



## Branding in a global marketplace: The mediating effects of quality and self-identity brand signals

Yuliya Strizhakova<sup>a,\*</sup>, Robin A. Coulter<sup>b,1</sup>, Linda L. Price<sup>c,2</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Business, Rutgers University, Camden, 227 Penn Street, Camden, NJ 08102, United States

<sup>b</sup> School of Business, University of Connecticut, 2100 Hillside Road, Storrs, CT 06269-1041, United States

<sup>c</sup> Eller College of Management, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721, United States

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### ABSTRACT

Research documents that consumers with a stronger belief in global citizenship through global brands (GCCGB) view *branded products* as more important and prefer global to local brands. We test the mediating effects of consumer use of quality and self-identity brand signals on the relationships between GCCGB and the importance attributed to branded products (Study 1: U.S. and Russia) as well as purchases of global brands (Study 2: U.S., U.K. and Russia). Our research establishes that consumer involvement with branded products and purchases of global brands revolves around consumers' use of brands as signals of quality and self-identity. In the developing country, results document mediation effects for the use of both quality and self-identity signals on the importance of branded products and global brand purchases. In developed countries, we find that the importance of branded products is explained by a greater use of brands as self-identity signals, whereas purchases of global brands are explained by a greater use of quality signals. Overall, consumers with a stronger belief in GCCGB are more likely to use brands as symbolic signals and to express their identity through brands, and consumer use of global brands as quality signals provides a distinct competitive advantage to global brands in both developed and developing countries.

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### 1. Introduction

Brands have a long history in the U.S. and throughout the world (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2010; Moore & Reid, 2008). Most importantly, brands provide firms with an opportunity to distinguish their product offerings and provide consumers with information about the product, particularly quality and self-identity characteristics (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Özsumer & Altaras, 2008; Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2008a). In contemporary consumer culture, brands have also become part and parcel of a nuanced interplay of ideologies that structure marketplace interactions and social life (Askegaard, 2006; Manning, 2010). For example, when western brands flooded post-socialist countries in the early 1990s, they were a symbol of revolutionary change synonymous with capitalist order and consumer culture (Coulter, Price, & Feick, 2003; Manning & Uplisashvili, 2007). These *branded products* (which were located on retailer shelves next to unbranded, low-quality domestic and regional products) represented not only differentiated quality and self-identity choices but also

engendered *branded products* as a meta-symbol for globalization, consumerism, and the West (Askegaard, 2006; Ger & Belk, 1996).

Concurrent with the influx of *branded products* in developing markets was the availability and rise of *global brands* such as Coca Cola, Microsoft, and Nokia. Global brands enabled consumers who identified with and wanted to be part of the global world (Arnett, 2002) to feel connected to an imagined global community through their consumption of the same brands around the world (Cova, Pace, & Park, 2007; Holt, Quelch, & Taylor, 2004). Research has further documented that global brands are a mechanism to send meaningful signals to other consumers (Erdem & Swait, 1998) and also serve as a passport to global citizenship, a vehicle for participation in a global world, and a pathway to belonging to the global world (Holt et al., 2004; Steenkamp, Batra, & Alden, 2003). We refer to this belief in the power of global brands to provide a sense of global belongingness as *belief in global citizenship through global brands* (GCCGB).

With modern access to a complex array of brands, consumers around the world choose daily whether to purchase branded products versus unbranded alternatives (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2008b) and whether to purchase global or local brands (Zhou, Yang, & Hui, 2010). Prior research documents that consumers with a stronger belief in global citizenship through global brands view branded products as more important (Strizhakova et al., 2008b) and prefer global to local brands (Holt et al., 2004). In this present work, we address the

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 856 225 6920; fax: +1 856 225 6231.

E-mail addresses: [ystrizha@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:ystrizha@camden.rutgers.edu) (Y. Strizhakova),

[robin.coulter@business.uconn.edu](mailto:robin.coulter@business.uconn.edu) (R.A. Coulter), [lprice@eller.arizona.edu](mailto:lprice@eller.arizona.edu) (L.L. Price).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 860 486 2889; fax: +1 860 486 5246.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +1 520 626 3061; fax: +1 520 621 7483.

theoretical bases for these relationships. We argue that consumer involvement with branded products and purchases of global brands revolves around consumers' use of brands as signals of quality (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Tsai, 2005) and self-identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Keller, 2003; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009).

Our work explicates and tests a model that examines the mediating effects of consumer use of quality and self-identity brand signals on the relationship between an individual's belief in global citizenship through global brands and two dependent variables: the importance attributed to branded products (Study 1) and purchases of global brands (Study 2). In both studies, we examine cross-national relationships in one developed (U.S.) and one developing (Russia) market; in Study 2, we expand our research venue to include the U.K.<sup>3</sup> Our sample is college-educated young adult consumers who are engaged in and empowered by both globalized and local consumer cultures (Douglas & Craig, 1997, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006) and are a focal target of multinational firms employing both global and "glocal" strategies (Douglas & Craig, 2011).

Our research contributes to research on branding and globalization by demonstrating how young adults in developed and developing countries use brands as quality and self-identity signals, particularly in relation to the *importance* that they attribute to branded products and to the *purchases* that they make. Specifically, we identify and compare mediation effects of these signals across countries. Taken together, our findings are valuable for brand managers striving to encourage consumer adoption of brand signals in markets where global and local brands, as well as unbranded alternatives, compete for market share.

## 2. Conceptual framework

As globalization processes are creating greater "interconnectedness" of world cultures by bringing together diverse meanings and ideals, branding and branded products have become important symbols for both firms and consumers (Appadurai, 1990; Askegaard, 2006). Specifically with regard to global brands, research has suggested that the strong associations with quality and image-focused characteristics have created a feeling of global bondedness among consumers (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999, 2006). Further, Askegaard (2006) argues that with branding as a major ideology of globalization, global brands have increased value and are important as a key means for consumers to participate in the global world. As such, firms have engendered a belief among consumers in the power of brands to provide a path to global citizenship, that is, a belief in global citizenship through global brands (Holt et al., 2004; Steenkamp et al., 2003; Strizhakova et al., 2008b).

Research also suggests that global brands have effectively created feelings of global belongingness by increasing consumer desire for quality and image (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003) and have initiated new value systems communicating meanings relevant to individuals' global and local identities (Askegaard, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). This general attention to branding, driven primarily by global brands in the post-socialist emerging markets, has raised consumer awareness of and increased the importance of branded products, both global and local (Coulter et al., 2003). More recently, Strizhakova et al. (2008b) have documented that individuals who have stronger beliefs that global brands are important as a vehicle for global citizenship attribute greater importance to branded products. Thus, we argue that individuals who believe in global citizenship through global brands are engaged with a consumer culture in which branded

products, including global and local brands, are important (Coulter et al., 2003; Ritzer, 2007). Research on consumer belief in global citizenship through global brands further suggests that this belief is also manifested by an interest in purchasing global brands. For example, Holt et al. (2004) demonstrate that approximately 12% of consumers purchase global brands because of a strong belief in global citizenship through global brands; Steenkamp et al. (2003), however, have shown that this effect on purchases disappears when perceptions of global brand quality are taken into consideration.

In the following sections, we examine the theoretical bases for the relationships between consumer belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance of branded products, and purchases of global brands. Specifically, we argue that consumers' use of brands as signals of quality (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Tsai, 2005) and self-identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Keller, 2003; Sprott et al., 2009) mediate these relationships. We first consider the relationship between a belief in global citizenship through global brands and consumer use of quality and self-identity as 1) *branded product* signals and 2) *global brand* signals. Then, we focus on the relationship between a belief in global citizenship through global brands and 1) consumer use of quality and self-identity *branded product* signals on the importance of branded products and 2) consumer use of quality and self-identity *global brand* signals on purchases of global brands.

### 2.1. Effects of global citizenship through global brands on consumer use of brand signals

As much research has documented, consumers are attentive to firms' signals related to brand quality and self-identity as they make choices among product offerings (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Özsoyner & Altaras, 2008; Strizhakova et al., 2008a). At the branded product level, research across developed and developing countries documents that consumers articulate that quality is the most salient characteristic in product choice (Holt et al., 2004; Steenkamp et al., 2003); these quality signals are particularly important because they effectively reduce consumer risk associated with purchases (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Zhou, Su, & Bao, 2002). As related to self-identity, consumers around the world find meanings in brands related to status, personality, and community affiliation (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Strizhakova et al., 2008a; van Rij, 1996), and these meanings serve as powerful signals of self-identity as well as presentation of self to others (Fischer, Völckner, & Sattler, 2010). In a globalizing world, it is perhaps not surprising that consumers find value not only in these signals for branded products but also with regard to signals of global and local brands. For example, Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) find that consumer perceptions of quality signals are equally strong for global and local brands, and although global brands are typically associated with stronger status signals (Alden et al., 1999; Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000), local brands can provide deeper and more meaningful identity-based signals (Ger, 1999) and are perceived as more down-to-earth and reliable (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004) than global brands.

We have argued that consumers who believe in global citizenship through global brands are more engaged in the marketplace, and we speculate that a stronger belief in global citizenship through global brands raises attention to and use of signals about branded products in general, as well as about global and local brands. Some recent work supports our contention. For example, Strizhakova et al. (2008b) report that global citizenship through global brands not only increases the importance of branded products but also is positively related to the globally oriented belief of cultural openness and to the locally oriented belief of consumer ethnocentrism, a purchase preference for local products. Others concur that consumer convergence into a global world coexists with the desire for cultural divergence and that consumers are sensitive to signals about branded products and global and local brands, concurrently embracing both the Lexus and the olive tree (Douglas & Craig, 2011; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010; van Ittersum & Wong, 2010). Moreover, a growing body

<sup>3</sup> Our research contrasts the developed U.S. and U.K. markets with the developing post-socialist market in Russia. Throughout our manuscript we use the term "developing" to represent post-socialist countries where branding is a relatively new phenomenon, and consumers have only recently had access to global brands. We acknowledge that other developing markets (e.g., Brazil) have had longer histories of local brands and greater access to global brands. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

of research suggests that in response to globalization, many consumers strive to integrate their local identities with global citizenship (Arnett, 2002; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Collectively, these findings provide support for our contention that a stronger belief in global citizenship through global brands is associated with attention to branded product signals as well as signals about global and local brands.

To summarize, we expect that consumers who hold a stronger (vs. weaker) belief in global citizenship through global brands are likely to exhibit: 1) greater use of *branded products* as signals of quality and self-identity; and 2) greater use of *global brands* as signals of quality and self-identity (see Fig. 1A and B, respectively).

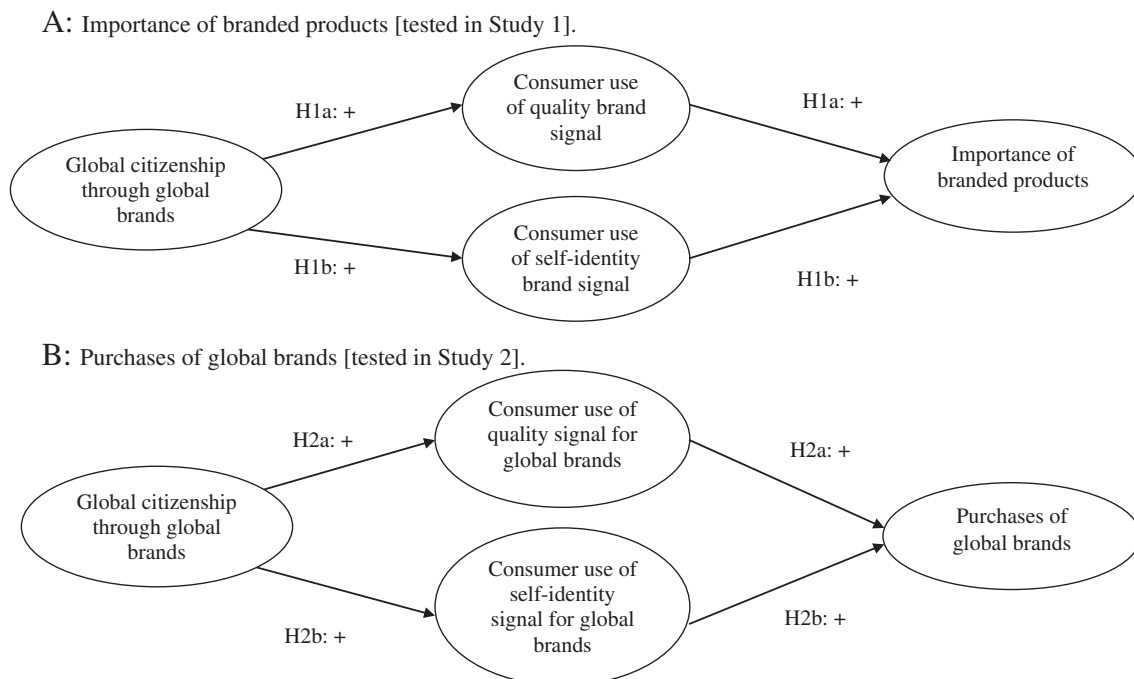
2.2. The effects of brand signals on the importance of branded products and global brand purchases

A significant body of work has linked consumer use of signals of brand quality (Holt et al., 2004; Swait & Erdem, 2007) and self-identity (Sprott et al., 2009) to higher sales and consumer loyalty. Herein, we contend that the greater consumer use of *branded products* as signals of quality and self-identity, the greater the importance attributed to *branded products*; and the greater the use of *global brands* as signals of quality and self-identity, the greater the purchases of *global brands*. We start by discussing quality signals and then discuss self-identity signals.

Researchers argue that brand quality drives involvement with branded products in both emerging and developed markets (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006; Steenkamp et al., 2003; Tsai, 2005). Other work in developed markets has demonstrated that consumers associate branded products with higher quality and has found that the joint signaling effect of brands and warranties depends on the information inherent in each signal and its credibility (Price & Dawar, 2002). Moreover, Tsai (2005) has documented a strong relationship between perceived brand quality and the value that consumers associate with a product. Holt (2002) has argued that in earlier stages of a consumer culture, as evident in emerging markets, marketers focus

on product benefits and highlight their functional attributes, in particular, quality. Indeed, cross-national work provides evidence of the importance of quality as a branded product signal in emerging markets (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Strizhakova et al., 2008a). Furthermore, in a recent multi-country study, Fischer et al. (2010) find that the risk-reduction function of brands (with reference to the quality signal) has a strong positive effect on the importance of brands. Other work speaks to the quality signals related to global brands and documents that consumers in emerging markets often prefer Western brands because they are perceived to have higher quality (Batra et al., 2000; Feick, Coulter, & Price, 1995). Based on this discussion, we speculate that the greater the consumer use of *branded products* as signals of quality, the greater the importance attributed to *branded products*; and the greater the use of *global brands* as quality signals, the greater the likelihood of purchasing *global brands*.

In the global world, branded products also serve as signals to ourselves and to others about who we are and how others should view us (Dong & Tian, 2009; Han et al., 2010). Notably, greater use of brands as self-identity signals has been linked to greater brand loyalty (Sprott et al., 2009). Importantly, within an evolving world culture, consumers are responding to images and metaphors that help them define their identities (Ger & Belk, 1996; van Rij, 1996). The use of identity-based brand meanings such as status, personality, and communities has given rise to the increased importance of branded products as a means to construct identity, particularly among young consumers (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008; Coulter et al., 2003; Cova et al., 2007). Thus, in this world of cultural intermingling, global brands provide a major resource of identity meanings (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), and consumers view global brands as an important, hegemonic device for creating and communicating identity (Askegaard, 2006). Indeed, Zhang and Khare (2009) have argued that consumer preference for a global versus local identity (and, presumably, attention to global vs. local brand signals) impacts preferences for global versus local brands. Based on this discussion, we speculate that the greater consumer use of *branded products* as signals of self-identity, the greater the



Note: In our analyses the two mediators were allowed to correlate, and the direct effect of global citizenship through global brands was investigated.

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of mediation processes.

importance attributed to *branded products*; and the greater the use of *global brands* as self-identity signals, the greater the likelihood of purchasing *global brands*.

### 2.3. The mediating effects of consumer use of brand signals

Presumably, consumer belief in global citizenship through global brands might be a sufficient reason for consumers to ascribe greater importance to branded products and to be more favorably disposed to purchase global brands. However, based on our theoretical justification, we posit that consumers' use of brands as signals of quality and self-identity is responsible for these effects. More formally, we hypothesize:

**H1.** Consumer use of brands as quality (H1a) and self-identity (H1b) signals will mediate the relationship between a belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance attributed to branded products.

**H2.** Consumer use of global brands as quality (H2a) and self-identity (H2b) signals will mediate the relationship between a belief in global citizenship through global brands and the percentage of global brands purchased.

## 3. Overview of studies 1 and 2

We test our hypotheses across two studies focused on young adults in developed and developing markets. We test H1 in Study 1 in the U.S. and Russia (see Fig. 1A), and we test H2 in the U.S., the U.K., and Russia (see Fig. 1B). We include both the U.S. and the U.K. in Study 2, as the former is a developed country with a high percentage of “domestic” global brands, and the latter is a developed country with a much lower percentage of “domestic” global brands; 51 of the top 100 global brands originate in the U.S., whereas only five originate in the U.K. (“Best global brands: 2010 rankings, 2011,” Interbrand).

Our research focuses on young adults aged 18–29. This age cohort is appropriate for several reasons. First, young adults (compared to older fellow citizens) have higher exposure to global media and technology, and in developing markets, this cohort is more likely to be familiar with the concept of branding. Second, past research indicates young adults drive dissemination and creation of the global consumer culture (Zhou et al., 2002), and recent market growth in developing markets is largely attributed to increasing consumption patterns by young, educated, urban dwellers who respond well to global brands and seem to share more in common with their peers in London or New York than with their parents (Eastern Europe: Europe's advertising hotspots, 2007). Finally, although heterogeneous in their attitudes and beliefs related to globalization (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006), young adult consumers as a group exhibit fewer extraneous age and income-related biases that typically impact consumption across cultures (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006; Coulter et al., 2003).

We used standard survey development procedures, carefully examining construct and face validity of the items used to measure our constructs of interest, to develop our questionnaire in English. A native Russian speaker translated the questionnaire into Russian, and then another native speaker back-translated it into English. Participants in the U.S. and U.K. were asked to complete an online survey, whereas participants in Russia, due to their limited computer/Internet access, completed pencil-and-paper questionnaires. Recent research shows no differences in response styles between the use of online and pencil-and-paper questionnaires in cross-national settings (De Jong, Steenkamp, Fox, & Baumgartner, 2008). All participants were undergraduate college students at public universities and completed surveys for extra credit. A Russian native who received training in data

administration and the ethics of survey research in the U.S. supervised the pencil-and-paper data collection in Russia.

## 4. Study 1

In Study 1, we examine the relationship between an individual's belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance of branded products, and the mediating effects of consumer use of brands as quality and self-identity signals. Thus, the survey included items to measure global citizenship through global brands, the importance of branded products, brands as quality signals, and brands as self-identity signals, as well as demographic variables. Our sample included 218 U.S. ( $M_{age} = 21.01$ ,  $SD_{age} = 1.74$ ; 70% females) and 292 Russian ( $M_{age} = 19.64$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.55$ ; 82% females) participants.

### 4.1. Measures

We developed a composite index to measure the construct, *importance of branded products*, using information that participants provided with regard to ten product categories: mineral water, soda, beer, coffee, cigarettes, chocolates, personal care/cosmetics, clothing, automobiles, and televisions. These categories were chosen: 1) to cover a range of durable and non-durable products; 2) because there are global and local brands in both countries; and 3) because they are relevant to our young adult sample. For each of the first six product categories, participants were asked about product use (e.g., “Do you drink mineral water?”), and if they gave a positive response, the following question was: “How important is the product's brand name when you are purchasing (product category)?” For the next two categories, personal care/cosmetics and clothing, participants were asked: “How important is the product's brand name when you are purchasing (product category)?” Finally, because of the potential price sensitivity associated with automobile and television purchases, our question was more speculative. Participants were asked: “How important is the product's brand name if you are purchasing a (product category)?” Each item was assigned a level of importance, ranging from “not at all important” (1) to “very important” (7). We computed an *importance of branded products* index for each participant by averaging the importance scores for all of the products used by a participant. The means in the U.S. and Russia were 4.82 and 4.79, respectively.

Items used to measure our latent constructs (belief in global citizenship through global brands, consumer use of brands as quality signals, and consumer use of brands as self-identity signals (Strizhakova et al., 2008a, 2008b)) were assessed using a seven-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Reliabilities of all scales in both countries were greater than .70 (see Table 1 for items, means and reliabilities).

### 4.2. Measurement model assessment

We used structural equation modeling (AMOS, 17.0) to test the fit of our measurement model composed of three latent constructs (belief in global citizenship through global brands, consumer use of brands as quality signals, and consumer use of brands as self-identity signals) and one observed factor (importance of branded products) (see Table 1 for items, factors loadings, means, and reliabilities). First, we established that the model fit was acceptable in each country (U.S.:  $\chi^2(30) = 60.13$ , CFI = .95, TLI = .92, RMSEA < .07 and Russia:  $\chi^2(30) = 80.47$ , CFI = .94, TLI = .91, RMSEA < .08). Next, we ran a multi-group CFA to establish configural and metric invariance. The fit of the measurement model was acceptable ( $\chi^2(60) = 140.60$ , CFI = .95, TLI = .93, RMSEA < .06). All factor loadings were significant, and correlations between factors were below .70 (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), indicating configural invariance (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Partial metric invariance was evident for our quality measure (two of the three items were invariant), and full metric invariance was achieved

**Table 1**

Study 1: Construct indicators, factor loadings, metric invariance, reliabilities, and means.

	Unstandardized factor loadings		Metric invariance
	U.S.	Russia	
	(n = 218)	(n = 294)	
Global citizenship through global brands <sup>a</sup>			Full marker
Buying global brands makes me feel like a citizen of the world.	1.00	1.00	
Purchasing global brands makes me feel like part of something bigger.	1.07	1.07	
Buying global brands gives me a sense of belonging to the global marketplace.	1.10	1.10	
Cronbach's alpha	.85	.78	
Mean	3.41	2.94	
Consumer use of brands as quality signals <sup>a,b</sup>			Partial marker
A brand name tells me a great deal about the quality of a product.	1.00	1.00	
I choose brands because of the quality they represent.	1.05	1.05	
I use brand names as a sign of quality for purchasing products.	1.16	.58	Not invariant
Cronbach's alpha	.83	.73	
Mean	5.05	4.74	
Consumer use of brands as self-identity signals <sup>a,b</sup>			Full marker
My choice of brands says something about me as a person.	1.00	1.00	
I choose brands that bring out my personality.	.90	.90	
I use different brands to express different aspects of my personality.	.92	.92	
Cronbach's alpha	.79	.72	
Mean	4.13	3.58	
Importance of branded products <sup>a</sup>			Index
How important is the product's brand name when you are purchasing (product category)?			
Mean	4.82	4.79	
Fit indices			
$\chi^2$ (df)	154.81 (65)		
CFI/TLI	.95/.93		
RMSEA	<.05		

<sup>a</sup> t-values associated with unstandardized factor loadings are significant at  $p < .001$ .

<sup>b</sup> See Section 4.1 for details on measurement.

for the other measures ( $\chi^2$  (65) = 154.81, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, RMSEA < .05;  $\chi^2$ -difference (5) = 14.21,  $p > .01$ ).

We used standard procedures to assess convergent and discriminant validity of our latent measures (see Table 2). First, the composite reliability coefficients for our measures in both the U.S. and Russia ranged from .72 to .85, exceeding the recommended minimum of .70 (Bagozzi, 1981; Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and providing evidence of convergent validity. Second, average variance extracted for these measures ranged from .51 to .66 and exceeded the recommended minimum of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Further, average variance extracted was greater than the squared correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), demonstrating discriminant validity in the U.S. and Russia.

### 4.3. Results

To test our mediation hypotheses, we used the bootstrapping bias-corrected confidence interval procedure in SEM (AMOS, 17.0; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). The underlying function of the bootstrap procedure is that the data are re-sampled multiple times to obtain an estimate of the entire sampling distribution of the indirect effect. The advantage of the bootstrap method is an assumption of a lack of normality and stronger accuracy of confidence intervals (Preacher et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2010). To

**Table 2**

Study 1: Assessment of convergent and discriminant validity: composite reliability, average variance extracted, and Pearson r correlations (squared Pearson r correlations).

Constructs	Composite reliability	Average variance	r (r <sup>2</sup> )	
			Consumer use of brands as:	
			Self-identity signals	Quality signals
U.S. (n = 218)				
Global citizenship through global brands	.85	.66	.37 (.14)	.02 (.00)
Consumer use of brands as self-identity signals	.83	.55		.50 (.25)
Consumer use of brands as quality signals	.79	.62		
Russia (n = 294)				
Global citizenship through global brands	.78	.60	.62 (.38)	.11 (.01)
Consumer use of brands as self-identity signals	.72	.51		.38 (.14)
Consumer use of brands as quality signals	.77	.54		

obtain confidence intervals, we used 2000 samples in this study. To test the null hypothesis regarding mediation effects, the bias-corrected percentile method generated 95% confidence intervals. Direct and indirect effects by country are presented in Table 3. We used the phantom-model approach to calculate individual indirect effects in AMOS (Macho & Ledermann, 2011).

Our hypothesized model explained approximately 23% of the variance in the importance of branded products in both the U.S. and Russia. Hypothesis 1a predicted that consumer use of brands as quality signals would mediate the relationship between the belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance attributed to branded products. As related to direct effects, we found a positive and significant direct effect of GCGB on consumer use of brands as quality signals in Russia, but the effect was non-significant in the U.S., and we found a significant positive direct effect of consumer use of brands as quality signals on importance of branded products in both the U.S. and Russia. With regard to the mediating effects, we observed a significant indirect effect of GCGB on the importance of branded products via consumer use of brands as quality signals in Russia, but not in the U.S. (see Table 3), thus, supporting H1a only in Russia.

Hypothesis 1b predicted that consumer use of brands as self-identity signals would mediate the relationship between the belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance attributed to branded products. We found significant positive direct effects of GCGB on consumer use of brands as self-identity signals and of consumer use of brands as self-identity signals on the importance of branded products in both the U.S. and Russia. Finally, the indirect effect of GCGB on the importance of branded products via consumer use of brands as self-identity signals was significant in both countries. Hence, our findings support H1b in both the U.S. and Russia.

The direct effect of a belief in global citizenship through global brands on the importance of branded products was significant in Russia but not significant in the U.S., supporting indirect-only mediation in the U.S. and complementary mediation of the brand signals in Russia (Zhao et al., 2010).

## 5. Study 2

In Study 2, we assess the mediating effects of consumer use of global brands as quality and self-identity signals (accounting for their use of local brands as quality and self-identity signals) on the relationship between a belief in global citizenship through global

**Table 3**  
Study 1: Results of mediation tests using a bootstrapping bias-corrected procedure.

	Bootstrap bias-corrected method 95%CI				
	Unstandardized estimates	SE	Lower	Upper	p-value
<i>USA</i>					
Direct effects					
GCGB on importance of branded products (total)	.17	.06	.05	.29	.004
GCGB on importance of branded products (direct)	.10	.06	-.01	.21	.081
GCGB on quality signal	.03	.07	-.09	.18	.585
GCGB on self-identity signal	.37	.08	.21	.54	.001
Quality signal on importance of branded products	.36	.08	.22	.53	.001
Self-identity signal on importance of branded products	.15	.07	.02	.30	.024
Indirect effects <sup>a</sup>					
GCGB on importance of branded products via quality and self-identity signals (two mediators)	.07	.04	-.02	.15	.157
GCGB on importance of branded products via quality signal	.01	.02	-.03	.07	.481
GCGB on importance of branded products via self-identity signal	.06	.02	.02	.14	.003
<i>Russia</i>					
Direct effects					
GCGB on importance of branded products (total)	.28	.06	.17	.39	.001
GCGB on importance of branded products (direct)	.13	.08	.04	.38	.033
GCGB on quality signal	.20	.09	.01	.40	.043
GCGB on self-identity signal	.71	.09	.54	.90	.001
Quality signal on importance of branded products	.18	.04	.09	.27	.001
Self-identity signal on importance of branded products	.15	.07	.02	.22	.032
Indirect effects <sup>a</sup>					
GCGB on importance of branded products via quality and self-identity signals (two mediators)	.15	.04	.02	.30	.044
GCGB on importance of branded products via quality signal	.04	.03	.03	.16	.031
GCGB on importance of branded products via self-identity signal	.11	.04	.02	.18	.036

<sup>a</sup> Assessment of individual indirect effects was conducted in AMOS by using the phantom-model approach (Macho & Ledermann, 2011).

brands and purchases of global brands. Thus, this questionnaire included: items to measure global brand purchases; the measures from Study 1 for belief in global citizenship through global brands, consumer use of global and local brands as quality signals, and consumer use of global and local brands as self-identity signals; and demographic variables. Our sample included 350 U.S. ( $M_{age}=20.04$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ; 58% females), 312 U.K. ( $M_{age}=20.04$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ; 60% females) and 308 Russian ( $M_{age}=19.85$ ,  $SD=1.87$ ; 55% females) participants.

### 5.1. Method and measurement

To measure *purchases of global brands*, we calculated the percentage of global brands purchased (accounting for local brand purchases) in ten product categories: bottled water, soda, laundry detergent, shampoo, chocolate, jeans, shoes, cell phones, computers, and MP-3 players.<sup>4</sup> The relevant survey questions included: “Have you purchased/do you own (product)?” followed by, “Please record the name of the brand that you have purchased most recently/own.” Using the definition of a global brand as “distributed and promoted under the same brand

<sup>4</sup> These product categories were chosen because they reflected: 1) a representation of durables and non-durables; 2) global and local brands; and 3) a relevance to our sample. Three product categories (mineral water, soda and chocolate) were the same as in Study 1.

name in multiple countries” and a local brand as “distributed and promoted under the same brand name only in one country, its region, or a neighboring country” (Özsomer & Altaras, 2008; Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004), two coders independently coded participant responses as “global brands,” “local brands” and “other” purchases (i.e., brands of unknown origins and unbranded products). Coders reached 90% level of agreement for classifying listed brands in the U.S and 98% level of agreement in Russia. For brands whose classifications could not be agreed upon, coders accessed Euromonitor’s Global Market Information Database and company websites to determine the appropriate classification. We calculated *purchases of global brands* by dividing the number of global brands purchased across the ten categories by the sum of the global and local brands purchased across the ten product categories. We did not include “others” in the base (denominator) because our signal-related questions were focused specifically on global and local brands. The average percentage of global brands purchased was 78.5% in the U.S., 78.8% in the U.K., and 74.7% in Russia.

Similar to Study 1, we assessed consumer use of global and local brands as quality and self-identity signals, as related to brand purchases. To ensure that participants distinguished between global and local brands, we presented participants with definitions of global and local brands: “We define ‘global’ brands as brands that are distributed and promoted in multiple countries under the same name, for example, Coca-Cola, Nokia, Nestlé, and BMW. We define ‘local’ brands as brands that are distributed and promoted in just one country, its region or a neighboring country under the same name, for example, [local brands in the U.S., U.K., and Russia, for the product categories, including bottled water (Poland Springs, Highland Spring, Monasturskaya), retailer (CVS, Lloyds, Plus), and chocolates (Munson’s, Kinnerton, Alenka)].” Then, participants were asked to respond to three seven-point items with regard to their use of global (and local) brands as signals of quality and self-identity (see Table 3). The order of global and local brand questions was rotated, and no ordering effects were observed (all *t*-tests across countries were  $<1.05$ ,  $p>.05$ ). To calibrate a respondent’s global signal score (accounting for local) on each item, we divided the respondent’s rating on the item by the sum of the global and local ratings on the item and used this to weight the rating on the global item and thereby determine the respondent’s score.<sup>5</sup> Finally, participants completed the items to measure global citizenship through global brands and demographics. Means, reliabilities and factor loadings are presented in Table 4.

The fit of our measurement model was acceptable in individual countries and in the total sample ( $\chi^2(90)=156.18$ , CFI=.99, TLI=.98, RMSEA<.03). All of our latent measures achieved full metric invariance (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998; Steenkamp et al., 2003;  $\chi^2$ -difference (12)=9.08,  $p>.05$ ). All measures exhibited convergent and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 5). The composite reliability coefficients for our measures ranged from .81 to .94, and average variance extracted for these measures ranged from .60 to .78 and was greater than the squared correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

### 5.2. Results

Similar to Study 1, we used the bootstrapping bias-corrected confidence interval procedure in SEM to test our hypotheses (see Table 6). Our hypothesized model explained approximately 3% of variance in global brand purchases in the U.S. and U.K. and approximately 5% in Russia. Hypothesis 2a predicted that consumer use of global brands as quality signals mediated the effect of a belief of global

<sup>5</sup> For example, suppose the respondent’s rating on a brand quality signal item was 6 for global brands and 2 for local brands. To calibrate the respondent’s global (accounting for local) signal score, we divided the respondent’s rating on the item (6) by the sum of the global and local ratings on the item (8) and used this to weight the rating on the global item, to thereby determine the respondent’s score ((6/8) \* 6=4.50).

**Table 4**

Study 2: Construct indicators, factor loadings, metric invariance, reliabilities, and means.

	Unstandardized factor loadings			Metric invariance
	U.S. (n = 350)	U.K. (n = 312)	Russia (n = 309)	
Global citizenship through global brands <sup>a</sup>				Full marker
Buying global brands makes me feel like a citizen of the world.	1.00	1.00	1.00	
Purchasing global brands makes me feel like part of something bigger.	1.04	1.04	1.04	
Buying global brands gives me a sense of belonging to the global marketplace.	1.01	1.01	1.01	
Cronbach's alpha	.93	.94	.86	
Mean	3.52	4.02	3.43	
Consumer use of global brands as quality signals <sup>a</sup>				Full marker
A global brand name tells me a great deal about the quality of a product.	1.00	1.00	1.00	
I choose global brands because of the quality they represent.	1.12	1.12	1.12	
I use global brand names as a sign of quality for purchasing products.	1.05	1.05	1.05	
Cronbach's alpha	.86	.83	.82	
Unweighted mean	4.76	4.85	4.73	
Weighted mean <sup>b</sup>	2.43	2.52	2.46	
Consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals <sup>a</sup>				Full marker
My choice of global brands says something about me as a person.	1.00	1.00	1.00	
I choose global brands that bring out my personality.	1.08	1.08	1.08	
I use global brands to express different aspects of my personality.	1.04	1.04	1.04	
Cronbach's alpha	.88	.85	.81	
Unweighted mean	3.57	4.16	3.87	
Weighted mean <sup>b</sup>	1.75	2.08	2.06	
Percentage of global brands purchased <sup>a</sup>	61.6	63.5	50.2	
Fit indices				
$\chi^2$ (df)	165.26(102)			
CFI/TLI	.99/.98			
RMSEA	<.03			

<sup>a</sup> t-values associated with unstandardized factor loadings are significant at  $p < .001$ .

<sup>b</sup> For example, suppose the respondent's rating on a brand quality or self-identity signal item was 6 for global brands and 2 for local brands. To calibrate the respondent's global (accounting for local) signal score, we divided the respondent's rating on the item (6) by the sum of the global and local ratings on the item (8) and used this to weight the rating on the global item and thereby determine the respondent's score ((6/8)\*6 = 4.50).

citizenship through global brands (GCGB) on the percentage of global brands purchased. We found a significant positive direct effect of GCGB on consumer use of global brands as quality signals across all three countries as well as a significant positive direct effect of consumer use of global brands as quality signals on the percentage of global brands purchased across countries. The direct effect of GCGB on the percentage of global brands purchased, however, was non-significant. Further, the indirect effect of GCGB on the percentage of global brands purchased via consumer use of global brands as quality signals was significant across countries (see Table 6). Hence, consistent with H2a, our findings indicate indirect-only mediation effects with regard to quality signals across countries.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals mediated the effect of a belief in global citizenship through global brands on the percentage of global brands purchased. We found a significant positive direct effect of GCGB on consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals across all

**Table 5**

Study 2: Assessment of convergent and discriminant validity: composite reliability, average variance extracted, and Pearson r correlations (squared Pearson r correlations).

Constructs	Composite reliability	Average variance	r (r <sup>2</sup> )	
			Consumer use of global brands as:	
			Self-identity signals	Quality signals
U.S. (n = 350)				
Global citizenship through global brands	.93	.81	.50 (.25)	.28 (.08)
Consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals	.88	.70		.45 (.20)
Consumer use of global brands as quality signals	.86	.68		
U.K. (n = 312)				
Global citizenship through global brands	.94	.78	.44 (.19)	.26 (.07)
Consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals	.85	.66		.50 (.25)
Consumer use of global brands as quality signals	.84	.63		
Russia (n = 309)				
Global citizenship through global brands	.91	.78	.44 (.19)	.27 (.07)
Consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals	.81	.60		.57 (.32)
Consumer use of global brands as quality signals	.82	.61		

countries, but a significant positive direct effect of consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals on the percentage of global brands purchased only in Russia. Further, we found a significant indirect effect of GCGB on the percentage of global brands purchased via consumer use of global brands as self-identity signals only in Russia (see Table 6). Hence, we support H2b and indirect-only mediation of the self-identity brand signal in the developing country of Russia, but not in the developed countries.

## 6. Summary of findings from studies 1 and 2

Our research has focused on a consumer belief in global citizenship through global brands as it relates to the general importance attributed to branded products and purchases of global brands. Across our two studies, we demonstrate that consumer use of brand signals, specifically, quality and self-identity, exhibits either complementary or indirect-only mediation effects. However, the significance of consumer use of these brand signals (as mediators) differed across countries and in relation to our two dependent variables. Specifically with regard to developed countries, consumer use of brands as signals of self-identity mediates the effect of global citizenship through global brands on the importance attributed to branded products (Study 1, U.S.), whereas consumer use of global brands as signals of quality mediates the relationship between global citizenship through global brands and purchases of global brands (Study 2, U.S. and U.K.). Thus, we support indirect-only mediation of the effects of global citizenship through global brands and purchases of global brands via self-identity and quality signals, respectively. The similar pattern of results for the U.S. and U.K. is an indication that the percentage of domestic global brands originating in the country does not appear to affect these relationships. In the developing country (Russia), consumer use of brands as both quality and self-identity signals mediates the relationship between a consumer's belief in global citizenship through global brands and the importance attributed to branded products (complementary mediation in Study 1) as well as global brand purchases (indirect-only mediation in Study 2). In the developing country, results document mediation effects for the use of both quality

**Table 6**  
Study 2: Results of mediation tests using a bootstrapping bias-corrected procedure.

	Bootstrap bias-corrected method 95%CI				
	Unstandardized estimates	SE	Lower	Upper	p-value
<i>USA</i>					
Direct effects					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (total)	.01	.92	-1.78	1.90	.978
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (direct)	-1.30	1.10	-2.83	1.58	.579
GCGB on quality signal	16.90	3.63	9.62	24.42	.001
GCGB on self-identity signal	29.63	3.28	23.28	36.50	.001
Quality signal on percent of global brands purchased	.06	.01	.01	.06	.046
Self-identity signal on percent of global brands purchased	.01	.02	-.03	.05	.776
Indirect effects <sup>a</sup>					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality and self-identity signals (two mediators)	1.31	.57	-.44	1.85	.529
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality signal	1.01	.31	.10	1.38	.016
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via self-identity signal	.30	.63	-.97	1.52	.758
<i>U.K.</i>					
Direct effects					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (total)	-.03	1.06	-2.13	1.99	.994
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (direct)	-.38	1.21	-2.78	2.05	.735
GCGB on quality signal	13.11	3.43	6.45	20.04	.001
GCGB on self-identity signal	21.79	3.13	15.85	27.86	.001
Quality signal on percent of global brands purchased	.06	.02	.01	.12	.020
Self-identity signal on percent of global brands purchased	-.02	.03	-.09	.03	.417
Indirect effects <sup>a</sup>					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality and self-identity signals (two mediators)	.35	.60	-.74	1.61	.475
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality signal	.79	.41	.20	.73	.011
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via self-identity signal	-.44	.67	-1.95	1.92	.433
<i>Russia</i>					
Direct effects					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (total)	.05	.77	-1.53	2.76	.950
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased (direct)	-2.10	.87	-1.44	2.35	.647
GCGB on quality signal	15.91	3.82	8.52	23.55	.001
GCGB on self-identity signal	25.19	3.68	17.86	32.54	.001
Quality signal on percent of global brands purchased	.04	.02	.01	.06	.049
Self-identity signal on percent of global brands purchased	.06	.02	.02	.08	.048
Indirect effects <sup>a</sup>					
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality and self-identity signals (two mediators)	2.15	.54	.15	2.58	.040
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via quality signal	.64	.32	.13	1.16	.041
GCGB on percent of global brands purchased via self-identity signal	1.51	.55	.81	1.71	.020

<sup>a</sup> Assessment of individual indirect effects was conducted in AMOS by using the phantom-model approach (Macho & Ledermann, 2011).

and self-identity signals on the importance of branded products and global brand purchases. In developed countries, we find that the importance of branded products is explained by a greater use of brands as self-identity signals, whereas purchases of global brands are explained by a greater use of quality signals. Overall, consumers with stronger beliefs in GCGB are more likely to use brands as

symbolic signals and express their identities through brands; and consumer use of global brands as quality signals provides a distinct competitive advantage to global brands in both developed and developing countries.

**8. Discussion and managerial implications**

Marketing strategists seem to agree that going global is a valuable strategy for companies and brands, but the question remains regarding how to do it successfully, and “glocal” strategies are emerging as valuable alternatives (Douglas & Craig, 2011). The overarching goal of the present research was to further understand the effects of consumers’ brand-related belief, specifically, global citizenship through global brands and the effects of consumer use of brand signals on the importance of branded products and purchases of global brands in developing and developed markets.

Our findings indicate that young adult consumers’ use of quality and self-identity brand signals is important to understanding the effect that a belief in global citizenship through global brands has on the importance attributed to branded products as well as purchases of global brands. First, historically, quality has dominated as a powerful brand signal to consumers worldwide (Erdem et al., 2006; Holt et al., 2004; Strizhakova et al., 2008a). Indeed, we find that young adult consumer use of global brands as quality signals is critical to increasing global brand purchases among this cohort, in both developed and developing countries. Additionally, in developing (but not developed) countries, these consumers’ use of branded products as quality signals does impact the importance they attribute to branded products. Although it seems that expression of global citizenship through global brands should be a sufficient reason to purchase more global brands, we find that consumer use of global brands as quality signals across countries is responsible for these effects. Despite recent gains in higher quality perceptions by local and private brands in developed markets (Hoch & Banerji, 1993), global brands still appear to benefit from their strong signals of excellent quality. Hence, global brand managers should continue investing in and signaling excellent quality of their brands across the globe.

Our results further indicate that brand managers need to highlight self-identity signals in their product development and communications/marketing campaigns. Young adult consumer use of the symbolic self-identity signal is important for promoting branding, particularly in developing markets. Global brands tell consistent stories around the world that show distinct personalities (e.g., “outdoorsy” Jeep), project status (e.g., Dolce & Gabbana), and offer memberships in certain brand “clubs” (e.g., BMW). Those who believe that global brands provide them with global citizenship, i.e., those who adhere to branding as a consumption ideology of a modern globalized community, are more likely to use brands as symbolic signals and express their own identities through brands. These symbolic consumption scripts have the potential to truly differentiate global brands from other consumption cues and unbranded products in developing markets. This finding is somewhat contrary to an exclusive reliance of brand advertisers in developing markets on the quality appeal (Shields, 2007).

Finally, our research shows support for the effects of globalization and glocalization processes on consumer culture and young adults. We demonstrate that purchasing global brands for the sake of “citizenship in the global world” is not merely a theory, but rather a belief that young adults embrace to varying degrees worldwide. Further, this belief affects not only global brands but rather branding more generally. In this global world, brands are an important currency and are highly valued by young adults across countries, despite socio-historical and cultural differences in their market development. Consumers adopt symbolic identity signals for both global and local brands to develop their own “glocal” identities; that is, they co-exist as citizens of their own countries and as citizens of the world (Arnett, 2002; Dong & Tian, 2009). As such, both global and local companies



targeting young adults need to understand these “glocal” identities and the related global and local values.

## 9. Future research implications

Our work provides for additional research opportunities in the context of brands and their signals. First, our focus was on the global segment of young adults, an important target for multinational firms. Future research might sample across different age cohorts or track more closely the degrees of exposure to branding and global communications to determine how various demographic and/or psychographic variables might affect use of brands and the underlying processes related to quality and self-identity signals. Application of our research questions to a broader sample of developed and developing countries is also warranted. For example, extension of this research to developing markets with a longer history of strong local branding (e.g., Brazil) may yield divergent insights into the consumer belief of global citizenship through global brands and consumer use of brand signals.

We drew upon the signaling and brand-meaning theories to identify two important mediators, consumers' use of brands as signals of quality and self-identity. Although we rotated question presentation and introduced other distraction questions and tasks to avoid common method biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), these biases may still be present, and future validation of our findings in experimental research and across a broader spectrum of samples is warranted. Examination of other brand signals, including brands as an extension of family and national traditions, reduction of purchase risk, and signals of social values, would broaden our understanding of the ways globalization shapes the importance of branding and purchases of global brands worldwide. Examination of the mediating effects of brand signals across specific product categories or in relation to certain brands is also worthy of future research. It is also important to assess the extent to which globalization processes influence competing consumption practices, such as the use of counterfeit brands or unbranded products. Global citizenship through global brands may be further examined in the context of building individual global brand strategies (e.g., Roth, 1992, 1995) and in relation to global media, worldwide events, celebrities, and global marketing campaigns.

A growing body of research suggests that in response to globalization, many consumers strive to integrate their local identities with global citizenship, exhibiting some form of a “glocal” identity (Arnett, 2002; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010). Further, recent work documents that local brands are growing in popularity, particularly in emerging markets (Gao, Pan, Tse, & Yim, 2006). Thus, future work might focus more on understanding how young adults with “glocal” identities treat local brand signals and whether the increased presence of higher quality local brands may affect consumer reactions to global brands.

Finally, an oversaturated world of marketed meanings and the search by consumers for “genuine” identities have given rise to anti-globalist and anti-branding movements (Holt, 2002; Klein, 2002). We did not observe signs of consumer resistance to branded products in our research and speculate that this may be a function of our focus on young adults. By focusing on consumers who rely on alternative cues in their consumption, such as those supporting local craftsmen and rejecting global belongingness, future research may broaden our understanding of branding in a global marketplace.

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