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Consumer Choice and Preference of Global versus Local Brands – An Empirical Study

Introduction

Considerable research studies have been conducted on the factors and drivers of global versus local brand preference from values-based, identity-based, utilitarian-based and external influence-based perspectives. However, past literature examined the consumers' drivers and their effects on brand preference in isolation of each other which often results in fragmented and overlapping insights. For marketers, it is very crucial to understand how consumers make this decision regarding the preference for global versus local brands (Özsomer, 2012). Understanding the reasons that underlie such preference is important as it helps companies marking their international marketing and expansion decisions.

A review of past literature has revealed that there is a wide number of theories and research studies that identify the different drivers of global and local brand preference. Most of these theories, however, have looked at the drivers from different perspectives. Some theories are utilitarian-based while others are values-based, identity-based and external influence-based.

Aside from the individual and different perspectives used to study brand preference drivers, past studies also use a wide range of contextual factors to explain the varying magnitudes of consumer brand preference. These factors include the economic development of a country, consumer demographics, product category and disposition towards globalization (Dimofte et al., 2008; Özsomer, 2012; Strizhakova et al., 2011). For instance, according to Batra et al. (2000), consumers in emerging countries are more inclined to purchasing global brands because they enhance their social status and give them access to a highly desirable global consumer segment. Local brands under low involvement categories like food, on the other hand, are more preferred than global brands because they are more in line with local tastes and needs (Özsomer, 2012).

The above have led us to develop the following four research objectives:

1. Identify the drivers that influence general global or local brand preference of Filipino consumers.
2. Identify the marketing-related factors that influence Filipino consumers' global or local brand preference for restaurant chains.
3. Identify differences or similarities between the views of consumers and restaurant practitioners on the drivers and factors that influence global or local brand preference.
4. Offer practical recommendations to marketing practitioners on how to maintain or increase brand preference.

Literature

Globalization has put global brands at the forefront of multinational companies' international business strategies. In the past decades, many companies such as P&G and Unilever have adjusted their strategic plans and pruned their brand portfolios to concentrate on global brands that have stronger growth potential and higher global demand (Schuiling and Kapferer, 2004). Several reasons are offered to justify the move of international companies towards global brands. From the supply side, marketing global brands can yield economies of scale through standardized operations and marketing (Kapferer, 2001) and faster time to market as they do not need to be modified to fit local needs (Neff, 1999). From the demand side, the consistent positioning of global brands creates a stronger global image and brand equity (Kapferer, 1997; Shocker et al. 1994) which result to readymade awareness and demand among consumers.

Brand preference is defined as the extent to which customers favour the attributes of a certain brand over the other brands included in their consideration set (Hellier et al., 2003). It represents consumers' bias (Jalilvand et al., 2015), disposition (Overby and Lee, 2006) and behavioural tendencies (Hellier et al., 2003) towards purchasing a particular brand over another. It is crucial for brands to achieve consumer preference as it does not only motivate brand choice (Aaker, 2011), but it also affects brand loyalty (Rajagopal, 2010) and repeat purchase (Amir and Levav, 2008). In today's highly globalized marketplace, it is very important for companies to understand how consumers make their choice between global and local brands and identify the reasons that drive brand preference (Özsomer, 2012).

Theoretical debate and frameworks on global and local brand preference drivers

Numerous studies in the past have tried to identify the different drivers that influence global or local brand preference. There are studies that offer a values-based framework (Steenkamp and de Jong, 2010) while some merely focus on identity-based drivers (Strizhakova and Coulter, 2014; Xie et al., 2015), or symbolic or utilitarian-based drivers (Halkias et al., 2016). There are also studies that delve deeply into external drivers to understand what influences consumers to prefer global over local brands (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007).

Values-based perspective: Steenkamp and De Jong (2010) proposed a conceptual framework to show how global or local brand preferences are influenced by values, which are cognitive beliefs that serve as guiding principles to consumer attitudes and behavior. In this framework, three levels of values were identified: “national-cultural, general and consumer domain-specific values”. For this research, general and consumer domain-specific values are especially relevant because they both reflect individually-held beliefs of consumers. Ten motivationally distinct general values were identified and organized into four high-order domains: “openness to change, self-transcendence, self-enhancement and conservation”. Consumer domain-specific values, on the other hand, include materialism, innovativeness, nostalgia, ethnocentrism and environmentalism. Each group of values in this framework is argued to have different influences on attitudes towards local and global brands. Power, universalism, stimulation and materialism, on the other hand, are found to be positive drivers of global brand preference. These findings are supported by previous research which suggests that global brands are preferred by consumers because they are powerful symbols of higher status and prestige and therefore enhance self-image (Özsomer, 2012).

Identity-based/symbolic perspective: Another perspective is based on symbolic or identity-expressing capabilities of brands, which according to Guzmán and Paswan (2009) is an important aspect of brands aside from their functional benefits. The theory of consumer-brand identification (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012) which is used to explain global or local brand preference states that what consumers purchase, own or consume will define who they are or who they want to be (Batra et al., 2012) and associate them to a group to which they want to belong (Zhang and Khare, 2009). For instance, consumers who want to be associated to the global community show higher preference to global brands in social prestige (Strizhakova et al., 2008). Consumers who want to be associated with symbols attached to global brands such as achievement, sophistication and modernity (Özsomer, 2012; Xie et al., 2015) prefer global over local brands.

Utilitarian-based perspective: Studies with utilitarian-based perspective say that consumers build preference for global or local brands because of their functional benefits. According to the dual-driver theory of consumer choice (Gardner and Levy, 1955), consumers are motivated by both utilitarian and symbolic motives. The symbolic motives were discussed in

the previous section while the utilitarian motives focus on the functionality, primarily the quality, of brands. While symbolic attributes provide consumers with internally-generated needs for image improvement, group belongingness and role identification (Park et al., 1996), utilitarian attributes solve an “externally-generated consumption problem” (Chimboza and Muntandwa, 2007). Using a utilitarian-based perspective, global brands are said to be preferred over local brands because of higher perceived quality (Halkias et al., 2016; Holt et al., 2004), reduced risk and greater credibility (Winit et al., 2014). Local brands, on the other hand, are preferred by some consumers due to the perception that their quality is adapted to specific local tastes and preferences (Xie, et al., 2015).

External influence-based perspective: While most studies on global and local brand preference drivers focus on personal values, utilitarian motives and symbolic motives, recent literature has revealed that other social and external elements also have impacts on consumers’ attitudes towards brands. Two studies, particularly by Lysonski et al. (2015) and Cleveland and Laroche (2007) have looked into these external drivers which include global mass media, global travels, interactions with people from other countries, exposure to marketing activities of global companies and influence of reference groups. The extent of exposure of consumers to external influences do not only affect their values but also change the way they view things and raise their consciousness about brands, current lifestyles and consumer preferences (Lysonski et al., 2015).

Are global brands preferred over local brands?

Considerable amount of past studies have tried to examine whether consumers prefer global or local brands using the internal and external drivers as basis for their arguments. Some studies report that consumers have higher preference for global brands because of their perceived brand superiority and stronger equity (Batra et al., 2000; Steenkamp et al., 2003) while others argue that consumers do not have universal, unconditional or intrinsic preference for global brands (Riefler, 2012; De Mooij, 1998; Swaminathan et al., 2007). These conflicting ideas show that consumers' reactions to global or local brands is diverse and is more complicated than is commonly expected (Van Ittersum and Wong, 2010). The debates on whether consumers prefer global or local brands has led other authors to propose that brand preference and its magnitude depend on many contextual factors including: 1) country's level of economic development (Özsomer, 2012); 2) consumer demographics (Sengupta, 2014); 3) consumers' attitudes towards globalization (Bartsch et al., 2016); and, 4) product category (Özsomer 2012). There is a variety of evidence from previous studies which explain how these contextual factors affect brand preference.

Given the insight that global or local brand preference depends on many contextual factors, it is important for companies to look at the intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting preference for specific product categories (Ismail et al., 2012). Grimm (2005) contends that category-specific attributes have the greatest impact on brand preference regardless of the motivational drivers of consumers. The focus of this research is directed at food and beverage industry and specifically on restaurant chains. We identified eight marketing-related factors that we believe they affect brand preference for global or local restaurant chains: *quality, price, brand name, customer service, ambience, country-of-origin, location* and *cuisine/s offered*.

Methodology

A total of 150 respondents qualified for the survey out of the 202 people that were conveniently selected from 16 cities and 31 barangays/villages in Metro Manila. A qualified respondent should regularly eat at a restaurant chain at least once a month. Of the 202

selected subjects, six did not qualify while 46 refused to participate. There is almost an equal split of respondents between gender and age groups as shown in appendix. Of the 150 qualified respondents, 47% are 18-35 years old while 53% are 36 years old or above. Males account for 52% of the total sample while females account for 48%. More than half, or 52%, of the total base eat in restaurant chains twice a month while another huge proportion of 43% eat out once a week. Structured questionnaire was used for the quantitative data collection phase, while a semi-structured interviewing guide was used for the qualitative phase.

The main body of the questionnaire was divided into five parts. The first part asks respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements that pertain to global or local brand preference drivers. The second part asks respondents to rate their level of familiarity with global or local restaurant brands in Metro Manila, Philippines. The third section was designed to measure the level of preference of respondents for global and local restaurant brands. This was followed by the fourth section that asks respondents to rate the level of importance of marketing-related factors influencing brand preference for restaurants. The last section gathered demographics data and purchase behaviour of respondents.

Discussion

The findings from the research provide empirical evidence that all of the global brand preference drivers stated in past literature have indeed significant impact on Filipino consumers' preference for global brands. Results, however, suggest that these drivers are multicollinear, which means that they are highly correlated with each other, and no single driver offers a unique effect on global brand preference. Although the drivers cannot be treated separately to explain brand preference, the factor analysis revealed that they can be formed into three distinct groups to offer a significant unique effect on brand preference. The first two groups were found to have positive effects on global brand preference while the third group was found to have positive effects on local brand preference. The most salient finding from the factor analysis (see analysis in the Appendices) is that the two groups of drivers with positive effects on global brand preference were composed of a combination of internal and external drivers. This supports the earlier argument of the researcher that brand preference drivers should not be treated in isolation and that brand preference is influenced not just by a single driver but by a combination of values-based, identity-based, utilitarian-based and external influence-based drivers.

The first group of global brand preference drivers, named **security and image enhancement drivers**, includes *perceived higher quality and low risk, social prestige, modernity, materialism* and *global mass media exposure*. This group, when tested using regression analysis, turned out to have the highest significant effect on global brand preference at $\beta = .45$, $t(148) = 7.44$, $p = .000$, $R^2 = .48$. This finding empirically supports past literature in five ways. First, the combination of the drivers in the *security and image enhancement* group validates the dual-driver theory of consumer choice by Gardner and Levy (1955) which states that consumers' preferences and choices are motivated by both utilitarian and symbolic motives. In this first group of drivers, *perceived higher quality and low risk* addresses the utilitarian needs, or externally-generated consumption problems of consumers (Chimboza and Muntandwa, 2007), while the rest of the drivers fulfil consumers' symbolic motives and internally-generated needs for self-image enhancement (Park et al., 1996). This finding is also consistent with the values-based model of Schwartz (1992), which posits that self-image enhancement, which is one of the four high-order values domains, has a significant influence on global brand preference.

Second, findings support the works of Özsoy (2012), Swoboda et al. (2012) and Dimofte et al. (2010) that show that *perceived higher quality* is the most important driver of global brand preference. Although the research findings did not show that this driver can, on its own, influence global brand preference, results showed that together *with social prestige, modernity, materialism and global mass media exposure*, it can have the most significant effect on global brand preference. Third, according to Holt et al. (2004), Steenkamp et al. (2003), and Batra et al. (2000), the second most influential driver next to *perceived higher quality*, is *social prestige*. Findings of this study showed that *social prestige* and *quality* both belong to the group with the highest impact on global brand preference.

Fourth, the inclusion of *modernity* and *materialism* also validates previous findings that countries characterized by lower levels of economic development, high income disparities and high status mobility, such as the Philippines, prefer global brands for their strong symbolic and image-enhancing capabilities (Batra et al., 2000; Alden et al., 2006). As global brands are often associated with symbols of success, achievement and affluence, Filipino consumers that are high on *materialism* and want to showcase their improved status and higher purchasing power tend to prefer global brands. This provides empirical support to the findings of Holton (2000) and Lysonski et al. (2015) and the values model of Steenkamp and de Jong (2010). Another important insight that supports the study of Steenkamp et al. (1999) is that consumption of global brands is usually associated with modern consumers who place high importance on new consumption experiences. Considering that the demographic makeup of the Philippines is composed mainly of younger consumers, it is not surprising that this segment would prefer global brands than old local brands.

Lastly, the combination of drivers in the first group emphasizes the importance of external influences such as *mass media* in driving more favourable attitudes towards global brands. This is in line with the studies of Cleveland and Laroche (2007) and Lysonski et al. (2015) that assert that the extent of consumers' exposure to external influences, such as mass media, greatly affects their perceptions and consciousness about brands and exposes them to current lifestyles and consumption trends. This is one possible reason why global brands that have relatively bigger advertising budgets generate higher preference from some consumers.

The second group of global brand preference drivers, **social acceptance**, is also composed of both internal and external drivers that have strong associations with reference groups: whether it be admiration for and desire for belongingness to a superior reference group (*desire to emulate a global consumer culture, admiration for economically-developed countries, cosmopolitanism*), to projection of an enhanced self-image to a reference group (*wealth expression, identity expressiveness, trend conformity, social responsibility*) and to being influenced by certain reference groups (*social interactions, susceptibility to normative influence, exposure to international marketing activities*). These drivers, taken collectively, can significantly affect global brand preference at $\beta=.41$, $t(148)=6.85$, $p=.000$, $R^2=.48$ next to *security and image enhancement* drivers.

The combination of drivers in the second group validates previous findings that consumers in emerging countries develop strong aspirations for global brands because they help them identify with the globalized world and with reference groups that they use as standards of self-appraisal and acceptance (Steenkamp and de Jong, 2010; Guo, 2013; Batra et al., 2000). This finding clearly reflects that the "consumer-brand identification" theory of Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) applies to Filipino consumers.

The last group, named **local identity**, is composed of local brand preference drivers. However, for this group, only *local pride* and *local consumption orientation* showed significant positive relationships with local brand preference. This finding attests that Filipino consumers' preference for local brands is driven by the brands' ability to adapt to the local needs and tastes of the market and their ability to inspire a sense of local pride. This supports the findings of previous research that consumers prefer local brands because they have deeper understanding of local market needs and preferences (Xie et al., 2015; Dimofte et al., 2008) and they are associated with symbols of localness, uniqueness and national identification which lead to closer relationships and pride among local consumers (Özsomer, 2012; Steenkamp et al., 2003; Ger, 1999).

On the other hand, *ethnocentrism*, or the belief that purchasing global brands is morally incorrect, unpatriotic and damaging to the local economy (Steenkamp and de Jong, 2010), together with *preservation of culture*, did not prove to be significantly correlated with local brand preference. This contradicts the results of a study conducted by Klein et al. (2006) that shows that *ethnocentrism* is a strong driver of local brand preference. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2011) and Cleveland et al. (2009), however, contend that consumers have different levels of *ethnocentrism*. Consumers with higher levels of *ethnocentrism* show higher preference for local brands.

Results of the study show that when it comes to restaurant chains, Filipinos put the most importance on **quality, customer service** and **ambience**. *Price* and *location* are secondary while the least important factors are *brand name, cuisine/s offered* and *country-of-origin*.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The main conclusion drawn from this research is that a single driver cannot influence global or local brand preference. Instead, brand preference is influenced by a combination of values, symbolic motives, utilitarian motives and external influencers. These drivers, as presented in this paper, can be grouped into three: *security and image enhancement drivers, social acceptance drivers* and *local identity drivers*. The first two groups have positive influence on global brand preference while the last one has positive influence on local brand preference. Global brand preference is influenced the most by a combination of *security and image enhancement drivers* which include *perceived higher quality and low risk, social prestige, modernity, materialism* and *global mass media exposure*. These drivers, according to past literature, are based on values, symbolic and utilitarian motives, that when combined, result in the strongest effect on global brand preference.

The second group of drivers influencing global brand preference is composed mostly of drivers associated with wanting to make an impression on, following the lifestyles and recommendations of and desiring to be part of a superior reference group. These drivers include *wealth expression, identity expressiveness, trend conformity, social responsibility, desire to emulate a global consumer culture, admiration for economically-developed countries, cosmopolitanism, social interactions, susceptibility to normative influence* and *exposure to international marketing activities*.

The last group of drivers are those that influence local brand preference. The study revealed that although *ethnocentrism* is a well-studied driver of local brand preference, it does not apply to Filipino consumers. This is the same with *preservation of culture*. Instead, *local consumption orientation* or local brands' ability to adapt to local needs, and *local pride* are the two drivers influencing consumers' preference towards local brands.

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Appendices

		TOP BOX LOCAL BRAND PREFERRERS			TOP BOX GLOBAL BRAND PREFERRERS
1	Ambience	93%	1	Customer service	87%
2	Customer service	86%	2	Location	86%
3	Quality	86%	3	Quality	84%
4	Location	63%	4	Price	81%
5	Price	63%	5	Ambience	76%
6	Brand name	32%	6	Brand name	52%
7	Cuisine/s offered	32%	7	Cuisine/s offered	37%
8	Country-of-origin	21%	8	Country-of-origin	35%

Marketing-related factors for global brand preferrers versus local brand preferrers

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
		Component		
		1	2	3
SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE	Desire to emulate global consumer culture	.905		
	Social interactions	.887		
	Cosmopolitanism	.877		
	Wealth expression	.832		
	Susceptibility to normative influence	.831		
	Admiration for economically-developed countries	.807	.500	
	Identity-expressiveness	.801		
	Exposure to international marketing activities	.787	.517	
	Social responsibility	.781		
	Trend conformity	.779		
	Ethnocentrism	.674		.519
SECURITY AND IMAGE-ENHANCEMENT	Modernity		.820	
	Global mass media exposure		.775	
	Perceived higher quality and low risk		.767	
	Social prestige	.593	.709	
	Materialism	.544	.705	
LOCAL IDENTITY	Local consumption orientation			.916
	Local pride			.881
	Preservation of culture			.678

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

CORRELATIONS		
N=150		Global Brand Preference
Trend conformity	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.679** .000
Admiration for economically-developed countries	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.626** .000
Identity-expressiveness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.623** .000
Social responsibility	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.598** .000
Desire to emulate global consumer culture	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.575** .000
Materialism	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.575** .000
Susceptibility to normative influence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.572** .000
Wealth expression	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.562** .000
Exposure to international marketing activities	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.557** .000
Global mass media exposure	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.537** .000
Social interactions	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.516** .000
Cosmopolitanism	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.505** .000
Social prestige	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.479** .000
Modernity	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.476** .000
Perceived higher quality and low risk	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.369** .000
Local pride	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.423** .000
Local consumption orientation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.363** .000
Preservation of culture	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.044 .591
Ethnocentrism	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.031 .705

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression analysis model

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.691 ^a	.477	.467	1.36998	1.684

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Acceptance, Security and Image Enhancement and Local Identity

b. Dependent Variable: Global brand preference

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	250.273	3	83.424	44.449	.000 ^b
	Residual	274.020	146	1.877		
	Total	524.293	149			

a. Dependent Variable: Global brand preference

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Acceptance, Security and Image Enhancement and Local Identity

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.107	.112		36.713	.000		
	Social Acceptance	.769	.112	.410	6.855	.000	1.000	1.000
	Security and Image Enhancement	.835	.112	.445	7.443	.000	1.000	1.000
	Local Identity	-.625	.112	-.333	-5.564	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Global brand preference