Building Strong Global Brands: Impact of Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations and Strategic CSR

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A conceptual framework is proposed to investigate three key dimensions that have an impact on multiple stakeholders and can enhance the value of global brands. These are: (i) Cross-Sector Alliances (CSA), (ii) Sustainable Innovations (SI), and (iii) Strategic CSR. Five global brands have been selected that appear both in the Forbes list of "Most Sustainable Companies" and the Interbrand list of "Best Global Brands" in 2017. Data has been gathered through documentary research. Content analysis of this data-set has led to the compilation of five case studies. Key findings and managerial implications are discussed. The contribution of this research is that it adopts a new approach to studying global brand management by incorporating CSA, SI and strategic CSR. It focuses not only on the economic aspects of global branding but also on potential societal and environmental outcomes for enhancing brand value.

Keywords: Global Brands; Brand Value; Cross-Sector Alliance; Sustainable Innovations; Strategic CSR

Introduction

Brand management in a global environment presents a myriad of challenges (Talay et al., 2015). Maturation of globalization and the financial crisis of the last decade has led to severe criticism of the strategies of global brands. Global brands and MNCs including Apple, McDonald's, Nike, Coke, and Google have encountered resistance relating to product acceptance, negative perceptions with regard to cultural influences, degradation of the environment and adverse impact on local communities. Indeed, for many consumers there may be a love/hate relationship with global brands – they may have a positive attitude towards a company's products but have a latent dislike for the company

(Nandan & Nandan, 2014). Brands have by and large focused on customers and investors with the intention of maximizing profit. This has resulted in loss of faith from communities at large (Porter & Kramer, 2011). For the purposes of this research, global brand is defined as "a brand that uses the same name and logo, has awareness, availability, and acceptance in multiple regions, derives at least 5 percent of its sales from outside the home region and is managed in an internationally coordinated manner (Steenkamp, 2014, p. 7).

A conceptual framework is proposed to build a connection between the increase in global brand value and three types of business activities (Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, and strategic CSR) via the impact on multiple shareholders. Steenkamp (2014) has proposed the "4V-model" to explain how global brands create value at each successive stage in the brand value chain. The author further states that global brands take advantage of economies of scale and scope to create value. Ozsomer and Altaras (2008) and Holt et al., (2004) highlight the cultural dimensions by asserting that global brands are symbols of global consumer culture.

This paper seeks to build on prior studies by adopting a stakeholder framework to investigate global brand management. Inherent in this approach is the notion that brands have to broaden their focus and appeal to a multiplicity of stakeholders in addition to its consumers. This research investigates three key dimensions, Cross-Sector Alliances (CSA), Sustainable Innovations (SI), and Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that have an impact on different stakeholders, and can enhance the value of global brands. We are not suggesting that activities associated with these three dimensions will always outweigh endeavors in other areas. It is to be expected that in the context of a digitally connected world, customers and other stakeholders expect that global brands will increasingly engage in CSA, SI, and strategic CSR.

In order to be competitive on a long-term basis, global brands have to differentiate themselves by incorporating "Strategic CSR" as part of their overall business plan. CSR activities are strategic in nature where a company can address specific social or environmental issues in ways that fit strategically with its long-term, vision, core-competencies, intellectual properties, and other resources. A firm can make a significant social impact as well as secure business benefits through strategic CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Strategic CSR would lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for the companies as well as its stakeholders.

Based on a literature review, a set of propositions are offered for future empirical testing. Five global brands have been investigated with respect to their engagement with different stakeholders through CSA, SI and strategic CSR, and the results are presented as case studies. Key findings and managerial implications are discussed along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Stakeholder Orientation

The importance of a stakeholder orientation for business entities has been emphasized (Brower & Mahajan, 2013; Peloza & Shang, 2011; Bhattacharya, 2010; Ferrell et al., 2010). According to Freeman (1984), a stakeholder is defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives" (pg. 46). The stakeholder theory, therefore, expands the focus of the firm beyond its shareholders and customers to include a multiplicity of constituents. Broadening the scope of a firm's focus can be justified from both a normative and instrumental standpoint. The normative implication is that firms have a moral obligation towards their stakeholders (Matten et al., 2003). From an instrumental perspective, firms should cater to the needs of stakeholders because this contributes to the success of the firm (Bhattacharya & Korschum, 2008). The instrumental perspective, in as much as it includes other stakeholders, is still profit and firm-centric as the stakeholders are seen to be entities that have to be managed for the benefit of the firm.

Stakeholder orientation provides a valuable frame of reference for assessing the relationship of a firm to its stakeholders. Ferrell et al. (2010) offer a preliminary definition of Stakeholder Orientation as "the organizational culture and behaviors that induce organizational members to be

continuously aware of and proactively act on a variety of stakeholder issues" (pg. 93). Admittedly, the interests and priorities of stakeholders will not always converge. In fact, many stakeholders may view a firm's activities to be in conflict with their interests and philosophies. It is unrealistic to expect a firm to meet the expectations of all stakeholders at all times (Jawahar & McLaughlin 2001). However, effective stakeholder management entails that firms demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the multiplicity of stakeholders and incorporate their needs and expectations in corporate decision making.

Literature Review and Research Propositions

Prior studies on global brand value include: consumer's perception of brand "globalness" (Steenkamp et al., 2003), influence of global consumer culture (Holt et al., 2004; Akaka & Alden, 2010), economies of scale and scope (Yip & Hult, 2012), CSR and global brand equity (Torres et al., 2012) international market segmentation (Papadopoulos & Martin, 2013), and institutional environments across markets (Randrianasolo, 2017). Steenkeamp (2014) has outlined the 4 V model for value-creating activities.

There has been increased attention with respect to themes relating to cross-sector alliances (Clarke & Crane, 2018), sustainable innovations (Boons et al., 2013; Varadarajan, 2015), and CSR (Malik, 2015; Fatma & Rahman, 2015). Research in these areas has been multi-disciplinary spanning the fields of management, marketing, public administration/policy, environment, sustainability, social work, sociology, and information technology. Hartman and Dhanda (2018) have investigated the success factors in cross-sector alliances between multi-national corporations and non-profit organizations. CSA research has also focused on co-creation of value (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012), social responsibilities of business (Seitanidi & Crane 2009, 2014), and the impact of cross-sector partnerships on beneficiaries (Clarke & MacDonald, 2016). The literature on sustainable innovations encompasses definitions and frameworks (Vardarajan, 2015), environmental sustainability drivers (Markusson, 2011; Levidow et al., 2016) and development of sustainable business models (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013). Marcon et al. (2017) found that process and organizational innovations were more popular than marketing and product innovations for multinationals that aim to balance business interests and environmentally sustainable growth. Studies pertaining to value-enhancing capabilities of CSR include: costs and benefits of CSR (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010), customer satisfaction (Lee & Heo, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2010), employee productivity (Valentine & Fleischman, 2008), capital market benefits (Dhaliwal et al. 2011), and earnings quality (Hong & Anderson, 2011). Strategic CSR's impact on brand image, brand equity, and stakeholder expectations have also been investigated (Popoli, 2011).

The literature review indicates that although prior research has been conducted on brand value as well as on CSA, SI and Strategic CSR, no research has combined these concepts using a stakeholder framework. The present study seeks to address this lacuna through an investigation of the following variables that go beyond individual brand characteristics and attributes.

Cross-Sector Alliances

Global brands can create value by forming cross-sector alliances (CSAs) especially with non-profit organizations (NPOs). Companies may have built relationships with customers, investors, and supply chain members, but they may not have the skills needed to expand their sphere of influence to communities or the environment. Thus, partnering with experts such as non-profit organizations may become necessary. Such partnerships are called cross-sector alliances (CSA) and are defined as collaborations between for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations (NPOs). These are also called social alliances (Sakarya, Bodur, & Öktem, 2012) or cross-sector partnerships (Schuster & Holtbrügge, 2014). Resource dependency theory suggests that collaborations can occur when organizations seek to obtain externally what they do not possess (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In a complex and rapidly evolving socio-economic environment, global brands can develop partnerships

with stakeholders in non-profit organizations. These partnerships themselves can help global brands develop sustainable competitive advantage as the resources, skills, and capabilities generated through collaboration would not have been possible for the firm to have developed on its own (Zaheer & Bell, 2005).

CSAs can seek to address social problems of mutual concern (Sakarya, Bodur, & Öktem, 2012) through a shift from adversarial to collaborative relationships (Hartman & Danda, 2018). Such partnerships have the potential to create transformational collaboration and social change (Stafford & Hartman, 2001). CSAs can also enable and encourage global brands and multinationals to adopt and practice codes of conduct benefitting local communities and society at large, which helps the firm succeed as it learns to create and maintain relationships with multiple stakeholders and create value through CSAs. Successful CSAs would be able to leverage the core competencies of each partner. For example, businesses share their technology, marketing, or finance-related expertise with NPOs that could, in turn, provide access to local communities and projects. It follows from the above discussion that CSAs would have a higher likelihood of impacting a plurality of stakeholders in addition to existing consumers. Hence:

P1: Global brands that form Cross-Sector Alliances are more likely to impact multiple stakeholders in their ecosystem.

Sustainable Innovation

Sustainable innovations are being recognized as an essential component of sustainable development and growth. According to Varadarajan (2015) "sustainable innovation is a firm's implementation of a new product, process, or practice, or modification of an existing product, process, or practice that significantly reduces the impact of the firm's activities on the natural environment" (pg.17). Boon, Montalvo, Quist, and Wagner (2013) describe sustainable innovation as "a process where sustainability considerations (environmental, social, and financial) are integrated into company systems from idea generation through to research and development (R&D) and commercialization. This applies to products, services, and technologies, as well as to new business and organizational models" (pg. 3). Clearly, this is a complex process as firms that focus on sustainable innovation have to consider the needs of many stakeholders, not just consumers and shareholders. Notably, sustainability-driven innovations do not necessarily lead to higher costs in the long run. Sustainable innovations yield both "bottom-line and top-line returns" by reducing input costs as well as generating additional revenues through superior products or new businesses (Nidumolu, Prahalad, & Rangaswami, 2009).

The creation of new business models based on sustainable innovations can be a source of competitive advantage that can ensure long-term success. A global brand has to link its sustainability initiatives with its business model along the dimensions of (i) the value proposition, (ii) supply chain management, (iii) customer interface and (iv) a financial model (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013). An innovation can create socio-ecological value for multiple stakeholders and at the same time achieve above-average financial returns for the organization (Dyck & Silvestre, 2018). According to Hutchins et al. (2019), resource-efficient technologies have been used to cut down the usage of gasoline (fuel-efficient and battery-operated cars), water (single-rinse and cold-water formulations of laundry detergents), paper and plastic (through recycling and digitizing). Clearly, the incorporation of a sustainability strategy will impact multiple stakeholders. Previous studies (Dahan et al., 2010; Stanton & Burkink, 2008; Bordewijk, 2006) have highlighted the participation of supply chain members and stakeholders such as government, NGOs, media and academics in the enhancement of sustainability programs of companies. Hence:

P2: Global brands that utilize sustainable innovations are more likely to impact multiple stakeholders in their ecosystem.

Strategic CSR

Many global brands are increasingly accepting CSR to be an important component of their business strategies (Homburg et al., 2013). Prominent global business leaders including Bill Gates (founder and chairman of Microsoft) and John Mckay (CEO of Whole Foods) have incorporated CSR as a business philosophy for creating sustainable value for key stakeholders (Williams, 2014).

Consciousness of the socio-environmental consequences of a global brand's actions necessarily entails incorporating Strategic CSR as part of the branding strategy. In addition to engaging in Strategic CSR, global brands have to communicate their effectiveness as good corporate citizens to their stakeholders, such as consumers, investors, government agencies and social activists. More importantly, a firm has to have a clear vision regarding what it stands for and what are its core brand values (CBV). The core values summarize the corporate brand identity and are fundamental principles around which all the activities of the company are based (Urde, 2003). The core values of a corporate brand form the basis of a company's business strategy (Louro & Cunha, 2001). Ideally, consistency between the Core Brand Values (CBVs) espoused by the company and its CSR activities is desirable (Nandan & Nandan, 2014). This is a strategic imperative and the essence of Strategic CSR. A company will be able to differentiate itself from its competition and find enhanced acceptability if it can communicate the congruence of CBV and CSR to different audiences. Hence:

P3: Global brands that incorporate strategic CSR are more likely to impact multiple stakeholders in their ecosystem.
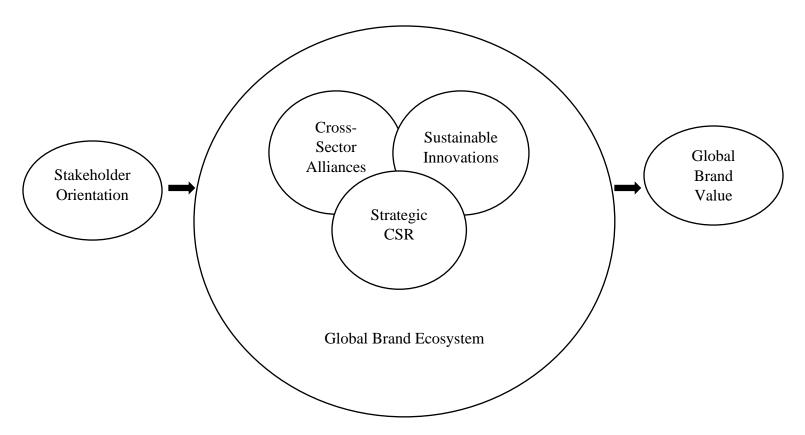
Brand Value

Brand value, from a financial perspective, is determined by "the incremental capitalized future earnings and cash flow achieved by linking successful, established brand names to a product" (Kerrin & Sethuraman, 1998, p. 262). Tiwari (2010) describes brand value as the difference between net present value of future cash flows from a branded product vis-à-vis a similar unbranded product. According to Bloomsbury Business Library - Business & Management Dictionary (2007), brand value is defined as "the amount that a brand is worth in terms of income, potential income, reputation, prestige, and market value" (p. 1066). Thus, brand value can be considered to be the financial worth of the brand. Interbrand publishes brand values of the top 100 global brands every year and highlights the relative increase or decrease in brand value over previous years. The company uses proprietary brand valuation methodology that includes an analysis of financial performance of the brand, the role of brand in purchase decisions, and a brand's competitive strength (Interbrand, 2018). Prior research has shown that CSR impacting various stakeholders has a positive effect on global brand equity (Torres et al., 2012). Clearly, through cross-sector alliances, sustainable innovations and strategic CSR global brands have the potential to positively influence multiple stakeholders. Strong global brands can leverage their brand value into a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Interbrand, 2015). Hence:

P4: Global brands utilizing sustainable innovations, cross-sector alliances, and strategic CSR are more likely to enhance their brand value over a period of time.

A conceptual model of global brand value in a stakeholder ecosystem is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Global Brand Value in a Stakeholder Ecosystem

The methodology most appropriate for this research was Qualitative Case study. There are conceptual as well as empirical gaps in the literature pertaining to global brands, cross-sector alliances, sustainable innovations, and strategic CSR. So, there is sufficient justification for the exploration of the concepts and their potential relationships through qualitative case study (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Purposeful sampling was utilized, suitable for studying underexplored phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Five global brands in diverse industries were selected that appeared in the Forbes list of "Most Sustainable Companies" as well as in the Interbrand list of "Best Global Brands" in 2017. Criteria for sample selection included: (i) involvement in CSR and sustainable innovation, and (ii) multiple cross-sector alliances. Data has been gathered through documentary research utilizing sustainability reports, project reports, corporate websites, published periodicals, and journal articles. Content analysis of this data-set led to the compilation of five case studies along the key research dimensions discussed above.

Case 1: Siemens
Sources for Case: Siemens (2018a), Siemens (2018b)

Siemens is one of the world's largest producers of energy-efficient, resource-saving technologies. It is a leading supplier of systems for power generation and transmission as well as medical imaging and laboratory diagnostics. The company generated revenue of €83.0 billion and net income of €6.2 billion in 2017 (Siemens, n.d.). Siemens was ranked number 50 on Interbrand's 100 Global Brands and number 1 on Forbes Most Sustainable companies in 2017. Table 1 provides an overview of the company's involvement and activities relating to Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, Strategic CSR and change in brand value.

Table 1 - Siemens: CSA, SI, Strategic CSR and Change in Brand Value

Cross-Sector Alliances:

Alliance	Project	Goal/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Con Edison (NYC Utility)	Installation of technology for continuation of service during severe weather	Increased resiliency of power system to unexpected weather events and flooding	Customers, community
Blue Lake Rancheria (Native American reservation)	Utilization of Siemens intelligent micro-grid management software to launch low carbon community and deliver cleaner power	Energy savings to local community of $200,000 in annual energy costs and reduction of 150 tons of carbon per year	Tribal, federal, state, and local governments, technology providers, community
Numerous start-ups	"next-47" (Siemens' unit for partnership with start-ups)	Commercialization of emerging technologies in the area of 3D printing, robotics and drones, artificial intelligence and virtual reality	Entrepreneurs, customers in the area of health care, manufacturing, and renewable energy
Aspen Institute	Technical Scholars project for STEM education at top community colleges	Increased opportunities in STEM education and careers for students pursuing alternatives to 4-year universities	Community, students
Darktrace (leader in enterprise and industrial immune system technology)	Provides cutting-edge cyber defense to utilities and the oil and gas industry	Increase cyber-security	Clients in utilities and oil and gas industry

Sustainable Innovations:

Innovation	Benefit Area	Objectives/Outcomes	Shareholders
DAQRI augmented reality helmet technology (smart helmet technology)	Digitalization in gas turbine training and field service operations	Increases speed, efficiency and accuracy of technicians; enhances productivity	customers
Development of intelligent infrastructure (technology and software)	Integration of traffic management systems in urban areas through digitalization	Reduction of congestion, traffic incidents on existing roads; Improved operational efficiency, energy and cost savings for rail	Customers, community members

		operators; Build smart cities of the future; creation of "internet of Trains"	
Medical imaging, molecular testing	Life-saving health technology	Improve patient outcomes; enhanced efficiency; early detection of Zika virus	Customers, medical partners, patients
Incorporation of cybersecurity in all aspects of technology development	Cybersecurity and anti-terrorism	Enhanced protection of infrastructure and security of military	Customers, community

Strategic CSR

Areas	Activities/Projects	Goals/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Technology	Integration of innovative technologies such as water solutions, AC drives and renewable energy solutions	Community development; improve quality of life of marginalized communities by providing electricity, clean drinking water and basic health care	Local community
Education	Provides education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics	Improve educational level; training of work force; enhanced employee satisfaction	Local community; employees
Cultural	Supporting values and culture of local communities	Humanitarian emergency aid	Local communities

Change in Brand Value (2012 -2017)

Brand	Forbes Sustainability Rank (2107)	Interbrand Rank (2017))	Brand Value (in billion)		% Change in Brand Value (2012-2017)
			2012	**2017**	
Siemens	1	50	$7.53	$9.98	33%

Case 2: CISCO

Sources for Case: Cisco (2018a), Cisco (2018b)

Cisco System is a multinational company that develops, manufactures and sells networking hardware, telecommunications equipment and other high-technology services and products. It is the largest networking company in the world. The company generated revenue of $48 billion and net income of $9.6 billion in 2017. Cisco was ranked number 16 on Interbrand's 100 Global Brands and number 3 on Forbes Most Sustainable companies in 2017. Table 2 provides an overview of the

company's involvement and activities relating to Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, Strategic CSR and change in brand value.

Table 2 - Cisco: CSA, SI, Strategic CSR and Change in Brand Value

Cross-Sector Alliances

Alliance	Project	Goals/Outcome	Stakeholders
Shawnee Mission School District	Enterprise License Agreement for security, collaboration and one-to-one digital learning initiative	Enhanced safety and effectiveness with respect to student and teacher engagement; positive shift in student performance; increase in attendance	Local community, teachers, students, educational institution
Mozhugongka Hospital, Tibet	Installation of Cisco collaboration equipment in hospitals in Mozhugongka and Nanjing	Use of video-conferencing for instant access to medical experts and research benefitting patients in remote and high mountainous areas.	Patients, hospitals, local communities
BC Hydro and Power Authority, Vancouver	Automating and analyzing the electric grid	Increased data collection from once every two months to twice a day; controlled power outages; improved visibility for remote devices across the grid	Local community, public utilities
Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, UK	Enable digital healthcare	Improved patient outcomes; reduction in IT costs	Patients, hospitals, local communities

Sustainable Innovations

Innovation	Benefit Area	Objectives/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Intent-based network (software that helps to plan, design and operate networks)	Enterprise networking that allows network operators greater control over running the network	Scalable and secure networking technology; IT automation for businesses; reduction of operational costs (projected to positively impact one billion people by 2025)	Governments, educational institutions, customers, NGOs
Encrypted Traffic Analytics	Network security; innovative methods of using the network to detect and stop malware	Protection of private data for businesses	Clients, community
IoT management solution	Enhanced digitization of supply chain	Accelerated decision making, easy connectivity, lower costs and increased customer engagement	Clients, community

Strategic CSR

Areas	Activities/Projects	Goals/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Social Entrepreneurship	2017 Global Problem Solver Challenge – supports entrepreneurs who create breakthrough technologies, products and services that address social and environmental issues.	Grants (including $100,000 Grand Prize) to multiple social entrepreneurs who used their innovations to solve problems in their community; for example, affordable speech-generating device for children and adults who are unable to speak	Local community
Financial Services	Collaborates with Opportunity International to provide seed funding for mobile financial services in three countries in Africa; subsequent expansion to provide cash grants and donation of Cisco technology.	Assist Opportunity International's goal of creating 20 million jobs worldwide primarily among poor women, farmers, and rural young people.	Local community; socially and economically vulnerable sections of society
Education	Cisco Networking Academy – integration of technology and education in order to prepare students for entry-level jobs and industry-recognized certification	Empowerment of students with vision, hearing, and physical disabilities; upward trend in female participation rates particularly in Oman, Peru, UAE, Nigeria and Tunisia	Students, local communities, employers, clients

Change in Brand Value (2012 -2017)

Brand	Forbes Sustainability Rank (2107)	Interbrand Rank (2017))	Brand Value (in billion)		% Change in Brand Value (2012-2017)
			2012	**2017**	
Cisco	3	16	$27.19	$31.93	17%

Case 3: ADIDAS

Sources for Case: Adidas (2018a); Adidas (2018b); Adidas (2018c)

Adidas is a multinational corporation that designs and manufactures shoes, clothing and accessories. It is the largest sportswear manufacturer in Europe, and the second largest in the world, after Nike. It employs nearly 57,000 people worldwide and produces over 900 million sports and sports lifestyle products with independent manufacturing partners every year. The company generated revenue of $€ 21.2 billion and net income of €6.2 billion in 2017. (Adidas, n.d.). Adidas was ranked number 55 on Interbrand's 100 Global Brands and number 49 on Forbes Most Sustainable companies

in 2017. Table 3 provides an overview of the company's involvement and activities relating to Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, Strategic CSR and change in brand value.

Table 3 - Adidas: CSA, SI, Strategic CSR and Change in Brand Value

Cross-Sector Alliances

Alliance	Project	Goals/Outcome	Stakeholders
SOS Children's Village, Syria	Availability of clean water	700 local families in the region provided access to water on a daily basis	Local community
Parley for the Oceans	Ocean Plastic Program	Reduction of marine plastic pollution	Society, local communities
Maersk Line (shipping company; transportation and logistics partner for Adidas)	Environmental Program	Reduction of Carbon footprint	Society, partners, collaborators
NGO Baidaire (non-government and non-profit civil society organization in Pakistan)	Women's Empowerment Program	1000 female workers in Sialkot area of Pakistan were provided job opportunities in the workplace	Local communities, vulnerable sections of population

Sustainable Innovations

Innovation	Benefit Area	Objectives/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Futurecraft 4D (use of Digital Light Synthesis in production)	High- performance footwear; elimination of the use of traditional prototyping or molding	Company aims to produce 100,000 pairs by end of 2018	Community, suppliers, customers
'Cotton + Corn' Sustainable Products Initiative	Eco-friendly footwear production; components include organic cotton and industrial grown corn, which is a non-food source	Company aims to market plant-based footwear by 2018	Community, supply chain, customers
Recycle ocean plastic into yarn for shoes	Reduction of marine plastic pollution; use of recycled PET material in production	Company aims at creating one million pair of shoes made with Parley Ocean Plastic	Society, supply chain, customers

Strategic CSR

Areas	Activities/Projects	Goals/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Energy conservation	Programs in energy efficiency, demand reduction, & renewable energy; divestment of some high energy-consuming sites	3% reduction in CO_2 emissions (baseline 2015) and enable carbon neutrality	Community, society
Water efficiency	Holistic approach to water management	Reduction of incremental water consumption	Community, employees
Waste management	Innovative waste diversion methods; timely and cost-effective recycling of electronic waste	Company aims to achieve a 50% waste diversion rate at all owned operation facilities by 2020	Society, local communities
Sustainability in retail stores	Construction of new stores incorporates sustainability fundamentals based on LEED certification program	Company aims to have all new key corporate construction projects and key retail stores as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified	Society, local communities, employees, customers

Change in Brand Value (2012 -2017)

Brand	Forbes Sustainability Rank (2107)	Interbrand Rank (2017))	Brand Value (in billion)		% Change in Brand Value (2012-2017)
			2012	**2017**	
Adidas	49	55	$6.69	$9.21	38%

Case 4: BMW

Sources for Case: BMW (2018a); BMW (2018b)

BMW is an automobile and motorcycle manufacturer that focuses all its brands on the premium segment. It has 30 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and employs nearly 130, 000 people. (BMW, n.d.). The company generated revenue of €98.7 billion and net income of €8.7 billion in 2017. BMW was ranked number 13 on Interbrand's 100 Global Brands and number 16 on Forbes Most Sustainable companies in 2017. Table 4 provides an overview of the company's involvement and activities relating to Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, Strategic CSR and change in brand value.

Table 4 - BMW: CSA, SI, Strategic CSR and Change in Brand Value

Cross-Sector Alliances

Alliance	Project	Goals/Outcome	Stakeholders
Brunp	Battery recycling in China	Reduction in pollution and waste sent to landfills; conservation of resources	Community, customers
Various stakeholders including cities and experts	Urban mobility	Enhanced individual and sustainable mobility in densely populated urban areas	Communities in urban areas, public and auto-transport users
UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations)	Intercultural Innovation Award for innovative projects that seek solutions for intercultural tensions and conflict	Contribution to enhanced inter-cultural understanding; project sponsored by BMW award had reached over two million people worldwide by 2017	Society, local communities

Sustainable Innovations

Innovation	Benefit Area	Objectives/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Autonomous driving	Development and expansion of open platform for autonomous driving	Goal is to achieve fully autonomous driving in fields ranging from software development to road testing	Society, auto-transportation users, employees, customers
Connected Drive	Increased interaction of driver, vehicle and outside world through digital integration	Increased safety for drivers and road users; increased comfort for drivers	Society, auto-transportation users; customers
Efficient Dynamics	Development of efficient combustion engine, increasing electrification of drive-trains, and improved aerodynamics	Optimization of energy efficiency of automobiles and motorcycles	Society, auto-transportation users, employees, customers

Strategic CSR

Areas	Activities/Projects	Goals/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Environmental protection	Expansion of vehicle fleet with alternative drivetrains; innovative mobility service	Substantial reduction of CO_2 emissions; increased annual sales of electrified vehicles	Communities, auto-transportation users, customers
Sustainability in supply chain	Increased supplier accountability with respect to transparency and resource efficiency	Increase supplier compliance with environmental and	Communities, employees, suppliers, collaborators

		social standards across the value chain	
Employees	Investment in employee training and development	Enhanced quality of life of employees; enhanced job-related skills of employees; enhanced employee loyalty and low staff attrition rate	employees

Change in Brand Value (2012 -2017)

Brand	Forbes Sustainability Rank (2107)	Interbrand Rank (2017))	Brand Value (in billion)		% Change in Brand Value (2012-2017)
			2012	**2017**	
BMW	16	13	$29.05	$41.52	43%

Case 5: L'OREAL

Sources for Case: L'Oreal (2018a); L'Oreal (2018b)

L'Oreal is the world's largest cosmetics company. It operates in 150 countries and has nearly 82,600 employees worldwide. The company generated revenue of €26 billion and net income of €4.68 billion in 2017. L'Oreal was ranked number 45 on Interbrand's 100 Global Brands and number 38 on Forbes Most Sustainable companies in 2017. Table 5 provides an overview of the company's involvement and activities relating to Cross-Sector Alliances, Sustainable Innovations, Strategic CSR and change in brand value.

Table 5 - L'Oreal: CSA, SI, Strategic CSR and Change in Brand Value

Cross-Sector Alliances

Alliance	Project	Goals/Outcome	Stakeholders
Various research institutions, laboratories, startups and suppliers	Open innovation	New innovations for the beauty market and personalization according to customer needs	Educational institutions, suppliers, entrepreneurs, customers, community
Chinese Ministry of the Environment	Green Consumption Initiative	Sustainable production and reduction of environmental impact of formulas and packaging	Employees, government, consumers, community
Pur Project (fair trade-certified cooperative practicing organic farming in Thailand)	Planting trees in north-eastern Thailand	Enrichment of soil and biodiversity; improved moisture retention; captured 8,843 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent through planting trees	Supply chain, farmers, local community
Photon	Website Factory Project in Chennai, India (use of digital	Economic development of region; job opportunities for local, underprivileged	Community, supply chain, employees

	technology to implement and maintain websites)	communities including women and minority groups	
NGO Shanshui Conservation, China	Development of supply chain for honey (used as an ingredient in some beauty products)	Production of high-quality honey; enhanced sustainable farming practices; positive impact of preservation of natural habitat of pandas in the region	Community, supply chain, employees

Sustainable Innovations

Innovation	Benefit Area	Objectives/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Dermo-cosmetics	Skincare that incorporates health, safety, well-being, and naturalness	Immediate visibility of skincare results; combats environmental and life-style factors	Customers
"Coalescent Innovations"	Combination of existing technology to create new products and processes in the area of skincare and beauty	Product application and skin reaction tests to combat ageing, UV exposure, and pollution	Product users, community
Collaborative Robots or "cobots"	Assist in various steps in the production process as well as data management	Simplification of logistics, and operational management in stores	Employees, customers, suppliers
Dry Factory	Reduction of water consumption	Company's Burgos plant located in Spain uses 100% recyclable and reusable water	community

Strategic CSR

Areas	Activities/Projects	Goals/Outcomes	Stakeholders
Environment	Evaluation of environmental impact of raw materials used in production process along 2 parameters: biodegradability and the absence of aquatic ecotoxicity	99% of ingredients used to create hair care products are biodegradable; 70 to 100% are of natural origin	Community, consumers, suppliers
Packaging	Stimulate the circular economy	100% of the company's plastic packaging is projected to be refillable, reusable or compostable	Community, consumers

Environment	Zero Deforestation policy	The company projects that none of the ingredients and raw material used in its products would be linked with deforestation	Community
Environment	Peatland restoration project in Borneo, Indonesia; training of local village communities on sustainable farming practices	Project contributed to preventing the emission of more than 31,700 tons of CO2 equivalent in 2017	Community, supply chain members

Change in Brand Value (2012 -2017)

Brand	Forbes Sustainability Rank (2107)	Interbrand Rank (2017))	Brand Value (in billion)		% Change in Brand Value (2012-2017)
			2012	**2017**	
L'Oreal	38	45	$8.82	$10.67	21%

Discussion

In the current socio-economic climate global brands need to move beyond "business as usual" mind-set. Customers and other stakeholders have to be provided a broader array of activities through which they can enhance their association with global brands. It is apparent that all five companies – Siemens, Cisco, Adidas, BMW, and L'Oreal take a holistic approach to brand management. Through the integration of sustainable innovations, cross-sector alliances and strategic CSR, these companies are able to impact a wide variety of stakeholders, not just customers. The following are some of the key themes that emerge from this research.

1. Cross-Sector Alliances:

Each of the companies were involved in CSA with partners in diverse fields all over the world. Siemens' alliances included a utility company, a Native American reservation, multiple start-ups in the area of 3D printing, education institutions, and cyber-security enterprises. Cisco Systems had alliances with a school district, hospitals in Tibet and the USA, and Hydro-Power Authority. Adidas CSAs were in the areas of providing clean water, reduction of marine plastic pollution, reduction of carbon footprint, and women's empowerment. BMW had alliances with partners in battery recycling, urban mobility, and reduction of intercultural tensions. L'Oreal's alliances were in the fields of innovations in the beauty market, sustainable farming, and economic development of underprivileged. Thus, P1 was supported.

The success of these companies is primarily because they were able to co-create synergistic value with their alliance partners. According to Austin and Seitanidi (2012), "synergistic value arises from the underlying premise of all collaborations that combining partners' resources enables them to accomplish more together than they could have separately" (pg. 731). Further, based on the case, through the companies' endeavors, it is apparent that they regarded the costs associated with providing societal and environmental value to various stakeholders as an investment rather than an expense.

2. Sustainable Innovations:

Each of the five global brands engaged in extensive sustainable innovations in diverse areas. These innovations were related to long-term sustainable development and were geared towards the fulfillment of stakeholder expectations. Siemens SIs encompassed smart helmet technology, life-saving health technology, traffic management systems through digitalization, and cybersecurity. Cisco Systems was engaged in intent-based networks, encrypted traffic analytics, and enhanced digitization of its supply chain through SIs. Adidas initiatives included: use of digital light synthesis in production, eco-friendly footwear production, and reduction of marine plastic pollution. BMW focused on autonomous driving, digital integration, increasing electrification of drive-trains, and improved aerodynamics. L'Oreal's SIs were in the areas of dermo-cosmetics (skincare incorporating health, safety, and naturalness), "cobots" (collaborative robots that assist in the production process and data management), and reduction of water consumption.

The SIs created socio-environmental value for multiple stakeholders as well as contributed to the enhancement of the brand value for each of the companies over a five year period (2012 -2017). Stakeholder participation also led to the increased collaboration of supply chain members in some cases. For example, Cisco Systems' intent-based network that aims to increase IT automation and reduce operational costs involves the participation of stakeholders such as governments, educational institutions, various NGOs, and customers. Thus, P2 was supported.

3.Strategic CSR:

Global brands under investigation have used strategic CSR to build and strengthen relationships with multiple stakeholders including local communities, vulnerable sections of society, government organizations, supply chain members, students, employees, and customers.
Siemens' activities include community development and improving the quality of life of marginalized communities by providing electricity, clean drinking water, and basic health care; supporting the cultural values of local communities, and providing humanitarian emergency aid. Cisco Systems is actively involved in social entrepreneurship relating to societal and environmental issues. In addition, the company provides seed funding for mobile financial services and empowerment programs for women and students with disabilities. Adidas' strategic CSR initiatives are in the fields of energy conversation, water efficiency, waste management, and sustainability in retail sustainability. BMW's efforts are targeted towards environmental protection, sustainability in supply chain, and improvement in the quality of life for employees. L'Oreal strategic CSR is geared towards environmental protection initiatives and stimulation of the circular economy through recycling. Thus, P3 was supported.

4. Brand Value – Global brand equity:

The increase in brand value for Siemens, Cisco, Adidas, BMW and L'Oreal over a five-year period (2012 to 2017) was 33%, 17%, 38%, 43%, and 21% respectively, thereby lending support to P4. A causal relationship between the three variables (CSA, SI and strategic CSR) and global brand value is not being implied. However, correlation is being inferred. Clearly, global brands have to consider moving beyond just customer profitability to meeting and exceeding stakeholder expectations in order to enhance their brand value.

5. Consistency with Core Brand Value Proposition:

It is also noteworthy that these global brands are engaging in multi-faceted activities in ways that are consistent with their respective core brand value propositions. In other words, CSAs, SIs and strategic CSRs are not carried out purely out of altruistic or philanthropic considerations but are designed around the companies' core values. Table 7 emphasizes the linkages between core brand values and key activities.

Table 6
Linkage between Core Brand Value and Key Activities of Global Brands

Brand	Core Brand Value	Key Activities
Siemens	• Help power a sustainable future across the globe	• Digital transformation • Reducing carbon footprint • Medical innovations
Cisco	• "change the world" • Customer focus • Mutual respect and care	• Collaboration with CSAs in education, health, and hydropower • Enhanced enterprise networking • Digitization • World-wide job creation endeavors
Adidas	• Change life through sports • Sustainability	• Collaboration with athletes, consumers, and partners • Innovations in high-performance footwear and sustainable product development • Energy conservation and water efficiency programs
BMW	• Shaping the future of mobility • Customer focus and service	• Autonomous driving technology • Urban mobility and safety • Environmental protection accountability from supply chain members • Employee training and development
L'Oreal	• "sharing beauty with all" • Economic and social leadership	• Innovation in skincare and beauty • Digital superiority • Environmental and social collaborations with multiple CSAs

Managerial Implications

Global brand strategy should be formulated on the basis of a multifaceted and multi-stakeholder perspective. The contribution of this research is that it adopts a new approach to studying global brand management by incorporating sustainable innovations, CSA and strategic CSR. This paper demonstrates potential linkages between the three concepts and global brand value. It focuses not only on the economic aspects of global branding but also on potential societal and environmental outcomes in enhancing brand value.

Global brands can differentiate themselves on the world stage by considering the priorities of local stakeholders. Alliances with NGOs and NPOs who are knowledgeable about local socio-cultural nuances can provide legitimacy and acceptability to international companies. Further, high

congruence between value propositions of global brands and alliance partners can facilitate the formation of CSAs. This study reveals several examples of alliances that were based on mutually consistent value propositions. Adidas partnered with Parley for the Oceans to reduce marine plastic pollution. Cisco collaborated with a hospital in remote areas of Tibet for video-conferencing and instant access to medical experts for patients. BMW formed an alliance with Pur Project (fair trade-certified cooperative practicing organic farming in Thailand) for planting trees in eastern Thailand for soil enrichment and biodiversity, thereby benefitting supply chain farmers and the local community.

Firms can attract socially responsible consumers and stakeholders who want global brands to "do good" or engage in philanthropy on their behalf. Benabou and Tirole (2010) use the term "delegated philanthropy" for such actions wherein the firm is used as a channel for the expression of citizen values. Thus, global brands can target these consumer segments through their strategic CSR endeavors.

Incorporation of sustainability principles including an emphasis on sustainable innovations has to be incorporated into the business model of global brands in order to ensure competitive advantage. The three principles of sustainable development have been identified as environmental integrity, social equity, and economic prosperity (Bansal, 2005; Elkington, 1999). According to Bansal (2005), environmental integrity ensures that resources of the planet are not irreversibly depleted by human activities; social equity implies equal opportunities for all sections of society as well as future generations; and economic prosperity refers to the achievement of an acceptable quality of life for individuals aided by production and distribution of products that help enhance standard of living.

The stakeholder perspective necessarily entails taking a long-term focus that includes company profitability while at the same time engaging in activities that have societal and environmental benefits. This recommendation is consistent with Porter and Kramer's (2011) exaltation to create "shared value" as a consequence of interdependencies between business and society. Brand loyalty and brand value can be enhanced by building trust with consumers and stakeholders through positive socio-economic actions.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has investigated only five global companies and has relied on secondary data. Further, there is no causal relationship being implied between sustainable innovations, CSA and strategic CSR activities and an increase of brand value. This study has not focused on the downsides of a firm's actions and the potential for conflict with different stakeholders. This may be the case if alliance partners are chosen whose core value propositions may not necessarily reflect those of particular global brands. Similarly, brand value can be diluted if CSR activities are seen to be merely "window-dressing." Further, the interactive effect of the three variables has not been investigated.

The present research is an exploratory step to encourage investigation of global branding dimensions that have remained relatively uncharted till now. Future cross-disciplinary empirical research can investigate a wide range of global brands across many sectors and industries. In addition, comparisons can be made between those brands that are on the Forbes sustainability list and those that are not, to highlight best practice themes.

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