

**BRAND ORIGIN AND CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
APPAREL PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES RELATING TO  
QUALITY**

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**A Thesis Submitted to  
Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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## **APPROVAL PAGE**

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the Thesis entitled:

### **BRAND ORIGIN AND CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF APPAREL PRODUCT QUALITY ATTRIBUTES**

Presented by, Katie Peterson

A candidate for the degree of Textile and Apparel Masters of Science Degree, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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*To my family:*

*Judy Peterson, Robert Linder, John Peterson and Jennifer and Rod Albers*

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

Chapter I contains the following sections (a) background of the study, (b) purpose of the study, and (c) significance of the study.

### **Background of the Study**

The country of origin effect has been recognized as an important factor in consumers' purchasing decisions (Schooler, 1965). In fact, it has drawn great attention in the consumer buying behavior literature since the 1960s (Ditcher, 1962; Schooler, 1965). Despite over forty years of research, the COO effect has been criticized as one of the least understood phenomena (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Furthermore, in an age of increasing international competition and globalization, the concept of country of origin has come under great criticism (Thakor & Kohli, 1996).

Recently, some scholars have argued that the concept of country of origin should be replaced with the concept of brand origin (Thakor & Kohli, 1996). Recent studies have shown that brand origin could be a more influential cue than country of origin in determining consumer purchasing behavior due to the increase in global supply chains in today's marketplace (Lim & O'Cass, 2001).

Thakor and Kohli (1996) defined brand origin as the place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong to by its target consumers. This definition is stated in terms of consumer perception, since consumer perceptions may differ from reality "by ignorance, lack of salience of origin information for a particular brand, or deliberate obfuscation by companies concerned about consumer reactions to unfavorable



origins” (Thakor & Kohli, 1996). Thus, brand origin is expected to have a greater impact on today’s consumers’ purchase decisions than COO.

### **Purpose of Study**

There are a few empirical studies of any sort evaluating the importance of brand origin on any product category (Thakor & Lavack, 2003). However, there are no studies that explicitly examine the role of brand origin in consumers’ evaluation of apparel products. Consequently, this study aimed to examine the influence of perceived brand origin on United States consumers’ perceptions of apparel product attributes related to quality. This study particularly focused on brand origin as a potential cue that consumers use to evaluate the quality of apparel products. Apparel products were selected as the central concentration for this study because they are produced through the most global and complex supply chain; thus, the boundary between country of origin and brand origin has been quite confusing (Dickerson, 1999).

### **Significance of the study**

The United States textile and apparel industry is becoming more global and increasingly focused on imported brands. According to the World Trade Organization [WTO] (2006) in 2005, the United States imported US\$80 billion worth of apparel products. As the United States textile and apparel industry becomes more and more global, it is important to point out that favorable or unfavorable perceptions of countries associated with the product lead to a corresponding favorable or unfavorable perceptions of brands that are from a certain country. This study also it added to the literature on

country origin and made explicit the importance of origin associations for brands in the brand dominated setting of the apparel industry while recognizing the fact that perceived country of brand origin is a strong determinant of consumer's product quality perceptions.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter II reviews relevant literature pertaining to this study, (a) theoretical framework, (b) brand origin, (c) the evolution of country of origin into brand origin, (d) country of origin effect as an extrinsic cue to quality, and (e) three main streams of country of origin and brand effect research.

### **Theoretical Framework: Associative Network Theory**

The process of brand evaluation typically evokes certain brand-specific associations stored within the consumer's memory (Keller, 1993). These brand-specific associations help consumers differentiate a brand from other competing brands (Keller, 1993).

The associative network memory (ANM) model provides an excellent groundwork for explaining why consumers use the associations from the country of brand origin as a basis for judging apparel product or brand quality. This theory was the foundation for numerous memory models that have been widely accepted among scholars as valuable and comprehensive conceptualizations of the semantic memory structure (Anderson, 1983; Wyer & Srull, 1989). Researchers have made use of this influential framework from cognitive psychology to explain many different marketing phenomena; both Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) have used the ANM model to conceptualize the theory of brand equity based on consumers' memory-based associations. Washburn (2004) used the associative network memory model to examine the role of brand equity in brand alliances and Pappu (2006) recently used the theory to explain the link between

customer satisfaction and retailer equity.

The associative network memory model explains that consumers' perceptions of brand quality as well as their attitudes toward certain brands are developed through memory-based associations with the brand (Anderson, 1983). This is due to the fact that a person's semantic memory space consists of a network of memory nodes that are linked together through associations (Collins & Loftus, 1975; Ratcliff & McKoon, 1988). Each node is a separate piece of information that has been encoded into the person's brain, and each node can then be linked to other nodes that share some type of association with the piece of information that was encoded in the original node (Collins & Loftus, 1975; Ratcliff & McKoon, 1988).

Based on the ANM model, Keller (1993) argued that brand knowledge is composed of brand nodes that are linked to other various nodes that contain associations previously acquired for that brand. For example, if the brand "Ford" is a node in the consumers' memory, then associations or attributes nodes such as "truck" or "The United States" could be other important nodes that are linked to the central brand node "Ford."

These consumer memory-based associations have been shown to have directionality. Farquhar and Herr (1993) argued that brand-product category associations are bi-directional. For an example, when the product category node "shoes" is mentioned, a consumer might recall the brand name nodes "Nike," also, when the brand name node "Nike" is mentioned, the consumer might recall the product category node "running shoes."

Consumers' memory-based associations have also been proven to have different correlation strength levels—weak or strong—, depending upon the number of times the

two nodes have been associated with each other in the past (Fazio, 1986; Till & Shimp, 1998). For example, if the brand node “Ford” were always associated with the node “The United States,” the two nodes would have a strong correlation. Or, if the brand node “Ford” were rarely associated with the node “ice cream,” the two nodes would have a weak or no association correlation value.

Given consumers use various memory-based associations to evaluate the quality of apparel products or brands; the study adopts the associative network memory model as the theoretical framework to explain the effects of brand origin associations on consumers’ perceptions of apparel product attributes related to quality.

## **Brand Origin**

### ***Brand origin and country of origin***

The marketplace is always changing; thus consumers are forced to make judgments about the quality of a product or a brand with incomplete information about that specific product or brand (Thakor & Kohli, 1996). Therefore, consumers often use secondary cues to form the associations needed to create images of a product or a brand (Keller, 1998). According to Keller (1998), the examples of secondary cues are country of origin, brand origin, distribution channels, or a spokesperson or endorser of the product (Keller, 1998). This study particularly focuses on brand origin as a potential cue that consumers use to evaluate apparel product quality. To understand the role of brand origin, however, the concept of country of origin must be discussed as it has been used as the precursor of brand origin.

## **Evolution of country of origin into brand origin**

The term country of origin has been defined in many ways throughout the literature. At first, country of origin was considered the country where the final assembly of the good took place, the country of manufacture (COM), or the country that appeared on the 'made-in' label (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Lee & Schaninger, 1996; Papadopoulos, 1993; White, 1979). Over the years, other concepts have progressively emerged in the country of origin related literature, such as country of design (COD), referring to the country where the product was designed and developed (Jaffé & Nebenzahl, 2001).

With the growth of hybrid products with multinational production, there is a growing discrepancy between COMs and CODs. Moreover, global companies tend to manipulate brand names to suggest particular origins; thus the concept of brand origin or country of brand (COB) has emerged (Thakor & Kohli, 1996). Consequently, country of origin is increasingly being considered the country that consumers typically associate with a product or brand, regardless of where the product was actually manufactured (Johansson, Douglas & Nonaka 1985).

Defining the concept of country of origin has become difficult in the past years due to the increasingly intensified global economy (Phau & Pendergrast, 2000). The increase in international trade has resulted in the emergence of hybrid or bi-national products, which has provided a new momentum to country of origin research (Han & Terpstra, 1988). Products with multi-country affiliations questioned the role and relevance of the construct of country of origin. More importantly, as the borders between countries blur and international trade increases a new product evaluation tool is needed

(Thakor & Kohli, 1996). This study accepts that the concept of brand origin best reflects today's increasingly global economy. Thus, brand origin is more important factor in determining consumers' perception of product quality attributes than is country of origin.

Thakor and Kohli (1996) defined brand origin as "the place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers". Thakor and Kohli (1996) suggest that the brand origin association is among the "most salient personality characteristics" of brands because it is part of the brand personality. Thakor and Kohli (1996) consider brand origin to be a demographic variable; thus, brands can be described in terms of their origins (e.g., Toblerone as Swiss chocolate, Budweiser as American beer.)

### **Country of origin effect- an extrinsic cue to quality**

Although, the purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of brand origin, due to the dearth of brand origin research and the strong tie with country of origin research, this section reviews previous country of origin research.

The phenomenon of consumers' dependency on country of origin information is referred to as the country of origin effect (Schooler, 1965). The country of origin effect refers to when consumers rely on country of origin information as a basis to judge the quality of a product (Schooler, 1965). For example, if a consumer would need to evaluate the quality of two shirts with different country of origins, the country of origin may play a factor in the evaluation process. If the first shirt was made in France, the consumer may believe it to be of higher quality than the second shirt that was made in China. This could be true because a consumer may have a preconceived notion that

Chinese products are of poor quality than those created in France. Thus, without the complete examination of each shirt, the consumer may generalize that the Chinese shirt is of poorer quality because of where it was made. This rationale exists because people tend to make generalizations about countries due to personal experiences, prior consumptions of products from various countries, exposure to the media, and prior knowledge of a specific country (Han & Terpstra, 1988). Consumers then infer these generalizations to the quality of the products produced in that country (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Tse & Gorn, 1993).

### **Country of origin and brand origin effect research**

Numerous studies have shown that country of origin has a significant effect on consumers' evaluations of products and brands. Schooler (1965) initiated the country of origin effect research focusing on the determination of whether or not the construct of a country or origin effect actually existed. The study concluded that country of origin effect exists and consumers have a bias against products made in less developed countries. Reiersen (1966, 1967) subsequently researched consumers' perceptions on quality and found that the country of origin effect was present for general products, classes of products, and specific products. Many studies have been conducted to determine why American consumers prefer domestically produced products but purchase mostly imported goods (Etzel & Walker 1974; Gaedeke 1973; Dickerson 1982). Additionally, Dickerson (1983) revealed that country of origin has a significant effect on consumers' evaluations of apparel products and that a majority of consumers took notice of whether clothing was imported and preferred to have domestically produced apparel.



Dickerson (1983) also revealed that concern over imported apparel appears to be only a middle-socioeconomic class phenomenon.

Hong and Wyer (1989) compared the effects of product attributes and country of origin associations on consumers' product evaluations. Hong and Wyer (1989) study suggested that consumers' awareness of a product's country of origin has a direct influence on consumers' quality perceptions (Hong & Wyer, 1989). This is true because country of origin becomes a heuristic basis for inferring the product quality without considering other attributes (Hong & Wyer, 1989). Similarly, Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) believed that consumers simplify judgments on product quality by retrieving pre-established evaluations from their memories. These pre-established evaluations act as shortcuts for judging the quality of a product. Therefore, consumers may use information, like country of origin, as the overall basis for judging the quality of a product (Chaiken & Maheswaran 1994).

Other studies (Maheswaran, 1994; Hong & Wyer, 1990) have suggested that favorable country of origin perceptions lead to favorable consumer perceptions of brand or product attributes, which ultimately lead to favorable evaluations of the brand or product by consumers. Thus, the authors further argued that companies may wish to accentuate the country of origin information, if consumers are expected to infer specific perceptions and evaluations from these associations (Erickson, Johansson, & Chao 1984; Hong & Wyer 1989, 1990).

From a brand origin perspective, some studies have been done to investigate the relationship between brand origin and consumer quality perceptions. Thakor and Lavack (2003) studied the relationship between the brand origin cues found in brand names and

consumer quality perceptions. Thakor and Lavack (2003) concluded that these perceived origin associations are a powerful source of brand appeal which marketers rely upon when focusing advertising on origin associations. Marketers use these associations in many product categories, particularly within categories where perceived origin or national identity is important to the product's image (e.g., the brands Channel and Tommy Hilfiger signify the France and United States, respectively to many consumers) (Thakor & Lavack, 2003). Although Thakor and Lavack (2003) revealed important insights into brand origin associations and consumer perceptions of quality, their study was limited to studying the quality of motorcycles and blenders, which are significantly different than apparel products. Moreover, the concept of judging the quality of apparel products is very different than judging the quality of other products (Hsu & Burns, 2002). Moreover, the process of judging apparel product quality is a very unique to each consumer (Hsu & Burns, 2002). Each consumer has different criterion for judging the quality of an apparel item. For one consumer, in evaluating apparel product quality, fit may be more important than the degree of stylishness and vice versa for other consumers. This suggested each consumer places the apparel product attributes in a different hierarchal order. Thus, Hsu and Burns (2002) presented the twelve criteria that consumers use to judge apparel product quality by compiling multiple apparel product attributes, greatly simplifying consumers' apparel product quality evaluation (Hsu & Burns, 2002). Consequently, this study hypothesized:

H1: Brand origin will have a significant effect on consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes relating to quality.

## *Factors impacting country of origin effect*

### *Consumer demographics*

Studies on the country of origin effect can be divided into three main focuses (Bertoli, Busacca & Molteni, 2005): (a) consumer demographics; (b) the economic development of the country; (c) stereotypes of country image and aspects regarding the products with which the country is associated.

The first major stream of country of origin effect research investigated the relationship between country of origin effect and consumer socio-demographic variables, such as sex, age, social status, and educational background.

Schooler's research (1971) indicated that male and female consumers have different attitudes towards country of origin. Female consumers generally evaluated foreign products higher than male consumers (Schooler, 1971). Likewise, Wall and Heslop (1986) investigated Canadian male and female consumers' attitudes towards Canadian products and the products of seventeen foreign countries. The results showed that Canadian females have more positive attitudes towards foreign products than Canadian males who almost always preferred Canadian products (Wall & Heslop, 1986).

Age, another socio-demographic variable, seems to affect consumer's attitude toward country of origin. In terms of age, younger people tend to evaluate foreign products more favorably than do older people (Bailey & Pineres, 1997; Schooler, 1971; Smith, 1993).

Education was the most influential demographic variable in studies of country of origin effect (Festervand, Lumpkin & Lundstrom, 1985). A number of studies revealed

that people with higher levels of education are more in favor of foreign products than those with limited educational backgrounds (Al-hammad, 1988; Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Festervand, Lumpkin & Lundstrom, 1985; Greer, 1971; Schooler, 1971). Similarly, McLain and Sternquist (1991) and Bailey and Pineres (1997) found that as the consumers' education level increases, the level of consumer ethnocentricity, or preference for domestic products, displayed by the respondents decreases.

From an income status perspective, Wall (1990) found that, the higher the income consumers have, the more positive their attitudes are towards imported products. Good and Huddleston (1995), and Bailey and Pineres (1997) also concluded that the higher consumers' income, the less likely it was that consumers would buy domestic products.

In conclusion, from this perspective, consumer socio-demographic variables and country of origin effect are found to have a strong relationship. Although there are no specific studies done in brand origin, investigating the relationship between brand origin and consumer socio-demographic variables; it is expected that similar results to that of country of origin would be obtained. Consequently, this study hypothesized:

H2: Consumer's socio-demographic characteristics affect consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes related to quality.

### ***Economic development***

The second major stream of country of origin effect research examines the impact of the image of the country in which a product was produced in relation to economic development conditions in that country. Schooler (1965) was one of the first researchers to examine country of origin effect associated with the level of a country's economic

development. Schooler concluded that products made in less developed countries were not evaluated as high quality products. Krishnakumar (1974) examined the influence of country of origin on people from developing countries. The results of the study showed that people living in developing countries tend to have unfavorable views of the products produced in their home country in terms of workmanship, reliability, durability, technical superiority, and other characteristics.

Wang and Lamb (1983) also examined the possible effects of the level of economic development, culture, and political climate of the manufacturing countries on U.S. consumers' willingness to purchase foreign products. Respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to purchase products made in 36 different developing countries. The findings of the study showed U.S. consumers' prejudices against products manufactured from developing economies. The authors concluded that U.S. consumers were most willing to buy the products made in economically developed and politically free countries with a European, Australian, or New Zealand culture base.

From a slightly different perspective, Manrai, Lascu and Manrai (1998) studied the existence of an interaction between the level of economic development of the country in which a product is manufactured and the type of product. The authors have found that U.S. consumers tend to have a greater bias against luxury goods when they are made in less developed economies. The bias is greatest for luxury goods and decreases for convenience goods. Similarly, Cordell (1991) also found that U.S. consumers are biased against products from developing nations when the price and the financial risk of the purchase increase.

In conclusion, when the degree of economic development of the country of origin is concerned, studies showed that consumers generally have greater trust in products that originating from economically advanced countries (Johanson & Nebenzahl, 1986). Although there are no specific studies done in brand origin that investigated the relationship between brand origin and a country's economic development, it is expected that similar results to that of country of origin would be possible. Consequently, this study hypothesized:

H3: The greater the GDP of the country of brand origin, the higher consumers will perceive apparel product attributes related to quality.

### ***Country stereotypes and ethnocentrism***

Finally, the third and most published stream of research is on country stereotypes and their implications on consumer product evaluations and purchase intentions. The majority of research suggests that country of origin has a profound influence on consumer product evaluations because consumers use prior learned information to form stereotypes regarding the overall quality of brands and goods from certain countries. Consumer may or may not choose brands that have strong national ties as a reflection of what consumers believe about country to which those products are tied to (Keller 1998).

Reierson (1966) was one of the first to conduct country of origin bias research. Reierson (1966) tried to determine the attitude of U.S. American students towards foreign products. Reierson's study measured the opinions of American students' towards products from ten different nations: United States, Germany, Japan, France, Canada, Italy, The United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium and Denmark. The products used in this

study included mechanical items, food, and fashion merchandise. The study found that stereotyping of foreign products was present among the American students. Reiersen (1967) continued his work of investigating American students' attitudes towards foreign products and concluded that if the "prejudice of consumers toward a nation's product is not too intense; consumers' attitude may be made significantly more favorable by even slight exposure to communication and promotional devices" (Reiersen, 1967 p. 386).

Gaedeke (1973) extended the idea of national stereotypes to products from developing countries. He examined the opinions of United States consumers towards the overall quality of imported products made in various developing countries versus domestically produced products. Two hundred students were asked their opinions about the quality of imported and domestic products on a 5-point Likert Scale. The countries used in this study were the Philippines, Hong Kong, Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, Mexico, South Korea, India, Singapore, Turkey, Indonesia and the United States. Products that were made domestically (e.g., food, electronic items and textiles) were rated first in all product classes named, while products from developing countries were rated lower. Thus, products from developing countries are stereotyped as having low quality. Similarly, Darling and Kraft (1977) investigated whether or not preconceived notions consumers have about foreign products are really national stereotypes or just opinions about specific products. The results of their study indicated clear evidence of stereotyping.

Therefore, when consumers have preconceived ideas about foreign products, they are acting through national stereotypes rather than opinions about specific products. Darling and Kraft (1977) concluded that consumers' past experience, learned stereotypes

and reputations of national products, and perhaps more general images of traditions and customs of foreign people, may affect consumer product evaluations.

The literature on country of origin stereotyping is very vast. However, three major finds have emerged in the study of country of origin stereotypes (Hooley & Shipley, 2001). The first, major finding that has emerged in the research on country of origin stereotypes is that stereotypes are different among different countries (Hooley & Shipley, 2001). Lillis and Narayana (1974) compared American and Japanese consumers' perceptions toward products with "made in" labels from five different countries: Britain, France, Germany, Japan, and USA. The findings of their study indicated that stereotypes differ between countries. Furthermore, these differences produced significant differences in subjects' perception of foreign and domestic products (Lillis & Narayana, 1974). Jolibert (1978) found that French consumers' prefer products that were made in France first, German products second and British products last. On the other hand, Cattin, Jolbert and Lohnes (1982) investigated the stereotypes held by American and French directors of purchasing towards products produced from five different advanced countries: France, Germany, Japan, USA and the United Kingdom. Their study found that French, German, and Japanese labels were rated higher by the Americans than the French consumers. Thus, their findings supported the notion that stereotypes are perceived differently from consumers across national boundaries. This may be true because consumers who share similar cultural values tend to evaluate foreign countries similarly (Cattin, Jolbert & Lohnes, 1982).

The second, major finding that has emerged in the country of origin stereotypes is that stereotypes change over time (Hooley & Shipley, 2001). Reiersen (1967) concluded



that if the "prejudice of consumers toward a nation's product is not too intense; consumers' attitude may be made significantly more favorable by even slight exposure to communication and promotional devices" (Reiersen, 1967 p. 386). Moreover, Nagashima (1970) compared Japanese and American attitudes toward foreign and domestic products. Nagashima (1970) found that the "made in" stereotype differed among Japanese and American businessmen. Japanese businessmen rated "made in Germany" as having the best quality while American businessmen gave the highest rating to products that were made in America. Nagashima (1970) also found that the "made in" image was strongly influenced by familiarity and availability of the country's product in question. In his follow-up study, Nagashima (1977) repeated his earlier 1970 study of the "made in" product image among Japanese businessmen. The purpose of Nagashima's (1977) study was to determine whether Japanese businessmen attitudes toward foreign products had changed over the eight-year period. Nagashima (1977) asked the Japanese businessmen their opinion regarding US, Japanese, German, British, and French products in terms of five dimensions (price and value, service and engineering, advertising and reputation, design and style and consumer profile). The findings of the study indicated stereotypes change over time because that the overall "made in USA" image to Japanese businessmen had deteriorated in many ways during the six years, 1969-75.

The third major finding in the study of country of origin stereotypes is that research has shown a tendency for consumers to prefer products that were produced in their home country. Moreover, these domestically produced products are often rated higher in terms of quality when compared to products from other countries. The term used to describe this phenomenon is called "ethnocentrism" (Hooley, Graham, Shipley,

David & Krieger, 1988). Hooley, Graham, Shipley, David & Krieger (1988) defined the term “ethnocentrism” from two different perspectives: (a) the belief in the inherent superiority of one’s own ethnic group or culture; and (b) a tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one’s own.

Consumers tend to prefer products from their own country because they believe that products from that country because they believe that these products have the highest quality and pose the least risk. Prior research suggests that ethnocentrism is not only a product evaluation tool but is also a direct factor in a consumers’ purchasing decision (Yaprak & Baugh, 1991). Consequently, consumers not only judge domestically produced products as having higher quality than imported products but they are more willing to purchase domestic products over imported products. For example, U. S. consumers may prefer U. S. products (Gaedeke, 1973; Nagashima, 1970; Reiersen, 1966); French consumers prefer products that are made in France (Baumgartner & Jolibert, 1978); Japanese consumers prefer Japanese products (Narayana, 1981); Polish and Russian consumers prefer their home country's products (Good & Huddleston, 1995); Spanish consumers prefer Spanish products (Peris & Newman, 1993); Mexican consumers prefer to purchase Mexican products (Bailey & Pineres, 1997); United Kingdom consumers prefer their home country's products versus foreign ones (Baker & Michie, 1995; Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Hooley, Graham, Shipley, David & Krieger, 1988; Peris & Newman, 1993); and European consumers in general tend to prefer products that are made in Europe to imported products (Schweiger, Shimp & Shin, 1995).

Han (1990) argued that country image can be conceptualized as a consumer halo. Therefore, Han (1990) designed a study to address the role of country of origin image in consumer behavior across three nations: USA, Japan and South Korea. The study measured country image with reference to five items: technical advancement, prestige value, workmanship, price, and serviceability. Color television sets and compact automobiles were the test items used in this study. According to Han (1990), the halo hypothesis suggested that consumers may consider not buying an unfamiliar foreign brand simply because they may make unfavorable inferences about the quality of the brand from their lack of familiarity with products from the country. The findings of the study also demonstrated that consumers' willingness to purchase a product was related to the economic, political, and cultural characteristics of the product's country of origin. Likewise Hooley and his colleagues (1998) concluded that country of origin images were affected by the consumer's perception of similarity between his or her own country and the origin country's political, cultural climate, and beliefs systems.

Baker and Michie (1995) studied how ethnocentrism affects consumers purchasing decisions when the domestic products are equal to imported products on price and performance. Baker and Michie's study examined British car drivers' perceptions and attitudes towards four makes of foreign cars: Honda, Hyundai, Porton, and Toyota. The British Car, Rover, was added to the study in order to establish the possible effects of ethnocentrism on consumers' intention to purchase. The results of the study demonstrated that respondents preferred the most expensive cars, such as Toyota and Rover. Moreover, the study's results also indicated that product country images and ethnocentrism had a significant impact (both positive and negative) on the consumers'

intention to buy. Thus, ethnocentrism can be a strong source of competitive advantage, especially when domestic products are equal to imported products on a price-performance basis (Baker & Michie, 1995).

In the U.S. apparel market, Dickerson (1982) found that the majority (64%) of US consumers preferred buying US-made apparel because they considered imported clothing as being of lower quality. Likewise, Morganosky and Lazrde (1987) investigated consumers' perceptions of brand and store image based on where the apparel product was produced (US or imported). Results revealed that US-made apparel was rated significantly higher in terms of quality than imported apparel. These findings were found to be consistent except for apparel from discount stores, which were rated significantly lower since consumers were more concerned with price than country of origin.

Shim, Morris and Morgan (1989) investigated American College students' attitudes towards domestic and imported apparel. The study found that students rated domestically produced apparel higher than imported apparel for fit, care, and durability. The study found no significant difference in fashionableness and prestige between domestic and imported apparel items. These studies are, however, focusing on the relationship between country of origin and a country stereotyping when consumers evaluate apparel quality attributes. Such relationship between brand origin and a country stereotyping is not known. Consequently, this study hypothesized:

H4: Ethnocentric consumers will perceive product attributes of domestic apparel brand products higher than those of foreign apparel brand products.

## **CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Chapter III provides the following sections: (a) sampling information, (b) research design and survey instrument development, and (c) data analysis techniques.

### **Sampling**

A survey was developed to collect data to empirically test the relationship between perceived brand origin and consumers' perceptions of apparel product attributes related to quality. The survey was administered on February 25, 2009 to undergraduate students at the University of Missouri. With the intent of representing of wide variety of students across the campus, two large lecture classes were chosen. These classes were Nutrition: Current Concepts and Controversies, and History of Western Dress. These classes seemed most appropriate for the study, because of the diversity of students enrolled. These classes contained students of different ages, races, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, these classes were two general education courses, drawing students from all over the campus at all academic years. At the time of the survey, approximately 200 students were enrolled in History of Western Dress and approximately 430 students were enrolled in Nutrition: Current Concepts and Controversies.

## **Research Design and Survey Instrument Development**

### ***Apparel brands from the United States, Italy, and China***

In order to evaluate consumers' perceptions on product attributes drawn from brand origin cues, the study focused on apparel products suggesting three different brand origins: United States, Italy and China. These countries were chosen because (a) they represented differing levels of industrial development, (b) they are located in different geographical locations, and (c) they play significant yet different roles in the global textile and apparel industry as either major importers, exporters or designers. The United States was included in this study so that the effects of ethnocentrism of United States consumers could be investigated. In addition, as Chinese apparel exports have dominated the global apparel industry in recent years (Dyer & Ha-Brookshire, 2008), China was included in this study. Finally, Italy was included in this study because it is a major influence in the high quality apparel manufacturing industry. Italy also has a rich history and still maintains an international reputation for quality and fashionable apparel (Khachaturian & Morganosky, 1990).

### ***Survey instrument***

The survey was designed by combining relevant scales in the established country of origin literature (Pisharodi & Parameswaran, 1994; Shrimp & Sharma, 1987). This was done because no specific scales exist in the current brand origin literature and brand origin and country of origin have strong ties. The questionnaire had three sections and had a total of 46 questions (see Appendix A).

The first section of the survey contained questions about consumer's specific opinions on brands from three brand origin countries: United States, Italy and China. This portion of the survey was adapted from the country of origin scales by Pisharodi and Parameswaran (1994). This scale was originally intended to measure how consumers attach stereotypical "made in" perceptions to products from different countries and how this may influence purchase and consumption behaviors. More specifically, this scale was used to assess consumers' perceptions on the quality of Korean and German built automobiles and blenders based on country of origin perceptions. To adapt this scale to measure the effects of brand origin on consumer's apparel quality perceptions, the words "General Product Attributes" were replaced by "General Brand Attributes." Moreover, the 10-point Likert scale was changed to 7-point Likert Scale with one originally representing *not at all appropriate*, and ten originally representing *most appropriate* to one representing *strongly disagree* and to seven representing *strongly agree*. This was done because 10-point scales are too large and broad and tend not to allow people to accurately place their points of view (Matell & Jacoby, 1971).

The second section of the survey contained questions on United States consumers' ethnocentrism and preferences for products with United States brand origins. This section was adapted from the Consumer Ethnocentrism scale by Shimp and Sharma (1987). To adapt this scale to measure the degree of ethnocentrism on United States consumers' brand origin based quality perceptions, the word "product" was replaced by "brand." To measure the effects of ethnocentrism on United States consumers' brand origin based perceptions on product attributes, respondents were requested to express their opinions on each item on a 7-point Likert Scale format (strongly agree=7, strongly

disagree=1).

The third section contained questions about the respondent's demographic information. Demographic information included the socio-economic characteristics of respondents such as: age, sex, ethnicity, time lived in the United States, gross annual income and education level. See Appendix A for full survey.

### ***Survey administration***

The survey was administered on February 25, 2009 to Nutrition: Current Concepts and Controversies, and History of Western Dress. The survey was administered in the beginning of each class. Survey participation was strictly voluntary and students were notified that they would not receive any compensation for taking or not taking the survey. 450 surveys were handed out to students with the intention of collecting 250 fully completed and usable surveys. A total of three hundred and ninety-six (396) students completed the survey. Students were assured that no personal identifiers would be used and all answers would be kept confidential. The students voluntarily completed the survey before the beginning of the classes Nutrition, Current Concepts and Controversies and History of Western Dress. Prior to taking the survey, students signed the written consent form approved by the University of Missouri Institution Research Board.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The computer program computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 17) was used for all statistical data analysis. Once the surveys were



collected, survey responses were transferred on to the computer program SPSS for initial descriptive data analysis of demographic information of respondents. Then comparisons were made using frequencies and percentages to obtain the general characteristics of survey respondents.

To test the first hypothesis (brand origin has a significant effect on consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes relating to quality), answers to the negative general brand attribute were reversed coded then Paired Sample T-tests analysis were performed. This was done in order to compare mean of the sum scores for General Brand Attributes for each of the three countries: United States, Italy and China. Paired Sample T-tests were ran to determine if there were differences in consumers' perceptions of apparel product attributes between the three different brand origin countries.

In order to analyze the second hypothesis (perceived evaluations on product attributes based on brand origin cues are affected by consumer's socio-demographic characteristics) multiple multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were performed. This was done in order to determine whether different consumers' socio-demographic attributes affected apparel product evaluations based on product attributes related to quality. The first, MANOVA analyzed the effects of the consumers' education on consumers' apparel product evaluations. In order to account for unequal sample size among five levels of education backgrounds, the variable Education was coded into two groups, freshman (231) and non-freshmen (161)( sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students), resulting in somewhat equal sample sizes between the two groups. The freshmen were coded into SPSS as 1s and sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students were coded as 0s.

The second MANOVA procedure analyzed the effects of the consumers' gender. For the same reason discussed in the Education variable, the variable Gender was coded into two groups, males (170) and females (224). Females were coded into SPSS as 1s and Males were coded as 0s. Due to the sample's homogeneous distribution, no further analysis beyond frequency analysis was done to examine the role of consumers' socio-demographic attributes of age, income, ethnicity, and time they had lived in the United States attributes on consumers' apparel product evaluations based on product attributes related to quality.

In order to analyze the third hypothesis (the greater the GDP of the country of brand origin, the higher perceptions on product attributes consumers perceive), the mean of the sum of General Brand Attributes scores for the three brand origin countries (United States, Italy, and China) were compared. This was done to draw conclusions on which brand origin country consumers rated as having the highest quality apparel brands.

To analyze hypothesis four (ethnocentric consumers will perceive product attributes of domestic brand products higher than those of foreign brand products), multiple regression tests were performed. This was done to examine the effects of consumers' ethnocentrism on consumers' quality perceptions for each of the three countries, after accounting for education and gender. The first test examined the effects of ethnocentrism on evaluations of products with United States brand origins. The second test examined the effects of ethnocentrism on evaluations of products with Italian brand origins. Finally, the third test examined the effects of ethnocentrism on evaluations of products with Chinese brand origins.

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS**

This chapter will include (a) description of the sample including demographic characteristics, (b) results of analysis for Hypothesis 1 and 3, (c) results of analysis for Hypothesis 2, and (d) results of analysis for Hypothesis 4.

### **Descriptions of Sample**

450 surveys were distributed to students, with the goal of having 250 surveys completed. A total of three hundred and ninety-six (396) students completed the questionnaire. However, two surveys were not used due to unanswered questions leaving a total of three hundred and ninety-four (394) useable surveys.

Of all of the respondents, 224(56.9%) of the respondents were male and 170 (43.1%) were female. The majority of the sample 386 (98%) was between the ages of 18-24 with the remaining two 8 (2%) falling between the ages of 25-30. The freshman class made up the largest group of the sample (59.1%). Sophomores accounted for the second largest group (22.3%). While juniors and seniors accounted for 5.8% and 11.5% of the sample, respectively. Graduate students accounted for a little over one percent (1.5%) of the sample.

The bulk of the respondents (87.3%) were Caucasian, (9.9%) were Black or African American, (1.3%) were Asian and (1.3%) were Hispanic or Latino. Over fifty percent (54.7%) of the sample reported having parental incomes of \$30,000 or less. Slightly more than forty-four percent (44%) of the sample had incomes ranging from \$40,000 to more than \$70,000. The majority (93.7%) of the sample had lived in the United States for their entire lives while two percent (2%) had lived in the United States

for less than 10 years, less than one percent (.5%) percent lived in the United States for 5-10 years, and 3.8 percent (3.8%) for more than 10 years, but not their entire life.

Frequency results are shown in Table 4.1.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**Survey respondents' socio-demographic frequencies and percentages**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	224	56.90%
Female	170	43.10%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24 years	386	98%
24-25 years	8	2%
<b>Years lived in the US</b>		
Less than 10	8	2%
5-10 years	2	0.50%
More than 10 years	15	3.80%
Entire Life	396	93.70%
<b>Education</b>		
Freshman	233	59.10%
Sophomore	88	22.30%
Junior	23	5.80%
Senior	44	11.20%
Graduate Student	6	1.50%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$10,000	62	15.70%
\$10,000-20,000	59	15.00%
\$20,000-30,000	33	8.40%
\$40,000-50,000	65	16.50%
\$50,000-60,000	90	22.80%
More than \$70,000	85	21.60%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Asian or Asian American	5	1.30%
Black or African American	40	10.20%
Hispanic or Latino	5	1.30%
Caucasian or White	344	87.30%

### Hypotheses 1 and 3

The results of the three sets of Paired-Sample T-tests showed statistically significant differences in the mean of the sum of General Brand Attributes between products with United States and Chinese brand origins ( $t= 13.98$ ;  $p= .000$ ), United States and Italian brand origins ( $t= -4.26$ ;  $p= .000$ ) and Italian and Chinese brand origins ( $t= -16.144$ ;  $p= .000$ ) (see Table 4.2). The results indicated that there were statically significant differences in consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes relating to quality depending on brand origin cues. Consumers perceived quality from products with United States brand origin 6.51 points higher than Chinese brand origin products, Italian brand origin products were rated 1.8 points higher than United States brand origin products, and Italian brand origin products were rated 8.31 points higher than Chinese brand origin products. Results indicated that consumers rated Italian brands highest in quality; Untied States brands second highest and Chinese brands the lowest in quality.

The analysis of the first hypothesis in turn led to analysis of the third hypothesis (the greater the GDP of the country of brand origin, the higher perceptions on product attributes consumers perceive). After consideration of the GDP of each country, the results of mean of the sum comparisons for General Brand Attributes indicated that products with Italian brand origin (mean=75.28) where rated as the highest quality based on brand origin cues. Products with United States brand origin (mean=73.46) were rated as the second highest in quality and products with Chinese brand origin (mean=66.95) were rated the lowest in quality based on brand origin cues. Thus hypothesis three, was partially supported since Chinese brand origin products where rated lowest, however,

contrary to hypothesis three, Italian brand origin products were rated higher than American brand origin products.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**Comparison of the mean of the sums for**  
**brand origin countries**

<b>Pair in Comparison</b>	<b>Mean Scores</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b><i>t</i>-value</b>	<b>Degrees of Freedom</b>	<b><i>p</i>-value</b>
<b>Pair 1</b>						
USBO <sup>1</sup> -	73.46	9.24	.47	14.00	394	.000
CHBO <sup>2</sup>	66.95					
<b>Pair 2:</b>						
USBO-	73.46	8.49	.43	-4.26	394	.000
ITBO <sup>3</sup>	75.28					
<b>Pair 3:</b>						
ITBO-	75.28	10.24	.52	16.14	394	.000
CHBO	66.95					

<sup>1</sup>USBO: United States Brand Origin; <sup>2</sup>CHBO: Chinese Brand Origin; <sup>3</sup>ITBO: Italian Brand Origin



## Hypothesis 2

In order to analyze the second hypothesis (perceived evaluations on product attributes based on brand origin cues are affected by consumer's socio-demographic characteristics), numerous multiple multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were performed. The results of the MANOVA tests are shown in Table 4.3.

### *Effect of Education*

MANOVA analysis showed that for the variable Education, there were statically significant differences in consumers' evaluations of apparel product quality based on brand origin cues between freshman and non-freshman groups (Wilks'  $\lambda = .959$ ;  $F(3,388) = 5.27$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Further univariate ANOVA analysis revealed that there were statically significant differences between the two groups in perceptions of apparel product attributes related to quality for products with United States ( $p = .000$ ). Further Two Group T-test analysis on the United States brand origin products revealed that freshmen rated products with United States brand origins 3.22 points higher than non-freshmen. Thus, results indicated that the more educated a consumer was the lower a consumer rated products with United States brand origins. However, there were no statistically significant differences were reported for products with Italian brand origins ( $p = .173$ ) and Chinese brand origin ( $p = .290$ ).

### *Effect of Gender*

MANOVA analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences in perceptions of apparel product quality based on brand origin between male and female groups (Wilks'  $\lambda = .959$ ;  $F(3,390) = .692$ ,  $p > .001$ ).

**TABLE 4.3**

**The effects of consumers' socio-demographic variables on consumers' perceptions of apparel product quality based on brand origin cues**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Wilk's Lamda</b>	<b><i>F-value</i></b>	<b>Hypothesis Degrees of Freedom</b>	<b>Error Degrees of Freedom</b>	<b><i>P-value</i></b>
Gender	.995	.69	3	390	.557
Education	.959	5.53	3	388	.001

#### Hypothesis 4

To analyze hypothesis four (ethnocentric consumers will perceive product attributes of domestic brand products higher than those of foreign brand products), multiple regression tests were performed. The results of the multiple regression tests are shown in Table 4.4.

Multiple regression analysis included Education and Gender variables showed that, for Italy, analysis revealed that ethnocentrism had statistically significant differences in consumer's perceived product evaluations based on brand origin cues ( $b=-274$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $r^2=.288$ ), after accounting for consumers' gender and education. It was an interesting finding in that, after accounting for consumers' gender and education, U.S. consumers with strong ethnocentrism had lower perceptions of the quality for Italian brand origin products.

However, results indicated that ethnocentrism did not have statistically significant differences in consumer's perceived product evaluations based on brand origin cues for product for United States origins ( $b=.089$ ,  $p=.744$ ,  $r^2=.215$ ) and for Chinese brand origins ( $b=-.402$ ,  $p=.178$ ,  $r^2=.100$ ), after accounting for consumers' gender and education.

**TABLE 4.4**

**The effects of consumers' ethnocentrism on product  
quality perceptions based on brand origin cues**

<b>Brand Origin Country</b>	<b>Unstandardized coefficient</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Standardized coefficient</b>	<b><i>t</i>-value</b>	<b><i>p</i>-vare</b>	<b><i>R</i><sup>2</sup></b>
United States	70.86	1.19	.02	.33	.000	.215
Italy	-1.54	.28	-.27	-5.57	.000	.288
China	-.40	.30	-.40	-1.35	.278	.100

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter includes (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion of the major findings, (c) implication and contributions of findings, and (d) study limitations and future research suggestions.

### **Summary of Study**

The country of origin effect has been recognized as an important factor in consumers' purchasing decisions. This study suggested that the concept of country of origin is outdated and should be replaced with the concept of brand origin that better suits today's marketplace. In an era of increasing globalization and multi-national products, brand origin is a useful replacement for the outdated concept of country of origin. Thus, the concept of brand origin serves as simplification for the increasingly complicated country of origin concept. Moreover, this study found that brand origin played a significant role in consumers' perceptions of apparel attributes related to quality. Hence, consumers associate products with the country from which the brand was originally developed not the country in which the product was produced.

This study was designed to investigate the effects of brand origin on consumers' perceptions of apparel attributes related to quality. A literature Review was provided to show the link and evolution of country of origin literature and brand origin. The Associative Network Memory theory provided the theoretical framework for understanding why consumers use secondary cues such as brand origin information when

forming their opinions and purchasing products. The following four hypotheses were tested during this study.

H1: Brand origin will have a significant effect on consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes relating to quality.

H2: Consumer's socio-demographic characteristics affect consumers' evaluations of apparel product attributes related to quality.

H3: The greater the GDP of the country of brand origin, the higher consumers will perceive apparel product attributes related to quality.

H4: Ethnocentric consumers will perceive product attributes of domestic apparel brand products higher than those of foreign apparel brand products.

A self-administered questionnaire was developed. The survey instrument consisted of forty-six questions, and was administered to two large lecture classes at a major Midwestern university. The survey was designed to learn more about consumers' perceptions of brands from the United States, Italy and China. The survey consisted of three sections: 1) brand origin questions; 2) Questions accessing Ethnocentrism; and 3) demographic information. Overall, a total of 394 surveys were collected and analyzed through the computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 17).

### **Discussion of Major Findings**

The results of this study revealed that consumers view the apparel product quality differently for brands from each of three brand origin countries studied (United States, Italy and China). The study showed that consumers rated Italian brands the highest in quality, United States brands were rated second highest in quality and Chinese brands

where rated the lowest in quality. Thus, this study showed that brand origin does play a large role when consumers' are making inferences about the quality of an apparel item. The findings of this study also revealed that consumers use brand origin information similarly to country of origin information to simplify quality judgments by allowing the retrieval of pre-established country related evaluations from memory (Schooler, 1965; Reiersen 1967; Hong & Wyer 1989). Additionally, this study's finding that consumer tend to rate Chinese brand products the lowest in quality is similar to the findings in country of origin research that suggested that consumers have prejudices against products from developing nations and prefer products and brands from countries that are similar to their home country (Manrai, Lascu & Manrai, 1998; Wang & Lamb, 1983; Reiersen, 1966; Gaedeke, 1973).

Additionally, the results of this study also indicated that consumer' education level effects their perception of apparel product attributes related to quality. The results of the study indicated that the more educated a consumer was, the lower a consumer rated quality of products with United States brand origins. This finding is similar to the findings in country of origin literature suggesting education is the most influential consumer demographic variable related to the effects of country of origin (Festervand, Lumpkin & Lundstrom, 1985). Numerous studies on the country of origin effect revealed that people with higher levels of education are more in favor of foreign products than those with limited education, which would explain why the highly educated consumers in this study preferred Italian brands to United States brand origin products (Al-hammad, 1988; Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Festervand, Lumpkin & Lundstrom, 1985; Good & Huddleston, 1995; Greer, 1971; Schooler, 1971).



This study's results also indicated that a consumers' gender did not affect their perceptions of apparel product quality based on brand origin. The finding that consumers' gender determining consumer's quality perceptions based on brand origin cues is very different from the findings in country of origin research suggesting gender is a key variable in predicting perceptions of product quality based on country of origin (Schooler, 1971; Heslop, 1986; Wall, 1990; Smith, 1993; Bailey & Pineres, 1997).

The results also indicated that consumers do not always rate the quality of the apparel brand from a richer, or a country with a high gross domestic products higher than brands from brand origin countries with lower gross domestic products. This study found that consumers rated products with Chinese brand origins the lowest, however, yet contrary to belief that consumers believe richer countries produce higher quality branded products, Italian brand origin products were rated higher than United States brand origin products. Again, this could be due to the fact that Italy has a long and rich history of producing quality fashions (Khachaturian & Morganosky, 1990). This finding was also similar to Wang and Lamb (1983) that concluded U.S. consumers were most willing to buy products made in economically developed and politically free countries with a European, Australian, or New Zealand culture base.

Furthermore the study's results indicated that ethnocentrism has some effects on consumer's perceived product evaluations based on brand origin cues. This finding is somewhat different from the findings in the country of origin literature suggesting ethnocentric consumers almost always rate the quality of domestic brands and products higher than that of foreign brands and products (Shim & Morgan, 1989; Morganosky & Lazrde, 1987; Dickerson, 1982; Baker & Michie, 1995). The high ratings on Italian

products are again probably due to the positive association with Italian fashion products (Khachaturian & Morganosky, 1990).

### **Contributions and Implications**

This research has several contributions. First, this study is a pioneering study that expanded the brand origin literature by showing that differences in consumer perceptions in product quality are influenced by brand origin and country of origin. This study helped to define brand origin as a perceived country to which consumers believe a product corporate headquarters are located. This definition differs from country of origin which is defined as the actual country in which a product is produced.

Second, the study added to the literature that says that the country of *perceived* corporate ownership may be a stronger influence than actual country of corporate ownership. This is important because marketers can use marketing companies to suggest different brand origins to diminish negative country associations. This is very important in a time of global trade and products with multi-national origins.

Third, this study made explicit the importance of origin associations for brands in the brand dominated setting of the apparel industry and recognizes the fact that perceived country of brand origin is a strong determinant of consumer's product quality perceptions. This is the first study that showed these differences in the area of apparel. This is very important because apparel is one of the most global industries.

Fourth, this study found differences in brand origin on the effects of consumer's age, gender, income and ethnicity in determining consumer's quality perceptions. This study showed that unlike country of origin, consumer's age, gender, income and ethnicity

do not play roles in determining consumer's quality perceptions based on brand origin cues. Unlike previously written country of origin literature this study found no effects for multiple demographic variables on consumer's perception of apparel quality based on brand origin cues.

Fifth, this study showed that unlike country of origin, consumer's ethnocentrism does not play a role in determining consumer's quality perceptions based on brand origin cues. In fact, this study showed that the longer a consumer lives in the United States the higher they rate Italian products in quality.

This study has many implications for both the academic world and for managers in the marketplace. First, the implication for academic research is that this study expanded the brand origin literature. This is important because it is necessary to expand this literature because the pre-cursors concept of country of origin has become outdated due the intensified global economy and products with multi-country affiliations. By expanding the brand origin literature this study helped create a more modern product elevation tool.

Second, this research has great implications in the marketing strategy of companies. This study suggested that companies with corporate ownership in countries that tend to have positive associations should make their brand origins known to the consumer. Additionally, for companies with corporate ownership in countries that tend to have negative associations, companies should use marketing tools that down play the country of brand origin or imply other brand origins. For example, if a company has brand origins in the United States or Italy the company may want to put the brand origin country on the label so that consumers can make the brand origin association more easily.

Moreover, companies may want to use brand origin cues in the brand names of their products. For example, an Italian leather company may want to use an Italian name for their brand to fuel brand origin associations while a Chinese company may also want to use an Italian name to suggest different brand origins. This study also provided evidence that managers of global brands do not need to overly worry about the countries they select for manufacturing or sourcing of components, but should worry more about the country in which the corporate parent of a brand resides. This finding suggested that a pair of Levi Jeans benefits from its American heritage, even when the pair of jeans is actually made in China.

Third, this study has implications for companies that want to market their products to college-aged consumers. This research showed that companies that want to successfully market to this group should create branding strategies reflecting different consumer perceptions drawn by various branding cues.

Fourth, this study has implications for companies that rely on consumer's ethnocentrism and patriotism. This study showed that consumer's ethnocentrism does not affect their apparel quality perceptions when based off of brand origin cues. This is important because these companies can make products that suggest different brand origins and consumers will still purchase them.

### **Limitations and Future Research directions**

Despite the significant results obtained from this study there were a few limitations to this study. Perhaps the most important limitations relate to the experimental design. First, the current survey instrument had a total of forty-six

questions. In order to obtain a more comprehensive study, a larger group of questions may need to be devised. The current survey was sufficient for addressing the purpose of this study but further statistical tests may need to be run in future studies to truly determine the effect of brand origin on consumers' perceptions of apparel attributes related to quality. Additionally, the nature of the experimental design constrained the number of countries to only three countries: United States, Italy and China. Future research should examine other countries and study how cultural differences moderate the brand origin effect. This will help marketers understand the role that different mechanism of culture play in order to limit poor brand origin associations.

Second, the study design was limited to one product category, apparel. Given that the product category of apparel has very low levels of consumer product involvement, future researchers may want to examine whether differences in consumer quality perceptions based on brand origin cues differ in high-involvement product categories. This may help marketers and managers understand whether or not the degree of involvement with a product category moderates the brand origin effect.

Third, the study also did not use actual brand names. Consumers' perceptions of apparel products were solely based off of the name of the country. Future research should examine the role of brand origin cues in brand names. This will help marketers choose proper brand names that limit negative brand origin associations.

Fourth, the sample was limited to students at the University of Missouri. To increase the number and diversity of respondents a larger population of classes should be surveyed throughout campus and the nation.

Future research clearly is required and should be based on more nationally representative samples and other types of products. The study only examined a single type of product, apparel, for which considerable information and perceptions are very subjective and where impacted by of the degree of familiarity or experience with the apparel brands. Examination of brand origin effects in the evaluation of products for which objective rather than subjective characteristics may yield different results.

As a final point, the concept of brand origin needs to be developed further. This study relied on comparing the concept of brand origin to the related concept of country of origin. This is necessary at the initial development stage of a new concept. However, brand origin should be considered as a multi-dimensional concept that stands alone from the concept of country or origin. Therefore, future research should perhaps investigate the nature of brand origin as a cue in product evaluations. While numerous studies including the present study found the salience of country of origin information in product evaluations, it is still unknown exactly how brand origin information is utilized, i.e., under what conditions it is more important in product evaluations. Future research should perhaps investigate the nature of brand origin as a cue in product evaluations and investigate how brand origin information is utilized and under what conditions it is more significant in product evaluations.

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**APPENDIX A:  
Survey Instrument**



# **The Effects of Brand Origin on United States Consumers' Quality Perceptions of Apparel Products**

February 2009

Thank you for choosing to participate in this survey.

This survey is being conducted by Katie Peterson, a Masters candidate in the Department of Textile and Apparel Management at the University of Missouri. Your responses will be used to assess the effects of brand origin on consumers' quality perception in the area of apparel.

Your participation in this survey is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate or discontinue participation at any time. You may also skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

All of your survey responses will be kept confidential. Your responses will only be seen by authorized researchers. Data gathered for this project will be analyzed as a whole, excluding references to any individual student.

By completing this survey, you acknowledge that you are 18 years or older. The survey will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

For information about your rights as a research subjects, please contact the MU Institutional Review Board (573.882.9585; irb.Missouri.edu)



Katie Peterson Masters Candidate [Kap6v8@mizzou.edu](mailto:Kap6v8@mizzou.edu)  
Department of Textile and Apparel Management  
University of Missouri

## **Section 1: Brand Origin Effect**

An apparel company's marketing team is trying to develop a branding plan for their newest clothing line specifically targeting college students. In order to develop this plan the company is performing research on how college students react to brands from different countries.

The following questions are to find out what you think about brands that associated with certain countries. For each country, please circle a number on a scale from **1 (strongly disagree)** to **7 (strongly agree)** that best reflects your judgment. There are no right or wrong answers. Please circle one answer per country.

---

Brands associated with the United States, China or Italy are or have:

**1= Strongly Disagree 7= Strongly Agree**

**1. Unreasonably expensive:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**2. Luxury products:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**3. Imitations:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**4. Good value:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**5. Cheaply put together:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**6. Meticulous workmanship:**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**7. High quality**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**8. Comfortable**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**9. Good value for money**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**10. Fit well**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**11. Stylish**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**12. Attractive**

United States	China	Italy
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Section 2: Brands from the United States.**

The following questions are to find out what you think about brands that come from the United States. An “American Brand” is a brand that was developed and managed by a United States company.

Please place an X on the scale from **1 (strongly disagree)** to **7 (strongly agree)** that best reflects your judgment. There is no right or wrong answer. Only one response per question.

**1. A real American should always buy American brands.**

\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

**2. American Brands, first, last and foremost.**

\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

**3. We should purchase American brands instead of letting other countries get rich off us.**

\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

**4. Americans should not buy foreign brands, because this hurts American business and causes unemployment.**

\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

### Section 3: Demographic Information

The following questions ask you about your background information. Please indicate your choice by placing a check mark besides the correct option. Only one response per question.

**1 . What is your current highest level of education?**

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

**2 . How long have you lived in the United States**

- Less than 10 year's
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years
- My Entire Life

**3. Which of the following best describes your age group?**

- 18-24
- 25-30
- 31-35
- 36-45
- Greater than 45

**4. What is your Gender?**

- Male
- Female

**5. Which of the following best describe your annual income?**

- Less than \$10,000/ year
- \$10,000- \$20,000/ year
- \$20,000- \$30,000/ year
- \$20,000- \$30,000/ year
- \$40,000- \$50,000/ year
- \$50,000- \$60,000/ year
- More than \$70,000/ year

**6. How do you describe your ethnicity? (Please check the one option that best describes you)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Caucasian or white
- Other

Thank you for participating!

If you have any questions please Contact

Katie Peterson  
Graduate Student  
Textile and Apparel Management  
[Kap6v8@mizzou.edu](mailto:Kap6v8@mizzou.edu)

Dr. Jung E. Ha-Brookshire  
Assistant Professor  
Textile and Apparel Management  
[habrookshirej@missouri.edu](mailto:habrookshirej@missouri.edu)  
573-882-3289

**APPENDIX B:**  
**Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled The Effects of Brand Origin on Consumers' Perception of Apparel Product Attributes Relating to Quality. was reviewed and APPROVED as "Exempt" on February 13, 2009 and will expire on February 13, 2010. Research activities approved at this level are eligible for exemption from some federal IRB requirements. Although you will not be required to submit the annual Continuing Review Report, your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. You must submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form by December 30, 2009 to provide enough time for review and avoid delays in the IRB process. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval. (See form: <http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/>)

If you wish to revise your activities, you do not need to submit an Amendment Application. You must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You will be expected to provide a brief written description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants. The Campus IRB will provide a written determination of whether the proposed revisions change from exemption to expedite or full board review status. If the activities no longer qualify for exemption, as a result of the proposed revisions, an expedited or full board IRB application must be submitted to the Campus IRB. The investigator may not proceed with the proposed revisions until IRB approval is granted.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

**APPENDIX C:**  
**Institutional Review Board Permission Letters**





**Department of Textile and  
Apparel Management**

University of Missouri-Columbia

**College of Human  
Environmental Sciences**

137 Stanley Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211-7700

PHONE (573) 882-7317  
FAX (573) 882-3289  
<http://www.missouri.edu/~tam/>

February 11, 2009

TO: University IRB Board

FROM: Laurel Wilson, Ph.D.  
Professor

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurel E. Wilson".

RE: Katie Peterson survey of students in TAM 3510

Katie Peterson has my permission to conduct a survey of students in TAM 3510 for her research concerning The Effects of Brand Origin on Consumers' Perception of Apparel Product Attributes Relating to Quality. The research project number is: 1131318.



**NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES EXTENSION  
COLLEGE OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

308 Gwynn Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211-7700  
PHONE (573) 882-9760  
FAX (573) 884-5449

February 13, 2009

Office of Research  
University of Missouri - Columbia  
205 Jesse Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211

Greetings:

By my signature, this letter confirms that Katie Peterson, an MU student candidate for the degree of Masters of Science in Textile and Apparel Management, has received my permission to administer in the course I instruct, Nutritional Sciences 1034, a survey that will be handed out to students and collected after approximately 10 minutes. This survey is administered under IRB ID: 1131318 "The Effects of Brand Origin on Consumers' Perception of Apparel Product Attributes Relating to Quality." The administration and use of this survey is subject to the supervision of Ms. Peterson's advisor, Dr. Jung Ha-Brookshire, Assistant Professor of Textile and Apparel Management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale E. Brigham".

Dale E. Brigham, Ph.D.  
State Nutrition and Fitness Specialist and  
Nutritional Sciences 1034 Instructor