Exploring Type of Strategies Used by Global Brands to Engage the Saudi Consumers More in Brands' Facebook Pages in Saudi Arabia in Terms of "Like, Share and Comment"

Dr. Mohammad Hatim Abuljadail

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Communication and Media

Dr. Saeed Ali Badghish

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Economics and Administration

King Abdulaziz University

Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This study aims to examine how local and global brands use their Facebook brand pages in Saudi Arabia. Building on prior research on globalization and localization, cultural value, and branding, and with a specific interest on culture value congruence, this study was designed to explore the question: What type of standardization/localization strategies used by global brands engage the Saudi consumer more in brand Facebook pages in Saudi Arabia in terms of like, share, and comment2 To identify social media content strategies used by local and global brands and consumer interaction using the Facebook metrics, a content analysis was conducted of brand pages on Facebook. The data for this study were obtained from 40 official brand Facebook pages in Saudi Arabia. Arising from the random selection of 10 posts dated in March of 2015 from each of the brand's Facebook pages, 400 posts were collected and analyzed. Results of the study provided insights into both brand and consumer activity, highlighting increases in consumer interactions with price/value information, performance information, and Saudi/Arab cultural cues related to Islamic values, family cultural values, females, and English language use. Social media remains risky for marketers and global marketers are still discovering the best ways to utilize social media to communicate with their diverse target audience. The results support careful consideration of the cultural values of the audience when developing the global social media marketing strategy.

Keywords: *Brands, Facebook, Social media, Culture, Standardization, Globalization.*

Introduction

The increased use and growing popularity of social network sites (SNS) has become undeniable. The number of users of SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram are growing every year. Facebook has reached a new milestone, with 1.86 billion active users per month (Facebook, 2017). Facebook's growing popularity has attracted businesses to establish pages for their brands. There are more than 60 million active business Facebook pages (Facebook, 2017). Consequently, after noticing the growing popularity of official Facebook pages among commercial brands, Facebook executives sought to provide more convenient solutions to global brands and any brand that exists in more than one market. As a response, Facebook introduced Global pages in 2012.

A global page is an official Facebook page that can have multiple pages for different markets, but all with the same universal brand name, number of fans, number of people talking about the page, and global insights

across all the different markets (Facebook, 2017). Marketers can localize the language, profile image, cover photo, posts, and tabs from one region to another, based on the target audiences and locations. For example, people in Japan will only see the content that is localized for Japan and people in Saudi Arabia will only see the content that is localized for Saudi Arabia. When users type the name of the brand, the global brand will direct them to the local page that is designated to the region in which the user is located.

Much of the studies already conducted has focused on the western world, leaving a gap in the literature by excluding important markets, such as the Arab world. Therefore, for this study, the researcher focused on examining SNS business in Saudi Arabia, one of the largest oil producing countries in the world. Geographically, Saudi Arabia is the second largest Arab country, and is the largest country in the Middle East (CIA, 2017).

Saudi Arabia is a country with strong religious values and traditions. Women wear an abaya whenever out in public, stores and restaurants close for prayer time throughout the day, and there is also a significant amount of censorship with regard to what is shown on television or taught in schools. Although the country is on a progressive track, these cultural traditions are a stronghold throughout the country. Due to this conservative nature, the Internet was launched late in Saudi Arabia. The introduction of the Internet, despite the ability to enhance the economy of the Kingdom, presented a challenge in terms of how to create a balance with the country's conservative values. Since the Internet was launched to the public in Saudi Arabia, the country's usage has grown rapidly from only 100,000 users in 1999 to 20,813,695 users in 2016, representing 64.7% of the population in Saudi Arabia (Internet Live Stats, 2016). The country has advanced and become less conservative since the internet developed, as Saudi people have an outlet to express their feelings and desires. The government has been able to fulfill some of these demands, but the closed, conservative culture has caused a hunger and great need for a liberal medium that provides an outlet for freedom of expression. In addition, Saudi internet users use social media for information seeking and fact checking the news (The Economist, 2014).

The role of culture expectations among global and local brands may present different patterns of brand social media posting and consumer interaction. The aim of this paper was to examine how local and global brands use their Facebook brand pages in Saudi Arabia and how the Saudi consumer reacts to the strategies used by those brands.

Global Advertising Strategies

The term globalization refers to the complete structuring of the entire world, as a whole (Robertson, 1990). As brands became able to sell their products and services around the world, global media and advertising became important in carrying the exchange and satisfying these new changes. Global media and advertising aim to diminish the differences among the world's consumers' cultures into one culture that can be understood universally (Cimendag and Yalcin, 2012). The success of such a strategy could enable global brand marketers to use a uniform strategy to market and sell their products efficiently at a lower cost around the world (Ford et al., 2011). Although globalization aims to have a unified culture of consumers, it is mainly based on the western culture-primarily, U.S. standardization and adaptation are the two common marketing strategies used by international brands in international markets (Ha et al., 2014). Standardization refers to the use of the same marketing strategy for different countries. In contrast, adaptation refers to the strategy of customization to each individual local market. While standardization supporters argue that globalization leads to the convergence of consumers around the world and the same message is beneficial to create a consistent global brand image (Levitt, 1983; Yunker, 2010), adaptation supporters argue that globalization looks at markets at the macro-level, neglecting the differences at the micro-level (Giddens, 2005). Adaptation supporters base their argument on divergence theories that say groups and subgroups strive to maintain their identities (Schlesinger, 1987; Arantes, 2007). Levitt's (1983) notion of standardized advertising assumes powerful ads that apply to all races, nations, ages, religions, customs and values. Nonetheless,

De Mooij (2013) argues that the success of global brands around the world doesn't necessarily mean that local cultures are diminishing. Although markets and technologies are converging, people's behaviors, attitudes, desires and values are not converging. Wind (1986) suggests a strategy called 'think globally and act locally'. This strategy aims at designing a strategy that follows global perspective, but with paying attention to local details. Such a strategy satisfies the cost reduction aspect of globalized advertising as well as the cultural differences aspect.

Cultural Value Congruity

Previous studies show that value congruence in the cultural context is essential to advertising success (Chang, 2006). The term congruence refers to harmony, compatibility, and agreement. Congruency is used in multiple contexts and has been considered highly effective in persuading consumers (Ha et al., 2014). For example, content that portrays models of the same ethnicity as the majority of viewers tends to be more persuasive, even though ads with models of another race might be more attention grabbing (Cui et al., 2012). In contrast, sometimes cultural values can be paradoxical. The cultural value paradox proposed by De Mooij (2013) argues that people might in some cases prefer the opposite of their own culture. Sometimes what people want is different from what they have, and that difference can reflect on the desired (what we want) versus the desirable (what society wants).

Values are a constituent of culture, which has been related to consumer behavior through values (Darden, 1979; Valencia, 1989). Although culture and values are closely entwined (de Mooij, 2004), research on the influence of personal values on behavior is scant. According to Fletcher and Brown (2008), behaviors are largely dependent on values and attitudes because these determine what is considered right or wrong. Values can explain and predict attitudes and behaviors in a diverse range of situations and contexts because they provide an abstract set of behavior-guiding principles (Rose; Shoham; Kahle & Batra., 1994). Work by researchers to measure cultural values and to develop marketing strategies by applying this knowledge, commonly uses scales developed by Kahle (1983), Phinney (1992), Rokeach (1973), and Schwartz (1994).

In addition, as mentioned earlier, consumers do not always want what they do not have. There are situations in which cultural value paradox can play a different role, making local cultural values more prominent. In examining cultural values reflected in advertising, Rokeach's (1973) instrumental and terminal values inventory reflects the desirable versus desired values that are rooted in culture. Some strategies can be more effective when they are congruent in some situations while incongruent in others. The appeal of cultural congruency and cultural paradox should both be considered when examining the effectiveness of standardization and adaptation strategies.

Several studies have shown the importance of cultural congruency and its role in improving advertising effectiveness. For example, Sadiq and Al-Gawaiz (2013) examined the cultural factors that shape attitudes toward advertising in Saudi Arabia. If brand identities or the communication strategies used are inconsistent with the Saudi local values, consumers could form a negative attitude toward the product or brand. Further, Perry and Motley (2010) showed how cultural values are reflected in home loan advertisements in both Saudi Arabia and the United States. While the idea of the American Dream is highlighted in ads in the United States, the prevailing Islamic laws are emphasized in home loan ads in Saudi Arabia, which restricts the paying or charging of interest. In the U.S., advertisers highlight affordability and low interest rates, whereas in Saudi Arabia, advertisers emphasize relationships (i.e., trust between the buyer and lender) and adherence to Sharia (i.e., home loans the Shari'ah way). Promoting the dream of home ownership prevails in both countries, but the themes of the ads tend to be consistent with the cultural values and expectations of each country. With globally accessible social media and global brand marketers targeting countries around the world, how marketers use social media to interact with consumers, with regard to value congruency, is an

important question to answer. Thus, based on past research on globalization and localization, cultural value, and branding, the following research question pertaining to the Facebook brand page content strategies was posed in this study: What type of standardization/ localization strategies used by global brands engage the Saudi consumer more in brand Facebook pages in Saudi Arabia in terms of *like, share, and comment*?

Methods

Sampling and Procedure

To identify social media content strategies used by local and global brands and consumer interaction using the Facebook metrics, a content analysis was conducted of brand pages on Facebook. The data for this study were obtained from 40 official brands' Facebook pages in Saudi Arabia. A total of 20 pages were selected from the top 100 Saudi brands in 2013 (top100 Saudibrands, 2013) and another 20 were chosen from the world's' most valuable brands in 2014 (Brandirectory, 2014). These 40 pages were selected based on the following criteria: (a) the brand had to have an active official Facebook fan page that posts monthly, and (b) the brand had to fit one of the six industry sectors included in this study, which were automotive, food and beverage, consumer goods, financial services, retail, and technology. Other industry sectors, such as industrial and construction, were excluded due to the different nature of the industry, with a focus on business to business relations rather than business to consumer relations. Industry sectors were narrowed down to ensure that industries were comparable and messages designed for similar target audiences and markets (see Table 1).

This study focused only on the year of 2015 were there was significant improvement in Facebook ads with revenue of more than three times of the 2013 (Clement, 2019). At the same time, the Saudi Economy faced many challenges with oil price of average $40 (Inflationdata Website, 2019). After the selection of 20 local and 20 global brands, of posts dated in March of 2015, 10 posts were randomly selected from every brand's Facebook fan page. The posts were selected from the posts that were posted in March 2015. A total of 400 posts (units of analysis) were analyzed and the data collection took place during the first two weeks of April 2015. Screen shots of the selected posts were taken and then the posts were coded.

Table 1 Brands in the Sampled Posts

Brand Category	Local	Global
Food/beverage	Almarai	Sprite Middle East#
Food/beverage	Rabea Tea	KFC@
Food/beverage	Herfy	McDonalds@
Food/beverage	Kudu	Lays@
Food/beverage	Afia	Nescafe#
Food/beverage	Nada	Nestlé Desserts@ Arabia
Food/beverage	Hana Water	Fanta Middle East#
Food/beverage	NADEC	Starbucks Middle East#
Consumer goods	Mikyajy	Lancome#
Consumer goods	Arabian Oud	Dove^
Consumer goods	Gazzaz	Garnier Arabia@
Consumer goods	Abdul Samad Al Qurashi	Olay@
Automotive	Samaco Automotive	Toyota*
Automotive	Aljomaih Automotive	BMW*
Financial services	Al Rajhi Bank	American Express* Saudi Arabia
Retail	Panda	Carrefour Saudi*
Retail	Ahmed Abdulwahed	Samsung Saudi*
Retail	eXtra Stores	Microsoft*
Retail	AlShiaka	Ikea*
Technology	Tokyo Games	PlayStation Middle# East
Total number of brands	20	20
Total number of posts	200	200

Note: * for Saudi page only, # for Middle East page, @ for Pan-Arab page and ^ for Gulf page only page (Facebook, http://www.facebook.com/). Middle East (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Israeli, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen), Pan-Arab (Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman).

The author served as the primary coder for the content analysis, and an international graduate student from Saudi Arabia was recruited and trained for three hours to serve as the second coder. During the training, the coder was given a codebook with operational definitions of all the measures. After the completion of the initial coding, an intercoder reliability test was assessed through the two coders, who both coded a 10% subsample of the local and global brands Facebook fan pages. The second coder coded 20 postings of local brands and 20 postings of global brands. An intercoder reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was assessed to determine consistency among coders.

The reliability coefficients were satisfactory for all the scales. The reliability coefficient for information cues was found to be Kappa = 0.74; association attributes was found to be Kappa = 0.70; terminal values was found to be Kappa = 0.69; post content categories was found to be Kappa = 0.72; and cultural cues was found to be Kappa = 0.93. The overall intercoder reliability for all the scales was found to be Kappa = 0.81. Kappa values from.60 to.79 are considered substantial and.80 and above are considered outstanding (Landis & Koch 1977). After establishing intercoder reliability, the researcher independently coded the remaining data.

Measures

The study used two message scales. The first scale, developed by Ha (1998), consisted of information cues, association attributes, and terminal values. Part of the scale is a modified version of Resnik and Stern's (1977) scale that was designed to measure advertising appeals. Resnik and Stern's scale was reported to have good reliability and was used widely by many scholars in the advertising field. Besides Resnik and Stern's information cues scale, the association attributes and terminal values scale was based on Rokeach (1973). Terminal values refers to the values that are promised by the advertisers that the consumer can enjoy after purchase, such as happiness, freedom, and equality. Association attributes, also called instrumental values, are characteristics that advertisers promise that the product advertised has, such as being stylish and friendly (Ha, 1998). Association attributes can be considered as attributes that lead the consumer to achieve the terminal values.

In addition to the inclusion of the scale developed by Ha (1998), which integrates information cues, association attributes, and terminal values (originally intended for analyzing services advertising only), for this study, two additional social media message scales were added to examine any additional content that would not be measured by the previous scales. As noted previously, information cues, association attributes and terminal values are designed to examine advertising appeals that reflect meanings and values about the brand or product. In the digital age, brands communicate messages that are beyond these three scales. Especially in social media, brands communicate a variety of content categories that are designed for different purposes, such as social engagement, entertainment, and competition, which may not relate to the product or brand. For example, during the content analysis for this study, the author noticed that many posts were not actually about the brand/product ($n = 130$, out of a total of 400 posts). The posts that were not about the brand/product were oftentimes greetings or posting jokes. Thus, the author included additional scales in order to cover the content not covered by the previous three scales.

The first additional scale employed in this study measured posts that are beyond information cues, association attributes, and terminal values. The additional scale, developed by Parsons (2013), included messages that are communicated to consumers, but not necessarily about the product. Parsons's (2013) categories were based on Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) framework, which classifies social media functions into seven categories: identity, presence, relationships, conversations, groups, reputation, and sharing. Parson (2013) identified 20 post content items for brand Facebook pages that were within the seven classifications of Kietzmann et al. (2011). The 20 items were included: ad campaigns/product information/sponsorships,

apps/ games/ downloads, calls for involvement, career/business opportunities, celebrity/athlete information/acknowledgements, company information/ news/ history/ fun facts, contest/sweepstakes, customer comments, entertainment related-TV/ movies, events, holiday greetings, information about changes to Facebook page or website, links, live events/ live video, photos, polls/ poll questions, product reviews/tips/ uses/ recipes, promotions/ coupons/samples, social responsibility/ charity/ philanthropy/ community, and video/YouTube links (Parsons, 2013).

The importance of these types of communication lies in the impact on consumer perceptions of the brands. To fit the purposes of this study, the author modified Parsons's (2013) typologies of non-brand messages and combined some of Parson's categories into one. For example, company information, page information, product information, and career information were combined into a single category named information/statements/instructions. Hence, the modified scale was simplified to consist of the following 10 post content categories: prizes/ giveaways, special price/ voucher/ rebate, celebrities, games/ quizzes/ polls/ competitions, events/ functions/ occasions, social engagement/ participation, corporate social responsibility, information/ statements/ instructions, entertainment/ humor/ TV/ sports, and greetings/ religious messages.

In addition, because the focus of this study was on brands that exist in Saudi Arabia, the author developed a scale of the most common 11 cultural cues mentioned in previous research investigating Arab culture (Al- Olayan & Karande, 2000; Kalliny et al., 2008; Luqmani et al., 1989; Stone, 2002). The 11 items included: family, Islam, traditional clothing, desert and Saudi scenes, hospitality/ Saudi food and beverages, nationalism/ Saudi flags, representation of male, representation of female, depiction of female in traditional clothing, Arabic language only, and Saudi dialect. In all, a total of 8 information cues, 11 association attributes, 14 terminal values, 10 post content categories, and 11 cultural cues were included in this study to investigate the appeals and content communicated by local and global brands in Saudi Arabia through Facebook pages.

Results and Analysis

The data were compared using independent-samples t-tests to compare whether the content posted by local and global brand Facebook pages had a significant difference in the scores of *likes*, *comments*, and *shares*. Significance was defined as a p-value less than.05. The consumer activity and interaction were recorded in terms of likes, comments, and shares and compared across the three global brand categories (Saudi, Arab, and Middle East). The data in terms of the total counts of likes, comments, and shares are given in Figure 1.

With regard to information cues (see Table 2) the identified significant differences included: (a) global brand posts that consisted of price/value information cues (M= 674.89) generated more likes than those of their local brand counterparts (M= 429.04); (b) global brand posts that consisted of availability information cues generated more likes (M= 1024.70) than those of their local brand counterparts (M= 392.49); (c) global

Table 2 Comparison of Local and Global brand Use of Information Cues and the Impact on Facebook Interactions

		Local			Global	
	Like (M)	Comment (M)	Share (M)	Like (M)	Comment (M)	Share (M)
Price/value*	429.04	9.0	8.58	**674.89**	20.39	16.0
Quality	1294.89	11.85	30.78	894.57	18.48	31.52
Performance*	2250.18	**12.61**	58.70	877.59	10.45	25.17
Components/contents	1392.23	15.42	33.71	834.29	16.43	51.07
Availability*	392.49	14.21	6.18	**1024.70**	15.0	**67.52**
Special offers	609.14	49.03	49.97	557.77	31.35	38.81
Package/shape	1975.31	14.77	37.46	379.25	19.38	31.63
Guarantees/warranties	454.0	25.0	26.0	288.0	11.75	14.50

Note. N = 400 * p <.05.

brands generated 11 times more shares (M= 67.52) than their local brand counterparts (M= 6.18); and (d) local brand posts that consisted of performance information cues (M= 12.61) generated more comments than their global brand counterparts (M= 10.45).
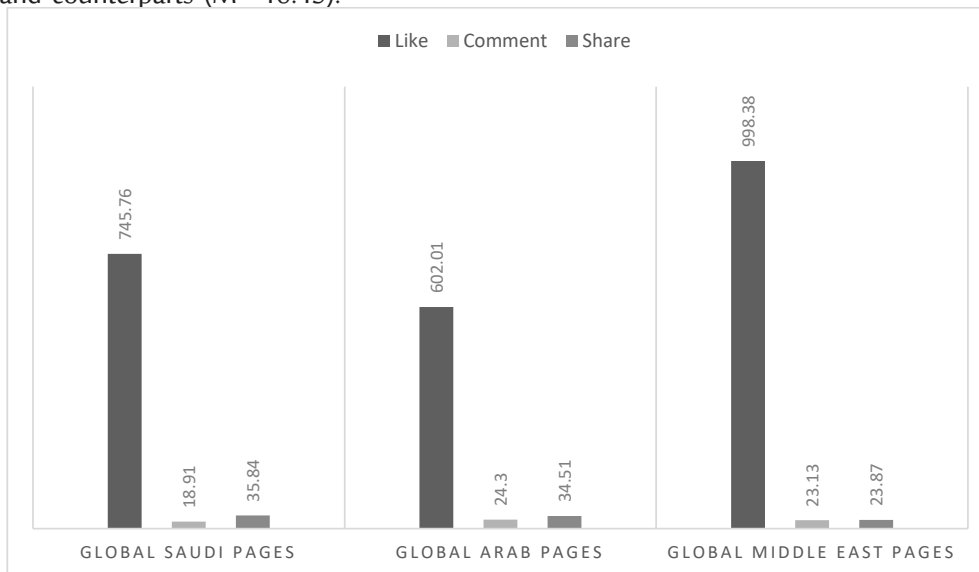
Figure 1. Number of likes, comments, and shares' among posts in global brands' Facebook pages of the three globalization/ standardization categories.

With regard to Saudi/Arab cultural cues, significant differences were noted in (a) global brand posts that consisted of Islam values (M = 1852.75) generated more likes than local brands (M =162.94); (b) local brand posts that used the English language (M=1437.1) received much more likes than their global brand counterparts (M=622.35); and (c) local brand posts that featured females (M = 17.85) generated more comments than their global brand counterparts (M =15.24; see Table 3).

The first significant difference noted when comparing the use of cultural cues across the three global brand categories (Saudi, Arab, and Middle East; see Table 4) was a significant difference in using family cultural values (F (2, 197) = 7.31, p <.01). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for global Arab pages posting content that consisted of family values (M =.24, SD =.43) was significantly greater than global Saudi pages (M =.07, SD =.26) and global Middle East pages (M=.05, SD =.22). However, the global Saudi pages did not significantly differ from the global Middle East pages with regard to using content that consists of family values.

Secondly, among the three global brand categories, there was a significant difference in using females (F [2, 197] = 15.73, p <.001). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for global Arab pages posting content that consists of females

Table 3 Comparison of Local and Global Brand Use of Saudi Arab Cultural Cues and the Impact on Facebook Interaction

	Local			Global		
	Like (M)	Comment (M)	Share (M)	Like (M)	Comment (M)	Share (M)
Family	1237.53	19.26	54.16	1088.44	26.40	47.76
Islam*	162.94	11.13	8.25	**1852.75**	35.0	74.75
Traditional clothing	584.39	9.78	53.33	526.0	14.89	26.11
Desert and Saudi scenes	323.13	6.50	12.13	1142.43	21.0	63.71
Hospitality/ Saudi food	53.00	4.17	9.50	94.0	10.0	41.0
Nationalism/Saudi flags	103.25	32.50	0.75	88.50	1.0	0.0
Representation of male	699.07	16.50	39.30	661.75	14.80	18.55
Representation of female*	870.41	**17.85**	40.19	872.42	15.24	29.16
Language use: English*	**1437.1**	30.35	30.55	622.35	19.59	23.61

Note. N = 400 * p <.05.

(M =.39, SD =.43) was significantly greater than global Middle East pages (M=.12, SD=.39), and global Saudi pages (M =.06, SD=.23). However, the global Saudi pages did not significantly differ from the global Middle East pages with regard to using content that consists of females.

Lastly, among the three global brand categories, there was a significant difference in using English language (F [2, 194] = 7.20, p <.01). Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the mean score for global Arab pages posting content that consists of English language (M =.88, SD =.32) was significantly greater than global Middle East pages (M=.78, SD=.42), and global Saudi pages (M =.62, SD=.49). However, the global Arab pages did not significantly differ from the global Middle East pages in regard to using English language.

Table 4 Cultural Cues in Facebook Posts across the Three Global Brand Categories based on Standardization/Localization

Variables	Groups	M	SD	F	df	P	Post hoc (Scheffe) 1	2	3
Family	1 Saudi Pages	.07	.26	7.31	2	.001		b	
	2 Arab Pages	.24	.43					b	b
	3 Middle East Pages	.05	.22						b
Islam	1 Saudi Pages	.04	.20	1.61	2	n.s			
	2 Arab Pages	.01	.12						
	3 Middle East Pages	.00	.00						
Traditional clothes	1 Saudi Pages	.07		.88	2	n.s			
	2 Arab Pages	.03							
	3 Middle East Pages	.03							
Representation of Female	1 Saudi Pages	.06	.23	15.73	2	.00		c	
	2 Arab Pages	.39	.49					c	c
	3 Middle East Pages	.12	.39						c
Language Use: English	1 Saudi Pages	.62	.49	7.20	2	.001		b	b
	2 Arab Pages	.88	.32					b	
	3 Middle East Pages	.78	.42					b	

a: (p <.01), b: (p <.05), c: (p <.001)
Note: 1= Saudi pages (n-70); 2= Arab pages (n=70); 3= Middle East Pages (n=60)

Summary of Results

Results of the study provided insights into both brand and consumer activity. Significant differences between global brand and local brand posts highlighted significantly increased consumer interaction in terms of likes among global brand posts consisting of price/value information cues and availability information cues, significantly more shares among global brand posts compared to local brand posts, and significantly more comment among local brand posts consisting of performance information cues. Examination of Saudi/Arab cultural cues, global brand posts that consisted of Islamic values generated significantly more likes than local brands, whereas local brand posts that used the English language received significantly more likes than their global brand counterparts and local brand posts that featured females generated significantly more comments than their global brand counterparts. Lastly, the global Arab pages were noted to have significantly greater number of posts involving cultural cues related to family cultural values, females, and English language.

Discussion and Conclusion

The dynamic of social media differs from traditional media in that social media users are active and can generate content. Social media users can publish content and interact with brands, as well as with other users. Scholars and practitioners have been looking for the best strategies to increase social media campaign effectiveness. Given the dominance of Facebook in terms of social media, the study focused on brand activity on Facebook.

For the research question, the authors examined the level of standardization/ localization among three different groups: global with Saudi page, global with pan-Arab page, and global with Middle East page. Consumer interactions collected included Likes, Comments, and Shares. The findings showed that global

Arab pages had more fans than global Saudi pages and global Middle East pages, respectively. This supports the argument of Levitt (1983) and Yunker (2010) which claim that globalization leads to the convergence of consumers around the world. However, the findings also showed that global Middle East pages generated the most likes per month, followed by global Saudi pages, and then global Arab pages. With regard to comments, global Arab pages generated the most comments, followed by global Middle East pages, and then global Saudi pages. Lastly, with regard to shares, global Saudi pages generated the most shares, followed by global Arab pages, and then global Middle East pages which is in line with the adaptation supporter (Giddens, 2005). Each of the three categories was more successful in generating one of the three types of Facebook interaction (likes, comments and shares).

As mentioned earlier by Cimendag and Yalcin (2012), Global media aims to reduce differences among the world's consumers' cultures into one culture to have one universal message. In addition, global Facebook pages allow marketers to have one universal page for the global brand and within the universal page, marketers can create market pages localized for different markets around the world. Although people around the world will see the posts that are customized for their particular market, the total number of fans shown on the page is the total number of fans of the universal page, rather than the total fans of the market's page. Therefore, we cannot use the total number of fans in brand Facebook pages as a metric to measure the effectiveness of global brand Facebook pages in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, the researcher examined the differences among the three global brand pages' categories (Saudi, Arab and Middle East) with regard to their localization strategies. A comparison of the Saudi/Arab cultural cues among the three global brand pages' categories highlighted three significant findings. First, global brands that have a Facebook page for the Arab world are posting more content that consists of family values (consistent with the Saudi/Arab cultural values) compared to global Saudi pages and global Middle East pages; however, global Arab pages are posting content that consist of more women than men and consist of English language as well, compared to their counterparts. Their inconsistency with the local cultural values can explain their lower liking interaction and higher commenting interaction. As mentioned earlier, high commenting interaction is not necessarily good, since comments can be negative (e.g., complaints).

Second, global Saudi page posts generated the highest number of shares, as well as an acceptable number of likes. Although they did not necessarily post a great deal of content highlighting the Saudi cultural values (e.g., family and Islam), they also did not post a great deal of content that was inconsistent with the local cultural values. Compared to global Arab and global Middle East pages, global Saudi pages posted less content that represents females (more than males). They also posted less content consisting of the English language.

Third, global Middle East pages generated the highest number of likes compared to the other two global page categories; however, their posts were inconsistent with the Saudi/Arab cultural values. Global Middle East pages posted less content representing values, such as Islamic and family values, but posted more content representing more women than men, as well as more English than Arabic language. There are several explanations for their high number of likes. First, the Middle East consists of countries that are non-Arabic speaking (e.g., Turkey, Iran, and Israel), which explains why the pages use more English than Arabic. In addition, the posts are being liked by non-Arabic speakers. Second, there are non-Muslim countries in the Middle East (e.g., Israel), which can explain why brands are using strategies that are not completely aligned with the Saudi/ Arab culture. This also could show that the posts that are inconsistent with the local Saudi values are being liked by others in the regions who are non-Muslim or non-Arab. The last explanation is cultural paradox. As there are three possible page categories for global brands, people might have even lower expectations when the global brand page is not dedicated to their local market. People might be less judgmental about being aligned with the local values when it is not only by a global brand, but a global

brand with a further reaching regional page that is not narrowly dedicated to their local market. When consumers are directed to the page that is localized to the region or country where they are located, they will be able to see the change of the page's name (e.g., Nescafe USA versus Nescafe Middle East).

This study has several managerial implications. Marketers are still discovering the best way to communicate with the public through social media. Social media remains unclear and risky for marketers, requiring careful strategy, as the public can turn social media against the brand. Social media is different from traditional media, as it remains focused on building a relationship with the public (Kim, 2016). Most previous studies have been stuck between strategies and desired outcome, unable to adapt a strategy that was successful for a different brand-a process that should include consideration of the characteristics of their audience and their cultural values.

Although this study attempted to be as comprehensive as possible, there were still some limitations. The data analysis was limited to the Facebook pages of brands that exist in Saudi Arabia, some of the global brands under study employed a Pan-Arab strategy, Middle East strategy, or Saudi-Arabia specific strategy; however, Facebook global pages allow marketers to create localized market pages within the universal global page. Hence, the *likes* on the pages of the global brands that employ Middle East and Pan-Arab strategies are not exclusively from local Saudi consumers. Although the global brands' social media strategies and their interaction might seem successful, this success may not be in all the countries in the region. For example, the social media campaign used in a brand's Facebook page that employs a Middle East strategy might seem successful; however, the success might not specifically cover all the countries in the region. It could be more successful if the marketing strategy was more localized for smaller regions or even for individual countries. It is of importance to further examine this area, especially when it comes to localization and standardization marketing strategies, where there are strategies that are in between localization and standardization, such as regional strategies. More research should be conducted on regional standardization of global markets and how they coordinate the content in those regional Pan-Arab, and Pan-Middle East pages.

Limitations

Although the data in this study included 400 posts, it was limited in terms of the number of posts per brand, to only 10. Also, although the posts were randomly selected, they were selected from only a single month (March) in one year (2015). Furthermore, the basis for selecting the 20 local brands was a listing of the top 100 Saudi brands in 2013, whereas the data were collected in 2015. The 2013 listing was the most recent top brands listing in Saudi Arabia at the time of the data collection for this study.

Directions for Future Studies

There are several suggestions for future studies. First, future studies may want to compare the results with different populations in different countries. Future studies can focus on the Arab world and compare how strategies might be different within the Arab countries. Future studies can also examine the different social media platforms and compare the findings from the different outlets. This study only examined brand pages on Facebook. Although Facebook has the highest number of users among the different social media platforms, the younger generation is slowly leaving Facebook and adapting to the newer and trendier platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, particularly consumers in the U.S. Thus, consumer interaction patterns on Facebook in the U.S. may be very different. This provides an opportunity that is ever expanding for research in all aspects of the impact of SNS on marketing and consumer interaction. Scholars should seize this opportunity and look deeper into all aspects of this new and important area of marketing research.

REFERENCES

- Al-Olayan, Fahad S. and Karande, K. (2000). "A content analysis of magazine Advertisements from the United States and the Arab World", *Journal of Advertising,* 29 (3), 69-82.

- Arantes, Antonio A. (2007), "Diversity, Heritage and Cultural Politics," **Theory, Culture and Society**, 24 (7-8), 290-296.

- Brandirectory. (2014). **Global 500**-2014. Retrieved April 19, 2015 from http://brandirectory.com/league_tables/table/global-500-2014

- Chang, C. (2006). "Seeing the small picture: Ad-self versus ad-culture congruency in international advertising". **Journal of Business and Psychology**, 20 (3), 445-465.

- CIA. (2017). **The World Factbook**. Retrieved December 20, 2017 from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2147rank.html

- Cimendag, Ismail and Erkan Yalcin. (2012). **Global marketing advertising with cultural differences: How can global companies better address cultural differences in marketing advertising in the Middle East?",** available at: http://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:533812/fulltext01.pdf (accessed 22 November 2016).

- Clement, J. (2019). "**Facebook's advertising revenue worldwide from 2009 to 2018 (in million U.S. dollars)**", Statista Website, Retrieved on 5th July 2019, from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/271258/facebooks-advertising-revenue-worldwide/

- Cui, Geng; Xiaoyan Yang; Haizhong Wang and Hongyan Liu. (2012). "Culturally incongruent messages in international advertising", **International Journal of Advertising**, 21(2), 355-376.

- Darden, W. R. (1979). **A patronage model of consumer behavior. in Competitive structure in retail markets: the department store perspective**, eds. R. Stampfl & E. C. Hirschman, American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL.

- De Mooij, M. (2013). **Global marketing and advertising: Understanding cultural paradoxes.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Facebook. (2017). *Facebook newsroom*. Retrieved February 11, 2016 from http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/

- Fletcher, R. and Brown, L. (2008). **International marketing**: **An Asia Pacific Perspective**. 4th ed., Pearson, Australia.

- Ford, John B.; Barbara Mueller; Charles R. Taylor and Nigel Hollis. (2011). "The tension between strategy and execution: Challenges for international advertising research-Globalization is much more than universal branding," **Journal of Advertising Research**, (51)1, 27-36.

- Giddens, Anthony. (2005). **Runaway world: How globalization is shaping our lives**. Routledge, New York, NY.

- Ha, L. (1998). "Advertising appeals used by services marketers: A comparison between Hong Kong and the United States", **Journal of Services Marketing**, 12 (2), 98-112.

- Ha, L.; Abuljadail, M. and Jiang, W. (2014). **International advertising**, **Oxford Bibliographies in Communication**. doi:10.1093/obo/9780199756841-0153

- Inflationdata. (2019). *Historical crude oil prices (Table)*. Retrieved July 2019 from: https://inflationdata.com/articles/inflation-adjusted-prices/historical-crude-oil-prices-table/

- Internet Live Stats. (2016). *Saudi Arabia internet users*. Retrieved December 16, 2016 from http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/saudi-arabia/

- Kahle, LR (1983). Social values and social change: adaptation to life in America, Praeger, New York, NY.

- Kalliny, M., Dagher, G., Minor, M. S., & De Los Santos, G. (2008). Television advertising in the Arab world: A status report. *Journal of Advertising Research,* (48)2, 215-223.

- Kietzmann, J. H.; Hermkens, K.; McCarthy, I. P. and Silvestre, B. S. (2011). "Social media2 Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media", *Business Horizons,* 54 (3), 241-251.

- Kim, C. M. (2016). *Social media campaigns: Strategies for public relations and marketing.* Routledge.

- Landis, J. R. and Koch, G. G. (1977). "An application of hierarchical kappa-type statistics in the assessment of majority agreement among multiple observers", *Biometrics*, 33 (2), 363-374.

- Levitt, Theodore. (1983). "The globalization of markets," *Harvard Business Review*, (83) 3, 92-102.

- Luqmani, M.; Yavas, U. and Quraeshi, Z. (1989). "Advertising in Saudi Arabia: Content and regulation", *International Marketing Review*, 6 (1), 59-72.

- Parsons, A. (2013). "Using social media to reach consumers: A content analysis of official Facebook pages", *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 17 (2), 27-36.

- Perry, V. G. and Motley, C. M. (2010). "Dreams and taboos: Home loan advertising in the United States and Saudi Arabia", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 22 (2), 199-212.

- Phinney, J. S. (1992). "The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups", *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Vol. 7, pp. 15 6–176.

- Resnik, A. and Stern, B. L. (1977). "An analysis of information content in television advertising", *The Journal of Marketing*, 41 (1), 50-53.

- Robertson, Roland. (1990). "Mapping the global condition: Globalization as the central concept," *Theory, Culture and Society*, (7) 2-3, 15-30.

- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York, NY: Free Press.

- Rose, G.; Shoham A, Kahle L. and Batra, B. (1994). "Social value, conformity, and dress", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 24, pp. 1501–1519.

- Sadiq S. and Al-Gwaiz, A. M. (2013). "Determinants of advertising attitudes: The influence of cultural and environmental context", *International Journal of Academic Research*, 5 (4).

- Schlesinger, Philip. (1987). "On national identity: Some conceptions and misconceptions criticized," *Social Science Information,* (26) 2, 219-264.

- Schwartz, S. (1994). "Beyond individualism-collectivism: new cultural dimensions of values", In: *Individualism and collectivism*, eds. K. Uichol; C. Kagitcibasi; H. C. Triandis and G. Yoon. Sage, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 85–119

- Stone, L. A. (2002). "The Islamic crescent: Islam, culture and globalization", *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research,* 15 (2), 121-131.

- The Economist. (2014). *Social media in Saudi Arabia: A virtual revolution*. Retrieved December 15, 2016 from http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21617064-why-social-media-have-greater-impact-kingdom-elsewhere-virtual.

- Top100 saudibrands. (2013). *Top 100 Saudi Brands*. Retrieved April 19, 2015 from http://www.top100saudibrands.com/awarded.html

- Valencia, H. (1989). "Hispanic values and subcultural research", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 17, pp. 23–28.

- Wind, Yoram (1986), "The Myth of Globalization," *The Journal of Consumer Marketing,* (3)2, 23-26.