Global Consumer Culture: The Evolving Nature of Global and Local Consumption

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Guest Editors
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Without a doubt, globalization, defined as the process of worldwide market and cultural integration, is changing the way businesses operate (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). However, beyond its effect on business activities, globalization continues to have a profound impact on the consumer landscape (Özsomer, Batra, Chattopadhyay, & ter Hofstede, 2012). Today’s consumers are relentlessly exposed to external cultural forces, without having to leave their native countries – they no longer necessary live their lives in accordance with the values, norms and behavioral expectations of their local culture.

Research largely overlooks the societal transformations being experienced among mainstream populations (focusing primarily on minorities). Due to globalization these alterations are now perceptible; however, the emerging literature intimates that these changes are proceeding unevenly and intricately, within and across borders, consumer groups and consumption contexts.

Consumers use shared sets of consumption-related symbols across borders, and foreign products are readily available in many domestic markets. As a consequence, companies are adapting their marketing strategies to target evolving global consumer segments that are favorably disposed to foreign and/or global market offerings (Papadopoulos & Martin, 2011). In an effort to capture these changes in consumer behavior, as a result of globalization, international marketing research seeks to conceptualize consumers’ positive and negative dispositions toward foreign countries and globalization (Bartsch, Riefer, & Diamantopoulos, 2016). Among others, literature describes consumers as being ethnocentric (Shankarmahesh, 2006; Sharma, 2015; Siamagka & Balabanis, 2015), cosmopolitan (Cleveland, Papadopoulos, & Laroche, 2011), xenocentric (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016), global citizens (Strzhahkova, Coulter, & Price, 2008), and/or having a global identity (Tu, Khare, & Zhang, 2012). Thus, thus the globalization of markets provides international companies with a paradigm that promotes global brand portfolios over local ones. However, the literature also is observing emerging trends in which large consumer segments are tending to favor local brands, either generally or for specific contexts (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010; Zeugner-Roth, Žabkar, & Diamantopoulos, 2015). The latter trend is forcing companies to reconsider their strategies and find ways of responding to the changing nature of global and local branding. Identifying the role consumer dispositions play in this paradigm shift is a first step in accommodating the evolving nature of global and local consumption.

Thus, despite the growing body of research that seeks to investigate the various ways consumer dispositions impact marketing decision (e.g., Bartsch, Diamantopoulos, Papakardis, & Chumpitaz, 2016; Cleveland, Rojas-Méndez, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2015; Guo, 2013; Özsomer & Altaras, 2008), the current state of the literature remains fragmented and requires further attention. Consumer dispositions, however, are not static and may change over time, and in response to external cultural forces. Indeed, firms manipulate consumer signals, including associations toward or away from particular cultures, in order to position products and to persuade consumers (Prince, Davies, Cleveland, & Paliwawadana, 2016).

Thus, the globalization of markets provides international companies with a paradigm that promotes global brand portfolios over local ones. However, the literature also is observing emerging trends in which large consumer segments are tending to favor local brands, either generally or for specific contexts (Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010; Zeugner-Roth, Žabkar, & Diamantopoulos, 2015). The latter trend is forcing companies to reconsider their strategies and find ways of responding to the changing nature of global and local branding. Identifying the role consumer dispositions play in this paradigm shift is a first step in accommodating the evolving nature of global and local consumption.

In particular, there is a dearth of research that seeks to better understand the differences among conceptualizations of consumer dispositions (and their resulting brand preferences), their antecedents (e.g., how do personality dimensions shape the adaptation of dispositions), how multiple identities interact and shape consumer behavior (e.g., the combination of multiple possibly contradicting identities), the interaction and trade-off among global and local consumer cultures, the appropriation of global consumer culture elements and their indigenization by local societies, and finally, the prospective development of several global consumer cultures across emerging markets (e.g., to what extent is there an overlap among Western and Eastern “global consumer cultures”).

The purpose of this special issue is to provide scholars with a platform to share important, potentially controversial, intuitions which push the boundaries of our understanding of global and local consumer cultures and their joint influence on many consumer behaviors. As such, we welcome submissions that seek to offer novel insights into the evolving nature of global and local consumer cultures, their effects on consumers’ underlying decision making processes, as well as on how these developments are precipitating a paradigm change in global and local branding approaches.

The guest editors will welcome rigorous contributions which address the above-mentioned aims or respond to proximate issues pertaining to consumers’ varied local, global and foreign dispositions. Suitable topics include but are not limited to:

- Multiple cultural identities.
- Does global consumer culture foster the development of multiple, possibly conflicting, cultural identities? If so, how? What are the mechanisms? If not, not why? What form do the identities take? Are there patterns or rules?
- Is there a link between multiple/conflicting cultural identities and acculturative stress (e.g., identity confusion)? What kinds of stress coping mechanisms are available within the consumption context?
- Dispositions and identities.
- Are consumer cultural dispositions and identities differentially activated according to the context?
- What are the behavioral ramifications (for example, pro social behavior)?

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References


