

How to Go GloCal: Omni-Brand Orientation Framework

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Abstract

The authors develop an omni-brand orientation framework that is a bidimensional conceptualization allowing global (local) brand elements to coexist alongside local (global) elements to create a “gloCal” brand. Using an interpretive analysis of interviews with 50 executives, the authors offer new insights into building and succeeding as a gloCal brand. The study shows that global brands are trying to become gloCal by building and nurturing local authenticity. The building blocks of local authenticity are brand image local connection, local iconness, local insights, and originality. Local brands, in turn, try to become gloCal by achieving global acceptance, a perception identified closely with global brands. The building blocks of global acceptance are perceived brand globalness, innovation, product performance quality, and global brand power. A follow-up study with 19 executives dives deeper into the drivers of success and leads to a conceptualization of a gloCal success cycle, which identifies components and strategies that enable brands to win both globally and locally.

Keywords

gloCal brands, global acceptance, local authenticity, gloCal success cycle

All local brands aspire to be global, and all global brands pretend to be local.

—Chief Executive Officer, Local Brand

On August 8, 2008, Li-Ning, a former Chinese Olympian and sports apparel entrepreneur, was given his country’s highest honor to light the cauldron flame during the Beijing Summer Olympics in front of a global audience of two billion people. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Li-Ning opened a hi-tech design center and a concept store in Portland, Oregon, purposely positioned within miles of the two largest global sports brands, Nike and Adidas (Brettman 2011). Revenues quickly grew to US\$593.4 million, and Li-Ning won the 2009 *Ad Age* China’s Marketer of the Year Award (Madden 2010). However, Li-Ning subsequently struggled to establish the brand outside China (Euromonitor 2018; Wen 2013) and ended up closing the Portland operations only four years later (Brettman 2012).

The marketplace is replete with examples of local brands’ failed initiatives to move beyond national borders and become global. At the same time, faced with enhanced competition in local markets, global brands also try to build local relevance by incorporating local characteristics (Xie, Batra, and Peng 2015), symbols, and cultural elements (Ger 1999; Özsoyner 2012). When they fail to do so, it can damage the

brand. For example, Dolce & Gabbana posted videos targeting the Chinese market in an effort to build local relevance, but many considered the ads racist. This snowballed into a viral scandal, with more than 870 million people witnessing the public gaffe. As a result, China’s top e-commerce sites refused to sell the Dolce & Gabbana brand (Wilkinson 2018).

Inspired by such examples, this research seeks to identify what global and local brands are doing to succeed. Using the grounded theory method (GTM), we discover that many brands view a path to success as the ability to simultaneously globalize and localize their brands. This dual approach has been discussed in global branding research. Researchers acknowledge that “the distinction between brand globality and locality seems to have become fuzzier than a simple dichotomy” (Diamantopoulos et al. 2019, p. 53) and that some brands aim to demonstrate *both* global and local characteristics (e.g., Özsoyner 2012; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003; Swaminathan, Page, and Gürhan-Canli 2007). As Sichtmann, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos (2019, p. 16) posit, “More

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and more brands operating in foreign markets try to develop a brand image which includes both global and local elements.” Such brands are referred to as “gloCal” (Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2008). A gloCal brand embodies a well-balanced combination of global and local elements (Godey and Lai 2011) and benefits from integrating the competitive advantages of both global and local brands (López-Lomelí, Alarcón-del-Amo, and Llonch-Andreu 2019). We believe that the focus on how to become and succeed as a gloCal brand is timely and important both theoretically and managerially.

First, recent backlashes against globalization—exemplified in the rise of nationalism, “buy-local” campaigns, and Brexit (e.g., Mandler, Bartsch, and Han 2020; Steenkamp 2019) and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—could make a gloCal branding strategy more relevant as consumers shift to local consumption alternatives (Arora and Stoner 2009). Indeed, a recent review of the literature on perceived brand globalness (PBG) and perceived brand localness (PBL) reveals the need to explore different combinations of PBG and PBL (Liu et al. 2021). Relatedly, large emerging markets such as China, India, Indonesia, and Poland are experiencing a resurgence of national pride. In such markets, it may prove increasingly important for global brands to shift toward a more gloCal approach (López-Lomelí, Alarcón-del-Amo, and Llonch-Andreu 2019; Steenkamp 2019).

Second, consumer desires are dynamic. Brands are operating in digitally connected, culturally diverse markets (Özsomer 2019; Steenkamp 2019), and a growing segment of consumers desire brands that combine both global and local elements (Steenkamp 2019; Steenkamp and De Jong 2010). Finally, international marketing research has approached this domain mostly from the consumer perspective. Identifying and conceptualizing how managers move their global and local brands toward a gloCal positioning and providing a framework for gloCal brand success complement the existing consumer-focused knowledge base.

This research explores gloCal strategy as a path to success by seeking answers to the following questions: What are the particular elements and building blocks of gloCal branding? How are these building blocks conceptualized and linked to gloCal brands? How are they different for brands that start as global or local and for brands with a Western or an Eastern origin? We also go one step further in trying to understand the enablers of success for gloCal brands by conceptualizing the global and local components of what we refer to as the “gloCal success cycle.”

The GTM is effective at identifying patterns by examining how (key) informants understand a particular situation (Potter 1998). We build our framework on the basis of in-depth interviews with 50 executives who hold high-level responsibilities with leading brands and by asking them to share examples of and insights into their marketplace successes and failures. Through inductive reasoning, we develop an omni-brand framework grounded in interview-based data. We focus on the consumer sports footwear and apparel categories to eliminate category-based confounds in an already-complex system. In a follow-up study drawing on a new set of 19 interviews (7 of which involved respondents from the original pool), we

attempt to gain a deeper understanding about what leads to gloCal brand success. The questions we used in both the initial and the follow-up studies appear in Appendix A, and we provide an overview of respondent characteristics in Appendix B. We conceptualize the global and local components of a gloCal success cycle. We identify the steps, processes, activities, and strategies that enable winning locally and globally, with both local and global success freeing up resources to fund the other respective component of gloCal brand success. We also focus on differences between brands with Western and Eastern origins and those with global or local starting points.

In the remainder of this article, we provide our methodology and research design for Study 1. We then present our omni-brand orientation framework, in concert with research propositions related to each building block of the framework. In Study 2, we dive deeper to understand the route to gloCal success and its enablers for three groups that started out as global Western brands (GWB), local Western brands (LWB), and local Eastern brands (LEB). We then conceptualize the gloCal success cycle and continue with a discussion of theoretical implications and practical insights into how global and local managers can take their brands gloCal and then manage gloCal brands successfully. We conclude with some limitations and areas for further research.

Study I: Methodology and Research Design

We adopted Kohli and Jaworski’s (1990) approach in their development of a market orientation framework, as the primary purpose of this study was theory construction, including constructs and propositions. We used the GTM to inductively develop new theory with an iterative data collection, analysis, and theory development process. The GTM process includes “theoretical” sampling and comparison (Glaser and Strauss 1967). For the sampling, we were careful to include marketing and nonmarketing leaders as well as executives from global and local brands from the East (e.g., Japan, China) and West (e.g., United States, Europe).

We interviewed 50 leaders at global and local sports footwear and apparel brands who have strategic and decision-making responsibilities aimed at building and managing their brands. The data collection utilized nonrandom sampling. We conducted the first 26 interviews in the United States and Europe in the spring of 2017 and the next 24 interviews in Asia during the summer of 2017, based on the prior interview insights (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Several of the brands overlapped between the first and the second set of interviews, building rigor into the data collection process. Table 1 shows the number of interviews per type of brand origin.

For the theoretical comparison process, we utilized the “flip-flop technique,” guiding us to look at opposites, both the differences and the similarities, to bring forward significant properties in the data. For example, we compared the first 26 interviews (Western) with the next 24 interviews (Eastern), and we compared the global-to-gloCal process with the local-to-gloCal process (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Table 1. Study I: Number of Interviews per Type of Brand Origin.

	Global Brand	Local Brand	Total
Western brand	23	16	39
Eastern brand	0	11	11
Total	23	27	50

We recorded and transcribed all interviews, and we used the NVivo software to organize the data, to code transcriptions, and to aid in analyses. The first open-coding phase reviewed words and phrases that might have potential significance (Saldaña 2015), and we created 2,064 unique codes with 15,424 coded moments. The codebook of 2,064 codes was reviewed by two masters-level students independently. The coders agreed with 2,019 of the 2,064 original codes, for an agreement level of 97.8%. Thus, we concluded that the originally assigned codes are valid. The second phase, axial coding (Saldaña 2015), included refinement of categories and moved the 2,064 codes into 105 categories with subcategories.

The third coding phase was selective coding, moving the information from a lower level of concept development to emergent patterns, categories, and themes (Saldaña 2015), guiding us toward discovering themes and categories. Ultimately, the omni-brand orientation framework emerged from our analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998, 1990). The omni-brand framework is grounded by an in-depth understanding of how a sample of large, well-known, and successful global and local brands of Western or Eastern origin have responded to the increasingly complex and challenging competitive landscape at the global and local market levels. As a result of our analyses, we develop a model to help brands become gloCal. We leverage a discovery-oriented approach and draw on the literature on global and local branding to interpret the rich and complex interview-based data.

In designing our research, we focus on a single category for several reasons. First, studying the building blocks of gloCal brands at global and local market levels (advanced and emerging) represents a complex context. Focusing on a single category eliminates potential confounds and reduces the risk of unwarranted categorical variance. Second, such complex questions are best understood and interpreted by (key) informants (Potter 1998). We needed to interview enough key informants to reach a sufficient level of richness and data saturation (in our case, 50 informants), which would not be possible if more categories were included. Third, the category of interest needed to have a sufficient number of global and local brands and brands in the process of becoming gloCal to generate a robust picture. The importance of focusing on a product category when studying global and local brand management has been acknowledged in the literature (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016). Thus, we chose to focus on the consumer sports footwear and apparel category.

Results: An Omni-Brand Orientation Framework

Our analysis shows that gloCal branding is a viable alternative to global and local approaches. Brand managers are faced with the challenge of balancing local needs against global demands. This study uncovers how the gloCal approach strategically balances these global and local concerns, such that a global (local) brand adds local (global) brand elements while leveraging its original position. One leader helped explain the perspective as follows:

We have gone from having product creation, where we create product in each market, to being 100% standardized. Then, we decided that maybe 100% standardized is too far, and so we dialed the pendulum a little bit back. We are trying to find the right balance of making sure we stand for what we want to stand for as a brand, but we also adapt to some specific consumer needs from each country.

(Vice President [VP], GWB)

An emerging theme in our analysis was the desire to become successful, respected, and globally accepted while enhancing local perceptions of brand authenticity. These core themes of global acceptance and local authenticity were prevalent throughout the interviews. The Olympics, for example, is a brand that is both globally accepted and locally authentic. As one interviewee explained,

The International Federations and the local organizing committee run the actual event, which you don't know before you go into an Olympic Games. The global Olympic values remain the same, but each game is so different because the local organizing committee really shapes the structure and culture of the games.

(VP, GWB)

An example that came up more than once was how a global brand, Nike, delivered local authenticity in the 2008 Beijing Olympics by designing and developing products specifically for the Chinese national teams.

There was a lot of focus globally, on China, in the three years leading up to the Olympics in Beijing. It was a very momentous occasion for the country of China, but also for us within Nike China. Nike is such a truly global company, yet we were making this product for the Chinese national teams in the Olympics!

(VP, GWB)

The local brand Li-Ning was particularly noteworthy in this context, as it supplanted the official Olympic sponsor, Adidas, and used the Olympics to establish the brand on the global stage.

The final torchbearer is never announced. Even Li-Ning's wife didn't know until right before the ceremony that he had been selected because it has to be kept a secret. To be honest, if you look at the values and who should be selected as the final torch

bearer, Li-Ning absolutely deserved it. He was a multiple gold medal gymnast; he changed sports in his country.

(VP, GWB)

Drawing on the data, the literature, and conceptual abstraction, we present a new conceptualization focused on the bidimensional use of global and local elements in branding. We called this dual strategy for establishing a gloCal positioning “an omni-brand orientation.” In today’s marketplace, some brands opt to build and nurture both global and local elements to connect, excite, and capture the minds and wallets of a growing segment of customers worldwide. Thus, this third, gloCal option—where global brands take on some local traits (Pieterse 2001) and local brands communicate their global availability, desirability, and successes (Özsomer 2012) and where local cultural symbols are used in conjunction with global components (e.g., Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 2006)—is corroborated in our research.

As global brands try to be more locally relevant in critical markets and as local brands try to tap global markets and customers, both types of brands face unique challenges in the digitally enabled marketplace. Their starting points are different, making their advantages, their obstacles, and their trajectories different as well. Despite their different starting points, the two types of brands (i.e., global and local) end up more similar as they creatively use *both* global and local elements in their branding. Using the GTM, we provide insights into the nature and content of gloCal brands, where the demands of global acceptance and local authenticity are acknowledged and addressed and where the building blocks of each are strategically fine-tuned. A leader with Nike’s Michael Jordan brand described how the brand’s global acceptance set a standard for other brands to follow:

A lot of people buy the Jordan brand because it is a standard of excellence; it is a global standard people want to obtain, and if you can create and become the standard, then others see it, and they buy into what that means.

(VP, GWB)

Another leader captured the importance of local authenticity as follows:

What every brand hopes to have is something that’s authentic and relevant to a particular group, such as being an outdoor brand from Canada. Then, other groups that are outside of that core purpose, they respect it, and then your brand becomes part of the culture.

(VP, LWB)

Many interviewees described the marketplace as a level playing field for global and local brands. As one interviewee stated, “The internet has basically changed everything and everybody’s global at this point because you can go to any website anywhere in the world and buy something if you want.” We found digital connectivity, and specifically e-commerce, to be a force that has changed business practices and consumption habits dramatically, and particularly in Chinese and South

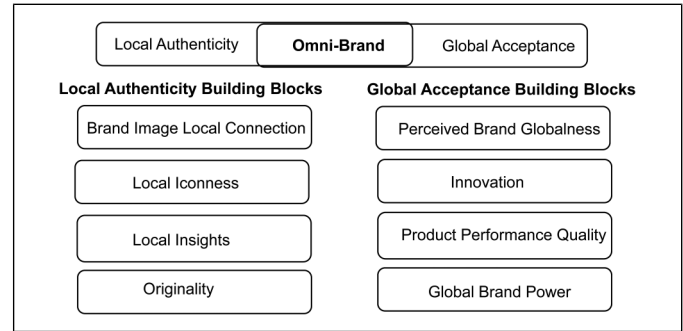


Figure 1. Omni-brand orientation framework.

Korean markets. In China, interviewees noted that digital ecosystems, and specifically e-commerce companies such as Alibaba, Tmall.com, JD.com, and Alipay, are changing the world. As one leader noted, such companies are “piloting the future of what e-commerce business can be.” Another interviewee indicated that these platforms are driving new consumption patterns:

Actually, consumers stay home. They use their mobile devices to order food, order drinks, buy what they want, get shoes, clothes, whatever they want. So, the difference is, there is a virtual life happening. And it is happening at their fingertips. And eventually, they enjoy the consumption.

(VP, GWB)

Our analysis shows that becoming gloCal involves different elements and building blocks depending on whether the original position is global or local. Accordingly, our framework in Figure 1 reflects executives’ strategic focus on a small set of brand management elements integral to creating an omni-brand. In our in-depth interviews, leaders articulated the building blocks used to develop local authenticity and global acceptance. We identified these building blocks using the frequency of responses from the qualitative interviews, interpretation, and inductive reasoning. For example, through experiences shared, the concept of culture was interpreted as indicating both local iconness and brand image local connection. In addition, respondents mentioned “consumer insights” frequently in the interviews in reference to local consumers, leading us to call this building block “local insights.” Collectively, brand image local connection, local iconness, local insights, and originality were the most commonly associated elements of local authenticity. Perceived brand globalness, innovation, product performance quality, and global brand power were identified repeatedly as building blocks of global acceptance. Other themes that emerged were less salient and more business focused, such as learning organization, entrepreneurial mind-set, positive affect, and social networking. To preserve model parsimony, we made a decision to include only elements directly related to gloCal branding. We describe each building block in the next section.

How to Take a Local Brand GloCal: Global Acceptance

In our data, the “global acceptance” concept was salient, with managers using various terms such as “globally approved,” “recognized,” “adopted,” and “accepted.” A leader at an LWB articulated the following:

I think what was most interesting for our brand was where we were able to go as a result of a new global marketing campaign. It really showed how much elasticity the brand had, which is incredible. It was a real critical moment for the brand in terms of everybody at the company saying, “Wow, we can be a little bit more impactful, a little bigger and a little more global than maybe we thought we could.”

(VP, LWB)

A leader from a Chinese-based LEB agreed with this:

We want to build the brand with more global awareness. At the end, we built a store [in the U.S.] during May and open[ed] our own store in Beijing.... So this is one of the goals to try to make a success.

(VP, LEB)

Strong brands provide a competitive advantage, and they are powerful marketing tools (Aaker, Kumar, and Day 1998; Keller 1993). Global awareness, acceptance, and desirability distinguish global brands from local brands (Özsomer and Altaras 2008). Brands that are perceived as available, desirable, and purchased worldwide are considered globally accepted (Batra et al. 2000; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003). Our research revealed that some local brands seek success through global acceptance. This leads to our first research proposition:

RP₁: Local brands need to build global acceptance to become gloCal.

We have identified four key building blocks of global acceptance: PBG, innovation, product performance quality, and brand power. In the following subsections, we discuss each in turn.

Perceived Brand Globalness (PBG)

A local brand needs to add global components while leveraging and fine-tuning some of its original elements as it becomes gloCal. One LEB executive discussed efforts to “think beyond what is culturally relevant but what is going to be more global.” A VP from another LEB articulated the perceived value, stating “I think everybody is trying to go more global. There is a perceived value in global. There is something cool about it.”

Managers of GWBs mentioned the benefits of perceived globalness and the need to balance global and local. The chief executive officer (CEO) of a GWB stated that “consumers are adopting the global brand that is best assorted for their local

needs.” In our research, leaders articulated how they build and improve PBG.

We try to spend time finding similarities between our geographies where there’s universal truths about what a golfer or a runner wants and try to capitalize on those and leverage those and create products that are going to serve a global or universal need instead of being so specific to every single market that you end up becoming a little bit of trying to be everything to everybody and not really standing for any one thing.

(VP, GWB)

We have a brand framework applied globally, and we have more freedom for local adaptation.

(Director, LWB)

We maintain a core global DNA while being authentic locally.

(Senior Director, GWB)

What we heard from experienced executives corroborated the literature. The international marketing literature defines PBG as perceptions that a brand is marketed in multiple countries using generally global symbols (e.g., brand names, logos, visuals, themes, endorsers associated with a modern lifestyle) in marketing communications (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999; Özsomer 2012). The PBG construct refers to the extent to which a brand’s stakeholders perceive it to be a global player (Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003; Swoboda, Pennemann, and Taube 2012), which leads to the positive effects of higher purchase likelihood, trust, and brand equity for a brand (Johansson and Ronkainen 2005; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003). Consumers are more likely to buy brands they believe to be global because of perceptions of quality, and they are likely to pay more due to perceptions of prestige (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003). Therefore, PBG is an important component of a brand on the route to global acceptance. Accordingly, we forward our next research proposition:

RP_{1a}: PBG is a building block of global acceptance as a local brand becomes gloCal.

Innovation

The interviewees recalled the importance of innovation in creating a brand that is globally accepted. The importance of innovation was mentioned by 47 of the 50 leaders we interviewed. One leader talked about innovation as “redefining the game, and taking consumers to places they didn’t know they wanted to go; ... something new, different, better, and unique.”

Our goal is to develop products that alter human performance. Our innovation team is completely global. It’s fun because, with the global reputation that we have, it opens all the doors.

(Director, GWB)

Leaders at local Chinese-based Eastern brands recognized the importance of innovation as well as the internal and external factors involved in the success and failure of its acceptance.

China's domestic market[is] strong and domestic consumers [are] maturing and more and more innovation in design and original ideas [are] materializing in China. The global markets are starting to accept China as not just a copycat. It is indeed a place where original and good technology and innovation and design could come into very good products.

(VP/GM, LEB)

[T]he idea was to start what we call the Li-Ning global innovation center in Portland, rethink how we want to approach our design, bring innovation back into the main engine, and try to change the main engine. Didn't quite work. Timing wasn't right. You're trying to change out a cylinder when the car is running at 60 miles an hour, and it ended up breaking the engine in the meantime.

(VP, LEB)

Innovation is defined as any introduction of a new or improved design or technology into the market (Griffith and Rubera 2014). Prior research has shown that innovation is essential to companies' survival and leads to success, particularly in today's hypercompetitive global marketplace (Lee and Zhou 2012; Rubera and Kirca 2012). Researchers have found both a direct and an indirect positive relationship among innovation, market orientation, and performance (Han, Kim, and Srivastava 1998). Our interviews suggest that innovation works indirectly by building perceptions of global acceptance as a local brand becomes gloCal. Accordingly, we offer the following research proposition:

RP_{1b}: Innovation is a building block of global acceptance as a local brand becomes gloCal.

Product Performance Quality

Product performance quality was a strong theme in the data. Of the 50 executives interviewed, 41 referenced performance and/or quality. They emphasized the connection between product performance quality and global acceptance and recalled the importance of getting product performance quality right.

We actually came up with several patents, starting from scratch. Some of them from basic research, and then we turn it into applied research, identify a new product concept, and we launch it in the market. We are still using the products because those are really true athletic performance products, and they are quite sustainable because those are for real, not just for looks. It provides you with an authentic functional performance experience, as well.

(Director, LEB)

We focus on creating quality performance durable products that last a long time, through better materials choices, construction techniques, but we also design products that we feel are timeless.

(CEO, LWB)

Many Eastern brands also realized that the route to global acceptance followed from increasing performance quality. As a manager from a Chinese brand stated,

The brand is looking for ... some way of enhancing their products in terms of functional quality so they, of course, look for science and engineering. I work in this area and actually, for my PhD, I started to work on footwear and the foot.... That's why I got invited to lead the Sports Science Research Center at [Brand]."

— Director, LEB

Some managers at Chinese-based local brands believed that their brand's focus on low prices has hindered their efforts to deliver product performance quality. Others stated that as manufacturers, many Chinese brands can offer higher quality at lower prices.

Quality is defined broadly as superiority or excellence (Zeithaml 1988). Global brands can benefit from a gloCal approach in advertising by featuring global attributes (e.g., quality) with local language, visuals, and themes (Hung, Li, and Belk 2007; Kates and Goh 2003). Consumers attribute higher quality to a brand that is globally available because quality is perceived as critical to "global acceptance" (Kapferer 1997; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003). This leads to our next research proposition:

RP_{1c}: Product performance quality is a building block of global acceptance as a local brand becomes gloCal.

Global Brand Power

The term "brand power" emerged from the research, and it was mentioned in some form by all 50 interviewees. There was consensus among leaders from both Western and Eastern brands that brand power is critical for global acceptance and that local brands need to gain brand power as they strive to become gloCal. Leaders described global brand power with terms like "worldwide recognition," "trust," "esteem," "admiration," "a powerful brand image," "benefits," and "values resonating with consumers worldwide." Indeed, Na, Marshall, and Keller (1999) define brand power as consisting of two dimensions: brand awareness power and brand image power. Drawing on our inductive research, we expand the definition. We define global brand power as a unique, desirable, favorable global brand image complemented by high awareness, trust, and admiration by customers worldwide. Leaders from many LWBs noted that their brands, while strong at home, are often just starting to expand beyond their borders and build brand power via global brand awareness and unique image associations:

We are one of the first U.S. authentic outdoor brands. The bad news—most people don't know who we are [outside the U.S.]. The good news—when people [outside the U.S.] were exposed to a little bit about who we are—our history, our heritage, our products, those types of things—there was a dramatic bump in their affinity for our brand and their purchase consideration.

(VP, LWB)

In contrast, for LEBs, the barriers to increasing brand power were both a lack of understanding about how to build a brand and prioritizing short-term profits over longer-term brand equity.

A lot of Southeast Asian companies are big family-owned conglomerates. So it's all about maximizing the total profit rather than building brands. The brand is often seen as just a trademark. It's just a label, a name for the business. So many companies sell their products under the name of the founder or the name of the family;... they lack understanding of marketing, and how it can help a brand grow. We are trying to make sure that consumers are able to associate the brand with a lot more things than just the company's or the founder's name.

(VP, LEB)

Regarding global brand power, therefore, we offer the following research proposition:

RP_{1a}: Global brand power is a building block of global acceptance as a local brand becomes gloCal.

How to Take a Global Brand GloCal: Local Authenticity

The concept of authenticity was a prominent theme in the interviews. Leaders used terms such as “locally authentic,” “genuine,” “real,” “home,” “relevant consumer experiences,” and “close-to-consumer.” Our respondents recognized the importance of authenticity in interviews related to outdoor or sports brands:

Our brand has had a long history in the outdoor category, and back in the 1970s, we were one of the first companies to build an outdoor boot, and we were authentic as the first company to build an outdoor, like a hiking shoe with Gore-Tex in it.

(VP, LWB)

In addition, it was important to be authentic with respect to how a sport is played in a market:

In China, we ended up getting Nike to make an outdoor version of the LeBron shoe, created for the China market, because we're still at the point where 90-plus percent of the kids are playing outdoors. If they wore his game shoe outdoors, it would get destroyed pretty quickly, so basically, we could leverage the athlete and talk about something that had an end use that was very locally targeted.

(VP, GWB)

What emerged from the GTM is also supported in the literature. Authenticity is identified as a key motivator for today's consumers (Grayson and Martinec 2004), with an increasing number of consumers searching for authenticity in the brands they buy (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003). Both academics and practitioners realize the importance of authenticity in branding (Beverland, Farrelly, and Qvester 2010; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Holt

2002; Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006; Newman and Dhar 2014), with some research even suggesting that authenticity is “the cornerstone of contemporary marketing” (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003, p. 21).

Global branding research already suggests that marketplace mythologies of global brands establish authenticity when they offer authentic narratives for consumers' identity projects (Özsomer and Altaras 2008). For example, Nike, with its “Just Do It” global positioning, can build authentic narratives around Cristiano Ronaldo, LeBron James, Rafael Nadal, and others that easily transcend national borders, where young people in particular can build their identity projects around the marketplace mythologies suggested in the slogan and built around these athletes. This type of authenticity is a perfect match for global brands.

The type of authenticity needed for a gloCal brand is different. A gloCal brand needs to build on the local context and resonate with local customers who consider themselves grounded in both global and local cultures (Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2012) and those who prefer combining the global while preserving the local (Steenkamp 2019). For Nike, this meant continuing to supply training equipment for the Chinese Athletics Association's national team athletes and being part of their authentic narratives. Local authenticity captures a connection with a specific location, time, symbol, or event relevant in the local culture (Özsomer 2012). As such, local authenticity is more closely aligned with local culture and its values than with global culture (Nijssen and Douglas 2011; Peñaloza 2000). Therefore, a potent sense of local authenticity can fuel growth in local markets (Eggers et al. 2013), especially when the segment preferring gloCal brands is large. Global brands can benefit from building, nurturing, and communicating perception of local authenticity with consumers as they take their brands gloCal. Accordingly, we propose the following:

RP₂: Global brands need to build local authenticity to become gloCal.

However, it is not easy to imbue global brands with local authenticity. Four building blocks were salient to local authenticity: brand image local connection, local iconness, local insights, and originality. We discuss each in turn in the following subsections.

Brand Image Local Connection

Brand image local connection can be defined as a “subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand by consumers who create an authentic self and reconnect with culture through the use of brands” (Napoli et al. 2014, p. 1091). It is the consistency of style and image as well as its relationship to a location (Beverland 2006). For example, Patagonia is considered a locally connected outdoor brand. The brand not only builds products for outdoors enthusiasts but also demonstrates its care for local communities and the environment through

its actions. Patagonia sources locally sustainable materials and donates to (local) environmental causes (Chouinard 2016).

For LEB, brand image local connection can be achieved through manufacturing prowess, as many local sports brands are also manufacturers.

We have this great Olympic athlete who won a gold medal [Li-Ning] and started the company, but it always felt like we know how to make shoes. We come from the factory side of things, the manufacturing side of things, and we've been making shoes for other brands, so we know that and we now want to make shoes for ourselves and put our Li-Ning logo on the side of it and connect its image to Li-Ning.

(Director, LEB)

The brand was a manufacturing shoe business. Basically, that's our story. We were born from the crafter side. All those people that were making shoes for national brands, they decided to stop and start doing it for themselves. Myself and the team, we're on their team, on the crafter team.

(VP, LEB)

The interviewees also provided stories about brands demonstrating weak local connections. As the brand leaders recalled failures in the marketplace, they reflected on issues of failing to connect with the local market.

We did a lot of research for a shoe we called the "World Shoe." It was a simple design at a very low price for China. It was a failure. Consumers weren't really sure they were really Nikes. They said the shoes didn't look like Nike. If they were going to spend their money on a Nike, they wanted it to look like a Nike. So they would rather buy counterfeit.

(Senior Director, GWB)

We were building a collection for Asia, but only did our research in China. We found out that in China "Red is royalty, prosperity and distinction." We decided, "Okay, the color red is going to be our focal point for the regional offering." Through the lens of cultural relevancy for the region and showing a reasonable understanding of the Chinese market, we completely blew it... We missed something because we did not try to understand China beyond an obvious color collection, nor did we understand that countries in Asia are very different. All the countries in Asia told us they couldn't sell the product.

(Director, GWB)

Recent antiglobalization campaigns (e.g., Brexit) and the COVID-19 pandemic have created opportunities for consumers to shift to (more) local consumption alternatives. We expect brand image local connection to become an even more important building block of local authenticity as consumers renew their interest in and connections to local places and cultures (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003). We forward the following research proposition:

RP_{2a}: Brand image local connection is a building block of local authenticity as a global brand becomes GloCal.

Local Iconness

The next element that surfaced in our interviews was iconness and how this led to local consumers' perceptions of authenticity. Leaders mentioned both iconic products and people.

Li-Ning was the very first, and Li-Ning started with the brand because he is probably ... one of the iconic idols. In that age, Li-Ning is even bigger than Yao Ming. Yeah, he had the most gold medals of Olympics. I think even as of today as an individual. And one of his moves in gymnastics is called the Li-Ning jump.

(Director, LEB)

UGGS, the tan high tops from Australia, somehow became cool in LA. A shoe made for not getting snake bites all of a sudden is the number one shoe of the summer in the early 2000s in LA. Makes no sense, but because it was authentic and specific to their own brand, it got adopted.

(VP, LWB)

Brands can achieve competitive success by using local cultural capital, heritage, and strategies that demonstrate an understanding of local identity, culture, and needs (Ger 1999; Özsomer 2012). Iconic brands represent a deep connection to culture. For example, Volkswagen represents German "innovative technologies" (Holt 2003), and the Levi's brand has achieved local icon status because it was the "uniform of cowboys and miners in the American West" (Maheshwari 2019, p. 1). In line with previous findings, some brands become "icons of the local culture" (Swoboda, Pennemann, and Taube 2012), and becoming a symbol of the local culture or country leads to perceptions of local iconness (Özsomer 2012). When icons align with location and authenticity, iconness drives authenticity. We offer the following research proposition:

RP_{2b}: Local iconness is a building block of local authenticity as a global brand becomes gloCal.

Local Insights

All 50 executives we interviewed referenced local consumer and market insights as being critical to their success; many also mentioned athletes and performance-related insights. When brands get this right, they are rewarded; when they get it wrong, they are viewed as disrespectful of local culture and ignorant. For multinational companies, the owners of most global brands, meeting the needs of local markets by generating local insights is easier said than done. Many successful brands have mechanisms and programs in place that encourage and record local insights, which then get redistributed across the global network. Capturing local insights involves listening to

consumers and responding by trying to better meet their needs.

Insights can definitely be global, and they can also be geo-specific. You can have different insights from Shanghai and Beijing. They're different cities. They're huge. They have a healthy competition. Their product briefs are going to be different because what each local market thinks is cool is going to be different than what another local market thinks is cool.

(VP, GWB)

There is value to the insights of the local team and the work they do at a grassroots level. They are the people closest to the moment of truth at retail. And some of these local insights can be leveraged across a global business.

(VP, GWB)

We provided an insight to global, and they helped us to create a product that today is still being regarded as one of the most epic or iconic products in this industry. They embraced this local insight with a special meaning and a story behind it.

(VP, GWB)

Because of the size and the importance of the Chinese market, insights from China are considered in the decision-making process. For example, brands need to gauge idiosyncratic local insights as specific as the temperature differences between cities in China. As one leader noted, the Chinese market is "quite complicated because of geographies. We have the south, we have the east, we have the north. The people are so different because of the weather." In addition, because of the large market opportunity in China, brands are more likely to listen and react to Chinese consumers.

For the local China market, there is a particular T-shirt, like a kind of cartoonish T-shirt that is on-trend in the China market. It's more like NBA fan-driven market; at the global level, that is not something that they want to create. But from local market standpoint, that T-shirt we locally design because by gaining the insight from this marketplace, we knew at that moment that consumers love that kind of design language. We created the tools and the stories to sell to the customers. It was really successful because we hit the needs of the local consumers.

(VP, GWB)

The depth and nuances reflected by these interviewees demonstrate how listening and responding to local insights can help global brands build locally authentic associations as they strive to become gloCal. Indeed, the market orientation literature highlights the importance of generating market intelligence and responding to it to better meet the needs of target markets (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Brands that succeed in this respect are better at offering globally consistent services (Lewis, Andriopoulos, and Smith 2014) while also responding and adapting to varied local needs (Marquis and Battilana 2009). Capturing local insights involves listening and

responding to consumers' needs, which leads to our next research proposition:

RP_{2c}: Listening and responding to local insights is a building block of local authenticity as a global brand becomes gloCal.

Originality

Originality is the ability to think creatively in order to produce novel solutions (Saeki, Fan, and Van Dusen 2001). The concept of "originality" was mentioned by 34 of the 50 interviewees. The following quotations exemplify the quest for originality:

The original concept of cross-training, and the original insight was about versatility and in function. Not only function, but in design, and just how ... what the shoe represented. You could just look at that shoe, and you know, "Oh, ... I can take this to the gym, I can play basketball, I can run in it." And that's why cross-training got so big, why it was so successful.

(VP, GWB)

When the consumer saw the benefits of moisture wicking, just great fit and everything, how you felt when you take it off and the fact that it didn't smell, the consumer started to take it to other places. You had kids playing on high school football teams wearing it up to the ski mountain, you had coaches on college football teams coming to Kevin and saying, "Hey, you know that material you made the undershirt out of, can you make me a golf polo out of that? Because where I play, it's 100 degrees and sticky and humid and I sure could use that." That's why the original polo that Under Armour still sells, in the line it's called The Coach's Polo because the coaches came up with the idea. When you have something original that can transfer across multiple sports and the consumer accepts it, it's a huge authenticity builder.

(VP, LWB)

We have a studio full of young Chinese footwear designers who are just passionate about footwear. We are also trying to just figure out what is a Chinese brand? What does it mean to be a Chinese sports-wear company? Because up until that time you are either making shoes for other brands or you are copying and knocking off shoes for other brands and putting your logo on it.

(VP, LEB)

As these insights corroborate, brands that are original are also considered authentic (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003); originality is associated with the consumer's quest for authenticity (Leigh, Peters, and Shelton 2006). An executive from Adidas described how being authentic in China requires being perceived as a basketball brand. Therefore, they now have "locally designed" original products for China, and this strategy is helping them be successful there. This leads to our final research proposition:

RP_{2d}: Originality is a building block of local authenticity as a global brand becomes gloCal.

Study 2: Methodology and Research Design

In Study 1, we derive the omni-brand orientation framework. However, we do not specifically identify different enablers of (and barriers to) success for firms moving from a local to gloCal and from a global to gloCal positioning. We conducted a follow-up study with the objective of identifying practical, actionable insights for the successful implementation of an omni-brand orientation. We are also interested in identifying different practices and implications for brands of Western or Eastern origin. Our aim is to answer the following questions: How can brand leaders build and manage successful gloCal brands, given their different starting points (global or local) and different cultural origins (Western or Eastern)? How are the global and local components of gloCal related, and how do they contribute to the success of a gloCal brand? We expect differences in terms of enablers of (and barriers to) success for firms moving from a local to gloCal and from a global to gloCal positioning, particularly for brands with Western and Eastern origins. While Eastern thinking is depicted as emphasizing harmony and seeking to identify a “middle way,” Western thinking stresses distinctions, contradictions, and opposition (Chen and Miller 2011). By focusing on China, we have the opportunity to add a layer of richness and value to our conceptualization (Hewett 2020).

We conducted the follow-up study targeting the same industry, brands, and managers studied previously to get an in-depth and more nuanced understanding of building and successfully managing gloCal brands. Seven brand managers from the first study agreed to our request for a second interview. We complemented this set with 12 additional interviews with managers identified using the same criteria as in the first study, for a total of 19 new interviews (4 of whom were female). We conducted and recorded 18 interviews via Zoom and 1 via e-mail during the spring of 2021. We purposefully approached managers who represented three categories: GWBs (6), LWBs (6), and LEBs (7). We did not identify any GEBs, as Eastern brands were still only beginning their globalization journey. Table 2 summarizes the number of interviews per type of brand origin and Table 3 provides brand origin and respondent characteristics for both studies. We utilized practical and structural questions to capture the definition of, metrics of, enablers of, barriers to, and steps toward success for a gloCal brand, which helped us develop the structure of our evolving theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The interview questions appear in Appendix A. Three coders coded 19 interviews to the same 11 questions. After the interviews were coded, we analyzed the data with special consideration of the differences between Eastern and Western brands and between local and global brands.

Results: GloCal Success Cycle

Study 2 helped clarify and articulate the prevalence and importance of gloCal brands. Of the 19 leaders, 15 (GWB = 6, LWB = 5, LEB = 4) stated that they were pursuing a gloCal branding

Table 2. Study 2: Number of Interviews per Type of Brand Origin.

	Global Brand	Local Brand	Total
Western brand	7	5	12
Eastern brand	0	7	7
Total	7	12	19

approach. That is, they were using strategies and practices to become both global and local. The interviewees describe this as follows:

I think we are all doing global and local at the same time. They become something that you do without thinking about it.
(VP, GWB)

We are trying to be both. Trying to keep the American brand DNA but understanding that outdoor scenes are so different for each region. We localize where we need to, so our brand resonates with whatever market we are in.
(VP, LWB)

As we make products that are more acceptable globally through innovation, we also localize. We add local elements including being a part of China’s history and being a local icon. We also try to keep the price low.
(Director, LEB)

Building a successful gloCal brand entails different steps depending on where the brand starts its journey. GWB leaders explained that being global was a necessity due to scale but that being seen as local was also an intentional strategy for their larger markets, such as China. For LWBs, leaders found value in marketing their authentic heritage but also wanted their brand to resonate in other markets. LEBs in the sports and outdoor category tend to be younger brands that lack the legacy or heritage enjoyed by many GWBs. LEB leaders also saw the current political tension between the West and the East (mainly China) as a barrier to gloCal success. One LEB leader described this as follows:

Twelve months ago, I would have said cultural barriers are the big hurdles, but today, the current political East/West squabble is going to be messy, and almost unavoidable when you have the aging, slowing-down West, and the scrappy, young, with money East that doesn’t have legacy or heritage.
(CEO, LEB)

In the following sections, we summarize our results and dive deeper into the three groups of brands that emerged in our study, namely, GWBs, LWBs, and LEBs.

GWBs

We interviewed six GWB leaders who represented two brands (Nike and Adidas). One of the six leaders and both brands were

represented in the first study. All six leaders articulated why and how their brands were trying to be both global and local:

[G]lobalization cannot happen without a local approach. Global is a necessity because of scale, but local is very much intentional. Winning locally leads to global success.

(Director, GWB)

Consumer data and analytics allow brands to better meet specific consumer needs, as one interviewee summarized:

It's simple, consumers define your success. It starts with knowing the consumer. There are things that the consumer shares, but then there are insights that vary from market to market.

(VP, GWB)

Nike's global business is organized into four geographical regions. When asked how they define success of a gloCal brand, a top manager at Nike said the following:

I would say, the way that we define success is through harmonization metrics. What we were trying to do with as many styles as we could is have three to four geographies adopt them into their market, so we wanted to have 50% of our styles adopted by three or four geographies and when we did that we knew that we had cracked the code on shared consumer insights around the world.

(VP, GWB)

The manager used the term "harmonization metrics" to define the number of geographic regions (out of four) adopting a percentage (e.g., 50%) of existing styles. Harmonization metrics include measures of the actual number of regions or countries in which a percentage of the same product mixes are used. The success of a gloCal brand was tracked via this metric. Another leader mentioned using the same product-/brand-tracking measures (brand affinity, conversion) across regions and markets and how all of these harmonized metrics are shared across countries and regions to identify similarities and differences. Relating harmonization metrics to gloCal success, one leader said the following:

One globally shared offering allows resources to be freed up to create local products.

(VP, GWB)

In addition, we found brand leaders signing local sports heroes who could tell authentic local stories and create local buzz. One leader articulated "the best way to guarantee success" for a GWB as follows:

There is a magic formula: a global positioning with a local legend is number one. You learn the global brand meaning and you start to translate, you start to understand. We signed the taekwondo team and Yuna Kim, the figure skater, which created a major shift in the overall market share in Korea. A local spokesperson, authentically tied to the culture, with authentic stories! People recognize if

you can tell an authentic local story. Local consumers will *respect* the brand more, and global consumers will *admire* the brand more.

(VP, GWB)

Another good example is Nike Swimwear. Nike is attempting to make swimming more accessible to observant Muslim women (Binkley 2019). The brand met the expectations of local communities by "having enough coverage in the bathing suits to honor their cultural needs and a distribution plan targeted to the places where consumers could purchase the product." This local story played out favorably in Western media (Binkley 2019) as well.

Brand leaders also explained how they utilized a gloCal approach without necessarily changing the brand's global positioning. When asked if they needed to sacrifice a global position for a gloCal position, leaders said the following:

The identity of the brand is global, and the formulation of the product could change because of local tastes.

(VP, GWB)

We would not sacrifice the global strategic position to create local revenue. If we know the consumer and marketplace, it is about balance.

(VP, GWB)

GWB leaders also articulated consumer and internal challenges they faced as they moved from global to gloCal. One leader explained how local consumers did not like a change made by the brand and responded negatively on social media. Another discussed how being global meant being too big to move fast, even though local responsiveness requires speed. A leader articulated an internal challenge as follows:

At a global brand, it is often difficult to communicate why the local insights and local responsiveness are important for the brand. It is difficult to educate a group of people at headquarters that have not experienced the local insights and help them see why it is critical and valuable for the brand in the respective country.

(Director, GWB)

LWBs

In the follow-up research, the six LWB leaders we interviewed represented six brands (Columbia, Danner, Stüssy, KEEN, PLAE, and Under Armour). Three of the six leaders and five of the six brands had participated in Study 1. Five of the six leaders stated that they were trying to be both global and local in their approach to managing their brand. The managers of these brands articulated their desire to "not stray from [their] core DNA." In one manager's words,

This core was defined as an outdoor brand with American Brand DNA. Western culture is cool; therefore, these brands are more often considered more creative and therefore more valuable

compared to LEBs.

(Director, LWB)

Many leaders emphasized strong local teams.

It is a mixture of a global point of view and local eyes on it. It is listening to your people on the ground and taking some chances. Our approach is to put a great team in place, then launch the brand and product, and say, do the right thing, measure those [key performance indicators], and adapt if required. This gives more freedom to leverage local insights. The pandemic has given companies a chance to relook at what they stand for. The better companies want to increase their connection to the consumer.

(VP, LWB)

Some of the LWB leaders were cautious about becoming gloCal too soon. One executive summarized this more cautious approach by saying that the brand would stay local and not expand beyond the home market until sales reach \$1 billion

We are not willing to change up the product line or change the focus of the brand for extra business. There is not enough time and resources available to understand the differences of each market. We just transfer U.S. products directly to other markets without adaptation because of a lack of resources.

(VP, LWB)

Another LWB leader articulated how the company imbues performance, an attribute that travels well globally, to the DNA of a local brand as it took the brand gloCal.

Let's face it. [Local Brand] started as, and they still are, a lifestyle brand. We created this division eight years ago, that's performance, and now we're trying to teach and educate the consumer that, "No, we're performance as well." Performance travels well across markets. But there are challenges that go with that. So, there is a mind-set that needs to be changed, and we're still changing that every day.

(VP, LWB)

Some LWB leaders were concerned about their ability to protect their home market as they were trying to become gloCal.

LEBs

We interviewed seven leaders at five LEBs (Anta, Li-Ning, Mizuno, Avalon, and HKRITA). Three of these interviewees and all five brands were part of Study 1. We were able to generate several new and nuanced insights that we were not able to identify in Study 1 by focusing on the LEB category. The concept of "cultural confidence" came up several times, specifically from leaders of Chinese brands. One leader described this phenomenon as follows:

[W]e have more cultural confidence, so the young generation has more confidence for their homeland. The power to decide for more things. [For example],... we delete all the English characters

on the basketball jerseys for the WCBA and put all Chinese characters.

(Director, LEB)

Leaders expressed a strong interest in a gloCal positioning as they perceived this as a way to increase the value of their brand and therefore charge higher prices. They described the importance of both innovation and product quality. They also described the importance of being culturally relevant in their home country. As one leader noted,

The product is better, the design is better, there is more Chinese culture on their products. The Western design is cool and the Chinese local brand is also cool, so we want that too.

— Director, LEB

There was discussion about taking a part of the company global (e.g., basketball) instead of the entire brand, as there is legitimacy, credibility, and respect to be gained outside of China. These managers also mentioned that the respect gained outside of China created positive feelings such as pride in China. These signaling effects of success outside of the home market align with the literature (e.g., Mandler, Bartsch, and Han 2021; Özsomer 2012).

Similar to Study 1, in Study 2, LEB managers lamented about market-entry failures as they attempted to globalize their brands. In Study 2, Chinese managers in particular faced these challenges. One leader described market-entry challenges as follows:

For a Chinese brand, it is really difficult to expand the brand to other countries, because the Chinese culture and the Chinese philosophy is very complicated to explain to foreigners.

(Director, LEB)

Another leader was less complementary of Chinese brands:

Anta [a Chinese sports brand] has to get over that big hurdle of not being innovative enough or not being a globally relevant brand. They are still seen as doing products that are similar to other brands' products.

(Director, LEB)

One strategy that several interviewees mentioned was to keep their Chinese brand local while acquiring Western brands to expand globally. One leader noted that "acquiring more brands in the global market will be the case." This is demonstrated by Anta, which bought Amer Sports, making it the owner of well-known Western sports brands including Wilson, Salomon, and Arc'teryx (Singh 2018). A CEO of a LEB provided a succinct diagnosis: "In China, local Eastern brands are undercutting the global brands with a gloCal approach to the marketplace."

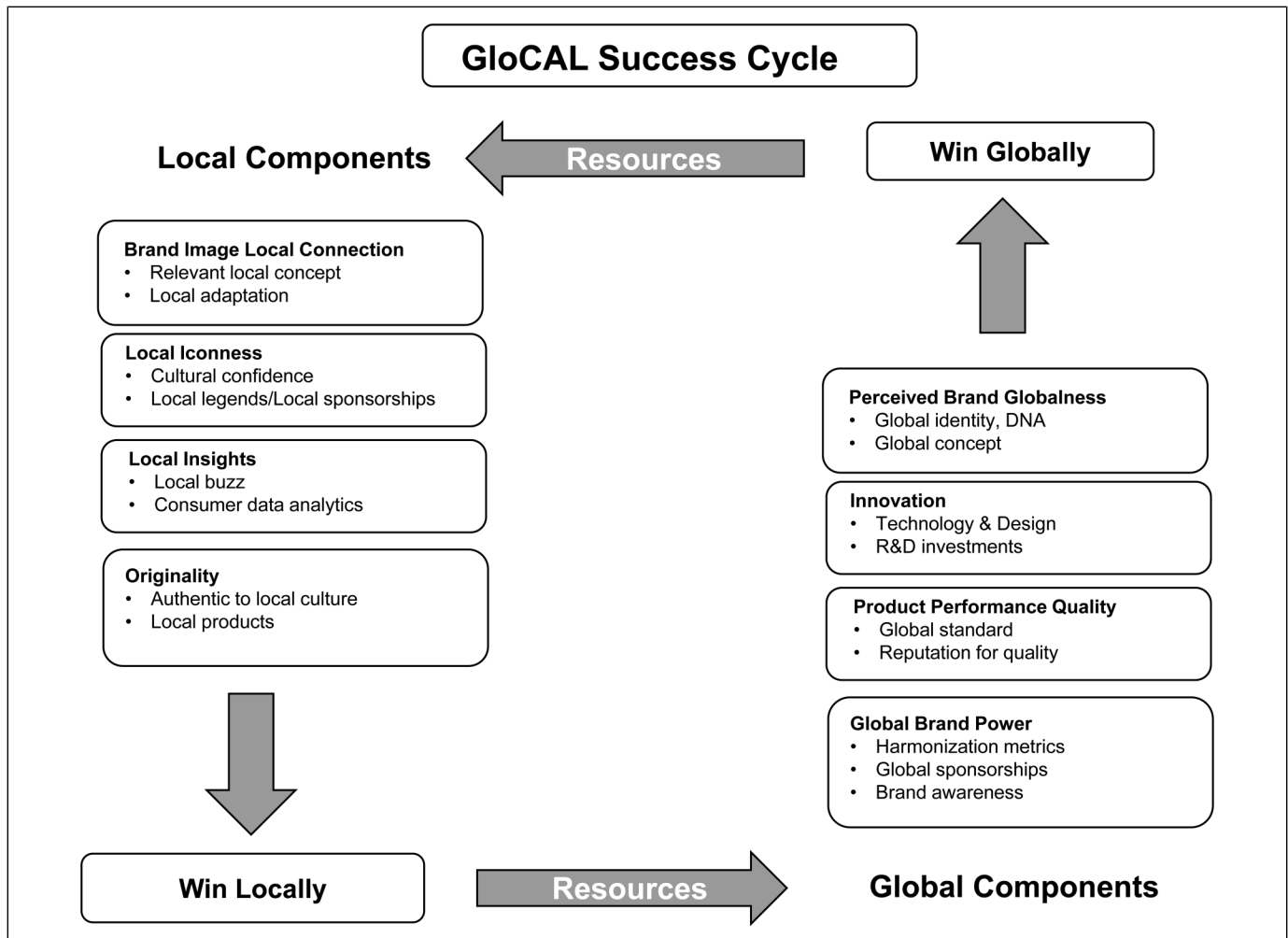


Figure 2. GloCal success cycle.

Managing the GloCal Success Cycle

One of the objectives of the follow-up study was to identify the relationship between global and local components of the gloCal strategy and the process of successfully managing a gloCal brand. We integrated the processes, activities, and strategies used in the three brand categories (GWB, LWB, and LEB) to conceptualize the gloCal success cycle (Figure 2).

The gloCal cycle starts with the need to provide relevant local concepts by country or by region. Executives provided insights into the sequence of gloCal success by articulating how brands must first win locally due to the competition that takes place at the local market level. Brands utilize data to build their local understanding to meet the expectations of local communities, create a local buzz with authentic local stories, and create products and distribution strategies adapted for local markets. The leaders talked about the critical nature of “boots on the ground,” or a global network of people in the local markets both within and external to the brand who understand the local communities and have the necessary

influence to inject local insights into the process. These local components are required for a brand to win locally.

Winning locally builds confidence and generates resources to start building global components, such as collecting and tracking harmonized metrics. Brand and market data are collected, stored, and reported in a harmonized way so that insights can be shared and similarities detected. Global components, such as global identity, personality, meaning, and point of view, that do not change by country or region start to become nurtured within the brand. These become the foundation of the brand. On these foundations, a global concept or positioning that imbues universal values, desires, and aspirations can be crafted (e.g., performance quality, innovation). This global concept and positioning can be extended across several categories and markets to build a franchise of products/services and markets while allowing for synergies and economies of scale. Enhanced global sales and revenues coupled with scale advantages allow these brands to succeed at the global level.

Succeeding globally, in turn, provides additional resources to invest in understanding local markets and generate local

insights that enable local translations and the development of successful locally adapted products and services. There appears to be a virtuous cycle between local and global success, such that each makes the other possible. The collective insights from this research suggest that brands that follow this cycle are more successful than brands that are only global or only local, at least in the category we studied.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

In two studies that build on each other, we construct a theory of gloCal branding, including constructs and propositions, and contribute to global branding theory in several ways. First, using the GTM, we build an inductive conceptualization of gloCal branding as a bidimensional model, consisting of global acceptance and local authenticity as the two pillars of an omni-brand orientation (Figure 1). We also identify the building blocks of global acceptance and local authenticity and develop research propositions for how to take a brand gloCal separately for brands that start as global or local. Second, we identify the relationship between global and local components of a gloCal brand in our gloCal success cycle conceptualization (Figure 2). Third, while most research has approached global branding from the consumer perspective (e.g., Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016; Özsomer 2012; Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2012), we build our conceptualization on in-depth interviews with experienced managers, thus complementing extant research. Indeed, our research provides ecological validity for gloCal branding. It shows that brand managers are embracing an omni-brand orientation, taking their brands gloCal by adding global (local) components *and* leveraging existing local (global) ones.

Finally, we add a layer of conceptual richness by focusing on GWBs, LWBs, and LEBs. The *content* of the components of an omni-brand (Figure 1) or gloCal success (Figure 2) did not differ significantly across the three groups of brands. However, the *levels* seemed to differ. For example, while GWBs enjoyed high brand power, many LWBs and LEBs were still focusing on building regional or global awareness. In terms of the gloCal success cycle, LWBs and LEBs were freeing up resources to build global components (Figure 2), while some GWBs (e.g., Nike, Adidas) had already completed the full cycle several times in their critical markets (e.g., China).

The omni-brand orientation is a bidimensional model, treating the original position (global or local) as the leveraging of brand identity and the new position as the addition of brand identity—two conceptually separate dimensions of an omni-brand (see Figure 1). Our conceptualization allows the new identity (e.g., local authenticity) to coexist with the existing brand identity (e.g., global acceptance) to create a gloCal brand. This bidimensional conceptualization is critical as a first step in a potentially dynamic

brand gloCalization process. In the medium to long run, the “melting” of the building blocks of global acceptance and local authenticity can create a mixture and combination that contains not only “the best” of the original global and/or local brand elements but also new and unique elements that are atypical of both of them (Coleman 1995; Steenkamp 2019). Different types of gloCal provide an interesting area for further research.

Managerial Implications

Our omni-brand orientation framework suggests actionable managerial perspectives as managers take their brands gloCal in the integrated, complex, digitally connected markets around the world (e.g., Mandler, Bartsch, and Han 2020; Özsomer 2012; Steenkamp 2019). In this bidimensional model, the building blocks of global and local exist *separately* but are used to varying degrees in managing a gloCal brand. Managers can build and nurture the needed elements—global acceptance and local authenticity—as they take their brands gloCal. For example, a global brand can leverage its global identity while adding a new position by building local authenticity via connecting its brand image locally and/or utilizing local insights and originality. Based on our interviews, Nike fits this trajectory in China. As a Nike China VP noted, Nike is a truly global brand, yet it has managed to connect its brand image locally by designing special products for the Chinese team in the Beijing Olympics. This level of local authenticity helps make a global brand gloCal.

A brand with a local original position can maintain its local identity and then add a new position by building global acceptance perceptions. For example, a director of the local brand Li-Ning explained how the brand increased its PBG by communicating its successes in foreign markets to local customers. The same brand also communicated its number of patents, explaining how it uses these patents to reach a higher level of product performance quality: “Those are really true athletic performance products, and they contribute to our perception of becoming a globally accepted local brand.” Another brand with a local original position was pleasantly surprised when it launched a global marketing campaign. The results were very positive, and it showed managers how sensitive demand was to marketing investments. The brand leveraged its local identity and added a new position by being more impactful and powerful.

In taking their brand gloCal, managers with a local (global) original position should not abandon their existing position but rather leverage it, thus allowing the global acceptance (local authenticity) building blocks to coexist alongside the original position to reap the benefits of a gloCal brand. In this process, both local and global brands become more similar to each other, though their starting points are quite different. This similarity has implications for both opportunities to target distinct consumer segments and brand performance. This similarity implies that gloCal brands with local or global original positions end up becoming more direct competitors

as they target similar segments—namely, consumers with a preference for *combining* global and local alternatives (gloCal brands) rather than preferring global consumption alternatives (global brands) or local alternatives (local brands) (Steenkamp 2019; Steenkamp and de Jong 2010). Indeed, an increasing number of consumers are connecting to both global and local consumption meanings (Steenkamp 2019; Steenkamp and de Jong 2010) and consider themselves grounded in both global and local cultures (Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2012). In a recent study, López-Lomelí, Alarcón-del-Amo, and Llonch-Andreu (2019) found that 4 out of 24 brands were categorized as gloCal by consumers in Mexico and that there was a sizable segment of “gloCal brand lovers.” The size of this segment and the importance consumers attach to global acceptance and local authenticity, together with their building blocks, are critical to the performance of gloCal brands.

As the differences between global and local brands become fuzzier in their path to becoming gloCal, GWBs may have an advantage due to their longer history of generating and acting on local insights in culturally distant markets (e.g., an American brand in China). The route to gloCal may be more challenging for an Eastern local brand targeting consumers in major Western markets, such as the United States or Europe. One manager articulated this challenge:

You know, in our American office, we have a lot of people who are of different racial backgrounds, and sometimes that’s very challenging when we come from a mono culture.... And so we have to let down every assumption that we have, and then we have to listen to all of the various points of views because we don’t know where or what that shared experience is.

(Director, LEB)

Another manager from a LEB described the challenges faced in Europe as follows:

Europe is a continent of different cultures. The French are different from the Germans, are different from the Spaniards, are different from the Scandi, and the Italians and every single one of them is a market to its own, literally. So when we started doing the expansion there, what we actually had to do was pick up different—not only different salespeople who spoke languages but also culturally had to be both on par with the local culture, as well as this larger vision that we had.

(Director, LEB)

The ability to change, transform, and learn best practices was articulated by several managers, particularly in the context of China. As a LEB manager explained, “What’s amazing about the Chinese consumer and about the Chinese business is the willingness to evolve. It is so fast and so entrepreneurial. To be able to create their own brands and learn from the best; and they’ve done a lot of that.” This agility and speed could make up for the limited history and experience that LEBs bring to the competitive arena as they become gloCal.

Another common theme articulated by LEB and LWB leaders for succeeding locally was the need to strive to win the respect of local stakeholders. Revenues generated from local markets are then used to elevate operations and capabilities to a global level. Winning globally then frees up resources for local translation to create gloCal products and services. Managers are advised to nurture the global and local components of success as they feed into each other in a virtuous cycle for gloCal brands, a process we refer to as the gloCal success cycle.

Our follow-up study suggests that pursuing *both* global acceptance and local authenticity leads to greater acceptance and success for these brands. For example, in Turkey, managers at the local Nike subsidiary realized that teenage girls did not like to run or jog but could be convinced to stay active by walking more. The local brand managers built an integrated campaign around walking with friends in interesting neighborhoods around Istanbul. Local influencers were used to create buzz. The insight and marketing programs were local, and the campaign enabled Nike to more closely connect with younger customers and to enhance the perceptions of local authenticity.

The gloCal success cycle is a representation of how winning globally and winning locally enable each other. Brand managers can follow the sequence provided in the gloCal success cycle to enhance the performance of their brands. Although the study focuses on Eastern and Western brands, the components of an omni-brand and the sequence of winning locally to free up resources for building the global components of gloCal success can be generalized to brands from both established and emerging markets. The takeaways from this study can be used by local brands from other emerging markets not in the East (e.g., Latin American, South African, and Middle Eastern brands) as they strive to bring global acceptance in their journey to become gloCal. This paper extends extant research by providing managers with the knowledge of what is needed to take a local or a global brand gloCal and the building blocks and enablers of success for gloCal branding.

Limitations and Further Research

With the GTM, qualitative methods are used to gather evidence and then inductively build a theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). A natural next step would be to test the omni-brand orientation framework and the gloCal success cycle with quantitative studies. Consumer attitudes toward gloCal brands with varying degrees of global acceptance and local authenticity, as well as the building blocks of each, can be measured in survey-based research and manipulated in experimental studies. Consumer-based research could also shed light on the outcomes and consumer engagement for brands that follow the omni-brand orientation framework. Consumer expectations of gloCal brands and the downstream consequences of gloCal branding can be investigated in terms of favorable affect, desirability, choice, purchase behavior, and brand performance (Table 3).

An additional limitation of our study is the focus on a single industry. The athletic shoe and apparel industry represents a suitable global context because there are many strong local, global, and gloCal brands to study the phenomenon of interest. An executive at a GWB expressed the following: “As you get global expansion, there’s plenty of growth in the sporting goods industry, both domestically and internationally. I really do feel, if you had to pick an industry, this is one of the better ones to choose.” Yet, to allow for generalizability of the findings, future studies should include additional categories in which strong global, local, and gloCal brands compete, such as e-commerce, fashion, and consumer electronics. Such studies will provide a better understanding of brand journeys and will help determine the importance of each building block and any sequencing effects.

The framework can also be expanded to capture brands at different stages of gloCalization. Our focus on GWBs, LWBs, and LEBs in Study 2 alluded to different stages. Relatedly, longitudinal studies that reveal how a brand transitions from global or local to gloCal would be useful and timely. In addition, the digitally connected markets of the world present myriad opportunities for brands to simultaneously enhance perceptions of local authenticity and their global acceptance. Future studies might investigate how the use of digital communication techniques enables (or inhibits) the ability to become gloCal.

In this article, we present an omni-brand orientation framework that provides a richer understanding of gloCal brands and describe a gloCal success cycle that will enable better management of these brands. We believe that the questions “how to go gloCal” and “how to succeed with a gloCal brand” are fruitful and managerially relevant areas for further research.

Appendix A: Qualitative Interview Questions

Study 1

1. Please tell me about your current title and job responsibilities.
2. Can you tell me what it is like to work in this industry?
3. Can you tell me about an experience working on a specific product/project/category that you would consider successful?
4. Can you tell me about an experience working on a specific product/project/category that you would consider less than successful?
5. Can you tell me about an experience being a global/local leader in this industry you would consider less than successful?
6. Can you tell me about an experience being a global/local leader in this industry you would consider successful?

Study 2.

1. Please tell me about your current title and job responsibilities.
2. Have you been intentionally trying to stay global (local or trying to be both)?
3. Are you willing to sacrifice some of your original position (global or local) to be both?
4. How do you define success (failure) in gloCal? What enables success? Give me a recent example.
5. What metrics do you use to gauge your success? How do you measure?
6. What barriers have you encountered in becoming gloCal?
7. What actions have you taken to overcome these barriers?

Table 3. Brand Origin and Respondent Characteristics.

Variables	Study 1: Number of Executives (N = 50) ^c	Study 2: Number of Executives (N = 19) ^c	Study 1: Number of Brands ^d	Study 2: Number of Brands ^d
<i>Primary Business Focus</i>				
GWB ^a to gloCal	23	7	5	5
GEB ^a to gloCal	0	0	0	0
LVB ^b to gloCal	16	5	12	5
LEB ^b to gloCal	11	7	8	5
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Caucasian/European	34	9		
African American	2	1		
Asian	14	9		
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	36	15		
Female	14	4		

^aGlobal brand = More than 30% of business outside home country.

^bLocal brand = ≤30% of business outside home country and primary business focus is inside home country.

^cSeven executives participated in both Study 1 and Study 2.

^dThirteen of the brands are represented in both Study 1 and Study 2.

8. What steps were (not) successful when moving to a gloCal brand?
9. What concrete steps should managers follow to move from local (global) to gloCal?
10. Are there any different implications for Western and Eastern brands? Explain.
11. How do you know if you are balanced? (gloCal = global + local)

Appendix B: Respondent Characteristics

Number	Global or Local Brand	Western or Eastern Brand	Gender	Job Title and Function	Study 1	Study 2
1	Global	Western	M	SVP Innovation	Yes	No
2	Global	Western	M	Manager Merchandising	Yes	No
3	Global	Western	M	Director Product	Yes	No
4	Global	Western	F	Senior Director HR	Yes	No
5	Global	Western	F	Senior Director Merchandising	Yes	No
6	Global	Western	M	GM Country	Yes	No
7	Global	Western	M	VP Innovation	Yes	No
8	Global	Western	F	VP Product	Yes	No
9	Global	Western	M	Senior Director Product	Yes	No
10	Global	Western	F	VP Product	Yes	No
11	Global	Western	M	VP Marketing	Yes	No
12	Global	Western	M	VP Process	Yes	No
13	Global	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
14	Global	Western	F	VP Sales	Yes	No
15	Global	Western	F	Director Product	Yes	No
16	Global	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
17	Global	Western	M	VP Sales	Yes	No
18	Global	Western	F	VP Product	Yes	No
19	Global	Western	M	Director Product	Yes	Yes
20	Global	Western	M	Director Merchandising	Yes	No
21	Global	Western	F	VP Regional Marketing	Yes	No
22	Global	Western	M	VP Sales	Yes	Yes
23	Global	Western	F	Director Community Relations	Yes	No
24	Global	Western	M	VP Product	No	Yes
25	Global	Western	F	Marketing	No	Yes
26	Global	Western	F	VP Product	No	Yes
27	Global	Western	M	VP Product	No	Yes
28	Global	Western	M	Senior Director Global Business	No	Yes
	Global	Western		Total Global Western	23	7
1	Local	Western	F	CEO	Yes	No
2	Local	Western	M	President	Yes	No
3	Local	Western	F	CMO	Yes	No
4	Local	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	Yes
5	Local	Western	F	VP Product	Yes	No
6	Local	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
7	Local	Western	M	Director Product	Yes	No
8	Local	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
9	Local	Western	M	CEO	Yes	No
10	Local	Western	M	VP Sales	Yes	No
11	Local	Western	M	GM Region	Yes	Yes
12	Local	Western	F	Senior Director Product	Yes	No
13	Local	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
14	Local	Western	M	SVP Brand Strategy	Yes	No
15	Local	Western	M	VP Product	Yes	No
16	Local	Western	M	VP/GM Country	Yes	No
17	Local	Western	F	Product Marketing Manager	No	Yes
18	Local	Western	M	Product Development Manager	No	Yes
19	Local	Western	M	VP Sourcing	No	Yes
	Local	Western		Total Local Western	16	5

(continued)

(continued)

Number	Global or Local Brand	Western or Eastern Brand	Gender	Job Title and Function	Study 1	Study 2
1	Local	Eastern	M	VP Sales	Yes	No
2	Local	Eastern	M	Director Product	Yes	No
3	Local	Eastern	M	Consultant Design	Yes	Yes
4	Local	Eastern	M	Director Design	Yes	No
5	Local	Eastern	M	CEO	Yes	Yes
6	Local	Eastern	M	Consultant Design	Yes	No
7	Local	Eastern	M	VP Design	Yes	Yes
8	Local	Eastern	M	Marketing Manager	Yes	No
9	Local	Eastern	M	Professor Marketing	Yes	No
10	Local	Eastern	F	President	Yes	No
11	Local	Eastern	M	Director Innovation	Yes	No
12	Local	Eastern	M	Sports Marketing Manager	No	Yes
13	Local	Eastern	M	Product Marketing Manager	No	Yes
14	Local	Eastern	M	Marketing Manager	No	Yes
15	Local	Eastern	F	CEO	No	Yes
	Local	Eastern		Total Local Eastern	11	7

Notes: CEO = chief executive officer, CMO = chief marketing officer, VP = vice president, GM = general manager, SVP = senior vice president; M = male; F = female.

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