



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



Standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets: A systematic literature review

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 22(02), 1191-1211

Publication history: Received on 04 April 2024 revised on 14 May 2024; accepted on 17 May 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.22.2.1470>

Abstract

This study examined standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. It was carried out to explore the scholarly arguments for both standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. It also explored the position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. The study adopted systematic literature review methodology. The population of the study comprised 4,128 relevant articles obtained from five credible research databases. The article selection procedure was facilitated by a set of inclusion-exclusion criteria and the PRISMA framework. This resulted in the inclusion of 79 relevant articles published between 2017-2023 for the review. The articles were reviewed using in-depth content analysis method. The first finding of the study revealed that the major scholarly arguments for standardization can be grouped into 16 categories, including: economies of scale and cost efficiency; global brand image and recognition; among others. It was also found that the major scholarly arguments for adaptation can be grouped into 13 categories, including: cultural differences; legal and regulatory environment; among others. The last finding is that majority of extant scholars proposed a hybrid approach (glocalization), which combines elements of both standardization and adaptation to create a strategy that is globally consistent yet locally relevant. Therefore, the study advises international marketers to conduct comprehensive market research before adopting a glocalization strategy. This entails understanding local consumer behaviours, preferences, cultural nuances, and economic conditions in order to craft marketing campaigns that align with local culture, values, and traditions of the target market.

Keywords: International marketing; Marketing mix; Standardization; Adaptation; Glocalization

1. Introduction

Marketing in international markets entails as many opportunities as threats especially in today's highly digitized and culturally-diverse society. This reality is compounded by the rapid pace of technological advancement and the diverse array of cultural norms and consumer behaviors prevalent in different regions (Kariuki & Iravo, 2021). One of the paramount opportunities presented by international marketing lies in the vast potential customer base (Ferry & Chan, 2018). The digitization of commerce has facilitated unprecedented access to consumers around the world. E-commerce platforms, social media, and search engines have become powerful tools for reaching target audiences on a global scale. Additionally, advancements in logistics and supply chain management have made it increasingly feasible to deliver products and services efficiently across borders (Zewdu & Gebrewolde, 2019). This global accessibility can significantly amplify revenue streams for businesses willing to navigate the complexities of international markets. However, alongside these opportunities, a plethora of threats loom. Cultural diversity is a significant consideration, because different societies have distinct values, preferences, and communication styles (Yavuz, 2020).

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In the views of Al-Sharaily and Ariffin (2017), understanding and respecting these nuances is crucial to establishing trust and credibility with consumers in foreign markets. Failure to do so can result in misinterpretations, insensitivity, or even alienation of potential customers. Additionally, legal and regulatory frameworks vary from one country to another, and non-compliance can lead to substantial financial and reputational consequences (Menon & Hassan, 2022). In the face of these circumstances, international marketers are often confronted with the decision of whether to adapt or standardize their marketing mix strategies as they enter foreign markets. Standardization of marketing mix is the practice of maintaining uniformity in certain elements of a company's marketing mix strategy across different markets or regions (Yekini & Akanbi, 2022). On the contrary, adaptation of marketing mix is the process of customizing the elements of a company's marketing mix to suit the specific needs and preferences of a target market in a foreign or international context (Yip & Chan, 2018). In several industry and country context, these marketing mix orientations have been applied by business organizations in the global marketplace.

However, the effectiveness and appropriateness of both of these international marketing mix orientations have been a subject of ongoing scholarly debates for decades. On both sides of the aisle, there are several scholars marshalling potent arguments both for and against adaption and standardization of marketing mix in foreign markets. On the one hand of the scholarly divide, some scholars lean on the proposition that standardization of marketing mix is central to the success of international marketing firms in a globalized world (Tan & Tan, 2018; Wainaina *et al.*, 2019; Ozsoy & Sayin, 2022; Adebite & Somoye, 2018). On the other hand, scholarly opponents of standardization argue that the global marketplace is characterized by unique country-specific differences, hence the need for an adapted or customized marketing mix to cater to the unique requirement of each country market (Naguib & Hegab, 2017; Jombo *et al.*, 2018; Lawal *et al.*, 2019; Oladimeji & Akinlabi, 2022). The purpose of this study therefore was to critically explore these scholarly arguments to determine the most appropriate marketing mix management approach for international marketing firms in the contemporary global environment.

1.1. Research problem

The scholarly discourse on adaptation versus standardization of the marketing mix in international markets has been a subject of significant interest and debate among researchers and practitioners in the field of international marketing. While there has been a substantial body of literature exploring this topic, several key gaps remain in terms of scope and applicability. One of the prominent study gaps is that a substantial proportion of studies have primarily focused on specific countries and industries (Kassahun & Worku, 2021; Wainaina *et al.*, 2019; Yip & Chan, 2018; Njuguna & Mwangi, 2019; Takahashi & Suzuki, 2023; Aydogan & Eser, 2022; Zaki *et al.*, 2017). While this approach has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of particular markets, it has created a gap in the broader understanding of adaptation and standardization of marketing mix in international markets. The key issue arises from the inherent diversity and complexity of international markets. Each country represents a unique set of cultural, economic, legal, and social factors that significantly influence consumer behavior, market trends, and competitive landscapes. Consequently, findings and conclusions drawn from studies conducted within a specific country-market context may not necessarily translate to other markets due to these inherent differences.

To address this study gap, there is a critical need for a comprehensive, wide-ranging exploration of the available literature on adaptation and standardization of marketing mix in international markets. Against this backdrop, a systematic literature review was necessary to synthesize empirical evidence in a manner that transcends national boundaries and industry-specific contexts. By doing so, it is possible to develop an integrated empirical framework that serves as a global compass for decision-making in international marketing mix strategies. Similarly, this integrated framework will incorporate multifaceted insights derived from diverse markets, encompassing a broad spectrum of industries and regions. It will not only account for the idiosyncrasies of individual country-markets but also identify commonalities and universal principles that underpin successful international marketing endeavors. Such an approach would enable businesses to navigate the complexities of global markets with greater precision and adaptability, with respect to the decision of whether to standardize or adapt their marketing mix strategies. Hence, the study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To explore the scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix in international markets;
- To explore the scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix in international markets;
- To examine the position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization and adaptation of marketing mix in international markets.

2. Conceptual review

2.1. Marketing mix in international marketing

In the international marketing context, the marketing mix refers to the combination of controllable marketing variables that a company uses to pursue its marketing objectives in a target international market (Nishimura & Motohashi, 2020). These variables include product, price, place (distribution), and promotion, and in most cases, they are adapted to suit the specific characteristics of the international market, taking into account cultural, economic, legal, and political differences (Wong & Chen, 2018). According to Nguyen *et al.* (2019), the marketing mix in the international context encompasses the strategic blend of product offerings, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional activities that an organization employs to effectively penetrate and operate within foreign markets. It encompasses a set of tactical elements that companies use to influence demand for their products or services in foreign markets. In the views of Boadi and Ofori (2021), in the context of international marketing, the product element involves not only the physical attributes of a good or service but also includes considerations like product adaptation, standardization, and customization to align with local market preferences and regulatory requirements. Similarly, Bhasa and Nair (2017) argued that pricing strategies in international marketing are influenced by various factors such as exchange rates, competitive landscapes, and local economic conditions. Companies must carefully determine pricing strategies that balance profitability with market penetration. Also, Saleem *et al.* (2020) maintained that the distribution (place) aspect involves decisions regarding how products are made available to consumers. In an international context, this includes selecting appropriate channels, managing logistics, and ensuring efficient supply chain operations. Cultural and regulatory differences may necessitate alterations in distribution strategies, making it crucial for companies to adapt their approaches to each market (Obaseki & Ismaila, 2019).

2.2. Standardization of international marketing mix

Standardization of the international marketing mix refers to the approach wherein a company employs uniform marketing strategies and tactics across multiple international markets (Tan & Tan, 2018). This strategy aims to achieve economies of scale and scope by utilizing consistent product offerings, promotional messages, pricing structures, and distribution channels, regardless of the specific characteristics or cultural nuances of individual markets (Wainaina *et al.*, 2019). Also, Kassahun and Worku (2021) maintained that one of the key aspects of standardization is product uniformity. This entails offering a standardized product or service globally, without significant alterations to cater to specific market preferences. Pricing is another critical component, whereby it involves adopting a uniform pricing strategy across different markets, often leveraging economies of scale to offer competitive prices (Adegbite & Somoye, 2018). This can lead to cost advantages and increased competitiveness in markets where consumers are price-sensitive. Furthermore, promotional standardization involves the consistent messaging and branding of products or services across international markets (Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019). This often requires careful consideration of cultural nuances, language barriers, and regional preferences to ensure that the message resonates effectively with diverse audiences. In addition, standardization of distribution channels aims to optimize the logistics and supply chain management to ensure a seamless flow of products or services from the manufacturer to the end consumer (Falola & Oluwole, 2020).

2.3. Adaptation of international marketing mix

Adaptation of marketing mix refers to the process of changing elements of the marketing mix to match local needs, customs, and practices as well as legal and economic conditions, within each foreign market where the company is operating (Yip & Chan, 2023). In the views of Njuguna and Mwangi (2023), adaptation of international marketing mix is the process of adjusting marketing variables, including product, price, promotion, and place, in response to differences in national and cultural characteristics, economic and legal environments, and competitive conditions. It can occur as product, price, place and promotion adaptation. According to Naguib and Hegab (2023), product adaptation involves tailoring the features, design, packaging, and branding to suit the preferences and needs of a specific target market such as cultural values, local regulations and standards. Similarly, Takahashi and Suzuki (2023) maintained that pricing strategy adaptation involves considering a multitude of factors, including local economic conditions, competition, purchasing power, and cost structures. Also, adapting the place element involves assessing local distribution infrastructure, retail preferences, and consumer behavior. This may involve establishing partnerships with local distributors, retailers, or e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, Oladimeji and Akinlabi (2022) observed that adapting promotional efforts involves tailoring advertising messages, media channels, and communication styles to resonate with the local audience. Cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors must be considered to ensure that promotional content is relevant and relatable (Aydogan & Eser, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study adopted systematic literature review design to integrate and synthesize available literature to examine scholarly arguments for and against both standardization and adaptation of marketing mix in foreign markets.

3.2. Population and study sample

Since this study took the form of a systematic literature review rather than an empirical investigation, the target population comprised all pertinent research articles related to the research subject. From a combined literature search on 5 credible research databases presented in Table 1, the population of the study comprised 4,128 research articles.

Table 1 Population of the study

SN	Research databases	Websites	No. of articles found
1	Google Scholar	https://scholar.google.com	1,137
2	Research Gate	https://researchgate.net	1,625
3	Semantic Scholar	https://semanticscholar.org	1,085
4	Journal Storage	https://jstor.org	251
5	Scopus	https://www.scopus.com/home.uri	30
		Total population	4,128

Source: Online research database search

After establishing the estimated study population, the sample size for the literature articles reviewed in this study was determined using the Taro Yamane procedure for sample size determination. The Taro Yamane formula states thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = Sample size required
- N = Finite population (4,128)
- I = Constant
- e = Margin of Error (5 percent)

By simple substitution,

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{4,128}{1+4,128(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{4,128}{1+4,128(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{4,128}{1+10.32} \\ &= \frac{4,128}{11.32} \\ &= 364.66 \end{aligned}$$

∴ n = 365 published articles

3.3. Article search and selection process

The first task carried out prior to article selection was the elimination of duplicate records found in the articles. Using the built-in export citation feature in the selected databases (Google Scholar, Research Gate, Semantic Scholar, Journal

Storage and Scopus), a reference list for all 365 published articles was electronically compiled. This reference list was then uploaded into Mendeley Reference Manager software to automatically and manually identify and eliminate duplicate records. The application of this procedure led to the elimination of 185 duplicate records, reducing the article sample to 180. To then select relevant articles into the study, the researcher applied a set of inclusion-exclusion criteria. For this study, the following inclusion-exclusion criteria were applied in the article selection process:

- Articles published between 2017-2023;
- Articles whose full text was available online as open access;
- Articles published in English language;
- Articles discussing “adaptation of marketing mix” or “standardization of marketing mix” in the context of “international markets”;
- Articles from peer-reviewed, non-predatory journals.

To apply this procedure, the researcher quickly glanced through the electronic abstracts of the 180 articles to identify those that met the inclusion-exclusion criteria. This resulted in the elimination of 101 articles from the sample size of 180 articles for failing to satisfy the criteria for inclusion in the review. Most of the articles excluded were not written in English, were published before the chosen timeframe and failed to address the subject matter of interest within the context of the adaptation and standardization of international marketing mix. Hence, the number of usable journal articles reviewed in the study was 79. Furthermore, the article selection and exclusion process carried out in this study is presented in a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework (see FIG. 1).

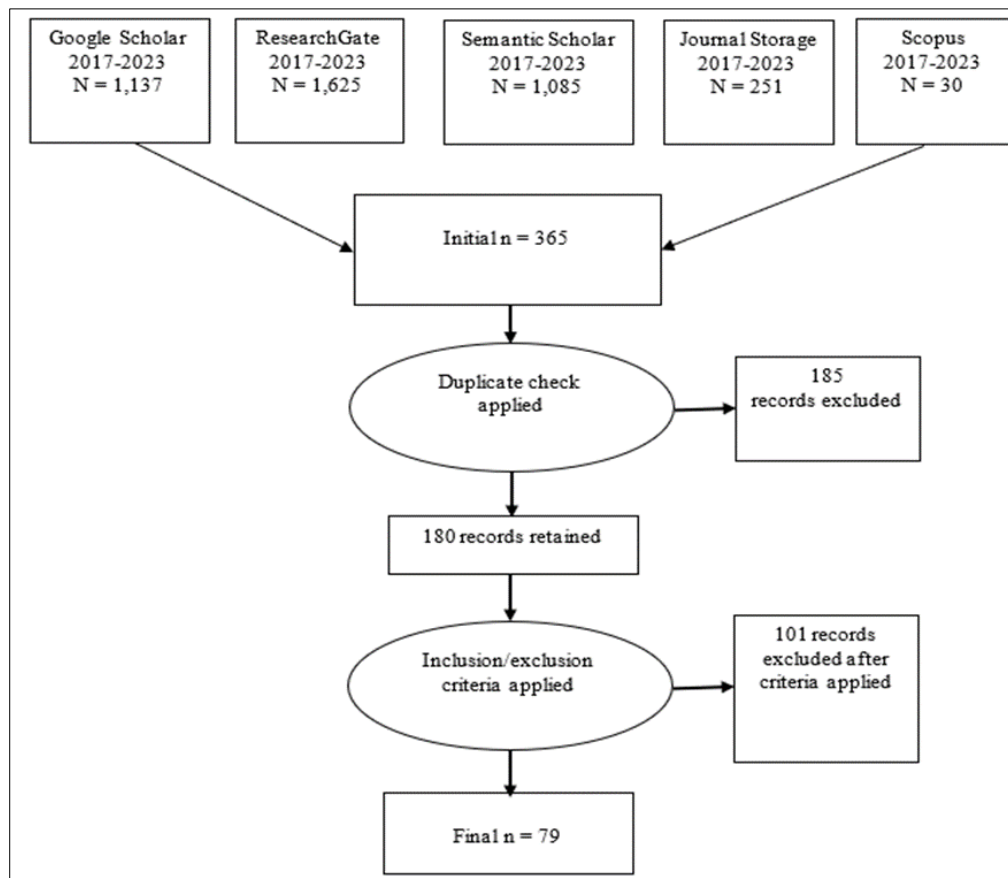


Figure 1 PRISMA flowchart showing the article selection process

3.4. Data analytical procedure

This study employed an in-depth content analysis approach to meticulously scrutinize secondary data derived from the chosen published articles. In-depth content analysis entails a methodical and exhaustive investigation of academic literature aimed at attaining a holistic grasp of a specific research subject or domain (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). It surpasses mere summarization and aggregation of sources, encompassing a critical assessment of the content,

underlying themes, arguments, and research methodologies within the literature to extract substantial insights and pinpoint areas of knowledge deficiency.

3.5. General description of the literature

The data displayed in Table 2 present the general description of the articles included in this review. It shows that out of the 79 articles reviewed, majority of them (14 or 17.7 percent) originated from India. With respect to the year of publication, the data shows that majority of the articles reviewed (23 or 29.1 percent) were published in 2018. Also, with respect to article indexing, the data shows that majority of the articles reviewed (68 or 86.1 percent) were non-Scopus indexed papers.

Table 2 General description of the literature

Article country of origin	Frequency
Nigeria	11
Ghana	3
Singapore	5
Kenya	3
Egypt	3
Turkey	4
Ethiopia	3
Saudi Arabia	2
Pakistan	3
India	14
Bangladesh	5
South Africa	2
Taiwan	1
China	3
Algeria	2
Iran	1
Congo	1
Thailand	2
South Korea	2
Uganda	1
Liberia	2
Japan	1
Spain	1
Greece	1
Mauritia	1
Tanzania	1
Indonesia	1
Total	79
Year of publication	

2017	6
2018	23
2019	14
2020	9
2021	8
2022	8
2023	11
Total	79
Article indexing	
Scopus	11
Non-Scopus	68
Total	79

4. Empirical analysis of research objectives

Under this unit, in-depth content analysis method was employed to systematically review the selected relevant literature in line with the research questions. The discussion is hereby structured to summarize and synthesize the findings of extant scholars in order to provide answers to the research questions of the study.

4.1. Objective 1: Scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix in international markets

The results presented in Table 3 summarize the scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix in international markets contained in extant literature. The findings show that the major scholarly arguments for standardization can be grouped into 16 categories. However, using the highest frequency count (between 10-16), the findings revealed that the most prominent scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix include: Economies of scale and cost efficiency; global brand image and recognition; streamlined marketing efforts; leveraging core competencies; cross-border learning and transfer of knowledge; efficient resource allocation and utilization; global competitive advantage; brand control and risk management; consistent customer experience; efficient supply chain management; agile corporate decision-making; unified sales channels; legal and intellectual property protection; and long-term strategic planning.

Table 3 Scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix in international markets

SN	Basis for argument	Authors	Frequency
1	Economies of scale and cost efficiency	DeCarolis and Toubia (2018); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Tan and Tan (2018); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Adedeji and Oluwabamide (2018); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Gao and Liu (2019)	16
2	Global brand image and recognition	Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Balasubramanian and Jansen (2021); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Amin and Abbas (2018); Fosu-Mensah (2018);	13
3	Streamlined marketing efforts	Azhar and Ishaq (2020); DeCarolis and Toubia (2018); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri	16

		(2019); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Chou and Huang (2017); Dacin and Verhoef (2017); Ding and Li (2021); Elbakri and Ramdani (2019);	
4	Leveraging core competencies	Balasubramanian and Jansen (2021); Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Tan and Tan (2018); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Dacin and Verhoef (2017); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); Amin and Abbas (2018); Biswajit and Shamsuddoha (2018); Dikimen and Simsek (2020); Fosu-Mensah (2018)	15
5	Cross-border learning and transfer of knowledge	Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Dikimen and Simsek (2020); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Dasgupta and Chandra (2019); DeCarolis and Toubia (2018); Elbakri and Ramdani (2019); Gao and Liu (2019)	10
6	Efficient resource allocation and utilization	Amin and Abbas (2018); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Balasubramanian and Jansen (2021); Biswajit and Shamsuddoha (2018); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Chou and Huang (2017); Dasgupta and Chandra (2019); Dikimen and Simsek (2020);	12
7	Global competitive advantage	Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Adedeji and Oluwabamide (2018); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Tan and Tan (2018); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Gao and Liu (2019); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); DeCarolis and Toubia (2018); Elbakri and Ramdani (2019);	12
8	Brand control and risk management	Tan and Tan (2018); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Balasubramanian and Jansen (2021); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Amin and Abbas (2018); Dacin and Verhoef (2017); Dasgupta and Chandra (2019); Ding and Li (2021);	12
9	Consistent customer experience	Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Adedeji and Oluwabamide (2018); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Biswajit and Shamsuddoha (2018); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Chou and Huang (2017); Fosu-Mensah (2018);	11
10	Efficient supply chain management	Falola and Oluwole (2020); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Dikimen and Simsek (2020);	10
11	Global data and analytics	Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Amin and Abbas (2018); Dasgupta and Chandra (2019);	9
12	Agile corporate decision-making	Tan and Tan (2018); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Adedeji and Oluwabamide (2018); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Biswajit and Shamsuddoha (2018); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Chou and Huang (2017); Elbakri and Ramdani (2019);	12
13	Unified sales channels	Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Ding and Li (2021); Fosu-Mensah (2018);	10
14	Technology integration and interoperability	Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Tan and Tan (2018); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); DeCarolis and Toubia (2018)	8

15	Legal and intellectual property protection	Ojo <i>et al.</i> (2021); Ezeudu and Adesina (2019); Wainaina <i>et al.</i> (2019); Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Falola and Oluwole (2020); Balasubramanian and Jansen (2021); Amin and Abbas (2018); Chou and Huang (2017); Dacin and Verhoef (2017); Dasgupta and Chandra (2019); Ding and Li (2021)	11
16	Long-term strategic planning	Gao and Liu (2019); Tan and Tan (2018); Zaki <i>et al.</i> (2017); Kassahun and Worku (2021); Ozsoy and Sayin (2022); Adegbite and Somoye (2018); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Adedeji and Oluwabamide (2018); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); DeCarolis and Toubia (2018); Dikimen and Simsek (2020)	12

4.2. In-depth analysis of scholarly arguments for standardization of marketing mix in international markets

The rationale for the standardization of marketing mix in international market continues to be subject to immense scholarly debates. These arguments are wide-ranging and multi-faceted as extant authors put forward several potent arguments in support of the standardization of marketing mix. One prominent scholarly argument for standardization of marketing mix is that standardizing product offerings can lead to economies of scale in production and distribution. This can result in cost savings, which can be passed on to consumers or used to increase profit margins (DeCarolis & Toubia, 2018; Bajaj & Sarin, 2018; Agarwal & Tyagi, 2018; Wainaina *et al.*, 2019; Tan & Tan, 2018; Zaki *et al.*, 2017; Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Ojo *et al.*, 2021; Yekini & Akanbi, 2022; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; Adedeji & Oluwabamide, 2018; Amal & Ibrahim, 2022; Gao & Liu, 2019). Another scholarly argument put forward is that standardization of marketing mix can lead to improved global brand image and recognition. This is because maintaining consistent branding elements such as logos, slogans, and visual identity can help create a strong and recognizable brand image globally. This can lead to increased brand equity and consumer trust (Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Ojo *et al.*, 2021; Adegbite & Somoye, 2018; Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; Ozsoy & Sayin, 2022; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Balasubramanian & Jansen, 2021; Falola & Oluwole, 2020; Kassahun & Worku, 2021; Agarwal & Tyagi, 2018; Alam *et al.*, 2019; Amin & Abbas, 2018; Fosu-Mensah, 2018). This suggests that by keeping branding elements consistent across different markets, such as logos, slogans, and visual identity, companies can establish a strong and easily recognizable brand identity worldwide.

It has also been argued by scholars that the standardization of marketing mix can lead to streamlined marketing efforts in foreign markets. This is beneficial for international marketers because managing a standardized marketing mix is often less complex and resource-intensive compared to developing and implementing diverse strategies for each market. This allows companies to focus their resources on other critical activities (Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; DeCarolis & Toubia, 2018; Wainaina *et al.*, 2019; Zaki *et al.*, 2017; Yekini & Akanbi, 2022; Adegbite & Somoye, 2018; Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Ojo *et al.*, 2021; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019). This scholarly argument implies that employing uniform strategies across different geographical locations can offer benefits such as cost efficiency, consistent brand image, and simplified management of operations across global markets. In another scholarly argument, it is maintained that standardization of marketing mix enables international marketers to leverage their core competencies to actualize successful internationalization. This is because standardization allows companies to concentrate on their core competencies and unique value propositions. It enables them to deploy their resources more effectively on areas where they have a competitive advantage (Balasubramanian & Jansen, 2021; Alam *et al.*, 2019; Tan & Tan, 2018; Zaki *et al.*, 2017; Falola & Oluwole, 2020; Ojo *et al.*, 2021; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Dacin & Verhoef, 2017; Kassahun & Worku, 2021; Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; Agarwal & Tyagi, 2018; Amin & Abbas, 2018; Biswajit & Shamsuddoha, 2018). This argument implies that standardization allows companies to leverage their core competencies, such as expertise in product development, brand management, or supply chain efficiency, to penetrate new markets efficiently and compete effectively against local and international rivals.

Another scholarly argument is that standardization of marketing mix facilitates cross-border learning and transfer of knowledge among firms in foreign markets. This is because when marketing mix strategies are standardized, it is easier for organizations to transfer successful practices and knowledge across markets. This helps in disseminating best practices and leveraging insights gained in one market to another (Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Ozsoy & Sayin, 2022; Ojo *et al.*, 2021; Yekini & Akanbi, 2022; Dikimen & Simsek, 2020; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Dasgupta & Chandra, 2019; DeCarolis & Toubia, 2018; Elbakri & Ramdani, 2019; Gao & Liu, 2019). This argument suggests that maintaining consistent elements in marketing strategies across different markets can enhance the exchange of insights and expertise between firms operating internationally. This perspective implies that by adopting standardized approaches to elements such as product, price, promotion, and distribution channels, firms can streamline their operations, create a common understanding across markets, and capitalize on shared knowledge and best practices.

In another scholarly argument, it is maintained that standardization of marketing mix can lead to efficient resource allocation and utilization. The authors argued that standardization allows companies to allocate their resources (both financial and human) more efficiently. It avoids duplication of efforts in market research, product development, and promotional activities (Amin & Abbas, 2018; Wainaina et al., 2019; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Adegbite & Somoye, 2018; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Amal & Ibrahim, 2022; Balasubramanian & Jansen, 2021; Biswajit & Shamsuddoha, 2018; Chandra & Dasgupta, 2018; Chou & Huang, 2017; Dasgupta & Chandra, 2019; Dikimen & Simsek, 2020). This argument implies that by adhering to standardized strategies, companies can reduce costs associated with customization, adapt quicker to market changes, and leverage consolidated resources more effectively.

It is also argued by proponents of standardization of marketing mix that this approach to international marketing can lead to global competitive advantage for business firms. They argued that consistent messaging and product offerings can provide a competitive advantage by creating a strong, unified market presence. This can make it harder for competitors to challenge a well-established global brand (Alam et al., 2019; Adedeji & Oluwabamide, 2018; Falola & Oluwole, 2020; Tan & Tan, 2018; Kassahun & Worku, 2021; Amal & Ibrahim, 2022; Gao & Liu, 2019; Ojo et al., 2021; Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; DeCarolis & Toubia, 2018; Elbakri & Ramdani, 2019). This implies that by maintaining consistent marketing strategies across different markets, firms can capitalize on economies of scale, streamline operations, and enhance brand recognition worldwide. The scholarly argument also maintained that standardization of marketing mix can improve brand control and risk management in foreign markets. This is because a standardized approach allows for greater control over brand image and messaging, reducing the risk of brand dilution or misalignment with company values (Tan & Tan, 2018; Kassahun & Worku, 2021; Ojo et al., 2021; Balasubramanian & Jansen, 2021; Ezeudu & Adesina, 2019; Yekini & Akanbi, 2022; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Alam et al., 2019; Amin & Abbas, 2018; Dacin & Verhoef, 2017; Dasgupta & Chandra, 2019; Ding & Li, 2021). This scholarly argument suggests that by adhering to standardized marketing mix strategies, companies can exert better control over their brand image and messaging across diverse cultural contexts, thereby mitigating the risks associated with inconsistent brand representation.

In subsequent arguments, proponents of standardization of marketing mix maintained that this marketing management approach enables the delivery of consistent customer experience by international marketing organizations. They argued that standardizing the marketing mix helps ensure that customers receive a consistent experience in terms of product quality, regardless of their location, which can lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Adegbite & Somoye, 2018; Wainaina et al., 2019; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Falola & Oluwole, 2020; Adedeji & Oluwabamide, 2018; Bajaj & Sarin, 2018; Biswajit & Shamsuddoha, 2018; Chandra & Dasgupta, 2018; Chou & Huang, 2017; Fosu-Mensah, 2018). This scholarly argument suggests that by adhering to standardized marketing strategies, companies can ensure that customers encounter a cohesive brand image and receive similar levels of service and product quality, regardless of their location. This consistency is believed to enhance brand recognition, loyalty, and trust among consumers, thereby potentially leading to improved market performance and competitive advantage for international marketing organizations.

In another scholarly argument, it is maintained that standardization of marketing mix can enhance efficient supply chain management in foreign markets. Scholars argued that standardization can lead to more predictable demand patterns, making it easier to manage the supply chain efficiently, thereby resulting in lower inventory costs and reduced stockouts (Falola & Oluwole, 2020; Zaki et al., 2017; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Ozsoy & Sayin, 2022; Adegbite & Somoye, 2018; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Agarwal & Tyagi, 2018; Amal & Ibrahim, 2022; Chandra & Dasgupta, 2018; Dikimen & Simsek, 2020). The implication of this scholarly argument is that a uniform marketing approach might facilitate easier coordination with suppliers, distributors, and retailers across diverse geographical areas, enhancing operational efficiency and responsiveness to market demands.

4.3. Objective 2: Scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix in international markets

The results presented in Table 4 summarize the scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix in international markets contained in extant literature. The findings show that the major scholarly arguments for adaptation can be grouped into 13 categories. However, using the highest frequency count (between 10-16), the findings revealed that the most prominent scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix include: Cultural differences; legal and regulatory environment; economic variances; competitive landscape; consumer behavior and preferences; variances in distribution channels and infrastructure; variances in political and social factors; currency exchange rates and inflation; risk management; customer trust and loyalty; variances in technological advancements; and variances in societal and ethical values.

Table 4 Scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix in international markets

SN	Basis for argument	Authors	Frequency
1	Cultural differences	Lingga and Putri (2021); Yip and Chan (2023); Njuguna and Mwangi (2023); Naguib and Hegab (2023); Aydogan and Eser (2023); Takahashi and Suzuki (2023); Jombo <i>et al.</i> (2018); Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Banerjee (2018); Chandra and Singh (2021); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Domènec and Costa (2017); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Gong and Liu (2018); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Idris and Masud (2020); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Wong and Tan (2021); Osei-Mensah and Kwame (2018);	19
2	Legal and regulatory environment	Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Banerjee (2018); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Azhar and Ishaq (2023); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Lingga and Putri (2021); Krishan (2020); Mensah (2018); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Murthy (2018); Narayan and Prakash (2019); Piyawat and Raksong (2020);	15
3	Economic variances	Banerjee (2018); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2023); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Murthy (2018); Gong and Liu (2018); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Idris and Masud (2020); Jaichand (2019); Lingga and Putri (2021); Krishan (2020); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Narayan and Prakash (2019); Wong and Tan (2021); Osei-Mensah and Kwame (2018);	14
4	Competitive landscape	Akinyele and Musa (2018); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Oladimeji and Akinlabi (2022); Banerjee (2018); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Domènec and Costa (2017); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Piyawat and Raksong (2020); Gong and Liu (2018); Idris and Masud (2020); Jaichand (2019); Mensah (2018); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Murthy (2018);	15
5	Consumer behavior and preferences	Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Banerjee (2018); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Narayan and Prakash (2019); Chandra and Singh (2021); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Jaichand (2019); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Lingga and Putri (2021); Krishan (2020); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Wong and Tan (2021); Osei-Mensah and Kwame (2018);	15
6	Variances in distribution channels and infrastructure	Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Banerjee (2018); Azhar and Ishaq (2023); Chandra and Singh (2021); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Jaichand (2019); Idris and Masud (2020); Lingga and Putri (2021); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Krishan (2020); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Piyawat and Raksong (2020);	13
7	Variances in political and social factors	Chandra and Singh (2021); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Banerjee (2018); Idris and Masud (2020); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Jaichand (2019); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Mensah (2018); Murthy (2018); Narayan and Prakash (2019); Osei-Mensah and Kwame (2018);	13
8	Currency exchange rates and inflation	Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Chandra and Singh (2021); Domènec and Costa (2017); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Gong and Liu (2018); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Nair and Srinivasan (2022) Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Lingga and Putri (2021); Krishan (2020); Narayan and Prakash (2019);	11
9	Risk management	Oladimeji and Akinlabi (2022); Chandra and Singh (2021); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Nair and Srinivasan	10

		(2022); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Jaichand (2019); Mensah (2018); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Piyawat and Raksong (2020);	
10	Customer trust and loyalty	Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Oladimeji and Akinlabi (2022); Azhar and Ishaq (2023); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Gong and Liu (2018); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Idris and Masud (2020); Jaichand (2019); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Murthy (2018); Nair and Srinivasan (2022);	11
11	Variances in technological advancements	Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Akinyele and Musa (2018); Chandra and Singh (2021); Dogus and Erez-Sami (2019); Domènec and Costa (2017); Idris and Masud (2020); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Lingga and Putri (2021); Krishan (2020); Piyawat and Raksong (2020);	10
12	Effective crisis management and response	Azhar and Ishaq (2023); Banerjee (2018); Chandra and Singh (2021); Drichoutis and Lazaridis (2020); Jaichand (2019); Mohan and Sharma (2019); Murthy (2018); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Osei-Mensah and Kwame (2018);	9
13	Variances in societal and ethical values	Banerjee (2018); Lawal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Piyawat and Raksong (2020); Oladimeji and Akinlabi (2022); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2023); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Domènec and Costa (2017); Gong and Liu (2018); Hamza and Nawaz (2022); Idris and Masud (2020); Krishan (2020); Mensah (2018); Nair and Srinivasan (2022); Wong and Tan (2021);	14

4.4. In-depth analysis of scholarly arguments for adaptation of marketing mix in international markets

Like standardization, there are also scores of authors on the other end of the spectrum who vehemently argue in favour of the adaptation of marketing mix strategies in foreign markets. The grounds upon which these scholars base their arguments are wide-ranging and multifaceted. For instance, in one scholarly argument, it was maintained that adaptation of marketing mix enables business organizations to effectively address cultural differences in global markets. This is critical because cultural nuances greatly impact consumer behavior since what appeals to one culture may not have the same effect in another (Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Domènec & Costa, 2017). As such, adapting the marketing mix allows companies to align their strategies with local cultural preferences, beliefs, and values (Lingga & Putri, 2021; Yip & Chan, 2023; Njuguna & Mwangi, 2023; Naguib & Hegab, 2023; Aydogan & Eser, 2023; Osei-Mensah & Kwame, 2018). The implication of this scholarly argument underscores the importance of tailoring product offerings, pricing strategies, promotional efforts, and distribution channels to align with the cultural nuances and preferences of diverse consumer segments worldwide.

In another scholarly argument, it is maintained that the adaptation of marketing mix strategies enables businesses to effectively fit into the legal and regulatory environment of global markets. Different countries have distinct legal frameworks and regulations regarding product standards, labeling, advertising, and pricing. Adapting to these legal requirements ensures compliance and minimizes risks (Lawal *et al.*, 2019; Banerjee, 2018; Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Azhar & Ishaq, 2023; Dlamini & Dlamini, 2023; Hamza & Nawaz, 2022; Mensah, 2018; Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Murthy, 2018; Narayan & Prakash, 2019; Piyawat & Raksong, 2020). The implication of this scholarly argument is that businesses can achieve better compliance and competitiveness in diverse global markets by tailoring their marketing approaches to accommodate varying legal requirements, cultural norms, and regulatory landscapes. Such adaptation might involve adjusting product features, pricing structures, promotional activities, and distribution channels to ensure compatibility with local laws and regulations while also resonating with target audiences (Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Krishan, 2020). Another scholarly argument put forward by proponents of adaptation of marketing mix maintained that this approach to marketing management enables businesses to align their operations with the economic variances in foreign markets. This is because economic conditions vary across countries, influencing consumers' purchasing power and price sensitivity. As such, adapting pricing strategies based on local economic conditions helps maintain competitiveness (Banerjee, 2018; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2023; Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Murthy, 2018; Gong & Liu, 2018; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Idris & Masud, 2020; Jaichand, 2019; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Wong & Tan, 2021; Osei-Mensah & Kwame, 2018). The implication of this scholarly argument is that by aligning their operations with the economic nuances of foreign markets, businesses can optimize their marketing efforts to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate risks associated with varying economic conditions (Krishan, 2020; Nair & Srinivasan, 2022; Narayan & Prakash, 2019). This approach acknowledges that what works in one market may not necessarily be effective in another due to differences in factors such as income levels, cultural values, and competitive landscapes.

Similarly, one scholarly argument in support of adaptation maintained that adapting the marketing mix for each country market enables businesses to successfully navigate through the competitive landscapes (Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Oladimeji & Akinlabi, 2022; Banerjee, 2018; Dlamini & Dlamini, 2023; Domènec & Costa, 2017; Drichoutis & Lazaridis, 2020; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Piyawat & Raksong, 2020). This argument suggests that by customizing marketing mix elements to align with local preferences and market characteristics, companies can enhance their relevance, resonance, and competitiveness within each specific market context. This approach acknowledges the inherent complexities and nuances present across global markets, recognizing that a standardized marketing approach may overlook crucial nuances and hinder a company's ability to capture market share and sustain growth. As such, embracing adaptation allows businesses to demonstrate responsiveness and agility in addressing the unique needs and preferences of consumers in diverse cultural contexts, ultimately fostering stronger market penetration and competitive advantage over time (Gong & Liu, 2018; Idris & Masud, 2020; Jaichand, 2019; Mensah, 2018; Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Murthy, 2018). In another viewpoint, proponents of adaptation of marketing mix argued that enables international marketers to tweak their marketing mix strategies in line with dynamic consumer behaviour and preferences (Lawal et al., 2019; Akinyele & Musa, 2018; Banerjee, 2018; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Narayan & Prakash, 2019; Chandra & Singh, 2021; Dlamini & Dlamini, 2023; Jaichand, 2019; Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Krishan, 2020; Nair & Srinivasan, 2022). This is because consumers in different countries have unique preferences, tastes, and behaviours. Hence, adapting marketing mix elements to suit local preferences can significantly increase market acceptance (Wong & Tan, 2021; Osei-Mensah & Kwame, 2018). This scholarly argument entails that by acknowledging the fluid nature of consumer preferences and behaviours, advocates argue that adapting the marketing mix enables companies to remain responsive and relevant in diverse global markets.

Also, the argument for adaptation of marketing mix extends further as proponents maintained that due to variances in distribution channels, transportation infrastructure, political and social factors, an adapted marketing mix strategy is required to maximize the chances of success in different country markets (Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Banerjee, 2018; Azhar & Ishaq, 2023; Chandra & Singh, 2021; Hamza & Nawaz, 2022; Jaichand, 2019; Idris & Masud, 2020; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Krishan, 2020). This implies that a one-size-fits-all approach to international marketing is inadequate in navigating the complexities inherent in diverse markets. Instead, they advocate for tailoring the marketing mix to align with the unique circumstances of each market (Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Nair & Srinivasan, 2022; Piyawat & Raksong, 2020). In doing so, proponents assert that businesses can optimize their chances of success by addressing the specific needs, preferences, and challenges present in different regions (Mensah, 2018; Murthy, 2018; Narayan & Prakash, 2019; Osei-Mensah & Kwame, 2018). This approach acknowledges the dynamic interplay between environmental factors and consumer behavior, emphasizing the importance of agility and adaptability in global marketing endeavours.

In another argument, extant scholars maintained that the adaptation of marketing mix is necessary due to currency exchange rates, inflation, risk management, variances in technological advancements and effective crisis management (Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Krishan, 2020; Narayan & Prakash, 2019; Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Jaichand, 2019; Mensah, 2018; Mohan & Sharma, 2019; Piyawat & Raksong, 2020; Murthy, 2018; Nair & Srinivasan, 2022; Osei-Mensah & Kwame, 2018). This scholarly argument underscores the dynamic nature of the foreign market environments, wherein factors like currency fluctuations and inflation can significantly impact purchasing power and consumer behavior. By adapting marketing mix elements in response to these fluctuations, businesses can mitigate risks and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Chandra & Singh, 2021; Dogus & Erez-Sami, 2019; Domènec & Costa, 2017; Drichoutis & Lazaridis, 2020). Overall, this argument emphasizes the importance of flexibility and adaptability in marketing approaches to navigate the complexities of contemporary markets successfully. Furthermore, another scholarly argument for adaptation of marketing mix maintained that this marketing management approach enhances consumer trust and loyalty in foreign markets (Lawal et al., 2019; Azhar & Ishaq, 2023; Drichoutis & Lazaridis, 2020; Gong & Liu, 2018; Idris & Masud, 2020; Jaichand, 2019; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Murthy, 2018; Nair & Srinivasan, 2022). This scholarly argument underscores that by customizing marketing mix elements to align with the preferences and expectations of consumers in different regions, companies can demonstrate a deeper understanding and respect for local cultures and values. Consequently, consumers are more likely to perceive the brand as authentic, relevant, and trustworthy, leading to stronger connections and higher levels of loyalty (Oladimeji & Akinlabi, 2022; Hamza & Nawaz, 2022). Therefore, adapting the marketing mix enables companies to overcome barriers to entry, mitigate risks, and build sustainable relationships with consumers in diverse international markets.

4.5. Objective 3: The position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets

The results in TABLE 5 present the position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. From the articles reviewed, majority of extant scholars (19) debating the

best choice between adaptation and standardization proposed a hybrid approach (Glocalization), which combines elements of both standardization and adaptation to create a strategy that is globally consistent yet locally relevant. They argued that instead of narrowly utilizing either adaptation or standardization, companies should harmonize both approaches under a hybrid framework that seeks a fair balance between adaptation and standardization (Yekini & Akanbi, 2022; Agyapong & Agyepong, 2017; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2019; Azhar & Ishaq, 2020; Agarwal & Tyagi, 2018; Alam et al., 2019; Amal & Ibrahim, 2022). This, they believed, would enable international marketers to benefit from the unique advantages of both strategic options with respect to the management of marketing mix.

Similarly, proponents of the glocalization approach to marketing mix management argued that it is imperative due to the complex interplay between global uniformity and local specificity (Dikimen & Simsek, 2020; Naguib & Hegab, 2023; Takahashi & Suzuki, 2023; Al-Sakkaf & Assiri, 2023; Banerjee, 2018). While maintaining consistency across global markets is crucial for brand recognition and efficiency, adapting to local preferences, cultural nuances, and regulatory environments is equally vital for market penetration and consumer acceptance (Drichoutis & Lazaridis, 2020; Kavishe & Rutashobya, 2023; Mohan & Sharma, 2019). By glocalizing the marketing mix, companies can tailor their products, pricing, promotion, and distribution strategies to resonate with local tastes and preferences, fostering deeper connections with consumers and enhancing brand relevance. This approach enables companies to navigate diverse cultural landscapes, mitigate risks associated with cultural misunderstandings or insensitivity, and capitalize on market opportunities that may otherwise remain untapped (Biswajit & Shamsuddoha, 2018; Chandra & Dasgupta, 2018). Ultimately, glocalization fosters a delicate balance between global standardization and local adaptation, positioning companies for sustainable success in foreign markets (Amin & Abbas, 2018; Bajaj & Sarin, 2018).

The findings in TABLE 5 also revealed that a good number of extant scholars (14) advocated for adaptation of marketing mix, emphasizing the importance of cultural and environmental differences in foreign markets (Njuguna & Mwangi, 2023; Aydogan & Eser, 2023; Azhar & Ishaq, 2023; Dlamini & Dlamini, 2023; Domènec & Costa, 2017). Essentially, this implies that successful marketing strategies must be tailored to suit the unique characteristics of each foreign market to effectively resonate with local consumers and navigate the intricacies of differing cultural norms and environmental factors (Rahman & Hossain, 2017; Singh & Raj, 2019; Solayman & Yeasmin, 2022). This approach acknowledges that what works well in one market may not necessarily yield the same results in another due to varying socio-cultural contexts, consumer behaviors, economic conditions, and regulatory environments (Srinivasan & Chandrashekar, 2020; Yoseph & Temesgen, 2021; Narayan & Prakash, 2019; Wong & Tan, 2021; Lingga & Putri, 2021; Yip & Chan, 2023). Thus, the advocacy for adapting the marketing mix underscores the importance of sensitivity and responsiveness to diverse cultural and environmental dynamics in foreign market expansion endeavors, aiming for enhanced market penetration and sustainable competitive advantage.

On the other hand, the minority of the scholars (12), argued for standardization of marketing mix, promoting the idea of a global market with universal customer needs. Their perspective is rooted in the belief that fostering a uniform marketing approach can facilitate the emergence of a global market characterized by universally homogeneous customer demands (Kumar & Sharma, 2018; Labi & Kuranchie-Mensah, 2018; Lee & Kim, 2023). This viewpoint challenges the notion of tailoring marketing strategies to fit specific local or regional contexts, emphasizing instead the potential benefits of a standardized approach in addressing consumer needs across diverse geographical locations (Kibert & Wang, 2019; Kironde & Nkumbi, 2018; Ding & Li, 2021; Elbakri & Ramdani, 2019; Fosu-Mensah, 2018). By advocating for a uniform marketing mix, these scholars envision a streamlined and efficient method of catering to consumer preferences on a global scale, which they argue could lead to increased market penetration and enhanced competitiveness for businesses operating internationally (Hadis & Tadesse, 2018; Jafari & Shabani, 2018; Kasmai & Kiasuwa, 2020; Khampirat, 2022).

Table 5 The position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets

Scholars	Position on Standardization/Adaptation of marketing mix	Frequency
Hadis and Tadesse (2018); Jafari and Shabani (2018); Kasmai and Kiasuwa (2020); Khampirat (2022); Kibert and Wang (2019); Kironde and Nkumbi (2018); Kumar and Sharma (2018); Labi and Kuranchie-Mensah (2018); Lee and Kim (2023); Ding and Li (2021); Elbakri and Ramdani (2019); Fosu-Mensah (2018).	Argued for standardization of marketing mix, promoting the idea of a global market with universal customer needs	12

Rahman and Hossain (2017); Singh and Raj (2019); Solayman and Yeasmin (2022); Srinivasan and Chandrashekar (2020); Yoseph and Temesgen (2021); Narayan and Prakash (2019); Wong and Tan (2021); Lingga and Putri (2021); Yip and Chan (2023); Njuguna and Mwangi (2023); Aydogan and Eser (2023); Azhar and Ishaq (2023); Dlamini and Dlamini (2023); Domènec and Costa (2017).	Advocated for adaptation of marketing mix, emphasizing the importance of cultural and environmental differences in foreign markets.	14
Yekini and Akanbi (2022); Agyapong and Agyepong (2017); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2019); Azhar and Ishaq (2020); Agarwal and Tyagi (2018); Alam <i>et al.</i> (2019); Amal and Ibrahim (2022); Amin and Abbas (2018); Bajaj and Sarin (2018); Biswajit and Shamsuddoha (2018); Chandra and Dasgupta (2018); Dikimen and Simsek (2020); Naguib and Hegab (2023); Takahashi and Suzuki (2023); Al-Sakkaf and Assiri (2023); Banerjee (2018); Drichoutis & Lazaridis (2020); Kavishe and Rutashobya (2023); Mohan and Sharma (2019).	Proposed a hybrid approach (Glocalization), which combines elements of both standardization and adaptation to create a strategy that is globally consistent yet locally relevant.	19

5. Discussion

From the analysis of literature as regards research question one, it was revealed that the major scholarly arguments for standardization can be grouped into 16 categories, including: Economies of scale and cost efficiency; global brand image and recognition; streamlined marketing efforts; leveraging core competencies; cross-border learning and transfer of knowledge; efficient resource allocation and utilization; global competitive advantage; brand control and risk management; consistent customer experience; efficient supply chain management; agile corporate decision-making; unified sales channels; legal and intellectual property protection; and long-term strategic planning. Also, the in-depth analysis of relevant articles with respect to research question two revealed that the major scholarly arguments for adaptation can be grouped into 13 categories, including: Cultural differences; legal and regulatory environment; economic variances; competitive landscape; consumer behavior and preferences; variances in distribution channels and infrastructure; variances in political and social factors; currency exchange rates and inflation; risk management; customer trust and loyalty; variances in technological advancements; and variances in societal and ethical values.

Finally, from in-depth analysis of relevant literature regarding research question three, it was found that majority of extant scholars debating the best choice between adaptation and standardization proposed a hybrid approach (glocalization), which combines elements of both standardization and adaptation to create a strategy that is globally consistent yet locally relevant. In the views of Japutra *et al.* (2019), glocalization is an international marketing management orientation that seeks to strike a balance between standardization (ensuring global consistency, often for efficiency and brand recognition) and adaptation (making adjustments to cater to local nuances, tastes, and preferences). This concept is particularly crucial in business, marketing, and cultural exchange. By glocalizing the marketing mix, businesses can ensure that their offerings are not only culturally sensitive but also more likely to resonate with the local population (Roudometof, 2019).

5.1. What does glocalization entail in this context?

Glocalization of the marketing mix is a strategic approach that combines elements of globalization and localization to tailor marketing strategies to specific local markets while maintaining a global brand identity (Hollensen, 2020). This concept is particularly relevant in today's interconnected world where companies operate in multiple countries with distinct cultural norms, consumer behaviors, and economic landscapes (Bekh, 2016). Scholars have offered various definitions of glocalization within the context of marketing. For instance, according to Grigorescu and Zaif (2017), glocalization refers to the strategy of a firm to adapt the product or service to the local tastes, culture, and regulations of the country in which it is marketed, while maintaining its global brand and identity. This definition emphasizes the dual nature of glocalization, where companies must balance the need for localization with the preservation of their global brand image. Another scholarly perspective on glocalization comes from Kolmakova (2017), who introduced the concept of "globalization of markets" but also recognized the importance of adaptation to local conditions. They argued that successful global companies must standardize certain aspects of their marketing mix, such as branding and core product features, while customizing others to suit local preferences and market requirements. In this sense,

glocalization involves a strategic blend of standardization and adaptation to achieve the optimal balance between global efficiency and local relevance. In another scholarly perspective, Hollensen (2020) argued that glocalization differs from simple adaptation because while adaptation involves making modifications to products or marketing strategies to fit the preferences of a particular market, glocalization takes a more nuanced approach by integrating global and local elements harmoniously. Rather than merely adjusting surface-level features, glocalization involves a deeper understanding of cultural nuances, consumer behaviors, and market dynamics in each target market.

Furthermore, glocalization encompasses not only product adaptation but also extends to other elements of the marketing mix, including pricing, distribution, and promotion (Japutra *et al.*, 2019). Companies may need to rethink their pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional campaigns to resonate with local consumers while maintaining a cohesive brand identity across different markets. Moreover, glocalization emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and adaptation (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019). It requires companies to stay attuned to evolving consumer trends, market conditions, and regulatory changes in each locality to remain competitive. Unlike static adaptation strategies, glocalization involves ongoing refinement and optimization based on feedback and insights gathered from local markets. Summarily, these scholarly viewpoints indicate that glocalization of the marketing mix involves the strategic integration of global and local elements to tailor marketing strategies to specific markets while maintaining a consistent brand identity.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

This study explored standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets under a systematic literature review framework. It specifically sought to explore the scholarly arguments for both standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. It also sought to explore extant relevant literature to identify the position of extant scholars on the choice between standardization versus adaptation of marketing mix in international markets. To that end, the study reviewed adequate relevant literature from peer-review journals using in-depth content analysis method. Consequently, it was found that the major scholarly arguments for standardization can be grouped into 16 categories, while the major scholarly arguments for adaptation can be grouped into 13 categories. It was also found that the majority of extant scholars debating the best choice between adaptation and standardization proposed a hybrid approach (Glocalization), which combines elements of both standardization and adaptation to create a strategy that is globally consistent yet locally relevant. These findings imply that the ongoing scholarly debates about the best strategic option for the management of the marketing mix in foreign markets persist. These debates have powerful scholarly supporters on both sides of the aisle. As such, there is need for international marketers to carefully consider the nature of their offerings, marketing resources and foreign market environment to decide on the best approach for their operations. Given that the findings revealed that most extant scholars seem to favour the glocalization approach to marketing mix management, the following suggestions are recommended to enable firms use this approach to maximize performance in foreign markets:

- *Conduct comprehensive market research:* Before implementing a glocalization strategy, it is crucial for international marketers to conduct thorough market research. They need to understand the local consumer behavior, preferences, cultural nuances, and economic conditions. This data will guide them in tailoring their product, promotion, pricing, and placement strategies to align with the specific needs and desires of the target market.
- *Adapt product offerings strategically:* Glocalization does not mean uniformity, but rather strategic adaptation. As such, international marketers need to tailor their products or services to align with the local market's unique demands and preferences. This could involve tweaking product features, sizes, or functionalities to cater to local tastes. Additionally, they need to consider factors like language, labeling, and compliance with local regulations.
- *Leverage culturally relevant marketing communication:* Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful glocalization. It is essential for international marketers to craft marketing messages, advertisements, and promotional materials that resonate with the local culture, values, and traditions. This could involve using local languages, employing culturally relevant imagery, and considering local holidays or events in their campaigns.
- *Establish agile distribution channels:* Distribution is a pivotal element of the marketing mix that must be tailored to each market. International marketers should consider the local infrastructure, transportation networks, and retail landscape when designing their distribution strategy. This may involve partnering with local distributors, adjusting inventory levels, or even exploring e-commerce options if that is more aligned with the market's preferences. By ensuring their product is readily available where and when consumers want it, international marketers can better enhance market penetration and accessibility.

Suggestions for future research

At the moment, there is a shift in focus among extant scholars from adaptation and standardization towards the glocalization orientation. The glocalization orientation represents a nuanced and holistic approach that recognizes the increasing interconnectedness of today's world, while valuing and respecting the diversity and distinctiveness of local contexts. As such, there is need for research effort targeted at exploring (either quantitatively or qualitatively) the roles of glocalization of marketing mix in maximizing the marketing performance of international marketers in both developed and developing countries' contexts. Such a study is necessary to generate substantive empirical evidence that underscores the imperatives of glocalization in weathering the shortfalls of both adaptation and standardization in today's dynamic global business environment.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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