

Marketing Innovation *in Time and across Time*:
International Flagship Stores, Brand Identity and the Boundary of the Firm

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Abstract

In this paper we problematize the contextualization and analysis of innovative international retailing practices *in time* and *across time*. Theoretically, the paper contributes to an understanding of the role of marketing activities in defining the boundary of the international firm. Using historical methods and drawing on primary data from firm-based archives in the United States and the United Kingdom this paper shows how adopting a long-term perspective on retail marketing innovation facilitates a deeper and richer understanding of the internationalization of retail activity from the perspective of practice and theory. We explore the epistemological challenges of incorporating historical methods into mainstream marketing research. These historiographical and theoretical issues are explored through consideration of the role of ‘flagship’ stores in the creation of brand identity in international markets during and between the first and second global economies: 1880 - 2019. Analyzing the experiences of American and British firms, this paper explores strategic tensions created by the relative financial and marketing value of iconic stores in prestigious locations in international markets. At the firm-level, the article provides insight into the emergence and development of in-house branding, retailing and marketing practices. At the market-level, it explores how marketing innovation defined by the first global economy (1880-29) was challenged by volatile trading conditions after 1929 and reasserted in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century (1980-2019).

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