

Examining the Country of Origin (COO) effect on consumer Perceptions and Purchasing Behavior of Mexican Artisanal Products from small business

Introduction

In today's global market, a psychological phenomenon that influences how the consumer marketplace, where consumers have access to a wide range of products that transcend national borders, the country of origin (COO) effect plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing intentions. COO s perceive and evaluate products based on their country's reputation. Factors such as innovation, design, price, prestige, and craftsmanship become key determinants in consumer decision-making (Nagashima, 1970; Roth & Romeo, 1992). Given the rapid growth of the Mexican market and its evolving consumer landscape, understanding the role of COO can empower small businesses to strengthen their brand identity, and enhance consumer's intention to purchase.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the **COO effect** on **consumer attitudes and purchase intentions** toward **traditional Mexican products** in **Mexico and the U.S.**, analyzing how COO influences **product evaluation and buying behavior** across cultures.

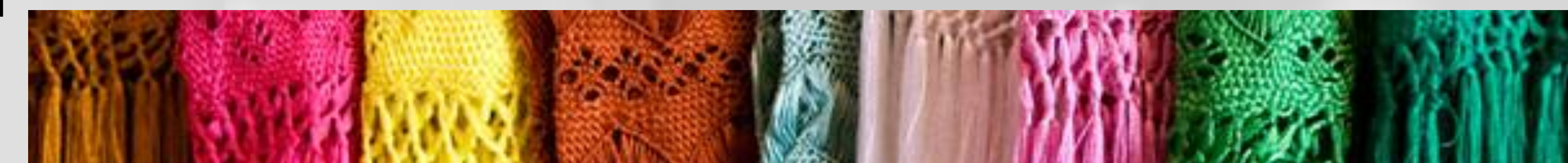
Methodology

This study employs an **online survey** with a **convenience sample of 400 participants** (200 from **Mexico** and 200 from the **U.S.**) to examine consumer perceptions of **traditional Mexican products** (e.g., Talavera pottery, Mezcal, ponchos, and candies).

The survey utilizes **validated scales** to assess key constructs:

- ✓ **COO perceptions** (Roth & Romeo, 1992; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).
- ✓ **Product attributes** (Pappu, et. al, 2006).
- ✓ **Consumer attitudes** (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Batra et al., 2000).
- ✓ **Purchase intentions** (Dodds et. al, 1991; Spears & Singh, 2004).
- ✓ **Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE)** developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987)
- ✓ **Cultural Affinity Scale** (Zhang & Khare, 2009)

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Literature Review

The Country of Origin (COO) effect significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions by shaping perceptions of quality, prestige, and trust. Consumers often use COO as a quality cue, favoring products from countries known for expertise in certain industries (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Han, 1989). Ethnocentric consumers prefer domestic products, while cosmopolitan consumers value global brands (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Alden et al., 1999). COO also impacts brand equity and willingness to pay a premium (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). While globalization is reducing COO effects, it remains a key differentiator in branding and consumer trust-building strategies (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).

Theory & Hypotheses

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and previous literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1:** Consumers will have more positive attitudes toward traditional Mexican products when they perceive Mexico as a country with a favorable image.
- H2:** Perceived product attributes (e.g., authenticity, craftsmanship, quality) will mediate the relationship between COO perceptions and attitudes toward traditional Mexican products
- H3:** Mexican consumers will exhibit higher purchase intentions for traditional Mexican products than U.S. consumers due to their higher ethnocentric tendencies.
- H4:** U.S. consumers with higher levels of familiarity and cultural affinity with Mexican heritage will have more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intentions toward traditional Mexican products.
- H5:** The impact of COO perceptions on purchase intention will be stronger for high-involvement products (e.g., Talavera pottery, Mezcal) than for low-involvement products (e.g., ponchos, candies).

Results

While results are still in progress, initial findings suggest that the Country of Origin (COO) effect significantly influences traditional Mexican products in both Mexico and the United States. This influence is primarily mediated through consumer perceptions and behaviors, including COO perceptions, product attributions, consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, consumer ethnocentrism, and cultural affinity.

Initial trends indicate that COO has a notable impact on product quality perception and consumer decision-making, contingent upon the geographical origin of the product or its brand. Culture, innovation, and prestige play pivotal roles in shaping consumer behavior. Future research may delve into the markets for traditional Mexican products compared to countries other than the United States.

References

