

International Advertising Strategy

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Strategy is the path to satisfy objectives. When considering advertising strategy, we often refer to creative strategy and those accompanying tactics designed to implement the strategy to satisfy marketing communication objectives. Frazer (1983) states that creative strategy is “a policy or guiding principle that specifies the general nature and character of messages to be designed. Strategy states the means selected to achieve the desired audience effect over the term of the campaign” (p. 36).

International advertising strategy is more challenging to define because of its complexity. References to international advertising strategy typically refer to creative strategy decisions a company makes when it considers expanding to new markets. Different markets present different challenges. The need to better understand the appropriate approach has exploded with multinational brands expanding into new emerging markets, which are often culturally distant from the home market. Rapid consolidation of marketing communication firms and advancements in communication technologies further underscore the need for greater insights. Understanding when and how an advertising strategy can transcend borders is central to the success of any campaign. This decision depends on whether the advertising strategy and its tactics are able to be standardized or require some degree of specialization for effectiveness.

Multinational firms are “the keystone of our global economy” (Mueller, 2011, p. 1). These companies must know how to communicate their brands with effective advertising strategy. Practitioners and academics have been studying this issue, and while much progress has been made in the process, much work is yet to be done. Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) summarize the status of international advertising strategy research by stating: “Advertising standardization and adaptation clearly remains an interesting area with much potential for further research but it is important that researchers take stock of what has already been found and develop the literature into

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new areas” (p. 392). There should be a sense of urgency to press forward instead of continuing to rehash old debates. Advertising itself is changing globally. With the evolution of social media, new formats of existing channels, and shifts in consumer preferences and behaviors, you might even wonder whether the right questions are being asked. In this period of rapid technological, socioeconomic, and political transformations, it is important to gain a sense of where we have been and to chart new pathways of explorations that keep pace and remain relevant in the changing global landscape.

A Polarizing Debate: Standardization versus Adaptation

Nearly one hundred years of academic and practitioner examination has been dedicated to “the great debate” of standardization versus adaptation of advertising strategy to market entry. Ryans, Griffith, and Jain (2008) state: “Specifically, in 1923, Brown at Goodyear emphasized that humans everywhere are the same and therefore that standardization should work. During that same period, Propson (1923) from Bausch & Lomb emphasized that local market differences call for advertising adaptation” (p. 281). This debate has received considerable attention in academic research for many years. More recently, Fastoso and Whitelock (2007) did a search on EBSCO host and Proquest databases and yielded more than 300 articles on the topic in terms of appearance in a marketing context, with 33 found to be directly related to international advertising standardization. Even with this much attention, theoretical progress in the field has been limited, due to reasons which will be discussed later. However, three schools of thought have emerged in the literature discussion: standardization, adaptation, and the contingency perspective (Agrawal, 1995).

The standardized school

Supporters of standardization feel strategy considerations that focus on similarities should be sufficient. The benefits of standardization, such as cost reductions through economies of scale, as well as centralized planning and implementation, benefit international brands (e.g., Fatt, 1967; Levitt, 1983). This marketing strategy was popularized by Fatt’s (1967) belief that humans have common traits regardless of location. One of the most profound statements supporting standardization came from Theodore Levitt (1983) in his essay published in the *Harvard Business Review*. Levitt’s essay focused on the globalization of markets, the multinational corporation, and “a new commercial reality – the emergence of global markets for standardized consumer products on a previously unimagined scale” (Levitt, 1983, p. 2). Levitt states that marketers should begin viewing the world as small standardized markets rather than large customized markets.

In the 1990s and beyond, many researchers endorsed the standardized school of thought. For example, Onkvisit and Shaw (1990) support a view that the homogeneity of markets drives standardization strategies. Global advertising is typically viewed from the standardized perspective (e.g., Harris, 1994; Karande,

Almurshidee, & Al-Olayan, 2006; Okazaki, Taylor, & Zou, 2006; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1999). The standardized approach typically happens in one of two ways: the adoption of a current domestic campaign or a coordinated effort to develop one campaign applicable to multiple markets (Mueller, 2011). Many advertising and marketing executives find value in the standardized approach because it simplifies the planning process and campaigns are implemented at a faster pace.

In *Dynamics of International Advertising*, advertising scholar Barbra Mueller (2011) states that certain products have characteristics that make them more suitable for the standardized advertising approach – products for which audiences are essentially similar, such as appeals to global youth and cross-border consumer segments. These types of groups can be homogeneous. Products that can be promoted via image campaign may be well suited for standardization. “The creative strategy used to sell these products is based on the development of a strong, memorable identity for the brand through image advertising” (Belch & Belch, 2012, p. 284). Again, products such as soft drinks, liquor, perfumes, clothing, toothpaste, and so on tend to have homogenous groups. The rapid growth of high-tech products such as televisions and computers with low cultural affiliation lend themselves to standardized advertising strategies. On the other hand, products directly associated with a nationalistic flavor are also ripe for standardized advertising consideration. Finally, products with strong country-of-origin appeal, such as Swiss watches, French wines, or Japanese cars, all lend themselves well to a standardized approach.

The adaptation school

Considering the marketing mix, advertising is one of the most difficult elements to standardize (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004; Mueller, 2011). Some authors claim that the globalization argument for standardizing advertising strategy is simply incorrect. “The controversy over globalization and its implications for strategies of multinational enterprises (MNEs) would disappear if the authors would look at the evidence. Both aggregate data and firm-level data indicate that globalization is myth however defined” (Rugman, 2003, p. 409). Proponents of the adaptation school of thought argue that ignorance of elements such as the culture, economy, media choice, and/or legal issues in an overseas market may cause serious brand issues and losses. Lindsey (1964) stated:

With such glaring cultural, economic, and linguistic differences, it cannot be too strongly urged that any foreigner who wants to advertise in Mexico should obtain the services of a local advertising agency and under no circumstances try to handle his business from abroad. (p. 257)

A fully specialized campaign should focus on localizing every tactic supporting the advertising strategy to ensure that each element of the campaign is culturally appropriate.

There simply is a discrepancy when interpreting the value received from standardizing. Greg Harris states that “one cannot prove in any scientific way ... the specific

contribution that advertising integration has made to the international sales performance of brands” (Harris, 1984, p. 223), supporting the idea that standardized brands could have been more profitable by specializing instead of standardizing strategy. While there are data supporting the use of a fully specialized campaign, much of the research from academics and practitioners alike points to a balanced or contingency approach.

The argument for global brand building with standardization has presented mixed results (Fastoso & Whitelock, 2007). Differences in market environments serve to support the specialization advertising strategy. Political, legal, and regulatory environments and their related issues all vary from country to country. Each environmental element poses a threat to any standardized advertising strategy approach (Mueller, 2011). Countries have different regulations in terms of the appropriateness of messages for particular audiences and specific product content, such as pharmaceutical advertising; or on general advertising, such as no comparative advertising. Differences in media habits and advertisers’ access to media may strongly differ when comparing different market environments. Additionally, product life cycles, cultural customs, consumption patterns, brand names, and message appropriateness may differ greatly between regional markets. Even access to reliable research tools upon which to base sound strategic advertising decision making may vary. Any one or a combination of these factors may challenge the utilization of a truly standardized advertising strategy.

The compromise school/contingency perspective

The compromise school focuses on an approach where the practitioner determines that whole adoption of either of the previously mentioned perspectives is not effective or even realistic. Holding the extreme view of either school has been rejected soundly by numerous studies in the marketing literature (e.g., Boddewyn, Soehl, & Picard, 1986; Choi & Jarboe, 1996; Douglas & Wind, 1987; Hennessey, 2001; Kim & Mauborgne, 1987; Main, 1989; Prahalad & Doz, 1986; Sorenson & Wiechmann, 1975; Terpstra & Sarathy, 1997; van Raij, 1997; Vrontis, 2003; Vrontis & Papasolomou, 2005). Mueller (2011) stated:

Many companies have moved away from viewing standardization as an all-or-nothing phenomenon and instead have chosen to employ a modified approach – standardizing some elements of their promotional plan while specializing others. The question is, in fact, one of degree, with standardization and specialization at opposite ends of a continuum, and with many shades of adaptation between the two extremes. (p. 190)

Similarly, Soberg (2002) noticed that the strategy decision issue is decided based on organizational variables such as market knowledge and managerial centralization. Onkvisit and Shaw (1990) find the degree of difference between standardization and adaptation more realistic. Link (1988) states that most companies can be placed on a global continuum of international advertising strategy rather than an “all or nothing” position.

The contingency perspective is a variation of the compromise school. Supporters of this perspective (e.g., Grein & Gould, 1996; Harvey, 1993; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997) suggest that international advertising strategy decisions need to be assessed within and outside the firm. The contingency perspective gives special attention to three particular variables: product-related factors, consumer segments, and organizational factors (Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004). Product-related factors have been supported as being one of the most important factors when considering standardization. Product categories such as consumer durable, non-durable, and industrial have been studied, with industrial goods having the highest level of marketing standardization (Boddewyn, Soehl, & Picard, 1986). Tai (1997) found eight out of 10 advertising decisions relate to a product's category.

While consumer segments are central to this chapter on international advertising strategy, market segments also play a pivotal role in the contingency perspective. The homogeneity of markets (supporting the standardized approach) or heterogeneity of markets (supporting the adaptation approach) is examined. Organizational factors such as the level of centralized control of advertising management also impact the degree of standardization. Kirpalani, Laroche, and Darmon (1988) found a relationship between headquarter control and how much advertising strategy was standardized, with country of origin also having an impact.

The perspective of this middle ground between the two ends of the standardization and adaptation continuum can be summed up in two words – *it depends*. However, exactly *what it depends on* requires a complex examination of numerous environmental factors.

The “great debate,” historically speaking

This chapter does not attempt to capture the full breadth of history or go into great depth on specific studies involved in the history of international advertising strategy. Much of the research on international advertising strategy appears to be mainly situational and descriptive (Soberg, 2002). Because of this limitation, the field of study is still quite fragmented. That said, a general historical review does provide a context for examining the current trends in the literature, which leads to recommendations and directions for future research.

Agrawal (1995) produced a seminal study citing the history of the international advertising strategy argument. Comparing practitioners (i.e., agencies and clients) and academician perspectives over 40 years, the study found some variation in the debate when comparing the literature by decade.

According to Agrawal (1995), the 1950s found support for adaptation from both practitioners and academicians. However, this approach could have been the product of low familiarity with international markets and the prevalence of local advertisers. Misunderstandings in communication due to copy problems and language barriers became major issues for discussion. Also, discussion focused on “customs and mores” appeared (see Pratt, 1956, p. 172, for detail).

Agrawal (1995) refers to the 1960s as the “decade of confusion” (p. 29). During that time, academics were shifting to more of a contingency approach, while practitioners were moving toward standardized strategies. Information from academic literature supports the need for a contingency approach, which should be more flexible based on the assessed situation. Situational factors include market characteristics, product life cycle stages, competition, media, government restrictions, trade codes, ethical behavior, and corporate organization (e.g., Buzzell, 1968; Miracle, 1968). However, the practitioners saw the argument as more of a discussion of the degree of standardization. They felt that as technology and travel improved, standardization would be more common. Agencies and clients such as BMW and Goodyear began running more standardized campaigns, which yielded success.

The 1970s brought a change to international advertising strategy, with practitioners moving back to advocating an adaptation approach. Academics were exploring both adaptation and contingency approaches. Agencies were concerned that standardization was oversimplifying differences in markets, as well as the fact that consumers were beginning to search for more differentiation in their consumption experiences (see Sutton, 1974, in Agrawal, 1995). Still, clients such as Unilever were found to save money using the standardized strategy approach. Academics again supported the adaptation and contingency approaches. Britt (1974) argued that consumption, psychological characteristics, and culture should be investigated in each market for each product. In this decade, academic models of international advertising strategy began to be created to assess various attributes (Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2008).

Agrawal (1995) found no evidence in the 1980s to attribute a particular approach to the practitioners’ international advertising strategy, even though there was an increase in standardized advertising among multinationals (Jain, 1990). Statement evidence supports agencies discussing the standardized approach by citing economies of scale, increased ability to travel, and communication technologies as major reasons. However, Hite and Fraser (1988) found that 54% of US multinational corporations were implementing contingency strategies, with 37% of firms utilizing localized strategies; only 9% were standardized. On the other hand, academics began to explore this argument more deeply, with comparative studies of content and literature reviews appearing on the topic. Studies supporting a localized approach were conducted that found content differences in terms of emotional and informational cues, value appeals, and other culture-bound influences (e.g., Hong, Muderrisoglu, & Zinkhan 1987; Madden, Caballero, & Matsukubo, 1986; Mueller, 1987; Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1990; Rice & Lu, 1988). Other literature reviews published during the 1980s (e.g., Onkvisit & Shaw, 1985, 1987; Walters, 1986) found that international advertising strategy “was situation-specific and that the real issue was *to what extent and under what conditions* should standardized advertising be used” (Agrawal, 1995, p. 41).

Agrawal’s historical review culminates with the following statement, which is particularly relevant to this chapter’s focus. He states that the answer is the balance of theory and practice: “While the practical approach of standardization may contradict the theoretical findings pointing to adaptation, the practical approach can actually be made more effective if theory can determine when and to what extent standardization should be used” (p. 43).

Other historical perspectives are found in the international advertising strategy literature. For example, Ryans, Griffith, and Jain (2008) examined this debate with a stage theory approach, which supports the historical foundation of advertising standardization as moving through three evolutionary stages: practitioner, scholarly, and conceptual and empirical refinement. The practitioner evolution found support in trade publications and scholarly outlets for both adaptation and standardization, but support “was primarily anecdotal” (p. 282). The foundation of the scholarship stage appeared in a doctoral dissertation by Donnelly in 1968, providing the first empirical work on the topic. This stage provides an understanding of the different factors impacting advertising strategy decision making. Still, the scholarship stage lacked organization for providing a framework for synthesizing findings. The conceptual and empirical refinement stage is where the decision of international advertising strategy continues to hinder further advancement in the field. Ryans *et al.* (2008) express their opinion that advertising standardization still lacks a universally accepted conceptual definition, and theory building has also suffered from lack of consensus about what constitutes advertising effectiveness. Additionally, an abundance of differing applications of statistical methods, sample frames, and research constructs has severely hindered theory production.

Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) found support for these same stages through their thorough review of the literature of arguments that have been proposed by academics (Agrawal, 1995; Britt, 1974; Buzzell, 1968; Pae, Samicee, & Tai, 2002; Sheth, 1978) and practitioners (Elinder, 1965; Fatt, 1967; Killough, 1978), as well as researched empirically (Duncan & Ramaprasad, 1995; Griffith, Chandra, & Ryans, 2003; Harris, 1986; Miracle, 1984; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997). Still, with much effort focused on this question, there appears to be no dominant or consensual model to guide the advertising strategy decision-making process.

Identifying previous models

Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) did a critical review of six proposed models in standardization/adaptation literature spanning 30 years. Their research found a general lack of acknowledgment of former models. In other words, new models were proposed without acknowledgment of previous models, thus suspending growth and testing of any one model. Only one model in the study (Harvey's model, 1993) included factors from another model (Britt, 1974). Their study also found many of the models suffered from a lack of empirical testing, application, and consumer orientation. Further, their study identified a common problem found in many studies: “a review of standardization followed by a review of adaptation and concluding that a middle way is best which has not allowed literature to move on from this point” (p. 391). For this reason, a review of some of these earlier models from the last several decades may be helpful in framing the need for further model testing and theory building, which will be discussed later.

Britt (1974) proposed “Organization of Criteria for Evaluating Advertising.” This model proposed criteria for evaluating advertising based on three main categories: consumption, psychosocial, and general cultural. Using simple yes/no answers, this

model was the earliest to guide a practitioner through the “standardize or adapt” choice. Britt (1974) cites a lack of weighting of criteria as a limitation as well as the difficulty in obtaining the necessary information needed to answer his questions.

Sheth (1978) contributed a consumer-oriented model for transferring advertising to different countries. This practitioner flowchart gives characteristics to be evaluated and applied to each country of entry. Decisions are based on three main areas: expected benefits consumers expect, the mechanics of communication (media choices, legal issues, and perceptions of advertising), and the interpreted meaning from the culture. By deciding if the countries are the same or different, the practitioner has one of eight strategy decisions to make, ranging from complete standardization to complete adaptation.

Jain (1989) produced “A Framework for Determining Marketing Program Standardization.” His model focused on how target market, market position, nature of the product, environmental and organizational factors, as well as market performance, impact the international advertising strategy decision. Jain’s approach is unique in the literature because he presents advertising as part of the total marketing program and marketing program elements’ impact on the degree of advertising standardization.

Harvey (1993) proposed a “Descriptive Model to Determine Degree of Standardization/Localization of Advertising.” This model is based on six variables: product, competition, organization experience/control, infrastructure, government, and culture. It recognizes advertising as a complicated process by identifying stages of development and execution: research and development, creative, media, production, and post-advertising research. The model uses 34 questions across six variables to assess international advertising strategy decisions. Krolkowska and Kuenzel note that Harvey’s (1993) model is similar to Britt (1974), but point out that it is more developed due to its quantitative elements and attention to the various stages of the advertising process.

Grein and Gould (1996) proposed a concept called “Globally Integrated Marketing Communications.” Their contingency model approach investigates and provides guidance to advertising strategy standardization within an integrated marketing communication framework. Their framework takes into account country and promotional discipline factors impacting global communication strategy decisions. Factors such as market position, promotion mix, advertising, and public relations are incorporated.

Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) presented a conceptual framework in their article titled “Standardisation versus adaptation of international advertising strategies: Towards a framework.” Their framework presents the strategy decision in a continuum with three influencing areas. The first influencing area consists of local environmental determinants such as cultural environment, economic and legal conditions, competition, advertising infrastructure, profile of consumers, and country-of-origin image. The second consists of the firm’s environmental determinants such as managerial and financial characteristics, as well as the nature of the product. The third area is composed of the intrinsic determinants such as advertising objectives, relationships between multinational advertiser and agency, creative strategy, media strategy, as

well as other communication mix elements and support activities. To Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008), the model is well balanced in literature but difficult to apply, “concentrating on thoroughness in developing a comprehensive framework of factors, rather than on providing a working model for managers” (p. 388).

Zou and Cavusgil (2002) proposed the “Global Market Strategy” (GMS) as a framework for integrating three diverse perspectives prevalent in marketing literature: the standardization perspective, the configuration/coordination perspective, and the integration perspective. The standardization perspective is seen if a multinational company has a global perspective and standardizes product and promotional campaigns across markets (e.g., Jain, 1989; Samiee & Roth, 1992). The configuration/coordination perspective “considers global marketing as the means to exploit the interdependencies between different country markets as well as the comparative advantages associated with various countries” (p. 60). The integration perspective mandates multinational corporations to employ worldwide resources and integrate across national boundaries. The GMS theory has its foundation in the integration of industrial organization (IO) theory (e.g., Bain, 1956; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1991; Collis, 1991; Scherer & Ross, 1990), with drivers derived from the resourced-based view (RBV) (e.g., Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

Vrontis (2003) produced the “Vrontis Triangular Pyramid of AdaptStand Integration.” This model was designed for marketing managers to help with determining the level of advertising strategy integration. The model is based on three factors to guide decision making: external environmental constraints, desirability/capability of the company adopting global benefits, and organizational/operational factors, each modeled individually leading to the strategy decision. While this model is complex, its demonstrated application has been documented further (Vrontis & Sharp, 2003; Vrontis, Thrassou, & Lamprianou, 2009).

Major Themes and Trends

With over five decades dedicated to significantly researching international advertising strategy, many researchers have begun looking at the big picture to determine where the field is now and where it is heading (and should be heading). Recent thorough literature reviews (e.g., Fastoso & Whitelock, 2007; Melewar & Vemmervik, 2004; Royne Stafford, 2005; Taylor & Johnson, 2002; Waheeduzzaman & Dube, 2004) and empirical studies (Griffith *et al.*, 2003; Samiee, Jeong, Pae, & Tai, 2003; Taylor & Okazaki, 2006) support the notion that researchers are still uncovering the characteristics of the great debate. Because the large body of international advertising strategy is fragmented and onerous in terms of breadth and depth, scholars have begun to reexamine the stream of themes in an effort to acquire further knowledge. Reviewing some of these recent studies will assist in identify some major trends, as well as indicate some fruitful areas for future research.

Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) offer a critique of the literature from the practitioner’s point of view. They focus on the application of academicians’ work on real standardization decisions in international advertising strategy. First, the authors note that

the term “standardization” is defined weakly in the literature, because of differing references to the term. Second, they observe that the literature too often takes extreme positions without recognizing the merits of the opposite approach. These extreme positions take the argument to a polarizing position and are not applicable for the practitioner. Third, the compromise school is not well defined and strategy models are too complex to be useful. There are simply too many variables to consider, with the relative importance of each variable unknown. Fourth, comparing survey data on international advertising strategy in the literature is problematic. The challenge of navigating differences in definitions, companies, countries, products, and statistical methods is daunting. Finally, the authors find no value-creating foundation for the decision to standardize or adapt international advertising strategy. In other words, models should provide the estimation or difference in value created by choosing one strategy over the other and not simply the factors that influence the decision to standardize.

Fastoso and Whitelock (2007) approached the standardization versus adaptation debate by analyzing research patterns of data from an international advertising manager perspective. They content-analyzed 33 academic studies. First, they found a general disagreement in terms of the concept definition of advertising standardization. Since this question has been “addressed in various ways,” they think that “there is reason to believe that the contribution of some of these studies to the body of knowledge has remained questionable” (p. 597). The authors also reported a shift from the global perspective to more of a regional focus. Second, the relationship between international advertising strategy and company performance was rarely discovered. Only two studies focused on performance issues. The authors suggest that more studies should take this approach to frame what they would consider “good practice” (e.g., Harris, 1994; Harris & Attour, 2003). Third, the international advertising strategy decision-making process research is still in its early stage of development. The authors criticize the fact that,

past process standardization research may have been one-sided in the sense that it only analyzed the process of decision making and the locus of control (HQ vs subsidiary) for such decisions while leaving the process of decision implementation out of consideration. (p. 599)

Vrontis *et al.* (2009) explored multinational companies on a linear continuum, measuring overall attitude toward standardization/adaptation. Their study focused not only on advertising but on all marketing mix elements and utilized the AdaptStand model for measurement. Their aim was to “investigate the complex relationship of the two extreme approaches (adaptation and standardisation) and to evaluate the relative degree of significance of the marketing reasons pulling toward either direction” (p. 482). Their sample consisted of 372 completed surveys from the largest 1,000 UK-based multinational companies across five industry sectors (i.e., manufacturing, services, transportation and communication, construction and retail, and wholesale). Respondents reported their behavior in international markets and reasons for their associated behavior, combining the Rasch model (1960/1980) with structural

equation modeling. Their contribution to the existing literature is highlighted in their own words as follows:

In line with the empirical and statistical evidence, this research presented, further developed and elaborated on Vrontis' (2003) AdaptStand approach (AdaptStand refers to companies' behaviour at a tactical level), which advises companies to standardise tactics where possible and adapt them only where necessary. This is different from the glocalisation term (glocalisation refers to both strategy and tactics), which refers to the organisation that is willing and able to think globally (standardise at a strategic level) and act locally (adapt at a tactical level) to meet the requirements of different nations and cultures. (Vrontis *et al.*, 2009, p. 491)

Vrontis *et al.*'s (2009) study not only adds to the field's understanding of multinationals' tactical behavior regarding international marketing strategy, but also is one of the few studies testing a strategy model. Ko, Kim, Taylor, Kim, and Kang (2007) applied the GMS model to examine cross-national market segmentation in the fashion industry. When presenting a broad conceptualization of global advertising as well as a theoretical foundation for international advertising within the context of GMS, Zou and Volz (2010) reported:

Similar to GMS theory, the proposed theoretical model of global advertising is founded on an integration of industrial organisation (IO) theory, whereas the internal organisational attributes as drivers of an MNC's global advertising are derived from the RBV. Essentially, the proposed theoretical model of global advertising is founded on the principle of fit: when an MNC's global advertising fits its external industry characteristics and its internal organisational attributes, its global brand performance is enhanced. (p. 68)

Fastoso and Whitelock (2010) conducted a study looking at the trend in the literature to focus on regionalization as opposed to globalization. The authors argue that studies have moved from an international focus to a more regional focus. Their study found that only 8.3% of studies in the first 20 years of international advertising strategy research focused on region. However, the percentage increased to 25% over the next 20 years, rising to 36% of the studies in the last decade. While the authors do not deny globalization, they do present evidence of competition on, largely, a regional instead of a global level. Their study suggests that regional advertising standardization has focused on three predominant regions, Western Europe, (Chinese) Asia, and the Middle East/Arab world, with regional studies being most common overall. Additionally, Fastoso and Whitelock (2010) found that regional standardization seems to be applied to strategy more than tactical decisions, and cultural similarities do not lead to identical advertising content in regions.

Future Research Paths to Follow

Based upon an – admittedly non-exhaustive – discussion of the breadth of history and depth of countless studies on international advertising strategy over the past decades, the authors have attempted to focus attention on major themes and areas of particular

limitation that are constraining a robust development of the body of knowledge. It is hoped that the reader will gain a sense of what the major streams of thoughts have been and what can be found by diving deeper into the body of literature. Despite its brevity, this chapter should have provided an adequate amount of foundational literature to underscore where contradictions and gaps currently exist. Previous studies have left specific ideas for further research. The remaining portion of this chapter offers suggestions or markers that international advertising strategy researchers may wish to consider for advancing the body of knowledge in this area.

Constructing explication to build consensus

Explication of a definition of standardization/adaptation is needed. Adequate discussions are essential, which provide others opportunities to critique, analyze, accept, or refine this definition for progress to be made. General scholarly agreement as to the construct of standardized/specialized international advertising should be adopted by the academy. The construct is multidimensional. Its current use (misuse) appears to be hindering theoretical development. Ryans *et al.* (2008) recommend to the discipline a definition for discussion by stating:

We argue, following Harvey (1993), that *it is the degree of standardization/adaptation along each dimension of advertising such as message, media, etc., that is at issue, rather than an either or decision*. As such, advertising standardization/adaptation should build upon the conceptualization put forth by Harvey (1993), namely, that the construct as a second-order factor composed of first-order factors of: (1) research and development, (2) creative, (3) media, (4) production and (5) post-advertising research to determine effectiveness, be adopted by researchers. (p. 288)

Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) give two examples of why standardization/adaptation is ill-defined and needs discipline-wide collective adoption. The authors discuss Peebles' (1988) study where the author supports global campaigns but recognizes local differences. Another example the authors provide refers to a study by Harris and Attour (2003), who state that "standardization is a flexible policy that can be adapted to a range of circumstances and differing market conditions." Findings supporting the need for unity on a conceptual definition are also discussed by Ryans, Griffith, and White (2003). Further, Fastoso and Whitelock (2010) state that "[i]n our view, one of the main reasons why agreement over the definition of advertising standardization has not been reached is the fact that so far no attention has been paid to what we term the *point of reference* in advertising standardization conceptualization and measurement" (p. 33). In sum, this central issue is extremely problematic and the situation forces authors to create and adopt their own conceptualization hindering the scientific process. It raises the question of how should the academy go about the process of explication to actually arrive at a definition which numerous researchers have pointed to as a major deficiency. Journal articles, conference papers, roundtables, and conference sessions precisely focusing on this task appear as options toward collectively reaching consensus.

More rigorous model testing

Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) expressed the opinion that too much of the literature surrounding the international strategy decision misses opportunities to critique existing knowledge and to build the body of knowledge. Critical analysis and testing is central to good theory building. In reviewing the previous models earlier in the chapter, we noted that international advertising strategy researchers have produced numerous models, but little widespread testing has been conducted on any one specific model. Models help develop and support theory. As this chapter has highlighted, many of the models found in the literature serve more as descriptive examples rather than tested theoretical models. In fact, all the models mentioned in this chapter have received limited to no rigorous testing in the discipline. Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) formulated some models, such as contingency models, which are often too complex for practitioners to apply. Anderson (1983) comments that marketing research suffers from a lack of “theory-driven programmatic research” (p. 28). Clearly, this is the case when studying international advertising strategy decision making and the utilization of these models. Vrontis *et al.*’s (2009) testing of AdaptStand is a good example of the process moving forward. Zou and Volz (2010) also contribute in the spirit of moving theory on.

To further the theory-building discussion, model conception is an important step but the validity of any model is in doubt if it is not challenged and further developed. Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) argue while international advertising strategy research has developed models of when to standardize or adapt, the literature has not produced models in a scientific progressive manner. They cite the progress of Fishbein’s (1963) “Expectancy Value Model” and discuss how follow-up models such as Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) “Theory of Reasoned Action” add knowledge and improve model development. International advertising research suffers from a lack of significant model testing and growth. Miracle (1984) commented that international advertising strategy suffers from literature building new hypotheses. While literature reviews in the current trends section of this chapter present progress, the discipline still suffers from a lack of concerted effort.

Linking theory building to practice

A general critique of the literature and major trends displays a need for studies that directly relate to practitioners as well as produce data and findings that support progress in the field. Building upon the previous model and theory discussion, Melewar and Vemmervik (2004) state that the field needs to reduce the “scattered papers” (p. 878) approach and find a more collective focus, which is, of course, easier said than done. However, the authors propose that one way to improve research would be to design a more comprehensive survey instrument that tracks companies and sectors over time. This shared instrument would build knowledge across sectors, companies, and time to identify variables of mutual importance and interest.

The accepted use of this type of shared instrument would allow for stronger statistical analyses (e.g., meta-analyses) across literature and time. Further, Fastoso

and Whitelock (2007) suggest that the field should adopt more electronic methods of collecting data. For example, cooperation with digital firms could yield a wealth of aggregate data.

Making regional strategy advancements

Fastoso and Whitelock (2007) confirm the need for a unified definition as well as acknowledging a change:

[A] shift has taken place away from the global perspective in international advertising strategy and towards a regional one ... the regional focus in standardisation allows for a clearer measurement of the phenomenon given that cultural similarity and economic integration have been found to foster standardization. (p. 597)

This shift places a focus on standardization in terms of examining equivalent countries in economics, language, and heritage (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987).

Intermarket segmentation analysis

Krolikowska and Kuenzel (2008) state that international advertising strategy research should begin to incorporate other consumer behavior theories in order to examine and measure both the impact of standardization and consumer attitudes. Applications of consumer behavior models such as Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) "Elaboration Likelihood Model" could help with understanding of standardized (or adapted) strategies as well as the various tactics involved.

Explication of "effectiveness" needed

Ryans *et al.* (2008) call on the discipline to define "effectiveness" since it is at the very core of the international advertising strategy debate. They emphasize that Jain's (1989) definition involving competitive advantage theory, supported by Hunt's (2000) resource advantage theory, could be a possible framework. However, there is significant literature on measuring advertising effectiveness in the literature, so many other possibilities are available.

Greater emphasis on international services

Royne Stafford (2005) found only 38 studies on the topic of services and international advertising strategy. This yields opportunities to look not only at services but also comparisons of product and service international advertising strategy (Fastoso & Whitelock, 2010). With the growth of service industries, especially in terms of digital products and the services they require, this area will continue to grow. More insight and knowledge in this area will increase in importance to practitioners.

Understanding relationship marketing internationally

International advertising strategy's relationship to other areas of the marketing mix needs to be addressed by the literature (Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2008). Relationship marketing is becoming more important with the personalization of message opportunities that innovative technology continues to provide. As consumers become more connected through various means of social media, and as marketing plans become more consumer focused, advertising's function in the marketing mix will continue to change. In this way, some academics claim that advertising's role will become more of a supportive activity (e.g., Egan, 2001). This approach undoubtedly changes the advertising strategy and is ripe for further exploration.

Examining underrepresented countries

Research in standardization versus adaptation needs to be explored in many countries underrepresented in the current body of literature (Fastoso & Whitelock, 2010). Fastoso and Whitelock (2007) assert that the literature is ripe with comparisons and analyses from Western Europe and Chinese Asia. Opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge are plentiful with regard to underrepresented parts of the globe, notably Africa, the Americas (excluding the United States), and Eastern Europe (Fastoso & Whitelock, 2010). As another example, the rapid changes in the Middle East all point to the potential of new emerging market-driven economies that would not have been under consideration just a short time ago. Likewise, the rise of social media and mobile technologies allow the logistics for data collection and access to consumers, too difficult to consider in the past.

New frontiers beckon

Who wants to continue to discuss old debates that generally provide less than fruitful and satisfying outcomes? Certainly, communicating where we have been as a discipline is important to impart historically. It is time to move forward. There are new frontiers out there to explore. The excitement of beginning to tackle this non-exhaustive listing of new pathways beckons. Heed the urgency to collectively achieve the explications required and the repeated calls by international advertising researchers to begin building new knowledge.

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