

# Digital Marketing Adaptation to Trade Wars and Geopolitical Sanctions: A Conceptual Perspective on Social Media Strategies in Global Brand Communication

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## Abstract:

This study is going to look at how problems with trade, which are happening because of trade arguments, fights and sanctions from countries affect international trade and how brands communicate. It is really important to remember that the problems between the US and China and the sanctions that came from this fight have changed trade and therefore how global brands communicate in different markets. In this situation using the internet to market products, social media has become very important for brands to be seen and heard in a very uncertain world. Even though people have already written about trade and how to use digital marketing they mostly looked at what happens when everything is stable and not many people have thought about how international trade problems affect digital marketing.

This study is based on ideas from Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory. It wants to see how global brands change their digital marketing plans when the world is very uncertain because of international trade fights and sanctions from countries. By looking at what people have written about international trade and digital marketing this study wants to make a model that shows how social media helps global brands communicate when the world is very uncertain because of international trade problems.

This study helps us understand marketing better by showing the connection, between international trade problems and digital marketing plans. The study also shows how important digital marketing is for global brands to communicate when the world is very uncertain.

**Keywords:** International Trade Disruptions, Digital Marketing, Geopolitical Sanctions, Social Media, Global Brand Communication

## INTRODUCTION

This study is about how problems with trade like disputes and sanctions affect how global brands communicate. For a while international trade has been really uncertain because of more conflicts and different tariffs. The idea that the global market is stable is not true anymore. Trade policies have caused a lot of interruptions big companies have to rethink how they operate and communicate. The trade problems between the United States and China are an example of this. The constant increase in tariffs on products billions of dollars has affected international trade and made it harder for global brands to communicate. Global brands are facing challenges because of these trade issues. The trade conflict, between the United States and China is a part of international trade today. Global brand communication is changing because of these trade problems.

The paper is looking into how trade problems, like trade disputes and sanctions affect the way global brands communicate. For a time now the global trade situation has been really uncertain because of all the conflicts and

different tariffs being put in place. It is no longer possible to assume that the global market is stable. Trade policies have caused a lot of problems. Many companies have had to change the way they operate and communicate. The trade tensions between the US and China are an example of this. The increasing tariffs on goods billions of dollars have changed the global trade situation and affected how global brands communicate. Global brands are facing communication challenges because of these trade problems. The trade conflict between the US and China is a part of the global trade situation today and the way global brands communicate is changing because of these problems. The communication of brands is really being impacted by trade disputes and sanctions and by the trade conflict, between the US and China. Global brands have to deal with trade problems. This is changing the way they communicate.

The international market is really tough now. This is because of trade sanctions that countries are putting on each other. These sanctions are happening because of problems between countries. For example, when Russia and Ukraine had a conflict many countries put trade sanctions on Russia. This caused a lot of problems for trade. Many big companies had to stop doing business or change what they were saying about their brands. In these situations, digital marketing became a very important tool for managing the crisis. Brands had to tell their stakeholders what was going on and what they were doing about it in an open and honest way. The international market and trade sanctions are still a challenge, for many companies, including those that are doing business with Russia and Ukraine. Digital marketing is helping these companies deal with the market and trade sanctions.

In trade wars and sanctions digital marketing helps organizations deal with disruptions. Social media enables real-time communication with stakeholders. This helps organizations respond fast to changes. Digital marketing is flexible. Allows for immediate communication, which is crucial in unstable trade times. It helps organizations respond quickly to changes in the environment. However most digital marketing research focuses on customer engagement and brand building in environments. Digital marketing needs to adapt to help organizations navigate trade instability and respond to disruptions. Organizations use marketing to communicate and respond quickly. This is important, in today's trade landscape.

Previous studies on trade disruptions have not paid much attention to how they affect digital marketing plans. Most research on trade wars and sanctions looks at how they impact trade amounts, supply chains and investments. On the hand studies, on digital marketing do not consider the uncertainties caused by trade disruptions.

There is a need to create a framework that brings together trade disruptions and digital marketing strategies. This will help us understand how to adapt marketing plans when trade disruptions happen. Trade disruptions and digital marketing are closely linked. We need to study this connection to help businesses prepare for trade uncertainties. By doing we can develop effective digital marketing strategies that take into account trade disruptions.

This study is examining how global brands cope with trade wars and geopolitical sanctions in relation to their marketing strategies. The study is using Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory concepts to achieve this. The study aims at finding out how global brands use the media to communicate with people. The study aims at contributing more knowledge on how digital marketing can cope with issues emanating from trade wars, worldwide. Global brands are seeking ways to ensure that their marketing strategies remain effective despite trade wars and sanctions. The study is examining how global brands use the media in communicating with people.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine how international trade disruptions—such as trade wars and geopolitical sanctions—affect the digital marketing strategies used by global brands.
2. To explore the strategic role of social media in helping global brands maintain effective communication and marketing resilience when faced with uncertainty in international trade.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

- Global business has always had to deal with trade disruptions. Since 2020 these disruptions have become more frequent and intense. Many researchers have written about how trade wars, tariffs and sanctions have changed the way big companies think about doing business in countries. They have to think about

how to get into markets invest and work with countries. The trade conflict between the United States and China is an example of this. It showed how vulnerable global companies can be when tariffs are disputed for a time.

- Researchers found that these disputes create uncertainty, which makes companies rethink their supply chains and how they work with countries. The sanctions that happened because of the Russia–Ukraine conflict added another issue to this conversation. Sanctions are different from tariffs because they also affect a company’s reputation and relationships with governments and the public. Companies that work in areas have to navigate legal issues, public scrutiny and concerns about their legitimacy.
- Some researchers used Institutional Theory to explain why big companies changed their business operations and communication strategies. They realized that to survive in an environment they need to manage how they are seen by governments, customers and the public.
- At the time digital marketing was changing. Research showed that social media platforms became central to a company’s brand strategy. Social media allowed companies to respond quickly to issues talk to customers and show stability even when things were tough. Studies found that companies with digital marketing skills were better at adapting to crises and keeping their customer’s trust.
- However, most of this research was done during economic times so it may not apply to times of geopolitical turmoil. Between 2022 and 2024 some researchers started looking at how companies use channels to respond to external shocks like trade restrictions and sanctions. These studies helped us understand how companies can be resilient. They showed that digital marketing can help companies make decisions faster communicate better and respond to crises. There is still a lot to learn. Most studies only look at parts of the problem and few have looked specifically at how trade disruptions affect digital marketing decisions.
- The recent research, from 2024 and 2025 says that we need to combine international business research and digital marketing research. Some researchers argue that digital marketing is not about promoting a brand but about its strategic value, especially in complex and risky environments. They want frameworks that consider how a brand communicates globally and how it is affected by politics and economics. We still do not have a comprehensive model that ties together international trade disruptions and social media-driven brand communication.
- The existing literature shows a gap. International trade research has looked at the policy consequences of trade wars and sanctions. Digital marketing research has advanced our understanding of media and branding. We need a bridge between these two areas of research. A framework that explains how global brands adapt their digital marketing practices in response, to trade disruptions. This study aims to address this gap.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study looks at how big brands handle trade problems. Big brands have to deal with a lot of issues because of trade wars and geopolitical sanctions. We are interested in seeing how they change the way they market themselves. Big brands have to adapt to these problems. We are using Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory to understand this. By using Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory we can see how big brands respond to trade problems and how they change their marketing strategies. We want to know how Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory help us understand how big brands change their marketing strategies in response, to trade wars and geopolitical sanctions.

### **Dynamic Capability Theory**

Dynamic Capability Theory is about how a company can stay on top of changes in its environment. It is about sensing changes grabbing opportunities and rearranging what the company has to respond to disruptions. In today’s changing world of international trade, where trade disruptions like tariff hikes and sanctions are common companies need to change their strategies to stay competitive. From a marketing view a company’s

dynamic capability helps it adjust its communication plans. It helps reshuffle resources and use real-time data to respond to environmental disruptions.

Recent studies suggest that digital marketing capabilities like being quick with content engaging in time and adapting to platforms can be seen as dynamic capabilities. These capabilities improve how well an organization can adapt. For example, social media lets a company sense change in what stakeholders think grab chances to talk to customers during crises and change brand stories in markets. So, from a marketing perspective adapting to change is not just a reaction; it is a strategic capability that helps a company be resilient, during tough times. It enables companies to adjust and respond effectively. Dynamic Capability Theory plays a role in this process. Companies must focus on capabilities to stay ahead.

### **Institutional Theory**

- Institutional Theory looks at how companies behave because of rules what people think is normal and what people are used to in the world around them. When countries do not trade with each other it is usually because of decisions made by governments rules that're in place or problems between countries that affect how companies behave. Things like trade wars, sanctions or rules about the internet all affect how companies behave in the world around them.
- When countries are not getting along companies have to be careful about what governments customers or regular people think, which means they have to do what is expected of them or say the things. Institutional Theory helps us understand why big companies have to change what they say on the internet because of rules that're in place. The internet is a way for companies to talk to people and they try to be seen as good companies by listening to what people are concerned about or by explaining what they are doing. Institutional Theory is important, for companies because it helps them understand how to behave in the world around them.

### **Integrating Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory**

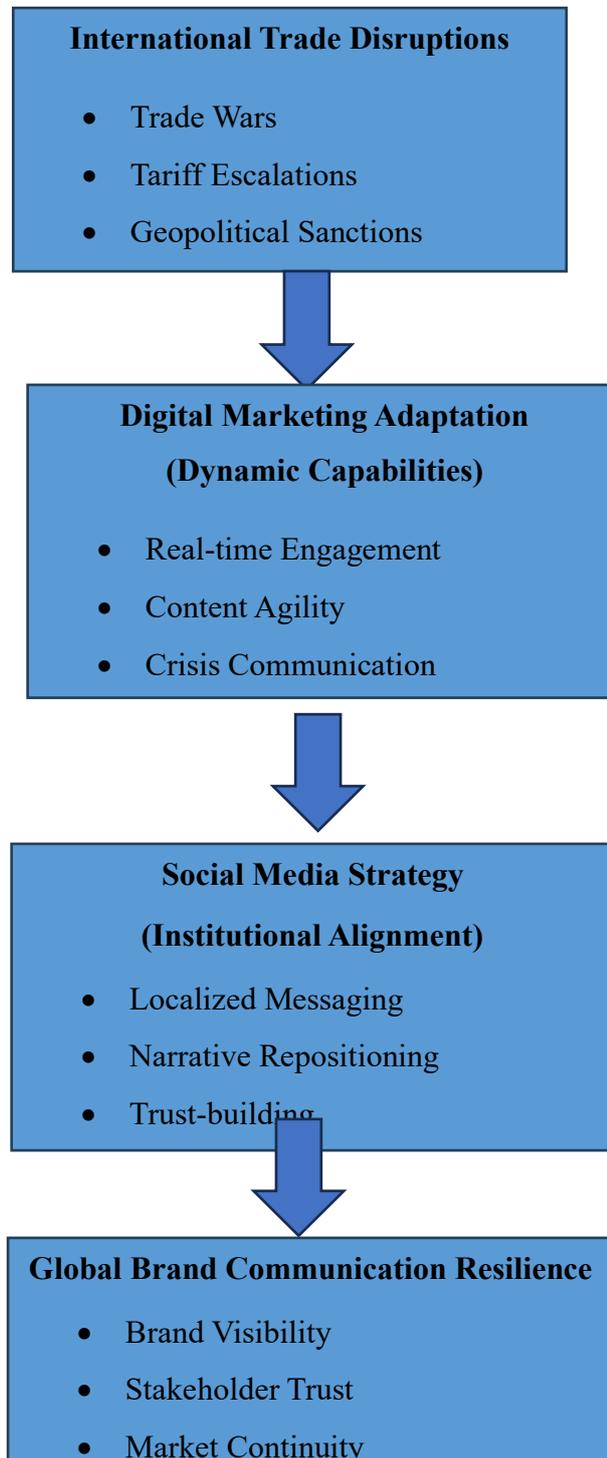
- Dynamic Capability Theory helps us understand how companies can change from within when external things change. On the hand Institutional Theory looks at the external world that companies must adapt to. By combining these two we can see how companies use marketing during changes in international trade. Dynamic Capability Theory is key here. Dynamic Capability Theory matters because it shows how companies can quickly adjust and come up with ideas. The outside world, with its rules and expectations pressures companies to adapt in ways. This is where Institutional Theory comes in.
- In our study we see media as a marketing tool for companies. This tool combines Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory. Companies can use media to change their marketing plans in response to changes in different countries. This helps us understand how companies can stay strong with their marketing during trade wars and sanctions. Media plays a role in this. We are examining how companies use media to adapt to changes in markets. This adaptability helps companies stay strong and keep selling their products even when times are tough. Both Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory are important, for this. Companies need to be dynamic and understand the pressures they face.

### **CONCEPTUAL MODEL / FRAMEWORK EXPLANATION**

- This study shows how problems with trade affect how companies use digital marketing and communicate their brand to the world. It uses two ideas, Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory to show what is going on inside and outside the company that affects how they communicate their brand. International trade disruptions are a part of this. These disruptions include things like trade wars and sanctions. They are factors that affect how companies communicate their brand.
- The main parts of the model are the problems with trade. These problems make it hard for companies to know what is going on and affect how they do business around the world. This makes it hard for companies to communicate their brand. Companies have to think about how they're going to do business and how they are going to communicate with people. International trade disruptions make companies unsure, about what's going to happen. This uncertainty affects how companies communicate their brand.

- Companies use marketing to adapt to these problems. They use media to help them adapt. Social media platforms are very helpful for companies to adapt to trade disruptions. Companies can use media to see what is going on find new opportunities and change how they use digital tools to stay in the global market. Digital marketing adaptation is a way for companies to deal with trade disruptions. International trade disruptions affect marketing adaptation and global brand communication strategies. Companies use media platforms to adapt to international trade disruptions and communicate their brand.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Digital Marketing Adaptation to Trade Disruptions



- The model also says that social media strategy is another thing that connects trade disruption with how global brands communicate. Companies use media to talk to people during a crisis and they do it in real time. They send out messages that're right for the local area and that follow the rules. They also use stories to deal with risks related to politics and geography. They try to build trust so that people still think their brand is good. These are ways that companies can respond to a crisis without breaking any rules.
- Lastly the idea behind this is that how well a company adapts to digital marketing affects how well its global brand can survive tough times. Being able to survive times means that a company can keep its brand known respected and engaging even when there is uncertainty about trade. The model says that if a company is good at adapting to marketing it will be better, at dealing with trade wars and sanctions without losing the value of its brand. Global brand communication is really important for companies and social media strategy and digital marketing adaptation are parts of that.
- So, the basic idea is that international trade disruptions can really affect how companies do marketing and talk to their brands worldwide. International trade disruptions play a role in digital marketing strategies and brand communication everywhere. The internet and social media are like a bridge between trade disruptions and how well companies can adapt to these disruptions. This helps us understand how digital marketing can survive in a world where international trade is always changing. International trade disruptions are a deal, for digital marketing and social media is a key part of this.

#### **IMPACT OF TRADE WARS AND SANCTIONS ON DIGITAL MARKETING**

- Over the few years trade wars, tariffs and sanctions have increased a lot. This has greatly affected how businesses operate. For example, the trade tensions between the United States and China the sanctions on Russia and changes in trade policies with growing economies have made it hard, for companies that operate in many countries to predict what will happen next. These trade disruptions have changed how companies create their marketing plans especially when it comes to using social media to communicate.
- One big effect of trade wars and sanctions on marketing is that companies need to be able to change their message quickly. Trade wars can cause a lot of problems like changes in rules problems with getting products to people and changes in what the public thinks. This means that companies need to be able to react to these changes. Digital marketing helps companies do this. They can use it to respond to changes in the world explain what they think and stop information from spreading when there are international problems. So digital marketing is not about long term plans it is about being able to change and adapt quickly.
- Trade wars and sanctions also make people care more about what they think of a company. In times of problems people want to know if a company's values are the same as theirs. They look at how a company acts and what it says to decide if they like it. Digital marketing is very important for this. Companies need to be honest and open about what they do, on social media, where people can talk about them and share their thoughts.
- A big thing to think about is how market localization and segmentation work. Sometimes trade restrictions can affect countries and areas in different ways. This makes it hard to use the marketing message everywhere in the world. With marketing you can make your strategies work better for each country by following the rules that are specific to that place. Social media is a way to make your digital marketing more local.
- Sanctions and trade barriers are also important when it comes to choosing a platform for digital marketing. Sometimes a country might have rules about technology and data that limit what you can do. This means that marketers might have to use digital marketing channels. It just shows how important it is to be flexible, with marketing when you are working with other countries.
- Trade wars and sanctions make digital marketing more important for businesses. It changes from a supporting role to a key tool for businesses to stay strong. Digital marketing, on social media helps businesses deal with uncertain times. It does this by keeping customers engaged making the brand look legitimate and being flexible with communication. This is really important in business situations. When

trade gets disrupted, it affects not operations but also how digital marketing is used strategically in managing international brands. Digital marketing plays a role in helping businesses adapt to these changes. It helps them navigate through the challenges of trade wars and sanctions. Businesses rely on marketing to stay connected, with customers and maintain their brand image.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS (GLOBAL BRANDS PERSPECTIVE)**

- The results of this study are really important for companies that operate all around the world. These companies have to deal with trade wars tariffs that can change anytime and sanctions from countries. Since there are a lot of problems in markets right now the people in charge of these big companies need to know that using the internet to advertise is crucial. Digital marketing is not a good way to promote products it is also necessary for these companies to stay in business.
- The people in charge of companies that operate all around the world need to understand that when there are trade wars, tariffs that can change anytime and sanctions from other countries they have to make decisions fast. They cannot take a lot of time to think about what to do. That is why the people in charge of these companies should let the digital marketing teams make their decisions. This way they can react quickly to things that happen in countries. They can use websites like Facebook and Twitter to keep an eye on what's happening in other countries and respond in a way that is appropriate for global brands, like theirs.
- Next managers need to come up with communication plans that're specific to each place. Trade wars and sanctions affect countries in ways. So big brands should not use the plan for every country when it comes to digital marketing. Digital marketing plans should be made to fit the rules and values of each country. For example, managers can try to gain the trust of consumers by making content for media that is specific to each country and reflects what is important to them.
- Big brands need to build trust and be honest in what they say online. When there are trade wars and sanctions everyone wants to know what the company is going to do. So managers need to be open with the public about what they're doing. Being honest helps to make things less uncertain. Helps the brand to be seen as legitimate when there are trade wars. Big brands like these need to be transparent in their communication to build trust, with the public and show them what they are doing.
- Also, managers must create a plan that works on many platforms. This plan should reduce risks from rules and platform limits. For instance, problems between countries can stop access to some tools in certain areas. A plan that uses platforms will keep communication going and prevent one failure from causing problems. This will help the company keep communicating in tough situations.
- In the end global brand managers must include marketing strength, in long-term plans. Of thinking trade problems are rare companies should make flexible digital marketing plans a normal part of their work. This way they can prepare for trade problems and respond quickly.
- So, the managerial implications I mentioned earlier show how important it is for companies to adjust their marketing strategies when international trade is disrupted. This can help global brands be more resilient keep their brand value strong and engage better with their stakeholders even when international trade is changing all the time.

### **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

- This study adds a lot to what we know about international marketing, digital marketing and international trade. It brings together two ideas: disruptions in international trade and digital marketing adaptation. This helps us understand these areas better and fills a gap in the knowledge about international business.
- One key area this study helps with is the Dynamic Capability Theory. It shows how digital marketing, especially using media can be a flexible capability that helps companies adjust to changes in international trade. While we know that being able to handle operations and supply chains is important, during crises this study highlights the importance of being able to communicate through digital marketing. This is a way of thinking about dynamic capabilities.

- Second this study helps Institutional Theory by showing how trade wars and sanctions create pressures that affect digital marketing. Unlike studies on Institutional Theory that focus on following rules at work this study highlights how companies communicate to fit in with these pressures. It shows how businesses use tools to communicate and match what is expected of them. This study adds to Institutional Theory by including communication as a way for companies to adapt to these pressures.
- Third using Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory the study suggests a model that looks at both what companies can do internally and what rules they must follow. This is an addition, to what we know because other studies have not considered how digital marketing changes and international trade problems are connected.
- The study also helps us understand how social media works in digital marketing. It shows that social media is not a tool to promote products and get people engaged. Social media also helps companies deal with problems and stay strong when things get tough. It helps them manage what people think of their brand and adapt to changes. This is a way of thinking about social media in international digital marketing. It can help us learn more about this area.
- The main things we learned from this study are that it adds to what we know about international trade and digital marketing. It also gives us a framework to work with so we can do research on how companies use digital marketing to stay strong in international trade. The study looks at media and its role, in international digital marketing. It looks at how social media helps with brand communication outcomes.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- This study has some ideas but it also has some limitations that we need to think about. For example, this study is based on ideas. Does not use real life data or statistics. This means we can think about the ideas in a way but we still need to test them to see if they really work.
- Another limitation of this study is that it mainly looks at problems with trade like trade wars or sanctions from other countries. It does not think about big problems that can happen like global health crises or problems with the environment. This means the ideas in this study might not be useful, for kinds of global problems and that is something we need to think about when we try to use these ideas in other situations.
- This study focuses on digital marketing strategies that use social media. It does not think about types of digital marketing like marketing on search engines sending emails or selling things online. Social media is a part of how brands are known around the world. Just looking at social media may not give us a complete picture of how digital marketing changes when there are problems with trade. Digital marketing is what we are talking about here. We need to look at all of it not just social media and digital marketing.
- The study is about brands that are known everywhere. We do not really understand how smaller businesses that operate in countries adapt their digital marketing strategies when there are trade problems. The digital marketing strategies of these businesses, which we call medium-sized businesses are very important. Sized businesses do not have as much power to influence things digitally and that is something important to consider when we think about digital marketing, for medium-sized businesses. Sized businesses have to think carefully about digital marketing.
- Also, we should note that the framework does not consider how digital infrastructure, laws and cultural differences between countries might affect things. These differences in how people access platforms and data rules, in each country can impact how well the proposed digital marketing plan works. Knowing about these limitations will give us a complete picture of what the study means and what it found out.

#### **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

- This study looks at how problems with trade like trade wars and sanctions from other countries affect the way companies use digital marketing. It uses ideas from Dynamic Capability Theory and Institutional Theory to create a model that explains how companies change their marketing plans when there are trade problems, especially on social media.
- The study shows that digital marketing is not about promoting products anymore. It is now seen as a tool that helps companies deal with uncertainty talk to people who have an interest in the company and keep

their brand reputation good. When it comes to trade wars and sanctions social media is a way for companies to communicate with different people who have an interest in the company. The model from this study shows that companies need to make sure their internal abilities to adapt to change match the pressures from the world around them so they can keep talking to people all, around the world about their brand.

- This study helps us understand how international trade disruptions affect marketing adaptation. It also gives us some ideas for research. For example, we could do some in-depth studies. Look at data from many countries to see if the ideas in this study really work. This would help us make sure the ideas can be used in life. We are talking about marketing adaptation and how it relates to international trade disruptions and brand resilience.
- We could also look at how different industries deal with trade wars and sanctions. International trade disruptions might affect marketing adaptation differently in industries, like manufacturing, technology and services. We need to study trade disruptions and digital marketing adaptation to learn more.
- The researchers can look into how new digital technologies changing things in the fields of artificial intelligence-based marketing analytics and influencer marketing and platform algorithms. They can see how these digital technologies help with marketing resilience when there are trade problems. The digital technologies and institutional factors can work together to add something to international marketing theory. Researchers can find out more about the role of digital technologies like artificial intelligence-based marketing analytics and influencer marketing, in international marketing.
- Finally, future studies could investigate the long-term implications of persistent trade uncertainty on global brand strategy, including shifts toward regional branding, digital localization, and decoupling of global communication strategies. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how international trade dynamics influence the evolution of digital marketing in an increasingly fragmented global economy.
- In conclusion, this study emphasizes the strategic significance of digital marketing adaptation in navigating international trade disruptions and provides a conceptual foundation for future scholarly inquiry. By bridging international trade and digital marketing literature, the paper advances understanding of global brand communication in an era of heightened geopolitical and economic uncertainty.

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