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**THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED BRAND
GLOBALNESS/LOCALNESS ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS
OF POLISH CONSUMERS**

Doctoral dissertation abstract

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Introduction

The use of brands by companies has a long history, dating back to ancient times. The meaning of a brand has evolved over the centuries from its original function, identifying a commodity, to a multidimensional construct, enriching products and services with additional intangible values that buyers highly value. For companies, a brand is, first and foremost a source of financial gain, a means of gaining a competitive advantage, a mark of quality, and even a way of giving products unique associations. As a valuable corporate asset, a brand is also a tool for creating consumer needs and influencing purchasing decisions. At the same time, companies use the brand to protect the unique characteristics of the products they offer legally. Having a strong brand, in addition to its broad benefits, creates risks related to unfair market practices of competitors. It is important to emphasise that the value of a brand depends on its uniqueness and ability to satisfy buyers' desires. Maintaining these characteristics requires appropriate management of risk factors and knowledge of the basis and forms of legal protection under current legislation.

The benefits of brands are also observed on the demand side. For consumers, the brand guarantees quality, thus reducing the risk of making a wrong purchasing decision. It is worth emphasising that having a distinctive brand also helps to create the consumer's personality, as modern consumers increasingly choose brands not for their functional values but for their intangible values. Brands allow both to signal to belong to a specific community and to offer an opportunity for an individual to stand out in their reference group (Stasiuk and Maison, 2014, p. 310). In this context, it is crucial to position the brand appropriately in terms of its global and local dimensions, as it can become a symbol of global culture (manifesting its universal values) and a local icon (representing the values of local communities).

Over the past few decades, the increasing globalisation of consumption has contributed to the creation of a global consumer culture, which has become an essential determinant of how companies operate in the market (Steenkamp, 2019). The rise of global connectedness is transforming the market into a multicultural environment, favouring companies that have managed to establish themselves in the minds of consumers as global brands that symbolise the values of a global consumer culture. Although the global brand can be considered in the context of an organisation's

perspective (supply-side perspective). Steenkamp et al. (2003, p. 54) argued that a global brand only benefits if the consumers perceive it as global - available in many markets and widely perceived by consumers as a global brand. Emphasising the demand perspective, the authors introduced the term Perceived Brand Globalness (PBG), which is widely accepted in the literature (Steenkamp et al. 2003, p. 54). In addition to broad market reach, which is an essential component of brand globalness, according to Steenkamp et al. (2003), the component of the brand's appeal to global symbolism is also essential. Brands are carriers of global values, which consumers use to create their identity shared with people worldwide. People identify with brands perceived as global because they provide a kind of 'passport' to global citizenship (Halkias et al., 2016). The reasons why companies choose to develop global brands are many and usually involve a number of benefits. First and foremost, companies can benefit from savings in marketing and R&D expenditures and cost reductions due to increasing production scale (Özsomer and Altaras, 2008). In addition, the benefits of global branding are supported by globalisation, which has reduced the time needed for geographical expansion of brands, highlighted the attractiveness of global brands, supported by a progressive homogenisation of consumer needs and tastes (Özsomer and Altaras, 2008).

Over the past decades, globalisation has been one of the most important forces shaping the environment in which companies operate in the market, but events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and, with it, trade wars have contributed to a slowdown in globalisation processes and even its 'corrosion' (Posen, 2022). With the events described above, consumer behaviour is changing. Consumers are becoming more critical of globalisation, directing their attention towards local values (Mandler et al., 2020). The new socio-economic reality seems to offer an opportunity for local brands to stand out and meet the expectations of a resurgent local consumer culture. Local brands are those that have managed to connect with the local market and participate in the consumption habits of local consumers (Sichtmann et al., 2019). Such brands do not necessarily have to originate from the consumer's country or be owned by a national company, what is important is their ability to create a bond with the local community (Sichtmann et al., 2019). Like their global counterparts, local brands also have their strengths. Consumers commonly value these brands for their authenticity, their ability to adapt to the specific needs of the local market, their ability to express the identity of the consumer and their support of local culture (Schuiling and Kapferer, 2004; Özsomer,

2012; Xie et al, 2015; Safeer et al, 2021). Similar to global brands, localness is captured as Perceived Brand Localness (PBL) (H. Liu et al., 2021).

With the political transformation and liberalisation of the Polish market, many foreign companies have decided to expand the presence of global brands and make them available to Polish consumers as well. These brands, despite their long-standing presence, still face strong competition from their local counterparts. For companies wishing to achieve or maintain a competitive advantage in a globalised market, it is important to understand how consumers make their purchasing decisions, why some consumers prefer global/local brands and what marketing implications this has, especially in terms of consumer assessment of brand quality and purchase intent.

Given that consumer behaviour is changing as a result of socio-economic events, companies are increasingly faced with decisions to continue with global brand strategies or to implement local alternatives. This is an important issue as previous research confirms that global/local brand positioning can significantly influence consumers' purchasing process, including perceived brand quality and purchase intention (e.g. Steenkamp et al, 2003; Halkias et al, 2016; Vuong and Khanh Giao, 2020). It should be emphasised that achieving high perceived quality scores is important for organisations, as quality advantage provides the opportunity for a price premium. This provides a compelling reason for consumers to purchase products and even allows for brand positioning along the quality dimension and differentiation from competitors (D. A. Aaker, 1991, p. 86). In turn, consumers' stated purchase intentions are some of the most important information used by marketing managers in assessing the effectiveness of companies' marketing activities, as well as forecasting future sales (Morwitz, 2014).

Having a strong global/local brand, in addition to its broad benefits, poses risks related to counterfeiting of branded goods. As one of a company's most valuable assets, a brand is built up over years and needs to be actively protected against unfair competitive practices. In the face of globalisation and trade liberalisation, infringement of intellectual property rights is becoming increasingly common. Unauthorised trade in branded products reduces business revenues, undermines innovation, hampers economic growth and can even pose a danger to consumers themselves (EUIPO, 2020). Counterfeit goods often do not meet quality standards and may contain harmful substances or defective components. In addition, consumers often do not know that they are in possession of counterfeit products and this ultimately damages the reputation of the original manufacturer.

And although the range of counterfeit goods covers virtually all product categories, the fraudsters' targets are most often products from well-known (widely recognised) global brands. The phenomena described above have increased in the last few decades and are increasingly taking place in the online environment. Consumers, being able to purchase products with virtually no territorial restrictions, via global online platforms, are also exposed to fraudulent sales practices. It should be noted that the online environment is characterised by the ease of copying works and the generally high anonymity of users, and consumers themselves face difficulties in assessing the authenticity of products. For businesses, it therefore seems important to determine how and to what extent a brand is legally protected under current legislation. The separation of acts can help organisations to maximise brand protection and their goodwill, as well as ensure the long-term benefits of their brand asset.

Research problems and gaps

This dissertation is the result of the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Studies programme "SIS PhD Economics+", funded by the National Centre for Research and Development and conducted at the Faculty of Management of Wrocław University of Economics and Business. The research considerations are therefore interdisciplinary in nature, involving two scientific disciplines: management and quality sciences (the main discipline) and legal sciences (the accompanying discipline). **The main research problem** is to find an answer to the question: how does the perceived brand globalness/localness influence the purchase intentions of Polish consumers in the context of the mediating role of perceived brand quality and the moderating role of consumer cosmopolitanism and consumer ethnocentrism? The research problem thus formulated is cognitive (exploratory), explicative (explanatory) and partly utilitarian (based on the empirical research conducted). **An additional research problem** requiring further investigation is to answer the question: how is a brand protected under current legislation and is its legal protection sufficient? Such a research problem is primarily cognitive in nature and provides a starting point for the study and analysis of legal acts and, consequently, the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

It is important to note that although consideration of the above topics has been ongoing for at least a couple of years, there are still **research, cognitive and information gaps** in both areas that require further study. In particular, with regard to the issue of perceived brand globalness/locality, the literature review has shown that there are research gaps concerning:

1. the too narrow conceptualisation of perceived brand globalness in the studies to date considering only the dimension of the broad market reach of the brand, there are no papers analysing the impact of the dimensions of global brand symbolism;
2. the small number of publications dedicated to the issue of perceived brand localness. An analysis of the literature has shown that research dedicated to this issue is scarce (there is little scientific evidence on the impact of local brand positioning on consumers);
3. inconclusive findings on the strength of consumer ethnocentrism as an important moderator of the effects of global/local brand positioning;
4. the scarcity of empirical research on the role of consumer cosmopolitanism on global/local brand preference;
5. the influence of perceived brand globalness/localness on consumer evaluation of brand quality and purchase intentions among Polish consumers.

Meanwhile, the study of legal literature and the analysis of legal acts revealed **significant cognitive and informational gaps** focused on the following issues:

1. the establishment of the concept of brand and related terms in the context of existing legal regulations. The notion of a brand does not appear in the legal language - the legislator does not use it in the language of regulations and legal acts, but the designations of this notion find their legal regulation;
2. legal protection of the brand in the applicable legal regulations. The regulation of brand protection is complicated and scattered and can take place at different levels, i.e. international, EU and national.

Research objectives, hypotheses and methodology

Filling the identified research gaps will be possible once the main objective and secondary objective have been achieved. **The main objective** of the dissertation is: To assess the impact of perceived brand globalness/localness on the purchase intentions of Polish consumers, taking into account the mediating role of perceived brand quality and the moderating role of consumer cosmopolitanism and consumer ethnocentrism. **An additional aim** of the research is: to identify and distinguish the object of protection,

which is a brand and, to indicate the legal basis of brand protection on the grounds of the legislation in force. The realisation of the main objective of the dissertation, due to its specificity, requires the verification of twelve adopted research hypotheses:

H1: The brand's broad market reach is positively related to perceived brand quality.

H2: Global brand symbolism is positively related to perceived brand quality.

H3: Perceived brand localness is positively related to perceived brand quality.

H4: The brand's broad market reach is positively related to consumers' purchase intentions.

H5: Global brand symbolism is positively related to consumers' purchase intentions.

H6: The perceived brand localness is positively related to brand purchase intentions.

H7: The relationship between market breadth and purchase intentions depends on the level of consumer ethnocentrism (negative relationship) and consumer cosmopolitanism (positive relationship).

H8: The relationship between global brand symbolism and purchase intentions depends on the level of consumer ethnocentrism (negative relationship) and consumer cosmopolitanism (positive relationship).

H9: The relationship between perceived brand localness and purchase intentions depends on consumer ethnocentrism (positive relationship) and consumer cosmopolitanism (negative relationship).

H10: Perceived global brand quality is positively related to purchase intentions.

H11: Perceived local brand quality is positively related to brand purchase intentions.

H12: Perceived brand quality mediates the relationship between brand wide market reach/global brand symbolism/perceived brand localness and purchase intentions.

Due to the specificity of the dissertation, the research process was divided into two parts - closely related to the research problems and objectives presented earlier. The realisation of the main objective of the dissertation consisted of three main parts: **conceptual, empirical and deductive-application.**

The conceptual part included conceptualisation and explication (outlining the research problem, identifying research gaps, formulating the main objective and accompanying research hypotheses) and operationalisation (translating the theoretical construct into an empirical research plan). The operationalisation stage included developing the research model, deciding on the choice of research methods, identifying the research subject and developing the research tool. **The empirical part** was conducted in the second quarter of 2022. It included an expert panel and two rounds of research: a

pilot and a survey proper. The expert panel included five academics conducting research in the areas of marketing management, international marketing, consumer behaviour and brand management. The pilot study was conducted on a sample of 194 students of management and finance and accounting at Wrocław University of Economics and Business. Directly after the pilot study, a main survey was conducted on a sample of 1,100 respondents on a panel of the research agency "SW Research". The research process was completed with a **deductive-application part**, including analysis and discussion of the results, identification of implications for business practice and limitations of the research. The added value of this stage is that the author of the dissertation identified potential directions for future research on perceived brand globalness/localness.

The realisation of the additional objective, focused on establishing and distinguishing the subject of brand protection and indicating the legal basis for brand protection, included a conceptual part and a deductive-application part. **The conceptual part** consisted of a thorough analysis of the literature on the subject and legal acts using the dogmatic-legal method (characteristic of works from the area of legal sciences). At this stage, the research problem was outlined and significant cognitive and informational gaps requiring deeper consideration were identified. In **the deductive-application part**, the interpretation and systematisation of legal norms in the area of legal protection of a brand was carried out. An attempt was made to establish the concept of a brand and related terms in the light of the applicable regulations. The final stage was the formulation of conclusions and recommendations relevant to the practice of law application.

Research findings

The main objective of this dissertation was to assess the influence of perceived brand globalness/localness on the purchase intentions of Polish consumers, taking into account the mediating role of perceived brand quality and the moderating role of consumer cosmopolitanism and consumer ethnocentrism. The secondary objective, on the other hand, focused on identifying and distinguishing the subject of brand protection and indicating the grounds for legal protection of a brand under the current legislation. This part presents the main conclusions from the realisation of the presented objectives of the dissertation and indicates the originality of the solutions to the research problems.

The realisation of the main objective of the dissertation required the verification of the twelve research hypotheses. The analyses conducted by the author allow to draw the following main conclusions:

1. According to the dissertation author's research and the hypothesis tests conducted (H4, H5 and H6), wide market reach of the brand, global brand symbolism and PBL significantly (positively) influence purchase intention among Polish consumers.
2. Hypothesis tests (H1, H2, H3) also showed that all independent variables, including broad market reach and global brand symbolism (PBG dimensions) and PBL, significantly (positively) influence consumer evaluation of brand quality.
3. However, the dissertation research conducted did not find support for the moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer cosmopolitanism in the relationship between the independent variables and the explained variable (purchase intention). The tests of hypotheses H7, H8 and H9 conducted did not prove a moderating effect (with one exception). There was a weak (but still statistically significant) moderating effect of consumer ethnocentrism on the relationship between global brand symbolism and purchase intention (this was a positive relationship, which was not assumed by hypothesis H8).
4. Although not a new finding, the dissertation author's study also confirms the findings of other researchers (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Vuong and Khanh Giao, 2020) that higher brand evaluations in the context of quality have their clear (positive) consequences in higher purchase intention.

5. An important finding from the testing of hypothesis H12 is that PBQ in the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable acts as a mediator (mediating factor). It should be noted that the mediating effect is partial (but statistically significant) and should be taken into account by other researchers in future studies.
6. An interesting finding of the study is that even global brands, through their long-term actions, can create a bond with the local market and thus become embedded in the local culture and benefit from it. This result may be indicative of the progressive phenomenon of hybridisation/glocalisation of brands.

The literature studies and the analysis of legal acts in the field of legal brand protection issues allow the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. Despite the fact that the brand is so important in business dealings, the legislator does not use the concept of "brand" in the language of regulations and therefore it does not appear in legal acts. In doing so, it should be noted that the designations of the brand concept find their own legal regulations.
2. The concept of brand in management science and quality in the legal order can be the designation of an entrepreneur, the designation of a product, a company, an enterprise, a trademark, a personal good, an industrial design or even the reputation of a company.
3. References to a brand in the legal order are scattered, the designations of the concept of a brand can be found in the Civil Code, the Industrial Property Law and even copyright and related rights. Against this background, it should be concluded that there is a need to unify the law, as the complexity of legal regulations and the lack of clarity is a major impediment for entrepreneurs wishing to protect a brand.
4. Significant brand protection (although not the only one) can be obtained by entities by registering a trademark, industrial design or obtaining a patent for an invention, which are provided for in the IPL. Protection is supplemented by acts on combating unfair competition, copyright and the Civil Code.
5. With the rapid development of online trade, competition between companies is global. Moreover, the largest volume of counterfeit goods comes from emerging countries. However, an analysis of the legislation has shown that intellectual property protection law tends to be limited to national and EU law. In this context, it should be concluded that there is a need for regulation at a global level, including emerging markets where brand rights are abused.

This dissertation provides an original solution to the research problems presented for several reasons. In particular in terms of the PBG/PBL issues:

1. To the best of the author's knowledge, this study is the first to address the issue of PBG/PBL and its impact on purchase intentions among Polish consumers. Particularly noteworthy is the comprehensiveness of the research taking into account two important moderating factors (consumer cosmopolitanism, consumer ethnocentrism) and a mediating factor (PBQ), which are tested in a single study.
2. In contrast to previous studies, the dissertation author used a more complete conceptualisation of PBG that includes its two important dimensions - broad market reach and global symbolism. Most importantly, in the case of global symbolism, the author's operationalisation was also proposed. Against this backdrop, this study represents the first attempt to capture this phenomenon in a fuller (extended) way to identify which element of PBG appeals more effectively to consumers. It is worth noting that the need to capture these two dimensions has already been mentioned in the literature (e.g. Liu et al., 2021).
3. Our own research applied the broader conceptualisation of PBL proposed by Sichtmann et al., (2019), which goes beyond local brand iconicity or perceived domestic production (Swoboda et al., 2012; Özsomer, 2012). This approach also allows for the inclusion of cases of foreign brands that have managed to establish a connection with the local market through a long-standing presence in the market and a strong commitment to the local market (and even those that have not managed to achieve local cultural icon status). There is also the added value of a new (fuller) proposal to operationalise an extended conceptualisation of PBL.
4. In the context of consumer ethnocentrism (a moderating variable), previous research suggests that the widely used CETSCALE ethnocentrism scale suffers from an overly narrow conceptualisation) and even "is a de facto measurement of the degree of extreme patriotic or nationalistic attitudes" (Maison and Baran, 2014, p. 10). This, in turn, has raised legitimate concerns among scholars about the potential overstated utility of consumer ethnocentrism in moderating PBG impact effects in previous studies (Diamantopoulos et al., 2019). In the present study, the author tests this moderating variable using the SCONET scale, which is devoid of ideological motives or an extreme patriotic basis (Maison and Baran, 2014).
5. The dissertation author's research also provides an empirical test of the second moderator (consumer cosmopolitanism). It should be noted that consumer cosmopolitanism has already been identified by Özsomer (2012) as an important factor potentially influencing the effects of PBG/PBL, but has not received much scholarly attention to date.

6. The main objective of the dissertation focused on the influence of PBG/PBL on purchase intention with consideration of a significant mediator (PBQ). Although the relationships described above have been considered by other researchers (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Vuong and Khanh Giao, 2020). The dissertation author's research model tests them for all independent variables, including a dimension of global brand symbolism not previously tested in the literature.

The added value of the dissertation is also its interdisciplinary aspect related to the realisation of the previously presented additional objective of the dissertation focused on aspects of legal brand protection. Against this background, it is worth emphasising that:

1. An attempt has been made to define the concept of 'brand' in the light of the applicable legal regulations and to define its conceptual scope. This is an important issue, because a simple transfer of the brand in the sense of management and quality sciences to the legal sciences is inexpedient (does not allow to obtain satisfactory results). Against this background, it should be stated that 'brand' on the ground of law and its institutions can be defined on two levels. Firstly, in a narrower sense (*sensu stricto*) a brand understood as a trademark. Secondly, in a broader sense (*sensu largo*), a brand can be defined by referring to the concept of an entrepreneur, personal property, business signs and industrial design, or even the reputation of a company.
2. An attempt has been made to interpret and systematise the legal norms on brand protection. This task posed a major challenge, as brand protection regulations are complex and dispersed and may run at different levels, i.e. international, EU and national, which are intertwined. It is noteworthy that it was indicated under which legal regulations companies can obtain the strongest brand protection.

This dissertation is theoretical and empirical in nature and covers two important issues - the issue of PBG/PBL and its impact on purchase intention among Polish consumers and aspects of legal brand protection. The main objective was achieved through the use of various research methods (critical analysis of national and international literature, expert panel composed of representatives of the academic community, survey method). It should be emphasised that survey research played a special role in the empirical research, which was carried out using the author's research tool (survey questionnaire) on a representative sample of 1,100 respondents. The designed research tool can be successfully used by other researchers dealing with PBG/PBL issues and even business practitioners, as purchase intentions are one of the most important pieces of information used in assessing the effectiveness of companies' marketing activities, as well as forecasting future sales. Noteworthy is the originality and

comprehensiveness of the proposed research tool, which demonstrates the high methodological value of the dissertation.

In turn, the additional objective was achieved through the use of the dogmatic-legal method based on the analysis of the legal text and the study of the subject literature. The brand as one of the most valuable assets of a company requires active protection against unfair competition practices. The findings made can be of value to specialists dealing with the protection of corporate intellectual property. At the same time, it should be noted that the considerations concerning legal protection of a brand contained in this work are made at a certain level of generality and concern diverse products. The main focus has been on synthesising and drawing conclusions of a general nature and identifying those legal regulations that are fundamental to the protection of a brand by means of legal regulation and, as *lex generalis*, apply to most products.

This dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. The first chapter discusses the essence and importance of the brand in business, including a presentation of the variety of approaches in defining the concept of a brand. It then discusses the difference between brand identity and brand image, describes the concept of consumer-based brand equity and highlights the role of a strong brand as a potential source of competitive advantage for businesses. The final section addresses the formation of a brand portfolio in the international market and the typology of brands, identifies ways in which an organisation can acquire brands, and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using local/global brands.

The second chapter is devoted to the problem of legal protection of a brand, indicating the sources of brand regulation in international, EU and national law. An attempt is made to establish the concept of a brand and related terms in the light of the legislation in force, the premises of legal protection of a brand are indicated, and in particular the problem of global trade in counterfeit goods and consumer motives for purchasing such goods are outlined. It then discusses the ways in which brands can be legally protected through various legal regulations. The chapter concludes with conclusions and recommendations.

In the third chapter, the role of the brand in the consumer's purchasing process was discussed, and factors shaping consumer attitudes towards the brand were identified. An important part of this chapter was the presentation of the state of previous research on the issue of perceived brand globalness/localness. A literature review of the Web of Science database was conducted (identifying the main areas of research) and a map of the intensity of links between keywords used in the literature research was developed. The following section

highlights the relevance of research into consumers' purchase intentions, as well as the factors influencing this phenomenon. In doing so, attention was drawn to the particular role of perceived brand quality. Next, the phenomena of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer cosmopolitanism were characterised as potential essential moderators in the relationship between perceived brand globalness/localness and purchase intention.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation presents the stages of the empirical research process with a detailed discussion. Research gaps in the field of perceived brand globalness/localness are identified. Next, the main aim of the dissertation is introduced, and the research hypotheses, the research model and the subject, actor and spatial scope of the research are discussed. The next section presents the research tool and the procedure for selecting the brands included in the study. An important part of this chapter was the presentation of the results of the research, in addition, the analysis and verification of the twelve research hypotheses were performed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results, an indication of the implications for business practice and the limitations and further directions of the research.

In the conclusion, the author of this dissertation presented a summary of his considerations. In particular, the most important research findings regarding the influence of perceived brand globalness/localness on consumers' purchase intentions and legal brand protection are discussed. The findings presented in this section highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the dissertation and the contribution to science. An important element has also been the identification of practical implementations for both issues addressed.

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