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How Important Are Brands? A Cross-Category, Cross-Country Study

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Abstract

This article focuses on the measurement of the overall importance of brands for consumer decision making—that is, brand relevance in category, or BRiC—across multiple categories and countries. Although brand equity measures for specific brands have attracted a large body of literature, the questions of how important brands are within an entire product category and the extent to which BRiC differs across categories and countries have been neglected. The authors introduce the concept of BRiC (a category-level measure, not a brand-level measure). They develop a conceptual framework to measure BRiC and the drivers of BRiC, test the framework empirically with a sample of more than 5700 consumers, and show how the construct varies across 20 product categories and five countries (France, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The results suggest a high validity of the proposed BRiC measure and show substantial differences between categories and countries. A replication study two-and-a-half years later confirms the psychometric properties of the suggested scale and shows remarkable stability of the findings. The findings have important implications for the management of brand investments.