A big data analysis of *guanxi* from an 'insider-outsider' perspective

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Abstract

1. Introduction

Guanxi, coined as the "Chinese" way of doing business, has received a significant amount of interest amongst scholars. This paper utilizes an outside-in marketing approach to explore the megatrends impacting guanxi and how the image of guanxi is interpreted from an insider-outsider perspective.

2. Methodology

This paper uses 162 million guanxi-related online news articles from 2017-2020 sourced from the Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT). The big data research methodology framework is adopted. The insider, China, is compared with two culturally distant outsiders, the US and Germany.

3. Key Findings

The findings revealed that guanxi was heavily influenced by geopolitical and public health issues. The study also discovered a major contrast in the overall sentiment between China, being slightly positive, and the US and Germany, largely negative. The association varies according to changes in the marketing ecosystem.

4. Research implications

The findings provide a new method to understand the state of business relationships (guanxi) and inter-country dynamics through the lens of an insider (China) and outsider (Germany and the US). This approach provides first-mover advantages for international business practitioners.

Keywords: business-to-business relations; big data; GDELT; Guanxi; outside-in marketing