instance, Coca-Cola used data from their new, digital beverage machines to track consumers' beverage customization choices. Coca-Cola found that consumers who drank Sprite nationwide frequently added a splash of cherry flavor to their beverage. Based on this intel, Coca-Cola introduced Cherry Sprite to their beverage line (Wong, 2017). Together, the increased speed, granularity, and cost-effectiveness of digital data collection make these tools attractive to organizations as they pursue glocalization (Childress, 2014).

Second, digital media can enhance communication and connectivity between organizations and consumers. This has occurred in two interrelated ways. First, digital media provide organizations with more devices and platforms

through which to communicate information and ideas to consumers. These include smartphones, apps, social media, websites, blogs, and others. Second, those various devices and platforms can facilitate two-way communication between organizations and users, as well as communication between users, themselves (van Dijk, 2012). Digital media content can be shared, saved, and publicly commented on, stimulating what Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison (2009) refer to as “participatory culture.” Jenkins et. al (2009) noted that with digital media, consumers move from an audience of passive spectators to an audience of active participants who are not only able to respond to organizations but now have a chance to create their own representations or models of a product. This type of participation is important because it facilitates engagement with the organization and ultimately promotes brand awareness, visibility, and connectivity to the brand. This can be difficult for organizations, as it opens the organization up to negative feedback, piracy, and other concerns. However, through the participation and engagement of consumers, organizations are able to see the result of their attempts to tap into norms and values through their marketing campaigns and strategies. These strategies are practiced through the enactment process (Escobedo, 2017).

Enactment and Marketing

Organizations, which are structures and processes both created and enabled by people, are both proactive and reactive to their surroundings. In other words, in order to exist successfully, organizational processes must make

sense of and respond to the environment in which they exist. Weick (2001) posited that organizations are constantly in motion and continuation because they are situated in environments that are “constituted by action” (p. 177). This mutual process, identified by Weick, is enactment. Thus, Enactment is the organizing process by which organizational members make sense of their environment with consumers in mind and then act based on their perceptions and understanding of that environment. The organization keeps the consumer in mind because they are aware of consumers ability to use sensemaking, to develop an understanding of the organization and their attempted value statement. The process of organizational enactment occurs in two steps: the reality of field (industry) knowledge, and market (consumer) knowledge, and then acting within that knowledge to respond to an environment (Weick, 1988). More specific to this study, organizations enact by creating marketing materials that guide consumers to evoke specific feelings or preconceptions of a specific image, material, or symbolic action. This communication is like a set of “how to” instructions that provide a clear purpose of the brand’s existence and how it relates to consumers. However, this purpose is in response to the environment around the organization on both field (industry) and market (consumer) levels (Hanlon, 2016). For example, McDonald’s recently used enactment to respond to a changing industry landscape that constituted the Slow Food Movement trend in the United States. First, McDonald’s investigated their decline in sales and became aware of the trends (sustainability, environmental factors, climate

change) occurring in both field (industry) and market (consumer) levels. These trends informed McDonald's of the actions that they needed to take to appeal to the current markets and to remain competitive in the industry. McDonald's responded by adjusting their menu, incorporating healthier and sustainable food options, and by communicating those changes to their consumers in their marketing materials (Maze, 2016).

The enactment process can also be used by companies who are entering new markets or environments. For example, Beats by Dre (Beats) company often uses commercials to illustrate the role their headphones and other audio devices can play in various consumers' lives. These commercials often depict people listening to music while engaging in hard work, dedication, and the spirit of success in various environments such as the gym and sporting events (Seb, 2015). But when Beats tried to enter the English rugby market, the company had to conduct research to understand the norms and values surrounding the sport. Beats learned that national pride played an important role in the consumers' understanding and experience of the sport, prompting Beats to craft their brand narrative, as a story that supports those norms and values (Seb, 2015). Through flashbacks to English National Rugby Team Captain, Chris Robshaw's secondary school playing days, orchestrated to English musician, Jacob Collier's tune, Beats told a story of hard work, dedication, and national pride. This brand narrative in the form of a commercial teaches consumers how to use the product and informs them of the narrative that your future begins where you are now, and

Beats headphones are a tool to get you there (Tesser, 2016). Thus, Beats used its field and market knowledge (i.e., research) to respond to an environment that is compatible with their product, and they taught Rugby fans how to incorporate Beats into their own lives.

In the context of this study, enactment helps explain how an organization like Disney uses data to make sense of a market or “environment,” and how those sensemaking processes inform the organizing process to appeal to those markets (Weick, 1988). Ultimately, Enactment was how Disney made sense of the environment (Chinese culture, market, politic) in order to make glocalization work. Enactment is particularly relevant here, as Shanghai Disneyland is the first instance in which Disney has been proactive about their identity in the process of glocalization. In previous international ventures, Disney adjusted those parks’ organizational identities as a reactionary strategy.

Woodside, Sood, & Miller (2008) also tie enactment to marketing by arguing that enactment provides a story that creates a conversation between brands and consumers. The components of this story then result in a brand narrative. In this study, this narrative, provided by Disney is necessary to ease limitations and restrictions as tensions that occur between two separate organizational structures that have different norms, values, and ways of conducting business: China and Disney.

Marketing a Brand Narrative

Forbes Magazine blog contributor, Hanlon (2016) explains that a brand narrative is a building block of a meaningful brand strategy. It displays what the community says about a brand as well as illustrates the “moments and experiences shared between the user and the product or service” (para. 3).

Hanlon notes that a brand narrative is a product that is strategically distributed to consumers and is crafted with careful consideration of data collection. These narratives -- the product of enactment -- are building blocks of brand strategy because they are often the first aspect of the company that a consumer comes into contact with. Brand narratives communicate the values, goals, and purpose of the organization to the consumer (Hanlon, 2016). For instance, a company might use a heartfelt story about struggle or determination to communicate how they make the world a better place. The goal is to generate familiarity between the organization and the consumer and to align itself with their target market’s values and norms (Hanlon 2016).

Companies use marketing strategies and media channels to push brand narratives to target markets. Peter and Donnelly (2012) define marketing as, “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value for customers, clients, partners and society at large” (p. 5). Brand narratives are an important component of this value-oriented communication in that they articulate how the company aligns with the target market’s needs and values. One of the best ways to do so, when glocalizing, is to

use an integrated approach, which would allow for the repetition and reinforcement of brand messaging (Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Bergh, 2017). Integrated marketing is both a strategy and process that combines various marketing components, such as advertising, promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and social media, to produce a unified, consistent message and experience. With this consistency, each marketing piece reinforces the others (“Integrated Marketing Definitions,” 2015). Pelsmacker et al. (2017) argue that integrated marketing attempts to connect the dots between the top management’s vision, organizational culture, brand image and the experience tied to that brand. Digital media enhance the integrated approach, allowing organizations to reach consumers through various platforms and devices. (“Integrated Marketing Definitions” 2015).

In the context of this study, the brand narrative, as a product of enactment, is an important tool for Disney. It not only informs the Chinese market of the park’s features, but also informs the Chinese people of its coordination and balance with Chinese culture. With fears and concerns regarding imperialism and western influence (“Disneyland in Shanghai: a Plot?,” 2009), the crafting and distribution of a brand narrative to Chinese consumers is an important consideration for Disney. But a company like Disney does not produce a brand narrative out of whole cloth when they enter a new market; they must work from the company’s existing history and brand narrative.

Brief History of Disney's Theme Parks

The Walt Disney Company was founded on October 16, 1923 when Walt Disney's *The Alice Comedies* were sold to New York distributor, M.J. Winkler (Disney History, n.d.). Walt Disney's big break came at an opportune time, as Disney's 1937 film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the first sound and color animation film (Rojek, 1993). Although these films are now dated to contemporary audiences, they illustrate Disney's early desire to consistently maintain creativity and innovation. This strategy has assisted in Disney's ownership of large subsidiaries and digital media contributors (such as ABC, Disney Channel, Walt Disney Studios, Lucas Film, Marvel Entertainment, Pixar, and Disney Parks), which has allowed Disney to exercise market power and produce innovation in various facets, such as graphic design, television shows, special effects, and more (Hoovers, n.d.). Through market power and expansion to various markets, Disney uses its theme parks to leverage "synergy," the ability to capitalize on cross-promotional activities, that ultimately enforced Disney's All-American brand narrative, through multiple channels (Wasko, 2001).

The American Disney Brand

The Walt Disney Company opened Disneyland, its first theme park, in Anaheim, California in 1955. The park is widely known for being "The Happiest Place on Earth," but its notion of happiness aligns with American ideals and the "rags to riches" model of the American Dream (Tumbusch, 2008). Books, television shows, and press interviews introduced Walt Disney as an American

hero who wanted to make childhood, fun, and happiness a place, rather than a memory (Gottdiener, 1982). On Disneyland's opening day in 1955, Walt Disney's dedication speech welcomed guests with these words:

To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past ... and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and the hard facts that have created America ... with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world (Disney, n.d., 0:06).

This narrative was ultimately a value proposition that informed consumers that Disneyland was a place where the past was honored (nostalgia) and the future was dreamt. This narrative gave meaning and purpose to the five original themed areas in the park: Main Street USA, Fantasyland, Frontierland, Tomorrowland, and Adventureland. Each idealized aspects of American culture, nostalgia, and ideals, such as colonialism, capitalism, patriotism, and progress (Padilla, 2003). Padilla (2003) explains that Walt displayed "his own life and dreams within his realms of entertainment," emulating nostalgia of Walt's own past (p. 30). This is seen in the establishment of Main Street USA, a replica of Walt Disney's childhood town of Marceline, Missouri and in the way that Walt Disney referred Disneyland as a direct result of a dream, hard work, and imagination (Padilla, 2003). Together, these pieces communicate an idealized version of American history, nostalgia and values as Disneyland's brand

narrative -- that it is a place of happiness and dreams, specifically the American Dream.

Prior to the park's opening, this narrative was distributed through films, merchandise, music, publications, comics, and broadcast television (Kissane, 2016). Walt Disney signed an agreement with the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in 1954 to produce the "Disneyland" television series in exchange for their investment in the park (Glover, 2015). In the first episode, with the theme song, "When You Wish Upon A Star," Walt Disney announced the park's opening. Disney described his relationship with Mickey Mouse as a partnership, and he introduced the park by saying, "Now we want to share with you, our latest and greatest dream ... Disneyland" (Parkscope Blog, 2017). In the episode, Walt Disney describes the park as a space filled with, "hopes and dreams, facts and fantasy" and he explains that the park represents the transition from hopes and dreams into a reality (Parkscope Blog, 2017). In later episodes of the series, Walt Disney introduces each of the original lands and their ties to American values and ideals, explaining that Frontierland is a visit to America's historic past, all of which coordinate with the opening day dedication speech in an integrated marketing approach.

This brand narrative was reinforced twenty years later when Disney opened Walt Disney World (WDW) in Orlando, Florida. WDW was a "one-size-fits-all," national expansion. WDW, while much larger than Disneyland in California, contained the same themed areas as Disneyland-- popcorn was sold,

parades ran throughout the park, and American holidays were celebrated (Fjellman 1992). Meanwhile, Disney films such as *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* (1955), *Johnny Tremain* (1955), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1955) enjoyed commercial success. These films aligned with the values celebrated in Walt's Disneyland dedication speech, including dreams becoming a reality and displays of American patriotism. The success of Disney's parks and films allowed it to quickly acquire large portions of the film and entertainment market, creating brand strength so strong that demand in overseas markets began to develop (Britt, 1990).

Disney Parks Goes Global- and then Glocal

Through collaboration with the Japanese government, Disney became aware of the Japanese people's interest in and demand for American culture, including Disney. In 1983, Disney opened Tokyo Disneyland -- a replica of WDW (Britt, 1990). Disney had originally planned a glocalized approach, but this was turned down by the Japanese government who felt that the authenticity of the park would be compromised if "Samurai Land" replaced "Adventure Land" at Tokyo Disneyland (Maanen, 1992). Thus, Disney infused marketing for Tokyo Disneyland with western values and business models. These included references to Walt Disney's ability to achieve the American Dream through establishment of familiar themed lands. Western representations in Disneyland Tokyo's marketing made it seem "authentically American" (Maanen, 1992; Raz, 2000). This strategy seemed to work for the Japanese market. In 1993 (ten years after opening),

Disneyland Tokyo had 15,815,000 park guests, more than any other theme park in the world (Raz, 2000).

Disney launched its second international park, Euro Disney, in Paris, France in 1992. The park expected 500,000 guests in the inaugural year, but when only 50,000 showed up, the French government suggested that the lack of interest was due to the park's American management system and the lack of attention to and consideration of European culture and norms (Matusitz, 2010a). Taking the French government's concerns into account, Disney removed the American chairman, Robert Fitzpatrick, and replaced him with a nationally known French chairman who looked to manage the park with a European management style, and a focused on integrating French and European values in its everyday products and services (Matusitz, 2010). By conducting research on European and French traditions, "Disney identified the European love for cultural foods, architecture, music, and national celebrations" (Spencer, 1995, p. 107). The company adjusted its food and dining accommodations, architecture, music, and even dress. Other changes included the removal of American Disney rides such as "The Jungle Cruise," which European citizens claimed was a reminder of imperialism. The park's name was also changed from Euro Disney to Disneyland Paris to acknowledge the park's distinct locale. This was the first time Disney had adjusted one of its parks' services and brand narrative to fit another culture's values and norms (Spencer, 1995). In other words, it was the first time the

company had to glocalize an international park to meet the expectations of local consumers.

Despite Disney's costly Paris folly, the company took a similar globalization approach when it launched Hong Kong Disneyland in 2005. Again, it was faced with declining attendance and complaints soon after opening (Matusitz, 2011). Chinese guests complained that the park's small size, dysfunctional layout, long lines, and negative environmental impact were not worth a visit (Choi, 2012). After market research, Disney realized that the majority of Chinese guests were unfamiliar with the Disney brand, which included Disney characters and the park's "lands" (Choi, 2012). In order to resolve these problems, Disney enhanced their correspondence and collaboration with the Chinese government and determined that cultural dress, Feng Shui, and environmental waste were concerns for the Chinese people. Alterations were made, such as the addition of Chinese gardens and cultural events (Fung & Lee, 2009). Disney also created a technologically advanced environmental management system that would demonstrate that Hong Kong Disneyland was just as interested in preserving the environment as the Hong Kong citizens (Environmental Management at Hong Kong Disneyland, n.d.; Lau & Yim, 2017). While this glocalized approach appeared to work for Disneyland Hong Kong, the park has recently faced problems, requiring park upgrades and additional glocalization efforts to distinguish it from other parks (Sun, 2016). Still, Hong

Kong Disneyland provided Disney access to Chinese markets and the marketing insights necessary to expand to mainland China (Lau & Yim, 2017).

Getting Glocal Right: Shanghai Disneyland

Referred to as “Authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese” by CEO Bob Iger, Disney approached mainland China, Shanghai Disneyland with a glocalized strategy. Disney worked alongside the Chinese government to forge a productive relationship between Disney and the Chinese people and government (Wisel, 2016). In multiple press interviews, Iger emphasized that research and data collection regarding Chinese culture, local norms, and interests were incorporated in the park. In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* days before the park’s opening, Iger noted that Disney was still learning about their Chinese markets through a series of test runs and by observing guests in initial soft launches. These revealed an unexpected demand for American food items, such as hot dogs and hamburgers and a strong need for shaded seating for elderly park guests. According to Iger, this attention to detail caused multiple delays in its official opening date (Makinen, 2016). Iger stressed the importance of getting the details right the first time and this was demonstrated in the years spent working with the Chinese Government to make sure the park was something that could effectively represent and “speak” to the Chinese people. Learning from mistakes made in the past, Disney made the park larger than Hong Kong Disneyland, and it constructed the castle to reflect contemporary Chinese architecture. The castle is also the largest castle at any Disney Park.

These details, although seemingly minor, came after years of climate testing and research regarding the political and social systems of China and Disney's interaction with China in the past (i.e. Hong Kong Disneyland,) (Lockett, 2015).

Research on Shanghai Disneyland as a glocalized venture is on-going, as the park is less than two years old. However, in their first year, Iger claimed the park exceeded Disney's expectations, as they welcomed 11 million guests in their inaugural year (Shen, 2017). Whether the park is sustainably successful or not, though, Shanghai Disneyland provides a striking case-study of glocalization. Disney is using a glocal approach to expand into a new, international market that so many global firms are eager to enter. But unlike Coke and McDonald's, Disney is a service-oriented conglomerate that sells experiences as much as it sells products. Moreover, Shanghai Disneyland is not just a single case; it is the product of Disney's past ventures, too. Iger claims that Shanghai Disneyland is the "descendent of the past parks" and reflects the lessons learned along the way (Low, 2016). There is no better place to examine what Disney has learned about glocalization, and how it is implementing those lessons than in the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative. With this in mind, I pose the following research question: How has Shanghai Disneyland used its brand narrative to negotiate tensions in the glocalization process (i.e., being "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese")? And how have Chinese citizens engaged with this brand narrative on social media?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

While there are various methods that could shed light on these research questions, this study employs a case study approach. Yin (2013) explains that case studies are empirical inquiries that involve an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon and its real-world context. Case study researchers look at an organization's actions to draw conclusions about how and why decisions are made. While direct observation would be ideal, accessibility is a key limitation in this study: I am not in Shanghai; Disney does not publically share their decision-making processes; and the events that I am concerned with have already occurred. Under such circumstances, case study researchers often examine documents, such as marketing materials and social media platforms, that provide clues about the decisions that produced those texts and outcomes (Deacon, Murdock, Pickering, & Golding, 2007). Through careful, interpretive analysis of those relevant documents, I aim to "illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result" (Yin, 2013, p. 17). Specifically, I examine Shanghai Disneyland's marketing texts to understand how it used its brand narrative to negotiate tensions in the glocalization process as it attempted to be "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese." Further, I also look at the ways consumers have engaged with that brand narrative on social media.

Sampling

This study involves two levels of sampling decisions. The first concerns the specific case examined and the second concerns the documents used to understand that case. A limitation of case studies is their small sample (Yin, 2013). However, I defend this study's examination of a single case by reiterating that Shanghai Disneyland is Disney's most recent theme park, and it provides insight into what the company has learned about glocalization and how it is implementing those insights. As Disney grew from Disneyland in Anaheim to Shanghai Disneyland, the successes, failures, and revised approaches to the five prior parks have provided guidance in the way that Disney has entered Shanghai. This increases the value of this specific case and provides layers that link to Disney's past globalized and glocalized ventures.

The second level of sampling concerns the selection of documents for studying this case. Two types of documents will be examined. First, in order to understand how Shanghai Disneyland used its brand narrative to negotiate tensions in the glocalization process, I examine Shanghai Disneyland's first two television commercials in the Chinese market (Poblete, 2016). These commercials were originally released by Tencent, a Chinese digital media streaming service. The debut commercial was released roughly 100 days before the park's opening and the second just after Shanghai Disneyland's opening day on June 16, 2016. The minute-long commercials show Disney's integration into mainland China in the form of Shanghai Disneyland. They do so by illustrating

the Shanghai Disneyland Castle as a fixture among the Shanghai skyline and by introducing the space as one that families and society can share. These commercials are particularly relevant, as television marketing is heavily regulated by the Chinese government, and Disney did not establish a Disney Channel in China – something it typically does in overseas media. As such, any television marketing Disney Shanghai *did* produce for the Chinese market is important and worthy of investigation.

Second, in order to understand how Chinese citizens engaged with the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative on social media, I examine users' posts on Weibo -- China's popular social media platform. Thirty percent of the Chinese population utilizes the micro-blogging application, which they use to post images, video, and text (Chernavina, 2017). Chinese citizens often generate portrayals of Disney on the platform, and those posts are treated, here, as engagement with the park and its brand narrative. Posts that included the phrase "Shanghai Disneyland" were filtered. This filtering system generated posts from January 6, 2018 (when I started the study) to some of the first user-generated posts about Shanghai Disneyland. Although it would have been nice to look at these very first posts, these search results were in reverse-chronological order, and it would have taken days to scroll down the feed to those early posts. Instead, I examined a total of 17 posts and 65 photos that ranged from January 6, 2018 to February 14, 2018. Specifically, I looked for patterns in the photos that users posted -- particularly the use of icons that had been featured in the Shanghai Disneyland

television commercials. Some icons featured in the television commercials immediately stood out in users' posts, such as the Shanghai Disneyland castle, characters, and elements of nature, while others, like photos of food, were unlike the television commercials, but still documented.

Scott (1990) identifies four "quality control criteria" for assessing documents—authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. Specifically, researchers relying on documents must evaluate whether those documents are genuine (authenticity), the extent to which the documents contents can be trusted (credibility), how similar those documents are to the body of relevant documents (representativeness), and the extent to which the documents are understandable (meaning). Using Scott's framework, the strengths and limitations of this sample can be identified.

One obvious limitation is this sample's representativeness. I did not analyze *all* of Disney's marketing materials for Disney Shanghai (a census) or even a representative sample of those materials. Instead, I look at just two commercials because, in doing so, I am able to conduct the sort of close, semiotic analysis that is needed to make sense of the brand narrative communicated through those texts. This is a level of depth that cannot be achieved with a large sample (Langrehr & Caywood 1995). Given the logic involved with integrated marketing and branding, television commercials are unlikely to differ significantly from other Shanghai Disneyland marketing

materials; therefore, I can get a solid interpretation of the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative by only looking at two commercials.

While this small sample helps facilitate a nuanced reading of those commercials, Scott's (1990) criterion of "meaning" also poses limitations. Specifically, the commercials and social media posts are in Chinese -- a language that I cannot read or understand. To address this limitation, I obtained two translations of each commercial. One translation came from a Mandarin speaking colleague, and other was obtained by the YouTube user who provided the English translation in the summary section of the video. For the social media posts, I only interpreted the images posted -- not the text that accompanies those pictures. This poses a limitation in that the text/image interaction may communicate meanings that are not evident in the image alone. Moreover, images, too, can have meanings that a researcher from another culture, like myself, may not recognize. Recognizing these limitations, I asked 4 colleagues who are from a Chinese Culture (two Taiwanese and two Chinese) to read my results and share whether my interpretations comport with their understandings of the commercials and social media posts. Through these colleague checks, I was provided some insight on how collective identity is often practiced as a means to preserve harmony among social groups as well as the broader society. This insight not only provided some clarity of how Chinese values were intertwined, but also sharpened my interpretation of harmony and its value. Thus,

these colleague checks help ensure that my interpretations are reasonably trustworthy and within scope of Chinese culture.

Data Annotation and Organization

To interpret Shanghai Disneyland's brand narrative in these texts, I conduct a semiotic analysis. Semiotics is the science of signs and symbols and their "life" in society (Gottdiener, 1982). Gottdiener defines a sign as an "object or image produced so as to intentionally stand for something else" (p.140). So, semiotic analysis examines the unification between object and meaning (Gottdiener, 1982). Semiotic analysis is appropriate for the collection, annotation, and interpretation of signs, codes, and their connotations (Freire, 2014). It is through such signs and symbols that Disney communicates its brand narrative and social media users engage with that narrative. Semiotic analysis of these signs and symbols, then, can shed light on the meanings of each text, offering insight into the choices Disney made concerning its brand narrative and the ways in which Chinese citizens made sense of those texts.

This study's semiotic analysis is two-part. First, I conducted a paradigmatic analysis in which I identified the various signs and symbols that make up each commercial. These signs and symbols include familiar Disney brand icons, such as the Disney castle, characters (e.g., Mickey Mouse), fireworks, color schemes, and song lyrics, but also meaningful Chinese cultural symbols such as colors, nature elements, human-made environments, and depictions of relationships. For each of these, I then considered alternative signs

or symbols that could have been used in their place (Hodkinson, 2016). For instance, when Cinderella is referenced in the debut commercial, I considered what other characters could have been referenced. This then led me to consider the significance of Cinderella, specifically. Freire (2014) explains that paradigmatic analysis focuses an analyst's attention on choice; it requires an interpretation and analysis of why some symbols are used and others not. This process helped, particularly, in identifying deviations between the American Disney brand narrative and the Disney Shanghai brand narrative. My experience with the American Disney brand also shaped the particular signs and symbols that I paid attention to, because they were familiar to me, making any deviations stand out. These deviations highlight possible tensions around globalization that Shanghai Disneyland sought to negotiate through its brand narrative.

Second, I conducted a syntagmatic analysis of the interactions between the signs and symbols present in each commercial (Hodkinson, 2016). Specifically, I produced a matrix for each commercial to identify the signs and symbols that appeared in conjunction with one another. By organizing the symbols in this way, I could see how they interact with each other to make meaning. For example, the matrix considers the relationship between Captain Jack Sparrow and Cinderella. Based on my interpretation of them within the context, I conclude that the characters represent old and new (based on the time period they were released) and joins a group of individuals (Cinderella joins a young woman) and groups (Captain Jack Sparrow joins a group of Children) to

go to a new place, that is the Shanghai Disneyland Castle. Interpreting this as balance and collectivity, I would then take this idea to consider any tensions between the U.S. and China that concern balance or collectivity. Through this analysis, I will be able to produce an interpretation of the commercial in a cultural context.

Semiotic analysis is an effective tool for closely examining individual media texts; however, other methods, such as thematic analysis, are more appropriate for identifying and understanding symbolic patterns and meanings across a larger sample of texts, such as social media posts. Thematic analysis is an “accessible and theoretically-flexible” qualitative approach for identifying “themes” across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is a salient, or meaningful pattern in the data that sheds light on the research question (Howitt and Cramer, 2006). Thus, the quantitative prevalence of any particular theme is less important than its meaningfulness and relevance to the research question. Since I was interested, here, in how Chinese citizens engaged with the Disney Shanghai brand narrative on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform, I paid particular attention to the patterned use of meaningful signs and symbols from the commercials. For instance, social media users regularly posted images of the Shanghai Disneyland castle, characters, and natural elements (nature) -- each of which I had identified as important symbols in the Disney Shanghai brand narrative.

Using these three prominent symbols as categories, I followed Howitt and Cramer (2006) in coding each post with brief descriptions of the other signs and symbols in each post. Using these brief descriptions as a guide, I then color-coded each post to identify additional categories and subcategories, such as daytime (light blue) and nighttime (dark blue) castle photos.

To summarize, I used semiotic analysis to identifying the meaningful signs and symbols present in the commercials, the alternative signs/symbols that could have been used (paradigmatic analysis), and how those signs and symbols were used in conjunction with one another (syntagmatic analysis). Then I used thematic analysis to identify the patterned ways in which Chinese consumers engaged with those meaningful signs and symbols on social media. These data do not “speak for themselves,” though; I needed to interpret and explain them, too.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

In the processes discussed above, I became familiarized with the documents and systematically annotated and organized their contents. However, those meaningful signs, symbols, and themes also need to be interpreted and explained. Huberman and Miles (2002) define an interpretive analysis as an informed opinion based on a set of experiences. Moreover, interpretation is a matter of perspective, as “knowledge about reality is mediated through the researcher” (Tracy, 2012, p. 40). In the context of this study, my experience is not just my interaction with the commercials and consumers’ social media posts.

Those experiences inform and are informed by my understanding of the relevant theories, Chinese culture, and the Disney brand. In this iterative approach, Howitt and Cramer (2011) explain that “at every stage of the analysis, the researcher will alter and modify the analysis in light of experience as ideas develop” (p. 329).

To illustrate the iterative process, consider an individual in the process of piecing together a jigsaw puzzle of a dog. The individual is told that the puzzle is simply a picture of a dog, and from that, the individual has a decent idea of what the dog puzzle will look like. But the individual is not provided information on *how* the dog will look. The individual does not know the details of the specs of black and brown freckles on the dog’s nose or the darker shade of brown in the center of the dog’s eye. The individual knows the puzzle pieces fit together to create a whole image, but cannot figure out *how* individual pieces relate to each other. This is so because puzzle pieces present more detail than the individual can organize. The individual can only complete the puzzle by assessing whether the pieces fit their preconceived ideas of what the picture likely looks like. If pieces do not fit together as expected, they have to adjust their idea of what the picture looks like.

For example, while organizing and trying to make sense of the data, I found myself diving back into the literature to learn more about Chinese culture and politics and the tensions between those systems and global companies, like Disney, that are seeking to enter the Chinese market. I also used the iterative process to work between known facts, such as red being a Chinese national

color, and my interpretations of the texts, whether commercials or social media posts. Where I confronted data that did not make sense to me, I returned to the literature to see if there was something about the culture or circumstances that I had not understood, and I revised my understanding and description accordingly.

One limitation of an interpretive analysis is the challenge of providing a convincing analysis. Because the findings are an interpretation of how the theory, data, and my experiences tie together, readers might feel as though there are holes or distortions in the study. This can happen when a researcher has not delved deep enough into the data, only making surface level interpretations or not illustrating their claims effectively (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Braun and Clark (2006) argue that the best way to avoid this problem is to provide clear, specific examples of data and all claims. By offering rich examples and exemplars, the reader will be able to understand and the evidence my interpretations are based upon and evaluate their merits. These examples will be selected carefully in order to avoid the weakness of having a “mismatch” between theory, data, and claims (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The Shanghai Disneyland commercials studied depict two distinct settings. The debut commercial portrays the park's arrival in Shanghai, and the second commercial illustrates settings from within the park. In the following chapter, I richly describe these two commercials, and I detail my semiotic analysis of these texts. Through this semiotic analysis, I identify two key themes in the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative--harmonic balance and collective identity. Through this brand narrative, Shanghai Disneyland constructs itself as China's Disneyland, a place that is "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese."

The debut commercial begins in a Shanghai city street at dusk. The music, chimes of Chinese flutes, as a Chinese woman, walking through the city, stops at a storefront window to dreamily gaze at a baby blue dress on display. With her eyes fixed on the dress, she places her hands gently over her heart and, with a look of disbelief, turns around to face a large white stallion and gold-plated carriage. The music's tempo picks up, a tune with uplifting notes, the audience can now see that the dress, like the carriage, resembles iconic symbols from the Disney movie, *Cinderella*. She cheerfully smiles, steps into the carriage, with a look of awe on her face, and a male narrator says (in Mandarin), "No matter who you are."

The commercial cuts to the next scene where two Chinese boys and a girl play near a river bank before the Shanghai city skyline as Captain Jack

Sparrow's pirate ship sails into the frame. With mesmerized faces, similar to that of the young woman, the ship sails with the Shanghai city skyline in the background. Then, the commercial dramatically cuts to those three children now, venturing on the ship, along-side Captain Jack Sparrow. The narrator returns: "Young or young at heart."

In the next scene, the music softens and chirping birds can be heard, as a grandson sits on his grandfather's lap in a rooftop garden, again with the Shanghai city skyline in the background. They both grasp an open book with Disney's animated Dumbo character on it. Then, in front of the Shanghai skyline, Dumbo emerges from a clouded sky . The narrator returns again: "As long as you stay curious and dream," and the grandfather and grandson are now seen riding on Dumbo, with clouds and the Shanghai city skyline in the distance. Next, a group of teenage friends -- two males and two females -- are depicted in a high-tech looking Chinese train station. The musical score now rivets, sounding like adventure, as their faces express concern, as they miss a train. But then, they all smile in delight as one of the male teens jumps on a neon-lit motorcycle that represents the Shanghai Disneyland Tron attraction. The rest of the group then joins him on their own individual motorcycles, triggering the music to include the whirling sounds of a high-tech motorcycle. The narrator exclaims: "Let your imagination soar in this magical kingdom."

Finally, Captain Jack Sparrow's pirate ship, Dumbo, Cinderella's carriage and the Tron cycles appear side-by-side, all heading in the same direction, like a

freeway of cars, once again passing the Shanghai skyline. In this shot the music grows more intense, as if it were leading up to something. The frame is shaded lighter on the left and darker on the right and it stays that way. All of the modes of transportation travel towards the darkest point of the screen (the right) which leads them to the Shanghai Disneyland castle, alongside Mickey Mouse, who walks on a red carpet, holding the hand of a young female child. The child's parents walk slightly beside her, with her father's arm around his wife's shoulder. They smile as they look ahead. The narrator returns, "We invite you to bring your family and friends..." as the castle is now seen with purple, gold, red, and green fireworks above it. As fireworks continue to erupt, the grandchild, seen previously, is perched on his grandfather's shoulders as they gaze at the fireworks with smiles on their faces. Around them, crowd of also look on, into the sky. The narrator continues, picking up mid-sentence, "...to the upcoming Shanghai Disney Resort, and ignite the dream with us." Meanwhile, fireworks illuminate the sky, which is now at its darkest shade of blue. The Shanghai Disney Resort logo, in its colors of red, gold, purple, and white, topped by the Shanghai Disney castle, also appears, starting with shades that resemble the fireworks, but ending in a bold red color. The commercial ends, the music hits its highest note-- concluding with a quick glimpse of the little girl hugging Mickey Mouse, as a red firework explodes behind them.

The second commercial takes viewers inside the gates of Shanghai Disneyland. It begins with music, a simple piano score, as a light and bright shot

of Cinderella walking in front of the castle waving at park guests. The music's tune softens and around her, children and adults pose for pictures in front of the castle holding Mickey Mouse balloons. One guest holds a camera in the background, taking a photo of an object (presumed to be a child) covered by Cinderella's dress. As Cinderella walks towards the castle, away from the camera, a little girl steps in between the camera and Cinderella. Her pink tulle skirt ruffles at her knees as she jumps and waves, catching Cinderella's attention immediately. She runs towards the camera, away from her mother, to Cinderella, as her mother stands in a gaze, hands clasped in the center of her chest. A narrator says, "There's always a princess living in a girl's heart." Cinderella is now eye-level with the little girl, holding her hands and smiling at her. The same exchange then occurs between the little girl's mother and Cinderella.

The commercial cuts to cast members in the parade dancing through a crowd of people, waving at park guests as the character Mulan sits on a float resembling her steed. Behind the float is the Shanghai Disneyland castle surrounded by a large crowd. A montage of clips from the parade unfold, including performers dancing, themed floats passing by and families enjoying the entertainment. Then, the piano score returns, speeding up, as the camera pans to a grandmother and grandchild sitting on a bench on the parade route clapping and smiling. The music slows, sounding like soft notes from a violin as the grandmother shares a laugh with grandpa, who holds a red Mickey Mouse balloon. The grandparents continue laughing as the camera zooms in on the

grandfather lovingly bending down behind the grandmother, embracing her, and brushing his cheek with the top of her head. The female narrator returns: "There is no relationship between your real age and your desire to stay young." The parade continues, with shots of performers in a kick line. The camera pans to smiling children's faces in the crowd, and then to orange and yellow balloons being held by the child in front of the castle.

Suddenly, the music changes, replacing the riveting tune of the piano with notes from a violin, increasing its intensity. In a one-of-a-kind version of Pirates of the Caribbean, Jack Sparrow's pirate ship (on a projection screen) aggressively breaks out of water, the music incorporating the splashing sound. The crowd on the attraction, seated in small boats, point and gaze up at Jack Sparrow's ship with excitement, as a little boy is seen sitting between his parents alongside a boat full of people. At this point, the crowd on the attraction appear to be in illusionary danger, as their boat looks to dodge the large ships on the projection screen. Courageously, the little boy throws his arms across his parents to protect them, as his parents smile upon him. Here, the narrator says, "Love can trigger courage."

The scene changes again, the music continuing with the tech sounds of a high-tech motorcycle, illustrating the Tron cycles attraction at nighttime. The angle of the attraction changes, the music including the excited screams of guests who are enjoying the Tron attraction. The cycles carry the viewer to the firework show, returning to the little girl, her mother, and Cinderella. Then the

music reverts back to a soft tune, not including a violin and what sounds like the beats of a tambourine, the commercial cuts twice – first to an image of a firework exploding over one of the spires of the castle, and then back to the little boy and his grandparents, who appear to still be laughing and amused. The grandmother leans back and gracefully places her head on her husband’s chest, sharing a smile with him. The camera then quickly pans back to a little girl, this time held by her father, and zooms into her eyes, where the firework-illuminated sky reflects in her cornea. The commercial concludes with the softening of music, fireworks erupting over the castle, and the Shanghai Disneyland logo (in red and yellow) appear on screen. As the music softens further, with the return of violin notes, the narrator says, “be bold and you are able to immerse in the Disneyland world of Shanghai.”

By looking carefully at the choice and arrangement of signs and symbols in these commercials, the following semiotic analysis describes how these texts communicate Disney Shanghai’s brand narrative -- that it is China’s Disneyland, a place that is “Authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese.” This is accomplished by tapping into Chinese cultural values, including harmonic balance and collective identity.

Harmonic Balance

In these two television commercials harmony is communicated through an emphasis on balance, including aesthetics (light and dark), age (young and old), gender (boys and girls), socio-cultural values (tradition and innovation), the lived

environment (natural and constructed), and, of course, experience (dreams and reality). Such balance is important in Chinese culture, as the Chinese value of harmony concerns balance and coordination of things, which can include symbolic and physical objects of beings (Lihua, 2013). Thus, Chinese audiences are familiar with these concepts, and Disney believes that Chinese audiences are likely to respond positively to these elements of the brand narrative.

The commercials illustrate the light/dark balance in that, as the commercial goes on, scenes often shift from light (left) to dark (right) along the skyline. This juxtaposition reflects the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang. This refers to the equilibrium and steadiness of the natural cycle that concerns the moon and the sun cycles (Huang, 2016). The way both commercials aesthetics shift from light to dark represents the cycle of the day. This coordination of light and dark elements are not seen as opposites, but compliments to each other to create one object or experience. For example, considering the concepts of Yin and Yang, reality and dreams compliment each other, as reality (the current state) causes an individual to consider what could be (the future), constituting a dream. Therefore, a dream can be considered as an ideal state based on reality.

The commercials also emphasize gender and intergenerational balance. This is demonstrated in the even representation of both boys and girls, as well as men and women. Even more so than gender balance, though, the commercials communicate balance between elders and tradition, on the one hand, and youth and innovation, on the other. For instance, the debut commercial illustrates

intergenerational balance in having a grandfather read the 1941 Disney story, *Dumbo*, to his grandson. This also balances tradition and innovation by suggesting that while the park may be new, it incorporates familiar stories that old and young alike can share and bond over. Similarly, in the second commercial, a child shares smiles and laughter with his grandparents as they watch a parade together. Those grandparents *are* later depicted without the child, as they share a tender moment; however, this, too, reinforces harmonic balance in that it communicates Disney's respect for elderly guests. This respect, or "filial piety," is an important cultural value in Chinese society -- one that is also highlighted in the boy attentively listening to his grandfather's rendition of *Dumbo*.

A sense of balance is also communicated through shots that incorporate both natural and constructed environments. For example, in the debut commercial, three children candidly chase each other and play beside a riverbank with the Shanghai skyline in the distance. This water refreshingly splashes up onto the bank as Captain Jack Sparrow's pirate ship emerges. This symbolizes not only a moat around the city (as traditionally seen around Disney's castles), but also suggests balance between nature and human-made structures (water and skyline). Also in the debut commercial, the grandfather reads *Dumbo* to his grandson while sitting on the roof-top of a housing unit. They are surrounded by lush green potted garden plants and accompanied by the sound of chirping birds, a blush pink, cloud filled sky, and, again, the Shanghai skyline in the distance. These scenes suggest that through innovation, there is still a way

to experience and cherish nature, since nature's beauty is shown in the midst of innovation.

The Shanghai skyline also plays an important role in balancing the introduction of new Disney icons into Chinese culture and society. For instance, the debut commercial begins with the Shanghai Skyline, and it ends with Chinese citizens walking towards the castle as a firework display erupts over the spires. Indeed, throughout the debut commercial traditional Disney symbols, such as Cinderella's dress and carriage, the pirate ship, and Dumbo, are seen throughout Shanghai city. Captain Jack Sparrow's ship sails through the surrounding water way with ease, Dumbo gracefully flies along the skyline, Cinderella's carriage glides through the city streets and the Tron cycles glide through the Shanghai train station. These juxtapositions communicate harmonic balance in the way Disney characters and icons appear to fit into the norms and rituals of life in Shanghai, and, by extension, China. Together, these juxtapositions highlight the balance between what it means to be "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese."

Collective Identity

In addition to harmonic balance, Shanghai Disneyland's commercials emphasize collective identity, including depictions of relationships, togetherness, and crowds. This is important, as collective identity is highly valued in Chinese culture, and represents the importance of the broader society or carrying before others beyond one's self (Wang & Chen, 2010). In the commercials, collectivism

is seen in the way individuals and groups of people come together in a common place to enjoy it, together.

For instance, the debut commercial seems, at first, to be a series of isolated vignettes, including the young woman window shopping, the children on the riverbank, the grandfather reading Dumbo to his grandson, and the teens waiting for a train. However, Cinderella's carriage takes the young woman to the Shanghai Disneyland castle, where she meets a large crowd. That crowd includes the teens who rode in on Tron cycles, a grandchild and grandson who flew on Dumbo, the children who sail on Captain Jack Sparrow's ship, and a little girl with her parents who are escorted down a red carpet by Mickey Mouse. In this sense, it is the Disney characters that are bringing this group of people together, both literally and metaphorically, as they are transported to stand alongside each other and dream, as the narration in the first commercial calls people to dream, together. As they travel to the castle, the Mandarin narration says, "We invite you to bring your family and friends to the upcoming Shanghai Disney Resort." And, once at the castle, they all watch a firework show as the narrator states, "to ignite a dream together, with us." Together, the images stress collectivism, as there is a distinct pattern of leaving one space to be in another, among more people. Meanwhile, the narration reinforces that message through statements like, "bring your family and friends" and "dream together with us."

The second commercial underscores this emphasis on collective identity, as no individuals are seen alone in the park. Instead, people appear in groups,

including family, friends, and crowds. For instance, a mother and little girl gaze into the eyes of Cinderella in a brightly lit daytime scene in front of the castle; grandparents share smiles, exaggerated laughter, and a Mickey Mouse balloon with their grandson; a crowd of people happily cheer and bounce on the balls of their feet as a parade of Disney performers pass; a boy and his parents sail through the “perilous waters” of Pirates of the Caribbean with other park goers; and a group of teens soar through the mystically lit raceway of the Tron ride. Like the debut commercial, this one, too, ends with all of them coming together to join a large, exuberant crowd. They stand, just inches separating their shoulders, and look up, gazing in awe at a firework show above the castle. This is accompanied with narration that encourages people to immerse themselves in the world of Shanghai Disneyland. Shanghai Disneyland has, again, brought people together.

This emphasis on collective identity is more striking when compared with Disney’s brand narrative in other markets, such as the U.S.. Disney does not usually depict crowds at their U.S. parks, as crowds would be a deterrent for visitors. Instead, Disney usually stresses individual experience and time well-spent with family. While this is not a large deviation, Shanghai Disneyland’s narrative promotes *both* family bonding *and* being part of a larger collective -- Chinese society and culture. Indeed, at the end of both commercials, as families watch a firework show, the camera pans out away from the castle, capturing a

sea of people standing before it. Thus, Shanghai Disneyland is where to go be together -- a family among an even larger family that is China.

Together, these symbols of harmonic balance and collective identity come together to produce Shanghai Disneyland's glocal brand narrative -- that this park is China's Disneyland, a place that is "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese." In doing so, Disney is establishing itself as a part of Shanghai's emergence on the global stage, while still celebrating Chinese culture. This narrative is Disney's attempt to combat the political and cultural tensions associated with Disney's expansion into China. With this brand narrative in place, Chinese citizens are able to interact and engage with the narrative based on the ways they photograph and organize sharing on online social media platforms, such as Weibo.

Engagement on Social Media

The "Shanghai Disneyland" tagged posts on the Chinese social media platform, Weibo contained a variety of photos. Some users posted single photos, while others posted collages and montages of several photos. These included photos of the Shanghai Disneyland castle, characters (in person and referenced in the form of food and souvenir items), and natural elements (nature). I captured data on a total of 34 photos (eleven posts) before recognizing and identifying various themes. To confirm my logic, I captured data on an additional 31 photos (six posts), totaling 65 photos and seventeen posts.

Among users' posts to Weibo, photos of the castle were most prevalent, as 29 out of 65 photos were of the castle. These photos were taken from a variety of angles and contexts, including shots from near and far, and during both day and night. Some users also enhanced these photos with digital filters (as is common with social media applications). These photos frame the castle as a landmark, as often display the castle in isolation and from a great distance, illustrating its prominence. They also illustrate harmonic balance as the castle is frequently photographed alongside elements of nature, such as trees, water, fire and metal. For example, one user posted a picture of the castle from across a body of water, this juxtaposes the debut commercial, and the way the Shanghai city skyline was seen from across a body of water. Another user posted a photo of the castle's front facade of the castle, lit up by the metallic light of fireworks at night. Still, another posted a photo of the castle's rear facade from within the Alice in Wonderland garden maze. In doing so, this photo captures a Queen of Hearts statue with lush green bushes behind it, just before a pillar of the castle. In these ways, users' photographs reinforced harmonic balance, as the images parallel the natural and constructed balance in the commercials. They suggest that this human-made structure -- and, by extension, the entire park -- exists in harmonic balance with nature.

The commercials depict the Disneyland Shanghai castle in conjunction with crowds; however, user-generated photos of the castle on Weibo often had no sight of crowds or human beings. For example, one user's image of the

castle's front facade creates the illusion that the park looks completely empty. In fact, the majority of the castle images on Weibo do not show any sign of life among them – just a structure in isolation. These photos reinforce the brand narrative's harmonic balance component; they instill a sense of peace, tranquility, and appreciation for the space, as there are no distractions between the user and the photographed object.

Though the castle is often depicted in isolation, one might expect that social media users would post photos of families and friends in the park together. Indeed, collective identity is one of the key components of the brand narrative identified in the Shanghai Disneyland commercials. However, this is not the case. Users posted very few photos of individuals, families, or friends in the park. Instead, photos focus on the castle, characters, natural elements, and food. Through a paradigmatic analysis (i.e., what is *not* shown), this could be interpreted as a lack of engagement with the brand narrative. However, if we take Chinese values and norms into account, these photos of objects and Disney characters may, in fact, function as one form of collective identity. Through my colleague checks, I learned that many Chinese citizens are reluctant to post selfies and family images that makes themselves or their family appear to be superior to others. So, by *not* posting photographs of themselves or their families, users can communicate that they are part of a larger, Chinese community.

Of course, people are not completely absent from social media posts about Shanghai Disneyland. But when park-goers *do* depict themselves or others

in social media posts, as in the case with some selfies or couple photographs, the non-verbal communication in those photos is very uncomfortable. Some users cup their face with their hands and only offer a small, hesitant smile. Others blur out their faces altogether. For example, one photo appears to be a young woman standing in front of the castle, but she has created a slight blur over her face. Through colleague checks, I learn that while this may be done for privacy reasons, it also symbolizes that her face (her identity), is not superior to anyone else's.

Interestingly enough, photos of characters, were often in the form of food or souvenir items. For example, in a bowl of Soy Chicken and E-fu Noodles, a hard boiled egg's yolk is carved in the shape of Mickey Mouse's head. A bright orange carrot is also cut in the same shape. The two items are placed side-by-side. Food did not play a role in the commercials, so this might seem like a deviation from the brand narrative; however, the combination of Chinese dishes presented along-side signs and symbols of Disney's most iconic character also suggests harmonic balance between Disney and Chinese culture.

Overall, Chinese consumers interact with the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative on social media in ways that tend to reinforce that brand narrative's emphasis on harmonic balance. This is done, especially, by pairing photos with of the castle with the natural environment; however, the process is more contradictory when it comes to collective identity, as few photos include people or groups. That said, by focusing on objects and Disney characters, these photos

still may reinforce collective identity in that they do not lavish attention on any one person or family.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The Walt Disney Company's brand narrative emphasizes that Disneyland is a place of happiness and dreaming for all. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the Disneyland theme song: "When you wish upon a star [dreaming], makes no difference who you are [diversity], anything your heart desires will come to you [wish fulfillment]." But the dreams embedded in the Disney brand narrative are not just any dreams -- they are the American dream. Through their "lands," Disney's U.S. parks paint idealized pictures of America's colonial past, its capitalist and nationalist values, and its technological promise. Commercials for its U.S. parks often feature the American flag, the parks' small-town replica, Main Street U.S.A., and plenty of happy children and families with their favorite Disney characters. References to Walt Disney's life are also common, as Walt, himself, comes to stand for the individual determination and success of the American Dream.

It would have been easy and relatively cheap for Disney to take a "one size fits all" globalization approach and simply reproduce this American brand narrative for Shanghai Disneyland. However, when Disney opened parks in Paris and Hong Kong, this globalization approach failed, and the company learned it had to adapt its parks and their brands to local cultures. Disney knew from the start that they would have to take a glocalization approach in Shanghai, as Disney's American brand narrative does not align with Chinese values, and the

Chinese government takes a particularly hands-on approach with companies seeking to enter the Chinese market. Thus, Shanghai Disneyland's success would depend on the adaptation of the American Disney brand narrative to Chinese culture and society.

This study investigated how Shanghai Disneyland used its brand narrative to negotiate these tensions. A semiotic analysis of two Shanghai Disneyland commercials demonstrated how the park sought to brand itself as China's Disneyland -- a place that is "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese." To accomplish this, Shanghai Disneyland tapped into core Chinese cultural values of harmonic balance and collective identity.

To communicate harmonic balance, Shanghai Disneyland's commercials place particular emphasis on balanced juxtapositions, including light and dark, male and female, young and old, traditional and innovative, natural and constructed, and dreams and reality. For example, in the first commercial, a grandpa reads *Dumbo* to his grandson. With the Shanghai skyline in the background, Dumbo (a 1941 Disney character), soars through the sky, directly juxtaposing the new and innovative skyline. In the next shot, the commercial shows the grandson and grandpa, sharing smiles and excitement as they ride through Shanghai city perched on Dumbo's back, headed to Shanghai Disneyland. While the relationship between the grandpa and grandson represents the juxtaposition of traditional and innovative (elderly and youth), Dumbo's presence in the commercial is also a metaphorical juxtaposition, as an

illustration of harmony between Disney and China. In doing so, the commercials suggest that Disney and Shanghai Disneyland exist in harmony with Chinese culture and society, in the same way elders and their cultural traditions are able to coexist with youth and innovation.

Of course, China is not a monolith, and Shanghai is a city with a culture of its own. Indeed, Shanghai is often criticized for straying from ancient Chinese traditions. This makes communicating harmonic balance all the more important in Disney's entrance into Shanghai. Thus, Shanghai Disneyland's commercials juxtapose the Shanghai Disneyland castle and other Disney symbols alongside Shanghai symbols, such as the Shanghai skyline, the metro system, and others. Moreover, this brand narrative eases tensions between Shanghai and China through illustrations of traditional and innovative (old and new) living in harmony, as well as the balancing of natural and constructed elements. This is seen in the first commercial, when Captain Jack Sparrow's ship plunges through the water surrounding Shanghai city, illustrating a balance between natural and constructed elements living in harmony. These juxtapositions suggest that Shanghai Disneyland is not only compatible with Shanghai and China, but that it can also foster more harmonious relationships within Chinese society

Shanghai Disneyland's commercials also emphasize collective identity by depicting families and friends coming together to join one another and form even larger groups in the park. Nowhere is this more clear than at the end of the commercials when the various guests and characters come together to enjoy a

firework show above the castle. Indeed, the first commercial's narrator tells guests to, "invite your family and friends" and "dream together, with us." and to essentially "dream" together. Through this attention to collective identity, Shanghai Disneyland becomes more than a theme park; it is a community space that welcomes Chinese families and society to enjoy and celebrate Chinese culture and innovation, including Disney. By considering Chinese culture and values throughout their narrative, Disney makes its introduction in Shanghai appear as a celebration of the norms and values that Chinese citizens already live, rather than a source of disruption or imperialism.

Of course, Disney did not completely abandon their existing, American Disney brand narrative upon opening Shanghai Disneyland. Instead, certain elements of this narrative were not discarded, but re-imagined. For example, "dreaming" is a core element of the existing, American Disney brand narrative. However, Shanghai Disneyland transformed the notion of "dreaming" to fit the Chinese market by turning "dreaming" into something that is done together, rather than by an individual. This is illustrated in the first commercial, as a crowd of people, made up of individuals that were already introduced, are seen standing in front of the castle, gazing at the fireworks that appear over the castle's spires. During this scene, the narration ends with, "ignite the dream with us," referencing both the act of dreaming and collectivity in one shot. This differs from the American Disney narrative, where dreaming is an individual act -- not one carried out by a group.

Similarly, family relationships -- particularly the role of elders -- are re-imagined in Shanghai Disney's brand narrative. This is not only seen in the way that the elderly play a role in both commercials, but in the way that a set of grandparents share excitement and smiles alongside their grandson in the second commercial, as they watch an energetic parade pass by. Compare this to an American Disney commercial that may show a shot or two of a grandparent, but focuses primarily on the child, as an individual. It is subtle shifts like this that Disney's used to tap into core Chinese cultural values, while not completely discarding with its American brand narrative.

Shanghai Disney's brand narrative did more than communicate the park's value to Chinese consumers and ease fears of cultural imperialism, though. It was also essential for establishing trust and a partnership with the Chinese government. By working with the Chinese government to produce this glocal brand narrative, Disney gained access to Chinese media platforms, and earned the government's endorsement. This endorsement speaks volumes, as Chinese citizens are made aware of the working relationship among the Chinese government and Disney, opening the door for citizens to establish a relationship with Disney. In this way, the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative helped the company negotiate key political and cultural tensions in the glocalization process.

While semiotic analysis is useful for interpreting the brand narratives embedded in marketing texts, it does not tell us how users actually engaged with the Shanghai Disney brand narrative. Thus, this study also looked at the ways in

which users engaged with the brand narrative on the Weibo social media platform.

User Engagement on Weibo

By observing user engagement with the brand narrative on social media, the vast majority of posts include the castle and various takes on harmony and balance. This is seen in many images of the castle, natural elements in the form of plants, water, and fireworks are referenced in the images, contributing to the same harmony and balance aspect seen in the commercials. This is not just evidence of the brand narrative resonating with citizens; through their use of Weibo, citizens participated in the very construction of the Disney Shanghai brand narrative. The narrative of China's Disneyland is also seen in photographs of food that is shared on the social media platform. And since the food items are commonly in the shape of Mickey Mouse's ears, these served as direct manifestation of being "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese."

Weibo users took a different approach when it came to collective identity, as they did not engage with collectivity in the same way that the Shanghai Disneyland commercials did. Instead of photographing themselves, their families, or crowds, they posted images of objects, such as characters, buildings (the castle), and statues. This may seem like a deviation from Shanghai Disneyland's collectivist brand narrative; however, by focusing on objects, Weibo users diverted viewers' attention away from individuals, including themselves -- an act that might be seen as collectivist. The experience of these objects can be shared

by other users, who can imagine themselves in the scene just as easily as the person sharing the photo. This takes sharing on social media to a very literal level -- sharing objects, but also sharing in experiences.

Limitations

By considering the single case of Shanghai Disneyland, this study looked at a total of two commercials and 17 Weibo social media posts, which equated to 65 individual photos. While these are not generalizable samples, I argue that these sample sizes are justified in that they it allowed for a close, semiotic analysis of Shanghai Disney's brand narrative and a thematic analysis of social media posts engaging with that brand narrative. Semiotic, in particular, requires close attention to details, and an analysis of this depth could not be provided by looking at much larger sample (Langrehr & Caywood 1995). Further, the logic of *integrated* marketing -- which aims to produce one message across multiple media -- means that these commercials are unlikely to differ significantly in their branding from other Shanghai Disneyland marketing materials. Therefore, I can get a reasonably clear picture of the Shanghai Disneyland brand narrative by looking at just two commercials. With regard to social media posts, the 17 posts and 65 photos are a justified sample in that I am able to not just look for patterns across these photos, but analyze them closely and make sense of them. Again, this would not be feasible with a larger sample. That said, after I located themes in a relatively small selection of 11 posts (34 photos), I then confirmed my interpretations by examining an additional 6 posts (31 photos). At this point no

new themes had emerged and a point of saturation was reached, concluding the data collection.

Through an analysis of the sample mentioned above, this study argues that, by focusing on harmonic balance and collective identity, the Shanghai Disneyland commercials communicated that the park was China's Disneyland. It also argues that Chinese citizens engaged with that brand narrative in ways that both challenged and reinforced it. That said, these interpretations are not evidence of how those citizens actually thought or felt about Shanghai Disneyland. Instead, they are educated guesses, based on close readings of these texts and an evolving understanding of Chinese culture and society. This study was an iterative process -- one that sought to move closer and closer to an accurate interpretation by returning to theory and data, and looking for ways to connect the dots in new ways. Moreover, as an English-speaking American, there is certainly the possibility that I have misinterpreted the messages communicated in the commercials or among Weibo users. So, I employed colleague checks to assess my interpretations against the interpretations made by members of Chinese society, making sure that key ideas and interpretations were not missed or too far off base from the realities of Chinese culture. For example, my first impression of the minimal family and friend photos on social media was that collectivity, as seen in the brand narrative, was not engaged with. However, through individual discussions with colleagues, I was able to understand that these photos also preserved harmony among all friendships, by

not creating jealousies. Implementing colleague checks in this study also assisted me in my understanding of the Weibo social media app and translation of commercials.

Limitations involving censorship should also be noted, as both Disney and China exercise censorship in their regulation and control of information flows through the press and media. For example, China demonstrates its censorship through shutdowns of communication and jailing violators. Disney exhibits censorship through their strong influence and pressure on the press, as well as their dedication to enforcing intellectual property rights. Such censorship may shape the range and nature of photos Chinese citizens post on Weibo and the way that the press report on Shanghai Disney. For example, such regulation is likely to censor any negative images or disengagement on the Weibo social media platform and cause Iger to comment on only successes rather than losses or failures within the Shanghai Disney project.

In short, by looking at these commercials and social media posts, I can make sense of *what* brand narrative was distributed by Disneyland Shanghai and *how* social media users engaged with it, but I cannot determine *why* these parties produced what they produced from these texts alone. Answering *why* questions required some speculation based on my evolving understanding of Chinese culture and society and the particular tensions around Disney's entrance into this market. In doing so, this case study offers some instructive lessons about the relationship between glocalization, digital media, and marketing.

Learning from Shanghai Disneyland

Disney's approach to the glocalization process in Shanghai provides businesses and organizations a point of reference that specifies various considerations they must make when establishing businesses within the Chinese market and other markets. In doing so, glocalization also serves an example of how organizations engage with and use enactment and to account for local culture and new environments. While this study recognizes specific examples of what Disney did to immerse itself within the Chinese market, it also created three general considerations that can be applied to most glocalized approaches. The first of these considerations is to identify difference and to be aware that all countries (and regions) and their cultural norms and values are different. Disney went into mainland China with the awareness that there were critical differences in values and norms of the Chinese market. They were also aware of the fears the market had of western culture. This prompted them to proceed with caution, as they participated in the process of enactment to understand the environment and market around them, using their findings to influence their actions. This leads to the second consideration of power. Where does power come from in the market? Who establishes credibility within the market? After undergoing the process of enactment, Disney understood that the Chinese government was the ultimate gatekeepers. In doing so, Disney was able to establish a working relationship that would not only assist in the political, social, and economic relations in China, but would inform their glocal approach to communicating with

Chinese consumers and establish legitimacy between Chinese citizens and Disney. Thus, Disney built a relationship with the Chinese government, and created a brand narrative that used concepts (such as harmony and collective identity) to create a space of familiarity within China, instead of a foreign space.

However, the social media aspect of this study urges glocalizing organizations to consider not just how people will think of a brand and use their products, but how consumers shape that narrative themselves, through engagement on social media. With this in mind, the third consideration encourages glocalizing organizations to consider citizens' active participation with those narratives. In this case, active participation with the narrative included the way in which the castle was photographed, as well as the way characters were photographed in the form of food. This participation demonstrates not only a difference in culture, but offers insight in how the narrative of, "authentically Disney, distinctly Chinese" was captured on an individual level by Chinese citizens. This demonstrates the use of social media as a crowdsourcing tool that can offer insight into how consumers engage, challenge, and reinforce brand narratives. While the posts do not necessarily inform the organization what consumers think or feel about the brand, it does offer how they engage (interact) and how they make sense of it. This is different from how they think or feel about the brand, as only actions are able to be observed. For example, through the analysis of social media posts, I come to an understanding that the castle is recognized as an important symbol, as it is photographed most. I can also

observe how users make sense of the brand by how the castle is photographed. However, the analysis of castle photos does not tell me how Chinese citizens feel about it. With these ideas in mind, social media posts of the castle provide me (and the organizations) with the concept that the symbolism and iconic imagery presented in the Shanghai Disney brand narrative resonated, in one way or another, with audiences. In this case, there is a connection between Chinese citizens and the castle.

By implementing these considerations into the glocalization process, Disney was able to realize that they did not need to change their identity and their brand completely to be successful in Shanghai. All they they needed to do was strategically emphasize certain aspects of their existing American brand narrative (such as intergenerational relationships and dreaming *together*) to enter the Chinese market while allaying concerns about the Disney organization disrupting Chinese culture and society. All they needed to be was “authentically Disney, and distinctly Chinese.”

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