"Made-In" Label, Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Income as Moderators of the Brand Types in Terms of the Country-of-Brand-Origin Impact on Consumers` Purchase Intentions

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Abstract:

Purpose: The paper aims to examine the moderating effect of "made-in" label, consumer`s socio-demographic characteristics and income on the relations between brand type in terms of the country-of-brand-origin (COBO) applied by emerging market company with purchase intentions of consumers from the European Union market.

Design/Methodology/Approach: An experimental conjoint analysis and multilevel linear models were used, and covered random sample of 1012 Poles aged 18-65, and concerned durable goods (household appliances).

Findings: "Made-in" label, consumer`s socio-demographic characteristics and income differentiate purchase intentions towards various brand types in terms of the COBO applied by emerging markets companies.

Practical Implications: Indicated impact of socio-demoraphic characteristic and income as moderators of brand types in terms of COBO may be a basis for shaping international brands strategies for brand owners from emerging countries.

Originality/Value: The major contribution of this study is a simultaneous examination of the "made-in" label, socio-demographic characteristics and income as moderators of the brand type in terms of the COBO applied by emerging market firms on consumer purchase intentions.

Keywords: Brand types, COBO, "made-in", consumers` socio-demographic characteristics, income, purchase intentions, emerging markets.

JEL classification: M31, F23.

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1. Introduction

Since 1960s, there has been a growing interest in the country-of-origin (COO) and its dimensions incl. country-of-manufacturing (COM), i.e., "made-in" label (Nagashima, 1970) and country-of-brand-origin (COBO) (Thakor and Kohli, 1996), and influence of COO perception on consumers behavior (Hamzaoui-Essoussi *et al.*, 2011). Recently, COO effect (COE) has been one of the key issues in international marketing and branding studies (Hao *et al.*, 2019), especially important for emerging countries firms as when entering foreign countries they face both the liability of foreignness and COO (Kim, 2017) which translate into the perception and purchase intentions of their products/brands. Firms may limit the negative influence of the COBO by using brand names associated with a foreign country enjoying a positive image or referring to the heritage of the home country (Southworth and Ha-Brookshire, 2016).

There is a lack of surveys on the impact of the brand type applied by the emerging countries firms on consumers' purchase intentions and on the moderating influence of "made-in" label on that effect. Only in a few studies such moderating variables as consumer`s socio-demographic characteristics and income were included, though they are of key importance for consumers` purchasing intentions (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015). Many studies have been conducted on very narrow populations (students) (Fetscherin *et al.*, 2015) and only a few research have been done on the populations representing a wide range of socio-demographic characteristics (Good and Huddleston, 1995).

The aim of this study is to answer the following research questions: 1) Whether "made-in" label moderates the relationship between brand type in terms of the COBO applied by an emerging market company and consumers` purchase intentions?; 2) Whether socio-demographic factors and income moderate the relation between the brand type in terms of the COBO applied by an emerging market company and consumers` purchase intentions?

To answer the research questions, an experimental quantitative method was used – full-profile conjoint analysis and multilevel linear models. The study covered a random sample of Polish consumers aged 18-65 and concerned one of the categories of durable goods – household appliances.

2. Literature Review

COO was initially identified with the "made-in" label (COM) (Nagashima, 1970). Nowadays it is understood as a multidimensional construct, including COBO (Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka, 2019), i.e., "the place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers" (Thakor and Kohli, 1996). Decomposing COO into various dimensions enables better understanding of the COE (Josiassen and Assaf, 2010). Based on the means-end-theory, COE is created

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based on knowledge about COO, COO' symbolic and emotional meaning determining brand connotations, and social/personal norms affecting perception of brands from a given country and willingness to buy (Adina *et al*., 2015). Many studies on the COE adopt a one-dimensional (Pecotich and Rosenthal, 2001) instead of multi-dimensional approach to the COO (Hamzaoui-Essoussi *et al.*, 2011), whilst brand personality perceptions vary in terms of both COBO and COM (Fetscherin and Toncar, 2009).

Hamzaoui-Essoussi, *et al.* (2011) state that COBO image positively relates to brand quality and image while COM – on brand quality, not its image. Difference between COM and COBO can act as "a source of ambiguity that reduces consumers' product evaluations" and refer to this consistency/lack of consistency as COO fit (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). A lack of fit between COM-COBO reduces new product evaluations, even when these COO dimensions are equally capable and this effect is moderated by consumer traits (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). The impact of COM and COBO on purchase intentions vary between product categories (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017) and for low-involvement products is lower than for high-involvement ones (Stadelmann and Schubert, 2018).

The COE is one of the key issues considered by companies while choosing the brands they apply in the international market (Hynes *et al*., 2014). In the case of positive COO image, companies may refer to the COO by relying on consumers` ethnocentrism or positive stereotypes attributed to a given country (Aichner, 2014), and when a COO image is negative – neutralise/hide unfavourable associations, e.g. by using brand names suggesting a desired COO (Magnusson *et al*., 2011). So, emerging markets companies can reduce the noise caused by negative COE and increase the effectiveness of its international branding by using brand names associated with a foreign country with a positive image (Magnusson *et al.*, 2011).

Lee (2019) shows that the fit between COBO and brand name "leads to better consumer evaluation of the brand than no fit". The positioning of brands from emerging markets may be focused on referring to the cultural heritage of the home country (Southworth and Ha-Brookshire, 2016) or communication of a western image as a to the preferences of global consumers (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2008). These firms apply following brand types in terms of the COBO (Chailan and Ille, 2015): 1) acquired or licensed, international brand originating from a developed country, 2) „occidental-style" brand created ex-nihilo by the emerging market company, suggesting origin from a developed country, 3) local brand already existing in the home country and referring to the success in the domestic market, and 4) new „local-go-global" brand firmly rooted in the domestic environment ("local" brand name and "western" image).

Socio-demographic characteristics and income are crucial to consumer behaviour (Antonides and van Raaij, 2003). Younger consumers attach more importance to the COO than olders (Khan and Bamber, 2007). Good and Huddleston (1995) argue that

age differentiates consumer behaviour in terms of COO. Moreover, the impact of COO can be moderated by the place of residence (Cui *et al.*, 2014), and consumers' knowledge about the COBO depends on socio-economic status and gender (Samiee *et al.*, 2005). Kaynak and Kara (2000) indicate that less affluent consumers are more ethnocentric and have stronger preferences for domestic brands, whilst according to other studies (Josiassen *et al*., 2010), income does not affect consumers` purchase intentions in terms of the COO/COBO.

Given the above, we hypothesize the following:

H1: "Made-in" label moderates the relationship between brand type in terms of the COBO applied by an emerging market company and consumers` purchase intentions.
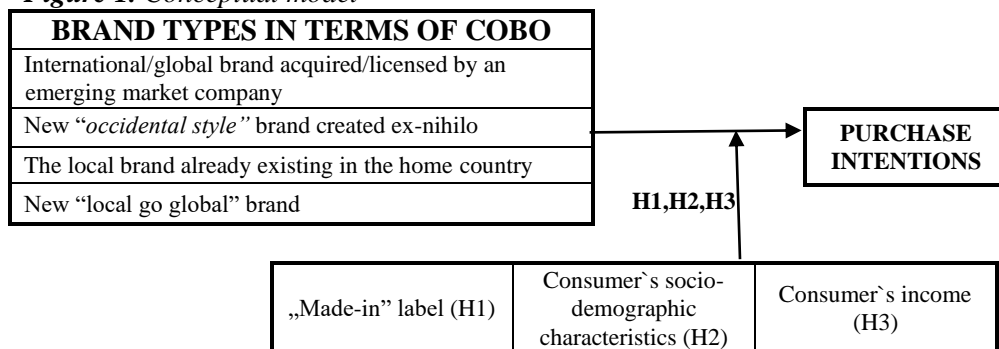*H2: Socio-demographic factors (age, gender, place of residence, educational level, occupational status) moderate the relationship between the brand type in terms of the COBO applied by an emerging market company and consumers` purchase intentions.*
H3: Disposable income per household member moderates the relationship between the brand type in terms of the COBO applied by an emerging market company and consumers` purchase intentions.

3. Research Methodology

On the basis of literature review, a conceptual model was developed (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Conceptual model*

Source: *Own elaboration.*

Authors used CAWI technique. Data was collected in 2019. To verify the hypotheses, an experimental full-profile conjoint analysis and multilevel linear models were used. In conjoint analysis respondents rate product profiles described with multiple attributes. Then evaluations are decomposed into part-worth utilities (Rao, 2014). This method allows to assess purchase intentions as a good indicator of future purchases (Ajzen, 2011), and served as a dependent variable. All estimates

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were made using SPSS (version 24). Durable goods (washing machines) were chosen as companies from emerging markets have increasing market shares within this industry (Applia, 2018), and many consumers know durable goods` brands (Magnusson *et al.*, 2011).

All profiles were described with the following attributes: brand, price, "made-in" label (EU, China, Turkey), spinning efficiency and energy rating (the latter two are specific to describe this product category). All brands represent each brand type in terms of COBO indicated by Chailan and Ille (2015) i.e., 1) international/global brand licensed by a company (Sharp – licensed by a Turkish company), 2) "occidental-style" brands, Amica owned by Polish company and Beko – by Turkish firm), 3) local brand already existing in the home country, Gorenje – (originating from Slovenia, brand of a Chinese company), (4) new "local-go-global" brand (Samsung –South Korea). Bosch, a global brand of western (German) origin was a point of reference due to the effect codding used, with "price" centered (Field, 2009). All 5 attribues and their levels (15) translate into 216 product profiles (6x3x3x2x2 experiment). To reduce them, ORTHOPLAN was applied (Hensher *et al.*, 2005). Respondents rated each profile (verbal description and visualisation) on a scale 1-10, "I would definitely not buy", 10 – "I would definitely buy".

To examine the effect of "made-in" label, socio-demographic characteristics and monthly income, multilevel linear models were applied (Field, 2009). To test their fit to the empirical data (Field, 2009), Pearson`s R and information criteria (AIC, AICC, CAIC, BIC) were examined. Firstly, the model for fixed effects was estimated, then the interactions brand-price, and brand-„made-in" were introduced, next a random intercept and regression coefficients were entered. Finally, interactions between consumers` socio-demographic characteristics and brand, and monthly income per 1 person and brand were introduced to the model described above.

The survey covered 1012 random Poles aged 18-65 (Table 1). Poland is the largest country from the admitted to EU in 2004, and classified till 2019 as an emerging market (MSCI, 2018). The sample structure by gender and age is similar to the representative sample of Poles aged 18-65 (GUS, 2018).

Table 1. *Socio-demographic characteristics of a sample and monthly income*

Characteristics of respondents		Percent
Gender	female	50.1
	male	49.9
Age (years)	18-24	11.2
	25-34	23.6
	35-44	24.7
	45-54	19.8
	55-65	20.7
Size of the place	village	38.1

of residence (number of inhabitants)	up to 49000	22.1
	50000-199000	17.7
	200000 and more	22.1
Educational level	basic or vocational education	9.1
	secondary education	39.5
	in the course of studies	5.6
	master`s degree or equivalent	45.8
Occupational status	permanent employment or working casually	72.9
	unemployed	8.1
	pensioner	12.5
	student	6.5
Monthly income per 1 person (in PLN)	499 and less	3.1
	500-1999	56.8
	2000-3999	33.4
	4000 and more	6.7

Source: *Own elaboration with basis in SPSS analysis.*

4. Results of the Empirical Study

Some variables were statistically insignificant in the initial model of fixed effects: "occidental-style" brand Beko, certain variables describing consumers` socio-demographic characteristics, i.e. "village", "secondary education", "extremely low income" (499 PLN and less) and "student", but they were not removed from further models (they were points of interest and removing them did not positively affect their quality. Subsequently, multilevel linear models based on Pearson`s R and information criteria were estimated/examined. It occurred to be appropriate to add to the model of fixed effects interactions: brand-price and brand-"made-in", randomize the intercept and regression coefficients, and include interactions between moderating variables-brand.

The finally applied model was well fitted to the empirical data (r=0.917), also with regard to the information criteria. As the interactions between most of the brands and "made-in China" were redundant even for the model of fixed effects with interactions between brands-price, and brands-"made-in", it was decided to remain only the statistically significant one – "occidental-style" brand Amica-"made-in China". Consequently, Pearson`s R has increased to 0.246 (previously: 0.241). The model of fixed effects with interactions between variables (all brands-price; all brands-„made-in EU"; "occidental-style" brand Amica and „made-in China"), including random intercept and coefficients, with interactions between all brands-consumers` socio-demographic characteristics, and monthly income, was used to verify the hypotheses (Table 2). In that model, variables for different age groups have been reduced to: "older consumers" (35-65 years) and "younger consumers" (18-34).

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Table 2. *Fixed effects of final multilevel linear model of fixed effects with interactions (all brands-price; all brands-„made-in EU"; Amica-„made-in China"; all brands-all socio-demographical factors; all brands-income), random intercept and coefficients*

Estimates of fixed effects (at p<0,1)[a]			
Parameter	**Estimate**	**Std. error**	**p value**
Intercept	5.530	0.091	0.000
Gorenje	-0.773	0.074	0.000
Amica	-0.156	0.078	0.046
Sharp	-0.506	0.063	0.000
Beko	0.132	0.075	0.078
Samsung	0.578	0.074	0.000
Price	-0.404	0.038	0.000
„Made-in EU"	0.384	0.046	0.000
„Made-in China"	-0.334	0.041	0.000
Energy rating	-0.195	0.026	0.000
Gender	0.173	0.049	0.000
Age	0.301	0.054	0.000
Small-sized city	0.181	0.086	0.035
Basic/vocational education	0.282	0.108	0.009
Rather low income	-0.180	0.081	0.025
Parameter (interactions)	**Estimate**	**Std. error**	**p value**
Amica-„made-in EU"	0.238	0.050	0.000
Sharp-„made-in EU"	-0.106	0.032	0.001
Beko-„made-in EU"	0.130	0.035	0.000
Amica-„made-in China"	-0.189	0.041	0.000
Gorenje-gender	-0.093	0.040	0.019
Amica-gender	-0.086	0.042	0.043
Sharp-gender	-0.111	0.034	0.001
Beko-gender	0.195	0.040	0.000
Gorenje-age	-0.081	0.044	0.066
Sharp-age	-0.155	0.038	0.000
Beko-age	0.259	0.045	0.000
Amica-village	0.140	0.066	0.034
Beko-village	-0.162	0.063	0.010
Beko-small-sized city	0.130	0.071	0.067
Sharp-basic/vocational education	-0.148	0.077	0.055
Sharp-secondary education	0.095	0.052	0.068
Sharp-very low income	0.131	0.072	0.067
Samsung-very low income	-0.167	0.084	0.048
Amica-rather low income	-0.128	0.069	0.063
Beko-rather low income	0.140	0.066	0.033
Sharp-unemployed	-0.255	0.087	0.003

Samsung-unemployed	-0.170	0.101	0.095
Samsung-pensioner	-0.217	0.102	0.033

Note: Dependent variable, purchase intentions.
Source: Own elaboration with basis in SPSS analysis.

Brands that have statistically significant impact on purchase intentions of washing machines are, local brand already existing in the home country Gorenje (-0.773), international brand acquired by an emerging market company Sharp (-0.506), "local-go-global" brand Samsung (0.578), whilst "occidental-style" brand Amica translates into a decrease of purchase intentions (-0.156), and "occidental-style" brand Beko is statistically insignificant.

Respondents prefer products at low prices (-0.404), "made-in EU" (increase of 0.383) with high energy rating (-0.195). If the product is "made-in China", it translates into decrease of purchase intentions (-0.334). At any significance level gender and age are important. Women and young consumers have higher purchase intentions (respectively: 0.173 and 0.301 points) than men and olders (aged 35-65). Those from small-sized cities (0.181), having basic/vocational education (0.282) declare an increase of purchase intentions, while those with rather low incomes – decrease (-0.180).

For brands and "made-in" at any significance level, the following interactions are significant: "occidental-style" brand Amica-"made-in EU", "occidental-style" brand Beko-"made-in EU", and Amica-"made-in China". If the product is labelled Amica brand, produced in EU, purchase intentions increase (0.238), while the production in China causes decrease (-0,198). For "occidental-style" brand Beko, "made-in EU" has a positive impact (0.130). For the international brand acquired by an emerging market company Sharp "made-in" EU results in a decrease in purchase intentions (-0.106).

Considering interactions between brands and gender, for the "occidental-style" brand Beko is significant – women are more likely to buy (0.195) than men. Men also declare an increase of purchase intentions for: local brand already existing in the home country Gorenje (0.093), "occidental-style" brand Amica (0.086) and international brand acquired by an emerging market company Sharp (0.111). For interactions between brands-age, only those for Sharp-"occidental-style" brand Beko are significant.

If the product is labelled with Sharp brand, there is an increase of purchase intentions among consumers aged 35-65 (-0.155), while for "occidental-style" brand Beko there is an increase of purchase intentions (0.259) of young consumers (aged 18-34). Most of the interactions for place of residence-brands are insignificant. Only those for village for "occidental-style" brands – Amica and Beko are significant. Respondents living in a village have higher purchase intentions towards those (increase of purchase intentions of 0.140) than ones labelled Beko (decrease of

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0.162). For the international brand acquired by an emerging market company –Sharp it can be pointed that consumers with basic/vocational education declare a decrease of purchase intentions (-0.148) and those with secondary education – an increase (0.095).

In the case of monthly income, for those with very low income there is a decrease of purchase intentions of products labelled new "local-go-global" brand Samsung (-0.167), whilst those with rather low income declare an increase towards "occidental style" brand Beko (0.140). Considering interactions between occupational status and brand, the one for international brand acquired by emerging market company – Sharp and "unemployed", and for "occidental style" brand Beko and "pensioner" are significant. Unemployed declare a decrease of purchase intentions for international/global brand acquired by an emerging market company – Sharp (0.255 points) and pensioners – decrease for new "local-go-global" brand (Samsung, i.e. 0.217).

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The analysis of interactions "made-in" labels-brand types in terms of the COBO partially supports H1. Respondents prefer washing machines made in EU for „occidental-style" brands (Amica, Beko), and for the international brand acquired by an emerging market company (Sharp) – a decrease. Perhaps Poles are aware of the domestic Amica`s and Turkish Beko`s origin from an emerging market, although Beko communicates as a global one. These brands are identified with a lower quality (Kumar *et al.*, 2009), which may be compensated by the production in EU. It is also confirmed by the lack of preferences towards Amica "made-in China" that probably evokes negative associations (Yunus and Rashid, 2016). For Sharp (Japanese origin), respondents declare lower purchase intentions if it is "made-in" EU.

Although this brand`s image had weakened (as reflected in decreasing market shares; Statista, 2017), they are probably aware of this its origin that may not fit to "made-in" EU. For new „local-go-global" brand (Samsung), interactions brand-„made-in" are insignificant, supporting conclusions that COM is losing its importance for global brands that people trust (Xie *et al.*, 2015). Consumers prefer more products "made-in" EU than those "made-in Turkey" or China, so still the perception of brands originating from developed countries is better than those from emerging ones (Demirbag *et al.* 2010).

The results partially confirm the moderating role of socio-demographic characteristics (H2). Men declare higher purchase intentions for "local brand already existing in the home country" (Gorenje), "occidental-style" (Amica) and international one acquired by an emerging market company (Sharp), whilst women – "occidental-style" (Beko).
These findings cannot be compared to other studies, but according to some authors (Khan and Bamber, 2007), gender has no impact on purchase intentions in terms of

the COO. Older consumers (aged 35-65) prefer international brand acquired by an emerging market company (Sharp) more than youngers (aged 18-34), maybe due to the decrease of that brand`s market share for 2008-2016 (Statista, 2017) and higher awareness among olderers. Older respondents declare also higher purchase intentions towards local brand already existing in the home country (Gorenje), probably due to familiarity with it (presence in Poland since 1970s).

Youngs prefer "occidental-style" brand Beko more than olders which can be a result of its moe appealing "global"communication. Positive purchase intentions of respondents from villages for domestic "occindental-style" brand Amica, and negative for "occidental-style" Beko may result from better knowledge of the domestic brand. In turn, positive purchase intentions of consumer from small-sized cities for products of "occidental-style" brand Beko can be explained by low average income level of villages` and small-sized cities` inhabitants (GUS, 2018) and relatively low prices of these brands compared to others.

Moreover, consumers with basic/vocational education and unemployed have negative preferences towards international brand acquired by an emerging market company – Sharp, whilst those with secondary education have positive ones. These slightly better educated consumers have also higher income and can afford buying washing machine by Sharp. Furthermore, unemployed declare negative preferences for "local-go-global" brand Samsung, and pensioners – towards Samsung. Again, it can be explained by the washing machines` prices and financial constraints.

The financial constraints and average prices of studied brands of washing machines may also explain the interactions between brand types in terms of the COBO and consumers` monthly income per one person. Those with very low income declare decrease of purchase intentions for relatively expensive new "local-go-global" brand Samsung, and those with rather low income for domestic-origin "occidental-style" brand Amica. It may be a result of low quality attributed to Amica and relative high financial risk associated with the purchase. Respondents with rather low income also declare increase of purchase intentions towards "occidental-style" brand Beko, as still financially achievable. Those statistically important interactions for the relationship between income and brand types in terms of the COBO partially confirm H3.

The main contribution of this study is the development of understanding of consumer behaviour with regard to the COBO effect, taking into account the moderating role of "made-in" label, consumer`s socio-demographic characteristics and income, and from the perspective of emerging markets companies as well as with reference to Poland as one of the EU countries. As consumer behaviour in terms of the COO may vary between countries (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017), these findings should not be generalised to other countries or product categories. Furthermore, it is limited to brands originating from 4 emerging markets (Poland, Slovenia, South Korea, Turkey) and 2 developed countries (Germany, Japan).

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Limited number of COO dimensions (COM, COBO) is also a limitation. In further research it would be valuable to compare the results of studies on purchase intentions towards different brand types in terms of the COBO of consumers from various developed and emerging countries, and taking into account also other consumers` characteristics (e.g. psychographic). It would be also worthwhile to include in the studies various product categories, and brands from other emerging markets, and for comparison – those from developed countries.

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