The adaptation and standardization on websites of international companies

Analysis and comparison from websites of United States, Germany and Taiwan

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Abstract:

To find an appropriate balance between centralization and localization is a key factor for a successful international company. From a company perspective, this thesis tries to figure out if the different aspects such as organizational culture, national culture and industry sector determine the standardization or adaptation of companies’ websites and which website features are affected. The internationalization typology of Bartlett and Ghoshal has been used to classify 12 companies from three industries according to their international strategy. Then their websites in United States, Germany and Taiwan will be analyzed to compare if the internationalization types among their websites correspond to the expected. The results show that the three aspects impact the appearance of these websites.

Keywords:

Websites, Internationalization, Adaptation, Standardization, Industry, National Culture, Organizational Culture.
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Glossary

E-shop: electronic shop
E-commerce: electronic commerce
FAQ: frequently asked questions
DE: Germany
TW: Taiwan
UK: United Kingdom
US or USA: United States of America
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1. Introduction

*Background*

The process when a corporation begins value-adding activities in other countries is called internationalization\(^1\). The reasons why these companies want to take this step are different. For instance, when the local market is mature, it is necessary to switch or enlarge the marketing area or the concern about labour cost or research and development purposes. Generally, the companies start business activities in their home countries and then eventually go abroad to set up subsidiaries. Thus, international companies might have several subsidiaries spread out in other countries. The character and type of those subsidiaries can have different functions. They can be for production, R&D, assembly and marketing or financing etc., whereas the others do not have the same functions\(^2\).

To keep sustainability and stable growth, the companies need to create core competences\(^3\) and to maintain or duplicate them into other business units, including the foreign subsidiaries. However, while going abroad, the elements such as power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity and uncertainty avoidance\(^4\) should also be considered. For example, one of the toughest markets in the world, Japan, has made many giant groups such as French supermarket Carrefour, British drug store Chain Boots and French cosmetic retailer Sephora come and withdraw in recent years. Even the world’s most powerful retailers, Wal-Mart has to struggle for its survival. The world’s biggest furniture company, Swedish IKEA also has to try again and still has a long way to go after their first bust two decades ago\(^5\).

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5. [http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/apr2006/gb20060426_821825.htm?chan=search](http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/apr2006/gb20060426_821825.htm?chan=search), retrieved 3\(^{rd}\), Jan. 07
The Turning Point from New Technology:

In the beginning of the 1990s, the “network of interlinked computers throughout the world” opened for private uses and companies. The application of this technology brought the commerce activity into a new generation which redefined internationalization by modifying its process and speed. To illustrate, in 1903, Ford Motor Company began its business and started its global expansion half a century later, in the 1960s. However, in October 2006, Google acquired YouTube, one of the most popular online video and social networking service companies, for 1.65 billion USD. It is a company founded less than one year ago but has already taken more than 50% of the market in this business area.

Internet has become an invisible but important distribution channel of companies for multiple purposes. They use it to express and explain their values, to communicate with their consumers, or even to sell their products without physical shops which is known as electronic commerce. Moreover, the company website increases the possibility to expand globally before setting up physical subsidiaries or having activities in other countries. This is possible because of its particularity to blur the geographical boarders and reducing costs for the communication and the market entry.

The expectations of users about how websites should be designed are getting higher with the increase of internet applications and their accessibility. At the same time it increase the competitively among the players. Website properties like easy navigation, attractive design, entertainment, services expected by consumers and so on can stimulate the usage of internet users and reinforce the positive company image. Thus, the company websites have also become a representation of their corporate identity and furthermore affects the trustworthiness of the firms. Moreover, the website project is an important strategy of the companies to express and promote themselves for any potential opportunities worldwide.

6 http://www.ford.com/en/heritage/history/default.htm?source=rt&referrer=company_default, retrieved the 6th, Jan., 07
7 http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/oct2006/tc20061010_083340.htm?chan=search retrieved the 6th, Jan., 07
**Problem Discussion:**

However, using this new technique to enlarge the business opportunities has also revealed some problems, especially for the international corporations. How the company presents itself online and the design of the website both affect the achievement a website can make.

From a management point of view and for the sustainability of a company which acts internationally, it is important to consider its organizational culture, to keep the strategy and company value from the home country. Nevertheless, the adaptation due to the different market situations and local culture aspects are also key elements when companies decide their internationalization strategy, which is supposed to be applied to their website strategy as well. Standardization is the strategy of companies to standardize their worldwide activities such as keeping the same product features, advertisement, and services for different countries, whereas localization is to adapt those activities for different markets specificities. Generally, companies decide how they address their customers, by standardizing or adapting their campaigns when acting worldwide.

The websites of firms in different countries are their representations of the corporation online. They should therefore be taken into consideration to fit not only the organizational culture for expressing the corporate idea but also the local culture for catching potential business opportunities. Notwithstanding, the adaptation and standardization of companies’ websites are not easy to decide and have indicated difficulties in maintaining the websites in different countries. The website should express the message corresponded to the company’s principle and business strategy. However, the local market situations, different industries types with culture free products or culture bonded products, and different types of local subsidiaries like franchise or dealer all affect the website strategy and maintenance.
Purpose:

The purpose of this thesis is to figure out if aspects such as organizational culture, national culture and industry sector affect the presentation of company websites, which is one of the important international activities of a firm. Company websites from different countries will be selected, analyzed and compared with each other. Moreover, the comparison will be analyzed to show how international companies adapt or standardise their websites for the different countries according to their internationalization strategy.

Perspective:

Research, from a national culture point of view to determine and decipher the international strategies, is quite common. This research will take an opposite perspective from the company side such as the organizational culture and corporate image. On account of this, one of the global extending activities, website presentation, will be evaluated and studied to understand the corporate strategy.

Delimitations:

Owing to the limitation of time, the empirical data will be collected from the websites of selected companies in three culturally different markets: the US, German and Taiwanese market. The focus will be on companies from the housewares, car and cosmetics industry.

Thesis outline

The outline of this research will be presented below. The platform that was given in the introduction part points out the background, the problem and the research purpose. The methodology will be presented for the understanding of the research method used in this thesis. Then, in the literature review theories related to companies’ different types of internationalization and website features will be presented. From the theories which will be presented and discussed, research propositions will be determined. In the empirical part, websites of selected international companies will be evaluated and
the used method of grading will be clarified to the reader. The results of the empirical research will be discussed in the analysis part. Besides that, the credibility of the proposed propositions will be checked according to the findings. Finally, a conclusion of this study will be given and futures research recommendations will be suggested.

Figure 1: Structure of the thesis

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Literature Review
- New Research

Propositions:
- P1: The multinational companies adapt their website to the different countries.
- P2: The global companies standardize their websites to the different countries.
- P3: The transnational companies adapt their websites partly to the different countries.

- Empirical Part
- Analysis
- Conclusions & Recommendations
2. Methodology

In this part the methodology of the research will be presented. First a general view of the methodology will be provided in order to understand the different possible approaches before presenting the method of this thesis. Moreover the reliability, validity and credibility of this study will be discussed. Finally, it will be argued why and how the findings of this work can be generalised and used for companies.

2.1. General Methodology

Funnel Procedure and the Method:

Before starting an empirical research, every researcher has to choose a certain area on which to focus his study. Some see therefore the research as a “funnel procedure” it starts out with a wide range of possibilities (the top of the funnel) that has to be limited to a specific topic (bottom of the funnel)\(^8\). The analysis of this work has to be narrowed down to a finite number of aspects in the empirical part. Neuman argues the same and proposes the need to “narrow and focus the topic”\(^9\).

A key step of this study is to relate the existing theories with the reality about the way websites are actually designed. This study is base on the deductive procedure which will be described below.

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\(^8\) Jeannin J.-P. (2003), Recherche en sciences sociales : la démarche, retrieved 22 May 2006  
www.sosreseaux.com/sos_etudiants_demarche_recherche.php  
The deductive approach first creates propositions from existing theories before testing them empirically and confirming or revising existing theories\(^{11}\). In other words, studies can be founded on existing theories and then tested in a second step by comparing them with the “empirical social reality” (see picture at the figure 7 above). The procedure is defined as a way “from ideas toward grounded empirical observations”\(^{12}\) since this approach starts with general principles and ends with the specific empirical findings.

The Approach of this Study

Studies can be done by different approaches. They can be qualitative, quantitative or combined as well quantitative as qualitative study. The character of the qualitative study will be described in the next paragraph.

\(^{10}\) Ibid, p.59.
\(^{11}\) Lawrence Neuman, op cit., p.59.
\(^{12}\) Figure 3.1, Ibid., p.60.
Qualitative Studies:

Qualitative studies have several advantages and limitations at the same time. The gathered information is richer and deeper for the following reasons. The answers are more qualitative since answers will be less superficial and deeper than as “yes” and “no”. Besides, background information should be considered as well, the implicit messages (indirectly expressed feelings) and explicit messages (directly expressed feelings) can both be analyzed and provide additional inputs for the research. Moreover, the amount of the collected data is less important than in quantitative research. Furthermore, the assessment of “personal insights, feelings, and human perspectives”\textsuperscript{13} can lead to the supplementary empirical data. Besides, qualitative data can vary depending on form, shape and size and are usually more complex than just numbers. Qualitative studies are linked to subjective experiences and impressions of the analyst and explain therefore more than “what” and “why”\textsuperscript{14}. Another advantage is that the measuring of the data can be changed according to the situation more easily and interactively by researchers. Thus, this method is more flexible than a quantitative one\textsuperscript{15}. The qualitative approach is comparable to a bridge that connects ideas with data\textsuperscript{16}.

Data Collection:

Primary data have the advantage that they are collected especially for the purpose of a specific research. That is the reason why the output generally fits the research better. Meanwhile, secondary data from previous studies are collected for certain reasons. For example, the usage of secondary data can be convenient since it saves time and money for the researcher and enables him to get additional information he may be not able to access by himself\textsuperscript{17}.

\textsuperscript{13} Lawrence Neuman W., op cit., p.152-153.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.181.
\textsuperscript{16} Lawrence Neuman W., op cit., p.181.
2.2. Methodology of this Study

In this part, the research methodology of this thesis will be presented and discussed.

2.2.1. Goals of this Empirical Research

The purpose of this empirical research is to determine if companies acting in an international field adapt or standardize their websites for the different markets. The data collected in the empirical part will be evaluated and used for the conclusion and suggestions at the end of this work. The findings of this study will show how companies adapt or standardize their websites and help understand which strategy is more suitable to a company depending on its type.

Primary data will be collected from websites of twelve companies in the housewares, car and cosmetic industry. In each of these industries, four well known companies and three of their most important markets, United States of America, Germany and Taiwan have been selected. These data will then be complemented by secondary data from previous studies. The products of the selected industries are consumer goods, some culturally bounded (such as housewares and cosmetics) and some culturally free (mostly high end products from car, housewares and cosmetics). Since housewares and cosmetics can be very different according to local flavor, taste, legislation etc. it is more culture bound. On the other hand, owing to the research and development, modeling and production cost, car industry is regarded as more culture free.

In this research, a qualitative approach is more suitable because of its character. First, the gathered data are representative and the outcome of the analysis will show if the propositions defined in the literature review are credible or not. Furthermore, the websites will be deciphered and similarities or dissimilarities explained.
2.2.2. Disposition of this Study

For being a qualitative research, the steps taken for keeping this study scientifically valid will be presented in the following part. In this research a qualitative approach for gathering data will be followed. The information content is rich because during the analysis of the websites more detailed data can be collected about website design and conception etc. For instance, general impression and characteristics will be noted and commented as well, contrary to a quantitative method restricted on checking the availability of certain features, their similarity or inexistence. In the discussion part the results of the primary data collection will be complemented by related secondary data. These will give additional inputs to explain the website strategy of international companies, as well as increase the understanding and reliability of this study.

First of all, the background about the use of websites in the international market has been introduced. Through that general information some interesting factors came out in this field which were discussed as problems. Hence, the purpose of this research has been pointed out after the problem part. It gives a clear idea about the value of this study. There are three propositions assumed in the beginning which will be tested later.

Secondly, general theoretical principles of the related area will be selected and presented. Through the theoretical discussion and review in the “literature review” part, there are criteria and measurement methods for using in the empirical part which are fixed and explained. Moreover, in order to concrete the propositions gathered from problems found and the literature review, there will be an empirical test for checking their credibility.

The resources of the data collected in this part are primary and secondary data. The secondary data are taken from the literature analysis. The procedure of data gathering will be explained before collecting the data and analyzing them. Accordingly, the assumptions will be approved or disapproved. This allows giving some conclusions and suggestions for the research. Meanwhile in the end, future research recommendations will be pointed out for completing the delimitation of this study which can extend or intensify this research area.
Thirdly, the reason for selecting these companies will be presented in the empirical part as well as the tasks of investigation. Collected data will be analyzed via those criteria in order to test the assumptions of the three research propositions. The way of investigation will be described in the empirical part and analyzed in the segment following. In the end, conclusions and suggestions will come out from the empirical research. Besides that, interesting questions for future research will be outlined.

2.2.3. Methods of Data Collection

To gather the empirical data for testing and analyzing the measurements have to be valid and reliable in order to ensure the quality of the data and the validity, credibility and reliability of the results.

For understanding the different internationalization types of companies and how they conceive their website as a global business activity, classifying companies into different categories and analyzing their websites of different countries is necessary. The reason why certain companies have been selected will be argued in the next part.

18 Slide 2 of the seminar of methodology from Professor Peter Gustavsson, Linköping University, march 2006
http://blackboard.liu.se/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_i d= 1132 1
The empirical research is restricted on the perspective of companies which produce or sale consumer goods worldwide. The different countries are supposed to have different cultures owing to their geography, history and other elements.

**The Reasons of Markets and Companies Selection:**

In order to increase the credibility, validity and reliability of this research and its sampling, 12 international companies of three representative markets United State, Germany and Taiwan have been selected.

First of all, these markets are from different continents, America, Europe and Asia, with business opportunities not only inside their own country but also in their regionally linked continent. However, the challenges for these international companies are the different cultures, languages and customs which can differ comparing to their headquarters or home countries. Besides, the languages are different in these three selected countries which can increase the representation and quality of this study.

Secondly, 12 companies in three industries are selected for several reasons, Car Industry - Ford, Nissan, Toyota and BMW. Cosmetic Industry – Maybelline, L’occitane, The Body Shop and Clarins. And Housewares Industry - Alessi, IKEA, WMF and Villeroy & Boch.

These three industries offer consumer goods to worldwide customers who might have different preferences or habits according to their different cultures. For the consumer goods industries, the brand image and customer relationship are important to convince or build up the first in mind impression which stimulates the buying behaviour. The usage of internet is still increasing and has already become a main distribution and advertisement channel. Thus, the consumer goods industries should be concerned about this new channel and conceive it to enlarge their business opportunities. In fact, the 12 companies all have a strong international brand reputation and good physical distribution channels worldwide. Thus, the new channels, websites, should be used as an efficient method to communicate their organizational cultures and concepts, gather
information, increase interactivity and provide personalized service directly to the consumers. The test will use certain criteria to compare the companies’ websites in the selected countries. Through the comparison, the degree of adaptation and standardization will be determined which will in turn show the international strategy of the selected companies.

The findings of this empirical research will be presented and discussed in the analysis part (part five). The detailed summaries of each company and group can be found in the appendix.

2.3. Credibility, Validity and Reliability

To concrete the value and objectivity of a meaningful research is not only necessary but mandatory. If that is done, the outcome of it can be applied and used by an executive who need to make decisions for reference or it can be the base of future research. In this section, the credibility, validity and reliability of this research will be pointed out. The theories of the literature review will be applied to the research. This study will analyze websites to determine if the propositions which will be suggested in the literature review are credible and if there are any factors affecting them.

In this qualitative study, proceeding objectively and in the same way through out the analysis of all the selected websites is crucial in order to ensure the reliability of the collected data and their interpretation. In fact, especially for the grading (measurement method) of the standardization versus adaptation, there can be a tendency of subjectivity during the evaluation of the websites\textsuperscript{19}. Therefore, the gathering of the primary data will be done by the two authors of this thesis and follow clear defined criteria. The procedure and these criteria will be presented more in depth in the empirical part. A “good data quality” requires more than reliable measurements. The empirical research should be reliable, valid\textsuperscript{20} and credible at the same time\textsuperscript{21}.

\textsuperscript{19} Lawrence Neuman W., op cit., p.404.
\textsuperscript{20} Ghauri P. and Gronhaug K., op cit., p.80
\textsuperscript{21} Lawrence Neuman W., op cit., p.402 and 247.
Validity is related to the trustworthiness of the study. The validity can be external and internal. External validity means that the study also can be true for other industries and companies. To increase the generalization of this study companies from three industry sectors and different price segments (high end products like Alessi’s and cheaper from IKEA’s etc.) have been selected. Besides that, countries with different cultural backgrounds: United States, Germany and Taiwan have been chosen. Internal validity signifies that the research is made without errors concerning the measurements etc. Internal validity is ensured in this thesis by a clear research design and thus avoiding errors which could lead to the collection of false data. Moreover, the research quality depends on the interpretative validity (“how good the interpretation is” \(^{22}\)) and the descriptive validity (if the descriptions hold true \(^{23}\)).

Finally, there is the credibility aspect of the work. The trustworthiness of this study is based on the possibility of easily being able to check the correctness of the findings by visiting and analyzing the websites. Some screenshots are provided to facilitate the readers’ understanding about the analysis so that he can see the adaptation or standardization of the explained website features.

### 2.4. Generalisation of the Findings

The findings of this research can help company managers in their strategic decisions. For instance, when they decide to internationalise their company and create websites for different countries or if they want to modify or actualise their current websites it can be helpful.

Companies can consider three internationalization strategies: multinational, global, and transnational, which will be presented in the following literature review. Depending on their types, they can localize or standardise their operations abroad. The research will analyze and show the different website features which can be adapted or standardised dependent on the company’s aim (image reinforcement versus localization). The manager can use the feature list, which will be outlined in the next

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\(^{22}\) Ghauri P. and Gronhaug K, op cit., p.218

\(^{23}\) Ibid, op cit., p.216.
section as reference, and analyze which of those features are more suitable for adaptation standardization according to the considered countries specificities. Furthermore, the way of adaptation of the analyzed companies can inspire managers who want to conceive their websites. The result gives clear ideas for the website designing. Thus, it can be generalised and to some extend taken as reference for companies from other industries. Indeed even if the study is constraint to three industries and has a limited research sample some of the findings can certainly hold true for other industries as well and has therefore external validity. Further researches in this area should however be done in order to determine if the particularities of the different industry sectors influence company strategies etc.

After this methodology, several theories and research related to international companies and their websites will be outlined. The theories will be grouped in two main parts. First, Ghoshal and Bartlett’s theory about different types of internationalization will be explained and connected with studies about adaptation and standardization of websites. Secondly, general features and culture related features will be enumerated. These theories and research findings will help to determine criteria to analyze to which extend companies are standardizing or adapting.

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24 Ghauri P. and Gronhaug K., op cit., p.86 and 218.
3. Literature Review

In this section, the literature articles and typologies related to this research will be presented and discussed for a better understanding of this research. They will also be used in the analysis in part V. First, the theories about the internationalization of companies and organizational culture will be dealt with, before getting to some general and culture related website features of international corporations.

3.1. The Typology of International Companies

To determine and clarify the internationalization type of companies is not only necessary but also important. The typology from Bartlett and Ghoshal provides a more complete and developed theory about internationalization. Their theory has been tested widely during the past years. The main reasons for using this typology could be divided into the following three points:

To begin with, there are various types of organizations which have different characters. Sorting the firms with similar features into manageable categories will make the understanding easier for the reader about the different types of international companies. Secondly, the internationalization type can be determined after the consideration of the features of companies’ websites. Indeed sometimes only by the recognition of some features the typology can be predicted and other features expected. The comparison and integration of research in international business and management areas became easier to achieve due to the application of these internationalization typologies. Last but not least, those specific features for each type of international company show the form of the organizational structure, strategy type or process and also the reaction to the industry type or environment. Understanding the typology is important because the companies with features fitting their type might have better performance than the others which do not present the necessary features.

26 Macharzina and Engelhard, Quoted by “Anne-Wil Harzing , ibid, p.101
2.1.1. Multinational Company:

Multinational companies can be described as those which adapt their products and management to the countries in which they operate. This means that the company will adapt its marketing, logistic etc. for each market. In this segment, the local operating or management center takes the responsibility of making most of the relevant strategies. This requires strong “geographic management” for detecting the potential opportunities country by country and reacting accordingly in order to earn or create the benefit from them furthermore. On the other hand, this kind of organization can be regarded as a “decentralized federation – strategic decisions decentralized”.

Levitt believes that multinational organizations face higher expenses because of the adaptations to the local specificities. Multinational companies have to face internal pressures when integrating their international strategy. At the same time the cultural, social and economical differences encourage the localization process. For instance governmental and institutional constraints, tariffs and duties, consumer demand differences make a more localized strategy necessary. A localization strategy implies the need to adapt to “the culture, media availability, product life cycle stages and industry structures” because of differing consumer preferences.

Singh et al. refer to several scholars who believe in the importance of understanding the cultural differences and that websites have to be adapted to cultures by multinational companies. The preferences of website features for instance the navigation, security, content etc. differs among cultures. Therefore an adaptation to the target culture can improve the use, access and interactivity of a website. However, he claims that no study clearly proves that website features have to be adapted to the

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28 De Wit B. and Meyer R., op cit., p.230
30 De Witt and De Meyer, op cit., p.418
cultures, neither if there is a trend toward a “global internet culture” or “culturally adapted web content”\textsuperscript{32}.

Some scholars argue that companies are already adapted or localized when they act internationally since there are too many factors (non cultural and cultural) limiting the international marketing efficiency otherwise. Furthermore cultural bound products are influenced by the local culture and require, according to Hermeking, an adaptation or localization to it\textsuperscript{33}.

In the next paragraph, it will be shown that numerous scholars believe that customer needs and desires become increasingly similar. This makes the existence of multinational-companies more questionable for scholars like Levitt (he believes in global companies)\textsuperscript{34}.

\textbf{Proposition 1:}

According to the definition and understanding of the first internationalization company type – multinational company, there comes out the first proposition: The multinational companies adapt their website to the different countries in which they operate.

\textbf{3.1.2. Global Company:}

Global companies are organizations which use the same products and management for their different markets without adapting them. Managers of typical global companies lead the company in their home country as well as abroad. The most important strategies are decided by the managers in the headquarters.

Thus the “business management” commands the production location, the standardization of products and focuses especially on low-cost global sourcing such as raw materials from different locations and cheaper labor cost. Their management


\textsuperscript{34} Levitt T, op cit., p.93
ability is extremely important for developing strategies to keep cross-market operating and coordinating efficient. In other words, this kind of organization can be regarded as a “centralized federation – strategic decisions centralized”.

Many scholars refer to Levitt when it comes to standardization of websites (i.e. Fletcher and Okazaki). Since the 1960s especially the standardization of international marketing became a key question for international oriented companies because of the growth of global media, “economies of scale and worldwide convergence of tastes”. Levitt emphasises the importance of globalization with his claim “nobody is safe from global reach and the irresistible economies of scale” 35. There is a trend for globalization in different industries (i.e. autos and steel). Global corporations operate abroad without adapting to the local market. By the standardization of their products and operations, organizations try to become and remain competitive both locally and internationally. The relative costs for global corporations are therefore lower since they can sell the same products/services everywhere36.

According to Douglas and Wind there are 3 underlying assumptions for globalization of companies37: the homogenisation of customers needs and interests worldwide, the readiness of people to resign to expected features if they can get a cheaper qualitative product and the substantial economies of scale can be realized in the production and marketing

**Homogenisation of the Needs:**

Numerous scholars argue for the homogenisation of the needs and demands: “Everyone in the increasingly homogenized world wants products and features that everybody else wants”38. It can be therefore talked about “similarities in customer behaviour” 39. Thus, companies should concentrate on the similarities of countries instead of their differences. However, this means at the same time renouncing to

35 Levitt T., op cit., p.102
36 Ibid, p.93, p.95-96
37 Douglas and Wind quoted by De Witt and Meyer, op cit., p.419
38 Levitt T., op cit., p.419 and Douglas and Wind quoted by De Witt and Meyer, op cit, p.96
39 Douglas and Wind quoted by De Witt and Meyer, op cit, p.420
potential profits. But companies need to be global otherwise they risk to become “victims” of those which are already global.

**Readiness to Buy Other Products:**

Additionally to the homogenisation of the demand also the price awareness motivates people to rather buy cheaper standardised products than the locally adapted products. Consumers accept other product features and are ready to buy products dependent on the price and the promotion\(^{40}\).

**Economies of Scale:**

Standardization can lead economies to scope and scale since even “small local segments have their equivalents everywhere” \(^{41}\). Multinational companies following the same strategy worldwide can benefit from synergies and competitive advantages at an international level\(^{42}\). In order to increase their sales companies need only to find similar market segments in different countries.

Okazaki emphasises the need to make cross cultural analysis to determine which website functions can be standardised\(^{43}\). Indeed global companies should not adapt their website to the “needs of each market segment”. However some adaptation like change to the local language\(^{44}\) and keeping headings\(^{45}\) etc. are important in order to avoid all types of cultural mistakes which lead to other interpretations and understandings\(^{46}\). Finally, cultural free products contrary to cultural bound products are easy to standardise and thus fit with a global strategy\(^{47}\).

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\(^{40}\) Levitt T., op cit., P.96-97  
\(^{41}\) Levitt T., op cit., p.94 and 96  
\(^{42}\) Douglas and Wind quoted by De Witt and Meyer, op cit. p.418  
\(^{43}\) Okazaki S. (2005), op cit., p.88  
\(^{45}\) Okazaki S. (2005), op cit., p.90  
\(^{46}\) Fletcher R., op cit, p.260  
\(^{47}\) Hermeking, M., op cit.
Proposition 2:
According to the definition and understanding of the second internationalization company type – global company, comes the second proposition: The global companies keep their website in different countries highly standardized.

3.1.3. Transnational Company:

Transnational companies adapt partly to the local market. They have compared to the traditional internationally acting organizational types (global and multinational) more complex design and subtlety. The roles and responsibilities are differentiated by tasks, businesses and functions. Therefore, the decisions making process and management are easier and clearer as for other forms. However, the complexity of these company types led to higher costs and requires managers with particular skills who can handle it.

In this new concept of Bartlett and Ghoshal, the different definitions of those companies running business abroad are all the important factors to help the transnational company make strategies for going international. Thus in this classification, one of the key elements “administrative heritage\(^{48}\)” becomes more important. Executives’ skills, knowledge, and sophistication about how to make all worldwide units abroad specialized and interdependent, while keeping them efficient to maximize their outcome are key requirements of transnational companies. Competences can be built and developed in different units abroad and shared worldwide. In short, the dispread overseas unit can be regarded as an “integrated network – strategic decision-making shared” in which all units are connected tightly but with a less hierarchical network. The arguments for and against localization and standardization have been showed both in theoretical and empirical research.

**Degree of Adaptation:**

Standardization does not mean that there are no adaptations at all. Coca Cola is a good example of a global brand which has standardised product and adapt only its tastes, flavours etc. to local demand and specificities. Generally standardization of products for “upscale consumer” is higher (i.e. industrial or luxury). Besides that, it is more common in industrialised places where differences between consumer interests and conditions of the market are smaller.

There is a paradox for the strategy making of the two different organizational cultures. It is hard to define or judge which one should be the critical principle for the high executives. For instance, the price or product/service features should be different according to the local market demand in order to catch potential opportunities. Besides, the production cost may not be the major cost anymore but that depends on the products market level. Thus, the strategy of internationalization should be more efficient and flexible in keeping not only global products but also regional or national products for different target segments or customer preferences.

**Proposition 3:**

According to the definition and understanding of the third internationalization company type – transnational company, comes the last proposition of this thesis: The transnational companies adapt their websites partly to the different countries in which they operate.

**3.1.4. Application of Internationalization Types**

The definition and the relation between Bartlett and Ghoshal’s three internationalization company typologies will be presented below in table 1.

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49 Douglas and Wind quoted by De Witt and Meyer, op cit. p.418-419
50 Ibid, p.403
Table 1: The characteristics of the Three Internationalization Company Typologies\textsuperscript{51}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Characteristics</th>
<th>Multinational</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Transnational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Configuration of assets and capabilities</td>
<td>Decentralized and nationally self-sufficient</td>
<td>Centralized and globally scaled</td>
<td>Dispersed, interdependent, and specialized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of overseas operations</td>
<td>Sensing and exploiting local opportunities</td>
<td>Implementing parent company strategies</td>
<td>Differentiated contributions by national units to integrated worldwide operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and diffusion of knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge developed and retained within each unit</td>
<td>Knowledge developed and retained at the center</td>
<td>Knowledge developed jointly and shared worldwide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{51} Bartlett and Ghoshal, op cit., p.75
The selected companies from the three industry sectors have been classified according to the presented organizational characteristics.

Table 2: The internationalization type of different companies\(^{52}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Internationalization Type</th>
<th>Configuration of assets and capabilities</th>
<th>Key Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Car Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>Production sites in 9 countries and R&amp;D in 3 countries but sales is worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Multinational Company</td>
<td>Decentralized Federation</td>
<td>1. 108 production plants spread out worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Multi-branded owned by Ford Motor Group in which share the R&amp;D and production sites worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Integrated Network</td>
<td>Production plants spread out in 27 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>Production sites in 7 countries and R&amp;D in 5 countries but worldwide sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housewares Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessi</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>Italian design and production selling in 72 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Integrated Network</td>
<td>R&amp;D centralized but sales in 35 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMF</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>Production sites in 3 countries and sales worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villeroy &amp; Boch</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Integrated Network</td>
<td>Production sites in 12 countries and sales worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cosmetic Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Body Shop</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Integrated Network</td>
<td>31 suppliers in 24 countries through the &quot;community Trade&quot; program but only for 55 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinias</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>Sales in 150 countries with the R&amp;D and production mainly in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybelline</td>
<td>Multinational Company</td>
<td>Decentralized Federation</td>
<td>Numerous local retailer's distribution channel, production site localized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’oeccitaine</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Centralized Hub</td>
<td>2 production site for selling in 60 countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{52}\) From their websites, links are listed in the reference list
3.2. Organizational Cultural or National Cultural Aspects

There has been a lot of research on how websites of international companies should adapt to local cultures by changing or modifying their features. However, the research of this paper takes a different approach, namely how website content should be adapted from a company’s perspective.

After a successful establishment on the national market, to keep growing, companies need to enlarge their market share and benefit, locally as well as in other countries. However, how to keep the organizational culture, corporate identity and core competences has became an important consideration while making internationalization strategies, especially in the fast changing environment of today. On the one hand, the importance of maintaining the initial core competences has been undoubted. On the other hand, adapting to new challenges such as different local culture, law, or customer behaviour is also the key element to keep a firm operating and competing with others.

According to Schein’s \(^{53}\) five steps of adapting to an external environment, applied to when operating abroad, sharing the mission and strategy assumption with other players, including customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders and governments is important in order to let them better understand the goal and vision of the firm. When competing in different markets, the means of how to achieve goals and the measurements of testing results will differ. Moreover, for keeping the competitive advantage, the correction of a launched strategy is necessary.

The features of websites will be divided into several segments whether a company adapts or does not adapt when setting up a new website for international marketing. The features related to national culture might be adapted, thus the company prefer to act worldwide by following local markets demands more. On the contrary, some companies prefer to keep their organizational culture in order to build the same strong corporate image; they do not adapt the features related to national culture. Then the

websites of selected international companies will be verified according to those classifications.

3.3. Website Features

Websites can be characterized and described by a diverse set of elements, its features. These influence the users’ impression and behaviour. Various scholars remind therefore the necessity to be aware of the impact of these features. Breitenbach and Doren claim that companies should take features into consideration when they create or actualise their website. For them “website features and services should be created and actualised” and this dependent on external factors: “the demand, expectation and needs of the different website visitor groups” and internal aspects like “marketing objectives”\(^\text{54}\). In this part different features will be described.

3.3.1 General Websites Features

Features of websites:

Websites can be analyzed by considering different characteristics. Key factors are according to Lengert\(^\text{55}\) the website quality (usability), the creation of trust and the creation of positive affect when visiting websites. The website consulters from Abc-netmarketing focus more on ergonomic aspects which for them consist of utility, usability and speed\(^\text{56}\).


\(^{55}\) Quoted by Hermeking, M. op cit.

\(^{56}\) Source: Lecture to ergonomic Web site from Carpentier S. (Abc-netmarketing) at the ESC Amiens Picardie November 2003.
Other scholars who have made research on website design and conception have used a broad list of website features for their analysis and comparison. From the study of Riley and Lacroix, Okazaki and Karayanni and Baltas features related to this work have been sorted out and grouped. First the general website features will be briefed and grouped into six segments then the culturally linked features will be presented and discussed.

**Categories of General Features:**
The general features will be presented in different categories as below.

**Visible Website Design:**
This category includes all visible aspects of websites and its related design such as aesthetics and webpage layout. These are the arrangement of text, pictures and headlines. The used word fonts, colours, pictures and images are key elements of the visual perception of the website as well.

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57 Source: op cit.
59 Okazaki S. (2005), op cit.
61 Karayanni D. and Baltas G. A., op cit., p.107
Customer Relation/Interactivity:

The website is a tool for companies to communicate and gather information about consumers. Nowadays especially the communication via internet has become “increasingly viable and important for world top brands that increasingly attract consumers outside their home country”\(^{62}\). Companies should therefore carefully decide their communication policy. To achieve this there are website features which allow for the customers to, for instance, express their questions, comments and feedback via e-mail, find answers to questions by consultation of frequently asked questions (FAQ) or get support and help for the usage of the homepage via a “Help” function. Furthermore, by proposing the user to register, become member of a club or apply for a newsletter the company can increase the brand identification and loyalty and share its organizational culture with its customers.

Press releases and media relations are other ways to interact with customers, become more transparent and more trustful. Another way to increase the community\(^{63}\) size and trust are chat boards where customers can interchange their experiences and discuss diverse topics. Furthermore, data collection enables companies to gather key information from their interaction with their potential customers allowing for customization. Indeed customized advices should be emphasized according to Riley and Lacroix\(^{64}\). Buttler agree since he believes that customer relations are the “heart of customer attraction and retention”\(^{65}\). Besides that, websites can be animated in order to be more trendy and attractive for the user. For instance, animation by Flash, Pop ups etc. make the website more dynamic. Finally, companies can propose a local site option or language options so that customers easily can access national websites or consult information in their native languages.

Information/Content\(^{66}\):

According to the statistic, people spend more and more time on the internet and this time is still increasing (See table 6 about usage of the web in Europe in appendix).

\(^{62}\) Okazaki S. (2005), op cit., p.88


\(^{64}\) Riley F. D.O. and Lacroix C., op cit. p.103


\(^{66}\) Karayanni D. and Baltas G. A., op cit, p.108
The users’ expectation about the website quality and information is also increasing. Websites should have an added value for the user\textsuperscript{67}.

For the companies, how to reach customer and present their products or services through their website efficiently and attractively are the major concerns while designing websites. Through these websites features, customer can get immediate and full information of new or existing products, services and promotions. The products can be presented via photos, flash or online video to attract the consumers before entering the physical stores. Furthermore, the information about the store location can be found online which can save time of consumers. The consumer can get the information about retailers close to his home without needing to search on a map or to remember the name and location from a previous shopping experience. Regularly actualised information are important in order to give the consumer a reason to come back and check for offers, news etc. since a website “should live”\textsuperscript{68}.

**Image Reinforcement:**

Adam et al. argue that websites are a way for communicating the corporate image and building up a brand identity\textsuperscript{69}. To reinforce their corporate image companies therefore provide brand information\textsuperscript{70}, place links to access information “about us” and the company “history”. Besides that, companies often inform their shareholders in the websites rubric investors, about job opportunities and organizational culture/employment policy of the company in their job/career category.

**Navigation:**

The navigation depends on the usability (“how easy it is to use”)\textsuperscript{71}. Pertinent link names are navigation features which facilitate users to find their way and save time when there is a “scent of information”\textsuperscript{72}.

\textsuperscript{67}Breitenbach C. S. and Van Doren D. C., op cit., p.560
\textsuperscript{70}Riley F. D.O. and Lacroix, op cit., p.100
Furthermore, a fast loading of the webpages makes the navigation easier and more convenient, by enabling the user to return to the homepage from all pages (existence of “Home”), a site map as well as a search engine.

**Security and Privacy:**
The internet enables companies to reach people around the world and erases boarders. However, boarders remain for each country when it comes to legal aspects. Every country has different laws. While setting up the local website, the legislation of the government should therefore be taken into consideration in order to keep the website legal and maintain a good company image. Moreover, the consumer concern about online shopping security and personal data control has become a key element when companies design their websites. Besides, avoiding internet crime and hacker related intrusions have also to be taken into account.

**E-Shop:**
The e-shop functionality enables customer to buy the required product or services via internet.

In this section, a broad range of important features for the conception and maintenance of websites were presented. However, not only these features will guaranty the success of websites. The success “will depend on consumer” and how they will perceive the website. “A website works because the people it serves like it” and this depends on if the website conception takes cultural related aspects into account. In the next part culture related features will be explained.

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73 Karayanni D. A. and Baltas G. A, op cit., p.111
74 Riley F. D.O. and Lacroix, op cit., p.100
3.3.2 Culture Related Features

The following part is about the features that may vary in different countries; they will be discussed from a culture perspective. The definition of culture related features is to point out if these features are affected by different cultures, customs or laws. Furthermore, culture related features will be used to check whether the companies adapt to the local culture and the degree of adaptation.

The culturally related features are those which can be adapted by the company to the different cultures. According to some scholars and practitioners it is even necessary to localize since “Cultural mistakes have become common on internet sites” for instance the wrong currency “and using phrases that when translated convey a hilarious or offensive meaning” 78 should be avoided. On the other hand, the range of change that those international firms made can be used to analyze the internationalization type of them.

Hermeking believes in the localization of companies and the fact that users’ satisfaction depends on the quality of the website design and the users’ “cultural habits and values” 79. According to him, “a culturally well designed website may be defined as communicating the right information at the right place with the right layout in the right manner and in the right time according to the culture of each of its users.” 80

A company which follows a localization strategy can for instance adapt following components of its website.

- **Visible Design**

First of all the most important criteria are certainly those related to the appearance since the interaction with the customers occur via website and the impression is limited to the website interface. The “look” of the site can be trendy when the aesthetics follow the newest fashion and tendencies, classic to give a more traditional

78 Fletcher R., op cit., p.260
79 Quoted by Hermeking, M., op cit.
80 Ibid.
image, a combination of both etc. The text can be the same for all websites or adapted, they can be explicit more or less or provide different information. Pictures and colours can be as well adapted or similar for the different websites. Some scholars prone the importance of the adaptation of colours for different countries in order to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstandings since colours can have different meanings. This is also the case of numbers, reading pattern etc.

Customer Relations:

First of all, the communication of website is via different function such as e-mail, chat board on line, guest book or customer feedback etc. The preference of usage about each function can be different according to the different consumer favourite and supposed to be different according to the country segments as well. Some websites even provide “frequently asked question (FAQ)” function by which consumer can surf and get answers directly from the questions inquired most repeatedly but it is not so common in all the countries.

Secondly, the “Personalized advice” and “club membership” are regarded as main elements while adapting due to the preference of each region can be in different range from slight to wide. Through the functions above, companies can collect data from consumers to get their opinion directly and improve their service accordingly. How to keep the interact-communication of websites efficient and qualified, firms need to consider which kind of criteria is more suitable for themselves.

Moreover, the newsletter or press releases for the same company but in different country websites could be also different on which depends the international strategy of company. However the usage of newsletter and other ways to interact with the customer have to be handled carefully since some user, especially for some culture it can be an intrusion in privacy and seen as “spamming”, whereas other are more likely to accept this way of information access.

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81 Fletcher R., op cit., p.267
82 Ibid, p.267-268
83 Palumbo F. and Herbig P, op cit., p.254
● **Product:**

Store locator function can be adapted to the location and consumer behaviour. Moreover, before entering the shop, the consumer can get full information about the product, services or promotion through those functions presented on websites. The demo of the product image or photo such as product preview and the description way could be different as well of the website in the same firm but in different countries.

● **Image Reinforcement:**

For Quelch and Klein\(^{84}\) companies should have specially conceived websites for each brand “when the brands have distinct images within markets”. However, others, like Palumbo and Herbig argue that a global website strategy can be more suitable. Indeed to keep one identity: the same “image, message and content” is seen as less confusing for consumer. It is therefore necessary to define clearly the branding on the internet before conceiving a website with a certain corporate identity, corporate image, specific brand information and the company logo and placement. Moreover the content selected for the rubric: “about us”, “history” or other types of corporate information should be in accordance with the image and can be adapted locally. Finally, also the investor information and relation should strengthen the corporate image and can be adapted to the target shareholders.

● **Navigation**

Users in certain countries expect other tools to facilitate their navigation across the different website pages. In some places the usage of site map and search engines is more expected than in others.

\(^{84}\) Quoted by Palumbo and Herbig P.255
● Security:

The legislation varies by country or even region, so that it is also important to look at this point in order to keep websites legal. Furthermore, the company might tend to take the high level of standard in order to keep the better and higher company image.

● E-Shop:

In some countries the trust in online transaction and online shopping acceptance is less developed as in others (see table 5 in appendix about average purchases in different countries). For instance, Germans which are more technology friendly, purchase in average more often via internet as their neighbours in France.\textsuperscript{85} In some countries the existence of an E-shop as other distribution channel can be more profitable.

### 3.3.3. Summary of Analysis Criteria

Criteria which will be used for analyzing the websites are outlined in the following table 3.

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\textsuperscript{85} Europe : Le marché de l'e-commerce (20/11/2006) retrieved the 10 december 2006

\[\text{http://www.journaldunet.com/cc/04_ecommerce/ecom_marche_eu.shtml}\]
Table 3: Criteria for Website Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Criteria for Analyzing the Company Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visible website design</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer relation/interactivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized advice (boards, email, guestbook, feedback)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection, customer orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to local site option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation: flash, pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product, service or promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store locator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Preview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforcement of image: Corporate image, information of brand, about us, history</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company logo and placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Navigation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security and privacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General comments</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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86 Own representation
3.4. Propositions and Research Model

The following figure summarises three internal and external factors which can influence the type of internationalization. First, a strong organizational culture of a company can reinforce the image and corporate identity. Secondly, national culture should also be taken into account to avoid misunderstanding and increase acceptance of the target market. Thirdly, the business types such as the product specificities affect international strategies of companies when operating abroad. Finally, on the one hand the company types impact the website design and conception and on the other hand the website has to present the internationalization types likewise.

Figure 5: Factors Influencing the Website Design

Organizational culture

National culture

Industry type

Types of internationalization:
- Multinational
- Global
- Transnational

Company Activities - Website design

Propositions:

P1: The multinational companies adapt their websites to the different countries in which they operate.

P2: The global companies keep their website in different countries highly standardized.

P3: The transnational companies adapt their websites partly to the different countries in which they operate.

Own representation
4. Empirical Part

In this part, the procedure of the data collection will be described. The analysis outcome is based on the available information from the website of those international companies on the day of test (see appendix for the dates).

First of all, the following website features of companies will be graded from 1 to 5 points according to their online presence: Aesthetics, Text, Pictures, Colour, Personalized advice, Community, Data Collection, and Product or Service Information. The grade would be given according to two standards. First, if the home country of the company is the same as one of these three selected countries, United State, Germany and Taiwan, the website of it will be taken as standard. Otherwise, the comparisons will be made according to the similarities or differences between websites in the three markets. Secondly, the other functions related to national culture preference, organizational culture standard or industrial custom, such as FAQ, Animation, Links…etc. will be also checked in order to see if there are differences between each other. For each of those features, 1 grade will be given if the websites from different countries reveal the same result. The detail about grading will be presented in the data collection procedure part.

Moreover, for the analyzed housewares companies there are limitation as following: Only an English and Italian version of Alessi is available on the Internet. This study will therefore be restricted on the English version. Taiwanese WMF website is not available but only the indication of the national retailer and the address is provided. Besides, Villeroy & Boch sends the user to a similar website to the German when the country of Taiwan has been selected. The websites between them are highly similar, and the only difference is the missing E-shop. For the cosmetic company L’occitane there is no German website available as well. Nevertheless since the German and Austrian cultures are similar and use the common language, the Austrian website will be picked up and analyzed.
Grades and Internationalization Types:

The company might get grade from 7 to 119, from extremely adaptation to extremely standardization. Thus, the internationalization type will be divided as: Multinational Company: grades from 7 to 44, Transnational Company: grades from 45 to 80, Global Company: grades from 81 to 119.

Data Collecting Procedures

The steps of gathering the data will be described and shown as bellow.

Visible Website Design

1. **Aesthetics:** The general appearance of website will be classified into two categories, trendy and classic. Grade will be given from 1 to 5 according to the degree from trendy to classic.
2. **Text:** The content of literal description on the website of each country selected will be checked. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.
3. **Pictures:** The pictures used for models or products on the website of each country selected will be checked. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.
4. **Colour:** The colours selected for setting up the web pages on the website of each country selected will be checked. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.

Customer Relation/Interactivity

1. **Personalized advice:** The two-way function or information by which the company can improve their consumer relationship to offer better service and the consumers can express their opinions in contrary. Chatting boards, e-mail, guestbook or feedback submitting channel illustrates that. The related functions will be checked. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.
2. **Community:** The functions for consumers to exchange opinions or increasing the value of subculture\(^{88}\) will be checked and give comments accordingly. If the company websites in different markets show that they have this service, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

3. **Data collection:** Through certain online functions, the company can gather data about consumers for offering better services in the future. The related functions will be checked. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.

4. **FAQ:** If the Frequently Asked Questions function exists on the website or not will be checked and give comments accordingly. If the company websites in different markets all have this feature, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

5. **Links:** About offering more information about the company in worldwide position or different language options, this function will be checked and give comments accordingly. If the company websites in different markets all have the link to the local website or back to the mother group, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

6. **Animation:** To check if there are any functions can increase the interactivities between consumers on the website such as flash game, wallpaper or screensaver download. If the company websites in different markets all have this kind of presentation, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

**Product Information**

1. **Product, service or promotion:** To see if the product information is different and if there are any special services for the local markets. Grade from 1 to 5 according to the degree from Adaptation to Standardization.

2. **Store locator:** To check if there is information for the customers to go shopping at stores directly. If the company websites in different markets all have this, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

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3. **Product Preview:** To check if the product appearance is available for consumers’ reference online. If the company websites in different markets all have this function, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

4. **Price Shown:** To check if there is price information on the websites. If the company websites in different markets all show this information, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

**Reinforcement of Image:**

1. **Investors:** For better understanding the performance, history, value and mission of company and, the information for investor is necessary. Thus, the related information will be checked if available on the website and comments will be given accordingly. If the company websites in different markets all have this information, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

2. **Company Logo and Placement:** Since the logo is one of the main identities of a firm, the shape, colour, placement of logo on the website will be checked and comments will be given accordingly. If the company websites in different markets present this in the same way, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

**Navigation**

1. **Site map:** For guiding the users to surf or access the information easily, the website map or guide will be checked if exists and comments will be given accordingly. If the company websites in different markets all have this function, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

2. **Search Engine:** For the users to surf or search certain information easily, the website search engine will be checked if exists and comments will be given accordingly. If the company websites in different markets all have this function, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

3. **Security and Privacy:** The security and privacy policy will be checked if shown on the website. If the company websites in different markets all have this feature, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.
4. **E-Shop:** The website will be checked if there is an online shopping service. If the company websites in different markets all have this function, 1 grade will be given. Otherwise, -1 grade will be given.

**General comments:** Each websites will be given general comments according to the finding in the end of the analysis part.
5. Analysis

In this part, the collected data of the empirical part will be discussed and analyzed according to the culture related criteria. The internationalization type of the selected companies will be verified according to the website appearance and compared with their internationalization strategies. Thus, the three propositions will be verified according to the conclusion of those analyzes.

5.1. Analysis of Websites in Car Industry

The empirical findings from the car industry websites bring the following insights:

5.1.1. Visible Website Design in Car Industry

Some features of the visible design of car companies’ websites are standardised by the selected companies. However, they seem to prefer adapting their websites appearance to the local markets. The companies worked a lot on the aesthetics. All are aware of the impact it has on consumer and their buying behaviour. Aesthetics are key aspects influencing the “Web site atmosphere”\(^{89}\) and the impression customers have about a company. The “positive experience” on a well-designed website can be compared to the experience in a traditional physical store.

The aesthetics are similar on all the BMW websites. The classic design is in accordance with the image of the company. The structure and use of colours are similar through the websites. Users switching from the Taiwanese to the United States website and vice versa still know where they are and find their way even without knowing the language. The dominating colours are blue, black, silver and grey which symbolise BMW. The text is adapted for the target markets, therefore the content differs. For example, the technical data of products are arranged differently. The used pictures on the websites are adapted even for the same model. Also, the cars on the animations are different in types and colours. BMW website designer managed to

create a decent culturally adapted design which at the same time has a dominating corporate design and reinforce the image of BMW.

Ford also adapts its design to the national culture. Its websites appears trendy image with animation about the promotion "year end" in the United States in end of 2006. Even the German website appears more classical but at the same time it is trendy since it has an event connected to the latest Hollywood movie, 007 CASINO ROYALE. The Taiwanese website also looks trendy as well. Nevertheless the various animations there disturb the attention of the users and increase the time of downloading of the pages. The photos are very different on the websites. The pictures of the United States website for example reflect the preferences of the local market which demand bigger vehicles. The corporate image is emphasized on all websites by the omnipresent blue colour which symbolises Ford.

Generally, Nissan’s websites appears classical, but the homepages and their animations of promotion events give a trendy image of Nissan as a first impression. These animations raise the consumers curiosity and motivate them to visit the website again. The website design, structure and arrangements are similar on all its websites. This and the usage of similar colours symbolising Nissan reinforce its strong corporate image.

Toyota’s American and Taiwanese websites are trendier with more colours and animations than the German one. The structure and the arrangement of the navigation bar of the United States and Taiwanese homepages are similar. However, the text is adapted to the local markets. For instance, the Taiwanese website has travel information as well as other local information on its website etc. Red, white and silver are the main colours of Toyota websites. But Toyota’s German website has mostly a white background, whereas the others have a more colourful background, being a part of Toyota’s brand colours.

The colour choice of the companies seems to be determined by the symbolic colours of the corporations which are dominating across the different webpages. In fact, colours enable users to associate websites with the corporation even without seeing the logo and they also increase the identification with the brand. The colours are
mainly used in the navigation bars at the top and on the sides. The background colour is generally standardised for the different websites and kept throughout the whole webpages. The website design of the selected car companies shows that some standardise their appearance in order to emphasize their corporate identity. It does not only help users to recognise the brand of the website, but also to orientate users even if they do not understand the language. Despite the high standardization of visible design elements, the companies still adapt pictures and texts to the local cultures.

5.1.2. Customer Relation/Interactivity in Car Industry

Both the customer related and the interactivity features of the car companies’ websites are locally adapted. For instance, Ford, Nissan and BMW adapt their personalized services (boards, email, guestbook, feedback). Besides that, links to global sites, animations, FAQs exist for all, but the placement of these links and the degree of animation etc. differs in the following ways.

BMW, like the other companies which will be discussed in the next paragraph, adapts the customer relation and interactivity to their target markets. It offers special services on its German home website for several customer groups (Business to Business, public, military, and diplomatic etc). For some of the customers, BMW has even a particular website (i.e. BMW Diplomatic Sales Website). On the United States and Taiwan websites, the service information for owners is similar. Other services which distinguish BMW from the other selected companies are the service to call back interested visitors, driving training (i.e. winter driving training in Sweden in Arjeplog) and screensavers. Special services like screensavers increase the brand identification which is important for the high end brands like BMW. Besides that, on the United States and German websites of BMW there are links to the worldwide group site, BMW motorcycle, and financial services. These links are nonexistent on the Taiwanese website. On all the United States websites of the tested companies, a button enables the user to switch to a Spanish version except on the BMW United States website. The German BMW website collects data about its potential clients by proposing registration to the owners of BMW cars, to the participators of the advent game and to users interested in a newsletter. By this registration the company accesses to personal information about its customers.
Ford adapts its website to its target markets and offers a wide range of services by considering the local cultures. They provide services like a “car configurator” (a car building function) only on its United States and German websites. The Taiwanese list the features that customer can select when choosing their car model. However, the Taiwanese website has a special service for corporate customers, the “FBC service”. This service enables companies to rent Ford cars. In the German market, consumers can subscribe to online personalized car information services. They can select what car models they are interested in and which models they want to be informed about by e-newsletter.

Nissan make localized adaptation of its services as well. On its United States website it has special services for Nissan’s car owners like “customized maintenance schedule”, “service coupons information for emergency procedures” and “diverse tips”. In Taiwan, “Nissan To Be” provides personalised information about entertainment activities, sightseeing places, security or services etc. while driving the car. The personalisation seems less developed on the German website than on the United States and Taiwan. However, Nissan gathers information in the German online survey in order to know the consumer better. The survey researches about the opinion of its visitors and motivates them to participate and share information by proposing to win a 30 euro voucher as reward. The online data collection on the United States website is limited to registration information of consumers. Like on the other car companies’ German websites, Nissan also proposes the interested and potential customers to book a test drive online (see screenshot 12 in appendix). Consumers can freely choose their dealer and desired car model. Moreover, the user can choose between English and Spanish version on the United States website, and the animation is adapted on each versions.

Toyota data collection and customer orientation is less adapted than the other car companies’ websites that were presented before. For example, on Toyota’s website users can access directly to Toyota worldwide, except on the German website. The Taiwanese website has a link to the Japanese version as well as to other corporate brands (i.e. Lexus). On the United States website users can select an English, Spanish or Chinese version. It can be noted that the personalisation services of the car companies are sometimes adapted. In United States the personalised services like
“shopping tour” function determines the price of the car, users can build their own car and sign in on a maintenance schedule. The personal car calendar reminding car owners about necessary car inspections seems more popular in United States. Furthermore, Toyota provides a personalised financial service (which determines if leasing or buying a car is more suitable) in the different countries. The function to build cars and determine the price also exists in Germany, except in Taiwan where there is no car configurator but personalised services for members, price calculation and personal advice for suitable products etc.

The ways companies collect data about their potential customers and customers are adapted to the different countries and companies. In fact, companies have to be aware of the cultural background of their customers and respect it in order to get detailed and sincere information of them. Mostly, website users give companies precious information during their registration to newsletters. “Frequently Asked Questions” which guides and answers the users’ questions are available on all websites of the selected companies. However, they are sometimes provided for different issues, such as accessory information in BMW Taiwan. Community offers are more frequent on the United States and Taiwanese websites than on the German websites which can be linked to the local market expectations. Besides, all the car companies websites are animated, but the usage and extent remain however different. In fact, in Taiwan the degree of usage is higher than in Europe and the United States. For western people, the Taiwanese websites seems overloaded with animations since they increase the time of download and make the navigation more complicated. The users in Taiwan are keener on animations and expect it more on the websites than the others which can be linked to their high context culture. In fact, in high context cultures the implicit communication, symbols etc. are more important than only text.

The link buttons to local/global site option are mostly different on the websites. On all the United States websites of the tested companies there is a button, which enables the users to switch to a Spanish version. Offering a Spanish version proves that most of the companies are conscious that the Hispanic speaking part of the population is

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90 Constantinides, op cit., p.118.
important in US. Adaptation to the market specificities allows companies therefore to reach more potential clients and to retain actual customers. This is increasingly important for the sustainability and growth of companies in the highly competitive car sector. These examples show that the customer related features and the interactivity are adapted to the local market.

5.1.3. Product Information of Car Industry

In this category product information related features have been tested. It turns out that product, service or promotion information is generally adapted to the expectations and specificities of the different markets. For instance, laws can influence the information type such as the mandatory translation of the text in France\textsuperscript{92}. Another example is that the information extent can change according to the national culture expectations. In fact, in high context cultures (Asian like Taiwan) visual messages and symbols are more suitable than long texts, whereas in low context cultures (with high individualism like United States) more detailed text and analytical arguments are expected by the users\textsuperscript{93}.

BMW provides product preview and prices for all websites of the analyzed car companies, except on the Taiwanese website where the price information is not available. The presentation and the way to access the data differs on the German website since some data like the technical data for M3 model are only available as PDF file. On the Taiwanese and United States websites this information could be consulted directly on the website which is more convenient and time saving. Furthermore, all websites inform about local dealer locations. On the German BMW site, no map is provided but a link leads to the selected dealer websites where the information about the location is provided.

Ford presents its car models in different ways on the websites. The product information and preview is adapted to its target markets. All the websites list the prices of the cars and have a dealer locator available. However, only the United States and the German websites provide a map which shows the way to the dealer.

\textsuperscript{92} Palumbo F. and Herbig P., op cit. p.253.
\textsuperscript{93} Hermeking, M. op cit. and Okazaki S. (2004), op cit., p.83.
Nissan also adapts most of the analyzed product information features. In fact, it standardizes its dealer locator search function but adapts the placement of the links to the function. To illustrate, in Germany the button is at the left bottom of the website, whereas on the United States website it is at the top right. Another example of product adaptation is Nissan’s websites (see screenshots below, the Z model of Nissan). The used pictures for the Nissan Z model are different on the three websites. The car colours are similar in Taiwan and Germany, but the angle of photographing differs for all countries.

Screenshot 1: Product preview of Nissan Z in United States

[Image]

Screenshot 2: Product preview of Nissan Z in Germany

[Image]

http://www.nissanusa.com/z/, retrieved the 8th, Jan., 2007

http://www.nissan.de/home/vehicles/passenger/Z33/index.html, retrieved the 8th, Jan., 2007
All Toyota websites describe its products in detail. However, the description and product information categorization differ. On the United States webpages, the information is grouped in “features and price, 360° view of interior and exterior of the car, photos and colours, options, specifications, accessories, e-brochures and receive updates” and diverse shopping tools see screenshot 4 below. On this homepage, the user first needs to search the required category among a wide range of possibilities, contrary to the Taiwanese webpage which has nine categories and the German which has seven (see screenshot 4 and 5 below). To illustrate, the different arrangements, “build your car” and “financial services” can be found in the shopping tools in United States, whereas it is among the seven general categories in Germany.

Another particularity which can only be found on the German website is that product information and prices are also available as PDF files. This was also the case on the German BMW webpage mentioned earlier in this section. Besides the product information, Nissan also adapts its dealer locator layout to the target markets (see dealer locator screenshots 13-15 in the appendix). A dealer locator and a map for the direction to the dealer can be found on all websites. The product photos and descriptions of the car properties etc. are adapted to local specificities since their customers expect other information content, extent and presentation (i.e. as PDF file in Germany). In some countries the product ranges are also slightly adapted. During the analysis, it appears that in the United States consumers prefer bigger car models.

5.1.4. Image Reinforcement of Car Industry

The companies all try to reinforce their corporate image through their websites but in varied ways and emphases. The information they provide differs sometimes for the countries, since some information about the company are country specific. For instance, additional specific data about the joint venture of Ford is only available on the local Taiwanese website. Information about the United States market development of Nissan is provided on the United States website etc. These facts are mainly important for the concerned market customers. The company’s slogans are key sentences which should be easy recognisable and transmit the image of the company. However, the companies seem aware of that translation “word by word” can sometimes be inconvenient and lead to misunderstanding, thus the used slogans are sometimes adapted according to the markets.

BMW seems to be conscious of the different meanings slogans can have and their impact on customers. BMW has a standardized logo and logo placement but adapts its slogan. The slogan is “The Ultimate Machine” in United States, “Freude Am Fahren” (“pleasure at driving”)100 in Germany and “Sheer Driving Pleasure” for Taiwan. The Taiwanese website uses the same slogan as the worldwide group site of BMW. To reinforce the brand identity, BMW provides a wide range of information about its corporation, the BMW world, actuality of the corporation (events etc.) and the culture of ideas. Indeed the “BMW world” has symbolic meaning and is an important tool for the company to communicate, share their values, involve the people in the BMW world and differentiate from their competitors. The screenshots below of BMW Germany shows the “BMW world” museum. The Taiwanese website is less informative since only information about local dealer is given.

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100 own translation
The corporate information about Ford differs on the three country websites. In Taiwan, there is local specific information for the local joint-venture of Ford. The visitors of the United States website need to go to the corporate group website "Ford Motor Company" to access detailed company information. Moreover, Ford maintains the same logo type but adapts its slogan to the target cultures. In Germany the slogan is “Feel the difference”, whereas on the United States it is “Bold moves” and “ ” (live in a prosperous way) in Taiwan.

Nissan has a strong corporate culture. Therefore it keeps the same logo at the same place on the websites. Visitors visiting the different countries recognise easily the brand and find their way on the site, even if they can not understand the language. On the United States website a list of seven slogan words appeared one after the other: “Shift_performance, individuality, joy, passion, originality, convention, inspiration” and a list of six slogan words in the Spanish version which are different: “Shift_direccion, libertad, vida, posibilidades, utilidad, tus limites” (translation: Shift_direction, liberty, life, possibilities, utility, your limits). The Taiwanese website had a short English slogan: “Shift_the future”, whereas the German is without slogan. Investors’ information is not ever standardised and easily available. German Nissan website users need for example to visit the global website of Nissan to get

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102 [http://content.bmwusa.com](http://content.bmwusa.com), retrieved the 14th, Dec., 2006
103 own translation
investors information, whereas it is available directly on the United States website. On Taiwanese website there is investor’s information for the joint-venture company.

Toyota adapted more their websites for image reinforcement. The content of the corporate identity differs in type and depth for the three countries. For example, in Taiwan additional information about Toyota’s joint venture is provided. Another main adaptation is the different website logos and placements. The slogan is “Nothing is impossible” (“nichts ist unmöglich”) in Germany, whereas in Taiwan it is "Moving Forward" and there is no slogan on the American website.

The survey shows that the corporate identity is emphasized differently. Some standardise most of the presented features since for them their organizational culture is important and they want to strengthen their corporate values (i.e. Nissan). The used logo type is standardized but they adapt its colours and placement in Toyota’s websites. The slogans are often adapted for the different countries.

5.1.5. Navigation in Car Industry

The navigation is facilitated by using certain features, clearly structuring and standardizing the websites. All websites have site maps function but some of them present the content in different ways. Search engines help users to find products etc. and are available on most of the websites.

The navigation is easy and natural on the analyzed car companies’ websites. On BMW, Nissan and Toyota’s websites, the search function is missing on their Taiwanese versions. Moreover a privacy policy is only missing on BMW Taiwanese website. BMW is the only of the selected car companies which has an E-shop for accessories and diverse BMW items. The sale of these exclusive BMW products certainly increases the brand identification and customer loyalty.

The findings show that most features exist on all websites independent on the country. However, adaptations are sometimes necessary i.e. the local legislation has to be considered. Companies seem to be conscious of this. They specify security and privacy matters for all websites and adapt to local requirements (legislation)
accordingly. Search engine functionality for dealers are more frequent on United States websites. There retailers can be found after indicating the Zip code and the state name of the desired location. Furthermore, the cars can not be purchased online. This can be explained because of the characteristics of this consumer good. In fact, cars are products with high financial risks. Besides, consumers prefer seeing and trying out first before deciding to buy or not. That is also the reason why the German websites suggested potential customers to book a test drive of the wished car. This service is also emphasized on all of theses websites. From most of the websites, consumers can easily access the request formulary and there apply online for a test drive.

5.2. Analysis of Websites in Cosmetics Industry

The data collected from cosmetics industry will be analyzed in the following segments.

5.2.1. Visible Website Design in Cosmetics Industry

In general, the differences among the cosmetic websites from different countries can be seen in the usage of photos or promotion events. The only common point which can be regarded as standard in the visible part of the cosmetic industry is the “Colour” in the background of main pages through which the companies transfer the same brand image. The details will be discussed as below.

In the case of L’occitane, the United States and Austrian websites are more similar to each other concerning the first impression of website layout, structure and colours comparing to the Taiwanese website. However, the Taiwanese website still has the same hue in the background colour but looks slightly different at the first view. This comes from the structure of the main pages. More or less the information is standardised but with a few local messages. For instance, the additional information about job opportunities in United States website is available.

As for the websites of Clarins, the standardized and professional impression comes from the website design which easily allows them to be identified belonging to
Clarins. Moreover, the used colours, photos and animations of the web pages are similar and so are the text but with translated language.

The Body Shop’s websites in United States and Taiwan are similar with the same layout and design, whereas the German website has different frame and colours comparing to the others, and also the United States website has a different way to organize the "navigation tool bar" (menu). For example, the information about the product line is in the top of the homepage while the general information about the company is at the bottom, which is different to the Taiwanese, German and UK version. In addition, American and Taiwanese websites are similar in the given information. The product presentation of United States website is more detailed and similar to UK. The German website has more literal information on the main pages than the others.

The design of the websites in the three selected markets of Maybelline can be regarded as trendy with similar structures and colours. All provide plenty fashion information for the trend followers. In contrary to this, the pictures, promotion events and languages are used differently. For instance, on Taiwanese websites the models who demonstrate the make up have an eastern look, whereas on German and American websites they have a western look. Moreover, even products which are available in all of those three markets, the pictures shown online are taken from different angles or with different arrangements. However, the interesting point is that the websites can still keep the same image through its different websites.

In short, the visible website presentation of these four selected companies can be regarded as standardized in the different countries but adaptations exist. Hence, the visible website design is one of the key elements for the cosmetic companies to convey the corporate identity.

5.2.2. Customer Relation/Interactivity in Cosmetics Industry
In the section of offering personalized advice online, The Body Shop and Maybelline are different depending on the region, contrary to Clarins and L’occitane which keep the same information and service online except L’occitane Germany. On the other hand, the gathering of consumer data differs highly on the websites of the companies except Clarins. Online community for consumers is not available on most of the companies except The Body Shop Taiwan. Besides, the animation interactivity is frequently used on all the Taiwanese websites. Taiwanese websites of The Body Shop and L’occitane have no links to the global corporate website or other countries’ websites. In addition, German websites seem to be lacking online information compared to the others. The differences among the countries’ websites will be shown in detail below.

The difference between Taiwanese and United States L’occitane website is the possibility to register as a member to get further information. From the registration the company can gather consumer information and use it to study consumers’ behaviour.

Clarins website has functions for gathering data or providing personalized customer services. These are basically the same in the three different markets. In Taiwan there is no “Clarins Institues de Beaute” (skin care center) existing but consumer can still find the information about it on the Taiwanese website.

The Body Shop online feedback and communication channel are better on the American website. Moreover, the customer orientation in Germany and Taiwan are lacking services such as e-newsletter. The Taiwanese website has an e-mail function which pop out after selecting the contact button, the consumers have no other method online to contact or express their feedback. To create a community among The Body Shop consumers, The Body Shop provide special information on Taiwanese website. Their consumers can participate in free seminars to learn new information or skills about skin care or makeup. This can not be found on the German or United States websites. Moreover, the American website has a link directly to English speaking countries such as UK, Canada and the international site. On the German website, there is a pull down menu where countries can be selected. There is no link back to the international website on the Taiwanese one.
On Maybelline United States website, there are online makeup advisers and make up studios for users. In Germany, only members can access make up studio information but "mascara finder", "foundation finder" and "123make up" (makeup) are freely accessible. Taiwanese website has tips about how to apply makeup, foundation finder and mascara finder. Furthermore, on the United States website consumers can exchange their comments or discuss special issues on a forum, which does not exist in the other two websites. Besides, their inquiry can be submitted online on United States website, whereas on the German and Taiwanese website, the functions such as “member register” and “forward to your friend” are available and increase the interactivity with customers.

To sum up, the customer relation and interactivity in cosmetics industry are different and have been adapted according to the local demand, whereas Clarins is the only company which keeps higher standardization.

5.2.3. Product Information in Cosmetics Industry

The product information is more standardized on the websites of L’occitane and Clarins, than on The Body Shop and Maybelline’s websites which have dissimilarities due to local preference. All the websites have a product preview function to promote and attract consumers, but the photos used for the same products are different except on Clarins’ websites. There all the product photos are the same in the three markets (see screenshots of Clarins below) which show their strong brand image. Concerning the product or service information of Clarins, the high standardization can be seen in this part as well. The differences in this information are slight and the same product photos are used online. There is no price shown on all websites of Clarins. Besides, all the companies have store locator information except Maybelline owing to its distribution channel that is different to the others. The price is not shown in Maybelline and Clarins’ web pages, and neither on The Body Shop German pages.

Screenshot 9 : Product Preview of Clarins United States

On L’occitane’s Austrian and United States websites, the descriptions of products are more similar than in Taiwan. On United States and Taiwanese websites, the

[Links to websites for Clarins Germany and Taiwan]

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consumers have possibilities to forward the product information to friends. The consumers can also reach the price information on all three websites.

Comparing the three websites of The Body Shop, the American has more product or service information. For example, the three websites offer different shopping method information. On the United States’ website, consumers can choose to go to their “stores”, buy directly through the website “online”, or make a reservation to get products demonstration at home with their friends. On the Taiwanese website like on the others, the store location can be searched online, and shopping is possible by mail order or in the physical stores. However, the information found on the German site informs only about store location information.

Regarding the Maybelline websites, the product preview function is the same on the three websites. Nevertheless even for the latest product line the product information or online services differs among the three countries. For instance, after selecting a product on the American website, there are additional notes such as application tips, suggested products for consumers’ reference. Owing to the distribution channel of Maybelline, the price and online shop are not available, but on the American website there are links to the e-retailers.

In summary, the product information is different on all the companies’ websites except Clarins. The consumers expect different detailed information about ingredients, production procedures. Besides, the description and demonstration of products are also adapted to the local culture.

5.2.4. Image Reinforcement in Cosmetics Industry

All the websites present their own corporate history or social concerns for expressing their business ideas or organizational culture. Even though, there are still differences among these messages released such as the concern for local society or the different types of local companies i.e. Maybelline Germany took over Jade several years ago and still keeps the name Jade in its logo.

For L’occitane’s American and Austrian websites, there are links to the general website where the users can access the website of other countries. Logo placements
are all on the upper left part of the web pages but the colour of the logo words is different in Taiwan.

Regarding Clarins, the logo used is the same on the three websites. Moreover, the company information content is highly similar since it is only translated into the appropriate language.

The Taiwanese and United States The Body Shop websites inform more about the founder’s background, their environmental and social concerns. For the company history, on Taiwanese website there is additional information for the Mayfair House Group which is the dealer of The Body Shop in Taiwan. On the German website, there is no information about the legend of the founder but additional events are described, such as the campaign against violence at home. Through the different transferred messages on their websites, different brand images have been built in different countries.

Maybelline’s company history is shown differently on the United States website than on the German and Taiwanese websites. Especially on the German one, there are additional information about the local company Jade, which was a known brand in Germany taken over by Maybelline, in order to keep the loyalty of customers. In practice, the logo placements are all in the right upper corner of the web pages. However, on the German website the logo slogan is together with the brand mark of “Jade”.

To conclude, the website features related to the image reinforcement in cosmetics industry show the standardization in different countries but also the adaptation according to the local demand or the company strategy.
5.2.5. Navigation in Cosmetics Industry

In the navigation part, most websites of the cosmetics industry offer functions such as site map and search engine, and they also list the security and privacy policy on all the web pages except the websites of Clarins and The Body Shop in Taiwan. Besides, the L’occitane websites can be regarded as with standardized navigation on the different countries’ web pages except in Taiwan.

Regarding the online shopping service, Clarins has online shops in Germany and United States but not in Taiwan. The Body Shop consumers in the United States can buy directly online and consumers in Taiwan per mail order through fax, whereas in Germany there is no possibility to purchase products online. For L’occitane, the service is available in Austrian and American websites but not in Taiwan. However, there is no E-shop accessible on all the Maybelline websites due to their distribution channel, but the United States website has links to the e-retailers.

5.3. Analysis of Website in Housewares Industry

In this segment, the results of the websites of housewares companies will be analyzed.

5.3.1. Visible Website Design in Housewares Industry

The visible design is generally more standardised on the websites. However it has to be reminded and taken into account when looking at the results that some companies have no website for each of the three studied markets (United States, Taiwan and Germany).

Pictures and product photos are exactly the same on the websites of Alessi and Villeroy & Boch. The companies keep as well similar colours over their websites. Especially the usage of colours symbolising their brand has been noticed.

Alessi’s homepage is more modern with animations, promotions and licensing products. The well conceived and animated website design gives users the feeling that
Alessi’s products are the exclusive Italian luxury items. Besides that, its text and colours are standardised since the Italian and English version is only translated.

IKEA’s website appears trendy to the visitors. It keeps the same content for its United States and German websites except for some local information, the IKEA family etc., whereas the Taiwanese website has other information. The colours are partly adapted. The background colour is mostly white on the three tested IKEA websites, however, the colour of the homepage differ. The text colour for the products in German website is similar to the United States website in blue, whereas the Taiwanese website is adapted. Part of the information is adapted locally. In the job opportunities in Germany, IKEA informs about apprenticeship possibilities. Apprenticeships are popular there and exist not in every country.

The appearance of Villeroy & Boch websites is conceived in a classical way. There are pull-down menus to select the own countries but these provide no local information since the website is only with translated contents. Moreover, the website is available in four languages: German, English, French and Dutch. On these websites there are nearly no adaptation at all. The main difference is that there is an E-shop accessible through the website of some countries, while this feature lacks on others. The colours and text can be therefore considered as standardized since the websites contents are only translated.

WMF websites are more classical and have different structures and aesthetics on the analyzed websites. The German website is better maintained, more informative and conceived, than the United States and differs in its structure. For Taiwan there is no specific website but only information about the local sales partner available on a pop up window. Besides, the main hue of WMF websites is similar. For the colours of the websites, black, grey and white colour symbolising WMF dominate. Contrary to the other analyzed housewares companies except IKEA, WMF adapts its product pictures for the United States and German market. The pictures on United States WMF website are less attracting and can not be zoomed.

Generally, these features are more standardised for the companies which aim to reinforce their image or just translate by simplicity for some reasons, for example, saving costs etc.
5.3.2. Customer Relation/Interactivity in Housewares Industry

The customer related and interactivity features are adapted like for the other presented industries to the local market. Personalized advices are adapted to target market specificities. The personalisation offer and degree seams depend on different markets owing to it is less frequent in Taiwanese websites and more on US.

On the Alessi website the consumers can only select the Italian or English version, even if there is a pull-down menu for countries selection. This selection only allows finding dealers in the different countries and does not lead to other websites. Answers to frequently asked questions of users are accessible to visitors which are interested in further information on all websites, except on the Alessi and the United States WMF websites.

IKEA websites are standardized for personalized advices in Germany and United States. In United States, extra suggestions of complementary products while consulting specific product information are provided. Otherwise in United States and German websites the product information are similar. Data are collected on the United States and German websites. There consumers provide data through click the button "Join our email list" and "My profile". On the Taiwanese website this function is inexistent, unless the consumer sends an e-mail or goes to the store directly. By all these ways, companies collect precious information about consumer preferences. IKEA offers users to visit the “group corporate site” and a link to the “global site” where all the country websites of IKEA are listed. The placement of the link “group corporate site” differs. In United States and Germany, it's on the bottom right, whereas in TWAIN, it is just next to the company logo on the top left. In United State and Germany, IKEA’s animated virtual person “ask Anna” which answers divers questions etc. makes the website more dynamic and alive. Indeed frequently actualised animated websites appear lively and give the user a reason to visit the website again.

Villeroy & Boch proposed its website visitors the selection of more than 100 countries in the pull-down menu “country selection” but only the possibility to switch to four
possible languages. In order to increase the personalisation and knowledge about customers, Villeroy & Boch gathers consumer data mainly on the German and United States websites. There in the e-shop websites a "contact" possibility through which the customers can give feedback or inquiry to the firm can be found. Furthermore, on the German website the user can, while contacting the company online, give feedback and evaluate the website. The German und United States e-shop websites allows customers to create their own “wish list” with their favourite products which they can consult when visiting the website after log in. Companies can also gather information about consumer preferences in Germany and United States by analyzing the purchase behaviour of their clients and their “wish list”.

WMF, like Villeroy & Boch, tries to customize and proposes a “wish list” to the registered clients on the German website. The United States WMF website’s purpose is more to present its products and company information to potential buyers and investors. Thus, there is no data collection and personalisation contrary to the German website which collects information of consumers when these register to the newsletter, buy online etc. Besides that, all housewares websites are animated except the United States WMF website. For instance, animated promotion about products, Christmas games “WMF Adventskalender” in Germany are frequent.

To conclude, companies understand the need to adapt their consumer interactivity features to local consumers especially when they want to gather information about them. In fact, understanding consumer and respecting their privacy should be a key concern for all countries in order to increase the satisfaction and probability that they share personal information about them. Besides that, the websites enabled the user to visit the international homepage of the corporations, other local websites or to change the language of the website. Finally, community could not be found on the date of analysis. This was specified by writing N/A on the result sheets in appendix.
5.3.3. Product Information in Housewares Industry

All companies provide product, service or promotion information and what distinguish them are the information extent and their way of presentation.

Alessi proposes its customers three services: "My details", "Basket" and "After sales" on its website and information about local stores in some countries. Alessi customers can access to further information on the online shop, the “A-shop (Alessi online shop)”. The product information is exactly the same on Alessi’s English and Italian version.

On the IKEA website the information differs generally. On the United States and German website the product information are translated, contrary to the Taiwanese where consumers need to download the catalogue first. The consumers of IKEA in Taiwan need to consult the IKEA e-catalogue for the prices and products. Additionally it can be mentioned that the product features are given in both "inch" and "cm" in United States, but only in "cm" on the Taiwanese and German website. Another example of locally adapted information is the order which can be placed "online", "by phone" or checked in the store in United States, whereas in Germany the tracking can not be done by phone and in Taiwan only done in the store. For the order tracing service, it can be achieved on German website but not the other two. Some of them websites provide as well a map and information for arriving by bus or metro and opening hours. The maps are generally the same for the different countries, in United States IKEA provides “mapquest” and “maporama” in Germany.

Villeroy & Boch as mentioned earlier has standardised websites and therefore the store locator selecting function and the product information is exactly the same on all websites. However, in the E-Shop webpages of United States and Germany there are specific local store information.

The United States WMF website provides less detailed information about products than the German website. On its German website WMF informs customers about the possibility to exchange their old silver dinning ware, to consult the last seen product and designer information etc. The product preview is also more advanced with
possibility to zoom the product and preview of the selected dinnerware items (for instance for wedding parties). The United States website does not provide the same information which indicates that the website is maintained less intensively rather than adapted locally. The price is given on the German website directly apart from the United States website. Furthermore, WMF stores can only be localized on the German website thanks to a store locator function, which describes the way. Contrary to the other companies no map is available.

To sum up, the product information of the housewares companies are generally detailed and attracting product pictures are provided on the websites of their home country. Information about the traditional point of sales, dealer locator with map and description of the direction facilitates interested potential customer to find their way and increases the probability of purchase. These features are better adapted by IKEA.

5.3.4. Image Reinforcement in Housewares Industry

The housewares companies provide all corporate information which is important for transparency, trustworthiness and credibility of companies. The degree of emphasizing the organizational culture can be more or less pronounced dependent on the strategy of the company.

The Italian luxury brand Alessi tries to reinforce its image by providing the company history in “corporate”, information about the famous designer they work with etc. But also the website design and colours enable the company to appear as exquisite brand of luxury items and strengthen their image.

Another example of a company caring about its image is IKEA. It has a strong organizational culture. This is especially visible in the "corporate information" and "job opportunities". However, IKEA also adapts locally. For instance, its logo differs in Taiwan (see below screenshots of the IKEA homepages with the company Logo) but all logos are on the upper left corner. The content differs as well on the Taiwanese website since it provides information about the local franchise group.
Villeroy & Boch provides information about the company and tries to reinforce their image. The content is considered as standardized since the information is only translated in four languages without adaptations. For instance, the same annual reports and company history are available on the websites.

The WMF website in United States provides less detailed information about the corporate image than the German. The information is also less actualised in US. The newest available annual report for the shareholders is from 2002, whereas of the test date report of 2005 and interim report half of 2006 can be consulted by the investors and actual share prices, interim report etc.

Screenshot 12: Homepage of IKEA in United States

To conclude, the housewares companies are aware that corporate and investor information are expected and necessary for their transparency and trustworthiness. The company logo placement is contrary to other analyzed industries the same for the

United States, German and Taiwanese websites of each company but the type is sometimes slightly different.

5.3.5. Navigation in Housewares Industry

The navigation on the website is generally facilitated on one hand by logically structured websites and on the other hand site maps and search engines. Site maps are available for the different websites but sometimes structured differently. Search engines facilitate the navigation and save time to the users who search specific information or products on all websites except Alessi, WMF United States and IKEA TWAIN. Moreover, security and privacy matters are specified to the website visitors except on the United States WMF website and only available on the e-shops of Villeroy & Boch in United States and German and the Alessi. E-shops are available on websites except IKEA in Taiwan, Villeroy & Boch in Taiwan and WMF US.

Alessi’s website has a site map but no search engine is available. The clear structure enables users to find quickly the desired product or information. Alessi has an online shop called “A-shop” which delivers to United Kingdom, US, Germany and Holland. It provides users the information about security and privacy policy of Alessi.

IKEA makes the navigation easier on its websites by clearly structured websites, logically structured buttons in the navigation tool bar and its chosen titles. A search function and “ask Anna” or “Frag einfach Anna” is available for the user on the United States and German website. Anna answers diverse questions and help users to find their way on the website and 24 hours per day. Besides that, users can directly shop online the consulted products in Germany and US. On the Taiwanese version the search function and E-shop are missing.

Villeroy & Boch has also a good structured website and is the same for the different markets. Site map and search engine are standardized and useful navigation tools. As mentioned earlier the only difference is the E-shop which is available on the United States and German website. On these E-shops privacy policy and security matters are specified.
The navigation on the German WMF website is easy and natural, whereas on the United States website it is more difficult to find information. For instance, to access to annual reports the German user find it by clicking on the “investors relations” button on the WMF AG site, whereas it is hidden and more difficult to find on the United States website.

E-shops are common on the analyzed housewares companies but only distributed to certain countries. Navigation elements are provided to facilitate that the user quickly find what the consumer is searching for.

### 5.4. Conclusion of the Analysis

The comparison of the results of the website analysis allows us to give following conclusions for the three industries.

#### 5.4.1. Industry Aspects

**Car Industry:**

To conclude it can be said that all analyzed car companies can be seen as transnational according to their website appearance. Indeed, even if they are standardised to some degree, i.e. similar product ranges which is certainly related to high R&D costs that have to be amortised or a strong brand image there are still numerous adaptations. For instance, engine power, or interior accessory or equipment which are available as standard or options are adapted to the demand. Furthermore the website content, product information, services, promotions, pictures and animations are also adapted locally since the customers expect different information content and extent etc. dependent on their culture\(^\text{110}\). This is true also for companies which have a strong corporate image related to their organizational culture like Nissan. Websites of global companies are generally more standardized and use the communication style of their

\(^{110}\) Hermeking, M., op cit.
home countries\textsuperscript{111}. However, the analysis of the car industry showed significant adaptations to the local culture.

**Cosmetics Industry:**

As for the general finding in deciphering the websites of cosmetics industry, the corporate image is highly standardized through the selected colours, contrary to the customer relation or product information. For these the website features among those companies shown both standardization and adaptation in different countries according to their typology. Most of the outcome fits the expectation of their internationalization type except Maybelline.

**Housewares Industry:**

According to the results Alessi and Villeroy & Boch are global companies, whereas WMF and IKEA are transnational. On one hand, Alessi is an Italian luxury brand which tries to keep its image of particular Italian items. The website designers succeed to translate the Alessi exclusivity although it is difficult to replicate the environment quality of the luxury traditional stores and shopping experience. The results of the analysis confirm that the “country-of-origin effect” exists in case of companies which have an image linked to their home country like the Italian brand Alessi. In general, these companies standardize their website design to reinforce their image\textsuperscript{112}. Villeroy & Boch appeared as well as global, this is connected to its standardised websites which are only translations in four languages. On the other hand, IKEA and WMF adapted partly their website features to their target markets and were therefore categorised as transnational players. One particular character of this industry is that three of the analyzed companies do not have websites for all the three countries except IKEA. Therefore, this might influence the outcome of the results but can also be their way of standardization.

\textsuperscript{111} Hermeking, M., op cit.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid
The following table 3 summarizes the results of the website analyzes and compares these with the expectations about the internationalization type according to the organizational characteristics of the selected companies. The similarities and dissimilarities will be discussed in the credibility of the propositions.
Table 4: The Results of the Websites Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Internationalization type according to the grades</th>
<th>Expected Internationalization type according to the statistics</th>
<th>If the website fit with the corporate strategy of internationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Car Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Multinational Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housewares Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessi</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMF</td>
<td>75,5</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villeroy &amp; Boch</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cosmetics Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Body Shop</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarins</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybelline</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Transnational Company</td>
<td>Multinational Company</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’occitane</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Global Company</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.2. Credibility of the Propositions

The suggested propositions of the theoretical part have been compared with the empirical findings. It came to some divergences between companies’ website strategy in practice (according to the analyzed website) and the internationalization strategy of the company they should follow (according to the company type and the theories).

If the theory matches the practical findings, then the suggested propositions are considered as credible and right (see table 4), and the company website strategy fit with its international strategy. On the other hand, the reasons why the website design does not fit with the expected company type can be as below:

1. The propositions might not be applicable for the selected companies.
2. The companies have different strategies for their websites than the strategy they follow actually.
3. The companies might not care enough about their websites appearance, because of costs, time, a lack of the necessary personal etc.

The Credibility after Analysis:

The propositions will be analyzed in the following section according to the results of the analysis and the reasons for the differences will be determined.

Proposition 1: The multinational companies adapt their website to the different countries in which they operate.

According to proposal 1, the websites of Ford and Maybelline are supposed to be adapted to the local culture of the different countries since these companies have been classified as multinational according to the internationalization type criteria. However, the analysis results showed that the websites fit the transnational company type instead.

Due to its organizational characteristics Ford is classified as a multinational company. Nevertheless its website has more standardised features for the three countries which
increase the corporate identification and thus present the company as transnational type.

The Maybelline United States website was taken as a standard for the evaluation and got therefore full points during the grading, which increased the resulting degree of standardization. Otherwise the analysis of Maybelline showed the high adaptation degree according to the local market. For instance, the product information and pictures are localized as discussed before.

In short, the proposition 1: “the multinational companies adapt their website to the different countries in which they operate” is rejected.

**Proposition 2: The global companies keep their website in different countries highly standardized.**

This proposition assumes that global companies standardise their websites for the different countries. This proposition is credible for the websites of Alessi, Clarins and L’occitane. These three companies standardise highly the presentation of their website in order to reinforce their image and brand identification. In contrary, the website of Nissan, BMW, Villeroy & Boch and WMF do not correspond to the organizational characteristics.

Nissan adapts the photos, services and text on its websites by which it augments the degree of localization to the target markets. BMW adapts the text, pictures and product information to local preferences and expectations and therefore decrease the degree of standardization which is an important criterion for global companies.

WMF has different website options in the pull down menu of the country selector; however, there are no websites available for most of the local markets (i.e. Taiwan) but only the address of dealers. The United States website of WMF is not developed and standardised comparing to the German one, which reduced the globalization degree. This is the reason why, these company’s websites allow considering WMF as a transnational company.
The proposition 2: “the global companies standardise their websites to the different countries” is therefore rejected.

**Proposition 3: The transnational companies adapt their websites partly to the different countries in which they operate.**

This proposition supposes that transnational companies adapt their website according to the demand and expectations of the different markets. The outcome of the website analysis of Toyota, IKEA and The Body Shop confirm this statement.

The proposition 3: “The transnational companies adapt their websites partly to the different countries in which they operate” is supported by the findings.
6. Conclusions and Future Research Recommendations:

Summary:

This research started from the notification that internet application can help a company to extend their markets and catch potential business opportunities. When companies make their internationalization strategies, both national culture and organizational culture should be taken into consideration. However, the right balance between adaptation and standardization is difficult to find and can differ vastly depending on to the business type and strategies.

For a better understanding of the strategies of international companies Bartlett and Ghoshal theories about three internationalization types from were discussed. These theories were used for the classification of the twelve selected companies according to their configuration of assets and capabilities. Besides that, three propositions were set for this research. Moreover, the website features related to cultural aspects were presented in the literature review as well. The features were then analyzed in order to determine if companies localize or standardize their website design.

In the empirical part, twelve websites of companies operating in different markets from cars, housewares and cosmetics industry were studied. The evaluation of the adaptation and standardization degree of the analyzed websites allowed determining the internationalization type of the companies. However, the gathered data and the evaluation of the company’s websites showed several dissimilarities compared to the expectations. Some companies had more localized or standardized features than expected. Then, the results of the empirical part were used for the comparison with the expected internationalization types of the companies. The differences between expectations and results were discussed and explained to fulfill the purpose of this research.
**General conclusion:**

To set up the international strategy in order to get the best balance between localization and standardization is not an easy decision for managers. Websites enable companies to access a broad public and people all around the world. Managers should therefore be aware of the importance and the impact of their strategic choice which highly can influence the success of their businesses. Websites of international companies should be set according to their international strategies in order to fit the corporate mission and vision. This has been commonly argued by scholars and practitioners that sustainable growth and development depend on firms’ congruent strategies. The analysis of the websites gave primarily interesting insights about the different standardization and localization degrees of their design and the features that are changed more frequently. The localization versus standardization enabled the determination if companies try to emphasize their image or adapt to the national culture.

On one hand, standardization of websites was important for companies which want to emphasize their corporate identity and transmit the exclusive or luxury impression of their products. Most of the companies’ website design gave a similar visible impression through their corporate logo and by using the same colours. The standardization was more pronounced in the housewares and cosmetics industries.

On the other hand, adapted website features are common in all the analyzed sectors, but to different degrees. High end brands prefer reinforcing their image by standardizing most of their features. However, in the car industry, the high adaptation according to the local markets has been seen even for expensive vehicle brand like BMW as well. Thus, it turns out that the image reinforcement is not only necessarily linked to standardization but also depending on the industry characteristics. Beside that, companies with strong organizational values like IKEA adapted as well to the local market i.e. in Taiwan. IKEA is known for its strong organizational culture with similar stores, human resource policies etc. in Sweden and abroad.
Suggestions:

To sum up, the suggestions of this research can be divided into three parts (organizational culture, national culture and industry) which fits with the reverse path of the model “factor influencing the website design” presented in the literature review (figure 5).

First of all, the theories of the internationalization typologies might not fit. Thus the managers, strategists, and researchers who would like to apply the typology need further consideration from multiple factors, like for instance, the different types of industries, the effect from new techniques, and the change of the general environment. That is why the companies need to adjust their campaigns in different markets.

Secondly, the fact that the propositions do not fit the expectation totally has indicated that some companies might not take care enough when conceiving their websites for the different countries. Owing to the different types of international extending, the local websites might be set up and taken care not only by their branches but also the local franchise companies or dealers. Companies should take care of the corporate image, the organizational culture and the international strategies of the headquarters in order to have a qualitative website which corresponds to the expectations of both the company and consumers. A significant element for the continuing growth is to ensure that the same value, vision and decisions of the corporate are spread and followed appropriately.

From the third point of view, the results of this research also give a possible hint that the executives might use different strategies behind the website presentation for the demand of local market. In this case, the potential business opportunities among different countries have been noticed and taken into consideration. Then the different marketing application or activities came out accordingly. This shows that the managers need to gather more information about national culture such as: the different consumer behavior and expectation, the motivations, attitudes of local management, and the nature of the local competitive structure.

113 Douglas and Wind, op cit., p.424
Future Research Recommendations:

Owing to the time limitation, this research has concentrated on a specific area for being a qualitative research and keeping its credibility, validity and reliability. Moreover, a meaningful research can also be the base for further research to extend this study or for new applications of the typologies. In the following paragraph the future research recommendations will be discussed.

In this thesis, there are websites from four companies for each of three consumer goods industries (Cosmetics, Cars and Housewares) in three markets (United States of America, Germany and Taiwan) were selected for analysis. Due to the different characteristics among industries and cultural differences, the research can be extended for better understanding of industries and markets. In addition, further research and interviews with both company executives and website designers can provide clearer ideas about how they present their business online. Moreover, it can be determined if the website strategies match international strategies or if there are special marketing strategies behind.

How to fit the local demand in order to catch the benefit from potential business opportunities and still keep the same brand image would be a challenge for strategy makers. Thus related studies can be expected to complete this research area.

Generalisation of this Research:

This research is supposed to be applicable for usage in different context. It could be a reference for companies’ executives, website designers, competitors, and practitioners or empirical analysts. The model presented in this research based on the internationalization typologies can be used for different application as well.

For the companies which consider extending their markets or going abroad, managers can get ideas from this research about how to set up their website strategies. For the international companies, this study can also be a reference for the design and review of their website strategies. The study can help executives or analysts for better understanding the situation of the industry environment and their competitors. Besides
that, it also enables evaluation of other companies’ website strategy. Moreover, the study demonstrates an application of internationalization typologies in one of companies’ global activities, the website design. However, new applications of this model are possible not only for website conception but also for different industries and companies’ activities, like advertisement strategy.
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http://www.bmwusa.com/
http://www.bmw.de/
http://www.bmw.com.tw/
http://www.nissan.com.tw/
http://www.nissan.de/
## Appendix

Table 5: Average number of online purchases during the last month

Europe Occidentale : average number of online purchases during the last month (study realised in April and May 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Average of online purchases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>5,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>5,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>4,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>4,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>4,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ACNielsen, October 2005*

---

Table 6: The usage of the Web in Europe¹¹⁵

Europe: The usage of the Web in Europe
(per person and month)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April 2004</th>
<th>March 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of connexions</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visited websites</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connexion time in total</td>
<td>10:42:29</td>
<td>11:18:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connexion time per connexion</td>
<td>30:57</td>
<td>31:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time passed per page</td>
<td>42 seconds</td>
<td>43 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen pages per month</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nielsen NetRatings
Actualised the 03/08/2004

Screenshot 15: Test Drive of Nissan Germany¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ http://dynamic.nissan.de/home/contact/testdrive/index.html, retrieved the 13th, Dec., 2006
Screenshot 16: Dealer locator of Toyota in United States


Screenshot 17: Dealer locator of Toyota in Germany

Screenshot 18: Dealer locator of Toyota in Taiwan

## Cosmetics Industry Data Sheet: Page 1 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>The Body Shop</th>
<th>Merkline</th>
<th>L'Occitane</th>
<th>Claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visible website design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aesthetics</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA and Taiwan are similar with the same layout and design. Germany website has different frame, color than the others. However, the USA website has different way of organizing the navigation toolbar (menus). For the information about product line in the top, the general information about company on the bottom.</td>
<td>The design is trendy but merkline websites keep the same image over its different countries. The websites provide fashion information for the trend followers. The structure of the manupage is similar.</td>
<td>The US and AU websites are pretty similar whereas come to the first image of layout, structure and colors comparing to the Taiwanese website. However, the Taiwanese website has the same line of background color but look a bit different at the first image because of the structure of manupage.</td>
<td>The homepages of Claims gives a professional impression about skin care and product innovation with new ingredients.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA and Taiwan are similar in the description layout. The product introduction of USA website is more detail and similar to UK. Germany website has more text than the others.</td>
<td>The text is not only translated but adapted.</td>
<td>More or less the information are pretty standard but for instance there are some additional information about job opportunities in USA website.</td>
<td>Very slight difference like on the product description, but only few different. The the arrangement of text is the same as well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The USA website is more standard and detail and the photo can be zoom in. The Germany one couldn't enlarge and not so attractive.</td>
<td>The pictures of products are taken from different angles. The photos of the models are different. In Taiwan, Asian models whereas in US and Germany the models look western.</td>
<td>The product photos are same but with paper box or without paper box.</td>
<td>Photos of models, products, images are the same.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA and Taiwan websites have the same background color in white which is different to German website.</td>
<td>The list of website color is highly similar on the different websites.</td>
<td>It can be seen as the same company website, however, in the color combination for the webpage is different.</td>
<td>Really the same.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer relations/interactivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personalized advice (boards, email, guestbook, feedback)</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA's online feedback and communication channel are better. German and Taiwan has contact on the top. Taiwan has e-mail pop-out, so the other method</td>
<td>In USA, they have makeup advisor and make up studio on website for the public user. In Germany, only member can access make up studio information but 'mascara finder', 'foundation finder' and '123make up' (make-up) are free for access. Taiwan have make up tip, foundation finder and mascara finder.</td>
<td>In Taiwan and US website, you can register as member to get more information but not in Austria website.</td>
<td>E-mail, inquiry function are the same. Even in Taiwan there is no Claims treatment site exists etc. but you can still find the information about thru on line.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Cosmetics Industry Data Sheet: Page 2 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>The Body Shop</th>
<th>Maybelline</th>
<th>Loccitane</th>
<th>Clarins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No in Germany. Hard to define if it exists in USA. In Taiwan the member can participate in the free seminar. Through this the member can discuss but hard to distinguish if it’s strong intercommunication or not. In USA, they have forum where consumers can exchange their comments, sometimes the topic &quot;pore&quot;. In the Taiwanese and German website, it does not exist.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Taiwan, they collect from &quot;member register&quot; and &quot;forward to your friend&quot;. In Germany, they have &quot;forward to your friend&quot; and register for membership on line &quot;my maybelline new york&quot;. In USA, there is no this kind of service but you can submit the inquiry on line. Since on the Germany website, the members can log in for accessing special services and then company can collect data about the frequency of visiting and time spend on the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The data collection through the on line membership can provide the company information about consumers behavior. Taiwan and Germany are the same while asking for the newsletter. But in USA, they ask additional questions to get more information about potential consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection, customer orientation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The customer orientation in Germany and Taiwan are lacking, no newsletter available. In USA, the data collection is more developed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No but beauty Q&amp;A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pull down menu the same in these three countries. The structure of websites are the same.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For US and Au, there are links to the general website where you can access to the website of other countries.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are in the same structure but need to access through the &quot;company information&quot; page which is not so convenient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to local site option</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The USA has link direct to English speaking countries such as UK, Canada and international site. However, in Germany, there is a pull down menu with countries selection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For US and Au, there are links to the general website where you can access to the website of other countries.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are in the same structure but need to access through the &quot;company information&quot; page which is not so convenient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation flash, pop</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>slight animation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes but no download</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes and have download</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes and have download</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product information</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All of them are with different shopping method. In USA, store/on line store home. In Taiwan, store/on line order. In Germany, store only. Product information: USA&gt;Taiwan&gt;DE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's different in different countries even for the same product line. The color offer is more in USA website. In the US website of selected products, there are application tips, suggested products and newest products as well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Austria and USA website, the description of products are more similar than TW website. In US and TW, there is possibility to forward the product information to a friend.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly different but still highly standardize the products and services information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store locator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mapquest, the same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In US website, there are links to on line retailers. In Germany and Taiwan there are no on line shop or links.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No map</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Cosmetics Industry Data Sheet: Page 3 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>The Body Shop</th>
<th>Maybelline</th>
<th>Loccitane</th>
<th>Claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product Preview</strong></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Germany, without zoom in the photo and it’s not so nice.</td>
<td>The type of product preview is similar but only the photos are taken slightly differently.</td>
<td>exactly the same product photos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price shown</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Information</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Taiwan and USA, the much more information about the founder background. In Germany, there are no more recent information about the environmental policy, animal testing, campaign against violence at home.</td>
<td>They all show the company history but in Germany and Taiwan are different to USA. Especially in Germany, there are additional information about Jade which was a known brand in Germany but taken by Maybelline in order to keep the loyalty of customers.</td>
<td>same information content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investors</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company logo and placement</strong></td>
<td>left upper part</td>
<td>top left corner</td>
<td>different shape</td>
<td>left upper part</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reinforcement of image:** Corporate image, information of brand, about us, history
## Cosmetics Industry Data Sheet: Page 3 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>The Body Shop</th>
<th>Maybelline</th>
<th>Loccitane</th>
<th>Claires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Navigation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site map</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In USA, on the top. In Germany, on the bottom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and privacy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Germany, it's about the usage of the website information, but not the data security.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-shop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, only mail order</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General comments</td>
<td>In Germany, there is no information of employment of job. Basically, through their website, the strong image can be catch especially from USA and Taiwanese website. However, the differences about the visible design, product information, images of products, and the service are still differ in each country. The most obvious different part between them are &quot;colors&quot;, &quot;data collection-personalization&quot; and the &quot;product information&quot;.</td>
<td>Generally, Maybelline website is more trendy with a lot of animation and reward to encourage consumer to visit the website more frequently. Moreover, they provide plenty of fashion news and tips of makeups. However, the product information, and service are different and adapted according to the local markets.</td>
<td>The local personalized communication and data collection is different in Austria website. Meanwhile, the layout of Taiwanese website is also slightly different. However, it can be seen as a standardized website through the first image. For the detail corporate information and product information available on the website, this company can be regard as global players.</td>
<td>High standardized structure, product, layout, information, personalized advice system... They set the website for different countries and translated the content into local languages, meanwhile, they still keep the strong standardized brand image.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
<th>Global company</th>
<th>Global company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Average:</td>
<td>85.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Car Industry Data Sheet: Page 1 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visible website design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aesthetics</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website structure and arrangement among these three websites are similar to each other and with strong brand image reinforcement. The homepages are all animated with their promotion events which transfer the trendy image of Nissan and interesting for consumer to visit the website again. However, the other pages of these three websites look more classic with dedicated arrangement and strong emphasis of the brand.</td>
<td>The US website homepage has a title “year end” which transfers an image of promotion. In German website, the appearance is more classic but connected to the latest event, Hollywood film 007. Taiwanese website looks more classic in the homepage but the animation versus disturbed the attention of the users and increase the time of downloading of the pages.</td>
<td>The US and TW website are more trendy with more colours, animation. The structure and the arrangement of the navigation bar of US and TW of the homepages are more similar. The DE website is more classic and structured differently.</td>
<td>The websites are all classic with a similar structure and use of the same colour types. Therefore the user switching from the TW to the US website and vice versa still know that they are on BMW website and can find their way.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development and growth of Nissan in different markets are discussed on the website accordingly. For instance, the German website presents the history and development of Nissan with focus on the European market, whereas the US website provides more additional information about Nissan’s “Heritage” in US. In Taiwan, the history and development of the joint-venture group of Nissan is available as well.</td>
<td>The structure is the same in US and Germany websites since there is a navigation bar in the top and bottom, whereas in Taiwan the navigation bar is on the left side.</td>
<td>The text is adapted to the local market. For instance the slogan is nothing is impossible (nichiyo ni umano shi) in DE, whereas in TW it is “moving forward” and no slogan at US website. On the TW website they have travel information as well as other local information on the website etc.</td>
<td>The text is adapted for the target markets, the content differs therefore. Even for the technical data the products are arranged differently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since the Nissan information are available differently in each market’s website, the photos selected for displaying the company history, product and promotions are different as well.</td>
<td>The photos selected among these websites are very different. On the USA website, the pictures show the preference of the local market which demands bigger vehicles.</td>
<td>In the main page of USA, Taiwan and German websites, the usage of pictures are mostly different according to the local demands and the product photos are different.</td>
<td>The used pictures on the websites are different. Even for the same model the photo of the cars are different. Also in the animations other car models and types are presented.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main hue of color selected for the three websites are grey silver, white and red which can be associated with Nissan and emphasize the brand.</td>
<td>The blue logo comes out the first image among three homepage. But the US homepages is more colorful comparing to the others. Moreover, the background color (white) used is the same on those three websites.</td>
<td>The DE website has a more white background whereas the other are more colourful. The used colours are often red tones which are the colours of the logo of the brand —symbol of Toyota.</td>
<td>All the websites use similar colours. The silver and grey colour symbolize the brand image of BMW.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer relation/interactivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized advice (boards, email, guestbook, feedback)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online inquiry subscription in Taiwan. For the owners registered online in the US, the additional personalized benefits can be offered, for instance, &quot;customized maintenance schedule&quot;, service coupons information for emergency procedures and tips are available. In Taiwan, Nissan &quot;To Be&quot; provides information about entertainment, activities, sightseeing places, security services... etc while driving the car.</td>
<td>In these three websites, customers can get quotation according to their own preference of the interior and exterior of the car. In Taiwan, there is a special service for business customers - F2C2 which can provide the special offer or rental service of cars for the corporates. Meanwhile, the &quot;Quality Care&quot; for the owners are available in US and Taiwanese website. In German market, there are personalized car information service through the e-newsletter.</td>
<td>In US the personalized can be determined through the shopping tour function which determine the price of the car, building your own car and maintenance schedule. Toyota provide a personalized financial service (which determine if leasing or buying the car is more suitable) for the different countries. In DE also a function to build and determine. In TW they offered a personalized service for member, personal advice for suitable product and reminder of the maintenance schedule of the car.</td>
<td>BMW DE has a special service for its different customer groups and for some even another website: BroB, public, military, diplomatic etc. In the website possibility to build your car, calculate the price. In US and TW websites the service information for owners are similar.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>owner club</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Yes, Nissan club</td>
<td>owner club</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>yes, owner club</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In TW the Toyota owner can get an Internet space for sharing photos and discussing with other Toyota passionate persons. IN US they have a owner club where the owner can interchange their experiences and share their passion for cars.</td>
<td>This information can't be determined on the website.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection, customer orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In German website, fill-in the online feedback survey can get award for gathering more consumer information. In USA, request a dealer quote online need to supply the personal information first. &quot;My Nissan&quot; can login.</td>
<td>Getting from newsletter registration, submission of questions online, and owner club in US and Taiwan.</td>
<td>Which is highly similar to the information gathered from &quot;Personalized service&quot; above.</td>
<td>Registration on DE, US and TW websites. On the German website the car owner can register, but also the participant of the advent game, or register to the newsletter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to local site option</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In US website, there is also possibility to the Spanish version directly. All can link to the global website in any webpage.</td>
<td>In US website, there is also possibility to access the Spanish version directly.</td>
<td>On the US website there is access to Toyota worldwide. In TW they have links to Toyota Japan, and other brands like Lexus, F1 etc.</td>
<td>On the US and DE websites there are links to the worldwide group site, to BMW motorcycle, and financial services.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation flash, pop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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</table>
## Car Industry Data Sheet: Page 3 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Information</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product, service, or promotion</td>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealer locator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>multi-map</td>
<td>multi-map</td>
<td>no map</td>
<td>Dealer locations are available on all the sites</td>
<td>Dealer location on all the websites. In the dealer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Preview</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>in US, DE and TW website 360° view interior and</td>
<td>In the German website some data like the technical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price shown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reinforcement of image: Corporate image, information of brand, about us, history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Information</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All links back to the global market; however, the websites in Germany and USA, there are information about 'Nissan in Europe' and 'Nissan in North America', whereas in Taiwan there are the information about the joint-venture company there.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>USA and German websites have information about the corporate identity, however the content differ in type and depth. Additional information in TW about that Toyota is a joint venture.</td>
<td>Information about the corporation, the BMW world, actuality of corporation (events etc.) are provided on the German and US website. However in Taiwan there are only information for the local dealer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Investors | Yes | No but go to the global website | Need to go to the 'Ford Motor Company' | Need to go to the 'Ford Motor Company' | Yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | no | no |

<p>| Company logos and placement | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | left upper corner | right upper part but different | left upper part but different | upper right corner | upper right corner | upper right corner |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Nissan</th>
<th>Ford</th>
<th>Toyota</th>
<th>BMW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site map</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No only for dealer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and privacy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes or No, Comments</td>
<td>Your California privacy rights</td>
<td>The German website has the function directly</td>
<td>The US and DE website have both detailed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-shop</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes or No</td>
<td>Yes or No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General comments</td>
<td>Generally, the websites of Nissan in these three markets transfer strong corporate image which is related to their organizational culture. However, even the brand image is so strong, the adoption of the content, pictures and services can still be seen from the websites.</td>
<td>There is a kind of standardization of the structure and color of websites which enable the user to recognize the corporate image. However, product description, information, services and photos are highly adapted to the local demand.</td>
<td>Contact function is different. In the German and TW website the user can access directly to a contact formular where he can write his questions. On the US website the user can choose between contacting by phone, asking a dealer, consulting the FAQs or writing an e-mail. Even if the user select email for a certain topic possible FAQs are provided which could eventually answer his question, otherwise he can select the email functionality and finally write his email. This procedure is longer.</td>
<td>In Germany, Special services: tracking order in eShop/driving training possibility to transfer the date of an event on the own calendar etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Industry Average: 61.5
## Housewares Industry Data Sheet: Page 1 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>IKEA</th>
<th>Alessi</th>
<th>WMF</th>
<th>Villervy &amp; Boch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visible website design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acclaitance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade from 1 to 5, Trendy to Classic</td>
<td>Grade from 1 to 5, Trendy to Classic</td>
<td>There is no specific website for Taiwan but only the information about the local sales partner. In Germany and in USA, the websites both are classic. The German website is more well maintained and considered than the US. The structures of US and German website are also different.</td>
<td>The website design of Villervy &amp; Boch in the three different countries are totally the same. There are pull-down menu for selecting the own country but not really provide the local information. Moreover, they just translated the content into 4 different language, German, English, French and Dutch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The German and US website are highly similar to each other. The text color for the products in German website is similar to the US website in blue. However, the Tw website is different.</td>
<td>The text color for the products in German website is more modern with animation, promotion and licensing products.</td>
<td>In German website, there are plenty information whereas the US website is less detailed content.</td>
<td>All the text are standardized since the content is only translated into German, English, French and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the main page of USA, Taiwan and German website, the usage of pictures are mostly different according to the local demand but the product photos are highly similar. Whereas in Taiwanese website, the product couldn't be review on line but need to download the product catalogue.</td>
<td>The used pictures on the homepage are different in US and Germany.</td>
<td>All the pictures are standardized since the website is only translated the language into German, English, French and Dutch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The background color is mostly white on the three website except for the mainpage the color usage is different. The text color for the products in German website is similar to the US website in blue. However, the Tw website is different.</td>
<td>The main line of the websites are similar, black, grey and white. The chosen colors are accordance with the usage of the company.</td>
<td>All the used color are standardized since the website is only translated the language into German, English, French and Dutch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Housewares Industry Data Sheet: Page 2 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>IKEA</th>
<th>Alessi</th>
<th>WMF</th>
<th>Villeroy&amp;Boch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer relation/interactivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized advice (board, email, guestbook, feedback)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The analyzed websites are mostly standardized for personalized advice instead of Taiwan. In USA, for instance, there are extra suggestions of complementary products while browsing the specific product information. Otherwise in USA and German, website the information of products are the same but translated.</td>
<td>In Germany, there are several services provided such as &quot;wish list&quot;, &quot;newsletter&quot;</td>
<td>German and USA e-shop website have &quot;contact us&quot; option on-line through which the customers can give feedback or inquiry to the firm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 to 3, Adoption to Standardization, Describe the difference found</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection, customer orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 to 3, Adoption to Standardization, In US, there are a lot of methods to gather the information from consumers, such as &quot;join our email list&quot; and &quot;my profile&quot; which need to supply some information before shopping on-line, while in Germany the method of gathering data is the same. In Taiwanese website there is no this kind function unless the consumers send the e-mail or go to the store directly. Go through on-line shop, newsletter or submit the question through &quot;contact us&quot;</td>
<td>In the US website, the website is more presenting the products and company information. Thus, there is no data collection. In Germany, the website collects information of consumers by newsletter releasing, registration and on-line shopping. Additionally, the company gathers information such as evaluation of the website and frequency of visit from the consumers who contact the company on-line.</td>
<td>German and USA e-shop website provide the possibility to the customer creating their own wish list with their favorite products, by which the company gathers information as well. While the customers registering the newsletter, the company can also collect information for reference.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAQ</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links to local site option</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In USA and Germany, it's on the bottom right whereas in TW, just next to the company logo on the top left. Italian version available but only translated the language</td>
<td>Italian version available but only translated the language</td>
<td>There are more than 100 options in the pull-down menu for country selection but only 4 possible languages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animation, flash, pop</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Housewares Industry Data Sheet: Page 3 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>English version</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>WMF</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product, reserve or promotion</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise in USA and German websites the information of products are the same but translated. In USA websites, there are full information about the product and can be shown direct on-line. However in Taiwan, the consumer needs to download the catalogue first. And the features of product are both in 'inch' and 'cm' in USA website, but only 'cm' in Taiwanese website. In Germany, the consumer can check on-line the status of the order. In USA the order can be 'on-line', 'by phone' or go to the store. In Germany, the order can be 'on-line' or go to the store. In Taiwan, only go to the store. All three provide the information for special project for kitchen or office.</td>
<td>There are three service which is 'My details', 'Basket' and 'After sales' on the website. Consumer can contact Alessi though on-line submission.</td>
<td>In Germany, they propose to the consumer to exchange the old items with kitchenware. In the US website, there is no function which enable to consult the last seen product and also less product description, no information about designers etc. which is concerned to be lack of information instead of adaptation.</td>
<td>In Taiwanese website, the general information and products are the same but don't really have 'service' available from the website. Since there are 20 countries which provide on-line shop service, the content of promotion would have slight different. For instance in the USA e-shop, there is special offer for holiday items.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store locators</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Taiwan and Taiwan, there are map and also the information for getting by bus or metro, open hour. In US website, there are also driving map available. In USA they use their program to show the consumer the way to the store.</td>
<td>Only in certain countries there are the information about local stores of Alessi.</td>
<td>No map in German but explanation of how to arrive the store.</td>
<td>However, the store locators list is the same one for all the countries. However, in the e-shop webpage of USA and Germany there are specific local store information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product Preview</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pictures of product in USA and Germany</td>
<td>Yes show on the e-catalogue</td>
<td>Yes in the &quot;A-shop&quot;</td>
<td>The same as USA, Germany and Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price shown</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Taiwan, there are also information for the local franchise group. The strong organizational culture can be seen in the websites especially emphasized in the part of &quot;Corporate information&quot; and &quot;job opportunities&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less detailed information in US website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
## Housewares Industry Data Sheet: Page 4 of 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>IKEA</th>
<th>Alessi</th>
<th>WMF</th>
<th>Villeroy &amp; Boch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English version</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Company logo and placement | Left upper part but different | Left upper part but different | Left upper corner | Left upper corner | Right upper corner | N/A | Yes | Yes | Yes |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navigation</th>
<th>Site map</th>
<th>Search Engine</th>
<th>Security and privacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-shop</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grading</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General comments</td>
<td>There are certain adaptations according to the demand, legislation and local specificities (e.g., information about apprenticeship in Germany). Otherwise, general usage, information and product range from ASE website are pretty similar between German and USA website. However, Taiwanese website seems to keep the main concept of the website design—more focus on product introduction.</td>
<td>As being one of most famous luxury brand, the website of Alessi has shown few adaptation for the worldwide market. There are pull-down menu for country selection but Alessi does not conceive the website into other languages.</td>
<td>Basically, the image in the both German and USA website are in the same tone. However, in USA website the content is less detailed and actualized comparing to German website. The layout, presentation and service information of German website are more detailed and in a wider range.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Industry Average | 89.373 |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Company type</th>
<th>Transnational company</th>
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