The Role of Global Institutions in Service Ecosystems: Servicescapes as Structures of Common Difference

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Purpose - Meshing global signs and symbols within local communities poses a challenge for companies wanting to engage with a variety of cultures in a cost-effective way. Servicescapes often emerge at these intersections of global and local institutions, and organize materiality to create value-laden interaction opportunities (Arnould, Price and Tierney 1998). These places and spaces are embedded within broader service ecosystems, constituted of multiple levels of nested institutions that are framed by local communities, national borders, and global meanings (Akaka, Vargo and Lusch 2013; Akaka, Vargo and Schau 2015). Although it's clear that global forces influence service ecosystems, the role of global institutions in shaping local servicescapes is not well understood. To explore this glocal relationship, we conceptualize a servicescape as a "structure of common difference" (SCD) (Wilk 1995), which points towards global institutions as common cultural *form* and enables us to identify differences across local cultural *content*.

We address the following research questions:
- How do global brands construct global narratives through their local servicescapes?
- How do global institutions support service ecosystems that span local and global boundaries?

Design/Methodology/approach - We examine the glocal nature of surf retailing, specifically design and organization of materiality within local surf shops. Observation of surf retailers reveals a distinct pattern to the store layout, product assortment and aesthetic that supports a particular global market mythology.

Findings - By examining surf retailers for global common structures and local meanings, we see how global surf brands reify and perpetuate myths of 1960s California and the idealized/updated figure of the Hawaiian surfer, through their servicescapes. Surf-related products utilize the common myth to shape the global surfing market, rather than promoting a single brand or product. Local communities rely on global institutions to distinguish themselves from other locals engaging in surfing and the market.

Research limitations/implications - This research explores retail-based servicescapes within the context of surfing. Other types of servicescapes and other cultural contexts could reveal variation in the balance of global and local institutions and their role in developing a glocalized narrative.

Practical implications - Our findings have important implications for managers seeking to design servicescapes for global brands and integrating those brands into local communities and cultures.

Originality/value - This study helps researchers to understand how a global brand can appeal to different cultures, maintain brand continuity, and support a specific global market. It provides insights into the role of global institutions in shaping local understandings within glocalized markets.

Key words (max 5) Servicescapes, structures of common difference, service ecosystems

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