

Shopping Behavior, Country Attitudes, and Evaluation of Countries of Origin in China

Sadrudin A. Ahmed* · Alain d'Astous**

〈Abstract〉

This article presents the results of a survey of 209 Chinese male consumers. In this study, consumer evaluations and attitude towards products made in industrialized and newly industrialized countries were obtained along with measures of consumer shopping behavior. The results indicate that industrialized countries were perceived as manufacturing products that are more reliable, technologically advanced, stylistic, and costly than newly industrialized countries. A cluster analysis using moderating variables related to shopping for refrigerators, cameras, and t shirts revealed that the Chinese respondents could be grouped into four segments identified as Durables Enthusiasts, Durables Uninvolved, Inexperienced Shoppers, and Apparels Involved. Country attitudes and evaluations were fairly consistent across the newly industrialized countries but varied for industrialized countries across the four segments. Similar results also emerged from a correlation analysis of made in attitude scales (based on moderating shopping variables) with country evaluations. It was found that Chinese consumers' involvement with durable products was positively related to the evaluation of industrialized countries. Consumers belonging to the Durable Enthusiasts and Apparels Involved segments evaluated industrialized countries more favorably and believed to a greater extent that products made in these countries are reliable, technologically advanced, and stylistic than consumers belonging to the Durables Uninvolved and Inexperienced Shopper segments. Managerial and research implications are derived from these results.

Key Words: Consumer and buyer behaviour

BACKGROUND

After decades of dependence on foreign countries for technology and markets, China is preparing for the next economic leap, driven by trade, investment, and technology (Child and Tse, 2001). This expansion

program is reflected in the tremendous growth experienced by both domestic consumption and export activities (Lloyd and Zhang, 2001). For instance, for the year 2005, China ranked first globally as a recipient of foreign direct investment, replacing the United States. China is a very large consumer market. The IMF has recently determined that in terms of

* Faculty of Administration University of Ottawa, Ottawa(Ontario), CANADA K1N 6N5
e-mail: ahmed@management.uottawa.ca

** HEC Montréal, Montréal(Québec), CANADA H3T 2A7 / e-mail: alain.dastous@hec.ca

purchasing power, China's economy is now the second largest in the world after the U.S. As the economic growth in China continues, it is expected that the consumption of Chinese people will increase significantly (C.I.A. 2006). In this context, it is important to examine how products and brands (Schlevogt, 2000) originating from both industrialized (ICs) and newly industrialised countries (NICs) are perceived by Chinese consumers.

Past research on COO, carried out mainly in developed countries, has been hindered by its overemphasis on generalizing COO effects without taking into account the specificity of countries where research was conducted and products studied. The present research aims to contribute to the COO literature by providing data from China, a large non occidental, very fast growing collectivist newly developing country that is making a transition from a communist to a capitalistic market system.

Global marketers interested in COO issues in China may obtain some guidance from previous studies available in the marketing literature (see e.g., Brouters and Xu, 2002). Although many authors have studied Chinese consumer behaviour related to such aspects as the evaluation of countries of design (COD) and countries of assembly (COA) (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1999; d'Astous, Ahmed, and Wang, 1995), shopping behaviour (Saywell,

1998), nationalism (Klein, Ettenson, and Morris, 1998), and international advertising (Zhao and Belk, 2002), at the present time there is no study examining the relationship between Chinese consumers' perceptions of COOs and their shopping behaviour. The present research seeks to fill this gap in the literature and to provide further evidence of COO effects in China as it pertains to consumer products.

In the following paragraphs the COO literature relevant to fulfilling the objectives of this study is reviewed and a conceptual framework for the research is presented. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, a discussion of the empirical results, and the managerial and research implications.

Country-of-Origin Effects

Stereotyping is one psychological process that is commonly invoked to explain how consumers react to COO information (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Country stereotypes serve as anchors to construct evaluations of products from foreign countries and affect the cognitive processing of other product-related cues. For example, there is a tendency for consumers in some countries like Canada to evaluate their own country's products more favourably (d'Astous and Ahmed, 1999) or

in some countries like Russia more unfavourably (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003) than do consumers from other countries. Since country stereotypes may be negative or positive, the management of a product's national image is an important element to consider in international marketing. Results of a great number of studies have demonstrated that a product's COO affects different aspects of consumer evaluation and choice behaviour. Thus, it has been shown that COO influences consumers' perceptions of the quality of a product (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, and Hyde, 2000), the evaluation of its attributes (Kim and Pysarchik, 2000), attitudes towards products (Lee and Ganesh, 1999), the perception of purchase risk (Tan and Leong, 1999), and product purchase value (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1999). COO perceptions also affect product preferences (Knight and Calantone, 2000) and purchase intentions (Kim and Pysarchik, 2000). These effects have been observed for products in general as well as for specific product categories (Kim and Pysarchik, 2000) and they hold for consumers as well as organizational buyers (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1995a).

A distinction between the country-of-design (COD) and country-of-assembly (COA) components of COO is critical as firms attempt to become global suppliers via central manufacturing, using standardised

marketing programs that include global brands and universal appeals for their products. Although COA and COD constitute factual information, consumer perceptions are the crucial elements (d'Astous and Ahmed, 1995b). These perceptions are influenced by such factors as brand familiarity (Samiee, 1994), the level of involvement in the purchase decision (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2002), the level of involvement evoked by the product class (Maheswaran, 1994), the familiarity with countries (Zhang, 1996), and the preference for domestic products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Involvement in the purchase process and in the product category is likely to vary across consumer groups (Quester and Smart, 1998). It was found to be useful in segmenting international markets (Aurifeille, Quester, Lockshin, and Spawton, 2002).

Conceptual Framework

COO is one of the most widely researched concepts in marketing and consumer behavior, yielding over 700 published studies to date (Papadopolous and Heslop, 2003). Research suggests that consumers' COO perceptions derive from both endogenous and exogenous antecedents. Studies of endogenous antecedents (e.g., Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004) have focused on

measurable consumer traits such as individual value systems to explain the variance in COO perceptions. Studies of exogenous antecedents on the other hand (e.g., Suh and Kwan, 2002) have investigated the structural or cultural dimensions of target countries to explain variance in consumers' COO perceptions.

Cultures can be broadly classified as either collectivist or individualist (Hofstede, 2001). An individualist culture is representative of a loosely knit society in which people take care of themselves and their families, whereas a collectivist culture represents a tightly knit society in which the group takes care of the people and the people are loyal to the group. In collectivist cultures, i.e., mostly Eastern countries such as China and Korea, strong distinctions are made between in group and out group members. In such cultures, consumer behavior is dictated by group norms and individuals tend to sacrifice their own needs and desires if this is likely to benefit the group (Gurhan Canli and Maheswaran, 2000b). For example, in a study involving American and Japanese consumers, Gurhan Canli and Maheswaran (2000a) found that the individualism/collectivism cultural dimension significantly explains COO perceptions.

Studies have also provided evidence of the effects of other exogenous COO antecedents. Among them, a country's level of economic

development has received the most attention. Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) showed that differences in economic development have a significant impact on COO evaluations. The level of a country's market orientation has also been found to be a significant determinant of COO evaluations (Leonidu, Hadjimarcou, Kaleka, and Stamenoua, 1999).

Several studies have shown that consumer involvement (high versus low) moderates the effect of COO on product evaluations (Gurhan Canli and Maheswaran, 2000b). Lin and Kao (2004) found that the magnitude of COO effects was moderated by numerous product based variables including product familiarity, product importance, and product complexity.

The conceptual framework underlying this research (illustrated in Figure 1) is derived from the above literature review. According to this model, Chinese consumers' country specific beliefs are the result of China's level of economic development, market orientation, and culture. These beliefs lead to consumer cognitions that are reflected in product country evaluations along four dimensions, namely economy, reliability, innovation, and style. These cognitions lead in turn to evaluations of countries of origin along two dimensions, namely country of design (COD) and country of assembly (COA). This approach is consistent with the results of a number of studies which have

decomposed the COO construct into a multidimensional operationalization that allows for testing of different COO subcategories (e.g., Chao, 2001; Insch and Mc Bride, 2004), one of the most common being the distinction between COD and COA. As shown in Figure 1, COA and COD evaluations are assumed to be moderated by shopping behaviour in the context of three products, namely refrigerators, camera, and t-shirts, that vary in their ability to evoke different levels of consumer involvement.

Although COO images are among the most highly studied areas of international

business and consumer behavior (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003), most research in this domain has been carried out in highly developed Occidental countries. In contrast, the present research provides data related to Chinese consumers' COO perceptions. It is hoped that this research will thus contribute towards broadening the conceptual underpinning of COO effectiveness that has so far been derived mainly from Occidental studies, by providing evidence from a vary large and fast growing collectivist East Asian country. It may also contribute in setting strategic directions for multinational companies in China.

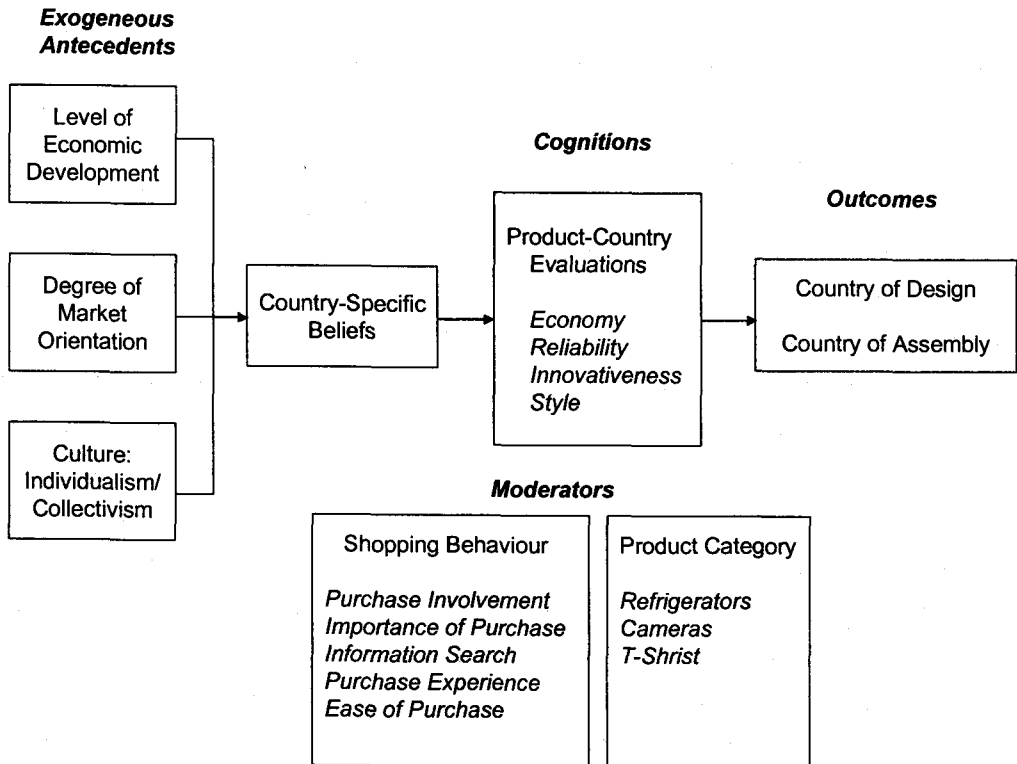


FIGURE 1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

METHOD

The study was conducted in the city of Beijing, located in the North Eastern part of China. This site was partly opportunistic since one of the authors was invited to teach at Renmin University. Beijing is the national capital and one of the largest cities in China.

The product categories chosen for the study were refrigerators, cameras, and t-shirts. These product categories were selected in order to understand the consumer behaviour of Chinese people with regards to products with different levels of technological complexity, shopping difficulty, and fashion orientation, evoking different levels of involvement. Cameras and refrigerators are technologically complex durable products whereas t-shirts are fashion oriented, less technologically complex non-durable products.

The questionnaire was written in Chinese (Mandarin) language and comprised three sections. Before going to the field, the questionnaire was pre tested with a convenience sample of Beijing male residents. In the first section, thirteen countries had to be evaluated as CODs and COAs using a nine-point bipolar scale (very poor/excellent) (see Appendix I, section a). The country stimuli included seven industrialized countries,

namely, the United States, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and South Korea, and six newly industrialized countries, namely, China, Brazil, Morocco, Mexico, Russia, and India. Those stimulus countries were selected for the following reasons. The United States, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, and Canada are highly industrialized large countries. China, Brazil, Russia, and India are projected to be the future world economic powers (Cateora and Graham, 2005). Mexico has a free trade arrangement with the U.S. and Canada and therefore, it is a country where products made in the U.S. and Canada are often assembled. Morocco is a former colony of France and has a special trade relationship with European Union member countries such as Italy, France, and Germany. It is therefore a country where products designed in these countries are often assembled. Finally, South Korea and Taiwan are major economic partners of China.

To ensure that the concepts of COA and COD were fully understood, respondents were provided with descriptive information. COD was defined as the country where the product was conceived, designed, or engineered; COA was described as the country where the product was assembled, or manufactured. The second section of the questionnaire incorporated questions about product purchase importance, information search, product

involvement, purchase difficulty, familiarity with the product class, and socio-demographics. The last section included items purported to measure perceptions of products originating from seven countries. Based on previous research (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2001), 15 items were expected to form four distinct dimensions: Economy (4 items, e.g., costly/economical), Reliability (4 items, e.g., reliable/unreliable), Innovation (3 items, e.g., imitative/inventive), and Style (4 items, e.g., common/exclusive). These items were previously used by Nagashima (1970; 1977) as part of his COO research program and subsequently used by Ahmed and d'Astous (2002). The countries that had to be rated using the items were the United States, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Mexico. Detailed descriptions of the attitude and shopping items are available from the authors.

The data were collected using the drop-off delivery method. This consisted in knocking on the door of Beijing residents and asking for their collaboration. Using an area sampling procedure, 315 homes of Beijing residents were visited. In order to be eligible, all participants had to be males over 18 years of age. This was done because previous research has shown that husbands have more influence in the purchase decisions of cars and televisions (Davis and Rigaux, 1974). In addition,

studies conducted in less developed countries have shown that buying decisions of complex durable consumer products are often dominated by men (Green et al., 1983). Thus it was felt that male respondents would more accurately reflect household durable consumer products buying behaviour. Additionally, because of important differences in shopping behaviour between men and women (see Schiffman and Kanuk, 2005), a homogeneous sample was deemed more appropriate for testing the moderating impact of shopping behaviour in this study.

After giving appropriate instructions concerning how to answer the questionnaire, the interviewer left the questionnaire with the respondents and picked it up the next day or at a more convenient time. From a total of 315 homes that were visited, 34 residents were not at home, there were no male in 11 cases, and 45 persons refused to participate. Out of the 225 questionnaires left, 219 were picked up. After eliminating badly completed questionnaires, 209 usable answers remained. Respondents were paid a small amount of money for their participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Description

The mean age of the survey participants was 35 years. Twenty nine percent of the respondents were single, 62 percent had one child, 75 percent had completed high school, and 36 percent had some university education. Thus, the sample was somewhat younger and much better educated than the Chinese population at large.

Country/Product Evaluations

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of seven

countries on perceived product design and assembly capabilities as well as on the four COO dimensions. Each dimension represents the average of the corresponding items. The resulting scales were found to be very reliable: Economy (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79), Reliability (alpha = 0.85), Innovation (alpha = 0.88), and Style (alpha = 0.88). Analysis of variance was carried out to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the two COO operationalizations, namely COA and COD, as well as the four COO dimensions. These are reported on the table. Additionally, Scheffé's post-hoc comparison tests were carried out to determine the statistical significance of differences between the individual sets of mean value. As the

Table 1 Mean Evaluation of Countries and Statistical Significances of Differences with Regards to Design and Assembly Capabilities and Four Country-of-Origin Dimensions¹

Countries	Countries of		a	Country-of-Origin Dimensions				b
	Design	Assembly		Economy	Reliability	Innovation	Style	
<i>Industrialized</i>								
United States	7.5	7.5	n.s.	3.4	6.8	7.4	6.8	.01
Japan	8.0	8.1	n.s.	3.8	7.8	7.8	7.4	.01
Canada	6.0	6.1	n.s.	4.2	5.8	6.0	5.6	.01
South Korea	6.1	6.5	n.s.	4.4	5.7	5.7	5.5	.01
Taiwan	-	-		4.8	5.5	5.5	5.7	.01
Mean	6.9	7.0	n.s.	4.1	6.3	6.5	6.2	.01
<i>Newly Industrialized</i>								
China	4.7	5.0	n.s.	5.2	4.4	4.1	3.9	.01
Mexico	4.6	4.5	n.s.	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.8	.01
Mean	4.6	4.8		5.1	4.7	4.4	4.4	.01

1. Obtained from 9-point bipolar scales.

a. Statistical significance of differences between manufacturing processes (i.e., COD versus COA).

b. Statistical significance of differences between COO dimensions.

number of comparisons is quite large, the results are not reported separately. They were, however, used to guide our discussion of the differences and similarities between the mean values. In order to facilitate the perusal of results presented in Table 1, the previously mentioned seven countries were grouped into industrialized (IC) and newly industrialized (NIC). The countries were placed under the appropriate heading on the basis of factor analysis of the thirteen COOs included in this study.

The results presented in this table show that on average the ICs scored much better than the NICs on the Reliability, Innovation, and Style scales and worse on the Economy scale. Overall, the COD and COA mean evaluation of the ICs was more positive than that of the NICs. All these differences in IC and NIC scores are statistically significantly different at $p < .01$. China was perceived as the country making the most economical products and the U.S. the least economical. Japan obtained the highest ratings on the Reliability, Innovation, and Style scales and China the lowest, whereas the U.S. scored somewhat lower than Japan on these three scales. The largest gap between the U.S. and Japan was on the Reliability dimension. Products made in the U.S. were believed to be less reliable (mean = 6.8) than those made in Japan (mean = 7.8). It is interesting to note that products

made in Japan obtained better ratings than those made in the U.S., even on the Economy dimension.

In general, Canada, South Korea, and Taiwan scored considerably lower than the United States and Japan on the Reliability, Innovation, and Style scales. On the Economy scale, among the five ICs, Taiwan scored the highest, followed by South Korea, Canada, Japan, and the United States. The made-in product evaluations associated with Canada, South Korea, and Taiwan were very similar on the Reliability and Style dimensions. Canadian products were viewed as less economical but more innovative than products made in Taiwan. Among the ICs, Taiwan scored the highest on the Economy scale. Among the two NICs, although on an overall basis China was evaluated almost as favorably as Mexico as a COD and slightly superior as a COA, products made in China were seen as more economical than those made in Mexico but less reliable, innovative, and stylistic.

Previous research carried out in North America has indicated that products made in Canada and the U.S. were considered more reliable, innovative, and stylistic but less economical than those made in Mexico (Ahmed, d'Astous, and Lemire, 1998). Other studies reported that Canadian, Thai, and Philippine consumers perceive Canadian products as more reliable, more innovative,

more stylistic, and less economical than products made in the Philippines and Thailand (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2001; Ahmed and d'Astous 2002). In another study, Chilean consumers gave higher ratings to Canadian and Japanese products on the Reliability, Innovation, and Style dimensions and lower ratings on the Economy dimension compared to products originating from Mexico and Chile (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1995b). Thus, the results presented in Table 1 parallel the made in cognitions associated with ICs and NICs (other than China) reported in previous studies.

Correlations of Shopping Variables with COO Evaluations

This analysis was carried out to verify the moderating impact of shopping variables as suggested in the conceptual framework. In order to reduce the number of independent variables to be analyzed, the five shopping variables - namely, purchase importance, extent of information search, product involvement, and purchase difficulty - were subjected to a principal components analysis for each product category separately. This procedure was used to facilitate comparison with previous research carried out with shopping variables. In each case, the analysis resulted in three factors that were named Purchase

Involvement (3 items: importance, search, and involvement), Ease of Purchase (one item), and Purchase Experience (one item). The three items loading on the Purchase Involvement factor were averaged in order to create a single index. The resulting scale was found to be reliable in each product category: refrigerators (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78), cameras (alpha = 0.85), and t shirts (alpha = 0.83).

The three shopping variables were correlated with the COD and COA judgments on the 13 countries. The statistically significant correlations (only) are displayed in Table 2. The results indicate that among the independent variables, purchase involvement with refrigerators performed the best with twenty two significant correlations out of total possible of twenty six. The average magnitude of these correlations was 0.24. Purchase involvement with cameras followed with nineteen significant correlations having an average magnitude of 0.20. The only other predictive variable of any consequence was Experience with the purchase of cameras with eight significant correlations with an average size of 0.20. The variables associated with the t-shirt product category performed poorly: purchase involvement with t-shirts was significantly correlated with COO judgments in only two cases, ease of purchase in three cases, and purchase experience in only one case.

Table 2 Statistically Significant Correlations of COO Evaluations with Shopping Variables

Countries	Purchase Involvement			Ease of Purchase			Purchase Experience			Country/Relations
	REF ¹	CAM	TSH	REF	CAM	TSH	REF	CAM	TSH	
U.S. COD	0.25**	0.20**				0.16**				6
COA	0.22**	0.21**		-0.15*						
ITALY COD	0.22**	0.28**						0.25**		8
COA	0.21**	0.23**			0.19*		0.14*	0.19**		
FRANCE COD	0.15*	0.20**				0.27**				3
COA										
GERMANY COD	0.18**	0.18**	-0.14*							7
COA	0.21**	0.21**	-0.14*			0.20**				
JAPAN COD	0.31**	0.22**						0.20**		5
COA	0.25**	0.17*								
CANADA COD	0.24**	0.24**								5
COA	0.31**	0.25**		-0.17*						
SOUTH KOREA COD	0.37**	0.25**						0.17*		7
COA	0.30**	0.23**			0.21**			0.21**		
CHINA COD										0
COA										
BRAZIL COD	0.18**						0.14*			4
COA	0.25**						0.19**			
MOROCCO COD	0.23**	0.17*								5
COA	0.24**	0.17*			0.17*				-0.15*	
MEXICO COD	0.26**	0.14*						0.15*		7
COA	0.34**	0.16*			-0.24**			0.17*		
RUSSIA COD	0.24**	0.14*		-0.27**						5
COA	0.15**			-0.18*						
INDIA COD	0.22**	0.15*		0.22*				0.22**		5
COA										
NUMBER	22	19	2	4	5	3	3	8	1	
AVERAGE SIZE	0.24 ²	0.20	0.14	0.19	0.21	0.21	0.16	0.20	0.15	

1. REF: refrigerator, CAM: camera, TSH: t-shirt. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$
 2. Average size is equal to the sum of the sizes of the statistically significant correlations for each variable divided by the number of the significant relationships.

China was the only country for which COD and COA judgments were not related to any of the predictor variables. In the case of France, there were only three variables significantly related to COD. COO Italy was associated with eight significant correlations (COD and COA), five of these related to cameras. South Korea and Mexico had seven significant correlations with COD and COA, five of these also related to cameras. Germany had the largest number of statistically significant correlations. Three out of the seven significant correlations with COD and COA Germany concerned t-shirts.

Overall it appears that the higher the involvement in the purchase of refrigerators and cameras, and to a lesser extent the higher the purchase experience with cameras, the greater the likelihood of evaluating a foreign COD and COA positively. Other studies conducted with respondents in Canada (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2001) and in the Philippines and Thailand (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2002) found that involvement with video cassette recorders and automobiles was positively related to COD and COA evaluations of countries of origin. Thus, results found in China are consistent with those observed in other industrialized and newly industrialized countries. The lack of any significant correlations of predictive variables with China may be explained by the presumption that Chinese consumers are

very familiar with products made in China (restricted range problem).

Segmentation Analysis

To provide additional evidence of the moderating impact of shopping variables and to provide results that are relevant for managers, the five individual shopping behavior items collected for refrigerators, cameras, and t shirts were used as inputs for a segmentation analysis. The segmentation analysis was carried out in two steps. In the first step, in order to reduce the number of variables and to provide more reliable indices for further analysis, the fifteen product specific shopping variables were grouped into factors through a principal component analysis. The resulting components were subjected to a varimax rotation procedure with Kaiser normalization to provide interpretable factors. In the second step, the derived factors were used to group the respondents into segments using a quick cluster analysis procedure (Anderberg, 1973).

The factor analysis resulted in five rotated factors that converged in seven iterations. Table 3 presents the factor matrix. Based on the size of the loadings of shopping items on these factors, they are described as follows:

Table 3 Results of the Principal Components Analysis of Shopping Variables (Rotated Factor Matrix)^{1,2,3}

Shopping Variables	Factor Loadings				
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Purchase Involvement:					
Refrigerator	0.84	0.08	-0.05	-0.06	-0.13
Camera	0.76	0.09	0.10	-0.11	0.38
T-shirt	0.06	0.89	-0.10	0.03	0.05
Importance of Purchase:					
Refrigerator	0.78	-0.01	-0.22	-0.02	-0.21
Camera	0.71	0.03	-0.01	0.09	0.39
T-shirt	0.16	0.84	-0.17	-0.01	-0.02
Extent of Information Search:					
Refrigerator	0.65	0.20	0.24	-0.04	-0.15
Camera	0.67	0.09	0.33	0.06	0.34
T-shirt	0.11	0.78	0.06	0.10	0.25
Purchase Experience:					
Refrigerator	0.00	-0.10	0.84	0.10	-0.03
Camera	0.09	-0.10	0.75	0.09	0.08
T-shirt	-0.01	0.20	0.03	-0.07	0.75
Ease of Purchase:					
Refrigerator	-0.07	0.21	0.29	0.69	-0.25
Camera	-0.08	0.10	0.14	0.82	-0.08
T-shirt	0.16	-0.22	-0.15	0.68	0.33
Eigenvalue	3.78	2.19	2.00	1.23	1.14
Proportion of explained variance	25.14%	14.59%	13.31%	8.18%	7.56%

1. The variables were measured on 9-point bipolar scales.
2. The strongest loadings are in bold characters.
3. Missing values (n=22) were replaced by the mean.

Factor 1 - Involvement with Durables:
A tendency to believe that the purchase of durables like refrigerators and cameras is very important, to feel highly involved in the purchase of and to search for a lot of information when shopping for a refrigerator or a camera.

Factor 2 - Involvement with Apparels:
A tendency to believe that the purchase of an apparel product like a t shirt is very

important, to feel highly involved in the purchase of an apparel item and to search for a lot of information when shopping for such items.

Factor 3 - Purchase Experience with Durables: A tendency to believe that one is very experienced in the purchase of refrigerators and cameras, some tendency to believe that the purchase of refrigerator is easy and some inclination to search for a

lot of information when purchasing cameras.

Factor 4 - Ease of Purchase with All Products: A tendency to believe that the purchase process for refrigerators, camera and t-shirt is easy.

Factor 5 - Purchase Experience with Apparels: A tendency to believe that one is very experienced in the purchase of apparels like t-shirts, has some level of involvement in the purchase of a camera, to believe that the purchase decision for a camera is important, and to believe that the purchase process for refrigerators is difficult whereas that for a t-shirt is easy.

Overall, the factor analysis results revealed that the nature of shopping

behavior towards durable products and apparels is very different. This difference in shopping behavior is greater between a refrigerator and a t-shirt than between a camera and a t-shirt. The factor analysis also revealed that there are individual differences in the level of difficulty experienced across all purchase tasks.

Table 4 presents the results of the quick cluster analysis based on the five factors. The best cluster analysis solution led to the assignment of the 209 respondents to four clusters. Discriminant analysis procedure using the factor scores as independent variables correctly classified 98.6% of cases testifying to the robustness of the segmentation

Table 4 Results of the Cluster Analysis - Description of Segments

Factors	Cluster/Segment Centroids			
	Cluster 1 Durables Enthusiasts	Cluster 2 Durables Uninvolved	Cluster 3 Inexperienced Shoppers	Cluster 4 Apparels Involved
Factor 1 Involvement with Durables	0.80	-1.29	-0.47	0.40
Factor 2 Involvement with Apparels	-0.98	-0.40	0.03	0.85
Factor 3 Purchase Experience with Durables	0.26	0.25	-0.15	-0.22
Factor 4 Ease of Purchase with All Products	0.23	-0.26	-0.03	0.00
Factor 5 Purchase Experience with Apparels	-0.01	0.71	-1.36	0.38
Percent Assigned	24.4%	19.1%	20.1%	36.4%
Size of Segment	51	40	42	76

procedure. A description of each of the clusters (segments) based on the interpretation of cluster centroids is as follows:

Cluster 1 - Durables Enthusiasts: This segment consisted of fifty one respondents (24.4% of the total sample). A member of this segment enjoys the process of shopping for durables like refrigerators and cameras but really dislikes the process of shopping for an apparels item like a t-shirt. While shopping for durables, in comparison with an average shopper, he is likely to be highly involved in the purchase process, to believe that the purchase is important, and to search for product information. He believes that he is somewhat experienced in the purchase of durables and finds all purchase decision easy to make. However, he is likely to feel uninvolved in the purchase of a t-shirt, to believe that this type of purchase is not very important, and to engage in little search for information about this type of product.

Cluster 2 - Durables Uninvolved: This segment consisted of forty respondents (19.1%). A member of this segment is not excited by the prospect of shopping for durables. When shopping for a durable product, he is likely to be highly uninvolved in the purchase process, to see the purchase as not important and to search for little information. He thinks that most purchase tasks are difficult, believes that he has a lot

of experience with the purchase of t-shirts, and has some experience with the purchase of durables, especially with cameras.

Cluster 3 - Inexperienced Shopper: This segment consisted of forty two respondents (20.1%). Compared to an average shopper, a member of this segment has limited experience with the purchase of all the products, especially t-shirts. When shopping for durables, he feels somewhat uninvolved in the purchase task, perceives that the purchase is less important and engages in less information search.

Cluster 4 - Apparels Involved: This segment consisted of seventy six respondents (36.4%). This was the largest segment in terms of its actual sample size. In comparison with an average shopper, a member of this segment feels involved with the purchase of an apparel item like a t-shirt, believes it to be an important purchase and searches for product information. He feels somewhat uninvolved with durables like refrigerators and cameras, feels that this type of purchase is somewhat less important and engages in less information search. This is however more the case for refrigerators than for cameras. He considers himself to be somewhat experienced in the purchase of apparel products like t-shirts.

Evaluations and Attitudes of Segments towards Countries of Origin

Analysis of variance procedures were applied to the data to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the segment scores on COO characteristics and dimensions. Additionally, Scheffé's post-hoc comparison tests were carried out to determine the statistical significance of differences between the individual sets of mean values. As the number of comparisons made are quite numerous, they are not reported separately. They were however used

to guide our discussion of the differences and similarities between the mean values across the segments.

Table 5 presents the mean evaluations of the seven ICs and six NICs with respect to their perceived capabilities as designers of consumer products (COD) across the four segments. Previous research has indicated that COA effects are eclipsed by COD effects. When given information about COD and COA constructs, consumers tend to place more weight on COD than COA (Chao, 2001; Insch and Mc Bride, 2004). Therefore, as there were no statistically significant differences between the mean

Table 5 Mean Country of Design Evaluations and Statistically Significance of Differences across the Segments¹

Countries	Segments					p value
	Durables Enthusiasts	Durables Uninvolved	Inexperienced Shoppers	Apparels Involved	Segments Mean	
<i>Industrialized</i>						
U.S.	8.0	7.0	7.2	7.7	7.5	<.01
Italy	7.4	6.6	5.9	6.5	6.6	<.01
France	7.5	6.8	6.2	7.1	7.0	<.01
Germany	8.1	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.4	<.01
Japan	8.7	7.5	7.9	8.0	8.1	<.01
Canada	6.3	5.7	5.7	6.1	6.0	<.10
South Korea	6.8	5.3	5.7	6.3	6.1	<.01
Mean	7.5	6.6	6.5	7.0	6.9	<.01
<i>Newly Industrialized</i>						
China	4.3	4.7	4.9	4.8	4.7	n.s.
Brazil	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.5	4.4	n.s.
Morocco	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.3	<.05
Mexico	4.8	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.5	<.10
Russia	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.2	n.s.
India	4.1	3.8	3.7	4.0	3.9	n.s.
Mean	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.3	n.s.

1. Obtained from 9-point bipolar scales.

values of COA and COD evaluations of the thirteen countries included in this study, it was decided to report only the results based on COD evaluations.

The average COD evaluations indicate that among the ICs, Japan is the country that received the best rating, followed by the U.S., Germany, France, Italy, South Korea, and Canada in that order. As expected, the seven ICs obtained much better evaluations than the six NICs. The COD evaluations of the NICs were fairly similar with two exceptions: COD China (the best evaluation) and COD India (the worst). The results further indicate that overall the mean evaluations of the six NICs did not vary a great deal across the four segments. The differences were a little more pronounced when examining each country individually. Durables Enthusiasts and Apparels Involved evaluated COD Morocco somewhat more favorably than consumers in the other segments.

On the other hand, the COD evaluations of the seven ICs varied considerably across the four segments. Durable Enthusiasts evaluated the seven ICs much more favorably than other segment members. Inexperienced Shoppers' evaluations of the ICs were the lowest, followed by those of Durables Uninvolved consumers. When one considers the seven countries individually, intra country differences by segments were

the largest in the case of South Korea, followed by Japan, and Germany. The lowest intra country differences were associated with Canada and France.

Table 6 presents the mean country attitude scores across the four segments for the four dimensions of COO for the five ICs and two NICs. Paralleling the NIC results discussed earlier regarding the mean evaluations of thirteen CODs, the data indicate that China and Mexico showed the smallest level of intra-country differences across the four segments on the four attitude scales. The largest intra-country difference in the NICs was between Durables Enthusiasts and Durable Uninvolved segments on the Reliability dimension. Durables Uninvolved respondents' perception of the reliability of products made in China was more positive than that of the Durable Enthusiasts. In terms of the between-country differences across the segments, the largest gap is between China and Mexico on the Style dimension among Durable Enthusiasts. Durable Enthusiasts perceived products made in Mexico as being much more stylistic than those made in China. They also had a better opinion of products made in Mexico on the Economy, Reliability, and Innovation scales than the members of the other three segments.

Among the five ICs, the results presented in Table 6 indicate that intra country differences were the highest for the U.S.

Table 6 Mean Evaluation of Countries across Segments and Statistical Significance of Differences between Four Product Country Dimensions¹

Country Perceptions	Segments				p value
	Durables Enthusiasts	Durables Uninvolved	Inexperienced Shoppers	Apparels Involved	
U.S.					
Economy	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.2	n.s.
Reliability	7.1	6.4	6.5	6.9	<.05
Innovation	7.9	6.8	7.1	7.6	<.01
Style	7.1	6.2	6.6	7.0	<.01
Japan					
Economy	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.7	n.s.
Reliability	7.6	6.9	7.3	7.5	<.05
Innovation	8.3	7.3	7.8	7.8	<.01
Style	7.9	6.9	7.3	7.5	<.01
Canada					
Economy	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.2	n.s.
Reliability	6.1	5.6	5.4	5.8	<.01
Innovation	6.3	5.7	5.7	6.0	<.01
Style	5.9	5.4	5.3	5.7	<.01
South Korea					
Economy	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.4	n.s.
Reliability	6.0	5.3	5.3	5.8	<.01
Innovation	6.1	5.4	5.4	5.8	<.01
Style	5.8	5.1	5.2	5.6	<.01
Taiwan					
Economy	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.7	n.s.
Reliability	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.7	n.s.
Innovation	5.7	5.2	5.2	5.6	<.05
Style	5.9	5.5	5.4	6.0	<.01
China					
Economy	4.9	5.4	5.1	5.5	<.10
Reliability	4.1	4.7	4.2	4.6	<.05
Innovation	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.4	n.s.
Style	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.2	n.s.
Mexico					
Economy	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.8	n.s.
Reliability	4.9	5.0	4.8	5.1	<.10
Innovation	5.0	4.6	4.5	4.8	<.10
Style	4.9	4.9	4.5	4.9	n.s.

1. Obtained from 9-point bipolar scales.

and Japan and the lowest for Canada. Intra-country differences involving South Korea and Taiwan fell in between the U.S., Japan, and Canada. In general, Durable Enthusiasts believed to a greater extent that

products made in the U.S., Japan, Canada, and Korea were reliable, innovative, and stylistic than the members of the other three segments. Their mean perceptions were closely followed by those of the Apparels

Involved, and were somewhat more distant from those of Inexperienced Shoppers and Durables Uninvolved.

Regarding their perceptions of Taiwan, Durables Enthusiasts and Apparels Involved were generally more positive than Durables Uninvolved and Inexperienced Shoppers. With regards to the Reliability, Innovation, and Style dimensions, the between country differences showed in Table 6 are consistent with the results reported in Table 1. The attitude towards Japan is the most favourable across the all four segments, followed by the U.S., Canada, and South Korea. On the Economy dimension, Apparels Involved Chinese consumers appear to be the most negative towards ICs, followed very closely by Durable Enthusiasts, Inexperienced Shoppers, and Durables Uninvolved. Thus, the pattern of COO perceptions across the four segments does not follow the same trend for the Economy dimension as it does for the Reliability, Innovation, and Style dimensions.

LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Study Limitations

This research suffers from a number of methodological limitations. It was carried out

in a single city, with an all male consumer sample, using only three stimulus products, in a country that is very diverse with huge differences in the standard of living across the different regions. Moreover, China is experiencing very important social changes and a very fast economic growth. Our results must therefore be interpreted with great care. Further research should be conducted with larger probabilistic samples from different parts of China and should use different types of products. These studies would be useful to global marketers interested in China who want relevant information concerning issues such as whether or not it makes sense to export products manufactured in an IC to China, or to manufacture IC-designed products in China for the domestic market in order to reduce manufacturing costs and receive a more favourable treatment from the Chinese government. Despite these limitations, we believe that the results presented in this paper may have strategic implications for global marketers interested in the Chinese market.

Conclusions

Our results show that COO influences Chinese consumers' product perceptions on such dimensions as Economy, Reliability,

Innovation, and Style and that it has an impact on their perceptions of a country's capabilities in the design (COD) and assembly (COA) of consumer products. They also show that shopping behaviour moderates the evaluations of COOs. Therefore, it appears that one may generalize the COO effects observed mostly in Occidental countries to a newly emerging, collectivist, and newly industrializing country like China.

In addition, our results show that shopping behaviour moderates the outcome of COO cognitions of Chinese consumers. These shopping behaviour items can be used to segment Chinese consumers into distinct sub-groups. Members of these sub group segments rate COOs differentially on Economy, Reliability, Innovation, and Style. They also evaluate the COOs differentially along its two operationalizations, namely, COD and COA. Before, these segmentation results can be generalized for the purposes of COO effects related theory building, similar studies need to be carried out in other countries.

Managerial Implications

It appears that Chinese consumers make a distinction between COOs in their overall evaluation and in their made-in attitudes. ICs are generally more favourably evaluated

and score much higher on the Reliability, Innovation, and Style product-country dimensions and lower on the Economy dimension than do NICs. This suggests that highly advanced nations would need to convince Chinese consumers that purchasing products made in their countries represents a good value, if they hope to mass market their products in China. One possible strategy for IC countries to counteract the perceived high-cost image of their product is to convince Chinese consumers that an IC product will last longer, will need fewer repairs, that it incorporates the latest innovations and styles, and therefore that it represents a better value in the long run. Another strategy is to assemble the product in China and emphasize the advanced IC-COD aspect in its promotional program. By doing this, the firm may profit from the reduced costs associated with manufacturing the product in China and, at the same time, benefit from the reliable, innovative, and stylistic image of a COD. China is a collectivist society and therefore, it may be very important for Chinese consumers to portray a favorable image to significant others through their consumption behavior. The prominent display of IC-COD or its surrogate IC brand name on a product, especially in the case of an apparel item, may serve as a vehicle to convey some prestige to the owner of this product.

Our results indicate that Chinese male consumers can be segmented into homogeneous subgroups. A cluster analysis of shopping variables resulted into four distinct segments, namely Durable Enthusiasts, Durables Uninvolved, Inexperienced Shoppers, and Apparels Involved. The mean COD evaluations and country attitudes of these segments indicated that durable products made in ICs are more likely to succeed with members of the Durable Enthusiasts segment and, albeit to a lesser extent, apparel products with members of the Apparels Involved segment. This is particularly true in the case of products made in advanced ICs such as the U.S. and Japan. These segment members are more likely to believe that IC products are more reliable, innovative, and stylistic than NIC products in the product class of their interest. Given that these consumers are likely to search for a lot of information when shopping for durables or apparels, it would be beneficial to provide COO information at the point of purchase, in pamphlets and/or on the Web sites of the products. Because products made in ICs are linked in Chinese consumers' minds with high costs, it is recommended that products directed at these segments be associated with strong warranty programs or product exchange programs to reinforce the value image of the products by emphasizing product reliability. This would be particularly

important for members of the Apparels Involved segment looking for apparel products from advanced ICs because these consumers are more likely to believe that products made in advanced ICs are very expensive.

For IC firms launching a new durable product on the Chinese market, it appears that the Durable Enthusiasts segment should be the initial target market. A similar comment applies to a lesser extent to the Apparels Involved segment for an apparel product. As these segment members tend to engage in the information search process by themselves, the cost of reaching them should be less than for other segments. Instead of mass media sources such as radio, television, and newspapers, less costly sources of communication such as specialized magazines, pamphlets, and point of purchase materials could be used to introduce and promote the products.

National governments interested in promoting their products in China may undertake institutional advertising in specialized media vehicles in order to position their COD and COA in the forefront of Chinese consumers' thoughts, especially with members of the Durable Enthusiasts and Apparels Involved segments for the product areas of their interest. They may also involve themselves in a systematic surveillance of products originating from

their country so as to maintain, and possibly to enhance the country's COO reputation.

Obviously, this research raises more questions than it provides answers. Although tentative managerial implications are drawn by us, much more work needs to be done to delineate appropriate product classes to be studied, attitude scales to be used, market segments to enter, the nature of COO evaluations as well as the part played by such factors as trust in enhancing the reputation of a country's products in China.

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