



An Old Question for a New Situation: Adaptation and Standardization in Transnational Brand Strategies. The case of Additional Sales on Amazon.com

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Introduction

Globalization, through deregulation and information technology, more specifically the Internet, has given speed to the way in which not only businesses, but also consumers proceed to cross-border transactions. The Internet has paved the way for electronic commerce, which is, by virtue of its borderless technology, international commerce. Now, smaller companies and the developing world are increasingly a part of this change.

The facility or expanding possibility of deploying cross-border strategies online revives a key question of international marketing. This is a key issue in international marketing management: standardize with a product not completely adjusted to each culture to cut down costs; or adapt to every market with that much more confidence that the product will be welcomed, even though with higher costs.

How would this debate of adaptation or standardization work out online, keeping in mind the boundary-less nature of the Web, and its similar technological infrastructure for all different markets? The fact that the Internet has given rise to electronic commerce (e-commerce) also re-introduces the longstanding question in international marketing management, that being whether to adapt or to standardize.

The objective of this paper is to find out if consumers on the Internet in different national markets behave similarly when they initially purchase a similar product.

The findings of the research should be of considerable use to online companies which decide to go beyond their national borders and should consequently decide between standardization and adaption strategies, or a combination of both. For a given category of product, if national cultural peculiarities influence the purchasing and consumption process of customers, then online companies' international marketing managers should rather consider an adaptation strategy. However, if the common cyberspace of the Internet tends to homogenize consumer behavior in different national markets, then a standardization strategy should be considered by international marketing managers. This aspect of "adaptation or standardization" in online cross-bordering marketing, has not been considered thoroughly, in preceding scholarly research.

Thus, the results will provide some insights into the theoretical and also the practical issue of standardization or adaptation in international marketing management. Research findings might also contribute to a better understanding of the behavior of consumers in different national markets in a context of globalization and information technology, which is believed by some scholars to be that of homogenization. Consequently, both scholars and practitioners might be interested.

In the following pages, we will review the literature of concepts and theories which contribute to the research on hands: international marketing strategies of adaptation and standardization, the impact of online cognitive agent on customer decision process.

After the literature review, we will explain our sampling and research design based on the method of observation of online customers' behavior in different national markets.