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Impact of Country-of-Origin and Price on Product's Advertisement Efficacy

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ABSTRACT The objective of this study is to assess the effect that country-of-origin and price have on efficacy of advertisements for a product. The African population has noticeably not featured much in country-of-origin research in spite of the growing size and complexity of the African consumer market. Country–of-origin refers to the country of manufacture, production, or growth where an article or product comes from. In realizing the goals for which it was set to achieve, this experimental study ascertained the influence of country-of-origin and price on advertisement efficacy involving an African population sample. Six hundred female and male undergraduates (with mean age = 23.02; SD= 3.2 years) were randomly drawn from a large university, to view a product advertisement that uniquely manipulated country-of-origin and price for a fictitious brand of insecticide named "Antisect." Data analysis was done using one-way analysis of variance. It was found that individually and collectively, country-of-origin and price did affect advertisement efficacy significantly. It was concluded that advertisers need to consider product's country-of-origin and product's price when developing successful advertisement campaigns. Beyond advertisements, country-of-origin and price also matter to buyers and consumers of products.

INTRODUCTION

Country-of-origin (COO) and price are among the numerous factors that influence purchase behaviour. Perreault and McCarthy (1996) define price as what is charged for something. It is a basic regulator of the economic system because it influences the allocation of factors of production, namely, labour, land, capital and entrepreneurship (Stanton 1981). In its role as distributor of scarce resources, price determines what will be produced (supply) and who will get how much of these goods and services (demand).

Consumer behaviour literature has indicated that consumers use country-of-origin labels to infer product quality. This is especially so if consumers know little else about the product class or brand in question (Eroglu et al. 1989). Products from economically prosperous and technologically advanced nations are viewed in more positive light than products from poor countries that lack sound production and economic base. There is a general tendency to think that developed countries are far more able to produce products that have high quality. Consequently, consumers are more likely to buy products on the basis of the products' quality inferences (Han and Terpstra 1988; Han 1989; Kin and Chung 1997). Plausible as the foregoing proposition by Han and Terpstra (1988), Han (1989), and Kin and Chung (1997) may be, it does not exhaustively state other possible reasons why rich countries do enjoy higher country-of-origin advantage than poor countries. Karunaratna (2003) has reported that when consumers are presented with information about the country of origin, they are able to differentiate between these and rely on country stereotypes in this evaluation. But how do consumers operate when they do not have any information about country from where a product emanates? Karunaratna's (2003) findings also suggest that consumers are able to discriminate among products from different countries and show that there is a hierarchy of effects where consumers rank, in order of decreasing quality. It is widely acknowledged that country of origin has an impact on the consumer product evaluations (Ehigie and Babalola 1995; Karunaratna 2003).

Poon et al. (2010) describe another phenomon by which consumers opt for products from home country. It is called consumer ethnocentrism. This refers to characteristically distinguishable beliefs developed by consumers regarding the moral justification for and appropriateness of buying products that originate from or are made abroad. The phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism presupposes that consumer has the likelihood to differentiate products that come from the in-group or (home country) and products that come from the out-groups or foreign countries. In making such distinctions, consumers decline to buy foreign products. Instead they go for home products essentaially for patriotic reasons (Poon et al. 2010).

The significance of this study lies in the fact that consumers worldwide are having increasing access to a wide variety of consumer products from other countries. Therefore, the promise of product-country image and price in influencing consumer behaviour is likely to increase in the future. It is also important to recognize the capacity that product-country images for consumer products have in aiding global marketing strategies.

The COO image is related to economic development, technology, world status of the country, as well as to the availability and familiarity of products and advertising. Therefore, it has been discovered from previous studies that consumers prefer products from advanced countries rather than those from less developed countries. In preferring these products, consumers may also be willing to pay a higher price compared to products from developing countries. Manrai et al. (1997) observed that product evaluation and company image are more valuable for consumers with highly positive country disposition than those with negative perceptions.

Since the mid-1960s, several studies have been devoted to investigating how country image might affect consumers' perceptions of product (Chan 2000). In general, these studies have confirmed the influence of country image on product evaluation (Han and Terpstra 1988; Han 1989; Kim and Chung 1997).

However, most country-of-origin studies that have been done in the past have focused on mostly developed countries of Europe and North America (Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu 2001). Little or no research has so far been done on country-of-origin effect in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Gaedeke (1973) has observed the importance of studying country-of-origin effect in different cross-cultural/national settings for better conceptualization and generalizabilty of the findings in multiple regions and countries. In that regard, there is need to culturally and regionally broaden COO and price research in relation to commercial efficacy. However, Aaker and Williams (1998) note some cultural differences in some aspects of consumer behaviour. Consequently, they caution on the practice of developing marketing strategies in one culture and transferring them to another culture wholesome.

This study chose an African sub-population along with a western population to research this subject of COO and be able to know if there are differences between the two regions.

Country-of-Origin (COO) and the Nigerian Context

Ehigie and Babalola (1995) observed the high preference of Nigerians for imported products, especially products from advanced western countries. COO effects among consumers in developing countries may be skewed in favour of products from developed countries. That is to say that consumers in developing countries are known to generally prefer products originating from developed countries. Other researchers (Okechukwu 1994; Cordell 1992; Usiner 1994) have found that COO indeed has an impact on consumer product evaluations and, supposedly, evaluations of product advertisements too.

Okechukwu and Onyemah (1999) reported that Nigerian consumers have a negative image of the 'Made in Nigeria' label, rating it lower than labels from more economically developed countries. Additional analyses indicate that the superior reliability and technological advancement of foreign products are the most important correlates of the Nigerian consumer's likelihood to purchase foreign products.

Technological reputation, economic factors, and price are among the factors that influence COO perception. For example, Japan has been know worldwide for producing high quality affordable electronics and automobiles.

Price and its Relationship with Country-of-Origin (COO)

Price involves the economic aspects of consumer behaviour that are in one way or the other influenced by income or purchasing behaviour. The traditional economic theory explains that consumers act to maximize the satisfaction that they purchase with available monetary resources (Kotler 1972).

Rational choice theory has tried to explain preference and choice by assuming that people are rational choosers. In choice situations, people actually have the goal of "satisficing" rather than maximizing. A satisficer simply encounters and evaluates goods until one is encountered that exceeds the acceptability threshold. That good is chosen (Schwartz et al.2002). A satisficer thus often moves in the direction of maximization without ever having it as a deliberate goal. But a maximizer often moves in the direction of maximization while having it as a deliberate goal.

To satisfice is to pursue not the best option, but a good enough option.

It is in trying to maximize satisfaction that consumers choose products that originate from countries which they believe have the technology, integrity and world reputation associated with such products. When such positive attributes of a producing or service-rendering country are established in relation to a product, then consumers may as well be willing to pay a commensurate and affordable price for the product.

A Theory of Country-of-Origin (COO) and Price

It has been accepted that COO reefers to "consumers" overall view of products from a particular country, based primarily on their prior perceptions of that country's strengths and weaknesses in production and marketing (Roth and Romeo 1992: 40). Numerous studies have indicated that COO bears a significant influence on consumer perception and decision making (Roth and Romeo 1992).

Huber and Mcann (1992) have observed that COO influences consumers' product evaluations by signaling product quality when they are unable to detect the true quality of a country's product. Elliot and Cameron (1984) report that, in particular, country-of-origin can be an indicator of quality when it is difficult to assess by other objective means. A study by Wall et al. (1991) revealed that COO information is more important in affecting product quality assessment than price and brand information.

Consumers' product evaluations depend on consumers' familiarity with the product. However, it has been found that when consumers are not familiar with a country's product, they will use the country's image as a "hallo" in product evaluation (Maheswaran 1994). Sometimes COO perception covers an entire country's products. It has been suggested that products in less developed countries tend to have a less positive image than products from more developed countries (Cai et al.2004). Similarly, a product with a developed country origin is seen as guarantee regarding the product's quality and preference (Kaynak 2000).

Bailey (1997) determined that upper-income Mexicans prefer foreign products, but this was mediated by age, education, and household size. Okechuku and Onyemah (1999) found that country-of-manufacture is significantly more important than price and other product attributes in consumer preference.

Goals of the Study

This research asked and attempted to answer the following three questions:

1. What impact would COO and price have on ad efficacy? This research question is justified by the fact that products originating from developing countries such as Nigeria enjoy far less positive image compared to products originating from developed countries (Cai et al. 2004). Therefore, it is important to know how COO and price interact in developing nations as opposed to developed nations;
2. What impact would COO and price have on recall, liking, intention and attitude - the components of ad efficacy? This question is predicated on the fact that price is important in consumer decision making especially when consumers are familiar with a product. But when that familiarity is lacking, consumers are bound to rely largely on the product's country of origin to be able to ascertain its quality; and
3. What level of product price and which country of production would impact on ad efficacy more significantly to Nigerian students? This question is asked based on the assumption that countries do not necessarily enjoy the same levels of country-of-origin advantage for common products. In the same manner, two or three price levels for a particular product may not affect consumers' product choices in exactly the same way.

METHODS

Participants and Setting

Participants in this study were sampled from 1st, 2nd and 3rd year undergraduate student population of the social sciences faculty at a Nigerian university. The students registered for three social science courses in the second semester of the university's 2003/2004 academic session. In all, 600 participants were selected from a larger group of 935 social science undergraduate students of the university. The sampled participants were made up of 300 males and 300 females. The study had pilot study and main

study components. Of the 600 participants that were sampled, 120 participated in the pilot study while the remaining 480 participated in the main study. The mean age of the pilot study participants was 22.2 years, with a standard deviation of 4.6, while the mean age of the main study participants was 23.02 years, with a standard deviation of 3.2.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study include a stop-watch, video player, a television set and three tins of an insecticide branded as Antisect and differently reported to have originated from Nigeria, Ghana and England. Other materials used in the study were an author self-developed memory/recall test, a product COO perception test, an advertised product price perception scale and an ad efficacy. Following are the detailed explanations for some of the materials used.

Antisect

A computer colour design and printed label of an intended new product named Antisect was created by the author in collaboration with a product brand creation and management professional. The designed and printed label was cut to size and neatly glued to the body of an existing insecticide named Mobil. The glued label superimposed the branded portion of the Mobil insecticide tin thereby causing the new Antisect tin to be viewed clearly from in and outside the video as Antisect. Three Antisect tins were created using this same process and each tin label carried one of the three countries of origin that were considered in the study.

Antisect Ads

The Antisect adverts were six in number and similar in length, outlook and content except for the presence of the elements of the independent variables – COO and price. Thus, there were two ad versions for Nigerian, Ghanaian and English products. One of each country's product ad versions carried a high price and the other a low price. Since participants' country of origin was Nigeria, the prices of the advertised products were expressed in Nigeria currency, the naira. Each ad version was 45 seconds long and was presented 8 times to participants in each experimental group while a 24 minute movie containing the ad slots lasted. The six slots for each version of the ad were evenly interspaced within the home video that subjects watched. Participants were supposed to watch the movie containing the ad slots and thereafter recall the advertised product information which was obtained using a questionnaire. This was important considering the fact that recall ability was an important component of the study.

Memory/Recall Test

The researcher randomly chose for use in the experiment eight nouns, pronouns and verbs which remotely or explicitly related to insecticide use and benefits. The words were read out to participants in quick succession and the participants were in turn asked to recall the words. The number and accuracy of the words recalled formed a participant's memory recall ability score. Reliability for memory/recall test yielded a coefficient alpha value of 0.69 and an item-total correlation of 0.67.

Product COO Perception Test

A pilot study was carried out to better familiarize the researcher with the experimental procedures, the challenges it posed and work how those challenges could be handled in the maim study. In the pilot study, 10 randomly selected subjects were asked to evaluate on a 7-point scale the capability of Nigeria, Ghana and England to produce high quality insecticide. Response options included very much likely, much likely, likely, undecided, unlikely, much unlikely and very much unlikely. A summation of respondents' response scores in respect of each country yielded 63 total scores for England, 55 for Nigeria and 51 for Ghana.

A one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to determine if there was significant difference in the choice of Nigeria, England and Ghana on their assessed capability to produce high quality insecticide. Results indicated that there was a significant difference $F(2, 28) = 5.74$, $P < .05$. A multiple comparison test using the least significant difference (LSD) formula was further done. It showed a significant t-value of 2.84 with England emerging as the most favourably perceived country, followed by Nigeria and Ghana in that order.

Advertised Product Price Perception Test

This was also a 10-item measure each with two-response options of high or low. In each of the items, participants were required to choose an option, which represented either high or low price relative to the prevailing local prices of substitute insecticide brands. In a pilot study, a five-member panel of randomly selected retail shop operators determined if the stated price of the advertised Antisect product was high or low relative to prices of competing insecticide brands they shop operators themselves sell. The aim was to establish that the low and high prices fixed for the advertised insecticide reflected current market trends.

Ad Efficacy

Ad efficacy has four components, namely, recall of advertised product information, attitude towards, intention to try, and liking of, advertised product.

A subject's aggregate score on these components represented his or her ad efficacy score. Efficacy yielded an overall Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.78 in the pilot study.

Recall of advertised product information component was based on an 8-item open questionnaire which the researcher developed to measure participants' recall of advertised product information. The advertised product information sought included product's brand name, name of manufacturer, first year of production, place of production, product's major advantage, product's price, in-can potency period and percentage discount offered .

Each of the 8 items was scored 0, 1, or 2 depending on accuracy or completeness of a participant's recall. A completely inaccurate or non word recall was scored "0"; a semi-accurate recall was scored "1" while full and accurate recall was scored "2". The advertised product information recall test yielded a coefficient alpha value of 0.69 and an item-total correlation of 0.67 in a pilot test.

The component that made up the attitude towards advertised product was a modified form of Belch's (1981b) semantic differential scale which consisted of 10 set of opposite-in-meaning attitude factor adjectives. The attitude component was both reliable and valid. It generated standardized coefficient alpha of 0.81, split-half of 0.74 and overall Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.85. There was a least corrected item-total correlation of 0.36 and a highest correlated item-total correlation of 0.61.

Intention to try advertised product measures consisted of a set of ten bipolar evaluative factor adjectives. The scoring of some items on the bipolar evaluative adjectives was reversed to minimize subjects' bias. With the positive adjectives lying either on the low or high end of the 1 - 7 continuum in intention measure, subjects were instructed to circle one of the seven numbers in each pair of the words. Adding the responses on all the items in the intention measure and reversing (items 1,3,4,6,7,8,9 and 10) which had positive responses at the low end (that is, scoring "7" as "1" and "6" as "2" etc.) gave an overall assessment of a subject's intention to try the advertised product.

The intention measure had standardized coefficient alpha of 0.75, split-half of 0.62 and overall Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.77. The coefficient alpha for part 1 split-half was 0.61 while that for part 2 was 0.57. It similarly had a least corrected item-total correlation of 0.33 and a highest corrected item-total correlation of 0.48.

Liking of advertised product consisted of 10 items, each with five Likert response options. The liking sub-scale had a standardized coefficient alpha of 0.82, coefficient alphas of 0.72 and 0.63 for split halves 1 and 2 respectively. Overall Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient was 0.84. There were also least corrected item-total correlation of 0.40 and highest corrected item-total correlation of 0.63.

Research Design

This study utilized a 2 x 2 factorial design. The experiment was carried out at the pilot and main study levels. At both levels, two trained experimental assistants assisted the researcher with the conduct of the study.

Subjects in each of the six experimental groupings viewed an ad of Antisect reported to have originated from a specified country considered in the study. The advertised product in each of the experimental groupings contained either high or low price. Therefore, the independent variable manipulations were centred on the different COO and price level which subjects in each experimental grouping were exposed to. Before viewing the ads, subjects in

each experimental grouping took a memory/ recall test. Experimental controls exerted during the study include random selection and assignment of subjects and elimination of distractions to subjects.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics. To answer research questions relating to the impact of COO and price on ad efficacy as well as the impact of COO and Price on recall, liking, intention and attitude -the components of ad efficacy, a 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA was used in each case. To answer the question on the level of product price and which country of production would impact more significantly on ad efficacy, mean scores were used along with least significant difference (LSD) comparison technique.

RESULTS

Results in table 1 indicate that COO and price independently and jointly impact on ad efficacy significantly. Table 2 shows that with the possible exception of COO and price not significantly impacting on intention independently or jointly, COO and price independently and jointly impact on each component of ad efficacy significantly. Mean scores for COO and price on ad efficacy appear in table 3. The efficacy mean scores in table 3 indicate that a high price Antisect originating from England impacted most significantly on ad efficacy.

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study have confirmed that country-of-origin of a product facilitates or hinders the product's advertisement efficacy. This phenomenon is called the country-of-origin (COO) effect. Previous studies on COO effect have focused primarily on Western and Asian population while also focusing on consumer choice or purchase behaviour primarily. But consumer behaviour, demand and supply have assumed global dimensions today. As well, actual consumer purchase behaviour does not manifest all the time. Therefore, researching COO and price effect on ad efficacy with an African population is, no doubt, a significant addition to literature in the

Table 1: A 2 x 2 analysis of variance showing the impact of country-of-origin and price on ad efficacy

Source	*SS*	*DF*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
Country of origin (A)	256546.6	2	128273.3	1730.51	<.001
Price (B)	6228.00	1	6228.00	84.02	<.001
A x B	8803.90	2	4401.95	59.39	<.001
Total	340022.90	479	709.86		

Table 2: A 2 x 2 analyses of variance showing the impact of country-of-origin and price on recall, liking, intention and attitude

Source	*SS*	*DF*	*MS*	*F*	*P*
Country of origin (A)	* 318.56	2	159.28	55.38	<.001
	** 18555.45	2	9277.73	707.26	<.001
	*** 24295.40	2	12147.7	482.64	<.001
	**** 38799.95	2	19399.98	832.49	<.001
Price (B)	* 40.86	1	40.86	14.21	<.01
	** 70.53	1	70.53	5.38	<.05
	*** 1267.50	1	1267.5	50.36	<.001
	**** 2041.88	1	2041.88	87.62	<.001
A x B	* 4.44	2	2.22	0.77	NS
	** 104.12	2	52.06	3.97	<.05
	*** 4754.40	2	1877.2	74.53	<.001
	**** 999.01	2	499.51	21.44	<.01
Total	* 47853.00	480	99.69		
	** 28162.93	479	58.8		
	*** 45466.80	479	94.92		
	**** 60268.37	479	125.82		

* represents *recall*, ** represents *liking*, *** represents *intention*, **** represents *attitude*

Table 3: Mean scores for country-of-origin and price on commercial efficacy

	Price	
Country-of-origin	*Low*	*High*
Nigeria	88.6	110.5
Ghana	79.9	83.2
England	135.5	137.0

field of study in question. It is in this connection that this study is very relevant.

The COO effect replicated in this study suggests that technologically and economically advanced countries that have capacity to provide high quality products will continue to have a huge advantage over developing countries regarding international competition for products marketing. The implication of this is that developing countries need to devise more creative ways of surviving in the highly competitive international products marketing arena.

Grossman and Helpman (1998) have observed that people get to know, appreciate and buy their home country products through different ways. One of these ways is socialization, which is influenced, in this case, by confidence in the producers, the technology for the product, availability and type of close substitutes. Perhaps, the case of Nigeria, as reported by Ehigie and Ramon (1994) explains consumers' rationale for choosing products based on quality rather than just patriotism. In this regards, advanced countries that have higher propensity to produce high quality products will continue to enjoy country- origin advantage than countries with lower propensity to produce high quality products. In Ehigie and Ramon's (1994) study, consumers perceived cake labelled as baked in England as better quality than those labelled as baked in Nigeria or Kenya. Baked in Nigeria cake was perceived as being superior in quality to that baked in Kenya

Findings of this study support the previous results of Eroglu et al. (1989) and Schaefer (1997). Eroglu et al. (1989) report that consumers use COO labels to infer product quality if they know little else about the product class or brand in question. Furthermore, product knowledge level of the subjects did reveal a moderating effect on their perception of product quality. The findings of this study, however, depart from Bader's (1996) proposition that as brand name is made known to subjects, price loses some strength as a product quality signal.

In spite of these findings, it is still not clear how much price sacrifice consumers can make for a product whose country-of-origin the consumer favours. In other words, is there a limit to how much a consumer is willing to pay for a product with a favourable country-of-origin?

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding of this study have established relationships between country-of-origin (COO) and product perceptions. These are invariably connected with product price and do affect efficacy of advertised product advertisement. Therefore, developing countries need favourable product perceptions to record high international market performances. The international market arena currently is dominated by developed countries and emerging developing countries. Thus, the prospect of influencing COO effects to equally favour most developing countries lies in strategic planning by these countries. Schaefer' (1997) for instance recommends that developing countries need to improve their international political relations while intensifying their national and international country promotion in all areas useful for international trade. Developing countries also need to ensure objective availability of products on the market from countries involved. Kaynak and Kucukemirogly (1992) are of the view that developing trade alliances with their developed counterparts is a sure way that developing countries can ease up the effects that COO has on their economies. Findings of this study also suggest that firms in developing countries need to strategically plan and position their products' advertisement campaigns for better results. This entails making adequate budgets for advertising which has become a useful tool for organizations and nations to succed in the face of increasing competition in the global product market.

Although today's product market is highly globalized and interdependent, developing countries could fare better if they sensitize their citizens to imbibe some level of consumer ethnocentrism for nationalistic or patriotic reasons. Consumer ethnocentrism will combine with other sound marketing and advertising measures to strengthen competition and ensure the survival of firms in developing countries.

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Appendix 1: Factor analysis component transformation matrix for intention

Intention	*Component*		
	1	*2*	*3*
10	.64	.36	.20
6	.63	.14	.88
1	.61	.39	.38
3	.59	.31	.23
2	.58	.24	.48
5	.58	.14	.44
4	.50	.15	.44
9	.48	.39	.19
7	.50	.28	.33
8	.49	.62	.19

Appendix 2: Factor analysis component transformation matrix for liking

Liking	*Component*
2	.74
5	.70
10	.66
6	.64
4	.63
3	.62
8	.58
1	.58
9	.51
7	.51

Appendix 3: Factor analysis component transformation matrix for attitude

Attitude	*Component*	
	1	*2*
3	.75	.51
10	.65	.35
4	.63	.14
7	.57	.15
2	.54	.47
9	.46	.38
5	.15	.90
8	.36	.61
1	.42	.52
6	.29	.50

Appendix 4: Factor analysis component transformation matrix for efficacy

	Component	
	1	*2*
1	.79	.69
2	.68	.77

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