Country of Origin in the Context of Consumer Purchase Decisions and Manufacturer Behaviour: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Aim: In these days of globalisation, the concept of the country of origin (COO) has attracted significant attention for its impact on consumer behaviour and manufacturer strategies. This paper examines the dimensions of the country of origin (COO) and its effects on consumer and manufacturer behaviour in the market.

Methodology: Utilising the PRISMA 2020 method, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify relevant studies, assess their validity, and present findings in a structured manner.

Results: The review was constrained by the selected databases, search terms, and inclusion and exclusion criteria. The primary sources were the WOS (Web of Science) and SCOPUS databases, from which 19,011 scientific papers were identified. After applying eligibility criteria, 18,833 articles were selected, and 75 full-text articles used to address the research questions.

Implications and recommendations: The scientific discussion around COO provides diverse insights and implications, underscoring the importance for sellers to understand the factors shaping consumer choices regarding foreign-made products.

Originality/value: The country of origin is a very complex, multi-dimensional, and multi-threaded concept, hence the added value of the article is to order the terminology and knowledge related to it, as well as to organize and point out the aspects of the country of origin that influence the purchasing decisions of consumers and the marketing activities of enterprises.

Keywords: country of origin (COO), country-of-origin effect, brand origin

1. Introduction

International trade is a crucial aspect of the economy in the current era of globalisation and market integration, making imported goods indispensable in the daily lives of people across nations (Adaba and Rusu, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for sellers of such products to have a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence consumer choices regarding foreign-made commodities. While price and quality may seem like the primary determinants guiding consumer decisions, choosing a product is a complex and nuanced process (Holden and Rothenberger, 2010; Rufaidah, 2022). Consumers carefully evaluate available information before making a purchase (Fu et al., 2021). The decision-making process is often made easier when there is abundant information about the products, or when the consumer is familiar with the product from previous transactions (Fu et al., 2021). However, if the information about a product is scarce or unavailable, consumers face a unique challenge. In such cases, they must select a product without sufficient information, often relying on the details provided at the point of sale to make an informed decision (Jimenez and San Martin, 2010; Yu et al., 2013). The consumer finds the product's price, product composition, and country of origin at the point of sale or on the product label (Sliburyte and Bankauskiene, 2017).

Balanabis and Siamagka (2017) observed that the 2008 global financial crisis has intensified ethnocentric inclinations among consumers. This aspect has become a significant focus of research in international marketing, with numerous scholars investigating its implications on issues such as country of origin perceptions, consumer behaviour, and multinational brand strategies (Magnusson and Westjohn, 2011). According to Sharma (2015), consumer ethnocentrism is a popular research construct. It is used to explain consumers' generally favourable bias toward domestic products and brands in several studies – a typical example of consumer ethnocentrism is American negative attitude towards foreign brand cars, and Japanese consumers' loyalty to Japanese products (Kandogan, 2019). Based on this brief introduction into the problem the authors decided to define two main research questions.

The authors defined the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the main dimensions of the country of origin?
RQ2: What effect does the phenomenon of country of origin have on customers and companies?

The next section focuses on finding answers to these research questions. Before presenting the literature review, the methodology of this research paper is discussed.

2. Methodology

For the purpose of this paper, the authors decided to use the method of systematic literature review, employed to synthesize existing research on a specific topic. It involves defining objectives with a reproducible methodology, conducting a systematic search to identify all relevant studies, assessing the validity of included studies, and presenting findings in a structured manner (Liberati et al., 2009). This approach aimed to provide an unbiased overview of the topic by critically assessing and analysing relevant research to address specific hypotheses and research questions (Kossyva et al., 2022). Systematic reviews follow guidelines such as the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statements to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and reliability (Beaudart et al., 2022; Cavalheiro, 2023; Liberati et al., 2009). One should also mention that various methods for literature analysis exist and that the authors decided to utilise the PRISMA 2020 method.

The PRISMA 2020 method for conducting a systematic literature review involves adhering to a set of updated guidelines to ensure transparent, complete, and accurate reporting of the review process and findings. The PRISMA 2020 statement includes a 27-item checklist that outlines reporting recommendations for each item, an abstract checklist, and revised flow diagrams for both original and updated reviews (Page et al., 2021). This method also works with a flow diagram, which is based on four main phases:

1. Identification → define research sources and criteria.
2. Screening → specify sample for investigation, narrowed down based on defined criteria.
3. Eligibility → test sample eligibility through deeper analysis.
4. Included → list articles for assessment and inclusion in literature review.

The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram and concrete steps for finding answers to previously defined research questions are presented in the following subsection.

2.1. Concrete Systematic Literature Process (PRISMA 2020)

For this literature review, the authors chose the WOS (Web of Science) and SCOPUS databases as the primary sources of potential articles and studies. The research period was set for literature sources published between 2010 and 2024. To find relevant articles, the authors also decided to use keywords found in other relevant scientific studies researching similar problems (Cristea et al., 2015; Vranesevic et al., 2024; Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka, 2019). The keywords were set as the following terms: "country of origin", "country of origin effects" and "brand origin". The authors also included in their literature review, articles which could be considered as open access articles in databases mentioned above. Based on these criteria, a total of 19 011 scientific papers were identified. Figure 1 presents the growing trend and increasing numbers of identified articles between 2019 and 2024.
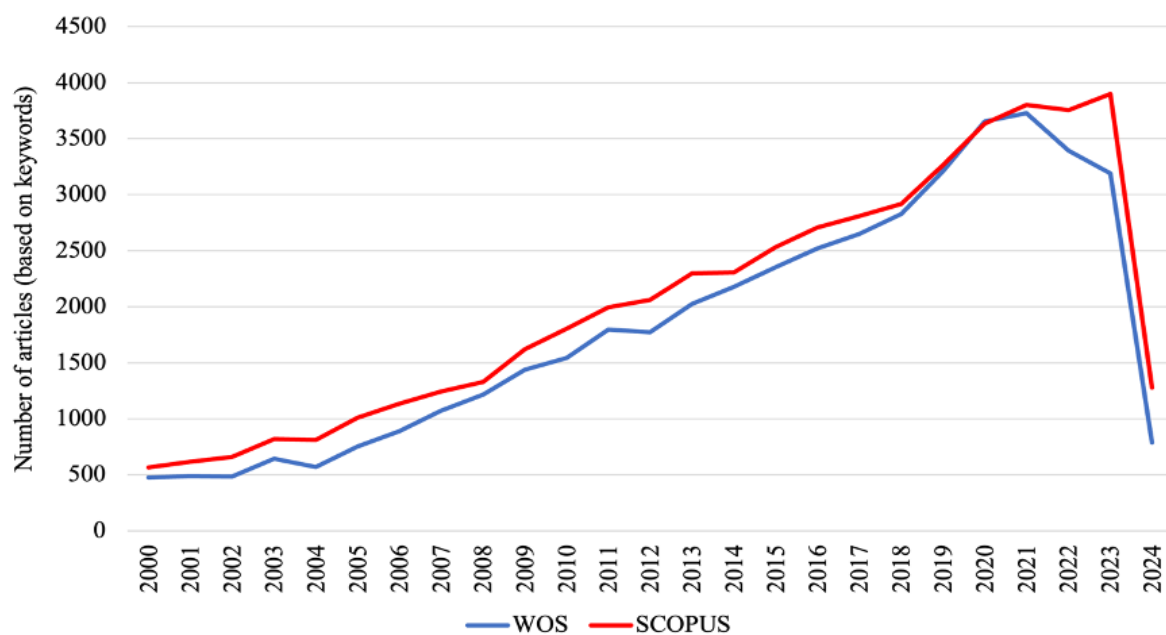

Fig. 1. Number of articles in databases

Source: authors' own work.

From the total of 19 011 identified articles, the authors followed the PRISMA 2020 methodology (see Figure 2). It the screening phase, further criteria were set to reduce the total number of articles and finding those most relevant. In the first step the criterion 'source type' was set and the following formats of text were included: articles, review articles, proceeding papers, book review, book chapter. Based on these criteria, 178 scientific texts were excluded, leaving a total number of identified articles after the first step as 18 833. In the second step, the 'language' criterion focused on selecting articles written in English. This helped to reduce the 18 833 considered articles to 17 220, meaning that 1 613 articles were written in other languages than English. The main goal of the final part of the screening phase was to filter articles based on the relevant 'research field'. In order to find answers to the pre-

defined research question, the authors considered the following relevant research fields: economics, management, business, international relations, and thus were able to exclude 15 263 literature sources, with the total number of identified articles reduced to 1 957.

In the eligibility phase, the authors first created one unified EXCEL database (merging the list of remaining articles from WOS and SCOPUS databases), and then eliminated protentional duplicates. Thanks to EXCEL operators and formulas, in total 43 duplicates were identified and excluded from the list of articles. After this step, the rest of the relevant articles were considered. The authors first included the 'citation relevance' criterion, where at least 10 citations were required. A total of 816 articles were selected. After reading the abstracts of the articles, the authors excluded 740 articles based on the 'relevance of topic' criterion. The remaining 75 articles were full text- checked and used to find answers to the research questions.

Based on this methodology, the next section presents answers to the aforementioned research questions.
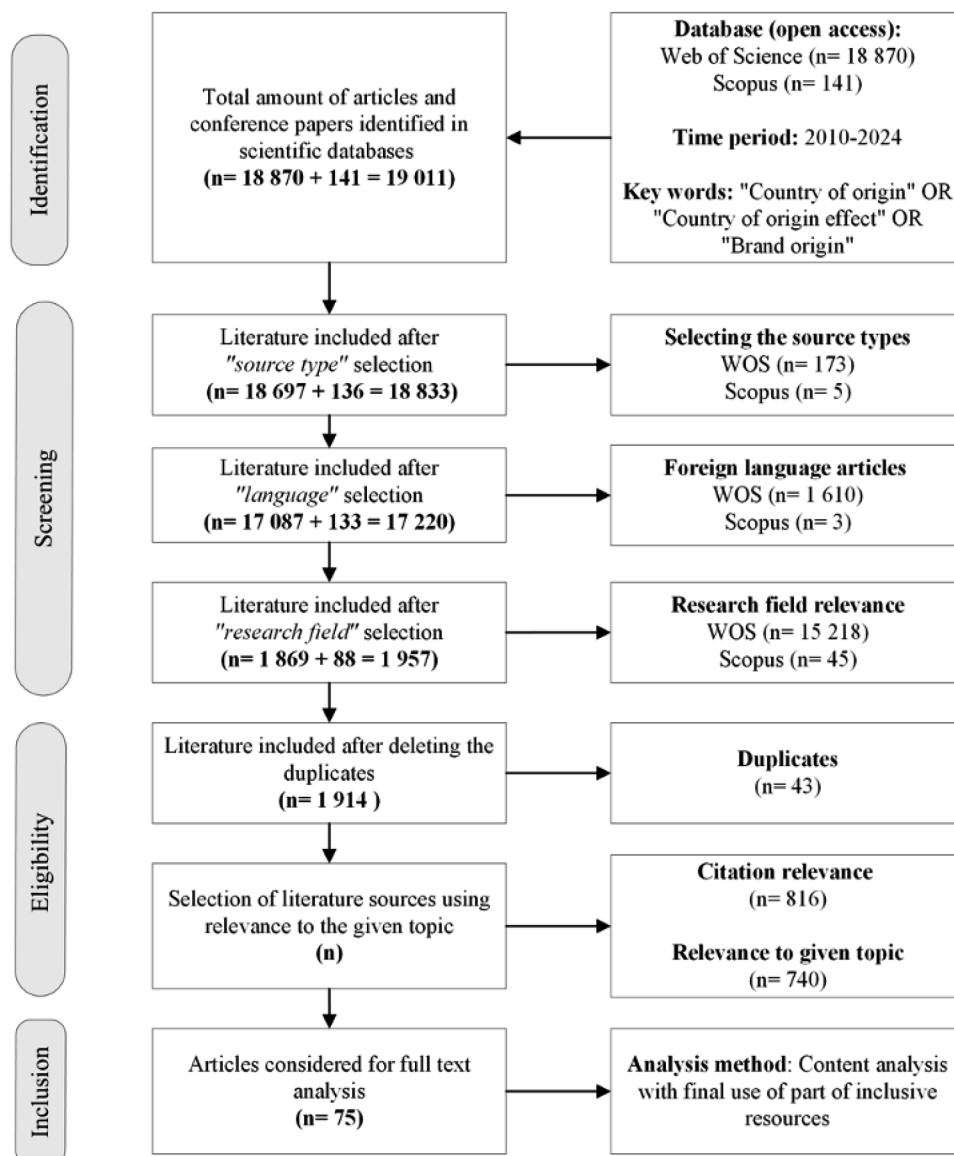
Fig. 2. Concrete PRISMA 2020 diagram for literature review in databases

Source: authors' own work.

3. Literature Review

In the following subchapters the answers for the research questions are presented.

3.1. Country of Origin and Its Dimension (RQ1)

Nowadays, consumers are exposed to various product quality attributes conveyed through packaging, branding, advertising, and other channels. One such attribute is the disclosure of the country of origin, which can influence consumers' preferences and buying choices (Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka, 2019). According to Chamorro et al. (2015, p. 445): "…country-of-origin is an informational cue which, like other informational cues such as price, brand name, etc., helps consumers to evaluate products and develop attitudes towards them". Herz and Diamantopolous (2013) refer to the country of origin as the nation with which consumers identify a product or brand as originating, irrespective of where the item is manufactured. Consumers often interpret the country of origin as a quality indicator, with goods from specific nations being perceived as superior due to technological advancements and manufacturing standards (Charters et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2013). Moreover, products linked with a particular country may be highly esteemed for their cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship, prompting consumers to pay more for authentic items, perceived quality, and more (Bonroy and Constantatos, 2015; Deselnicu et al., 2013;). Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka (2019) compiled an overview of various dimensions of country of origin (COO) by examining earlier scientific papers from 1970 to 2006. Based on their findings, several different dimensions of country of origin were identified. All the identified dimensions and their explanation can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. COO dimensions

COO and its dimensions	Definition
Country of origin	• The country of origin of the product.
Country of manufacturing	• The country where the product is manufactured. • The country is communicated through a label as 'made in' or 'place of manufacturing'.
Country of design	• The country where the part or product is designed.
Country of assembly	• The country where the product is assembled.
Country of parts/ country of key components	• The location where some or all components of the product originate. • The origin country of the crucial components of the product.
Country of corporate ownership	• The location housing the corporate headquarters of the company selling the product or brand, and the original home country of the parent company, irrespective of where the product is currently manufactured.
Country/culture of brand origin Country of brand	• The country/culture to which the brand is assigned by the target consumers.
Country of association	• The country that consumers usually associate with a given product/brand, regardless of where the product is manufactured.

Source: adapted from (Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka, 2019).

Many researchers still widely discuss the phenomenon of country of origin and its dimensions. De Mooj (2013) and Raggio et al. (2014) pointed out that while people consider the phenomenon of the country of origin in their buying decisions, many other aspects influence the final picture of the product. According to these studies, one of the most significant factors in considering a foreign product is the customer's stereotypes, which shape their perception of the product (e.g. people often believe that

the best fashion comes from Italy, the best cars are manufactured in Germany, the best electronics are produced in Japan, and the best cosmetics are made in France). The next subsection presents answers to RQ2 and continues the issue of country-of-origin effect.

3.2. Country-of-Origin Effect

Country-of-origin effect describes the differences in consumer responses to a product that arise from the product's perceived country of origin. This can profoundly influence the product's position in the market, shaping how consumers perceive its value and quality. When the country of origin aligns well with the product's intended positioning, it can enhance the product's appeal, adding attributes such as prestige, reliability, and authenticity. Conversely, if the country of origin aligns differently from the desired image, it can detract from the product's appeal, creating a disconnect between how the brand wants to be seen and how it is perceived by consumers. This misalignment can result in reduced consumer interest and lower sales. Thus, understanding and strategically leveraging country-of-origin effects is crucial for brands aiming to optimise their market positioning and resonate effectively with their target audience. Table 2 presents the benefits which the authors identified based on the process of literature review described earlier.

Table 2. COO effect

Effects	Description	Source
Creation of association	The label 'country of origin' like other labels, helps shape a unique set of associations related to competition, cultural, and social factors. These associations are formed not only towards the products but also towards the country of origin or the company itself.	Cristea et al. (2015); Tjandra et al. (2015); Barbarossa et al. (2018)
Quality connotation	Labels such as 'made in' and 'designed in', along with other country-of-origin labels, provide information about the quality dimensions of a product. Quality cues can be intrinsic, inherent to the product, or extrinsic, such as price, brand, and the country of origin. These are especially important when customers lack sufficient information about a product but still need to make a purchasing decision.	Cristea et al. (2015); Tjandra et al. (2015)
Shape of customer perception and attitudes	At an emotional level, 'country of origin' influences the symbolic and emotional associations of a product, offering benefits such as status and pride. Conversely, brands may be rejected if their home countries do not align with a consumer's values and beliefs. This normative effect can result in the rejection of brands from countries involved in objectionable activities or governed by controversial regimes.	Cristea et al. (2015); Barbarossa et al. (2018
Reducing perceived buying risks	Country-of-origin serves as a quality indication for reliability, safety, and durability, helping to reduce perceived buying risks on the customer's. Its importance is especially pronounced when other product information is scarce.	Cristea et al. (2015); Barbarossa et al. (2018)
Creates and form stereotypes	Research indicates that consumers' perceptions of a product's COO are often influenced by stereotypes about the country itself, whether these perceptions are positive or negative. These stereotypes can stem from various sources, including personal visits, knowledge about the country, political views, and ethnocentric tendencies. However, these stereotypes frequently do not reflect the actual features of the product. For example, concerns such as human rights violations, child labour, and low manufacturing costs can distort perceptions of the product's attributes. Other studies revealed that consumers' views on COO are more likely based on these stereotypes rather than on specific characteristics of the product.	Tjandra et al. (2015); Barbarossa et al. (2018)
Helps to create competitive advantage	It helps to distinguish products from the competition on the market. It is also an important tool while establishing reputation and protecting from competitors and fraud.	Sharma (2011)

| Helps to create strong brand and leverage brand equity and brand image | The concept of COO is related to branding practices, although branding is generally understood to be a broader term. Branding encompasses a set of cultural principles and symbolic meanings conveyed through marketing, which may include but are not limited to, perceptions of origin. History of economics demonstrated that registered trademarks have historically strengthened the connection between COO and branding. Trademark legislation, introduced in most countries during the nineteenth century, prioritised transparency about origin as a central concern and common branding strategy. During this era of expanding global trade, indications of origin and their fraudulent uses became widespread. The country of origin (COO) also influences the perceived image of the brand itself; in this context, the brand image is constructed. | Sharma (2011); Vranesevic et al. (2024) |

Source: own adaptation of various sources.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of the country of origin (COO) is a topic of significant discussion within the scientific community, yielding a range of insights and implications. The COO plays a critical role in shaping consumer behaviour, acting as a pivotal factor in daily purchasing decisions. Additionally, this phenomenon has a substantial impact on manufacturers, influencing their strategies for product labeling and international market placement. The PRISMA 2020 method was employed to screen 75 publications, enabling the analysis of selected scientific sources based on predefined keywords such as 'country of origin", 'country-of-rigin effect' and 'brand origin'. This methodological approach also facilitated the addressing of the two specific research questions. This paper examined the dimensions of the country of origin (COO) and its effect on the behaviour of consumers and manufacturers in the market. It is important to note that the presented results may vary depending on the specific product segments analysed.

The paper addressed a topical issue, however it has certain limitations due to the chosen methodology. The systematic review was constrained by the databases utilised, the selected search terms, and the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Yet, these limitations present an opportunity for future research to consider broader scientific databases and conduct a more in-depth exploration of relevant scientific articles.

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Kraj pochodzenia w kontekście decyzji zakupowych konsumentów i zachowań producentów: przegląd literatury

Streszczenie

Cel: W czasach globalizacji zagadnienie kraju pochodzenia produktu zyskało duże zainteresowanie ze względu na jego wpływ na zachowania konsumentów i strategie producentów. W artykule przedstawiono wymiary kraju pochodzenia produktu, jego efekty i wpływ na zachowania konsumentów i producentów na rynku.

Metodyka: Wykorzystując metodę PRISMA 2020, przeprowadzono systematyczny przegląd literatury w celu zidentyfikowania odpowiednich badań, oceny ich ważności i przedstawienia wyników w ustrukturyzowany sposób.

Wyniki: W przeglądzie literatury ograniczono się do wybranych baz danych, wyszukiwanych haseł oraz kryteriów włączenia i wykluczenia. Podstawowymi źródłami były bazy WOS (Web of Science) i SCOPUS, z których zidentyfikowano 19 011 prac naukowych. Po zastosowaniu kryteriów kwalifikacyjnych wybrano 18 833 artykułów, a do odpowiedzi na pytania badawcze wykorzystano 75 artykułów pełnotekstowych.

Implikacje i rekomendacje: Naukowa dyskusja na temat kraju pochodzenia dostarcza różnorodnych spostrzeżeń i implikacji, podkreślając znaczenie zrozumienia przez sprzedawców czynników kształtujących wybory konsumentów dotyczące produktów wytwarzanych za granicą.

Oryginalność/wartość: Efekt kraju pochodzenia jest bardzo skomplikowanym, wielowymiarowym i wielowątkowym pojęciem, stąd wartością dodaną artykułu jest uporządkowanie terminologii i wiedzy z nim związanej, a także uporządkowanie i wskazanie na aspekty kraju pochodzenia produktu, które wpływają na decyzje zakupowe konsumentów oraz działania marketingowe przedsiębiorstw.

Słowa kluczowe: kraj pochodzenia produktu, efekt kraju pochodzenia, pochodzenie marki