

### 1. About the special issue

The topic, “country of origin (COO),” garners great attention from the academic circle with recent attention given to how COO shapes consumer behavior and organizational behavior, and how marketers can overcome or take advantage of COO in their strategies. A high proportion of submissions to the *International Marketing Review* already focuses on COO topics. In fact, the *International Marketing Review* has published many of these in its regular issues, two formal special issues devoted to COO matters (Volume 25, Issue 4, 2008 and Volume 27, Issue 4, 2010), and a special issue covering COO debates (Volume 28, Issue 5, 2011). The journal has also conferred a best paper award to a COO-focused manuscript (Riefler and Diamantopoulos, 2007).

In recent years, this topic has gained new light through a lively debate on the relevance of COO research in marketing. Samiee *et al.* (2005) argue that COO may not be as important as previously assumed, claiming that COO researchers have been investigating the issue in not only the wrong way, but also often with flawed methods. Usunier (2011) and Usunier and Cestre (2008) largely concurs with Samiee *et al.* Jointly, they conclude that COO research is unimportant and atheoretic, and lacks managerial relevance (Samiee, 2011; Usunier, 2011). However, others argue that COO research is relevant, asserting that there is no crisis or that concerns are exaggerated (e.g. Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013a, b; Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2011; Magnusson *et al.*, 2011a, b). This vigorous debate supports the notion of revisiting research on COO with a focus on adopting new methods and new variables, and seeking to answer new questions. In this special issue of *International Marketing Review*, we seek papers that advance the topic of COO by evaluating COO research conducted from new critical perspectives, questioning basic assumptions regarding the nature of COO, providing new theoretical insights, and/or providing solutions in the form of empirical data. Recent suggestions include the need to focus on brand origin (BO) rather than COO (Samiee, 2011). Usunier (2011) recommends focusing research on the brand’s country, looking into BO recognition accuracy, and examining BO assessment. Kim and Park (2010) suggest a need for a better understanding of how various COO dimensions (e.g. country of manufacture vs country of brand) affect evaluations and consumer behavior (Aiello *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2015; Pucci, *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, comparing the impact of various COO dimensions as well as analyzing new individual psychological characteristics, such as product involvement and ethnocentrism, may help international marketing researchers to better understand the factors underlying the formation of COO evaluations. This may also help to uncover the role of brand awareness and brand preference in the context of COO concepts, thus suggesting further research avenues.

### 2. Overview of the papers

The first paper by Balabanis and Siamagka (2017) addresses the gap between academic literature and actual purchase behavior by investigating issues behind variation in consumer ethnocentric behavior (CET). This research explores influential factors of CET’s well-established impact into product category, product cost and visibility, and brand and COO of purchased products. The goal is to study how these differences can cause behavioral effects. Results indicates that product category is an important determinant of CET’s



---

behavioral effect, especially in high-prices product categories. Cultural similarity does not have a negative effect whereas product visibility can strengthen CET's behavioral effects. These findings provide marketing insight into understanding the determinants of ethnocentric behavior and importance of COO, thus providing a more effective way to reduce the negative effects of CET.

Diamantopoulos *et al.* (2017) investigate the "Made-in-EU" label to understand consumers reactions to BOs. They focus on a specific superordinate entity (the EU) as BO to which a number of country-specific origin cues (i.e. Austria, Spain, USA, Romania, Chin) were compared. The results show that "Made-in-EU" is interpreted as a quality signal. However, the association of linking a brand to the EU fails to generate positive effects. Also, the exact impact of a "Made-in-EU" brand designation depends on the standard of comparison, that is, the specific country against which the EU is evaluated. They also provide guidance for practitioners on whether or not, and how to promote a "Made-in-EU" brand label.

García-Gallego and Mera (2017) examines BO and how it influences consumers' preference in terms of regional, national, or foreign-produced goods. Due to the growing importance of COO, it is necessary to determine consumers' perception of the attribute's origin. Results indicate that there is a great importance of the entity's origin, as consumers prefer regional over national or foreign institutions. This finding also suggests guidelines for financial entities (institutions) to make decisions on brand management regarding the communication of entities' regional origin.

Moon and Oh (2017) examine COO's effects in international marketing channels; specifically focusing on the role of distributors' behavior. This research investigates the attitude toward foreign brands, social valuation of the brand's origin, and perceived behavioral control influence overseas distributors place foreign brands. The results of this research shows that the attitude toward foreign brands, social valuation of the brand's origin, and perceived behavioral control influence overseas distributors place foreign brands. In addition, antecedents of behavioral factors are examined as country-induced bias factors (i.e. buyer animosity, country-related affect). This study also suggests that to build positive attitudes toward foreign brands, a firm needs to focus on promotions through several media channels in international markets to reduce the perceived risk of the manufacturer's origin.

Insch *et al.* (2017) investigate consumer willingness to pay a premium for domestically manufactured product in a "buy-national" campaign. Findings indicate a strong evidence for "buy-made-in" effect regarding muesli bar and toilet paper product categories with a 95 percent confidence level. The results suggest marketing implication for brand managers, retail partners, and governments, prompting them to reconsider the rationale for participating in a "buy-national" campaign. The results of this research introduce a unique COO as a choice set for a differential influence on context effect.

Kim *et al.* (2017) analyze how the concept of national stereotype and COO influence fashion brand images on consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention for fashion collections. Data are collected from Seoul, New York, and Paris fashion collections to compare the differences and similarities of consumers' decision-making process. The key findings of this research indicate that consumers have high-brand evaluation and strong purchase intention from a country that has a stronger COO and fashion brand image. Results also indicates that COO is greatly influenced by countries' political, economic, and cultural artistic image. Thus, this study suggests a basic foundation for establishing marketing strategies based on COO's image in order to also increase the fashion collection's image.

Garrett *et al.* (2017) examine the relevance of COO for product evaluation as an important information cue and factor in purchase intention on consumers' decision-making process. This research addresses the role of COO and its place in conjunction with store image, another important informational cue, within an increasingly important product context, that of store brands. Researchers examine the relative effect of COO on store image and identify COO as an

indicator of the effects on product evaluation and purchase intention. The results show positive effects of COO on brand store evaluation and purchase intention. In addition, COO impacts promotional-focused consumers and public consumed products such as puffer jackets.

Majid (2017) investigate how country of origin image (COI), and price and counterfeit likelihood affect consumer perceptions and choices of risk products. This study explores the positive and negative influences of counterfeit goods' perceptions and choices. The results indicate that COI as a prominent or differentiating attribute depends on product and issue. In addition, COI is considered as significant factor in Chinese-made, lead-painted toys. Thus, marketing strategies must take into account that COI depends on product categories.

Reardon *et al.* (2017) attempt to fill the research gap by conducting empirical tests of how consumers' COO theories influence complex decisions made by retail buyers. The focus is on how COO influences retail purchase processes, such as product involvement and new trial products retail buyers' typically decide to test. COO has a strong and positive effect on retail buyers for both higher and lower involvement products. COO also has a significant impact on consumer behavior. These results enrich the theoretical foundation for retail buyers, providing knowledge on COO's effects on all levels of the supply chain. This expands opportunities for manufacturer and retail buyers to better market their products, and highlights the important role of managing industrial sales, branding, and government officials.

The final paper by Zolfagharian *et al.* (2017) examines the effects of consumer ethnocentrism and COO across different immigrant communities. Previous studies on consumer ethnocentrism and COO focus only on one type of migration: consumers who move from developing to developed countries. This study investigates various patterns of immigrants' migration in the USA and Mexico. Findings report that for immigrants with high levels of ethnocentrism, prejudice toward home and host country products interacts with COO effects; however, for immigrants with low levels of ethnocentrism, the COO effect is salient.

**Eunju Ko**

*Departments of Culture and Design Management and Clothing and Textiles,  
Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea*

**Byeong-Joon Moon**

*School of Management, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, and*

**Peter Magnusson**

*Florida International University, Miami, Florida, USA*

## References

- Aiello, G., Donvito, R., Grazzini, L., Halliburton, C., Wagner, B., Wilson, J., Godey, B., Pederzoli, D. and Shokola, I. (2015), "An international comparison of 'Made in Italy' in the fashion, furniture and food sectors: an observational research study in France, Russia and The United Kingdom", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 136-149.
- Balabanis, G. and Siamagka, N.-T. (2017), "Inconsistencies in the behavioural effects of consumer ethnocentrism: the role of brand, product category and country of origin", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 166-182.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Herz, M. and Koschate-Fische, N. (2017), "The EU as superordinate brand origin: an entitativity perspective", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 183-205.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Schlegelmilch, B. and Palihawadana, D. (2011), "The relationship between country-of-origin image and brand image as drivers of purchase intentions: a test of alternative perspectives", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 508-524.

- García-Gallego, J.M. and Mera, A.C. (2017), "COO vs ROO: importance of the origin in customer preferences towards financial entities", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 206-223.
- Garrett, T.C., Lee, S. and Chu, K. (2017), "A store brand's country-of-origin or store image: what matters to consumers?", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 272-292.
- Herz, M.F. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2013a), "Activation of country stereotypes: automaticity, consonance, and impact", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 400-417.
- Herz, M.F. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2013b), "Country-specific associations made by consumers: a dual-coding theory perspective", *Journal of International Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 95-121.
- Insch, A., Mather, D. and Knight, J. (2017), "Buy national campaigns: congruence determines premiums for domestic products", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 239-253.
- Kim, H., Shin, E., Chenga, A., Lennon, S. and Liu, W. (2015), "Influence of design, workmanship, and familiarity on perceptions of country-of-origin apparel brands: a study of consumers in the US, China and Japan", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 265-277.
- Kim, N., Chun, E. and Ko, E. (2017), "Country of origin effects on brand image, brand evaluation, and purchase intention: a closer look at Seoul, New York, and Paris fashion collection", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 254-271.
- Kim, S. and Park, H. (2010), "Effects of country of manufacture and country of brand on consumers' quality perception and purchase intention", *Journal of Korean Marketing Association*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 19-40.
- Magnusson, P., Westjohn, S.A. and Zdravkovic, S. (2011a), "'What? I thought Samsung was Japanese': accurate or not, perceived country of origin matters", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 454-472.
- Magnusson, P., Westjohn, S.A. and Zdravkovic, S. (2011b), "Further clarification on how perceived brand origin affects brand attitude: a reply to Samiee and Usunier", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 497-507.
- Majid, K.A. (2017), "Drawing negative inferences from a positive country-of-origin image – consumers' use of COI and price levels to assess counterfeit drugs", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 293-310.
- Moon, B.-J. and Oh, H.-M. (2017), "Country of origin effects in international marketing channels: how overseas distributors account for the origins of products and brands", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 224-238.
- Pucci, T., Casprini, E., Guercini, S. and Zanni, L. (2017), "One country, multiple country-related effects: an international comparative analysis among emerging countries on Italian fashion products", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 98-112.
- Reardon, J., Vianelli, D. and Miller, C. (2017), "The effect of COO on retail buyers' propensity to trial new products", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 311-329.
- Riefler, P. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2007), "Consumer animosity: a literature review and a reconsideration of its measurement", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 87-119.
- Samiee, S. (2011), "Resolving the impasse regarding research on the origins of products and brands", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 473-485.
- Samiee, S., Shimp, T.A. and Sharma, S. (2005), "Brand origin recognition accuracy: its antecedents and consumers' cognitive limitations", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 379-397.
- Usunier, J.-C. (2011), "The shift from manufacturing to brand origin: suggestions for improving COO relevance", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 486-496.
- Usunier, J.-C. and Cestre, G. (2008), "Further considerations on the relevance of country-of-origin research", *European Management Review*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 271-274.
- Zolfagharian, M., Saldivar, R. and Braun, J. (2017), "Country of origin and ethnocentrism in the context of lateral, upward and downward migration", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 330-352.