Country of Origin
- *Does it really matter in the current globalization?*
Acknowledgement

This study was conducted as our master thesis in the marketing program at the Linnaeus University, spring 2015. With this paper we have reached our final destination in our research journey and the end of an era is here. This research along with our education have enriched us with great challenges and developed both a wider and deeper perspectives within the field of marketing and business. In order to attain this position many people has been of great importance. Therefore, we want to take this moment to show our appreciation and gratefulness towards the individuals that has taken part and provided both help and support during our journey.

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ABSTRACT

COO is a construct that refers to the country which a consumer associates a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced. Scholars like Magnusson et al. (2011) argue that COO is a salient cue in consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention. In contrast, Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2010) criticize the COO effect, by explaining that due to multinational production, integrated worldwide supply chains and global branding there are other cues that have become more salient in consumers’ decision-making process.

The purpose of this thesis is to extend the understanding about the relationship of COO in consumers buying process. The research questions followed: To what extent does country of origin influence consumers’ product evaluations and purchase intention? To what extent does the level of involvement affect the relationship between country of origin and consumers’ product evaluation? To what extent does the level of involvement affect the relationship between country of origin and consumers’ purchase intentions.

Applying a deductive approach, a quantitative research has been chosen for this thesis involving survey as the source for data collection in order to test this research four main concepts: COO, product evaluation, purchase intention and product involvement.

The findings indicated that COO has a significant direct effect in consumers’ product evaluations and purchase intention. The results also indicated on that when consumers’ perceive products to be low involvement, the COO effect is greater in consumers’ decision-making process.

Keywords

Country of origin, COO, Product evaluation, Purchase intention, Product involvement, Online shopping, Fashion clothing
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1. INTRODUCTION
This chapter highlights the country of origin (COO) concept and the current debate on the construct and emphasizes those by presenting research gaps that were tested in the research.

1.1 Background
The country of origin (COO) concept has been a highly researched topic in international marketing since its introduction among scholars in the early 1960s (Pharr, 2005). COO is explained as a construct that refers to “the country which a consumer associates a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced” (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2006, p. 29). The concept originally descends from the impact of both manufacturing origin and brand origin in consumers’ decision-making process (Demirbag et al., 2010; Phau and Chao, 2008; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). However, scholars have in recent years started arguing that the world is nowadays not the same as decades ago, referring to an increasing globalization where it in the current business is common that companies source and manufacture their products from numerous locations (Samiee, 2011; Martin and Cerviño, 2011). Given this, more scholars explain that the manufacturing part of the COO construct is becoming a less salient cue in consumers’ product evaluations (Kipnis et al., 2012; Phau and Chao, 2008).

It is acknowledged that in the current marketing practice, many international firms have adapted their marketing strategy to their consumers’ COO perception (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). For example, IKEA put emphasis in their Swedish heritage in their promotional activities. As such, their stores are painted blue and yellow, they call all their products with traditional Swedish names and they offer Swedish food in the store. Another illustration is Volkswagen’s effort to emphasize the “Das Auto” slogan in their promotion campaigns and also they use a German-accent narrator in their TV commercials to strengthen the brand’s German heritage (Magnusson, 2011). Given this, the impact COO has on consumers’ evaluations and preferences have resulted in that firms consider the concept in their marketing strategies and practices (Demirbag et al., 2010; Phau and Chao, 2008; Sharma, 2011). Further emphasize Yasin et al. (2007) in their study that it is the consumers’ beliefs and evaluations of a brand that is strongly influenced by an organization’s COO. This has accordingly to Jiménez and Martin (2014) and Magnusson et al. (2011) resulted in a greater challenge for firms’ managements to develop and establish a marketing strategy that exploit the markets and segments the organisation is operating in. Therefore, managers have to consider the impact of COO for their own organisations future prosperity (Jiménez and Martin, 2014; Magnusson et al., 2011). Realizing that the current market
place is highly competitive, it is also essential for managers to understand that the online environment is a big part of organisations’ future competitiveness (Fan and Tsai, 2010). In Reuber and Fischer’s (2011) study they explain that the COO cue is a determinant signal in online product evaluations. Moreover, Parsons et al. (2012) conducted a study where they used online shoppers and their findings indicated that COO is also highly influential in brand-level. This is important to highlight since consumer have the possibility in the online environment to receive product information quickly where different shopping channels and reviews are just seconds away (Lan and Lie, 2010) and still seeing the effect of the concept gives incentives to managers to implement it in their own operations. Especially fashion clothing is a product category that is highly influential in the online environment and works extensively with online customer experience (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2004). Given this, mean Hines and Bruce (2007) that fashion clothing is a product category that consumers spends the most money on when shopping online and further have academics interest for the topic increased considerably.

1.2 Problem Discussion
There exists a current debate about the COO construct, with studies providing contradicting findings regarding how influential the concept is in consumers’ decision-making process (Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013). Scholars like Magnusson et al. (2011), Josiassen and Harzing (2008) and Demirbag et al. (2010) argue that COO is a salient cue in consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention. In contrast, Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2011) criticize the COO effect, by explaining that due to multinational production, integrated worldwide supply chains and global branding there are other cues that have become more salient in consumers’ decision-making process. If the above criticism by Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2011) is justified then product evaluations and purchase intentions would not be expected to either directly or indirectly be influenced by COO considerations, and firms could therefore exclude to implement that cue in their marketing strategies. However, Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) and Magnusson (2011) contributed to the debate when they responded to the criticism by empirically refuting Samiee and Usunier’s notion that COO is not a salient cue in consumers’ decision making process. Although, a noteworthy aspect is that both Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) and Magnusson et al. (2011) discuss how COO is a decisive cue but agree with some of Samiee and Usunier’s scepticism towards the concept and argue that the COO process in consumers’ decision-making process is still not fully clear. Therefore it is acknowledged that there are different opinions among scholars regarding what COO actually affects in consumers’ decision-
making, which Wen et al. (2014) discuss as a process that product evaluations and purchase intentions are two significant variables in.

Given the current inconsequent and still unclear information about the COO cue, Peterson and Jolibert (1995) indicate that product evaluation and purchase intention variables are influenced differently by the COO concept. They mean that purchase intention comprises a higher degree of personal commitment than perceptual evaluations, and tends to have more influencing factors. Lim and Darley (1997) contribute with additional aspects to the debate by arguing that COO is a clear cue that affect consumer evaluations but explain that the concept has less impact on the purchasing aspect of consumers. In contrast, Demirbag et al. (2010), Phau and Chao (2008) and Sharma (2011) all argue that COO has a direct effect on both product evaluations and purchasing intentions. Also Wang and Yang (2008) support the claim that COO has a direct effect on purchase intention and Ching et al. (2013) suggest that the COO cue influence purchase intention in the online environment. These opposing results gives supports to Hui and Zhou (2002) arguments that the COO field has not gain enough recognition in exploring the difference or similarities between behavioural and evaluative variables. Their findings indicate that the COO information had a direct effect on overall product evaluation, while for the purchase intention the effect is rather indirect and there are other cues that also impact the specific variable. However, they also note that since they only use one product category they question whether their findings can be generalized to other product categories, which gives incentives for further and extensive research (Hui and Zhou, 2002). Wang et al. (2012) add to the debate by arguing in their study that when the country image is affective the COO cue has a direct influence on purchase intentions, while a cognitive country image rather influence purchase intentions indirectly.

In the subject of product evaluation and purchase intention the most commonly used product categorization is referred as high or low involvement products (Arora et al., 2015). In extant literature, it is not clear what exact role COO plays in consumers’ product evaluation and intentions to purchase or whether its effect is the same for low-involvement products as for high-involvement products (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). In Ahmed et al.’s (2004) article, the findings indicate that past research on product involvement of COO effects have mostly been focusing on high involvement products (e.g. automobiles and electronics). This goes in line with the belief that the COO effect is stronger in high involvement contexts (Ahmed and d’Astous, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2002; Ahmed et al., 2004). In contrary, the results in Josassien et al. (2008) study showed that low involvement products are more sensitive of COO effects. This also
supports the arguments in Verlegh et al. (2005) and Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran’s (2000) pieces of research that explain how consumers consider COO to be more important in their product evaluations when they are less involved in the information process, for example when involvement is low with the products that they are evaluating. Therefore, the evidence among scholars shows that there is diffusion whether low and high involvement products are more likely to be affected to a higher degree by the COO cue. As a result both Josassien et al. (2008) and Magnusson (2011) state that more research needs to be done in the COO context that investigate the moderating effect of high and low involvement products. Likewise discuss Parkvithee and Miranda (2012) and Browne and Kaldenberg (1997) that fashion clothing is an interesting context to investigate involvement studies in.

Given the previous problem analysis, this study contributes to existing COO literature in several ways by investigating a number of research gaps. Firstly, it will shed light on the relationship between COO’s impact on consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention, where Hui and Zhou (2002) argue that existing research is not adequate. Secondly, by evaluating the moderating effect of high and low involvement products, this study can support Josassien et al. (2008) and Magnusson’s (2011) call for extensive research by correctly assessing how the COO cue actually impact different product types. Thirdly, this research can challenge the current criticism towards the COO construct proposed by Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2010) by empirically demonstrating its impact on product evaluations and purchase intentions.

Also have recent COO related researches been criticized for being biased since they expose brands origin to the respondents (Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011). Consequently, in order to investigate these gaps in an unbiased manner the study needed a platform to test the concepts. This study applies the research in the online environment since its context has become essential for organisations to consider in businesses today (Fan and Tsai, 2010). As well is the online consumer behaviour a relatively new topic without adequate research among scholars (Laroche, 2010). The COO concept is still relatively unexplored in the online context, however there is still some evidence in Parsons et al. (2012) and Reuber and Fischer (2011) studies, which imply that the COO signal is effective in the online environment. Hence, it would therefore be interesting to study COO’s impact on the consumers’ decision-making process in such environment and extend the COO literature in that context. Lastly, already discussing the need for having a platform to perform an unbiased study, the need for an applicable product category was also vital for the research. In this study was fashion clothing applied since it is a product category that has
been successfully studied in COO research before (Jung et al., 2014; Magnusson et al., 2011). Likewise is fashion clothing a product category that consumers spends the most money on when shopping online and it is also acknowledged that academics interest for the topic increases extensively (Hines and Bruce, 2007). For the remainder of this paper, we first reviewed the most relevant COO literature in our conceptual framework, which outlined the hypotheses that was empirically tested in the survey. Furthermore, in the final part of the paper we analysed and concluded the findings from the empirical data and discussed relevant implications of our study in order to contribute to international marketing research and practice.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is to extend the understanding about the relationship of COO in consumers’ decision-making process.

1.4 Research Questions

1) To what extent does country of origin influence consumers’ product evaluations and purchase intention?

2) To what extent does the level of involvement affect the relationship between country of origin and consumers’ product evaluation?

3) To what extent does the level of involvement affect the relationship between country of origin and consumers’ purchase intentions?

1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 - Introduction
Introduces the topic by highlighting the COO concept together with additional constructs. Continues with problem discussion, purpose and RQ.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review
This chapter provides a literature review of research and science that function as a framework for understanding and analysing the COO construct.

Chapter 3 - Conceptual Framework
Aim of this chapter was to provide conceptual distinctions from the literature that would function as the foundation for the hypothesis testing.

Chapter 4 - Methodology
In the methodology chapter the different methods was presented together with motivations for the selected choices in order to be as transparent as possible.
Chapter 5 - Analysis and Results
In this chapter the analysis and results are presented comprising demographic variables, correlations, regression-analysis and hypotheses testing.

Chapter 6 - Discussion
The discussion chapter aims to explain the relationship between the theoretical framework and past research combined with the empirical data and findings.

Chapter 7 - Conclusions and Contributions
This chapter presents the conclusion and contributions based on the previous chapters.

Chapter 8 - Managerial Implications, Limitations and Further Research
This chapter comprises the practical advices, weaknesses of the study and finally suggestions for further research that can evolve the literature.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review of research and science that function as a framework for understanding and analysing COO relations to product evaluation, purchase intention and product involvement. In the last part there is also an introduction to online environment and the chosen literature serves as a point of origin for the conceptual framework. A comprehensive literature review table can also be found in Appendix 10.1.

2.1 Country of Origin (COO)

The research regarding the COO concept was introduced in Scolar’s (1965) study, since then it has been a widely explored topic and generated numerous of studies and interest (Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013) (see Appendix 10.1 review of COO research). Testifying to the importance of the concept, International Marketing Review published two special issues dedicated exclusively to the topic of the COO phenomenon (2008, Vol. 25, No. 4 and 2010, Vol. 27, No. 4). The original view of COO descends from the impact of manufacturing origin in consumers’ product evaluations (Demirbag et al., 2010; Phau and Chao, 2008; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999).

However in modern days, several studies have started to question the concept, whereby they argue that manufacturing origin is not as important as it once was (Kipnis et al., 2012; Usunier, 2011; Samiee, 2010). Showing support for this, Martín and Cerviño (2011) and Samiee (2010) explain that the world is nowadays not the same as decades ago, referring to an increasing globalization and integration where it today is common that companies source and produce their products from multiple locations. Given this, Usunier (2011) explains that consumers still perceive product cues related to origin, rather than manufacturing origin or “made in” labels, which are no longer a salient cue in consumers’ product evaluations. Consequently, more scholars have started to provide support for the notion that COO research is under evolvement and that the concept still is not completely understood (e.g. Magnusson et al., 2011; Martin and Cerviño, 2011; Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011).

2.2 Country of Origin and Product evaluation

Consumers face numerous judgements and decisions every day and each of these evaluations is dependent on the information and knowledge the individual possesses regarding the specific context (Kruglanski and Webster, 1996; Andersson et al., 2015). One of the key factors in the decision making process comes from consumers’ product evaluation (Martin and Cerviño,
2011). Bloemer et al. (2009) explains that in previous research of COO it is recognized that consumers’ decision-making and product evaluations derives from what is referred as a cognitive process (Bloemer et al., 2009). The cognitive process is essentially built up by the consumers’ interpretations of a product's different informational cue, which is what consumers then rely on when making a product evaluation (Westjohn and Magnusson, 2011). There are two types of cues that dominate the cognitive process, where some of them are extrinsic cues referred to as intangible product characteristics, such as price, brand name and COO, whereof other cues are intrinsic, which refers to attributes such as design, taste and performance (Grewal et al., 1994). It is argued that consumers’ tend to resort to extrinsic cues on daily basis in the decision-making process since it may be more difficult to interpret intrinsic cues before a purchase (Elliot and Cameron, 1994). It is also acknowledged that extrinsic cues such as COO could work as a cognitive shortcut that consumers rely on when intrinsic cues are not accessible, but also as a tool to accelerate the product evaluation process (Westjohn and Magnusson, 2011). According to research conducted by Dagger and Raciti (2011) and Yasin, et al., (2007) it is important to notice that the COO effect works involuntary and instinctive on people’s product evaluation process. The effect is apparent and in an extensive literature review done by Rezvani et al. (2012) it was shown that even when consumers can evaluate all the intrinsic product characteristics by experiencing the product, the effect of extrinsic cues tend to have more influence on consumer product evaluation.

Additionally, consumers’ faces several perceptual cues (intrinsic and extrinsic) each day and tend to simplify all the impressions in predetermined patterns and stereotypes (Magnusson et al., 2011). Likewise, the categorization theory explains the same patterns and in such context claims Martin and Cerviñós (2011) research that consumers’ often put brands in different categories that they in some way or another find related to each other. The categorization function as a way for consumers’ to bypass overwhelming amounts of impression, making the response often based on only a few key features (Magnusson et al., 2011). To describe this in theoretical terms, it exist a couple of different explanations on how extrinsic cues like COO affect consumers’ product evaluations (Bloemer et al., 2009). One of the explanations that have receive most attention according to Ghazali, et al. (2008) is the halo-effect, which is used when people have little knowledge and information about a product. The halo-effect works as an indirect proof, for example: people do not know a specific dishwasher from Germany but they know that Germany is a country with high quality products, so although they are not familiar with the brand, they
evaluate it positively (Rezvani et al., 2012). This tends to be common when the information cues are assumed to be limited but can also play a considerable role in customer evaluation when choosing from a wide range of products (Rezvani et al., 2012 and Laroche et al., 2005).

2.3 COO as a Purchase intention cue

The previous section explained that COO is a decisive and direct cue that affect consumers’ product evaluation. In contrast, COO’s impact on consumers’ purchase intention is a more diffuse and complex matter with extensive contradicting findings among scholars. The concept is explained as the individual’s idea or intention of what they think they will buy (Rezvani et al., 2012). Also Blackwell et al. (2001) explains the theory as a kind of behavioural intention that refers to a consumer’s subjective judgement about what that individual will do in the future. Lee and Lee (2015) further describes the concept’s essence by mentioning purchase intention as an important and meaningful aspect to consider in the decision-making process since it is the most powerful precursor of purchase behaviour and the latter has a direct and critical effect on the success for businesses. Wang et al. (2012) argues that COO influence consumers’ purchase intention through the combined attributes of the product, which is naturally influenced by different perceptions of the particular consumer but Wang and Yang (2008) still mean that the concept has a direct relationship with purchase intention. It was first Peterson and Jolibert (1995) that concluded in their study that the product evaluation and purchase intention was affected differently by the COO cue. They meant that consumers’ purchase intention required more emotional effort and personal commitment compared to product evaluations and tended to have more influencing factors, such as price. This is in line with Hui and Zhou’s (2002) and Lim and Darley (1997) arguments in their study where they empirically demonstrate that COO impact differently on the criterion variables involved in the consumer decision process.

Although, a noteworthy perspective that should be added to the debate is that there are also scholars that are supporting the COO cues impact on purchase intention. For example Sharma (2011); Demirbag et al. (2010); Phau and Chao (2008) all argue that COO affects both product evaluations and purchasing intentions. Moreover, Wang and Yang (2008) discuss in their study that COO has in fact a direct relationship with purchase intention. This is interesting since Hui and Zhou (2002) argue that the relationship between consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention have gained limited acknowledgment and that the direct impact COO has on consumer purchase intentions has not been adequately addressed. Also Wang et al. (2012) discuss this matter in their study where they imply that when the country image is affective the
COO cue has a direct influence on purchase intentions, while a cognitive country image rather influence purchase intentions indirectly.

2.4 Product involvement

The theory of product involvement can be explained as the level of interest, recognition or knowledge a consumer posses of a product. Since the introduction of the concept among scholars, there have been extensive attempts to determine involvements effect in the consumer behaviour literature (Rangaswamy, 2015). In the subject of product evaluation and purchase intention the most commonly used product categorization is referred as high or low involvement products (Arora et al., 2015). Although, in existing literature, it is not clear what exact role COO plays in consumers’ product evaluation and intentions to purchase or whether the effect is the same for low-involvement products as for high-involvement products (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012). When referring to low-involvement scenarios, consumers tend to be less motivated to engage in the product and its message, while for high-involvement products it is rather the opposite (Liu and Shrum, 2009). This provides incentives for managers to develop and design their firm’s marketing strategies with consideration of the involvement of the company’s products. A scenario could be that a low-involvement product might get positive attitudes from even weak signals, while for a high-involvement product, consumers become more engaged in the offer and therefore they strive to seek even more meaningful and detailed information, having a more cognitive behaviour (Atkinson and Rosenthal, 2014). Consequently has this resulted in an increasing interest among researchers, where their ambition is to know more about levels of product involvement in order to implement a more effective marketing communication (Ahmed, 2004).

It is further acknowledged in Harari and Hornik (2010) study that product involvement has a substantial influence on consumers’ decision-making process. They explain that the degree of involvement has an impact on consumers’ cognitive and behavioural response, which is affected in form of memory, attention, search, processing and brand commitment (Harari and Hornik, 2010). Consumers that possess higher knowledge about products tend to perceive them as more important and thus engage the product with a higher involvement in the decision-making process (Harari and Hornik, 2010). Along similar lines, Rangaswamy (2015) argue that high involvement products can create interest and emotional attachment for consumers to such products. Given this, consumers’ would then be more engaged and motivated to collect and interpreting different cues for a current or future decision-making (Rangaswamy, 2015). COO is one of these cues that
have been researched regarding how it affects consumers’ decision-making process in form of product evaluation and purchase intention (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2011).

According to Josiassen et al. (2008) consumers tend to either use a central route or a peripheral route when evaluating products’. When consumers utilize a central route, often in connection to high-involvement product they pursue a cognitive effort evaluating all information available more deeply. While applying to a peripheral route, often in connection to low-involvement product, consumers tend to base their evaluation on more salient and easily accessible cues (Josiassen et al., 2008). Consequently, several researchers suggest that COO cues have greater impact on consumers in low-involvement product categories (Josiassen et al., 2008; Verlegh et al., 2005; Gürhan and Maheswaran, 2000; Maheswaran, 1994; Han, 1989). Gürhan and Maheswaran (2000) explains the matter further by arguing that it is due to consumers’ limited motivation for searching for information, turning COO image into an easily accessible cue giving it a bigger focus instead of more specific product information which requires more effort (Gürhan and Maheswaran, 2000). Nonetheless in Ahmed et al.’s (2004) article, the findings indicate that past COO research on product involvement effects have mostly been focusing on high involvement products. Also these studies demonstrate that the COO effect is stronger in high involvement contexts (Ahmed et al., 2004; Ahmed et al., 2002; Ahmed and d’Astous, 1999). These beliefs are grounded in the notion that consumers will put more effort into every cue in high-involvement products and thus will COO be given more attention that will lead to a bigger impact on consumers (Ahmed and d’Astous, 1999, Ahmed et al., 2004). Such beliefs is supported with Parkvithee and Miranda, (2012) assertion that extant literature is not clear what exact role COO plays in consumers’ product evaluation and intentions to purchase or whether its effect is the same for low-involvement products as for high-involvement products.

2.5 Online environment

Understanding how consumers are acting and behaving is an essential part in organisations’ competitiveness and prosperity and the concept of consumer behaviour have received a great amount of attention among marketing scholars (Solomon et al., 2012). In recent years have consumers shopping habits drastically changed with the technology development and the online environment has become a more essential platform for organisations to consider in businesses today (Fan and Tsai, 2010). The evolution of Internet technologies has changed firms’ emphasize where the online presence has become a key driver to stay competitive (Riyad and Hatem, 2013). It is also acknowledged that the COO effect is salient in the online environment, where Reuber
and Fischer (2011) explain that the COO cue is a determinant signal in online product evaluations and Ching et al. (2013) suggest that the COO cue influence purchase intention in the online environment. Further Parsons et al. (2012) concluded that COO is highly influential in brand-level as well when performing a study in the online environment. The online consumer behaviour is quite similar to traditional consumer behaviour. They both posses the basic characteristics of every consumer that desire to purchase a service or product, with wants, needs and demands. It is also acknowledged that online consumers’ tend to be more represented by younger people (Koufaris, 2002). Online consumers have also the ability to receive product information more quickly where different shopping channels and reviews are just seconds away in the online environment (Lan and Lie, 2010). This gives firms a great challenge since information, reviews and knowledge about different businesses are more easily accessible for the consumer. The consumer can then evaluate different products and services in their own environment and value different alternatives that will affect their intention to purchase (Toa et al., 2007). It is additionally argued that the online consumer behaviour is a relatively new topic with not adequate research among scholars (Laroche, 2010) and therefore the motivation for extensive research in an online environment is distinct. In recent literature it is also acknowledged that one of the product categories that consumers spends the most money on when shopping online is fashion clothing and the academics interest for the topic increases significantly (Hines and Bruce, 2007). Likewise is the fashion industry interesting to study since it works extensively with online customer experience (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2004).
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is based on the literature review and the aim was to provide conceptual distinctions from the literature and that would function as the foundation for the hypothesis testing. The chapter also ends in a summarization, where figure 3.1 present an overview of the conceptual relationships and direction of the study.

3.1 The influence of COO on Product evaluation and Purchase intention

Given the previous theoretical discussion it has been recognized that in extant literature, there has been extensive research on the COO field (see Appendix 10.1 review of COO research). However, there are still several matters in the COO context that scholars are not presenting a coherent view of. Especially explains Magnusson et al. (2011), Samiee (2010), Usunier (2011) and Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) that there is still not a comprehensible view regarding what COO actually affects in consumers’ decision-making process. For example in Samiee (2010) and Usunier (2006; 2011) studies they criticize the COO concept and argue that it is not a salient cue in consumers’ decision-making, while Demirbag et al. (2010); Phau and Chao (2008) and Sharma (2011) in contrariety all empirically demonstrate in their researches that COO do affect both product evaluations and purchasing intentions. Additionally, as salient cues in the consumer decision-making process (Wen et al., 2014), product evaluation and purchase intention are two variables that are discussed to not being influenced to the same level by the COO concept (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Hui and Zhou, 2002; Lim and Darley, 1997). Even though the effect is not completely concluded, many scholars have been requesting further research on the topic striving to get a more coherent view of what or to what degree the COO cue influence consumers in their decision-making (Demirbag et al., 2010; Magnusson et al., 2011; Samiee, 2010; Usunier, 2011).

Particularly COO’s influence on purchase intention is an area where scholars conclude contradicting findings. Hui and Zhou (2002) and Wang et al. (2012) view is that COO have a rather indirect effect on purchase intention, where they argue that the COO affect purchase intentions through perceived value and the evaluation of the product. In contrary explain Wang and Yang (2008) in their research that COO have a direct effect on purchase intention. As such, explains Hui and Zhou (2002) that existing research of COO’s impact on consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention and whether there is a difference between the concepts, is not adequate. Consequently, it is recognized that scholars are not illustrating a coherent view on COO’s influence on product evaluation and purchase intention, which give incentives for
extensive research. Given this, there are still arguments for COO as a salient cue in consumers’ decision-making process despite Samiee and Usunier’s criticism and we argue that a product’s COO both positively impact consumer’s product evaluation and purchase intention. However we also believe based on the theoretical framework that COO’s impact and the cognitive route in consumers’ decision-making is not the same for the product evaluation as for the purchase intention. This is due to current inconsequent findings among scholars regarding the understanding about the relationship of COO in consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention. In order to provide more clarity regarding this we argue that COO’s influence is greater for consumers’ product evaluation than purchase intention and these beliefs come from the idea that consumers tend to put more emotional effort and personal commitment in their purchase intention rather than their product evaluation. This means that when consumers intend to purchase a product, other cues than the COO signal becomes more salient compared to when consumers evaluate products, where the COO cue is stronger (Peterson and Jolibert 1995; Hui and Zhou, 2002). Thus to respond to the current criticism towards the COO construct and provide evidence for the understanding about the relationship of COO in consumers’ decision-making process, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1a:** The importance of a product’s country of origin impacts consumers’ product evaluation.

**H1b:** The importance of a product's country of origin impacts consumers’ purchase intention.

**H2:** Product’s country of origin has a greater impact on consumers’ product evaluation than purchase intention.

### 3.2 COO impact on high and low involvement products

Given the evolvement of the COO literature it has been acknowledged among scholars that the level of involvement in products is differently affected by the COO cue. Parkvithee and Miranda (2012) explain this by meaning that it is not clear what exact role COO plays in consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intentions or whether the effect is the same for low-involvement products as for high-involvement products. Harari and Hornik (2010) argue that this is essential to understand since the level of product involvement has a great influence on consumers’ decision-making process. In one side of the debate, argue e.g. Ahmed and d’Astous (1999) and Ahmed et al. (2004) that the COO effect is stronger in high involvement contexts, where their beliefs come from the idea that consumers’ will be more involved in every cue in high-involvement products and have a greater impact on consumers.
In contrary, other scholars discuss that COO cues have a more significant impact in low-involvement product categories (Josassien et al., 2008; Verlegh et al., 2005; Gürhan and Maheswaran, 2000; Han, 1989). This due to consumers’ limited motivation for searching information and the idea that COO is an easily accessible cue in the decision-making process (Gürhan and Maheswaran, 2000). Adding the two perspectives together, most scholars are supporting that the COO influence is more significant for low-involvement products and therefore we argue that COO positively impact low involvement products. Thus to provide evidence to the current COO literature and respond to the debate about what level of product involvement that is the stronger determinant in consumers’ decision making process, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H3a:** Country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’ product evaluation at a lower degree of product involvement.

**H3b:** Country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’ purchase intention at a lower degree of product involvement.

**Figure 3.1 – Conceptual model**

*Figure 3.1 shows the relationship between the direct and indirect variables together with the different hypothesis tested in this study.*
4. METHOD

In the following chapter the different method parts are presented as for answering the questions: What have been done and why? Additionally, the operationalization sums up the link between theory and reality. A research methodology summary is presented in Table 4.2.

4.1 Research approach

A quantitative approach was applied in this thesis in order to statistically provide evidence for COO’s effect on consumers’ decision-making process, but also in order to see if the impact differed depending on the involvement of the product. By adopting a quantitative approach in this research it is possible to statistically explain the relationship between the different concepts since a quantitative approach aims to gather quantified numbers in order to get more accurate and generalizable results (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Despite the COO literature ambiguous result among researchers, it has been widely studied since its introduction in the 1960s (Pharr, 2005). Therefore it was argued that a deductive approach would be suitable to apply in this paper, since it is based on theory-testing from established theory or generalizations that aims to extend and confirm phenomenon’s in different contexts (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Moreover, the COO field has in recent years been under criticism for its biased methodological choices and one of the deductive approach advantages is to strive for objectivity in the research and minimize authors own thoughts and beliefs (Patel and Davidson, 2003).

4.2 Research design

A research design involves the overall strategy for the different components of the study and that they are coherent and logical (Blaikie, 2009). A well-developed research strategy or plan can help researchers to answer its research questions. Moreover, a research design can have different directions depending on the objective and purpose of the research. It is vital to apply the most appropriate design in a study since it guides the entire process (Shukla, 2008). This research is of a descriptive design since its objective is to emphasize actual conditions in the environment and describe relations between the concepts studied. Bearing this in mind, the thesis can study actual conditions and behaviour of consumers’ without any manipulation of the environment. Since COO-contextual research is widely researched there is no need for an exploratory research for answering our purpose.
4.3 Research strategy

It is vital to choose a suitable research strategy in order to be able to collect the most relevant data and answer the paper’s research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this paper, survey was seen as the best-suited method since it provides easily accessible quantitative results that can be generalized. It is also acknowledged that surveys is seen as one of the cheapest and fastest way to get collect information, that also provides a generalizable effect if scientifically valid (Fink and Kosecoff, 1985). Also, an advantage with this method is that the interviewer cannot impact the respondent with any personal subjective bias (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This is seen as especially important in this research as the field of COO research has been under criticism for producing biased method chapters, where the methods are in some way adapted for receiving the results the different scholars want (Usunier, 2011; Samiee, 2011; Magnusson et al., 2011). Therefore e.g semi-structured interviews, observations were excluded as they all have objective weaknesses.

4.4 Data collection method

As mentioned in 4.3, the data collection procedure in this paper was dependent on a survey and it was argued that this type of data collection method captured the descriptive purpose of the study most efficient. As such, the data collection was collected through both an online and paper-form questionnaire. The online questionnaires were sent out using the platform Google Docs and the paper-form questionnaires were collected in three different places in Växjö during three various days. The questionnaires were sent out and collected during three different days in the week in order to strengthen the credibility of the study, due to the ambition to have as many random respondents as possible (Aczel and Sounderpandian, 2008). For instance it could be that respondents in one day could be very similar to each other and thus the motivation to collect data during different days in the week.

4.4.1 Pre-test

To construct a robust and credible research we designed and structured a focus group that functioned as a pre-test where the main emphasize was that the respondents understood the questions. Bryman and Bell (2011) argues that qualitative methods can facilitate quantitative research by providing correct measurements and since several scholars argue that the research in COO context is often too biased (Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011), the choice of having a focus group in this study increased both the credibility and unbias of the research.
4.4.2 Questionnaire motivation

The main emphasis for the authors in this paper was to answer the purpose and research questions but also construct a study that would not be partial since scholars argue that the research in COO context is often too biased (Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011). They argue that COO research should not artificially expose respondents to brands and their origin, which would lead to answers that are not rigged or manipulated. Therefore, in the process the authors of this thesis decided to structure the questionnaire by using a single product category and then measure COO’s impact on product evaluation, purchase intention and having product involvement as a moderating factor. However, in order to test the concepts the questions had to be put in a context-related situation otherwise it would not be possible to test the concepts using a single product category. As such, the context-related platform to test the concepts was chosen to be the online environment and the industry, fashion clothing. Online consumer behaviour is a relatively new topic without adequate research among scholars (Laroche, 2010) and Hines and Bruce (2007) mean that fashion clothing is a product category that consumers spends the most money on when shopping online. Moreover, the motivation of using the fashion industry also comes from the idea that the fashion industry works extensively with online customer experience (Goldsmith and Flynn, 2004) and also have the fashion industry been studied in previous COO research (Jung et al., 2014; Magnusson et al., 2011). Likewise, several scholars argue that fashion clothing is an interesting context to conduct involvement research in (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012; Browne and Kaldenberg, 1997) and academics interest for the topic increases more and more (Hines and Bruce, 2007). For instance, Hansen and Jensen (2009) claim that extensive research needs to be conducted to understand the factors that influence consumers’ online clothing shopping behaviour. Another interesting perspective for the motivation of applying fashion clothing in this study comes from Wei-Na et al’s. (2005) idea that it is likely that subjects classified as low in one study may be classified as high in another study or vice versa. Given this, we let the respondent by themself determine their level of involvement based on their perception of the involvement in the product category, e.g. a low score mean that the respondent valued it as a low involvement product category. This idea comes from that in many former studies (Arora et al., 2015; Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012; Browne and Kaldenberg, 1997) fashion clothing is perceived as a high involvement product category, due to the fact that exclusive brands are included. With a total absence of brands in this research, and therefore also making the research unique, every individual respondent have the opportunity to choose the level of involvement they feel towards fashion clothing. That said, this study does not define fashion
clothing as being high or low involvement products rather it lets respondents’ determine their own interpretation of how involved they are in the product, all to minimize the influence of the researches in respondents answers. This way of structuring the questionnaire could also help to demonstrate evidence regarding how the population of the paper perceive fashion clothing as being low or high involvement products, which hopefully could provide clearer guidelines for more extensive research.

4.4.3 Questionnaire design
There were four main concepts that were tested in the study; COO, product evaluation, purchase intention and product involvement. The questionnaire was structured by using a single product category, fashion clothing and the survey was designed in a way that each construct was tested independently towards online fashion clothing. The questions were measured using a Likert scale which is a measurement tool often applied in surveys and the instruments have been adapted in previous research studying these concepts (Lee and Lee, 2009; O’Cass, 2000). The meaning of a Likert scale could for instance be that the tool lets the respondent rank how much he or she agree with a statement (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and in our process the respondents could rank the statement 1-7, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 7 representing strongly agree. To receive comprehensive and representative answers, each construct had 5 questions and hence the total amount of questions were 20 excluding control questions. To ensure the robustness of the study, the questionnaire also included control variables asking the respondent to write gender, age, occupation and education. It is acknowledged that control questions are valuable to include in a survey in order to determine that the respondents fit the population that is studied (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

4.5 Sampling
The sampling procedure for the survey was depending on a non-probability sampling and the respondents were chosen through a convenience sampling. This type of method is the least expensive and time-consuming method, which well reflected our limited time frame. A convenience sample is a technique where the respondents are selected because of their convenient accessibility for the researcher. Nonetheless, the credibility of this method has been questioned, where the most common criticism towards the concept is sampling bias and that the results does not represent the entire population due to the lack of randomness in the sampling procedure (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, Aczel and Sounderpandian (2008) and Malhotra
(2010) explain that to increase the credibility when applying a convenience sample, the data collection should be done during different times of the day and week in order to have greater diversity among the population. Therefore, performing such study can strengthen the study and the results can be accepted and generalized to some extent (Malhotra, 2010; Aczel and Sounderpandian, 2008). Consequently, the data collection process was gathered throughout different times of the day and also during different days of the week, both in the weekdays and weekends. In the study the population was Swedish inhabitants and in order to receive answers and opinions from all types of segments the respondents were not restrained to any age-barriers.

The paper-form questionnaires were collected both in the centre of Växjo as well on Grand Samarkand, a major shopping mall located in Växjo during three different days of the week. The sampling frame of the online questionnaires derived from Facebook groups and the authors e-mail contacts. However, studying Swedish inhabitants and merely use respondents from Växjo, a city with 80 000 inhabitants in the south of Sweden might influence the data and not be completely representative for the Swedish population. Nevertheless, due to the fact that a major part of the respondents online were not from Växjo increase the diversity and representativeness of the research. Moreover, after the elimination of incomplete surveys, there were 204 of 223 respondents included. The response rate is hard to determine in this research due to the diversity of data collection. However, calculating the number of people in the Facebook groups, e-mail lists and the number of individuals that were asked to participate at the shopping mall the approximately response rate was 25 %.

4.6 Operationalization

Operationalization can be seen as the process that links theories to reality and actual real world scenarios (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Consequently argue Schensul et al. (1999) that a clear and robust operationalization tend to make the step-by-step process in the study more comprehensible and clear (Schensul et al., 1999). According to Christensen et al. (2010) a well-structured operationalization additionally sets down precise definitions of each variable, increasing the quality of the results and improving the strength of the design. The operationalization table in this thesis (Table 4.1) is adapted from Amo and Cousin’s (2007) four phases: defining key concepts based on identified literature, providing operational definition of key variables, finding and listing potential measures for key variables and develop measures for the particular concepts.
4.6.1 Variables

By adopting references from Westjohn and Magnusson, 2011 and Bloemer et al. (2009) this study defines product evaluation as consumers’ interpretations of products different informational cues, which is what consumers’ then rely on when making a product evaluation. Product evaluation acts as a dependent variable in order to see to what extent the product evaluation is dependent on COO in the consumers’ decision-making process. The measurement details are implemented from Hong and Wyer (1990) and also partially from the work of Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000). In product evaluation, as with all the other variables, a seven-point Likert scale is used to measure the respondents’ opinions. The second dependent variable is purchase intention, the concept is explained as the individual’s idea or intention of what they think they will buy, adopted from Rezvani et al. (2012) and Lee and Lee (2015). The measure indicates the consumer’s level of interest in purchase intention with the framework used by Lee and Lee (2009) and Wang et al., (2012).

COO is explained as a construct that refers to the country which a consumer associates a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced (Phau and Chao, 2008; Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2006; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). In this study COO acts as an independent variable in order to see in what extent COO impact the consumers’. The main framework is adopted by methods used in Hui and Zhou (2002) and Magnusson et al. (2011). As for the second independent variable, product involvement can be defined as the level of interest, recognition or knowledge a consumer posses of a product. (Day, 1970; Rangaswamy, 2015). The main objective is to see the degree of consumer involvement in the decision-making process. The product involvement measurements are based on the work by O’Cass (2000).

Table 4.1 - Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual Definition</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Measurement details</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>The consumers’ interpretations of a products different informational cue, which is what consumers’ then rely on when making a product evaluation (Westjohn and Magnusson, 2011; Bloemer et al., 2009).</td>
<td>Indicates to what extent the product evaluation is dependent on COO in the consumers’ decision-making process.</td>
<td>Adapted from Hong and Wyer, (1990) Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000)</td>
<td>Q1 – 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7 Data analysis method

It is vital to implement accurate data analysis tools in research since it will function as an instrument that will help researches to answer their hypotheses. This paper uses quantitative data analysis methods and in the process the statistical application SPSS have been implemented, which is the software that is widely known for being the most commonly used and precise data analysis tool in quantitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Kothari (2004) explains further that it is essential to choose a data analysis method that is coherent with the purpose of the study.

4.7.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics describe basic features of a study that illustrate general information about a sample (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2008). Descriptive statistics help researches to simplify large amounts of data in an easy understandable way and in this research the descriptive statistics was used to see whether opinions differed between different subgroups. For example it could be how genders differ in how they are being influenced by the COO cue.
4.7.2 Regression analysis
Regression analysis is a commonly used data analysis method when scholars want to explore the relationship between variables. The data analysis method aims to in a detailed way explore the correlation between two variables, e.g. independent and dependent variables (Pallant, 2011). Since the aim in this paper was to investigate COO along with the moderating effect of involvement and its relationship to consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention, multiple linear regression analysis was chosen in this paper. In order to complete the multiple linear regressions for this research, SPSS version 21.0 was statistical tool used.

4.7.3 Measurements
Understanding how to interpret the statistical variables and their meaning is equally important as choosing the most accurate analysis method. This paper uses mainly two values to interpret the data, the p-value and $R^2$-value. The $R$-square value shows a percentage of the change in the dependent variable that can be explained by the variance in the independent variable (Pallant, 2011). The p-value explains the statistical significance of the research, thus how strong or weak the research is. Having a research with strong statistical significance indicate that the findings can be reliable and be applied to the selected population for the study (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

It is acknowledged in the academic world that the maximum level of statistical significance should be $P<0.05$ and p-value is the probability that indicate on that the results are random and did not occur due to sampling errors. Presenting p-values that is below $P<0.05$ indicate on that the tested hypothesis is accepted (Nolan and Heinzen, 2011).

4.8 Quality criteria

4.8.1 Reliability
To ensure high quality in the research, a pre-test was applied where the main emphasize was to make sure that the respondents understood the questions for the survey. Also the quality procedure involved controlling the reliability and validity. The purpose of using validity and reliability is to measure the quality of the research and insure the credibility and strength of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Reliability concerns the consistency of measuring a concept and if a research should be seen as reliable the constructs should have high positive correlations. As such, the reliability was tested in this study through a Cronbach Alpha test, which is an instrument that measures the internal consistency. The function of a Cronbach Alpha test is that it will explain how closely a set of items are as a group and if the questions asked to the respondents measure the same thing. The coefficient value in a Cronbach Alpha test has a range
from 0 to 1 and it is acknowledged among scholars that the acceptable coefficient should be higher than 0.7 (Santos, 1999)

4.8.2 Validity

The next step in the quality procedure was to ensure high validity, which is to see whether a measurement tool in a study is really measuring what it is supposed to do (Bakker, 2012). Consequently, this study insured the validity through measuring the content validity, construct validity and external validity. Content validity refers to that the used theories should be relevant in accordance to what is tested (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The content validity was measured through performing a pre-test in which the aim was to develop clear and understandable questions for the survey. In addition, to further guarantee the quality in the research, the content validity was strengthened by having individuals with relevant academic knowledge revising the operationalizing and if the questionnaire was relevant in relation to what is being tested. This is in accordance with Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) arguments that persons with knowledge in the subject can increase the validity of a study and in our procedure two professors from Gothenburg's university helped us by revising the operationalizing and questionnaire. Construct validity relates to whether the study measures what it is intended to and can often be achieved by applying a correlation test (Gibbert, 2008). The construct validity was insured in the research by a Pearson Correlation test and the purpose of such test was to see how well two sets of data is correlated and the objective was to see how the different constructs tested in the study was correlated with each other. The value in a Pearson Correlation test has a range of +1 (perfect correlation) to -1 (perfect but negative correlation) with 0 as an indicator of an absence in the relationship (Adler and Parmryd, 2010). However, it has to be noticed that in a scale from 0 to 1, values of 0.30 refers to a relative weak to moderate positive linear relationship whilst values of 0.40 refers to a moderate positive linear relationship (Cicchetti, 1994). Also an indicator for construct validity is when the correlation between the variables is below 0.8 which all of the construct was (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The final insurance for high validity was through the measurement of the external validity, which refers to the generalizability of the study (Hair et al., 2003). There were 204 respondents in the study, which the authors seemed as sufficient for the external validity.
4.9 Method summary

Following is a summary of the research methodology used for this thesis.

**Table 4.2 – Method summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research methodology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research approach</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research design</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research strategy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection method</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operationalization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis method</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality criteria</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, results from SPSS are presented, starting with descriptive statistics following by quality criteria and hypothesis testing.

5.1 Descriptive statistics

To provide a more rigorous test and see how opinions differ between different subgroups, the study included four demographic variables: age, gender, education and occupation. For the sample included in the study, the majority (78 %) of the 204 respondents were between 18 and 35 years old. In addition, the gender distribution was more equal, slightly weighing over in favour of male responses. Approximately a third (29.4 %) of the respondents had an educational background from high school and the other two thirds (66.7 %) had in addition a college or university background. Looking at occupation distribution, the diversity was mainly divided between (46.1 %) students and (41.7 %) employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1 - Demographic variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 +</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College / University</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Quality criteria

The internal consistency measures the correlation between two constructs and a Cronbach’s alpha test was implemented in the research to ensure that the reliability was coefficient. In table 5.2 it is illustrated that product intention had the lowest α-value at .797 followed by involvement .845, COO with .905 and product evaluation having the highest correlation value at .912. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011) and Santos (1999) a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher can be considered acceptable in most of the academic research situations. Hence, with all α-values reaching over the satisfied limit, the internal consistency can thus be seen as strong and sufficient in the study.

### Table 5.2 - Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's α</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Product Evaluation</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purchase Intention</td>
<td>.797</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.128</td>
<td>.411**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. COO</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.149</td>
<td>.424**</td>
<td>.412**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Involvement</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.147</td>
<td>.305**</td>
<td>.417**</td>
<td>.465**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The next step to ensure high quality in the research procedure was to control the validity in the study and therefore a Pearson’s $r$ correlation test was carried out to see how two sets of data is correlated. The illustrations in table 5.2 indicate that the correlation values range differed from .305 to .465 with all significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). However, it has to be noticed that in a scale from 0 to 1, values of 0.30 refers to a relative weak to moderate positive linear relationship whilst values of 0.40 refers to a moderate positive linear relationship (Cicchetti, 1994). Given
this, the correlation between product evaluation and involvement had the lowest Pearson $r$-value of .305 and consequently had that relationship the weakest correlation of the given values. The correlation of product evaluation together with purchase intention had a Pearson $r$-value of .411 and with COO .424, which show a stronger relationship. Moreover, the COO variable had a moderate positive relationship with all concepts and the involvement and purchase intention variable’s value was .417, showing a moderate positive correlation. An indicator for construct validity is when the correlation between the variables is below 0.8 which all of the construct is (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

5.3 Hypothesis testing

5.3.1 Product evaluation

_Bellow in table 5.3.1 is the result from the multiple regressions is presented with the relevant values in order to test the hypothesis._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.3.1 – Product evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator Involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Hypothesis_

| | H1a | H3a |
| | | |
| R$^2$ | .018 | .188 | .218 |
| Adjusted R$^2$ | -.002 | .167 | .194 |
| Change in R$^2$ | | .170** | .200** |
| F-value | .909 | 9.156 | 9.143 |
| Degrees of freedom | 4 | 5 | 6 |

* p< 0.05 ** p< 0.01  
_Standard error is presented within parenthesis next to the beta of each independent variable_
Table 5.3.1 illustrate the results on product evaluation and its relationship to the other variables that are concerned in the research. It is found that the control variables have no significant effect on the respondents’ product evaluations. Meaning that the independent variable in the next model can be strong determinants of the dependant variable.

It is observed that hypothesis H1a *the importance of product’s country of origin impacts consumers’ product evaluation* and H3a *country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’ purchase intention at low degree of product involvement* are accepted with a (p < 0.01), which means that there is less than 1 % chance that the result would occur by chance. The beta value for the COO variable is .373 meaning an increase in standard deviation by one in COO would lead to an increase by 0.373 for evaluation. Respectively for the involvement variable, if the standard deviation increases by one, it would lead to a decrease of evaluation by -.127. In addition, the change in R² value is 0.17 which shows that COO increase the predictability by 17 % when added in model 2 and 20 % in model three which means that there is only as 3 % difference in model three when involvement is added. The R² value in model one shows that there is almost no explanation for the variance in evaluation, whereas in model two and three the change in evaluation can be predicted by 18.8 % respectively 21.8 %.
5.3.2 Purchase intention

_Bellow in table 5.3.2 the result from the multiple regressions is presented with the relevant values in order to test the hypothesis._

Table 5.3.2 illustrate the results on purchase intention and its relationship to the other variables that are concerned in the research. It is found that control variable of age have a significant effect on purchase intention. Thus, an increase of one standard deviation in age would thus give a .203 decrease on purchase intention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3 - All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.071** (.155)</td>
<td>-.012 (.143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.253 (.075)</td>
<td>-.203** (.069)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.002** (.143)</td>
<td>.071 (.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>-.095 (.092)</td>
<td>-.083 (.084)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COO</td>
<td>.388** (0,63)</td>
<td>.415**(.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.098* (.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b</td>
<td>.388** (.063)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>Change in R²</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>3.422</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>10.966</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.153**</td>
<td>9.900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.168**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p< 0.05; ** p< 0.01 Standard error is presented within parenthesis next to the beta of each independent variable

It is observed that H1b _the importance of a product’s country of origin impacts consumers’ purchase intention_ is accepted with a (p <0.01) meaning a probability less than 1 % that the
result occurred by chance. In order to test H2 *Product's country of origin has a greater impact on consumers' product evaluation than purchase intention* a comparison between H1a and H1b was made. The result shows that both values were significant with a slightly stronger beta-value for purchase intention, thus H2 was rejected. Furthermore H3b *Country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’ purchase intention at lower degree of product involvement* is accepted with a (p < 0.05) meaning a probability less than 5 % that the result occurred by chance. The beta value for COO is .388 meaning an increase in standard deviation by one in COO would lead to an increase in purchase intention by .388. In addition, the Change in R² value is, 153 which shows that COO increase the predictability by 15.3 % when added in model two and 16.8 % in model three which means that there is only a 1.5 % difference in model three when involvement is added. The R² value in model one shows that there is a very little explanation for the variance in intention. Whereas in model two and three the change in intention can be predicted by 21.7 % respectively 23.2 % giving COO as the strongest predictor for variance.

Table 5.5 - Summary of hypothesis testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a: <em>The importance of a product’s country of origin impacts</em></td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumers’ product evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b: <em>The importance of a product's country of origin impacts</em></td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumers’ purchase intention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: <em>Product’s country of origin has a greater impact on consumers’</em></td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>product evaluation than purchase intention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a: <em>Country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’</em></td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>product evaluation at a lower degree of product involvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b: <em>Country of origin is a stronger determinant of consumers’</em></td>
<td>Accepted*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purchase intention at a lower degree of product involvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a hypothesis to be accepted the hypothesis testing model must be significant on at least the 5 percent level. The significance level of each individual beta-value is indicated by; *p<0.05; **p<0.01
6. DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to explain the relationship between the research questions, theoretical framework and the results. It was valuable to discuss the empirical outcomes together with the theoretical framework and then provide possible relationships.

Product evaluation and COO

The academic field of COO has been a highly studied subject in international marketing since its introduction among scholars in the 1960s (Pharr, 2005). However, there has been a risen and substantial criticism in the recent years proclaiming that the cue is under evolvement and that the concept still is not completely understood (e.g. Magnusson et al., 2011; Martín and Cerviño, 2011; Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011). This study aimed to answer a number of research gaps in the COO literature that could give light to the current debate about the COO’s cue impact in consumers’ decision-making process. By empirically demonstrate COO’s impact on consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention, this study could provide valuable evidence for COO’s role in consumers’ decision-making process.

In line with previous studies (e.g. Demirbag et al., 2010; Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013; Sharma, 2011), this study empirically demonstrates that COO is a distinct cue in consumers’ product evaluation. The results indicate that the presence of the COO cue can automatically trigger a more favourable evaluation of products and therefore H1a the importance of product’s country of origin impacts consumers’ product evaluation is supported and accepted in this research. These results supports Reuber and Fischer’s (2011) proclaim that the COO cue is a determinant signal in online product evaluations. Moreover, a main objective in the study was to construct a research that would not be partial and thus the use of one product category and non-exposure of a particular brand or country among the questions. The expectations were that we would be able to see the influence COO has as an extrinsic cue in consumers’ cognitive process without any impact from brand information. It is already known that consumers’ decision-making and product evaluation derives from a cognitive process (Bloemer et al., 2009). However, what is truly interesting with the findings in this study is how the respondents used the COO cue, without knowing any brand name or COO, but still argued for its relevance in their product evaluations.
One reason for the outcome could be explained by the categorization theory and halo-effect, which is justified when people have little knowledge and information about a product (Ghazali et al., 2008). Even though this study did not recall to the respondents that the fashion clothing originated from a particular country. It could be argued that the respondents still in their cognitive evaluation process categorized fashion clothing to be more favourable when it originates from a particular country. Consequently, the respondents perception of the product category made them to categorize more favourable countries in which they generally perceive to be associated with more favourable products in that particularly product category. Hence, COO’s essence in consumers’ product evaluations.

**Purchase intention and COO**

Historically has COO research reported a greater focus on the relationship between COO and consumers’ product evaluation, accuracy and other variables. However, the aim was to address this insufficient gap by involving the constructs of purchase intention and product involvement together with COO and product evaluation. The results provide support for H1b the importance of a product’s country of origin impacts consumers’ purchase intention and are thus accepted in this research, which ads empirical support to the literature (Phau and Chao 2008; Demirbag et al., 2010; Sharma, 2011) saying that COO do influence purchase intention. These findings also goes in line with Ching et al. (2013) notion that the COO cue is influential in the online environment when it comes to consumers’ purchase intentions. As well argue Lee and Lee (2015) that it is of true importance that purchase intention gains the focus it deserves due to the relevance in the decision-making process since it is the most powerful precursor of purchase behaviour.

Adding to existing literature, the empirical material indicates that COO has a direct and influential role in consumers’ purchase intentions (Wang and Yang, 2008). However, the $R^2$-value indicate that COO has a real and direct effect on consumers’ purchase intention but the $R^2$-value also demonstrate that there exist other variables that explain consumers’ intention to purchase. Peterson and Jolibert (1995) suggest that price could be a variable that could explain one part of the remaining percentage, which was proven in their study as a very important aspect in consumers’ decision making.
Product evaluation and purchase intention

It has already been addressed that one main ambition in this paper was to investigate the current criticism towards the COO construct Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2010) by empirically demonstrate COO’s impact on product evaluations and purchase intentions. Adding to existing literature e.g. (Magnusson et al., 2011; Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2009), this study empirically demonstrates the relevance of the COO concept by accepting H1a and H1b. The applicability of the COO cue was empirically tested in this process through seeing the relationship between COO’s impact on consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention, where Hui and Zhou (2002) argue that existing research is not adequate.

Even though our result indicated on the relevance of the COO concept, the findings does not completely support (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Hui and Zhou, 2002; Lim and Darley, 1997) claim that product evaluation is influenced more by the COO cue than purchase intention. The empirical material rather demonstrates that both variables are positively affected by the COO cue, but the difference in effect is very marginal. Therefore, the empirical material refutes the findings in Peterson and Jolibert (1995); Hui and Zhou (2002); Lim and Darley (1997) studies and hence, there was found no support for H2 Product’s country of origin has a greater impact on consumers’ product evaluation than purchase intention, which therefore was rejected. The results also contradict Hui and Zhou’s (2002) notion that COO has no direct impact on consumers’ purchase intention, given that H1b was accepted. Such evidence is in line with Wang and Yang (2008) belief that COO have a direct effect on purchase intention.

Adding the empirical material together, the results show that the COO effect is not bigger for consumers’ product evaluation compared to purchase intention. However, when the respondents in the study rated the different constructs, COO was in general rated higher when product evaluation had higher ratings. Thus, it might then be that COO becomes more important for consumers when they also believe product evaluations is very important and if such interpretation can be justified it becomes interesting to understand why there is a difference between the constructs. Kruglanski and Webster (1996) explain that consumers make numerous of product evaluations each day and all are based on information and knowledge from their experience. While Rezvani et al. (2012) explains that purchase intention is an individual’s idea or intention of what they think they will buy. Hence, by understanding the difference of these concepts it could then be argued for that when it comes to the purchasing part of decision-
making process, consumers’ cognitive process tend to value the COO cue less compared to when they evaluate products. Consequently, in comparison to consumers’ product evaluation, their idea of what they will buy becomes less affected by the origin of the product and instead other cues become more salient, e.g. price (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995).

However, another argument that supports the idea that COO influence consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention quite similar is by looking on the $R^2$-values. The evidence shows that the values are very similar for both the evaluation and intention, around 20 % which imply that even though the relationship between COO and the two constructs is significant there are still other variables that explain the change in product evaluations and purchase intentions. Hence, the values shows us that for both product evaluation and purchase intention the biggest increase in $R^2$ is in model two when COO is added inclining COO as the biggest predictor for product evaluation and purchase intention in this research. The $R^2$ value for evaluation and intention in model three is 21.8 % respectively 23.2 %, which means that this research only explains approximately 20 % of the change in evaluation and intention. This is in line with Samiee (2011) notion that COO is only one of many cues in consumers’ decision-making process.

**Product involvement**

Product involvement was also included in the study as a moderate variable. Parkvithee and Miranda (2012) argues that it is not clear what exact role COO plays in consumers’ decision-making process or whether the effect is the same for low-involvement products as for high-involvement products. Also Harari and Hornik (2010) argue that it is essential to understand the level of product involvement since it has a great influence on consumers’ decision-making process. The result offers insights on the subject by explicitly looking at the effect on product evaluation and purchase intention with and without involvement as a moderating factor. The effect product involvement had on product evaluation as a moderating factor was -.127**, meaning that low product involvement strengthens the impact of COO on product evaluation. While involvements moderating effect for purchase intention was similar at -.098*, meaning also that a low product involvement gives higher COO effect. Thus, both H3a and H3b is accepted meaning that COO is a stronger determinant of consumers’ product evaluation and purchase intention at a lower degree of product involvement.
Henceforth, these findings is in accordance to Verlegh et al. (2005); Josassien et al. (2008); Han, (1989); Gürhan and Maheswaran, (2000) and Maheswaren (1994) claim that COO cues have a greater impact in low-involvement product categories. Given this, a noteworthy aspect to consider in the results is in line with Gürhan and Maheswaran’s (2000) idea that it is the simpyness of the COO cue that makes consumers to associate the COO cue in product evaluations and purchase intentions. Hence, in consumers’ decision-making process when considering low involvement products, the consumers’ value easy accessible cues to associate with and COO are among these cues. However, it also has to be noticed that the significance level for the moderating variable, involvement was (P<0.01) for product evaluation and thus significant but for purchase intention the significance level was within (P<0.05) which implies for a stronger relationship with product evaluation.

**Control variables**

It is also worth noting that none of the control variables were significant for the product evaluation construct, but age was found to be significant for the purchase intention construct with (P<0.01). This imply that none of the control variables for the evaluation item significantly affected consumers’ product evaluation, however looking at the consumers’ purchase intention, age has an effect with a negative beta value of -.203 in model two and -.205 in model three. This demonstrates that younger consumers have greater purchase intention regarding fashion clothing online, which goes in line with Koufaris, (2002) meaning that online consumers tend to be of younger age. Consequently it would mean that age does not have a significant effect on how consumers evaluate products online but that the purchase intention online is greater for the younger consumers. Although looking at the R² value in model one, the control variables only have a small impact on the change in purchase intention.
7. CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion and contributions based on the purpose of this thesis, which is to extend the understanding about the relationship of COO in consumers’ decision-making process. Moreover, the purpose was answered through the direction of the following research questions.

7.1 Conclusion

This research studied the relationship of COO in consumers’ decision-making process and the findings indicated that COO has a significant direct effect in consumers’ product evaluations and purchase intention. A noteworthy aspect that also has to be considered is that there is no difference in COO’s effect on consumers’ product evaluation compared to their purchase intention. The research also studied to what extent product involvement affects the relationship between COO and consumers’ product evaluations and purchase intention. The results indicated on that when consumers’ perceive products to be low involvement, the COO effect is greater in consumers’ decision-making process.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

The study have contributed to existing theory in the COO literature by investigating a numerous of research gaps. The findings first shed lights on the current criticism towards the COO construct Usunier (2006; 2011) and Samiee (2010) by empirically demonstrating its impact. The study indicates that COO is a strong cue that have a positive effect in consumers’ decision-making process, which supports previous studies presented by Magnusson et al. (2011); Josiassen and Harzing (2008) and Demirbag et al. (2010). Secondly, COO’s direct influence on product evaluation and purchase intention was tested and the results confront previous research doubting COO’s direct effect on purchase intention. It was shown that COO had a similar positive effect on both concepts, which contradicts e.g. Hui and Zhou’s (2002) argument that COO do not have any direct effect on consumers’ purchase intention. An essential aspect of the study was that the research would be developed without any bias since previous research in the COO literature often have been criticized for being just partial. Therefore, this study demonstrate the relevance of the COO concept using one single product category and without any impact from brand information or specific countries which ought to give a less biased picture about the actual relationship. Third, this study also investigated the moderating effect of high and low involvement products, since Josassien et al. (2008) and Magnusson (2011) asked for extensive research that could correctly assess how the COO cue actually impact different product types.
Our findings complements one side of the emerging research (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000; Verlegh et al., 2005; Josassien et al., 2008), who concludes that COO cues generates more positive COO effect in low-involvement product categories. Given this, the results that are presented in this study gives light to several interesting aspects in the COO literature.
8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter comprises the practical advices, weaknesses of the study and finally suggestions for further research that can evolve the literature.

8.1 Managerial implications

Drawing from this study, the findings have some practical implications that managers can adapt to in their operations. In a world of ongoing and increasing globalization, some scholars have started criticize the effect COO have in consumers’ decision-making. Nonetheless, the findings in this study have demonstrated the effect of COO without referring to particular countries or brands. This give incentive to managers to value the COO cue in their businesses and it becomes essential for them to understand their brand and products’ COO in order to be competitive in the market. Another vital aspect of these results is that firms’ need to understand if they have positive or negative COO relations in their particular country and market segment since it could be a strong indicator for the organizations’ future strategic marketing direction. Consequently, marketers should utilize and highlight a positive COO cue in their advertising strategies, by providing favorable COO more exposure as it will positively affect their consumers’ decision making-process. In contrast, an unfavorable COO should also become a major part of firms’ strategic directions but in the opposite way. Instead of highlighting the cue, managers should look on other marketing directions and see how they could design a strategy that minimizes the negative effect of the firms’ COO.

These strategic directions should especially count for firms that are acting in a market that is characterized by low involvement decisions as COO tend to be more influential in consumers’ decision-making process when it comes to low involvement product categories. Hence, for managers that is on a daily basis operating with low-involvement products, the findings of this study is definite something that can change the basis of their marketing strategies.

8.2 Limitations and further research

Even though this study has a strong quality indicator with high reliability and validity there are still a few limitations in the study that could question the generalizability. As explained throughout the paper the aim was to conduct a study with no bias and thus it was decided to use one single product category, fashion clothing and a platform, the online environment to test the constructs. Given this, it could be argued for that the results of the study would only be
applicable to such environment and the generalizability for the population could be questioned. However, we mean that the results should still be valid for the population of the study since the choice of having the online platform is well argued for in the paper. Also, as for almost all studies, a product category can’t be tested without being put into a context and in this case we adapted the online environment. Even though there are some differences in behaviour when consuming in the online environment, the basic traits of consumers with wants, needs and demands are all relevant for the traditional consumer as for the online consumer and therefore should the results not differ with us using the online environment.

Additionally, another limitation to the findings might be the usage of one single product category, hence that the effect of the various constructs would only apply to the fashion industry. The choice of having one product category was to make the study stronger and remove the bias. We believe that only having one product category, the fashion industry is rather a strength of the study than a weakness. It will remove the questioning of bias and it will also make it possible to measure the respondent's involvement for a product category rather than predicting one high involvement and one low involvement product category, as this is believed to differ between consumers and situations. Moreover, the study was likewise limited to Swedish respondents, which could give incentives for different results in other countries and cultures. Also, due to the limited time and funds, a convenience sampling method was used. By not implementing a probability sampling the findings from this study might not be as trustworthy as it could have been. However to increase the credibility in the study the convenience sampling was executed with so many random influences as possible. The data collection was gathered throughout different times of the day and also during several different days during the week both in the weekdays and weekends all to ensure a high quality standard of the research.

Given the findings of this paper there are several aspects that contributes to the COO field, which together with the existing literature provides valuable directions for further research. First, it was mentioned in the limitations about the single product category that were applied in the study and that the results would possible be narrowed to that specific environment. Thus, an motivating extension of research would be to reproduce our study but applying another product category so the results of our study would not just rely on contextual reasons. Second, in this study the objective was to test COO’s influence in consumers’ decision-making process by measuring product evaluations and purchase intention. It would also be interesting to study other variables
of that process, for instance COO relationship to post purchase evaluations. Third, since this study was conducted in Sweden with Swedish respondents the COO literature would also benefit from further studies that replicate this study in other cultural environments. It could for instance be locations where the respondents have another view of what type of involvement a product category has or whether the COO cue is an essential aspect in their decision-making process.

Lastly, a final suggestion for further research comes from the $R^2$-values of the study that were measured around 20 %. This indicates that there is also a major part of other influential cues in consumers’ decision making process and an interesting study for the future is to see how strong each of these variables are related to each other. For example how strong is the COO cue in consumers’ decision-making process in relation to let say brand name or price as previous literature (Hui and Zhou, 2002) discuss. Understanding what kind of cue that is the most influential for each product category and degree of product involvement would be very attractive for both academics and managers, thus the motivation for the further research.
9. REFERENCES


Fink, A. and Kosecoff, J. (1985), How to conduct surveys, SAGE publications, Beverly Hills


Lund.


## 10. Appendix

### Appendix 10.1 - Review of COO research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Study objectives</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Further research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schooler (1965)</td>
<td>To create the first empirical test in the context of COO by investigate if the same product evaluations would vary according to the COO.</td>
<td>The findings indicated on that the influence of COO influenced evaluations of products. Attitudes towards people in a given country affect perceptions towards the products from that specific country.</td>
<td>This study was the first empirical study conducted in COO research and created a foundation in the literature for all further research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson and Jolibert (1995)</td>
<td>To quantitatively assess and systematic investigate the effect of COO with the help of meta-analysis.</td>
<td>Purchase intention is not as direct an evaluation as a quality/reliability perception and is likely to have more (and a greater variety of) influencing antecedents.</td>
<td>Need to treat the perception and intention variables differently and to include and analyse them separately in future COO studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999)</td>
<td>To establish a firm ground for COO research, by combining narrative review and qualitative meta-analysis.</td>
<td>COO has a larger effect on perceived quality then on attitudes towards a product or purchase intentions. Also affect differences in economic development the COO.</td>
<td>The authors suggest that more updated research on the COO effect. Specifically on symbolic and emotional aspects of COO, including the role of competitive context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui and Zhou (2002)</td>
<td>To make an experimental study with the observed inconsistency between evaluative and behavioral data for COO effects.</td>
<td>COO information had a direct effect on overall product evaluation and an indirect effect (through product evaluation) on perceived product value, which in turn determined purchase intention.</td>
<td>Examine the effects of congruence/incongruence between brand origin and country of manufacture on product evaluations and purchase intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed et al. (2002)</td>
<td>To do an empirical study that focuses on consumers’ attitude to low-involvement products, bread and coffee, in a newly-industrialized nation.</td>
<td>COO does matter when consumers evaluate low-involvement products but, in the presence of other extrinsic cues (price and brand), the impact of COO is weak and brand becomes the determinant factor.</td>
<td>Future research in this area should carefully screen countries to ensure that there is no ambiguity about consumers’ COO perceptions of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Additional Notes</td>
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<td>Usunier (2006)</td>
<td>To review previous COO research to explore COO’s actual relevance.</td>
<td>This article’s main findings indicate on that marketing researchers seem to be relatively unaware or chose to ignore the decreasing relevance of COO research.</td>
<td>The authors propose that future research should continue to question the relevance in COO literature.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Wang and Yang (2008)</td>
<td>To investigate the relationship between brand personality, COO image and purchase intention.</td>
<td>Results reveal that both brand personality and COO image exert significant positive main effects on purchase intention.</td>
<td>Include product involvement as a control variable as a potential factor that influences consumers’ purchase decisions.</td>
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<td>Josiassen et al. (2008)</td>
<td>To comment on recent studies criticizing both past COO research and the relevance of the COO concept itself.</td>
<td>COO research is currently not able to inform marketing practice adequately due to focus on feasibility rather than emphasize on theoretical and practical relevance in the study of COO effects.</td>
<td>Research into the background for consumers’ COO stereotypes is limited and the authors believe that this is a fertile area for future research. Look for additional key-determinants of cognitive COO-effects besides those that have been included into our model.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloemer, Brijs and Kasper (2009)</td>
<td>To explain and predict which of the four cognitive processes that are distinguished in the literature, with respect to COO.</td>
<td>The outcome of this paper is a set of theoretical propositions on which cognitive COO-effects can be expected to occur under different situational contexts.</td>
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<td>Samiee (2011)</td>
<td>To comment on the current controversy regarding the relevance of COO and BO research.</td>
<td>Argue that BO cues become more salient in consumers’ evaluations. Argue that BO accuracy matters and brings forward the concept of BORA.</td>
<td>Future origin-related studies have to consider the concerns raised by the research community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usunier (2011)</td>
<td>To comment on Magnusson et al’s paper and observe the shift from manufacturing to brand origin in COO research.</td>
<td>BO matters. However, in contrary to Magnusson et al’s findings, this paper argues that BO accuracy matters. As such, this paper discusses BORA research and its implications.</td>
<td>Further research should study what causes brand origin to be correctly (or incorrectly) guessed by consumers.</td>
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</table>
Martín and Cerviño (2011) To develop a framework that can determine brand CO recognition. The study want to integrate consumer and brand characteristics in a theoretical model. Brand CO recognition appears to be contingent on brand type and this should be valued in the debate on brand CO recognition. Managements’ in firms would benefit from considering product category and country aspects of their most valuable brands. Further research should replicate the model, apply other brands and also link brand recognition with other aspects of consumer attitude and behavior.

Appendix 10.2 – Survey in Swedish

Enkät - Magisteruppsats

Hej!

Tack för att ni tar er tid att genomföra denna enkät som kommer handla om modekläder online. Vi som står bakom enkäten är tre magisterstudenter vid Linnéuniversitetet. Era svar är väldigt värdefulla för oss då dem ligger till grund för vår magisteruppsats.

Enkäten kommer att ta ca 2-3 minuter att genomföra och dina svar är helt anonyma. Du kan endast genomföra enkäten en gång och frågor markerade med en stjärna* är obligatoriska. Om du skulle ha några frågor angående enkäten maila gärna: fc222ar@student.lnu.se

Vi är väldigt tacksamma för ditt svar!

*Obligatorisk

1. Jag anser det viktigt att jämföra olika märkeskläder vid köp online *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Stämmer inte alls ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   Stämmer helt ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Jag anser det viktigt att jämföra kvalitéten på märkeskläder vid köp online *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Stämmer inte alls ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   Stämmer helt ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. Jag anser det fördelaktigt att jämföra märkeskläder vid köp online *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Jag anser det viktigt att överväga alla aspekter av märkeskläder vid köp online *
   *Markera endast en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Jag anser det är viktigt att jämföra pris på märkeskläder vid köp online *
   *Markera endast en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Sannolikheten för att jag skulle överväga att köpa märkeskläder online är hög *
   *Markera endast en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Om jag skulle köpa märkeskläder så skulle jag överväga att köpa det online *
   *Markera endast en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Min vilja att köpa märkeskläder online är hög *
   *Markera endast en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. När jag söker efter märkeskläder online är det med avsikten att köpa *
Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte
alls                      Stämmer helt

10. **Att köpa märkeskläder online är viktigt för mig** *

Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte
alls                      Stämmer helt

11. **Jag tänker mycket på vilket land märkeskläder kommer ifrån** *

Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte
alls                      Stämmer helt

12. **Vilket land märkeskläder kommer ifrån är viktigt för mig** *

Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte
alls                      Stämmer helt

13. **Vilket land märkeskläder kommer ifrån påverkar mitt omdöme** *

Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte
alls                      Stämmer helt

14. **Vilket land märkeskläder kommer ifrån är en viktig del i mitt köpsbeslut** *

Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte                      Stämmer
15. Jag tar alltid hänsyn till varifrån märkesklädera kommer ifrån *

*Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte alls | | | | | | |

Stämmer helt

16. Jag spenderar mycket tid på att söka efter märkeskläder *

*Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte alls | | | | | | |

Stämmer helt

17. Jag är väldigt involverad i märkeskläder *

*Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer helt

18. Märkeskläder har stor betydelse för mig *

*Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer helt

19. Märkeskläder är en viktig del av mitt liv *

*Markera endast en oval.

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Stämmer inte alls | | | | | | |

Stämmer helt

20. Märkeskläder tar upp en stor del av min uppmärksamhet *

*Markera endast en oval.
21. **Kön** *

Markera endast en oval.

- Kvinna
- Man

22. **Ålder**

Markera endast en oval.

- 0-17
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56 eller äldre

23. **Utbildning** *

Markera endast en oval.

- Grundskola
- Gymnasieutbildning
- Universitet / Högskola

24. **Sysselsättning** *

Markera endast en oval.

- Anställd
- Student
- Egenföretagare
- Arbetslös
- Annat

25. **Hur ofta reser du utomlands** *

Markera endast en oval.

- Aldrig
- 1 gång per år
- 2 - 4 gånger per år
26. **Vilken är den vanligaste orsaken till att du reser utomlands** *Markera endast en oval.*

- Semester
- Affärsresa
- Studier
- Annat

---

**Appendix 10.3 – Survey in English**

| Product Evaluation | 1. I consider it important to compare different brands when buying fashion clothes online  
2. I consider it important to compare the quality of fashion clothes when buying online  
3. I consider it advantageous to compare fashion clothes when buying online  
4. I consider it important to consider all aspects of fashion clothes when buying online  
5. I consider it important to compare the price of fashion clothes when buying online |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purchase Intention | 6. The probability that I would consider buying fashion clothes online is high  
7. If I were to buy fashion clothes, I would consider buying it online  
8. My willingness to buy fashion clothes online is high  
9. When I look for fashion clothes online is with the intention to buy  
10. Buying fashion clothes online is important to me |
| **Country of Origin** | 11. I think a lot of what country fashion clothes come from  
12. Which country fashion clothes comes from is important for me  
13. Which country fashion clothes comes from affects my opinion  
14. Which country fashion clothes comes from is an important part of my purchase decision  
15. I always take into account where fashion clothes come from |
| **Involvement** | 16. I spend much time searching for clothes  
17. I'm very involved in branded clothing  
18. Fashion clothes are important to me  
19. Fashion clothes is an important part of my life  
20. Fashion clothes takes up a large part of my attention |