
Guest editorial: Global branding management in a rapidly changing environment

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Over the past decades, the world has witnessed the emergence of a relentless push towards global market integration, fueled by global media, the internet, mobile communications and the free movement of capital and goods, leading to worldwide investment and production strategies (Steenkamp, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2017). Changes in global business environments, including political, technological and cultural factors, resulted in paradigm shift in customer buying behaviors and firms' branding strategies (He and Wang, 2017). For instance, the renaissance of consumer ethnocentrism, patriotism, local identity and global company animosity has shadowed the prospect of global brands (He and Wang, 2015). Thus, in an age of emerging and growing antipathy towards globalization, perhaps fueled by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, a relevant issue within the global branding literature needs to be answered. Recent evidence shows that the COVID-19 pandemic and the related closures and lockdowns have changed how consumers shop for products and pushed global firms to change branding strategies to acquire, retain and grow their business with their customers (Kannan and Kulkarni, 2022). The pandemic has affected consumer brand engagement on social media for global brands through the mechanisms of the COO and consumer animosity (Wang *et al.*, 2022), and meanwhile influences marketing global branding and innovation strategies in responding to the shifted from "physical first" to "digital first" and from "selling customers" to "serving customers" (Sheth, 2022). Technology advancement has significantly impacted the business operation models in platform economies (Van Alstyne *et al.*, 2016) as such the digital technology has been one of the most important tools for modern day brand globalization. Over the past two decades, digital platforms have revolutionized marketing leading to the fast growth of interactive marketing field that offer new ways to reach, inform, engage customers in multisided value co-creation (Wang, 2021). With the help of digital technology, global companies have substantially reshaped their organizations and changed the way to build global brands with increased use of interactive marketing tools to engage customers (McDonald, 2022; Puligadda *et al.*, 2021). This special issue introduces eight articles that address above strategic issues regarding global branding management in a rapidly changing environment.

With rising levels of globalization, consumers have increasingly come into contact with products and services from diverse cultures that are different from their own and there has been a corresponding growth in the study of consumer behavior in the context of global branding, such as why (or when) do consumers prefer global brands. He and Ge (*The dual impetus for perceived brand globalness and brand competence in a rapidly changing environment: The role of Brand-Nation Connection*) find that brand innovativeness and national traditions have positive effects on brand-nation connection (BNC). The authors further reveal that technological turbulence moderates the impact of brand innovativeness on BNC while cultural change moderates the relationship between national traditions and BNC. The authors conclude that BNC is an important determinant of perceived brand globalness, and both BNC and perceived brand globalness positively influence brand competence. Such findings highlight that in the changing world, the coexistence of brand innovation and cultural traditions through strategic management is essential for brand competence. They also provide guidelines for emerging global brands to incorporate nation-related cues and global signals in their brand positioning to reinforce brand competence.



Yadav, Paul and Mittal (*Impact of nation brand experience on nation brand loyalty, and positive WOM in a changing environment: the role of nation brand love*) further examine the role of nation brand experience in enhancing a nation's global reputation. The results show that international visitors' sensory and affective nation brand experiences significantly enhance brand love for a nation, leading to national brand loyalty and positive WOM among them.

Similarly, Hong, Zhang, Zhang and Hu (*Is brand globalness compatible with brand country-of-origin? An investigation of hybrid brand positioning strategies for emerging market brands*) investigate hybrid brand positioning strategies for emerging market brands based on two positioning elements: brand country-of-origin (COO) and brand globalness. The results show that the best hybrid positioning strategy is the one that highlights brand COO and de-emphasizes brand globalness.

Cause related marketing (CRM) is often considered effective in establishing positive brand image for firms in international markets. Hung, Tse and Chan (*Gaining Legitimacy and Host Market Acceptance: A CRM Analysis for Foreign Subsidiaries in China*) investigate how foreign subsidiaries planned CRM strategies to gain legitimacy and acceptance, along with the moderating effects of strategic mindset and subsidiary empowerment, on CRM effects in a host market with less developed institutions. The results show that post-crisis recovery enhances sales but not future opportunities by itself unless the subsidiary receives headquarters empowerment. The authors also find that only ethical and philanthropic corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities with enhancement from strategic mindset influences future opportunities.

Shah, Olya and Monkhouse (*Developing strategies for international celebrity branding: a comparative analysis between Western and South Asian cultures*) further look at consumer response to celebrity branding across Britain and Pakistan containing non-explicit and explicit sex appeals. The authors find that celebrity-endorsed advertising without explicit sex appeals elicited an overall favorable response across markets. British consumers respond to both adverts similarly. However, Pakistani consumers filter advert themes through salient cultural values and respond negatively to explicit sex appeals whereas accepting sexuality in associations of a celebrity endorser. The authors suggest that a global or domestic marketing strategy can be used across the cultures based upon the environmental conditions and the themes and appeals incorporated within advert design.

Lang, Behl, Guzman, Pereira and Del Giudice (*The role of advertising, distribution intensity and store image in achieving global brand loyalty in an emerging market*) investigate the simultaneous impact of advertising efforts, distribution intensity, and store image on global brand loyalty of fast-moving consumer goods in emerging markets. The study reveals variations among the selected marketing mix elements and brand loyalty, contributing to the understanding of global consumer culture, marketing mix, brand equity and global brand loyalty. Such knowledge helps practitioners develop suitable global branding strategies to manage global brand image and achieve consumer loyalty across emerging markets.

Cultural values have a significant impact on consumer perception of brand values. Arli, Gupta, Sardana and Sharma (*Demystifying the evaluation of brands endorsed by religious leaders in the emerging markets*) apply social identity theory to investigate the effects of extrinsic religiosity and perceived role of religious leaders in the relationship between consumers' intrinsic religiosity and perceived value of brands endorsed by religious leaders. The empirical outcome reveals that religious consumers in the emerging markets are likely to support the brands endorsed by religious leaders vis-à-vis other national or multinational brands. The authors conclude that religious identification offers a unique sacred worldview and unlimited group membership, unlike other social groups, especially in the highly religious emerging markets.

There is a general agreement that global branding should operate in accordance with the cultural value priorities of different countries on a global basis by addressing unique features

in local cultures. Velázquez, Alberto; Hang and Ren (*The impact of dialectical thinking on androgynous brand equity across cultures: The moderating role of brand positioning*) examine the impact of cross-cultural difference in dialectical thinking on consumers' responses to androgynous brands and its implication for brand equity by looking at how consumers take both feminine and masculine attributes into consideration to form their judgments of androgynous brand equity. The results demonstrate that an androgynous brand has higher brand equity in China than in the UK. Chinese consumers also rate higher feminine/masculine attributes of masculine/feminine brands, whereas an androgynous brand's equity is mainly driven by its less dominant attributes. The authors conclude that the importance of an androgynous brand's less dominant attributes in driving its brand equity and provides a tool that the international marketing managers can use to strengthen such influence.

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