DOI: https://doi.org/10.53486/sstc2026.v2.100
CZU: 316.72:339.138(100)

GLOCALIZATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION IN MULTINATIONAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

GLOCALIZAREA ȘI ADAPTAREA CULTURALĂ ÎN CAMPANII DE MARKETING MULTINAȚIONALE

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Abstract: *În contextul globalizării, companiile se confruntă cu pătrunderea pe piețe economice noi, dar fără să își piardă relevanța culturală. Deși globalizarea presupune omogenizarea preferințelor consumatorilor, realitatea economică a demonstrat că lucrurile sunt cu mult mai subtile. Astfel a fost adoptat un nou concept numit „glocalizare", ceea ce presupune ca un produs „global" să fie adaptat „local". Această cercetare își propune să analizeze modul în care companiile pot adapta produsele și campaniile de marketing la specificitățile culturale locale, utilizând teoriile lui Hall (context cultural ridicat vs. scăzut), Hofstede (dimensiuni culturale) și de Mooij (comportamentul consumatorului influențat cultural). Rezultatele obținute reflectă ipoteza că adaptarea la cultura locală generează rezultate superioare față de strategiile uniforme, iar gradul de adaptare necesar depinde de țara țintă. Cercetările arată că glocalizarea nu este o opțiune, ci o condiție esențială pentru succesul internațional, asigurând autenticitatea, loialitatea consumatorilor și un avantaj competitiv sustenabil.*
Cuvinte-cheie: gl*obalizare, marketing, glocalizare, campanii de marketing, companii, piețe economice, consumatori*
JEL CLASSIFICATION: M31, F23, M16, Z13

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, we are more connected than ever before. This interconnectedness is often called the "global village," a concept that's widely discussed in business and communication workshops.Technological advances and improvements in communication have opened doors for businesses to venture beyond their national borders. As a result, companies can now tap into international markets.This trend, known as globalization, is described as "a process that integrates national and regional economies, societies, and cultures through a global network of trade, communication, migration, and transportation," according to the Financial Times this allows us to understand that people's tastes and preferences are homogenized, which allows for standardized marketing strategies and products for all.

However, the reality of the economic environment is a little more complex. A fixed strategy used in several foreign markets can lead to a negative impact on the economy due to the social and cultural differences of the population. Based on this fact, another concept was invented, ‚made up of two other terms, ,,globalization " and ,,localization " which means ,, the process by which global and local forces interact and influence each other in shaping the world around us (Robertson, Citation1995, p. 28). It represents a strategic approach where companies include in their marketing and management strategies the cultures and local differences of people, thus maintaining the effectiveness of the products but also respecting the local norms of people from different parts of the world.This term allows people a deeply undetsanding of the importance adapting global products and services to meet the needs of the local market.

This topic is very important today because of the multitude of companies that want to enter international markets and because of consumers who increasingly want authenticity and cultural relevance from brands, making Glocalization not just a simple concept, but an essential condition for meeting consumer needs and achieving the success of international companies.

OBJECTIVES

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To define and differentiate the concepts of glocalization and globalization in the context of international marketing

2. To analyze the role of cultural theories in creating effective glocalization strategies

3. To examine real examples of international companies to allow the identification of key success strategies based on the concept of glocalization

4. To formulate practical recommendations for marketing specialists who want to implement glocalization campaigns

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of this research is based on several works of scientific researchers in the field of international marketing:

1. Edward T. Hall (high context -low context)-Edward T. Hall implemented a framework for understanding cultural communication between people. In low-context cultures such as Germany or the USA, communication is direct, explicit and the meaning is mainly transmitted through words, directly and to the point. In contrast, high-context countries such as Japan, China or Arab countries rely heavily on implicit communication, i.e. where the meaning is already integrated into the context, in non-verbal cues and in the listener's pre-existing knowledge. For marketers, this concept of glocalization means that for low-context cultures, messages must be clear and explicit, while for high-context cultures, these messages must be based on building relationships and transmitting symbols and the desired meaning through subtlety and mutual understanding.

2.Geert Hofstede (Theory of cultural dimensions)-Geert Hofstede provided an understanding of how people's cultural values influence their behavior at work and in society in general. All of these dimensions can be used directly for marketing strategies:

A)Individualism vs Collectivism-In "individualistic" countries like the UK or the US, marketing messages often focus on the "person" i.e. their success, independence and development in themselves. On the contrary, in "collectivist" societies like South Korea, Japan and China, marketing campaigns are more effective when they emphasize the community, family and generally the well-being of "groups" ,, Common prosperity (Chinese: 全名富裕; pinyin: Gòngtóng fùyù(their slogan)"

B)Power distance-This concept assesses the extent to which less powerful members of organizations accept that power is distributed unequally .In cultures with high power distance such as Mexico or Panama, marketing may include authority figures and hierarchical structures, while cultures with low power distance such as Germany and Denmark respond better to messages of equality and collaboration.

C) Uncertainty avoidance -This term measures the degree to which members of a society feel threatened by ambiguous or unstructured situations. Cultures with high levels of uncertainty avoidance such as Japan and Greece prefer clear rules and structures. Marketing in these cultures must be cautious and offer clear, well-structured options and highlight tradition. Cultures with low levels of uncertainty avoidance such as the USA and Singapore are more flexible and tolerant of change, thus they are more open to innovations and novelties.

3.Marieke do mooji (Consumer behavior and culture) -Mooji's research supports Hofstede and Hall's literary concepts, applying their ideas on consumer behavior. His research argues that people's culture and habits influence not only what they buy but also the reasons why they do so. He argues that marketing concepts such as branding, advertising and even the adoption of certain technologies depend directly on people's culture, thus providing a practical basis for glocalization.

4.Ronald Robertson Title: "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity" -The author explains the concept of glocalization in more detail, arguing that what we call "local" is no longer an isolated or purely authentic space, but is often constructed and promoted using recipes and models that are, themselves, global in nature. Local identities are stimulated and shaped through trans-local interactions and comparisons.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative analysis of case studies. This method is suitable for analyzing complex topics such as "glocalization", just like in real life. In this way, the research was carried out some relevant examples were chosen, namely 3 well-known multinational companies: Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Adidas. These companies are known to be successful globally, but adapt to local markets .For each company, we analyzed the global identity for their brand. Then we identified specific examples of local adaptation, the examples also connected together with the theories of Hofstede, Hall and Mooij

CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

Macdonald is a company famous all over the world, especially through their products like Big Mac, Macflury and cheeseburger. However, the company adapts its menu significantly to local cultures.In India, most of the population does not eat beef, so McDonald's does not offer many pork or beef products. Instead, they have introduced items like McAloo Tikki (a burger made of potatoes and spices). In Japan, McDonald's offers EBU Fileto (a burger with shrimp to suit the local taste for seafood). They change not only the basic menu but even the desserts. In Asian countries, McDonald's offers different flavors of their ice creams such as, Mac flurry with matcha, coconut. In Europe, they add flavors like Lotus Biscoff in Belgium/UK and Pistachio in Italy.Through these cultural adaptations, McDonald's is a relevant example that demonstrates its respect for its clientele from all over the world. This company is not only seen as "foreign food", but they themselves become a part of the local food culture.

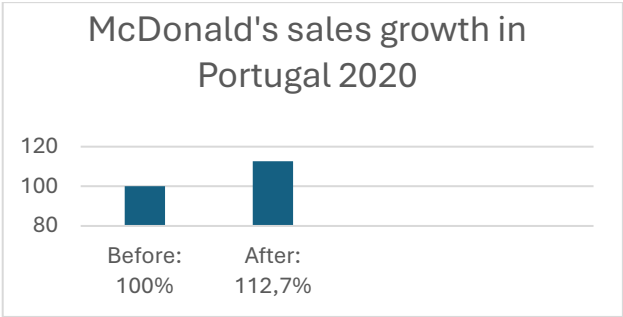


Fig.1 How McDonald's Localization Strategy Shapes Consumer Behavior in Portugal
(based on: Glocal Branding in Action: How McDonald's Localization Strategy Shapes Consumer Behavior in Portugal,Vasco Ribeiro Santos, Anabela Pereira, Bruno Sousa, Umar Ali, Luzia Arantes, Theodore Tarnanidis, Rúben Pinhal)

"This study investigates how McDonald's glocalization strategy affects consumer behavior in Portugal, highlighting the interplay between the global brand identity and local cultural adaptation. Employing Kozinets' (2020) netnographic approach, the research analyzes over 15,000 consumer-generated digital interactions across social media, review platforms, and food forums to uncover authentic, culturally embedded perceptions. Findings reveal that McDonald's localized offerings, such as the McBifana and McPastel de Nata, resonate strongly with Portuguese consumers, driving a 12.7% increase in sales and enhancing emotional brand attachment. The study also uncovers a generational divide, with younger consumers exhibiting greater receptivity to hybrid brand identities. By applying netnography to a global fast-food brand in a culturally rich European context, this research contributes to international consumer marketing literature by offering a digitally grounded framework for understanding localized brand performance. The findings provide actionable insights for global marketers seeking to cultivate cultural authenticity and consumer engagement across diverse markets".

Another example is Coca-Cola, it has campaigns like,,taste the sensation" but the way this is perceived campaign is different in each country. The "Share a Coke" campaign replaced the Coca-Cola logo with popular local names on the bottles. In China, they used nicknames and "endearment" terms instead of just first names. This worked better in China's high-context, relationship-oriented

culture.During Ramadan Coca-Cola airs advertisements in the Middle East that focus on family, community, and unity. This demonstrates the importance in collectivist cultures, they have created a personal connection with consumers, and Ramadan campaigns demonstrate a deep understanding of local religious and cultural events.This builds strong emotional relation with the brand.

The last but not the least example is Adidas who has 2 different approaches related to fashion industry in different markets. In China, Adidas is identified as a fashion, lifestyle, and trendy brand, implementing fashion and cultural elements that turn a simple piece of clothing into anextraordinary one. Adidas uses traditional and cultural elements related to clothing design, emphasizing mandarin collars, dragon patterns, while still maintaining the traditional concept of oversized or baggy clothes. This allows people to pay large amounts for their clothes because Adidas took into account the term 'glocalization,' which demonstrates the fact that this concept allows brands to enter different international markets and, moreover, to be able to earn much more money.

CONCLUSIONS

All in all, this research demonstrates that the glocalization process in marketing strategies is not an optional one, but necessary for all companies that want a large and loyal customer base. A simple and purely global approach with the same strategies everywhere will not bring as much success as a glocalized one, where each person is studied and analyzed, what preferences they have, what culture, what unites them and what they fear the most. All these moments are extremely important in creating long-term relationships with consumers because they are the key to a profitable and successful business, and as we know, "the consumer is king" (Kotler)

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