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An Empirical Study on the Impact of Country of Origin Effect on Young Lithuanian Consumers' Attitude towards Products

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The country-of-origin (COO) effect is one of the most controversial areas of scientific marketing research because the results of some studies lead to different conclusions about the COO and its impact on consumer attitude and behaviour. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product and how it depends on COO effect's moderators in the Lithuanian market. Theoretical analysis reveals that COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product depends on moderating effects of consumer experience and product knowledge, consumer ethnocentricity, consumer product involvement, consumer perceived product risk and a product brand. The quantitative research method – online questionnaire survey – was chosen as an appropriate method to collect research data. The correlation analysis was used to estimate the relationship of COO effect, its moderators and a consumer's attitude to a product. Further, the data have been analysed using a stepwise regression method in order to verify the hypotheses of our research. The findings showed that a consumer's attitude to a product is strongly influenced by COO effect. A consumer's attitude to a product is also influenced by COO effect moderators, which are product knowledge and product involvement. Analyzing the results of empirical research it can also be noticed that in this research case, when respondents evaluated their attitude to products made in foreign countries, one of COO effect moderators analyzed in theory, a consumer's ethnocentricity, did not have influence on a consumer's attitude to a product. The original contribution of this article is that it investigates the moderating effects of consumer ethnocentricity, product involvement, and product knowledge on the relationship between COO effect and consumer's attitude to a product in an emerging market.

Keywords: *Country-of-Origin, Consumer Attitude, Product Knowledge, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Product Involvement.*

Introduction

In an era of globalization and market integration, the economy is undisputable without international trade, and residents in each country often cannot imagine their lives without imported products. Therefore, for the sellers of such products, it is very important, even necessary, to know what factors affect consumer decisions when choosing foreign-made products. At first sight, it may seem that in all cases the price and quality have the biggest impact on the consumer's decisions. However, choosing a product is a quite difficult and complex process, during which a consumer evaluates all the available information about the product and makes a decision to buy it or not. A process of choosing a product is going easier when a consumer has a considerable amount of information about products from which to choose, or in the case of a repurchase situation. However, when a consumer has a minimum or absolutely no information about a product, a completely different situation occurs: in such a case, a consumer has to make a decision to choose one product from several possible, and because he does not have information necessary to make a decision, he is looking for it at a point of sales and makes decisions with the information that is available (Jimenez & San Martin, 2010; Yu *et al.*, 2013).

A consumer finds the product's price, product composition and a country-of-origin at the point of sales or on the product label. In other words, product's 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 (Chamorro, Rubio & Miranda, 2015). Vendors have always been curious which product and why a consumer chooses when he/she does not have full information about it, while the price and the composition of the product are identical. The answer to this question has been discussed and based on the results of the country-of-origin (hereinafter COO) effect research. The results have shown that COO is an extrinsic information cue and a consumer tends to choose products when he/she decides on their quality and reliability according to the country where they were made. So, the consumer's decisions are influenced by his/her earlier formed opinion and attitude to certain countries. Interestingly, Urbonavicius, Dikcius & Navickaite (2011) define COO as a three-dimensional concept. The authors state that COO is a combination of cognitive, affective and conative elements. Although the impact of COO on consumers' attitude towards products has been studied for decades, the country-of-brand-origin (COBO) impact on the consumer has become scholars' interest only recently (Pikturniene & Treigyte, 2009). The research of Pikturniene & Treigyte (2009) revealed unique results that consumers have a different attitude towards products with different COO and COBO combinations. Moreover, the consumer's attitude towards products with different COO and COBO combinations does not depend on

the product category but on consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

A consumer's attitude is considered to be a relatively constant consumer's opinion on certain things. When a consumer has taken a view, he/she is guided by it in dealing with a variety of daily activities' issues and various problems. An attitude often helps a consumer to make a decision easier because once a certain opinion is formed, and situation recurs, there is no need to deal with the problem again. It can be seen that in the scientific literature, for example, Godey *et al.* (2012), it is stated that there are unique characteristics and features that an attitude has like the intention of a predisposition, motivation and they can be positive or negative. For vendors and manufacturers from all over the world, consumer's attitude features, characteristics, and factors which affect the formation of a consumer's attitude are highly relevant so naturally, this subject was and is intensely researched. Researchers analyse both the attitude and the interface of its formation, also the influence of products' or consumers' characteristics on the formation of a consumer's attitude (Bloemer, Brijs, & Kasper, 2009; Zafer Erdogan & Uzkurt, 2010).

A wide range of studies has already been done on the impact of COO effect on a consumer attitude. The first empirical studies have been carried out in the sixties of the last century, and later the number of studies increased because COO became one of the leading topics of the international trade and the exploration of a consumer's behaviour. There is no doubt that COO impacts (positively or negatively) the consumer's product evaluation and buying decisions (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Yu, Lin & Chen, 2013; Berry *et al.*, 2015).

The COO effect and its impact on a consumer's attitude have been explored in many ways and different countries, and it has led to different results. Chamorro, Rubio, & Miranda, (2015) analysed the influence of COO effect on a consumer's attitude by evaluating various categories of products. Fong, Lee & Du (2014) examined how consumer's attitude and COO depend on different cultures, when buying requires a different consumer involvement in a purchasing process and Urbonavicius, Dikcius, & Navickaite (2011) studied how an image of the COO affects consumer's beliefs and buying decisions. Such empirical studies have let to find out that the COO impact on a consumer's attitude varies depending on how much information about a product a consumer has, respondent's characteristics, categories of the goods and consumer culture.

According to Yang, Ramsaran-Fowdar & Wibowo (2016), COO can be driven by different factors such as country image/national stereotypes, consumer ethnocentrism, involvement, consumers' knowledge on the product and his/her experience as well as cultural differences. Many conducted COO studies let examine not only various factors which COO effect influence on a consumer's attitude may be different, but also how COO influences consumer's perception and evaluation of the reputation of a product's COO, and stereotypes. Although there have been quite a lot studies of COO and consumer's attitude and behaviour performed, Godey *et al.* (2012), Ciravegna, Lopez & Kundu (2014) point out that product's COO effect is one of the most controversial areas of scientific marketing research, because the results of some studies lead to different conclusions about COO and its impact on consumer attitude and behaviour.

Such scholars as Laroche *et al.* (2005), after doing their research, announced the findings where both COO and its image (also known as Product Country Image (PCI)) had a significant impact on consumer's evaluations according to what product or service was chosen. However, Liefeld's (2004) earlier studies had shown different results which were interpreted by a researcher, and it was concluded that COO influence on consumer attitude and behaviour was weak, and sellers who operate in the global markets, should not emphasize product's COO in anticipation of higher sales. Godey *et al.* (2012) pointed out that despite the researchers' efforts to confirm and relate research results and COO effect, even in recent years, many marketing researchers such as Laroche *et al.* (2005), Bloemer, Brijs & Kasper (2009), Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos (2013), Berry (2015) still search for the conceptual and methodological clarity of COO effect. As emphasized by different authors like Pecotich & Ward (2007), Bloemer *et al.* (2009), Godey *et al.* (2012), Yang, Ramsaran-Fowdar & Wibowo (2016), despite the existence of these studies, the role of COO effect on a consumer attitude, beliefs, and behaviour remains unclear, and further studies are needed. As a result, the research question addressed within the study is: how COO of a product cues affect consumer's attitudes to a product, i.e. what are the moderators of COO effect and how they affect consumer's attitude to a product. So as the original contribution of this article, the study investigates moderating effects on the relationship between COO effect and consumer's attitude to a product in the emerging Lithuanian market.

The aim of the research is to explore the impact of COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product and how it depends on COO effect's moderators in the emerging Lithuanian market. The object of the research is the impact of COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product and its moderators.

Research methods: when performing the theoretical analysis, the methods of comparative analysis and systematization of scientific literature were applied. The quantitative method of data collection (questionnaire survey) was applied in the empirical research. For the data analysis and to test the hypothesis, methods of correlation and stepwise regression were adapted.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

After a thorough literature analysis, it can be concluded that there are many factors that have an impact on consumer purchase intention. The analysis of a consumer's perception of COO effect showed that COO effect depends on a country's economic development level, where a product was made, as well as on a cultural type of consumer's country (individualism/collectivism): these are called exogenous antecedents; the COO effect also depends on a consumer demographic and psychographic characteristics - endogenous antecedents; and moderators – awareness of COO, consumer's experience and product knowledge, consumer's ethnocentricity, consumer product involvement, consumer's perceived product risk and a product brand (Chryssochoidis, Krystallis & Perreas, 2007; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Chattalas, Kramer & Takada, 2008; Saffu

& Scott 2009; Zafer Erdogan & Uzkurt, 2010; Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Godey *et al*., 2012).

Studies have shown that the respondent's age affects the evaluation of products and attitude to them because the younger the respondents are, women as well, the more positive image about products made in foreign countries they have. Consumer‘s culture influences his/her attitude to a product, and this influence varies depending on the consumer's country. According to Lin & Chen (2006), Spielmann (2016), it can be assumed that product knowledge is represented by memories and knowledge of consumers related to certain products and recognition and confidence in those products. Considering low-knowledge and high-knowledge consumers, it is significant to point out that low-knowledge consumers can be strongly influenced by COO perceptions when evaluating foreign-made products and the opposite case is with high-knowledge consumers.

According to Jimenez & San Martin (2010), Bian & Moutinho (2011), Stere & Trajani (2015), Siamagka & Balabanis (2015), consumer ethnocentricity is assigned to the important factors which make the impact on the COO perceptions because under its influence customers are affected by COO effect: customers have already formed a negative attitude to foreign-made products and prefer the use of domestically produced goods. It has to be noticed that high levels of consumer ethnocentrism lead to less knowledge of product brand origin and thus, lower consumer‘s COO knowledge.

The effect of COO on consumers, while they make purchase decisions, can be found to vary based on potential risks and benefits they get. Fong, Lee & Du (2014) state that consumer's perceived product risk also influences COO effect: i.e. when a consumer's perceived product risk is higher, COO affects consumer stronger, and vice versa, when product's risk decreases, COO effect changes in the same direction.

According to the opinion of Chu *et al.* (2010), Godey et al. (2012), Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos (2013), Berry *et al.* (2015), a product brand can become a source of quality and suitability assessment, as well as COO, because with information and knowledge about the product brand, the customer tendsto rely less on COO when assessing a product. However, it should be emphasized that consumer opinion about product brand, which has a positive image, can be strongly affected by the negative image of product COO, so it is assumed that product COO is more often a significant stimulus to form consumer attitude than product brand.

Detailed literature reviews have been conducted, and it can be concluded that the influence of antecedents and two of the moderators, i.e. product brand and consumer perceived product risk, is widely researched as there have been some studies on different manifestations performed. Therefore, it is important to determine how COO effect and its moderators like consumer ethnocentrism, product involvement, and product experience and knowledge, impact the consumer’s attitude analysis on both theoretical and empirical levels because such studies have been done quite fragmentedly and a gap exists within the knowledge. To date, the joint analysis of the moderators' impact on consumer attitude has not been done yet.

According to the scientific works of Ahmed et al. (2002), Lin & Chen (2006), Bartsch, Riefler, & Diamantopoulos (2016), it can be stated that COO may affect the consumer’s attitude towards a product in two ways: as a halo effect or as a summary construct. When consumers are not familiar with the country's products, during their evaluation the country's image affects as the halo effect and directly influences consumer's attitude. It means that while evaluating the product, a consumer thinks about COO and its existing image, not about other product characteristics. When consumers have the experience and knowledge on the country's products, the PCI can become a construct which sums up consumers' beliefs about the product characteristics, and then directly affects the consumer's attitude to the product. So, as Lin & Chen (2006) generalize, a positive image of COO is a factor, which forms consumer's attitude to a product or has a significant influence on its formation.

Scholars like Ahmed and d'Astous (2008), Josiassen, Lukas and Whitwell (2008) supposed that consumer's perception of foreign-made products and attitude to them can be changed when a consumer has an experience and knowledge (subjective and objective) of using the product, because when a consumer is using the product, his consciousness captures an evaluation which determines the further consumer's attitude to a product and creates heuristics for making the choice.

Some scholars like Ahmed & d‘Astous (2008), Josiassen, Lukas & Whitwell (2008) suppose that a consumer's product involvement may influence COO effect on consumer's attitude, because when there is high involvement of product category a consumer typically analyzes product's attributes, features, carefully evaluates them and only later the attitude to a product is formed. Studies performed by Ahmed *et al.* (2002), Lin & Chen (2006), Josiassen *et al.* (2008), Bian & Moutinho (2011) confirm that consumer's product involvement affects the formation of an attitude because it influences consumer's need to get more information about the product and its characteristics. In line with this, a study conducted by Ciravegna, Lopez, Kundu (2014) describes that a consumer dealing with high product involvement tends to make a decision on a product’s evaluation and purchasing more sophisticatedly, i.e. the consumer will carefully and thoroughly evaluate, intensively examine information about a product before purchasing it. Meanwhile, a consumer evaluating low involvement product will behave conversely. Other authors like Prendergast, Tsang & Chan (2010), Fong, Lee, & Du (2014) emphasized that it is important to analyse product involvement with other factors, which affect the COO effect. According to Bartsch, Riefler & Diamantopoulos (2016), it can be highlighted that COO influence on a consumer’s attitude to a product cannot be analysed without the analysis of a consumer’s experience using a product as product knowledge influences the relationship among the consumer, price, and quality. Depending on a consumer’s level of product knowledge, it will affect the product quality assessment.

Other researchers such as Chryssochoidis *et al.* (2007), Zafer Erdogan & Uzkurt (2010), Lee, J., Lee, B., & Lee, W. (2013) believe that it is necessary to analyse the COO effect on a consumer’s attitude, including the psychological factor

of consumer ethnocentrism. This relevance is substantiated by the fact that all the scientific literature which analyses COO effect states that the consumer's attitude to products made in foreign countries is not only associated with the attitude to COO but also with a consumer's level of ethnocentrism. The COO, as an informational cue, activates much ethnocentric and not only a consumer's beliefs and consumer's knowledge about COO, which accordingly affect the evaluation of products in a consumer's perception. Scholars Jimenez & San Martin (2010), Bian & Moutinho (2011), Siamagka & Balabanis (2015), Stere & Trajani (2015) added that it is necessary to emphasize a strong relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and the attitude to a product.

After conducting the theoretical substantiation of the distinguished moderators (i.e. product knowledge, consumer ethnocentrism, and product involvement), our research is continued in order to verify empirically COO effect's and already discussed moderators' impact on consumer's attitude to a product. Based on the theoretical analysis the following hypotheses are derived, which will be tested in the empirical study of COO effect's and its moderators' impact on consumer's attitude to a product in the emerging Lithuanian market:

H1: COO effect has an impact on consumer's attitude to a product.

H2: COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product depends on a consumer ethnocentrism.

H3: COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product depends on consumer product knowledge.

H4: COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product depends on consumer product involvement.

Research Design

For the empirical research of COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product, the general marketing research methodologies were applied. The aim of the empirical research was to explore the impact of COO effect on consumer's attitude to a product and how it depends on moderating effects of consumer ethnocentrism, product involvement, and product knowledge in the emerging Lithuanian market.

The quantitative research method – online questionnaire survey – was chosen as an appropriate method to collect research data.

The research instrument – questionnaire – where 14 questions were included; the major part was composed of the questions for measuring constructs which were analysed theoretically and the other part was composed of general questions which reflected the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The closed-ended questions, which give a possibility to equally interpret the answers of the respondents, were used in the questionnaire, on the basis of which, the comparative analysis can be carried out. The attitude scale was presented in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to indicate their extent of agreement with various statements described on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

The questionnaire questions were adapted and developed from existing scales seeking to explore consumer's attitude to two different COO cues (Russia vs. Switzerland), consumer's ethnocentrism, product knowledge and product involvement (a watch – high involvement product and a deodorant – low involvement product).

It has been chosen to distribute two versions of questionnaire. In one version of the first questionnaire for a watch, the country with a positive image – Switzerland - is assigned, in another version - an average assessed country - Russia. In the second questionnaire, one version accordingly for a deodorant is selected on average estimated COO Russia, and in another - very positively evaluated Switzerland. The method of the research to use two separate questionnaires was adapted using the empirical study by Pecotich & Ward (2007), where the researchers investigated global branding, consumer expertise, and COO. The idea of using different countries, products involvement and knowledge combinations are adapted from the studies of Lin & Chen (2006), and Yim Wong, Polonsky & Garma (2008). Switzerland as COO was chosen for the research because researchers Ahmed *et al.* (2002) used it in their COO studies, and Russia was chosen because it was often used in the studies by Saffu & Scott (2009).

For the investigation of a consumer ethnocentricity, a 17-item CETSCALE was adapted - the scale was designed to measure consumer ethnocentricity, firstly used by Shimp & Sharma (1987). A consumer's product involvement research scales were adapted from the research of Josiassen *et al.* (2008) and COO effect and a consumer's experience and knowledge research scales were formed based on Kabadayi & Lerman's (2011) methodology. Meanwhile, consumer's attitude to a product is being researched following the recommendations of Ahmed & d'Astous (2008) taking into account consumer product characteristics, made in a foreign country, ranking and his/her own desire to buy a ranked product.

It is known that social factors can also influence COO effect on a consumer's attitude; so the intention was to eliminate it. That is why a homogeneous social group of students was selected, who study in the city of Kaunas and it allowed eliminating the social factor. Such homogeneous group of respondents was selected based on the practice of Khan & Bamber (2007), Prendergast *et al.* (2010) and Kabadayi & Lerman (2011). However, for this reason, the adaptation of research results for other social groups is possible only with certain limitations. Regardless of the chosen homogeneous social group, questions about respondents' demographic characteristics were included in the questionnaire on purpose of testing the social homogeneity of the sample. Two different online survey sites (www.apklausk.lt and www.manoapklausa.lt) were used to collect the data and their links were shared by using social media on the Internet with students who study in Kaunas. Sekaran & Bougie (2011) emphasize that an appropriate sample size is between 30 and 500 respondents, and that for a population size of 75 000 and 1 000 000 the sample size should be between 382 and 384. A final useable sample of 408 completed questionnaires was obtained. The target respondents were selected using the convenience sample selection method.

Research Results and Discussion

The participants of the research were students (chosen respondents' age range was from 18 to 27 years), and demographic questions were asked only to confirm the sample's social homogeneity. The majority of respondents were female (58 %), male respondents comprised 42 % in the sample. The predominant age groups of respondents were 18 and 19 years (24.67 % and 32.67 %), and 42.67 % of respondents were a bit older (age group of 20-25 years) of the sample.

In case of the question, whether respondents pay attention to the product's COO when evaluating it, the answers showed that such behaviour is characterized by 64 % of respondents, 28 % answered that they pay attention to COO depending on product category, and only 8 % answered that they do not pay attention to COO. Meanwhile, in case of the question regarding their opinion shift about a product, whether a product is made in a negatively assessed country, it turned out that 56.7 % of respondents would change their opinion about a product. 34 % of respondents were not sure whether their opinion would change, and 9.3 % of respondents answered that their opinion on a product would not change despite the fact that a product is made in the country, which they assess negatively.

In order to evaluate a product's COO effect and influence of its moderators, separate blocks of the questions were formed: for the COO (Switzerland and Russia), for each moderator (ethnocentrism, involvement, and knowledge) as well as for the respondent's attitude to a product depending on COO awareness. It has been chosen to distribute two versions of questionnaire, in which only those questions differ which are about the respondent's knowledge about products (the first questionnaire investigated respondents knowledge of a Russian watch and Swiss deodorant, and the second one - vice-versa - about a Swiss watch and Russian deodorant), and the attitude to the products (the first questionnaire examined respondents' attitude to the Russian watch and Swiss deodorant, and the second - to the Swiss watch and Russian deodorant). The results of the first block questions about the relationship of ethnocentrism and COO effect, and product involvement will be analysed together in both questionnaires, and the results of questions about product knowledge and attitude to a product will be analysed separately of each questionnaire.

When the respondents were asked about ethnocentrism, the answers showed that 35.3 % of respondents strongly disagreed, and 22 % disagreed with the statement that the Lithuanians, purchasing the products made in other countries, are responsible for the fact that residents of Lithuania are losing their jobs. Furthermore, it was revealed that respondents are positive about the imported products as 33 % strongly disagreed, and 32 % disagreed with the statement that foreigners should not be allowed to sell their products in our market. It was also seen that the following statements were evaluated negatively: "All the import should be limited" and "Products made abroad should be taxed high to stop their entry into the Lithuanian market", because 24.7 % of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 28.7 % disagreed with the first statement, while 26.7 % of the respondents strongly disagreed and 32.7 % disagreed with the second statement. It can be noticed that the respondents tend to disagree with the statements that measure ethnocentrism. The calculated averages of respondent answers from each questionnaire showed that the average value of ethnocentrism block question answers in the first questionnaire comprise 2.91, and in the second one - 3.13 (Table 1). These results demonstrate that respondents tended to choose a lower than the average value by marking their opinion about each statement, so it can be concluded that the respondents' level of ethnocentrism is low.

While examining the respondents' opinion about Switzerland, as COO, it was observed that the most important aspects are as follows: products made in Switzerland give appropriate status to their owners (45.3 % of respondents strongly agree), products produced in Switzerland have a good reputation (44 % of respondents strongly agree) and are reliable (32 % of respondents totally agree). It confirms the average value of evaluation of Switzerland as COO, which is 5.9 in both questionnaires (Table 1).

When analysing the respondents' opinion about Russia, as COO, it was disclosed that the majority of the respondents have no opinion about this country. The elements which defined Russia as COO were the charming style (24.7 % of respondents disagreed, and 42.7 % somewhat disagreed), good reputation of products produced in Russia (21.3 % of respondents disagreed, and 43.3 % somewhat disagreed) and high quality products which are produced in Russia (18.7 % of respondents disagreed, and 46.7 % somewhat disagreed). The average evaluation of Russia as COO of the respondents of first questionnaire is 3.15 and 3.32 of the respondents of the second questionnaire (Table 1).

It was clear after asking the respondents about the involvement with a watch that the respondents mostly evaluate a watch as an important product (32 % of respondents agree and 19.3 % strongly agree), and as an attractive product (32 % of respondents agree and 22 % strongly agree). Meanwhile, when investigating the respondents' involvement with a deodorant, it was observed that respondents do not evaluate a deodorant as an interesting product (16.7 % of respondents strongly disagree and 32 % disagree), as well as respondents do not consider a deodorant as an attractive product (10 % of respondents strongly disagree, 30 % disagree, and 32 % somewhat disagree).

As mentioned above, there were two questionnaires distributed, which were different only in questions about the product knowledge and attitude to products. When the respondents were asked to evaluate their knowledge about the Russian watches, it was noted that they do not have much knowledge about the watches made in Russia and they are not sure, how they should evaluate them, because even 30.7 % of respondents chose the answer "undecided". When the question about the knowledge on deodorants made in Switzerland (the block of questions from the first questionnaire) was asked, it was noted that the respondents do not have knowledge on deodorants made in Switzerland, because 34.7 % of respondents strongly disagreed, 25.3 % disagreed, and 17.3 % undecided how to answer this question.

After asking the question about the knowledge of watches made in Switzerland (the block of questions from the second questionnaire), it became obvious that the majority of respondents (48 %) do not have knowledge of watches made in Switzerland, but 12 % of respondents answered they have used watches made in the mentioned country and they do

have quite a solid knowledge about them. After investigating the respondents' knowledge about deodorants made in Russia (block of questions from the second questionnaire), it has been noted that a big part of the respondents have never tried deodorants made in Russia (58.7 % of the respondents strongly disagreed), but they have tried other products made in Russia (26.7 % agreed and 22.7 % strongly agreed).

When the respondents were asked to assess their attitude to Russian watches (the block of questions from the first questionnaire), it was seen that most of respondents had no opinion about Russian watches. The mentioned attitude questions only distinguished a desire to purchase Russian watches, which respondents evaluated negatively (8 % of the respondents strongly do not want to buy such a watch, 25.3 % and 24 % of them do not want to purchase a watch made in Russia). After investigating the respondents' attitude to a deodorant made in Switzerland (the block of questions from the first questionnaire), it is noted that respondents mostly evaluated the quality of a deodorant as the quality of such products was rated as high - 50.7 % of the respondents and the 42.7 % as extremely high. A desire to buy a deodorant made in Switzerland was assessed highly, because 42.7 % of respondents said that they wanted to buy it, and 37.3 % wanted to buy the mentioned product.

After investigating the respondents' attitude to watches made in Switzerland (block of the questions from the second questionnaire), it is noticed that for the respondents the most important thing for such product is prestige (61.3 % of respondents evaluated the product as a prestigious), technology and quality (49.3 % of respondents evaluated as very high). After asking a question about the attitude to deodorants made in Russia (block of questions from the second questionnaire), it emerged that respondents have no opinion about this product.

Table 1

The Average Values of Respondent Groups' Answers

Group		Ethnocentrism	COO Switzerland	COO Russia	Involvement to watch	Involvement to deodorant	Knowledge of watch	Knowledge of deodorant	Attitude to watch	Attitude to deodorant
1 questionnaire	Average	2.91	5.89	3.15	526	2.82	3.66	3.32	**3.78**	**6.15**
	Standard deviation	0.946	0.742	0.563	0.890	0.787	1.137	1.003	0.900	0.591
2 questionnaire	Average	3.13	5.90	3.32	5.70	2.80	3.65	3.54	**6.27**	**3.47**
	Standard deviation	1.107	0.717	0.671	0.736	0.811	1.448	1.329	0.689	1.315

After analysing the average differences of the respondents' answers (Table 1), it can be noticed that consumers' attitude to a watch made in Russia, and a watch made in Switzerland is very different. The Swiss watch was assessed almost 2.5 point higher than the Russian watch. The same situation has occurred when the respondents evaluated the attitude towards a deodorant: the choice for the Swiss product was evaluated 2.69 points higher than the Russian product. So, it is obvious that a consumer's attitude to a product is strongly influenced by COO, regardless of whether the product has a high or low involvement.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire scales were measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficients that were calculated using the SPSS program package. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient results are presented in Table 2. The results of the first questionnaire indicate a high level of reliability of the data (in particular, questions estimating ethnocentricity, COO and the attitude to a product with high involvement). The exception is the block of questions about the knowledge of low involvement product, where a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value is less than 0.7, but is quite close to the specified value, so it can be assumed that this block of questions show acceptable level of internal consistency.

The internal consistency of the second questionnaire can be also highly evaluated because a bigger part of results is higher than 0.872. The lowest value is in the block of questions about high involvement product, but it is close to 0.7, so it can be accepted that the internal consistency of this block of questions is sufficient. This means that both questionnaires are reliable.

Table 2

The Internal Consistency Values of the Questionnaire According to Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's alpha value	
	1 questionnaire	2 questionnaire
Ethnocentrism	0.924	0.937
COO (Switzerland)	0.906	0.907
COO (Russia)	0.856	0.872
High involvement to product	0.833	0.686
Low involvement to product	0.783	0.76
Knowledge of high involvement product	0.833	0.808
Knowledge of low involvement product	0.674	0.733
Attitude to high involvement product	0.908	0.883
Attitude to low involvement product	0.745	0.933

After testing the internal consistency of the data, we continued our analysis by applying the correlation method using the SPSS 23.0 program package. The selected significance level α is equal to 0.05. Thus, the correlation coefficient is considered statistically significant when $p<0.05$. The correlation analysis was used to estimate the relationship of COO effect, its moderators and a consumer's attitude to a product.

In order to assess the relationships of rank variables, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients, the calculation results of which are presented in Table 3 and Table 4, were applied whereas the correlation coefficients of each questionnaire were calculated separately. Statistically significant coefficients are marked in bold font in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Spearman's Correlation Coefficients (The First Questionnaire Data)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Ethnocentrism	1.000								
COO (Switzerland)	**-0.382**	1.000							
COO (Russia)	-0.120	**0.230**	1.000						
High involvement to product	0.008	-0.175	-0.204	1.000					
Low involvement to product	-0.007	0.136	0.076	**0.282**	1.000				
Knowledge of high involvement product	0.132	-0.048	**-0.243**	**0.405**	0.192	1.000			
Knowledge of low involvement product	-0.157	-0.007	0.101	0.005	**0.245**	0.054	1.000		
Attitude to high involvement product	-0.055	0.181	**0.431**	**-0.274**	0.156	0.086	-0.108	1.000	
Attitude to low involvement product	0.009	**0.330**	0.114	**-0.505**	-0.208	**-0.430**	0.064	0.093	1.000

The results of the correlation analysis of the first questionnaire (Table 3) indicate that a statistically significant positive relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.330$) is between the opinion about Switzerland as COO and the attitude to low involvement product. This means that a respondent's positive attitude varies about Switzerland as COO, which is related with the attitude to low involvement products. Such results are logical because when a consumer has a positive opinion about COO, his/her attitude to a product made in COO will also be positive. Also, it is determined a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.431$) between the attitude to Russia as COO and the respondent's attitude to high involvement product, which in this case is a watch made in Russia, suggests that the positive changes in the respondent's opinion about Russia are associated with changes of the positive attitude to a watch made in Russia. Also, a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$, $r =-0.430$) was identified between the knowledge of a low involvement product and this means that a deodorant produced in Switzerland was attributed to a low involvement product, which in this questionnaire is a deodorant manufactured in Switzerland. Such correlation relationship between the variables suggests that the less knowledge and experience a respondent has with a deodorant made in Switzerland, the more positive his/her attitude to a deodorant is; it again shows the influence of COO on a product's assessment and attitude to it.

When analysing Spearman's correlation coefficients of the first questionnaire, statistically significant relationship ($p <0.05$) was observed between a low involvement product, that is a deodorant, and the respondent's attitude to a low involvement product, which in this questionnaire is a deodorant manufactured in Switzerland. The determined relationship is moderate and of negative direction ($r =-0.505$) which suggests that low involvement in a deodorant as a product is associated with a better attitude to a deodorant made in Switzerland. Such results can be interpreted as a respondent's attitude to a product is particularly affected by the positive image of COO.

The results of the second questionnaire correlation analysis (Table 4) showed that even six of the variables have a statistically significant relationship with a consumer's attitude. First of all, a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.264$) exists between the opinion about Switzerland as COO and attitude to a high involvement product, which in this case is a watch made in Switzerland. The established relationship suggests that the positive opinion changes about Switzerland as COO are associated with positive changes in the attitude to a watch manufactured in Switzerland. Also, a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = -0.391$) was observed between the knowledge of a high involvement product, that is a watch made in Switzerland, and the attitude to a high involvement product, which in this case is a watch made in Switzerland. It means that the less knowledge a respondent has about a watch manufactured in Switzerland, the more positive attitude he has to a watch made in Switzerland.

Table 4

Spearman's Correlation Coefficients (The Second Questionnaire Data)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Ethnocentrism	1.000								
COO (Switzerland)	0.019	1.000							
COO (Russia)	-0.009	**-0.288**	1.000						
High involvement to product	-0.021	0.195	-0.111	1.000					
Low involvement to product	-0.207	-0.008	-0.095	-0.147	1.000				
Knowledge of high involvement product	0.060	0.039	-0.001	**0.468**	0.040	1.000			
Knowledge of low involvement product	**0.270**	0.192	-0.037	0.081	0.109	**0.310**	1.000		
Attitude to high involvement product	-0.050	**0.264**	-0.175	**-0.403**	-0.128	**-0.391**	-0.036	1.000	
Attitude to low involvement product	-0.090	-0.030	**0.373**	0.055	**0.413**	-0.012	**0.312**	**-0.240**	1.000

When analysing Spearman's correlation coefficients of the second questionnaire, a statistical significance relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.413$) is observed between a low involvement product, that is a deodorant, assessment and the attitude to a low involvement product, which is in this case a deodorant manufactured in Russia. Such Spearman's correlation coefficient leads to the conclusion that the higher involved a consumer to a deodorant is, the more positive

attitude is to a deodorant manufactured in Russia, i.e. COO influences such consumers' attitudes, who are the least interested in a deodorant as a product. A statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.312$), noticed between the knowledge of low involvement into a product, which is a deodorant made in Russia, and the attitude to a low involvement product, which in this case is a deodorant manufactured in Russia, as well as between an opinion about Russia as COO and the attitude to a low involvement product, which in this case is a deodorant made in Russia ($p<0.05$, $r = 0.373$).

After summing up the results of the correlation analysis, it is seen that in the first questionnaire even five variables, and in the second - six, such as COO of Switzerland, COO of Russia, high and low involvement to a product and knowledge of both high and low involvement to products, had statistically significant relationships with a consumers' attitude. It means that in order to continue the relationship analysis and to verify the hypotheses, we should perform a regression analysis of the data.

The data, collected during this study, have been analysed using a stepwise regression method, in order to verify the hypotheses of our research. Such regression analysis method was chosen due to the fact that it was used by Lin & Chen (2006) to research COO and its moderator's effect. 12 regression models (Table 5 and Table 6) were created in total in order to test the derived hypotheses. It was already mentioned that the research included two questionnaires, thus for each questionnaire different regression models were created. The first questionnaire results are presented in Table 5 and the results of regression analysis of the second questionnaire are shown in the Table 6.

Table 5

Results of Regression Analysis When Dependent Variable Is a Consumer's Attitude (The First Questionnaire Data)

Variable	Standardized (Beta) coefficient values					
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
Ethnocentrism						
COO (Switzerland)					0.255	0.274
COO (Russia)	0.404	0.389	0.408			
High involvement to a product			-0.225			
Low involvement to a product				-0.437	-0.393	-0.297
Knowledge of high involvement product		0.230	0.272			
Knowledge of low involvement product						-0.255
R	0.404	0.464	0.514	0.437	0.504	0.557
R^2	0.163	0.216	0.264	0.191	0.254	0.311
Adj-R^2	0.152	0.194	0.233	0.180	0.234	0.282
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

All models' results presented in the Table 5 and Table 6 show that standardized (Beta) values of the coefficient are statistically significant, that is they have independent influence on the dependent variable (a consumer's attitude). It also shows that p coefficient significance values of all models are low ($p <0.001$), which means that models are acceptable for the regression analysis.

In order to find out if the regression models are accurate, and whether they are not multi-collinear, the variance inflation factors (VIF) of independent variables of all models were calculated. As the highest VIF value of all models independent variables is equal to 1.3 (a recommended maximum VIF value of 5, Sekaran & Bougie (2011)), the independent variables' multicollinearity was not detected.

Models 1, 2, and 3, presented in Table 5, were created by checking the influence of each variable (ethnocentricity, opinion about Russia as COO, a watch involvement and knowledge of watch made in Russia) on a consumer's attitude to a watch made in Russia. This means that these models represent a combination of a high involvement product and COO which has a negative assessment. In the meantime, models 4, 5, and 6 were created by checking the influence of variables (ethnocentricity, opinion on Switzerland as COO, a deodorant involvement and knowledge of a deodorant made in Switzerland) on a consumer's attitude to a deodorant manufactured in Switzerland. These models reflect the combination of a low involvement product and COO which has a positive evaluation.

As already mentioned before, models 1, 2, and 3 reflect the same combination of high involvement product and a negative evaluation of COO, however, the variables in the model were added gradually, COO was included in model 1, in model 2, COO and product knowledge were added, and model 3 reflects the final fact which variables influence consumer's attitude to a watch produced in Russia. So, a consumer's attitude to a watch manufactured in Russia is influenced by the opinion about Russia as COO ($\beta = 0.408$), involvement in watch ($\beta = -0.225$) and knowledge of a watch made in Russia ($\beta = 0.272$). All standard coefficients show that the variables have the influence on a consumer's attitude. As we can see, ethnocentrism does not get in among influencing variables. When evaluating the coefficient values of model 3, it is worth noting that the adjusted coefficient of determination value of this model is higher than for model 1 and model 2, hence the model explains the most dependent variable dissemination about the average, but it is only about 23 % of the dependent variable dissemination about its average.

Models 4, 5, and 6 reflect the combination of low level involvement product and a country with a positive assessment, accordingly, where in model 4, the low involvement product was added, in model 5 - low involvement product and COO, while model 6 shows all the variables influencing a consumer's attitude to a deodorant manufactured in Switzerland. Once again, in model 6, the attitude to a deodorant is influenced by the opinion about Switzerland as COO ($\beta = 0.274$), a deodorant involvement

level (β = -0.297) and the knowledge of a deodorant made in Switzerland (β = -0.255), but ethnocentricity is not included among the variables which influence a consumer's attitude. The adjusted coefficient of determination value (0.282) of model 6 shows that the model explains about 28 % dissemination of dependent variable about its average.

Table 6

Results of Regression Analysis When Dependent Variable Is a Consumer‘s Attitude (The Second Questionnaire Data)

Variable	Standardized (Beta) coefficient values					
	Model 7	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**	**Model 11**	**Mode 12**
Ethnocentrism						
COO (Switzerland)		0.380	0.438			
COO (Russia)				0.475	0.505	0.517
High involvement to a product			-0.318			
Low involvement to a product					0.424	0.401
Knowledge of high involvement product	-0.328	-0.385	-0.251			
Knowledge of low involvement product						0.267
R	0.328	0.499	0.571	0.475	0.636	0.689
R^2	0.108	0.249	0.326	0.225	0.404	0.475
Adj-R^2	0.095	0.228	0.298	0.215	0.388	0.452
p	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Models 7, 8, 9, presented in Table 6, were created by checking the influence of each variable (ethnocentricity, opinion about Switzerland as COO, a watch involvement and knowledge of a watch made in Switzerland) on a consumer's attitude to a watch made in Switzerland. So, these models reflect the combination of high involvement product and a country which has a positive evaluation. Models fit for the regression analysis as all their p values are low ($p<0.001$), in addition, standardized (Beta) coefficient values are statistically significant, that is they have independent influence on the dependent variable (a consumer's attitude). As in the case with the first questionnaire, when analysing the data of the second questionnaire, the regression analysis was carried out by gradually adding the independent variable to the regression model one by one. Knowledge of high involvement product influence on a consumer’s attitude was analysed in model 7 and COO was added together with the knowledge in model 8, and we can see all independent variables which influence dependent variable in model 9. In this case, a consumer's attitude to a watch is influenced by the opinion about Switzerland as the COO (β = 0.438), the watch level of involvement (β = -0.318) and knowledge of watch made in Switzerland (β = -0.251).

Regression models 10, 11, and 12 were created in order to analyse the influence of variables (ethnocentricity, opinion about Russia as COO, a deodorant involvement and knowledge of a deodorant made in Russia) on a consumer's attitude to a deodorant made in Russia. These models represent a combination of low involvement product and the country which has a negative assessment. COO influence on a consumer's attitude were analysed in model 10, COO and low involvement product in model 11, and model 12 reveals all the independent variables which influence this model's dependent variable - a consumer's attitude. So, it can be said that in the combination of low involvement product and the country which has a negative assessment, a consumer's attitude to a deodorant is influenced by the opinion about Russia as COO (β = 0.517), a deodorant's level of involvement (β = 0.401), and knowledge of a deodorant made in Russia (β = 0.267). The variables – the opinion about Russia as COO and deodorant involvement level standardized coefficients - are high, so it can be concluded that the variables are quite significant for a consumer's attitude to a product.

After analysing the models based on multiple correlation coefficient (R) values, it can be seen that a minimum R value from all of the models is in model 3 (R = 0.514), and the maximum value is in model 12 (R = 0.689). Consequently, the dependent variable, that is a consumer's attitude, strongly depends on all the independent variables listed above.

After analysing the last step models (models 3, 6, 9, and 12), those which demonstrate all the possible independent variables of the study influencing a consumer's attitude, it can be seen that a consumer's ethnocentricity does not get among the model's independent variables which influence a consumer's attitude towards a product. According to our study results, we can reject the hypothesis H2, when Lithuanian students evaluate foreign-made products; COO effect on consumer’s attitude to a product does not depend on a consumer ethnocentrism.

According to the results of the conducted regression analysis, the independent variable - a respondent's opinion about COO - gets in all last step models: models 3, 6, 9, and 12. Switzerland as COO appears in models 6 and 9, where the dependent variable is a consumer's attitude to products produced in Switzerland, and COO of Russia as an independent variable appears in the models 3 and 12 in which the dependent variable is a consumer's attitude to products made in Russia. So, it can be concluded that COO is one of the independent variables which influences the dependent variable - a consumer's attitude to a product. Such

conclusion confirms the research hypothesis H1 that COO effect has an impact on consumer‘s attitude to a product.

Product involvement as an independent variable is included in models 3, 6, 9 and 12. The dependent variable is a consumer’s attitude to high involvement product in models 3 and 9 accordingly. So, in the regression models, the independent variable influencing dependent variable is high involvement of product, and in models 6 and 12, the situation is reverse - the dependent variable is a consumer's attitude to low involvement product. So, in the mentioned models, low involvement to a product is assigned as the independent variable. According to all created models, when a consumer's involvement to a product is included among the independent variables, the values of COO independent variable standardized coefficient (Beta) are higher than a consumer's involvement to a product and are not included in the model. It means that the influence of the COO becomes more important to a consumer's attitude when a consumer's product involvement is added to the regression model, concluding from the multivariate regression coefficient R value, which rises when a consumer's involvement to a product is added to a model. It can be indicated that due to the inclusion of consumer's involvement to a product in the regression model, it becomes more accurate.

Such results of the regression analysis allow confirming the hypothesis H4 of the research: The COO effect on consumer’s attitude to a product depends on consumer product involvement.

When analysing the results of the regression analysis, it is noted that a consumer's product knowledge as an independent variable appears in all last step models, i.e. models 3, 6, 9 and 12. A consumer's product knowledge of high involvement product as the independent variable influences a consumer's attitude to a high involvement product in models 3, 9 and in models 6 and 12, the independent variable, which is a consumer's knowledge of low involvement product, also influences a consumer's attitude but in this case to a low involvement product. Comparing COO standardized coefficient (Beta) values in the models, where among the independent variables, a consumer's knowledge of product is included, with the models where a consumer's knowledge is not included among the independent variables, it can be noticed that in the first case, COO standardized coefficient (Beta) values are higher, so its influence on a consumer's attitude is stronger, when together the consumer's product knowledge is analysed. Also, multivariate regression coefficient R value is higher when a consumer‘s product knowledge is included into a model. Thus, it can be concluded that due to the inclusion of a consumer's product knowledge in the model, it becomes more accurate. Such conclusions allow confirming the research hypothesis H3, because it confirms the fact that COO effect on consumer’s attitude to a product depends on consumer product knowledge. Thus, the results of the regression analysis enabled to confirm the hypotheses H1, H3, H4 and to reject the hypothesis H2.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The ongoing discussions on COO effect showed that it has an influence on a consumer's attitude to products and also to a consumer's behaviour, even there is still no unified approach to what the most important determinants of COO effect are on consumer's attitude, beliefs, and behaviour. To sum up, the scientists‘ discussed concepts about COO effect, it can be stated that the COO has an influence on a customer’s evaluation of the country’s products, and it might be an advantage or disadvantage for a producer company competing in the market.

It can be concluded that for COO effect influence analysis, the most relevant antecedents are consumer's culture and consumer's demographic characteristics; the most relevant moderators are consumer’s product knowledge, consumer’s ethnocentricity, consumer’s product involvement, consumer’s perceived product risk and a product brand. The fragmentary scientific research on product knowledge, consumer ethnocentricity, and product involvement and their influence on a consumer's attitude to a product, encouraged the authors of the paper to test them all in a case of two COOs‘ (Russia vs. Switzerland) products (a watch and a deodorant) in the Lithuanian market. Before carrying out the empirical research, referring to our theoretical insights, four hypotheses have been derived.

After analysing the empirical research results, it was found that COO effect strongly influences the consumer's attitude to a product. A consumer's attitude to a product is also influenced by COO effect moderators, which are consumer product knowledge and product involvement. After analysing the results of empirical research, it is noted that in this research case, when respondents evaluated their attitude to products made in foreign countries, one of COO effect moderators analysed in theory, which is a consumer's ethnocentricity, did not have influence on a consumer's attitude to a product. The results of the research have shown that COO influence on a consumer's attitude to a product varies depending on a consumer's available product knowledge and product involvement.

Empirical research results have also shown that COO makes a strong impact on a consumer's attitude to a product, regardless whether the product is high or low involvement. Therefore it is considered that both high and low involvement products' importers have to find out the attitude of the Lithuanian consumers towards COO effect, and when there is a positive opinion about a country while developing and planning marketing strategy highlight product's COO as one of product's quality indicators or advantages. Meanwhile, when there is a negative opinion about COO, other attributes of a product in marketing strategy should be emphasized.

According to our research results, it might be recommended before importing products from foreign countries to the Lithuanian market that it is important to analyse thee consumers' available knowledge about specific products from that country, to anticipate the potential consumer's attitudes to imported goods. Also, it is recommended for the importers or manufacturers that while developing a marketing strategy, firstly it is necessary to find out how a consumer's attitude varies to specific product, depending on the information and knowledge with a similar

category of products, and to use this information in order to increase the effectiveness of marketing strategy. Whereas COO effect on a consumer's attitude to products made in a foreign country does not depend on a consumer's ethnocentricity, it is recommended to carry out additional empirical studies examining COO effect moderators' impact on a consumer's attitude, where the products, made in Lithuania, would also be analysed.

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