

**REVIEW**

**Global Standardization and Local Adaptation of Marketing---A  
Critical Review of the Literature**

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ARTICLE INFO

*Article history*

Received: 4 February 2021

Accepted: 24 February 2021

Published Online: 20 April 2021

*Keywords:*

Marketing strategies

Global standardization

Local adaptation

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses and critically reviews the causes and consequences of global standardization and local adaptation of marketing strategies. The scope of the literature review is in the fields of international marketing, international trade, and corporate strategic management. It also aims to emphasize finding gaps after reading the literature. Even though the studies' scope is extensive, this paper limits the reach: firstly, it introduces the standardization and local adaptation, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of both by researchers. At the same time, untangle the relationship between international marketing strategy and marketing mix. Secondly, it is divided into macro and micro to collate and analyze the leading factors affecting international strategy, so that the cross-market fit of global marketing tactic can be realised. Finally, focus on the KPI. The indicators of financial return were selected as the review from the factors representing the intuitive development level of the company. The goal was to concentrate on the mutual feedback and adjustment between the standardization/adaptation and performance of multinational companies. Among them, the diversities between developed and emerging markets are interspersed in each link. As this difference is a trend that scholars have begun to notice in recent years. Although many existed bibliographies are revolved around particular multinational companies or regions to assessment, this paper will focus on the impact of practical research article review and evaluation. It would not involve specific corporate and country.

**1. Introduction**

Under the background of highly globalization, standardization and adaptation is a controversial topic. As standardization/adaptation would directly affect the performance (Ghauri and Cateora, 2011)<sup>[1]</sup>. It has been a strategic goal for multinational companies to enter the global that international plans could cope with market uncertainties and overcome shortcomings to integrate into the mar-

ket. Onkvisit and Shaw (2009)<sup>[2]</sup> identified it was more challenging and stressful to operate across markets than at domestic. Thus, many journals which are in international marketing subject, are deeply analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the two models. The driving forces behind the implementation of global strategies and discussed the interaction of standardization/adaptation and performance (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Zou and Cavusgil, 2002; Theodosiou and Leonidou, 2003; Pauwels and Hanssens, 2007;

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Boso *et al.*, 2013)<sup>[3][4][5][6][7]</sup>. It has a worthy refer for enterprises and managers.

This review is a structured glance and partial intensive reading through more than one hundred academic references to get inspiration from the strategic direction of international marketing. According to the initial part could be a general grasp of the theoretical concepts of international marketing, and the content involved. Under the second module, it is possible to understand what will lead international companies to choose standardization/adaptation. In the sense of management to support enterprises, comprehensively analyze the antecedents and adopt the most favourable strategy. The third part will answer the profit results of marketing plan implementation. Besides how the business situation will change the marketing strategy?

## 2. Research Methods

In this review, I resolve through critical reading to classification and induction theory, finding the connections and varieties between different publications. Discover the gaps that might be filled according to my considerate of the literature. The search for literature from the Queen's University Belfast library, Reference list in paper and Google Scholar platforms. Write the thoughts generated during the in-depth browsing of the literature in the research document notes, and then organize the bibliography electronically. There will be creative narrowing in the search scope. The keywords selected based on the subject when consulting publications are international marketing strategy, standardization/adaptation, antecedent factors, key performance indicators, and multinational company. In terms of the time range, for the reliability of the data. The literature on the conceptual background content will be concentrated in the research that is widely cited after the 1990s. Still, for the currency, the journals and publishers mentioned in large parts of this paper have been in the past decade research results. The data come from the top authoritative journals in marketing and management, such as *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* and *Journal of Marketing*. This allows the authenticity of critical literature review to be verified.

## 3. Standardization VS Adaptation

### 3.1 Theoretical Background

Standardization and adaptation have always been the centralize of international marketing research. According to Ghauri and Cateora (2011)<sup>[1]</sup> stated that globalization had become a trend in the current market. Thus, when a

group chooses to operate transnationally, the paradigm of global marketing strategy selection becomes the key to the success or failure of new marketplace development (Katsikea *et al.*, 2006; Lages *et al.*, 2008; Schilke *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[8][9][10]</sup>. There are two definitions of standardization in the existed literature: the application of the same marketing strategy in global markets. The other is the use of local marketing strategy without any modification in worldwide (Samiee and Roth, 1992; Cavusgil *et al.*, 1993; Zou *et al.*, 1997)<sup>[11][12][13]</sup>. Chung (2007)<sup>[14]</sup> described the basis of standardization as a comparison of domestic and foreign operating mechanisms and market outlines. Ghemawat<sup>[85]</sup> redefined the global strategic fit in a book published by Harvard in 2018. Among them, Einstein<sup>[84]</sup> believed that differentiation exists between each region and adapt to localization is an effective way to resolve diversity. Global market adaptation includes marketing mix strategies, business positioning and changes in performance indicators. So far, standardization and adaptation seem to be clearly defined.

The debate about whether the globalization of advertising requires to be standardized or adaptive began around the early 1990s. After that, the ensuing argument expanded to promotion methods and then to the marketing mix (Tan and Sousa, 2013; Westjohn and Magnusson, 2017)<sup>[15][16]</sup>. The debate over both strategies lists its unique advantages. The argument given for advocating for standardization in the global market is that as the process of worldwide economic integration progresses gradually, the world will become a whole. The basic to the survival of multinational companies is to improve unified to obtain higher profits (Vrontis *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[17]</sup>. Meanwhile, Madden, Roth, and Dillon (2012)<sup>[18]</sup> analysed that standardized global unified use of brands, large-scale production, and requirements for marketers has become gentler, so labour costs also are reduced. Third, different propaganda methods or slogans not used in the same markets could make consumers psychologically unconvinced and confusion. Standardization just avoids this kind of psychology phenomenon (Backhaus and Van Doorn, 2007)<sup>[19]</sup>. However, Newburry and Yakova (2006)<sup>[44]</sup> had opposite views on standardization. When multinational companies standardize unconditionally, it could face the situation that the companies expect to do not conform to the actual condition. In the end, it leads the enterprise withdraws from the market due to poor governance or even bankruptcy. From this point of view, the upsides and downsides of standardization in all aspects cannot be ignored.

The reason for support applies adaptation is that standardization could not be appropriately implemented in a short period. The company that chose to adopt a custom-

ized market strategy could also learn from the overseas business philosophy (Hultman *et al.*, 2009; Slangen and Dikova, 2014)<sup>[20][21]</sup>. In addition, Westjohn and Magnusson (2017)<sup>[16]</sup> detailed that there are deep-rooted differences in culture, language, education, religion and so on. In each country, those multinational enterprises should respect cultural diversity. At present, business managers are increasingly shifting towards market adaptation to assist companies in cross-border business (Hultman *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[20]</sup>. Although the literature research on market customization is much less than that on standardization, local adaptation seems to be more integrated into the target marketplace.

According to those kinds of literature, it seems that these two types of thought are dialectically reasonable. It is also based on the point of maximizing corporate interests. In order to avoid the confrontation between the two concepts and extreme thoughts (Gabrielsson *et al.*, 2012)<sup>[22]</sup>. Venaik and Midgley (2019)<sup>[23]</sup> also put forward the hypothesis that if all companies implement locally adapted international marketing strategies. Then there is no difference in the same industry, and it becomes another form of standardization. Marketing standardization is conducive to enterprises to reduce costs and improve performance. On the contrary, localization could alleviate social conflicts (Magnusson *et al.*, 2013)<sup>[24]</sup>. To avoid the confrontation between the two concepts, some scholars have done related research to prove that these two market models are not individual groups, but two parts of the unified market as a whole. Based on rigorous analysis and estimation of market conditions and the method of operation (Vrontis *et al.*, 2009; Chung *et al.*, 2012)<sup>[17][25]</sup>. It could be seen that both theories might be practised in a multinational enterprise or even a brand.

Based on the above, there are some of the study limitations. Mostly the academic standardized are conceptual and lack real practice research and actions. At the same time, there does not appear to be a clear definition of the relationship between standardization and adaptation. Split into different systems for evaluation rather than uniform examination. In the research method, most of the current journals used qualitative research methods, such as interviews and other small samples, not statistical purposes. Since directly grasp the main aspects of things, strongly subjectivity and not objective and accurate.

### 3.2 Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix

Products, pricing, place and promotion in the marketing mix are at the spirit of international marketing. Ozsomer and Simonin (2004)<sup>[26]</sup> liken marketing strategies to a parent, with the four parts of the marketing mix as branched

family members. The so-called marketing mix strategy is to modify and combine the four elements in dissimilar situations (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2006; Lages *et al.*, 2008; Sousa and Lengler, 2009)<sup>[8][9][27]</sup>. Therefore, the international marketing model is essentially the standardization or adaptation for each module of the marketing mix.

Standardization is the most common and widely used for 4Ps. One definition of standardization for marketing mix is price, place, promotion and price taken the same approach globally (Lim *et al.*, 2006)<sup>[28]</sup>. As well as, in the handle of the actual situation, most multinational companies prefer a broad range of standardized elements, to achieve maximum profits and obtain a competitive advantage in the market (Zou and Cavusgil, 2002; Katsikeas *et al.*, 2006)<sup>[4][8]</sup>. The same academic research from Lages *et al.* (2013) also confirmed that multinationals could utilize higher standardized strategies to save costs and capital. Or take a holistic approach to a marketing mix which is different from the domestic market but applies to the world. However, these concepts have somewhat deviated from the actual. Zou and Cavusgil (2002)<sup>[4]</sup> had suggested that the fully standardized operability of 4Ps is low because the cultural, political and economic conditions of different countries are generally unlike the same. Furthermore, the essence of marketing strategy is to effectively satisfy the market demand with the development of the eras, to make internal adjustments between marketing mixes (Bahadir *et al.*, 2015)<sup>[29]</sup>. Therefore, although standardization has the simplicity in real operation, it is necessary to adapt the marketing mix to follow the target market.

Local adaptation has gradually entered the public vision. Due to the integration of the benefits of adaptation and standardization in the marketing mix, so as to achieve the international strategy in line with the objectives of enterprises. Modification is adjusted from two or more aspects, such as prices and promotional systems (Homburg *et al.*, 2012)<sup>[30]</sup>. Next, it is wise to customize strategy according to the external environment. Because Sheth (2011)<sup>[31]</sup> elaborated that the diversity of cross-markets and more participants in the market are the crucial drivers of adaptation, which is also the reason for the abandoned standardization. Furthermore, multinationals adapt the resources of their marketing portfolios to address the risks of differentiation. On the other hand, when entering a new market, the high degree of localization of various elements could lose the original appeal of the brand, but also make consumers question the business (Zdravkovic *et al.*, 2010)<sup>[32]</sup>. Occasionally, adaptation causes a burden on corporate funds. For example, the local adaptation of advertising increases unnecessary financial expenses (Sethuraman *et al.*, 2011)<sup>[33]</sup>. From this perspective, it seems that the combination

of unification and differentiation is the optimal solution.

So how to associate them? First, identified where is the company is located in the target position, customers and market (Hartmann *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[34]</sup>. Secondly, studies have confirmed that cross-market operations should be conducted without focusing on one approach. It is better to combine standardization and adaptation to achieve strategic goals (Vrontis, 2003) <sup>[35]</sup>. In fact, the current combined mode of operation has become the method used by multinationals to enter the target market (Ghauri and Cateora, 2011) <sup>[1]</sup>. Finally, apply the plan to each part of the marketing mix. But it is noteworthy that rely on the advantages of single standardization then judge blindly. Decision-based on the actual situation.

### 3.3 Application of International Marketing Strategy to 4Ps

There is a focus that researchers are willing to explore concerning the standardization/adaptation of promotion in 4Ps. Although the topic of standardization or adaptation for the global market originated in promotion, it was followed by a discussion of the various elements in the mix (Lages *et al.*, 2008) <sup>[9]</sup>. At present, from the marketing mix, promotion is still the core preliminary point and continues to be widely evaluated. More research supports localization, Magnusson *et al.* (2013) <sup>[24]</sup> explained that advertising and other promotional methods are typically rendered by local religions, cultures and lifestyle habits. The research results also shown that the adaptation of promotional purposes has brought positive benefits to enterprises and reduced variances. Indeed, the behaviour method should comprehensively refer to many factors, such as the ability of the enterprise, the primary conditions of the target country and a series of problems (Powers and Loyka, 2010) <sup>[36]</sup>. On the contrary, no matter how adapted and promotion matched, rashly adopting localization is not rigorous enough, and may cause managers to lose their rational judgment (Hultman *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[37]</sup>. In fact, Onkvisit and Shaw (2009) <sup>[2]</sup> justified that the standardization of promotional activities is worry-free to a certain extent, decrease unnecessary human resources and material consumption. To summaries, it seems that the standardization/adaptation of promotional methods could take the lead in a gradually globalizing world, also the debate might be continuing.

In 4Ps, each element has its characteristics, and companies may use different qualities to combine with the external environment to achieve performance. A book from Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) <sup>[38]</sup> argued that there is a high probability that product would be standardized based on its adaptable attributes to the market. Similarly, Onkvisit

and Shaw (2009) <sup>[2]</sup> believed that the product is the most standardized. This allows for high profits in less competitively stressful markets while reducing unnecessary marketing expenditure (Sethuraman *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[33]</sup>. But there has been a growing opposition, Venaik and Midgley (2019) <sup>[23]</sup> critically evaluate that in the face of competitive market challenges, product convergence leads to low customer loyalty, small market share and other business problems. Moreover, product innovation is a approach for companies to survive in an uncertain environment. There are data shown that product adaptation benefits increase revenue (Bahadir *et al.*, 2009; Boso *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[7][39]</sup>. For emerging markets, existed products seem not to satisfy consumers, so product improvement is properly feasible in such markets (Bahadir *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[29]</sup>. Compared with other factors, it seems that the product is more suitable for standardization, but it does not rule out adjustment as the internal market conditions change.

The price factor is usually considered to be an uncomplicated issue. On the whole, the impact of price is not to be ignored. Some researchers believed that the importance of price is much higher than any P. It is assumed that the perfect combination of promotion and product could be difficult to overcome the direct impact of price on consumers (Farley *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[40]</sup>. Traditionally, price standardization is unquestionable (Townsend *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[41]</sup>. In other words, the global uniform price could ensure the profit deserved by the enterprise would not be lost, nor would it cause damage in trade barriers for import and export trade (Theodosiou and Katsikeas, 2001) <sup>[42]</sup>. Nevertheless, Zou and Cavusgil (2002) <sup>[4]</sup> described that it is difficult to achieve uniform global pricing in realistic. Because the tariffs, distances, costs of different countries are different, and prices are greatly affected by losses, amounts should be measured comprehensively. From a modern perspective, multinational companies implement price customization based on the political and market situation. For instance, lower prices and increase sales in undeveloped regions. Increase price in areas with excellent economic momentum. Ultimately, profits could be reach maximized (Chung, 2010) <sup>[43]</sup>. At that moment, the customization of price factors seems to be conducive to the development of the cross-market and more practical.

The place seems evident because the sales channels could be roughly divided into online and physical stores. Due to the application of sales channels is basically similar in the various areas (Townsend *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[41]</sup>. Moreover, under the globalization, online shopping platforms used by multiple countries are gradually popularized, and the transportation methods of goods circulation are also accelerating (Newburry and Yakova, 2006) <sup>[44]</sup>. Con-



versely, in the face of some backward areas, it might be necessary to respond to local sales pattern. All in all, sales channels in most regions seem to be compatible with standardization.

In general, the application of standardization/adaptation in each element requires managers to design with referring to theoretical knowledge. During the period of firm stability, it is advisable to minimize the cost brought by the standardized paradigm (Schmid and Kotulla, 2011)<sup>[45]</sup>. Yet, it is worth to ponder that adaptation is to increase the capital premium capacity of multinational corporations (Wirtz *et al.*, 2007)<sup>[46]</sup>. Whether it is to be analysed in conjunction with the drivers that influence international marketing strategies.

Regarding the research gap of the marketing mix in international marketing, it is found that the sample deviation is significant, and most of the theoretical-based recommendations are neither comprehensive nor specific. Also, a large amount of literature and corporate attention to research on marketing strategies focuses on products, while ignoring the impact of price, promotion and place adjustment on performance (Thomas and Jeffrey, 2010)<sup>[47]</sup>. Not only that, but the current literature also only stays at 4Ps, almost without 7Ps related to the marketing mix. In the future, 7Ps in international marketing would be paid attention.

#### 4. Antecedents Affecting International Marketing Strategies

This chapter focuses on the drivers that lead to global marketing strategy decisions. Since the relationship between strategy and the market conditions, determine the outcome of the company's development to a certain extent. In the second and third parts, the antecedents are divided into external and internal. Respectively, discuss the value and influence of different factors and find some gaps that might need to be filled.

##### 4.1 International Marketing Strategy Fit

The degree of tacit agreement between the marketing strategy and environment is managers and companies are interested in making a decision. The level of marketing strategy fit caused by the response after evaluated the whole situation. Cadogan (2012)<sup>[48]</sup> argued that international marketing is more challenging and diverse than domestic marketing. For some countries, global integration is forced to be accepted. As more and more states have opened up the authority of international trade, which means that the marketing strategy is biased towards the standardization of convergence (Laanti *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[49]</sup>.

Driven by global economic integration, Rao-Nicholson and Khan (2017)<sup>[50]</sup> stated that the standardization strategy has been fully adapted to the global market, and adjustment is unnecessary and wasteful of resources. Conversely, as early as 1987, the theory given by Walker and Ruekert<sup>[51]</sup> about the core of the market was that the company should timely revise strategic to changes in the external environment (customers, policies, economy, culture) to reach the market demand. The writing of market and strategy allows for synthesis of the general ideas within the literature on Day (1999)<sup>[52]</sup> market-oriented international strategy. In short, the purpose of the marketing strategy is to achieve the maximum degree of fit between the enterprise and the environment.

However, it is hard to obtain a perfect relationship between marketing strategies and external factors. Venaik and Midgley (2019)<sup>[23]</sup> concluded from experiments that under certain circumstances, it is difficult for multinational companies to successfully achieve the unity and fit of strategic organization with the external environment. Because when multinational companies evaluated the internal and external factors of the target market. It is tough to understand the inner meaning of history and languages. This diversity could be generated in the decision of the marketing strategy (Sheth, 2011)<sup>[31]</sup>. Moreover, when marketers conduct cross-market strategic deployments, it is determined by scientific analysis and assessment, but in part by the marketing manager's personal perception of the target market, and even prejudiced problems exist (Maitland and Sammartino, 2015)<sup>[53]</sup>. Therefore, when making universal marketing decisions, companies would consider various factors and attempt to overcome challenges.

Then the fit of the market and strategy refers to the purpose of the business, the attributes of the background, and the interconnected correlation between other indicators (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006)<sup>[54]</sup>. Marketing is subject to the rendering of a large social environment. In the field of international marketing, the high probability of results is subject to the degree to which external factors and internal strategies matched (Hultman *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[20]</sup>. Jain (1989)<sup>[55]</sup> proposed to standardize or customize the international marketing model with the external environment as the antecedent variable. The factors that affect the marketing strategy model are roughly divided into macro factors and micro factors. The macro factors include the political, economic, cultural and legal conditions of the target market. The micro aspects include customer requirements, competitive pressure, company profitability, and corporate governance (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2006)<sup>[8]</sup>. It is worth mentioning that Venaik and Midgley (2019)<sup>[23]</sup>

explored that the laws and regulations in different countries, which seems to be considerable. As the problem of incomplete infrastructure that has not disappeared in emerging markets also needs to be referred to when formulating strategies. The strategic results brought about by macro and micro conditions, and the quantity of influence is what scholars have been emphasizing.

From the real-life point of view of the research gap, does seem that the concept of strategic fit is too idealistic, and the significance for the management implementation might not be visible. In terms of research methods, studies of this type of journals mostly use meta-analysis to integrate and statistics past research. The limitation of meta-analysis is that the conclusion is inaccurate enough and straightforward. It does not combine specific circumstances and lacks context (Pawson, 2002)<sup>[56]</sup>. Therefore, suggested select cases and in-depth exploration, rather than summarizing.

## 4.2 Macroscopic Antecedents

Economically, the economic level of the host country, the cost of raw materials, the income of consumers, and consumption power all contribute to the expenditure, and it also reflects the potential level of the domestic market (Samli *et al.*, 1993)<sup>[57]</sup>. Thus, when the economic situation of the target area and the home country are similar, standardization of marketing strategies is feasible and reliable. In short, economic status and standardization are positively related. For example, the economic similarities of European nations are extraordinary, and the result was borderless markets. Conversely view from Katsikeas *et al.* (2006)<sup>[8]</sup> and Hultman *et al.* (2009)<sup>[20]</sup> against that the result of the precise calculation study shown economic factors were not strongly related to the choice of standardization/adaptation. In brief, the elements based on the economic circumstances of the host country are not essentially considered for the choice of market strategy, but also consider to be used as a suggestion.

Among the factors of market policy, politics, and law are regular criterion as it is the manifestation of state power. Bahadir *et al.* (2015)<sup>[29]</sup> assessed different market conditions, such as differences between developed and emerging countries. There is a distinction between strategic requirements and development directions. Such as the laws and regulations on medicines, tobacco, and food between nations. Sheth (2011)<sup>[31]</sup> also agreed with the above view that the policy in developed and undeveloped markets are fundamentally different. After repeated revisions in policies and regulations, perfect standards already exist in a developed market. But political factors in emerging economies might be instability. The analysis

illustrated that if the target region has the similar market environments, standardization may be feasible. Otherwise, it would be out of date.

In terms of cultural customs, language, and religion which are external factors worth to be explored. The adoption of standardization by multinational companies promoted by Jain (1989)<sup>[55]</sup> could only be implemented among folks who have the same life philosophy, cultural background, religious beliefs and customs. European countries are apparent evidence. But after all, the reality is that most social backgrounds are not different from the conditions of the host country and are altered (Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2011)<sup>[58]</sup>. Actually, the beliefs, festivals and even the customs of life in European countries are not alike. So, Kolk and Margineantu (2009)<sup>[59]</sup> have been tested to conclude that regulatory policies and human factors account for a large proportion of the causes and weight of marketing strategy customization, which is a direct driver. In summary, standardization and adaptation might be influenced by strong cultural forces, but also in line with specific realities for comprehensive decision-making.

The literature on macro-drivers that is seems to have some analytical gaps, and each factor is Isolated in discussion and research, rather than combined to grasp the overall situation. The significant antecedent variables that affect standardization/adaptation lack an accurate definition. For substantive practical behaviours, the separated (rather than combined) analyses for the factors could lead to companies being too one-sided in decision-making and may cause misinterpretation of target zones. Not only that, but the latest literature on emerging markets has also almost ignored the rate of progress in developing countries. For example, the tricky of inadequate infrastructure has been dramatically improved, which means that the research has not kept up with the pace of emerging economies.

## 4.3 Microscopic Antecedents

In the face of consumer-oriented, the reason for support standardization and local adaptation is dissimilar. According to the traditional theory of Ramani and Kumar (2008)<sup>[60]</sup>, it outlined that the enterprise willing to implement standardization. Due to the manager focus on the conversion rate of customers in the target market, to achieve higher than the planned performance level, while saving the expenses. Three years later, Kumar *et al.* (2011)<sup>[61]</sup> has taken the opposite view, argued that the customer-oriented concept is not always practical and feasible. Besides, the latest research results indicated that multinational companies desire to gain a foothold in the world, the method is to interact with consumers efficiently. Follow this concept, and marketing strategies should concentrate on

localization to better obtain the preferences of different folks. However, due to the adaptation, the resources are scattered, the input and output ratio is reduced, and the cost is increased. According to these points, Lee and Griffith (2019)<sup>[62]</sup> advocated that customers are valuable, but business results are more valued by managers. As a result, when choosing global strategic standardization, accompanied by the search for similar connections and commonalities in their countries with new target customer bases.

From the perspective of market competition intensity, the tightness of rivalry is also a micro factor that could be declared. When firms confronted with pressure and competition from the market, it would become extra versatile and adaptable, such as using pricing, promotion, and customized advertising to enhance value (Theodosiou and Katsikea, 2013)<sup>[63]</sup>. When facing the same type of commerce or services, companies usually choose to adopt customization to their products, even the overall marketing mix (Venaik and Midgley 2019)<sup>[23]</sup>. The opposite argument comes from Kumar *et al.* (2011)<sup>[61]</sup> explained that high-intensity market competition pressure would cause the manager to feel confused, and the international marketing deploy model has become puzzling. Afterwards, Obadia (2013)<sup>[64]</sup>, Shi and Gao (2016)<sup>[65]</sup> and Spyropoulou *et al.* (2018)<sup>[66]</sup> justified that among the micro-driving forces, the intensity of competition and the state of the market are most worthy of attention. In this case, Wilden and Gudergan (2015)<sup>[67]</sup> have credible evidence examined that competitive antecedent is a crucial point in influencing tactical organize decisions. At the moment, there does not seem to be a convincing paradigm for management decision-making. Therefore, if the enterprise gives up considering the contribution of market competition, the judgment might affect the performance to a large extent.

The implementation of profit-oriented international marketing strategies is an area that management might be willing to treasure and controversial. Lee and Griffith (2019)<sup>[62]</sup> believed that through the consistency of international marketing mix strategy to overcome the discrepancy in multinational markets. Conform to the meaning of standardization, coping with shifting events by sticking to a fundamental principle. Conversely, if an adaptive international marketing strategy is adopted according to diverse countries or regions as market segments, conducting a series of client surveys, which would invisibly increase the cost of resources, including human and material resources, investment expenditure. The price rises so that profits will be reduced. While the firm expects a positive relationship in a financial ratio, it is not that reliable and actionable, then requires a mixture of aspects (Gabrielson *et al.*, 2012)<sup>[22]</sup>. As a consequence, the standardized

marketing strategy seems to be more in line with the requirements of profit oriented. It is merely that the standardization/adaptation degree of marketing plans is not only about financial returns.

Multinational companies ought to invent opportunities and challenges in emerging markets as expanding their business territory. In terms of innovation, emerging countries are likely to accept foreign information. Because current production no longer contented the consumption level of the public. So, market access is low, and profits are high. At the same time, acceptance in developed countries is relatively narrow. Cayla and Peñaloza (2012)<sup>[68]</sup> endorsed this point that for country kind of India, any new product would be competitive. It is suggested that emerging markets could also be considered as a condition for strategic choice.

Regarding the research gap of micro antecedent variable, it is a strict task to investigate the marketing decision of an enterprise. Therefore, this kind of academic journals usually applied the method of interviewing marketer and several senior managers in a specific company (Shi and Gao, 2016)<sup>[65]</sup>. The conclusion drawn in this way may occupy the misunderstanding of personal subjectivity and the limitation of the company's industry. Then I found that about financial oriented in a one-sided attitude biased towards the benefits of standardization and neglected to study the shortcomings brought about by unification. The current research is a short-term observation, but in the long run, it is biased against reality. But long-term studies are also unrealistic because companies that fail to make strategic choices are already facing bankruptcy (Spyropoulou *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[66]</sup>. In addition, research on emerging markets is almost towards countries such as China, Brazil and India, but some emerging markets in Africa are valuable.

## 5. Correlation between Marketing Standardization/Adaptation and Performance

As for transnational corporations, it could be the most intuitive to focus on the profit key indicator in the development of new markets. Hence, the literature review in this chapter only selected financial returns as KPI. The core of this module is to explore and analyse the interaction between performance and international marketing strategies. Critical reading discovers deficiencies in research. The first part introduces the factors that affect the performance in the international market. It is explained that standardization/adaptation is essential to performance through a review. Then, the last two parts of this chapter are a detailed evaluation of the interaction between inter-

national strategy and KPI.

### 5.1 Factors Affecting the Performance of the International Market

The performance feedback mechanism is one of the cores of corporate behaviour. It is essential to measure the company's progress from the growth of financial indicators. For companies, the year-on-year rise in profits is the primary development goal (Morgan *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[69]</sup>. Key performance indicators include multiple dimensions, such as high customer conversion rate, market share ratio, sales revenue, return on investment and other symbols as benchmarks for evaluating market performance (Morgan, 2012)<sup>[70]</sup>. The company growth theory proposed by Joseph and Wilson (2018)<sup>[71]</sup> defined that performance is based on the intuitive capability of business operations. Therefore, the financial rate of return is selected as the KPI. Simultaneously, the financial growth of multinational companies depends on the extent to which corporate governance decisions and marketing strategies fit. Studies have shown that compare the same companies, the upper-performance level of the company that maintains a higher matching relationship with the background (Venaik and Midgley 2019)<sup>[23]</sup>. Since the performance in overseas markets is greatly influenced by specific elements, including politics, economy, the total of companies in the same industry, and the force of rivalry.

First, the relevance between standardization and adaptation is a vital feature used to measure the business and performance (Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Lee and Griffith, 2019)<sup>[62][72]</sup>. The strategy of standardization or adaptation is based on performance. In theory, how much revenue and profit the international marketing model generates (Griffith *et al.*, 2014)<sup>[73]</sup>. Also, in terms of management, profit growth is the key performance indicator, which is also the ultimate driving force considered by business managers (Morgan *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[69]</sup>. In early research, mostly the content of international marketing research focused on strategy. Neglecting the performance of the company after the transformation or implementation of global marketing tactics. In recent years, scholars have begun to explore and experiment with it.

Secondly, the fit between the tactical strategies of the multinational company and the background of the target market also play a vital role in performance. Chung (2010)<sup>[43]</sup> considered that a top-quality strategy could bring a higher market share and customer base. The research results of Katsikeas *et al.* (2006)<sup>[8]</sup> demonstrated that the standardization of marketing strategies implemented by multinational companies could bring revenue provided that companies have the similar cultural background

and compatibility in the transnational market. But when the essential customer intelligence of the host country is different from the target market, standardization would retreat to subsequent place. If the cross-market similarity is elementary, then the company's planning tends to local adaptation, and the strategy likewise depends on the degree of variation (Okazaki *et al.*, 2006)<sup>[74]</sup>. The ability of the firm to achieve the best performance indicators decided by the relationship between the capabilities and antecedent factors within the company. The market to which it belongs, and the ability to complement strategic implement that matches the target market (Spyropoulou *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[66]</sup>. For the above, whether the international marketing model is appropriate or not should be based on the primary conditions of the multinational enterprise itself. Then the company strategy could be united with the national background of the established market and adjusted according to its circumstances.

Although many studies have explored the factors that influence the performance of international operations. The research on the standardization/adaptation of global marketing strategies into each element of the marketing mix is blank. For instance, analyse the impact of the customization of promotion in 4Ps on performance. The lack of any effect of price standardization on performance. Due to the particularities of various markets around the world, current research has not given narrower limits. This is worthy of consideration and scrutiny.

### 5.2 Impact of International Marketing Strategies on Performance

As early as 1989, Jain<sup>[55]</sup> started to promote thorough research into standardized and adaptable performance. But for now, the conclusions drawn by the studies on performance indicators are unevenness, making the decision-making of the marketer unclear and the supported by the results of it is from an altered direction. The content of international marketing strategies has become an essential prerequisite to study the cross-market performance of enterprises (Chen *et al.*, 2016)<sup>[75]</sup>. There is a particular mode of action between international marketing strategy and performance. Standardization/adaptation could increase performance under certain circumstances or weaken performance capabilities (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2006, p.870)<sup>[8]</sup>. Some scholarships have found that the standardization of international marketing strategies is directly proportional to performance and related have a positive impact (Zou and Cavusgil, 2002)<sup>[4]</sup>. In contrast, Calantone *et al.* (2006)<sup>[76]</sup> claimed that there is an inverse relationship between full standardization and performance, and it would bring a negative return to companies. Despite this, standard-



ization still dominates the global deploy plans of export companies. The results from Gabrielsson *et al.* (2012) <sup>[22]</sup> expressed that standardization is generally assisted for company performance. The summaries of all views shown that the more substantial effect of standardization on performance, but it does not exclude objections.

The effect of comprehensive standardization on the performance of multinational companies depends largely on the similarity of the external environment. When met with a large enterprise-scale, coupled with the culture of home countries in expanding the market, social, economic and other aspects of the circumstances are significantly parallel. The probability of successful implementation of standardization is outstanding, to promote global economic progression (Schilke *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[10]</sup>. Also, Katsikeas *et al.* (2006) <sup>[8]</sup> identified that when the target market is highly compatible with the original national situation, the financial return of standardization on cross-market would increase. It is admittedly that not only large-scale multinational companies, but also small-scale enterprises should be standardized as much as possible. It is wise to choose to save cost to increase revenue (Schilke *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[10]</sup>. All in all, the factors to consider should be consistent with the cross-market strategy to achieve the planned financial return.

However, on the surface, the unified marketing strategy is only to save costs. To abandon the expansion of market share brought by customization, thereby increasing profits (Zeriti *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[77]</sup>. It seems undesirable and thoughtless. Moreover, Lages *et al.* (2008) <sup>[9]</sup> evaluated that comprehensive standardization may bring shocks and negative emotions to enterprises. Next, weaken the performance growth and customer identification caused by local adaptation to a certain extent (Schilke *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[10]</sup>. Hence, the contribution of standardization to financial returns is indelible. But at the same time, it is also necessary to avoid negative results. As well as early investigation of the cross-market operation of multinational enterprises to a large extent determined the strategy of enterprises.

The geographically innovative products are critical to the plans to expand its footprint. The competitive advantage brought by local adaptation lies in the discrepancy, contented the diversification of cross-market groups. thereby to obtain a favourable performance advantage (Wirtz *et al.*, 2007) <sup>[46]</sup>. Specifically, when the financial strength of the enterprise is relatively high, it is willing to follow and respect the diversity of the target market and have the capital to support local adaptation (Ruzo *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[78]</sup>. Customization is a paradigm that is integrated into the target country. And does not bring a sense of distance to the target customer. This sense of closeness

is a potential factor for growth performance (Zeriti *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[77]</sup>. Griffith and Lee (2019) <sup>[62]</sup> argued that the increase in profitability also rooted in whether companies can efficiently attract and retain consumers. Thereby boost sales and exceeding the average benefits brought by standardization. The opposite theory is to establish harmonization is based on the simultaneous application of each segment to meet economies of scale and reduce the high cost of customization (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[8]</sup>. Surroca, Tribó and Zahra put forward an idealistic describe in 2013 <sup>[79]</sup>, discover an approach to change the drawbacks of high cost brought by adaptation. Assumed that enterprises could implement localization and likewise ensure it would not increase costs. For example, laws, policies, and tax rates make reasonable use of differentiation to avoid budget expansions. Although the impact of local adaptation on turnover is not in the scope of management considerations temporary. It does not represent only faced with the failure of standardization that a strategic shift is made.

To be frankly, the research gap about the pluses and minuses of standardization/adaptation to performance is to adopt a single or two countries as the research object. Then the completeness of the sample is peculiar and not comprehensive. The conclusion this drawing is only applicable to this type of country. The existed literature still focuses on the impact of standardization on performance, thereby ignore the positive or negative implication of adaptation. The focal point of the following research seems to be biased towards the field of local adaptation, which might need to be filled.

### 5.3 Impact of Performance on Standardization/Adaptation

International expansion is generally regarded as a method to increase financial income. So, when the business performance changes, the implementation of marketing strategies would be deeply discussed. Studies have begun to notice fluctuations in corporate performance that could trigger a re-planning of international marketing strategies (Chng *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[80]</sup>. Before implementing a marketing strategy, managers should master the current company performance capabilities (Morgan, 2012) <sup>[70]</sup>. The growth or decline in the performance of multinational companies would bring revolutions to market decisions and corporate behaviour (Pauwels and Hanssens, 2007) <sup>[6]</sup>. Later, Lages, Mate and Griffith conducted an experiment in 2013 <sup>[86]</sup> on how to make strategic adjustments to the performance decline. According to more than 2,000 survey statistics calculated, enterprises would adopt conversion marketing tactics because of local specifics when the new market is sluggish. In the same year, Mintz and Currim (2013) <sup>[87]</sup>

also explored the performance of special periods and the status of international strategy. On the contrary, there is currently a theoretical confirmed that if companies resolutely make strategic adjustments during the economic downturn, it may cause more severe problems than current and increase risk (Chng *et al.*, 2015)<sup>[80]</sup>. Therefore, for managers to operate negatively, multinational enterprises would enter the international market into a dilemma.

In this particular period, when the financial return of the company is challenging to reach the performance requirements. Some researchers suggested that the company should implement a more standardized marketing paradigm. Due to it could compress budgets to a certain extent, increase profits and worth. And the benefits of cost-effectiveness are speedy and timely for managers to implement the proposal (Schilke *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[10]</sup>. When the scale of multinational companies is large and many workforces, Ruzo *et al.* (2011)<sup>[78]</sup> assessed that as their strength and health, companies prefer to incline to abandon the adaptation of market elements and implement uniformity that can decrease costs. In comparison, Lages *et al.* (2008)<sup>[9]</sup> argued that standardization is not a hundred percent and might not play a crucial role when companies sink into trouble. Since the research from Jiang and Holburn (2018)<sup>[81]</sup> revealed that in the long-term profit target, the market is alerting manager when there is a meagre financial turnover in the business, disappointment to grasp performance aims. The current management method could not produce benefit to the enterprise, and the strategy is too flinching. Explicitly speaking, whether to strengthen standardization or adaptation should also refer to the current market competition level, the financial situation and development goals.

When affronted a decline in performance, the issues to be considered are not only the reorganisation of tactics but also the comprehensive analysis of the pressure of the external environment. Due to the diversity in the international market, it is problematic for products to achieve uniformity of standards. As a result, the primary competitive advantage is weakened, and the target customer group could not recognise the business. In the face of such problems, performance could contain a negative impact. So, the transformation of standardization into a local adaptation that respects differences improve poor management (Schilke *et al.* 2009)<sup>[10]</sup>. Pauwels and Hanssens (2007)<sup>[6]</sup> illustrated that after profit decline, companies usually modified promotion and place. Similarly, Morgan (2012)<sup>[70]</sup> agreed with the opinion that in order to improve business performance in tough periods, the strategy requires to complement market and plan. Morgan (2012)<sup>[70]</sup> Believed that declining performance would encourage

local adaptation. Nevertheless, there are studies suggested that long-term adaptation would gradually lose its effect eventually (Krasnikov and Jayachandran, 2008)<sup>[82]</sup>. Thus, the strategy could not be altered to adapt as a medicine to restore vitality to the enterprise. But it might be a method to recover when the business is fragile.

In general, performance seems to play a role in strategic deploy to a certain extent but has no critical influence on marketing intentions. In comparison, the strategic intent of an enterprise is affected by the competitive pressure of the market, and customer feedback has a weighty impact (Brouthers *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[83]</sup>.

The research methods are mainly meta-analysis and interview survey. Due to strong subjectivity and limited data, the authority might not be flawless (Griffith *et al.*, 2014)<sup>[73]</sup>. The limitation of the research is that the current literature focuses on how managers should respond to the decline in performance. So, what modifications could standardization/adaptation bring when performance rises? In addition, it is not only managers who mean to the response plan, but also to discuss the causes of operational problems. This topic is a direction that requires a lot of investigation and interviews.

## 6. Conclusions

In summaries, the core concepts of critical literature review are global marketing strategies and marketing mix. Through this answered the causes and consequences that affected the standardization/adaptation strategy.

The first part explained that the standardization is to implement the same marketing mix strategy on a global scale. Local adaptation is an international strategy that integrates various elements of the marketing mix into the target market. In the second chapter, it is reviewed that business leaders should realise that whether to use single methods or the combination standardization with adaptation to conform to the paradigm of maximum strategic fit (Jain, 1989)<sup>[55]</sup>. The antecedents of the macro perspective include political conditions, economy, policies, laws and so on, among which the policy parts that deserve the extra attention. From a micro perspective, the competitive pressure in the market is mentioned the most, and it is also a central antecedent (Spyropoulou *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[66]</sup>. Undoubtedly, consumer preference and performance orientation would also influence decision-making. In the third section, not only reviewed the performance impact of standardization/adaptation but also evaluated the effect of performance on standardization/adaptation. Minimizing the cost of standardization would serve to improve performance, but it has the effect of decline sales and revenue. In general, adaptation would accomplish perfor-

mance goals in the long span. Though, the large amount of capital investment in the early stage makes manager more motivated to standardization. The slothful financial returns might cause managers aware of current business problems and create effective diversified solutions (Venaik and Midgley 2019) <sup>[23]</sup>, It may also make the next phase of strategic design more standardized to reduce costs.

According to the literature review, the current literature mainly emphasizes the positive aspects and negative aspects of standardization, the degree of fit with the market and the impact on performance. Therefore, the research gaps in international marketing strategies, mainly centre at the following aspects. In terms of content, there is a lack of in-depth exploration of the local adaptation direction. As well as, ignored the impact on international strategies when financial returns rise. In the aspect of research background, because of the higher data transparency, a large proportion of the research industry is limited to well-known multinational companies or export companies. Besides, most of the assessment in emerging markets are based on China, Russia, Brazil. Academics seem not to realize the weight of other undeveloped economies. In the field of research methods, the mostly literature used qualitative analysis methods, with small samples and irregular quality. The reliability and validity of the conclusions are doubtful. Additionally, the alleged definition is not clear enough, and it seems that meaningful guidance for managers is less.

We should admit that the existed international marketing framework may not be comprehensive. In the confront of progress and alternating social environments, the strategic choice of multinational corporation is not an uncomplicated task for marketers. Consequently, the future research direction trend to the significance to practice, and gradually narrow the research scope concrete.

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