Title: Website Strategy and Coordination of Multinational Companies

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Summary: The following project is based on the Professional Master's Thesis.

"The topic of my research is focused on the websites of Multinational Companies (MNCs) as well as the internal structure of the Headquarters (HQ) and subsidiaries, including the strategies affecting the relationship between the two units on a digital level, (i.e., organization, communication, the perception of the unit in its home and host country, cultural strategies, and the maintenance of a brand image on a website). In other words, the topic relates to how MNCs strategize the layout of their websites across subsidiaries, using approaches such as globalization, localization, or a hybrid of the two as well as the various organizational components affecting the implementation of the chosen strategy (e.g., cultural and language barriers, human resource management, and internal communication channels)."
[excerpt from the article]

Keywords: *(cf. Thesaurus du Management):*
MULTINATIONAL COMPANY

STANDARDIZATION

FOREIGN SUBSIDIARY

INTERNET SITE

Abstract

This study focused on the website strategies of multinational companies (MNCs) and how they operate in their home and foreign market. The website strategies were examined through a two-scope lens to determine the degree of standardization and localization that MNCs employ online. Furthermore, this study looks at the internal process of coordination that MNCs implement to manage the websites of their subsidiaries. Using a qualitative research approach, this paper sought to discover insights through in-depth interviews with website informants and analyses of the corporate websites. The study found that MNCs have recently migrated toward a standardization approach for the website purpose with localized efforts for specific website elements due to legal necessities and cultural opportunities. Furthermore, it was discovered that due to the standardized approaches, MNCs maintain control over the decision-making for the website strategy but keep an open mind for adaptations to the content and features. Additionally, MNCs use tactics such as international websites to overcome legal barriers and promote a standardized brand, country tests to discover regionally-adapted content, and points of contact or proxies to simplify their coordination efforts. The results of this study can help website decision-makers in MNCs to understand website strategies from a global perspective and determine the appropriate approach to foreign cultures.

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Introduction

One great advantage of the internet is the ability to reach a large number of the population across the globe. For a business unit, this means that developing a corporate website builds and opens a virtual front door, giving them access to a wider range of potential consumers through a digital interactive communication channel. While local businesses can easily target new audiences with the same strategy, multinational companies (MNCs) suddenly face new barriers to consider, namely how to interact with a target foreign market in the online domain while coordinating their subsidiaries.

According to a study in 2016 by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, MNCs are responsible for just over a third of global production and two-thirds of global trade (De Backer, Miroudot, and Rigo, 2019). Given the prevalence of MNCs in the global market, their websites provide a gateway to reach and target consumers across the world. To effectively communicate corporate information and brand promotion, firms must determine an appropriate website strategy for both their home country and foreign markets. While the first corporate websites were created only three decades ago, the technology in web design and the number of internet users has increased substantially. According to Our World in Data, the number of internet users increased from 400 million to over three billion between the years 2000 and 2016 (Roser, Ritchie, and Ortiz-Ospina, 2015). This rapid rise of internet activity has given MNCs limited time to develop and test the most fitting website strategies that can gain them a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the global nature of the internet and the local nature of a culture clash during website strategy implementation. MNCs can either decide to adapt to the culture by

targeting their intended consumers or standardize their business from a global perspective. In the US, this problem was demonstrated by a website dispute in the National Hockey League (NHL). Before 2007, each team in the league managed its own website to promote the team, share the game schedule, update team news and events, and sell merchandise. However, the league mandated the migration of individual team websites to the umbrella of the NHL organization to standardize the image of the league and of course, control the sale of merchandise. One team fought back. The New York Rangers, having spent years developing their website and catering it to their fan base (See Figure 1), took the case to court and sued the NHL to avoid using the cookie-cutter standardized league website. Although the Rangers eventually migrated, the case represents a localized website approach (i.e., the Rangers), a standardized website approach (i.e., the migration), and the problems that can arise from managing websites (i.e., the court case). This event additionally encapsulates the advantage of localizing websites to have a better relationship with consumers (Shin and Huh, 2009:287), the advantage of standardizing the websites to implement control over the brand (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:920), and the responsibility for coordination by the headquarters of an organization (Noverita, 2007:118).

Figure 1: Localized Website Example vs. Standardization Website Example

Before: Adapted to target | After: Mix of Localization & Standardization

Big Team Logo at top

League logo at top & small team logo

Team Colors

League & Team Colors

Team Information Only

League & Team Content

Left: (Rangers, 2006:nyrangers.com)[1]
Right: (Rangers, 2007:rangers.nhl.com)[2]

In this paper, I discuss the different standardization and localization practices in the virtual domain as well as the coordination practices from the creation of website guidelines to the implementation. While previous literature discusses how content can be adapted using Hofstede's cultural dimensions and how other website components are adapted to foreign cultures, there is a lack of evidence on the overall strategies and decision-making that lead to a website approach. With the intent to reach consumers in a global market, research into the best practices of MNC website strategies is important to discover opportunities in brand promotion, customer relationships, and subsidiary coordination. Because websites involve elements such as content, brand image, display, payment options, newsletters, contact information, corporate

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[1] Taken from The Wayback Machine. See Bibliography for source under Rangers, N.Y.
[2] Taken from The Wayback Machine. See Bibliography for source under Rangers, N.Y.

messages, product details, and log-in features, it is impertinent for MNCs to know whether to standardize or adapt the aforementioned components in congruence with the overall chosen strategy. Furthermore, this paper discusses the combination of standardization and localization to achieve a 'glocalized' approach to websites.

Research Question 1: To what extent does an MNC use a glocalized website strategy?

Using a combination of standardization and localization implies a need for coordination by the headquarters of an MNC. In a standardized approach, HQ typically has full control over decision-making in subsidiaries when determining how business is conducted in the host country (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). On the other hand, a localized approach makes control by HQ more difficult (Yue, 2015:279). A subsidiary has the freedom to appropriately adapt to local market conditions by making its own decisions. Because a glocalized approach is a combination of the two, subsidiaries need a degree of control and coordination by HQ in addition to a degree of autonomy. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the strategies used by MNCs to accomplish this feat, focusing on which aspects are coordinated or independent and the methods HQ used to interact with the subsidiaries (e.g., communication channels, coordination, and strategy management).

Research Question 2: How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?

Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review is focused on the websites of Multinational Companies (MNCs) as well as the internal structure of the Headquarters (HQ) and subsidiaries, including the strategies affecting the relationship between the two units on a digital level, (i.e., organization, communication, the perception of the unit in its home and host country, cultural strategies, and the maintenance of a brand image on a website). In other words, the topic relates to how MNCs strategize the layout of their websites across subsidiaries, using approaches such as globalization, localization, or a hybrid of the two as well as the various organizational components affecting the implementation of the chosen strategy (e.g., cultural and language barriers, human resource management, and internal communication channels).

This review begins by describing the function and attributes of a corporate website, followed by its benefits and challenges. The next part goes into detail about the standardization and localization debate, leading to the idea of glocalization and how it's implemented on a corporate website. After establishing the degree to which the websites of MNCs are standardized, I use Hofstede's cultural dimensions to describe what a localized website could look like. The final section discusses possible strategies for MNCs to give autonomy to their subsidiaries while maintaining a degree of control.

A. Website Function

For the past two decades, corporate websites have become an increasingly fundamental aspect of a company. Argyriou, Kitchen, & Melewar (2006:583) refer to a website as a 'virtual storefront' and point to brand image promotion as the central objective. It is the face of a company in the digital environment. It's the equivalent of seeing the front door of a company's office, reading a product and service brochure, or seeing a brand awareness advertisement on the television.

If promoting brand image is the central objective, then the ability to communicate with a large audience (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:910) is a close second. According to internetworldstats.com, the number of internet users as of March 2021 is over five billion people. Not only does this change the type of communication between companies and consumers via interactivity (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:912), but it also "causes the firm to become international whether it planned to or not" (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2006:342). Although anyone with access to the internet is connected to a company through its website, the company is not targeting all consumers within their reach by the creation of a website alone.

The elements of the website and its design are the determining factors in its ability to relate to an audience. At a theoretical level, a website can be viewed as a hierarchical flow of information, linking texts and images from the homepage to the additional pages (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:912). Each page is more specific than the last, in regards to information. And because of a website's ability to display so much information in an organized manner, Okazaki and Alonso (2002:381) describe it as a "combination of both electronic and print media." In other words, a website can post vast amounts of information in different mediums in one place. For this reason, corporations have a responsibility to determine which information to present and

how much.

As stated above, a company website is an index of organized and strategic information that communicates brand identity and products to over five billion people. With links and an interconnected web, consumers are no longer solely receiving information but also giving information through interactive behavior. The interactive design of a website turns a consumer into a website user. Okazaki (2005:91) mentions that "interactivity has been considered as one of the most important characteristics of the internet." Forrester Research (in Sinkovics, Yamin, & Hossinger, 2007:223) highlights it, along with quality content, trust, and ease of use, as one of the primary determining factors in generating repeat visitors. For this reason, a company's website design is influenced by customer-centrism.

The internet is a 'highly-involved medium,' meaning consumers are highly motivated when searching for specific information (Okazaki and Alonso, 2002:381). Therefore, companies must determine the best strategy for organizing information on their website in order to invite new users and keep returning ones. After all, the more a company operates on the internet, the better its global performance (Yip and Dempster, 2005:9).

B. Website Benefits

Having discussed the purpose of a corporate website, this section discusses the benefits it has for a company. Many of the advantages of having a corporate website derive from its functions discussed above. For this reason, I will go into further detail about interactivity.

At a basic level of interactivity, a company's website can be a vehicle to learn about consumer behavior from website data collection (e.g., traffic, bounce rate, benchmarking, etc.). Using web analytics tools and communication strategies to foster relationships with consumers,

companies are better able to achieve communication goals on their websites (Argyriou et al., 2006:593). Understanding the behavior of website users, companies can adapt their websites to "simplify information search and retrieval or transaction processes" (Argyriou et al., 2006:593). A company can adapt its information display based on user analysis to make a consumer's journey effortless.

To strengthen the relationship with an online consumer, a website provides an opportunity to build trust. Kotha, Rajgopal, & Venkatachalam (2004:S113) list the following ways to do so: "In the online space, firms engender customer trust by providing explicit statements of privacy policies, operating highly reliable Web sites, and prominently displaying information on return policies and the availability of customer service via e-mail or telephone". Previous research has indicated that engendering online trust is associated with productive consumer experiences (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223).

An additional customer management technique facilitated by company websites is its function as a communication channel (Shin and Huh, 2009:287). Because of a website's interactivity, it changes the relationship between company and consumer from a one-way flow of information to an omnidirectional one (Kovaitė, Šūmakaris, & Stankevičienė, 2020:172). Consumers can communicate and respond to a company immediately through feedback forms, which in turn, generate more insight from stakeholders.

Finally, as mentioned before, a website can reach consumers all over the world (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2006:342); Shin, W., Huh, J., 2009 (p. 287). The benefit derived from this aspect is the speed at which information is received and the low cost to do so (Yip and Dempster, 2005:2). The implication for companies developing an online strategy for their website based on these benefits is that MNCs must consider strategies to communicate, display information,

manage relationships and build trust that specifically caters to their target.

C. Website Challenges

As a tool to promote a brand, develop relationships with stakeholders, and display marketable information, a corporate website faces certain barriers, especially while reaching consumers abroad. An MNC has a few things to consider.

One such consideration is known as 'psychic distance'. Psychic distance is the extent to which a foreign market is known (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2006:340). It is the gap of knowledge between the local market and the foreign market caused by differences in "language, education systems, managerial practices, culture, and industrial development" (Beddi and Mayrhofer, 2013:177). The problems that arise from it are the expectations of an internationalizing company. Because of a firm's previous experience in one market, they may expect similar results in a new market. In relation to a corporate website, a company may overlook possible reasons why they are not developing the same online relationships with users in new countries.

However, even if a company is aware of the psychic distance between its home country and a foreign country and uses counteractive behavior to actively learn the new market, a firm must consider its knowledge-acquiring methods. Because a website is in a virtual space, a company is "susceptible to falling into a 'virtuality trap'" because of its dependence on the digital environment (Sinkovics et al., 2007:221). A virtuality trap refers to the false impression that a company is learning everything they need to know about a market through 'virtual interactions' rather than off-line methods (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2006:349). It's the assumption that further measures to learn about the market are unnecessary because of the information received online.

This raises the question of what information from a foreign market is relevant to the structure of a corporate website.

D. Purpose of the Thesis and Research Questions

The goal of this thesis is to discover the different strategies of MNCs' website organization and coordination among its subsidiaries. Previous research has indicated that MNCs use different approaches. However, it is limited to the studies of specific MNCs in several different countries. Many of them focus on MNCs in the US because of their large market share around the world, but some have looked at others in Korea, Japan, and parts of the EU. The research has focused on how the culture is adapted to the websites and to the extent to which various aspects are adapted. Some of these studies are limited to content analysis without direct contact with the firm. And others have restricted their analysis to only the homepage of the website.

Given the lack of research in this area, my goal is to further study managerial aspects of website strategies. In addition to furthering the study of how much a website is adapted and which areas are adapted, I'm also going to look at how corporations can communicate and coordinate their website approach while giving the subsidiaries a degree of autonomy to make decisions on how best to adapt.

Research Question 1: To what extent does an MNC use a glocalized website strategy?

Research Question 2: How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?

"Glocalize"

When MNCs internationalize and form subsidiaries, they are entering new countries, new markets, and new cultures. Not only is there a psychic distance, but there is a geographical distance, an administrative distance, an economic distance, and a cultural distance Beddi, H., Mayrhofer, U., 2013 (p. 178). Because of these market gaps, MNCs must decide to what degree they are going to adapt their business model to the host country market.

There has been a long-standing debate on the strategy MNCs should use to promote their brand in host countries. More specifically, research for the past few decades has focused on whether a company should standardize its business or localize it (Sinkovics et al., 2007:222). This debate has inspired researchers to concentrate on specific areas of an MNC, from the coordination of international marketing activities (Schmid, Grosche, & Mayrhofer, 2016) to human resource management (Noverita, 2007), to discover which practice is best. And now, being the fourth industrial revolution, a few studies have been done to decide, to what extent companies standardize or localize their website, albeit focusing primarily on MNCs in a few countries.

The term, standardization, also known as globalization when discussing marketing, "refers to the practice of marketing the same products in the same way in the global market" (Shin and Huh 2009:289). A company that uses this strategy may disregard the cultural nuances of a foreign market, and instead, use the same approach for each host country. It's not that they are choosing to use the perspective of their home country to project success in specific foreign countries, but rather, they are using a global perspective.

A firm might choose this global perspective because of an increasingly connected world. One school of thought supports standardization by stating that consumers all over the world are

more likely to share the same tastes and preferences for products and services (Okazaki, 2005:90). Therefore, instead of modifying its advertisements, a company would only translate them (Okazaki, 2005:90). In a neoclassical view, Beddi and Mayrhofer (2013:176) state that standardization is vital to staying afloat globally. In neoclassical economics, supply and demand (a product-centered economic model) is the determining factor of success for a company. It's a generalized view, fitting a generalized strategy.

From an online perspective, and as stated in the first section, a firm's website is much more than a product or channel for promotional messages. So what does it mean for a website to be standardized? According to Singh and Boughton (2002) (in Sinkovics et al., 2007:222), it means that a website has "the same web content, in the same language, for both domestic and international users." However, Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009:914) still consider a website to be standardized if it has the same web content but is translated to the language of the consumer. By web content, I refer to design, illustrations, content, and features (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:914). With the ease and availability of online translation widgets, it's fair to say that a translated website can be considered standardized since the foreign market's culture is not taken into account.

The opposite side of the debate discusses a need for a company's adaptation, or localization, to a foreign market. While standardization is a practice best suited for a global perspective, adaptation uses a local perspective to compete (Yue, 2015:279). I refer to localization as an approach that "focuses on differences among consumers in different countries and uses a tailored marketing strategy for each country, considering its culture, media availability, product life cycle stages, and industry structure" (Shin and Huh, 2009:289).

Contrary to the standardization school of thought declaring that consumers have the same tastes and preferences, Okazaki (2005:90) also states the argument for localization. Namely, tastes and preferences between cultures are increasing in variation, suggesting that MNCs should relate to their foreign market's culture (Okazaki, 2005:90) while "considering local rules and laws," including the online domain (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:912).

To adapt a company's website to the host country's market, the company must put on a new face, so to speak. While standardizing a website requires minimal effort and budget, localizing it requires a lot. It demands cultural knowledge, linguists, time, and coordination (Sinkovics et al., 2007:222). In addition to language, each aspect of a firm's website must be adapted to the foreign market, including the "content graphics, symbols, colours, features and even the design and the name" (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:914).

However, there is a third option. Instead of deciding whether to use a standardization or localization approach to host country websites, the two extremes can be placed at opposite ends of a scale, or 'continuum' (Shin and Huh, 2009:290). On this continuum, with standardization and localization at the poles, a company analyzes portions of the market (i.e., product demand, market, production, laws, target consumers) and uses a combination of the two extremes in their foreign market approach (Shin and Huh, 2009:290). This is both referred to as a 'contingency school' (Agrawal, 1995 (in Shin and Huh, 2009:290)) and 'glocalization,' a hybrid word, combining globalization with localization. Because of the multiple variables on a website that can be either standardized or localized (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:921), there is a debate on which parts should be adapted and which should stay consistent.

In a study about internet communications of European MNCs, Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009:920) found that firms use a consistent brand image on their websites in foreign markets.

This approach is in line with a study of MNCs by Okazaki (2005), where it was found that firms standardize their design features while localizing content. However, the opposite was found by Robbins and Stylianou (2003), showing that companies localize their design features and globalize their content. By design features, I refer to the logo, color, layout, and presentation. By content, I refer to company information and social issues. (Shin and Huh, 2009:292;293).

A Theoretical Perspective on Standardization, Localization, and Glocalization

The nature of a debate implies that there are at least two sides supporting opposing thoughts. For the standardization versus localization debate, the only time there is a complete separation of the two strategies is if a company decides to use only one for all areas of its business. However, this is typically not the case when an MNC moves into a foreign market.

To illustrate my point, consider the products of an MNC, specifically the promotion of them. A firm may choose to standardize all marketing of them, and if its product line is limited, it may be the most advantageous. However, if an MNC sells both durable and non-durable goods, it may be missing an opportunity. According to previous research, durable goods (e.g., automobiles, furniture, electronics, etc.) are less 'culture-bound' and easier to standardize (Okazaki, 2005:106) while non-durable goods (e.g., food, clothing, textiles, etc.) are better to localize because they "tend to appeal to tastes, habits, and cultures that are considered unique in different countries" (Shin and Huh, 2009:292). A similar argument can be made for B2B and B2C products. Like durable goods, B2B products are considered culture-free and easy to standardize while B2C products are the opposite (Shin and Huh, 2009:292). Although this is widely considered the appropriate strategy, Shin and Huh (2009:298-299) found that in Korea

MNC websites there was no difference in marketing strategy between these four products while it was evident in American MNC websites.

In addition to products, it is thought that the market of an MNC's home country and the size of a company can determine whether a firm standardizes its approach. For example, Shin and Huh (2009:291) highlight the school of thought that standardization is rooted in western culture, specifically because western companies already have a large presence in Asian countries. Company size was predicted to be a factor as well since large companies have a competitive power and small companies would want to avoid direct competition. Because of the competitive power of large companies, Shin and Huh (2009:292) thought they would use standardization while smaller companies use localization to compete on a smaller scale. However, it was found that neither country of origin nor company size played a role in the standardization of US and Korean MNCs (Shin and Huh, 2009:298).

However, I consider the limitations to this research on US and Korean MNC websites, as it was a content analysis, unable to answer why an MNC standardizes or localizes and the effects it has on business (Shin and Huh, 2009:302). Additionally, the study, along with Okazaki (2005), centered its research on US and Korean MNC websites only.

The illustrated point demonstrates the potential need for different strategies for MNCs in foreign markets. With this established need, I continue the debate by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

The arguments for standardization stem from its global perspective. When an MNC enters a foreign market, the reputation of its brand is subject to a wider audience, spanning different cultures. An MNC with a favorable brand image might choose to standardize their efforts to increase their "brand identification across countries" (Shin and Huh, 2009:289). Given

that brand image is a central benefit for websites, this adds extra weight to its online strategy discussion. This argument is further supported by Okazaki (2005:91), stating that building a reputable corporate image is "crucial in cyberspace."

Two more obvious advantages for standardization are cost-efficiency and convenience (Shin and Huh, 2009:289). MNCs can lower the cost by using synonymous promotion strategies for each market since "people worldwide want the same product and for the same reason" (Kansal, 2015:41). Without the need to adapt to various markets, an MNC only needs to develop one strategy. There's no need for cultural experts to design, analyze and update its adaptation to a host country (Sinkovics et al., 2007:222).

Another advantage to consider lies in the relationships between the headquarters (HQ) and the subsidiaries of MNCs. Using a standardized approach aids management (Shin and Huh, 2009:289). With a global strategy, subsidiaries are less autonomous and HQ has more control, thereby improving coordination (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). Additionally, with standardization, high coordination, and low autonomy, HQ and subsidiaries have a constant flow of communication. Because of this constant communication, subsidiaries are better able to use the resources and knowledge provided by HQ, " such as knowledge, management skills, global product reputation, production technology, and financial capital" (Yue, 2015:279). Because an MNC conducts business in multiple markets, this advantage implies that HQ is a database of global knowledge acquired in various foreign markets and can understand the competition on a global scale. While this is a less obvious advantage for standardizing a website, in particular, it highlights the importance of coordination in a glocalized approach.

Because the internet connects users across the world, the global perspective of standardization is thought to be the most reasonable online strategy (Shin and Huh, 2009:288).

There is a high cost to adapting online, and with a reasonable target conversion rate, standardization can convert users into consumers efficiently (Sinkovics et. al, 2007:223). Furthermore, it can be implemented on a shorter time scale, as standardization implies just one strategy for all (Sinkovics et al., 2007:229).

Although standardization may be quicker, the obvious disadvantage is the strategic inability to effectively communicate one marketing campaign across different cultures (Shin and Huh, 2009:289). In other words, different cultures respond differently to the same message. While some scholars think that consumers have the same buying habits across the globe (Okazaki, 2005:90) and that the internet calls for a global perspective (Shin and Huh, 2009:288), other scholars believe "while there may be global products and global brands, there are no global people" (Sinkovics et al., 2007:229).

Using a localization approach, an MNC is better able to appeal to specific foreign markets, thereby gaining the trust of the locals. It was found that local brands were better able to garner trust and a favorable perspective than their global competitors Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) (in Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:910). In addition to trust, a firm is also able to reach more consumers in a foreign market by adapting its strategy to the target culture (Shin and Huh, 2009:290).

Through adaptation, an MNC is more capable of understanding the different aspects of a culture and applying appropriate strategies as they evolve, resulting in fewer communication mistakes (Kansal, 2015:41). The communication between foreign market consumers and MNCs suggests the importance of building a relationship between them. Because a corporate website functions as a communication channel (Shin and Huh, 2009:287), localization tactics can be used to bridge the gap between company and consumer.

It bridges the gap by tailoring its communication to the foreign market, which can lead to competitive advantages and the realization of market potential (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). This is further supported by the need of consumers to relate culturally to a firm, even virtually (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). Finally, exposure to a culturally appropriate website decreases consumers' 'cognitive efforts' (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). In other words, it creates a smooth transition from website user to consumer. To summarize, a localized website gains trust, opens a dialogue, and reduces the stress of a potential buyer.

As stated before, localization requires a degree of autonomy for the subsidiaries of MNCs, mainly due to its need for extra efforts to understand and interact with the foreign market. Although autonomy may mean less control and coordination by HQ (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223), it saves time by providing subsidiaries with "flexibility and creativity in local problem solving" (Yue, 2015:279). Because autonomous subsidiaries have a higher level of cultural expertise in the foreign market, they can make quicker decisions as well as observe and act upon the subtle movements of culture.

Given the strengths and weaknesses of both standardization and localization, the glocalized approach offers an alternate strategy, enhancing the advantages. A website can standardize, in addition to company logos and colors, by promoting product news, philanthropic activities, investor relations, and company information and history to reinforce their brand image (Okazaki, 2005:91). On the other hand, an MNC can adapt to a foreign market by localizing the "time, date, zip code, and number formats" as well as using the home country's URL (e.g., .uk, .fr, .de, etc.) (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). Because of various URLs and a degree of localization for each host country, I can assume that a glocalized approach would demand multiple corporate websites. As a communication channel, a firm's website sometimes offers a log-in feature,

feedback forms, country-specific payment options, and "individualized product recommendations," all of which support a localization approach (Okazaki, 2005:92).

As evidenced by research, there have been some studies done on the website strategies of MNC. However, it is quite limited and most of it has focused on a limited number of countries (e.g., US, Germany, Korea, Japan, France, Spain, UK). While some of the literature focused on the cultural portrayal of website elements, others focused on to what degree it is standardized. Even this literature is limited by content analysis, the number of countries, the type of product, and the evolution of digitalization. What the research lacks is a study on the coordination and organization used in a glocalized approach. In other words, if a standardized approach necessitates control from HQ and a localized approach necessitates subsidiary autonomy, then how can an MNC best strategize their glocalized websites? How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?

Cultural Challenges - Culture and Language Barriers

Because the online domain is not 'boundary-less' or 'culture free' (Sinkovics et al., 2007:221), the implications of cultural adaptation need to be addressed. While Tsikriktsis (2002) (in Sinkovics et al., 2007:223) states that culture does not substantially affect the quality of a website compared to the quality of service, there is much evidence that adapting a website to a foreign culture improves the relationship with consumers, increases communication and results in more conversions (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). Furthermore, an adapted website that generates consumer trust is more likely to attract returning users, resulting in loyal customers (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:15).

As stated before, two costs of adapting a website to cultural elements are time and

additional resources (i.e., local experts) (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:15). By cultural elements, I refer to language, values and attitudes, and aesthetics (Kansal, 2015:41). However, researching and responding to culture has been noted as a 'worthy expenditure', resulting in "increased web usage, market expansion, and customer satisfaction" (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:25;15).

Finally, the biggest challenge of cultural adaptation on an MNC website is knowing how to appropriately adapt. One technique to overcome this is by using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions to decide what kind of vocabulary, colors, and content to use for each country.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede, a well-known published author, examined the values and attitudes of over 100,000 global employees and established five dimensions to define a culture (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:16). The five dimensions are power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long vs. short-term orientation (LTO). A sixth dimension by Edward T. Hall, high vs. low-context cultures, will also be added to determine the best cultural adaptation website strategies. However, I will exclude long vs. short-term orientation because of its ambiguity in a virtual sense, noting that a low LTO society demands more feedback online (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:19).

Power distance refers to "the extent to which members of a society expect and accept inequalities in power distribution" (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:16). In other words, there is a respect for status, authority, and high levels of a hierarchy (Sinkovics et al., 2007:226). For a country with a low power distance, such as Norway, this means that employees in the lower positions of a company have more freedom and flexibility with company-wide interactions and corporate resources. In regards to a firm's website, all content and information are accessible to

all users Cook and Finlayson, 2005:18). For a country with a high power distance, such as Panama, a website may have restricted information or pages only accessible by a high social position (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:18). Because this seems theoretical, especially for a website without a log-in feature, I will also add that a website in a country with a high power distance is more likely to have 'company hierarchical information' (i.e., employee ranking), 'pictures of CEO' (i.e., associations with important people), 'proper titles' (i.e., display of important positions), and a 'vision statement' (i.e., a message from the CEO about the company's ambition) (Singh, Zhao, & Hu, 2005:68).

Individualistic cultures are described as independent, self-reliant, and ambitious for personal achievement (Sinkovics et al., 2007:224), while collectivist cultures emphasize a sense of belongingness (Kansal, 2015:41) and strive for the "greater good of the society" (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:16). For an individualistic culture, a corporate website is likely to have an 'independence theme' (i.e., a depiction of self-reliance and achievement), 'product uniqueness' (i.e., why the product is special), and 'personalization' (i.e., greetings, gift recommendations and tailored web pages) (Sinkovics et al., 2007:225). For a collectivistic culture, a website would display relations to the community, newsletters, loyalty programs, and a family theme (Singh et al., 2005:67).

The **masculinity and femininity dimension (MAS)** refers to "the degree to which a society emphasizes the distinction between traditional gender roles" (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:16). In a high MAS culture, such as Japan, there is a distinction between the roles of men and women as well as a high degree of competitiveness. In a low MAS culture, the line between male and female responsibilities is blurred (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:18). On a high MAS website, there are more likely to be quizzes, games, and images portraying gender roles (Singh et

al., 2005:67), while a low MAS website supports success through cooperation and motivation through poetry and pleasing visuals (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:18).

The next dimension, **uncertainty avoidance (UA)**, refers to "the extent to which members of a society tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity" (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:16). A country with high UA, like Germany, prefers structure and predictability, and its corresponding website is likely to have guided navigation, customer service, free trials, and customer testimonials (Singh et al., 2005:67). On the other hand, a country with low UA prefers informal processes and risks (Kansal, 2015:41). Its website is more complex and invites exploration through various choices and content (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:18).

A **high and low context culture** refers to the extent to which communication is implicit and indirect (Singh et al., 2005:69). For example, in a high context culture, communication is more indirect, relying on a context while in a low context culture, communication is more direct and informative (Sinkovics et al., 2007:226). On a website, high context would translate to 'aesthetic appeals', 'politeness' (i.e., humbleness and indirect expressions), and a 'soft sell approach' (i.e. videos and images depicting a product's intangible features). For a low context culture, a website would use a 'hard sell approach', 'company's rank in the industry', and 'the use of superlatives' rather than indirect expressions (Singh et al., 2005:73).

To give an example, one study analyzes a corporate website in Indonesia (Cook and Finlayson, 2005:19). On the website, there are two images. One image is a high-status person and the other is a picture of two normal people, a man and a woman of the same height. The interesting part of this web page is that the two people combined are the same size as the high-status person, while the high-status person is vivid and the two people are blurred. Furthermore, the high-status person is female. Without knowing the cultural dimensions of

Indonesia, one can determine that it is collectivist because of the representation of community in the image of the woman and man. It is low MAS because of the equal height of the man and woman, and it has a high power distance because of the large bold image of the high-status woman. If it weren't for the woman being a societal leader, it could be misinterpreted as individualistic.

HQ & Subsidiary Relationships

This final section deals with the interaction between HQ and subsidiaries in an MNC. Using a glocalized approach demands a degree of autonomy for the subsidiary to adapt and a degree of control from HQ to coordinate a global brand image. It is split into three subsections. The first discusses HQ control through socialization and agency theory while the second discusses subsidiary independence through autonomous decision-making and knowledge generation. The final subsection discusses the interaction between the two through internal communication channels and intermediary units.

A. HQ Coordination

HQ has the responsibility of organizing the brand strategy at a global level while subsidiaries make decisions at the local level (Noverita, 2007:118). One technique used by MNCs to keep a degree of control of their subsidiaries is socialization. I define socialization as an "organization's attempt to align individuals' core values and norms across the firm." This can be obtained through methods such as corporate training, careful employee selection, informal social meetings, and moving employees between subsidiaries and HQ. The goal of socialization in an organization is to deter the self-serving behaviors of independent subsidiary employees and

help them to understand, appreciate, and act on corporate goals above all else (Ambos, Kunisch, Leicht-Deobald, & Schulte Steinberg, 2019:68-69).

Another strategy used by MNCs for the management of subsidiary employees is continuous learning and communication (Kovaitė et al., 2020:172). It is reasonable to assume that providing training and advice to the subsidiary employees will result in better decision-making in an evolving market. Furthermore, the advice should be a two-way flow. When HQ is open toward receiving advice rather than only giving, subsidiaries are more likely to feel valued and included by HQ, resulting in better relationships and more frequent communication (Farh, Liao, Shapiro, Shin, & Guan, 2020:2).

B. Subsidiary Autonomy

Given the autonomous nature of a localized approach, coordination becomes more difficult, and local decision-making becomes more necessary (Yue, 2015:279). Because subsidiary managers have the dual role of seeing the business from a local perspective as well as a global perspective, previous research indicates that employees with cross-border work experience are better suited for the job (Farh et al, 2020:4). By cross-border work, I refer to work experience in foreign countries. Not only does cross-border work result in a unique network but also in knowledge of foreign markets.

The potential of being a knowledge generator can also help subsidiary units in their decision-making. By knowledge generator, I refer to a subsidiary being able to accumulate knowledge from their tasks and sending it back to HQ. This open communication decreases miscommunication with HQ, creates subsidiary value, encourages collaboration between the two, and gives confidence to the subsidiary in making confident decisions. Furthermore, the

knowledge gained by subsidiary autonomy can be accumulated, analyzed, and applied on a global scale. (Sajadirad, Lassen, & Søberg, 2019:51;57)

C. Communication

To communicate with a subsidiary in a foreign country, different digital channels must be used when face-to-face is not an option. While face-to-face interaction is the best option for building relationships and trust, other forms of communication each have their benefits (Sisko, Ensio, & Nevalainen, 2014:282).

Figure 2: Digital Communication Channels (**Sisko et al., 2014)**

Channel	Advantages	Disadvantages
Email	Reviewability, revisability, wide distribution	Possible information overload, tone misinterpretation
Instant Messaging	Synchronous, informal, easy to clarify, build relationships	Tone misinterpretation, employee time-wasting
Intranet	Database of knowledge, Share training and corporate information	Non-specific target, not always intuitive to navigate
Social Media	Personal, High number of users	Better as an external channel, employee time-wasting
Blogs	Dispersion of company updates and information	May go unseen

In addition to using multiple communication channels, MNCs can also create a position for an intermediary unit. An intermediary unit acts as a go-between in the HQ-subsidiary dynamic. This person can aid in communication and the dispersion of information as well as help solve any problems in the relationship (Yue, 2015:279).

To summarize, there are several different strategies for an MNC to coordinate its subsidiaries. Although previous literature on HQ and subsidiary relationships has not focused on the organization of corporate websites, there is applicable knowledge that can be used to hypothesize possible glocalized strategies.

Methodology

The primary research methodology chosen for discovering insights into the website strategies of MNCs was a qualitative semi-structured interview procedure.

Methodology Choice

The nature of this study is rooted in the discovery of internal company strategies. These processes are not immediately available to an outsider and can only be explained by long-form answers. Furthermore, interpersonal navigation is necessary to find the appropriate information, given the complexity of different company strategies and industries as well as different job titles and tasks. For these reasons, an in-depth interview process was the ideal choice.

A qualitative study provides the opportunity to delve into the intricacies of a complicated system, and in this case, strategy. By definition, a strategy is a plan of action needed to achieve a goal from a specific starting point. Because starting points and goals are dependent on a company's industry, origin, market, product, and timeline, they are almost totally unique to each company. This uniqueness highlights the variation in possible company strategies. As evidenced by Park and Park (2016:4), "the qualitative method is sufficient and excellent for discovery, considering its goal and specific procedures." Therefore, in-depth interviews are the best solution to the variety in an unpredictable study such as this one.

Given the numerous types of systems in website management, there is also a varying degree of efficiency. Because finding the advantages and disadvantages is an important aspect of strategy, qualitative research allows the possibility of discovering the feelings of company informants. Rather than relying on facts only, it was important to compare the website strategy

with employee opinions. This insight allows me to discover what works well and what does not as well as comparable drawbacks and benefits across the target companies. Without face-to-face conversations, the ability to perceive emotions, facial expressions, and body language, then follow-up accordingly with inspired questions is severely inhibited.

Qualitative research also has the advantage of inspiring more in-depth answers than a survey or questionnaire. With quantitative research, there is typically a shorter preparation time. For example, the participant receives the survey, opens it, reads the instructions and background, and finally answers it. For the interview process, there is more priming. The participant receives an invite with an explanation and sometimes a few words of persuasion. After giving consent and agreeing to a time, the participant awaits the in-person questions with anticipated expectations. The point of this comparison is to highlight the amount of effort and mental preparation that the participant puts into the procedure before he or she even begins to answer questions. The result is momentum. And to continue the momentum, these in-depth interviews allow a changeable ordering of questions that best suits the mood and personality of the participant. Snyder (2012:3) points out that familiarity between the interviewer and interviewee 'elicits more deeply meaningful interviews'.

The open-ended aspect of qualitative research also suits the study as a vessel for discovery. Given the explorative nature, there is less of a need to find exact answers in an ordered way and more freedom to assess the received information. In other words, it allows me to focus on the consistencies between companies in various industries by studying the various strategies and the language used to describe them. "The qualitative approach is holistic in orientation, treating the phenomenon as a whole system and searching for patterns that lie within

its bounds" (Park and Park, 2016:5). Instead of having to determine right answers from wrong answers, its flexibility enables the use of context as a determinant.

Research Setting

Those aforementioned advantages are why I chose qualitative research. More specifically, I used case studies to understand the dynamics of the strategies and how they affect the attitudes of the key informants. Using inductive reasoning after noting said strategies, I looked for patterns across the companies of the participants. The following explanation will give more context to why qualitative research was chosen specifically for this case and how the literature shaped the direction of the primary research.

This study was conducted with informants of MNCs. The idea was to explore the website strategy of companies with different websites for different countries. Because website strategies are an internal process, it was difficult to convince references and leads to agree to an interview. The majority of informants needed the confirmation of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), which I provided them through the Ethics Appeal process at Grenoble Ecole de Management (GEM). The NDA requires their personal information (e.g., name) and company identifiers (e.g., company name, website URL, etc.) to remain confidential. Even with the NDA, many leads during recruitment felt this information was too confidential. Without being able to use their data, I refer to their job position title and the company industry to distinguish the informants.

The job position of the informants also played an important role in choosing qualitative research. There are varying positions in a company involved on the website ranging from a web developer to a legal representative. Additionally, firms sometimes create their job titles to

distinguish employees. By searching and selecting the participants myself, I was able to determine that the information and data that I collected was from an appropriate informant.

This research on website strategies is in part based on the coordination process of HQ and its subsidiaries. Coordination implies that different elements are working together toward a common goal. It was not feasible to learn about these processes through a survey. On the contrary, interviews enabled me to receive long-form answers and clarify any miscommunication. I was also able to follow up with the participants when any information was lost or forgotten.

While the coordination process was one part of my focus, the degree of standardization on the website was the other part. Based on my findings explained in the literature review, I discovered that the debate on standardization is a current problem in the design and management of websites. Therefore, the interviews involved a combination of website design and coordination processes. The interviews intended to stay on these topics while giving the participants freedom to expand on their thoughts. I continued the momentum of the discussion by refraining from interruption as well as changing the order of the questions if the participant brought up a topic related to another area of my research (e.g., one participant started speaking about communication channels during their answer to a question about cultural adaptation).

To provide a frame for the research setting, I chose informants based on their company websites. The companies needed to have different web pages for each country that they operate in rather than only a translation. I came across a few MNCs that had one website with different language options. The reason I chose not to focus on these firms was the implication that nothing on the website was adapted to the host country's culture except language. It also implies that the website strategy is less complex and more intuitive.

Data Collection

The study was based on the findings in the literature review, namely how MNCs coordinate their websites across their subsidiaries. Therefore, the most important consideration in finding key informants for the interview was their involvement in a company that operates in more markets than its home country and has websites for each market. The domain name was allowed to be the same, but the firm needed to either have different web pages or different subdomains for each country. For the most part, this took the form of a country's initials before or after the domain (e.g. de.example.com or example.de for Germany) or the country's initials in a subdirectory (e.g., example.com/de). Websites with language options only in the same URL were excluded since no other website elements were changed according to the country. Each company involved in this study operates in at least four countries.

The second criterion for the study was the involvement in the website strategy. To distinguish the involved employees, I use the term 'website informant' for the selection criteria. A website informant is an employee or manager that either makes decisions for the website or is involved in the implementation of the strategy. Possible job titles were 'digital strategist, digital specialist, digital junior, multi-channel engagement coordinator, web developer, display manager, UX specialist, e-commerce manager, etc.' Because the naming of job titles in the digital field can sometimes be arbitrary, it was important to speak with the participant beforehand to assess their involvement and knowledge of the corporate website.

The interview procedure consisted of interviews with six website informants, each from a different company. To diversify the attitudes of the sample, the participants were chosen based on whether they work at HQ or a subsidiary. I also looked at the degree of standardization on the websites. Three of the informants worked at the headquarters of their company, and the other

three worked at subsidiaries. It was a nonprobability sample in which I used website involvement and company location as criteria.

The recruitment process was based on judgmental sampling where I used my knowledge from previous literature with the pre-interview discussions about involvement to determine the credibility of the participant. Before each interview, I contacted potential candidates by direct message, email, or in-person channels to describe the topic of the interview (See Appendix A), advertise the NDA to ease any concerns, and ask for availabilities. In preparation, I made four possible sets of interview questions each corresponding to working at HQ, working at a subsidiary, working at a company with a 'more' standardized website, or working at a company with a 'less' standardized website (See Appendix B). With the exception of 2-4 questions, all of the questions were the same for each candidate. The variation between the two types of websites is very minor. The difference is the varying degree of content and layout in a 'less' standardized website. For example, a 'less' standardized website may have different content, pictures, and features even if all the websites look similar at first glance because of standard brand colors. A 'more' standardized website uses almost exactly the same pictures and layout order of elements.

Figure 3: Website Type Matrix

HQ website informant with a **More standardized website**	**HQ website informant** with a **Less standardized website**
Subsidiary website informant with a **More standardized website**	**Subsidiary website informant** with a **Less standardized website**

There were six companies involved in this study. Each company had corresponding websites for each country they operated in. The headquarters of each company varied in location, but they all operated in at least a few European countries. Three companies were French, one

company was American, one was from the UK, and the last one was Korean. The companies also varied in industry. Except for two of the companies, they are each involved in a different industry. The two companies in the same industry operate out of different home countries. It was important to avoid direct home country competitors since 'operating websites or conducting business online can easily be replicated by competitors' (Sinkovics, Yamin, & Hossinger, 2007:223). With such easy replication, the sample size may have been affected if the website approach was too similar. Finally, the industries involved in this study are the electronics industry, commercial drink industry, pharmaceutical industry, savings and loan industry, and the automobile industry.

The interviews were all conducted in the same manner. Before each interview, I studied the firm's country websites. I searched for similarities between countries by going to the home page of each country's website. The first element I looked at was whether the content was similar, followed by layout, brand colors, order of content, web page buttons, URLs, language options, payment options, newsletters, community interaction, and index links. The interviews all took place online through a video call communication channel. The questions and answers were in English despite English only being the native language of one website informant. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 80 minutes with an average of 50 minutes. The interviews were recorded with both video and audio to be transcribed and analyzed.

The interview process started with a light greeting and summary of the study to make the candidates feel at ease and inspire their knowledge on the subject, respectively. The questions were split into two categories. The first section dealt with the website design (e.g., content, layout, buttons, etc.) and its adaptation to the market. It was an analysis of the firm's website with commentary from the informants. The second section dealt with the website coordination

strategy. It was designed to discover how each part of the process fit together like the cogs of a machine. I chose to discuss the website design first because it is a side of the company that is exposed to consumers. It isn't hidden. By discussing this area and showing the informants that I've already studied their company websites, I hoped to build a level of trust before starting the second section that inspired some informants to ask for an NDA. The goal during the second half of the interview was to gain insights into privileged information by understanding the website coordination process with accompanying employee attitudes.

As a semi-structured interview, I was allowed to change the order of the question when the participants spoke about another area of the research unprompted and add new ones to adjust to their conversations styles and knowledge.

Table 1: Collected Interview Data

MNCs	Job position	Responsibility	Industry	Origin	Duration	HQ	# Sites*
Comp. A	Digital Specialist	EU sites strategy (12)	Electronics	Korea	45:01	No	20+
Comp. B	E-commerce	HQ & sub. Sites (4)	Commercial Drink	France	50:24	Yes	4
Comp. C	Digital Manager	France website (1)	Pharmaceuticals	UK	1:10:14	No	20+
Comp. D	Multi-Channel Engagem. Coord.	France, Belgium, & Netherlands sites (3)	Pharmaceuticals	USA	50:33	No	20+
Comp. E	Display Manager	France & Spain sites (2)	Automobile	France	46:56	Yes	5
Comp. F	Lead Web Dev.	HQ & sub. Sites (5)	Savings & Loan	France	40:14	Yes	5
6 comp.	**6 positions**	**27 sites**	**5 industries**	**4 origins**	**302.42 min.**	**3 HQ**	**74+**

*Total company websites. Translated-only websites were not considered. Max at 20 to represent large scale.

Data Analysis

This section aims to explain the method of this study's data analysis clearly to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017:2). As a case-study qualitative research method, I studied the interview answers by first transcribing them through software, and second, by reviewing them from beginning to end to find any errors that changed the message of the participant and to review the material. Because the website informants were mostly non-native English speakers, this required listening to some sections repeatedly to confirm what was said. There were less than five unintelligible words, but each didn't affect the message because of context clues. I noted these in my transcripts with an 'indistinct' label.

For the data analysis, I used a software program designed for qualitative data. I uploaded the interview transcripts with the videos before beginning a thematic analysis to "identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes found within [my] data set". Without including the transcription procedure, the data analysis was a four-step process constructed to perceive the attitudes of the website informants, note the resemblance between them, and discover unexpected results (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017:2).

Figure 4: Analysis Process

	Term	**Procedure**
Step 1:	In Vivo	Highlight important passages
Step 2:	Axial Coding	Categorize the passages
Step 3:	First-order Constructs	Group similar passages
Step 4:	Second-order Constructs	Group second-order constructs

The first step of the analytical process was to create in vivo codes. By highlighting and moving relevant excerpts into sets, I became more familiar with the subject matter of each interview. I made six sets of in vivo codes, one for each interview. Additionally, coding with the original language of the informants enabled me to find more meaning in the data that might be lost in a normal coding procedure. For example, when asking about the factual process of their website strategy, I determined attitudes through in vivo coding when hearing expressions such as 'that's the issue' or 'that really shocked me.'

After creating a list of in vivo codes, I separated them into sets corresponding to each interview. This way, I could easily find the context of the in vivo code. With both a master list of in vivo codes and a setlist of specific 'interview in vivo codes', I revisited each one and used axial coding to put them into categories. These categories touched topics such as reasons to standardize the website, adapt the website, legal differences, monitoring the website, the flow of strategy, and guidelines.

Having grouped the in vivo codes into categories, I started the third phase of the data analysis by creating first-order constructs. The goal of these constructs was to find common themes from the interviews. I assessed the in vivo codes assigned to categories and searched for commonalities. Once found, I created first-construct labels. For the more specific categories, I kept the in vivo codes as they were. For example, for the category 'community messages,' I used a 'localize by adapting content to the country holidays' to illustrate the theme of creating content based on seasons and holidays specific to a market. For the bigger and broader categories, I broke up the section into more specific codes by first adding comments to be more accurate with the data. Some of the categories were too similar, so making comments allowed me to merge in vivo codes from multiple alike categories into first-order constructs (e.g., aligning 'risk of

over-localizing' comment from 'quality consistency loss through adaptation' category with 'risk

in localizing might change quality' comment from 'standardize for quality image' category).

After creating the first-order constructs, I analyzed the codes to find relationships

between them. The second-order constructs are based on those relationships. They summarize

common themes found in the interviews. For example, a construct for the amount of control by

HQ represents the varying degrees discovered for each company. In total, there were 16. The

final step in the data investigation was to relate them to the concepts from the literature review.

Because there were two research questions in this study (i.e., summarized by 'Degree of

Standardization' and 'Internal Website Strategy'), the concepts were again divided into two main

areas with three related dimensions each.

Figure 5: 'Degree of Standardization' Data Structure

1st-order	2nd-order	Dimensions
- Create an international site to promote brand quality - Use the brand image on the website to promote quality - Manage customer relationships on the website to promote quality	→ Building Trust through Brand Quality on the Website	} **Website Purpose**
- Inform customers by pinning information on the homepage - Create a different website for information purposes	→ Methods for Communicating Company Information	
- Risk of 'over-localizing'	→ Risks of Localization	} **Standardize Website**
- Displaying Company information for customer relationships - Using other methods for customer relationships	→ Reaching Customers without Targeting the Culture	
- Standardization through translation - Synchronizing local message through a global message	→ Mass Appeal through Standardization	
- Adapt the message for culture - Adapt content according to season/holiday - Adapt for payment/retailers - Adapt for Google	→ Website Opportunities for MNCs to Localize	} **Localize Website**
- Solutions to legal regulations - Adapt because of illegal message - Adapt because of illegal product - Validate all by the legal department	→ Reasons for Legal Adaptation	

Figure 6: 'Internal Website Strategy' Data Structure

1st-order	*2nd-order*	*Dimensions*
- Content comes from one country - Each country makes content - Website implementation as collaboration - Website implementation as a hierarchy - Problem in website element implementation - Create job position to review website updates	→ Flow of Website Strategy	**Strategy Coordination**
- Each country manager translates - One person translates content for all countries	→ Assigning Responsibility for Translation	
- Adapt the message for culture - Adapt content according to season/holiday - Adapt for payment/retailers - Adapt for Google	→ Website Control by HQ vs Subsidiary	
- Solutions to legal regulations - Adapt because of illegal message - Adapt because of illegal product - Validate all by the legal department	→ Freedom to Follow Guidelines	**Subsidiary Management**
- Test Standardization by implementing in one country first	→ Using a Country as a Test for Website Plans	
- Website Management in one place - Split website mgmt up into components	→ Location of Website Management	
- Communicate by email - Communicate by other	→ Choosing Internal Communication Channels	
- Speak English internally - Speak French Internally	→ Choosing an Internal Language	**Internal Communication**
- Have multiple POCs per country - Have one POC for each country to communicate	→ Use of Point of Contacts for Subsidiaries	

Trustworthiness of the Analysis

As outlined above, the data analysis explanation intended to clearly define the approach used to find common themes in the primary data (i.e., in-depth interviews). The goal of this section is to explain the interview navigation methods to help the reader 'determine whether the process is credible' (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017:1).

The first research question in this study is based on the format and content of an MNC website (i.e., degree of website standardization). This information is typically accessible to anyone with an internet connection since a firm's website is considered a 'virtual storefront' (Argyriou et al., 2006:583). Although open to outsiders, the reason that a firm chose to implement its strategy is private knowledge. To have an effective discussion about the website with the interviews, I studied the websites of each company beforehand. I made a cross-analysis of each country's website to determine the similarities and differences between them. During the interviews, I mentioned the inconsistencies to the participants as a probing method to gain insight into the reasoning behind them. It gave me a frame of reference for the answers.

Due to a varying degree of trust from the website informants, I navigated the interviews correspondingly. As mentioned before, an NDA was a fundamental prerequisite for the majority of the interview participants. Although a few participants were willing to open up immediately, some showed hesitancy. For the flexible informants, I asked questions that were prepared for the second half of the interview as soon as they mentioned the topic to continue their train of thought. For the hesitant informants, I focused on building rapport by asking first about information available to the public. If they mentioned a topic or answered with signs of apprehension early on, I made a note of it, waited for a more appropriate time, and rephrased the question. An example of such a topic is a question about the disadvantages or challenges of their management or coordination strategy.

These strategies enabled me to arrive at more accurate conclusions with the data. By encouraging the participants to open up and give detailed answers, I was able to see common themes between the company strategies.

Findings

A Study on the Website Strategies of Multinational Companies

To give context to these results, I will first reiterate the backbone of this study. With the emergence of a corporate online presence, firms have taken different approaches in their website strategies, especially in coordinating these strategies across host markets. This study focuses on two aspects. The first research question analyzes the degree of standardization on the website in terms of content, layout, information display, etc. The second research question analyzes the procedures taken to implement a chosen strategy through coordination, management, and communication. Therefore, this section will contain six dimensions, three for each research question, formatted in one continuous narrative focusing on the results rather than the interpretation.

Research Question 1: To what extent does an MNC use a glocalized website strategy?

Research Question 2: How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?

A Multinational Company's Online Purpose

As discussed in the literature review of this paper, the website purpose of an MNC can range from a channel to promote its brand image to an interactive platform for communicating with customers. Because the purpose of a website can help define the strategy, one of the goals of this study was to determine the primary function that the website informants deemed the most important. The first dimension, 'The Website Purpose' functions as a prologue for the two

research questions as well as an introduction to website standardization through brand

management and communication. The data for 'The Website Purpose' dimension is divided into

second-order constructs (See Table 2): 'Methods for Promoting Brand Quality on the Website'

and 'Methods for Communicating Company Information'.

Table 2: The 'Website Purpose' Dimension

Themes	Building Trust through Brand Quality on the Website	Methods for Communicating Company Information
Definition	This second-order theme highlights the various techniques used by MNCs to market brand quality on their websites and overall internet presence.	This second-order theme details how MNCs can communicate the company and product information as a primary function of the website.
Interview Quote	"We want this image of excellence innovation as well… excellence and innovation to come across to everyone. And by extent, we want them to trust the message and come to us whenever they have a need because they know that we can fulfill it." (Company A)	"You won't see these things under the international website because you cannot buy them on the international website. It's more like a brochure website." (Company B)
Link to Literature	"If promoting brand image is the central objective, then the ability to communicate with a large audience (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:910) is a close second."	
Differentiation from Literature	While promoting brand image and communicating with consumers is an inherent aspect of a website's purpose, interactivity, an attribute highlighted as one of the most important characteristics by Okazaki (2005:91), played a lesser role compared to information display and brand image promotion.	

Building Trust through Brand Quality on the Website. This theme distinguishes the strategies

found for how MNCs use their websites to promote their brand. The first strategy was to create

an alternative website solely for informational and brand purposes. It was used by three of the

companies.

> "*It's for brand advocacy, to learn about the brand, what is it, what products.*"
> (Company B)

In this example, the company created an international website in addition to websites for

each country. According to the website informant, certain products were unable to be purchased

in certain countries. Therefore the international website didn't show any product pages. Instead, it promoted quality by advertising other experiences and how to best enjoy the product.

The other three companies used a different strategy. They relied on brand recognition through the repetition of brand colors (i.e., familiarity) and consumer reviews (i.e., reputation).

> *"On the website, they don't really promise that you can receive your goods in, for example, in 20 days. Otherwise, they'll have legal problems. It's more through client reviews and getting them to write another good review for us."* (Company E)

By posting consumer reviews on the home page of their websites and by standardizing the brand image, the companies aimed to reinforce their reputation. One of the participants also highlighted the importance of consistency in the website brand to show consistency in the product and service quality (Company A).

Methods for Communicating Company Information. This theme discusses how the website is used for communication purposes. Similar to the brand quality theme, the MNCs used two strategies to communicate with consumers. If the firm had a separate website for brand promotion, they also used this channel for company information.

> *"They launched specific websites where you can find all the videos from the different websites directly on one platform."* (Company D)

The reported benefit of another website for company information was that it de-cluttered the other websites. Company C explained how it was only necessary to link the video to the country website in order to provide any necessary information.

On the other hand, the companies without separate websites relied on homepage banners and updates to speak to their market.

> *"The purpose of the of the site overall is not only to inform the customer and make them aware of our products and our values but also to sell products."*
> (Company A)

A common theme for these companies was a constant update of content on their websites whether it was a new website feature or new product information. For Company A, in the example above, one of the first things displayed on their home page is 'Our Current Offers', a title for their current promotions. Instead of using a completely different website for information, these companies used their homepage.

Standardizing the Website

The findings in the interviews indicate that companies are moving toward a more standardized website strategy. Each company mentioned that its current strategy is less than ten years old or has plans to change the entire website in the next couple of years. At least three of the companies stated that each website was originally managed by its country but have since 'migrated' to a central management system (Company D). It was undetermined whether that was due to the benefits of standardization or the development in technology (e.g. Content Management System (CMS)). Regardless, standardization in website practices was both opined and explained in three themes (See Table 3): 'Risks of Localization', Reaching Customers without targeting the culture', 'Mass Appeal through Standardization'.

Table 3: The 'Standardize Website' Dimension

Themes	Risks of Localization	Reaching Customers without Targeting the Culture	Mass Appeal through Standardization
Definition	This second-order construct falls under standardization as an argument for why localization is risky.	This second-order construct highlights how MNCs deliver their company message across foreign markets.	This second-order construct details a one-for-all marketing approach as a defense for website standardization.
Interview Quote	"The content was not updated. They just copy-pasted what was on the UK website onto the US one. So then a lot of people started to ask customer service saying, 'How can I get an engraving?' But it's not really true." (Company B)	"The b2b site leads to a contact form. It allows us to actually get in touch with the potential customer and build a little bit of a relationship with them, understand the project, then be able to help them that way." (Company A)	"And the messaging, just by adapting the wording, the messaging is going to be okay, and it is going to appeal to one degree. It's going to appeal to someone to a certain degree or to the vast majority of the audience." (Company A)
Link to Literature	"However, Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009:914) still consider a website to be standardized if it has the same web content but is translated to the language of the consumer. By web content, I refer to design, illustrations, content, and features (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:914)."		
Differentiation from Literature	While Okazaki (2005:92) noted log-in features as localized elements on a website, the findings show how log-in features and the reception of customer data support a standardized approach allowing data to be collected from consumers with the intent of a customer relationship without targeting the culture.		

Risks of Localization. This theme relates to the disadvantages and potential problems of using a localization approach to the website elements. The commonality discussed in the interviews revolved around the amount of effort it takes to localize the messages to consumers.

> *"So now almost nothing is localized. Everything is migrated and directed from the global perspective. And sometimes it takes longer to adjust the website. You have to do make a special request to ask the global to do some modifications and some editing. It's a bit longer on the processes."* (Company D)

Company A and Company B also mentioned the problems with localizing marketing on the website. While Company A warned against 'over-localizing' and losing the core message of their company, Company B highlighted what can go wrong in the

implementation process by accidentally including a localized message from one country onto the webpage of another country, resulting in confused customers. Meanwhile, Company F supported standardization because of an aversion to risk in the perception of host-country consumers.

Reaching Customers without targeting the culture. This theme discusses how MNCs develop relationships with foreign consumers through the website without adapting their website content. The relationship can foster through the input of customer data by either a game or quiz that requires an email address for email campaigns or the requirement for a sign-in feature to navigate the firm's website.

> *"You cannot buy anything, which means each time you want more information, you have a contact form on the international website that is redirected to the customer service team."* (Company B)

Other options mentioned for reaching customers through the website included a blog operated only by the marketing team at HQ (Company E), encouraging consumer reviews (Company E), and creating a 'cohesive solution' to customer needs: "We want to communicate that we take care of every single thing that we do to the same degree" (Company A).

Mass Appeal through standardization. This final theme supports an overall standardization approach to target all markets to at least one degree. By using a one-for-all strategy, MNCs can appeal to all markets without adapting to the culture by focusing on their biggest market. For the

smaller companies, this meant concentrating on the country with the biggest income. For larger countries, this meant concentrating on the region (e.g., Europe).

> *"We're basically in the middle trying to cope with everyone and trying to satisfy everyone."* (Company C)

This way of appealing to everyone works, according to the participants, when 'the global vision is aligned with the local one' (Company D). It's implemented by creating a globalized campaign and "relying on the advice of the local marketers to say, 'Well this works. That doesn't.' There's a lot of dialogue going on." (Company A). While that example sounds like it could be considered an adaptation, it's rather a top-down approach. It can be compared to a literal translation of a text versus a free translation. In a free translation, the same meaning is conveyed even if the words are different.

> *"Because in the French market, the website works well. We think, 'okay, why don't we just copy-paste for the other markets?' And then we'll see."* (Company E)

Localizing the Website

The previous two dimensions regarded an MNC website as a conduit of brand image promotion and a standardized approach to reach customers. They encompassed the firm's goal from an overall perspective. This dimension looks at the specificities of website elements and how they can be adapted to the culture. Rather than seeing localization as an approach, it can be seen as a sub-strategy specific to appropriate website components. This dimension is divided into two constructs (See Table 4): 'Website Opportunities for MNCs to Localize' and 'Reasons for Legal Adaptation.' The second construct differentiates from the first in that it is obligatory rather than advantageous.

Table 4: The 'Localize Website' Dimension

Themes	Website Opportunities for MNCs to Localize	Reasons for Legal Adaptation
Definition	This second-order construct discusses the various reasons and types of website elements for an MNC to adapt to the host country's culture.	This second-order construct details the reasons MNCs must adapt certain elements on their websites due to legal reasons, rather than cultural.
Interview Quote	"For example, if you're doing a boutique opening only in one market, you're going to communicate it in that market, not all the markets. First of all, because you save some time… And also it doesn't make any sense to do it in another market. No one's going to be interested in the French market." (Company B)	"[In France], for medicines, we have to stick closely to what the project is needed for. This claim was really emotional... And so it was way more than the actual use of the product." (Company C)
Link to Literature	"Namely, tastes and preferences between cultures are increasing in variation, suggesting that MNCs should relate to their foreign market's culture (Okazaki, 2005:90) while "considering local rules and laws," including the online domain (Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:912)."	
Differentiation from Literature	The results from this study support the findings of Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009:920) and Okazaki (2005) in their conclusion that companies standardize the design features and localize the content. This is in contrast to Robbins and Stylianou (2003) who state the opposite school of thought.	

Website Opportunities for MNCs to Localize. This theme discusses four advantageous opportunities for MNC to adapt website elements. There are four companies from the study that discussed these opportunities. The other two companies were primarily concerned about the adaptations due to legalities discussed in the next theme.

In all of the companies, including the two just mentioned, payment, links to retailers, and delivery aspects of the websites were adapted to the country. These adaptations are necessary from a logistics point of view. However, there is still a disparity between countries in the same company.

"In Spain, they link... you can buy something on the site and others actually just link to the retailers from which you can buy them. We do have our own shop. That's been a recent launch. And I don't know 100%, in which countries this has actually been implemented." (Company A)

From a search engine optimization (SEO) perspective, adapting to the culture for higher Google results was also demonstrated. SEO is determined by the text on a web page and the keywords used in a search engine. This type of adaptation comes in the form of choosing the best translation for website content and adding the best keywords to the web page. To have a successful website, the appropriate keywords for each language must be used on the websites.

> *"So it's a website that only displays content landing pages. And we try to have the best search engine optimization."* (Company F)

Another opportunity for localization is a difference in the marketing of products or services. Some products may not be offered in all host countries (Company B). Newsletters and 'content dissemination' were also adapted by sending out translations for each language in a given country (e.g., In Belgium, Company A sends out information in French and Dutch). Additionally, Company E explained a problem between two country websites that exposes a difference in culture:

"When you go to the homepage, you select your car, you enter a model and you get whatever products there are for this model. It's different for different people. They search in a different way. For example, for French users, most of them click on 'Select Your Vehicle.' They see whatever is available. But for Germans, it's not that at all. When your specific car part is broken, you change it. So for the German market, it doesn't work like that because people just come and search for the piece that they want. And if they don't easily find where they can search for it, and they only see the 'Select your Vehicle', they're going to bounce." (Company E)

Company E's HQ and primary market are located in France, so the website navigation is catered to them.

Finally, seasons and holidays had an impact on the decision to localize content. Instead of continuously adapting all content to culture, two companies used holidays specific to culture as an opportunity to relate to the market.

> *"For instance, in China in September, it's the mid-autumn festival. And September, there's not a festival in the US. This specific time, we were putting pictures about the celebration on the Chinese website."* (Company B)

Reasons for Legal Adaptation. The two other companies mentioned in the introduction of the previous theme were both pharmaceutical companies. Given the strict regulations in medicine, these companies were forced to adapt to the country's law. For this reason, the legal review was a significant part of the localization process. However, the legal review was an important procedure for all of the companies in this study.

> *"We have to go through the legal review for anything that we put online live. That's also if someone was not necessarily accurate, it does get flagged and gets corrected at that point. So the process in itself is auto-correcting."* (Company A)

Illegal products and marketing played a role in the MNC's website strategies as well. According to the pharmaceutical companies, speaking directly to the consumer, advertising banned products that are available in other countries, and advertising something like back pain are all illegal in France. Company A also discussed the difference in aggressive marketing between the US and Europe. And the whiskey company explained the differences between cultures in advertising alcohol and cigars.

> *"On the US and UK websites, we sell the products and gift collections. And in this collection, you have some sets, for instance, you have a cigar set, where you can buy a bottle of cognac with a cigar. But this set is not available in France because of the law. You're not allowed to sell cigars."* (Company B)

Company B used their alternative international website to overcome this barrier. The pharmaceutical companies still advertised how their brands could help with back pain in other countries. However, the difference between these pharmaceutical companies and the others was a lack of a website link to the other country websites. Still, consumers have access to the other websites if they use the appropriate URL.

> *"For example, if they take a look at the UK website and see the back pain, they're going to use it in France for back pain."* (Company C)

There's a photo on Company C's French website, where it is illegal to talk about back pain, depicting a man holding the back part of his arm and shoulder. His hand is very close to his back, but because the photo is situated between a photo of a man holding his wrist and a man holding his elbow, it still passes as arm pain rather than back pain.

Coordinating the Website Strategy

This dimension marks the beginning of the findings for the second research question about the internal website strategy. The coordination of a website strategy involves the various players (e.g., job positions, subsidiaries, and HQ) and the collaborative maneuvers to establish the website plan of action. The goal of the second research question is to understand the organizational process of a 'glocalized approach'. It is defined by two themes from the interviews (See Table 5): 'Flow of Website Strategy' and 'Assigning Responsibility for Translation'.

Table 5: The 'Strategy Coordination' Dimension

Themes	Flow of Website Strategy	Assigning Responsibility for Translation
Definition	This second-order construct encompasses the strategies that MNCs use in website implementation as well as tasks assigned to follow through with the directive.	This second-order construct discusses the options used by MNCs to create content for their websites.
Interview Quote	"He's responsible for all the visuals. So he has to create visuals for different markets. We have four markets. And the calendar is never the same for each market. So, at the same time, he has to do this activity for the French market, that activity for the Spain market. It's quite chaotic." (Company E)	"You can, as a developer, you can input an image. Automatically, the website is going to extract all the text, propose some translation key, put everything in their database, and you have an API to get the translation. It's really fast, really well done." (Company F)
Link to Literature	"Given the autonomous nature of a localized approach, coordination becomes more difficult, and local decision-making becomes more necessary (Yue, 2015:279)."	
Differentiation from Literature	Socialization and training were found to be impertinent in the coordination of subsidiary websites. Instead, the subsidiaries were trusted using guidelines and verification techniques.	

Flow of Website Strategy. This theme represents the procedure used by MNCs to implement their website strategy. It entails the movement of guideline content from the key decision-makers to the appropriate employees. It discusses the variation in the origin of content creation (i.e., host-country makes the content vs. HQ makes the content), the variation in guideline flow (i.e., top-down approach vs. collaborative), and common problems.

Website content is an ever-changing website element. It can be used to display company information, promote new products, or relate to the host-country market's culture. Because the internet allows companies to reach a large target at a relatively low cost, it welcomes more advertising opportunities than a storefront window. In regards to content creation, the MNCs were divided. Three reported that the content was created by someone at HQ, while the other MNCs relied on the marketing team in their respective country to manage the content.
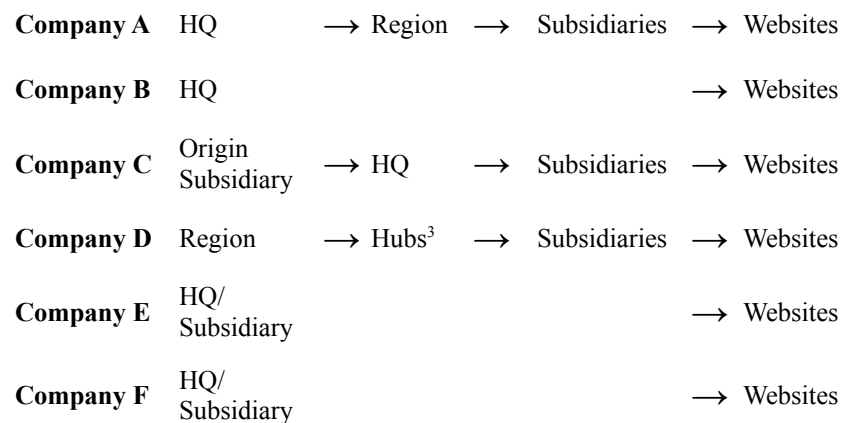
> *"And he always does the same kind of design, for example, with the same colors, just to make it really recognizable for the audience. The poor designer, you know, makes it for each country and for different calendars."* (Company E)

The flow of the guidelines describes the coordination approach and highlights the responsible actors at each stage of the implementation. For the majority of the MNCs, the website strategy guideline originated at HQ. However, it was not always a top-down approach (See Figure 7). For Company E and Company F, the strategy was more of a collaboration between HQ and the subsidiaries while Company C used one specific country as an origin before using a top-down approach for the rest of the subsidiaries.

> *"Even though the project was led by Germany, we had to wait until Germany sent the contents to the UK [HQ]. The UK could translate it into English, so we could translate from English to French."* (Company C)

Figure 7: The Flow of Website Guidelines

Company A	HQ		$\rightarrow$ Region	$\rightarrow$	Subsidiaries	$\rightarrow$	Websites
Company B	HQ					$\rightarrow$	Websites
Company C	Origin Subsidiary	$\rightarrow$ HQ		$\rightarrow$	Subsidiaries	$\rightarrow$	Websites
Company D	Region	$\rightarrow$ Hubs[3]		$\rightarrow$	Subsidiaries	$\rightarrow$	Websites
Company E	HQ/ Subsidiary					$\rightarrow$	Websites
Company F	HQ/ Subsidiary					$\rightarrow$	Websites

The main problems found in the coordination process arose because of the complexity. The guidelines, whether they begin at HQ or not, flow from country to country and from job position to job position. For Company F, one of the smaller MNCs, the strategy was found to be 'quite efficient.' However, it was still lengthy. The flow was shorter, but the time to implement was longer. For the more complex systems, there were issues with employees and managers forgetting to verify country-specific content. Company D discusses a system for their website

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[3] Hubs refers to a grouping of countries (e.g., France, Belgium, and The Netherlands)

where each website element must be validated and given a code before adding it to the website to avoid irregularities. When discussing a problem they had recently, he said:

> *"It happened maybe two months ago or this summer. I have to protect every kind of PDF to see if we are good or not, and he didn't have any code. So we contacted the owner of this PDF to ask him or her if it was normal and why isn't any code associated with it?"* (Company D)

Assigning Responsibility for Translation. In continuation with assigning roles based on HQ positions and subsidiary positions, this theme discusses the inconsistencies in translation responsibilities. Most of the MNCs relied on the subsidiary to translate the content, but some either used translation software or asked the country for a direct translation without much concern for adapting it.

> *"Most of the time the translation was almost mirror to the English one because it was faster to just translate the thing that was already validated."* (Company B)

Managing the Subsidiaries' Website Involvement

One of the aims of this study is to discover how HQ manages the subsidiaries while coordinating a global approach and giving them the freedom to make decisions for the website. In a similar vein to coordination, this dimension details the relationship between HQ and subsidiaries. It also discusses the management of the websites. There are four themes associated with this dimension (See Table 6): 'Website Control by HQ vs Subsidiary', 'Freedom to Follow Guidelines', 'Using a Country as a Test for Website Plans', 'Location of Website Management'.

Table 6: The 'Subsidiary Management' Dimension

Themes	Website Control by HQ vs Subsidiary	Freedom to Follow Guidelines	Using a Country as a Test for Website Plans	Location of Website Management
Definition	This second-order construct debates the degree of website control at subsidiaries.	This second-order construct entails the freedom given by HQ to culturally adapt.	This second-order construct discusses how a host country website can be used as a test.	This second-order construct discusses whether the website is managed in pieces.
Interview Quote	"The websites are totally managed by headquarters." (Company B)	"Everything has to look the same. And everything has to have the same tone of voice. There are specific placements, in terms of branding, where the logos and titles go." (Company A)	"Every strategy, every content, every idea comes from global, and then they send it to the country they want to start with. Then it's sent to the other countries." (Company C)	"With it being such a large company, we have master sites for each subsidiary." (Company A)
Link to Literature	"With a global strategy, subsidiaries are less autonomous and HQ has more control, thereby improving coordination (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223). Additionally, with standardization, high coordination, and low autonomy, HQ and subsidiaries have a constant flow of communication." "Furthermore, the knowledge gained by subsidiary autonomy can be accumulated, analyzed, and applied on a global scale. (Sajadirad, Lassen, & Søberg, 2019:51;57)"			
Differentiation from Literature	Although the literature suggested that autonomy enabled good decision-making by the subsidiaries, the findings demonstrate that control is typically kept at least one step up from each subsidiary (e.g., HQ or regional).			

Website Control by HQ vs Subsidiary AND *Location of Website Management.* These two themes are grouped together because of the relationship between the origin of control and the location of the website code. The website control theme discusses how much control HQ has over its subsidiaries for the management of the websites. The location of website management details the ownership and location of the master sites. In this context, control is defined by the responsibility of an employee or manager in adding or changing elements on the website.

The results for this theme were split in half. For the larger MNCs (i.e., 20+ subsidiaries), the websites were controlled by the region, and the master sites were located at the subsidiaries. For the smaller ones, the websites were managed by and located at HQ. Although each subsidiary could request a content change, none of them had full control over the website.

Company A, who recently formed an EU team discussed the dynamics of control between HQ and the EU regional team.

> *"So we have an alignment with HQ, but there are certain areas where we are beginning to push and say 'actually this is not as you think, and this is a better way of doing it.' So we are actually gaining more power and gaining more independence to actually be able to properly serve the needs of the subsidiaries. It's not only HQ that we have to align our goals with, we have to align our goals to what the subsidiaries need. We need to make sure that we serve both."*
> (Company A)

Freedom to Follow Guidelines. Each company has a set of guidelines that countries must follow for the website. This theme represents the degree to which subsidiaries can change the guidelines. The pharmaceutical companies had the most freedom in their interpretation of the guidelines since each subsidiary must abide by the laws of the country. The other companies discussed an end goal of standardized websites and were, therefore, obliged to strictly follow the guidelines. While Company A first stated 'we have very strict guidelines' early in the interview, the previous quote is showing movement towards freedom.

Using a Country as a Test for Website Plans. A common theme found in the interviews was using one country as a 'guinea pig' for website content. The MNCs chose one country, usually in one region, then apply features or content to that website first. If it has positive results, they use the same for other countries in the region. Four of the companies explicitly mentioned this strategy. Additionally, Company F discussed the use of A/B website testing in the home country for their standardized website strategy.

"France has been chosen to be the design market for this year. It means that we're going to have to launch the products campaigns first in France, then in other countries." (Company C)

Internal Communication

To coordinate the online strategy between HQ and the subsidiaries, MNCs must be able to communicate with each other over long distances. This dimension describes the methods they use to do so. There are three themes found in the interviews that represent the internal communication used to coordinate a website strategy (See Table 7). They are 'Different Choices of Internal Communication Channels', 'Choosing an Internal Language', and 'Use of Point of Contacts for Subsidiaries'.

Table 7: The 'Internal Communication' Dimension

Themes	Different Choices of Internal Communication Channels	Choosing an Internal Language	Use of Point of Contacts for Subsidiaries
Definition	This second-order construct details the various communication channels MNCs use for website strategy.	This second-order construct highlights the primary language of internal communication in MNCs.	This second-order construct discusses the points of interaction between the employees involved in the website implementation.
Interview Quote	"And we've got a new process now. We just started this new platform in July, so the platform is not intuitive, and even on the agency's side, it's complicated also." (Company C)	"Even though we speak English [here], the central team language is Korean." (Company A)	"There are proxy people that are working directly with [each] country." (Company F)
Link to Literature	"While face-to-face interaction is the best option for building relationships and trust, other forms of communication each have their benefits (Sisko, Ensio, & Nevalainen, 2014:282)."		
Differentiation from Literature	Despite the numerous amount of beneficial communication channels, email was primarily and sometimes exclusively used.		

Different Choices of Internal Communication Channels. This theme discusses which communication channels MNCs use to communicate internally. Email is generally known to be

the most common channel, and this study confirms that. The majority of the MNCs use email to interact with colleagues inside and outside their country. However, Company F and Company C additionally reported using chat-based communication platforms. Three of the companies that only used email complained about time delays. One complaint was due to time zones, and another was due to culture.

> *"It's very difficult to coordinate because of the differences. For example, in Belgium, they start working very early, like at 7 am or 6 am. And they end the day at 4 pm or 5 pm. Which is different in France, where we start around 9 or 10 am and then end the day at six or seven, or even later."* (Company D)

On the other hand, Company F expressed his joy in meeting in person, even just once a year.

> *"We are lucky because each year we have a big company meeting for two or three days. All the people from other countries are meeting each other at one nice place. So it's the occasion to discuss with the other country people and meet in real life. That's nice."*

Choosing an Internal Language. This theme considers the language chosen by the MNC for internal communication. For all MNCs in this study except two, English was the required language, regardless of the location of HQ. Company D spoke a mixture of two languages but chose to speak the country's language if another country was able to. Company E, a French company, only spoke French with other subsidiaries in Europe.

> *"We all communicate in French. No English allowed (laughing)"* (Company E)

Use of Point of Contacts for Subsidiaries. This theme relates to the intermediary unit discussion in the literature review. It summarizes how MNCs designate a point of contact (POC) for each subsidiary. Two of the companies explained how they typically only have contact with one

person when communicating with other countries. They both reported being satisfied. In response to my question about communication challenges other than time differences, Company D said: "Oh no, it works pretty well." On the other hand, two companies without POCs seemed unsure.

> *"So it means a lot of people have really specific roles. And you don't know if you are talking to the right person."* (Company C)

Discussion

As an MNC increases its presence online, it improves its performance globally (Yip and Dempster, 2005:9). 'Globally' describes the highest order in today's market. It also implies unity. With the link between the internet and the global market, the idea of standardization becomes prominent. Yet, people are neither standardized nor united in their tastes and preferences. They belong to unique families, cities, countries, and cultures, being impacted by each one. From a corporate point of view, they are all potential consumers and must be targeted from both a global and local perspective.

This combination of dueling strategies led to the formation of the first research question, "To what extent does an MNC use a glocalized website strategy?" The key phrase, 'to what extent,' emphasizes how website strategies can be depicted on a sliding scale with 'localization' at one end, 'standardization at the other end, and 'glocalization' encompassing everything in between. Although it's possible to choose one of the contrasting approaches for the websites, the research focused on MNCs that use a combination. While I rejected some MNCs that only used a standardized approach (e.g., one website with different language options), I never encountered purely localized websites (e.g., websites with different URLs, formats, and content that are operated solely by the host country). I concluded in the literature review that purely adapting the language can still be considered a standardized approach due to the available technology and ease of translating procedures.

The findings in this study demonstrated that MNCs are less likely to choose an overall strategy for their websites. They may intend a strategy, but product features, company information, logistics, brand promotion, and legal reasons inhibit the implementation of a chosen

approach. If the MNCs propose a more standardized approach to their websites, those

considerations may incite a challenge. If the MNCs propose a more localized approach, the

feasibility of subsidiary coordination (e.g., time and effort) can be a natural deterrent. Therefore,

the second research question, "How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving

subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?", initialized the study of coordination, management, and

communication between the home country and host country. The results of the study suggest

variation in the strategies used by MNCs. They all used different approaches, including the two

companies operating in the same industry. Because this information is unavailable to the public,

a study was important to discover these methods.

Theoretical Implications

The findings show the importance of promoting a positive brand image on the corporate

websites of MNCs. Whether they accomplished this through banners, regularly updating content

on the homepage, or creating an alternative website dedicated to this goal, the firms believed it to

be a crucial function of the website. This is in line with previous literature, by Argyriou et al.,

(2006), who prioritize this objective. The companies in this study use brand colors in their online

efforts to standardize the brand in foreign markets and promote the quality of their product

selection. This gives the notion that standardization can influence the perception of new products

through a positive association with established integrity. It also supports Shin and Huh

(2009:289), who argue that a company with a favorable brand image may choose to standardize,

and Okazaki (2005:91), who suggests the importance of brand image in the virtual world.

Furthermore, trust is a by-product of this approach. The findings show that displaying

consistency in quality impacted consumers. By focusing on the brand image, firms try to develop

trust in their website, supporting Sinkovics et al. (2007:223) argument that trust leads to a positive online experience. Because a website is a virtual medium for communication, its impersonal characteristic makes trust an important objective for MNC websites. Contrary to the idea that trust is developed by a standardized approach, both Shin and Huh (2009:290) and Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) (in Halliburton and Ziegfeld, 2009:910) argue that trust is more affected by targeting a culture using a localized approach. While the larger companies in this study focused on their brand image to develop trust, the smaller MNCs used customer reviews to reinforce it. Customer reviews can only be seen as an adaptation if a firm chooses to only display the reviews given by the host country customers. Otherwise, it's a 'numbers game,' categorized as standardization. Therefore, the findings show more evidence for standardization as a technique for trust development on their websites.

From the migration of country websites to centralized management through software such as a content management system (CMS), MNCs have expressed a desire to move to a more standardized approach. All of the MNCs have changed their strategy within the past few years from local websites to either central or regional management. This may be due to the complexity of adaptation in terms of 'over-localization risks', customer confusion due to variation in websites, brand image disparity, technological advancements, error-prone procedures due to a lengthy process, and time constraints, as evidenced by this study. The evidence supports Shin and Huh's (2009:289) noted standardized advantages of cost-efficiency and convenience.

Furthermore, a theme found in this study was the ability of an MNC website to appeal to all people to at least one degree. This was expressed either directly by the MNCs in this study or through standardized methods that accomplish localized needs (e.g., using consumer reviews to establish trust, log-in features to build customer relationships through data input, and portraying

quality through a global message). While this implication does not exactly support the globalized

need for a globalized population (Kansal, 2015:41), it is contrary to Sinkovics et al. (2007:229)'s

suggestion that there are no 'global people'. Instead, this study argues that everyone is global to a

degree, and MNCs are able to find that commonality through the methods listed above.

Based on brand image consistency, company communication, and mass appeal through

standardization, I argue that MNC website strategies are not necessarily 'glocalized,'

semantically speaking. Instead, I would argue that websites have an overall standardized

approach with adapted elements. This is due to the importance of a consistent global brand

image, which is a primary website purpose. Also, interactivity, one of the most important aspects

of a website (Okazaki, 2005:91), manifests itself in the output of company and product

information, which the findings show to be standardized to advertise consistent quality, and the

input of data through analytics software, indicating impersonal and algorithmic characteristics.

Unless a subsidiary has full control over the website to change format and content as needed,

which was not the case in any companies involved, the majority of website analytics must be

viewed from a global perspective. These two standardized primary website functions suggest that

MNCs use a standardized approach with adaptations instead of a 'glocalized' approach. It's less

of a standardization and localization 'continuum' (Shin and Huh, 2009:290) and more of a

hierarchy with standardization at the top and localization opportunities scattered beneath (e.g.,

content, payment options, delivery options, languages, time zones, newsletters, format, features,

etc.).

The second research question focused on the website strategies from an internal point of

view. Except for one MNC, which separated their HQ in the US from the rest of the world (i.e.,

International Business Unit (IBU), the website strategy always started at HQ. It started with the

creation of guidelines by HQ. Next, the guidelines were sent to either the region and subsidiaries or they were directly implemented by the digital team at HQ (e.g. for the smaller MNCs). After receiving the guidelines, the region or subsidiaries were responsible for localizing the content, if needed. For example, legal regulations and translation were the primary reasons. While complying with legal regulations is an absolute necessity, translation is close to it since the target market will either not be able to understand, or they will see a sometimes incoherent translation from a web browser. Because HQ is primarily the origin of the guidelines, the coordination of the website strategy rarely relies on the decision-making of the subsidiaries. Although it was found that the subsidiaries give their input on which content to use and how to adapt it, the website campaigns did not call for subsidiary autonomy. With the lack of autonomy and local decision-making, this study showed consistent communication with HQ and time delays due to cultural, geographical, and psychic distances, both of which support the literature (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223; Yue, 2015:279). I should also note that psychic distance, the gap of knowledge in a foreign market (Yamin and Sinkovics, 2006:340), played a significant role in the hierarchical website approaches when considering legal compliance.

Although HQ was the primary coordinator, one of the MNCs in this study explained the progression in their autonomy. For the newly created regional team, it was still obligatory to strictly follow the guidelines. However, the participant noted an increasing amount of authority at the regional level. This is important to note for a few reasons. First, website strategies are evolving, and website teams reported being formed recently. Second, it supports the literature that suggests local units begin with strict control, then gain autonomy from HQ over time (Yue, 2015:286). Third, it highlights the relationship between subsidiaries as knowledge generators and trusted decision-making (Sajadirad, Lassen, & Søberg, 2019:51;57).

In addition to the flow of guidelines, control was rooted at the headquarters or regional headquarters of the MNCs while the master sites were either located at the subsidiary level or HQ. If the country manager wanted to change anything on the website or edit the content based on their cultural knowledge, it had to be verified by HQ. These findings indicated a strict procedure for following the guidelines. This suggests that subsidiaries have yet to earn the trust needed from HQ to make strategic decisions for the website. Because the coordination procedures were generated by HQ, socialization techniques were also not found to be relevant in this study. Rather than trying to align subsidiary goals with corporate goals through training from an internal management standpoint (Ambos et al., 2019:68-69), the coordination strategy indicated the alignment of a global vision with a local vision from a website strategy standpoint. In other words, goal alignment was focused on marketing rather than management through the implementation of strict guidelines with optional subsidiary input on elements such as culturally- or legally-appropriate content.

Managerial Implications

One of the findings in this study was the existence of an informational website. It is a website that MNCs use for informational and brand image purposes. The benefit of this alternative website is that it is not constricted by country-specific laws. In every case in this study, this website's URL ended with '.com'. While this top-level domain was originally created for the US Department of Defense, it is still operated by an American company, Verisign, and falls under the jurisdiction of US law. No MNCs in this study that use this type of informational website have their headquarters in the US. This implies that using an American domain may give MNCs the most freedom in their website strategy. This is further backed by the lack of the

GDPR in the US, the acceptance of aggressive marketing in the US as explained by one participant, and the lack of strict regulations for the promotion of alcohol, tobacco products, and pharmaceutical products in comparison to the countries that the website informants operated in.

The MNCs also benefited from this 'international' website in its use as a communication channel. As discussed in the findings, the alternate website was used to display company and product information. This gives MNCs an alternative place to store lengthy descriptions while giving them an opportunity to highlight key product features, promote products, and focus their marketing efforts on the host country's website. This is a solution for MNCs who want to create a standardized brand image while localizing specific content.

As explained by the theoretical implications, MNCs tend to use a standardized strategy with opportunities to localize website elements. From the literature, the following were suggested to be localized: time, date, zip code, country-specific URL, log-in features, feedback forms, payment options, and individualized product recommendations (Sinkovics et al., 2007:223; Okazaki, 2005:92). However, I've argued log-in features can be considered a standardized approach because of a mass collection of data, and product recommendations can be promoted equally and consistently to advertise quality. With the exception of those two, the others were found to be localized in the study. Furthermore, I add website keywords, links to retailers, newsletters, and delivery options to this list of localization opportunities. Newsletters were also thought to be standardized by Okazaki (2005:91). However, the evidence from this study supports opportunities for both. They can be a way to communicate with a foreign community (i.e., localized) or a way to communicate corporate information (i.e., standardized). Also, the literature did not consider website keywords in the standardization debate. Yet, the findings show a high consideration for search engine results. Website keywords are crucial for

search engine optimization (SEO) on search engines (i.e., Google). MNCs must be conscious of the commonly used terms in their market and industry when translating content to best serve SEO. Therefore, carefully considering which words to put on a website encourages a localization opportunity. Finally, the content was found to be both standardized and localized by all companies, depending on its message. One recommendation from this study suggests that seasons and holidays provide an excellent opportunity to localize.

Another finding in this study was the use of a test country. The MNCs reported testing a website campaign in one country before implementing that strategy in the other subsidiaries if the results are positive. While the initial strategy may be adapted to the culture of the test country, it still implies a standardization approach since it will also be used in other countries. However, this strategy might be better suited to subsidiaries within the same region.

Defining roles and positions can play an integral part in developing an efficient website strategy. As evidenced by this study, having multiple points of contact between the subsidiaries and HQ resulted in problems such as miscommunication, speaking to the wrong person, and implementing the wrong content. The MNCs that reported having one proxy per country or team expressed fewer problems in their coordination system. This supports the idea of an intermediary unit (Yue, 2015:279). Because website strategy implementation involves positions such as webmasters and web developers, digital teams, UX teams, communication teams, marketing teams, legal representatives, and country managers, establishing one point of contact can help avoid problems in internal communication.

Conclusion

Theoretical Limitations

This study has limitations in the findings. The first research question addressed the extent to which an MNC website is 'glocalized.' While the findings support the localization of different elements on a website due to legal compliance, translations, logistics, and holidays, there was a lack of evidence on content localization due to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This may be a result of standardized approaches or possibly the lack of knowledge of said dimensions (i.e., the website informants did not consider the cultural dimensions of their country or the host country when creating content).

Another limitation in this study was interactivity as a website purpose. Brand image and the display of company information were commented on, which both can be considered an external output, but the input by the consumers was only expressed by log-in features and contact forms. These two inputs can be noted for data collection methods, but there is no evidence on how MNCs can use that data to adapt their websites within the confines of the HQ guidelines. Furthermore, it was undetermined which data played the most significant role in MNC KPIs as determinants of website success. It would be interesting to know whether something general like the overall web page bounce rate or something more specific like the click-through rate on adapted content, by men aged between 18-25 living in a host country, played a more important role in subsidiary requests for adapting content or any role at all. Additionally, this study lacked a cross-analysis of website success based on the specific MNC approaches versus SEO scores.

From a marketing standpoint, this study lacked evidence on the considerations during the creation of a website campaign. The findings pointed to keeping consistent brand colors and displaying appropriate information, but they did not address why certain photos were chosen to represent the company and its products across all of the websites. It is unknown whether the images and banners were originally created based on cultural neutrality or because they tested well in either the home country or test country.

Methodological Limitations

One of the chosen criteria for the participants in this study proved to not be impactful. Originally, the goal of the qualitative research was to speak with website informants from HQ, subsidiaries, MNCs with more standardized website approaches, and MNCs with less standardized website approaches. While the participants were equally divided in their location at HQ and subsidiaries, finding informants from MNCs with less standardized approaches proved to be difficult. As discussed in the implications of this paper, the MNCs used standardized approaches with opportunities to localize. While it did vary in the degree of standardization for these website elements, this paper lacks the strategies for highly localized strategies. This could be due to the early stages in establishing website approaches.

Another limitation in this study was the location of the sample. Although the MNCs varied in the location of their headquarters, all of the website informants were physically located in Europe even if they were responsible for the websites in Asia and North America. Europe consists of strong economies and varied cultures in close proximity, giving MNCs a Euro-centric perspective. Still, there is no evidence of the difference between regional approaches.

The size of the sample also played a limiting role in the research. The sample consisted of six interviews from six participants. In this capacity, this study did not hit its mark. The goal was to have a minimum of eight interviews. Without hitting the minimum, the study may not have captured additional themes that could have impacted the implications and recommendations.

Finally, there was variation in the job positions of the website informants. As discussed in this paper, an MNC website strategy involves many different people. The participants in this study ranged from web developers to digital specialists. The disparity in roles may have affected the data. For example, a web developer, while not having the same knowledge of branding as someone on the marketing team, may be able to give more insight on the internal procedures due to collaboration with multiple teams or vice versa. Because of the different positions, the interview questions were asked differently, resulting in a possible interview bias.

Future Research

This study on the website approaches succeeded in determining how MNCs can promote their brand consistently across subsidiary websites and develop consumer trust by using standardized methods. Additionally, it points out which website elements can be adapted to the culture. Because the first research question was to determine the extent of website 'glocalization,' concluding that MNCs typically use a standardized approach in their website purpose with localized opportunities in their website elements provides insight into the type of strategy that an MNC should initially adopt. As discovered by the research, these strategies are less than a few years old, indicating future opportunities to study this topic once they are more established.

This study also exposed how MNCs coordinate their strategy with strict guidelines from HQ with an openness to adapt certain content based on subsidiaries' counsel. Furthermore, it was discovered that MNCs assign roles for different stages of the implementation (e.g., content creation, adapted translation, content verification, legal compliance, subsidiary/team point of contact, and regional teams). Also, using a test country and international website were found to be useful tactics.

However, the limitations highlight a few opportunities for more research, namely the impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on website content, the internal strategies of highly localized MNC websites, and cultural considerations when marketing standardized content. In addition to these three topics, the difference between regional website strategies and the effect of website data on local decision-making could be investigated in further research. Furthermore, a two-case study design (e.g., one highly globalized website and one highly localized website), where one person at each stage or team of the implementation process is interviewed could provide more insight into the difference in strategy and overcome the variation in job limitation.

Practical Recommendations for MNC website strategies:

1. Create an 'international' website to promote the brand, communicate company and product information, and provide lengthy descriptions

2. Standardize the website approach and look for localization opportunities:

    a. Time, date, zip code, country-specific URL, feedback forms, payment options

    b. Links to retailers

    c. Newsletters

    d. Website keywords for SEO

    e. Delivery options

    f. Seasonal and holiday-specific content

3. Choose a country to test a website campaign

4. Establish a point of contact for each team, subsidiary, and HQ personnel

5. Control the subsidiaries at the beginning with an open mind for autonomy later

6. Designate a person in the host country to translate by adapting the message to consider SEO

7. Designate a person to verify the website elements after implementation

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Appendix A: Discussion Guidelines for the Participants

Note: Your **data** will only be used for research. Any personal information will be anonymized. Company information will also be anonymized upon request. NDA accepted.

Goals

To answer the research questions by determining the different strategies that MNCs use for their websites (i.e., adapting vs. standardizing website elements) and coordination process between HQ and subsidiaries (e.g., coordination, communication, socialization, and management).

Target Audience

Website informants - People involved in the decision-making and/or implementation process of an MNC website strategy

1. Website informants at an MNC with a highly **localized** website (Target Audience 1)
2. Website informants at an MNC with a highly **globalized** website (Target Audience 2)
3. Website informants at **HQ** (Target Audience 3)
4. Website informants at the **subsidiary** (Target Audience 4)

Summary

The topic of my research is focused on the websites of Multinational Companies (MNCs) as well as the internal structure of the Headquarters (HQ) and subsidiaries, including the strategies affecting the relationship between the two units on a digital level, (i.e., organization, communication, the perception of the unit in its home and host country, cultural strategies, and the maintenance of a brand image on a website). In other words, the topic relates to how MNCs strategize the layout of their websites across subsidiaries, using approaches such as globalization, localization, or a hybrid of the two as well as the various organizational components affecting the implementation of the chosen strategy (e.g., cultural and language barriers, human resource management, coordination, and internal communication channels).

Appendix B: Interview Guidelines for Qualitative Research

Goals

To answer the research questions by determining the different strategies that MNCs use for their websites (i.e., adapting vs. standardizing website elements) and coordination process between HQ and subsidiaries (e.g., coordination, communication, socialization, and management).

Target Audience

Website informants - People involved in the decision-making and implementation process of an MNC website strategy

1. Website informants at an MNC with a highly **localized** website (Target Audience 1)
2. Website informants at an MNC with a highly **globalized** website (Target Audience 2)
3. Website informants at **HQ** (Target Audience 3)
4. Website informants at the **subsidiary** (Target Audience 4)

Question Design in this Document

Research Questions
   A. RQ1 - Website Strategy
   B. RQ2 - Coordination, Communication, Socialization, Management

Interview Questions
   A. Questions for ALL
   B. Questions specific to Target Audience 1 (TA1)
   C. Questions specific to Target Audience 2 (TA2)
   D. Questions specific to Target Audience 3 (TA3)
   E. Questions specific to Target Audience 4 (TA4)

Key:
Red: Questions for RQ1
Blue: Questions for RQ2

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent does an MNC use a glocalized website strategy?

        Objective 1A: To find the specific strategy MNCs use

        Objective 1B: To discover which aspects of a website are standardized and localized

        Objective 1C: To discover the goals a company considers when choosing its strategy

        Objective 1D: To discover how much authority the subsidiary has for its website strategy

RQ2: How can HQ both coordinate their websites while giving subsidiaries the freedom to adapt?

        Objective 2A: To discover how a website strategy is communicated from HQ to subsidiaries?

        Objective 2B: To discover how the goals of autonomous subsidiaries are aligned with those of HQ?

        Objective 2C: To discover how much decision-making authority is given to the subsidiaries for the website

        Objective 2D: To discover how an MNC coordinates the standardized part of a glocalized strategy across multiple subsidiaries?

Interview Questions

A. Questions for all (QfA)

a. Who are you, what do you do, for how long have you been in this position? **(info question)**

b. How involved are you in the decision-making process for the website? **(info question/Management RQ2)**

c. How would you define the purpose of your company's website? **(Website strategy RQ1)**

d. How important is it to keep a consistent brand image across company websites? **(Website strategy RQ1)**

e. Which part of the website do you think should be standardized and which should be localized? For example, content, design, format. Why? **(Website strategy RQ1) --- Instead:**
   i. What parts of your website are currently standardized, which are not and how happy are you about the current degree of standardization?

f. Do you feel that adapting the website to the culture changes the image of the company? **(Website Strategy RQ1)**

g. What kind of things need to stay consistent on the website and what are you free to adapt? **(Website Strategy RQ1)**

h. Subsidiary: Are there guidelines for the website from HQ? How do you respect those guidelines? **(Website Strategy RQ1)/(Socialization RQ2)**
   i. HQ: Do you feel like the subsidiaries respect the guidelines for the website?

i. Subsidiary: How much instruction for the website do you receive from HQ? **(Coordination RQ2)**
   i. HQ: How much instruction is given to the subsidiary for the website?

j. Subsidiary: How do you communicate with HQ? Channels, language? **(Communication RQ2)**
   i. HQ: how do you communicate with subsidiaries? Channels, language

k. What's the perception of management among your colleagues? How do your colleagues and people around you feel about the management and coordination? Do you see areas of improvement or things they do especially well?… Do you agree with that? **(Management RQ2)**

l. Is there anyone else you feel I could talk to about this?

B. Highly localized website (TA1)

    a. Why do you think your company chose to adapt the website to each culture? **(Website Strategy RQ1) --- AFTER QfA.d**

    b. *What kind of opportunities and advantages arise in your opinion from adapting your website to culture***? --- AFTER QfA.g**

    c. What kind of challenges arise from adapting your website to culture? **(Website Strategy RQ1)**

    d. How often does management communicate a standardized idea (**clarify what it is: newsletter/promotional message from corporate, website feature such as a widget, standardized feedback forms, new product content, website colors, brand image, chatbots, images of company leaders, company vision statement, company rank and awards** -) for the website? **(Communication RQ2)** What's the implementation process for that idea like? **(Website Strategy RQ1) --- AFTER QfA.**

C. Highly globalized website (TA2)

    a. Why do you think your company chose to standardize the website? **(Website Strategy RQ1) --- AFTER QfA.d**

    b. *What kind of opportunities and advantages arise in your opinion from standardizing your website across cultures?* **--- AFTER QfA.g**

    c. What kind of challenges arise from keeping a globalized website? **(Website Strategy RQ1)**

    d. Do you find that each subsidiary website is at the same level for the global plan or are some executed better than others? Why do you think that is? **(Management RQ2) --- AFTER QfA.j**

D. HQ (TA3)

    a. Are you in contact with the subsidiaries? **(Communication RQ2) --- AFTER QfA.i/j**

        i. Yes - How do you face the challenges that arise when you communicate with them?

        ii. No - Do you feel that the subsidiaries share the same company goals or do they seem independent? Why do you think it's that way?

    b. Do you think that the subsidiaries need more or less monitoring for the website? Currently, How do you monitor the subsidiary websites? **(Management RQ2)**

    c. Do you think that the subsidiary goals match those of HQ? **(Socialization RQ2)**

E. Subsidiary (TA4)

    a. How free are you to make decisions for your subsidiary website? **(Management RQ2) --- AFTER QfA.i**

    b. Do you feel that you need more or less communication from HQ? Or the same? How is strategy communicated to you currently? **(Communication RQ2)**

    c. How are company goals communicated to you? Do you feel like your goals are aligned with HQ? **(Socialization RQ2)**