Global Brand Building and Management in the Digital Age

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Abstract
The rapid spread of the internet and internet-based technologies is reshaping how companies build and manage global brands. While specific platforms and technologies change rapidly, what does not change quickly are the underlying trends. This article identifies the implications of five core underlying digital trends for global brand building and management: (1) rise of digital global sales channels, (2) cocreation of global brand strategy, (3) global transparency of brand activities, (4) global connectivity among the brand’s consumers, and (5) the Internet of Things. For each trend, the author discusses key changes taking place in the marketplace and directions for future research.

Keywords
global brands, digital channel, cocreation, Internet of Things, sharing economy

For millennia, societies have benefited from international exchange of goods, people, and ideas (Diamond 1997). Around 200 B.C., the Eurasian continent was connected from West to East through the so-called silk roads (Frankopan 2015). However, these long roads were vulnerable to political disruption, and for much of the period until 1500 A.D., the world was economically, culturally, and socially fragmented. A decisive turn of events came when European ocean-worthy sailing ships started to connect the continents, a process that was started with Columbus’s voyages to the Americas. From then on, continents were connected on a global scale through sea-lanes. Subsequent technological breakthroughs that served to connect different parts of the world ever more tightly include railways, telephone, automobiles, and commercial air travel.

The advent of the public internet and the commercial use of the World Wide Web is the latest stage in the millennia-long process of forging global connections between peoples and states. However, the speed and scope of its global spread is unprecedented (https://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm; see Figure 1). In 1995, approximately 16 million people (.4% of the world population) used the internet, which by June 2019 had grown to 4.5 billion people (58.8% of the world’s population). More people currently use this latest global connection technology than have ever flown in a plane, traveled by train, or owned a car.

It is obvious from examining the academic and practitioner literature that the coming of the digital age has had a profound impact on all facets of (international) marketing. In this article, I focus on one key business challenge that is of great relevance to international marketing scholars and managers: global brands. Until the advent of the digital era, creating a global brand was a long and painstaking process. The brand had to secure physical distribution, country by country, and that meant cultivating strong relationships on the ground. Its price could differ substantially from country to country, with many consumers ignorant of the pricing differential. Television and print advertising were the primary media to reach the widest possible global audience with the brand’s promise. What the brand (company) did in one country had little effect on how it was regarded in another country. These truisms no longer hold in the digital age.

Any article written about branding strategies in the digital age runs the risk of obsolescence before it appears in a journal. Specific digital platforms and tools for global brand building and management change rapidly over time. What will not change nearly as quickly are underlying trends. This article identifies five key trends: (1) rise of digital global sales channels, (2) cocreation of global brand strategy, (3) global transparency of brand activities, (4) global connectivity among the brand’s consumers, and (5) the Internet of Things (IoT). Although I recognize that there may be other trends that
influence global brands, based on my understanding of the academic and practitioner literature and discussions with managers, I believe these five trends are among the most important ones that keep international marketers awake at night. Due to space constraints, this article focuses on business-to-consumer (B2C) brands.

For each trend, I offer a summary of key changes that occur in the marketplace as a result of that trend, as well as their implications for the practice of global brand building and management (summarized in Table 1). This analysis leads to a set of future research directions.

Global Digital Sales Channel

Key Changes

The digital sales channel refers to sales of products and services through a variety of internet-based platforms. Global B2C e-commerce sales were $3.5 trillion in 2019 (14.1% of total retail sales) and are expected to exceed $6.5 trillion in 2023, according to industry expert eMarketer (Lipsman 2019). Western countries are no longer primarily fueling this growth. Since 2014, consumers in Asia-Pacific spent more on e-commerce purchases than those in North America, making Asia-Pacific the largest regional e-commerce market in the world, with China being the primary driver of growth in the region. While much e-commerce revenues are generated domestically, the digital sales channel offers important new possibilities for brands that are already global (“existing brands”) as well as for brands that are in the process of going global (“new brands”).

Digital sales channels allow managers of existing global brands to reach consumers in parts of countries that they could otherwise not reach without physical stores. For example, in China, 600 million rural consumers have no easy access to modern distribution. With the internet-connected smartphone, they are leapfrogging the brick-and-mortar phase, going directly to digital, and gaining access to every product, from tissue and shoelaces to appliances and weightlifting sets (Clover 2015).

If consumers buy the brand in a physical outlet, they can return to the store for redress if the brand falls short of its promises. But how can a consumer get redress for an e-purchase? How can the consumer tell whether the product or service is trustworthy? By relying on the brand name. A strong brand instills confidence in consumers that it will deliver on its promises (Rajavi, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp 2019), and many of these strong brands are global brands, because the global availability and acceptance of a brand signal quality (Steenkamp 2019a). Thus, the digital world may favor strong global brands.

While the digital sales channel offers opportunities to exist globally, the benefits for new brands, including brands from emerging markets, are even more profound. With the internet, every brand is just a keystroke away from a consumer overseas. More than half of respondents—including 73% of Germans, 64% of Mexicans, 58% of Chinese, 50% of South Koreans, and 30% of Americans—in an online survey said that they had made an online purchase from an overseas retailer in the past six months (Nielsen 2016).

The rise of the digital sales channel reduces the channel advantages that existing global brands have enjoyed historically. An example is the razor blade market, in which Gillette has practically tied up the retail shelves in brick-and-mortar stores in countries around the world. Dollar Shave Club and Harry’s were among the first to exploit the digital channel. Its consumers subscribe to monthly deliveries of razor blades and other personal grooming products. Within less than a decade, these two brands captured 13.7% of the U.S. razor blade market (Passport 2019) and are now expanding to other markets dominated by Gillette, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

The digital channel also offers opportunities to scale to a global level faster than ever before. Take the Chinese luxury cashmere brand Sand River, which was launched in 2013. It has 12 brick-and-mortar stores in China, but by 2019, overseas sales accounted for 15% of revenues, all through the digital sales channel. Such rapid expansion would have been impossible in the predigital age.¹

Future Research Directions

Distribution. The global brand has three broad options for its digital sales channel, which are not mutually exclusive (Gie lens and Steenkamp 2019). First, the firm can establish its own brand website, as companies from Procter & Gamble (pgevery day.com) to Apple (Apple.com) have done. This eliminates the middleman and avoids double marginalization. A second option is selling through an e-retailer such as Amazon, which resells the products it purchased from the brand manufacturer

¹ This information was obtained in an October 2018 interview with Sand River chief executive officer (CEO) Juliet Guo. For more information on Sand River, see Steenkamp (2014b).
Table 1. Global Brand Building and Management in the Digital Age.

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<th>Existing global brands</th>
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<th>Communication</th>
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<td>• Every brand can now be global in a keystroke</td>
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<td>• Price comparison websites orient the market toward price</td>
<td>• More targeted and time-relevant advertising</td>
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<td>• Increased arbitrage</td>
<td>• Create the right mix of digital and offline advertising</td>
<td>• Direct-to-customer selling/disintermediation</td>
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<td>• Return on investment of advertising can be readily calculated</td>
<td>• Online marketplaces offer great potential for new brands</td>
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<td>Cocreation of Brand Strategy with Your Customers</td>
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<td>• Aligns with the mindset of new firms</td>
<td>• Facilitates geocentric NPD</td>
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<td>• Cocreation of ads</td>
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<td>• Difficult for state owned enterprises</td>
<td>• Reduces resources disadvantage (R&amp;D, marketing) vs. established players</td>
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<td>• Global fallout of predatory and anticompetitive pricing</td>
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<td>Transperrnacy of Global Brand Strategy</td>
<td>• Information asymmetry with customer reduced</td>
<td>• Easier for new firms given lack of administrative heritage</td>
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<td>• Global fallout of predatory and anticompetitive pricing</td>
<td>• Potential to reduce advertising costs</td>
<td>• P2P transactions create distribution channels over which the brand has no control</td>
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<td>• Need for globally consistent customer proposition</td>
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<td>• Difficult for state-owned enterprises</td>
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<td>• Opportunities for new global brands based on “sharing” economy</td>
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<td>• Increases customer loyalty to the product offering</td>
<td>• Monologue becomes multilogue</td>
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<td>• Sharing economy may require radical rethinking of your business model</td>
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<td>• Multiplier effect if brand advertising is taken up by social media</td>
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<td>IoT</td>
<td>• Privacy and confidentiality concerns favor global brands with a strong reputation for privacy</td>
<td>• State-owned enterprises and brands from countries with a weak rule of law will be under intense scrutiny</td>
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to consumers. This option is closest to the arrangement brands have with brick-and-mortar retailers. In between these two extremes is when the brand sets up its own store on a marketplace platform, such as eBay, Tmall (Alibaba), Rakuten, and Amazon (which operates both as e-retailer and as marketplace). The brand manufacturer sells directly to buyers (i.e., the platform does not take ownership of the products). If desired, the platform can fulfill orders. For example, Amazon connects consumers from 185 countries with two million suppliers from more than 100 countries, of which 65% use Amazon for order fulfillment (Abraham and Koelemeijer 2015).

Table 2 shows the strengths and weaknesses of each digital distribution option on several criteria. It shows that marketplace stores combine many of the strengths of the other options. Yet, compared with selling through e-retailers or even dedicated brand websites, brand stores on online marketplaces have attracted little research attention, and even less so in an international context.

Product. The global digital sales channel offers firms the potential to serve global niche segments profitably. The theory of the Long Tail (Anderson 2008) holds that societies are increasingly shifting away from a focus on a small number of “hits” (mainstream products) at the head of the demand curve toward a large number of niches in the tail. However, leveraging the demand in these niches was previously difficult, if not infeasible, because of two interrelated factors: high cost of securing shelf space and insufficient demand in any local niche. By aggregating local niches into a global niche, which is served through digital sales channels, narrowly targeted products can now be economically attractive. The research challenge is to identify these global niche segments. Existing methods are geared toward identifying substantial (e.g., large) international market segments (Steenkamp and Ter Hofstede 2002; Ter Hofstede, Steenkamp, and Wedel 1999). We need new, statistically robust methods that can identify niche segments that are stable, actionable, and responsive to the brand’s marketing. Statistically, this is much more demanding than uncovering large segments.

One important drawback of using online marketplaces is that rogue actors might offer brand counterfeits. Research has found that four of every ten products bought online in China are either bad quality or outright fake (Clover 2015), while another study found that 4,000 products listed on Amazon are actually banned, mislabeled, or not allowed for sale in the United States (Berzon, Shifflett, and Scheck 2019). Research is needed on why some people knowingly purchase counterfeits, what the impact of counterfeits is on affected brands, and who receives the blame (the marketplace or the brand). We also need to understand how firms can counter this threat (such as through educating consumers, negotiating with marketplaces, withdrawing from marketplaces, quality seals, or litigation). Are there global best practices, or is the most effective solution dependent on local institutional (regulative, cultural, economic) characteristics, such as the rule of law, cultural collectivism, or market concentration?

Pricing. Pricing decisions are usually more localized than product or advertising decisions (Steenkamp 2017). From an economic point of view, that makes sense: maximizing profit in a country depends on local customers’ price sensitivity, the marginal cost of production, and the prices of competing products and services. Thus, in theory, profit-maximizing prices should be set locally. However, that ignores consumer arbitrage. For example, in response to consumer arbitrage, the average price premium for luxury brands in China compared with France declined from 44% in December 2016 to 32% in July 2017 (Hancock 2017). Are such price changes based on detailed analysis of consumer responses? Dolan and Simon (1996) report that firms rarely set their prices internationally based on well-founded information concerning consumer and competitor behavior. Is that still the case? Descriptive research on price-setting practices by multinational firms is needed to answer this question.

Can Weber’s law of just meaningful difference (JMD) be used to understand what international price gaps are meaningful, attitudinally (leading to dissatisfaction or resentment) and behaviorally (leading to arbitrage)?2 Is this JMD contingent on

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2 In its original form, Weber’s law, which was derived in psychophysics, is formulated as \( \Delta S / S = K \), where \( S \) is the initial stimulus, \( \Delta S \) is the smallest change in the stimulus capable of being detected (called just noticeable
product category and country characteristics? Can JMD be used to develop guidelines for acceptable price corridors (Simon and Kucher 1995) to anchor local prices? We also need economic models that allow for global price optimization, based on local own-price and cross-price elasticities, JMDs, and local marginal costs. Given the importance of price for the firm’s bottom line, such models would be a major academic contribution.

Temporal alignment between exposure to a brand advertisement and the moment of purchase is a Holy Grail in advertising. That is why in-store advertising (e.g., flyers, displays) is so effective. Thus, along with the spread of the digital sales channel, advertising is shifting from traditional to online media. In 2019, for the first time in history, global digital advertising spending accounted for half of total media ad spending (Enberg 2019). This raises several issues in need of research. First, is digital advertising equally effective around the world? Nielsen (2015) reports that trust in internet advertising differs systematically across generations (e.g., Gen Z, Baby Boomers), digital media (e.g., branded websites, text ads), and regions (e.g., North America, Europe). Moreover, costs differ across digital media and countries. Academic research should develop new models to help global brands optimize the digital mix in this complex global environment.

Future research also should determine the optimal mix of online and offline advertising. Kumar et al. (2016) found that a strategy that uses both online and offline media yields, on average, 50% more “bang for the advertising buck” compared with when all the money is spent on online advertising. However, these results are based on a single U.S. retailer selling wine and spirits. This optimal mix is likely to differ between countries as well as between categories and brands. We need conceptual models and empirical research on factors that can predict these contingencies. The resulting parameter estimates can be used to guide managerial decisions for other countries that were not part of the empirical study (Steenkamp and Geyskens 2014).

**Cocreation of Global Brand Strategy**

**Key Developments**

Firms increasingly realize that they can improve their performance by tapping into consumers’ knowledge. They are looking for ways to involve consumers in particular aspects of the global brand strategy, such as new product development (NPD), brand positioning, and advertising. One survey (Hitachi 2017) found that 27.4% of major European organizations (including nonprofits) worked with customers on a collaborative project continuously in the preceding 12 months, while only 10.3% did not. The survey also found that 58% of businesses had piloted cocreation projects to help them innovate, 51% said that cocreation had improved their financial performance, and 54% reported that it had helped improve their social impact (Hitachi 2017). In a global study, 61% of the executives surveyed said they embrace open innovation to generate new ideas (PwC 2017).

Crowdsourcing, the gathering of ideas or information by enlisting a large number of people over the internet, has emerged as one of the most important types of cocreation. Global crowdsourcing facilitates development of truly geocentric brand strategies, from geocentric NPD to global advertising that engages consumers, by taking input from consumers around the world (not just those in the home country). For example, Kraft struggled in its efforts to give Mini Oreo cookies their own identity distinct from regular Oreo cookies. It engaged crowdsourcing firm eyeka! to gather ideas from consumers about what they saw as unique to Mini Oreos.³ Kraft received more than 500 ideas from 42 countries and identified 10 potential ideas for its new brand positioning. This input inspired the new value proposition and global campaigns for Mini Oreos around “Bonding Moments” (Steenkamp 2017). Creative advertising ideas are scarce, and therefore firms such as Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Danone, and Hyundai have turned to global crowdsourcing to tap into the creativity of the masses (Steenkamp 2017).

Global crowdsourcing can reduce the research and development (R&D) and marketing costs for existing global brands. However, for new brands, which often lack the resources of existing global brands, the advantages are even greater. If these brands can outsource much of these costs, this reduces the resources advantages of established global players.

**Future Research Directions**

**Organizational structure.** A commitment to using cocreation as integral part of the firm’s strategy requires that the firm lets outsiders in and gives up some control of its strategy. In other words, the traditional strict boundaries between the firm and the environment become blurred. One fruitful area of research would be to examine whether the success of brand cocreation depends on the firm’s organizational structure and culture. Does cocreation lead to better outcomes in firms that use the network model (Palmisano 2014), have flat structures, are “adhocracies” (Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster 1993), and have organizational cultures comfortable with trial and error? This raises a related question: Can state-owned enterprises, which play an important role in emerging markets such as China (Kumar and Steenkamp 2013), use cocreation as well? Are there mechanisms that allow them to circumvent their hierarchical structure and bureaucratic processes, which are more attuned to listening to their political masters than to their customers?

³ eyeka! specializes in crowdsourcing creative business problems, such as generating ideas for new products or services, product designs, brand positioning, or advertising campaigns. It draws on a community of over 280,000 registered members from more than 160 countries. Every project is organized as a contest with one or more potential winners.
Marketing mix. Cocreation is most frequently applied to NPD. Chang and Taylor (2016) conducted a meta-analysis on previous research on cocreation in NPD. They found that the mean effect size of customer participation on NPD performance is .26 (p < .001), using the correlation coefficient r as measure of effect size (Geyskens et al. 2009). They further reported that for emerging-market firms, the effect of customer participation on financial performance is .41 (p < .01) versus .23 (p < .01) for developed-market firms. Future research should examine why this is the case. Is it because emerging-market firms are more entrepreneurial, are less bureaucratic, have limited knowledge resources, or are lower in R&D capabilities? Or might this be due to sample selection bias, in that one observes an effect only for survivors, and competition in emerging markets is more brutal than that in developed markets?

Firms have also begun to experiment with cocreating other aspects of the marketing mix, such as brand positioning and advertising. However, there is little evidence on the impact of such crowdsourcing on firm performance. Is it better than what the firm could come up by itself? Is it worth the effort—and if so, when?

Role of national culture. The digital era has made tapping into the creativity of the global masses a feasible option for firms. International cocreation, often through crowdsourcing, has two advantages. The firm taps into a larger pool of ideas. Moreover, receiving inputs from people around the world allows the firm to develop truly geocentric marketing strategies for their brand, as opposed to the more usual ethnocentric strategy in which the firm tweaks the domestic strategy for overseas markets. International cocreation raises two important research questions: (1) Are there systematic differences between countries in their likelihood to engage in cocreation? and (2) Is the input from people from different countries equally useful (Chua, Roth, and Lemoine 2015)? If the willingness to engage in cocreation differs between countries, the firm may not have sourced the global wisdom of the crowd after all. The second question matters because it suggests that there may be systematic differences in the usefulness of ideas across countries.

Creativity research has traditionally emphasized the importance of divergent, out-of-the-box thinking. This suggests that firms are advised to target their cocreation efforts at countries where the national culture stimulates creative thinking. How can one identify such countries? Gelfand, Nishii, and Raver (2006) and Gelfand et al. (2011) propose the cultural dimension developed for individualism and power distance. This suggests that convergent cultures might be more useful in certain contexts.

Chua, Roth, and Lemoine (2015) found that that an individual from a tight culture is less likely than a person from a loose culture to generate ideas, and succeed at, foreign creative tasks. The greater the cultural distance between participant and target country, the stronger the negative impact of cultural tightness. Furthermore, the tighter the culture of the target country, the lower the likelihood that ideas proposed by foreign participants will be successful in that country. Finally, the tighter the culture of an individual’s country, the more likely they are to engage in—and succeed at—creative tasks in their own country (local creative tasks).

This study is an important first attempt to investigate how the outcomes of cocreation can systematically vary across countries. One useful avenue for future research is to examine the role of other country factors. The Web Appendix to Gelfand et al. (2011) presents correlations between tightness– looseness and other country constructs, including five cultural frameworks, social axioms, and others. This may serve as inspiration for future research. Here, I focus on Hofstede’s multidimensional framework, which is conceptually richer than tightness– looseness. I would expect that uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and power distance all play a role, and that their role might be different between likelihood to participate versus likelihood to be selected. For example, uncertainty avoidance could have a negative effect on likelihood to participate but a positive effect on likelihood to be selected (as the idea might be less “extreme,” which increases chances of selection; Eapen and Grewal 2019). There might also be an interaction between task structure and national culture. To continue with uncertainty avoidance, might the likelihood of participation by consumers from high-uncertainty-avoidance countries be greater for highly structured creative tasks than for highly unstructured tasks, and vice versa? Similar research questions could be developed for individualism and power distance.
Another topic for future research is to examine actual market outcomes. Being selected as a winner by the firm is at best but a proxy for success. As Chua, Roth, and Lemoine (2015) showed, firms have their cultural biases too, and there is no guarantee that the idea selected actually performs well in the marketplace.

Global Transparency of Brand Activities

Key Developments

In the industrial era, products grew ever more complex, so much so that consumers had more difficulty assessing product quality and value. More brands started to travel internationally, but most consumers did not; they bought locally and got their information locally. Information asymmetry was especially high for global brands, which were typically at the technological frontier. Brand managers could exploit the lack of cross-border flow of information among consumers to charge higher prices and offer varying quality or customer service to maximize profits.

The digital age has minimized this information asymmetry. E-retailers and price comparison websites are improving consumer decision making. Online shoppers in the remotest parts of countries such as China or India know a lot about a global brand’s attributes and pricing worldwide, without ever having seen the product in a physical store (The Economist 2014). Transparency about the global brand’s activities, ranging from its supply chain to after-sales service, has become an important issue in the digital age. This requires brands to behave consistently across the globe. If not, they run the risk of being exposed with a concomitant consumer backlash.

Take PayPal, which took a strong stand in 2016 when North Carolina adopted the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (“the bathroom bill”) regulating single-sex multiple occupancy bathroom and changing facilities in schools and public agencies. Opponents described it as the most anti-LGBT legislation in the United States. In protest, PayPal canceled its plan to open a new global operations center in Charlotte, North Carolina. Its CEO explained PayPal’s motivation thusly: “[These] principles of fairness, inclusion and equality are at the heart of everything we seek to achieve and stand for as a company. And they compel us to take action to oppose discrimination” (Schulman 2016). PayPal was heavily criticized because, apparently, it had no problems with basing its international headquarters in Singapore, despite the fact that homosexual acts are punishable by up to two years in jail there. PayPal’s values also did not prevent the company from operating a global operations center in Malaysia, where homosexual acts are punishable by public lashings and jail sentences up to 20 years.

In a world of different cultural values and regulations, marketing messages in one country can lead to a backlash in other countries. For example, IKEA airbrushed women out of the Saudi edition of its furniture catalog. In response, people in other countries posted on Tumblr images where women had obviously been replaced by IKEA furniture (Sterling 2012). Starbucks suffered a backlash for replacing its female mermaid logo with a crown in the water in Saudi Arabia. A senior executive at the global advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi commented, “It’s an extremely difficult position for a global brand to be in. On the one hand, they have their value system as a global brand, but then on the other they have to be aware of local market sensitivities” (Hall 2012). In the age of transparency, brand managers must ask themselves not only whether a particular market communication is sensitive to a local audience but also how a global audience might respond.

Transparency has major implications for a common company practice known as “geoblocking”—differential treatment of consumers based on their geographical location or nationality. Geoblocking can take different forms, such as denied website access, refused sale, no delivery options, or different prices or conditions of sale. Such practices are exposed more fully and rapidly than ever. An example is Disneyland Paris. German consumers complained that they could not access cheaper online deals that were available to residents of France, as they were directed to the theme park’s national website, which did not have the same offers. Pricing data gathered by consumer organizations showed that one premium package cost €2,447 on the theme park’s German site compared with €1,346 on the French site. European Union (EU) officials also documented a 15% difference between prices in pounds and euros for the same type of ticket. To avoid an investigation by the European Commission, Disneyland Paris agreed to ensure that non-French consumers have fair access to its best offers on its website (Brunsden and Robinson 2016).

Transparency is easier to achieve for new firms than for established firms with an administrative heritage of secrecy. Transparency poses a particular challenge for emerging market firms closely linked to the state. Nowhere is that more relevant than in China. The governance structure of the typical Chinese state-owned enterprise is often unclear, and if it has a stock market listing, its stock may only pertain to part of the company (Lin and Milhaupt 2013, Steenkamp 2013). Controlling interest remains with the state, and its larger operations remain veiled. Digital giant Tencent is a major player in the social media space with its WeChat messaging service, but Tencent’s inner workings are rather murky (Elliott 2014). Consumers wonder whether the Chinese government has access to Tencent’s data. At a tech conference in Singapore, Tencent’s CEO did not alleviate consumer concerns: “Lots of people think they can speak out and be irresponsible. I think that’s wrong” (Elliott 2014). This stands in stark contrast with Apple CEO Tim Cook’s refusal to grant the Federal Bureau of Investigation backdoor access to its iPhones. While lack of privacy may or may not be a problem in China, it does hurt the international ambitions of firms such as Tencent, ZTE, and Huawei (Steenkamp 2014a).

Future Research Directions

Marketing crises. One area where the increased transparency of brand activities is particularly pertinent is when the brand is hit
by a marketing crisis. Marketing crises—broadly defined as publicized negative events stemming from marketing-mix-related activities (Clark 1988)—can be disastrous for any company. Examples are product-harm scandals, predatory and anticompetitive pricing, false advertising, poorly sourced product ingredients, and unethical distribution practices (Dinner, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp 2019). Such crises can destroy carefully nurtured brand equity, cause major revenue and market-share losses, and lead to a significant decline in firm value, if not outright bankruptcy (e.g., Cleeren, Van Heerde, and Dekimpe 2013; Dawar and Pillutla 2000; Van Heerde, Helsen, and Dekimpe 2007; Xiong and Bharadwaj 2013). In the pre-digital age, unless the marketing crisis was global in scope, the fallout was usually restricted to the market where the scandal occurred because of the information asymmetry between the brand and its customers. That asymmetry no longer applies in today’s environment. We need to begin to study marketing crises on a global basis.

Dinner, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp (2019) made a first step in that direction by studying marketing crises in overseas markets using the event study methodology. They found that marketing crises are most harmful when the host country is either close or very far away from the home country, in terms of psychic distance (Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson 2008). Dinner, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp also reported that firms can mitigate the effect of psychic distance with high marketing capabilities. The performance metric in their study was change in shareholder value, and therefore, it quantified the global fallout of local crises. Marketing capabilities were operationalized using the stochastic frontier method (Kalligianakos et al. 2013), using global inputs and outputs, and thus measured global marketing capabilities.

Future research could go in several directions. Because of the global performance metric, Dinner, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp (2019) accounted for possible spillover effects of the crisis to other countries but did not study whether this happened—and, if so, how the information spread. We need research on the conditions under which marketing crises spill over to other countries. Research is also needed on the international diffusion process of such knowledge. Another area for future research is how much transparency is needed. There is a wide range of options between sweeping a crisis under the rug and being completely open about it. Transparency with consumers in the country where the crisis occurred may be advisable, but is the same true in other countries, or is it best to “let sleeping dogs lie”? There is unlikely going to be one answer across all countries and crises. Thus, what contingency factors play a role?

Dinner, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp (2019) focused on the moderating role of global marketing capabilities. Future research should examine whether local marketing capabilities are more effective to combat the fallout than global marketing capabilities. Moreover, what is the relation between global and local marketing capabilities? Given the central role of marketing capabilities in our field (Moorman and Day 2016), international marketing scholars should study the interplay between them. Do global capabilities exist independent of local capabilities? Is there synergy between these two types of capabilities?

We need more insight into the global performance consequences of marketing crises. Financial markets may overreact or underestimate the harm done to the brand. Sales and brand equity are important alternative performance metrics. Another factor to consider is company reputation. Does a reputation for corporate social responsibility mitigate the fallout (corporate social responsibility as insurance; Luo and Bhattacharya 2009) or exacerbate it (consumers feeling let down as performance falls short of expectations; Oliver 1980)? Another factor to consider is the home country of the firm. Do firms from countries that may be viewed as hegemonic (e.g., the United States) or as weak on the rule of law (e.g., China) suffer more than others?

Global versus local. Another issue for future research is how to address the tension between the need to adapt advertising to local values and regulations and the need for global consistency and adherence to corporate values. We need frameworks that can help managers tackle the difficult problem of making a particular market communication sensitive to a local audience while taking the response of the global audience into account and ensuring that the message does not become so bland that it loses its impact. Finally, although geoblocking can create public backlash, it also allows the firm to optimize prices or distribution policies at the country level. Should this practice be abandoned or are there conditions under which it is a smart strategy?

**Digital Connectivity**

**Key Developments**

With the advent of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, Weibo, and other social media, consumers can exchange brand information, opinions, and experiences with hundreds or thousands of people every day. Consumers communicate with others through social media, general review platforms (e.g., Yelp), specialized review platforms with a narrow focus on a particular product category (e.g., Movies.com, CarAndDriver.com), e-commerce platforms (e.g., Amazon, eBay), and other platforms. The totality of these virtual communications is commonly called electronic word of mouth (eWOM)—internet-mediated written communications (e.g., reviews, tweets, blog posts, likes, pins, images, video testimonials) between current or potential consumers (Liu, Steenkamp, and Zhang 2018).

In today’s marketing environment, where traditional advertising has become less effective (Sethuraman, Tellis, and Briesch 2011; Van Heerde et al. 2013), eWOM has emerged as an increasingly important factor driving brand sales. You, Vadakkepatt, and Joshi (2015) reported that the eWOM elasticity of sales is .42 for favorability (e.g., average rating given to a product) and .24, for volume (e.g., number of reviews). In comparison, the mean advertising elasticity of demand is approximately .12 (Sethuraman, Tellis, and Briesch 2011), and...
eWOM is largely free. Thus, eWOM is attractive for any brand, but especially for new brands that do not have the deep pockets of large brands.

The rise of eWOM has profoundly shifted the balance of power between global brands and their consumers. In the pre-digital era, the brand manager largely was in control of the brand narrative. Brand-related communication was largely unidirectional, emanating from the brand to the consumer—essentially a monologue. In the digital age of connectivity, the monologue has become multilogue. Consumers communicate directly with each other about the brand. The brand manager is, at best, one of the participants in the conversation and, at worst, left out. An example of the shift in power is what happened when Mondelez Australia quietly altered its Kraft Easy Mac microwaved snack formula in 2013, removing processed cheese and replacing it with flavored cheese sauce powder. The change spectacularly backfired. Complaints to its website increased by 320% and after one year, Mondelez reverted to the original recipe after plummeting sales threatened the future of the product (Collier 2014).

Yet, even in multilogues, only a minority of users will be initiating discussions. For any given brand, most people consume rather than produce brand information. Brand managers must therefore engage digital opinion leaders and solicit their opinions to influence eWOM. Digital opinion leaders can be used for various activities—such as providing input to NPD, new advertising campaigns, and brand positioning—to improve the likelihood that eWOM will be favorable. The Chinese brand Sand River does just that. It has identified several digital opinion leaders (microbloggers) whose followers belong to Sand River’s target segment of more highly educated, urban, cosmopolitan women. The digital opinion leaders promote Sand River to their followers, who can order products through the microblogger’s site. Microbloggers’ number depends on the revenues generated by their recommendations.4

Brand managers attempt to leverage the inherent connectivity of social media to develop advertising content that people want to share on social media, creating a multiplier effect, maybe even going viral. In 2012, Dollar Shave Club was launched with a hilarious video poking fun at overengineered existing brands (i.e., Gillette) with expensive features people allegedly do not need. The video got over 26 million views and created instant awareness for a new brand that lacked the resources for a large advertising campaign.5

Another development that can be directly traced to digital connectivity between consumers is the emergence of peer-to-peer (P2P) online platforms, collectively known as the “sharing economy” (Eckhardt et al. 2019). These platforms enable people to collaboratively make use of underutilized inventory through fee-based sharing (Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers 2017). The online platform facilitates sharing among people who do not know each other. The combination of stranger sharing and online platforms is what makes the sharing economy a powerful new phenomenon.

A plethora of new P2P platforms have emerged as global brands in the last few years, including Uber, Airbnb, Etsy, BlablaCar, Craigslist, and HomeAway. The speed with which these companies have expanded across the globe means that incumbents have had little time to prepare themselves. For example, Airbnb now has listings in over 100,000 cities, despite being founded only a little more than a decade ago. Uber and Etsy are active in over 80 countries, and France’s BlablaCar is active in 22 countries.6

These platforms have become brands in their own right, and some are already very valuable. For example, Uber’s global brand value in 2019 was $24.2 billion, according to BrandZ (Kantar 2019), up 51% from 2018. The branding of the platform is crucial from a consumer perspective. The essence of a brand is the belief of consumers that it delivers what it promises (Rajavi, Kushwaha, and Steenkamp 2019). If a consumer trusts a brand, this will reduce transaction costs because high brand trust reduces perceived purchase risk, which decreases consumer information-gathering and processing costs (Erdem and Swait 1998). Stranger sharing entails a high degree of risk. Absent a branded digital platform, stranger sharing would involve vetting each person before entering in a purchase agreement (“contract”) with them, which would entail prohibitively high transaction costs.

**Future Research Directions**

**eWOM.** One pressing research question is how brands can generate and leverage eWOM, especially on a global basis. Is there something like global eWOM, or should managers try to generate eWOM on a country-by-country basis? If it is all local, are there best practices that can be shared and adapted locally in the spirit of worldwide learning (Steenkamp and Geyskens 2014).

Multilogue communication models are underdeveloped. What is the role of the brand manager, digital opinion leaders, and other consumers? Can we distinguish characteristic flows of information through the network? To what extent do multilogues transcend national borders? Might there be clusters of eWOM, defined by cultural or linguistic region (e.g., Scandinavia, Spanish-speaking countries)? Is there global eWOM in English as the lingua franca of our times?

Ads that go viral in social networks, generating enormous amounts of eWOM, is a dream of any global brand manager. Is it possible to predict which ad will go viral, locally and (ideally) globally? Six factors have been suggested in the practitioner literature: be succinct, be upbeat, be timely, be involved, be informative, and be inspiring (Pozin 2014). Are these factors comprehensive? Are all factors needed? How important is each one? Do the answers to these questions differ between going

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4 This information was obtained in an October 2018 interview with Sand River CEO Juliet Guo.

5 The ad can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUG9qYTJMsI (accessed December 5, 2019).

6 Information obtained from various company websites.
viral locally versus going viral globally? Academic research could make a major contribution by content-analyzing ads that have gone viral.

**Digital opinion leaders.** A related issue is how brands can steer eWOM by coopting digital opinion leaders. How effective and efficient (given costs) are global versus local opinion leaders? There are different types of global opinion leaders, including celebrities (e.g., Kylie Jenner), sports stars (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo), actors (e.g., George Clooney), and musicians (e.g., Taylor Swift), but these are relatively few in number, expensive, and may not be credible for your brand or target segment. Are local, and possibly micro, digital opinion leaders a more attractive option, and if so, how can they be identified efficiently? A related question is how to compensate local opinion leaders for their efforts. There is little research on cross-national similarities and differences in preferences for incentive systems (one exception is Segalla et al. [2006]). Should incentive systems be left to local managers or is it possible, and desirable, to develop a global framework with local variations?

**Sharing economy.** The sharing economy raises many questions for international marketing scholars. Are there universal motivations why people participate in the sharing economy that can be found around the world? Böcker and Meelen (2017) propose three types of motivation: economic, environmental, and social. Are these exhaustive or are there other motivations as well? Do motivations vary across countries, and if so, why? Which industries are most susceptible to P2P platforms? What is the effect of the global spread of P2P platforms on (“old economy”) incumbents, and what are effective counterstrategies? Does the market potential of P2P platforms differ between countries, in function of their economic, regulative, and cultural institutions (Scott 2001)? Can branded P2P platforms offer a safeguard in countries with a weak rule of law and high corruption (Steenkamp and Geyskens 2006), or in countries where transaction costs are higher (Geyskens, Steenkamp, and Kumar 2006)? Are P2P platforms more successful in efficient markets with a high degree of competition versus closed, oligopolistic markets? What is the role of cultural preferences for solutions to transaction costs (Steenkamp and Geyskens 2012)? Finally, what is the potential of the sharing economy to enhance societal well-being in emerging markets by making goods and services available to the bottom of the pyramid?

**Internet of Things**

**Key Developments**

Tangible goods are more easily copied than intangible services. Thus, many leading goods firms have added services to their existing products (Fang, Palmatier, and Steenkamp 2008). Augmenting the product with services makes the global brand’s value proposition more valuable to buyers (Zeithaml and Brown 2014). The digital era has taken these so-called service-transition strategies to an entirely new level; the IoT is fast becoming a reality (Lee and Lee 2015). The IoT is changing the way people interact with each other and with the products they consume. It is resulting in smart devices (e.g., home appliances and cars) equipped with sensors, software, and connectivity that allow these devices to interact and exchange information with each other (Hoffman and Novak 2017).

McKinsey estimates that IoT will create up to $1.1 trillion of economic value annually by 2025 for suppliers; the impact on consumers is even greater (Manyika 2015). Brands that effectively use the IoT to provide value to consumers will dominate the future. South Korea’s LG has programmed a line of smart refrigerators that can sense their own contents and track inventory through barcode or radio-frequency ID scanning. Procter & Gamble’s Oral-B launched the Oral-B SmartSeries, the world’s first connected electric toothbrush, which connects to the Oral-B app through Bluetooth technology. The app acts like an oral care personal trainer, providing real-time guidance while you brush, and records brushing activity can be shared with dental professionals, helping create smarter and more personalized brushing routines (Steenkamp 2017).

The IoT’s ultimate prize is to own an operating system that integrates a range of devices that communicate with each other and the user, possibly with a virtual assistant such as Google Home, Alexa (Amazon), Siri (Apple), or Cortana (Microsoft). It is telling that these four companies are also the four most valuable companies, both by market capitalization and by global brand value (Kantar 2019). China’s home appliance brand Haier is also moving in that direction (Kantar 2019; Steenkamp 2013). Haier has redefined its home appliance business as an ecosystem, adapting to a market in which an increasing number of consumers are looking for smart systems rather than individual products. As a consequence, Haier’s brand value increased dramatically; in 2019, it entered the BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands list, with a brand contribution score of 5 (the maximum score possible) and a brand value of $16.3 billion (Kantar 2019).

One industry in which the IoT is expected to have profound impact is automobiles. According to Allied Market Research (Jadhav 2018), the global autonomous vehicle market size is projected to surpass $500 billion by 2026. Major car companies (e.g., BMW, Ford), technology companies (e.g., Google), and ride-hailing companies (e.g., Uber) are all involved in these efforts. The stakes could not be higher. Global passenger car sales exceeded 77 million units in 2019,7 and six car brands had a brand value exceeding $10 billion (Kantar 2019). It is becoming increasingly clear that their future will be determined by their ability to develop and own the software of the car of the future.

Not every brand is equally well-positioned for the IoT. The types, amount, and specificity of data gathered by devices create concerns about the privacy, confidentiality, and integrity of people’s personal information. Providers of IoT-enabled products and services will have to create compelling value

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propositions for data to be collected and used, provide transparency into what data are used and how they are being used, and ensure that data are appropriately protected. This favors established brands with a track record of protecting consumers’ interests (e.g., Apple, Google), whereas it disadvantages state-owned enterprises. Even privately held companies hailing from a country characterized by a weak rule of law are at a disadvantage, as overseas consumers may have serious doubts about the privacy and confidentiality of the data. If many Americans do not trust the U.S. government with their data, how many would trust Huawei?

Future Research Directions

What kind of firms benefits from the IoT? The IoT renders the distinction between goods and services increasingly obsolete. Successful brands will offer both, across a multitude of devices. Who will be the ultimate winners? Global software companies, such as Google, Apple, IBM, Oracle, Microsoft, SAP, and Amazon, that own operating systems that connect devices? Or global manufacturers, such as GE, Siemens, or Toyota, with their deep knowledge of hardware? If we consider current brand and firm valuations, it appears that financial markets expect that the software companies will own the future. Under that scenario, hardware manufacturers run the risk of becoming original equipment manufacturers. Global manufacturers are well aware of this threat. Few can compete on their own in a world where software is dominant. This raises a plethora of questions. If hardware companies cannot do it on their own, can they forge global strategic alliances within or across industries to develop their own operating system? What kind of governance structure is most effective for these global alliances (Krishna, Geyskens, and Steenkamp 2016), taking into account that preferences for governance mechanisms differ across cultures (Steenkamp and Geyskens 2012)? Should the operating system be open or proprietary? Is it possible to have alliances between “software” companies and “hardware” companies? Do the answers to all of these questions differ between business markets (where, e.g., Siemens and GE may have an edge) and consumer markets (where people seem to have greater attachment to Apple or Google than to Toyota or Braun) (Crooks 2016).

There is only one major non-U.S. integrated global software player: SAP. If economic rents move from manufacturers to software firms, this means that U.S. firms will profit disproportionately, while European and Japanese companies will see their fortunes decline. Will these countries accept such U.S. dominance? What about China? On the one hand, foreign digital companies do not have a strong presence in China, largely for domestic political reasons. On the other hand, key Chinese firms such as Tencent, Baidu, and Alibaba have enjoyed only modest success in overseas markets thus far. Is this because they are not sufficiently adapted to foreign markets, because they have not been exposed to the competitive rigors in their protected home market, because they lack the “coolness” (Warren et al. 2019) of Apple or Google, or because of consumer distrust? Haier, in contrast, is doing better, even though it is closely linked to the state. Why is that? What can we learn from an in-depth comparison between Haier and these other Chinese companies?

Potential for local cultural embedding. With globalization under pressure (Steenkamp 2019b), will people start to prefer local operating systems over U.S. systems? Is it possible for local technology companies to position themselves as local icons by combining technological sophistication with local cultural elements to gain a competitive edge? Alternatively, can global players combine global technological sophistication with credible local cultural embedding (cf. Steenkamp 2019a)? Amazon Global Selling enables firms to list and sell their brands on nearly 20 country-specific websites (https://services.amazon.com/global-selling/overview.html). It offers global order fulfillment and tools for online order management, and it helps with customer support, international taxes and regulations, and registration requirements. While this does not make Amazon a local player, it does provide opportunities for local brands to sell locally and globally. What is the potential of Amazon Global Selling to become a global brand and to create local connections with consumers?

Privacy concerns. A functioning IoT requires collection of large amount of data from consumers, which raises significant privacy issues. Countries differ substantially in the regulation of information privacy, defined as the amount of control that individuals exert over what and how much information is revealed to others (Bellman et al. 2004). In 2018, the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) went into effect. It regulates data protection and privacy for all individual citizens of the EU. The GDPR aims primarily to give control to individuals over their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment for international business by unifying the regulation within the EU. Will the GDPR hamper the diffusion of the IoT in Europe compared with the United States, which has a less stringent regime? Alternatively, will the GDPR increase people’s confidence that their privacy is well protected and thus lead them to feel more positively toward the IoT? Furthermore, there appear to be systematic cross-national differences in privacy concerns (Bellman et al. 2004). Do these differences affect the market potential of the IoT in different countries? Can we explain these differences based on the countries’ institutional characteristics, including national cultural values, rule of law, political system, and other factors?

Environmental concerns. Another issue that international marketers should examine is the potential of the IoT to address environmental issues, which, by their very nature, are global in scope. Consumers around the world are expecting companies to address environmental problems such as plastic waste,
carbon emissions, water wastage, and resource usage. The IoT has great potential to reduce the environmental burden of economic activity. But this may require closer integration of firm behavior with consumer behavior, including connected devices that are able to communicate with each other and that are integrated across vendor-managed inventory systems, business analytics, and consumer support systems. This suggests that there might be a trade-off between privacy protection and the environment. Are consumers willing to accept giving up some privacy protection for the greater good?

**Conclusion**

The advent of the public internet and the commercial use of the World Wide Web has resulted in the latest technology that forges connections between people and societies on a global scale. The introduction of previous technologies, such as caravan travel over the Silk Roads, sailing ships, railways, telephone, highways, and commercial air travel, have each had a fundamental impact on global economic, cultural, and social life. The digital highway is no different. What is different, however, is the unprecedented speed with which this new technology has spread around the world.

In this article, I discussed the implications for global brand building and management along five dimensions of this digital revolution: the rise of digital global distribution channels, cocreation of global brand strategy with consumers, need for transparency of a global brand’s activities, global connectivity among brand consumers, and the IoT. I reviewed current developments in the marketplace and raised issues that deserve future attention by international marketing researchers. I summarize the most pertinent research questions in Table 3. To keep the discussion tractable, I discussed each trend separately. However, it is possible that some trends have multiplicative effects. For example, perhaps cocreation and the growth in IoT will have a synergistic effect. There is limited literature to guide us here, which offers opportunities for future research. To highlight this, I added a separate entry to Table 3 addressing multiplicative effects.

I conclude my article with one general observation. While studying global branding in the digital era, I was struck by the dynamics in the marketplace, which in many respects is ahead of international marketing research. Amazon pioneered global digital sales channels and marketplaces; eYeka! and others developed global online crowdsourcing; Uber, Airbnb, and others invented global P2P platforms; and Google, Siemens, and others the global IoT, long before these phenomena caught the attention of marketing academia. While it is probably unavoidable that companies are ahead of international marketing scholars in developing technology-driven digital applications, I believe the time lag is longer than it should be. Companies should rightfully be able to turn to us for pertinent conceptual and empirical insights and guidance. I hope that this article

### Table 3. Future Research Agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Future Research Directions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Digital Sales Channel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Strengths, weaknesses, and contingency factors for the effectiveness of brand stores on online marketplaces as sales channel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficacy of mix of digital sales channel options across countries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
<td>Conditions under which the marketing mix differs between marketing-mix instruments, countries, categories, and brands, and why</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interplay between a firm’s global organizational structure and the performance of brand cocreation activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>How state-owned enterprises can use cocreation—barriers and best practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why cocreation is more beneficial for emerging-market firms than for firms from developed countries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing Mix</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficacy of cocreation for tasks other than NPD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does efficacy of cocreation of marketing mix differ between marketing-mix instruments, countries, categories, and brands, and why</td>
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<td><strong>Role of National Culture</strong></td>
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<td>Individual and country drivers in consumer participation in—and performance of—global cocreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingent role of national culture in global cocreation outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interplay between task structure and national culture in global cocreation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Transparencies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing Crises</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditions under which local marketing crises spill over to other countries, and characteristics of the cross-national diffusion process of this information</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Interplay between global and local marketing capabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consequences of marketing crises on sales and brand equity in other markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role of company reputation and the home country of the firm on consequences of a marketing crisis</td>
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<td><strong>Global Versus Local Marketing Strategies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solving the tension between the need to adapt advertising to local values and regulations and the need for global consistency and adherence to corporate values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditions under which geoblocking is recommended, even at the risk of being exposed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Connectivity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>Does global eWOM matter, or is it all local?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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9 I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.
Table 3. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Future Research Directions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How can managers increase global and local eWOM? Are there best practices that can be shared and adapted to local markets?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying cross-national flows of information among consumers.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Developing global multilogue communication models.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Characteristics of ads that go viral locally and globally. Are they different?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Digital Opinion Leaders</strong></td>
<td>Efficacy of using digital global versus local opinion leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Methods to identify digital local opinion leaders</strong></td>
<td>Cross-national differences and similarities in compensation systems for digital local opinion leaders. Is there room for global guidelines?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing Economy</strong></td>
<td>Motivations for consumers to participate in P2P platforms. Do these motivations differ between countries? If so, why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the market potential of P2P platforms differ between countries, in function of their economic, regulatory, and cultural institutions?</strong></td>
<td>Potential of the sharing economy to enhance societal well-being in emerging markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IoT</strong></td>
<td><strong>Which Firms Benefit?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Can hardware companies develop their own operating systems by forging global strategic alliances within or across industries?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The role of national culture in shaping effective governance structures for global strategic alliances</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How will other countries react to the dominance of U.S. software firms?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What holds Chinese players back from taking full advantage of the IoT on a global scale?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Cultural Embedding</strong></td>
<td>Potential for local players to thrive, using local cultural embedding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Potential of Amazon Global Selling to become a glocal brand and to create local connections with consumers to counter perceptions of U.S. hegemony</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Privacy Concerns</strong></td>
<td>Effect of role of GDPR and privacy protection in other countries and of people's privacy concerns in the acceptance of the IoT in different countries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What explains cross-national differences in people's privacy concerns?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Concerns</strong></td>
<td>Potential of the IoT to counter global environmental degradation and climate change</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer trade-offs between improvement of the environment versus privacy concerns in different countries</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multiplicative Effects</strong></td>
<td>Are there multiplicative effects between these five trends? Can these trends have synergistic effects, or work against each other? For which trends is this most likely?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

provides an impetus to other international marketing researchers to make global brand building in the digital era the focus of some of their own work.

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