



Cause, effect and benefits of a standardised corporate visual identity system of UK companies operating in Malaysia

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Abstract *Investigates the degree of global standardisation of a corporate visual identity system (CVIS) in multinational operations. A special emphasis of this research is accorded to UK companies operating in Malaysia. In particular, the study seeks to reveal the reasons for developing a standardised CVIS; the behavioural issues associated with CVIS; and the determination in selecting a graphic design agency. The findings of the research revealed that multinational corporations in an increasingly corporate environment adopted a standardised CVIS for several reasons, including, aiding the sale of products and services, creating an attractive environment for hiring employees, and increasing the company's stature and presence. Further findings show that the interest in global identity was stimulated by global restructuring, merger or acquisition. The above trends help explain why increased focus has been accorded to CVIS over the past five years by many UK companies operating in Malaysia. Additional findings reveal that both the UK design agencies and in-house design department are used in the development of the firms' CVIS.*

Introduction

In recent years the globalisation of multinational corporations has become a major theme among scholars of international marketing strategy (Douglas and Craig, 1992). One notable facet of the literature on international marketing strategy is the lack of emphasis accorded to the role of a corporate visual identity system (CVIS). Whilst there is a distinct literature of a corporate visual identity (Chajet and Schatchman, 1998; Olins, 1995), this literature is, for the main, anecdotal in nature and is written by visual identity consultants. A further characteristic of the literature is that whilst it is visionary in scope and practical in content the *modus vivendi* of a good deal of this writing is the promotion of graphic design consultancies. Such writers have ideas and services to sell rather than hypotheses to test or challenge.

The authors' examination of the literature and of case histories pertaining to the development of new, global, CVIS found that organisations typically adopt

one of two approaches. The first approach is built on a standardised international CVIS based on the assumption that an identical CVIS is desirable, resulting in focused design management and economies of scale. With this approach there is an implicit assumption that various national and/or cultural groups decode the messages emitted from such a CVIS in a similar manner. Among UK based organisations adopting this stance are the BBC, Laura Ashley, ICI, Shell and Sun Alliance. The second approach draws on the notion that multiple CVIS are required so as to accommodate and reflect distinct cultural mores and traditions that exist globally. Organisations which have adopted this strategy are Blue Circle Industries, Hickson International and Pearson.

In defining a corporate visual identity system (CVIS) the antipodean scholar, Dowling (1994), states that a CVIS encompasses a quintet of elements embracing:

- (1) the corporate name;
- (2) a symbol or logotype;
- (3) typography;
- (4) colour; and
- (5) slogan.

For his part, Balmer (1995) in his early analysis of the corporate identity literature, identified seven schools of thought, four of which were concerned with visual identity.

These four schools of thought variously accord attention to the strategic, cultural, communication and fashionability roles of visual identity. The importance of visual identity is a not uncommon tenor in the marketing literature (Baker and Balmer, 1997), and a leading exponent of corporate identity/corporate image management, Abratt (1989, p. 68), remarked *vis-à-vis* the saliency of visual identity:

Visual identity is part of the deeper identity of the group, the outward sign of the inward commitment, serving to remind it of its real purpose.

The major objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the reasons for implementing the CVIS with the degree of CVIS standardisation. This study also examines several behavioural issues that relate to CVIS standardisation.

The generation of hypotheses

The comparative lack of theoretical sources on global corporate visual identity led the authors to review the literature on globalisation. As such, the distinct literature on corporate strategy, multinational strategic planning and the international marketing mix were examined. Whilst these sources provided some important directions and guidelines, the authors discovered that a good deal of this literature was conceptual in nature. An examination of this literature resulted in the generation of nine hypotheses which were broken

down into three broad categories. The first relates to the reasons for developing CVIS. The second relates to behavioural issues associated with CVIS and the third relates to the main determinant for selecting a graphic design agency.

Reasons for developing CVIS

Schmidt (1995), Van Riel and Balmer (1997) and Gray and Balmer (1998) implicitly and explicitly note that one explanation why many corporations are becoming concerned about their corporate identity, corporate image and reputation and visual identity is because of changes in the competitive environment. Multinational corporations are realising that they must differentiate themselves in ways that create a distinct image and corporate brand values among their diverse stakeholder groups. The above statement is also supported by research conducted by Lippincott and Margulies (1987) whereby one of the most widely identified reasons for initiating a global corporate identity is responding to a competitive environment. Gray and Smeltzer (1987) stated that a reason corporations are becoming concerned about their image is the increasing competitive arena in which they operate. In his discussion on the relationship between corporate culture and corporate identity, Downey (1986) explained that because competition is becoming increasingly severe, corporate identity is an asset for building understanding, credibility and support among a variety of key publics. Therefore our first hypothesis is:

H1: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that “responding to competitive environment” has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS internationally.

In his article on standardisation of multinational practices, Buzzell (1968) stated that executives implementing a standardised marketing approach held that consistency in product style, sales and customer service, product brand and in corporate brand names, packaging and corporate image are powerful means of increasing sales. Research undertaken by Lippincott and Margulies (1987) revealed that the most common reason for initiating a global visual identity programme is to increase sales of products and services. Hovell and Walters (1972), expounding the various strategies *vis-à-vis* international marketing strategy, hypothesised that standardisation in corporate marketing presentation can give a company a sales advantage. Marken (1990) further stated that the reason corporate identity is important is because it can extend product lives and can also help the firm’s cash flow through the inevitable sales cycles. A positive image among customers is correlated with strong sales, as hypothesised by Gray and Smeltzer (1987). Thus:

H2: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that “aiding the sale of products and/or services” has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS internationally.

Lippincott and Margulies (1987), Marken (1990), Schmidt (1995) and Sorrell (1997) all state that corporate visual identity and a corporate identity programme can also reap financial rewards for organisations in terms of attracting investment, raising capital, charging premium prices and assisting the cash-flow through sales-cycles. Hence:

H3: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that “raising money” has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS internationally.

The need to attract, retain and motivate employees is a veritable *idée fixe* in the literature as pointed out by Lippincott and Margulies (1987), Schmidt (1995), Sorrell (1997) and Balmer and Stotvig (1997). That is:

H4: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that “creating an attractive environment for hiring employees” has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS internationally.

Downey (1986) explained that corporate identity is an asset for building understanding, credibility and support among a variety of key publics. Peebles *et al.* (1977) concluded that the principal reason given in support of standardised advertising is the opportunity for the organisation to present a global corporate image and presence. Britt (1974), in his article on standardising marketing for the international market stated that a global visual identity promotes a firm’s stature and presence. Related to the above is the notion that companies need to differentiate themselves. The act of building corporate identity and visual identity into the strategic management equation provides companies with a dimension of difference that is impossible for competition to duplicate. Ackermann (1986) and Gray and Balmer (1998) argue that senior managers who use corporate and visual identity as strategic management tools can build a competitive position for which they can have proprietary value over the long term. Research undertaken among senior managers in seven countries by MORI for Henrion Ludlow and Schmidt (Schmidt, 1995) revealed that this was the single most important attribute of a CVIS. This means:

H5: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that “increasing the company’s stature and presence” has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS internationally.

Behavioural issues

The next set of hypotheses seek to highlight the relationship of CVIS standardisation and changes in behaviour *vis-à-vis* the corporate identity.

Lippincott and Margulies (1987) concluded that the majority of the companies they had contacted cited global restructuring as the main reason for

their interest in global corporate and visual identity. Lee (1983), with reference to First Star corporate identity, stated that global restructuring was a main factor for any senior bank executive to consider re-approving the bank's corporate visual identity system. Olins (1990) views concur with the aforementioned. He also commented that corporate restructuring can give rise to a review of an organisation's identity and CVIS. Articles by Decyk and McDonald (1988), Mills (1988) and Simpson (1988) take a similar perspective. These suggest that:

H6: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that the company's interest in CVIS has been the result of global restructuring.

A common *leit motif* in the literature is that many communicators have, over the last 20 years, remarked that they have observed a growth in attention given to CVIS. For example, Lippincott and Margulies (1987) in their study found that many companies stated that senior managers' interest in global visual and corporate identity had grown. Goldbaum and Hunter (1988) commented that companies such as Rhone-Poulanc, ICI and Dow Chemicals had become more sensitive about corporate and visual identity and image. These companies have become more concerned about the importance of their identity and image during the past five to ten years. In the UK it is evident that marketing expenditure and client confidence increased by spending more on design, with £526 million spent in the year to March 1998 as opposed to £397 million spent in the year before, an increase of nearly 25 per cent (*Design Week*, 1998). In short, we hypothesised that:

H7: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that the attention given to CVIS in the UK has increased over the past five years.

H8: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that the attention given to CVIS in Malaysia has increased over the past five years.

The selection of a graphic design agency

As a point-of-departure, an analysis of the role of advertising and design agencies with regard to global marketing communication strategies was undertaken.

In a major study of international advertising strategies of 150 American MNCs, it was found that among those firms using totally standardised international advertising, none of them used a foreign advertising agency (Hite and Fraser, 1988). Donnelly (1970) in his study revealed that the application of a standardised advertising agency is closely associated to a centralised organisational structure. Douglas and Wind (1987) broadly concurred and concluded that centralised planning and organisation of international marketing activities will naturally result in a standardisation strategy.

Standardisation *vis-à-vis* global advertising standardisation is very much enhanced if a single network-agency is used with subsidiaries, branches and/or affiliates in the countries where the firm operates (Peebles *et al.*, 1977). Sauvant's (1976) research found a high degree of reliance on home-country agencies by multinational corporations. Sorenson and Wiechmann (1975), in their research on standardisation of the global marketing mix, found that the basic advertising message in 75 per cent of instances had been standardised.

With particular reference to global CVIS, Pilditch (1970) adjured against global visual identity programmes being delegated to overseas subsidiaries. He went further and advocated that not only should control be central on one department, but the responsibility should be vested in one person. Lippincott and Margulies' (1987) survey of the USA's global visual identity crisis found that in approximately 66 per cent of organisations polled, management of CVIS were handled through one office. Therefore we hypothesised that:

H9: Firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation are more likely to state that a UK design agency was responsible for the preparation of the company's CVIS.

The next section of this article focuses on the study of the nine hypotheses outlined above. At this point the objectives of the study may, usefully, be reiterated, namely: the reasons for developing CVIS; the behavioural issues associated with CVIS; and the determination in selecting a graphic design agency. The research focused on UK companies operating in Malaysia.

Methodology

The Dun and Bradstreet *Who Owns Whom* was used as the sampling frame in which a list of 111 British multinational corporations in Malaysia were identified. Malaysia was chosen because of the large number of British firms with subsidiaries there and the cultural diversity of the country: about 50 per cent Muslim Malays, 40 per cent Chinese of various dialects and religions, a well-established Indian community and a small number of indigenous inhabitants. Since Malaysia is part of the "British" Commonwealth of Nations, there is a mix of British companies operating there from those with a long lineage as well as new entrants.

The stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample. Following this method, the 111 companies were categorised, a priori, into three groups, according to their nature of main business; industrial, consumer good and services. The data presented in their annual reports were used in determining the category into which they fall. A list of firms in each of the three categories was developed and alphabetically ordered. A total of 19 industrial goods companies, nine consumer goods companies and 12 service companies were then randomly selected (refer to Table I).

In order to have some degree of standardisation in conducting the survey across organisations, the questionnaire developed was highly structured with some open-ended questions. The questionnaire was self-administered by the

respondents with the researcher present. The closed questions consisted primarily of 11-point scales rating, where the extreme scales were anchored by definition in words. The 11-point scale rating was used because this scale was consistent with measuring the percentage change in corporate visual elements from country to country; 0 per cent corresponding to completely different, 100 per cent meaning exactly the same or identical, with 10 per cent divisions between. The 11-point rating scale was considered to be the most suitable technique to capture the respondent's opinion on the degree of CVIS standardisation.

Findings

The hypothesis tests compared the views of firms using a high degree of CVIS standardisation with those who were not. High scores were those scoring an average of seven or above on the 11-point scales. The high and low scores were compared using a chi-square test with Yates correction on two by two matrices (Table II).

H1: Responding to a competitive environment

The results support hypothesis *H1*. The findings reveal that 72 per cent of the companies that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation state that "responding to a competitive environment" has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. For the companies that adopt a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 64 per cent state that "responding to a competitive environment" has a low degree of importance.

H2: Aiding the sale of products or services

The results show that 79 per cent of the MNCs that adopt a high degree of CVIS standardisation state that "aiding the sale of products or services" has a high degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. Among the companies that adopt a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 57 per cent and 43 per cent state "aiding the sale of products or services" has a low and high degree of importance respectively. This hypothesis is supported.

Table I.
Companies
participating in the
survey

Industrial	BICC, Blue Circle Industries, British Aerospace, British Petroleum, BTR, General Electric, GKN, Hickson International, High Point, Imperial Chemical Industries, Laing, Laporte, Lucas Industries, Redland, Renold, Tarmac, Taylor Woodrow, Tilbury Douglas, Wimpey
Services	Barclays Bank, British Airways, British Gas, British Telecommunications, Forte, Guardian Royal Exchange, PA Consulting Group, Royal Insurance, Standard Chartered, Sun Alliance Group, Willis Corroon, WPP
Consumer goods	BAT, Courts (Furnishers), Glaxo Holdings, Gestetner, London International Group, Pearson, Shell, SmithKline Beecham, Wellcome

Hypotheses	Variables	Significance level		Results
		χ^2	<i>p</i>	
<i>Reasons</i>				
<i>H1</i>	Competitive environment	3.49	0.06	Supported
<i>H2</i>	Sale of products/services	7.34	0.01	Supported
<i>H3</i>	Raising money	1.42	0.23	Not supported
<i>H4</i>	Hiring employees	16.20	0.02	Supported
<i>H5</i>	Stature and presence	7.08	0.01	Supported
<i>Behavioural issues</i>				
<i>H6</i>	Global restructuring	0.02	0.89	Not supported
<i>H7</i>	Attention of CVIS in UK	0.07	0.73	Not supported
<i>H8</i>	Attention of CVIS in Malaysia	2.74	0.09	Supported
<i>Agency selection</i>				
<i>H9</i>	Preparation site	1.51	0.22	Not supported

Note: Yates' correlation is used to adjust for small sample cell size

Table II.
Results of cross-
tabulations

H3: Raising money

As far as “raising money” is concerned, it is found that for those companies that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation, 54 per cent and 46 per cent state that this reason has a high and low degree of importance respectively, thus hypothesis *H3* is not supported. With regard to the MNCs that implement a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 71 per cent state that “raising money” has a high degree of importance and 29 per cent state that it has a low degree of importance.

H4: Creating an attractive environment for hiring employees

The results show that 79 per cent of the companies that adopt a low degree of CVIS standardisation state that “creating an attractive environment for hiring employees” has a low degree of importance in their decision to develop and implement CVIS. Among the companies that adopt a high degree of CVIS standardisation, 64 per cent state that “creating an attractive environment for hiring employees” has a high degree of importance in their CVIS decisions. These results support hypothesis *H4*.

H5: Increasing the company's stature and presence

The findings reveal that 96 per cent of the MNCs that adopt a high degree of CVIS standardisation state that “increasing the company's stature and presence” has a high degree of importance in developing their CVIS. Among the companies that implement a low degree of CVIS standardisation the findings are 57 per cent and 43 per cent state that “increasing the company's stature and presence” has a high and low degree of importance in their CVIS decisions respectively. Consequently, hypothesis *H5* is supported.

H6: Interest in CVIS has been the result of global restructuring

The hypothesis for global restructuring (*H6*) is not supported. For the companies that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation 42 per cent state that global restructuring and 58 per cent state “others” as their reason of interest in CVIS. Among the MNCs that adopt a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 50 per cent state global restructuring as their reason for interest in CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. The other 50 per cent state “others” as their reason for interest in CVIS.

H7: Attention given to CVIS in the UK has increased over the past five years

A total of 71 per cent of the companies that implement a low degree of CVIS standardisation and 62 per cent of the companies that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation state that the attention given to CVIS in the UK has increased over the past five years. Therefore, the result is not supporting hypothesis *H7*.

H8: Attention given to CVIS in Malaysia has increased over the past five years

As far as Malaysia is concerned, 62 per cent of the MNCs that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation state that attention given to CVIS has increased over the past five years. Among the companies that adopt a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 71 per cent state that the attention given to CVIS has been the same over the past five years. Hypothesis *H8* is therefore supported.

H9: A UK design agency was responsible for the preparation of the company's CVIS

Hypothesis *H9*, that a UK design agency is responsible for the preparation of the company's CVIS, is not supported. The findings show that among the companies that adopt a high degree of CVIS standardisation, 62 per cent state that the UK design agency was responsible for the preparation of CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. For the MNCs that implement a low degree of CVIS standardisation, 64 per cent state that the in-house UK parent and/or the Malaysian subsidiary was responsible for the preparation of CVIS between the UK and Malaysia.

Discussion and conclusions

Reasons for a high degree of standardisation of a CVIS

This study found that all of the reasons for developing CVIS, except for “raising money” (*H3*), have a significant relationship with the degree of CVIS standardisation. The multinational corporations adopting a high degree of CVIS standardisation consider “responding to competitive environment” (*H1*), “aiding the sale of product or services” (*H2*), “creating an attractive environment for hiring employees” (*H4*) and “increasing the company's stature and presence” (*H5*), are important reasons in their decision to develop and implement a standardised CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. As far as

“raising money” (*H3*) is concerned, the result has been insignificant. Therefore, *H1, H2, H4, H5* are supported and *H3* is not supported.

Hovell and Walters (1972), Buzzell (1968), Gray and Smeltzer (1987) and Downey (1986) *inter alia* forwarded five major reasons why companies employ the highly standardised marketing and CVIS. The findings in this research project all supported all the reasons that they highlighted except one. It appears that the implementation of a high degree of standardised CVIS strategy is the end result of the realisation that this strategy will enable the companies to compete more effectively in the global environment. Therefore, competitive forces in the major markets have persuaded the British companies operating in Malaysia to adopt a more standardised CVIS. In addition, it appears that the standardised strategy assists the company in marketing its products and services, and attracts better and brighter executives and employees worldwide. These reasons were highlighted by the executives because of the positive association generally connected between big MNCs with quality products, prestige and high reputation, and an excellent remuneration package. Furthermore, the findings suggest that a standardised strategy had enhanced and increased the company’s stature and presence in the international arena. This reason was mentioned by almost all of the respondents that adopt the high standardisation CVIS strategy. As far as “raising money” is concerned, the finding has been significant. This probably reflects that much of the money and capital is raised in the UK by both groups.

The corporate communications executive of a leading management consultancy emphasised the importance of perception and presence:

We are a big international company. We have about 80 offices in 20 countries around the world. It is important that everybody presents the one company image. Previously we were so diversified. Therefore, the switch to one company CVIS was critical to our marketing and selling and how our clients perceive us internationally.

On the issue of competition, the corporate affairs executive of an industrial-based company remarked:

The main reason we had to reassess our corporate visual identity two years ago is because all of our international competitors in our major marketplace have employed the monolithic identity system.

The corporate communications executive of a leading consumer-based company mentioned one of the reasons that its CVIS was developed and implemented is because of employment:

Our CVIS has been very important especially in recruiting and employing executives. We are seen as one of the major multinational corporations, we are able to attract brighter and better candidates.

As far as aiding sale of products and services is concerned, the public affairs executive of an industrial-based company remarked:

We have been using the old corporate visual identity for the past ten years. Our new corporate visual identity represents the core values and business ethos of a multinational

operation. We believe that creating a strong corporate visual identity has supported us in the business and marketing of our products and parts globally.

Behavioural issues

The only behavioural issue that is found to be significantly related to the degree of CVIS standardisation between the UK and Malaysia is the attention given to CVIS in Malaysia over the past five years (*H8*). Other behavioural issues such as reason of interest in CVIS between the UK and Malaysia (*H6*) and attention given to CVIS in the UK over the past five years (*H7*) are found to be insignificant in relation to the degree of CVIS standardisation. *H8* is supported. *H6* and *H7* are not supported.

Furthermore, it was found that those multinational corporations that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation have also given increasing attention to the CVIS in Malaysia and employ the UK design agency in the preparation of the CVIS between the UK and Malaysia. In the UK it is found that for both groups the attention given to CVIS has increased over the past five years.

Among the companies actively planning to enhance their global identities, interest was stimulated by three major factors, namely: merger, global restructuring and acquisition (Lee, 1983; Olins, 1990; Mills, 1988; Simpson, 1988; Deyck and McDonald, 1988). Lippincott and Margulies (1987) concluded that global restructuring is the major reason for the companies' interest in global corporate identity. In this study both groups cited global restructuring, merger, acquisition and company policy as the main reasons. Therefore, the hypothesis associating between high standardisation and global restructuring is not supported.

Goldbaum and Hunter (1988), Schmidt (1995) and *Design Week* (1998) emphasised that many multinational corporations world-wide have become more sensitive about the importance of their identity and corporate and visual corporate perspectives during the past five to ten years. It is evident in this study that only those companies that implement a high degree of CVIS standardisation have given increasing attention to CVIS in Malaysia over the past five years. This is primarily due to the recent influx of many Japanese companies into Malaysia which have invested heavily in making their CVIS more prominent. Therefore, to compete effectively, the British companies felt that they needed to increase their visual presence in the Malaysian environment. In the UK, it appears that both groups have increased the focus given to CVIS over the past five years.

The selection of a graphic design agency

As far as preparation of CVIS is concerned, the findings suggest that both the UK design agency and the in-house design department are used by firms that adopt the high standardisation strategy. *H9* is not supported. This finding appears not to support claims made by Hite and Fraser (1988), Sorenson and

Wiechmann (1975) and Lippincott and Margulies (1987) where the high standardisation strategy is associated with the usage of home country agency.

A corporate communications executive of a major insurance company emphasised:

We have used a UK design agency and the in-house design department in the development of our corporate identity manual. We saved ourselves quite a bit of money because we do not employ any Malaysian design agency.

The corporate affairs executive of a wood preservation firm explained:

When we designed our corporate identity, a large percentage of our division went for the monolithic structure. We have a design office here. We also use a design consultancy but their involvement and influence is not that great.

Managerial implications

This study has several implications for management and the implementation and effectiveness of global corporate marketing strategies. The research revealed that managers implementing a high standardisation of CVIS strategy are responding to the global competitive environment. In addition, such a strategy has a halo effect *vis-à-vis* utilising the global marketing mix. Senior managers adopting this approach are in a better position to recruit the best and brightest executives world-wide. Senior managers involved in this study for the most part remarked that the standardised strategy had enhanced and increased the company's stature and presence in the international arena. These findings provide evidence that the direction to follow, as far as the CVIS strategy is concerned, is towards the highly standardised end of the continuum.

Companies in the process of restructuring their global organisation, firms that are merging and MNCs acquiring other firms feel that there is a need to improve the way they present themselves world-wide. There are many examples of companies that have gone through a major CVIS change recently, such as CGU, HSBC (former Midland Bank), BP Amoco, and British Airways. For managers, it is important to bear in mind that the successful development and implementation of a standardised global CVIS is both the responsibility of the appointed design agency and the in-house design department. Close co-operation between the two parties is vital to ensure a harmonious global CVIS.

Limitations of the study and further research

The global CVIS standardisation construct reflects executive opinion and perceptions and was tested for intrafirm consistency. It is therefore expected that because of the executives' key positions in their organisations, their responses reflected the strategic choice of their respective companies and hence are reliable and valid. However, what the firms actually do globally cannot typically be observed by a researcher without utilising considerable resources to take multiple measures of the same companies across several markets. While this study provides an initial picture of the current state of affairs between the UK and Malaysia, additional countries should be included and analysed, both

to determine their individual standings and also to determine if clear grouping of countries can be identified. Further research could involve a longitudinal study whereby databases would be established to ascertain the trends in global CVIS as well as between the UK and Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, one of the key weaknesses in the ongoing global CVIS debate is the inability to prove any point, due to the proliferation of anecdotal literature. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematically generated data about corporate practice and performance. Future research activities should be directed towards clarifying present and future situations and providing guidance to management on the payoffs of alternative CVIS policies and their contribution to the broader corporate identity and corporate marketing policies adopted by the organisation.

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