Scripting the Meaning: The Influence of Brand Name Script on Brand Meaning and Brand Attitude

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Abstract

The present study examines the role of the script used for the graphical representation of a brand name in creating brand meaning. The study results demonstrate that each script contributes to forming different aspects of the brand meaning in multi-script environments. However, the process of meaning transfer is also influenced by the context of the product category, which can impact some of the aspects of meaning related to norms and familiarity. Furthermore, the study indicates that if the brand meaning aligns with the product category schema, it positively impacts brand attitude. This study adds to the branding literature by introducing the script concept as a brand name characteristic and demonstrating its significant effect on brand meaning.

Keywords: Brand meaning, Brand name, Brand attitude, Script, Korea

1. Introduction

Brands are among the most important assets of companies in the modern world, and a brand name is one of the critical characteristics of a brand. Therefore, a strategically chosen brand name becomes a crucial factor in the product's success (Francis, Lam, and Walls 2002) as it serves as the first point of interaction with the product and the foundation of the brand image (Gîta, Beca, and Cetina 2017; Hillenbrand et al. 2013). Therefore, careful selection of a brand name is of great importance.

When developing a brand name, marketers should pay attention to many characteristics. Some of these are pretty universal, such as semantic configuration (whether a brand name is an actual word or not and if it contains morphemes), sound symbolism, and relevance to the product category (Hillenbrand et al. 2013; Robertson 1992). However, in some contexts, there is an additional dimension to consider - script. These contexts include regions where the Roman alphabet is not the only widely used script.

A script is a graphic form of a writing system (Ghosh, Dube, and Shivaprasad 2010) or a physical form of letters/characters (Pae 2018). The term script

refers to a particular set of symbols or graphemes. The critical property of scripts is that they can be used for the graphic representation of multiple languages. For example, many European languages use the Roman alphabet, and Chinese, Japanese, and Korean use Chinese characters. Moreover, one language can use multiple scripts: for example, in the Japanese writing system, Chinese characters, two syllabic scripts (e.g., Katakana and Hiragana), and Rōmaji (a script based on the Latin alphabet) are used. Thus, language and script are separate entities, so it is impossible to equate them.

The relationship between language and script can be described as indirect since there is no complete correspondence between them (Unseth 2005). While in some cases, a particular script is primarily associated with a specific language (such as the Korean language with the Hangeul script), such association is not universal. Moreover, due to globalization, the Roman alphabet as a medium of the English language (which serves as a major international contact language) is often used in marketing communication, even in those countries where it was not traditionally used, and the level of bilingualism with English is low (Bhatia and Ritchie 2008).

Therefore, marketers operating in marketplaces where multiple scripts are used (at least in the marketing communication context) must determine which script to use for a brand name. Correct script selection is one of the most critical marketing factors in a multi-script environment (Iwahara, Hatta, and Maehara 2003). Branding practitioners also recognize that the choice between different scripts is one of the initial decisions to make during brand name development (Fashion Factory 2019). Right script choice is also important during the brand localization strategy development. For instance, the financial losses of PepsiCo on the Russian market are believed to be caused by the 'unfortunate' script choice: transliteration of the brand name to Cyrillic negatively affected the brand perception (Bhatia and Ritchie 2008).

Meanwhile, studies on brand naming have long focused on English brand names (Zhang and Schmitt 2001), exploring only the Roman alphabet, commonly used for its graphic representation. The only other context academics paid close attention to is the Chinese market (Francis, Lam, and Walls 2002; Gîta, Beca, and Cetina 2017; Zhang and Schmitt 2001; Zhu et al. 2021). However, researchers overlooked other markets where different scripts (or combinations of scripts) are used, such as Hangeul in Korea, Katakana and Hiragana in Japan, and the Cyrillic alphabet in Russia, Mongolia, and other countries. In multi-script contexts, each script has its own unique symbolic function (Jung 2001) and conveys different associations (Iwahara, Hatta, and Maehara 2003). Korea is an exciting example of such a multi-script context.

Brand names in Korea are primarily written in Hangeul, the Roman alphabet (often regardless of the language origin), and Chinese characters or Hanja. However, the proportion of each depends on the category. For example, among the brands owned or distributed by Amore Pacific (mostly make-up, skincare, and personal hygiene), all three variants are used, with the Roman alphabet being the most prevalent (Amore Pacific 2022). On the other hand, in the cup noodles (ramyon) category, there is a large proportion of Korean names that often combine Hangeul and Hanja (Kwon 2019), such as '辛라면' or '生生 우동.' What makes Korea an interesting case is that the script choice is not limited to only two variants like in many other markets (the Roman alphabet and a local script). Instead, there are three possible options: Hangeul, Hanja, and Roman. Each of these variants helps to develop different brand associations, reflecting the unique Korean language and culture (Labbrand 2018).

The current research aims to introduce the concept of the script in the marketing field as one of the essential characteristics of a brand name. It is an instrument that can be used to shape brand meaning. The research explores how the script of a brand name influences its meaning in the Korean context. Additionally, it aims to investigate whether the differences in brand meaning created by different scripts impact brand attitude.

2. Conceptual background

2.1. Brand meaning and brand name

In the modern world, goods are no longer consumed solely for their functional properties. Instead, the symbolism and meaning they convey have become equally important. As a result, the concept of brand meaning has become a focus of interest for many researchers, who often emphasize its importance in their work (Iglesias and Bonet 2012; Keller 2013; Merrilees, Miller, and Shao 2016; Mihalcea and Cătoiu 2008). The cultural meaning transfer model posits that meaning is transferred from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods and ultimately to individual consumers (McCracken 1986).

A meaning transfer is most often explained with the help of an associative network model (Hwang 2017). It suggests that any concept stored in human memory can be represented as a node in a network (Collins and Loftus 1975), while the properties of the concept are represented as links to the other nodes. It is proposed that the process known as 'spreading activation' arises when thinking of the core concept causes thinking about another one (activation of one node activates the other related nodes) (Gwinner and Eaton 1999). In the branding context, other nodes connected to the particular brand node are referred to as brand associations. Thus, brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory (Keller 2013). These brand associations are said to contain the brand meaning for consumers (Batey 2015; Franzen and Moriarty 2008). That is, brand meaning is a set of brand associations. Brand associations, in turn, are aspects of brand meaning.

Brand names are among the essential vehicles of meaning transfer (Mick et al. 2004), and it can be suggested that they are especially important since they appear in all the brand communication elements (package, advertising, POS materials, et cetera). The extant literature indicates three main streams of research about the influence of brand names on brand meaning. The first explores brand name semantics/suggestive brand names (Amos, King, and King 2021; Baxter and Lowrey 2011; Chao and Lin 2017; Gunasti, Kara, and Ross 2020; Meng, Zamudio, and Jewell 2021). The second one studies sound symbolism (Guèvremont and Grohmann 2015; Klink and

Athaide 2014; Kuehnl and Mantau 2013; Pathak et al. 2019; Pathak, Calvert, and Velasco 2017). The third examines typography or font used to write the brand name in a brand logo (Doyle and Bottomley 2011; Grohmann 2016). However, there is a fourth dimension that is mostly overlooked – script.

2.2. Script as an aspect of a brand name

The script can be defined as a physical form of letters, characters, or other writing conventions (Pae 2018), a set of characters or graphemes that represent the sounds of the language. Like typography, this dimension describes how a brand name is written within the logo. Still, it mainly concerns cultures whose writing systems contain more than one script or where the local script differs from the Roman alphabet. Some of those cultures are Korea, whose writing system includes Hangeul and Hanja, and Japan – Kanji, Katakana, Hiragana, and Latin alphabet. Additionally, in Russia and some other countries, though the Cyrillic alphabet is prevalent, Latin is also often used, especially in branding.

While marketing scientists rarely study the specifics of the different scripts' perception and usage, it is relatively widely explored in the related field – advertisement research (Bhatia 2020; Creighton 1997; Jung 2001). Moreover, it is often covered in publications dedicated to the Linguistic Landscapes (Al-Naimat 2015; Backhaus 2006) and linguistics in general (Iwahara, Hatta, and Maehara 2003; Joyce and Masuda 2019). For example, a review of the publications on linguistic landscapes reveals that the relationships between the script and the language of signs are one of the major topics in this research area (Backhaus 2006).

Studies (Al-Naimat 2015; Backhaus 2006; Sutthinaraphan 2016) show that the choice of the language of the sign does not necessarily determine the choice of script. The reason is that the words from one language can be transliterated and written by the script usually associated with another language (such as Japanese or Thai words written in Roman letters and vice versa). Another important takeout from the LL research is that the signs in foreign languages or using non-native scripts (predominantly Roman alphabet) can serve two different purposes: delivering information to the actual foreigners and impressing the locals (Someya 2002, cited by Backhaus 2006).

In addition, code-mixing (usage of different languages in one ad) is often explored in advertising research, and it is said to have two levels: linguistic level and script level. Thus, it is essential to incorporate both of those levels into the analyses (Bhatia 2020; Jung 2001). Researchers state that in multi-script environments, each script has its unique function determined by its symbolic value. This explains some of their usage patterns, such as the Roman alphabet being used rather for getting attention than conveying information (Bhatia and Ritchie 2008). Another important takeout is that these functions are not permanent; they change with time (Jung 2001).

Each script used in a particular writing system embodies distinctive cultural concepts and has different roles in daily life and education. Thus, they have their own meaning and can transfer it to a brand. Such transfer could happen through various vehicles containing different scripts, such as packages and advertising. However, the current study will focus on the brand name as a transfer vehicle since the brand name is the foundation of the brand image and often the first point of interaction with the brand (Gîta, Beca, and Cetina 2017; Hillenbrand et al. 2013). While packages and especially advertising can be subject to changes, a brand name is more permanent. A script is an essential part of multiple elements of marketing communications (e.g., slogans, claims, company names, et cetera). However, it is argued that brand name is especially important since consumers interact with it across multiple marketing communication channels (advertising, both traditional and digital, package, both in-store and at home). More precisely, if the same brand name is written in various scripts, it can activate or support different aspects of the brand meaning, transferring a script meaning to a brand. Thus

H1. *The choice of a script for a brand name will have different impacts on brand associations.*

2.3. Scripts in Korean marketing communication context

The hypothesis suggested above is generic. It requires a specification for a particular market, depending on the scripts used there. Moreover, specifying these scripts' meanings within that context is important. For example, two scripts coexist in the Korean writing system - Hanja (Chinese characters) and an authentic Korean script Hangul (Pae 2018). Moreover, in communication and marketing contexts, the Roman alphabet is also used very frequently. All those scripts are used for writing brand names on the Korean market.

Hanja, or Chinese characters, have been used in Korea for the longest time. Hanja is 'a thread that knits Korean history and language together' (Do 2018). For most of that history, however, Hanja was used only by the aristocracy. Over the centuries, there have been different ways of using Hanja to write in Korean (Taylor and Taylor 2014), but in the current Korean orthography, it can be used only to write Sino-Korean

words. Though Hanja is currently not widely used in Korea, it is still found in some domains and contexts, often in traditional industries and products (Lawrence 2012). In particular, brand names written with Chinese characters in the Korean context are said to be associated with nobility and history and carry some mysterious and sacred connotations, conveying a luxurious and premium brand image (Labbrand 2018). Thus, it can be suggested that Hanja usage will strengthen associations with having a long history, traditional, mysterious, aristocratic, noble, and high-class.

Hangeul, in turn, was developed specifically for the Korean language by King Sejong the Great in 1443. After several decades of being used mostly in combination with Hanja, it became the predominantly used script in Korea and is the most common script for people to interact with on an everyday basis via media, education, and other mediums. Worth noting that Hangeul was specifically developed to be simple and easy to learn and to reflect the phonetic structure of the Korean language (Pae 2018). Brand names written in Hangeul are supposedly perceived as more everyday and authentically Korean (Labbrand 2018). Thus, Hangul usage will likely strengthen such associations as simple, everyday, habitual, and Korean.

Last but not least, the Roman alphabet, though it is not considered a part of the Korean writing system (Pae 2018), is still widely used in Korea, especially in the context of marketing communications. The analysis of Korean advertising (Jung 2001) shows that the Roman script for writing product names was used at least since the 1960s. Since then, Roman product names have constituted a considerable part of all product names, always outnumbering Hanja only ones. The Roman script in Korea, like in many other countries is primarily seen as a graphic representation of the English language: not only in daily life but even in academic research, these two concepts are often not separated. Thus, it is safe to suggest that the Roman script shares many associations with the English language. Whereas English is the primary foreign language currently used in South Korea (Paik 2018), it has become a symbol of modernization and globalization and a status symbol. Moreover, English is often found in the sociolinguistic domains of modernity and luxury (Lawrence 2012). The Roman alphabet, accordingly, will make such associations as modern, global, foreign, and high-class more pronounced.

Thus, adjusting the generic form of H1 to the Korean context and we suggest that:

H1a. *If the brand name is written in Hanja, the following brand associations will be more pronounced: having*

a long history, traditional, mysterious, aristocratic, noble, and high-class.

H1b. *In the case of Hangeul, the following associations will be stronger: simple, everyday, habitual, and Korean.*

H1c. *Roman alphabet will strengthen such associations as modern, global, foreign, and high-class.*

2.4. Brand attitude and category schema fit

It was proposed that the choice of script used for the graphic representation of a brand name impacts the strengths of certain brand associations. However, while developing a brand strategy and visual brand identity, which includes the graphically represented brand name, marketers should understand if the influence of the different identity parts will benefit a brand or not. Just the associations by themselves don't always have a valence, they might be not emotionally loaded at all or change the valence depending on the context. Thus, it is necessary to not only understand the script's influence on associations but also evaluate the consequences of such influence.

To understand the consequences of the script's influence on associations, the relationship between those associations and brand attitude should be explored. Brand attitude is a 'consumer's overall evaluation of a brand' (Mitchell and Olson 1981; Schivinski and Dabrowski 2016). It is an affective component of brand perception. Brand attitude reflects the level of favorability in the brand evaluation. Brand attitude is defined as 'a function of beliefs', where beliefs are subjective associations between any two discriminable concepts (Mitchell and Olson 1981). Thus, it can be expected that brand attitude will be influenced by brand associations (which are, in turn, affected by the script).

However, this influence is not necessarily universal but depends on product category context, or in other words, on how congruent is a certain association to the product category schema (Batra and Homer 2004). Researchers often turn to schemata theory to explain the role of the product category (Batra and Homer 2004; Halkias 2015; Orth and De Marchi 2007) and its influence on brand perception. Schemata or schema is a cluster of interconnected emotions, facts, and perceptions stored in a memory as a unit (Batra, Lenk, and Wedel 2010). Though there are multiple types of consumer schemata, one of the most important ones is the product category schema in the marketing context (Halkias 2015).

Consumers turn to the previous knowledge about a product category that already exists in their minds when forming a schema to make inferences about

Fig. 1. Generic form of the conceptual model.

brand meaning (Batra 2019). Product category schema contains information about a particular product category and its defining features of a product (Orth and De Marchi 2007). Researchers suggest that brand associations need to fit the consumers' category schema (or, in other words, be congruent with it) to positively affect brand response (Batra and Homer 2004; Chatterjee and Kay 2010; Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016).

Thus, depending on the overall congruence of the brand associations with the product category schema consumers already have in their mind, it can be suggested that the relationship between brand associations and brand attitude can be described as follows:

H2. *The product category schema fit will moderate the relationship between brand associations and brand attitude: that is, a higher fit will be associated with a better attitude.*

The relationships between all the constructs in the research are represented in Fig. 1.

2.5. Category as a moderator or perceived brand globalness/localness effect on brand attitude

Since the script influences several aspects of the brand meaning (or associations) for the sake of research feasibility at this stage, it is necessary to concentrate on certain meaning facets influenced by the script. Among the aspects of meaning we expect to be influenced by the script are associations such as 'global' and 'Korean.' Global brands and their performance, as well as local brands that are often seen as their counterparts, received much attention from researchers (Davvetas and Halkias 2019; Liu et al. 2021; Özsomer 2018; Price and Coulter 2019; Schuiling and Kapferer 2004; Strizhakova and Coulter 2015; Xie, Batra, and Peng 2015). The choice between global and local positioning is essential to marketing strategy (De Meulenaer, Dens, and Pelsmacker 2015; Swoboda, Pennemann, and Taube 2012).

Some researchers define global and local brands based on their geographical presence and/or marketing mix standardization (Schuiling and Kapferer 2004; Strizhakova and Coulter 2015). Others suggest that objective reality is not as important as brand image (Winit et al. 2014) or consumer perceptions since consumers may have limited knowledge about the actual geographical presence of the brand (Liu et al. 2021). Thus, these researchers suggest using such concepts as 'perceived brand globalness' and 'perceived brand localness' (Halkias, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos 2016; De Meulenaer, Dens, and Pelsmacker 2015; Sichtmann, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos 2019; Swoboda, Pennemann, and Taube 2012).

Perceived brand globalness (PBG) is defined as 'an extent to which consumers perceive it to be a global player' and perceived brand localness (PBL) as 'the extent to which a brand is associated with local culture' (Xie, Batra, and Peng 2015). PBG and PBL are conceptualized not as the ends of the spectrum but as complementary yet distinct brand characteristics and sources of value (Sichtmann, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos 2019). The same brand can be high or low on both PBG and PBL. PBL is usually measured using the name of the country where the study is conducted (Liu et al. 2021); thus, in the current research context, 'local' will be interchangeable with 'Korean.' Therefore, the 'Korean' brand association will represent PBL, and the 'global' brand association will represent PBG.

Previous research shows that both PBL and PBG can become sources of brand value, causing more positive brand attitude and purchase intentions (Bourdin, Halkias, and Makri 2021; Halkias, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos 2016; Winit et al. 2014). There is some evidence, however, that the product category can shape the effects of PBG and PBL. For example, global brands are perceived as superior to local brands in the technology category and inferior in the food category (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016). Other research (Özsomer 2018) shows some evidence that product category (food vs. non-food) moderates
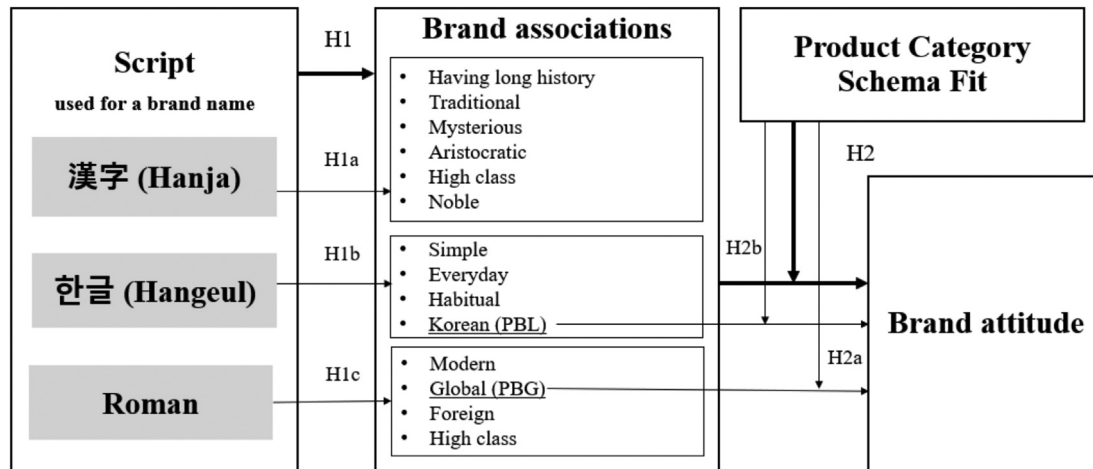
Fig. 2. Adjusted conceptual model.

the relationship between PBL and perceived product quality, leading to higher quality perception in the food category. Food is generally more grounded in local culture-grounder (Liu et al. 2021; Strizhakova and Coulter 2015); thus, food brands tend to benefit from the higher perceived localness.

This research will explore the product category's moderating role in the context of product category schema fit. We suggest that if the perception or association fits the category schema, it will cause a higher brand attitude. In line with the previous research (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016) high-tech category is chosen as a domain where perceived globalness fits the schema and the food category as one fitting the perceived localness.

H2b. *A positive relationship between PBG and brand attitude will be stronger for the high-tech category (compared to the food category).*

H2c. *A positive relationship between PBL and brand attitude will be stronger for the food category (compared to the high-tech category).*

The adjusted variant of the conceptual model is represented in Fig. 2.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Method

The present study used an online experiment with mixed within and between-subject design. Qualtrics software was used to conduct the experiment. Each subject was presented with two stimuli (one randomly selected variant of the food category brand name and one randomly selected high-tech category

brand name). Ramyon (Korean noodles) was chosen as an example of a food category, and laptops were selected as an example of a high-tech category. The experiment participants were undergraduate and graduate students of the Business Administration department of a private university in Seoul, and they were asked to fill in the questionnaire before the classes. Over four days, 92 usable responses were collected.

Before the main experiment, two pre-tests were conducted. The first pre-test was to determine whether the associations drawn from the literature were relevant to the scripts in question. The online questionnaire was developed using Qualtrics software, and the link was distributed among the students of the same university. Forty-three usable answers were collected (responses from international students were excluded). Respondents were asked to evaluate each association's relevance to the three scripts (Hanja, Hangeul, Roman) on the 7-point Likert scale (the order of the associations in the list was randomly rotated across the respondents). The list contained 13 associations: simple, everyday, habitual, Korean, having a long history, traditional, mysterious, aristocratic, high class, noble, modern, global, and foreign. Two of them (mysterious and aristocratic) showed low associations (lower than average across all scores, 3,95 points, which is also close to the middle of the scale - 4) with all three scripts (see Table 1). Thus, they were removed from the list.

The second pre-test was conducted to choose the brand name for the experiment. Six Sino-Korean words (since only Sino-Korean words can be spelled in Hanja within the current rules of the Korean writing system) that were deemed not to be suggestive in any of the categories in question were tested (流星/유성/Yusung; 大 星/대 성/Daesung; 大 龍/대 룡/Daeryong; 金龍/금룡/Keumryong; 三寶/삼보/

Table 1. Association list pre-test results.

Association	Hanja	Hangeul	Roman
Simple	1.768	5.302	3.883
Everyday	2.534	6.139	4.930
Habitual	2.976	5.744	4.372
Korean	3.651	6.581	1.651
Having long history	6.069	5.232	3.720
Traditional	5.697	5.162	2.813
Mysterious	3.372	3.767	3.023
Aristocratic	3.372	3.488	2.953
High-class	3.930	4.255	4.325
Noble	3.720	4.581	3.186
Modern	2.232	4.697	5.000
Global	2.604	3.441	6.395
Foreign	3.465	2.511	5.348

Sambo). Respondents were asked to evaluate each word fit to being a brand name within a context of a particular product category (ramyon, laptop) on a 7-point Likert scale. The order of the categories and the order of each name presentation within a category were randomized. The names were presented in all three scripts. The questionnaire was designed using Qualtrics software and distributed online. Thirty-six usable responses were collected. None of the potential names received very high scores (see Table 2), which was expected since they were specifically selected not to be semantically connected to the categories in question to avoid being suggestive. Nevertheless, the variants that were evaluated as the most suitable (Yusung for the laptop brand name and Sambo for the ramyon brand name) were selected for the main experiment.

During the main experiment, the subjects were first asked about their age, gender, and nationality. After that, they were asked which image characteristics (including 'global' and 'Korean') fit the category, further checking the category schema fit manipulation. Then they were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (Hanja/Hangeul/Roman) within each category. After being exposed to a brand name, they were asked about the associations the brand with such a name would carry (7-point Likert scale for each association). After that, they were asked to evaluate their attitude toward that potential brand. The existing brand attitude measure was used (Priester et al. 2004).

Table 2. Brand names pre-test results.

Category	Ramyon	Laptop
流星 / 유성 / Yusung	3.228	3.657
大星 / 대성 / Daesung	3.228	2.914
五星 / 오성 / Ohsung	3.257	2.942
大龍 / 대룡 / Daeryong	2.742	2.371
金龍 / 금룡 / Keumryong	2.457	2.485
三寶 / 삼보 / Sambo	3.285	2.914

Table 3. Manipulation check. Category schema evaluation means.

	Laptop		Ramyon	
	Global	Korean	Global	Korean
Mean	5.48	3.15	4.48	5.61

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Manipulation check

To check whether the manipulation of the category schema fit was successful, we compared the perceived fit of "global" and "Korean" associations for both categories. For the laptop category, the mean score for the global association fit was 5.48, and for Korean, 3.15, with an independent sample t-test revealing that the difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (p-value 0.000 < 0.05). For the ramyon category, the mean score for the global association fit was 4.48, and for Korean, 5.61 (see Table 3 and Fig. 3) with an independent sample t-test; the difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (p-value 0.008 < 0.05). Thus, being Korean is more fitting to the ramyon category schema, and being global is more fitting laptop category schema, meaning manipulation is successful.

Hypothesis 1. H1 suggested that the brand name written in different scripts can activate or support a different set of associations. In the Korean context, brand names written in Hanja were expected to make such associations as 'having a long history,' 'traditional,' and 'noble' more pronounced, compared to the other script variants. 'High-class' association was expected to be stronger for Hanja and Roman names, than in the case of a Hangeul name. Brand names written in Hangeul were expected to make such associations as 'simple,' 'every day,' 'habitual,' and 'Korean' stronger compared to the other script variants. Lastly, brand names written in Roman were expected to make such associations as 'modern,' 'global,' and 'foreign' stronger compared to the other variants. To test this hypothesis, mean scores of each association strength were calculated for each category. Then using the one-way ANOVA, it was checked whether the association strength means significantly differed between different script conditions. Additionally, post hoc tests were performed to check which groups have significant differences in means.

Hypothesis 1. Ramyon. Comparing the means supported most of the hypothesized results (see Table 4). Mean scores for the brand name written in Hanja (e.g., 流星, 三寶) were the highest for such associations
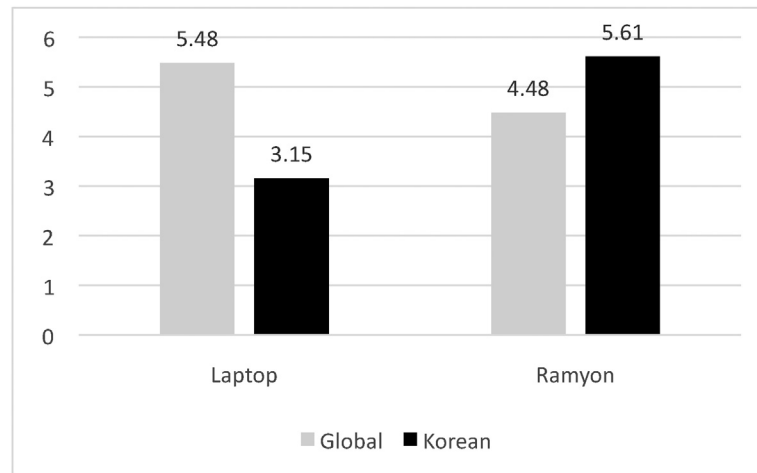
Fig. 3. Category schema evaluation means.

as 'having a long history,' 'traditional,' 'noble,' and 'high-class.' For the brand name written in Hangeul (e.g., 유성, 삼보), the mean association scores were the highest 'simple,' 'every day,' and 'habitual,' while 'Korean' got the same mean score as Hanja brand name. Brand names written in Roman (e.g., Yusung, Sambo) got the highest mean scores for such associations as 'modern,' 'global,' and 'foreign.' Thus, with the minor exception ('Korean' did not get the highest score for the Hangeul brand name as predicted but shared the highest result with the Hanja brand name), H1 was preliminarily confirmed.

One-way ANOVA was performed to see if the observed means difference has statistical significance. Except for the "everyday" and "habitual" associations, for all the other associations the means of at least one of the conditions was significantly different at the 95% confidence level (p-value < 0.05) (see Table 4). A Tuckey post hoc test, however, revealed that not in all the cases the means were significantly different between all three scripts (see Table 5).

The mean score for the 'simple' association was higher for Hangeul (5.24 ± 1.558) compared to Roman (4.1 ± 1.626) and Hanja (4.29 ± 2.275). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .109). Thus, while the 'simple' association is the strongest for the Hangeul name compared to Hanja and Roman variants, the difference is significant only with the Roman variant (p = .039). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hangeul) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'Korean' association was lower for Roman (3.8 ± 2.140) than for Hanja (5.00 ± 1.785) and Hangeul (5.00 ± 1.954). Hanja and Hangeul's means were equal. Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hangeul) is not supported.

The mean score for the 'having long history' association was higher for Hanja (5.39 ± 1.315) than for Hangeul (3.79 ± 2.042) and Roman (2.87 ± 1.570). The means' differences between Hanja and Hangul (p = 0.001) and Hanja and Roman (p = 0.000) were statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hanja) is supported.

The mean score for the 'traditional' association was higher for Hanja (5.46 ± 1.347) than for Hangeul (4.18 ± 1.566) and Roman (3.00 ± 1.875). The

Table 4. Associations' means, F-values, and p-values for the ramyon category.

Association/condition	Hanja	Hangeul	Roman	F	Sig.
Simple	4.29	5.24	4.1	3.592	0.32
Everyday	4.46	4.74	4.07	1.257	0.289
Habitual	3.96	3.82	3.63	0.254	0.776
Korean	5	5	3.8	3.757	0.027
Having long history	5.39	3.79	2.87	16.403	0.000
Traditional	5.46	4.18	3	16.877	0.000
High-class	3.32	1.94	2.9	6.357	0.003
Noble	3.36	1.71	2.6	9.874	0.000
Modern	2.86	2.32	3.57	4.897	0.010
Global	2.93	2.53	3.87	5.257	0.007
Foreign	2.79	1.91	3.43	8.543	0.000

Table 5. Tuckey posthoc test results, p-values of means differences between scripts for ramyon category.

Association/script comparison	Hanja/Hangeul	Hanja/Roman	Hangeul and Roman	Significant difference
Simple	.109	.921	.039	Hangeul/Roman
Korean	1.000	.058	.044	
Having long history	.001	.000	0.79	Hanja/Hangeul; Hanja/Roman
Traditional	.007	.000	.013	Between all the scripts
High-class	.003	.567	.045	Hanja/Hangeul; Hangeul/Roman
Noble	.000	.126	.044	
Modern	.389	.210	.007	
Global	.621	.089	.006	Hangeul/Roman
Foreign	.059	.224	.000	

differences were significant between all three scripts: Hanja and Hangeul (p = .007), Hanja and Roman (p = .000), and Hangeul and Roman (p =. 013). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hanja) is supported.

The mean score for the 'high-class' association was lower for Hangeul (1.94 ± 1.179) than for Hanja (3.32 ± 1.847) and Roman (2.90 ± 1.689). The difference was significant between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .003) and Hangeul and Roman (p = .045). Thus, the hypothesis (lowest value for Hangeul) is supported.

The mean score for the 'noble' association was higher for Hanja (3.36 ± 1.879), compared to Roman (2.60 ± 1.610) and Hangeul (1.71 ± .760. However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Roman (p = .126), the means differed significantly only between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .000). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hanja) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'modern' association was higher for Roman (3.57 ± 1.654) compared to Hanja (2.86 ± 1.880) and Hangeul (2.32 ± 1.224). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Roman (p = .210), the means differed significantly only between Hangeul and Roman (p = .007). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'global' association was higher for Roman (3.87 ± 1.776 compared to Hanja (2.93 ± 1.783) and Hangeul (2.53 ± 1.482). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Roman (p = .089), the means differed significantly only between Hangeul and Roman (p = .006). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'foreign' association was higher for Roman (3.43 ± 1.832 compared to Hanja (2.79 ± 1.572) and Hangeul (1.91 ± .956). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Roman (p = .224), the means differed significantly only between Hangeul and Roman (p = .000). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is supported only partially.

The results for the ramyon category can be summarized as follows (see Table 6).

Thus, we can say that in the Ramyon category, almost all the hypotheses about the association strengths were at least partially supported (except for the 'Korean' one). While on the level of the means comparison all the associations except for one showed the hypothesized results, not all the differences between the means were statistically significant. 'Korean' brand association showed equal strength for Hanja and Hangeul (while it was suggested that it will be the strongest for Hangeul), which

Table 6. Summary of the H1 results for Ramyon.

Association	Hypothesized result	Actual result	Statistical significance of the mean difference	Conclusion
Simple	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Hangeul	Hangeul/Roman - Y, Hangeul/Hanja - N	Partially supported
Everyday	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Hangeul	No	Partially supported
Habitual	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Hangeul	No	Partially supported
Korean	Strongest for Hangeul	Equally strong for Hangeul and Hanja	Hangeul/Roman - Y	Not supported
Having long history	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	Yes	Supported
Traditional	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	Yes	Supported
High-class	Weakest for Hangeul	Weakest for Hangeul	Yes	Supported
Noble	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	Hanja/Hangeul - Y, Hanja/Roman - N	Partially supported
Modern	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Roman		Partially Supported
Global	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Roman	Roman/Hangeul - Y, Roman/Hanja - N	Partially Supported
Foreign	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Roman		Partially Supported

Table 7. Associations mean scores for the laptop category.

Association/condition	Hanja	Hangeul	Roman	F-value	Sig.
Simple	3.15	5.14	4.4	10.908	0.000
Everyday	2.97	4.0	4.23	5.552	0.005
Habitual	2.42	3.38	3.67	4.755	0.011
Korean	3.52	5.24	4.5	7.829	0.001
Having long history	4.42	4.07	3.03	5.913	0.004
Traditional	4.67	3.93	2.53	11.424	0.000
High-class	3.70	2.72	3.20	2.530	0.085
Noble	3.70	3.0	2.93	1.854	0.163
Modern	2.30	2.93	3.9	7.976	0.001
Global	2.36	2.38	3.63	5.485	0.006
Foreign	3.36	2.07	2.67	5.361	0.006

can be explained by the fact that both scripts belong to the Korean writing system and are often used for writing Ramyon brand names (Kwon 2019).

Hypothesis 1. Laptop. Comparing the means supported only a part of the hypotheses (see Table 7): mean scores for the brand name written in Hanja were the highest for such an association as 'having a long history,' 'traditional,' 'noble,' and 'high-class' as hypothesized. However, for the Hangeul name, the situation is different. While such associations as 'simple' and 'Korean' received the highest mean score as hypothesized, mean scores for 'everyday' and 'habitual' were the highest for the Roman variant of the brand name, which is different from the expectations. As for the Roman variant of the brand name, mean scores for 'modern' and 'global' were the highest, as expected. However, the highest score for the 'foreign' association was received in the Hanja condition. Thus, while the hypothesis is preliminarily confirmed in the case of 8 of 11 associations, the result differs from the expected for the remaining three.

One-way ANOVA was performed to compare each association means between the different script conditions to see if the observed means difference has statistical significance. Except for the 'high class' and 'noble', for all the other associations the means of at least one of the conditions was significantly different at the 95% confidence level (p-values < 0.05)

(see Table 7). A Tuckey post hoc test, however, revealed that not in all the cases the means were significantly different between all three scripts (see Table 8).

The mean score for the 'simple' association was higher for Hangeul (5.14 ± 1.382 compared to Hanja (3.15 ± 1.822) and Roman (4.40 ± 1.831). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hangeul and Roman (p = .223), the means differed significantly only between Hangeul and Hanja (p = .000). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hangeul) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'everyday' association was higher for Roman (4.23 ± 1.649 compared to Hanja (2.97 ± 1.649) and Hangeul (4.00 ± 1.690). There was no statistically significant difference between Hangeul and Roman (p = .843), however, the means differed significantly between Hangeul and Hanja (p = .036) and between Hanja and Roman (p = .007). The hypothesis (highest value for Hangeul) is not supported, but the data shows differences between scripts.

The mean score for the 'habitual' association was higher for Roman (3.67 ± 1.900) than for Hangeul (3.38 ± 1.699) and Hanja (2.42 ± 1.437). There was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .071) and Hangeul and Roman (p = .789), however, the means differed significantly between Hanja and Roman (p = .012). The hypothesis

Table 8. Tuckey posthoc test results, p-values of means differences between scripts in laptop category.

Association/scriptcomparison	Hanja/Hangeul	Hanja/Roman	Hangeul/Roman	Significant difference
Simple	.000	.012	.223	Hanja/Hangeul; Hanja/Roman
Everyday	.036	.007	.843	
Habitual	.071	.012	.789	Hanja/Roman
Korean	.000	.067	.230	Hanja/Hangeul
Having long history	.676	.004	.047	Hanja/Roman; Hangeul/Roman
Traditional	.224	.000	.010	
Modern	.273	.000	.056	Hanja/Roman
Global	.999	.012	.017	Hanja/Roman; Hangeul/Roman
Foreign	.004	.185	.309	Hanja/Hangeul

(highest value for Hangeul) is thus not supported, but the data shows some differences between scripts.

The mean score for the 'Korean' association was higher for Hangeul (5.24 ± 1.786 compared to Hanja (3.52 ± 1.770) and Roman (4.50 ± 1.614). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hangeul and Roman (p = .067), the means differed significantly only between Hangeul and Hanja (p = .000). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hangeul) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'having long history' association was higher for Hanja (4.42 ± 1.582) compared to Hangeul (4.07 ± 1.580) and Roman (3.03 ± 1.790). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .676), the means differed significantly only between Hanja and Roman (p = .004). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hanja) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'traditional' association was higher for Hanja (4.67 ± 1.882) compared to Hangeul (3.93 ± 1.889) and Roman (2.53 ± 1.570). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Hanja and Hangeul (p = .224), the means differed significantly only between Hanja and Roman (p = .010). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Hanja) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'modern' association was higher for Roman (3.90 ± 1.807) compared to Hangeul (2.93 ± 1.486) and Hanja (2.30 ± 1.468). However, there was no statistically significant difference between Roman and Hangeul (p = .056), the means differed significantly only between Hanja and Roman (p = .000). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is supported only partially.

The mean score for the 'global' association was higher for Roman (3.63 ± 2.008) compared to Hangeul (2.38 ± 1.374) and Hanja (2.36 ± 1.692). The means were significantly different between Roman and Hangeul (.017) and between Roman and Hanja (0.12). Thus, the hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is supported.

The mean score for the "foreign" association was higher for Hanja (3.36 ± 1.800) compared to Roman (2.67 ± 1.132) and Hangeul (2.07 ± 1.132). There was no statistically significant difference between Hangeul and Roman (p = .309) and between Hanja and Roman (p = .185), however, the means differed significantly between Hangeul and Hanja (p = .004). The hypothesis (highest value for Roman) is not supported, but the data shows some differences between scripts.

The results for the brand meaning analyses in the laptop category can be summarized as follows (see Table 9).

Thus, hypotheses concerning 8 out of 11 associations (simple, Korean, having a long history, traditional, high class, noble modern, global) were at least partially supported. Interestingly, the Roman brand name received the highest score for the 'everyday' and 'habitual' associations. Such results can be explained by the fact that on the Korean market, all the laptop brand names are, to our knowledge, written in Roman script, regardless of their origin. Thus, it is possible to hypothesize that the category norm or the influence of the category schema overweighed the script's effect in this case. The association 'foreign,' contrary to the expectations, received the highest mean score in the Hanja name condition. This finding

Table 9. Summary of the H1 results for laptops.

Association	Hypothesized result	Actual result	Statistical significance of the mean difference	Conclusion
Simple	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Hangeul	Hangeul/Hanja - Y, Hangeul/Roman - N	Partially supported
Everyday	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Roman	Roman/Hanja – Y Roman/Hangeul - N	Not supported
Habitual	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Roman	Roman/Hanja – Y Roman/Hangeul - N	Not supported
Korean	Strongest for Hangeul	Strongest for Hangeul	Hangeul/Hanja - Y, Hangeul/Roman - N	Partially supported
Having long history	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	Hanja/Hangeul – N, Hanja/Roman - Y	Partially supported
Traditional	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	Hanja/Hangeul – N, Hanja/Roman - Y	Partially supported
High-class	Weakest for Hangeul	Weakest for Hangeul	No	Partially supported
Noble	Strongest for Hanja	Strongest for Hanja	No	Partially supported
Modern	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Roman	Roman/Hangeul - N, Roman/Hanja - Y	Partially supported
Global	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Roman	Yes	Supported
Foreign	Strongest for Roman	Strongest for Hanja	Hangeul/Hanja – Y, Hanja/Roman - N	Not supported

Table 10. Regression results for the laptop category.

	B	SE B	β	t	p	R2	F	p
Constant	2.326	.346		6.726	.000	.319	20.841	.000
PBL	.066	.064	.090	1.031	.305			
PBG	.416	.066	.550	6.273	.000			

also can be explained by the category norms: since Hanja is not generally used for writing laptop brand names in Korea, research participants could assume that if the brand name is written in Hanja, it is not Korean.

<div align="center">***</div>

Overall, for both categories, different scripts produce statistically significant differences in most measured associations' strength (9/11 in both cases). This fact supports the generic variant of hypothesis 1. Most of the sub-hypotheses about the associations' strengths were fully or partially supported (10/11 for Ramyon and 8/11 for laptops). While some of the sub-hypotheses were not supported, it can be seen not as an argument against hypothesis 1 in general but rather as an indication of the fact that meaning transfer is quite a complicated process, and while making assumptions about its' results it is necessary to take into account different factors, such as category norms, which was not not accounted for in this research.

Hypothesis 2. Multiple linear regression was used to test if PBG and PGL significantly predicted BA in each category. For the laptop category, the fitted regression model was: BA = 2.326 + .416*PBG + .066*PBL (see Table 10). The overall regression was statistically significant (R2 = .319, F = 20.841, p = .000). It was found that in the laptop category, PBG significantly predicted BA (β = .550, p = .000). PBL, however, did not significantly predict BA (β = .090, p = .305). R-squared is .319, thus more than 30% of the variation in BA can be explained by the regression. Since the PBG coefficient is positive (.416), it positively influences BA.

For the ramyon category, the fitted regression model was: BA = 2.781 + .051*PBG + .324*PBL. The overall regression was statistically significant (see Table 11, R2 = .234, F = 13.625, p = .000). It was found that in the ramyon category, PBL significantly predicted BA (β = .473, p = .000). PBG, however, did

not significantly predict BA (β = .064, p = .495). R-squared is .234, thus more than 20% of the variation in BA can be explained by the regression. Since the PBL coefficient is positive (.324), it positively influences BA.

These results show support for H2 on the category level.

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Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that the category product fit moderates the relationship between brand associations and brand attitude. Product category schema fit (PCSF) was coded as a binary variable for each category: 'global' association as fitting (1) for laptop and unfitting (0) for ramyon; 'Korean' association – as fitting (1) for ramyon and unfitting (0) for laptop.

As for the 'global' association, in the first step, three variables were included: PBG, category schema fit, and the interaction between these two variables. The regression overall was found to fit the data (R2 = .143, F = 10.025, p = 0.000). However, the only variable significantly influencing the outcome was PBG (β = .294, p = .007, see Table 12). In contrast, both product category schema fit (β = −.075, p = .580) and the interaction between the PCSF and PBG (β = .148, p = .349) were found not significant.

Moderation analyses for the 'local' association showed similar results: while overall regression was fitting the data (R2 = .101, p = 0.000), only the PBL (β = .339, p = .001) had a significant influence on BA, while both PCSF (β = .023, p = .896) and the interaction between PCSF and PBL (β = −.061, p = .750) influence was not significant (see Table 13).

Overall, although formal moderation analyses did not support the hypothesis, on the category level, it was supported: PBG showed a significant positive influence on BA in the high-tech (laptop) category but not in the food (ramyon) category. PBL, in turn, showed a significant positive impact on BA in the food (ramyon) category but not in the high-tech (laptop) category.

Table 11. Regression results for the Ramyon category.

	B	SE B	β	t	p	R2	F	p
Constant	2.781	.376		7.403	.000	.234	13.625	.000
PBL	.324	.064	.473	5.077	.000			
PBG	.051	.074	.064	.686	.495			

Table 12. Moderation analyses for PBG.

	B	SE B	β	t	p	R2	F	p
Constant	3.319	.289		11.467	.000	.143	10.025	.000
PBG	.234	.086	.294	2.726	.007			
PCSF	−.212	.382	−.075	−.555	.580			
PBG*PCSF	.105	.112	.148	.939	.349			

Table 13. Moderation analyses for PBL.

	B	SE B	β	t	p	R2	F	p
Constant	2.983	.363		8.217	.000	.101	6.751	.000
PBL	.247	.074	.339	3.324	.001			
PCSF	.066	.505	.023	.131	.896			
PBL*PCSF	−.033	.103	−.061	−.319	.750			

4. Discussion and implications

4.1. General discussion

The present research advances global branding literature by investigating the role of script used for the brand name in forming brand meaning. It introduces script as one of the brand name characteristics that take part in creating the brand meaning in the marketing field. Before this characteristic was more often explored in linguistic research and was not sufficiently covered in marketing literature. This research also aims to connect brand meaning to brand attitude and responds to the calls for research incorporating the moderating effect of the product category in brand meaning research (Batra 2019).

Our findings show that the usage of different scripts indeed contributes to the formation of different brand meanings. However, the results also show that the script does not simply transfer the meaning to the brand; the process is also influenced by the product category context, such as which scripts are dominantly used by the brands in a particular market in a specific category. Such context can influence aspects of the meaning transfer, e.g. related to norms and familiarity.

Another contribution of the current research is an attempt to explore the meaning holistically, not conflating it to narrower constructs such as brand personality. With brand meaning being a very context-dependent construct (Mühlbacher et al. 2006), we aimed to explore the exact aspects of meaning that are influenced by the particular context and the role of the meaning transfer contributing mechanism (namely script) in this specific cultural and market context. Though for the sake of the research feasibility and thus adequate questionnaire length, we were probably not able to cover all the possible aspects of meaning that the script can influence, we have shown that each script contributes to transferring not only one particular aspect of the meaning

(or brand association) but affects several of such aspects.

Finally, building on the concept of the category schema fit and the previous research on perceived brand globalness and perceived brand localness, we have shown that each of those characteristics can positively influence brand attitude if it fits the category schema. Moreover, in line with the previous research findings (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016), it was found that while such association as 'globalness' (or perceived brand globalness) suits the schema of the high-tech category, in the case of more culturally-grounded category, such as food, 'localness' suits the category schema more.

4.2. Practical implications

The current research generates implications for new brand development and existing brands entering new markets. The brand owners should pay attention to multiple elements of the brand name and logo, such as semantic configuration, sound symbolism, design and colors of the logo, font, et cetera. In multi-script environments, however, they should strategically choose the main script they use to represent the brand name graphically. Since each script can contribute to creating a specific meaning, it should be chosen strategically.

The first thing that marketers should understand is which scripts are used in a particular market and which cultural concepts or meanings they represent. The same script can be perceived differently in different markets depending on its role in history, education, and daily life in a particular country or region. For example, the Roman alphabet is the only script used in many countries for centuries. In the other areas, however, it is an alternative to the local scripts, which were introduced relatively recently. Thus it carries some additional meanings, differentiating it from the local scripts.

Second, marketers should be aware of the category context: which scripts are predominantly used within it, which meaning aspects of the category they can be connected to, and how the category context overall can affect the meaning transfer process. For example, if one particular script is predominantly used in a specific category, it can be perceived as habitual and every day in this particular context, even if it is not so in another context.

Third, desired brand positioning should be taken into account. For example, in the Korean context, if the brand aims to be perceived as modern, it would be more beneficial to use Roman script; on the other hand, if the desired image is traditional, Hanja should be considered.

Last but not least, script interaction with the other brand cues should be considered aiming for synergy in meaning creation. While this topic is not covered in the current study, other research suggests that congruent cues work more effectively than contradicting ones.

4.3. Limitations and future research directions

Certain limitations can be identified in the current study; they can create directions for future research. First, this research aims to be more exploratory than conclusive, thus creating space for further studies with more focused designs and representative samples.

Second, this study was conducted in the Korean context, while many other multi-script markets exist. Further studies could try to reproduce the results in other markets where several scripts are used in a marketing communication context. Examples of such countries are Japan (4 scripts are widely used), India (more than ten scripts are widely used, though not all of them simultaneously), Israel, Arabic countries, and Cyrillic-dominated countries (Russia, Belarus, Mongolia).

Third, only two product categories were explored within this study. Moreover, category schema influence on image transfer was only discovered post-factum and not initially incorporated into the research design. This creates room for exploring additional categories and their schemas within the context of studying a brand name script and its role in brand meaning creation.

Fourth, some researchers claim that scripts change their functions and thus meaning they create over time (Jung 2001). However, this research results demonstrate only a static picture relevant to the present moment. Therefore, there is a need for longitudinal research.

Finally, within this study, only solo-script brand names were explored, and each script was studied in isolation. However, some companies combine two or even three scripts in their logos. Usually, in such logos, one script is more salient than another. An interesting direction for future research is studying the meaning transfer effects of the bi-scriptal logos. Other companies have alternative logo variants using different scripts. Thus, another possible research direction would be exploring such a strategy and its effect on brand meaning.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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