



# Brand Loyalty and Global Value Chain: An In-depth Study Based on the Integration of Chinese Enterprises and WTO Rules

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## ABSTRACT

Both brand loyalty and Global Value Chain integration could be important factors in strategies for creating competitive positions in highly saturated international markets. This paper aims to assess the impact of brand loyalty on the Global Value Chain integration of Chinese firms under the WTO system. The main research question is to determine what role the Global Value Chain plays in compliance with international trade standards and brand equity in China. This paper uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to map the literature on brand loyalty, GVC integration, and WTO compliance on business practices. This paper notes that enhanced GVC governance enhances customer loyalty by ensuring quality products, and buying firms' satisfaction due to expanded markets. This paper also proposes that observing rules enhances brand reputation by promoting the protection of intellectual property and compliance with international regulations. Finally, the research offers a strategic approach for Chinese enterprises to enhance brand loyalty via culture adaptation, innovation, and services. Practical implications propose that firms need to coordinate global strategies with the local market to be competitive and develop customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Global Value Chain, WTO Framework, Chinese Enterprises.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

Brand Loyalty is a key factor in determining the performance of companies in the global marketplace since it influences customer loyalty, repurchases, and profitability over the years. Yi and Jeon (2003) have noted that the use of loyalty programs does improve consumers' perceived value of the program and the brand. This is particularly so within the globalization environment that challenges business organizations to develop new products to meet the various consumers' requirements. Brand loyalty in global markets is a crucial strategic tool that helps organizations create competitive advantage, customer relationships, and sustainable positioning. Today, brand loyalty is a highly important strategic weapon for an organization to gain competitive advantages, enhance customer relations, and secure its growth.

GVC trading has offered a new structuralism of globalization by which firms can select certain production stages and link up to the production line. Antràs and Chor (2018) point out that one of the critically important factors concerns the role of a firm or a company in GVCs, which influences its capacity to employ assets based on competition, such as brands. According to S. Wang and Chen (2022), Chinese enterprises have to ensure that this GVC strategies conform to WTO to enable them to grow their business in the global market. The WTO compliance is for the companies to be as far as possible global standard, and most of the time appropriate in dealing with business affairs. It is the goal of this paper to examine the relationships between brand loyalty, GVC integration, and WTO compliance in influencing competitiveness and then provide effective recommendations for practice.

GVC strategies and brand development are shaped by WTO compliance. Specifically, the World Trade Organization regulates norms of market access, quality standards, and intellectual property protection. Keane (2002) suggests that because these rules are adhered to firms have the capability of forming credibility, increasing brand reputation, and attaining consumer trust. Especially for Chinese enterprises, compliance with WTO regulations is very important because they can inject transparency, lower trade barriers, and form a standard of fair practices in trading.

### **Problem Statement**

In the case of the GVCs and WTO rules managing brand loyalty is problematic for Chinese enterprises. Earlier research has examined brand development or GVC positioning but it has not defined the interrelationship between them (Agarwal & Wu, 2004; Sun, Tang, & Li, 2021; Festa, 2019). This research seeks to address this research question to help fill this gap by exploring the impacts of WTO compliance on brand loyalty and operations to answer how Chinese firms can gain brand equity strategically even with legal constraints under WTO.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate how brand loyalty influences GVC integration of Chinese firms.
2. To explore how WTO rules may impact brand loyalty in enterprises, especially those in China.
3. To analyze the applicability of the Strategic Framework for Enhancing Brand Loyalty in Chinese enterprises.

### **Significance of Research**

This research is important as it connects brand loyalty, GVC integration, and WTO compliance and helps shed light on how Chinese companies can improve competitiveness in global markets. It highlights the challenges including the optimal operations too closely with global trade parameters, integrating branding to cater to global cultural contexts, and yet maintaining product quality across international markets. The contribution to academic knowledge comes from combining three interconnected domains, namely brand loyalty, GVC, and WTO compliance into a framework. It offers solutions to practitioners to stimulate customer loyalty minimize operational costs and comply with international export standards. This research makes unique contributions to this literature by identifying challenges in these issues and proposing tailored strategic recommendations to help Chinese enterprises achieve sustainable growth and competitiveness.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Brand Loyalty in Global Markets**

Marketing concept- Brand loyalty – is the long-term phenomenon of the consumer being loyal to his/her preferred brand based on factors like satisfaction and perceived value. Dong and Yu (2020) reveal that brand loyalty is one factor that defines global brand perception, especially in emerging markets where globalization and localization are key strategies. The authors noticed that consumer preferences are shaped by global branding and cultural variation, which implies that brand loyalty is not a stable, but rather a situational concept.

Key factors for brand loyalty include the quality of the product, emotional engagement, and efficiency of loyalty programs (Beck, Chapman & Palmatier, 2015). Their study emphasizes that relationship marketing and personalized loyalty programs help to build consumer trust and loyalty in the global markets. Nevertheless, Kwiatek, Morgan, and Thanasi-Boçe (2020) propose a more complex view by focusing on relationship quality together with loyalty programs. Their research indicates that although loyalty programs alone can improve customer retention, the impact is even better when combined with good-quality relationship marketing efforts. This interplay underlines the fact that a dual strategy should be employed particularly in competitive markets.

However, cultural and economic differences, economic patriotism, and rivalry in the global market may negatively impact the growth of brand equity. Akhter (2007) investigates the relationship between consumer behavior and nationalistic feelings towards globalization and brand loyalty, suggesting that economic factors usually determine consumer preference for either international or local brands. In the case of Chinese enterprises, the relevance of brand loyalty stems from their engagement in the competitive global markets. Effectively cultivating loyalty allows these companies to manage cultural differences and become recognized brands in the global market. This means that it becomes crucial for firms to adapt strategically and align themselves with global consumer expectations to maintain competitiveness and market share.

## **Global Value Chain and Global Positioning**

Global Value Chain (GVC) is defined as a network of production processes that are scattered across the different countries where firms focus on one or many stages of production to increase efficiency and tap into the global market. In their recent work, Sun et al. (2021) explain how strategic participation in GVCs can help firms enhance their competitiveness and stress that this integration affects the labor income share and macroeconomic outcomes. The beauty of engaging in GVCs is that firms have to possess sustainable strategies that are feasible within that chain given their position, hence the element of governance and division.

Consequently, the potential of the industries to participate in GVC also has a strategic impact and influence on the industries. Pla-Barber and Villar (2019) examine the governance structures of the automobile and textile industries and the learning through GVCs about competitive upgrading, cost, and innovation. They argue that the choices that firms make of specific forms of governance – vertical integration or modular production, for instance – affect their capacity to place themselves advantageously in the global economy.

Branding is one of the most important factors that affect the performance of GVCs. Reddy and Sasidharan (2024) explain that measures like the elimination of bureaucratic procedures increase GVC participation and open up a chance for firms to establish their brands in the international market. Similarly, S. Wang and Chen (2022) also point out that branding is essential for Chinese firms engaged in GVCs because strong brands help firms upgrade their positions in the value chain, gain higher profit margins, and retain competitiveness in the international market.

### **Effect of WTO Rules on Business Practices**

Regulations of WTO are very crucial and affect the world trade and branding strategies of companies especially those that have international business. The major laws and policies that regulate market access, Intellectual Property Rights, and Non-tariff barriers affect the way that the firms operate and brand themselves. According to Keane (2002), with the entry of China to the WTO, its enterprises have had to change their name and strategies and adopt the global standards of the WTO to be accepted in the international market.

Adherence to the WTO rules is both a challenge and a prospect for Chinese enterprises. According to Low (2005), though these rules allow companies to penetrate new markets they are also compelled to abide by high levels of disclosure and ethical conduct. For companies that are shifting from local markets to international markets, it is crucial to meet these requirements. However, compliance provides great potential to improve reputations, safeguard ideas, and establish trust in global markets.

Chen, Wang, and Song (2021) also explained that compliance with WTO rules enhances production efficiency and assists in joining the green supply chains. Compliance helps Chinese firms to match their branding and operational strategies with the best practices in the world thus offering a better market image. To the Chinese firms, it is important to capitalize on the WTO opportunities as well as to overcome the compliance requirements to establish powerful brands and corporate competitiveness in the global economy. The strategic compliance with WTO rules therefore creates a cornerstone for future growth and development of the international business.

### **Interconnection Between Brand Loyalty and GVC Integration**

The utilization of loyalty strategies in GVC increases firms' competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness. Fernandez-Stark and Gereffi (2019) explain that value chains enable firms to develop brands by ensuring that the production systems are in line with the consumers' requirements in the international market. Companies that are benefiting from GVC integration can also rely on brand loyalty to grow in the long run and to gain the trust of consumers.

Brand and operational strategies in GVCs are synergistic for competitive advantages. Kano, Tsang, and Yeung (2020) highlight the need to ensure that branding is well integrated with operations to have a consistent brand value proposition across different regions. For example, a sustainability-focused brand within GVCs attracts the consumer with the consciousness of the ethical consumer while at the same time improving the supply chain performance and overall brand recognition and operations.

Kasemsap (2020) presents examples of companies that instituted the branding process within their global supply chain successfully. If companies pursue localized branding while keeping global branding and customer relationship management statuses, they will have better consumer retention as well as more operational efficiency. For example, Walmart integrates its advanced logistics and loyalty programs to make products available and satisfy customers. Whereas Amazon localizes to service needs and delivers and recommends based on systems that aren't the most efficient depending on the market but retain brand consistency across the board. Similarly, Toyota uses Just In Time manufacturing, and sustainability practices to convey brand loyalty to environmentally conscious consumers. The other side of the coin is that Apple stresses quality standards, innovation, and service

all over their supply chain which is completely appropriate to their premium brand image. These are great examples that would show that a strong branding and operational strategy is very important for competitiveness and retaining customer loyalty in the global market.

### **Frameworks for Enhancing Brand Loyalty in Global Markets**

The creation of the right frameworks for building brand loyalty in the global markets therefore calls for the integration of the principles of international trade, creativity, and cultural sensitivity. Zaid, Palilati, Madjid, and Yusuf Abad (2021) claim that supply chain integration is fundamental in enhancing customer loyalty through enhancing overall performance and satisfaction. Based on their research, the authors claim that the smooth integration of the supply chain has a positive effect on the stability of brand experiences and, therefore, encourages customer trust.

According to Upadhye and Bandopadhyay (2016), action loyalty means organizational efforts need to be in sync with consumers' perceptions. Their integrated model also suggests several customer-oriented strategies such as personalized communication, utilizing information from the customers to develop new products, and delivering it in such a way now that services have a way to develop an emotional bank with customers. These strategies are considered essential for global branding affiliation as well as for forming consumer loyalty in various markets.

Observance of the international trade standards is as equally important for global branding achievement. According to Abbott and Snidal (2012), there is a need to embrace responsive regulation and compliance with trade norms to develop a strong brand and credibility across borders. Similarly, according to Festa (2019), cultural adaptation, that is adjusting brand strategies to meet local tastes while keeping a global brand image, is a critical element of brand loyalty. It is possible to develop models that may support sustainable customer loyalty and enterprise competitiveness on the global level by combining compliance-based, innovative, and culturally sensitive approaches.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory that is most applicable to this study on the enhancement of brand loyalty of Chinese enterprises in the global market is the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model formulated by Kevin Lane Keller. The given model is specifically developed to focus on the development of brand equity – brand awareness, brand association, brand placement, brand identification, and brand loyalty (Keller, 1993). This aligned with the main purpose of this study, namely, the improvement of brand equity for Chinese companies in the global market. This is especially important, given that perceptions of the customer are vital to the discussion of brand loyalty. As Chinese enterprises increase their international presence, the role of CBBE, which encompasses customer knowledge, association, quality perception, and emotional bond (the four dimensions of brand equity) becomes critical. This model outlines a systematic way of analyzing how these elements work and affect brand loyalty in different international markets.

The CBBE model helps analyze how Chinese firms can create strategic plans to shape customers' perceptions and subsequent behaviors during different stages of brand evolution. It can inform branding choices, marketing messages, and customer interaction. The CBBE model is a sound and easily understandable model for understanding and implementing brand equity. It offers a framework (Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response, and Brand Resonance) to show how Chinese firms may potentially build loyalty through deliberate branding strategies.

### **Literature Gap**

Previous research discusses brand loyalty (Beck et al., 2015), global value chains (GVCs) (Antràs & Chor, 2018), and the effects of WTO rules (Keane, 2002; Abbott & Snidal, 2012) as distinct areas of study. However, there is limited knowledge of the complementary relationship between the two concepts and their interaction with Chinese enterprises and WTO rules. Additionally, studies are lacking in offering practical, WTO-compatible strategies to improve customer brand commitment in the international market and within the bounds of legal restrictions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Method and Research Design**

As a method of research suitable for this study, the researcher adopts the qualitative research method to analyze the relationship between brand loyalty and GVC. For this study, the research questions on the relationship between brand loyalty and global value chain integration for Chinese firms were analyzed using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This approach is suitable because it allows patterns that have been found in previous

work to be identified and also gives a summary view of the WTO rules, such as penetration strategies in the global market and cultural compatibility towards brand loyalty. SLR method involved inclusion and exclusion criteria and the assessment of the data collected to ensure the high quality and relevance with the objectives of the study.

### Data Collection

#### Searching Technique

Searching techniques used in this research involve keywords research such as "brand loyalty" "WTO regulations" "Global Value Chain" and "Chinese enterprises" are used to retrieve the relevant literature. Moreover, the synonyms of keywords were also used to retrieve as much literature as possible. Another technique used was database research. The reliance on databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Research Gate, etc., is because of the availability of a large number of peer-reviewed articles. Moreover, the more advanced technique was the use of Boolean Operators (AND, OR, NOT). They help narrow down the research and retrieve only those articles that focus on the relevant issue.

#### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Date published	2009–2024	Before 2009
Research type	Peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies	Non-peer-reviewed articles, non-empirical, editorials, and opinion articles

### PRISMA Framework

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were employed to further screen the data. Articles were read and re-read to ensure that the data was relevant to the objectives of the study. After the implication of this criteria, out of 35 articles, 23 articles were selected for data analysis. The PRISMA framework for the data analysis is shown in Figure 1.

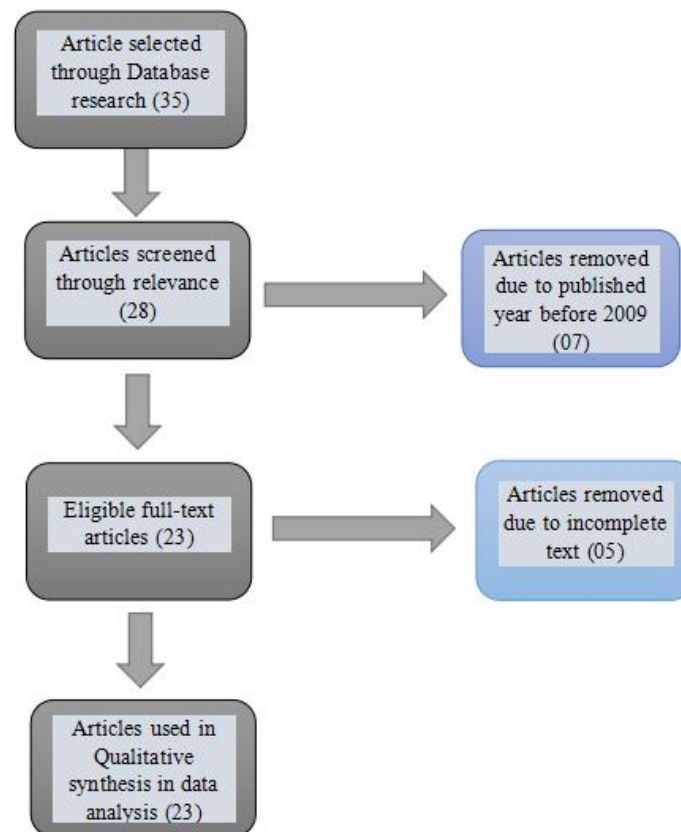


Figure 1. PRISMA Framework



## Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method used in this study is Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis and can be used in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data. The steps of thematic analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Steps and Description

Steps	Description
Familiarization	Read and re-read the collected data to have familiarization with content.
Code generation	Place the data under different codes based on the context of the data after familiarization.
Initial themes	Codes were then grouped to form broader themes.
Reviewing themes	Themes were then revised to ensure that they met the original focus of the study and were not distracted.
Naming themes	After reviewing, name the themes based on the context and content of the data.
Producing report	Use these themes in the data analysis and discussion.

## Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues that have been considered in this study include the correctness of the data sources used in this study as well as the citations used in the research work. The research does not conceal any bias as it outlines its methodological process and the constraints of the study. Moreover, it does not infringe the copyright by not only giving proper reference to the sources used in the development of the ideas in the synthesis of literature.

## RESULTS

This chapter involves the systematic analysis of collected data in tabular form based on the objectives of the study. The themes extracted for this study are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes and their Description

Themes	Description
Interplay between brand loyalty and global value chains	This theme focuses on how effective value chain integration improves brand loyalty through product quality, customer satisfaction, and operational performance across the international market.
WTO rules and strategic branding	This theme looks at how WTO compliance affects business through implementing certain policies that foster brand loyalty through adherence to trade laws, quality products, and intellectual property.
Strategic framework for enhancing brand loyalty	This theme proposes a strategic model of how Chinese firms can strengthen brand loyalty in global markets through the principles of cultural sensitivity, market entry strategies, innovation, and service quality.

### Theme 1: Interplay between Brand Loyalty and Global Value Chains

Table 4 represents the core elements of each paper by providing aims and objectives, research methodology, data analysis results, and conclusions related to the interplay between brand loyalty and the global value chain.

Table 4. SLR for Interplay Between Brand Loyalty and Global Value Chains

Author(s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
Gabriele (2020)	To analyze the impact of China's science and technology plans on industrial enterprises' integration into global value chains.	Policy Analysis of China's 15-Year Science and Technology Plan.	China's focus on R&D enhanced industrial enterprises' participation in global value chains.	China's R&D initiatives are pivotal in strengthening its enterprises' global value chain positions.
Warner (2013)	To examine strategies for Chinese enterprises to harness China's economic growth in global value chains.	Qualitative analysis of economic and strategic initiatives.	Strategic alignment with China's economic policies improved the global competitiveness of firms.	Chinese enterprises must align strategies with national economic growth for better global integration.
C. Yang, Lin,	To investigate the role of	Survey-based	Integration quality	High integration quality is

Author(s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
Chan, Kim, & Sheu (2019)	integration quality in improving customer-oriented performance in supply chains.	empirical study on supply chain integration quality.	positively influences customer satisfaction and performance.	critical for achieving superior customer-oriented performance.
Ruzo-Sanmartín, Abousamra, Otero-Neira, and Svensson (2022)	To assess the impact of relationship commitment and customer integration on supply chain performance.	Quantitative analysis of customer integration and performance data.	Commitment and integration directly enhance supply chain efficiency and outcomes.	Strong relationships and customer integration are essential for optimizing supply chain performance.
J. Zhang & He (2014)	To identify the key dimensions of brand value co-creation and their effects on customer perception and brand performance.	Survey and structural equation modeling on brand co-creation.	Brand co-creation enhances customer perception and boosts brand performance.	Brand value co-creation is a key driver of customer loyalty and brand success.
Pun and Hou (2022)	To explore strategies for mitigating copycatting in global supply chains involving Chinese suppliers.	Game theory analysis applied to global supply chain strategies.	Strategic countermeasures reduce the impact of copycatting in supply chains.	Combating copycatting requires innovative strategies tailored to supply chain dynamics.
Strutton (2009)	To investigate emerging threats in global supply chains and propose innovative remedies for mitigating risks.	Case study and qualitative assessment.	Innovative strategies mitigate emerging threats in global supply chains.	Proactive strategies are essential for mitigating risks in global supply chains.

## Theme 2: WTO Rules and Strategic Branding

Table 5 represents the core elements of each paper by providing aims and objectives, research methodology, data analysis results, and conclusions related to WTO rules and strategic branding.

Table 5. SLR for WTO Rules and Strategic Branding

Author (s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
Bacchus, Lester, and Zhu (2018)	To analyze how WTO complaints could encourage China's transition to a more market-oriented economy.	Comparative analysis of China's trade practices with other WTO members or market-oriented economies.	WTO complaints facilitated the gradual alignment of China's trade practices with market principles.	WTO complaints can drive China's transition to more market-oriented branding and trade practices.
X. Zhang and Li (2013)	To explore China's political strategies for compliance with adverse WTO rulings.	Policy analysis and review of WTO dispute settlement cases involving China.	China adopted selective compliance strategies to balance political interests and WTO rulings.	Selective compliance with WTO rulings shapes China's global trade and branding strategies.
S. Yang, Jiménez, Hadjimarcou, and Frankwick (2019)	To assess the role of functional and social brand value under WTO-driven trade regulations.	Survey-based study on consumer perceptions of brand value in China.	Functional and social values significantly influence brand perceptions in a WTO-compliant environment.	Integrating functional and social brand values is crucial for success under WTO trade norms.
Lu, Liu, and Rahman (2017)	To evaluate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand loyalty in a WTO-compliant environment.	Case study analysis of CSR practices by two global firms operating in China.	CSR initiatives in a WTO framework enhance brand loyalty and corporate reputation.	CSR practices aligned with WTO rules foster customer loyalty and long-term brand equity.
Tian and	To study the evolving	Ethnographic and	Chinese consumer	Chinese consumers

Author (s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
Dong (2010)	identity of Chinese consumers in the context of global branding and WTO norms.	historical analysis of Chinese consumer behavior.	identity evolved to value global brands and WTO-regulated trade transparency.	increasingly value global brand alignment with WTO trade transparency.
Drache and Jiyuan (2013)	To investigate anti-dumping cases and their implications for China's trade practices and branding strategies.	Comparative analysis of anti-dumping cases filed by major economies.	Anti-dumping cases exposed vulnerabilities in China's trade practices, prompting strategic branding adjustments.	Anti-dumping cases highlight the need for strategic brand positioning under WTO frameworks.
D'Agostino and Schiavo (2024)	To examine how trademarks are used by global firms, including Chinese enterprises, to mitigate import competition under WTO frameworks.	Empirical analysis of trademark filings and competition data from top R&D-spending firms.	Trademark strategies helped firms, including Chinese enterprises, defend against competition and bolster branding.	Trademarks serve as critical tools for protecting brand identity in global markets.

### Theme 3: Strategic Framework for Enhancing Brand Loyalty

Table 6 represents the core elements of each paper by providing aims and objectives, research methodology, data analysis results, and conclusions related to strategic branding for enhancing brand loyalty.

Table 6. SLR for Strategic Framework for Enhancing Brand Loyalty

Author(s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
H. Wang and Miao (2020)	To explore the challenges faced by Chinese enterprises in global markets and suggest strategic solutions to enhance their brand loyalty and international competitiveness.	Qualitative research approach with case studies of Chinese enterprises expanding globally.	The study identifies key obstacles such as cultural adaptation, regulatory compliance, and market entry strategies that hinder the successful globalization of Chinese enterprises.	The study recommends a strategic framework focusing on aligning global market strategies with local cultural nuances and regulatory requirements to enhance brand loyalty and achieve sustainable success in international markets.
M. Zhang, Jin, Wang, Goh, and He (2014)	To identify key success factors for Chinese service enterprises in strengthening brand loyalty in competitive global markets.	Empirical study using surveys and interviews of Chinese service industry executives.	The study found that innovation, quality service delivery, customer relationship management, and cultural sensitivity are critical to enhancing brand loyalty for Chinese service enterprises.	The study concludes that Chinese service enterprises should integrate innovative practices, improve service quality, and foster strong customer relationships to build lasting brand loyalty in both domestic and international markets.
Doherty, Smith, and Parker (2015)	To examine the creation and marketing of fair-trade markets in the Global South.	Qualitative research using case studies in the context of fair-trade markets.	The study identifies key challenges and opportunities for fair trade marketing in the Global South.	The fair-trade market is expanding, with marketing efforts needing further integration into global value chains.
You and Chen (2021)	To analyze China's export brand strategy and its international market approach.	Qualitative content analysis of China's export brand strategy and policies.	China's export brand strategy focuses on increasing innovation and global competitiveness.	China's export strategy is evolving towards international competitiveness and innovation-driven growth.
Yeung, Xin, Pfoertsch, and Liu	To explore strategies adopted by Chinese companies to expand	Exploratory study involving strategic frameworks used by	Chinese companies adopt various strategies such as market entry	Chinese companies successfully apply strategic approaches to



Author(s)	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Result	Conclusion
(2011)	into global markets.	Chinese companies in global markets.	and local adaptation for global expansion.	internationalize and compete in global markets.
Li, Xu, and Fan (2021)	To investigate cultural distance and customer orientation strategy for Chinese service MNEs under the Belt and Road initiative.	Empirical study using cross-cultural analysis of customer orientation strategies.	Customer orientation strategies have significant effects on the success of Chinese service MNEs.	Chinese service MNEs must focus on cultural adaptation and customer orientation to succeed internationally.
Chang and Zhu (2011)	To understand the role of customer orientation and quality in enhancing corporate reputation for market expansion in China.	Quantitative survey-based research on corporate reputation and customer orientation in China.	High-quality products and services, along with strong customer orientation, are crucial for corporate reputation in China.	Companies focusing on product and service quality, as well as customer-centric strategies, can enhance their reputation.
Yuan, Kim, Dai, and Ketil Arnulf (2013)	To explore how foreign-invested enterprises (FIEs) sustain competitive advantage in China.	Qualitative research on competitive advantage frameworks in FIEs in China.	FIEs can sustain a competitive advantage by adapting to local market conditions and aligning with global practices.	Foreign-invested enterprises can sustain competitiveness in China by leveraging both global strategies and local adaptations.
Du, Liu, Straub, and Knight (2016)	To study the impact of national cultural values on innovation in the Chinese IT-enabled global service industry.	An empirical study using national cultural value metrics and innovation behavior analysis.	National cultural values significantly influence innovation behavior in the Chinese IT service industry.	Innovation behavior in China is heavily influenced by national cultural values, particularly in the IT services sector.

## DISCUSSION

### Discussion on Interplay Between Brand Loyalty and Global Value Chains

The findings of Theme 1 derived from the SLR studies show that brand loyalty is improved through global value chain integration to maintain consistent product quality, operational efficiency, and customer trust. Better integration of the supply chain process makes products in the global markets more reliable and available and enhances consumer brand loyalty. Furthermore, cultural adaptation and its subsequent innovation in the global supply chain contribute to the building of very strong and long-lasting relationships between Chinese firms and their customers.

W. Rajagukguk, Samosir, J. Rajagukguk, and Rajagukguk (2024) acknowledge service quality and supply chain value in customer loyalty and post that customer relationship management (CRM) is crucial in linking this service quality and supply chain value to customer loyalty. This is consistent with findings from Theme 1 (seamless supply chain integration enhances customer satisfaction, an important key to brand loyalty). Nevertheless, regression analysis by Rajagukguk et al. explicitly indicates the significance of CRM which is not an emphasis of the current study, but a complementary factor in developing brand loyalty in Chinese enterprises.

Song and Chatterjee (2010) focus on the competitiveness of the global supply chain and how the integration of the supply chain process adds to the Chinese firm's performance and market position. Similarly, they argue that strong supply chain practices let companies gain a competitive advantage and perception of brand in the global marketplace as was found in this study. However, contrary to the current study that focuses on the operational efficiency determinant of brand loyalty, Song and Chatterjee take a broader view of the competitive positioning by incorporating other dimensions apart from supply chain integration, including market responsiveness and agility.

Torres de Oliveira, Ghobakhloo, and Figueira (2023) examine the ways Industry 4.0 technologies make feasible supply chain practices that promote social and environmental sustainability, which consequently strengthens brand loyalty through ethical practices and transparency. In comparison to the results found in the current study, this study further argues the aspect of sustainability. Whereas the current topic of the study is more concretely involved in operational and innovation to the process of integration of GVC while, Torres de Oliveira et al. (2023) discuss the involvement of other wider impacts of digital transformation and sustainability practices for

accomplishing customer loyalty and reputation. From these insights, it can be seen that the integration of sustainability practices and digital technologies can boost the benefits of the integration of GVCs, with a more robust framework for building brand loyalty.

Overall, the evidence collectively suggests that GVC integration engenders brand loyalty via operational efficiency, operational as well as cultural adaptation, and innovation. In addition, however, these studies promote an additional emphasis on CRM, market responsiveness, and sustainability, which can offer complimentary strategies for brand loyalty, for Chinese enterprises. Future studies can benefit from the addition of these broader dimensions into the analysis that led to more holistic approaches for gaining competitive advantage in global markets.

### **Discussion on WTO Rules and Strategic Branding**

The findings of this theme reveal that the rules of the WTO significantly influence the behavior of Chinese companies in terms of brand loyalty and market competitiveness. By complying with WTO rules, firms help integrate global best practices, improve their operational efficiency, and ensure product consistency and quality across borders which leads to strengthening their consumer loyalty. In addition, the findings show that WTO rules can be used by Chinese firms to preserve intellectual property, enhance brand reputation, and resolve the difficulty of accessing overseas markets comparatively. This theme's findings are consistent with Kotler and Gertner (2002) on the importance of brand management and place marketing in global markets. They argue that international trade norms such as those established by the WTO can powerfully give rise to global marketing strategies that in turn will create brand equity and consumer loyalty. While this study corroborates that WTO rules enable firms to better build brands, Kotler and Gertner emphasize the place branding aspect that the country's image and reputation in world markets also matter and they matter for brand loyalty, beyond the operation.

Likewise, Shultz and Saporito (1996), discuss the matters of protecting intellectual property that need to be protected through international agreements such as the TRIPS Agreement under WTO. Their study suggests that WTO compliance is helpful to companies to protect their brand from counterfeiting, which preserves the brand integrity and imbues consumer confidence. This corresponds to the present study's finding, which notes the role of WTO rules in strengthening brand loyalty by guaranteeing the protection of intellectual property. On the other hand, though, Shultz and Saporito in particular focus on intellectual property protection and the present study is wider in terms of the operational improvements stemming from WTO membership.

While Agarwal and Wu (2004) study the impact of China's WTO membership on its international marketing strategies, the present work tests the premium method. This finding suggests that one preexisting impact of China's WTO accession is creating opportunities to strengthen brand image and improve market access, echoing several significant findings of this study. Contrary to Agarwal and Wu, the current study considers another advantage of green supply chains: increasing operational efficiency and product consistency. Taken together, these studies suggest that WTO compliance acts as a multiple-headed hoe, not only enabling firms to expand from one market to another but also helping to generate brand loyalty.

The challenges that Chinese firms face in the global market, i.e., barriers to cultural adaptation and regulatory constraints. By improving branding and operational patterns, the current study argues that WTO compliance mitigates these challenges. Chinese firms will overcome these barriers by aligning with WTO norms and leveraging the mixed aspects of their operational and brand strategies to continually achieve success in international markets.

The collective evidence concludes that WTO rules empower Chinese firms to build stronger brands, enhance market access, and protect intellectual property. But insights from Kotler and Gertner (2002) on place branding and from Shultz and Saporito (1996) on intellectual property allow us to highlight that the combination of marketing and branding along with broader market strategies and operational excellence is necessary. Future studies could combine these narrowly focused approaches to complement each other in making WTO compliance the most beneficial.

### **Discussion on Strategic Framework for Enhancing Brand Loyalty**

The outcome of the findings of this theme affirmed that there are crucial aspects within a Chinese enterprise that help in understanding how to form and maintain brand loyalty in a foreign market; strategic alignment and cultural adaptation. The study shows that brand loyalty, and economic advantages, require effective global market entry strategies and strong customer engagement. In addition, it emphasizes the significance of continuous innovation and the quality of services in increasing consumer satisfaction and ultimately long-term brand relationships. Omar, Williams, and Lingelbach's (2009) findings support the conclusion of the theme that to control corporate reputation and brand loyalty, a strong global brand strategy is a must. The current study fits in

this because their study shows that the firms need to adjust their strategies for market entry with local market demands. Omar et al. (2009) emphasize more on corporate reputation as opposed to the current study which seeks to explore a wider view of the framework for improving loyalty through customer engagement and market entry strategies.

In contrast, Yazid (2020) explores the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in fostering customer loyalty and brand trust, highlighting the mediating effect of customer satisfaction. This complements the findings of Theme 3, which emphasizes the importance of service quality and customer relationship management. However, writing on CSR, Yazid (2020) defines the concept as relating closely to customer loyalty and hence not the broader and more strategic perspective tackled in this study. Lastly, Fraß (2016) also provides insights into the Chinese market where he outlines that after-sale services are crucial for establishing brand loyalty. This supports the observations made in Theme 3 that indicate that customer communication and interaction through service is an important ingredient in building customer loyalty. While Fraße (2016) assigns the after-sales service as the principal strategy to use for loyalty, this paper uses a broader strategy of the success factors that include the market adaptation globally, product differentiation, product offering, and service delivery to boost brand loyalty.

Yazid (2020) specifically looks at CSR and its relationship to customer loyalty and brand trust with the proposed mediator of customer satisfaction. This is in agreement with the findings pointed out in Theme 3 which show that there is a need for service quality and Relationship Management. Yazid however, specifically established the relation between customer loyalty and corporate social responsibility, a specific relation not quite discussed in this present study. Fraß (2016) argued the importance of after-sales services in establishing brand loyalty in China. In other words, this corroborates Theme 3 revelation that the reinforcement of loyalty goes through service quality and continuous interaction with customers. Contrary to Fraß (2016), this study proposes a broader, holistic strategic framework from global market adaptation to product innovation and service quality to achieve brand loyalty.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that the results of this theme, which is supported by Omar et al. (2009), Yazid (2020), and Fraß (2016), reveal that loyalty building is a complex process. From the analysis, CSR and after-sales services are significant, but Chinese enterprises need a comprehensive model of cultural adaptation, global market strategies, continuous innovation, and service quality for brand loyalty. Further research can be conducted in the future to examine how these factors coexist to strengthen loyalty formation strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to investigate the linkage between brand loyalty and GVC integration concerning Chinese-origin enterprises and the role that WTO regulation plays in the global competitiveness and brand positioning of Chinese-origin enterprises. The main aim of this study was to investigate the effects of GVC integration on brand loyalty and the development of strong customer relationships in the context of global markets. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology was used for this study to synthesize the existing work on how global operations and local market strategies influence brand equity within the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model theorization.

The findings also suggest that GVC integration enhances brand loyalty by maintaining product quality consistency, enhancing customer satisfaction, and available market access. Furthermore, WTO compliance supports brand reputation and loyalty by adopting international trade norms, upholding product standards, and securing intellectual property. The study highlighted the contribution of cultural adaptation and innovation to the competitive advantage that Chinese enterprises enjoy in the global market.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Theoretical Implications**

Across all these findings, the study collectively emphasizes the importance of global value chain (GVC) integration, WTO compliance, and cultural adaptation for Chinese enterprises to build and sustain brand loyalty in the international market. This study's findings support key insights derived from the literature review, especially, product quality, operational efficiency, and customer relationship management are essential drivers of supporting brand loyalty (J. Zhang & He, 2014; Yeung et al., 2011). Product quality and availability across regions are ensured by GVC integration, not only to support brand associations, but brand awareness is a central concept to build a brand. This is consistent with Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model (1993), that brand loyalty progresses through stages from brand awareness to brand resonance, powered by the perceived quality

and customer engagement. Results from this study are consistent with Keller's framework and reveal that integration into GVC, as well as cultural sensitivity, leads to a better emotional engagement of consumers, which contributes to a higher brand resonance.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that adherence to global trade regulation is essential in establishing brand equity (Agarwal & Wu, 2004; J. Zhang & He, 2014). As a foundation, WTO rules, particularly in the area of intellectual property protection and market access, facilitate the establishment and protection of a firm's brand identities in international markets. Taken as a whole, also in line with the CBBE model and theoretical perspectives of the literature, the results emphasize the role of combining global operational practice with local market adaptation in building brand equity.

### **Practical Implications**

The Practical Implications section acknowledges that cultural adaptation integration with the client base of Chinese enterprises should incorporate the issue of the global value chains, and brand loyalty in the international markets. Thus, firms can match the global strategies to the local environment to produce similar quality products that meet customer needs thus informing the customer of building brand credibility. However, service quality improvement and innovation have to form the basic framework as they are strategic weapons in the creation of competitive advantages and longevity of brand associations. Implementing the global market, as well as preferences within each country, results in higher brand equity and consumer loyalty. To achieve such kind of success in the market Chinese firms are required to develop strategic capabilities that will encompass operations management, cultural intelligence, and customer management.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Leverage WTO Compliance for Branding:** According to WTO rules, Chinese firms should strategically match their branding initiatives with transparency, ethical practices, and quality assurance. Protection of intellectual property, through leveraging the TRIPS agreement, will not only protect brand identity but increase consumer trust in the international market.

**Enhance Localization within GVCs:** To adapt to the local culture within the firms' GVCs, firms should adopt localized branding by building cultural nuances into their marketing and operations framework. Tailoring products and services to regionally perceived needs with global brand standards.

**Focus on Customer Relationship Management (CRM):** The most robust CRM should be implemented by firms, and these solutions should focus on personalized customer engagement, loyalty programs, as well as after-sales service. The strategies also deepen the bond with consumers on the emotional front which enables and enhances long-term loyalty.

**Enhance Localization within GVCs:** Within their GVCs Firms should adopt a localized branding strategy, combining cultural nuances into marketing and operational framing. It includes creating goods and services tailored to a particular local flavor without obscuring the global brand.

**Develop Hybrid Branding Frameworks:** An integrated hybrid approach bridging the global trade norms and local market strategies is necessary. They should innovate to attract the unique demands of diverse consumer bases while more or less adhering to international standards in their operations.

**Foster Strategic Partnerships:** By partnering with local distributors and suppliers, these firms can simplify the cross-cultural and regulatory aspects of market entry and keep customers loyal.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Limitations of the study include reliance on secondary data taken from past literature that does not fully reflect the shift of GVC integration and WTO regulations and their application to the real world. Future research can characterize the empirical case studies of the effect of WTO regulations on the selected industries and regions, as well as cross-cultural studies to determine how the local market factors affect brand loyalty in a heterogeneous international environment.



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#### ETHICAL DECLARATION

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