

# *The Importance of Brand Liking and Brand Trust in Consumer Decision Making: Insights from Bulgarian and Hungarian Consumers During the Global Economic Crisis*

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This paper presents the research findings of a global brand study conducted during the recent global economic crisis. The study sought to understand how four brand constructs (country-of-origin, brand familiarity, brand liking and brand trust) would influence global brand purchase intent in a sample of consumers living in Bulgaria and Hungary. Step-wise regression models were used for the study's twenty brands for consumers living in both countries. The regression models indicated that brand liking and brand trust were the most important predictors of purchase intent in both groups. The paper discusses the relevance of these findings for marketing global brands in post-crisis environments in both countries.

*Key Words:* brand trust, brand liking, Hungary, Bulgaria,  
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*JEL Classification:* M31

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the geo-political as well as the marketing landscape of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe has changed significantly. As is often noted, in those countries that were attempting to replace their legacy of state-led socialism with market-based approaches to economic development, consumers created substantial demand for goods and services in their attempt to play catch-up with Western European living standards. The opportunity to purchase many new, different, foreign goods, quickly gave customers a much wider selection of 'known' brands from which to choose. Consumer purchase

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was motivated by the desire not only to possess products previously restricted but also to show to society what ‘new’ things individuals had. The opening of previously closed, restricted markets therefore created tremendous opportunity for Western multinationals. As a result, multinationals ‘flooded [these] markets with their international brands and products’ (Schuh and Holzmülle 2003, 176).

The initial phase, in which early market entrants gained significant sales, was soon replaced by increased market competition. By 2006, A. T. Kearney noted that global retailer interest in Eastern Europe had declined significantly from previously ‘very high interest’ in the region between 2000–2005. Their report noted, ‘This doesn’t mean the region is losing its allure; rather, it indicates that the “boom” following the end of the Cold War is starting to fade. Indeed, the rush is ending primarily because the market is filling up’ (Kearney n. d.).

Salter (2006) provides a realistic antidote to the sweeping generalizations that are sometimes made about the region. He notes, ‘The West tends to view the fall of the Berlin Wall as a light switch that illuminated Eastern Europe to the prosperity of capitalism. In reality, the transition remains a laborious endeavor filled with trial-and-error and expensive mistakes’ (paragraph 2).

The recent global financial crisis, however, has raised new questions regarding the region’s economic development and progress. At the global level, Philippe Le Houérou, World Bank Vice-President for Europe and Central Asia, summarized the crisis’s regional impact by noting that ‘For years now, Emerging Europe and Central Asia have roared along in high gear. But the global crisis and the drying up of external private financial flows are stalling the engine of growth, prompting many [countries] to downshift and some to even slip into reverse’ (The World Bank 2010).

Yet, in spite of these larger macroeconomic shifts, consumer attitudes towards foreign brands did not change much. Having now had a decade of access to and experience with foreign brands that, before 1989, they had only heard of, consumers in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) did not want to lose that freedom of choice. Furthermore, there is tacit knowledge that in some CEE markets, consumers only needed to ‘think’ that a product came from the United States, Western Europe or Japan to motivate purchase. For example, the Hungarian clothing company, Budmill, has become successful by intentionally creating a Western European sounding name to tap such consumer inferences. A product’s true country of origin was examined by few consumers, and brands only needed

to sound American, Japanese or Western European for consumers to like and buy them.

The research we report in this paper is about how customers evaluate global brands in two Central and Eastern European countries under the recent financial crisis. We presented 20 global brands to consumers in Hungary and Bulgaria and asked them to evaluate each brand in terms of their familiarity with, their liking of, their trust in it, and the possibility of purchase. They also were asked about the importance of country-of-origin (COO) in their purchase decision. Regression models were built for all 20 brands in both countries to test for significant differences between Hungarian and Bulgarian consumers. We note here that our research is not longitudinal. The research, however, was conducted from mid-2008 to early-2009 and thus captures consumer global brand attitudes in both countries during the global recession. While we believe the insights gained into consumer decision making in Hungary and Bulgaria are sufficiently interesting on their own to report them here, we also believe our research provides insight into global brand strategy midway in the recession/crisis itself. Researchers could use the findings reported here as a baseline to longitudinally measure changes in global brand attitudes post crisis.

### **Global Brands**

Brands are often considered the cornerstone of marketing. Brands transform generic products into entities that consumers will want to purchase and for which they will pay a premium to acquire (Aaker 1991). There is almost universal agreement in the marketing literature that 'to brand' a product involves more than giving a generic product a name. As the American Marketing Association definition of branding indicates, branding includes color, design, or symbols that are specifically associated with one product. Branding is the complex interplay between the product's physical attributes and the psychological and social attitudes/beliefs created in the targeted consumer's mind that differentiates one product from another (Simoes and Dibb 2001).

Successful product branding has a number of important consequences for firms – perhaps the most salient of which is the creation of brand equity. Brand equity is a summary measure of a brand's ability to attract and retain loyal customers expressed in monetary terms. Yet brand loyalty does not happen instantaneously. It accrues to the brand over time and is, undoubtedly, a tangible expression of marketing strategy. Brand

loyalty always involves trust, since it is trust that solidifies the brand-customer relationship over time. In addition to brand trust, brands also involve constructs of brand image, attitude towards the brand, brand personality, and brand associations. As the voluminous branding literature testifies, brands are exceedingly complex entities.

Market-oriented firms understand that they must continually monitor, refine and reposition their brand(s) in order to deliver consumer value long term. In increasingly competitive markets, the need for effective strategic brand management processes becomes essential. A firm's brands also have wider, organizational effects. Brands are ambassadors for the firm itself. Consumers reach conclusions about what a firm stands for, whether the firm is a good corporate citizen and whether the firm is ethical or not from perceptions of the firm's brands. This multifaceted relationship leads directly to the question of what is a global brand?

A common starting place is with a definition: 'A global brand is defined as the worldwide use of a name, term sign, symbol, design or combination thereof intended to identify goods or services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (Ghauri and Cateora 2010, 356). This definition clearly is written from the firm's view, since its focus is on the internal processes of brand design and differentiation. Recently, scholars have begun to define global brands from both a consumer as well as a supplier perspective. Roberts and Cayla (2009) note that 'definitions of global brands are mostly supply side' (p. 350). They assert that a brand's globalness is defined in terms of number of markets served, size of markets served and the extent to which the brand shares consistent technical specifications across these markets. This parallels the traditional definition of a global brand stated earlier (Ghauri and Cateora 2010). Roberts and Cayla (2009) also note that while a consumer-centric view of global brands (that is, the process by which consumers categorize brands as 'global') is desirable, such a view is still underdeveloped in the marketing literature. Steenkamp, Batra and Alden (2003) are very clear that 'a brand benefits from consumer perceptions that it is "global" [...] only if consumers believe the brand is marketed in multiple countries and is generally recognized as global in these countries' (p. 54).

Rosenbloom and Haefner (2009) have analyzed global brand definitions from both the firm's and the consumer's perspectives. Their literature review found only one global brand definition that integrated both consumer and producer orientations: A global brand was defined as 'the

multi-market reach of products that are perceived as the same by both consumers and internal constituents' (Johansson and Ronkainen 2005, 340). Firm and consumer perspectives are aligned through a global brand strategy, since the firm's intentional branding strategy is perceived as such by targeted consumers in multiple countries. The approach used in this research follows both Steenkamp, Batra and Alden's (2003) perceived brand globalness and Dimofte, Johansson and Bagozzi's (2010) most recent work on global brand effect that simply states, a global brand is 'a brand that is perceived to be widely available and recognized as global' (p. 85). In this research, if a survey respondent in Hungary or Bulgaria thought a brand was global, then it was.

### **Hierarchical Model**

Marketing is replete with a number of hierarchical models. AIDA (awareness-interest-desire-action), Lavidge-Steiner Model (1961) and Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1973). The underlying framework for most hierarchical marketing models is consumer information processing. Consumer information processing is often sequential, in which one, internal psychological process is a necessary precursor for the next higher order psychological process. Within the advertising literature, Percy and Elliot (2005) summarized the brand communication process as having four stages: Category need, brand awareness, brand attitude and brand purchase intent. Percy and Elliott's (2005) work takes as its starting point McGuire's (1969) work on attitude change. McGuire (1969) posits six behavioral steps through which any persuasive message must pass if it is to effect attitudinal change. Percy and Elliott simplify McGuire's model by reducing the number of information processing steps to four. More importantly for this research, they developed their model from the perspective of the practising brand communications manager. Their focus was to develop a practical framework that brand communication managers could use to effectively evaluate and design persuasive advertising.

For the research presented here, Ozsomer and Altaras (2008) provide an important conceptual model for understanding how global brand attitudes lead to the likelihood of global brand purchase intent. Ozsomer and Altaras (2008) present a conceptually dense model. It triangulates three theoretical streams in consumer behavior: consumer culture theory, signaling theory, and the associative network memory model. Their final conceptual model contains 10 discrete categories that include global brand authenticity, global brand cultural capital, perceived brand global-

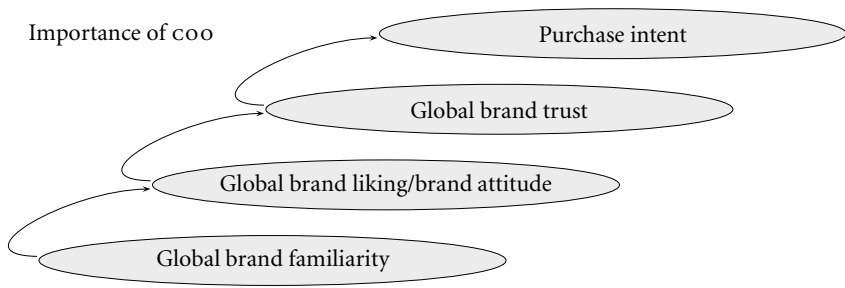


FIGURE 1 Hierarchical model of familiarity-liking-trust-purchase intent

ness, consumer self-construal, perceived cosmopolitanness, global brand quality and global brand social responsibility – to name only some of the constructs. The model's great strength is its ability to integrate significant portions of the extensive research on global brands. The model has two, significant limitations. First, the model provides limited guidance to the practicing global brand manager. The model, while conceptually dense, is too complex for the global brand manager to be pragmatically useful on a day-to-day basis. Second, the model is generic. It does not include brand names and thus sidesteps one of the key issues for the global brand manager: That consumers make brand purchase decisions based on the brand itself and not on more abstract, generic product categories.

The model used in this research aims to overcome these two limitations. By reducing the number of concepts tested to five, the model simplifies Ozsomer and Altaras's (2008) framework. The model used here parallels Percy and Elliot's (2005) research in its attempt to focus on a small number of brand concepts that the practising brand manager can understand and use in crafting competitive brand strategy. By using specific brand names, this research gives both the global brand managers and academic marketing researchers insights into consumer decision making at the most granular level possible: the brand. For the global brand manager, knowing whether consumer decision making converges or diverges across countries can be especially helpful. Figure 1 presents the hierarchical model.

*Country of origin.* Inevitably, country of origin (COO) is built into every global brand. While consumers may consider COO extrinsic in their decision making, global brand managers must consider COO as an intrinsic characteristic. In a global marketing context, it is important to know the influence of COO on global brand purchase decisions. Hence our decision to include it in our model (see figure 1).

Country of origin has been extensively studied and, in the judgment of Ahmed and d'Astous (2008), is 'now a mature research topic' (p. 79). When Pharr (2005) conducted her extensive literature review, the COO literature had well over 700 studies. Country of origin has been researched in terms of brand image, brand name, consumer levels of involvement, country stereotypes, quality/price relationships. Marketing scholars have variously tried to understand how COO affects perceived product value (Cervino, Sanchez and Cubillo 2005; Hui and Zhou 2002); brand image and brand equity (Lin and Kao 2004; Pappu, Quester and Cooksey 2006). COO has been studied in the context of several emerging markets (Bilkey and Nes 1982; Speece and Nguyen 2005).

If consumers use COO in their decision making, then knowing the accuracy of those perceptions becomes important. Research on the accuracy of consumer COO attribution found that (a) consumers varied in their accurate recognition of a brand's true country of origin, and (b) respondents inferred country of origin by associating the brand name with a language thought to be representative of a specific country (Samiee, Shimp and Sharma 2005). Follow-up research found that university students in the United States frequently inaccurately identified the COO for well-known brands (Anderson Analytics 2007). For example, 53% of the sample thought Nokia to be a Japanese company rather than a Finnish one, and 48% of respondents identified Adidas' COO as the United States as opposed to Germany (Weiss 2007).

*Brand familiarity.* Our model hypothesizes that global brand familiarity is a foundational activity. Consumers must have some understanding, recognition or knowledge of the global brand before they can proceed to the higher order stages of liking, trusting and ultimately purchasing the global brand. This hypothesis conforms to existing research. Heckler and Childers (1992), Kent and Allen (1994) and Low and Lamb (2000) have all found that consumers who are familiar with a brand have more elaborate, sophisticated brand schemas stored in memory than consumers who are unfamiliar with the brand. Research also has demonstrated that brand familiarity yields more favorable brand evaluation (Janiszewski 1993; Holden and Vanhuele 1999). Increased brand familiarity means that consumers will process advertising messages quicker and with less effort because they already 'know things' about the brand (Chattopadhyay 1998). 'Brands with higher levels of familiarity generally enjoy higher levels of preference among customers' (Lee and Lee 2007, 2). Global brand familiarity leads to global brand liking.

*Brand Liking.* De Houwer (2008) has stated, 'A core assumption in marketing research is that consumers tend to buy brands and products that they like' (p. 151). While intuitively attractive, brand liking is an underdeveloped area of market research. Few rigorous studies of the construct exist. Hence, definitional clarity is also limited. Boutie (1994) points the way with the following: Brand liking 'seeks to build consumers' positive attitude toward a brand based on the belief that it cares about them (or addresses them) as individuals' (p. 4). In part, our research attempts to validate the role of global brand liking in the consumer's global brand decision making process and hence to confirm or disconfirm its importance in leading to global brand purchase intent.

*Brand Trust.* In contrast to brand liking, brand trust is a well-researched marketing construct. Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yague-Guillen (2003) define brand trust as 'the confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer' (p. 37). As such, brand trust is one, logical outcome of brand familiarity and brand liking. Hence global brand familiarity and global brand are necessary preconditions for global brand trust. It seems unlikely that global brand trust could be built if consumers were unfamiliar with or disliked the global brand. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001) underline the central role of brand trust as a variable that generates customer commitment and purchase. Researchers have also linked brand trust with brand loyalty (Lau and Lee 1999), increased market share and advertising efficiency (Chatterjee and Chaudhuri 2005) as well as brand equity (Ambler 1997).

Recently, Romaniuk and Bogomolova (2005) have studied whether global brands varied in terms of trust. They sampled consumers living in the United Kingdom and Australia and controlled for brand size effects in the trust scores of 110 local brands in 13 markets. They found little variation in brand trust scores when controlling for market share. Romaniuk and Bogomolova (2005) concluded that 'trust is more like a "hygiene" factor in that all brands have to have a certain level of trust to be competitive in the market' (p. 371). This finding makes sense given the market similarities of the United Kingdom and Australia. It is worth wondering, though, whether a similar convergence of global brand trust exists in consumers from countries in substantially different stages of economic development, such as Hungary and Bulgaria. Our research was, in part, an attempt to find out.

*Purchase Intent.* Brand purchase intent is the highest construct in our



model (see figure 1) and supports the common marketing focus on sales. Extensive consumer research exists that confirms that asking consumers about their behavioral intentions is a stronger predictor of actual behavior than directly asking consumers whether they will or will not buy a product or service. Rossiter and Percy (1997) define brand purchase intent as the 'buyer's "self-instruction" to purchase the brand, or take purchase-related action' (p. 126). Our research hypothesizes that purchase intent for global brands is developed after consumers have accumulated information about the brand (i. e., they are familiar with the global brand), and after they have developed positive attitudes (liking) towards and trust in the global brand. Global brand purchase intent, being the highest level construct, is one outcome predicated by the preceding processes.

### **Research Objectives and Methodology**

This research had two objectives: (1) To test the predictive power of the hierarchical model global brand purchase intent (see figure 1), and (2) To determine whether consumers in Hungary and Bulgaria, when presented with the same set of 20 global brands, differed in their familiarity with, liking of and trust in these global brands. The global brands chosen were: Adidas, Dannon, Gucci, H&M, Haier, Hyundai, IKEA, Kappa, L'Oréal, Lenovo, LG, Motorola, Nivea, Nokia, Panasonic, Phillips, Puma, Samsung, Sony, and Vodafone. This constellation of brands was chosen to include a variety of different categories of interest: high involvement versus low involvement products; durable versus fast moving consumer goods; retail and consumer electronics brands; and brands that were outside Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Both Haier and Lenovo are Chinese brands. Further, we wanted to include a few brands under-represented in the global marketing literature to date. Hence: H&M, L'Oréal, Kappa, Nivea and Vodafone. The research was conducted in Hungary and Bulgaria from the middle of 2008 through the beginning of 2009.

The questionnaire was straightforward. All 20 brands were presented to each respondent. Respondents had one open ended question at the survey's beginning. They were asked to write-in their perceived country of origin for each global brand. Respondents were next asked to rate each global brand in terms of their familiarity with, liking of, trust in it, and the likelihood of purchase if the respondent were able to do so. Seven-point Likert scales were used for all constructs. Thus, the scale for global

TABLE 1 Sample Characteristics

Demographic	Bulgarian		Hungarian	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	40.8	53	47.8	97
Female	59.2	77	52.2	106
<i>Age</i>				
16–20	28.5	37	15.3	31
21–25	30.0	39	44.3	90
26–30	16.9	22	16.3	33
31–35	12.3	16	8.4	17
36–45	9.2	12	7.4	15
Over 46	3.1	4	8.4	17
<i>Education</i>				
High school/some college	41.9	49	71.0	132
Completed University	31.6	37	18.3	34
Graduate work	26.5	31	10.8	20

NOTES Bulgarian  $n = 130$  Hungarian  $n = 203$ . For education, Bulgarian  $n = 117$  and for Hungarian  $n = 186$  as not all respondents answered the question.

brand familiarity ranged from ‘not at all familiar’ to ‘very familiar’ on a 7-point scale. Liking the global brand ranged from ‘like nothing about the brand’ to ‘like everything about the brand’ on a 7-point scale. Global brand trust was scaled ‘no trust at all’ to ‘total trust.’ Likelihood to purchase was assessed on 7-point scale that ranged from ‘never purchase’ to ‘always purchase’ – ‘if you were able.’ Respondents were asked the importance of knowing the global brand’s country of origin as part of their purchase decisions. They responded by using a 7-point scale from ‘not important at all’ to ‘very important.’ Basic demographic information (age, gender, highest level of education) was also collected. The questionnaire was pre-tested and was found to be reliable. The questionnaire was electronically posted on an online survey website. This was done to facilitate both data collection and data analysis. Respondents, however, were recruited using local universities and personal relationships in both countries. Budapest and Sofia served as the locations for recruiting respondents. In each respective country, bachelor, master, postgraduate and PhD level students completed the questionnaire. Table 1 presents the sample characteristics.

The Bulgarian sample was almost 60% female, while the Hungarian sample was 52% female. The age distribution between the two groups

had a higher representation of 21–25 year-olds from Hungary, while the sample of Bulgarian respondents had a higher representation of 16–20 year-olds. However, if the first two age categories are combined (to make a composite 16–25 age cohort), the samples become quite similar. A much greater percentage of Bulgarian respondents had completed university (31.6%) compared to only 18.3% of the Hungarian respondents.

### **Country of Origin Accuracy**

We begin with country of origin accuracy because we hypothesize it as a possible antecedent independent variable that could influence global brand purchase intent overall. Table 2 presents the COO recognition accuracy of the two samples.

In terms of being able to correctly identify the COO of the twenty brands in the questionnaire, the Bulgarian respondents were more accurate than the Hungarian respondents for 10 brands, 50% (see table 2). Those brands were: H&M, Haier, Lenovo, LG, Motorola, Nivea, Panasonic, Phillips, Samsung, and Vodafone. The Hungarian respondents were more accurate for two brands (10%). They were IKEA and Nokia. There were no differences between the two groups for eight brands (40%), Adidas, Dannon, Gucci, Hyundai, Kappa, L'Oréal, Puma, and Sony.

### **Global Brand Differences**

We next turn to the mean score comparisons between Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents on global brand familiarity, global brand liking, global brand trust, global brand purchase intent and the relative importance of knowing the global brand's COO. Table 3 presents the striking difference between Bulgarian consumers and Hungarian consumers in terms of global brand familiarity.

The Bulgarian respondents indicated a greater familiarity with 19 of the 20 global brands tested. Hungarian respondents had greater familiarity with only one brand, IKEA (see table 3). No differences were found for three brands: Dannon, H&M, and Vodafone. Nokia was almost universally known by every Bulgarian respondent (mean score = 6.74); and while Nokia was also the most familiar brand for Hungarian respondents, it was significantly less familiar to the Hungarian sample than for Bulgarians.

Bulgarians consumers indicated a greater liking for thirteen brands: Adidas, Gucci, Haier, Hyundai, Kappa, L'Oréal, LG, Motorola, Nokia,

TABLE 2 COO recognition accuracy

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	57.7	63.8	.26
Dannon	56.2	57.9	.29
Gucci	80.0	84.5	.50
H&M	16.2	3.9	.00
Haier	38.5	2.5	.00
Hyundai	53.1	54.7	.77
IKEA	36.9	58.6	.00
Kappa	51.5	45.9	.33
L'Oréal	83.1	90.0	.06
Lenovo	21.7	7.4	.00
LG	36.9	15.8	.00
Motorola	53.5	39.5	.00
Nivea	60.8	0	.01
Nokia	44.6	58.4	.01
Panasonic	63.1	48.3	.01
Phillips	30.2	26.1	.05
Puma	48.5	48.5	1.00
Samsung	36.4	22.8	.00
Sony	69.2	64.5	.40
Vodafone	53.5	30.0	.00

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians (percent correct recognition of COO), (4) two tail significance. Two tail tests were utilized.

TABLE 3 Global brand familiarity

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	6.05	5.40	.00
Dannon	5.68	5.38	.10
Gucci	5.15	3.38	.00
H&M	3.68	3.75	.77
Haier	3.33	2.41	.00
Hyundai	4.75	3.93	.00
IKEA	4.08	4.88	.00
Kappa	4.88	3.97	.00
L'Oréal	5.75	4.46	.00
Lenovo	2.96	2.50	.05
LG	5.54	4.73	.00
Motorola	5.50	4.31	.00
Nivea	6.13	5.23	.00
Nokia	6.74	5.59	.00
Panasonic	5.85	4.92	.00
Phillips	5.76	4.99	.00
Puma	5.76	4.99	.00
Samsung	6.04	5.25	.00
Sony	6.16	5.16	.00
Vodafone	4.99	4.73	.23

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians, (4) significance. A univariate ANOVA was used to assess the significance between means. Items were on a 7-point scale, with 1 being 'not familiar at all' and 7 being 'very familiar.'

Panasonic, Phillips, Puma, and Sony (see table 4). There were no differences in liking scores for seven brands: Dannon, H&M, IKEA, Lenovo, Nivea, Samsung, and Vodafone.

For global brand trust, Bulgarians trusted more brands than the Hungarians: Adidas, Gucci, Kappa, L'Oréal, LG, Nokia, Panasonic, Puma, and Sony. For the other 11 brands there were no differences between the two countries.

In terms of likelihood of brand purchase, Bulgarian respondents were

TABLE 4 Global brand liking

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	5.83	5.29	.00
Dannon	4.82	4.84	.92
Gucci	5.23	3.99	.00
H&M	4.31	4.17	.55
Haier	4.18	3.39	.00
Hyundai	4.27	3.67	.00
IKEA	4.48	4.75	.20
Kappa	4.68	4.08	.00
L'Oréal	5.37	4.84	.00
Lenovo	4.38	4.03	.20
LG	4.91	4.52	.03
Motorola	4.34	3.88	.01
Nivea	5.50	5.23	.13
Nokia	6.23	5.49	.00
Panasonic	5.52	4.73	.00
Phillips	5.28	4.89	.02
Puma	5.63	5.15	.00
Samsung	5.31	5.10	.22
Sony	5.79	5.21	.00
Vodafone	4.47	4.24	.31

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians, (4) significance. A univariate ANOVA was used to assess the significance between means. Items were on a 7-point scale, with 1 being 'like nothing about the brand' and 7 being 'like everything about the brand.'

TABLE 5 Global brand trust

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	6.10	5.57	.00
Dannon	4.79	5.04	.21
Gucci	5.45	4.61	.00
H&M	4.45	4.41	.87
Haier	4.03	3.83	.42
Hyundai	4.37	4.04	.08
IKEA	4.57	4.81	.26
Kappa	4.96	4.35	.00
L'Oréal	5.48	5.11	.04
Lenovo	3.92	4.03	.70
LG	5.09	4.59	.00
Motorola	4.39	4.14	.19
Nivea	5.64	5.41	.17
Nokia	6.39	5.70	.00
Panasonic	5.56	5.07	.00
Phillips	5.39	5.14	.14
Puma	5.60	5.24	.03
Samsung	5.43	5.25	.30
Sony	5.89	5.43	.00
Vodafone	4.70	4.45	.23

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians, (4) significance. A univariate ANOVA was used to assess the significance between means. Items were on a 7-point scale, with 1 being 'no trust at all' and 7 being 'total trust.'

more likely to purchase thirteen brands: Adidas, Gucci, Haier, Hyundai, Kappa, L'Oréal, LG, Nokia, Panasonic, Phillips, Puma, Sony, and Vodafone (see table 6). There were no differences between Bulgarians and Hungarians for seven brands: Dannon, H&M, IKEA, Lenovo, Motorola, Nivea, and Samsung.

Lastly, we present the importance of knowing the global brand's country of origin. Table 7 indicates that Bulgarian consumers scored higher

TABLE 6 Likelihood of global brand purchase

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	5.96	5.27	.00
Dannon	5.08	4.99	.66
Gucci	5.47	4.31	.00
H&M	4.58	4.15	.06
Haier	4.14	3.43	.01
Hyundai	4.24	3.42	.00
IKEA	4.44	4.74	.15
Kappa	4.85	4.05	.00
L'Oréal	5.53	4.98	.00
Lenovo	4.10	4.01	.73
LG	4.80	4.43	.04
Motorola	4.01	3.68	.10
Nivea	5.46	5.23	.17
Nokia	6.32	5.42	.00
Panasonic	5.26	4.78	.00
Phillips	5.27	4.87	.01
Puma	5.55	5.15	.02
Samsung	5.33	5.10	.18
Sony	5.84	5.22	.00
Vodafone	4.47	3.97	.03

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians, (4) significance. A univariate ANOVA was used to assess the significance between means. Items were on a 7-point scale, with 1 being 'never purchase' and 7 being 'always purchase.'

TABLE 7 Knowing the global brand's COO

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Adidas	4.79	3.45	.00
Dannon	4.41	3.45	.00
Gucci	4.46	3.45	.00
H&M	3.55	3.45	.74
Haier	3.37	3.45	.78
Hyundai	4.22	3.44	.01
IKEA	3.81	3.46	.26
Kappa	4.08	3.44	.04
L'Oréal	4.78	3.44	.00
Lenovo	3.17	3.45	.36
LG	4.05	3.61	.13
Motorola	3.94	3.60	.25
Nivea	4.54	3.61	.00
Nokia	4.78	3.62	.00
Panasonic	4.36	3.61	.01
Phillips	4.31	3.61	.02
Puma	4.46	3.61	.00
Samsung	4.36	3.62	.01
Sony	4.58	3.61	.01
Vodafone	3.76	3.61	.60

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) brand, (2) Bulgarians, (3) Hungarians, (4) significance. A univariate ANOVA was used to assess the significance between means. Items were on a 7-point scale, with 1 being 'not at all important' and 7 being 'very important.'

in the need to know the COO of a brand for 13 brands: Adidas, Dannon, Gucci, Hyundai, Kappa, L'Oréal, Nivea, Nokia, Panasonic, Phillips, Puma, Samsung, and Sony (see table 7). There were no differences between the groups for seven brands: H&M, Haier, IKEA, Lenovo, LG, Motorola, and Vodafone. What is unknown, though, is to what degree, if any, the constructs of global brand familiarity, global brand liking, and

the importance of knowing the global brand's COO are significant predictors of global brand purchase intent. We turn to this broader issue next.

### **Predictive Ability of the Hierarchical Model**

Separate stepwise multiple regressions were run for Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents for the twelve brands that were used in the study (see tables 8 and 9). The dependent variable was likelihood of purchase of the brand while the independent variables included: (1) age (constructed as a dummy variable), (2) education (constructed as a dummy variable), (3) gender (constructed as a dummy variable), (4) familiarity with the brand, (5) degree of trust in the brand, and (6) degree of liking the brand. The dummy variable for gender was assigned two variables, male and female. The dummy variable for education was divided into three variables, high school/some college, completed University, and graduate work. For age there were six variables, 16 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years, 26 to 30 years, 31 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years, and over 46 years.

The VIF was calculated for all significant variables in the Bulgarian and Hungarian regression models. There was no VIF above 3.0 across all the models. 'As a rule of thumb, if the VIF of a variable exceeds 10 that variable is said to be highly collinear' (Gujarati and Porter 2009). Thus none of the variables indicated any collinearity issues.

For Bulgarian respondents, 'liking' was the most important variable for 14 of the 20 brands analyzed (see table 8). Adidas, Lenovo, Nivea, Nokia, Puma, and Sony were the exceptions. Trust was the most important predictor for these brands. Overall trust was a significant independent variable for 18 brands. Familiarity was significant for just 2 brands, H&M and Panasonic. Knowing the COO of the brand was found as a significant independent for 12 brands which included Adidas, Gucci, Haier, Hyundai, IKEA, Motorola, Nivea, Panasonic, Phillips, Puma, Sony, and Vodafone. Demographics played a limited role in predicting the likelihood of purchase in all the models:

- Those aged 26–30 years were more likely to purchase Haier than those over 46 years.
- Those aged 21–25 were less likely to purchase Kappa than those over 46 years.
- Those aged 36–45 years were less likely to purchase Puma than those over 46 years.

TABLE 8 Bulgarian respondent regressions (familiarity, trust, liking, importance of COO, age, education, and gender regressed against likelihood to buy)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Adidas	50.8	.00	.773	.585	Trust	4.5	.00	.415	2.0
					Liking	3.8	.00	.341	2.0
					COO	2.3	.02	.158	1.1
Dannon	209.2	.00	.837	.694	Liking	6.2	.00	.599	3.0
					Trust	2.8	.00	.271	3.0
Gucci	34.1	.00	.715	.496	Liking	4.4	.00	.376	1.4
					Trust	4.3	.00	.355	1.3
					COO	2.2	.02	.173	1.1
H&M	54.6	.00	.772	.585	Liking	6.3	.00	.587	1.5
					Familiarity	2.8	.00	.261	1.5
Haier	30.2	.00	.771	.575	Liking	6.0	.00	.549	1.2
					COO	3.1	.00	.283	1.2
					26–30 years	2.7	.00	.234	1.0
Hyundai	19.7	.00	.624	.369	Liking	3.3	.00	.325	1.4
					Trust	3.1	.00	.307	1.4
					COO	2.8	.00	.237	1.0
IKEA	36.9	.00	.818	.652	Liking	4.9	.00	.524	2.3
					Trust	2.7	.00	.289	2.3
					College	-2.5	.01	-.176	1.0
					COO	2.1	.03	.157	1.0
Kappa	35.3	.00	.738	.529	Liking	4.5	.00	.426	1.7
					Trust	3.9	.00	.364	1.7
					21–25 years	-2.1	.03	-.151	1.0
L'Oréal	48.7	.00	.777	.591	Liking	6.2	.00	.569	2.0
					Trust	2.3	.02	.210	2.0
					Male	-2.1	.03	-.144	1.0
Lenovo	32.1	.00	.581	.327	Trust	5.6	.00	.581	1.0

*Continued on the next page*

- Those aged 36–45 years were more likely to purchase Samsung than those over 46 years.
- Those aged 16–20 years were more likely to purchase Vodafone than those of 46 years and older.

Education was only a significant predictor for IKEA, with those having completed the University being less likely to purchase than those with a masters/doctorate degree. Gender was only significant for L'Oréal with, men being less likely to purchase than women.



TABLE 8 Continued from the previous page

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
LG	73.6	.00	.764	.576	Liking	6.1	.00	.497	1.6
					Trust	4.2	.00	.346	1.6
Motorola	33.8	.00	.704	.482	Liking	3.8	.00	.365	1.8
					Trust	3.4	.00	.333	1.9
					COO	2.5	.01	.182	1.0
Nivea	30.3	.00	.694	.466	Trust	3.2	.00	.343	2.0
					Liking	2.9	.00	.310	2.0
					COO	2.9	.00	.219	1.0
Nokia	40.7	.00	.674	.443	Trust	4.0	.00	.420	1.9
					Liking	2.9	.00	.310	1.9
Panasonic	20.1	.00	.666	.422	Liking	3.3	.00	.341	1.8
					Trust	1.8	.05	.190	1.9
					COO	2.1	.03	.167	1.3
					Familiarity	2.1	.03	.184	1.3
Phillips	40.0	.00	.735	.527	Liking	4.0	.00	.369	1.8
					COO	3.9	.00	.274	1.0
					Trust	3.4	.00	.318	1.8
Puma	46.7	.00	.775	.588	Trust	9.6	.00	.697	1.2
					COO	2.3	.02	.167	1.2
					36–45 years	2.2	.02	.154	1.0
Samsung	68.9	.00	.818	.660	Liking	5.1	.00	.587	1.9
					Trust	5.7	.04	.457	1.9
					36–45 years	2.5	.01	.147	1.0
Sony	32.2	.00	.698	.472	Trust	3.8	.00	.422	2.4
					COO	2.9	.00	.214	1.0
					Liking	2.2	.02	.246	2.3
Vodafone	27.1	.00	.730	.513	Liking	3.2	.00	.340	2.2
					Trust	3.1	.00	.318	2.1
					16–20 years	2.9	.00	.210	1.0
					COO	2.4	.01	.196	1.2

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) model/brand; model summary: (2) *F*, (3) sig., (4) *R*, (5) adj. *R*<sup>2</sup>; coefficients (standardized betas): (6) variable(s), (7) *t*, (8) sig., (9) weight; (10) VIF.

For Hungarian respondents, liking was the most important predictor for 18 of the brands. The only exceptions were Dannon and Lenovo (see table 9). Trust was a significant independent variable for 16 brands. The exceptions were Gucci, Nokia, Phillips, and Sony. Familiarity was important for only two brands, Gucci and Kappa. Knowing the COO of the brand was a significant predictor only for L'Oréal.

TABLE 9 Hungarian Respondent Regressions (familiarity, trust, liking, importance of COO, age, education, and gender regressed against likelihood to buy)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Adidas	79.2	.00	.683	.461	Liking	7.5	.00	.488	1.4
					Trust	4.3	.00	.281	1.4
Dannon	118.9	.00	.737	.539	Trust	6.9	.00	.437	1.7
					Liking	5.9	.00	.373	1.7
Gucci	22.1	.00	.426	.173	Liking	4.3	.00	.308	1.2
					Familiarity	2.7	.00	.192	1.2
H&M	68.7	.00	.714	.502	Liking	7.6	.00	.499	1.7
					Trust	3.5	.00	.232	1.7
					Male	-2.8	.00	-.146	1.0
Haier	55.4	.00	.597	.350	Liking	4.8	.00	.373	1.8
					Trust	3.5	.00	.277	1.8
Hyundai	39.8	.00	.613	.366	Liking	6.4	.00	.445	1.5
					Trust	3.0	.00	.213	1.5
					Male	-2.7	.00	-.152	1.0
IKEA	49.0	.00	.652	.416	Liking	3.9	.00	.317	2.2
					Familiarity	3.8	.00	.298	2.0
					Trust	2.1	.02	.139	1.3
Kappa	57.3	.00	.703	.485	Liking	7.3	.00	.575	1.7
					Trust	3.2	.00	.243	1.7
					Familiarity	-1.9	.04	-.127	1.0
L'Oréal	29.8	.00	.657	.417	Liking	5.6	.00	.385	1.6
					Trust	3.3	.00	.232	1.6
					16-20 years	2.7	.00	.151	1.0
					Male	-3.0	.00	-.177	1.1
					COO	2.2	.02	.122	1.0
Lenovo	61.6	.00	.760	.569	Trust	4.7	.00	.499	1.6
					Liking	2.9	.00	.401	1.6

Continued on the next page

Reviewing the demographics for the Hungarian group, men were less likely to buy H&M, Hyundai, and L'Oréal than women. H&M and L'Oréal are easy to understand as they are women's fashion items while Hyundai is more difficult to interpret.

There were only two significant education situations; those who had completed the University were less likely to buy Nivea than those who had completed some graduate work, while those who were in the category of completed high school/some college were more likely to purchase Puma. The 16-20 year-olds were more likely to buy L'Oreal and Sony that

TABLE 9 Continued from the previous page

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
LG	93.0	.00	.696	.479	Liking	8.0	.00	.543	1.5
					Trust	3.6	.00	.243	1.5
Motorola	40.3	.00	.645	.406	Liking	6.4	.00	.470	1.4
					Trust	2.8	.00	.205	1.0
					36–45 years	2.0	.00	.122	1.4
Nivea	53.1	.00	.696	.475	Liking	5.1	.00	.386	2.0
					Trust	4.9	.00	.380	1.0
					(1)	-2.0	.04	-.113	1.4
Nokia	113.4	.00	.750	.557	Liking	14.5	.00	.727	1.1
					26–30 years	-2.6	.00	-.133	1.0
Panasonic	53.3	.00	.696	.476	Liking	6.5	.00	.453	1.6
					Trust	4.3	.00	.300	1.6
					Importance	2.0	.03	.115	1.0
Phillips	99.1	.00	.596	.352	Liking	9.9	.00	.596	1.0
Puma	45.3	.00	.665	.432	Liking	6.9	.00	.501	1.5
					Trust	2.7	.00	.200	1.4
					(2)	2.3	.00	.136	1.0
Samsung	71.5	.00	.674	.448	Liking	9.1	.00	.585	1.2
					Trust	2.4	.01	.157	1.2
Sony	73.1	.00	.745	.547	Liking	10.4	.00	.632	1.4
					Importance	2.6	.00	.163	1.4
					16–20 years	2.0	.04	.104	1.0
Vodafone	118.6	.00	.766	.582	Liking	7.7	.00	.543	1.9
					Trust	3.9	.00	.280	1.9

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) model/brand; model summary: (2) *F*, (3) sig., (4) *R*, (5) adj. *R*<sup>2</sup>; coefficients (standardized betas): (6) variable(s), (7) *t*, (8) sig., (9) weight; (10) VIF.

those over 46. The only other age variable than was significant was that 26–30 year-olds were less likely to buy Nokia.

### Analysis and Conclusions

Overall, this hierarchical model does a good job of predicting purchase intent for most of the global brands. The adjusted coefficient of determination for the Bulgarian sample ranged from .694 (Dannon) to .327 (Lenovo). Similarly, the adjusted coefficient of determinations for the Hungarian sample ranged from .569 (Lenovo) to .173 (Gucci). An examination of the adjusted coefficient of determinations also indicated that

there was no overfitting of the models (Hair et al. 2006, 216). Using the rule of thumb that  $R^2$ s should be greater than .25 to be considered having reasonable predictive power, all the models are reasonably robust.

Liking and trust were the important predictors for both Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents. For the Hungarians, liking was the most heavily weighted predictor for 19 of the 20 global brands, while trust was the second most important predictor for 13 of the brands. The standardized coefficients ranged from .727 for Nokia to .308 for Gucci. All coefficients were significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

For Bulgarian respondents, liking was the most important predictor for 14 brands, while trust was the most important predictor for 6 brands. Trust was the second most important predictor for 11 of the global brands. The 14 liking coefficients ranged from .599 for Dannon to .325 for Hyundai. For trust the 6 coefficients ranged from .697 for Puma to .343 for Nivea. All standardized coefficients for liking and trust for the Bulgarian sample were significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

Familiarity with the brand was unimportant for both groups across, with a few exceptions. To borrow from Romaniuk and Bogomolova (2005) quoted above, perhaps global brand familiarity operates as a hygiene factor. All global brands must attain a certain level of familiarity for active consideration; otherwise they fall out of consumers' evoked sets. Familiarity may function more simply. Rather than being a truly continuous variable, familiarity may operate dichotomously. Either a consumer is or is not familiar with the global brand.

Thus liking and trust were the most important predictors for both countries. Liking, or attitudes, have long been established as an important predictor of purchase behavior. It is not surprising that brand trust was also an important independent variable. Trust is confidence concerning a brand's reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt 1994) and can also be seen by consumers as a way to moderate risk in the buying process (Anderson and Narus 1990). It is confidence in the face of risk (Lewis and Weigert 1985). Given the uncertain times of the world recession, trust in a brand can help to reduce even greater marketplace uncertainty.

The logic of this assertion was borne out in a recent JWT study on consumer anxiety (JWT 2009). JWT noted that the economic crisis increased consumers' anxiety considerably. Events outside consumers' direct control had devastating, direct effects on consumer purchase behavior. In Hungary and Bulgaria, where the crisis had a disproportionately negative

effect compared to other Central and Eastern European countries, consumers not only curtailed purchases but also became much more cautious in their spending. The JWT study noted, 'The anxious are planning their purchasing behavior around where and when they can get the best deals and exercising greater restraint' (p. 5). It is reasonable to presume that brand liking and brand trust become more salient in decision making when budgets are tight. Gaining 'the best deals,' as the JWT study suggests, may mean a more rational approach to decision making.

Trust played a more significant role for Bulgarian consumers than for Hungarians. The Bulgarian consumers seemed to need/have more information about brands than did their Hungarian counterparts. Bulgarian respondents were far more familiar with the global brands in the study. They felt it was more important to know about the COO of brands and indeed were more knowledgeable of the COO of the 20 brands in the study.

For Bulgarian consumers, whose GDP per capita was \$12,700 (CIA World Factbook 2009a) as compared to Hungarians whose GDP per capita was \$19,800 (CIA World Factbook 2009b), trust may be a more important precursor of purchase factor, because limited incomes create a greater perceived risk that mistakes could cause major damage to the family budget. Add in a major recession, and family income may seem even more fragile.

Recent trade figures indicate substantial increases in Chinese imports into Bulgaria (Messerling and Wang 2008). It is reasonable to hypothesize that counterfeit and shoddily-made Chinese products make Bulgarians careful, cautious consumers. Thus trusting the global brand name provides a degree of security for the Bulgarian consumer.

Global brand managers would do well to stress relationship marketing tactics that either reinforce or highlight brand trust. L'Observatoire Cetelem, a French consumer behavior research firm that regularly tracks consumer behavior in six Western European countries (Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal) and seven Central and Eastern European countries (Hungary, Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovakia, Poland, and Russia), said that: '[The] global crisis has encouraged rational consumer behavior of Europeans and has speeded up changes in spending patterns: more prudent and balanced spendings' (L'Observatoire Cetelem, 2010). Liking and trust become competitive advantages in situations where consumers will want to purchase solely on price. This situation may create tension within consumers. On the one hand, pur-

chases are more planned and careful. On the other, brand managers may want to provide target markets with reasons not to buy strictly on price. Stressing the relational and emotional connections between consumer and brand may be a productive strategy here.

This study has several limitations. While every effort was made to recruit a representation sample in both Hungary and Bulgaria, Table 1 suggests that the sample might not be as representative of each country's population as desired. Further research should be conducted to select a sample more representative of each respective country. This is especially important since respondents completed the survey online. Access to the Internet is not evenly distributed across the entire population, thus leading to some selection bias. Second, every brand tested in this research serves as both a corporate and a product brand. Follow-up research should be conducted to untangle the halo effect that the corporate brand might have from the specific product brand. Third, the study explores consumer decision making in only Central and Eastern Europe countries. Research should be done to confirm or disconfirm findings in other Central European countries, such as Poland, Estonia and/or Albania.

Overall, there are some significant differences between Bulgarian and Hungarian consumers regarding the relative influence of global brand familiarity, global brand liking and global brand trust in purchase intent. As Central and Eastern European countries continue to provide global corporations and their brands with market opportunities, further study of within-Europe comparisons are needed.

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