

MONOPPONOM AS AN EMERGING JAPANESE AMERICAN
CRAFT: CREATING A TRANSCULTURAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
PLAN

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Journalism and Communication
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

May 2023

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Grace Miyoshi for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Journalism and Communication to be taken June 2023

Title: Monopponom as an Emerging Japanese American Craft: Creating a Transcultural Public Relations Plan

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The popularity of traditional Japanese crafts and handmade crafts has dwindled in the past century. This thesis combines traditional Japanese craft principles with cultural theories of communication to create a transcultural public relations plan for Monopponom, an Oregon-based Japanese American craft business, in efforts to revitalize crafts into the mainstream. Specifically, craft principles by Soetsu Yanagi and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions theory, Bardhan’s Third Culture theory, and Curtin and Gaither’s Cultural Economic Model informed the strategies for this campaign. The result was a transcultural public relations model that layered predictive and descriptive communication theories that together formed a more robust and culturally relevant communication campaign for targeting diverse audiences. The plan is yet to be implemented. Suggestions for future research include expanding target audiences beyond Japanese American niche groups and developing strategies for other international localities to expand third culture spaces.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Patricia Curtin for her unwavering support during this thesis process. Her expertise in international communication was invaluable to my research and learning over the past year. And of course, her personal connection with Japan made this process more meaningful to me. Thank you, Pat, for your encouragement, reassurance, and patience always. This would not have been possible without Professor Kelli Matthews and Professor Lisa Munger, who make up the rest of my committee. Thank you, Professor Matthews, for helping jumpstart my thesis back in the Fall and being a reliable touchpoint all this time. And thank you, Professor Munger, for your contagious enthusiasm, support, and interest in my project this past year.

I would also like to thank Aiko Gaudreault for being my first client and for trusting me with Monopponom. Your talent makes me excited for the future of crafts.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me the last four years. Most importantly, I would like to thank my mom who made my higher education possible and made me the person I am today. Thank you, Mom, for empowering me to become the hardest worker in the room and making me believe that I can accomplish anything.

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Project Description

Japan has a long history of community members depending on local craftspeople for the items that make up their day—ceramic dishes, hand-dyed garments, illustrated prints, and many more functional items. This lifestyle created opportunities to beautify each moment of daily life through mundane objects. These homemade items also filled homes with love in the form of imperfect indentations made by the hands of the maker and the chips and scratches from use over time. Because each object had value in its craftsmanship, individuals held onto the items even if they were damaged. Imperfections that represented a lifetime of functional use, love, and appreciation were embraced.

However, crafts—both in the way of life dependent upon locally made items and the techniques of the craftsmanship itself—are disappearing, having been replaced by industrial, often disposable products over the last century. There is potential to redirect consumer culture to a more sustainable crafts-based lifestyle if the right communications tactics are employed. This move would simultaneously encourage sustainability and preserve Japanese cultural heritage. How could culture-centric models of public relations be used to communicate the value of crafts?

This thesis provides a public relations plan for Aiko Gaudreault, a student craftsperson who makes Japanese-inspired prints, so she can implement them to popularize and sustain her business. This project posits a sustainable future with crafts reentering the mainstream. The project makes possible a consumer culture where public relations, historically a mechanism of industrial capitalism, can become a strong tool to sustain local heritage businesses.

Literature Review

THE WAY OF CRAFTS

Craft aesthetic and principles by Soetsu Yanagi

Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961) was a Japanese philosopher and critic who proposed the concept of Mingei, Japanese crafts for the people by the people. A Mingei craft is an item that is utilitarian-oriented, commonplace, ordinary, and created by nameless craftspeople (not notable people). The craft must be made in quantity and produced without force; it is not artificial, or self-imposing, and always made with consideration of the user. These crafts should be affordably priced and accessible to many. Mingei craftsmanship's purpose is to serve life itself; therefore, some qualities of crafts can be described as natural, genuine, simple, durable, safe, wholesome, honest, natural, innocent, humble, harmless, unagitated, free, sound, and pure.

Yanagi had two major influences on his philosophy: Korean aesthetic and Buddhist ideology. Yanagi was first inspired by the 1914 Yi Dynasty Porcelain that was used by everyday people, realizing how true beauty can emerge from a nameless product and producer. He believed in the spirit of eternal Korean beauty that "Beauty is love." Yanagi's aesthetic also aligned with Buddhist teachings of tranquility and harmony. Overall, "the primary spirit of traditional Japanese culture is the value of harmony. The aesthetics in traditional Japanese crafts are concerned with the simplicity of nature" (Lin & Watada, 2009, p. 37); therefore, good craftwork represents unity between the material used, aesthetics, and function. These ideals originate the Japanese design sensibilities of wabi, sabi, and suki that is the increased beauty of an object by natural use and wear. Yanagi is the grandfather of Japanese crafts, and his

philosophy, although adapted in various ways, remains the backbone of Japanese sensibilities today.

Yanagi always believed in the power of crafts and their ability to connect peoples and pasts through eternity. His faith in crafts was unwavering even in 1940, by which point he had witnessed the Japanese industrial revolution beginning in the Meiji restoration period. Yanagi said, “be that [industrialism] as it may, crafts and industrial goods are fundamentally different. I believe that whatever advances are made, the value of crafts cannot be surpassed” (Yanagi, 2012). Yanagi believed that crafts are integral to humankind's past, present, and, most importantly, future.

Collective necessity of crafts

In a 2006 national survey conducted by the City Planning Institute of Japan, 60% of the surveyed production areas said that artists are “important” to their communities; in the past 20 years, 23% of areas reported an increase in the importance of artist-craftsmen (Ho & Nojima, 2006). As the number of artist craftsmen dwindles in an industrialized economy, Japanese communities are not so fast to part with crafts in their daily lives. Crafts help form identity and community, and they give individuals the power to realize their imagined realities.

Craftspeople shape their own identity and the identity of consumers. Crafts are an externalization of self as an embodied identity of a craft worker (Bell et al., 2018). The individuality of the maker is reflected in the craft itself, then again in its marketing, and finally again in consumption. When a person decides to purchase the craft—an extension of the craftsman—the consumer buys into the maker’s identity. This consumer also informs their own identity by buying into an aesthetic or function of said object.

Crafts also build community by preserving the history of traditional methods and ways of life. Cultural artifacts are essential to collective memory because interaction with materials engage individuals in a social experience of the past and widens their reflections of history beyond oral and written narratives (Toraldó et al., 2018). Craftspeople work to create cultural space, not just physical, tangible assets to be possessed. Crafts can integrate the heritage of diverse communities to “develop contemporary perspectives on the past, as a catalyst for future-thinking about who we are, how we live, work, and relate to one” (Hackney et al., 2018, p. 236).

Crafts can bridge the nostalgia between what once was and what could be. The “global revival of craft is marked by the increasing presence of objects that evoke memories from the past” (Toraldó et al., 2018, p.124). Nostalgia often occurs in times of uncertainty, recalling feelings of security in past moments. There is a current revival of vintage and traditional things to cope with anxieties of the present by reliving a version of the past. Having material items provides comfort either as a distraction or as company, perhaps in the presence of the spirit of the hands that made them. Crafts reduce fear and anxiety by nurturing empathy for natural materials and forming relationships to a fixed past.

Crafts give individuals the power to create imagined realities. Craftspeople dream the “same dreams of peace, equality, diversity, opportunity, and respect for each other and for the planet” (Hackney et al., 2018, p. 241). While each craft is different, craftspeople strive to realize an idealized world of peace, harmony, and inclusion. In a collaborative effort to revitalize traditional craft in Japan, the “ARCHITEXTURE” project brought together architects and designers, such as Kengo Kuma and Jun Aoki, to reimagine the shape and space of the furoshiki, a traditional Japanese wrapping cloth to carry goods (Lin & Watada, 2009). The goal was to meet a demand for contemporary uses of a traditional product to match current fashions. Kuma

designed furoshiki textiles with braille sheet music to a children's song about closing and opening hands – it's a literal interpretation of tying a furoshiki but in a playful and physically intriguing way. Concepts like the ARCHITEXTURE project “[Apply] tools of the old and [keep] one's mind new” by honoring history and tradition while expanding the craft's inclusion, aesthetic appreciation, and value-added purpose (Lin & Watada, 2009, p.37). Craft offers a tangible way to communicate the stories of the past while simultaneously showcasing new functions of how we might live in the future. Yanagi said, “Our aim is not to know everything that exists or has existed: on the contrary, our mission is to study the world of everything that ought to exist.” (Yanagita & Yanagi, 2012). In a globalized and digitized landscape, crafts as a form of transcultural communication can be unifying give us the power to make a better future.

Role of public relations in revitalizing craft

Practitioners have the responsibility to promote social remembering and empower creators who preserve traditional stories. However, public relations and marketing, as arms of capitalism, have historically exploited craft heritage for profit (Blundel, 2018). Take the industrialization of camembert cheese, for example. Camembert cheese was publicized in its mythic form, not in its true form, because the historical documents of its origin were so varied and contradictory. Instead of choosing a specific process or story, industrial camembert cheese brands began using general imagery and discourse of small crafts makers (small molds, ladles, milk pitchers) despite not actually using them in their production (Blundel, 2018). Appropriation of symbols in messaging misinforms consumers about where products come from and deludes the true heritage of the craft. This misuse of imagery and discourse perpetuates universalism and presentism, an assumption that all businesses within an industry (for example, cheeses) are similar, irrespective of the unique local context and historical background. As a result, local

specialties and crafts become forgotten—the richness of the craft becomes diluted, misconstrued, and confused.

A wide array of contextual elements that are missing in craft messaging currently: source materials, embodied knowledge and skills, socio-economic influences, values, cultural norms, and more (Blundel, 2018). There is, however, significant potential for messaging to represent true narratives of different social groups or individuals and their history. Practitioners can evoke “feelings of admiration, pride or satisfaction related to unique local stories or personalities, folkloric or mythical traditions” through brand humanization to represent the craft itself and the related local culture (Toraldó et al., 2018, p. 119). The key to revitalizing crafts with public relations is to maintain the producer’s agency.

Lastly, when considering the revitalization of crafts, it is important to note that the Japanese government engages in active efforts to revitalize crafts within its borders. A well-known effort is the prestigious Living National Treasure accolade. The title is awarded to craftspeople who demonstrate ultimate mastery in their traditional craft. They are seen as intangible and vital living treasures to the nation and to the preservation of Japanese culture (Furuta, 2023). The prestigious title is a form of communication that identifies craft as an invaluable part of Japanese culture. This national practice offers a top-down approach to revitalizing crafts while Yanagi’s ‘Unknown Craftsman’ ideology encourages bottom-up, localized movements to revitalize crafts use by everyone. The latter approach encourages participation by all, and this call to action can be amplified by culturally relevant public relations plans.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CULTURAL THEORIES

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory

To better understand the role that public relations can play in revitalizing Japanese crafts, it is helpful to look at how public relations theories have incorporated culture thus far. Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory was one of the first theories with empirical confirmation of how cultural differences impact organizational behavior, management, and communication at large (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Hofstede's initial study included surveys of IBM employees around the world, and the results were examined from a cross-cultural perspective. His results first indicated four dimensions in a culture that affect decision-making: power range, masculinity and femininity, avoidance of uncertainty, and individuality and collectivism (Hofstede, 1984). Power range or distance refers to social inequalities that could exist in a culture including individuals' relationships with authority. Avoidance of uncertainty is "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011, p. 12). A high masculinity index represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards in a competitive environment; femininity reflects a cooperation-oriented, modest society that values caring for the weak (Hofstede HQ). This index can also be considered "tough versus tender" cultures in the business context. Individuality and collectivism refer to the relationship between an individual and the group in the culture.

Later research in collaboration with Michael Minkov added two more dimensions to the theory: long-term orientation and indulgence. Long-term orientation refers to a culture's affinity to maintain links with its past and honor traditions versus the culture's drive for societal change and modern education. The long-term orientation index is particularly important to this study because it was added after more data collection from Asian countries. Lastly, indulgence

represents a culture that embraces free gratification compared to a culture that demonstrates restraint.

A limitation of Hofstede's theory is the implication that nation is culture. The study's assessment of countries and their "national cultures as monolithic and stable, [erases] subtleties and [creates] homogeneity out of multiple identity facets, such as race/ethnicity, religion, and gender orientation" (Curtin, 2021, p. 9). This approach enables some assumption-making and stereotyping. Cultures cannot be defined by the nations they exist in, and national borders do not constrict the existence of culture, especially in a globalized and diasporic environment. Hofstede and Minkov justify this limitation by saying countries and cultures typically evolve in similar cultural directions. Hofstede has also addressed that this theory was developed for organizations to improve operations, which is why the concepts are not always applicable on an individual scale.

Hofstede's dimensions still add nuance and valuable insight into how communication works within specific cultural contexts. Culture has significant impacts on consumer decision-making (e.g., purchasing or consumption), so the dimensions provide basis for predicting consumer behavior (Ozdemir, 2018). Hofstede's work has value, but it also has notable limitations.

Bardhan's Third Culture theory

To address some of these limitations, Nilanjana Bardhan proposed a Third Culture theory that adds more dimension to culture and agency to participants in transcultural communication. Note here that transcultural should not be confused with transnational or multinational because a country is not an entire culture – a culture exists without borders.

Bardhan's Third Culture theory posits culture as a dynamic, dialogic entity in the form of a new 'third culture or realm' that emerges from a mutually beneficial, co-creative relationship between participants. This theory positions practitioners as culture builders, the conduits and enablers of cultural exchange and relationship building (Bardhan, 2011). This theory is dependent upon the idea that culture is defined, reformed, and maintained by communication; third culture is not an end state, but both "an emergent open-ended third realm of cultural understanding that results from mutual ongoing interaction" (Bardhan, 2011, p. 82).

Although the practitioner serves as an intermediary, this is a largely co-creative model, where the third culture is shaped by all parties involved in communication. The model is a significant step away from traditional, managerial models like Hofstede's because the model empowers all those who engage in communication and is community-oriented:

"The model attempts to celebrate and fuse with the cultural Other, it is open-ended and emergent in that no cultural end state is predicted, and it attempts to move away from an individualistic and Cartesian notion of an autonomous, unitary Self" (Bardhan, 2011, p. 90).

However, Bardhan's third culture theory's dependence on "Mutuality and the willingness to change" brings to the forefront a limitation (Bardhan, 2011, p. 82). The model assumes a rational and predictable participant who will always act toward mutual gain. "The assumption behind culturalism is that enlightened self-interest and task-centered motives could be incentives for cooperation and interdependence for mutual gain" (Bardhan, 2011, p. 97). Incentives that target 'mutual gain' and relationships being mutually 'beneficial' is still a very materialistic, superficial way of viewing relationships. Additionally, a single moment of mutual gain is unlikely to cause sustained adjustments to values or behavior, which is a challenge to be

considered when designing public relations strategies that aim to do just that (Kent & Taylor, 2011).

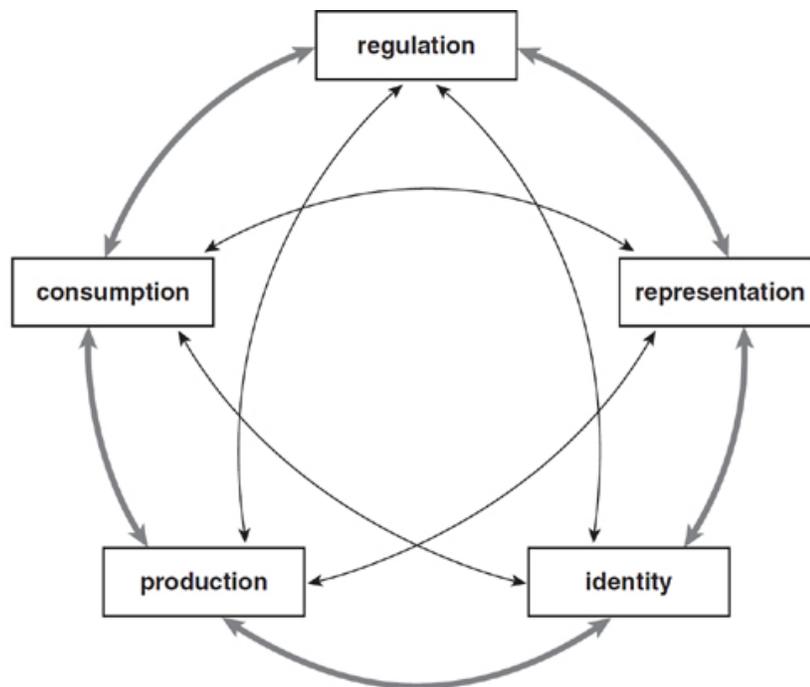
Bardhan's theory still assumes equal powers of influence in communication that will lead to rational decision-making. Given histories of imperialism, colonialism, exploitation, wars, and genocides, powers in cultural exchange and encounters can never be completely equal. However, this history does not mean the 'historically powerful' will always have the power because there are cases in which underdogs have seized once imperial communication systems to their advantage (e.g., the case of India) (Bardhan, 2003).

Despite the limitations, Bardhan's Third Culture empowers a practitioner to be a unique cultural bridge. Ultimately, Bardhan's Third Culture theory's strength lies in agency, empowering consumers of messages, and positing that culture is not just a space defined by public relations. The Cultural Economic Model provides a more circular, dialogic approach to conceptualizing transcultural communication that is less binary or back-and-forth.

Curtin and Gaither's Cultural Economic Model

Another theory that informs this project's public relations plan is Patricia Curtin and Kenn Gaither's Cultural Economic Model (CEM) of public relations. This model views culture, similar to Bardhan, as dynamic, non-linear, and evolving. In the CEM, each process of communication influences the other within larger contextual elements (political, economic, social) that are also intertwined and influencing each other. The CEM model is based on a circuit of culture that is made up of articulations or interactions among moments of regulation, representation, identity, production, and consumption, which interact with one another and "[create] spaces of shared cultural meaning" (Curtin, 2021, p. 15) (See Fig. 1). Communication and culture are symbiotic as they are continuously influenced by cultural context. "This means

that wherever there is culture, there is communication. When we communicate, we constitute culture” (Fuchs, 2017).



SOURCE: Graphic courtesy of Dara Curtin.

Figure 1: Curtin & Gaither’s Cultural Economic Model

Reprinted with permission from “Articulating public relations practice through and critical/cultural theory through a cultural-economic lens,” by Patricia Curtin, Kenna Gaither, and Erica Ciszek. In Jackie L’Etang, David McKie, Nancy Snow & Jordi Xifra (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical public relations* (p. 43), London: Routledge.

Representation is another process by which we give things meaning (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). “In the CEM, campaign materials embody organizational discourses, reflecting producers’ goals and objectives” (Curtin, Gaither, & Ciszek, 2016, p. 42). Meanings are situationally bound by the greater cultural context because the producers and consumers of representation are influenced by their culture.

Production informs the logistical and ideological boundaries of representation, providing a base for intended messaging although the meaning is not fixed in this initial interaction. The

production is shaped by the technological and cultural resources available. Typically, production is gendered and racialized in corporate culture and tends to become another form of colonization (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). However, this model gives the producer much more agency, allowing them to stay in constant relationships with other processes.

Although production merely provides options for meaning making, meaning can only fully be realized when interpreted during consumption. Consumption is a form of production that involves both creating and negotiating meaning. Therefore, consumption is the process by which production is fully realized i.e., meaning is applied and derived. The meaning is encoded during production but articulated in consumption (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). This principle aligns with crafts themselves; the meaning of the crafted object is made through its functional use and integration into everyday life. It's important to conduct regular environmental scans and evaluations to track changing meanings (Curtin, Gaither, & Ciszek, 2016).

In this model, both an organization's and a consumer's identity are defined by their differences such as, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and gender. Identities are constructed within the articulation of consumers and producers; as different parties interact and react, they define their respective identities. Identities are always in flux because social contexts are ever-changing.

Regulation is the "formal and informal controls on cultural activity, such as technological infrastructure, educational systems, laws, and cultural norms. It constructs social order, providing the rules by which we operate and the common sense that guides us" (Curtin, Gaither, & Ciszek, 2016, p. 42). New technology, such as social media can be both empowering and disempowering depending on context. Instagram, for example, can be democratizing by increased accessibility

but disenfranchising by use of algorithms that favor certain creators over others. Regulations guide articulations with other processes.

The CEM opens possibilities for practitioners to focus more on social justice points of view because it gives agency to each person and power to the reverberating impacts of their actions. The CEM has very few applied examples, which makes results unknown and success uncertain, but Curtin et al. also conclude that the absence of guarantees and the multitude of possibilities are a strength of the model itself.

Project case study

As they define the world of crafts, Bell et al. emphasize how crafts embody culture:

“[W]e approach craft interpretively, as a phenomenon that is culturally and socially constructed, the result of agreed-upon patterns of action and language that are the outcome of social relations. Consequently, craft continually emerges and is inextricably linked to the sociocultural, economic and historical conditions of its production” (Bell et al., 2018, p. 1).

This description of crafts mirrors the articulation process of CEM within a cultural context, highlighting how crafts and their producers are culture builders, the space-makers for cultural exchange. It necessitates giving craftspeople the right tools to share their work. This thesis integrates cultural theories into a public relations plan for a craftsperson.

Aiko Gaudreault of Monopponom is a student craftsperson at the University of Oregon who produces Japanese-inspired prints and has agreed to be the client for this project.

Gaudreault’s Monopponom applies the Japanese aesthetic of minimal colors (red, yellows, and black). Her prints are a representation of her Japanese American heritage. Gaudreault’s work bridges industrial and traditional—a modern feature of traditional crafts. Her methods are conceptually traditional, as printmaking has been integral to Japanese media for centuries.

Aesthetically, her prints have an industrial, modern influence as they are inspired by 1980s Japanese magazines. Her linoleum block prints with ink range in size, but many are 4x6 on paper. The illustrations, depicting cats cooking, riding motorcycles, or just laying back, imbue nostalgia and comfort in the whimsical, humorous caricatures of everyday life with a feline twist. The prints evoke a sense of home, especially after knowing that they were inspired by Gaudreault's cat back home.

Monopponom emerged during the pandemic's quarantine period; its prints of chaotically intertwined people and creatures showcase scenes of togetherness that would not have been possible since early 2019. The joyful closeness sparked hope for the future; back then, her prints foreshadowed post-pandemic freedom, and now they are nostalgic of simpler times. Crafts connect individuals (creators, viewers, buyers) to the past, help them reflect on the present, and propose an imagined future. Gaudreault's guiding principles, her methods, and her intentions are well aligned with crafts principles.

Gaudreault's goals are to increase her sales on Etsy, but also to just "make things that people want" (Gaudreault, personal communication). She currently sells each print for \$10-15 and has made 87 sales since 2021. The public relations plan is designed to give Gaudreault the best possible tools and methods to share her story and market her brand. Each abovementioned public relation theory provides an essential layer to campaign development for Monopponom. These theories guide the situational analysis research, strategies, tactics, as well as objectives for Monopponom's plan.

Hofstede's dimensions are a theoretical backbone when conducting business and communicating across cultures, which provide essential insights to the Monopponom plan that will communicate to a diverse audience. "Hofstede's indices [are] measurable cultural variables"

(Curtin, 2021, p.8). Even with the limitations presented above, Hofstede's theory provides an empirical method to assess audiences for the plan whether it be American, Japanese, Japanese American, or smaller sub-groups of culture. Specifically, avoidance of uncertainty, long-term orientation, indulgence, and masculinity are influential cultural dimensions when conducting environmental scans to develop audience profiles for this campaign.

The cocreational, dialogic aspect of Bardhan's Third Culture theory is valuable to guide Monopponom's plan because the brand has a small following. The theory can help the brand build upon its preexisting relationships. Monopponom should be able to share its art and story while nurturing a dialogic and reciprocal exchange of experiences to develop the brand further.

Since the CEM posits that communication is culture and representation is meaning, how and what will be communicated in the campaign must be deliberate because it will be a reflection of both Gaudreault and of the brand's identity. Monitoring is needed through implementation (production and consumption processes) to gauge reactions, which can be done through reviews left, fan pictures, and engagement comments. Additionally, the CEM proposes that identities are always in flux because the socially constructed aspects *are ever-changing*; therefore, picking a target audience for the campaign is much more of a constant negotiation as opposed to a fixed decision (Curtin, Gaither, & Ciszek, 2016). There are also many social regulations to consider, such as cultural norms of hanging art on your walls or supporting local artists.

A strength of the CEM model is how the practitioner, although still a cultural intermediary, does not have all the power in messaging. This model gives Gaudreault, the producer, much more agency. Gaudreault will be in a constant relationship with the other processes. Integration of the CEM allows Gaudreault to control production and each part of her organizational practices.

Ultimately, this model provides a dialogic framework to treat Gaudreault not as a money-maker or corporate entity but as a relational person and artist within a greater glocal context.

Research Questions

How can culture-centric models of public relations support revitalizing traditional Japanese crafts?

How can public relations help create space (digitally and physically) for cross-cultural crafts?

What does a public relations campaign based on a cultural-economic model of communication look like?

Methods

The two methods employed for this thesis project were literature reviews and applied work with the client, Aiko Gaudreault. The literature review portion of the research laid the theoretical foundation for both Japanese craft principles and public relations models that guided this project. The goal of the crafts section was to define a craft (as classified by Soetsu Yanagi, the grandfather of crafts), why they are valuable to Japanese culture and modern society at large, and public relations' role in re-popularizing crafts.

The public relations literature review explored three culture-centric models of communication, each providing an essential element to form a well-rounded, culturally sensitive, and effective public relations campaign for the client. Where there was a limitation in one theory, another theory filled the gap.

The most vital components of my methods were the interactions with Gaudreault and the applied work for Monopponom. To address the research questions and create a strategic, personalized public relations plan for Monopponom, I conducted mini-informal interviews with Gaudreault. The goal of the informal interviews was to understand her current trade practices, her specific goals for the future, how she characterizes her work, and who she wants to connect with. Other important contextual information included collaborative interests, views on

transcultural communication, scale of public relations efforts, and preferred channels of communication (see Appendix A).

Making the public relations plan for Monopponom was the final step of the methodology. I conducted further secondary research for the campaign to identify competitors, market, and potential partners. The secondary research began by examining Etsy store insights for key word searches, store viewing trends of the past year, and purchase rates. The Etsy store insights also showed which social media apps trafficked the most store views. Market research entailed finding consumer statistics online. Then, I searched Etsy and Instagram to identify top competitors for Monopponom by searching top keywords, such as ‘block print’ and ‘original art.’ Lastly, I found local Japanese-influenced businesses to partner with using Google, word of mouth, and personal background knowledge. Using a combination of insights from my conversations with the client, literature research on craft principles and public relations theory, and secondary environmental research, I developed a comprehensive public relations plan. The plan will not be implemented in time to evaluate results for this thesis.

Monopponom Public Relations Plan



PR PLAN
for
AIKO GAUDREAU's MONOPPONOM

Presented by Grace Miyoshi
University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

History and Background

Monopponom is an original artwork and block-print shop started by Aiko Gaudreault in 2020, selling Japanese-inspired prints of silly, surreal cats and other friendly creatures. The compositions are inspired by a paradoxical “taking goofiness seriously” theme and are all lighthearted. Gaudreault wanted to bring wholesome joy to people with fun, whimsical prints of everyday life, especially during quarantine. Gaudreault uses a simple color palette of black, white, red, and sometimes yellow. The images are brought to life by the action-packed, goofy scenes and the bold layering of kanji characters (Japanese words). The cat theme is inspired by her own cat.

Monopponom prints are inspired by Japanese magazines and print ads from the 1980s. Japanese media and culture heavily influence Gaudreault’s designs, specifically the themes of “ゆるい (yurui: loose, relaxed, laid back) and シュール (shuru: Japanese surrealism, non-reality, comedy). “Japanese culture has such a distinct standard for art and comedy, and I really resonate with it,” said Gaudreault.

Currently, Monopponom has 100 followers on its Instagram account and 119 admirers on its Etsy page. Monopponom has previously sold at the Eugene Holiday Market, the Ditch Market (an annual curated marketplace of local creators), and student-ran art pop ups. Additionally, Monopponom has previously collaborated on branding for Oyatsupan bakery and Lane Council of Governments for May’s bike month.

The goal of is to provide Monopponom with a strategic communications plan that will position the brand as 1) purposeful with clear connection to its brand values of Japanese heritage, sustainability, and sparking joy and 2) as an inviting brand that resonates with local and digital communities. The objective is to increase awareness of the brand, motivate individuals to engage with the brand, and finally, increase product sales. The plan will implement transcultural communication tactics and strategies to effectively communicate across mixed cultures. Ultimately, the goal is to and increase transcultural awareness and understanding of the craft.

About Aiko Gaudreault: Gaudreault is a 20-year-old Technology and Media student at the University of Oregon. She was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, often visiting Japan in the summers since she is half Japanese. She is a long-time fine arts enthusiast, “doing art for as long as [she] can remember.”

Communications Audit

Monopponom’s current communication platforms consist of Instagram and Etsy. These two platforms have provided the minimum exposure to get the brand started. Monopponom has yet to expand to other platforms such as Pinterest, YouTube, or Facebook, which would provide more channels to connect a wider audience to selling platforms in the future. For now, the brand has an

opportunity for followers to better get to know the brand and product on its existing platforms by posting more.

Instagram

Monopponom’s Instagram currently has 100 followers. Its profile is well organized, professional, and cohesive, consisting of 11 posts that feature art products and promotions. The brand identity is very clear in its artistic style, color scheme, and language. The account started in April 2021, posting on average about once a month. Three of the 11 posts have been raffling promotions, while the others are dedicated art posts. The post with the highest engagement is the “Chaos” print, which is graphic of a concert with cats, a cow, and a person in attendance (See Fig. 2). All posts include supportive comments by followers. Engagers are impressed by Monopponom prints and are affected positively by seeing them. Many of the followers are close friends, according to Gaudreault.

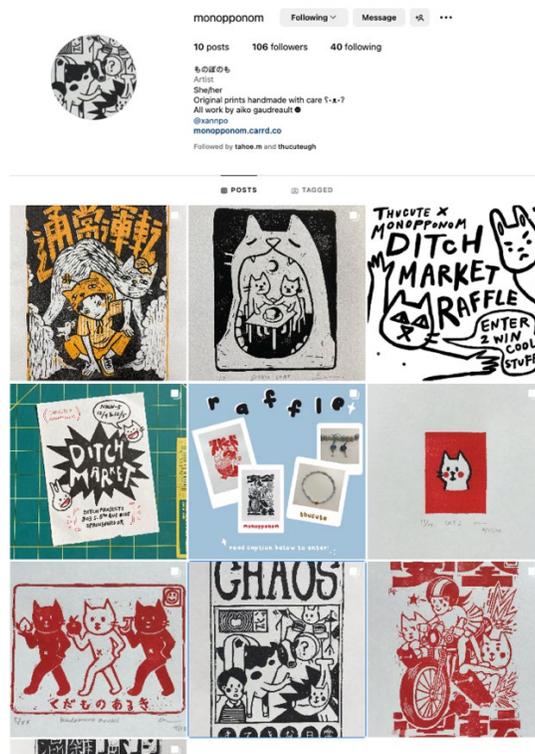


Figure 2: Monopponom Instagram Feed

Photos span from April, 2021 to February, 2023 with ten posts total. The feed is cohesive, employing a consistent color palette, Monopponom aesthetic, and graphic-heavy posts. The profile biography is minimal with a short introduction and description of Gaudreault with links to the Etsy, email information, and Gaudreault’s secondary art account.

While Monopponom’s Instagram is successful thus far, there is significant growth potential by posting regularly and expanding the content that is available. For example, Monopponom can post all its available prints on the Instagram page. Behind the scenes footage (photos or videos) could also increase engagement and brand familiarity. Lastly, Instagram Reels can significantly increase brand visibility and would be a valuable asset to the brand’s platform.



Figure 3: Instagram post of “Chaos!” print on @Monopponom

This is the post with the most engagement on its Instagram, receiving four supportive comments from friends and fans. The post caption is a product description and includes over 20 hashtags in both English and Japanese (e.g., #drawing #sketch #blockprint #バナナ #バンド). The other three photos in the series showcase close-ups and process images.

Etsy

Monopponom’s Etsy currently has 93 sales and 121 admirers as a Star Seller on the platform. Star Seller status entails smooth and speedy shipping in addition to rave reviews. The brand has a full five-star review with 31 positive review comments. The support most commonly includes words, such as ‘love,’ ‘high quality,’ ‘well packaged,’ and more. The reviews reflect positive experiential associations with the brand such as customer relations (extra gifts included), quality packaging with care, and speedy shipping. Customers also showed support for the illustrations themselves.

Monopponom currently has nine prints available for sale. Four of the prints are titled with English names, while five of them are Japanese. The prices of the prints range from \$10-15. The most popular products according to the reviews are “Waratteru,” a graphic of a laid-back cat with a Japanese quote reading ‘somewhere, someone is laughing,’ and the “Kudamono Aruki,” a graphic of three cats with human bodies all holding an apple and walking in a line (currently sold out).

From January 2023 to April 2023, visits to the Etsy page decreased by 65.5%. Orders have also decreased by about 82% in the last four months. According to the Etsy traffic insights page, Etsy (searches, other pages, and Etsy SEO) brought in 81% of visits to the Monopponom page while the remaining 19% were brought in through external links (91% monopponom.cardd.co, 3% TikTok). Key words searched were original art and block print on Etsy.

Etsy is Monopponom's most popular platform. Etsy performance can be increased by improving the SEO and profile effectiveness of the shop. Etsy performance can also be increased by promoting the shop across other channels, such as Instagram or Pinterest.

RESEARCH

Target Audiences

Key Public: Gen Z art and crafts enthusiasts on social media

The first key public is 'Gen Z crafts enthusiasts on social media,' which includes 16-to-24-year-olds who use social media to discover new crafts artists. Instagram and Pinterest users fall under this target audience due to the platforms' unique abilities to target art buyers. The typical GenZer spends 4-5 hours a day on social media—the highest social media usage across all age groups. This age target will maximize the exposure potential of Monopponom's art. The large student network on Instagram is reliable to expand Monopponom's visibility since its followers are currently mostly students.

Gen Z individuals are more likely to “buy art to support an artist or artist friend than previous generations.” Gen-Zers also focus on buying pieces that relate to their identity than to status or mass appeal (Yuyi, 2016). Women and students are most likely to buy art for their homes (Hayler, 2023).

As the first digitally native generation, Gen Z has a deeply personal relationship with the arts because they have always been creating, curating, and distributing art through photos, videos, memes, and music (Ittelson, 2019). This is a generation that prioritizes ethics, social climate, and identity in artistic patronage over status symbolism, making them an optimal target to sell culturally relevant art.

Faux Persona 1

Kokoro Hansen is a 19-year-old female from Los Angeles, California, raised by a Japanese mother and an American father. She is a Global Studies Major at the University of Oregon. As a second year, she is living off campus with her two best friends. She is constantly looking on Instagram, going to the Saturday Market, and antiquing for home decor. Kokoro also loves collaging.

Faux Persona 2

Joy Miller is a 24-year-old living in Portland, OR. They are an alt hipster type who wants to explore and just enjoy life. They are a travel blogger and part time barista and enjoy concerts at small venues with their friends in their free time. Joy is deeply passionate about Japan – their favorite spots in Portland are Kiriko made and the Japanese garden. They live in SE Portland, always on the lookout for quirky crafts and home décor to add character to their place.

Key Public: Small to medium size AAPI owned product brands to seek sponsorships with
Small to medium sized Japanese influenced product brands to seek sponsorship with include craft supplies companies such as The Japanese Paper Place or Hiromi Paper Inc. Other AAPI owned product brands whose mission aligns with Monopponom such as Three Trees is also a viable sponsorship option to seek. A sponsorship by a crafts-related company will provide funding in the form of resources and increase the credibility of Monopponom as a print company. A sponsorship by a non-crafts-related company narrowed by cultural background and sustainability messaging will expand Monopponom’s audience and strengthen brand identity.

The Japanese Paper Place

The Japanese Paper Place is more than a paper company. Founded in 1980 by Nancy Jacobi in Toronto, Canada, the company’s mission has always been to “encourage and promote creativity with quality Japanese papers.” TJPP specializes in Heritage Washi, washi paper made using traditional methods (a practice of over 1000 years) and Japanese-grown fibers. TJPP brings traditional Japanese papermaking to a modern setting with a diverse and colorful product line. Its website showcases various types of prints (relief, silkscreen, monoprint, cyanotype, digital, etc.) on their paper, highlighting the product’s versatility and the company’s pride in working with printmakers. The print aesthetics are more contemporary than they are traditional. The company’s Instagram already includes a process TikTok, indicating brand’s interest in working with craftspeople. With pillars of quality made from tradition and a mission to unleash creativity that align with Monopponom’s work, TJPP is an ideal company to pitch a sponsored partnership to.

<https://www.japanesepaperplace.com/our-story/>

https://www.instagram.com/the_jpp/

Hiromi Paper Inc.

Hiromi Paper Inc. is a washi paper company based in Culver City, California. The company is committed to improving rapport with Japanese papermakers, artists, printmakers, designers, and bookmakers. Additionally, Hiromi Paper Inc. seeks out “new directions and a deeper understanding of washi,” bridging tradition and innovation. Its showroom in Culver City is painted by artist Kenny Schafer, a contemporary American painter—a loud external representation of the company’s desire to embrace modernity and multiculturalism while the inside is full of traditional supplies. In exchange for product sponsorship, Monopponom would offer Hiromi Paper Inc. a face to the company’s mission of nurturing relationships between papermakers and new generation multicultural artists.

<https://www.instagram.com/hiromipaper/>

<https://www.hiromipaper.com/pages/about-us>

Three Trees Food

Three Trees is an alternative milk and products company founded by Jenny Eu in 2012, making and selling nourishing plant-based milks with no gums or additives. Three Trees promises uncompromising quality, nourishment and delicious flavor, and self-care in its products. Its consumer base includes individuals who appreciate natural, quality items with a sustainability mindset. These pillars of quality, naturalness, and sustainability align with Monopponom’s brand philosophy and sensibility.

Three Trees and Eu are strong advocates for AAPI representation and the brand has collaborated with other AAPI brands previously. Three Trees is named after the Chinese symbol of forest (森) which depicts three trees (木); these characters are the same in Japanese as well. Three Trees' values align with Monopponom although the brands sell different products. Alternative milks is a personal interest and preference of Gaudreault, Monopponom would benefit from expanding its audience from a non-crafts angle.

<https://www.threetrees.com/our-promise>

<https://www.instagram.com/threetreesfoods/>

Key Public: Local businesses owners interested in Japanese crafts

Independent, local businesses interested in selling or using Japanese crafts include boutique shop owners, coffeeshop owners and small bookstores. Product placements in these establishments are key to exposing local individuals to Monopponom's prints and artwork; customers who like the product will either ask for the Instagram or Etsy. Potential stores include Snow Bunny Coffee, Little Otsu, and Oyatsupan in Portland or Tokyo Tonkatsu and Soko Coffee in Eugene.

Hiro Horie - Oyatsupan Bakery

Horie opened Oyatsupan in 2015 after leaving his corporate position at Pasco, Japanese baking giant, after 25 years. He attended the American Institute of Baking in Kansas 1992 (Waterhouse, 2016). He has two children (son and daughter) and a wife. Lives in Beaverton, Oregon.

Rachel Lee – Snow Bunny Coffee

Lee considers her Korean café, Snow Bunny Coffee, 'her baby' since she designed the floorplan and did a lot of the construction herself. The store opened winter 2019, meaning she had to depend on a lot of community support through the first years of business, which were also pandemic years. Community is extremely important to her whether its customers or fellow business neighbors. She is a young entrepreneur (specific age unknown). The coffee shop is in the Pearl District in Downtown Portland, a youthful and upscale neighborhood.

Yvonne Chen and Jermey Crown – Little Otsu Stationary Store

Chen and Crown started out in vegan publishing using vegetable-based inks when they began Little Otsu. Their interest is in handmade goods. Their aesthetic inspiration is [Bauhaus and Ellsworth Kelly](#). "Yvonne & Jeremy carry out all aspects of the business including the buying, selling, order fulfillment, and publishing duties. When we're not shopkeeping, filling orders, or working on a LO project, we're most likely... researching the lives of our [Aunt Bonnie & Uncle Jim](#), reporting on [Portland vegan food](#), watching (hopefully) good movies, listening to '90s indie rock, and ultimately still talking about work." (<https://www.littleotsu.com/pages/about-us>)

Kevin and Leslie Yamaka - Soko Coffee

The Yamakas own the mom n pop coffee shop on Oakway, Eugene, serving Japanese-style coffee. The café has a modern, minimalist aesthetic while still feeling homey. This business has a high focus on community and making people feel better, which aligns with Monopponom's mission of sparking joy in spaces. Previously, they partnered with Wesley United Methodist Church in Eugene for their Kickstarter campaign. In March 2021, they also partnered with

Porterhouse Clothing, giving out a free coffee with every clothing purchase. The couple have two children.

Competitive Audit

Emiko Shop

Emiko Shop is an art shop that specializes in prints and other goods (patches, stickers, cards, masks) with spiritual and magical themes. This shop was on the first page when searching 'block print' on Etsy because it was a paid ad. Emiko Shop has made 6,761 sales and has 5,616 admirers on the page. Its homepage has a header graphic with the "Magical Empressions Emiko" tagline and the description reads, "Hand printed goods and gifts with a touch of magic!" The shop's last updated announcement offers free shipping on domestic orders of \$35 or greater and orders are pre-gift wrapped. Below the announcement, the homepage also includes two featured items above an All Items listing. Emiko Shop sells a range of product types and sells a total of 44 products: 26 prints, four goods and gifts, one art print, three dried flower products, and ten 'other.' The profile photo is also a branded image of Emiko shop.

The Emiko Shop has a dedicated Instagram page that features a combination of process content, personal content, and product placement. The account has 2,618 followers with 1,000 posts altogether. The account type is Shopping & Retail, and its bio reads, "Printmaking, digital illustration & more / Focused on the magic in everyday life." Because of the broad and versatile tagline, the brand is not exclusively about the products and has room to expand its product line. The bio link directs viewers directly to the brand's Etsy. The most viewed process video Instagram Reel received 6,528 views. Her Instagram Highlights include BTS, Process, Thank You, Baking, and Garden. These categories combine artistic background, customer relations, and personal interest.

<https://www.instagram.com/emikoshop/>

https://www.etsy.com/shop/emikoshop?ref=shop-header-name&listing_id=924864654

Quiet Revelry Studio

Quiet Revelry Studio is a print and art shop selling nature-themed prints of florals, birds, insects, and fruits. This shop was on the first page when searching 'block print' on Etsy. The profile photo is the brand logo with full name included. The homepage includes a pastel green header graphic. QuietRevelryStudio is ranked a star seller and its description section reads 'Original artwork.' The introductory announcement is very friendly, welcoming visitors to the shop. It includes a short description and a plug to the Instagram account ("follow to watch my process"). Haley, the creator, signs off on the announcement, personalizing the business. Prints start at \$24. QuietRevelry Studio has 14 different products for sale, 12 of which are prints.

The Instagram account features the same brand logo as the profile picture. The bio is a personal profile, showing her real name and description: "Artist based in Roanoke, Virginia. I like to make a lot of different things. Linocut prints are available in my Etsy shop." The account has 466 followers and 71 posts. Her last post was four days ago, and she posts about 2-4 times a month. Her most viewed Instagram Reel has 13.8K views. The Instagram Highlights are primarily art process posts. The Etsy link is also directly in its bio.

[etsy.com/shop/QuietRevelryStudio?ref=shop-header-name&listing_id=1116099090](https://www.etsy.com/shop/QuietRevelryStudio?ref=shop-header-name&listing_id=1116099090)

<https://www.instagram.com/quietrevelrystudio/>

Revenant Press

This shop’s Frog and Toad Lovers linocut print is the first print to appear when searching ‘block print’ on Etsy. This product is labeled a best seller. The listing includes words ‘linocut’ and ‘block print’ in the materials section of the product. Revenant Press has no header image, branded profile picture, or an announcement. The shop sells two products, which are prints of tarot cards. The shop has 147 sales and 100 admirers. No social page is found. Revenant Press uses one key item to promote the entire shop and is successful with said item.

https://www.etsy.com/shop/RevenantPress?ref=profile_header

AugustMidnightArt

AugustMidnightArt is another print store that appears in a block print search. Its homepage header image is of original feather prints of the store, and the profile is the characteristic cat print that is popular in the shop. It is a star seller. The bio tagline reads, “Insomnia fueled linocut prints!” The shop offers free gifting wrapping in the announcement. AugustMidnightArt makes goofy personified animal prints, starting at \$18, which makes this brand the most direct competitor for Monopponom.

https://www.etsy.com/shop/AugustMidnightArt?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=1414915500

Social Media Audit

	Monopponom	Emiko Shop	Quiet Revelry Studio	Revenant Press	AugustMidnightArt
Instagram	100	2,618	466	N/A	N/A
Etsy Admirers	121	5,616	319	99	115
Etsy Sales	93	6,761	240	147	81

SWOT

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesive brand identity and character • Niche Japanese American aesthetic • Homemade, artisanal quality and craftsmanship • Affordability: low cost of production and affordable sales prices • Home-y quality • Pre-established affinity for Japanese culture in target localities • Has diverse and globally minded audience 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product range is limited • Irregular releases and posting on social media • Bare bones Etsy page • Lack of reinforcement by community opinion leaders
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<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborations with sellers, businesses, and online opinion leaders • Sponsorship from established brands • Expand product line to other functional items • Growth on social media • Greater availability in summer seasons 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition in the art prints market • Threat that prints can be plagiarized if promoted on platforms, such as Pinterest • Less need for decoration than for usable goods • Platform algorithms
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Strengths

A strength for Monopponom is its strong, cohesive brand identity across all print designs: whimsical, surreal, comforting, and joyful. Another strength of Monopponom is the originality and handmade quality that certain customers are looking for. This one-person process is beneficial to control production and distribution, and more importantly guarantees good quality in each piece.

A significant strength for Monopponom is that the target localities (Eugene, Portland) have a pre-established affinity for Japanese culture. Individuals’ attitudes and behaviors can more easily be influenced with this precedent.

Weaknesses

Currently, Monopponom’s product range is extremely limited. There are fewer product options for customers to purchase, and there are fewer branding opportunities as a result.

Another aspect of Monopponom that could be improved is the social media presence. Social media is vital to attracting visits to the Etsy shop. Additionally, the shop organization and branding are very minimal and can be improved. When the store is virtual only, it is necessary to have an appealing “storefront.”

Opportunities

There is expansive opportunity both locally and digitally for Monopponom. First, Monopponom can collaborate with individuals or businesses to increase awareness of the brand. Monopponom can work with Japanese-influenced storefronts in Eugene and Portland to leverage preexisting relationships with niche crowds.

Moreover, sponsored partnerships provide both funding and promotional opportunities for Monopponom online. Sponsorships increase brand visibility, expand strategic relationships, improves brand reputation and credibility, and diversifies funding sources (Ingram, 2023 and Baylis, 2021). Products related to Monopponom crafts supplies, such as paper or ink companies would be beneficial. Additionally, non-related product companies (alternative milks, other beverages) whose values fundamentally align with Monopponom would help expand Monopponom audience.

Additionally, Monopponom has significant opportunity to grow its social media presence (Instagram, Pinterest). A following on social media will help grow awareness of Etsy or other selling platforms.

Lastly, Monopponom could expand its product range to include items, such as pins or stickers. Pins are the second best-selling item on Etsy, stickers are fourth, and prints are 13th (Wildwood, 2023). Additional products can be in collaboration with other craftspeople or community businesses.

Threats

A social media presence elicits risk of art and designs being plagiarized by corporations or sometimes other small businesses. Another threat is the high competition within the art market; Monopponom designs could have difficulty standing out or reaching the correct audience in an already saturated market.

Lastly, general social conversations trends show there is a decreasing popularity in conversation about Japan, declining by about -22.5% over the past year (Japanese consumption trends report, 2023). However, the fastest rising consumer need from Japan is ‘Snack,’ highlighting the Japanese food sector’s popularity over other items; instead of posing a threat, this segment’s popularity provides an opportunity for Monopponom to collaborate with food-related businesses to leverage another trend.

PEST

<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative material, art, and designs are automatically copyrighted at the point of its tangible conception (Gormley, 2020) • Japan reopened its borders for visa-free visitors in October 2022 for the first time since pandemic, causing an influx of travelers to Japan (Japan U.S.M., 2023) • Oregon provides grants and relief funds to support artists and craftspeople • Must file taxes for self-employment income that exceeds \$400 (Self-employed individuals tax center) • The Japanese government takes on initiatives to preserve crafts 	<p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic recession – less willingness to spend on ‘frivolous’ unnecessities • It is not easy to depend on crafts for a living (Bell et al., 2019) • The ecommerce section of Etsy that specializes in crafts and vintage items made \$1.7B in revenue; this produced the greatest revenue for the company (Pasquali, 2022a) • 70% of Etsy sellers self-identified that their Etsy income has held steady, if not grown, since the start of the Pandemic (Pasquali, 2022b)
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<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and students are most likely to buy art for their homes (Hayler, 2023) • The number of active buyers on Etsy has increased from 46.35M in 2019 to 96.34M in 2021 (Pasquali, 2022c) • consumers appreciate story in homemade crafts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ differentiation from industrialized goods • Dense student population in Eugene for target audience at about 29,794 students (Student Population Comparison) • As of 2020, 32,680 people in Oregon identified as Japanese, being the fourth largest AAPI ethnicity in the state (Oregon, 2020) 	<p>Technological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of NFTs and digital art • AI art has become a threat to all creative industries (Clarke, 2022) • Instagram is the most used social media app <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2020, 87% of art buyers used Instagram to find new artists (Statista, 2022c) • In 2021, 56% of Etsy sellers self-identified as multi-channel sellers (Pasquali, 2022b)
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Political

An important political factor to be aware of is copyright law that gives creator sole ownership and control of any creative material or designs at its tangible conception, lasting the artists lifetime plus 70 years (Gormley, 2020). This law will theoretically protect Monopponom original artwork from being plagiarized.

Oregon is a state that supports the arts and crafts, providing a variety of different grants to apply for to support independent artists and small businesses (Grants Overview, State of Oregon). There are also organizations, such as the Oregon Arts Commission, the Oregon Community Foundations, and the James F. and Marion L. Miller foundation which work together to administer the Artist Resilience Program —a program that provides relief funding to Oregon artists who experienced financial hardship during COVID-19 pandemic due to loss of income or opportunity (Artist Resilience Program). Oregon politics favor supporting the arts.

Economic

The most significant economic consideration is the current recession. When asked how the news of a potential US recession impacted their spending habits, 30% of respondents said they were purchasing less, and 28% said they were spending money more concisely (Taylor, 2023). The inflated cost of goods and experiences also increases production costs (cost of materials) for crafts people and reduces demand for products that are deemed unnecessary. These factors could limit Monopponom’s production and sales.

On the other hand, another economic trend is the steadily increasing popularity of selling platforms, such as Etsy and Depop. The ecommerce section of Etsy that specializes in crafts and vintage items had revenue of \$1.7B, making up 75% of the company’s overall revenue in 2021 (Pasquali, 2022a). Additionally, 70% of Etsy sellers self-identified that their Etsy income has

held steady, if not grown, since the start of the Pandemic (Pasquali, 2022b). These factors hold that Etsy is one of the most profitable platforms for independent creators that is only gaining popularity even through the pandemic when many businesses had to close.

Social

Oregon has a rich crafts scene, hosting regular and seasonal crafts markets for independent creators. This is an environment that values hand-crafted local items. In Eugene specifically, there is a weekly Saturday Market, a seasonal Holiday Fair, and other boutique stores (Made In Oregon store, for example) that sell locally crafted goods. For decorative art specifically, it has also been found that women, young couples, and students are most likely to buy art for their homes (Hayler, 2023). In 2022, emotional benefits as they relate to a passion for art were an art buyer's most important motivating factor when purchasing art with social impact and patronage (supporting artists and art organizations) being the second (Top Motivations, 2023).

In Eugene, there is a student population of about 29,794 people (Student Population Comparison). Portland has a well-established cultural connection to Tokyo with a large Japanese diaspora (Vaughan, 2022). Portland was also trending in Tokyo between 2014-2018 when a travel guide was published in Popeye, a popular fashion and lifestyle magazine (Korfhage, 2023). There is already a bridge built between the two cultures for Monopponom to utilize.

Technological

In 2022, 85% of respondents to an art buyers survey said that they purchased art online compared to 2019 and 2020 when only 44% and 67%, respectively, said they purchased art online (Pasquali, 2022c). A growing majority of individuals buying art is doing so online. For example, in 2020, 87% of art buyers used Instagram to find new artists (Statista, 2022).

Moreover, the most marketable channels are the most popular social media apps today, including Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram in order of popularity (McLachlan, 2023). These social media platforms can help traffic audiences to selling platforms, namely Etsy. Etsy is the most popular selling platform; the number of active buyers on Etsy has increased from 46.35M in 2019 to 96.34M in 2021 (Pasquali, 2022c). Additionally, in 2021, 56% of Etsy sellers self-identified as multi-channel sellers (Pasquali, 2022b). Sellers are most successful when they have their products available on different selling platforms.

Pinterest is another valuable tool for driving traffic to selling platforms. A total of 70% of Pinterest users say they're on the platform to find new products, and 75% of weekly users claim they are always shopping (Stanley, 2023). "Pinterest drives half of my traffic to my Etsy shop!" said Wendy Conklin of Chair Whimsy, an Etsy shop that has grown to six figures in three years (Grant, 2022).

PLAN

Goal: Currently, Monopponom has a strong brand identity of serious goofiness captured in surreal, Japanese-inspired prints; the joyful caricatures are products that customers have praised thus far. The goal of this plan is to position Monopponom as 1) purposeful with clear connection

to its brand values of Japanese heritage, sustainability, and sparking joy and 2) as an inviting brand that resonates with local and digital communities.

Objective 1: Increase social media awareness by 70% in the next six months.

Strategy 1: Social media strategy

A social media strategy focused on posting content regularly showing product placements and creative process will heighten Monopponom shop's visibility and personability. Strategy 1 characterizes Monopponom as a personable print shop that invites viewers into the creative process.

Tactic 1: Revamp Instagram profile

- ◆ Regular picture posts
 - Establish a social media calendar with posts scheduled every-other week (as a function of client's capacity)
 - uploads the most popular Etsy prints haven't been posted on Instagram yet
 - product placement examples
 - process pictures
 - inspiration dumps
 - Follow, tag, and reshare other AAPI artists or craftspeople for cross-exposure
- ◆ Instagram Reels videos
 - process video that includes sketching, carving, printing, or doodling
 - a montage video of inspiration moments that includes cat, nature, Japan, and friends
 - montage of all available prints
 - product placement footage
 - recommended frequency is once a month or at client's capacity
- ◆ Host a raffle
 - Ask followers to share pictures on their story or feed of Monopponom art featured in their life (e.g. a picture hanging in their room) with account tagged.
 - Incentive: custom Monopponom print of their request
 - Receive permission to use the photos for Monopponom account

Deliverables

- Social media calendar
- Example content: video template, post ideas
- Google drive folder of gathered UGC

Tactic 2: Sponsored content strategy on Instagram

- ◆ Build PR kit
 - Monopponom and Aiko's background one sheet
 - Why partner with Monopponom / story-telling angle
 - Sample print
 - Past collaborations
 - Take photos of Oyatsupan shirt designs and other collaborations
 - Photos of the bubble tea and bike prints
 - Customer testimonials

- What we would offer:
 - Product placement posts once a month
 - Sponsored story post twice a month
 - A product line in collaboration with sponsoring brand
- Ask: a three-month sponsorship period to begin. One post a month (three total) of content that we generate
 - Picture of special prints with washi paper
 - a process video featuring washi paper, explaining special qualities of washi
 - an artist's morning routine video with alternative milk
 - Three Trees inspired print
- ◆ Connect with brands
 - DM and/or email introductions
 - Send PR kit
- ◆ Post sponsored content on Monopponom feed
 - Announce sponsorship
 - Post agreed upon content

Deliverables

- Contact list of desired brands
- Pitch deck
- Mock-up sponsored content examples

Tactic 3: Pinterest sharing

- ◆ Use personal account to post images

Objective 2: Increase traffic to Etsy by 50% in the next nine months.

Strategy 2: Establish partnerships with local businesses that have connections to Japanese culture

This strategy leverages the preexisting rapport between local Japanese-influenced businesses and their niche customers, placing Monopponom directly in the third culture conversation/sphere. Monopponom should pitch these businesses by highlighting Monopponom's cultural and aesthetic alignment with the targeted business and by emphasizing a mutually beneficial exchange. Planting Monopponom products in public spaces will motivate community members to seek out other Monopponom channels.

Tactic 1: Build website / homepage

- ◆ Blogs
 - Message from Aiko about how the business started, what her inspiration is, where she wants to go from here
 - Inspiration with relevance to historical references, such as 80s cat cartoons or block printing in Japan
 - Explain why viewers should support Japanese prints?
 - Events she's looking forward to this summer
 - Creative thought process for her collaborative prints and designs
 - Dream collaboration / placement
- ◆ Portfolio

- ◆ Intro video
- ◆ Services offered page
- ◆ Add customer testimonials

Deliverables

- Website sitemap
- Two blog posts
- History / Background video

Tactic 2: Build pitch kit

- ◆ Target ask: long-term or short-term placement at the storefront
- ◆ Kit contents:
 - Monopponom and Aiko's background one sheet
 - Sample print
 - Past collaborations
 - Take photos of Oyatsupan shirt designs and other collaborations
 - Photos of the bubble tea and bike prints
 - History of past participation in events (Holiday Market, UOISDA, Pop-Ups)
 - Customer testimonials
 - Mock-up branding collab products

Deliverables

- Pitch deck

Tactic 3: Outreach

- Go to stores and deliver pitch kit, collaborative product mockups, and mini sample print freebies for their customers
- Contact store by sending DMs on their social media accounts or by email

Deliverables

- Contact book/sheet
- Business cards

Tactic 4: Leverage businesses pre-existing customer base to traffic to Monopponom

- ◆ Make freebies to giveaway in stores (plugging Monopponom channels)
- ◆ Request collaborative/promo posts from their social channels
- ◆ Take product placement photos and post on channels
- ◆ Request collaborative promo on their social channels

Deliverables

- Customer cards for in-person placements
- Example product placement photos we want
- Instagram post drafts/templates

Objective 3: Increase Etsy sales by 25% in the next 12 months.

Strategy 3: Boosting Etsy Engagement

Revamping the Monopponom Etsy with SEO improvements, professionalism tips, and increased personability to make the shop more accessible.

Tactic 1: Revamp Etsy page to drive more traffic

- ◆ Improve SEO of Etsy page
 - Add alt text to images
 - Add descriptive text including colors, texture, material, or ingredients
 - Add videos of product placements in rooms or offices
 - Backlink product pages to collab stores’ websites, social accounts, blogs, and personal website
- ◆ Improve customer relations
 - Any new orders include ‘tag us on Instagram’ note for more shares
 - Create customer package
 - Gifts for returning customers (is there a way to track on Etsy or should we keep books to track)
- ◆ Expand product offering
 - Add stickers or pins
 - Make them “limited edition”

Deliverables

- Recommendations for profile improvement
- Customer relations stickers/business notes

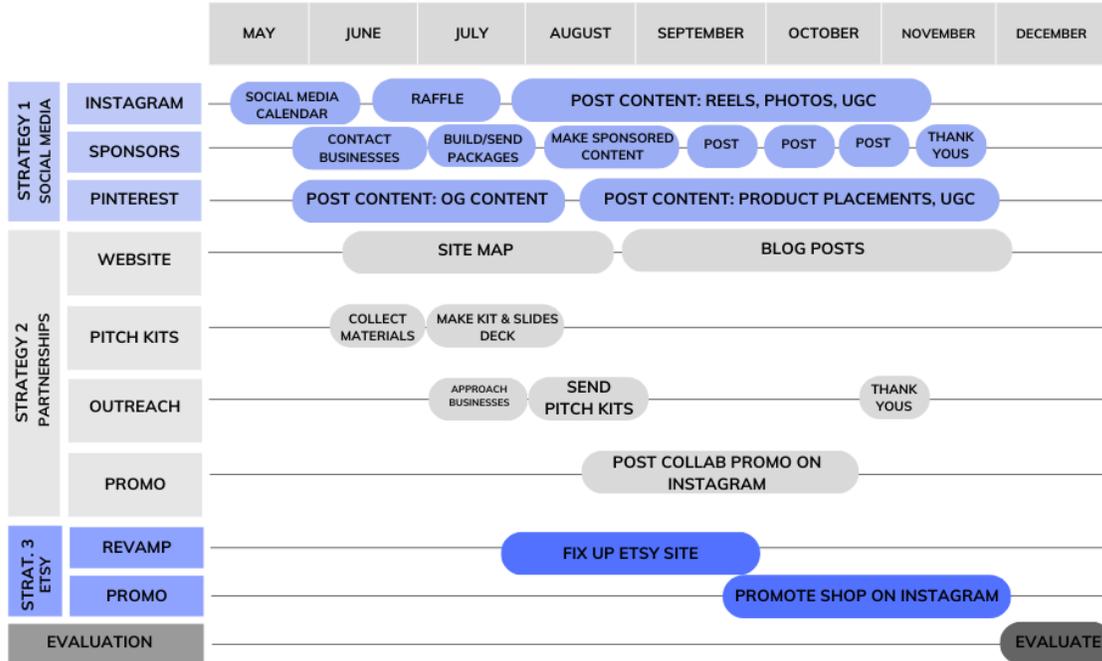
EVALUATION

The success of this public relations strategy will be examined and measured upon completion of the six-month timeline and the growth of Monopponom through this period.

KPIs	Detail Items	Benchmarks
Instagram	Followers, interactions including likes and comments, how many reshares	^ 70% increase in followers ^ ≥30 profile or post reshares
Etsy	Shop visits, admirers, sales, searches	^ 70% increase in shop visits ^ 40% increase in shop admirers ^ 35% increase in shop positive shop reviews ^ 25% increase in sales
Business collaborations	Product placements, collaborations, promotional posts	^ ≥Two long-term product placements in shops ^ ≥ Two collaborative promo posts on Instagram
Website	Track views, time spent on website, link shares	^ ≥100 website views

TIMELINE

MONOPPONOM PR PLAN 2023 TIMELINE



BUDGET

Objective/ strategy	Tactic	Item(s)	Unit Cost (\$)	Quantity	Total Cost (\$)
1	IG Raffle	- Customized print	15	1	15
		-Shipping	10	1	10
1	Sponsors	- Sample	5	6	30
2	Website	- Host site fee	15	6	90
2	Pitch Kit	- Free mini prints	3	120	360
		- Business cards	1	10	10
3	Product Line	- Pins	4	20	80
		- Stickers	10	10	100
Sub Total					695

Discussion

This project developed a transcultural public relations plan for Monopponom, a Japanese American print shop and brand, employing crafts principles by Soetsu Yanagi and a blend of three transcultural communications theories (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Bardhan's Third Culture, and Curtin and Gaither's Cultural Economic Model). The following discussion explores how the abovementioned literature influenced the strategic planning process.

Cultural value of crafts and crafts principles were applied to the strategic planning of the Monopponom plan. On a basic level, Monopponom ensures that its products are affordable while the plan makes the crafts accessible to a wide audience; Yanagi was a large advocate for affordable and accessible crafts. Etsy has made crafts extremely accessible, so the plan capitalizes modern merchandising channels. This evolution of crafts dissemination in the digital age supports Yanagi's faith that crafts will prevail through industrialism as he first saw during the Meiji Restoration. The historical and personal value embedded in handmade crafts guides the storytelling strategy for Monopponom. The plan recommends using process footage, sharing inspirations, and making historical references across all channels to provide viewers with backstory. Specific tactic recommendations include a blog post with historical and personal influences, a website profile, an Instagram process highlights section, and a short Etsy bio. The public relations plan for Monopponom honors the humility and timelessness of craftsmanship itself as explained by Yanagi while making crafts accessible and relevant in modern times.

One limitation under the scope of Yanagi's craft principle is that Monopponom prints do not completely fit into his definition of a craft—the aesthetic style of Monopponom may be too bold and the prints would not be considered functional, daily use items in his view. However, Yanagi could not have predicted such a globalized environment where ownership of a

multicultural print can signal identity. Involvement and patronage in arts and crafts is a method of personal branding and identity-building for individuals, where their specific artistic taste signals associations with certain in-groups. This identity function of crafts informed customization incentives for the Instagram raffle and the collaboration strategy that targets niche groups. Yanagi would agree that arts and crafts do not require a deeper or more profound meaning beyond the function they perform—in this case, the function would be to represent identity.

The plan was organized according to the standard think-feel-do cognitive model of communication. The plan's first strategy focuses on increasing brand awareness using social media platforms. A majority of this strategy was influenced by Bardhan's Third Culture theory. For example, sub tactic 3 of the first strategy invites consumers to the co-creative process as outlined by Bardhan's Third Culture Theory. This tactic utilizes Monopponom's small and intimate following on Instagram as a constant conversational space. The raffle sub tactic asks followers to share product placements of Monopponom prints in exchange for a chance to win a custom print. Participation in this conversation is proposed with mutual benefits. The raffle is an opportunity to gather and exchange feedback about the prints post-purchase, and for Monopponom to see how the prints are being used in real life while gathering user-generated content. Additionally, the practitioner, Grace Miyoshi, only serves as a cultural intermediary that enables co-creative collaboration between participants (Monopponom, influencers, consumers), which is an integral element of Bardhan's theory.

Additionally, this tactic also considers Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, specifically the individualism metric. The US ranks very high for individualism (91), meaning people living in the US value personal identity and branding to differentiate themselves from others. The public

relations plan targets individualism-oriented peoples by incentivizing participation with custom prints.

The second strategy for the plan seeks to garner positive associations with and attitudes toward Monopponom by establishing partnerships with local Japanese-influenced businesses. The second strategy is also heavily influenced by Third Culture theory since the tactics target local Japanese American stores, such as Oyatsupan, Little Otsu, or Soko Coffee. These Third Culture spaces are in constant negotiation, because the stores continue to evolve their business model, aesthetic, and function according to customer demand and in turn they share iterations of their Japanese identities. The proposed collaboration will expand the store's product line and introduce customers to more niche-specific items; this is a value-added proposition because regular customers seek these businesses for the identity-specific experience. By leaning into their Japanese identities and supporting other Japanese American businesses, these stores will reinforce their connections to the niche and strengthen their ties with customers. In turn, Monopponom leverages pre-existing rapport of business and customer to increase brand awareness and expand its own consumer base. The proposed partnerships are mutually beneficial for all parties. By increasing exposure and creating positive associations, this strategy seeks to increase consumer motivation to eventually act.

Finally, the last strategy promotes a call to action to support Monopponom on Etsy via purchases or following the shop. This strategy first leverages the standard principle of emotional purchases—that a person is more likely to make an emotional purchase if it's an inexpensive item—which is why the campaign heavily focuses on increasing awareness. The principle of emotional purchasing behavior is supported by the US's higher indulgence rating (68) according to Hofstede's indices. The US also has low long-term orientation (26) and neutral uncertainty

avoidance (46) that also make consumers in this demographic more likely to make inexpensive purchases. The US has a culture of free gratification, low consideration for long-term effects, and neutrality when it comes to risks. The Monopponom plan recommends leaning into these characteristics by expanding its product line to incorporate a wider variety of inexpensive goods, such as pins and stickers.

The CEM provides a holistic view of Monopponom, the target businesses, influencers, and all cultural entities involved in this plan. Crafts itself—Monopponom prints, Oyatsupan pastries, Little Otsu stationary, and Soko Coffee drinks—are all embodiments of third culture spaces and reflections of articulations among the CEM processes. The stores' products, branding, and physical spaces are all communication. The consumption, approval, feedback of this representation from consumers is another articulation. This back-and-forth communication is culture, as the CEM states.

The strength in this plan is the way it invites and integrates other cultural actors to broaden spaces both locally and digitally for shared identity. The initial challenge was finding connections to other articulative spaces occurring simultaneously alongside Monopponom. The plan observes cultural articulations from a broader view to nurture alliance-forming and relationship building. The value in the CEM is being able to identify these relational webs. The continuation of these articulations will become building blocks to make this multicultural setting a norm, subsequently rewriting the material practices and historical conditions of ethnic crafts in local culture. The relationships built between Monopponom and collaborators will eventually become a standard template that ensures Japanese American and all AAPI representation in the target localities. Dynamics of the CEM ensures preservation of Japanese culture while inviting new interpretations and collaborations.

The most pronounced limitation of this study is that the plan is yet to be implemented. The results and effectiveness of this transcultural public relations plan and framework are still to be determined. Similarly, another limitation of this project is the small scale of the case study, which only targets Japanese Americans in Oregon. The success of this theoretical framework is yet to be seen on an international level. More research should be conducted on this multi-tiered form of public relations planning in other regions, namely Japan. Another option is a place with a large Japanese diaspora, such as Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The CEM also invites actors outside of Japanese heritage into a shared identity. The model gives all participants agency so that anybody can participate in cultural exchange in third culture spaces. Digital spaces infinitely expand the bounds of CEM's articulations; digitization has enabled hybridity, there are no limitations on what the participants or the resulting cultures are like. The practitioner's role is to help participants reach the shared physical and digital spaces.

Finally, I will outline the contributions of this project. The present study furthers practical applications of Hofstede's and Bardhan's theories while also attempting to address gaps in applications of Curtin and Gaither's Cultural Economic Model. In doing so the paper makes important contributions to the field of public relations. First, this study extends the limited research and understanding of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Bardhan's Third Culture theory as supplements of one another. This study provides an example of what merging these transcultural theories into a public relations plan would look like. Second, the CEM has not directly influenced the planning process of a public relations plan in any previous studies. The CEM provided a strategic roadmap to navigate cultural relational webs. While Hofstede's theory is a scientific model that employs a predictive framework for relationships and behavior,

Bardhan's theory and the CEM are critical models that are descriptive. The latter theories describe what cultural dynamics exist and how and why things are occurring. This study combines prediction without determinism, realizing the agency of consumers and participants in all parts of communication to evolve public relations planning in a digital and globalized environment. Ultimately, the case of Monopponom proves that it is possible to create hybrid spaces that transcend traditional ethnic bounds while still honoring the philosophy of traditional craftsmanship in a globalized society. This study opens the door for more transcultural public relations strategies that will amplify cultural voices and carve out permanent physical and digital spaces for crafts.

Appendix

Appendix A:

Questions asked:
(Lead with open-ended questions: tell me about a time when _____.) How would you describe your artistic style? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who are your inspirations?○ What is the aesthetic you're going for?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ how do you think it will resonate with viewers/buyers?.
What are some of your goals for Monopponom? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The brand, its Etsy, and your role in it?
Who do you want your work to reach? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Japanese community in Japan, Japanese Americans, local Eugene students, or others.
What outlets have you previously used to share your work? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who engages with them?○ Are there outlets you're curious about but haven't explored yet?○

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