

Globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing towards Vietnamese coffee brands: Effects on consumer response and soft power perception

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Abstract: Globalization has increased the need for brands to balance global consistency with local cultural relevance. However, limited research explains how such strategies adopted by domestic brands influence both consumer responses and perceptions of national soft power. This study examines how globalization–localization strategies in the cultural marketing of Vietnamese coffee brands influence cultural identification, consumer purchase intention, and national soft power perception. By integrating the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework with Competitive Identity Theory, the study conceptualizes cultural identification as the mechanism linking marketing strategies with consumer and national-level outcomes. Data from 327 Vietnamese consumers were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that global standardization and local cultural adaptation positively influence cultural identification, while cultural identification significantly affects purchase intention and national soft power perception. Mediation results further confirm the central role of cultural identification. The findings highlight that culturally embedded branding can strengthen consumer engagement while contributing to Vietnam's international cultural image, which extend both the S–O–R framework and Competitive Identity Theory in the emerging market like Vietnam.

Keywords: Cultural identification; cultural marketing; glocalization; national soft power; purchase intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent advancements in transportation, digital communication, and international trade have accelerated globalization, making national borders increasingly permeable and facilitating the circulation of products, services, cultures, and lifestyles across countries (Gayathri, 2023). As consumers are increasingly exposed to diverse cultural influences through media, tourism, and global commerce, companies are challenged to develop marketing strategies that simultaneously satisfy global market expectations while preserving local cultural relevance. This phenomenon has fostered the emergence of globalization–localization (glocalization) strategies, in which firms integrate internationally recognized business practices with culturally distinctive local values to strengthen their competitive advantage and enhance consumer engagement (Spielmann et al., 2024; Su'udiah, 2025).

Vietnam provides an especially compelling context for investigating this phenomenon. As one of the fastest-growing emerging economies, Vietnam has experienced rapid economic development, the expansion of its middle class, and increasing consumer purchasing power over the past two decades with total retail sales of goods and consumer service revenue surpassing the 7 quadrillion VND in 2025 according to National Statistics Office. These developments have created favorable conditions for both domestic and international

brands to expand their presence in the Vietnamese market. According to the International Franchise Association, Vietnam is one of the most promising franchise markets in Southeast Asia. The involvement of consumer preferences, globalization of businesses and cultures, and greater international mobility have significantly enhanced Vietnamese consumers' willingness to experience new food and beverage concepts, which make the franchising sector be highly promising over the next decade (Hoang & Bui, 2025). Reflecting this trend, international food and beverage brands such as KFC, Starbucks, and McDonald's have achieved substantial market growth, while the food and beverage sector accounts for the largest proportion of foreign franchise businesses in Vietnam, representing 41.31% of the country's franchise market (Vo et al., 2025).

Within this increasingly competitive environment, cultural marketing has become a critical strategic approach for brand differentiation (Schofield et al., 2025). Previous studies have emphasized that understanding and integrating local cultural values are essential for the success of international food and beverage franchises entering foreign markets, as cultural adaptation contributes to favorable consumer perceptions and long-term business performance (Liu et al., 2022). Beyond transferring business models and operational expertise, franchise businesses must effectively incorporate elements of the host country's cultural heritage into their branding and

marketing activities. In Vietnam, where collectivism remains a dominant cultural characteristic influencing interpersonal relationships and organizational interactions (Ng & Tan, 2021), cultural identity plays a particularly significant role in shaping consumer evaluations of brands. Furthermore, evidence from Starbucks' expansion into the Australian market suggests that successful international franchising requires careful adaptation to local consumer preferences and attitudes. These findings highlight that balancing global brand consistency with local cultural authenticity has become increasingly important in influencing consumer responses. This challenge is particularly relevant for Vietnamese coffee brands. Coffee is not merely an agricultural commodity or beverage in Vietnam but also represents an important cultural symbol closely associated with the country's history, lifestyle, and national identity. As Vietnamese coffee brands increasingly pursue international expansion, they face the strategic dilemma of maintaining authentic Vietnamese cultural values while adopting globally competitive branding and marketing practices (Tang et al, 2019). Successfully integrating globalization and localization strategies within cultural marketing may not only improve consumer responses but also enhance international recognition of Vietnamese culture through commercial brands.

From a broader perspective, globalization has also reshaped consumers' cultural identities and purchasing behaviors (Cleveland et al., 2016). Continuous exposure to foreign cultures through products, media, tourism, and digital platforms has facilitated cross-cultural consumption and encouraged consumers to develop identities that incorporate both global and local cultural orientations. The Acculturation to Global Consumer Culture (AGCC) framework suggests that increasing engagement with global consumer culture significantly influences consumers' evaluations of foreign and domestic products, particularly within emerging markets (Siamagka et al., 2015). At the same time, generational differences further shape cultural identity and consumption behavior, as younger consumers tend to demonstrate stronger openness toward global cultural influences than previous generations. Prior research has highlighted the importance of examining cohort differences in cultural identity and consumption intentions, particularly within rapidly globalizing markets such as Vietnam.

Despite growing research on cultural marketing, cultural identity, and globalization, limited studies have examined how globalization-localization strategies adopted by domestic brands can simultaneously influence consumer responses and perceptions of national soft power. This gap is particularly relevant to Vietnamese coffee brands, whose cultural heritage enables them to function beyond commercial products as carriers of Vietnamese national identity. To address this research gap, this study integrates the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework and Competitive Identity Theory. The S-O-R explains the consumer-level mechanism through which globalization-localization strategies stimulate cultural identification and subsequent behavioral responses, while

Competitive Identity Theory explains how culturally embedded brands can contribute to perceptions of national identity and soft power. Integrating these perspectives therefore provides a broader explanation of how firm-level cultural marketing can generate both consumer and national-level outcomes. Accordingly, this study examines the effects of globalization-localization strategies in the cultural marketing of Vietnamese coffee brands on cultural identification, consumer purchase intention and national soft power perception. The study is constructed with five main parts: (1) introduction; (2) theoretical framework and hypothesis development; (3) methodology; (4) results and discussion; and (5) implications and conclusion.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Framework, originally proposed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974), explains how external environmental stimuli influence individuals' internal psychological states, which subsequently shape their cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. Rather than responding directly to external cues, consumers first evaluate and interpret these stimuli through internal psychological processes before forming judgments and behavioral intentions. Owing to its comprehensive explanation of consumer decision-making, the S-O-R framework has been extensively applied in marketing and consumer behavior research to examine how various marketing activities affect consumers' perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and responses. In the context of globalization-localization strategies in cultural marketing, the S-O-R theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for explaining how cultural marketing practices implemented by brands influence consumers' psychological evaluations and subsequent responses. As brands increasingly balance global consistency with local cultural relevance, consumers are exposed to diverse cultural cues that shape their interpretation of brand authenticity, cultural meanings, and emotional attachment. These internal evaluations subsequently influence not only consumers' responses toward the brand but also their broader perceptions of the cultural image and attractiveness of the brand's country of origin. Therefore, the S-O-R theory offers a suitable theoretical lens for understanding the underlying mechanism through which globalization-localization strategies in cultural marketing shape consumer responses and perceptions in the context of Vietnamese coffee brands.

Besides, the Competitive Identity Theory, proposed by Anholt (2007), explains how countries enhance their international competitiveness and influence by communicating a distinctive national identity through culture, exports, tourism, governance, investment, and people. The theory argues that a country's reputation is not created solely through governmental promotion but is largely shaped by the experiences and perceptions that international consumers develop through its products, services, and cultural assets. As

representative national products, brands play an important role in conveying cultural values and strengthening a country's image in the global marketplace. In the context of this study, Vietnamese coffee brands represent more than commercial products; they serve as cultural ambassadors that communicate Vietnam's heritage, traditions, and identity through cultural marketing strategies. By balancing global consistency with local cultural authenticity, these brands can enhance consumers' perceptions of Vietnamese culture while strengthening Vietnam's international image and attractiveness. Therefore, Competitive Identity Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding how globalization-localization strategies in cultural marketing adopted by Vietnamese coffee brands influence consumer responses and contribute to the perception of Vietnam's national soft power.

2.2 Globalization - Localization Strategies in Cultural Marketing

Globalization has accelerated the movement of products, information, and cultures across national borders, creating unprecedented opportunities for Vietnamese coffee brands to expand into international markets (Tran et al., 2026). As Vietnamese coffee gains increasing international recognition, coffee brands face the challenge of maintaining a consistent global brand image while simultaneously responding to the cultural preferences of consumers in different countries. This has led to the emergence of globalization-localization (glocalization) strategies, which integrate the advantages of global standardization and local cultural adaptation. Rather than treating these two approaches as mutually exclusive, firms are encouraged to preserve a coherent global identity while adapting selected marketing elements to fit the cultural context of target markets (De Mooij, 2021).

Global standardization focuses on maintaining consistency in brand identity, product quality, packaging, and marketing communications across countries, allowing firms to strengthen brand recognition, establish quality consistency, and achieve economies of scale (Rashkova et al., 2024). For Vietnamese coffee brands, standardization may involve maintaining consistent product quality, visual identity, packaging design, and brand storytelling across international markets to reinforce the authenticity and reliability of Vietnamese coffee. Ho-dac & Mulder-Nijkamp (2025) further argue that standardization reinforces brand consistency and facilitates consumers' recognition of brand values across different markets. However, excessive standardization may reduce brand differentiation and weaken consumers' perceptions of authenticity, particularly for products such as coffee that embody strong cultural symbolism.

In contrast, local cultural adaptation emphasizes adjusting marketing activities to align with the cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and consumption preferences of local consumers (Yeboah-Banin & Quaye, 2021). Effective adaptation requires firms to move beyond superficial modifications by incorporating deeper cultural characteristics into branding,

communication, and customer experiences. For Vietnamese coffee brands, local adaptation may include tailoring communication styles, packaging language, promotional campaigns, café experiences, or product presentation to match local consumer preferences while preserving the distinctive cultural identity of Vietnamese coffee. Rizkita et al. (2025) suggest that integrating local cultural values into marketing strategies enables firms to establish stronger emotional connections with consumers while improving competitiveness in culturally diverse markets. Consequently, globalization and localization should not be viewed as competing approaches but rather as complementary strategies that enable Vietnamese coffee brands to remain globally recognizable while becoming locally relevant.

Within this strategic context, cultural marketing has become increasingly important for brands whose products embody strong cultural meanings. Cultural marketing extends beyond promoting functional product attributes by communicating the traditions, heritage, and cultural values associated with a brand (Moro et al., 2018). Unlike ordinary consumer products, Vietnamese coffee represents not only a beverage but also the country's agricultural heritage, traditional brewing methods, café culture, and national identity. Therefore, incorporating authentic Vietnamese cultural elements into branding, storytelling, packaging, and promotional activities enables coffee brands to create stronger emotional engagement with consumers while differentiating themselves in highly competitive international markets. Furthermore, culturally distinctive branding also contributes to promoting Vietnam's international image. Suktarachan & Thammachai (2025) demonstrate that brands incorporating unique cultural characteristics can enhance national soft power by increasing international awareness and fostering positive cultural associations. Accordingly, Vietnamese coffee brands can simultaneously function as commercial products and cultural ambassadors representing Vietnam to global consumers.

Despite these advantages, implementing globalization-localization strategies remains a significant managerial challenge. Firms must continuously balance global consistency with local relevance while preserving authentic cultural values. Excessive standardization may weaken brand differentiation and reduce consumers' perceptions of cultural authenticity, whereas excessive localization may dilute the brand's global identity and reduce consistency across international markets. Moreover, successful cultural adaptation requires a comprehensive understanding of local values, beliefs, and lifestyles rather than superficial changes to marketing content (Arifin et al., 2026). For Vietnamese coffee brands, achieving this balance is particularly important because coffee simultaneously serves as a commercial product, a cultural symbol, and a medium through which international consumers experience Vietnamese culture. By integrating globally consistent branding with authentic Vietnamese cultural elements, coffee brands can strengthen consumers' cultural identification, increase purchase intention

(Vuong & Khanh Giao, 2020), and reinforce perceptions of Vietnam's national soft power through meaningful cultural branding. Therefore, adopting a balanced globalization–localization strategy in cultural marketing provides an essential foundation for enhancing the international competitiveness of Vietnamese coffee brands while simultaneously promoting Vietnam's cultural identity on the global stage.

2.3 Cultural Identification

Cultural identification refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as belonging to and sharing the values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors of a particular culture (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). It is regarded as a relatively stable psychological characteristic that shapes individuals' cognitions, emotions, evaluations, and behaviors over time. Individuals with a high level of cultural identification tend to interpret events from the perspective of the culture with which they identify, make judgments according to its beliefs and values, choose culturally congruent behaviors, and participate actively in cultural activities (Hoang & Bui, 2025). Rather than being an innate characteristic, cultural identification is gradually developed and reinforced through continuous interactions between individuals and their cultural environment. During these interactions, cultural participation, shared experiences, and feedback from members of the cultural community strengthen individuals' sense of belonging and attachment, allowing cultural identification to become increasingly stable and influential in guiding attitudes and behaviors.

The dynamic nature of cultural identification can be further explained through the concept of cultural frame switching, which refers to changes in individuals' cultural mindsets triggered by contextual cultural cues (Matsumoto et al., 2021). Previous research has demonstrated that language, symbols, traditions, and other cultural cues activate different cultural identities, leading individuals to adjust their emotions, self-perceptions, communication styles, and behaviors according to the cultural context. Although language is considered one of the most influential contextual cues, situational cultural identification is also affected by broader contextual characteristics, including the nature of the social setting, interpersonal relationships, and the purpose of communication (Ferguson et al., 2025). These findings indicate that cultural identification is not entirely fixed but can become more salient when individuals encounter meaningful cultural symbols or experiences that remind them of a particular cultural identity. This perspective is also supported by Communication Accommodation Theory, which explains that individuals continuously adjust their communication styles and cultural expressions during social interactions to negotiate and express their cultural identities (Sun et al., 2026). Such accommodation includes both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors, allowing individuals to converge toward the communication style of their cultural in-group or diverge from out-group members depending on the social context. Surrain et al. (2019) further

suggest that language choice itself represents an accommodative behavior reflecting individuals' willingness to affiliate with a particular cultural group. Consequently, cultural identification should be understood not only as an internal psychological characteristic but also as an ongoing social process that evolves through repeated exposure to cultural symbols, interactions, and communication experiences. The stronger the exposure to authentic cultural cues, the stronger the individual's perceived connection with that culture is likely to become.

Within the context of cultural marketing, cultural identification functions as an important psychological mechanism that links cultural stimuli with consumers' cognitive and behavioral responses toward brands. Hoang & Bui (2025) argue that cultural identity influences consumers' perceptions of cultural marketing and facilitates cultural understanding in multicultural environments. Businesses can therefore strengthen consumers' cultural identification by integrating authentic cultural values into branding, storytelling, product design, packaging, advertising, and customer experiences. For Vietnamese coffee brands, cultural elements such as traditional brewing methods, local coffee rituals, agricultural heritage, regional specialties, and Vietnamese café culture represent distinctive cultural symbols that communicate the country's identity to both domestic and international consumers (Ngo et al., 2025). Repeated exposure to these authentic cultural elements allows consumers to develop stronger emotional attachment and a greater sense of cultural belonging toward the brand. As consumers increasingly perceive Vietnamese coffee brands as authentic representatives of Vietnamese culture rather than merely commercial products, they are more likely to develop favorable brand evaluations and stronger behavioral responses. Therefore, cultural identification represents a fundamental psychological construct in this study, serving as the key mechanism through which globalization–localization strategies influence consumers' purchase intention and their perception of Vietnam's national soft power.

2.4 National Soft Power Perception

National soft power refers to a country's ability to influence the preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of foreign publics through attraction rather than coercion or economic incentives. Nye (2017) defines soft power as the capacity to shape others' preferences by appealing to their values, culture, and ideas instead of relying on force or pressure. Unlike hard power, which depends on military or economic resources, soft power originates from a nation's culture, political values, and foreign policies when these are perceived as legitimate, credible, and morally attractive. Universities, cultural institutions, media, and non-governmental organizations are important channels through which countries communicate their values and strengthen their international image. Because soft power relies on trust, credibility, and emotional attraction, it is generally considered a long-term strategic resource for enhancing a

country's international influence rather than a direct instrument of political control.

Culture has become one of the most influential sources of national soft power because it serves as a bridge connecting countries with international audiences (Otmazgin, 2012). Culinary tourism and food diplomacy, for example, have increasingly been recognized as effective approaches for promoting national culture, attracting tourists, and strengthening international cultural exchange (Ellis et al., 2018). Governments have actively incorporated local cuisine into destination branding and tourism promotion to communicate cultural heritage and reinforce national identity. Similarly, Cabral et al. (2025) demonstrated that Malaysia's "Malaysia Truly Asia" campaign successfully promoted the country's multicultural cuisine, contributing to both economic development and international cultural recognition. Restaurant names also function as subtle but powerful cultural symbols that combine marketing appeal with national identity. Names that reflect local language, traditions, or cultural icons help create familiarity among consumers while simultaneously communicating cultural authenticity. As demonstrated by Suktarachan & Thammachai (2025), culturally distinctive restaurant names can enhance consumers' awareness of a country's culture, strengthen emotional engagement, and ultimately contribute to the country's soft power by making its culture more attractive and recognizable internationally.

Previous studies have further emphasized that national soft power should not only be examined from a macro-level perspective but also through individuals' cognitive perceptions. Although China's rapid economic growth and increasing geopolitical influence have strengthened its international position (Grosse et al., 2021), evidence suggests that its state-led soft power initiatives have achieved only limited success because international audiences often interpret cultural promotion differently. Rather than focusing solely on national policies, recent research argues that soft power ultimately depends on how individuals perceive and evaluate cultural initiatives. Accordingly, Polejack (2021) emphasizes that effective soft power should emerge primarily from civil society and cultural attractiveness rather than direct governmental promotion. In contrast, China's state-centered interpretation considers cultural promotion a strategic national policy designed to strengthen international influence. These contrasting perspectives illustrate that national soft power is fundamentally shaped by the way individuals interpret and respond to cultural messages rather than by governmental efforts alone.

From the cognitive perspective, national soft power perception is closely associated with how individuals process and interpret cultural information. Culture serves as a bridge linking macro-level national strategies with individuals' cognitive evaluations and behavioral responses (Waller, 2009; Maack, 2001; Samovar et al., 2014). Human perception is formed through complex cognitive processes in which external cultural information interacts with prior knowledge, beliefs,

and experiences (Fisher et al., 2024). Information processing occurs through both bottom-up and top-down mechanisms, meaning that individuals' existing beliefs significantly influence how they perceive cultural symbols and national images (Fu et al., 2023). In the context of this study, Vietnamese coffee brands represent important cultural carriers that communicate Vietnam's history, traditions, lifestyle, and national identity to international consumers. Through globalization-localization strategies, these cultural elements can strengthen consumers' cognitive and emotional perceptions of Vietnam, thereby enhancing their perception of Vietnam's national soft power.

2.5 Hypothesis Development

2.5.1. Global Standardization, Local Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Identification

A global standardization strategy enables brands to maintain a consistent brand identity, product quality, packaging, and marketing communications across international markets. Consistent branding strengthens consumers' recognition of brand attributes and facilitates the formation of stable brand associations. According to Ho-dac et al. (2025), brand perception reflects the attributes, qualities, and emotions that consumers associate with a brand, indicating that consistent branding reinforces consumers' understanding of brand identity. Beyond enhancing brand recognition, global standardization also reduces consumers' uncertainty when interacting with a brand across different markets by providing consistent experiences and reinforcing brand credibility. Such consistency enables consumers to form stronger expectations regarding the brand's values and cultural meanings, making it easier for them to recognize the cultural characteristics embedded in the brand. As consumers repeatedly encounter coherent brand messages and visual identities, they are more likely to internalize the cultural values conveyed by the brand and develop a stronger psychological connection with its country of origin.

Previous research has emphasized that standardized marketing approaches help communicate the cultural elements of a brand's home country, increase brand recognition, and strengthen consumers' awareness of the brand's cultural identity. At the same time, adaptation strategies, such as incorporating local language and culturally relevant marketing elements, enable brands to establish a closer connection with local consumers while preserving their authentic identity (Nguyen, 2024). For Vietnamese coffee brands, maintaining consistent communication of their origin, heritage, and cultural values across international markets enables consumers to develop stronger cultural associations with the brand. Hoang & Bui (2025) further argue that cultural identity plays a significant role in shaping consumers' perceptions of branding and marketing activities. Therefore, when Vietnamese coffee brands consistently communicate their cultural identity through a global standardization strategy, consumers are more likely to perceive them as authentic representatives of Vietnamese culture, thereby strengthening their cultural

identification. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Global standardization strategy positively influences cultural identification with Vietnamese coffee brands.

Local cultural adaptation refers to modifying marketing strategies to align with the values, beliefs, norms, and lifestyles of a specific cultural group rather than merely changing surface-level elements (Heim et al., 2019). Effective cultural adaptation requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances and the capability to incorporate these cultural characteristics into marketing activities, thereby increasing the relevance and authenticity of a brand in the eyes of local consumers. From this perspective, adapting marketing strategies to local cultural contexts enables consumers to perceive a brand as more culturally meaningful and representative of their own cultural identity. In addition, culturally adapted marketing enhances consumers' emotional engagement by creating a sense of familiarity and cultural resonance. When consumers perceive that a brand respects and reflects local traditions, values, and customs, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand and establish stronger psychological connections with its cultural identity.

Previous studies have further highlighted the importance of cultural adaptation in marketing practices. Understanding local values, norms, and traditions enables businesses to design marketing campaigns that resonate more effectively with target consumers. Furthermore, implementing marketing strategies based on local wisdom enhances product attractiveness while strengthening the emotional connection between consumers and brands (Rizkita et al., 2025). Because consumers tend to favor products and services that reflect their cultural identity, integrating local cultural elements into branding and communication can improve consumers' recognition of a brand's cultural authenticity. This cultural alignment enables consumers to perceive the brand as more relevant to their values and traditions, thereby fostering a stronger sense of identification with the brand. Accordingly, Vietnamese coffee brands that effectively incorporate local cultural adaptation into their cultural marketing strategies are more likely to strengthen consumers' cultural identification with the brand. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Local cultural adaptation positively influences cultural identification with Vietnamese coffee brands.

2.5.2. Cultural Identification and Consumer Purchase Intention

Cultural identity plays an essential role in shaping consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward brands, particularly in the food and beverage industry. For international franchise brands, understanding and incorporating local culture contribute to favorable consumer perceptions and facilitate successful market entry. In the Vietnamese context, where collectivism strongly influences social relationships and consumer values, cultural identity has

become an important factor in shaping business development and consumers' attitudes toward brands (Hoang & Bui, 2025). Previous research has also emphasized that standardized marketing approaches communicate the cultural elements of a brand's home country, while culturally adaptive marketing strategies strengthen consumers' awareness of and connection with the brand's cultural identity through locally relevant communication and experiences (Nguyen, 2024).

Previous studies have demonstrated that favorable brand evaluations positively influence consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers generally perceive globally recognized brands as having superior quality, and perceived brand globalness positively enhances perceived brand quality (Vuong & Khanh Giao, 2020). Higher perceived brand quality subsequently strengthens consumers' purchase evaluations and directly increases purchase intention. Likewise, when consumers strongly identify with the cultural values represented by a brand, they are more likely to perceive the brand positively and develop stronger intentions to purchase its products. For Vietnamese coffee brands, cultural identification enables consumers to perceive the brands not only as commercial products but also as authentic representations of Vietnamese culture. Accordingly, stronger cultural identification is expected to encourage consumers to choose Vietnamese coffee brands over competing alternatives. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Cultural identification positively influences consumer purchase intention with Vietnamese coffee brands.

2.5.3. Cultural Identification and National Soft Power Perception

Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. Building upon this concept, National Soft Power Perception refers to consumers' perceptions of a country's cultural attractiveness, international image, and ability to exert influence through its culture, values, and national identity. In the context of cultural marketing, brands function as important carriers of national culture by communicating cultural symbols, values, and identity to consumers across different countries. Interactional Sociolinguistics further explains that language and cultural symbols shape individuals' cultural identity and influence how they perceive, interpret, and interact with other cultures. Similarly, cultural identity reflects the shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that individuals develop within a cultural group, enabling them to promote cultural understanding in multicultural contexts (Hoang & Bui, 2025). Therefore, consumers who strongly identify with the cultural values embedded in a brand are more likely to develop favorable perceptions of both the brand and its country of origin, thereby enhancing their National Soft Power Perception.

Previous studies provide empirical evidence supporting this relationship. Suktarachan & Thammachai (2025) demonstrate that culturally distinctive restaurant names effectively communicate national culture, create familiarity

among international consumers, and strengthen a country's soft power by enhancing its cultural attractiveness. Their findings further show that the global influence of the Korean Wave and the international recognition of Thai cuisine illustrate how culturally distinctive branding strategies can increase international awareness and improve a country's image. In addition, businesses can enhance cultural communication by integrating authentic cultural elements into marketing strategies and adapting them to different cultural contexts, thereby facilitating consumers' understanding of the country's culture (Vo et al., 2025). For Vietnamese coffee brands, consumers who develop stronger cultural identification are more likely to perceive Vietnamese coffee as an authentic representation of Vietnam's history, traditions, and cultural heritage. Such cultural identification extends beyond brand evaluation and contributes to more favorable perceptions of Vietnam as an attractive, culturally distinctive, and influential nation. As Vietnamese coffee brands effectively communicate Vietnam's cultural identity through globalization–localization strategies, consumers are more likely to recognize Vietnam's cultural values and international appeal. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Cultural identification positively influences national soft power perception with Vietnamese coffee brands.

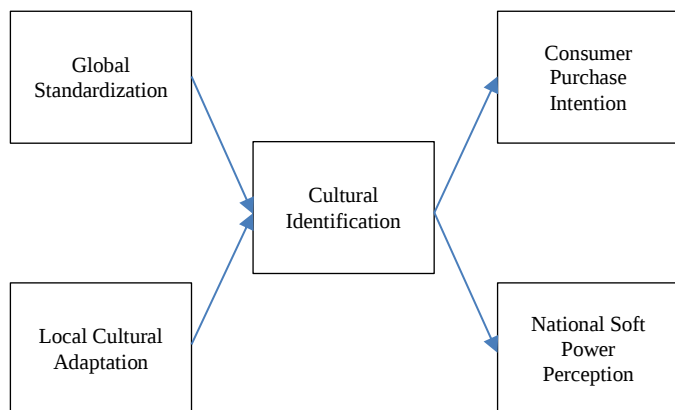


Figure 1: Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Variables and Questionnaire Design

The measurement instrument was designed to examine the relationships among global standardization strategy, local cultural adaptation, cultural identification, consumer purchase intention, and national soft power perception in the context of Vietnamese coffee brands. All constructs were measured using items adapted from previously validated scales. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 - "Strongly disagree" to 5 - "Strongly agree".

Global Standardization Strategy (GS) was measured using 5 items adapted from Ho-dac & Mulder-Nijkamp (2025).

Local Cultural Adaptation (LCA) was assessed using 4 items adapted from Rizkita et al. (2025). Cultural Identification (CI) was measured using 4 items adapted from Hoang & Bui (2025). Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI) was measured using 5 items adapted from Vuong & Khanh Giao (2020), while National Soft Power Perception (NSP) was measured using 4 items adapted from Suktarachan & Thammachai (2025). All measurement items were slightly modified to fit the context of globalization–localization strategies in the cultural marketing of Vietnamese coffee brands. The questionnaire was originally developed in English and translated into Vietnamese using the back-translation method to ensure semantic equivalence (Brislin, 1970).

3.2 Sampling, data collection and analysis

The data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to Vietnamese consumers who had prior experience with Vietnamese coffee brands. The survey aimed to examine consumers' perceptions of globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing, cultural identification, consumer purchase intention, and national soft power perception. To ensure broad participation, both online and offline data collection methods were employed. The online survey was distributed through social media platforms and online communities, while offline questionnaires were administered at coffee shops and public locations in major cities across Vietnam.

A convenience sampling approach was adopted, targeting respondents aged 18 years and above who had previously consumed at least one Vietnamese coffee brand. The questionnaire included demographic information, including gender, age, education level, occupation, monthly income, Vietnamese coffee brands previously experienced, and frequency of consuming Vietnamese coffee brands. These characteristics enabled a comprehensive understanding of respondents' backgrounds and consumption behaviors related to Vietnamese coffee brands. A total of 327 valid responses were obtained and used for data analysis. The collected data provide a comprehensive basis for examining how globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing influence consumers' cultural identification, purchase intention, and perceptions of Vietnam's national soft power through Vietnamese coffee brands. Data were subsequently analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographics of respondents

A total of 327 valid responses were collected and included in the final analysis. As presented in Table 1, the sample comprised 190 female respondents (58.1%) and 137 male respondents (41.9%), which indicate a relatively balanced gender distribution with a slight predominance of female participants. Regarding age group, the majority of respondents were 18–24 years old (40.1%), followed by those aged 25–34 (33.0%), 35–49 (19.3%), and 50 years and above (7.6%). This

distribution suggests that the sample primarily consisted of young and middle-aged consumers, who represent the primary customer segments of Vietnamese coffee brands.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Demographics		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	137	41.9
	Female	190	58.1
Age	18–24	131	40.1
	25–34	108	33.0
	35–49	63	19.3
	50 years and above	25	7.6
Occupation	Student	99	30.3
	Office Worker	120	36.7
	Self-employed/ Freelancer	43	13.1
	Business Owner	30	9.2
	Government Employee	23	7.0
	Other	12	3.7
Monthly Income	Less than USD 500	117	35.8
	USD 500–1,000	138	42.2
	More than USD 1,000	72	22.0
Vietnamese Coffee Brands Experienced	Highlands Coffee	258	78.9
	Trung Nguyen Legend	221	67.6
	Phuc Long	193	59.0
	The Coffee House	174	53.2
	Others	96	29.4
Frequency of Consumption	Less than once a month	29	8.9
	1–3 times per month	79	24.2
	Once a week	89	27.2
	2–3 times per week	84	25.7

	More than 3 times per week	46	14.1
Total		327	100

Regarding occupation, office workers accounted for the largest proportion (36.7%), followed by students (30.3%), self-employed/freelancers (13.1%), business owners (9.2%), government employees (7.0%), and respondents in other occupations (3.7%). The respondents also represented different income groups, with 42.2% earning USD 500–1,000 per month, 35.8% earning less than USD 500, and 22.0% earning more than USD 1,000, reflecting a diverse range of purchasing power.

For consumption behavior, Highlands Coffee was the most frequently experienced Vietnamese coffee brand (78.9%), followed by Trung Nguyen Legend (67.6%), Phức Long (59.0%), The Coffee House (53.2%), and other Vietnamese coffee brands (29.4%). Since respondents were allowed to select multiple brands, these percentages do not total 100%. In terms of consumption frequency, 27.2% of respondents consumed Vietnamese coffee brands once a week, 25.7% consumed them 2–3 times per week, 24.2% consumed them 1–3 times per month, 14.1% consumed them more than three times per week, and 8.9% consumed them less than once a month. Overall, the demographic and behavioral characteristics indicate that the sample is sufficiently diverse and appropriate for examining consumers' perceptions of globalization–localization strategies in the cultural marketing of Vietnamese coffee brands and their effects on consumer response and national soft power perception.

4.2 Scale reliability and validity assessment

Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and convergent validity assessment for all constructs. The findings indicate that all measurement scales exhibit satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.874 to 0.991, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022), indicating strong internal consistency. Similarly, the rho_A values range from 0.876 to 0.992, all above the acceptable level of 0.70, further confirming the reliability of the constructs.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CI	0.929	0.932	0.949	0.825
CPI	0.991	0.992	0.993	0.966

GS	0.981	0.985	0.985	0.929
LCA	0.874	0.876	0.914	0.727
NSP	0.902	0.905	0.932	0.773

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

Regarding composite reliability, all constructs report values between 0.914 and 0.993, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70, which demonstrates high construct reliability. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.727 to 0.966, all exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity. Among the constructs, Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI) exhibits the highest reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.991; CR = 0.993; AVE = 0.966), whereas Local Cultural Adaptation (LCA) records the lowest values (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.874; CR = 0.914; AVE = 0.727), although these values remain well above the recommended thresholds. Overall, the results indicate that all measurement constructs possess satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, supporting their suitability for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3 presents the results of the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for assessing discriminant validity. According to the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its correlations with the other constructs. Specifically, the diagonal values range from 0.853 to 0.983, all exceeding the corresponding inter-construct correlations, which indicates satisfactory discriminant validity. The HTMT results further support this conclusion. All HTMT values range from 0.307 to 0.743, which are well below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (or the more liberal threshold of 0.90), indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. The highest HTMT value is 0.743 between Cultural Identification (CI) and National Soft Power Perception (NSP), while the lowest value is 0.307 between Global Standardization Strategy (GS) and Cultural Identification (CI). Therefore, both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT confirm that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity, supporting the distinctiveness of all constructs in the proposed research model.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

		CI	CPI	GS	LCA	NSP
Fornell -	CI	0.908				

Larcker Criterion	CPI	0.566	0.983			
	GS	0.296	0.503	0.964		
	LCA	0.543	0.360	0.287	0.853	
	NSP	0.682	0.400	0.411	0.539	0.879

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

4.3 Model Assessment and Discussion

The structural model was examined by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the significance of the proposed relationships, which were presented in Table 4. The adjusted R^2 values indicate that the model explains 31.2% of the variance in Cultural Identification (CI), 31.8% of the variance in Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI), and 46.3% of the variance in National Soft Power Perception (NSP). These results indicate that the proposed research model demonstrates moderate explanatory power, suggesting that globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing provide a meaningful explanation of consumers' cultural identification, consumer response, and national soft power perception toward Vietnamese coffee brands.

Table 4: Structural Equation Modelling Results Estimates

Paths	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	S.D (STD EV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
GS -> CI	0.152	0.154	0.049	3.112	0.002
LCA -> CI	0.499	0.502	0.046	10.821	0.000
CI -> CPI	0.566	0.569	0.046	12.195	0.000
CI -> NSP	0.682	0.685	0.048	14.173	0.000
GS -> CI -> CPI	0.086	0.089	0.031	2.736	0.006
LCA -> CI -> CPI	0.283	0.286	0.037	7.614	0.000
GS -> CI -> NSP	0.104	0.107	0.038	2.721	0.007
LCA -> CI -> NSP	0.340	0.344	0.040	8.454	0.000
Adjusted R^2 : CI = 0.312; CPI = 0.318; NSP = 0.463					

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

The results show that Global Standardization Strategy, as one dimension of globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing, has a positive and significant influence on Cultural Identification ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 3.112$, $p = 0.002$), supporting H1. This finding indicates that maintaining a consistent brand identity, product quality, packaging, and marketing communication across different markets enables Vietnamese coffee brands to reinforce consumers' recognition of their cultural origin and authenticity. Consistent cultural communication helps consumers associate the brands with Vietnam's coffee heritage and strengthens their identification with the cultural values embedded in the brands. This result is consistent with Ho-dac & Mulder-Nijkamp (2025), who argue that global standardization enhances brand recognition and reinforces consumers' understanding of brand identity. Nevertheless, the relatively small path coefficient suggests that standardized branding alone is insufficient to maximize consumers' cultural identification in cultural marketing. Instead, consistency should be combined with culturally meaningful communication that reflects the unique characteristics of Vietnamese coffee culture.

The findings further reveal that Local Cultural Adaptation, the second dimension of globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing, exerts a stronger positive influence on Cultural Identification ($\beta = 0.499$, $t = 10.821$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Compared with global standardization, adapting marketing activities to local cultural values, traditions, symbols, and consumer preferences plays a much more influential role in strengthening consumers' psychological attachment to Vietnamese coffee brands. This finding supports Rizkita et al. (2025), who emphasize that culturally adapted marketing strategies improve brand authenticity, consumer engagement, and emotional relevance. Within the context of Vietnamese coffee brands, incorporating traditional coffee culture, local stories, and Vietnamese cultural heritage into branding and communication enables consumers to perceive the brands as authentic cultural representatives of Vietnam. These findings suggest that successful cultural marketing should achieve an effective balance between global consistency and local cultural adaptation rather than relying on either strategy independently.

The results also demonstrate that Cultural Identification significantly enhances Consumer Purchase Intention, representing the consumer response in this study ($\beta = 0.566$, $t = 12.195$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H3. Consumers who develop stronger identification with the cultural values represented by Vietnamese coffee brands are more willing to purchase these brands and continue supporting them. Cultural identification strengthens consumers' emotional attachment, increases perceived authenticity, and creates symbolic value beyond the functional attributes of coffee products. These findings are consistent with Hoang & Bui (2025), who highlight the important role of cultural identity in shaping consumers' attitudes toward brands, and Vuong & Khanh Giao

(2020), who demonstrate that favorable brand perceptions positively influence purchase intention. The results therefore suggest that cultural marketing strategies contribute to consumer response not only by promoting product quality but also by communicating meaningful cultural values associated with Vietnamese coffee brands.

Similarly, Cultural Identification has a strong positive influence on National Soft Power Perception ($\beta = 0.682$, $t = 14.173$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. This relationship represents the strongest direct effect in the proposed model, indicating that cultural identification contributes more strongly to perceptions of Vietnam's national soft power than to consumer purchase intention. The findings imply that Vietnamese coffee brands function not only as commercial brands but also as cultural ambassadors that communicate Vietnam's history, traditions, and national identity to consumers. As consumers increasingly identify with the cultural meanings embedded in Vietnamese coffee brands, they are more likely to perceive Vietnam as a culturally attractive, distinctive, and influential nation. This finding supports Suktarachan & Thammachai (2025), who argue that culturally distinctive branding enhances a country's international image and strengthens national soft power by increasing global cultural recognition and attractiveness. Therefore, globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing can generate benefits beyond commercial performance by contributing to Vietnam's cultural influence and international reputation.

The mediation analysis further confirms the central role of Cultural Identification in the proposed research model. The indirect effects of Global Standardization Strategy on Consumer Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.086$, $p = 0.006$) and National Soft Power Perception ($\beta = 0.104$, $p = 0.007$) through Cultural Identification are both statistically significant. Likewise, Local Cultural Adaptation indirectly influences Consumer Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.283$, $p < 0.001$) and National Soft Power Perception ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < 0.001$) through Cultural Identification, with substantially stronger indirect effects than those of Global Standardization Strategy. These findings demonstrate that Cultural Identification serves as the key psychological mechanism through which globalization–localization strategies in cultural marketing shape both consumer response and national soft power perception toward Vietnamese coffee brands. Collectively, the results provide empirical support for the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, where globalization–localization strategies represent the external stimuli, Cultural Identification represents the organism, and Consumer Purchase Intention together with National Soft Power Perception represent the responses. This evidence highlights that balancing global brand consistency with authentic local cultural adaptation is essential for strengthening both consumer behavior and Vietnam's cultural influence through its coffee brands.

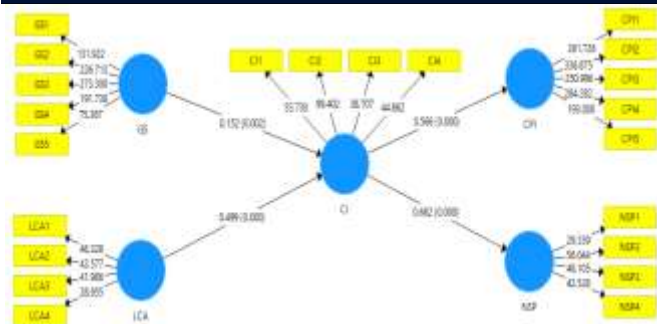


Figure 2: PLS Bootstrapping Model

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study extends the S–O–R framework by Mehrabian & Russell (1974) by demonstrating that cultural identification mediates the effects of globalization–localization strategies on consumer purchase intention and national soft power perception. The findings further show that local cultural adaptation has a stronger influence on cultural identification than global standardization, highlighting the importance of cultural relevance in international branding. The study also extends Competitive Identity Theory by Anholt (2007), which demonstrates that commercial brands can function as cultural carriers that shape consumers' perceptions of national soft power. Vietnamese coffee brands therefore provide a micro-level mechanism through which culturally embedded marketing can contribute to Vietnam's international cultural image.

The findings also provide practical implications for Vietnamese coffee brands, consumers, and organizations involved in promoting Vietnam's cultural image. For Vietnamese coffee brands, the results indicate that cultural identity should be treated as a strategic component of international marketing rather than as a supplementary promotional element. Although global standardization contributes to cultural identification, its relatively weaker effect compared with local cultural adaptation suggests that maintaining a consistent Vietnamese brand identity should be accompanied by meaningful cultural adaptation. Brands should therefore preserve core elements such as Vietnamese coffee origin, heritage, brewing traditions, and distinctive brand identity while adapting communication, product presentation, and customer experiences to the cultural context of each target market.

The significant impact of local cultural adaptation on cultural identity suggests that Vietnamese coffee brands need to move beyond superficial localization. Businesses can leverage authentic narratives such as coffee culture, consumption rituals, regional characteristics, local traditions, and cultural values across packaging, advertising, store environments, and digital content. Social media and digital platforms, in particular, enable brands to convey these cultural stories through short-form videos, storytelling content,

interactive campaigns, and experiential marketing. Such activities can strengthen consumers' cultural identification with the brand, thereby boosting purchase intentions. For Vietnamese brands expanding internationally, cultural authenticity can thus serve as a competitive advantage, distinguishing Vietnamese coffee from highly standardized global products.

From the consumer perspective, the findings indicate that individuals are not merely passive recipients of marketing efforts but play an active role in shaping and disseminating a brand's cultural significance. The strong connection between cultural identity, purchase intention, and the perception of national soft power demonstrates that consumer behavior can have impacts extending well beyond the mere choice of a product. For Vietnamese consumers, the act of selecting, consuming, recommending, and sharing experiences with Vietnamese coffee brands on social media helps propagate the image of Vietnamese coffee culture. Furthermore, a heightened awareness of the cultural values embedded in these products allows consumers to forge a deeper connection between their daily consumption habits and Vietnamese cultural identity. For international consumers, engaging with Vietnamese coffee through specific brands can serve as a convenient entry point to learn about Vietnam's lifestyle, traditions, and cultural characteristics.

For Vietnamese coffee enterprises and industry stakeholders, the strong link between cultural identity and the perception of national soft power suggests that Vietnamese coffee can be positioned simultaneously as a commercial product and a cultural ambassador. Brands can collaborate with industry associations, tourism companies, and trade promotion organizations to craft consistent narratives about Vietnamese coffee culture for the international market. Blending Vietnam's shared cultural identity with the unique characteristics of individual brands helps maintain cultural authenticity while preserving brand distinctiveness. In this way, Vietnamese coffee can be recognized not only for its product quality but also for the cultural values it embodies.

And finally, for Vietnamese regulatory bodies and organizations promoting trade, tourism and culture, research findings suggest that building the national image should not rely solely on public-sector-led campaigns. Vietnamese coffee brands can serve as vital intermediaries in conveying Vietnamese culture to international consumers. Authorities can support businesses through international trade fairs, cultural events, tourism promotion programs, business matchmaking activities, and international media campaigns centered on Vietnamese coffee. Integrating coffee culture into promotional activities for Vietnam can simultaneously expand business opportunities, boost the international profile of Vietnamese coffee, and foster positive associations with Vietnam's culture, people, and national image.

This study has several limitations that should be considered. The use of convenience sampling and a sample of 327 Vietnamese consumers may limit the generalizability of

the results to broader consumer populations and international markets. Future research could employ probability sampling and cross-cultural samples to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings. In addition, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to capture changes in cultural identification and consumer responses over time. Longitudinal studies could therefore provide deeper insights into how these relationships evolve. Future research may also incorporate other factors such as perceived authenticity, brand globalness, cultural distance, or consumer cosmopolitanism, to further explain how globalization-localization strategies influence consumer behavior and national soft power perceptions.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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7. REFERENCES

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