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Brand Experience in China

Kemira Brand Localisation

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Abstract

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The aim of the thesis was to explore the role of brand experience and visual storytelling when localising a brand in a business-to-business context. The thesis discusses how a company can localise its brand elements and create an enhanced brand experience while maintaining brand consistency.

The literature review introduces a brand experience blueprint, including brand experience environment, essentials, and enablers. The topic is discussed through visual preferences, cultural understanding, and societal issues. The Chinese culture and the megatrends prevailing in China play an essential role when defining the current visual preferences and cultural understanding among the Chinese.

The study shows that nowadays, in China, local and foreign brands coexist. Some prefer the Western approach in terms of visuality but, on the other hand, might expect local relevance in branding and marketing materials. The versatility of the Chinese culture and the transition phase also appear in other terms: It can be described as both collectivistic and individualistic, traditional and modern, as well as reserved and expressive, depending on the context. This versatility should be taken into account in terms of brand experience and visual materials when localising a brand.

The literature analysis, Kemira global brand guidelines, and the discussions with the Kemira personnel in China form the basis for the chosen brand experience enablers (i.e., communications and design) and visual guidelines for the Chinese market. As a result of the study, the Kemira brand book China extension introduces visual guide-lines for typography, imagery, colour usage, and WeChat visual content creation. It will serve as a tool for the Kemira marketing team and visual creators in the future.

Keywords:	Brand, brand experience, localisation, standardisation, brand experience enablers

Tiivistelmä

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia brändikokemuksen (brand experience) ja visuaalisen tarinankerronnan roolia b-to-b-brändin lokalisoinnissa. Opinnäytetyö tarkastelee yrityksen eri brändielementtien lokalisointia ja sitä, miten vaikuttaa positiivisesti brändikokemukseen horjuttamatta brändin johdonmukaisuutta.

Kirjallisuuskatsaus esittelee brändikokemuksen blueprintin, joka koostuu brändikokemusympäristöstä (brand experience environment), brändikokemuksen peruspilareista (brand experience essentials) sekä brändikokemuksen mahdollistajista (brand experience enablers). Aihetta käsitellään visuaalisten mieltymysten, kulttuurisidonnaisen tulkinnan sekä yhteiskunnallisten linssien läpi. Kiinalaisten tämänhetkisiä visuaalisia mieltymyksiä ja tulkintoja tarkastellaan pääasiassa kiinalaisen kulttuurin sekä Kiinassa vallitsevien megatrendien pohjalta.

Opinnäytetyö osoittaa, että Kiinassa ovat vallalla sekä kiinalaiset että ulkomaalaiset brändit. Kiinalaisista osa suosii länsimaalaista visuaalista otetta, mutta samaan aikaan odottaa myös ripausta paikallisuutta brändi- ja markkinointimateriaaleissa. Kiinalaisen kulttuurin moninaisuus sekä muutoksen ilmapiiri näkyy myös muilla tavoin: kulttuuria voi kuvailla sekä yhteisölliseksi että yksilöllisyyttä painottavaksi, perinteiseksi sekä moderniksi ja varautuneeksi sekä ilmaisukykyiseksi riippuen kontekstista. Tämä moninaisuus on syytä ottaa huomioon brändin lokalisoinnissa ja visuaalisissa materiaaleissa.

Kirjallisuuskatsaus, Kemiran globaali brändiohjeisto sekä keskustelut Kemiran Kiinan tiimin kanssa ovat luoneet pohjan valituille brändikokemuksen mahdollistajille (viestintä ja muotoilu) sekä Kiina-kohtaiselle visuaaliselle ohjeistukselle. Opinnäytetyön tuloksena syntynyt Kemiran brändiohjeistus Kiinan markkinoille esittelee visuaalisen ohjeistuksen koskien typografiaa, kuvamaailmaa, värien käyttöä sekä WeChatin visuaalista sisällöntuotantoa. Sen on tarkoitus toimia Kemiran markkinointitiimin ja visuaalisten suunnittelijoiden työkaluna.

Avainsanat: brändi, brändikokemus, lokalisaatio, brändikokemuksen
                                mahdollistaja (brand experience enablers)

Content

1 Introduction

This study concentrates on the importance of brand experience and storytelling when localising a brand and examines the brand experience enablers, i.e., communications and design. The thesis aims to convert a brand story into concrete visual elements that resonate with Chinese stakeholders and enhance the brand experience. Moreover, this case study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how a company can localise its brand elements and create an enhanced brand experience while maintaining brand consistency. The literature review highlights different insights into the challenge of global consistency compared to local meanings and interpretations regarding brand experience through visual preferences, cultural understanding, and societal topics.

As a result of the study, visual guidelines for the Chinese market will be introduced. Visual guidelines support storytelling and effectively help overcome the communication obstacles that might occur if the message is based only on text. English is broadly used in advertising in Asia to overcome the diversity in languages and dialects. English, however, is not the most appealing language in China, as many are not proficient in English. To avoid the challenge with languages and to create quality perceptions, more emphasis could be put on visual elements and stimuli in branding in Chinese markets. (Henderson, Cote, Leong & Schmitt 2003, 308.)

This thesis focuses on the societal and visual perspective of branding. Branding is seen as a long-term process, whereas marketing is considered a short-term tactic and will be thus left out of the scope. The thesis introduces the Chinese societal landscape shortly and builds up a brief overview of megatrends in China. Also, visual preferences among the Chinese will be discussed. The literature analysis and the discussions with the Kemira personnel in China form the basis and guidelines for the storytelling and chosen brand experience enablers. These guidelines will be followed when setting up the Kemira brand book China including visual guidelines on typography, imagery, and colour usage. The aim

of the guidelines is to enhance coherent, intriguing, authentic, and involving brand communication in China to build awareness, trust, and loyalty towards the Kemira brand among Chinese stakeholders.

2 Brand experience

2.1 What is a brand?

> *'Products are created in a factory. Brands are created in the mind.'*
> Walter Landor, designer and branding/consumer research pioneer (1913-1995)

There is an endless number of brand definitions that have changed over time. Slade-Brooking (2016, 12) describes a brand as the name and reputation attached to something or someone which distinguishes it from the competition. However, a brand is not just the name, logo, symbol, or trademark but reflects certain values that define its character. A brand is an intangible asset of the company, a set of promises implying trust, consistency, and expectations (Davis 2002, 3).

From the customer perspective, brands have financial value in the minds and hearts of customers. This includes brand awareness, beliefs of superiority, and emotional bonding. This, however, emphasises only the communication task and leaves out the product or service itself. (Kapferer 2012, 7–11.) In his definition, Kapferer (2012, 13–5) combines the consumer and financial approaches and divides the concept of 'brand' into brand assets, brand strengths, and brand value (financial equity). Brand assets include brand awareness, brand reputation, emotion, image, and reflected customer imagery. Especially emotion and image will be in focus in this thesis. Brand strength brings brands to a certain point in time within a specific market, competitive environment, and business model. In this thesis, the context aspect will be discussed in terms of culture, its influence, and prevailing megatrends. The focus will be on China and the b-to-b market. The aspect of brand value, which reflects the brand's ability to deliver profit, will not be discussed in this thesis.

Brands seek to create lifelong relationships as they aim to connect emotionally with their consumers (Slade-Brooking 2016, 12). More specifically, brand assets can be seen as learned mental associations and affects. They develop through time in interactions with the brand. In fact, a brand is a summary of 'all the positive and negative impressions' created by the customers during interactions with the brand's products, distribution channels, personnel, and communication. (Kapferer 2012, 15–19.) This emotional aspect will be investigated throughout this thesis and will be an integral part of the approach chosen for the study. In addition, the focus will be on brand assets and customer perception concerning b-to-b brands. Thus, the thesis's interest lies in how a company builds its brand globally and how the audience in a b-to-b-context perceives it.

2.1.1 Brand engagement

A successful brand requires that it continuously fulfils the customer's expectations. It gets recognised by the audience and encourages customers to choose it over competitors. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 14.) A successful brand also brings trust. The perceived risks influence people's decision to buy a product, and the brand's task is to overcome this anxiety. (Kapferer 2012, 20.) Branding is no longer done primarily on TV or in magazines, but social media has created a platform for people to share their opinions and experiences on brands. It has drastically changed the way how brands are built.

Van Dyck (2014, 63) states that co-creation, community, and self-concept positively influence the consumer's involvement with the brand, which in turn positively impacts brand perception. By co-creation, Van Dyck means all situations where consumers collaborate with a company or other consumers to create something. This way, the consumers feel like a valuable and integral part of the company or brand. (Van Dyck 2014, 63.) For instance, in their study, Mao et al. (2020) proved that the most significant factor for a positive brand experience among Chinese respondents was how the brand identity of smartphones represents the unique self of the consumer and how the audience identifies with it. The thesis explores how a global brand resonates locally in China, addressing

the same identification question. In Mao's study, the respondents identified with the Western culture, and localising the brand was not relevant, whereas localised content might work better in some cases. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the Chinese target group case by case to understand their current preferences and affections.

Moreover, sharing ideas and experiences with other community members offers the customers a chance to belong to a community. Self-concept aims to build a bridge between the imperfect 'me' of the present and the perfect 'me' of the future as consumers distinguish themselves from others by choosing the brand. To develop a deep relationship between the brand and the stakeholders, it is essential to identify the right target group, shape stakeholders' perception through co-creation, create a community around the brand, and connect with the stakeholder's need for self-concept. (Van Dyck 2014, 62–63, 70.) Positive brand experiences seem to be related to strong involvement and identification with the brand. An active interplay between the company and the customers could thus lead to loyal consumers.

In an online context, stronger brand identification positively affects brand loyalty through more vital online brand identification, enhanced by an interactive online community, satisfied customer relationships, and a high-quality platform (Chou 2013, 678–679). As mentioned before, consumers are now active participants in brand-building through social media. For instance, sharing posts is a much faster way to launch than a global marketing campaign. (Wheeler 2018, 76.) Social media and its new platforms create possibilities for community creation and brand identification more easily than ever before. There are many ways for customer engagement on social media platforms, such as trusted communities, shared brand stories, or recognisable and coherent content, which ideally lead to loyal customers.

2.1.2 B-to-b brands

The target company of this study operates in a b-to-b environment. In a b-to-b context, decision-making plays a key role, including hard facts like features, benefits, price, service quality, etc. Conventionally soft facts like brand reputation are excluded when talking about b-to-b brands, even though emotions and other intangible factors guide our decision-making at work and in the business world. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 1–3.) Consequently, in this study, b-to-c research results will be introduced and utilised as a reference, as the approach of this study is based on the fact that brand communication is eventually targeted to people despite the business context. Thus, the emphasis is on storytelling and emotional appeal, as also soft facts count in a b-to-b context.

When scrolling down social media feeds, people bear their personal and occupational interests and create mixed networks, including colleagues, friends, and family. Throughout the day, they might bump into advertisements that relate to their work and spare time, no matter what time of the day. Consequently, although b-to-b and b-to-c marketing differ, they have similar paths to brand creation among customers. As in b-to-c business, also in b-to-b business content marketing is an effective tactic to outreach the global audience because of low cost and convenience (Thomson 2020; Thomson Data 2019).

Some aspects require special attention in a b-to-b context. For b-to-b companies, the added value in business is connected to superior service. The functional performance-based values blend with emotional values and create a powerful entity. (Quader & Sohel 2018, 49–82.) Kemira seems to share this orientation with emotional values, which are visible throughout their websites and marketing material. Their brand builds on storytelling and sets the business in a relatable context.

To sum up, since nowadays there is an explosion of choices in all business areas, brands have found their place far beyond b-to-c markets (Kotler &

Pfoertsch 2006, 1–3). In a business-to-business context, the reliability and repu-
tation of a brand are crucial: In b-to-b, instead of products, one buys trust. For
this reason, according to Kapferer, corporate brands play a much more signifi-
cant role in b-to-b than in consumer goods. (Kapferer 2012, 81.)

2.2 Brand touchpoints

Brand experience can be defined as '*carefully sequenced, synchronised and
selected touchpoints that combine to emotionally engage stakeholders as they
progress through their entire journey*' with the brand (Coleman 2018, 3). The
points of contact between a brand and a consumer are so-called touchpoints
that offer the brand a chance to keep a prominent position in the minds of its au-
diences (Slade-Brooking 2016, 18). Stakeholders should move seamlessly from
one touchpoint to another without disruption, and the touchpoints need to be
carefully selected. Thus, building brand experience is a joint effort of the whole
organisation, from human resources to sales, finance, and marketing. (Coleman
2018, 3.)

Guiding the customer through the entire journey creates an overall brand expe-
rience, including the brand's substance: values, essence, promise, positioning,
and personality. This is the basis the stakeholders connect with – the logo and
other visual elements light up the brand only when the substance is in place.
(Coleman 2018, 3–4.) Moreover, brand touchpoints offer a chance to increase
awareness and build customer loyalty. The brand can link to its audience
through various touchpoints such as websites, newsletters, signage, packaging,
exhibits, apps, letterheads, billboards, business cards, services, products, em-
ployees, presentations, videos, mobile, trade shows, public relations, podcasts,
advertising, and experiences, for instance. (Wheeler 2018, 3.)

Brand experiences make people feel happier than possessions and provide al-
most unlimited sources of differentiation for customers. In addition, they facili-
tate interaction between people. (Coleman 2018, 6–8.) This links nicely to b-to-
b, in which building a strong brand experience is a foundation for the lengthy

decision-making and purchase process. A brand experience is rather a continuous journey than a moment of purchase. Moreover, Marmat (2021) states that an enhanced and memorable brand experience in an online social media context can be created through a holistic approach by aligning companies' internal human resources and processes that help to deliver promises to customers and other online social media contingencies. Marmat's research introduces several forces which enhance the brand experience: interactivity, consumers' and stakeholders' participation, brands' knowledge, ease of interactive platform, employees' behaviour, brands' culture, brands' reputation, and customer demographic characteristics, customer motivation as well as customer attitude.

The brand experience blueprint has three different levels (Coleman 2018, 14–21):

- Brand experience environment: perspective, delivery, data, stakeholders
- Brand experience essentials: values, essence, promise, positioning, personality
- Brand experience enablers: employee behaviour, communications, design

It is worth defining the brand experience essentials in the context of the brand experience environment so that the brand resonates among the designated stakeholder groups. Brand experience enablers bring the brand experience essentials to life and alter them into something tangible. (Coleman 2018, 14–21.)

2.3 Brand experience environment

The brand experience environment consists of four elements: understanding the stakeholders, fine-tuning the perspective, considering the mechanics of delivery, and data-driven approach (Coleman 2018, 24–25). According to Coleman (2018, 109), the importance of every part of the Brand Experience Environment is relative and depends on the organisation and the characteristics of the market. This thesis will introduce and discuss the most relevant elements in terms of the thesis' emphasis.

The first element is related to stakeholders: the focus on the lifestyle of the target group and the understanding of how they see the world through their eyes. The emphasis in this thesis will be on the cultural context. This perspective will be discussed later in connection with localisation and Chinese culture. In addition, the mechanics of delivery implies a critical element related to this thesis: creating an emotional connection and stories as a means for connection creation. This will be discussed next in this chapter. Fine-tuning the perspective and data-driven will be left out as they don't address significant relevance in the context of the thesis.

2.3.1 Emotions as the mirror of the stakeholders

'One eye sees, the other feels.'
Paul Klee

Jensen (1999, 99) states that a strong brand most likely contains an appeal to our emotions. For years, it has been recognised that our decisions primarily affect our emotions (Coleman 2018, 71). Our emotions tend to guide our behaviour; therefore, engaging stakeholders emotionally is essential. Interestingly, rational and cognitive processes, however, are part of marketing. Still, emotions are often overlooked (Coleman 2018, 3–4), even though emotion is consistently linked with attention, which makes the brand stand out (Nelson-Field 2020, 110). Arousal, linked to successful advertising, is an established construction of emotion and heightens sensory awareness. It occurs when we burst into tears, or something takes our breath away or gives us goose pimples. Arousal makes us pay attention, especially if the cause of arousal is relevant. Attention, however, is insufficient and does not lead to a memorable brand experience if arousal and branding are not aligned. (Nelson-Field 2020, 110–111, 119–120.)

Van Dyck (2014, 55) states that divergent and relevant creative advertising is an effective way to set and meet brand objectives. Moreover, emotional appeal plays a crucial role in creative advertisements: the ads that evoke emotional responses always affect consumers, even though they were not committed.

(Van Dyck 2014, 55.) In fact, according to Fischer and Praxmarer-Carus' (2021) study, the more pleasure and perceived distinctiveness a brand experience includes, the more attached the customer is to the brand.

As mentioned earlier, traditionally, b-to-b branding was based on logic, rationality, and functional features. Coleman (2018, 72), however, states that emotions in branding are not only related to b-to-c markets but also b-to-b brands – only the types of emotions are qualitatively different as complex, high-risk, high-value, and long-term investments drive the b-to-b market. Therefore, experiences that reduce risk, provide security, reassure, give peace of mind and enhance personal or organisational reputation are the factors that will be chosen.

According to Godin (2018, 21), marketers, in fact, sell a road to achieve emotions: belonging, connection, peace of mind, status, or some other desired emotion. Marketing delivers feelings with different services, products, or stories. Stories and messages with emotional appeal create images in target groups' minds through symbols, associations, identification, and instinct. They are often represented as visual cues. (Rope & Pyykkö 2003, 272–273.) Through telling stories, making connections, and creating experiences, marketing can make the stakeholders feel being part of something or engaging with a service (Godin 2018, 21).

2.3.2 Stories stand out

Already in 1999, Jensen (1999, 52) introduced a study by the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies, which suggests that the significant growth in consumption in the future will be nonmaterial. The stories related to the product or service would become an essential part of the buying decision, and there are no cultural or national boundaries in need for stories. Jensen stated that we crave stories because people have always lived for and with myths, fairy tales, and legends. First, stories were told through oral tradition and images and later through the written form. According to Jensen, *'Anyone seeking success in the market of the future will have to be a storyteller.'* (Jensen 1999, 52, 57.) It

seems that images and oral tradition have, in fact, found a new means in peo-
ple's hearts since television and especially social media invasion and stories
are a prevailing way to appeal.

As Jensen predicted, content is the most crucial asset in communicating in the
digital age, and content should be created through stories. According to Aaker
(2018, 14), compared to facts, stories are more efficient in '*gaining exposure,
activating social media, communicating information, being remembered, creat-
ing involvement, persuading, inspiring and more.*' Turning the facts into a story
pays off because stories break through information overload rather than facts.
Often organisations, especially in b-to-b and high-tech spheres, however, as-
sume that exact facts are more efficient than telling a story even though several
facts can be woven into one appealing story. Moreover, these organisations
tend to believe that their target groups are always rational and rely on objective
information, even though this is rarely the case. (Aaker 2018, 14–16.)

A story can be defined as a narrative portraying real or fictive events or experi-
ences. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end and often includes content or
detailed sensory information. Even though a story incorporates or communi-
cates facts as a narrative, a story is not a sequence of facts or features. A story
allows the audience to interpret the facts and issues raised. (Aaker 2018, 16.)
Aaker defines a signature story as '*an intriguing, authentic, involving narrative
that delivers or supports a strategic message clarifying or enhancing the brand
vision, customer relationship, organisational values and/or business strategy.*' It
aims to give the brand visibility and energy and persuade customers for a more
extended period of time. A signature story is intriguing, attracting the eye and
the mind, authentic and involving, and implies a strategic message which crys-
tallises the following: the brand vision, the customer relationship, the organisa-
tion and its values, and the current and future business strategy. (Aaker 2018,
16–18.)

An involving story draws the audience into the story and often results in a cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioural response. This requires the audience to empathise with the characters, and the plot becomes essential. (Aaker 2018, 17–18.) Stories bring people closer to each other and make them contribute to creating and spreading culture. The brand stories aim to help target groups create something personally meaningful for them. (Storbacka, Korkman, Mattinen, Westerlund 2001, 173.) Persistent, consistent, frequent, and targeted stories gain trust, attention, and action. Ideally, the stories hold up over time and resonate. Godin summarises the aim of stories to genuinely reach the target group: '*Match the worldview of the people being served. Show up in the world with a story they want to hear, told in a language they're eager to understand.*' (Godin 2018, 12, 21, 40.) Consequently, stories add depth, meaning, and context to our brains. They act as a source of shared understanding and meaning. (Coleman 2018, 209.)

Stories are thus a powerful means to reach b-to-b audiences as they are likely to get activated on social media, communicate information, create involvement, persuade, and inspire. Moreover, one story can include several facts and imply a strategic message in an appealing and meaningful way. It is also an efficient and pragmatic means to make the company values, essence, and personality alive.

2.4 Brand experience essentials

Brand values

Brand experience essentials are a crucial part of brand experience. One needs to connect with stakeholders at a values level to influence the stakeholder's behaviour to achieve behavioural change. If the values resonate with stakeholders, they will identify with them and find the brand appealing. Finally, brand values are a means for stakeholders to express their values. (Coleman 2018, 117–120.)

In practical terms, many Finnish children's clothing labels, for instance, highlight sustainability, ecological approach, localness, and quality, which in turn resonate with quality-aware customers who want to express their values of life through their children's clothing. In fact, according to Wheeler, the green society has led to a new business model in which the main task is not only to create shareholder value but to combine people, the planet, and profit. Economic prosperity is now integrated with protecting the environment and demonstrating genuine care for communities and employees. Many companies consider sustainability as the core purpose of the brand promise. (Wheeler 2018, 72.)

Brand values also show the way for brand experience enablers as the values can be expressed through communications and design. Clearly defined brand values create guiding principles to guide the use of brand experience enablers which facilitate the creation of consistent and cohesive experiences. (Coleman 2018, 120.) Again, as an example, Finnish children's clothing brands could be marketed through nature-related photography in a Finnish environment, and the local factories and employees would be emphasised.

Brand essence

Coleman (2018, 131) defines brand essence as '*the core idea or premise that underpins and informs everything the brand does.*' In other words, what the brand is all about. For instance, Nike reflects 'authentic athletic performance', and Disney 'fun family entertainment'. Brand essence is not a tagline but an internal brand strategy tool that guides toward potential new markets and provides a focus for internal brand education. (Coleman 2018, 131–135.)

Brand promise

A brand promise aims to communicate the benefits of the brand to the stakeholders to build a brand experience that delivers relevant value. It is essential to distinguish the benefits from features and finally allocate them to relevant stakeholder groups. (Coleman 2018, 139–143.) Brand promise helps the designers develop the brand's emotional characteristics, which enhance communicating

directly with its audience and differentiating from the competition. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 35.)

Brand positioning

Brand positioning includes the unique associations with the brand the company aims for stakeholders to connect with. When positioning a brand, it is essential to define points of difference representing unique parts of the brand experience compared to competitors. (Coleman 2018, 144.)

Brand personality

Giving a brand a personality evokes people's natural tendency to link human characteristics to a brand. This, in turn, enables people to connect with organisations, services, and experiences associated with the brand on an emotional level. In addition, brand personality creates self-expressive value which reflects human characteristics such as lifestyle, interests, values, and story, for instance. (Coleman 2018, 157–162.)

2.5 Brand experience enablers

The brand expression must align with the company's mission, target market, culture, values, and personality (Wheeler 2018, 40). Successful brands define their brand experience essentials clearly and are consistently communicated through various channels. Once the message and relevant medium are defined, aligning the brand, content, and channels is easier. The brand experience environment provides an overview of the stakeholders' interests and the emotional connection one aims to create to engage the stakeholders. (Coleman 2018, 193–197.)

Finally, the brand design and brand experience enablers combine the look and feel of the brand in terms of different kinds of visual elements such as logos, imagery, or animated stories. Cohesive brand identity and defined colours, typeface families, and formats create a coherent brand identity system and unified

look and feel, building trust and fostering customer loyalty. (Wheeler 2018, 40–42.) Brand experience enablers consist of three elements: employer behaviour, communication, and design (Coleman 2018, 175). For the relevance of the thesis, only communication and design will be discussed.

Quader and Sohel (2018) introduce Schmidt and Ludlow's (2002) view on visual consistency: Primary aims of brand identity management are reconcilability and memorability, which are created through a coherent style and consistent design. Visual consistency and design management are essential means of achieving this. (Quader & Sohel 2018, 68.) Moreover, distinctive brand assets make the brand memorable. Such unique assets can be creative elements such as logos, colours, fonts, shapes, slogans, characters, or even auditory elements. The more distinctive assets a brand has, the stronger and broader the brand is tied in the memory. (Nelson-Field 2020, 51.) In addition to the traditional visual brand assets Coleman (2018, 217) adds multisensory design and service design to the spectrum. He also encourages one to consider these assets to facilitate a deeper and more complete understanding. For the relevance of this thesis, service design will be left out of the scope, but the multisensory design will be discussed briefly in relation to visual elements.

Various visual elements enable brand experience essentials, such as logo, colour, imagery, typography, packaging, video, branded environments, and clothing (Coleman 2018). A clear visual communication system is created out of the visual elements to attract customers and differentiate the brand from the competition (Slade-Brooking 2016, 42). In the following, some of the most essential visual elements, such as typography, colours, imagery, and multisensory design, will be discussed.

2.5.1 Typography

Typography can be defined as the art and practice of arranging type (Slade-Brooking 2016, 46). It is a core element of an effective brand identity system and supports positioning. The chosen typeface needs to be functional, flexible

for different contexts, and provide a wide range of expression while being clear and legible. (Wheeler 2018, 158). Not only has each typeface its history, but every cultural community is characterised by its language, script, and writing system (Tung, Chen, Liu, Chen, Xue & Ishida 2021). As the target context of the thesis is China, this chapter will focus on Chinese typography to define a framework for choosing the most suitable typeface for the brand.

Written Chinese is based on logographic letters called Hanzi, originating from the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 BCE). There are over 4800 simplified versions of Hanzi letters still frequently used. Chinese typography differs drastically from Latin typography. Hanzi is mono-width and fit into a notional square; on average, they are comparable to upper-case Latin letters size. (Tam 2018.)

Chinese can be written in two different writing modes: vertical and horizontal. Vertical writing mode is still widely used in Hong Kong, even though horizontal writing is becoming increasingly popular as there are more and more translated and mixed-text publications. (Tung et al. 2021.) The horizontal setting has been enforced for all printed material by the government of the People's Republic of China since 1955, and on websites, the text is always written horizontally (Tam 2018).

The typefaces can be divided into four style categories: Kai, Song, Fangsong, and Hei (see picture 1). Kai has a calligraphic style and traditional resembling handwritten forms, whereas Fangsong's stroke contrast is low and stroke weight very light. It is most suitable for vertical settings and shorter texts. Song typeface resembles Latin serifed typefaces and is dedicated to continuous reading. It is widely used and is also suitable for display use. Hei can be seen as the most contemporary typeface, and it is the most similar to mono-linear sans serif Latin typefaces. Nowadays, various weights are available for versatile purposes, including display use in contemporary graphic design. (Tam 2018.)

東国三力今書鷹酬鬱愛袋永
Kai Ti 楷體 —— Regular script

東国三力今書鷹酬鬱愛袋永
Fang Song 仿宋體 —— "Imitation Song"

東国三力今書鷹酬鬱愛袋永
Song Ti 宋體（Ming Ti 明體）—— Serif

東国三力今書鷹酬鬱愛袋永
Hei Ti 黑體 —— Gothic / Sans Serif

Picture 1. Kai, Song, Fangsong, and Hei typefaces (Hynuza 2015).

China's two main writing systems are Traditional (TC) and Simplified Chinese (SC). Both writing systems have their audiences in different countries and regions. Traditional Chinese is still used in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Malaysia, whereas people in mainland China and Singapore use Simplified Chinese. Even though the most educated Chinese in mainland China can understand Traditional Chinese, it is essential to choose the correct writing system matching the specific region to ensure everything is understood. (Pulse of Asia 2022.)

2.5.2 Colour

Colour is one of the cornerstones of an identity design (Rivers 2003, 78). For instance, colours have traditionally been used for symbolic effects in flags and military uniforms. Over time, colours are utilised to represent certain moods or thoughts; this way, symbolic meanings can be expressed through colours. Colours give brands an opportunity for more efficient communication, and in fact, colour is an important brand identifier - brand recognition can be increased by 80 per cent by using colours appropriately. The ultimate colour choices when

creating the visual brand identity are based on the feel and impact the design requires. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 42, 48, 55.)

Traditionally, the literature suggests that colours have different meanings and aesthetic appeals in different cultural settings as their aesthetic expressions differ: Colours evoke other emotions and associations depending on the target group. Therefore, careful use of colours in marketing is essential (Aslam 2005, 8; Rivers 2003, 78). For example, Deloitte's colour choice for a magazine cover in Japan expressed consistent but respectful communication regarding colour usage. Instead of a black background, broadly used in other countries but considered ominous in Japan, a white background was chosen. (Wheeler 2018, 20.)

However, finding reliable, fresh data on colour perception related to culture is challenging. The influence of globalisation might result in less clear cultural differences in colour perception as visual marketing gets mixed in the global markets, and people also identify with groups other than those they originate from. Therefore, a list of questions (Wheeler 2018, 156) that help test the effectiveness of the colour strategy will be now introduced. For this thesis, the most relevant have been chosen:

- Is the colour distinctive?
- Is the colour appropriate to the type of business?
- Is the colour aligned with the brand strategy?
- What do you want the colour to communicate?
- What meaning has been assigned to the colour?
- Does the colour have positive connotations in the target markets?
- Does the colour have positive or negative connotations in foreign markets?
- Will the colour facilitate recognition and recall?

2.5.3 Imagery

The appropriate imagery aims to reinforce the brand message (Slade-Brooking 2016, 55). Images add colour and strength to branding and can attract more attention and interest. Through imagery, companies can illustrate a company's ethos, function, personality, or message. (Rivers 2003, 30–31.) For Kemira, the imagery strongly reflects the brand message and story and is an inseparable part of branding. It is visible on all marketing communication channels, including social media.

Nowadays, different social media platforms skilfully exploit the power of imagery, and its influence cannot be questioned. At its best, the imagery gives a visual cue to the brand and pushes the imagination to a track that tells a story in the stakeholder's mind. According to Slade-Brooking, images convey specific meanings, and often particular objects develop strong symbolic meanings over time. Therefore, it is essential to fully appreciate any historical or traditional meaning to ensure that it is used sensitively and appropriately. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 49.) Different styles in images can also have semiotic significance. For instance, retro-like mimicry of hand-tinting might create a feeling of nostalgia or tradition (Slade-Brooking 2016, 50). In contrast, a calm forest imagery style might reflect the Japanese ideals of balance and harmony, as in Deloitte's cover (Wheeler 2018, 20).

2.5.4 Multisensory design

The brand is not only a visual form of communication. Appealing to all the senses is a much more powerful way to communicate. Smell, for instance, is one of the most appealing ways to attract consumers and make them remember the brand. As smell is the most sensitive of all senses, it relates closely to pleasure, well-being, emotion, and memory and significantly influences mood. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 30.) Smell directly connects to our brain's limbic system dealing with long-term memory and emotion. Therefore, smell is an essential element in how one makes decisions. Whereas images fade away in some days

or even hours, recall of smells can remain even for years and bring one back even to childhood. For instance, the Kyoto property uses a mixture of locally grown matcha, lemon, cardamom, cider wood, and jasmine to enhance the brand's premium positioning with Japanese undertones. (Coleman 2018, 222–223.)

Another example is sonic branding, including jingles, with or without words, which will most likely create 'earworms'. These catchy melodies reach our consciousness everywhere, from smartphones to television to shopping malls, appeal to our emotions, and connect to a brand. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 30.) In fact, research proves that music influences our memory, emotion, and movement (Coleman 2018, 224–226). Sound can intensify the brand experience and trigger an emotional response. Music can even transcend cultures and languages.

Also, the taste can help evoke homely emotions and thus enhance the brand's positioning. For example, some brands offer retro, playful sweets at reception to reflect their outgoing, fun, and young brand. More and more brands also include haptics in their brand experiences, aiming to bring their customers closer to the brand through a sense of touch. (Coleman 2018, 224–226.)

Apple leans on multisensory brand experience by creating unique brand experiences in its stores. Apple concept stores allow customers to see, touch, listen and even smell Apple. Evolving as many senses as possible enhances brand recognition more effectively than involving just one sense. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 31.) Zha, Foroudi, Melewar & Jin (2022) studied the processes involved in the consumers' mining, processing, and application of brand-related sensory data through a sensory brand experience (SBE). They state that there is an intrinsic need and desire to consume through our senses.

The research showed that the tendency for online shopping caused by the pandemic, for instance, instead of store visits, had not diminished the desire for sensorial experiences. More specifically, the combination of five sensory cues in

a brand setting instead of just one strongly affects sensory brand experience: it is essential to create a unique blend of brand sensations and different feeling states with a brand to build continual brand engagement and a positive sensory brand experience among consumers. In turn, a positive sensory brand experience will likely bring the customer emotionally closer to a brand, as sensory brand experience can transfer to brand personality perception. This is a path to match brand personality with consumers' personality, aiming to make the customer fall in love with the brand. (Zha et al., 2022.)

3 Brand localisation

3.1 Localising or Standardising

There has been a strong trend towards global brands as the globalising world economy keeps increasing. Some multinational companies, such as Apple, Gillette, and IKEA, follow a global strategy and have strongly standardised their marketing. However, people tend to value local and regional products and retailers more as the local actors usually understand consumers' needs better. Moreover, even though standardisation might help strengthen the brand's worldwide strategy and global image, it is not necessarily simple to 'translate' marketing to fit all markets around the world. Cultural, historical, religious, linguistic, economic, and social factors influence the interpretation in each region and culture. This has led to global brands emphasising local concerns in their marketing, i.e., glocal marketing. (Van Dyck 2014, 87–88.) In the b-to-b context creating glocal content will probably positively affect the reliability and reputation of the brand. Local aspects of branding make customers feel understood, which in turn builds trust. In b-to-b, trust plays a significant role; therefore, considering local concerns in branding is valuable for companies such as Kemira.

Most brands face the problem of creating a uniform image if the brand does not have the same product or service in each country (Kapferer 2012, 405). Advertising has been researched from this standardisation perspective, and the find-

ings are valuable in understanding the cultural influence also on brand percep-
tion. According to de Mooij (2004, 180), standardised global advertising only
works equally effectively in some markets, as consumer values might differ from
those promoted in the advertising message. Advertising has its systems of
meaning which depend on the culture and often vary from country to country.
This means that there are different ways advertising is composed and read. (de
Mooij 2004, 180.)

In Asian countries, the aim of advertising, for example, was to build a relation-
ship between the company and the customer. According to references from the
beginning of the 21st century (for example, de Mooij 2004), in an Asian context,
an indirect approach works better than a direct approach which is likely to turn
customers off. It is essential to understand how culture operates when transfer-
ring marketing to other cultures, as consumers from different cultures experi-
ence the advertising message differently. In other words, culture, including
shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values, cannot be separated from
the individual or the historical context. (de Mooij 2004, 181.) A shared history
and a shared system of reference create meaning locally as people are familiar
with the same stories and share similar backgrounds (Wang 2008, 51–52).
Through globalisation, however, nowadays, China is culturally closer to the
West than ever before, and some customers identify with Western culture (Zhou
& Belk, 2004, 71). Perhaps we could talk about a mixture of a global and local
culture which both affect the beliefs and attitudes of the target group. Conse-
quently, it could be questioned if the traditional conventions still prevail.

People's behaviour is affected by their needs and motivations but also by their
decision-making context. In different cultures, people make the same decision
for different reasons. Many global standard products sold in different cultural
contexts are purchased for different reasons depending on the culture. For in-
stance, de Mooij introduces a study (Li 2001) in which Nokia ringtones, popular
in other individualistic cultures, were not perceived as alluring among collec-
tivistic Chinese consumers who don't wish to stand out in a group. (de Mooij
2004, 191.)

Achieving a balance between globalising and localising is ideal for branding efforts. Combining global and local requires continuous strategic adaptation, which successfully results in glocalisation. Glocalisation allows global brands to adapt to local needs without losing the original brand identity. (Beveridge 2021, 6.) For example, balancing standardisation and localisation in the Chinese luxury markets is essential. To avoid over-localization, the key elements of marketing communications must be standardised globally to keep the local elite onboard as they feel like a part of the global community. (Liu, Perry, Moore, Warnaby 2015, 363.)

Incorporating local cultural elements into global brands will communicate the customers' open attitude and show the relationship between the global brand and cultural elements. However, to avoid cultural intrusion, local cultural elements should not possess any features of global brands. For example, when 'Starbucks moon cake' is launched, there should be a relational interpretation to describe the relationship between Starbucks and moon cakes. That is, Starbucks should be seen merely as a manufacturer of the 'Starbucks moon cake' and should not adopt a property interpretation as follows: *'A Starbucks moon cake is a moon cake mixed with the Starbucks chocolate chips.'* (Nie & Wang 2019.)

Several factors influence to which extent to standardise and how much to adjust to local needs. One of them is the company's country of origin, due to which a target group holds positive or negative attitudes toward a country and might respond more or less favourably to a brand. (Beveridge 2021, 6–7.) Moreover, interestingly often, it is not essential who owns the brand or who manufactures the brand, but how the target group interprets the ownership. A multinational brand might appear local to a specific group of customers and match the values and context, making the brand appear genuinely local. (Wang 2008, 38–39.)

3.2 Culture, values, and communication styles

Cayla & Arnould introduce a theory on brands as cultural forms. A cultural form, including songs, folktales, and plays, is defined as 'a way of interpreting and organising the world'. They reveal how people should live, look, and think. Accordingly, branding can be seen as '*a specific form of communication, which tells stories in the context of products and services, addresses people as consumers, and promises to fulfil unmet desires and needs*'. It is a symbolic way to talk about and see the universe. Additionally, the concept of brands as cultural forms offers a frame to study branding in its historical, geographical, and social context. (Cayla & Arnould 2008, 86–87.)

For example, P&G, a U.S. consumer goods company, wanted to introduce its Pampers brand in Japan using storks in the advertising campaign leaning on the story of storks who bring newborn babies. This story, however, didn't have any relevance to Japanese consumers as the babies are delivered inside the peaches floating on the river. (Beveridge 2021, 32.) The cultural context was obviously unfamiliar to the target group and did not address them in any way. This leads back to the importance of stories discussed previously in the thesis. Even though stories are an efficient way to communicate the brand, the story's local context, and relevance should not be forgotten.

To be successful in localisation, Wang (2008, 66) lists Zai Zhongguo's (2005) rules to be followed in China:

- *Emphasise team playing and communal and family values;*
- *Use extreme caution whenever you try to make an appeal to humour or sex;*
- *Pick warm, sincere public relations activities that are modest in tone;*
- *Instil modern sensibility into familiar Chinese idioms, allusions, stories, or fables;*
- *Use storytelling and other more indirect creative methods to appeal to the southerners, but feed Beijingers more serious and information-oriented ads.*

Beveridge introduces another, more up-to-date point of view on Chinese culture, highlighting harmonious relationships as the ultimate goal of communication. Harmony, however, is seen as a dynamic process that changes due to opposing elements – something that keeps changing and finding its form. Sulwhasoo, a high-end Korean natural skincare brand, has utilised these contradictory elements in its branding to express cutting edge-technologies and innovation through imagery with square and round drops. (Beveridge 2021, 123–125.) The dynamic process of harmony is thus transferred into a modern form and visual cues reflecting Eastern cultural values.

3.3 Visual preferences in China

Cultural symbols carry meaning unique to a group of people sharing the same culture. Next to language, visual cues are an essential means of effective intercultural marketing communication. Customers interpret marketing messages as a combination of spoken and written language and visual cues such as symbols, colours, and signs. As emojis, for example, first appeared on mobile phones, they were seen as a universal form of communication. Emojis, however, have very different meanings depending on the culture. For instance, the angel emoji is interpreted as a positive sign in Western cultures, whereas in China, it signifies death. (Beveridge 2021, 56.) Next, it will be discussed what kinds of meanings colours and imagery imply in China and how these cultural differences can be considered in branding.

Colours

Next, it will be discussed how Western and Chinese perceptions of colours differ and affect the interpretation and meaning of the message. The research (Zhao & Xu 2021, 2067) shows, for example, that the red colour of Coke packaging enhances the brand in China as Chinese consumers consider red to represent good luck, happiness, and energy. Moreover, according to previous research from the beginning of the 21st century, in China, colours have different connotations (Aslam 2005, 5): red stands for love, happiness, luck, and good

taste, whereas yellow signifies purity, royalness, authority, and also good taste. Green is interpreted as pure, sincere, and trustworthy; blue is associated with high quality. The meaning of purple is linked with luxury and love, whereas black is seen as powerful and expensive. White signifies death, mourning, or purity. (Aslam 2005, 5.) In Western cultures, white is often considered a sign of weddings as the bride wears white, whereas white is traditionally worn at funerals in China. These conventional views on colour interpretation seem, however, relatively narrow and race the question of how glocalisation finds its place in this context.

Even though the idea of a white wedding gown is not universal, globalisation has changed cultural habits, and Western traditions are now seen in China (Beveridge 2021, 59). Similarly, as the society in China is undergoing a drastic change and there are significant differences in cultural preferences between regions, the ways people interpret colours and create meanings vary in China. In addition, globalisation has brought Western brands closer to Chinese society – and Asian brands closer to Europe – and consequently, there is a group of people in China identifying with Western brands (Zhou & Belk, 2004, 71), which might influence the preferences for visual language as well.

Rather than defining which colours work and which don't, it is much more fruitful to examine colours from various perspectives through the following questions, slightly modified compared to the list introduced earlier in the thesis (Wheeler 2018, 156):

- Are the primary colours, blue, white, and black, distinctive?
- Are the primary colours appropriate to the type of business?
- Are the colours aligned with the brand strategy in China?
- Do the colours communicate the brand story in China?
- What meaning has been assigned to the primary colours blue, white and black?
- How about the supplementary colours?
- Do the colours have positive connotations in the target markets?

- Does any of the Kemira colours have negative connotations in China?
- Will the colours facilitate recognition and recall?

Imagery

In addition to different advertising appeals and motives, advertising styles also include different communication styles (de Mooij 2004, 192). Moreover, de Mooij claims that visual languages differ depending on the culture and the history, geography, climate, and religion influence them. Especially direct and indirect communication styles result in very different kinds of ads. For instance, in China, direct messages in advertising might be interpreted as rude, whereas metaphors work well. Also, celebrities in advertisements do not address the audience directly or rely on persuasion but play a more symbolic role. In collectivistic cultures with indirect communication, metaphors are more frequently used than in individualistic cultures. Metaphors are often culture-specific and may be difficult to understand in other cultures. For instance, a Nokia advertisement with a squirrel aimed to symbolise free movement and good reception in a deep forest. However, the Chinese perceived the animal as living far away from people and missed the intended symbolism. (de Mooij 2004, 192–196, 181.)

Cultural preferences are also linked to visual stimulus – the same visual stimulation cannot communicate the same message to target groups globally (Wang 2008, 106). In China, meaning is in the context, and communication is implicit (de Mooij 2004, 195–196). People tend to pay attention to the background of the image and process images holistically, paying attention to details of the relations between objects (Chua, Boland & Nisbett 2005). This is related to the dynamic process of harmony discussed earlier. Moreover, the research shows that human/nature harmony appeal is often in Eastern Asia advertising (Ongkrutraksa 2002). Similarly, Henderson & al's research, conducted among Chinese and Singaporean respondents, suggests that companies should leverage elaborate, natural, and harmonious design to strengthen their brands as these create positive affect, quality perceptions, and precise meaning. (Henderson et al. 2003, 308–310.)

According to Wang, Wedel, Huang & Liu's research in Chinese and American cultures, consumers' emotional experiences and information processing related to a particular brand differ. Brand processing likely occurs if the facial cues match the viewers' cultural background. This is based on the fact that a smiling face with an averted gaze positively influences brand information processing among Chinese consumers. In contrast, among American consumers, there was no such impact. Moreover, compared to American consumers, a slightly smiling face with a direct gaze appealed more strongly to Chinese consumers.

Consequently, if a company wants to attract the consumers' attention, direct eye gaze with a smiling facial expression might be a suitable strategy. An averted eye gaze and a smiling facial expression, in turn, should be chosen if the aim is to evoke consumers' deep impressions and information processing. (Wang et al. 2017.)

Table 1 below summarises what kind of visual content, elements, and vibe are conventionally seen as efficient and appealing in China. Later in this thesis, the conventional approach will be challenged as China is going through a transition in many ways. Despite that, it is essential to be aware of these conventional values and preferences, which a part of the Chinese most probably still relate to.

Table 1. Conventional Brand Imagery in China

Content	Elements	Vibe
Metaphors that relate to local culture	Human & nature	Natural, visual
Familiar Chinese idioms, allusions, and stories	Relevant to the audience, celebrities in symbolic roles	Elaborate
Implicit message	Use caution when making an appeal to humour or sex	Modern sensibility
Team playing	Local cultural elements	Positive
Communal and family values	Concrete details, smiling faces	Vivid
The dynamic process of harmony	Contradictory elements	Harmonious, dynamic

The previously introduced references related to imagery and communication styles date back to the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century. Thus, it is essential to consider that globalisation has also affected in this respect. It is also worth paying attention to new communication platforms and analysing their influence and power. Research (Li, Zou & Yang 2019) shows, for instance, that storytelling is an effective way to build the audience's trust towards the brand on We Media such as WeChat. Especially stories relevant to the Chinese and offering concrete details in terms of eye-catching videos and audio, for example, are likely to increase consumer trust. In addition, advertorials that promote positive value positively affect trust. It seems that the Chinese long for positive energy, and when they encounter positive stories, they are likely to pay closer attention and develop trust in the story. (Li & al. 2019, 330.)

4 Kemira brand in China

Kemira is in the business of chemistry expertise, ensuring hygiene, safe water, food, and safety. With over 100 years of experience, Kemira partners with municipal water utilities, pulp, paper, board, and tissue producers, and companies in the energy sector. Kemira helps customers design for efficiency, reuse resources, and revitalise natural systems. At Kemira, there are 5,000 employees. The headquarters are in Helsinki, and the company operates in 100 different countries with 62 manufacturing sites.

4.1 Kemira brand experience environment in China

4.1.1 China and megatrends

China, with 9.6 sqm of land, over 1.4 billion inhabitants, and over 50 ethnic groups, is a versatile and the largest country in the world. The Chinese culture and its communication have traditionally been described as implicit instead of explicit or direct, listening-centred, polite, insider-oriented with low trust, and saving face-oriented. In fact, Fang states that '*the Chinese are both collectivist and individualist, both traditional and modern, both long-term and short-term, both reserved and expressive, and both Communist and Capitalist, all depending on the situation, context, and time.*' Traditionally seen as family-centred, nowadays, Chinese society allows people to emphasise their personal pursuits and dedication to the organisation and community. (Fang 2014, 2–12.) Pheng & Yuquan's (2002) research shows that people avoid conflicts and competition conventionally in China and don't want to differentiate as individuals from the group.

As one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and with increasingly sophisticated information technology, China has rapidly become one of the world's largest digital economies (Lambert, Chung, Leung, Kevin, Xia, et al. 2021). China's economic structural transformation 'from a manufacturing-based investment-driven economy to a service-based consumption-led economy' has

been going on for a while already (Lo 2017, 1). In 2017 Lo predicted that the trend for Chinese consumption would move away from the basics towards luxury and non-essentials based on the rising Chinese household income and people willing to live better and enjoy more luxury. In addition, demand for health products, such as air purifiers, health foods, fitness, sports equipment, and clothing, will increase. (Lo 2017, 18.)

Sustainability in focus

Sustainability has become an essential focus area for many businesses, and the Chinese government is pushing companies accordingly with its environmental policy. According to Lo, the government will invest more in pollution and environmental control. Money will also be spent on leisure-related activities or gear such as entertainment, travel, dining, sports, technology such as smartphones and computers, and connectivity with the rest of the country and world. (Lo 2017, 18.)

According to a strategic Chinese PR agency, Influence Matters, there have been discussions in the media lately on the necessity of sustainable choices for companies operating in China, and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) has attracted the capital market's attention. There is a shift from greenwashing to genuine sustainability and real interest in environmental issues. Since 2020, China's national strategy has focused on environmental, social, and government (ESG) related issues. ESG has become a long-term topic for investment, industrial transformation, and media discussions. On September 22, 2020, General Secretary Xi Jinping declared at the 75th United Nations General Assembly an ESG policy according to which the goal of 'China's carbon dioxide emissions will reach the peak by 2030 and strive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060'. More carbon emission reduction policies will be released shortly. (Influence matters 2022.)

According to OECD, China's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2060 shows a strong commitment to mitigating climate change (Economy Policy Reforms

2021). Moreover, in May China National Development and Reform Commission published the 14th Five-Year Plan for Bio-economy Development. It aims to promote integrated innovation in biotechnology and information technology, accelerate the development of biomedicine, bio breeding, biomaterials, bio-energy, and other industries, and make the bio-economy bigger and stronger. The focus is set on sustainability – it is expected that both industries and consumers will increasingly demand products from renewable and circular resources, including wood and textile fibres. Among others, the markets for waste solutions, including biomass, plastic, and water, are promising. (Ni 2022.)

COVID and its consequences

COVID-19 has punished China heavily, and as a result, China has reacted by restricting society with continuing lockdowns and a zero-COVID policy. On the other hand, COVID-19 is probably one reason for the rapid development of digital innovation and vast online services in China. China has nearly one billion internet users, and the country is developing many 'China-first' innovations in omnichannel retail, social media, on-demand services, mobility, fintech, health tech, and other domains. (Lambert, Chung, Leung, Kevin, Xia et al. 2021.) Chinese consumers will continue favouring their trusted information channels such as short videos, social media, billboards, mobile, web, and TV. Content-based eCommerce will be prominent on video-sharing platforms such as Douyin (the Chinese Tiktok) and Bilibili. Livestreaming and broadcasting will follow these more traditional eCommerce platforms in the future. (Lambert et al., 2021.)

4.1.2 Branding in China

Understanding Chinese cultural heritage is also vital from the perspective of branding. A couple of elements are crucial in Chinese culture: auspiciousness, good fortune, happiness, power, and status. (Wheeler 2018, 93.) Moreover, regarding branding, China is the most complex market with diverse regional,

linguistic, and cultural nuances (Wheeler 2018, 92–93). In fact, there are significant regional differences in market cultures between different city clusters in China (Wang 2010, 58).

China has become a country where local and foreign brands coexist, and local and international changes occur. As China is developing rapidly, it is crucial to constantly screen cultural and economic changes. As LinkedIn expanded in China, for instance, they wanted to establish a Chinese name and identity for the Chinese audience. The brand identity needed to be consistent with the global brand and resonate in the Chinese context. Consequently, LinkedIn built on existing brand equity and meaning and explored country-specific positioning and attributes. (Wheeler 2018, 92–93.)

Whereas older research shows that foreign brands are less appealing to Chinese consumers compared to local brands (Zhiyan, Borgerson & Schroeder 2013), Zhou & Belk researched Chinese consumer perceptions on global and local advertising appeals showing that Western models and global advertisements appealed to the ones who reach for international cosmopolitanism and its imagined prestige. The study suggests that those driven by nationalistic feelings and aiming to maintain local prestige identified with the content representing Chinese values. (Zhou & Belk, 2004, 71.)

4.1.3 WeChat as the lead platform

Yunpeng and Khan's (2021) study states that online brand experience has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. The results are based on data collected from customers of different most popular and leading websites across industries in China. In fact, several industries that used to require face-to-face interactions are expected to switch to digital interaction. The change allows service providers to work anywhere, broaden availability, and enhance the quality of services. Virtual domains attract more and more Chinese consumers for social interactions and leisure activities. Virtual and physical social activities tend to merge as

offline social interactions are nowadays often organised through virtual platforms. (Lambert et al., 2021.)

Zhang, Xu & Ye (2021) studied what influences trust in social media brands in social media communities in China. The study suggests that social media brands in China should increase users' trust by optimising their entertainment content, social networking function, and social-status-enhancing function because the information users receive through social media is intertwined with entertainment and social networking: *'The blend of interpersonal communication with information seeking on social media increases social media brand trust and boosts user attachment to social media platforms.'* The information gained from social media provides many different social media topics. It eases users' interaction with others as users can follow their friends, celebrity figures, and other favourite social media accounts.

Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat, TikTok, and Weibo attract an increasing amount of loyal users in China but also abroad (Zhang, Xu & Ye 2021). WeChat is considered the most popular hub in the social media landscape of China. As the world's fifth most widely used social networking app, it transmits nearly 205 million video messages and boasts almost 410 million audio and video calls daily. (Stancheva 2022.)

Originally, WeChat was launched in 2011 for short messages and functioned as a simple messenger app like WhatsApp. Since its launch, WeChat has become a multi-function app that many Chinese smartphone users prefer over other social media apps. It is the most popular app in China, and only five apps worldwide have more users than WeChat. Nearly every smartphone user in China already has a WeChat account. WeChat Work, with 75 million users in 2021, is similar to the design of WeChat but is made for businesses. (Iqbal 2022.)

For instance, Nike's success in China is connected to its strong WeChat presence. According to Nike China, it is essential to combine many different kinds of

platforms in the Chinese market. Nike China is gaining brand equity by engaging with consumers on online platforms, involving their customers as brand ambassadors, and creating communities. (Daxue Consulting 2022.)

Chen, Shen, Huang, and Li's (2021) study shows that WeChat content and interaction positively influence Chinese consumers' perception of South Korean brands. More specifically, functional information, entertaining information, social interaction, brand interaction, and self-concept positively impact their brand identity and enhance consumers' purchase intention. The study also states that South Korean brands with a higher sense of enterprise social responsibility are recognised as more attractive and may obtain more significant value.

4.1.4 In transition

As one of the world's largest digital economies (Lambert et al. 2021), China is transforming into a service-based consumption-led economy (Lo 2017, 1). It was predicted in 2017 that Chinese consumption would lean towards luxury and non-essentials, and the demand for health products, such as air purifiers, health foods, fitness, and sports equipment and clothing, will increase (Lo 2017, 18). The urban population in China is growing rapidly, and in 2015 the Chinese middle class was the biggest in the world. Moving from rural to urban areas and entering the middle or upper middle class has made the Chinese seek services that have not been available or affordable. (Beveridge 2021, 16.)

Also, according to the World Federation of Advertisers (2021) in APAC, a passion for change and good health and well-being are emphasised in society. Thus, luxury, leisure, well-being, and service are the powers altering society and might also affect visual preferences across different business areas. With well-being being one of the key drivers, people are also willing to measure sustainability efforts and pay more for sustainable products. Moreover, businesses are increasingly involved in societal issues due to the pandemic. (World Federation of Advertisers 2021.)

Moreover, in China, there is a genuine interest in sustainability and environmental issues. National Development Programs aim to promote innovation in different bio industries and technologies, thus strengthening the bio-economy. There is a tendency for both industries and consumers will increasingly demand products from renewable and circular resources. There are promising markets for waste solutions, including biomass, plastic, and water. (Ni 2022.)

In terms of technology, China is taking significant steps. Digital innovation is developing rapidly, and the number of internet users is exploding (Lambert et al., 2021). In 2022, WeChat was one of the most important digital channels for brands to promote their services. In many cases, WeChat has outpaced corporate websites, and brand communication and marketing happen now on social media. Not only does digitalisation make the Chinese branding landscape challenging, but it is also a complex market with diverse regional, linguistic, and cultural nuances (Wheeler 2018, 92–93). In fact, the market clusters differ significantly between regions (Wang 2008, 57–58), making it impossible to categorise Chinese into one culture or market or name specific colours or content which would attract the target group. The only thing certain is that in China, a prominent part of branding occurs on social media.

Moreover, in China, local and foreign brands coexist, and nowadays, a part of Chinese consumers identify with Western culture, and thus content with Western characteristics appeals to them. Also, in Hong Kong, many consumers may perceive Western culture as superior to Chinese culture in certain aspects, such as achievement and competence, but still consider Chinese culture more optimistic regarding traditional moral values and solidarity attributes. Sometimes consumers might seek the prestige and quality they expect from global brands but, at the same time, appreciate the local relevance the brand offers. (Beveridge 2021, 12, 33.)

A similar trend of coexistence can be seen elsewhere in Chinese culture. As discussed before, traditionally, Chinese culture has been defined as implicit and family-centred. Nowadays, the versatile culture is seen as both collectivistic and

individualistic, traditional and modern, as well as reserved and expressive depending on the context. Chinese people are now aiming for their personal interests but also are dedicated to the organisation and society. (Fang 2014, 2–12.)

Kemira's business landscape is promising as China's bio-economy, and waste solutions markets are booming. When creating the Kemira brand experience enablers, the complex economic, cultural and regional landscape must be considered. The transition phase influencing different regions in different ways makes it challenging to create specific guidelines. Still, most importantly, the emphasis should be put on the brand story, WeChat as a platform, typography, and the slight adaptation of imagery and colours. In addition, visual no-go choices should be introduced.

4.2 Kemira brand experience essentials in China

This chapter describes how to create communications that reflect Kemira's brand essentials. The attention will be put especially on Kemira's platform on WeChat, China's leading digital marketing communications channel. The brand experience essentials will be discussed from various points of views: services, values, essence, promise, positioning, personality, and brand story.

Services

Kemira's core businesses are pulp & paper, water treatment, and the energy industry, in which chemistry expertise plays a key role. Kemira helps its customers design for efficiency, reuse resources and revitalise natural systems. Kemira aims to increase sustainability and reduce food waste by enabling safe and functional fibre-based packaging. For Kemira, safe and sustainable chemistries are a part of the good life, ensuring hygiene, safe water, food safety, and more.

As a global leader in sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries, Kemira provides the best-suited products and expertise to improve

its customers' product quality, process, and resource efficiency. Kemira partners with municipal water utilities, pulp, paper, board, and tissue producers, and companies in the energy sector.

Values

Kemira's values consist of four main elements: dedication to customer success, care for people and the environment, performance, innovation, and success together. Kemira is committed to operating safely and responsibly and reducing its environmental impacts.

Essence

Kemira's brand essence is built on three core pillars: sustainability, innovation, and smart solutions. Kemira's expertise in these areas, combined with a customer-centric mindset, sets the company apart and makes Kemira's brand future-proof in the market.

Promise

Kemira's core pillar, sustainability, is an integral part of their decision-making of what they expect of their business partners and how they create value for the customers. Kemira wants to use its chemistry expertise to solve sustainability challenges and contribute to society. In China, the company promise is similar to the global one, emphasising sustainability.

Positioning

Kemira aims to add value to its stakeholders while adding peace of mind. Kemira wants to express that Kemira is a global company, proud of their 100+ years of history innovating for a more sustainable future. The company intends to strengthen its position as a world-class chemistry expert.

In APAC, the business leans towards pulp & paper, and the company is now re-entering the water business. There are lots of small competitors in the field.

Personality

Kemira's brand is human, purposeful, and data-driven. Kemira's statements are qualified with facts, but the brand also engages with people's senses and feelings. This combination of the functional aspects with a human-centric approach aims to define the unique brand position in people's minds.

Brand Story

Kemira contributes to society by developing and applying chemistry to optimise water management and how natural resources are used and recycled. This way, Kemira aims to affect the quality of human life. Kemira's message goes as follows: 'Chemistry with purpose.' The features that make a food package more sustainable, more durable, or smarter are almost always invisible. Kemira brand aims to tell meaningful and relatable stories from people to people and show that Kemira products are part of everyday life. Kemira wants to be seen as a resource-responsible solutions provider who follows regulations and as a reliable partner with high standards and expertise.

4.3 Kemira brand experience enablers in China

After analysing the brand experience essentials, the Kemira Brand Experience Enablers in China will be discussed next. The focus will be on typography, the use of colours, imagery, and layout principles. Finally, the Kemira China Brand Book and WeChat visual as brand assets will be introduced.

4.3.1 Typography

Kemira's primary typeface for corporate identity is Akkurat (see picture 2). It was designed by Laurenz Brunner and released in 2004 by Lineto (www.lineto.com). It is a solid, reliable font with remarkable legibility. There is no Chinese variation

available; therefore, a font expressing a similar solid, simplified and contemporary look as Akkurat in traditional and simplified Chinese was chosen.
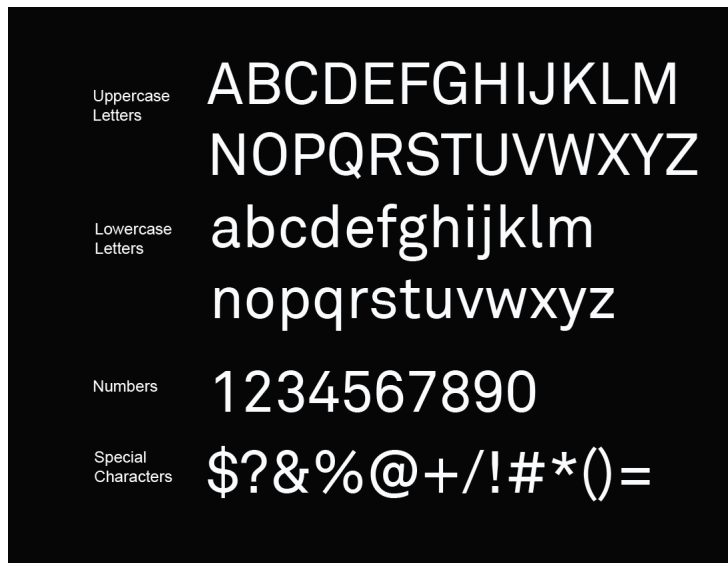
Picture 2. Akkurat typeface (Dafont Free 2022).

Monotype's Ying Hei (see picture 3) is a Chinese sans serif typeface family emphasising performance and elegance. The minimal and contemporary M Ying Hei has two variations: HK for traditional and PRC for simplified Chinese. It is a hanzi script with various weights covering text and display sizes. The M Ying Hei's minimal, sharp strokes are described as an '*unfussy, stripped-down version of the more elaborate Kaishu typefaces that have defined the look of Chinese characters for 1,500 years'*. The calm and neutral font is easily legible on screen, and print can be well combined with corporate typefaces such as Univers, Frutiger, Neue Helvetica, and Avenir Next. It matches perfectly Kemira's brand and corresponds to the characteristics of the primary typeface Akkurat. (Quave 2018; Monotype HK 2022.)

Picture 3. M Ying Hei typeface (My Fonts 2022).

Primary typeface Traditional Chinese

Next, the use of M Ying Hei will be introduced as typography examples (Fonts.com). The typeface options reflect the options chosen for Akkurat.

M Ying Hei™ HK W2
Weight: 2
Style: light

M Ying Hei™ HK W4
Weight: 4
Style: normal

M Ying Hei™ HK W7
Weight: 7
Style: bold

全世界的人共同分

Primary typeface simplified Chinese

M Ying Hei™ PRC W2
Weight: 2
Style: light

全世界的人共同分享各樣研發成果

M Ying Hei™ PRC W4
Weight: 4
Style: normal

全世界的人共同分享各样研发成果

M Ying Hei™ PRC W7
Weight: 7
Style: bold

全世界的人共同分享各样研发成果

Secondary typeface

Due to licensing and system availability, in MS Office templates (such as PowerPoint, Word, and Excel), the typeface is Source Han Sans (light and medium). In addition, it is used as a fallback on online applications and the web.

4.3.2 Use of colours

According to Kemira Visual Guidelines, it is important to maintain a sense of hierarchy, balance, and harmony when using the Kemira colour palette. Kemira's colour system is flexible, with only a few key principles and rules.

'*White is the main colour for composition: it is the background and foundation for most applications. In most cases, content can be created on a white background, and primary and supplementary colours can be used to create elements. Kemira blue is used to emphasise key content areas. Font colours in titles and body texts should be white or black to ensure readability.*' (Kemira 2022.)

According to the feedback from Kemira China, the primary colours (see picture 4) work well in the Chinese context. Also, supplementary colours (see picture 5) are suitable for Kemira's business, and Kemira colours are aligned with the brand strategy. The Kemira colours can be described as distinctive as they reflect the Scandinavian roots and modern simplicity, which according to Kemira China, appeal to the target group. They create a coherent fingerprint for the brand, and the assumption is that the colours facilitate recognition among the audience.

Consequently, it seems that globalisation has influenced the interpretations of colours and neutralised traditional cultural connotations. Based on the literature review, traditionally, other colours except white have been linked with positive connotations. It is good to be aware of the conventional connotations linked to the colour white, as it might, in some contexts, create culture-specific interpretations – especially as the colour white plays a central role in Kemira visuals. In addition, regarding online status and alerts, red might be the most suitable option in China as it is linked to positive situations and cultural perceptions.
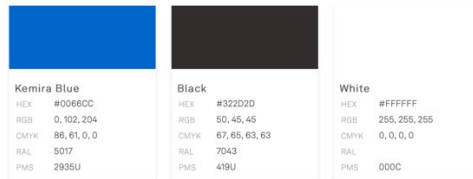
Picture 4. Kemira primary colours (Kemira 2022).

Picture 5. Kemira supplementary colours (Kemira 2022).

4.3.3 Imagery

The careful, effective use of images is the cornerstone of Kemira's brand story. Kemira's brand images feature the following areas: end users, raw materials and end products, people at work, processes, tools, and facilities. The brand communications concept highlights people in end-use situations.

A set of images (see pictures 6, 7, 8, and 9) was chosen for the stock photo bank to support the China Marketing Team. These photos are also utilised in the Brand Book Kemira China and work as examples for future photo shoots. When selecting the images, the global and Chinese aspects (see Tables 2 and 3) were taken into consideration.

Table 2. Kemira Imagery: General Guidelines.

| Global	China	To avoid
Images should be human, meaningful, and straightforward, showing people in everyday situations that reflect our brand story. Such images help convey our value by showing the everyday value we add for end users.	In addition to global: Metaphors and implicit messages Highlighting well-being and sustainability thematic and typical situations in China showing the everyday value.	Do not create solely China specific visual content. The audience appreciates versatility and global approach.
Images are created in a narrative style and use an authentic, global, urban, and modern look.	In addition to global: Including nature-related content with familiar Chinese narratives for instance including products/food sold in renewable carbon packages.	Do not utilize outdated narratives but those which reflect the present society.
Images should have a contemporary feel, showing interesting details with a sharp focus, reflecting high quality, expertise, and reliability.	In addition to global: Include also local cultural elements.	Do not use a large variety of colours but stick to a simple look in order to reflect high quality.
Images should have out-of-focus areas, blurs, and movement, as well as bokeh to emphasize our dynamic approach.	In addition: elements reflecting dynamic process of harmony	Do not use photos which are full of details.

Table 3. Kemira Imagery: People.

Global	China	To avoid
People are photographed in a narrative style and are in touch with the observer through interesting framing and crops (up close, where the action is).	In addition to global: with smiling faces	Do not utilize photos in which the pose is false or seems pretended.
The documentary-style can be achieved by letting subjects act and behave as though they're not being photographed; this is a desired characteristic for our style.	Emphasize also team playing and communal values	Do not use photos with direct gaze towards camera.
People should have a credible, trustworthy, competent, and contemporary look.	In addition to global: positivity	People should not have a too polished look.
Employees, actors, and models reflect our global diversity and appeal.	Represent also people with Asian origin.	Do not stick to only one ethnic group. The audience appreciates versatility.

For raw materials images (see picture 6), nature-related stories introducing raw materials used in carbon production or highlighting the water treatment process by including stories on safe water, for instance, should be used. People from different backgrounds should be included in the narratives.
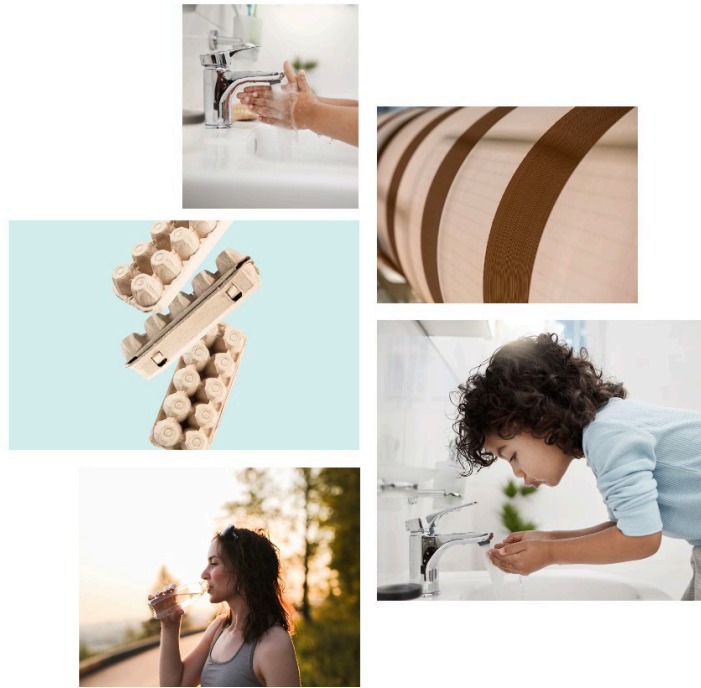
Picture 6. Raw materials, Visual Guidelines China

The nature images (see picture 7) should be human, meaningful, and straight-forward, showing people in everyday situations that reflect the brand story. Such images help convey our value by showing the everyday value we add for end users. Metaphors and implicit messages highlight thematically well-being and sustainability and typical situations in China showing the everyday value.
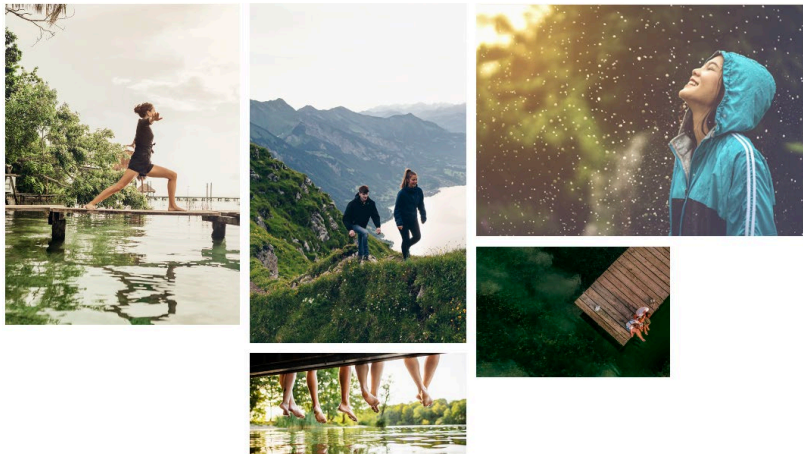
Picture 7. Nature, Visual Guidelines China

In end product images (see picture 8), people are photographed in a narrative style and in touch with the observer through interesting framing and crops. The documentary style can be achieved by letting subjects act and behave as though they're not being photographed. Familiar Chinese narratives should be included showing products/food sold in renewable carbon packages. It is r ecommended to emphasise positivity with smiling faces. Employees, actors, and models reflect Kemira's global diversity and appeal.

Picture 8. End products, Visual Guidelines China

Also, in people at work images (see picture 9), people are photographed in a narrative, documentary style and in touch with the observer through interesting framing and crops. Team playing and communal values, and positivity with smiling faces should be emphasised. Employees, actors, and models reflect Kemira's global diversity and appeal.

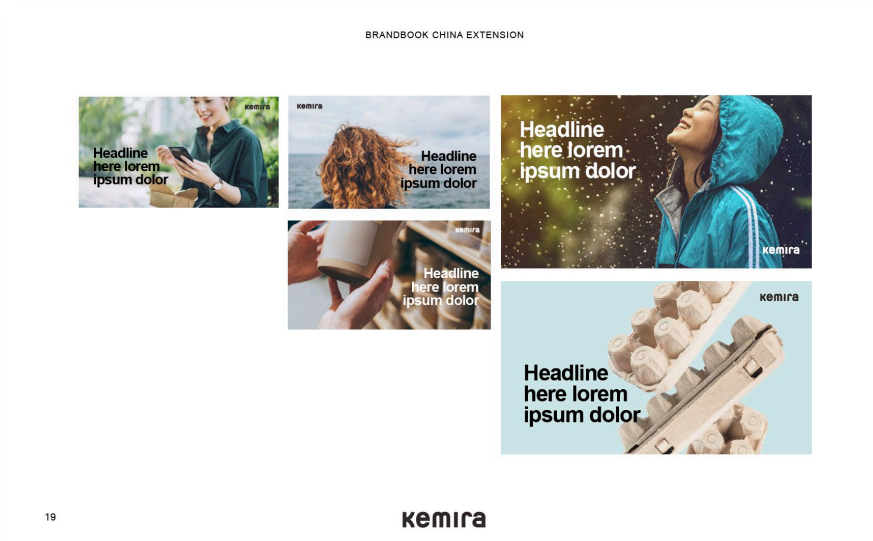Picture 9. At work, Visual Guidelines China

4.3.4 WeChat visuals

WeChat is the most popular app in China. Almost every smartphone user in China already has a WeChat account, and there were 75 million WeChat Work users in 2021. Accordingly, Kemira's most essential digital presence in China is on WeChat, and it even defeats Kemira's official website. The revisited China-specific design offers the Kemira WeChat site new opportunities to make the platform more consistent with the Kemira brand. The following examples serve as guidelines for future WeChat visuals.

WeChat platform: Image guidelines

WeChat Kemira follows the general Kemira brand guidelines. As a result of this study, a number of images have been chosen for China, reflecting both global and local feeling. Some examples (see pictures 10 and 11) were created for the WeChat header section. It is essential to choose images with a clear and simple background and follow the general image guidelines also when producing visual content for WeChat.
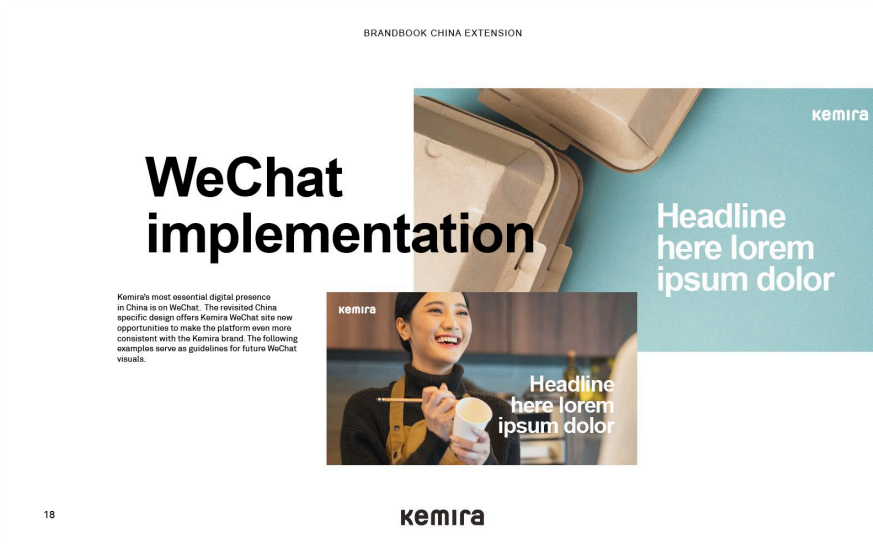
Picture 10. Kemira WeChat implementation, Visual guidelines China

Picture 11. Kemira WeChat header examples, Visual guidelines China

4.3.5 Visual guidelines extension China

As a result of this study, visual guidelines extension for China (see picture 12) was created. The Brand book Kemira China extension highlights previously introduced topics such as typography, imagery, colours, dos and don'ts, and WeChat implications.

Picture 12. Kemira brand in China, Visual guidelines China

First, the guideline introduces the context in which the Kemira brand exists in China. It describes how globalisation has brought Western brands closer to Chinese society, and consequently, a group of people in China identify with Western brands (Zhou & Belk 2004, 71). This probably influences the preferences for visual language and has altered the way visual language is interpreted.

It also introduces WeChat as the leading platform and stories as an essential and efficient way of communication. Especially stories relevant to the Chinese and offering concrete details are likely to increase trust. Also, the importance of trust in the b-to-b context is discussed.

Next, the guideline introduces typography (see picture 13) chosen for the Chinese market. As there is no Chinese variation for Akkurat, a typeface M Ying Hei, expressing a similar solid, simplified and contemporary look as Akkurat, was chosen in traditional and simplified Chinese. The guideline describes and showcases all relevant styles.

Picture 13. The primary typeface, Visual guidelines China

The imagery (see picture 14) was divided into four sections: nature, raw materials, people at work, and end product. Each section introduces images available for the Chinese market.
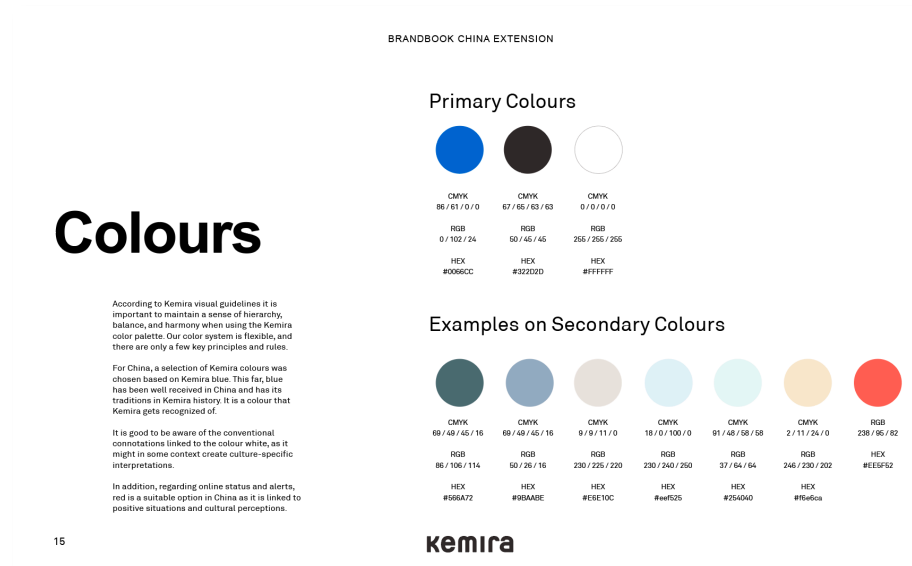
Imagery

Picture 14. Nature, Visual guidelines China

Colours

For China, a selection of Kemira colours (see picture 15) was chosen based on Kemira blue. Blue has been well received in China and has its traditions in Kemira history. It is a colour that Kemira continuously gets recognised for.

Picture 15. Colours, Visual guidelines China

Dos and don'ts

The aim of Dos and don'ts (see picture 16) is to support the creation of visual material in China. It is a useful list that immediately shows the recommended ways of visual content creation and the ones to be avoided.

Picture 16. Dos and don'ts, Visual guidelines China

Implications for WeChat

Kemira's most essential digital presence in China is on WeChat. The revisited China-specific design offers the Kemira WeChat site new opportunities to make the platform even more consistent with the Kemira brand and emphasise the glocal approach. The examples on Kemira China visual guidelines (see picture 17) serve as guidelines for future WeChat visuals.
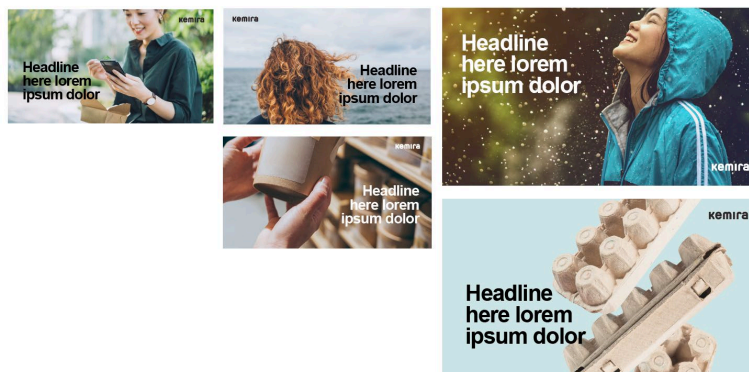
Picture 17. WeChat implementation, Visual guidelines China

5 Discussion

The thesis aimed to explore the importance of brand experience and storytelling when localising a brand and examine the brand experience enablers. First, based on a literature review, the thesis studied how a company can localise its brand elements and create an enhanced brand experience without losing brand consistency. The literature review introduced the brand experience blueprint, including the brand experience environment, essentials, and enablers.

The topic was discussed through visual preferences, cultural understanding, and societal issues. The Chinese culture and the megatrends in China played an essential role when defining the conclusions on current visual preferences and cultural understanding among the Chinese. The b-to-b context and branding were discussed in comparison to b-to-context with an emphasis on emotional appeal and trust creation in branding.

The study showed that nowadays, in China, local and foreign brands coexist. Consequently, some Chinese prefer the Western approach in terms of visuality and might seek the prestige and quality they expect from global brands. On the other hand, they might expect local relevance in branding and marketing materials. (Beveridge 2021, 12, 33.) The Chinese culture's versatility also appears in other terms in the Chinese culture, which can be described as both collectivistic and individualistic, traditional and modern, as well as reserved and expressive, depending on the context. Nowadays, the Chinese emphasise personal interests and dedication to the organisation and society. (Fang 2014, 2–12.)

Moreover, based on the literature review, there is a transition phase influencing different regions in different ways in China. The versatility on many levels caused challenges in creating specific guidelines for the Chinese market. The emphasis was put on the fact that China is heading towards sustainability and advanced technology solutions and that the West and East are no longer as much apart as they used to be regarding visual preferences. The literature analysis and the discussions with the Kemira personnel in China formed the

basis for chosen brand experience enablers and visual guidelines for the Chinese market. The feedback received from the personnel in China has been valuable, especially when defining typography in a foreign language. Based on the feedback, it was possible to be assured that the typography choices were suitable. As a result of the study, the Kemira brand book China extension introduces visual guidelines on typography, imagery, colour usage, and WeChat visual content creation.

The thesis aimed to enhance coherent, intriguing, authentic, and involving brand communication in China to build awareness, trust, and loyalty toward the Kemira brand among Chinese stakeholders. The Kemira brand book China extension serves as a useful guide for the marketing team to make relevant and effective choices in terms of branding and visuality. A quantitative study and service design methods could be utilised to gain comprehensive information on consumer preferences and the market in China, resulting in more valid and comprehensive data. Moreover, it would be fruitful to test and further explore the framework introduced in this study. The present study serves, therefore, as a beneficial starting point for more profound research.

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