Journal of Research in International Education

http://jri.sagepub.com

Global Product Branding and International Education
James Cambridge
Journal of Research in International Education 2002; 1; 227
DOI: 10.1177/147524002764248158

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://jri.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/2/227

Additional services and information for *Journal of Research in International Education* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://jri.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://jri.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

Global product branding and international education

JAMES CAMBRIDGE
University of Bath, UK

International education has been compared with other globally marketed goods and services such as soft drinks and hamburgers: a reliable product conforming to consistent quality standards throughout the world. This article explores the issues of international education, globalization and product branding, and examines the extent to which it may be claimed that international schools constitute a network of independent franchised distributors of globally branded international education products and services. The concept of branding and the implications of global branding are also discussed.

KEYWORDS   *global branding, globalization, international education, international school, product branding*

L'éducation internationale a été comparée à d'autres biens et services disponibles sur le marché mondial tels que les boissons gazeuses et les hamburgers: un produit fiable répondant à des normes de qualité mondiales. Cet article explore les questions de l'éducation internationale, de la mondialisation et de la valorisation de la marque des produits. Il examine également dans quelle mesure on peut affirmer que les écoles internationales forment un réseau de distributeurs indépendants et franchisés de produits et services de marque éducation internationale reconnue partout dans le monde. Le concept de valorisation de la marque et les implications de marques mondialement reconnues sont également traités.

Se ha comparado la educación internacional con otros bienes y servicios comercializados a nivel mundial, como refrescos y hamburguesas: un producto de confianza que cumple con unas normas de calidad mundiales. Este artículo trata los temas de la educación internacional, la globalización y la denominación de productos, y analiza hasta qué punto se puede afirmar que los colegios internacionales constituyen una red de distribuidores franquiciados independientes de bienes y servicios denominados a nivel mundial como educación internacional. Así mismo, se analiza el concepto de denominación de un producto y las implicaciones de estas denominaciones mundiales.

Introduction

The term 'international education' may be considered to be a pragmatic shorthand device signifying the type of education which is offered in a growing population of institutions around the world, and which are known popularly as 'international schools'. These schools serve the educational needs of globally mobile students, and their diverse constituency includes the children of diplomats and employees of multinational companies, parastatal bodies and non-governmental organizations, as well as students who are indigenous to the host country. However, it cannot be

227

stated that international schools are where, uniquely, international educa-
tion takes place. This is because an international school may offer an edu-
cation that makes no claims to be international, while it has been argued
that an international education may be experienced by a student who
has not attended a school that describes itself as international (Hayden
and Thompson, 1995). An increasing number of independent and state
schools in different parts of the world, for instance, are offering a curricu-
lum based upon what might be considered the values of international
education.

International education has been described as a contested field of edu-
cational practice involving the reconciliation of economic, political and
cultural–ideological dilemmas which may be identified as competing inter-
nationalist and globalizing perspectives (Cambridge and Thompson,
2001). The internationalist current in international education may be iden-
tified with an orientation towards international relations, with aspirations
for the promotion of peace and understanding between nations. This is a
view of international education as 'a transformative discourse which locates
all fields of enquiry in a supra-national frame of reference and upholds the
cause of peace' (Rawlings, 2000). It embraces an existential, experiential
philosophy of education which values the moral development of the indi-
vidual and recognizes the importance of service to the community and the
development of a sense of responsible citizenship. Such an educational
philosophy was promoted by Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound
and the United World Colleges movement (Peterson, 1987; Röhrs, 1970;
Sutcliffe, 1991). It may be argued that internationalist international educa-
tion celebrates cultural diversity and promotes international cooperation
and an internationally minded outlook.

The globalizing current in international education is, on the other hand,
influenced by and contributes to the global diffusion of the values of free-
market capitalism. These values are expressed in international education in
terms of quality assurance, through the application of international accred-
itation procedures, the spread of global quality standards and the global
certification of educational qualifications. Globalizing international educa-
tion facilitates educational continuity for the children of a globally mobile
clientele, as well as for children of the host country clientele with aspira-
tions towards social mobility in a global context. It may be argued that
an outcome of globalizing international education is global cultural con-
vergence towards the values of the 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair,
2001). However, the internationalist and globalizing approaches are rarely
seen in their pure forms, for even the most fervent idealists are tempered by
the material conditions of the marketplace. International education, as

228

practised, reconciles these contrasting approaches. Schools that offer international education appear to be heterogeneous because each reconciliation is unique to the historical, geographical and economic circumstances of the institution.

Globalization

It has been argued that globalization is a context for understanding the propagation and spread of international education and international schools (Cambridge, 2000, 2001). Globalization may be described in terms of:

> . . . a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (Held et al., 1999)

The goals to which the processes of globalization are leading include 'the establishment of a borderless global economy, the complete denationalisation of all corporate procedures and activities, and the eradication of economic nationalism' (Sklair, 2001). This is a perspective which may be identified with what is termed hyperglobalism.

The majority of international schools tend to operate within the context of a local market. Usually students do not travel very far to attend an international school; they reside with their parents, who are expatriates working in a country which is not their home, and attend an international school in their locality, or in a nearby city. In the case of a small state an international school might serve a whole country. It may be argued that the only schools offering an international education which really operate in a global market are some of the United World Colleges, particularly those that are wholly residential. These colleges have a policy of student recruitment from all countries in the world, with students often funded by scholarships raised from charitable donations to national committees. In this case, students do not attend a college because they happen to reside in that particular country with their parents but, instead, they leave home and move to another country specifically to experience an international education. United World Colleges are institutions with a global catchment area for student recruitment. However, while the market for most international schools is confined to the locality of each, it may be argued that the curricula they offer are global because they are also available in other schools in different countries.

229

The logic of globalization has important implications for educational management. As Sklair (2001) points out, 'global capitalism succeeds by turning most spheres of social life into businesses, by making social institutions – such as schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, welfare systems – more business-like'. The business-like attributes of such institutions are likely to include an aggressive approach to efficiency (the optimum method for getting from one point to another), calculability (an emphasis on the quantitative aspects of products supplied and services offered), predictability (the assurance that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales) and control through the application of technology. These trends have been identified with the so-called 'McDonaldization' of society (Ritzer, 2000). Such approaches require a shift in the institutional culture–ideology of schools away from exclusively pedagogical issues and towards the espousal of market-oriented values. As Lyon (1999) expresses it, 'emancipatory reason gives way to technocratic rationalisation'. This is a development which is not peculiar to international schools; it is also to be found in the national education systems of several countries (Lauder, 1991). The espousal of the values of free-market capitalism associated with the globalizing current of international education has led to the transformation of international education into a globally branded product. It has been proposed that international education 'may be compared with other globally marketed goods and services such as soft drinks and hamburgers; a reliable product conforming to consistent quality standards throughout the world' (Cambridge, 2000). To test this proposition, it is necessary to examine the concept of product branding.

Product branding

A brand is 'a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality' (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993). Brands represent the tangible and intangible benefits provided by a product or service which can be identified with the entire customer experience. A brand 'includes all the assets critical to delivering and communicating that experience: the name, the design, the advertising, the product or service, the distribution channel, the reputation' (Gilmore, 1997). Branded products first appeared in the late 19th century as a response by manufacturers to reduce the increasing power of wholesalers:

> In the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, there were four key players in the production and consumption of goods: consumers, retailers, wholesalers and producers. The wholesaler occupied the pivotal position, serving as a link

230

between a limited number of producers and a much larger number of retailers. In the absence of branded goods, the wholesaler fulfilled retailer demand by buying a product from the manufacturer at the lowest price. Obviously such practices were not very advantageous to manufacturers and kept profit margins rather small. To escape the stranglehold of the wholesalers, manufacturers started to create brand names for their products, differentiating them from others producers' output (usually only in image) and appealing through advertising directly to the consumer. . . . The ascendancy of the manufacturer changed the pattern of economic activity, and while it resulted in higher prices and lack of price competition, it gave consumers a 'choice' regarding the brand of product they purchased. The 'information' that advertising provided gave the producer and consumer more autonomy at the wholesaler's expense. (Leiss et al., 1990)

In the context of the marketing of education, it is useful to analyse the role of schools and their relationship with examination boards. It may be argued that schools act as the retailers of products (i.e. academic qualifications) that are 'manufactured' by the examination boards. Schools and examination boards are joined in a symbiotic relationship giving mutual benefit, because the examination boards require the schools' knowledge of local markets while the schools derive benefit from their association with the name and reputation of the branded product that they are retailing. This bears a strong similarity to other relationships between manufacturers of products and services and their franchised distributors. Franchising is a system in which:

. . . one large firm . . . grants or sells the right to distribute its products or use its trade name and processes to a number of smaller firms . . . franchise holders, although legally independent, must conform to detailed standards of operation designed and enforced by the parent company. (Dicke, 1992: 2–3)

It may be argued that international schools operate in local markets as the franchised distributors of globally branded international education products and services, such as the programmes of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the US-based College Board Advanced Placement International Diploma (APID). The establishment of quality standards through accreditation constitutes an important part of the franchising process. This is evident from the way in which the International Baccalaureate Organization, for instance, is now promoting 'IB World schools', which are authorized to offer the programmes of the IBO, using a trademarked logo (IBO, 2001a). Branded international education products and services might

231

form one selling point out of many for the marketing of the school to potential clients but, as Farrell (2001) points out:

> . . . the marketer must appreciate that, where there is a choice, especially between schools with comparable positions in the league tables, parents are making decisions about the symbolic differences between schools: the utilitarian value [of either] is similar.

This argument suggests that the marketing of educational products and services operates on two levels: the symbolic and the utilitarian, a theme taken up by theorists of commercial product advertising and branding who argue that marketing works on two levels because goods and services 'are simultaneously communicators (about social ideas and power) and satisfiers (of human needs)' (Jhally, 1990). The International Baccalaureate Organization provides an illustration of this distinction in its justification for introducing a new logo (IBO, 2001a), where arguments are deployed which not only address the satisfaction of rational utilitarian needs ('an easily recognised visual identity') but also make a symbolic appeal to the emotions ('a label for quality when an organisation or company does well . . . helping schools benefit from the good name of the IB programmes'). In the jargon of the advertising business, this dual approach is reflected in the 'positioning' and 'personality' of brands.

Brand positioning 'defines the brand's point of reference with respect to the competition' (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993). This is often determined by price; some products occupy a high price positioning which, it is hoped, will attract high-income earners who value the sense of style, affluence and exclusivity associated with luxury brands. Positioning may also be determined by product usage. Hankinson and Cowking propose that yoghurt, for example, might be positioned either as a healthy breakfast food alongside muesli, or as a children's dessert alongside ice cream. Positioning, therefore, describes the brand by defining its competitive context. Applied to an international education context, brand positioning would contrast an international education product with its competitors, which might be either a national educational system or a different international education product.

The brand personality consists of 'a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values' (Hankinson and Cowking 1993). Functional attributes describe extrinsic, tangible product properties such as 'durability, 'ease of use', or 'portability', whereas symbolic values describe intrinsic, intangible properties such as 'friendliness', 'fun' and 'care'. Thus,

232

an important component of brand personality lies in its emotional appeal to the customer. Applied to an international education context, the functional attributes of the brand personality of an international education curriculum would include the transferability of qualifications to other educational systems and their widespread recognition by higher education institutions. They might also be expected to include language of instruction, curriculum content and mode of assessment. Symbolic values associated with international education would include references to more general aspects such as 'internationalism', 'inclusiveness' and 'multiculturalism'. These values may be extended to embrace concepts such as 'community service' and 'character building', particularly in the context of the internationalist current of international education.

Taken together, brand positioning and brand personality contribute to the brand proposition, which comprises a set of statements or a slogan that identifies the brand. This is important in giving a product a competitive advantage over its rivals because it assists the process of brand recognition by customers. Gilmore (1997) observes that 'business is war; the objective is competitor destruction through superior industrial economics'. Brand warfare, however, constitutes a distinctive strategy by which:

> . . . the brand warrior identifies the key conquest as the customer, not the rival. Beating the rival follows inexorably from winning over the customer's heart and mind, so the process of nurturing a brand is a crucial aspect of the warrior's attack. (Gilmore, 1997)

The brand proposition therefore appeals not only to the rational intellect of the customer but also to the emotions.

A successful brand may extend the range of products and services with which its name is associated by a process known as brand stretching. However, it is important to ensure that this process 'does not dilute the core values of the brand, thereby weakening its proposition and overall coherence' (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993). In other words, brand stretching appears to be most effective when the gap between the original product and the new product group to which the brand is to be stretched is not too wide. Thus, companies are advised by certain business management gurus to 'stick to the knitting', by concentrating their attention upon those activities at which they excel (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

In the context of international education, brand stretching may be identified with the trend for service providers to diversify their activities into a range of new areas, defined, for instance, in terms of different age ranges of

233

students, different subjects or different modes of assessment. Stretching of educational brands may be vertical – with different programmes serving a progression of different age cohorts – or horizontal, with a range of different programmes serving the same age cohort. The vertical stretching of the International Baccalaureate brand has led from the development of the IB Diploma (IBDP) to the Middle Years (IBMYP) and Primary Years (IBPYP) Programmes. The Cambridge brand has been stretched in many different ways: for local consumption in the United Kingdom as the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), and for international consumption as Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The Cambridge International Examinations brand has been stretched not only horizontally but also vertically. It has been stretched horizontally to include GCE Advanced (A) levels and the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), which serve the same age cohort, and vertically to include the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), which is directed towards a different age cohort. It will be interesting to see whether, in the future, international education brands can be stretched to cover other services beyond educational qualifications and curriculum support.

Global brands

Four contrasting approaches to doing business in many countries may be recognized, comprising global, multinational, international and transnational organizational structures (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1990). Global and multinational organizations are highly centralized. Global corporations treat the world as a single market, whereas multinational corporations treat the world as a number of discrete national and regional markets. That is to say, global corporations sell the same goods and services everywhere, but multinational corporations adapt their products to specific markets. This is in contrast with international and transnational organizations whose structures are decentralized. In international corporations the headquarters performs a coordinating function between the various national branches, whereas transnational corporations have a polycentric structure with no headquarters or coordinating centre.

It may be concluded that the bodies which provide international education products and services are global organizations because they have centralized structures and offer their products for sale in a single unitary world market. This is exemplified by the structure and functions of the International Baccalaureate Organization. The IBO has its headquarters in

234

Geneva and its Curriculum and Assessment office (IBCA) near Cardiff. There is a degree of decentralization, with the local marketing of IBO products coordinated by regional offices, but, for the Diploma Programme at least, coordination of assessment is highly centralized. Furthermore, there is little or no scope for local variation in the examinations. The same examinations with the same form and content are attempted by students in many different countries in the same session, even to the extent that the same questions are set in the three official languages of the IBO (Spanish, French and English). The services of the IBO constitute globally marketed products because they assure the same standards of quality throughout the world. A reasonable question to ask may therefore be 'To what extent may it also be argued that the IBO is a global brand?'

In order to answer this question, it is necessary first to discuss the common features of global brands. One such feature is that they are strong in their home market and have a geographical balance in sales, that is to say 'a global brand has at least a minimum level of awareness, recognition and sales all over the world' (Quelch, 1999). In the context of international education, the issue of what constitutes the 'home market' is an interesting one. Walker (2000) argues that 'global mobility was certainly one of the driving forces behind the creation of the IB Diploma Programme. It was not however, the only such force.' According to Walker (2000), there is 'a misconception that international education was created for the internationally mobile student'. He follows up this argument by tracing the antecedents of international education, as practised today, to the International School of Geneva founded in 1924 to serve the children of civil servants working at the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. The foundation of the United Nations International School, New York, followed in 1947, and the United World College of the Atlantic was founded in 1962. If these schools and others like them constitute the 'home market' for the products of the IBO, then it continues to be strong in that market. Furthermore the brand has stretched also to serve other markets, particularly the transient professionals or 'global nomads' and the indigenous populations in some countries who seek an alternative to their own national education systems.

Another common feature is that global brands address similar consumer needs in different countries worldwide and have consistent positioning, by making reference to the same values in all markets. Brands may be global but their consumers associate them with their country of origin, so that 'paradoxically, the country of origin is therefore a factor in making them global' (Quelch, 1999). This may be identified as an aspect of brand personality. It would be interesting to investigate whether customers

235

associate the International Baccalaureate Organization with other international agencies, such as the United Nations Organization, because their offices are all located in Geneva. Similarly it would be interesting to explore whether customers of Cambridge International Examinations might associate it with a brand personality that combines images of an ancient seat of learning with 'silicon fen' technological innovation. Such a view would appear to be supported by Lowe (1999) who, using data from consumers of international education in El Salvador, notes that 'IGCSE is preferred . . . because "Cambridge" has status amongst parents who are very status conscious'.

Global brands are said to maintain a product category focus; that is, a brand is associated with a particular product and is identifiable with a corporate name. A major difference between the marketing of international education and other global brands appears to be in the amount and type of product advertising carried out. Visual imagery, textual overlay information and identification of the enduring values associated with the brand are present in the branding of educational products. Logos, glossy prospectuses, mission statements and websites are all examples of how international education organizations promote themselves, but big budgets and high production values are not as pervasive as they are in the advertising materials of global consumer brands in the mass media. As an example, the International Baccalaureate Organization reports (IBO, 2001a) that it has registered, or is in the process of registering, 'in many countries' a variety of visual devices as trademarks:

- 'International Baccalaureate' in three languages;
- the traditional IB logo (circle with IB in the centre);
- a circular variation of the 'IB World School' logo; and
- a new IBO logo, created expressly to allow the organization to protect and continue to use the letters 'IBO': the design will be used in all languages and the use of 'OBI' in French and Spanish will be phased out.

The last point in this list represents an interesting example of how demand for the maintenance of a strong product category focus has resulted in globalized standardization. It could be argued that aspirations for parity of esteem between English and other languages appear to have been overwhelmed in the interests of product recognition by the use of a globally standardized logo. One of the main pitfalls of building global brands is the tendency towards excessive standardization throughout the global market.

236

Other pitfalls include ignoring the differences between the extent of a brand's development and the stage of development of a particular market, and the tendency towards imposing total headquarters control over all markets. According to Quelch (1999), there are a number of challenges to the future development of global brands. In the economic sphere, these include the development of the euro currency zone that will make differential pricing between countries in Europe more transparent, and the financial and economic instability of emerging markets. Global brands are sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations and, to take one recent example, the decline in the South-East Asian economies in the late 1990s may have priced international education products out of the reach of some customers in that region. Commodities as varied as tobacco products, jeans, cosmetics and motor vehicles are subject to price differentials between different regional or national markets, so that they may be less expensive to customers in some markets than in others. The diversion of parallel imports from low-price to high-price markets is seen as a challenge to some global brands because it undermines their brand positioning based on price and associations with exclusivity. However, this is unlikely to affect international education unless there are differential fee structures in operation in different national or regional markets. The relationship between global brands and their marketing service companies presents a dilemma between the global and the local, in terms of whether products should be advertised in particular ways by local agencies in national and regional markets, or by global advertising agents campaigning in the same way in all markets. Oskovisit and Shaw (1999) present a fuller discussion of standardized international advertising, but this is unlikely to have a profound influence on international education products because they are not generally marketed through high volume advertising in the mass media. The dilemma remains, however, between the conflicting demands for globalization of brands and the maintenance of existing brands which are successful in local, national or regional markets.

The benefits of global branding may be identified in four areas. Global branding adds value for consumers, because 'certain consumers perceive a value added when an international or global brand name is attached to "emotionally involving" or "aspirational" products' (Quelch, 1999). Global branding offers economies of scale which can reduce costs, but it is debatable whether this applies in the context of international education where assessment materials are currently distributed between schools, examiners and examination boards in an intercontinental circuit. However, this may change as secure distribution of encrypted electronic mail becomes more widespread. For example, the International Baccalaureate

237

Organization has extended its online services to include an On-line Curriculum Centre and IBnet, which serves schools' coordinators for the three IB programmes by circulating news and information about curriculum changes and deadlines, and providing administrative tools for student registration for examination sessions. Cambridge International Examinations has CIE Xchange, which 'provides centres with a secure environment to help administer . . . qualifications and services. Centres can download a variety of documents, upload files and get the latest news on a range of issues' (CIE, 2001). Global branding also offers opportunities for cross-border learning because the more frequently organizations trade in a global market, the more experience and expertise they gain from it. Furthermore, there are cultural benefits to be gained by global organizations because many people aspire to work for, and be associated with, what they perceive to be important global companies.

International education as a globally branded product?

The application of a theory of product branding, a concept associated with the intensification of market competition, to educational products and services may be contested on the grounds that it is unclear precisely who are the customers. For example, should children in schools be considered as workers, clients or products? As Lauder (1991) comments:

> . . . the very fact that there is no easy or convincing way in which the language of education can be translated into that of the tradable sector suggests that the organisations and processes of the two sectors are dissimilar in important respects.

Should the customers of international education products and services be identified as the schools, which then act as retailers supplying the consumers of their services? Or should we consider the customers to be the parents of students at a school, or the students themselves? Employers, higher education institutions, governments and others in society may also be identified as having an interest in educational products and services. All of these constituencies may be considered stakeholders in the process of education (Everard and Morris, 1990). One way to clarify this issue is to determine at whom the advertising is directed. Inspection of the websites of the International Baccalaureate Organization, Cambridge International Examinations and the College Board indicates that they direct their advertising to a variety of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers and other education professionals.

238

What brand positioning and personality do international education products demonstrate? It is evident that the curricula offered by international schools display contrasting orientations towards being 'international'. In terms of a framework proposed by Thompson (1998), it may be argued that the College Board Advanced Placement tests constitute a curriculum *exported* from one country to the rest of the world. The programmes of the IBO have been especially *created* as international curricula, with the diploma model incorporating 'the best elements of several national systems, without being based on any one' (IBO, 2001b). In contrast, the IGCSE and AICE courses of Cambridge International Examinations are *adapted* from comparable English curricula for use in an international context. Such a description is supported by Cambridge International Examinations, which states that a key feature of its examinations is that they are specifically designed for international use:

> Although many of them are based on the best features of the British qualifications system – and are equivalent to the examinations used in UK schools – Cambridge International Examinations aims to ensure that the examinations are equally suitable for students of any nationality and any cultural background. The examinations are designed to meet the needs of learners who are not necessarily native speakers of English, and careful consideration is given to this issue in setting and marking the examinations. (CIE, 2001)

These contrasting curricula and associated assessment systems appeal to different sections of the client population for international education, depending on whether they require a qualification that is specific to college entry in the USA, as in the case of the College Board examinations, or one which has a wider currency (e.g. IBO, CIE). However, it is interesting to note that the College Board Advanced Placement International Diploma (APID) is a stretched version of the AP brand which is promoted as a service to students who wish to study at colleges outside of North America (College Board, 2001).

Contrasting the IBO and UCLES (or CIE) products, Lowe (1999) observes that 'the underpinning notion in the IB of education for an internationalism growing out of one's own culture (and language) is absent from the UCLES products'. This view is supported by Guy (2000), who proposes that 'no assumption can be made that IGCSE schools are subscribing to promoting international understanding'. Guy also identifies contrasting approaches towards teacher involvement in curriculum development:

> The IBO itself exists to support schools in implementing the [IB Middle Years] programme, provide for moderation of work and to facilitate curriculum development. This supportive and inclusive role is arguably in direct contrast to the Cambridge Board's more business oriented and market directed, product-based approach to provision of the IGCSE.

Compared with the IBO, 'UCLES is arguably a more centralised and nationally-focused organisation' (Guy, 2000). Thus it may be concluded that the suppliers of international education services differentiate themselves in terms of their respective brand positioning and brand personalities.

One way in which the values associated with a brand may be expressed is in terms of quality assurance. Sklair (2001) observes that:

> . . . various forms of benchmarking are used in most large institutions to measure performance against actual competitors or an ultimate target (zero defects, for example). The term world best practice (WBP) is used . . . as a convenient label for all measures of performance achieved through various systems of benchmarking.

Both Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) offer curriculum support and accreditation services to schools offering their programmes. The process of accreditation by external agencies such as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) has become an increasingly widespread practice among schools offering an international education, to the extent that Murphy (1998) proposes that:

> . . . it is a source of satisfaction to schools to know that they have undergone a rigorous process of evaluation by experienced colleagues and have been found worthy of accreditation . . . In addition more and more peripatetic parents are becoming familiar with the process of accreditation and are beginning to feel that placing their children in an unexamined school is a risk they do not wish to take.

Conclusion

Product branding is 'ultimately about securing the future of a company, its products and services by building loyalties using emotional as well as rational values' (Gilmore, 1997). The aim of branding to retain consumer loyalty and encourage repeat purchases of goods or services may be seen in the context of educational marketing. It is necessary to develop a relationship between the school and its customers, in order to maintain the

240

'possibility of any siblings attending the school: the school equivalent of repeat business' (Farrell, 2001).

Brands represent the tangible and intangible benefits provided by a product or service. The brand proposition comprises the positioning and personality of the brand. Brand positioning describes the brand by defining its competitive context. Applied to international education, brand positioning contrasts an international education product with either a national system or another international education product. Brand personality describes the unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values of the brand. Brands appeal to the customer on both the rational and emotional levels. Applied to an international education context, the functional attributes of the brand personality of an international education product include the transferability of qualifications to other educational systems and their widespread recognition by higher education institutions, the language of instruction, curriculum content and mode of assessment. Symbolic values associated with international education include references to more general aspects such as internationalism, inclusiveness and multiculturalism. These values may also embrace concepts such as community service and character building, particularly in the context of the internationalist current of international education.

A successful brand may extend the range of products and services with which its name is associated by the process of brand stretching. In the context of international education, brand stretching may be identified with the trend for service providers to diversify their activities into new areas defined, for instance, in terms of different age ranges of students, different subjects or different modes of assessment. Stretching of educational brands may be vertical, with different programmes serving a progression of different age cohorts, or horizontal, with a range of different programmes serving the same age cohort.

Bodies that provide international education products and services, such as the International Baccalaureate Organization, Cambridge International Examinations and the US College Board, are global organizations because they are highly centralized and offer their products for sale in a single unitary world market. They may be considered to be global brands because they:

- are strong in their home markets and have a geographical balance in sales;
- address similar consumer needs in different countries worldwide and have consistent positioning, by making reference to the same values in all markets; and

241

- maintain a product category focus by being associated with a particular product which is identifiable with a corporate name.

It is proposed that the deconstruction of international education in terms of global product branding may be performed by reference to the concepts discussed here. Such an activity would constitute a research programme that could assist international schools in developing their effectiveness as organizations by identifying their institutional missions more clearly, identifying their customers with more accuracy and improving their marketing activities. It is intended that such an activity will form the basis of a further piece of research to be undertaken within this context.

References

BARTLETT, C. AND GHOSHAL, S. (1990) *Managing Across Borders*. London: Hutchinson Business Books.

CAMBRIDGE, J. (2000) 'International schools, globalisation and the seven cultures of capitalism', in M.C. Hayden and J.J. Thompson (eds) *International Schools and International Education*, pp. 179–90. London: Kogan Page.

CAMBRIDGE, J. (2001) 'Globalisation and international education'. *IB World* 26 (Feb.): 11–12.

CAMBRIDGE, J. AND THOMPSON, J.J. (2001) '"A Big Mac and a Coke?", Internationalism and globalisation as contexts for international education', unpublished paper.

CIE (2001) Cambridge International Examinations website. Available at http://www.cie.org.uk/

COLLEGE BOARD (2001) College Board website (for information about Advanced Placement testing and the AP International Diploma). Available at http://www.collegeboard.com/

DICKE, T.S. (1992) *Franchising in America: The Development of a Business Method 1840–1980*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

EVERARD, K.B. AND MORRIS, G. (1990) *Effective School Management*, 2nd edn. London: Paul Chapman.

FARRELL, F. (2001) 'Postmodernism and educational marketing'. *Educational Management and Administration* 29(2): 169–79.

GILMORE, F. (1997) 'Introduction: Brand championship', in F. Gilmore (ed.) *Brand Warriors: Corporate Leaders Share their Winning Strategies*, pp. 1–24. London: Harper Collins Business.

GUY, J. (2000) 'IBMYP and IGCSE – are they really compatible? A response to Caroline Ellwood. Part 1'. *International Schools Journal* 20(1): 10–17.

HANKINSON, G. AND COWKING, P. (1993) *Branding in Action: Cases and Strategies for Profitable Brand Management*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

HAYDEN, M.C. AND THOMPSON, J.J. (1995) 'International schools and international education: A relationship reviewed'. *Oxford Review of Education* 21(3): 327–45.

242

HELD, D., MCGREW, A., GOLDBLATT, D. AND PERRATON, J. (1999) *Global Transformations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

IBO (2001a) 'The IBO's new logo'. *IB World* 26 (February): 2–3.

IBO (2001b) International Baccalaureate Organization website. Available at http://www.ibo.org/

JHALLY, S. (1990) *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*. London: Routledge.

LAUDER, H. (1991) 'Education, democracy and the economy'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 12: 417–31.

LEISS, W., KLINE, S. AND JHALLY, S. (1990) *Social Communication in Advertising*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

LOWE, J. (1999) 'International examinations, national systems and the global market'. *Compare* 29(3): 317–30.

LYON, D. (1999) *Postmodernity*, 2nd edn. Buckingham: Open University Press.

MURPHY, E. (1998) 'International school accreditation: Who needs it?', in M.C. Hayden and J.J. Thompson (eds) *International Education: Principles and Practice*, pp. 212–23. London: Kogan Page.

OSKOVISIT, S. AND SHAW, J.T. (1999) 'Standardized international advertising: Some research issues and implications'. *Journal of Advertising Research* 39(6): 19–24.

PETERS T.J. AND WATERMAN, R.H. (1982) *In Search of Excellence*. New York: Harper Row.

PETERSON, A.D.C. (1987) *Schools Across Frontiers*. La Salle, IL: Open Court Books.

QUELCH, J. (1999) 'Global brands: Taking stock'. *Business Strategy Review* 10(1): 1–14.

RAWLINGS, F. (2000) 'Abstract of doctoral thesis: Globalisation, curriculum and international communities: A case study of the United World College of the Atlantic'. *International Journal of Educational Development* 20(4): 365–6.

RITZER, G. (2000) *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

RöHRS, H. (1970) *Kurt Hahn*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

SKLAIR, L. (2001) *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford: Blackwell.

SUTCLIFFE, D. (1991) 'The United World Colleges', in P. Jonietz and D. Harris (eds) *World Yearbook of Education 1991: International Schools and International Education*, pp. 25–37. London: Kogan Page.

THOMPSON, J.J. (1998) 'Towards a model for international education', in M.C. Hayden and J.J. Thompson (eds) *International Education: Principles and Practice*, pp. 276–90. London: Kogan Page.

WALKER, G. (2000) 'International education: Connecting the national to the global', in M.C. Hayden and J.J. Thompson (eds) *International Schools and International Education*, pp. 193–204. London: Kogan Page.

Biographical note

JAMES CAMBRIDGE has been a biology educator in national and international schools worldwide and is currently a Research Officer with the Centre for the study of Education in an International Context at the University of Bath. Address: CEIC, Department of Education, University of Bath, Bath BA2 7AY, UK [email: J.C.Cambridge@bath.ac.uk].