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A model of susceptibility to global consumer culture

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ABSTRACT

Objective – Since finding similarities between cultures is an important aspect to defining global goods, this article proposes a model to characterize and verify the impact of traits that are latent to global consumers' susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC) in acquiring global brands.

Design/methodology/approach – Extensive literature review and analysis of issues referring to global consumption characteristics.

Theoretical framework – Reviewed literature, integrated within a seven dimension SCCG model: compliance with consumer trends; social responsibility, perception of quality, social prestige, brand credibility, perceived risk and information costs saved; that may influence buying intention.

Findings – As a result, we propose an integrative theoretical model of the dimensions that make up susceptibility to global consumer culture that lead consumers to acquire globally present brands. The proposed model involved seven constructs that influence SCCG. We also included buying intention, which is the result of susceptibility.

Originality/value – The proposed model allows for better understanding of the reasons why consumers tend to buy and consume global brands. With this model, it is possible to study in depth the individual differences that refer to personal preferences for brands as global symbols and meanings. It also contributes to the work of international managers, helping them develop global branding and positioning strategies focused on the different global markets in which a global brand is marketed.

Keywords – Global Consumer Culture; Susceptibility to Global Consumer Culture; Global Brand



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I INTRODUCTION

Over half the world's population (56%) now lives in urban areas, and this number is expected to reach 66% by 2050 (United Nations – Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). The reason behind this trend seems to be more directly influenced by globalization. This fact creates threats to businesses and professionals working in this reality, and also makes possible the emergence and development of multinational companies and intercultural communities, resulting in generation of opportunities (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006; Guo, 2013). To seize the opportunities arising from this scenario, many multinational companies are substituting their brand portfolios in favor of global brands (Ford, Mueller, Taylor, & Hollis, 2011; Steenkamp, Batra, & Alden, 2003; Talay, Townsend, & Yenyurt, 2015).

In the context of globalization, researchers and experts have been debating issues involving the targeting of markets around the world (not just locally), since the barriers that limited the sharing of needs and desires by consumers in different regions of the world are disappearing (Levitt, 1983; Taylor & Okazaki, 2015). This is observed in the emergence of trade agreements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the largest and most recent of them all.

With the cheapening of transport, ease of communication, and economic, social, cultural and sometimes political integration, more and more companies are positioning their brands globally (Steenkamp *et al.* 2003; Talay *et al.*, 2015). Businesses see the internationalization of markets as an opportunity for growth (Lysonski, 2014). In addition, many companies understand that consumers have a preference for brands that have a global image, when compared to the brands of local competitors (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2015), even when the quality and value of global brands are not objectively superior. This is because global brands are seen as cosmopolitan and subject

to stricter standards of social responsibility than local brands (Dimofte, Johansson, & Ronkainen, 2008).

Marketing researchers go further in their observations: consumers perceive global brands as superior (Holt, Quelch, and Taylor, 2004), with greater prestige (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003), greater social responsibility (Holt *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b), and greater credibility (Erdem & Swait, 2004), which reduces the risks associated with purchases (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Murray & Schlacter, 1990) and lowers the need for information gathered by consumers when choosing a particular brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998). In addition, consumers agree that they belong to a global context (Keillor, D'Amico, & Horton, 2001; Lysonski, 2014), and this stimulates consumers to purchase global products. Global brands somehow express an image of them, that is, consumers start to be considered part of the global consumer culture (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003).

The concept of global consumer culture (GCC) arises in this context, and is a set of symbols referring to consumption and to behaviors that are commonly understood, but that are not necessarily shared by consumers and businesses around the world (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). Thus, the GCC construct may raise strategic business implications with regard to the positioning of brands as value generators, depending on the susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC). The SGCC is a characteristic or latent trait of consumers and varies from one individual to another. This is reflected in the desires of consumers and in their tendency to acquire and use global brands (Zhou Teng, & Poon, 2008). This feature is also characterized as independent from culture and driven by individual consumer characteristics (Dawar and Parker, 1994).

Studies in literature focused on finding similarities between cultures (Akaka & Alden, 2010; Guo, 2013). For example, Dawar and Parker (1994) proposed research to identify “universality in marketing,” that is, consumer behavior in a given field and which is oriented to the use of a

particular category of one same invariable product in different cultures and countries. Concerning this idea, Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998, p.78) confirmed that to “assess the applicability of frameworks developed in one country to other countries is an important step when establishing generalizations of consumer behavior theories.”

Given that finding similarities between cultures is an important aspect to further define global products (Akaka & Alden, 2010; Alden *et al.*, 1999; Dawar and Parker, 1994; Guo, 2013), this article proposes a model to characterize and verify the impact of latent traits to the susceptibility to global consumer culture (SGCC) of global consumers in acquiring global brands. Relevant literature is reviewed and assessed. Next, this is integrated into a model of SGCC structured into seven dimensions: conformity to consumption trends, social responsibility, perception of quality, social prestige, brand credibility, perceived risk and information costs saved. All of these dimensions can influence buying intention.

The proposed model allows a greater understanding of why consumers tend to buy and consume global brands. More specifically, this work contributes to the academy, since through the application of this model, it is possible to study individual differences in greater depth when it comes to personal preferences for brands infused with global symbols and meanings. Further, this paper offers a contribution for international managers in their efforts to develop global branding strategies and positioning of brands in different global markets. The development of a susceptibility construct for global consumer culture makes possible the identification of markets where consumers may be more likely to purchase and consume global brands.

First, we present a theoretical framework with the themes of global consumer culture, global markets and global brands. Next, we develop the concept of susceptibility to global consumer culture making the assumptions and relationships of the model clear. We also present the variables that allow the implementation of

the proposed model. Finally, this study concludes with appropriate final considerations.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section describes the main themes that permeate the understanding of the role of susceptibility as it relates to global consumer culture and buying intention in different cultures (countries) with access to global brands. Thus, the concepts developed here seek to delimit the theoretical model proposed. Topics discussed include global brands, globalization of markets and global consumer culture.

2.1 Global brands

In general, brands that are widely available in all international markets and enjoy high recognition levels in the world are described as global brands (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008). Global brands are those which consumers can find under the same name in several different countries; where companies coordinate similar marketing strategies at each location where they operate (Lopes & Casson, 2007). The positioning, communication strategy, brand personality, their appearance and buying sensations are practically the same in almost all conditions, in all countries (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999).

There are basically two distinct schools that seek to define the construct ‘Global Brand’. In one, the definition refers to the literature on standardization in marketing, stating that the primary motivation for a business in building global brands is to benefit from the strong economies of scale and scope. In this context, a standardized brand can create significant cost savings in marketing, research and development, procurement and manufacturing (Craig & Douglas, 2000; Levitt, 1983). In addition, by specializing in ethical appeals that transcend cultures, structures and regional differences, the global brand benefits when a single consistent

image is perceived by all of its markets (Hassan, Craft, & Kortam, 2003).

The second, and more recent, defines the global brand construct from the perspective of consumer perception (Alden *et al.*, 2006; Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003). In this case, a global brand is defined as such only to the extent to which consumers perceive the brand as global and is marketed both in domestic markets and in many overseas markets. This means that the brand is perceived as being more global when it is present in more markets (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003).

According to Holt *et al.* (2004b) consumers interpret global brands as having the “face” of the marketing of the most powerful companies in the world. These brands are generally desired and accepted by consumers, having an abstract sense of consistency across various markets (Özsomer & Altaras, 2008). Consumers have knowledge of these brands through their experiences with movies, books, music, news, advertising, and discussions with friends.

Joining the two aforementioned approaches in the search for a consensual definition of global brands, we agree with Özsomer, Batra, Chattopadhyay and Hofstede (2012), who propose that:

Global brands as those that use similar brand names, positioning strategies, and marketing mixes in most of their target markets. Some brands are more global than others with respect to differing levels of achieved standardization... A global brand is based on the extent to which brands employ standardized marketing strategies and programs across markets (Özsomer *et al.*, 2012, p. 2-3).

2.2 Globalization of global consumer markets and culture

Important scholars agree that culture is an unstable construct which evolves and changes constantly (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Laroche & Cleveland, 2007). In this context, Hofstede

(2001) describes the major forces that cause changes in culture as trade, economic dominance and technological advances. For example, in Brazil there is a focus on understanding lifestyles as they relate to food consumption in different cultures (Siekierski, Ponchio, & Strehlau, 2013).

An individual does not have multiple identities, that is, a mixture of two or more cultures, but rather can adopt a hybrid cultural style (Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983). Due to globalization, this hybrid culture or global consumer culture can be considered an entity in conflict. While on the one hand the overall culture is the result of a reduced diversity of different cultures because of mass media and technology, on the other hand it is also the result of a greater cultural diversity due to migration, and again, the mass media.

Hybrid cultures are a result of human mobility and the media. They exist due to exposure and then permanent integration of different cultural elements. These changes in cultural content occur through five global flows (Andreasen, 1990): (1) imaging and communication flows; (2) flow of political and ideological ideas; (3) flows of migrants, tourists, students and workers who carry their cultural heritage with them; (4) technology flows; and (5) capital and money flows. These flows allow individuals worldwide to assimilate symbols and meanings into their everyday lives (Waters, 1995).

Culture has been historically characterized by geographical limitations. The aforementioned global flows have loosened the territorial fixity of culture. As a result, cultural patterns and consumer behavior are no longer tied strongly to a specific territory (Craig & Douglas, 2006). Global flows allow: (1) cross-cultural penetration where the flow of information, ideas and products from one culture enter into another culture, thus changing its nature; (2) deterritorialization, when one culture is no longer defined exclusively in terms of its specific geographical location; (3) cultural contamination whereby a culture is “contaminated” by other cultural elements, thus changing the cultural boundaries and making it

difficult to identify a central race or ethnicity of that culture; (4) cultural pluralism, when individuals within a culture exhibit elements of other cultures; and (5) cultural hybridization, when two or more elements from different cultures join, resulting in a new cultural element (Douglas & Craig, 2005). Thus, cultural hybridization results in the rise of global consumer culture, which affects consumer behavior and consumption patterns.

Global consumer culture has been defined as a cultural entity that is not coupled to a single country, as something larger that transcends national cultures (Alden et al., 1999). Global culture is the shared set of symbols referring to consumption, such as product categories, brands and consumer activities (Lee & Tai, 2006).

It can be argued that as standardization of products, manufacturing and industrial institutions and trade grows, there is a commensurate increase in the uniformity of preferences, needs and desires. On the other hand, Holt *et al.* (2004a) show that there is not an overall homogeneous market but rather a global culture created and preserved by communication - newspapers, magazine articles, television, radio stations, internet content, books, movies, music, advertising and marketing communications - for every consumer has access to different cultures by these means, generating interest and knowledge of brands in the world. Thus, "social and cultural changes provide a breeding ground for global brands" (Kapferer, 2003, p. 356).

If global consumer culture is a set of symbols referring to consumption and behaviors that are commonly understood, but not necessarily shared by consumers and businesses around the world (Alden *et al.*, 1999), then global consumer culture does not represent homogenization of preference, but reflects the spread of global signals and consumer behavior. Consumers understand the signals of this global consumer culture and behavior, but rely on their own local systems of meaning to visualize, interpret and use (Akaka & Alden, 2010).

To understand how global brands are understood and valued by consumers in the

world, we need to consider the issue using a cultural lens looking at where these people exist (Holt, Quelch, and Taylor, 2004b; Strizhakova & Coulter, 2015; Talay et al, 2015). For example, Akaka and Alden (2010) found that global consumer culture is a collection of common signals including product categories such as jeans or tablets, signals which are seen by some market segments such as youth around the world but this does not necessarily mean that consumers from different countries share these tastes and values, but they do share interests and knowledge of symbols such as brands, products, consumption activities and events.

From a cultural perspective, the growth of global consumption occurring in parallel with the rise of global consumer culture is characterized generally by the acceptance of beliefs and consumption trends for the whole (Holt *et al.*, 2004a). We can see, therefore, that there is a global trend of consumption based on global symbols, which strengthens certain behavioral characteristics that should be similar in consumers of all cultures and nations. These features define a pattern of behavior that can be reflected in the desire for or trends in the acquisition and use of global brands (Zhou *et al.*, 2008). This feature, called SGCC is also characterized as being independent of culture and being driven by individual consumer characteristics (Dawar and Parker, 1994). Consumers from different cultures/markets (European or Asian markets), recognize that one of the characteristics associated with a global brand is the social responsibility exercised by companies in that market. SGCC can be determined by analyzing certain specific dimensions which are defined and presented in the following section.

3 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROPOSED THEORETICAL AND MEASURABLE MODEL

Nowadays, global brands have more relevance than in the past and are differentiated

from domestic and local brands. Consumers in different parts of the world are increasingly seeking the same products (Lysonski, 2014), which creates a permanent increase in demand for global brands in many countries.

Consumers who share global consumption behaviors are being called global consumer segments (Keillor *et al.*, 2001). According to Waters (1995) there is increasing global consumption in segments associated with the emergence of a global consumption culture identifiable in the similarities in the consumption of a product. An iPod, for example, is becoming a source of self-expression and identity throughout the world. Also, Alden *et al.* (1999) analyzed the positioning of multinational brands through advertising and identified global consumption of appeals, "(...) implicitly, advertising characterizes the idea that consumers around the world consume a particular brand or appeal to human generalities, thus making an investment in a brand with cultural significance as if it were a channel to convey the feeling of global consumer culture (p. 77)."

This global trend has contributed to the desire to acquire global brands (Ford *et al.*, 2011). In other words, there is a group of distinct individuals/cultures/countries for purchasing and consuming brands which offer a global sense of belonging. Conformity consists of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with the structure of a group, in this case a global group.

This set of considerations sets up the first hypothesis (H1):

H1. There is a positive relationship between the conformity construct and the consumption trend and the construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture.

Social actions are one of the most debated topics when considering the misconduct of a particular brand (Huber, Vogel, & Meyer, 2009). We recognize the importance of measuring consumer perceptions of the social responsibility of global brands, as they are directly associated

with the social responsibility of global brands (Özsomer & Altaras, 2008; Zhou *et al.*, 2008). Consumers recognize the influence of global companies which may be positive or negative for the welfare of society (Holt *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b). These consumers hope that companies link social problems with their products and brands offered to them in the marketplace. Consequently, consumers are convinced that global brands can be protagonists in addressing the social causes such as, public health, workers' rights, the environment etc.

The empirical research of Becker-Olsen, Taylor, Hill and Yalcinkaya (2011) examined the impact of companies' communication with respect to their brands as referring to corporate social responsibility oriented marketing. They considered consumer perceptions in two distinct cultural, economic and political contexts; the United States and Mexico. They found that multinational companies working in the field of global corporate social responsibility generated positive consumer perceptions of their brands. Positive effects included brand identification, perceptions of good corporate citizenship, motivation and reputation. This situation could therefore help to generate a SGCC where consumers would be more motivated to acquire global brands.

Perhaps for this reason there is an extensive discussion in the literature on the benefits for both companies and for brands to be socially responsible (Knox & Maklan, 2004). Among the benefits, the following are mentioned: (1) consumer preferences are increasingly directed to the consumption of goods and services from socially responsible, transparent and reliable companies; and (2) when confidence between stakeholders exists, the aim of social responsibility policies is reduced risk due to security issues (consumers, employees and the community), potential boycotts and loss of corporate reputation (or brand).

Thus, Dimofte *et al.* (2008) note that social responsibility is one of the five factors that describe the dimensionality of the global brand

construct. Corporate social responsibility is a component of global business, not a fad (Holt et al., 2004a), or more broadly, it is part of GCC, as it is an element associated with global brand consumption (Alden *et al.*, 1999; Zhou *et al.*, 2008). Popoli (2011) complements the aforementioned idea by asserting that regardless of the laws regulating various aspects of social responsibility in different countries, the company must give an answer to the global market about the nature of their social behavior, and therefore should establish a strategy of corporate social responsibility that includes all of its possible meanings. The author concludes by pointing out that the ideal of social responsibility is situated within the context of the ideals of the global culture in which it exists.

Thus, it is clear that there is a widely recognized trend for international marketing managers to apply social responsibility strategies in the context of GCC. These strategies of enterprises with respect to positioning a brand as a value generator depend on SGCC. Thus, it can be asserted that there is a positive relationship between social responsibility and SGCC as elaborated in H2.

H2. There is a positive relationship between the social responsibility construct and susceptibility to global consumer culture.

From a sociological point of view, the symbolic value of global brands (such as social prestige and status) is particularly important in a society with income disparity (Zhou *et al.*, 2008). For those less fortunate societies, conspicuous consumption serves as a way to construct a social identity that results in a strong desire to purchase products or brands that symbolize the overall global consumption of rich cultures (Alden *et al.*, 1999; Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004).

The prestige of a brand can indicate a high status for a product associated with that particular brand (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003). Consumers tend to perceive the consumption of a prestigious brand

as an indicator of social status, wealth or power. Thus, these brands are purchased infrequently and are strongly linked to the self and social image of an individual (Alden et al., 1999).

Much of the existing literature shows that global brands are powerful symbols and consumers use these symbols as a representation of different social and cultural meanings, including social prestige, acceptability and modernity (Zhou *et al.*, 2008). Empirical evidence confirms that there are some motivational dimensions underlying consumer preference for global brands. These dimensions illustrate consumer beliefs about superior products, aspirations, consumer trends and appeals to the prestige of global consumption symbols (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000; Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003). Thus, we offer the third hypothesis (H3) about prestige.

H3. There is a positive relationship between social prestige and the construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture.

The overall consumer perception of the extent of globality of a brand can produce superior evaluations of that brand (Kapferer, 2003). To test this idea, Holt *et al.* (2004a) conducted a survey in 12 countries that included 16 global brands in different product categories in order to detect consumer orientations to those brands. They found that consumers perceived high quality in the global brands. In the latest survey of global brands, Alden et al. (2006) suggest that brands with strong associations with quality and focused on image characteristics have created a sense of global connection among consumers. Consistent with the literature, Özsumer and Altaras (2008), commented that one of the associations of preference for global brands is the perceived quality of the products. This discussion leads us to the fourth hypothesis:

H4. There is a positive relationship between the construct of quality and

the construct susceptibility to global consumer culture.

The historical notion that credibility is based on the sum of past behavior is called reputation in the economic literature (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). When consumers have uncertainties about brands and when the market is characterized by information asymmetry, brands can serve as signals to the positioning of products as they contain embedded meanings (Özsomer & Altaras, 2008). Credibility may be a signal of a brand, that is, an important feature, and thus can be used to position products in the minds of consumers (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

The credibility of the brand is defined as the extent to which the information about the product contained in a brand are perceived as believable, and that credibility depends on the willingness and ability of companies to deliver what was promised (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Swait & Erdem, 2007). Özsomer and Altaras (2008) take the concept to the global level, noting that the credibility of a global brand depends on the willingness and ability of companies to deliver what they promise on a global scale, while preserving consistency in the marketing mix in various markets and maintaining large investments in brands. Hsieh (2004, p. 28) adds that, “for consumers, global brands tend to incorporate a special credibility, value, power and reinforced preference due to their global availability and their recognition”.

From the perspective of signaling theory, the content of the signal of a brand depends on each of the elements of the marketing mix (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Thus, one dimension of the brand that should improve the perception of credibility is the degree to which it is perceived as a global (as opposed to local) among consumers worldwide (Özsomer & Altaras, 2008). Brands that are positioned globally are likely to hold a special credibility (Kapferer, 2003). Thus, it appears that there is a positive relationship between brand credibility and global consumption.

H5. There is a positive relationship between the construct of brand perception of credibility with the construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture.

The importance of credibility, according Erdem and Swait (1998), stems from the fact that imperfect and asymmetric information creates uncertainty for consumers about the attributes of a particular product. Consumer uncertainty may exist even after reconciliation of information – for attributes associated with experience – and after consumption – for the attributes of long-term experience and belief (Erdem & Swait, 1998). This circumstance leads directly to perceived risk for consumers because consumers’ actions bring consequences that cannot be anticipated with certainty. Therefore, these will have some unforeseen consequences that are likely to be unpleasant. This highlights the importance of the concept of perceived risk in the literature on marketing because this is recognized as a fundamental concept in consumer behavior.

Perceived risk in this case is the possible loss while pursuing the desired result (Featherman & Pavloub, 2003). Perceived risk is a multidimensional construct, which implies that consumers experience uncertainty as to the type and degree of expected loss resulting from the purchase and/use of a product (Murray & Schlacter, 1990). In classical decision theory for example, risk is designed as variations of repeated distribution of possible outcomes, with given probabilities and their subjective values (Mitchell, 1999). The types of risks categorized by researchers include the financial, the psychological and the social (Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Financial risk consists of uncertainty about the amount of loss which would be incurred to repair a product. This is a significant determinant in perceived value (Agarwal & Teas, 2001). Psychological risk refers to the potential loss of self-image or the concept of self as a result of purchasing products or their use (Mitchell, 1999; Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Finally, social risk is associated with the perception of meaning that others give to the used item. This

risk refers highly to the status of consumers within a society (Rindfleisch & Crockett, 1999). Thus, social risk contains the potential of the estimated loss of respect and status in their social group as a result of the adoption of a product that may seem ridiculous or outdated (Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Therefore, perceived risk, based on social risk, has a direct relationship with susceptibility to global consumer culture. Based on this, we progress to the sixth hypothesis.

H6. There is a positive relationship between perceived risk and the construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture.

The search for information and its storage in consumers' minds precedes purchasing behavior and choices, and is therefore a perennial research topic (Peterson & Merino, 2003). This search for information can occur in both internal and external form. The search for internal information involves memory and occurs before searching for external information. The information retrieval process is interactive and complementary, since external search information interacts with internal memory.

If consumers buy a brand that is convergent with the transmitted attributes, brand credibility as a signal will be strengthened. This means that consumers believe the perceived risk considerably and minimize the need for external research. In this case, the brand creates an experience that consequently strengthens positive consumer memory (Erdem & Swait, 1998), reducing the cost of searching for new information.

It can be argued that when buying a global brand consumers minimize efforts to seek information given that these products generally convey credibility and quality to consumers. This question of minimizing effort is about reducing costs. The cost, defined herein, is not referring to monetary cost, but rather all costs referring to the effort of searching for information, in which the main cost is time spent.

There are several studies that discuss the

relationship between seeking information and the purchase of a product/brand (Baek & King, 2011; Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006). The cost of seeking information has a direct relationship with GCC when it comes to global brands, leading consumers to have a positive susceptibility to consumption of these brands when present in many markets. That is, the cost information (information already present in the mind/consumer memory) causes consumers to have a greater susceptibility to purchase the products of global brands. For all these reasons, we are led to the seventh hypothesis.

H7. There is a positive relationship between the construct information costs saved and the construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture.

As shown in previous cases, the susceptibility to global consumer culture can be conceptualized as a set of multi-dimensional facets of motivations that lead to the acquisition and use of global consumer symbols. Thus, this susceptibility can be an important determinant of an individual's psychological and behavioral trends as referring to global brands. It is speculated, however, that global consumption behavior cannot be fully understood unless consideration is given to various motives connected to consumption. Susceptibility to global consumer culture is generally embedded in the social context of trends in global consumer culture. Thus, the measurement of susceptibility is neither exclusive to a brand nor about consumption in a specific situation, but as commented by Zhou et al. (2008) it is a general trait that influences buying behavior, as manifested more specifically in buying intention. Consequently, our eighth hypothesis makes clear the relationship between susceptibility to GCC and buying intention.

H8. The construct of susceptibility to global consumer culture precedes the construct of intention to buy a global brand.

4 PROPOSED MODEL

Based on an extensive literature review and analysis of issues referring to global consumption characteristics, we can describe and distinguish the characteristics of susceptibility to global

consumer culture and the intention to buy global brands. Thus, the hypotheses of this study and the creation of latent variables and the process of measurement were established. The specification of the framework with the theoretical assumptions of the research are presented in Figure 1.

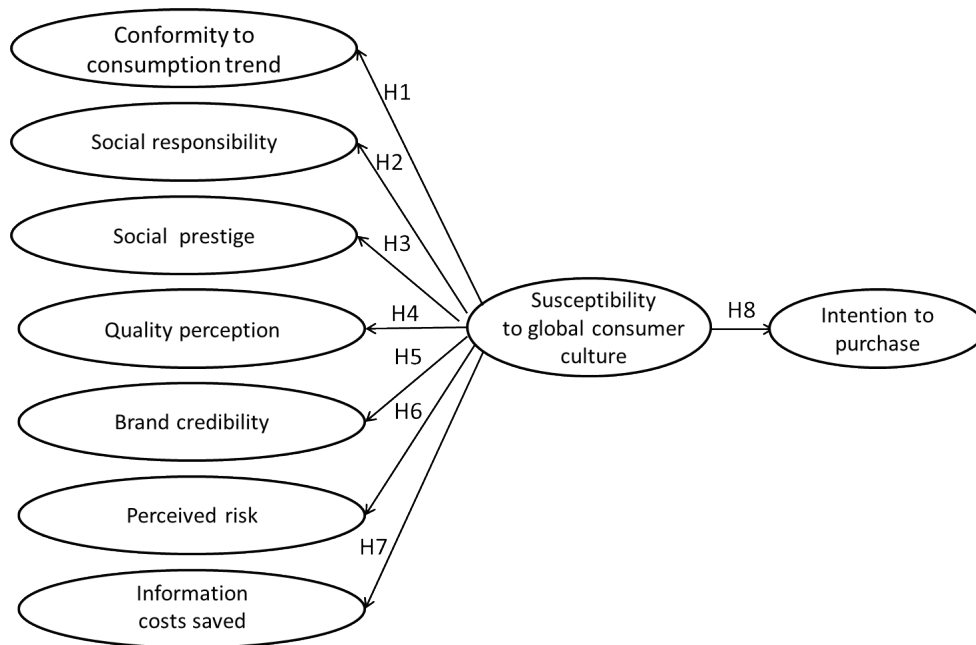


FIGURE 1 – Susceptibility to global consumer culture and buying intention

DeVellis (1991, p.75) suggests that experts review the set of variables generated in order to “confirm or invalidate its definition of the phenomenon.” In conformity with this methodology, we repeatedly used experts in the field to revise the items we produced in English. We carried out this activity with three PhD professors with knowledge of that English. We provided these experts with a description of the constructs

in English so that they could evaluate the items in relation to the understanding, adjustment and wording of indicators of the instruments in accordance with the back-translation technique. Suggested changes from the application of this procedure were made in order to reach the instrument shown below. Table 1 presents a summary of factors equivalent to the variables in English.

TABLE 1 – Variables and Items to measure the SGCC construct and buying intention

Factors	Variables	Origin
Conformity to consumption trends	Makes me feel well when I use it in my social group.	Dholakia e Talukdar (2004), Holt <i>et al.</i> (2004b), Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2008)
	Gives me a feeling of global belonging.	
	Gives me a good impression of others.	
	Connects me closely to a contemporary lifestyle.	
	Makes me feel part of the global trend.	
Social responsibility	Takes care of the environment reinforcing the ecological awareness of the society.	Holt <i>et al.</i> (2004b)
	Cares about my safety and health, and also of my family's.	
	Is ethically committed.	
	Is committed to its employees.	
	Behaves as a good neighbor in my country.	
Perception of quality	Positively impacts the economy of my country.	Holt <i>et al.</i> (2004b), Steenkamp <i>et al.</i> (2003), Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2008)
	Has a high quality image.	
	Is highly reliable since people from all over the world buy it.	
	Is extremely safe since it delivers high quality services.	
	Is associated with the most advanced technology in the world.	
	Always maintains the quality over time.	
	Is a winner in the global competition.	
Is a market leader in terms of innovation.		
Social prestige	Is fashionable.	Batra <i>et al.</i> (2000), Steenkamp <i>et al.</i> (2003), Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2008)
	Resembles the most up-to-date lifestyle in the world.	
	Symbolizes a unique social image around the world.	
	Is a symbol of prestige.	
	Is used by successful people all over the world.	
	Is associated with wealth.	
Brand credibility	Is used all around the world by people I respect.	Erdem <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Delivers the promised value.	
	Is a testimony of product reliability.	
	Is expected to offer promises that are kept over time.	
	Is committed to delivering its statements, neither more, nor less.	
Perceived risk	Has a name which you can trust in.	Erdem e Swait (1998), Murray e Schlacter (1990)
	Is able to deliver its promises.	
	Reduces the need to seek information before buying it.	
	Doesn't need to be tried on many times to find out what it is like.	
	We can assume is good even before buying it.	
	Is financially interesting due to its value for money.	
Information costs saved	Increases my social status because others would think very well of me.	Erdem e Swait (1998), Erdem <i>et al.</i> (2006), Swait e Erdem (2007).
	Is psychologically interesting for fitting my self-concept.	
	Is time saving since I know exactly what I'll receive when buying it.	
Buying intention	Delivers what I want and allows me to save time and effort in searching for the best.	Erdem e Swait (1998), Erdem <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Requires less pre-purchase information.	
	Makes me take it into consideration on my buying list.	
	Would certainly be considered on my shopping list.	
	Would be recommended by me to my friends and relatives.	Erdem e Swait (1998), Erdem <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Would be the option I would consider buying in the first place.	

The SGCC construct was made up of seven dimensions, each with a specific number of items: conformity to consumption trends (5 items), social responsibility (6), perception of quality (7), social prestige (7) brand credibility (6), perceived risk (6) and information costs saved (3), totaling 40 items. The construct of buying intention was developed with four items. Within the context of cross-cultural research, demographic data should also be included in the survey. Examples of demographic variables are: country of residence, gender, age and education. It was also suggested that we measure items using a Likert scale in two phases of 6 points, identifying the perception of direction first (disagreement or agreement with the item) and then the intensity (low, very or completely), following Mazzon (1981).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

While economic, political and technological forces that influence the race for global consolidation are familiar to companies, the globalization of markets is perhaps the most critical issue they are currently facing (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Taylor & Okazaki, 2015). The dominance of transnational corporations that produce and sell consumer goods worldwide has driven the extensity and intensity of global consumer culture. Global integration has accelerated the homogenization of consumer behavior between developed countries and emerging markets (Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004). In this context, understanding consumers, and the traits referring to trends leading to the acquisition and use of global brands which are independent of culture becomes more important.

In this article, foundations were established to develop hypotheses that resulted in the proposal of an integrative theoretical model of the dimensions that are part of the susceptibility to global consumer culture and lead consumers

to buy brands with a global presence. The proposed model developed seven constructs that influence SGCC. These are: consumption trends, perception of quality, social prestige, social responsibility, brand credibility, perceived risk and information costs saved. Finally, the model included buying intention, which is the result of that susceptibility. We used item response theory to measure the constructs.

This article is a theoretical contribution in the context of past research on the changing trends of the global consumer (Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004; Keillor et al, 2001; Lysonski, 2014; Zhou et al., 2008) and psychological responses to the perceived globality of brands (Steenkamp et al. 2003; Thou Khare, & Zhang, 2012), since it proposes a theoretical and measurable model with global applicability to assess individual differences of consumers when it comes to personal preferences for brands as symbols and global meanings.

It should also be mentioned that the items presented were developed in English in order to provide more precise measurements of susceptibility to the construct of a global consumer culture and buying intention. Scientific methodological rigor was used. This included care in drafting the research model so that the variables were clear and presented no redundancy between variables of equal weight.

The model and proposed scale of seven dimensions should reflect the reasons for general consumption and the acquisition and use of goods and symbols (brands) overall. Consequently, this leads to a better understanding of consumer culture which is important for brand strategies (Alden et al., 1999; Talay et al, 2015.).

The knowledge of specific susceptibility to global consumer culture and expected variations in different market segments should be useful for the development of focused brand positioning strategies. Specifically, the model could be used to empirically test propositions that explain how a particular consumer segment has been motivated

to join global consumption trends. Evaluating susceptibility to global consumer culture can also help businesses identify how a global brand can be positioned along the seven dimensions. Understanding the concepts associated with each of the dimensions provides international marketing professionals with strategic direction for global branding and positioning of global brands executed in different cultural contexts. Future studies comparing countries by continent or regions that operationalize this proposed model could be carried out.

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