

Merchandising Snoopy: The case of licensing Peanuts in Japan

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Abstract

The Peanuts brand has commanded multimillion-dollar success in the challenging Japanese marketplace. The strength of the intellectual property developed by comic artist Charles M. Schulz and its resonance with fundamental Japanese tastes account for only part of the brand's success. This study uses a historiographic methodology of ethnographic, interview, and archival research to examine the case of the Peanuts brand's strategic approach to expansion in the Japanese market. The research findings indicate that (a) licensing is a strategically profitable model for adapting and logistically distributing a product to a new market, (b) active oversight structured into the licensing scheme is critical for maintaining brand integrity, and (c) division of authority that relies on localized partnerships within that structure of oversight is necessary to allow for the desired adaptation key to success.

Keywords

brand, consumer products, intellectual property, Japan, licensing, localization, management, Peanuts

Introduction: A rich case study

Deeply rooted in mid-century Americana, Peanuts has thrived as a global brand for over half a century. Born out of the comic strip insights of Minnesota-born artist Charles M. Schulz, Snoopy, Charlie Brown, and the gang have survived the artist's 2000 death with significant financial success, regularly placing the groundbreaking cartoonist in Forbes' "Highest Paid Dead Celebrities" lists; in 2016, Schulz ranked second, his estate earning US \$48 million that year, only behind musical force and mass copyright holder Michael Jackson (Greenburg, 2016). Beyond the profits for Schulz's estate alone, the franchise produces significant returns for an array of stakeholders, from the brand management team holding a majority stake in the copyright and global entertainment media networks to retailers and manufacturers worldwide. The core of the property was originally the daily newspaper comic strips featuring the optimistic failure Charlie Brown whose melancholic hope is buoyed and dashed by his dog Snoopy and his gang of witty, surprisingly sophisticated, and adeptly cruel childhood friends (all roughly 6 years old). The success of the understated strips, however, launched Peanuts into other arenas including repeat animation and vast product licensing with far-reaching success. Over 1100 global licensees produce Peanuts products and operate in over 100 countries (Iconix Brand Group, Inc., 2016). The brand's diverse stakeholders have produced an annual revenue upward of US \$1 billion (Oswald, 2015).

In 2017, Peanuts was sold by New York brand management company Iconix to Canadian entertainment property company DHX Media for a US \$345 million (the sale included the rights to Strawberry Shortcake, a smaller but still profitable property with 350 licensees). Sixty-seven years after its characters first hit US newspapers, the sale proves Peanuts' continued power as a global brand (Mitchell, 2017). Although rooted in Schulz's original work, the financial fuel of the mainstay of modern consumer culture (s) is its array of consumer products bearing the Peanuts branding. These products are largely the work not of the rights holders but rather their army of global licensees. The franchise's system of licensing, along with the insightfully relatable source material created by Schulz, is what allows for the brand to reach its perpetual heights. This study approaches the complexity of the Peanuts brand from an historical and qualitative approach, one that is routinely missing from the international business literature. This approach is not mutually exclusive with quantitative methods, yet scholars regularly contribute to an imbalance in the literature by shying away from the rich value of qualitative approaches (Doz, 2011). This article embraces the richness that the field and the subject of international licensing of a

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brand affords and explores the way the exemplar of Peanuts has thrived globally, taking a close look at its most successful international endeavor: Japan, the world's second largest consumer market (Salsberg, 2010).

The findings in this case study bring to life Pettman's note that the carefully attending to the relationships within networked structures and systems of franchising is critical to achieving success (Pettman, 1998). The ways in which the brand's domestic licensing structure provided it the ability to expand, despite the typical "path dependency" involved in internationalization (Yahagi and Kar, 2009), are of particular attention to this study. The study of Peanuts is thus intended to deepen an understanding of not just this one property but also an understanding of the vital role that licensing structures play in producing the consumer content that reaches into both hearts and wallets across the world. The historiographic methodology for the study has three pillars used to triangulate the insights outlined in the article. These three pillars include (1) ethnographic site visits to merchandising sites throughout Japan, (2) on-site conversational interviews with franchise executives, and (3) archival research on franchise practices and the business's performance. Using the materials this approach has garnered, this essay extends the current literature and argues that localized approaches to licensing of intellectual property (IP) like an entertainment character, combined with purposeful exertion of balanced management control, offer licensors and licensees alike robust opportunities for expanding into a new, even international, market.

Literature review: Understanding licensing and the brand history

Licensing

The cultural, commercial, and legal realities of modern licensing offer scholars and practitioners a fascinating yet complex field of inquiry and operation that is, relative to its impact on commerce and society, surprisingly understudied. Driving billions in profits for many of the world's most profitable culture-producing companies, licensing and franchising activities reach across virtually every research field. Cultural artifacts produced by these activities have been studied at length in humanities disciplines, from analyses of Disney Princesses (e.g. Do Rozario, 2004; Moffitt and Harris, 2014; Wohlwend, 2012) to Pokémon (e.g. Allison, 2003; Bainbridge, 2014; Koroleva et al., 2016).

Despite such artifacts' explicit commercial context, the disciplines explicitly devoted to studying commerce have attended to questions of licensing and franchising (including character licensing) with far less volume than the pervasive business practice would suggest. The General Director of the World Intellectual Property Organization has expressed similar surprise at the lack of analysis in a recent report, noting, "A recognized brand is among the most valuable intangible assets. Despite this cross-cutting importance, evidence of how branding and trademark use

affect economy-wide performance is still limited" (World Intellectual Property Report, 2017).

Of course, there have been valuable recent contributions in recent commerce studies, suggesting a possible growing interest in the valuable studies. In addition to the expected studies from advertising and marketing scholars investigating activities valuable for promoting a given branded product (e.g. Braun-LaTour and LaTour, 2004; Kim and Chung, 1997), such business literature that does attend to licensed brands suggests that (1) brand extensions can have powerful impacts on the success of the brand's core evaluation (Lane and Jacobson, 1997), making new licensing a risky proposition. (2) Companies' efforts to leverage their IP in new categories are met with failure more often than not. This suggests the need for increased understanding of such successful strategic approaches to expansion (Batra et al., 2010). (3) The success of extensions, such as through licensing, into new cultures is influenced by an array of variables such as local IP rights protections (Yang and Maskus, 2001), cultural boundary knowledge (Hong and Snell, 2015), and the gravitational pull of previous expansion "paths" (Yahagi and Kar, 2009). As traditional franchise chain store literature has indicated in studies of operations loosely parallel to licensing franchise operations, it should be added that (4) the interorganizational management structures and relationship schemes are strong contributors to a brand's expansion success (Sydow, 1998). One can see the impacts of structural variations play out, for example, in licensing contracts, which vary greatly across industries and instances (Anand and Khanna, 2000).

Some recent case study literature of both trade and academic origins has endeavored to offer insights into licensing operational practices. Mashable and Time journalist Chris Taylor's *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe* submits an engaging historical treatment of genre-defining franchise decision-making (Taylor, 2014), while film theorist Kristin Thompson's in-depth study of the *Lord of the Rings* franchise, for example, unearths successful franchising building practices such as providing promotional materials to support licensees taken by New Line Cinema and other licensing stakeholders to turn the Middle Earth property into a modern media institution (2007). These works chronicle the relationship and management practices that led to successes and challenges in their respective franchises; such works have received significant praise for the insights generated by the multipronged historical method deployed. Because the success of a brand's expansion endeavors is influenced so strongly by its management practices and relational structures, this article's approach is intended to follow these substantive exemplars and offer new strategic insights into licensing practices through the powerful case study of the highly successful Peanuts franchise in the peculiar context of Japanese consumer culture.

Historical context of the Peanuts brand

Peanuts began as a syndicated comic strip, debuting in only seven newspapers in 1950 but growing to hundreds and

then thousands of papers in the years to come. As was the norm in the comic strip industry, the Minneapolis/St Paul-based Schulz initially sold the rights to the New York syndicate, United Feature Syndicate (UFS), after pitching his idea of his strip called *Li'l Folks*. The comic had potential, but the name was too close to other properties already on the market, so an associate at the syndicate offered the name *Peanuts*, a likely homage to the "peanut gallery" comprised of engaging children on *The Howdy Doody Show*. While Schulz hated the name throughout his entire career, he felt deeply connected to the art and drew on inspiration from his daily life to produce unique content for nearly 50 years, producing 17,897 newspaper strips and dozens of television specials, retiring only because of the onset of fatal colon cancer.

In the late 1950s, product merchandising began for the brand and was a quick success. Merchandiser Connie Boucher recreated her *Winnie the Pooh* licensed coloring book success by developing a licensed *Peanuts* calendar date book, Hungerford Plastics Corporation created 9" polyvinyl dolls for the characters, and limited animation shorts of the *Peanuts* gang were even created in black and white to promote the Tennessee Ernie Ford television program and Ford Falcon cars. Coca-Cola even agreed to sponsor the first television special for the comic strip, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, bringing it off the page and onto the screens with explicit "thanks to the local Coca-Cola bottlers" in the viewer's area.

Such product expansion was a natural fit for the brand: from its inception, *Peanuts* was inherently structured as a licensing operation. The comic strip syndicate, UFS, was not in the business of developing, let alone manufacturing, products featuring their comic strip characters. It was not even in the business of manufacturing comic strips but would instead enter into contracts with newspapers across the country to print *Peanuts* in their funnies section, the papers paying for local exclusivity in order for their newspaper to compete with the paper across town that did not hold a printing agreement with UFS.

Like Connie Boucher and Hungerford Plastics, *Peanuts* was an attractive property for licensees other than just newspapers, and a diverse array sought out brand executives hoping to include the copyright and trademark protected content in their own organizational and commercial products. The process of obtaining legal permission was rather basic for many years: Interested parties, from religious organizations to college clubs and beyond, would simply write postal letters or make phone calls to UFS or to Schulz directly (who kept his telephone number publicly listed in the phone book his entire career), requesting permission. UFS and Schulz routinely granted permission, resulting in *Peanuts* characters even permitted to grace the pages of a Methodist dance manual (Lind, 2015). When Schulz was contacted directly, he would redirect the interested party to UFS, often suggesting UFS grant approval. Only rarely would a prospective licensee be turned down, such as a politicized request from the United Nations and a greeting card request that would compete with a developing Hallmark contract.

The requests for organizational and commercial product use grew exponentially, and in 1970, Schulz created the Charles M. Schulz Creative Development Corporation to work with UFS on approving and managing licensing agreements. But as the interest grew, the syndicate's approval reach was at times out of step with the artistic or brand perspectives held by Schulz. Razor blades sold in Germany, for example, were branded with the likeness of Charlie Brown, much to Schulz's dismay. "Whose idea was that?" Schulz asked somewhat rhetorically. "Charlie Brown shouldn't be selling razor blades" (Lind, 2015: 224). In 1978, then, the often-meek Schulz flexed his considerable muscle during contract negotiations in order to gain approval rights to all merchandising, which would then be managed by the Creative Development division previously created (later renamed Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates).

Modern peanuts gatekeepers and their relationships

When Schulz died in February of 2000, his five children and his widow Jeannie took ownership of the artist's estate, seeking to maintain the status quo with UFS in the wake of the loss of their artist and patriarch. When UFS closed its doors in 2010, the rights to *Peanuts* were sold for US \$175 million to the newly formed *Peanuts Worldwide, LLC*, a company owned by the newly created *Peanuts Holdings*, a joint venture between the Schulz family (20% ownership) and the New York-based brand management company *Iconix* (80% ownership). The Schulz ownership operated as *Beagle Scouts, LLC*, on which Creative Associates holds a board seat.

Standard operating procedure directed interested licensees to contact *Iconix* in order to enter into a contract covering details such as royalties and minimum guarantees. Either after or during final contractual agreement, then, the licensee would be put in touch with the artists at Creative Associates in order to ensure that the artwork deployed would conform to the brand's artistic and thematic standards. The personal relationship many Creative Associates members had with Schulz while he was alive is augmented by a written "Quick-Reference" document of brand standards in order to establish a uniform model for managing licensee guidance. Decisions at *Iconix* would be driven and guided by the brand manager assigned to *Peanuts*; final editorial calls at Creative Associates would be made by the creative director (at the time of publication, the holder of the position was an accomplished comic artist hired directly by Schulz prior to his death).

For any major new projects, such as the new television special in 2011, *Happiness is a Warm Blanket Charlie Brown*, or the new theatrical film release in 2015, *The Peanuts Movie*, the immediate Schulz family would be called upon to unanimously approve the new major creative venture. As Craig Schulz explains, for example, of the *Happiness is a Warm Blanket* script:

The family members had all said we want it all to come from the comic strip...so we had to thumb through years of comic

strips, and we spent a year or so digging through those things and trying to string them together and make them not read like a comic strip. [Question: Going forward, do you have that same kind of comic strip scripting mandate from the family for future specials?] No; now that they have seen how good it can be, they trust me a little more. (Schulz, 2013)

Individual licensees making products surrounding any particular special or using the franchise content more generally would, of course, decide for themselves if the brand partnership parameters that Iconix and Creative Associates offered would be advantageous to pursue. In 2017, Iconix sold its 80% share of Peanuts to Canadian entertainment brand holder DHX Media, with little structural change likely to take place in the brand gatekeepers' fundamental relationships.

Peanuts in the Japanese context

Introduction history. In 1967, Japanese poet Shuntar Tanikawa introduced Snoopy to post-war Japan through his translations of the comic into Japanese. Tsuru produced the translations in a series of books reprinting the comic strips. The introduction of the strips via book reprints was a necessary change from the brand's historical newspaper roots, given that neither the daily newspaper routine nor the presence of a funnies section was common in the Japanese culture. This modified introduction took place in an era of economic growth in Japan (Haghirian, 2009) and proved a great success for the franchise.

Although historically considered a difficult market to penetrate, given its culture and logistical peculiarities (Fields et al., 2000), Japan would become a multimillion-dollar marketplace for Peanuts. Similar to other American brands who successfully navigated the Japanese terrain (Alden, 1987), Peanuts has become a known and beloved property. Licensees have found ways to place Snoopy's face on seemingly innumerable conventional and cultural consumer goods across the country, to sustain entire standalone stores devoted to the brand, and even to craft unique amusement park zones celebrating the property. Iconix regularly highlighted Japanese success in its annual 10-k report, noting to stakeholders that the country is the "largest international market" for their high-profile brand and crediting "strength from our licensees in Japan" for millions in annual revenue (Iconix Brand Group, Inc., 2016). One brand executive even surmised that at times the country could produce nearly one-third of the entire franchise's business (Interview with brand executive, 2016). Publicly acknowledging the important market, the brand celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the introduction of Peanuts to Japan by adorning their highly sought-after free daily pins for its booth at the 2017 annual Comic-Con International convention with Japanese text.

Successful cultural fit. The success of Peanuts in Japan has been due to several factors. First, the characters' large, smooth, and round lines, expressive eyes, and comical facial gestures fit within the Japanese consumer's "kawaii" culture—the culture's ubiquitous affinity for

"cuteness." Though not founded by commercial business enterprises, cuteness in Japan was quickly appropriated by merchandising efforts aimed at a psychographically inward-facing consumer base: "The cute lent personality to objects such that consumers could have relationships with their commodities that they might lack with other people in a society pervaded by alienation," explains Granot et al. (2014). Peanuts, especially the endearing and at-times cuddly Snoopy character, was a natural fit for this established commercial context.

Second, Peanuts not only came with an often-cute aesthetic but also a simple, peaceful, elegant one. Paired with minimalist, even if profoundly contemplative, verbal copy, the simple clean lines fit with the culture's historically minimalist comportment and the postwar peaceful aesthetic it was embracing. The reconstruction period after World War II left Japan with a new complexity of industry and culture, resulting in an array of nuances across the nation, but it also resulted in a rather pervasive embracing of peace. "[D]espite the ultimate emergence of a conservative postwar state," notes historian John Dower, "the ideals of peace and democracy took root in Japan—not as a borrowed ideology or imposed vision, but as a lived experience and seized opportunity" (Dower, 2000: 23). Looking almost like an inked version of a Zen garden, Peanuts was a natural fit for the new Japan. In an interview for this study, Masuhiko Hirobuchi, an honored former member of the Japanese press corps and author of *ヌーピーたちのアメリカ* (translated "Snoopy's America" or "A Journalist's View of America through Peanuts") explained poignantly that "Peacetime was an important factor in the rise of Peanuts in Japan" (Hirobuchi, 2016); Postwar Japanese people were embracing unique, new cultural attitudes and leisure habits that fit well with the consumption of comic strip reprint books—a natural peaceful corollary to the popular and often exciting Japanese Manga comic industry. A brand built on brief, structured, and engagingly endless content was timed well for introduction, expansion, and success.

Third, postwar Japan was primed for voracious consumption of high-quality Americana. American infrastructure investments, a surge of mid-century American vintage fashion, and a desire to renegotiate the cultural sense of what "American" might mean as the postwar occupation came to a close (Shunya, 2008) gave rise to a strong affinity for Americana among much of the Japanese consumer base. The newly opened market and a cultural attitude toward buying-expertise led the industry and consumers toward an amplified Americana marketplace with tens of thousands of US products for sale (Alden, 1987) and a keen attentiveness to the genre among the Japanese consumers. "At this point, the Japanese probably understand American classics better than Americans do," says Nick Wooster, former director of men's fashion at Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus (Kannampilly, 2015). That positive public sentiment toward foreign franchising is critical for expansion of a brand (Paswan and Kantamneni, 2004) and established the base upon which regional partnerships and increased consumer interest could be leveraged, which was

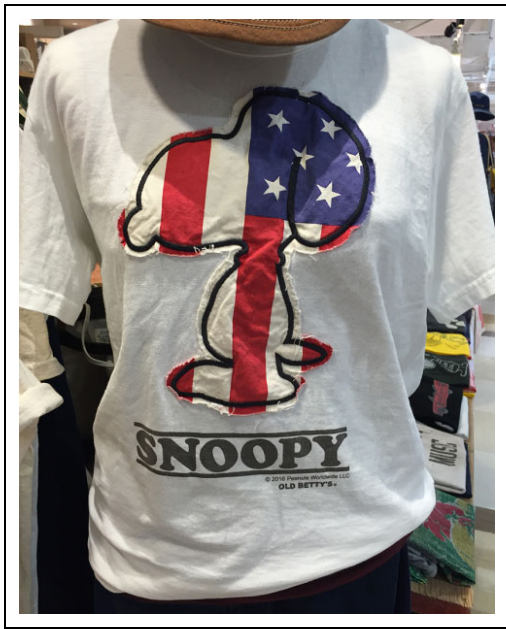


Figure 1 American flag Snoopy T-shirt by made-in-Japan brand old Betty's, sold at the OPA clothing retailer.

given an even greater lift shortly after it was introduced. In this primed market, the Peanuts brand was given a significant Americana-rich publicity boost when in 1969, the United States launched its widely televised Apollo 10 mission, the lunar and command modules of which were named Snoopy and Charlie Brown. It is no surprise, then, that shopping mall consumers can find products explicitly celebrating the American nature of the property (Figures 1 and 2).

Finally, and perhaps most critically, as a property with an established licensing operation already underway in America and elsewhere, Snoopy was poised to quickly spread across the new international market location. Especially given the brand's fit within the culture and its proven ability to be affixed to products across the spectrum in other markets, the introduction of the translated text in the Japanese market all but guaranteed the property's success—so long as the rights holders were willing and equipped to manage licensing approvals, which they were. For the consumer product companies in Japan, the incentive to license Peanuts, even though it meant paying royalties to the American rights holders on products they could otherwise reap full profits on, was clear. Licensed characters draw a buyer in, incentivizing their purchase further and creating a heightened emotional bond with a product that might not otherwise elicit such, thereby offering the promise of increased sales. As Brougère describes of the Japanese company Sanrio's Hello Kitty character—a US 1-billion annual franchise (Windolf, 2009)—such cute characters are “there to address the object to the child and beyond to the mythical childhood that some consumers wish to maintain” (Brougère, 2013). Because the licensing structure was in place, Tanikawa's translation opened up an

immediate new opportunity for licensees to attract buyers to their product in hopes of gaining an edge in their highly competitive market.

The demand for licensing has continued, and in modern Japan, licensing Peanuts in Japan operates through a single licensing agent—Sony Creative Products, Inc., a subsidiary of Sony Music Entertainment. Sony Creative Products (hereafter “Sony”) is a Tokyo-based IP management company, managing the licensing for several leading international brands, including Barbie, Thomas & Friends, SpongeBob, and Peanuts, along with its own original properties. Sony functions as a vetting house for would-be Japanese licensees, assessing whether a licensee's product proposal fits the brand meaning and business strategy of Peanuts before coordinating agreements with the American Peanuts headquarters. At times, Sony even serves as a translation liaison during contract and art guidance negotiations, given that many of the Japanese licensees do not speak fluent English (nor do the American counterparts typically speak fluent Japanese).

Method: Embracing the merits of historiography for business

Like similar cases, this article approaches its subject grounded in the tenets enumerated above and through a theoretical framework that values the transdisciplinary power of the historiographic method—one that embraces an understanding that historical analysis can provide comparisons across space, time, and exemplars that are all valuable for understanding business practices, especially in internalized contexts, providing “progress towards a more complete understanding of the phenomena of international business” (Buckley, 2016: 896). This theoretical perspective and method is one that, as O'Brien et al. contend, “resonates with the case study family of research methods,” and is one that “has much to offer the researcher in business and management.” (2004: 142).

Drawing upon the historiographic method's interest in “a comprehensive set of sources” (O'Brien et al., 2004: 137), a triangulation methodology was necessary for this study in order to, as Cohen et al. (2000: 112) describe, “map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity” of the behaviors and practices in the given situation. Three approaches were essential to understanding Peanuts in its international/Japanese business context. The first is ethnographic site visits. For 2 weeks, key merchandising and experiential franchise sites across Japan were visited with detailed observations made on the product, consumer, and retail practices. The second is direct onsite conversational interviews with senior-level executives within the Peanuts franchise in the United States and in Japan (including the brand's CEO; creative director; regional manager for the Japanese licensees; museum directors, curators, and archivists; and multilevel brand artists). Meeting these executives at their places of work in the method of conversational interviewing (Patton, 2015) allowed for not only unique access to the franchise operators in a setting comfortable to them but also provided an ability for them



Figure 2 “Snoopy’s American Market” miniature groceries figurine playset, sold at Snoopy Town.

to generate insights in the context of the products themselves, resulting in organic feedback and the open sharing of technical franchise operations that other methodological traditions often cannot produce.

The third method is archival research using franchise records and publicly available reports on the business practices of the publicly traded entities controlling the franchise. Standard ethical research practices were adhered to, and no unique ethical conflicts manifested during the course of study. Franchise recordkeepers granted access through their standard researcher processes and subjects interviewed were all actively made aware of the research being conducted in order to avoid any ethical conflicts.

Findings and discussion: Extending our understandings via Peanuts

Conventional retail

As of 2016, Sony managed over 200 Japanese licensees of Peanuts. Licensees have seen fit to procure rights for the Peanuts characters on the full range of typical consumer products, including T-shirts, luggage, key chains, greeting cards, dishware, food products, handkerchiefs, figurines, stationery supplies, and products comparatively unique for the Japanese culture, including public transit ID covers, tea sets, fine art prints, figurines wearing kimonos, and rice molds (Figure 3). The array of licensing arrangements has allowed Peanuts products to populate retail locations across the conventional spectrum, from



Figure 3 Snoopy rice mold cookware kit sold in Snoopy Town store in Kyoto.

department and convenience stores to specialty shops and less conventional locations.

Peanuts is so pervasive across retail outlets that shoppers visiting a Western-style shopping mall, local shopping arcade, or even the drug store candy aisle are almost certain

to come across a range of Peanuts products. Shoppers can find products ranging from collapsible duffle bags featuring Snoopy's face by Matsumoto, to fizzy bath bombs containing surprise Peanuts figures by Santan, to chocolate-covered Pocky breadstick treats with Woodstock adorning the box cover by Osaka-based confectionary giant Glico. Tokyo's high-end Mitsukoshi department store even holds a popular "Snoopy in Ginza" annual celebration the week of Snoopy and his siblings' birthday.

Most licensed Peanuts products are reasonably priced for the average consumer; in 2016, the Matsumoto duffle cost ¥2,880 (US 25.63), the bath bombs cost ¥380 (US 3.30), and the Pocky cost ¥150 (US 1.33). Anomalous pricing, of course, can be found, like a Joe Cool Snoopy t-shirt found at Fukuoka's Kawataba shopping arcade's Minakai men's clothing outlet in 2016 for ¥12,000 (US 106.80). High-end products also exist, such as the Epson Smart Canvas digital Snoopy watch sold at the Snoopy Museum Tokyo for ¥24,000 (US 213.61). These exceptions, however, prove the rule of generally affordable pricing, falling at or slightly below expected pricing for similar branded Peanuts products in the United States.

Across locations and price points, shoppers familiar with licensed Peanuts products in North America are likely to find much of the branded Peanuts merchandise in Japan to be of a slightly higher quality than products they would purchase in America. This may be due in part to the proximity to production facilities, allowing licensed goods to be competitively priced while maintaining higher quality. More specifically, though, Japanese consumers have historically demanded that merchants offer high-quality products. As a McKinsey report noted in 2010, Japanese consumers have historically been "celebrated for their willingness to pay for quality" (Salsberg, 2010). Such quality demands "are among the most stringent in the world" according to Martin and Herbig (2002). Knowledge of such expectations are long-standing; a 1987 report for the *Harvard Business Review* notes that Japanese market is "crackable," but that "quality standards for products, packaging, and service are high in Japan, often higher than in the United States" (Alden, 1987: n.p.). Branding executives routinely express such as advice to clients: "It naturally goes without saying that Japanese expect the highest quality," Kopp (2012) of Japan International Consulting tells foreign companies; "Check and double-check to avoid any mistakes or quality problems. Everything given to the customer should have a perfect appearance." "The quality of products and services in Japan is usually uniformly high, and extends from small- to large-ticket items," Synodinos (2001: 244) explains. While the opportunities for lower end goods have expanded in Japan since the onset of economic struggles at the turn of the millennium (Salsberg, 2010), even the least expensive products retain a high level of production quality, aesthetic appeal, and artistic fidelity to the Schulz source material. The Peanuts franchise thus affirms the current literature's analysis of consumer interests, and the localized understanding and adherence to those interests is what has helped maintain the expansion's success. Especially given not just competing brands but

competing licensees in the same Peanuts space, such quality remains a vital and routine element of the brand's presence in the market.

Beyond higher quality, the Japanese marketplace also fosters a breadth and depth of licensed content not typically seen on Peanuts products. Because of what Sony's executive manager in charge of Peanuts, Hiroko Nakamura, described in an interview for this study as the Japanese fan culture's "strong interest in minor characters" (Nakamura, 2016), Japanese Peanuts licensees will occasionally pull from often untapped recesses of the Peanuts catalog when crafting what they hope to be a competitive product. A juice glass set sold in retail stores across Japan, for example, features Charlie Brown and Snoopy dancing with Lila. Lila is only a minor character mentioned in a handful of 1968 comic strips (February 17; June 3 and 8; August 20–31; she is also mentioned in the second theatrical Peanuts film, 1972's *Snoopy Come Home*) who was Snoopy's first owner that had returned him to the Daisy Hill Puppy Farm. Snoopy's brothers provide another example of the breadth the marketplace supports: shoppers can find a 10-inch plush of Olaf, the roundly obtuse brother who routinely has his tongue hanging out, sold at the NHK-Character Shop in Fukuoka's Canal City shopping complex.

Specialty retail

The potency of the Japanese consumer interest in Peanuts products not only supports diverse licensed products across retail categories and outlets, it even supports entire retail locations devoted to Peanuts products:

Snoopy town. A division of the Kiddy Land retail store company, Snoopy Town shops are located in most major cities across Japan. Kiddy Land obtained the license from Peanuts Worldwide to open their stores in 2008, and as of 2017 operate more than two dozen Snoopy Town locations across the country. Typically housed within a larger shopping structure, Snoopy Town stores offer shoppers a sea of choices, featuring hundreds of licensed products bearing the likenesses of the Peanuts characters on the shelves. US shoppers can liken the experience to visiting a shopping mall Disney Store (also found in Japan). When it opened in 2016, for example, shoppers visiting the new Snoopy Town store in the Aeon shopping mall in Fuchu City just outside of Hiroshima proper had access to over 3,500 limited-edition products (Japan Times, 2016). Further north, the millions walking the streets of Tokyo's Harajuku district can follow the large Peanuts character paintings down the stairs to Kiddy Land's lower level to find each aisle full of local and tourist shoppers looking at shelves packed with Peanuts products—from greeting cards and plushies to chopsticks and washi tape (Figures 4 and 5).

Without the willingness on the part of the Peanuts brand rights holders to enter into deals with an array of licensees, the sheer quantity of diverse products needed to stock the shelves of Snoopy Town stores would not exist. Licensing to over 200 entities allows the corporate buyers of Snoopy Town to have a large catalog of possible items



Figure 4 Snoopy Town shop on the island of Kyushu in the city of Fukuoka displaying apparel, backpacks, and a Japanese translation of the 1984 animated special, *It's Flashbeagle, Charlie Brown*.

to stock. Because the corporate buyers are able to choose at their own discretion from an array of licensees who shoulder the expense of designing and producing the merchandise, the risk for Snoopy Town is greatly diminished. Thanks to licensing, new products can be tested in small quantities. The risk of a product failing to sell is largely shouldered by the licensee, not Snoopy Town. If a product succeeds, Snoopy Town corporate buyers can then expand the product genre, likely having the ability to choose from any number of licensees already creating complementary products. Were Snoopy Town to be both the producer and seller of its products, not only would it require a greatly expanded design division, the risks of failure would shift dramatically, and the store would be significantly less viable.

Given the market for unique products, Snoopy Town locations do commission an array of products exclusive for their store location. The risk of failure for the products is buffered by the wide array of licensed products filling the rest of the store. Opposite an idiosyncratic “recommended products” display (featuring beach towels in the summer of 2016), for example, the Snoopy Town store in Kyoto carries a selection of soft-line personal bags featuring Snoopy and a Bunny Wunny not found in any other store. Others carry “squished penny” style souvenir machines and postcards featuring the store’s location, thus turning the stores into not just an access point but also a driver of consumer tourism and collecting habits.

Although operated by Kiddy Land, Snoopy Town stores do not cater only to children. “The needs of our customers are surprisingly diverse. We have expanded product lines and boldly tried approach to the adult layer to make stores more fulfilling,” says Kiddy Land (Kiddy Land, n.d.). Sony’s Nakamura describes their consumer targeting as having three key touch points: infancy, Jr. High adolescence, and the start of career life (Nakamura, 2016). The target customers, approximately three quarters of whom are female, thus first start their attachment with the characters at their earliest moments, snuggling a plush version of a character. In Jr. High, when their spending power has increased and their social interactions have reached a significant new level of complexity, they can don a Snoopy backpack that both fits them personally and has sufficient acceptable social cache (important in Japanese group-oriented culture; Martin and Herbig, 2002) to wear over their school uniform while riding the train. After graduation, then, as they are starting their career, they can hearken back to the characters that produced positive feelings in their childhood, choosing the Peanuts stationery set to sit atop their new desk at work. When they return home from work to their newborn child, they can give them a Peanuts gift and begin the cycle anew.

In addition to offering an array of officially branded products, the labeling of the retail location as Snoopy Town exponentially elevates the already present risk to Peanuts that scholars like Lane and Jacobson (1997) note in the



Figure 5 Snoopy Town shop in Tokyo's vibrant Harajuku district, full of both products and customers.

current literature: Even a popular brand's core perception is at risk when an extension is pursued; if a licensed product is perceived poorly, there is a potential that the consumer may evaluate the brand itself poorly and reject subsequent offerings. Sony, however, explicitly seeks to capitalize on this direct relationship between licensed product extension and core brand perception by pursuing licensing that will create lifetime brand loyalty. They do so via licensees that create products targeted at the key lifecycle touch points—from baby products to school bags to office supplies—in order to turn the Lane-Jacobson risk into a Peanuts reward. As financially incentivized brand stewards, Sony through outlets like Snoopy Town attempts to increasingly drive the lifetime loyalty cycle; parents with buying power over their child's products are compelled to use branded products adorned with the same Snoopy they loved when they were children, thus increasing the chances they will buy licensed products for their new child who will then more likely want an age-adapted version of the brand again when reaching adolescence, followed by a nostalgic return in adulthood. Snoopy Town stores, with their vast collections from various licensees, serve as one powerful outlet for Sony and the Peanuts brand to reach these consumers at each key stage with a wide access to a vast product array.

Understanding the operations of Peanuts and Sony in Japan thus provides a further understanding to the existing literature on the risks of brand extension. New licensing endeavors risk product failure/success for the licensee and negative/positive brand evaluation for the licensor. The

risk comes from the distinction consumers do not perceive between brand and licensee. However, localized approaches to licensing can increase the chance of specific product success, thereby increasing the possible affinity for the brand as a whole. This can then generate further interest in other specific products outside of a licensee's typical purview, which can then boost the brand and the original licensee's work once more. Contrary to the trend toward "path dependency" noted in the current literature (Yahagi and Kar, 2009), this case study of Peanuts proves that diverse, local licensee-driven collaboration can be a powerful means to confront both risk and previous routine, opening up possibilities for both a brand and a licensee to expand their range even further into less expected expansion avenues as positive brand evaluation expands and deepens.

Snoopy Museum Tokyo. In 2016, The Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa, California, a museum led by Schulz's widow, dedicated to preserving, honoring, and educating fans about Schulz's oeuvre, opened its first branch location—the Snoopy Museum Tokyo, located in the Roppongi shopping and entertainment district of Tokyo. After a highly successful exhibition of original Schulz artwork at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2013, the exhibition team successfully convinced the Schulz Museum and Peanuts executives in the United States to open the temporary Snoopy Museum Tokyo. The move was met with great success. Expecting nearly one



Figure 6 Nighttime view of the Snoopy Museum Tokyo.

million visitors a year, the museum regularly sells out its daily timeslot tickets and is forced to post a sign outside to disappoint would-be guests. An affiliate of the original Schulz museum in Santa Rosa, California observed that the overwhelming visitor response to the Tokyo satellite museum was actually underwriting the operations of the much quieter flagship stateside museum. Much like its California counterpart, the Tokyo exhibits feature original comic strip artwork from Schulz, vintage collectibles, interactive sensory exhibits like a popular large plush column designed to replicate Snoopy's hug, and fandom retrospectives from high-profile enthusiasts, like Japanese singer and actress Atsuko Maeda and Japanese pro-baseball player Yasuaki Yamasaki. Fans with an appetite for a bite to eat can spend some time in the classy Café Blanket, cleaning up the crumbs from their Peanuts branded pancake with a Peanuts branded napkin.

The museum commands consumer attention not just because of its historical artifacts but also by functioning as a fan-sumer tourist destination. At the end of the tour of exhibit rooms, visitors end in a large gift shop run by friendly young female workers and stocked with an impressive array of products. Museum-licensed products like postcards and stickers made from comic strip panels, a Snoopy Museum Tokyo lettered stamp kit, and tins of tea serve as independent draws for tourism. Each of the more than 500 products in the store are unique to the museum store only, made expressly for visitor purchase and not

available for sale anywhere else. Although formerly shopping primarily in their local regions alone, Japanese consumer behavior has shifted in recent years to include significant travel for unique purchasing (Salsberg, 2010), providing the context for significant success of unique licensed merchandise sales at the Snoopy Museum Tokyo.

Guests of the museum range from children to retirees, but the majority of guests are 30–50 years old, the majority of whom are women (Figures 6 and 7). Most are likely to find the historical material to be almost entirely new. This is because in Japan, the fandom for the Peanuts franchise is massively skewed toward an ahistorical and asymmetrical love for Snoopy. Although having an interest in minor characters for enjoyment purposes, attachment to the franchise is pervasively generated by attachment to Snoopy alone, often with little understanding of the beagle's comic strip history or depth of storyline. The name of the museum itself articulates the Snoopy dominance, as do tourism recommendations: "Rabid fans of the little white doggy are sure to go crazy over Tokyo's new Snoopy Museum," raves the popular *Time Out* publication (*Time Out Tokyo* Editors, 2016). "The Snoopy Museum is a mecca for anyone who has ever been seduced by the iconic white beagle owned by Charlie Brown," describes a *Japan Times* columnist (Demetriou, 2016). "I wonder how many people know that the comic strip is called 'Peanuts,' and that Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schroeder, Peppermint Patty, Lucy, Linus and more, are just as important as Snoopy," mused a Meiji



Figure 7 Brown's Store gift shop in the Snoopy Museum Tokyo.

University professor after visiting (Vogt, 2017). The 2015 release of "The Peanuts Movie" in the United States, produced by 20th Century Fox and written by Schulz's son, grandson, and a cowriter, was even renamed "I Love Snoopy—the Peanuts Movie" for its international release in Japan.

The emotional connection to the brand, its meaning, and its products is often very strong among Japanese fans. "Snoopy is like my family" baseballer Yamasaki has said (Yamasaki, 2016). Yet as Hirobuchi has argued in his texts written for Japanese Peanuts fans, there is much more breadth and depth of meaning to the brand than the typical Japanese Peanuts consumer is aware of (Hirobuchi, 1993). The lack of a connection across the rest of the Peanuts corpus has not diminished its appeal, but rather transformed it from the pan-character appeal common in America. American fans overwhelmingly know and connect with Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schroeder, and the rest of the gang. American idioms about pulled footballs, tiny toy pianos, and kite-eating trees prove such broad familiarity and connection. These connections have driven much of the US market's love for the franchise, not to the diminishment of a widespread love for Snoopy, but rather alongside it. In the American market, Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, and the gang are collectively Peanuts (even if Snoopy is often the most popular). Fans connect with their choice of the cast of characters, relating to their individual neuroses and foibles. In Japan, while secondary characters are a fun addition, the overwhelming affinity for and emotional

connection with the brand is driven by lovable Snoopy alone. It is localized licensing that recursively allows for the difference to be both possible and marketable.

In addition to serving as a place of enjoyment and purchase for Snoopy fans, the Snoopy Museum Tokyo also functions as a vital licensee operated with direct involvement by Sony and its American counterparts, given its impact on Japanese consumers' understanding of the brand. Generations of American fans grew up reading the comics during their morning routine and watching the television specials as an annual ritual, but neither of these traditions exist for Peanuts in Japan. Instead, while these American media traditions recursively drive American consumer interest in the Peanuts products, in Japan, the reverse is true. The success of the museum is thus a great market opportunity for the brand. As Sony Peanuts brand executive and museum head Nakamura explains, "Peanuts is very popular now, so now is a key time to educate the consumers. Maybe as much as 50 percent of Japanese consumers know Peanuts by the products first" (Nakamura, 2016). The Tokyo museum is an opportunity to not just entertain or even educate its millions of visitors for history's sake but to educate them in a way that will deepen and broaden consumers' connection with the brand.

Tourist destinations. Tourism affords licensees outside of Snoopy Town and the Snoopy Museum Tokyo product creation and sales opportunities as well. Along the arcade of shops on the sacred island of Miyajima, for example,



Figure 8 A 3-inch notepad set featuring Snoopy and the peanuts gang at the sacred Shinto sites on Japan's Itsukushima island in Japan, sold at a souvenir stall.

tourists can find small licensed Snoopy products like a 3-inch stationery notepad set featuring Snoopy holding a local bean cake pastry while the Peanuts gang is sightseeing at the sacred “floating” torii gate to the spirit world (Figure 8). Back in Tokyo, visitors to the Kabukiza traditional kabuki performance theater can find licensed Peanuts merchandise in its small gift shop, including notebook products featuring Snoopy in dramatic scenes from the classical on-stage performance.

Perhaps the highest profile tourism licensing instance occurs at Universal Studios Japan. Like at amusement parks owned and operated by Cedar Fair in North America, the Universal Park licenses the Peanuts brand for a character-themed attraction area in the Wonderland section of their 108-acre theme park in Osaka. Large costumed versions of Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Snoopy dance choreographed numbers on the walkway at designated times (Figure 9), while guests ride the rotating Flying Snoopy ride. Other guests grab a bite to eat at Snoopy's Backlot Café, while others still venture inside a faux studio for the Snoopy Sound Stage Adventure and indoor mini-coaster. The park, like other licensees, commissions unique products for their own stores as well. One will find in the large Snoopy Studio Store for example, commemorative Snoopy tins filled with sweet treats, a common product in Japanese tourist locations, typically given to friends and family as a souvenir gift. Such gift giving is nearly a perfunctory tradition in Japanese culture, and the cashier will, like in most gift shops, automatically offer a second, neatly folded gift bag that one can use when presenting the gift. Because the

Peanuts licensing structure and precedent allows for localized input, such unique gifts are possible and popular. Because they go through the contractual and artistic oversight of the Sony and American Peanuts Worldwide team, the content and artistic quality is consistent with products you would find at any licensee across the country.

On occasion, one might find mash-ups celebrating numerous properties at once, such as a small Snoopy-Saurus-Rex key chain plush drawing on not only affinities for Snoopy but also for Jurassic Park, another of the park's licensed properties. For the Peanuts property, though, these mash-ups will not involve other licensed properties; the dinosaur version of Snoopy-Saurus-Rex does not have any explicit Jurassic Park content on it and easily passes for more of a Japanese Godzilla reference. The prohibition against cross-brand design comes stateside from the California brand managers. “Non-Peanuts characters may not be included with the Peanuts characters as if they exist within the same world,” reads the Peanuts Quick-Reference Art Guide that Creative Associates provides to licensees (Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates, 2009). This prohibition is common with character-based IP holders, save for with world-building brands that widely position their IP as part of a shared universe, such as Hannah Barbera's classic cartoons canon, Marvel and DC comics superhero characters, or in the unique marketing push from brands like the Disney Princesses crafted by “hard charging” (Chmielewski, 2011) consumer products chair Andy Mooney (Setoodeh, 2007). Combining franchise content may have the potential to pull in fans of other brands, but



Figure 9 A large crowd gathers to watch and take pictures of Snoopy and Lucy dance with Charlie Brown next to the flying Snoopy ride and souvenir store, sponsored by the Nissan company.

it also comes with risk of diluting or distorting brand meaning. Because of competition from within locations (Universal Studios Japan, for example, licenses a number of high-profile brands, including Jurassic Park, Sesame Street, Harry Potter, and Hello Kitty) and from without (Disneyland Tokyo likewise draws a massive tourist base from across Asia), maintaining clear borders for the brand makes market sense, allowing a franchise to craft and control its own competitive brand identity. From a purely logistical perspective, the process of collaborative licensing, working with competing brand holders and artistic managers for two properties, is typically not just a market identity risk but a potentially insurmountable contractual, gatekeeper personality, and management challenge.

Licensing risks

The licensing of a brand's IP across international lines is generally protected by two international statutes—the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (Japan acceded in 1899; the United States in 1988) and the Universal Copyright Convention (Japan and the United States acceded in 1955), with additional remedies available through the World IP Organization (Japan joined in 1975; the United States in 1970). Such legal protection regimes have allowed Peanuts to spread not just throughout Japan but also throughout other Asian locations, including a series of Charlie Brown cafés in Malaysia, China, Singapore, Thailand, and Korea (Gordon, 2017). Beyond the broad multilateral agreements that allow for such IP expansion, Japan is a comparatively stable legal partner for expansion, the US State Department acknowledging that “Intellectual property (IP) in Japan enjoys

relatively strong legal protection and good enforcement” (*Office of Investment Affairs Investment Climate Statement*, 2016). Japan and the United States enjoy a long-standing bilateral relationship on rights protections, dating back to the turn of the 20th century (*United States Copyright Office*, 2017), which offers the promise of enforcement and comparative coherence for rights holders. In 2017, American officials even indicated the potential for further formal bilateral trade policies that might replace the regional Trans-Pacific Partnership from which the United States withdrew in 2017 (Nagata, 2017).

Relying on local licensees to offer creativity and expertise requires that international laws protect both the licensee and the IP holder from infringement. When such is possible, an IP holder can not only expand into a potentially lucrative new market, they can do so with a decreased risk of product rejection by way of an increased sensitivity to the market's particular consumer culture norms. By licensing instead of being both the designer and producer of the product, the IP holder also reduces the financial risk of consumer rejection of the product. By licensing, the rights holder transfers the majority of the financial risk to the licensee for new product trial and expansion to new regions. Especially in the case of Peanuts, the critical mass of hundreds of licensees all but eliminates the financial risk by sheer volume. For unique or high-profile licensees that might corner a segment of the market, minimum guarantee agreements help ensure that Peanuts Worldwide receives financial compensation for the exclusivity of the product, regardless of its inevitable success or failure. Simultaneously, the licensee typically pays the production and distribution costs. Because distribution has historically been a

significant challenge for international sellers in Japan (Alden, 1987), localized licensing has proven an immensely successful approach to expanding in the region.

Some financial risks do remain for a licensor like Peanuts, given the convoluted nature of the overlap of liability and IP law. Especially when the licensor “sufficiently participates” in the design of a product, international, Japanese, and American laws allow for a licensor to be held legally liable in some cases of product malfunction, even if the error was committed by the licensee or third parties it contracts (Nottage, 2004: 139–142). The law typically rests upon an examination of the particular facts of the case to determine if the IP holder can be held liable (Buss, 2000). The additional parties operating outside of the watchful management eye of a licensor can raise concerns for licensors nervous about tort action, especially given that some legal scenarios do allow the licensor to be held liable even if it did not participate in product design. In some cases, though, a waiver of liability signed between the licensor and licensee can mitigate some of the risk to the licensor, save for those legal responsibilities which government statute does not allow to be waived.

While for many, licensing is on balance a highly beneficial route to consider, the inherent benefits of licensing neither guarantee success nor do they absolve the licensor of any effort. “What most people forget is that brand licensing requires resources, efforts, time and sometimes investment,” reminds Capstone Branding (Binder, 2011: 2). Especially given a full spectrum of product types receiving brand endorsement, contract negotiations alone can be so variable as to require significant resources (Tharp, 2012). IP holders can approach licensing from a high to low involvement perspective, but any successful approach requires purposeful structuring and monitoring of the licensing scheme. The Peanuts brand’s success in Japan proves the value of thoughtfully investing significant resources into a system of mutual reliance, trust, and verification. This sort of localization, as Yahagi and Kar demonstrate with the case of Chinese and Japanese expansion of Seven-Eleven, allows for adaptation that can increase the success of a franchise (Yahagi and Kar, 2009). This is likewise consistent with the previous findings Batra et al. (2010) extend, demonstrating that “fit” is an essential component of the success of any new extension of a brand. Beyond the case of convenience store operations, the case of the Peanuts brand demonstrates the value of localization within the personal, visceral, and lucrative realm of character merchandising. Utilizing Sony as a regional brand manager affords Peanuts with cultural insights, intellectual capital, and local in-person support needed to bring the Peanuts characters to the Japanese customer in a richly engaging way. It does so, however, at a premium, owing Sony a portion of the royalties. Operating through Sony as a conduit, the final contractual approval requires an attentive and skilled brand management team in America to ensure that deals which are ultimately accepted are crafted in the best interest of the property. This is both a strictly financial decision and a brand meaning decision. For

Peanuts, the latter imperative is captured in their “Quick-Reference” guide:

[O]ur first concern is always the protection of the Peanuts characters as created by Charles Schulz. Its value has continued to grow over the past 60 years because of his creative vision. We feel it is our role, and yours [licensee], to maintain on product as much of what he put into the comic strip as possible. (Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates, 2009)

For Creative Associates and licensees to successfully be stewards of that vision, significant resources must be deployed first with the corporate legal team to ensure that a successful contractual foundation is established. For Japanese licensees, this means that the liaison work of Sony thus becomes that much more important as well.

Off-message and low-quality products have occasionally, albeit rarely, made it to market bearing the Peanuts branding. In order to maintain a high level of artistic quality that matches the vision of Schulzian fidelity, and especially to maintain the aesthetic quality needed to succeed in the Japanese marketplace, Creative Associates in California must attract and retain artists skilled across multiple, even unexpected media; one of the Creative Associates artists is, for example, an expert on how to shape Snoopy’s nose in three-dimensional space. They must then maintain a constant vigil over a single, consistent aesthetic and thematic understanding of the Schulzian artistic vision in order to keep the diverse licensed products on-brand. All of this requires not just financial capital but also emotional and intellectual capital. During research interviews conducted, members of the Creative Associates team regularly expressed an internal commitment to maintain Schulzian perspectives. “Most of us here were either hired by or directly knew Mr. Schulz,” commented an artistic licensing approval team member during an onsite visit to the approval offices; “I think we feel a responsibility to honor his legacy” (Approval Team Member, 2015). Given the oversight of a successful corporate brand management team, including the second layer of vetting provided by Sony in Japan, the Schulz’s family’s continued involvement, and that many at Creative Associates knew Charles Schulz directly, Peanuts is in a unique position to avoid straying too often.

Conclusion and future direction

Over its 50 years in Japanese circulation, the Peanuts brand has made a significant impact on the consumer culture of Japan. In the brand’s disproportionately successful second largest market, it has spanned consumer product sectors and spaces. It is a mainstay of an infant’s product life, of an adolescent’s search for apparel and school products that are well accepted, and of the young adult’s search for new materials for both her desk and her new nursery. The multimillion-dollar Japanese deployment of the IP has such broad appeal that it even takes part in tourism—both third-party destinations and destinations of its licensees’ own making.

The deployment of a multipart licensing structure, one that requires effective human capital through multipart review that simultaneously relies on localized partnerships while commanding a tightly (but not too tightly) understood artistic and thematic authority, offers great potential for a rights holders to reap financial and cultural rewards that outweigh the costs inherent in expansion and multi-party licensing. The structure of the Peanuts brand's approach to the marketplace may serve as a model for scholars and practitioners to understand the successes and failures of other similar brands, and the analysis found here may serve as a foundation for similar and comparative analyses by future scholars.

As this case study of Peanuts' impact in the Japanese marketplaces demonstrates, the quality of the IP alone is insufficient to account for a brand's success. In addition to detailing an exemplar of successful cultural "fit," this study contributes to scholarly and practitioner understandings of internationalization management practices and local partnership structures needed to successfully extend IP, especially character-based IP, into a new market. This, as the current literature has suggested, is both vital information for the success of licensing expansion and an area that the field has not yet thoroughly covered. This study of Peanuts extends the current understanding of the licensing practices while deepening the scholarly and practitioner knowledge on possible successful management practices. It is hoped that the various fields interested in such as case study will find heuristic value in its contributions, thereby opening up avenues for further comparative research in the fields of entertainment culture branded products, international merchandise licensing, and structural management approaches to brand expansion. The comprehensiveness that the historiographic approach affords may be adopted in the future for the value it brings, though its breadth comes with a limitation of depth. Future studies may, for example, study management perceptions of international management reporting structures in a select entertainment culture brand or compare only artistic approval contract language across multiple brands. Such future studies, along with this, will hopefully continue to pave the way for continued vibrant research into the complex and highly valuable field of licensing.


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