

Re-imagining Corporate Branding:
National Culture as a Marketing Competence

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Abstract

This case study explores how national culture affects a company's brand building and examines how a company identifies its national culture as a marketing competence to re-imagine its corporate brand. Based on a literature review of research on Uniqlo, a leading Japanese fashion retailer, this study examines how the company, influenced by its founder's legacy and the company's overseas experiences, developed its business through a continuous emphasis on retaining and improving the three major features of Japanese manufacturing culture or Japanese craftsmanship: price, quality, and technology. This study considers the theoretical framework of "country-of-origin" theory to discuss how the positive conceptions of local customers about Uniqlo products, which match the constructed image of Japanese products, have facilitated the growth of the company overseas. The results highlight the drawbacks of a homogeneous research approach to corporate brand building, which overemphasizes the importance of the "one" best way, and imply that a positive national culture could be a hidden brand building tool for promoting a company's growth.

Keywords: Uniqlo, re-imagine, corporate brand, national culture, marketing competence

1. Introduction

With the flows of people, money, and technology between cultures, the borders between nations have become more ambiguous, and companies' overseas activities have also contributed to this blurring of national borders. In such an environment, a company must have a competitive marketing strategy, and corporate brand building is regarded as one of the most significant (Park et al. 1986). A prominent theme in research on corporate brand building is how culture contributes to building a unique brand and how a business can benefit from this in the local-global context (Kaplinsky 1998). Against this background, this study focuses on the role of national culture, which has a significant influence on how customers perceive and act towards products and, in turn, influences brand recognition, loyalty, and even sales (Nagashima 1970).

To examine these issues in this era on ongoing globalization, this study examines the

top Asian fashion retailer Uniqlo,¹⁾ which has aggressively expanded its business to overseas markets. We use this example to show how the Japanese culture, particularly the Japanese product culture or Japanese craftsmanship, has been re-examined and identified as a marketing competence and discuss how this change has contributed to the re-imagination process of its corporate brand.

The way in which a company operates in this globalizing market has been widely discussed among scholars, and this study reviews their arguments from two major research perspectives. Scholars that follow the first research perspective claim that companies nowadays emphasize their single, global image rather than localizing their image for every market and that this homogeneous tendency has strong effects on society (Van Maanen 1991; Howes 1996; Ritzer 1998). The homogeneous approach, in which the practice of the companies or the distribution of the goods is considered to be a process of homogenization, was what Newman and Nollen (1996) described as “one size fits all.” This type of research focuses on creating the one best way to build a brand rather than localizing meaning according to various cultures. For example, Van Maanen’s (1991) research on Disneyland’s brand building examined employees’ outfits, facial expressions, and behaviors and focused on how their roles contributed to creating a unified image of Disney as a global brand.

Other scholars consider this type of standardization to be a colonization process. Howes (1996) described that the claim of Coca-colonization, which states that the distribution and consumption of Coca-Cola is a process of colonization or Americanization rather than of localization. Similarly, Zhu (2015) examined the managerial control of a Japanese retailer in an Asian market and declared its managerial control process to be colonization or, more specifically, Japanization.

The standardization of a corporate brand may help integrate a firm’s employees, as they will behave in a similar ways by sharing the same type of belief. Moreover, it may help a company reduce its cost by using a standard manual and system at home and overseas. Some scholars such as Ritzer (1998) have warned that this tendency might have some negative results, claiming that our society and culture is changing towards a more rationalized and homogeneous one by using the example of the standardization of the fast-food chain McDonald’s.

The above homogeneous viewpoints provide valuable insights into how companies, after initial difficulties, have successfully built their global brand images over time. Although globalization has largely facilitated the speed of standardization in the corporate organization and even society, the arguments are rather one-sided and they underestimate the impact of national culture on the company’s management practices. As some scholars claim, this process does not mean that our national culture is fading, but rather that it is considered to be a marketing competence (Cham 1981).

The second research perspective focuses on how brands have been perceived in the context of local or national culture and how this perception influences brand building. Silk

1) Uniqlo is a brand under its parent company, Fast Retailing. However, as this brand has a major influence on its business, this study uses the name Uniqlo instead of Fast Retailing.

and Andrews (2001) claimed that nowadays companies must negotiate in the local language, showing that national culture is widely used as a profitable advertising tool. Zhu (2012, 2015) also argued that the localization of corporate management largely benefits the company by making it easier to gain good talent overseas, because local employees can more easily share its localized corporate values.

One of the perspectives from which to research brand building in the local context is to find out how one country's culture influences customers' perceptions. In particular, this study considers "country-of-origin" theory, which examines the influence of country-of-origin, or another country under this theoretical framework, to analyze how Uniqlo witnesses and confirms the impact of its national culture and examine how and why the company has made its decisions. Here, national culture refers to the image of the culture of the country-of-origin, which is not necessarily where the products are manufactured, because a major brand could still represent its country even though the products are actually made elsewhere.²⁾

The country-of-origin effect has been studied from various aspects, and many scholars suggest that customers have different attitudes and perceptions according to where products come from (Cham 1981; Han and Qualls 1985; Saudi 1997; Kaynak and Kara 2002; Ammi 2013). According to Nagashima (1970), country image can be defined as "the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country" (68). Roth and Romeo (1992) claimed country image is related to product perceptions, while Bilkey and Nes (1982) defined country image as the general perceptions of the quality of products made in a given country.

Han's (1989) research on the role of country image and consumers' evaluations of television sets and automobiles offered insights into how consumers construct the idea of one country along with the increase in familiarity towards that country's products. He concluded that country image will "become a construct that summarizes consumers' beliefs about product attributes and directly affects their attitude towards the brand (Min 1989: 222)" and stated that this tendency will be enhanced by the extent to which customers are familiar with a country's products. His research implied that if a company produces fewer attractive products, this will eventually affect the image of a country negatively. Further, if a company wants to use the advantage of the positive image of its country, it needs to identify the country's advantages and adopt them into an effective business strategy. This finding indicates that employees need to share a country's unique manufacturing customs and beliefs.

Japan is a representative example of how the positive image of a country interacts with consumers' attributes. This study particularly focuses on the culture of Japanese craftsmanship, which is here interpreted as the underlying virtue or the manufacturing principle for Japanese manufacturing custom. Scholars have argued that the core spirit that supports the positive image and high credibility of Japanese products is the pursuit of fine craftsmanship, which was thought to be cultivated based on a sense of harmony, respect for nature, and an

2) For instance, although only part of Toyota's automobile manufacturing process is completed in Japan, the Toyota brand is still embedded with the image of Japanese culture (Silk and Andrews 2001).

aesthetic of simplicity, and this idea has since been central to Japanese production (Watanabe 2006).

Previous research shows that the image of Japanese products is high, particularly in three areas: price, quality, and technology. Studies of how Western consumers perceive the image of Japanese products describe that most believe that Japanese products are better in terms of technological advancement and price/value. Han and Qualls (1985) found that while Japanese products are consistently preferred to US and Korean products, Japanese-made products or the products with Japanese images have the features of affordable prices, advanced technology, innovation, and good value. Ammi (2013) stated that this tendency has remained unchanged, since Western consumers perceive Japanese products positively and Japanese companies are successful at marketing products and building a positive product image, particularly in the areas of technical performance and price/value.

Although positive feelings towards Japanese products are generally strong among Western consumers, they are particularly strong in Asia. A 2012 research report by Hakuhodo, a Japanese advertising and public relations company, targeting people in 14 Asian cities (Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul, Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Metropolitan Manila, Delhi, and Mumbai) showed that Japanese products are evaluated highly in terms of credibility, including criteria such as high quality, reputable brand, and price/value.

According to that 2012 report, the first successful overseas market Uniqlo entered, Hong Kong, has relatively high trust in Japanese products in general. Further, Hong Kong residents have a strong desire to purchase Japanese products compared with other cities (Hakuhodo 2012). This favorable view of Japanese products has contributed to the success of Uniqlo (the situation of Uniqlo Hong Kong is further explained in Section 5).

Another finding worth mentioning is that according to the 2012 Hakuhodo report, while the majority of people have a positive image of Japanese products, many might hesitate to purchase because of their higher market price. This finding allows us to hypothesize that if the price of Japanese products lowers without changing the level of quality and brand image, more customers might be interested in buying them.

The above literature describes how the images of Japanese products are linked to price/value, high quality, and innovative technology, with an especially strong positive image in Asia. This study examines how the three aforementioned characteristics of Japanese product culture are reflected in Uniqlo products and how the identification of its national strength contributes to the process of re-imagining the corporate brand. Many Japanese companies have failed to build influential brands based on their culture (Frank 1997; METI 2014). However, Uniqlo seems to be an example of how Japan has re-invented its marketing to survive in this changing global market. In the next section, the background of Uniqlo and its current business situation is discussed, focusing on its growth overseas.

2. Background of Uniqlo

Uniqlo, which means “unique clothing warehouse,” is a Japanese casual wear company and the number one Asian fashion retailer. After opening its first store in 1984, its parent

company, Fast Retailing, survived the recession in Japan and gained a substantial global market share. Uniqlo has always been the core business segment of Fast Retailing.

Given its net sales, Fast Retailing's presence gradually became apparent in the world market. Fast Retailing was ranked within the top five SPA (specialty store retailers of private label apparel) companies by the end of 2012 (Stores and NRF 2012). SPA refers to a company responsible for the design, manufacturing, and retail functions, so that its products represent the company's production philosophy.

Inditex, which owns the ZARA brand, was ranked first followed by Hennes & Mauritz. The Gap, avant-courier of SPA and casual wear, was ranked third. Fourth-ranked Fast Retailing was the first Japanese apparel company to rank within the global top five. According to the company's 2014 annual report, its net sales totaled \$13 billion. Along with this increase in net sales, the foreign media became interested in the global presence of the company founder, Tadashi Yanai, whose overall wealth of \$133 billion made him Japan's richest person in 2013 (Forbes 2015). Yanai had this honor in 2009 and 2012 as well. As of April 22, 2013, he owned around 45% of Fast Retailing, which was worth \$17 billion in stock value (Forbes 2015).

Of Fast Retailing's three major operations (Uniqlo Japan, Uniqlo International, and Global Brands), Uniqlo International, which comprises its overseas operations, has had the fastest growth in recent years. The data show that in 2014, Uniqlo International increased its net sales by 64.7% and net profits by 89.5% over the previous year (Fast Retailing 2014). This case study considers Uniqlo products based on three basic features: higher price/value, better quality, and advanced technology.

3. Uniqlo Products and Japanese Craftsmanship

To sustain the unique features of Uniqlo products, the company made a strong effort to maintain price control, improve quality, and innovate. In the following, I discuss how Uniqlo is able to reduce prices by using an SPA model, maintain its high quality with the "*Takumi*" (master) project, and create innovative materials through industrial collaboration. These three core principles have to be sustained and improved to raise customer loyalty and build brand image.

Price/value

Previous research shows that the price of clothing is the major decision making criterion for consumers (Uchida 2013). The first opportunity for Uniqlo to show its price/value was the 1,900 yen fleece campaign in Harajuku, Tokyo in 1998. This event was sensational because the company provided customers with fleece products at a price 10 times lower than the products of foreign retailers at that time. This attracted a large number of customers and, eventually, increased its brand recognition in Japan (Tsukiizumi 2012).

Since then, Uniqlo has emphasized keeping prices low without compromising on quality. Besides the company's strategy, its SPA model has also played a critical role. This business model allows companies to keep their costs low through mass production (Kawashima 2012). Uniqlo can negotiate and buy supplies at even lower prices because the company pur-

chases all manufactured products from contract factories. The mass production system is evident from the fact that Uniqlo sold more than eight million pieces in 1999 and 26 million pieces in 2000 (Kawashima 2012).

Uniqlo does not own its factories; instead, to secure reasonable prices, it trades with many factories in Mainland China that have lower labor costs (Woo and Jin 2014). Uniqlo has worked with 70 factories in Mainland China so far and has started shifting the focus from Mainland China to South East Asia to reduce the risk of a China-centered production system and the associated higher labor cost. In 2012, China-based manufacturing accounted for 75% of the market, although this proportion has decreased in recent years (The Daily Jakarta Shimbum 2013). Uniqlo has already established production sites in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia and is also considering the Philippines and Myanmar (Sankei Biz 2012).

Attractive products must not only be affordable; they also require a good price/value. Uniqlo has been improving its quality by sending experts to overseas manufacturing sites. The next subsection shows how Uniqlo attracts customers in terms of its quality and how the company utilizes the “*Takumi*” (master) project to control quality.

Quality

According to the customer satisfaction index produced by Service Productivity and Innovation for Growth (SPRING), a Japanese company that promotes the service industry, Uniqlo’s quality is high. In the 2014 SPRING report, Uniqlo was ranked first in the fashion industry, and its quality was ranked second among all fashion retailers (SPRING 2014). This high evaluation of Uniqlo product quality reflects the success of the company in sustaining its strong advantage. Japanese consumers are hard to satisfy because product quality, in general, is high (Kawashima 2012). However, even in this environment, Uniqlo’s product quality has been evaluated highly in the domestic market.

Quality control is a critical way in which to improve product value, and manufacturing sites play a significant role here. Despite not owning any factories, Uniqlo employs about 400 staff and textile *takumi* (skilled artisans) in Shanghai, Ho Chi Minh City, Dhaka, Jakarta, and Istanbul (Uniqlo annual report 2014) to control quality levels. Besides its quality and affordable prices, Uniqlo products are associated with innovation. The next subsection describes the efforts of Uniqlo to produce innovative products.

Technology

Yanai, the founder of Uniqlo, states that clothing is able to transmit the company’s information technology to its customers and that the role of SPA allows the company to transmit valuable information about its product uniqueness that meets customers’ needs (Yanai 2012).

Uniqlo has established a strategic collaboration with a Japanese company called Toray Industry that specializes in industrial products centered on technologies in organic synthetic chemistry, polymer chemistry, and biochemistry. Toray is currently the world’s largest producer of carbon fiber and Japan’s largest producer of synthetic fiber. Its carbon fiber is extensively used in the exterior components of the Boeing 787 airliner. In 2000, Toray set

up a strategic department exclusively tasked with manufacturing special fabric for Uniqlo. In 2007, Toray established a textile department for Fast Retailing, which has grown through this strategic cooperation.

A representative example for the innovative products of Uniqlo is the “Heattech” thermal series, which allows heat retention because of its special materials. The “Heattech” series was the result of the collaboration between Toray and Uniqlo. This type of product was limited to elderly people to keep warm and was called “*baba shatsu*” (shirts for old women). Uniqlo started selling “Heattech” products in 2003 and sold 645 million pieces within four years (Yanai 2012). In 2011, Uniqlo sold one billion pieces of the “Heattech” series and almost three billion pieces altogether from 2003 to 2013. Uniqlo was able to increase its sales by improving the thermal materials and attracting customers of various generations by manufacturing basic casual thermal wear.

Besides the “Heattech” series, in 2007, the company released a new type of underwear for summer seasons for female customers called “sara fine,” and the new line sold 60 thousand pieces within a year of its launch. In 2008, the company started to produce and sell an underwear series for male customers called “silky dry.” These two series sold one million pieces in 2008, six million in 2009, 16 million in 2010, and 28 million in 2011. The company unified both “sara fine” and “silky dry” under the new product name “AIRism.”

The above examples show that Uniqlo products successfully reflect the three key features of Japanese product culture. One of the key people in the company’s success is Tadashi Yanai. The next section discusses his personal traits and the Japanese industry to examine how he created his unique management philosophy.

4. Founder’s Legacy

Yanai’s philosophy was strongly influenced by his strong crisis awareness, which was cultivated through his personal traits. Yanai, who was born in the post-war period, had witnessed many ways in which war damaged the economy and people as well as the fragility of a national economy and companies (Yanai 2012). Based on his experiences of business failure, Yanai believed that, in contrast to popular beliefs at the time, an adventurous spirit and fast growth were the key factors to success and declared that his would become the number one fashion company in the world.

To grow rapidly, Yanai handed his authority over to the younger generation. However, he regained the position when the business was struggling (Matsushita 2010), and the company soon recovered. Yanai believed that learning from a developed society could benefit Japanese businesses, and he frequently visited the United States to learn from its more advanced systems (Yanai 2012). When Yanai observed the situation in Japan, he felt that domestic manufacturers were losing the beauty of Japanese craftsmanship (Yanai 2012).

With the Plaza Accord in 1985 and rising value of the yen, Yanai believed that fashion products should be more affordable for mass customers. However, this contrasted with reality, because many manufacturers put cost before quality (Yanai 2012). To maintain the level of Japanese craftsmanship, Yanai sent out a team of masters to Chinese factories to manage the quality of production and educate local employees. In Fast Retailing’s 2003 annual

report, Yanai states that quality control plays a major role in his company, because a prominent philosophy of Uniqlo products is “clothing with fine craftsmanship” (Yanai 2012).

Yanai’s unique philosophy prompted the company to expand its business to overseas markets. Besides earning global status and a market for sustainable growth, Yanai also wished to position his company in the West, where marketing was more advanced. He began in the United Kingdom. After an unfavorable start, the business has now become one of the most profitable Uniqlo operations, and this overseas experience has helped the company re-evaluate the strength of Japanese product culture, as discussed next.

5. Overseas Experiences

Uniqlo’s recent overseas expansion has contributed largely to the company’s business overall. The financial statement of Fast Retailing in April 2015 described that while Western markets (United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Germany) and Southeast Asian markets (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia) had increased both in sales and in profit as planned, the growth in Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and Korea had exceeded expectations significantly.

The company started its overseas expansion in the UK market and opened its first store in 2001. In his biography, Yanai states that a new challenge was necessary after the success of the fleece campaign. The initial plan of the overseas expansion was to open 50 stores in three years (Yanai 2012). The company sent several Japanese expatriates to London and opened its first four stores in 2001, followed by another 17 in the next two years. However, owing to unfavorable results, the company had to exit the market two years later. One year after entry, Yanai commented that he regretted the initial plan because headquarters did not actually have a concrete plan and Uniqlo failed to promote the good aspects of the products, such as their quality, price, and advanced technology (Yanai 2012).

In 2002, the company opened a store in Shanghai, China, the second overseas market in which it attempted to earn a profit. It aimed to create another “brand” for Uniqlo China, selling products exclusively for the Chinese market. As a result, it had to lower quality and price as well as exclude certain technological elements. This was because Yanai had less confidence that the original price could compete with Uniqlo’s Hong Kong counterparts at that time (Yanai 2012). However, the situation in China was not ideal for the next several years, and the company had to close all its Beijing stores in 2005.

In the same year as it exited the Beijing market, Yanai and the top management team of Fast Retailing found unexpected success in Hong Kong. Here, the country-of-origin theory can be used explain how the positive image of Japanese culture contributed to its success. The Hong Kong expansion produced one billion yen in net income in the first year of entry. Pan Ning, the CEO of Uniqlo Hong Kong at that time, claimed that this was because the subsidiary insisted on using “authentic” products, including Japanese language on the packaging, quality, prices, and technology to reflect a Japanese image on Uniqlo products (Pan 2012). Pan’s confidence in utilizing Japanese culture as a way in which to promote its products came from his experience of observing many Hong Kong and Taiwan tourists patronizing the Uniqlo stores in Japan. He recalled that the Uniqlo store was always full and that

customers lined up from the first to the third floors even before opening (Pan 2012).

Hong Kong's success verified the positive effect of "made-in-Japan" on product marketing. Following its Hong Kong operation, Uniqlo began to focus on building its corporate brand by re-interpreting Japanese culture, which is further explored in the following section.

6. Re-imagination of the Corporate Brand

When Uniqlo analyzed its overseas failures and successes, it found various influential factors, such as inexperience in marketing and the internationalization of human resources. However, the company chose to re-interpret the tradition of Japanese product culture. There are two perspectives to explain this phenomenon. The first is that the founder's belief in pursuing Japanese fine craftsmanship prompted the company to revive the power of national culture. The idea of Japanese craftsmanship has always been a backbone of the company's growth, as was apparent from the effort it made to improve the quality, price, and technology.

The second perspective is that the overseas experiences allowed the company to rediscover the strength of Japanese tradition. When Uniqlo products were sent to overseas markets, the responses of local customers were difficult to predict. It was only after exposing its products to an unknown cultural context that it could rediscover the power of national culture. Because basic assumptions and shared beliefs vary, the company needed the experience of exposing its products overseas to determine how national culture could function as a marketing competence.

Besides the company's re-interpretation of the impact of national culture and its unexpected experiences overseas that prompted its shift towards a brand building strategy, we should not underestimate the impact of positive customer attributes on the image of Japanese products. As the 2012 Hakuhodo report showed, people in Hong Kong evaluate Japanese products highly, which to some extent contributes to their interest, trust, and support in Uniqlo products, because many of them feel that the characteristics of Uniqlo products (price, quality, and technology) reflect the constructed images of Japanese brands.

Through the founder's legacy, overseas experience, and positive perception from local customers, Uniqlo re-examined the meaning and competence of its national culture. This change in brand building was apparent in their official publications and global strategy. Uniqlo began linking its core philosophy with Japanese traditions (Uniqlo annual report 2006) to benefit its high quality products (Yanai 2012).

The company expanded its interpretation of national culture, in a broader sense, to traditional Japanese customer service and human resource management. In 2008, the company announced a new business strategy, the Global One policy, stating that every Uniqlo around the world would follow one best practice, which was the system of belief based on Japanese culture. Later, in 2009, Yanai re-emphasized that all staff at Uniqlo must share the culture of Uniqlo Japan (Yanai 2012).

7. Conclusion and Future Perspectives

This study provides insights into how the power of one country's manufacturing culture has been revived through the founder's legacy and overseas business experiences and how this serves as a strong marketing competence for brand building. While focusing on the increase in sales and overseas expansion, Uniqlo did not neglect the importance of Japanese manufacturing culture, especially in the areas as price, quality, and technology. The strong beliefs of the founder prompted the company to incorporate the virtues of Japanese craftsmanship into its products.

Further, overseas successes and failures made it realize that its products, which were based on Japanese traditions, were one of the major success factors in overseas markets. This change prompted the company to reconstruct the meaning of its corporate brand from a fashion retailer with no clear image to a brand that depicted Japan strongly. This finding implies that a company's decisions about its product image could be largely influenced by how it interprets its successes overseas.

Previous studies of country-of-origin have shown that Japanese products are highly evaluated by Western and Asian customers, and this positive attribute is considered to be important for success overseas. Success in Hong Kong shows that the image of Uniqlo products matches the constructed image of Japanese products as well as highlights the strong support from local customers on the company's success there.

This finding disputes the homogeneous research approach that claims that while a company is building a global brand image, the impact of national or local culture fades. This study shows that, in the globalization process, local culture has a strong impact on global brand building, especially when the country's traditional craftsmanship is valued among employees and when the image of that country's products has a positive image overseas.

The growth of Uniqlo might continue along with its expansion into more overseas markets; however, we should not underestimate some challenges the company may face in the near future. Many of the problems are shared among Japanese companies.

First is the undesirable business situation in Western markets, which may apply to many Japanese retailers nowadays. As opposed to many large Japanese manufacturers overseas, Uniqlo's business in Western countries was not favorable or even in a critical condition. Although some have a positive outlook, saying that sales will increase once Western society recognizes the value of Uniqlo products (Uchida 2013), the problems might be not that simple to resolve. "Conquering" the Western market will thus be the next challenge for many Japanese retailers before they can become a "real" global company.

Second is the critique of Uniqlo's working environment, particularly the long hours and high pressure, which have been a common criticism of Japanese organizations. In recent years, some have referred to Uniqlo as a "*burakku kigyō*" (black company), which refers to companies that consider employees to be "*tsukaisute*" (disposable). These companies allow employees to work extremely long hours, do not pay for overtime work, allow power harassment, and have high turnover rates (Asahi Shinbun 2013). In a publication³⁾ by *Bungei*

3) Publications include an article published in May 2011 about the working environment in Uniqlo China's

shunju, a Japanese publisher, Uniqlo was widely criticized for forcing employees to work extremely long hours in Japan and providing worse working conditions than those in Mainland China's factories⁴⁾. Uniqlo requested an injunction against these publications; however, in 2014, the Tokyo High Court dismissed the company's claim. The publication of an article entitled "*Hihei suru shokuba*" (Exhausted workplace) by Toyo Keizai, a Japanese business publisher, in 2013 also pointed out that the long working hours of Uniqlo's store managers created employee depression (Kazama 2013). These publications reinforce the negative image of working for Uniqlo in Japan.

In summary, the dynamic relationship between culture and corporate branding has been one of the most prominent themes in management and culture studies, and future work in this field should add in-depth observations and complexity to the theoretical accounts of culture and company studies.

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factories and the book entitled *Yunikuro teikoku no hikari to kage* [Uniqlo empire's light and shadow] written by Masuo Yokota in 2013.

4) In fact, many Japanese companies have been criticized because of their poor working environments (e.g., Imano 2012). Working conditions in Japan have become a challenging and controversial issue, and companies need to deal with this issue quickly to maintain sustainable growth.

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