University of Cincinnati

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I, Isariya Boonkasemsanti, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Design.

It is entitled:
Design Guideline for Cross-Cultural Branding: A case for Thai Dessert Brand in Cincinnati

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Design Guideline for Cross-Cultural Branding

A case for Thai Dessert Brand in Cincinnati

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School
College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning

Of the University of Cincinnati

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Design

In the School of Design

Of the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning

by

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Thesis Committee:

Craig Vogel, Chair

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ABSTRACT

There are many brand identity guidelines currently being used in the field of graphic design, yet none of them has been specifically created for cross-cultural brands. The aim of the study was to create the methodologies for designing cross-cultural brand identity. The case of Thai Dessert Brand Identity in Cincinnati was conducted and the observations, problems, questions and findings throughout the design process were documented.

The methodologies for identifying the appropriate cultural element for the design phase included the primary research, which involved qualitative research method through an in-depth interview as well as quantitative research method through online surveys, and the secondary research in fundamental design principles and existing branding strategy models are studied to help create the framework. To facilitate the data analysis of the qualitative research, the main steps of thematic analysis were applied.

The primary result from the design project yields the Brand identity design for the brand ‘Kati-Kala’ with the essential brand assets that are well accepted by the target audience in Cincinnati. The Cross-cultural Branding Design Framework was built using analysis of the documented observations and problems during the design project.

Overall the research study provides useful insights for designers and business owners who seek to create visual identity for their brand in foreign countries, as well as emphasizing the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of the brand to create an identity blend that facilitate business success.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis represents not only my work in Cross Cultural Brand Identity Design but also a milestone in two years of work at the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning (DAAP) at the University of Cincinnati. One of the joys of having completed the thesis is looking back at everyone who has helped me over the past. I hereby would like to place on record my sincere gratitude to those who have contributed to this project.

Foremost, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my chair of committee, Professor Craig M. Vogel, for his steadfast integrity, and selfless dedication to both my personal and academic development. I would like to thank my thesis committee, Assistant Professor Todd Timney, for sharing his expertise, valuable guidance and friendship. And I thank Associate Professor Jay Chewning for offering thorough and excellent feedback on the earlier versions of this thesis.

I would like to mention the people who have inspired me in the professional level, starting with Valerie Jacobs and Betty Bones from LPK Cincinnati, and Brooke Brandewie for the insight and advice about trends. Patti Breisler, Jen Langdon, Ben Meyers, Tim Binzer from Brandimage, Jamey Wagner, Elisabeth Brennan, Emily Schwegman, Kristin Lebahn-Childs, Jen Rossingnol, Bart Laube, Emma Bracey and the design team members from Interbrand.

And last of all, I would like to acknowledge my parents, Prutti and Pawanna Boonkasemsanti, whose unconditional love and support made this journey possible.
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BASIC DEFINITIONS

Brand

Seth Godin states that “A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another.” The book Brand Management-How to manage a brand by Jiri Georg Urban defines brand as “the personality that identifies a product, service or company (name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them) and how it relates to key constituencies: customers, staff, partners, investors etc.” Brand Consultancy Landor Associates relates to brand as, “the sum of all the characteristics, tangible and intangible, that make the offer unique.” The Interbrand Brand Consultancy also states, “A brand is a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark, which, if managed properly, creates value and influence.”

Brand Identity

Designing Brand Identity by Alina Wheeler states that “Brand Identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. It takes disperate elements and unifies them into whole systems.” While Jiri Georg Urban on ‘Brand Management – how to manage a brand’ also stated that Brand Identity is “the outward expression of a brand, including its name, trademark, communications, and visual appearance.” According to the statements above, it can be concluded that Brand is the overall asset that represent an organization, product or service in a way that affect customer’s decision, while Brand Identity is only the tangible aspects of a brand.

Globalization

Wikipedia defines Globalization (or globalisation) as the process of international integration arising from the interchange of worldviews, products, ideas and other aspects of culture.
Westernization

In regards to Wikipedia, westernization is a process whereby societies come under or adopt Western culture in areas such as industry, technology, law, politics, economics, lifestyle and values. Some thinkers assume that westernization to be the equivalent of modernization.

Modernization

Wikipedia has stated that Modernization refers to a model of a progressive transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' to a 'modern' society.

Modern

According to Merriam-Webster, the term means something of or relating to the present time or the recent past: happening, existing, or developing at a time near the present time, or based on or using the newest information, methods, or technology

Contemporary

According to Merriam-Webster, contemporary means something that is happening or beginning now or in recent times. Contemporary Design means the design that was marked by characteristics of the present period.

Cross-cultural design

According to Merriam-Webster, cross-cultural means ‘Dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas.’ and as Walsh and Helkiö (2009) gives the definition as ‘Cross-cultural design is designing technology for different cultures, languages, and economic standings while ensuring usability and user experience across cultural boundaries.’ It can be implied that Cross-cultural design for brand identity is designing the brand identity to communicate the brand equity across the different cultures.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In establishing new business overseas, brand Identity is one of the key success factors for businesses. As cultural elements in the visual identity subtly communicate their non-verbal messages to the audience, how can designers craft a cultural expression that would resonate powerfully with the audience in the different part of the world?

According to Tian and Borges (2011), communication is the one of the most important functions to master in order for businesses to be successful in today’s competitive markets, especially for companies doing business internationally. In the cross-cultural communication, there is a cultural chasm between different cultures. Cultural differences can either be a powerful differentiation point, or the radical difference can decrease the sale of the product. Therefore it is very important for the business owners as well as designer to understand the culture of both the product origin and the target group to create a meaningful brand.

Design for a global market

As the world becomes an increasingly globalized place, and traditional studies have maintained that globalization means westernization (Tomlinson 1991) or modernization (Giddens 1990; Wood 1998). According to Yan (2013), Globalization may occur as a process of westernization where developed countries sell their products or brands, as well as western values, which are often the synonym of modernity, to the underdeveloped countries. In the light of this, we can see that the western culture has the biggest influence to the world’s taste and preferences. For modernization, another viewpoint from Krishan Kumar, Encyclopedia Britannica suggested that, instead of being dominated by tradition, societies undergoing the
process of modernization typically arrive at forms of governance dictated by abstract principles. Traditional religious beliefs and cultural traits, according to the theory, usually become less important as modernization takes hold. This illustrates how modern design approach commonly eliminates the traditional elements or modifies them to the most transparent level that no longer contains cultural identity. The challenge is to integrate the traditional culture to modern or contemporary design without losing the identity. The other solution is to merge identities of two cultures together and represent them as a hybrid design.

**Cross-cultural Design**

When products are introduced into markets with different cultural contexts, cultural confrontation may occur. (Yan 2103; Pieteres 2009) The new guideline aims to bridge the cultural chasm between different cultures by helping designer find the appropriate methodology to apply cultural elements into the brand identity. The case study aims to design Thai Dessert brand for Cincinnati audience, mainly focus on English speaker and Americans. The problem statement is whether there can be a guideline to facilitate designers to integrate cultural elements into modern or contemporary design.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The summary of the literature review is the methodologies that the selected case designers and design firms are using to create brand from the different culture. The full version of the in-depth interview and secondary research can be found in the appendix.

UNO Design

The Filtros approach: filtering the cultural elements for the brand

UNO Design is a design firm focusing on cross-cultural branding. Their approach is doing a collaborative exercise with the client. The process yields an art collage of mutually selected images to reflect the envisioned design direction. This way, the designer can channel individual design viewpoints into a group consensus of visual direction. Collage consists of various cultural attributes such as colors, arts, traditions, architectures, holidays, foods, heroes, etc. The designers then apply the attributes into design. The examples of this application method range from the extraction of color and texture of the product to create the brand identity that resonates with product characteristics, the font treatment of the logo that is derived from the typography style, and the capture of the interior color scheme to create brand identity asset that can be applied to environmental design.


Interbrand

The Interbrand Brand Consultancy states that, "A brand is a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark, which, if managed properly, creates value and influence." To create the visual guideline, Interbrand brings the strategy and design team together with the clients to do the workshops to create a mutual agreement of the brand concept and design direction. The total brand definition and expression process was used.

The strategic team will create the customer journey mapping and obtain the audience insights, and the designer team will collaborate with them and generate ideas. The strategic process starts broad then goes tight to focus on brand definition brief, pivoting into the creative development where ideas can flourish and the process goes broad again.

To come up with the brand definition brief, the brand owner perspective and the target audience definition of the brand are studied in parallel to find the optimal brand personality that was accepted by the audience and well represent the product’s identity in the brand owner’s perspective. The outcome is the visual guideline with the agreed visual elements, colors and imageries to create brand identity, packaging design and retail concept.

Diagram 2. Butterfield, L. (2011). *The brand creation tasks from the brand cycle: Ten models and processes* (pp. 6-7) Interbrand
According to the interview with Betty Bones, the senior designer from LPK Cincinnati on Taste of Belgium identity redesign project, the takeaway from the interview about this Belgian inspired American culinary yields as follows;

1. **Cultural Immersion**: it is important to understand the country of origin or the business by immersing into their culture or gain some related experience (e.g. consuming their food, seeing the movies) also to understand the political system or the history of the country is an effective way to understand the people from the country and use the people’s characteristics or lifestyle to differentiate the brand. In case of Taste of Belgium, LPK looked at their political system, the democracy under the constitutional monarchy. LPK helped Taste of Belgium define itself as a brand built on tradition and rich history, while epitomized the country’s democratic spirit, individuality and zest for living. Waffle is the street food that can be found anywhere from side street vendors to the restaurant, and that is democratic. The design took the crown, which is the symbol of the constitutional monarchy and adding the fork to represent quirkiness, fun and joy of life through good food.

2. **Understanding the target**: Designers need to study about the target group, make persona and mood board, and understand their lifestyle to be able to envision the appropriate product concept and brand characteristics. Taste of Belgium took the action through the modification of their menus by adding local ingredients such as Goetta to their crepes and savory dishes, and serving American inspired dishes such as Chicken and (Belgian) waffles. They also put ‘Frites’ (Fries made with Fresh cut potatoes and lard) which is the product familiar to the Americans in their menu.
3. **Taglines**: easy-to-remember tagline can help boost the recognition of the brand. In this case, LPK emphasize the culture by repeating the country’s name through the actions ‘Eat like a Belgian, drink like a Belgian, Live like a Belgian’. This should correlate with the brand messages as well.

4. **Cultural Connotation**: Belgium and Germany use the same color scheme on their national flags, but in different design. LPK incorporates brand story and the crown for the constitutional monarchy into the brand identity to differentiate Belgium from the other countries with similar national colors.

In summary, the interview provided the insights into branding strategy and brand identity design method, which will be used in the design phase.
Cross-cultural Brand Character Analysis Pyramid

In the analysis of the brand before the interview, the pyramid of mutual and different cultural aspect was proposed as a methodology to define the distinctive characteristics for the brand as well as finding the similar attributes that would connect two cultures together.

According to the article about Taste of Belgium branding redesign on LPK blog “LPK helped Taste of Belgium establish a narrative that captures that spirit of democratic individuality. And what’s more democratic than a waffle? It transcends differences—be they cultural, political or culinary. Within a world of disagreement, a waffle brings people together”

Figure 2.1 : Boonkasemsanti I. Cross-cultural Brand Character Analysis Pyramid And its application to Taste of Belgium’s branding redesign. 2015, Cincinnati,OH
The power of Habit : The Power of Familiarity

According to the book ‘the power of habit’ by Charles Duhigg, one common-sense implication of habits is that people have an ingrained preference for things that are familiar that makes it hard for them to accept radical innovations in things. One way to get beyond this is to couch the new in the language of the familiar. The related case taken from the book is, to drive user acceptance of a radically different sounding song, radio stations learned to “sandwich” it between the more familiar hits. This can be applied to the design strategy by using the key visual element that is more familiar to audience as the permeator to introduce the whole bundle of visual elements as a package. This strategy resembles to how most people recognize an elephant from its trunk and ivory when they were asked to describe the animal. There can be a number of familiar visual elements of the culture in the audience’s perception, and they can be the key to differentiate the culture and create brand identity.

Figure 2.2 : Boonkasemsanti I. The metaphor of the elephant’s head as the familiar visual element to introducing the package of cultural elements to the new audience. 2015, Cincinnati, OH
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

A Thai Dessert Branding design project was set as a case study. Along the design process, the problems, questions and findings throughout the process was documented and analyzed, fundamental design principles were applied and branding strategy models were studied as the guideline to create the framework. In the process, both the primary and secondary research approach were applied.

The primary research includes a qualitative research through an in-depth interview with a participant in communication design profession, and quantitative research approaches were applied through 2 online surveys.

The secondary research includes studying existing branding design and branding strategy guidelines and related existing studies about branding, culture and identity. To facilitate the data analysis, the main steps of thematic analysis were performed in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, generating initial cultural related keywords, searching for themes among keywords, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final themes for the design.

The design project started from taking the keywords acquired from the research phase to find the existing design in the U.S that contained similar elements from the keywords. The designs then be aligned in design continuum range between two distinguishing styles, in this case, traditional and contemporary. The designer then analyzed and defined the positioning of the style to be used from the brand positioning. The existing American design for the product in the same category will also be studied to help defining the design positioning.
CHAPTER 4
THE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process starts by conducting a perception survey, the survey used multiple choice questions asking the volunteers to select the cultural elements that they thought represent Thailand. The options in the questions were selected from the guidebooks to Thailand, www.gettyimage.com, www.shutterstock.com and www.pinterest.com. By doing secondary research finding the most popular images, or the pattern of search result when entering the keyword ‘Thai’, ‘Thai Culture’, ‘Thai Identity’. The sources for cultural inspirations can be separated in 8 categories;

1. Architecture & Environment

The architecture inspired elements can be taken from the form of the buildings, the façade treatment and materials. In this case the distinctive shapes of the temples and pagodas were highly recognized by the Cincinnati audiences.

2. Festivals, Sports event

Festivals and ceremonies are the time to find the traditional artistic expression and craftsmanship at its best. The national sports events (e.g. the Olympic Games, the Asian Games) is the ideal resource for doing secondary research on the national identity, which includes but are not limited to, the event’s logo, mascot and environmental design.
3. **Artifacts** (Pattern, form, texture) e.g. Textile, Earthenware, jewelry, etc.


4. **Climate** Color Inspiration, the color scheme used in the country of origin

5. **Mythology**

6. **Language** (Typeface, letterform)

![Thai Numerical Characters](image)

Figure 7: *Thai Numerical Characters*. 2014. Bangkok.

7. **Religion**

8. **Food, produce, lifestyle**

![Thai Cultural Identity Collage](image)

Figure 8: *Thai Cultural Identity Collage*. 2014, Cincinnati, USA
Choosing the familiar visual elements for the Design Process

According to the results of the survey *Perception of Cincinnatians on Thai Culture & Identity* on October 18th 2014, the visual elements that gained most popularity among 38 volunteers are 'Elephant' and 'Temple'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thai Culture Perception Survey</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Colors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Target Group: Gen-Y and Gen-Z 18-35 years old, all genders, location: CAC Art &amp; Craft Fair, October 2014</td>
<td>Vibrant 50%</td>
<td>Elephant 53%</td>
<td>Gold 50%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Colorful 50%</td>
<td>Temple 53%</td>
<td>Red 45%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exotic 42%</td>
<td>Thai Food 53%</td>
<td>Yellow 37%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flavorful 47%</td>
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<td>Dessert Ingredients</td>
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<td>Concerns</td>
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<td>Ginger 56%</td>
<td>Authenticity 68%</td>
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<td>Rice 55%</td>
<td>New Experience 53%</td>
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<td>Coconut 53%</td>
<td>Healthy 32%</td>
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<td>Fusion, Creative 8%</td>
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Figure 9: *The summary of results from the perception survey on Thai Culture from 38 target audiences in Cincinnati.* November 2014, Cincinnati, USA

Existing Brand mark Study: The Contemporary - Traditional Design Continuum

Figure: *The Thai Elephant and Temple Logo Design Continuum.* 2015, Cincinnati, USA
The study look into the existing logos of restaurant business in the United States that used either Elephant or Temple/Pagoda shapes to create the logo. The design continuum ranges from the sophisticated, traditional, and rich in detail Thai design to the facile, superficial and modern design that simplified elements to the contemporary side.

In choosing the intensity of culture, the designer look into the characteristics of the product and how the local competitors treat their brand identity. The pattern of visual identity found in this domain was the simple shapes, modern typeface, contemporary feel, with the family of pastel colors to represent the happiness and joy of dessert experience.

**The Temple** : Combining the shape of Thai temple, and coincidently it also looks like Thai crown, the Hibiscus flower, the circle which is the common shape for dessert logo and Thai line work that resembles the smile together into the logo that looks like a smiling face (A).

**The elephant** : The design process begins with taking the simple geometric form of an oval, the shape that most dessert logos are using, to add with line work inspired by Thai decorative ornaments. The line work created the abstract image of an elephant. Then the exploration and experiments were conducted to see the possibilities of design variations. The result came out as a positive line work version (B) and the negative line work version (C).
Figure 10: The first logo design options for the Thai Dessert Branding Design project in Cincinnati. November 2014, Cincinnati, USA.

The designs were taken into another survey with design professions and college students in Cincinnati. Out of 35 survey results from English speaking/American volunteers, the most preferred logo was the elephant shape in negative space. Some experimental designs were taken to the exploration combining elements or distorting their shapes as illustrated.

Figure 11: The alternative logo design options for the Thai Dessert Branding Design project in Cincinnati. November 2014, Cincinnati, USA.
Naming

The design then progressed to selection of font treatment for the product name. The name of the brand was selected from the survey result as well. The naming options included; In a coconutshell, Kati Kala, Thai Immersion, Beyond Bangkok, BangkoCo, Kati Coco and ‘Kati-Kala’ which means ‘Coconut Milk – Coconut Shell’ was the most popular name and most appropriate. The survey questions included The linguistic disaster check and Identical Brand Pre-Screen (Interbrand, 2010), which yields the interesting result that some wording such as ‘Bang’ has negative connotations with sex and drugs in English, but ‘Bang’ have a very positive connotation in Chinese language. However, since the project focuses on the U.S. market, the names with ‘Bangkok’ were not considered.

Typeface

Other than the meaning connotation, the language used in the typeface was taken into discussion whether to use Thai letter or English. To enhance the familiarity, English typeface was selected, with the curvy font style to align with Thai line work, but with the softer edge, displaying the reminiscent of childhood to align with the characteristics of the dessert.

Figure 12: The font treatment and language connotation of the Thai Dessert ‘Kati-Kala’ logos. January 2015, Cincinnati, USA.
Flat or Form

The question of whether to make the logo 2 or 3 Dimension, beside the mood and tone of voice the logo will communicate, it also depends on the budget for corporate material production. The 2D logo with flat color will cost less. However, as the design asset developed further, the 3D logo in the oval form with sense of thickness complimented with the colorful and sophisticated background better and the realistic quality gave more depth to the brand mark.

Figure 13: The comparison of 2D and 3D options for the Thai Dessert ‘Kati-Kala’ logos. January 2015, Cincinnati, USA.

Color

The design then explored into the color options. The experiment ranged from Thai color scheme in the American (Cincinnati) people’s perception, according to the survey the colors that associated with Thailand were Red, Gold and dark green. While for the Thais, according to the study of Thai dessert brand marks in local Thailand, the popular colors are brighter, warmer tone from bright red, orange to brown. The candy pastel scheme normally used

Figure 14: The exploration of color schemes for ‘Kati Kala’ brand. January 2015, Cincinnati, USA.
in the American dessert shops for pastries and bakery like pink, ivory cream or teal green are also presented. The dark red was selected, according to the sample group of American and Chinese designers in Cincinnati’s preference, and the additional information that the brighter shade of red (DEng Lode Nook : Bird’s Blood Red) , when used with gold can be associated to Chinese culture. The dark red or ‘DEng Chad’ (Crimson Red) is also the classic color for Traditional Thai arts and crafts.

**Color and the Identical Cultural Connotation**

A combination of color can be associated with Nations, especially with the colors from their National Flags. Red and Yellow as a restaurant logo, in the American perception generally means Chinese Food. If we placed the logo in Blue and Yellow in front of IKEA store, especially with the non-familiar name, could even make the audience associate the brand with Swedish products. Green and Yellow can also mean products from Brazil, even if the key visual element was an elephant. In some case, more than the simple shape and generic color combination is needed to communicate the uniqueness of the culture.

![Color and domestic animal association with other culture](image)

Figure 15 : *The Color and the Identical Cultural Connotation*. January 2015, Cincinnati, USA.
Line Works

According to Marko Lane’s 12 Essential Rules To Follow When Designing A Logo, logos aren’t always seen head-on in real world situations, for example, on the side of a bus or a billboard. Therefore, designers should make sure to view the logo design from all angles and ensure that it’s recognizable from any direction. Decorative ornaments can distinguish a culture from one another. The traditional line work can be applied into borders to make a unique shape that is easily recognized by the audience. In the picture below, Thai line works are applied into Border of the logo, with the crimson red background and a golden frame, the classic color and material combination in Thai rituals and ceremonies. The leaf-like shape is inspired by the ‘Bodhi Leaf’, the sacred tree in the Buddhism.

Figure 16 : The Thai Linework in traditional artifacts and the implementation to design. February 2015, Cincinnati, USA.

Diamond Pattern : Thai line work can look soft, organic, and free form at the first glance, however, these ornament are composed based on rigorous geometric pattern. The artist must create a grid line system before creating the line art accordingly. The diamond shape pattern
is the fundamental pattern that is used on its own or as the foundation for more sophisticated patterns. The original color scheme taken from temple walls is the array of primary colors such as yellow, red, blue and green. According to the color trend of dessert brands in the western country, the preferred colors are less vibrant.

Figure 17: *The Thai Diamond Pattern in traditional artifacts and the implementation to design.* February 2015, Cincinnati, USA.

Figure 18: *The Design implementation of the logo and the diamond pattern for ‘Kati Kala* February 2015, Cincinnati, USA.
According to the comments from one of the American target audiences, The diamond pattern alone can look too generic, the design refinement explored into the more subtle level of the pattern by adding the small squares on the crossing points of the lines. The colors used were primary, original colors to bring contrast. The result yielded as shown below. As the overall image looks overwhelming, the background design was taken back to the simpler version.

Figure 19: *The further design experiment the diamond pattern for ‘Kati Kala’. February 2015, Cincinnati, USA.*

Figure 20: *The menu design for ‘Kati Kala’. February 2015, Cincinnati, USA.*
The menu was developed accordingly, by providing 3 categories of dessert from the most authentic Thai to the hybrid dishes like Thai Tea Lava Cake or Chili Brownie and the American dessert with a hint of Thai inspiration like cookies with lemongrass-peanut flavor. The dessert brand aims to accommodate all the audience with different level of familiarity and willingness to embark on the new culinary adventure. Overall, the brand would also like to represent the hospitality, flexibility, easygoing and enjoy life which are the characteristics of Thai people in general. Identity is not only represented through the visual elements, but in the experience too.
CHAPTER 5
THE ANALYSIS AND FRAMEWORK

The total brand definition and expression process was referred to as a guideline to build the cross-cultural branding design framework. The analysis brings to the understanding of the big picture of the brand building process and identifying the position of the design process that was conducted in this domain.


FINDINGS

Result: In adjusting the cultural identity from a different culture to the new market environment, the suggested approach is to simplify the complexity of cultural identity into more abstract design, to communicate with the audience in the meaning level, and create familiarity. The strategy is to find the key visual element of the culture from the audience’s perspective and develop the new visual identity from the contemporary design approach, using the
designer’s judgment and the understanding of culture as a filter to select the right amount of cultural intensity on the design continuum. The result yields the blend of sophisticated, complex and exotic Thai cultural elements with modern contemporary design.

In light of this, the design process was taken to analysis to build a design framework that guides designers through the process of cross-cultural brand identity. It addresses the factors to be concerned and the action suggested for each step.

**ANALYSIS**

In the brand definition process, once the strategy team has come up with the brand definition brief; which includes Brand Proposition, Brand Personality and Brand Positioning, the designer will collaborate with the brand owner and the target audience to acquire their perception on the product or brand. In this case, finding the key persons who are native, or understand the culture well is important as a ‘Cultural Expert’. And to understand the target audience’s knowledge of the new culture is essential too. Together the designer will create a visual guideline based on the knowledge about the particular culture, and bring to the Brand Expression process to create Brand Identity, once the brand identity design was completed, it will be implemented to the packaging design and retail concepts.

The visual guideline is the display of imageries that represent the culture in the perception of the audience and the cultural experts. These references can be separated in 8 categories;

1. Architecture & Environment
2. Festivals, Sports event
3. Artifacts (Pattern, form, texture) Textile, Earthenware, silversmith etc.
4. Climate (Color Combination)
5. Mythology
6. Language (Typeface, letterform)
7. Religion
8. Food, produce, lifestyle

In summary, the designer needs to consider about three aspects; the foreign culture, the local audience’s perception on the foreign culture, and the product characteristics.

Once the culture-related images were collected, the designer will conduct a survey with the target audience to see the cultural elements that are familiar to them, then the designer will explore further in the selected cultural elements to gain inspirations, with the concern about the target audience’s general environment, preference, and the product character.

Conceptually the designer needs to jump between these two pillars to find the right blend of visual elements in shape, line work, color, pattern and texture (material finish).

Diagram 3 : Boonkasemsanti.I. *The Detail of Cross-cultural brand identity design framework.*
*February 2015. Cincinnati, USA.*
The Finalized Cross-Cultural Brand Identity Design Framework consists of five main steps as presented. The framework starts from the meaning level by conducting cultural backgrounds study and determining the brand value (shared/differentiated attributes) to collecting related cultural elements, creating visual element boards. The next steps are defining the qualities of attributes and selecting the right positioning for the brand. Lastly is designing and conducting preference surveys. The designer can take the feedback and make refinements. The process can be repeated until designers and stakeholders agreed on the design.
The Framework with examples from the case of Thai Dessert Brand ‘Kati-Kala’ to illustrate the implementation of the guideline.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Overall the research study provides useful insights for designers and business owners who seek to create visual identity for their brand in foreign countries. Specifically, it emphasizes the importance of understanding the culture of the product origin, in accordance with the cultural specifics in the target market, to create well-received cultural identity blend that facilitate the business success.

The finding from the case design project is designers need to develop the understanding of sociocultural anthropology, the study examines social patterns and practices across cultures, with a special interest in how people live in particular places and how they organize, govern, and create meaning. (aanet.org, 2015) The better knowledge about the cultures in the meaning level leads to the more creative design by taking two cultures’ cultural elements to analysis and using the designer’s judgment to create the unique blend of ‘hybrid’ design. Cross-cultural brand identity is the sophisticate blend of a complex visual system that consist of many elements that have countless possible design variation. The designer also needs to reach out to the audiences to get the feedback.

CHAPTER 7

OPPORTUNITY

The opportunity is to create the online platform for the designers and the cultural experts to share their data. The scenario is, an American designer might face the task of designing an Ethiopian restaurant in Peru. Or more specifically, the business owner wants to sell the Injera pancakes from the Northern part of Ethiopia in Cuzco, Peru. The online platform will be a portal to find the right references for the culture needed. The designer can find inspirations, visual references or create a survey. This will be the paid membership to sustain the cost for hiring the cultural experts from different countries to provide their insight. The service also includes the platform for designer to create surveys and recruit the volunteers from specific culture.

Diagram 5 : Boonkasemsanti.l. The Cross-cultural brand identity design online platform. February 2015. Cincinnati, USA.
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An Interview With Betty Bones, Lpk Cincinnati on Brand Identity Design Process For Taste Of Belgium, October 2014

I : In developing a brand based on different culture, how is the approach differ from the domestic brand, and if so, what are the other factors you concern about?

B : We take similar approach on both of them. Starting from the questions like ‘Who they think they are?’, ‘What is their mission?’, ‘What is the color palette? To ‘Who they envision themselves as?’

For TOB, he (Jean-François Flechet) wanted to tie back to Belgium. And that’s a unique story to start from. We went back to the most important thing, the authenticity. We tried to represent the humble, original taste from quality ingredients together with Belgian cultural elements and color palette from the national flag.

I : Can you explain the process of building a brand and brand identity for TOB?

B : We tried to immerse into their business and together create a compelling story for a brand. Who are they, what they sell, why do they need branding, what is missing in their current brand... We also obtained the insights from the people who work with them and their brand champions about their perception on the brand. Then we came up with one or two strategy options. In this case, there was only one because he already knew what he wanted. He had a very clear vision about his brand and why he wanted to rebrand it. Then we polished the strategy, developed the brand vision, mission, value, tone of voice, slogan and visual
expressions. We wanted this brand to have a down-to-earth attitude and be humble, and dedicate itself to good quality food. Despite of the fun and easygoing environment, the food are taken seriously and served elegantly.

We normally come up with 15 or more initial designs, which we will narrow down to 3 and then 1 for further development. The design schemes range from conservative side to the more eccentric options.

The slogan ‘Eat like a Belgian, drink like a Belgian and live like a Belgian’ came accidentally during one of our meeting by one of our designers and it works! It happened like that most of the times.

I : How did you make a decision on which elements to use in Branding Identity system?

B : We tried to find the elements that connect to the brand messaging and related to their authentic story. For Taste of Belgium we brought out their national symbols, color palette, which is dropped down the intensity a little bit from the real flag because after all, we want it to support the food, not destroying them.

I : How do the elements represent overall branding strategy?

B : Jean-Francois came to us because he wanted to go further than waffles, since the menu continues to grow. Our strategy for the brand was to be fun, inspiring and unboring. The brand architecture consist of their food, Belgian inspired American dishes with a twist made from the Authentic traditional ingredients. We wanted to break cultural boundary. So the result came the contemporary modern style brand that targets the young, funky, new age consumers.
I: Were you involved in customer experience design? If so, how did the identity go beyond the logo to other experiences?

B: Yes, we do! After developing the brand identity, we made sure the brand experiences are covered in every consumer touch point. We wanted to make sure of the unity of the brand experience. We put the logo of the crown with the fork on the menu, the glasses and on packaging as well.

Figure 21: Boonkasemsanti I. (2015) *The Analysis of Taste of Belgium Brand Identity Design*. Cincinnati, USA.
Product Strategy: Taste of Belgium’s core product (Belgian Waffle) is familiar to American Waffle, making it easy to introduce them to the audience. They also adapt to the environment by serving American Chicken and Waffles.

Figure 22: Boonkasemsanti I. (2015) The Analysis of Taste of Belgium Brand Identity Design 2. Cincinnati, USA.

The Brandmarks were applied throughout every customer's touch point to immerse customers into brand experience.


Survey 1: Perception of Cincinnatians on Thai Culture & Identity
The goal of this survey is to measure the knowledge about Thailand and Thai Culture of target audience in Cincinnati and to acquire the key visual element and color associated to Thailand for the identity design process.

Chart 1: The Verbal Description of Thai Characteristics in the opinion of Cincinnatians, October 18th 2014, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

The most selected keywords that represent Thailand are; Vibrant, colorful, flavorful, tasty, and exotic. These keywords will be used in designing brand identity. From a Thai people’s opinion, if Thailand was color, it is indeed vibrant, vivid and contrasting like the blend of spice.
Chart 2: The Visual Elements for Thailand in the opinion of Cincinnatians, October 18th 2014, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

The three most popular visual elements are; Elephant, Temple, Thai Food. The elephant has been the symbol of the country and once it was displayed on a National Flag. Temple is also another element that represents the identity of Thai Architecture and Buddhism.
When asked about the colors associated with Thailand, the answers were Gold, Red, Yellow and Green. Blue is not well recognized, however Blue is actually one of the base color for Traditional Thai Arts. And the design will try to introduce Blue to the spectrum.
Survey 2: Preference of Cincinnatians on naming and logo design

The analysis of the result will be used to extract the distinct brand personalities as perceived by the respondents and also to be able to make a cross-cultural comparison between American and Chinese responses. The survey hypothesis is the perception of people from different cultural backgrounds on the naming and logo design of a brand varies and the preliminary surveys are essential for designing identities for the brand.

Survey Content

The survey was divided into four different parts.

1. To measure the familiarity with Thai culture of the audiences in Cincinnati Area.
2. The linguistic disaster check (Interbrand, 2010) : to check for negative associations by a single native speaker.
3. Identical Brand Pre-Screen for the naming options above
4. To assess the preferences of audiences from different backgrounds on logo options provided.
Survey Form

Part 1: measuring the familiarity with Thai culture of the audiences in Cincinnati Area.

1. Please rate your familiarity with Thai culture / Thailand

Part 2: Filtering the respondents’ cultural backgrounds

2. What country are you from? (Comment box)
3. What is your native spoken language? (Comment box)

Part 3: Meanings association with naming options

4. What are the negative associations (If any) with these names in your native language? (If none, you can leave blank)
   • In a Coconutshell
   • Kati-Kala
   • Thai Immersion
   • Beyond Bangkok
   • BangKoCo
   • Kati Coco

5. Is there any brands, or products, or place in your market that have similarities to the following words?
   • In a Coconutshell
   • Kati Coco
   • Thai Immersion
   • Kati-Kala
6. Would any of these words be an issue for a dessert brand? (Please answer in Y or N, and if Y, please give some reason in specific)
   - In a Coconutshell
   - Kati Coco
   - Thai Immersion
   - Kati-Kala
   - Beyond Bangkok
   - BangKoCo

7. Speaking of 'Thai Dessert Place', which name do you like most?
   - In a Coconutshell
   - Kati Coco
   - Thai Immersion
   - Kati-Kala
   - Beyond Bangkok
   - BangKoCo

Part 4 : Logo options

8. Please refer to these sample logos in the following questions
9. In your opinion, which option associate most with the Thai Dessert Place?

A  B  C

10. Imagine these logos on a row of shops, which one would you prefer to enter and experience?

A  B  C

11. Is there any name or word you would like to suggest for naming my Thai Dessert Place?
(Comment box)
THE RESULTS

The summarization of the results from online survey with 22 Americans/English as a native spoken language yielded as follow;

Logo Preference Survey Results: the target group preferred option (C), the logo was selected to be developed.

Naming survey results:

In a Coconutshell

Positive: The audiences associated the name with tropical, natural, healthy, quirky and fun. The name easily reminded them of coconut.

Negative: The name is too long and limiting. Some audience said it could also be read as "coconuts hell"
Association: Tropical, Funny, Coconut, Coconut water, suntan products, mall food court shop, soap and hair care

Issue: Sounds too specific and people might think the product is coconut only

**BangKoCo**

Positive: Interesting, fun, like the play on word

Negative: The term “Bang” has strong sexual connotations, No indication of the product: Thai dessert, hard to pronounce

Association: Coco Key (Water Park), Coconut water; Vitacoco

Issue: The negative Connotation

**Kati-Kala**

Positive: Sounds pretty, exotic, fun, intrigue

Negative: Hard to pronounce, not knowing the meaning

Association: Kitty-Koala, Coca-Cola, The girl named Katie

Issue: Not knowing what the product is, unknown, Kati may be mispronounced (Not Ka-Thai but Ka-tai)

**Thai Immersion**

Positive: The name associated the audience to cultural understanding, authentic Thai experiences in all respects, a deep look into the culture- positive learning, Cross-pollination, being open, openness, world peace

Negative: Sounds like a educational course for learning the Thai language, Immersion lacks specific context, generic, not related to restaurant

Association: language course, Thai Food, Experience

Issue: doesn't have appetite appeal, sounds like food but not dessert
Beyond Bangkok

Positive : Healthy, Exploring flavors/spices outside of Thai, Exotic exploration, discovery, unknown, international, connected to the world

Negative : Not clear, 'Bang cock' (sexual, slang, gross, immature), vague

Association : Bangkok Bistro (Thai Restaurant in Hyde Park area) mall villages, away from the big city, peaceful, green, and authentic. The movie ‘Hang Over’, recipes beyond typical Thai food, Airline, high-end Asian food

Issue : Does not sound like dessert, trying too hard

Kati Coco

Positive : Small, Friendly, Quirky, and Fun

Negative : Juvenile, not knowing the meaning

Association : Coco Chanel, Coconut water, Katie Chocolate, Cocoa Powder, Cat, Kaley Cuoco (the actress)

Issue : Sounds like the name of people rather than dessert

The decision on the most appropriate brand name was based on 4 criteria : Appeal, Fit-to-Concept, Distinctiveness and memorability. The name with most relevant keywords will be selected. However, the names with ‘Bangkok’ which many respondents associated it with sexual connotations will not be considered.

The concept of the brand is "The new experience of Thai Dessert in a fun and relaxed atmosphere" The names that fall in this category are; In a coconutshell, Kati Kala, Kati Coco, BangKoCo and Kati Coco. From the feedback, the name 'Thai Immersion' have deep meanings.
that communicate the concept of cross-culture, however, the comments indicated that it may lack appeal and does not represent ‘fun’ which is one of the key terms of the brand concept. According to the result of the online survey on February 6\(^{th}\) 2015, the most popular name among 32 respondents was ‘Kati-Kala’.

**General Knowledge of Thai Dessert**

This part provides the additional information about Thai Dessert featured in the menu of ‘Kati-Kala’. Despite of the popularity of Thai Savory Dishes, Thai Desserts are barely put under spotlight in the global level. I hereby would like to dedicate the space on my appendix to document this piece of literature about Thai Dessert, as a mean to provide the in-depth information to those who are interested.

The main ingredients of traditional Thai Dessert are rice flour, coconut milk or coconut meat, and sugar. Thai dessert originally does not contain eggs, but as the Royal court and the noble families were influenced by the western culture, either from traded goods or people, some egg-based desserts were brought to the table. The recipes were gradually modified depended on the ingredients available. This could be the first ‘Cross-cultural’ experience for many Thais in term of dessert 450 years ago.

![Figure 24: Thai country dessert and the royal court inspired dessert with elegant decoration, 2012. Thailand.](image-url)
Figure 25: *Thai country-style dessert*, 2014. Thailand.

Figure 26: *Thai hybrid dessert*, 2014. Thailand.
The 9 Auspicious: Thai dessert names are subtly associated with meaning or metaphor. Here from the figure below, any egg-based dessert will mostly be named as ‘Thong’ (Gold) such as Thong Yip which is egg yolk dumplings dipped in thick syrup, or ‘Ja Mong Kut’ (The crown of the chief) which is the thick egg yolk and bean paste cake with watermelon seeds, ‘Thong Yord’ (Flower shaped Egg Yolk Tart), All conveys good meaning. In wedding ceremonies or special events, it is important for these meaningful figures to be presented.

Figure 27: 9 Auspicious Desserts of Thailand, 2011
Figure 28: *Thai Dessert Main Ingredients*, 2014. Thailand.

Figure 29: *Thai dessert making techniques*, 2014. Thailand.
Figure 30: Thai dessert presentation techniques, 2014. Thailand.

Figure 31: Summary of Thai dessert identities, 2014. Thailand.
The Dessert Menu

Desserts will be offered in three categories to accommodate customers with various levels of exposure to new culture. They can either start from American common dessert with a hint of Thai flavor, like cookies and cupcakes;

Thai Cookies

$ 2

- Lemongrass Peanuts
- Pandanus Cashews
- Thai Tea Caramel Chips
- Coconut Toffee & Macadamia

Cupcakes

$ 4

- Coconut Custard
- Thai Tea Velvet
- Mango
- Papaya Delight

Drinks

$ 5

- Coconut Water
- Thai Milk Tea
- Thai Tea Smoothie
- Single Origin Coffee
The Hybrids: The cross-cultural approach to dessert by bringing American cooking techniques to apply to Thai ingredients, or Asian-inspired flavors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dessert</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thai Tea Lava Cake</td>
<td>$7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spicy Brownie &amp; Coconut Ice cream</td>
<td>$7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut Cake</td>
<td>$7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango Crumble</td>
<td>$8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Fruit Trifle</td>
<td>$9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya Bread Pudding</td>
<td>$9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai Authentic Assortments</td>
<td>$4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 for $15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ja Mong Kut</td>
<td>Egg Yolk, Watermelon Seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look Choop</td>
<td>Mung Bean Paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thong Aek</td>
<td>Egg Yolk, Gold Leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED Ka-Noon</td>
<td>Mung Bean Paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thong Yip</td>
<td>Egg Yolk, Syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa-Neh Chan</td>
<td>Flour, sugar, nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thong yord</td>
<td>Egg Yolk, Syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sankaya Fak Thong</td>
<td>Eggs, coconut milk custard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foy Thong</td>
<td>Egg Yolk, Syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woon Ka Ti</td>
<td>Coconut Milk, Pandan leaf Juice, Agar-Agar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanom Chan</td>
<td>Flour, sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coconut Milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>