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Product-Country Images in the Arts: Preliminary Findings from an Ongoing Research Program[1]

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted among adult consumers in Canada (n = 203), Italy (n = 165), and Switzerland (n = 208) in which participants' perceptions of sixteen countries as regards their reputation for nine art/culture products were assessed. The results indicate that product-country images in the arts were affected by country and product familiarity, as well as consumers' openness to foreign cultures. In addition, consumers in a given data collection site had a tendency to better evaluate their home country than other consumers. Countries more proximal with the participants' home country on such factors as language, culture, politics, and history were also better evaluated, especially when the proximity factor played a significant role in the consumption of art/culture products.

[1] The authors would like to thank Marco Negrini who collected the data in Italy on which the results of this study are partly based.

INTRODUCTION

There is a substantial body of literature in marketing that is concerned with the impact of a product's country of origin on consumer perceptions (see e.g., Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Numerous studies conducted in several countries for a period of more than forty years have demonstrated consistently that perceptions of global products are shaped by country images and stereotypes. A typical result of this research domain is that products made in less economically developed countries are generally perceived less favourably than those originating from highly industrialized countries (Al-Sulaiti et Baker, 1998). Country-of-origin effects have been observed for products in general as well as for specific product categories. These effects are generally less pronounced when the manufacturing process is simple (e.g., shoes) than when it is complex (e.g., cars) (Ahmed, d'Astous, and Eljabri, 2002) and they have been shown to be moderated by several variables, such as product expertise (Maheswaran, 1994) and preference for domestic products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987).

Many art and cultural products are global products. For instance, movies are produced and distributed in different parts of the world; symphony orchestras, ballet dancing companies, museum expositions, and circuses often go on tour in various countries. Consumer perceptions of global art and cultural products may be influenced by their national origin. However, the country-of-origin literature has focused mainly on tangible products such as cars, TVs, clothing, and the like, and has completely neglected the arts. The objective of this study is therefore to examine the impact that country of origin may have on consumer perceptions of art and cultural products.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

It seems obvious that people make associations between art/culture products and countries. Thus, opera is quite naturally associated with Italy, jazz music with the United States, and theatre with England. These product-country perceptions are rooted in good part into reality but may also be subject to stereotypical perceptions. A great number of studies in marketing have shown that consumers use the overall image of countries in order to make specific inferences about various product characteristics, including quality (see e.g., Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993). It is likely that such stereotypical perceptions also apply to art/culture products.

Stereotypical judgements are quite efficient when consumers' knowledge is limited and when an objective assessment is difficult. For instance, evaluating a new electronic product is likely to be a complex task for someone who does not know anything about electronics. Learning that this new product was fabricated in Japan would be useful in this particular situation given this country's image as a producer of electronic products.

We propose that consumer product-country associations in the arts are influenced by country familiarity as well as by product familiarity. Judgements about a country's reputation in the arts should be more objective when they are based on factual knowledge of the country (Balabanis, Mueller, and Melewar, 2002). Because all countries possess some degree of competency in the arts, consumers who are more familiar with specific countries should evaluate more favourably these countries as producers of art/culture products. In addition, more educated people display a greater openness to other cultures and foreign products (Schooler, 1965). Openness to other cultures and education should logically be positively associated with knowledge about foreign countries and, consequently, country familiarity should lead to more favourable product-country perceptions. Using the same logic, one's degree of openness to foreign cultures should be positively associated with product-country perceptions in the arts.

H_1: The higher the degree of familiarity with a country, the more favourable the evaluation of that country with respect to art/culture products.

H_2: The higher the degree of interest in the people, the customs, and the culture of other countries, the more favourable the product/country evaluations.

The impact of art/culture product familiarity on product-country perceptions may however be less consistent because consumer familiarity with a given type of art/culture product is not necessarily global and generalized. For instance, it can be restricted to very specific art content domains (e.g., nineteenth-century classical music) and to one (e.g., Japanese comic strips) or a few countries (e.g., French literature). Thus, although a general positive impact of familiarity with art/culture products on product-country perceptions is predicted (see also Okechuku, 1994), this impact is expected to be less consistent than in the case of country familiarity.

H_3: The higher the degree of familiarity with an art/culture product, the more favourable the evaluation of countries as regards this product.

Many studies have shown that consumers tend to perceive their country's products more favourably than do consumers in different countries (e.g., Elliott and Cameron, 1994). However, this home-country bias does not imply that consumers prefer products that are made in their own country (Papadopoulos, Heslop, and Bamossy, 1991). For instance, although Canadians could perceive to a greater extent than people from other countries that Canada has a good reputation as regards say, the construction of automobiles, Canadians should be nevertheless inclined to think that Japanese cars are better. According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), there exists a general tendency by American consumers, that they called "consumer ethnocentrism", to question the legitimacy of buying foreign products. We predict that a home country bias exists in the case of art/culture products as well. This bias may be in part explained by the country familiarity effect discussed above, i.e., in general consumers should know more about their home country than consumers from other countries. In addition, one can argue that art/culture products reflect to a great extent a country's culture and people. Therefore, evaluating one's country as regards art/culture products is equivalent in some way to make an evaluative judgement about oneself.

H_4: There is a generalized home country bias, i.e., in general product-country perceptions of home countries are more positive when they are made by residents.

In general, consumers should know more about countries with which they have some particular relationships, whether these relationships are based on geographical proximity, common history, shared values, political or economic ties. As discussed above, this greater country familiarity should lead to more favourable product-country perceptions. One can also see this as a corollary of the home country bias inasmuch as proximal countries are likely to be perceived as more similar to the home country.

H_5: Evaluations of countries are more favourable when they share a common language, a common history, and have cultural, political, and economic ties.

The proximal country effect is a generalized closeness effect. This effect should be stronger when the dimension on which it is based is relevant to the product-country judgements that are made. For instance, the perception of a country with respect to some political dimension should be affected more by country similarity on political issues than by say, geographical proximity. Therefore, when judging the reputation of a country as regard a given art/culture product, the

country proximity effect should be more important if proximity is founded on a dimension that is relevant to the product. One such dimension is language. All other things being equal, product-country perceptions related to art/culture products for which language plays a significant role in the consumption process – like comic strip books, novels, and theatre – should be influenced by the existence of a common language.

H_6: The impact of a shared language on product-country perceptions is more important when language plays a significant role in the evaluation of an art/culture product (i.e., comic strip books, novels, theatre).

METHOD

To test the research hypotheses, a survey was conducted with adult consumers in French-Canada (n = 203), in Italy (n = 165), and in Switzerland (n = 208). The same data collection procedure was used in each country. Streets were randomly selected in some cities and interviewers knocked on the door of every two dwellings to obtain the residents' participation. After giving appropriate instructions, a convenient moment was agreed upon to pick up the questionnaire. Special efforts were made to convince male consumers to participate. The Canadian data were collected in Laval, a large city located north of Montréal in the French-speaking province of Québec; the Italian data were collected in Milan; and in Switzerland the data were collected in French-speaking suburbans of the city of Neuchâtel. Table 1 presents the response rate information for each data collection site.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Measures and Product-Country Stimuli

A questionnaire was developed and pre-tested with a convenient sample of 10 French-Canadian adult consumers. In the first section of this questionnaire, sixteen countries, namely France, the United States, Italy, China, Switzerland, Mexico, Belgium, Canada, Morocco, Austria, South Korea, England, Russia, Japan, Brazil, and Australia, had to be evaluated as regards their reputation as producers of various art and cultural products. These perceptions were measured with the help of a nine-point bipolar numeric scale with anchor points *no reputation at all/very good reputation*. A total of nine art and cultural products were selected as stimuli for gathering

consumer perceptions: theatre, opera, classical music, art museums, action and adventure movies, novels, comic strip books, classical ballet, and jazz music.

The selection of country and product stimuli was guided by several considerations. It was deemed important to choose countries from various parts of the world and with different levels of economic development in order to make comparisons with the existing literature on country-of-origin effects. In addition, countries in which a data collection was planned (i.e., Canada, Italy, Switzerland, and Australia) were included in the stimulus set in order to verify if the home country bias which is sometimes observed in country-of-origin studies would show up in the case of art and cultural products.

The set of art/culture product stimuli was defined on the basis of four main criteria. Firstly, for the purpose of generalization, the stimuli had to cover a wide range of art and cultural products. Secondly, they had to evoke a sufficient level of familiarity so that consumers with different backgrounds in art and cultural matters would be able to give their opinion with a minimum of difficulty. Thirdly, the association of the product stimuli with the chosen countries had to show some variance in order to allow the emergence of country-of-origin effects. For example, countries like South Korea and Morocco would *a priori* be perceived as having a lower reputation for opera than Italy. Finally, it was important to limit the number of art and cultural products to attenuate as much as possible the burden associated with completing a rather long questionnaire.

In the second section of the questionnaire, the product and country stimuli had to be rated with respect to the respondent's knowledge (*do not know at all/know very well*) and interest (*no interest at all/a great deal of interest*) using nine-point bipolar numeric scales. The third section of the questionnaire contained two additive scales. The first was a ten-item scale to assess the respondent's involvement with arts and culture in general. The scale was adapted from the well-known involvement scale developed by Zaichkowsky (1985). The second was a scale developed by Sharma, Shimp, and Shin (1995) to measure a person's cultural openness, i.e., one's interest in the people, the customs, and the culture of other countries. The scale comprises seven items for which the respondent had to indicate his or her level of agreement (*strongly disagree/strongly agree*) on nine-point bipolar numeric scales. The last section of the questionnaire contained questions to assess the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, occupation,

family income, and education). The original questionnaire was translated in Italian and adapted (e.g., socio-demographics) to fit the country in which the data were collected.

RESULTS

Description of the Samples

The total sample comprises an almost equal number of male (50.1%) and female (49.9%) respondents. There was no statistically significant difference between countries with respect to gender. However, several differences were observed with other socio-demographic variables. Thus, participants are younger in Switzerland (mean = 34.96) than in Canada (mean = 41.76) and in Italy (mean = 42.20) ($F = 16.15$, $p < 0.001$; eta squared = 0.06). As regards the education level, statistically significant differences between data collection sites were observed (Chi-square = 46.92, $p < 0.001$; Cramer' $V = 0.20$): there are more participants with a university education in Canada (44.5%) than in Italy (27.3%) and in Switzerland (27.7%); more people who are less educated (primary and secondary school) in Italy (33.3%) than in Canada (20%) and in Switzerland (16.5%); more college educated participants in Switzerland (55.8%) than in Canada (35.5%) and in Italy (39.4%). Therefore, the overall education level is higher in Canada, followed by Switzerland and Italy, in that order.

Occupation was roughly coded in seven categories: employee, housewife, manager, professional, student, retired, other. There were significant differences between data collection sites on this variable (Chi-square = 120.24, $p < 0.001$; Cramer's $V = 0.33$): more students in Switzerland (21.9%) than in Canada (7.3%) and Italy (12.1%); more employees in Switzerland (49.5%) than in Canada (18,2%) and in Italy (28.5%); more managers in Canada (14.1%) than in Switzerland (4.6%) and in Italy (4.8%); more professionals in Canada (28.1%) than in Switzerland (12.2%) and in Italy (12.7%).

In order to make meaningful comparisons on household income, the income scales were recoded in three classes: low, medium, and high. Statistical differences between data collection sites were observed with respect to this variable (Chi-square = 47.25, $p < 0.001$; Cramer's $V = 0.21$). In general, the household income level followed the pattern of education: higher in Canada, followed by Switzerland, and Italy, in that order.

Overall then, Italian respondents are less educated and have less financial resources, consumers in Switzerland are younger and more likely to be students, and Canadians are more likely to be professionals and managers.

Product/Country Perceptions across Data Collection Sites

The product/country perceptions were analyzed using repeated-measure analyses of variance. More specifically, for each art/cultural product, the perceptions were analyzed as a function of countries (16 levels – within-subject factor) and data collection site (3 levels – between-subject factor). In all cases, the country × site interaction was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating that the pattern of perceived country differences was not the same across data collection sites. In all cases, the main effect of country and data collection site was significant at $p < 0.001$.

Table 2 presents some partial results from the analyses of variance. The table shows the mean perceptions of the two most positively as well as the worst evaluated countries across all art/culture products. Some preliminary observations can be made from this table. Firstly, although the pattern of product/country evaluations differed significantly across data collection sites, there appears to be some overall consistency in consumer judgements. Thus, for "high art" products such as classical music, opera, museum, and classical ballet, France and Italy were consistently rated very favourably. For "popular art" products such as action movies and jazz, the United States received the best evaluation in the three samples. Therefore, one tentative conclusion based on these results is that the differences in product/country perceptions between data collection sites are not large. Secondly, as can be seen in the table, two countries consistently received the worst evaluations across all art/culture products: Morocco and South Korea. It is interesting to note Morocco was evaluated as the worst country more often in Italy (7 times out of 9) and in Switzerland (6 times out of 9) than in Canada (3 times out of 9). The average mean evaluation of Morocco was also slightly higher in the Canadian sample. This suggests that even though Canadian consumers did not evaluate favourably Morocco as an art/culture country (within the context of these products, obviously), their evaluations were less extreme. Thirdly, it is worth noting that Italy was evaluated best or second best 4 times by the Canadians, 9 times by the Italians, and 5 times by the Swiss. This result indicates that Italians tended to evaluate their country more favourably than the other participants.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

In general, country evaluations were more favourable in the Canadian sample than in the other samples. The differences in country favourability in the Canadian sample might be due to differences in openness to foreign cultures (OFC) across the three data collection sites. A principal components analysis conducted on the OFC items, for the total sample as well as for each sample separately, revealed that a single factor explained a good proportion of the item variance (total sample: 68.81%; Canada: 65.27%; Italy: 73.91%; Switzerland: 69.74%), implying that the scale was unidimensional. The mean of the items was therefore computed to serve as the indicator of the OFC construct. The reliability of the scale was high in the total sample (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93) as well as in each sample (Canada: 0.91; Italy: 0.94; Switzerland: 0.93). A one-way analysis of variance using the OFC indicator as a dependent variable and data collection site as the independent factor showed that OFC was lower in Italy (mean = 6.78) than in Switzerland (mean = 7.30) and in Canada (mean = 7.51) (F= 5.51, $p < 0.001$), giving some credence to the proposed explanation.

Test of H_1

This hypothesis proposes that product-country evaluations are influenced positively by country familiarity. The hypothesis was tested by computing the correlation between country familiarity and each product evaluation for this specific country. For instance, the familiarity with France was correlated with the perceived reputation of France as regards theatre, opera, classical music, etc. This was repeated for all sixteen countries. Table 3 displays the results of these analyses. In addition to showing all correlations, the table presents the mean correlation computed across all 9 art/culture products and across all countries. As can be seen, all significant correlations were positive. Significant correlations ranged from 0.08 (Italy-opera) to 0.49 (Canada-novels). In general, the hypothesis is well supported given that 137 of 144 correlations were positive and statistically significant. No systematic pattern appears to exist between the strength of the correlation and the degree of familiarity with either the country or the art/cultural product as both correlations were not statistically significant.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Test of H_2

This second hypothesis predicts an overall effect of openness to foreign cultures on product-country evaluations. To test this hypothesis, consumers' country evaluations were averaged over art/culture products. This resulted in an overall evaluative rating for each country. The openness to foreign countries score was correlated with this index. The 16 correlations were all positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), ranging from 0.17 (Italy, Russia) to 0.37 (France) with an overall average correlation of 0.23.

Test of H_3

This hypothesis proposes that product-country perceptions are influenced positively by product familiarity. However, because art/culture product knowledge may be local or associated with a few countries, it was expected that this impact would be less consistent. The hypothesis was tested by computing the correlation between product familiarity and each country evaluation for this specific product. For instance, the familiarity with theatre was correlated with the perceived reputation of France, the United States, Italy, etc. as regards theatre. Table 4 presents the results of these analyses. As can be seen, all significant correlations were positive. Significant correlations ranged from 0.10 (Italy-opera) to 0.31 (Russia-novels). A total of 115 correlations out of 144 were positive and statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of product familiarity is less consistent than that of country familiarity. Most non-significant correlations were observed with action movies and comic strip books.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Test of H_4

This hypothesis concerns the existence of a generalized home country bias. The hypothesis was tested by looking at product/country differences for Canada, Italy, and Switzerland across the three data collection sites. For instance, in order to explore the possibility of a home country bias by Canadians as regards theatre, the mean theatre/Canada evaluations should be compared across the three samples. The observation of a higher mean evaluation in the Canadian sample would be consistent with a home country bias.

Firstly, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted in order to verify that there were statistically significant differences between data collection sites with respect to how each country

was perceived in relation with the entire set of art/culture products. In this analysis, the evaluative judgements on all art/culture products constituted the vector of dependent variables and the data collection site was the independent variable (3 levels). Three analyses were conducted, i.e., one for each country. The results indicated that there were reliable ($p < 0.001$) mean differences between the sites in all three cases. Therefore, these multivariate analyses were followed-up by univariate analyses of variance where the data site differences were examined for each art/culture product separately.

The results are displayed in Table 5. The table contains (1) the mean evaluation of the three countries as regards each art/culture product across the different data collection sites, (2) the results of the omnibus F tests for mean differences, and (3) the results of contrasts between the mean in the home country sample and the combined means in the other two samples. For instance, it can be seen that the Canadians gave a better evaluation of Canada as regards theatre (mean = 6.50) than the Italians (mean = 3.09) and the Swiss (mean = 4.55). The F statistic (35.71) indicates that the means are statistically significant. In addition, the difference between the Canadian mean evaluation and that of the other samples is positive (mean contrast = 2.70) and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ in this particular case). To facilitate the interpretation of the results, the largest mean in each product/country row of the table is presented in bold characters.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The results presented in Table 5 are generally consistent with a home country bias, especially in the Canadian and Italian samples. For all art/culture products, except opera and art museums, it can be seen that the Canadians and the Italians rated their own country more favourably than did the respondents in the other two countries. The non observation of a home country bias by Italian consumers in the case of opera and art museums appears to have been caused by a ceiling effect. In the Switzerland sample, the results were less supportive of a home country bias. The Swiss rated their own country more favourably than did the respondents in the other countries for six products: theatre, classical music, art museums, novels, comic strips, and jazz. The mean differences were not statistically significant in the case of opera and classical ballet. As for action movies, their home country evaluations were less positive.

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that the home country bias depends on the type of art/culture product for which an evaluative judgement of the country is made. The strongest home country biases were observed with theatre, novels, comic strips, and jazz. When there are strong product/country associations in consumers' mind, as in the case of classical music, opera, art museums, and classical ballet, the home country bias is clearly attenuated.

Test of H_5

This research hypothesis predicts that product-country evaluations will be more favourable when they concern a country which is associated with the respondent's home country on such dimensions as language, history, culture, politics, and economics. A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using the 16 country evaluative measures averaged over art/culture products as the dependent variable vector and data collection site as the independent variable. The results of this analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.001$) of data collection site. Follow-up univariate analyses of variance indicated that all mean differences were statistically significant, except in the case of Austria.

Figure 1 displays the plot of the country mean in each data collection site. As expected, a home country bias was observed in the evaluation of Canada, Italy and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland. It can be seen that countries in which the French language is used (i.e., France, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, Morocco) were generally better evaluated by the Canadians and the Swiss (all contrast significant at $p < 0.001$). The only exception is Morocco which received better evaluations from the Canadians only. The evaluation of the U.S. and Mexico was higher in the Canadian sample than in the other samples ($p < 0.001$). This may be explained by the geographical proximity of the U.S. and Canada and the economic ties (i.e., NAFTA) between the three countries. England and Australia received a better evaluation by the Canadians ($p < 0.001$). Australia, Canada and England are members of the Commonwealth and share a common language. Therefore, these results provide strong support for the hypothesis.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Test of H_6

This research hypothesis proposes that shared language is a feature that impacts positively on product-country perceptions and that this is the case particularly when language plays a significant role in the evaluation of an art/culture product, i.e., for comic strip books, novels, and theatre. To test this hypothesis, the evaluation of countries in which the French language is used (i.e., Belgium, Canada, France, Morocco, and Switzerland) were averaged and the resulting average evaluations were compared across art/culture products and data collection sites. The results are presented in Table 6. As expected, the evaluations were generally more favourable in Canada and in Switzerland than in Italy. Using the magnitude of the *F* and eta squared statistics, the largest mean difference was associated with comic strips, followed by novels, theatre, classical music, art museums, classical ballet, opera, action movies, and jazz, in that order. These results provide only partial support for the hypothesis because, although the largest differences among data collection sites were obtained with comic strips, novels, and theatre, important differences were also observed with other art/culture products.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

An additional analysis was conducted to further test the hypothesis. The French-language country evaluations were averaged across comic strips, novels, and theatre to create an overall evaluative product/country index of relevance to language. Another index was created using the same countries with all the other products. Therefore, the first index represents respondents' evaluations of French-speaking countries as regards art/culture products for which language plays a significant role whereas the other index represents their evaluations of the same countries as regards all other products. A mixed-design analysis of variance using these indices as a two-level within-subject factor and data collection site as a between-subject factor was conducted. The results revealed a statistically significant interaction ($F = 71.66$, $p < 0.001$) as well as a statistically significant main effect of the index ($F = 182.51$, $p < 0.001$) and data collection ($F = 88.58$, $p < 0.001$) factors. The interaction means are displayed in Figure 2. As can be seen, the evaluation of French-speaking countries was more positive in Canada and in Switzerland than in Italy, which is consistent with H_5. But the most relevant results concern the pattern of evaluations in each data collection site. In support of H_6, in Canada and in Switzerland, the evaluation of French-speaking countries was more favourable in the case of products for which language plays

a role in the evaluation process than in the case of other art/culture products. This was not observed in the Italian sample.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that consumers' perceptions of countries with respect to art/culture products are fairly consistent across three different data collection sites, but are nonetheless shaped by consumers' subjective knowledge about countries and art/culture products, their openness to foreign cultures, as well as their nationality. Thus, product-country images in the arts are positively influenced by the degree of familiarity with countries. One explanation for this result is that as familiarity with a country increases, consumer judgements become more objective (Balabanis, Mueller, and Melewar, 2002). This greater objectivity would in turn lead to a better capacity to perceive the true merits of the country with respect to arts and culture. It may also be possible that countries which are more familiar are also better liked and that this overall liking extends to such positive abstract quality as having a good reputation as regards arts/culture products. It is difficult to distinguish between these two explanations on the basis of cross-sectional data. From the point of view of the organisations involved in the promotion of their country's art/culture products (e.g., ministries of tourism and recreation), the positive relationship between general country familiarity and product-country image in the arts suggests that promotional/educational programs targeted to non-residents are susceptible to have a positive impact on the country's art/culture image, even though they do not focus specifically on art/culture products per se.

Country images are formed partly through the consumption of products. For instance, the reputation of the United States as an "opera" country may be enhanced by the presence of American opera singers on the international scene, by the diffusion of opera performances (e.g., the Metropolitan opera radio broadcasts), and by the sales of compact discs. A country's reputation in the arts may therefore be increased by systematically associating art/culture products with their national origin. This can be done with art/culture products as well as with conventional products, using some branding alliance strategies. For instance, Sweden's reputation in folkloric music could be promoted on the package of IKEA products and in IKEA stores

around the world. Such alliances between tourism organizations, global firms, and promoters of art/culture products deserve to be studied.

The results of this study have to be evaluated in light of some important methodological limitations. Firstly, the art/culture products that were used as stimuli were very broad. This may have led to different interpretation from the survey participants. For instance, classical music refers to categories of music which are quite different (baroque, contemporary, chamber music, symphonic music, etc.) as well as to diverse perceptual dimensions (e.g., composers, performers). Depending on how one interprets the term "classical music", product-country perceptions may change significantly. Thus, although South Korea may be perceived as having a poor reputation as regards classical music composers, this country has produced some of the best performers of classical music. Future studies in this area should therefore consider the possibility of using better defined art/culture product stimuli within a reduced number of categories.

Secondly, the art/culture product stimuli used in this study were mostly relevant to Western countries. It seems clear that product-country perceptions would have been different had we used casbah dancing (Morocco), belly dancing (Middle East, Africa), Beijing opera (China), and other art/culture products typically associated with non-Western countries. Choosing product stimuli in a study like this, involving a multi-country data collection, is not an easy task and is bound to be the object of severe and justified criticism. It should be noted however that the main objective of this study was not to position countries on their reputation as regards the selected art/culture products – although we recognize that this is an obvious outcome of the data analysis – but to explore the variables that explain how consumers form their perceptions of countries as producers of art/culture products. From this point of view, it remains to be demonstrated that the effects that were uncovered in this study (e.g., home country bias, country proximity-based judgements) would change in any way with a different set of stimuli. Future studies should examine more attentively the product stimulus set issue within the perspective of producing results that contribute to useful and generalizable knowledge about product-country images in the arts.

Thirdly, the data collected in this study came from only three data collection sites and concerned a limited number of art/culture products and countries. In addition, the cities in which the data were collected were chosen by convenience. Therefore, one should be cautious in attempting to generalize the results of this study across consumers and art/culture products. More research is

needed on how consumers perceive countries in the context of the arts. Further research in this area ought to be conducted with better samples as well as more relevant product-country stimuli. In particular, it would be relevant to collect data in countries having received less favourable evaluations in the present study (Mexico, Morocco, South Korea) in order to verify if there exist some Western Countries/other countries differences in product-image perceptions in the arts.

CONCLUSION

The study of product-country images in the arts has been largely ignored by researchers. It is therefore an area which is rich in research opportunities. Researchers interested in this domain should benefit from the vast research literature which concerns country-of-origin effects on consumer product evaluations (see e.g., Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998). One research direction suggested by this literature is the study of how consumers react to products with multiple national origins. As markets are globalizing, products are often associated with more than one country-of-origin. Thus, a product can be designed in one country, assembled in another with components sourced in yet another country (see d'Astous and Ahmed, 1995). Research has shown that the perceived competency of countries varies significantly as a function of these different processes. Multi-origin products also exist in the context of the arts. For instance, a concert may involve a South-Korean symphonic orchestra interpreting some classical music French repertoire at Carnegie Hall. Or, a play from an American author may be performed by an Italian cast in some Australian city. How do consumers perceive multi-origin art/culture products? Are consumer perceptions and eventually their consumption experience affected by country stereotypes? Research should be undertaken to provide satisfactory answers to these and other questions which are relevant to our understanding of consumer behaviour in the context of the arts.

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Table 1. Response Rate Information

	Canada	Italy	Switzerland
Number of visited dwellings	1001	330	414
Number of contacts	691	250	322
Contact rate	69.1%	75.8%	77.8%
Number of refusals	472	0	80
Acceptance rate	32.7%	100.0%	75.2%
Number of distributed questionnaires	219	250	242
Number of questionnaires picked up	205	226	209
Number of unusable questionnaires	2	71	1
Number of usable questionnaires	203	165	208
Response rate	92.7%	66.0%	86.0%

Table 2. Product/Country Perceptions Across Data Collection Sites[1]

	Country Perceptions in Canada (minimum n = 180)			Country Perceptions in Italy (minimum n = 165)			Country Perceptions in Switzerland (minimum n = 191)		
Cultural Products	**Best Country**	**Second Best Country**	**Worst Country**	**Best Country**	**Second Best Country**	**Worst Country**	**Best Country**	**Second Best Country**	**Worst Country**
Theatre	France (7.47, 0.14)	England (7.03, 0.16)	South Korea (3.04, 0.14)	Italy (7.73, 0.13)	England (6.59, 0.17)	Morocco (2.16, 0.15)	France (7.90, 0.12)	Italy (6.73, 0.13)	South Korea (2.60, 0.11)
Opera	Italy (8.30, 0.09)	France (6.59, 0.16)	Morocco (2.85, 0.12)	Italy (8.22, 0.09)	France (6.18, 0.17)	Morocco (2.07, 0.13)	Italy (8.29, 0.09)	France (6.54, 0.15)	Morocco (2.10, 0.12)
Classical music	Italy (7.77, 0.10)	France (7.17, 0.14)	Morocco (3.03, 0.13)	Italy (8.25, 0.11)	Austria (6.81, 0.19)	Morocco (2.03, 0.14)	Italy (7.56, 0.11)	Austria (7.21, 0.18)	Morocco (2.12, 0.12)
Art museums	France (8.52, 0.07)	Italy (8.28, 0.07)	South Korea (3.40, 0.14)	Italy (8.55, 0.08)	France (8.36, 0.08)	South Korea (2.50, 0.15)	France (8.29, 0.08)	Italy (7.75, 0.09)	Morocco (2.61, 0.14)
Action movies	United States (8.70, 0.07)	England (5.67, 0.16)	South Korea (2.95, 0.13)	United States (8.56, 0.08)	Italy (5.58, 0.16)	Morocco (2.26, 0.14)	United States (8.72, 0.07)	France (6.35, 0.14)	Morocco (2.01, 0.12)
Novels	France (8.06, 0.11)	United States (7.92, 0.13)	South Korea (2.94, 0.14)	Italy (7.80, 0.14)	France (7.52, 0.12)	South Korea (2.32, 0.15)	France (8.28, 0.10)	United States (7.32, 0.13)	South Korea (2.15, 0.13)
Comic strip books	United States (7.80, 0.13)	France (7.45, 0.17)	Morocco (2.82, 0.12)	United States (7.70, 0.13)	Italy (7.05, 0.16)	Morocco (1.99, 0.13)	France (7.50, 0.15)	Belgium (7.40, 0.31)	Mexico (2.28, 0.15)
Classical ballet	France (7.51, 0.12)	Italy (6.72, 0.13)	South Korea (2.95, 0.15)	Italy (8.05, 0.14)	France (7.65, 0.12)	Morocco (2.35, 0.15)	France (7.26, 0.12)	Italy (6.88, 0.14)	Morocco (2.02, 0.13)
Jazz	United States (8.51, 0.11)	Canada (6.88, 0.16)	South Korea (2.23, 0.12)	United States (7.96, 0.12)	Italy (5.39, 0.17)	Morocco (1.86, 0.13)	United States (8.32, 0.11)	France (5.56, 0.16)	Morocco (1.67, 0.11)

1 All mean differences in country perceptions (including all countries) are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. The moderating role of data collection site is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ in all analyses.

Table 3. Correlations of Country Familiarity with Product/Country Perceptions[1]

Familiarity with:	Country evaluation as regards:									
	Theatre (4.67)	**Opera** (3.47)	**Classical music** (4.69)	**Art museums** (5.21)	**Action movies** (6.43)	**Novels** (5.83)	**Comic strip books** (5.31)	**Classical ballet** (3.32)	**Jazz** 3.91)	**Mean**
France (6.40)	0.29[a]	0.14[a]	0.17[a]	0.13[b]	0.17[a]	0.28[a]	0.21[a]	0.18[a]	0.17[a]	0.19
United States (5.66)	0.24[a]	0.07[ns]	0.12[b]	0.11[b]	0.14[a]	0.18[a]	0.15[a]	0.11[b]	0.18[a]	0.14
Italy (6.07)	0.28[a]	0.08[c]	0.20[a]	0.19[a]	0.13[b]	0.36[a]	0.35[a]	0.29[a]	0.26[a]	0.24
China (2.85)	0.21[a]	0.26[a]	0.25[a]	0.24[a]	0.18[a]	0.25[a]	0.22[a]	0.21[a]	0.27[a]	0.23
Switzerland (2.68)	0.27[a]	0.10[c]	0.08[ns]	0.31[a]	-0.02[ns]	0.26[a]	0.33[a]	0.08[ns]	0.26[a]	0.19
Mexico (3.36)	0.28[a]	0.25[a]	0.22[a]	0.40[a]	0.21[a]	0.27[a]	0.24[a]	0.20[a]	0.28[a]	0.26
Belgium (3.58)	0.30[a]	0.27[a]	0.23[a]	0.32[a]	0.25[a]	0.25[a]	0.15[a]	0.32[a]	0.30[a]	0.27
Canada (5.00)	0.28[a]	0.41[a]	0.44[a]	0.45[a]	0.38[a]	0.49[a]	0.44[a]	0.48[a]	0.31[a]	0.41
Morocco (2.80)	0.26[a]	0.17[a]	0.21[a]	0.22[a]	0.28[a]	0.29[a]	0.21[a]	0.24[a]	0.22[a]	0.23
Austria (3.50)	0.32[a]	0.22[a]	0.24[a]	0.26[a]	0.24[a]	0.28[a]	0.18[a]	0.28[a]	0.26[a]	0.25
South Korea (1.92)	0.25[a]	0.27[a]	0.26[a]	0.32[a]	0.21[a]	0.33[a]	0.30[a]	0.23[a]	0.31[a]	0.28
England (4.95)	0.22[a]	0.05[ns]	0.15[a]	0.21[a]	0.09[c]	0.14[a]	0.05[ns]	0.06[ns]	0.08[c]	0.12
Russia (3.43)	0.24[a]	0.16[a]	0.17[a]	0.25[a]	0.08[c]	0.29[a]	0.13[b]	0.17[a]	0.22[a]	0.19
Japan (2.94)	0.27[a]	0.28[a]	0.26[a]	0.27[a]	0.18[a]	0.25[a]	0.23[a]	0.16[a]	0.26[a]	0.24
Brazil (2.99)	0.17[a]	0.21[a]	0.24[a]	0.29[a]	0.19[a]	0.30[a]	0.19[a]	0.13[a]	0.20[a]	0.21
Australia (3.12)	0.28[a]	0.20[a]	0.22[a]	0.29[a]	0.20[a]	0.25[a]	0.22[a]	0.23[a]	0.23[a]	0.24
Mean	0.26	0.20	0.22	0.27	0.18	0.28	0.23	0.21	0.24	

1 Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. The mean product and country familiarity are presented within parentheses.

Significance levels: a: $p < 0.001$; b: $p < 0.01$; c: $p < 0.05$; ns: not statistically significant.

Table 4. Correlations of Product Familiarity with Product/Country Perceptions[1]

Product/country evaluation:	Familiarity with:									
	Theatre (4.67)	**Opera** (3.47)	**Classical music** (4.69)	**Art museums** (5.21)	**Action movies** (6.43)	**Novels** (5.83)	**Comic strip books** (5.31)	**Classical ballet** (3.32)	**Jazz** 3.91)	**Mean**
France (6.40)	0.13[b]	0.13[b]	0.20[a]	0.23[a]	0.05[ns]	0.17[a]	0.20[a]	0.25[a]	0.21[a]	0.17
United States (5.66)	0.05[ns]	0.15[a]	0.18[a]	0.20[a]	0.21[a]	0.24[a]	0.02[ns]	0.25[a]	0.27[a]	0.17
Italy (6.07)	0.02[ns]	0.10[c]	0.01[ns]	0.21[a]	0.00[ns]	0.04[ns]	0.05[ns]	0.17[a]	0.14[a]	0.08
China (2.85)	0.12[b]	0.19[a]	0.22[a]	0.07[ns]	0.12[b]	0.13[b]	0.04[ns]	0.22[a]	0.17[a]	0.14
Switzerland (2.68)	0.11[b]	0.17[a]	0.26[a]	0.16[a]	0.04[ns]	0.19[a]	0.13[b]	0.20[a]	0.17[a]	0.16
Mexico (3.36)	0.17[a]	0.22[a]	0.20[a]	0.23[a]	0.01[ns]	0.19[a]	0.01[ns]	0.26[a]	0.22[a]	0.17
Belgium (3.58)	0.16[a]	0.23[a]	0.24[a]	0.21[a]	-0.02[ns]	0.12[b]	0.16[a]	0.22[a]	0.22[a]	0.17
Canada (5.00)	0.10[c]	0.21[a]	0.26[a]	0.10[c]	0.15[a]	0.22[a]	0.07[ns]	0.24[a]	0.25[a]	0.18
Morocco (2.80)	0.15[a]	0.19[a]	0.15[a]	0.08[c]	0.01[ns]	0.17[a]	0.00[ns]	0.22[a]	0.22[a]	0.13
Austria (3.50)	0.12[b]	0.18[a]	0.17[a]	0.21[a]	-0.02[ns]	0.20[a]	-0.04[ns]	0.20[a]	0.19[a]	0.13
South Korea (1.92)	0.12[b]	0.22[a]	0.17[a]	0.11[a]	0.00[ns]	0.10[c]	-0.06[ns]	0.16[a]	0.17[a]	0.11
England (4.95)	0.14[a]	0.18[a]	0.26[a]	0.28[a]	0.02[ns]	0.26[a]	0.03[ns]	0.29[a]	0.23[c]	0.19
Russia (3.43)	0.11[c]	0.23[a]	0.18[a]	0.31[a]	-0.02[ns]	0.18[a]	-0.01[ns]	0.21[a]	0.15[a]	0.15
Japan (2.94)	0.11[b]	0.25[a]	0.19[a]	0.18[a]	0.09[c]	0.12[a]	0.05[ns]	0.18[a]	0.17[a]	0.15
Brazil (2.99)	0.17[a]	0.27[a]	0.22[a]	0.17[a]	-0.02[ns]	0.16[a]	-0.01[ns]	0.24[a]	0.21[a]	0.16
Australia (3.12)	0.13[b]	0.15[a]	0.18[a]	0.18[a]	0.07[ns]	0.17[a]	-0.01[ns]	0.23[a]	0.19[a]	0.14
Mean	0.12	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.04	0.17	0.04	0.22	0.20	

1 Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. The mean product and country familiarity are presented within parentheses.

Significance levels: a: $p < 0.001$; b: $p < 0.01$; c: $p < 0.05$; ns: not statistically significant.

Table 5. Home Country Evaluation Differences across Data Collection Sites

	Data collection site:			*F* statistic[1]	Home country contrast[2]
	Canada	**Italy**	**Switzerland**		
Theatre					
Canada	**6.50**	3.09	4.55	35.71[a]	2.70[a]
Italy	6.57	**7.73**	6.77	20.01[a]	1.06[a]
Switzerland	4.15	2.91	**4.83**	46.01[a]	1.30[a]
Opera					
Canada	**5.10**	2.84	3.20	67.03[a]	2.09[a]
Italy	**8.30**	8.22	8.25	0.22[ns]	-0.04[ns]
Switzerland	**3.98**	2.81	3.62	15.07[a]	0.19[ns]
Classical music					
Canada	**5.75**	2.86	3.63	97.79[a]	2.54[a]
Italy	7.67	**8.25**	7.52	10.65[a]	0.66[a]
Switzerland	**4.73**	3.11	4.31	23.58[a]	0.33[c]
Art museums					
Canada	**6.17**	3.59	4.48	67.86[a]	2.17[a]
Italy	**8.29**	8.55	7.75	17.80[a]	0.52[a]
Switzerland	**5.73**	4.11	4.31	27.73[a]	0.95[a]
Action movies					
Canada	**5.64**	3.48	4.20	45.82[a]	1.81[a]
Italy	5.09	**5.58**	5.09	3.22[c]	0.49[b]
Switzerland	**3.39**	2.36	2.50	17.89[a]	-0.38[c]
Novels					
Canada	**6.77**	3.30	4.53	126.13[a]	2.89[a]
Italy	6.22	**7.79**	6.54	30.73[a]	1.42[a]
Switzerland	4.40	2.86	**4.83**	44.10[a]	1.17[a]
Comic strip books					
Canada	**5.96**	2.80	4.04	98.66[a]	2.57[a]
Italy	4.91	**7.05**	4.40	26.84[a]	2.40[a]
Switzerland	4.21	2.58	**5.86**	19.97[a]	2.09[a]
Classical ballet					
Canada	**6.17**	3.22	3.96	98.32[a]	2.58[a]
Italy	6.68	**8.05**	6.87	26.84[a]	1.27[a]
Switzerland	**4.77**	3.27	4.29	19.97[a]	0.25[ns]
Jazz					
Canada	**6.90**	3.52	4.81	38.75[a]	2.76[a]
Italy	4.11	**5.39**	4.00	22.44[a]	1.35[a]
Switzerland	3.37	2.96	**4.09**	13.66[a]	0.92[a]

1 Overall test of differences between the three means across data collection site after adjusting for country familiarity.

2 Mean in home country *versus* combined means in the two other data collection sites (one-tailed test when predicted direction, two-tailed test otherwise). Significance levels: a: $p < 0.001$; b: $p < 0.01$; c: $p < 0.05$; ns: not statistically significant.

Table 6. Evaluation of French-Speaking Countries across Data Collection Sites[1]

	Data collection site:			*F* statistic[2]	Eta squared
	Canada	**Italy**	**Switzerland**		
Theatre	5.30	3.52	4.75	66.19	0.19
Opera	4.60	3.31	3.76	36.81	0.11
Classical music	5.13	3.41	4.04	65.40	0.19
Art museums	5.95	4.45	5.18	50.74	0.15
Action movies	4.20	3.14	3.60	25.76	0.03
Novels	5.53	3.79	4.89	70.00	0.20
Comic strips	5.52	3.17	5.29	117.77	0.29
Classical ballet	5.32	3.92	4.29	47.83	0.15
Jazz	4.43	3.24	3.89	24.26	0.08

1 Countries included in the average evaluation: Belgium, Canada, France, Morroco, and Switzerland.

2 Overall test of differences between the three means across data collection site. All differences are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

Figure 1. Impact of Country Proximity on Product-Country Perceptions

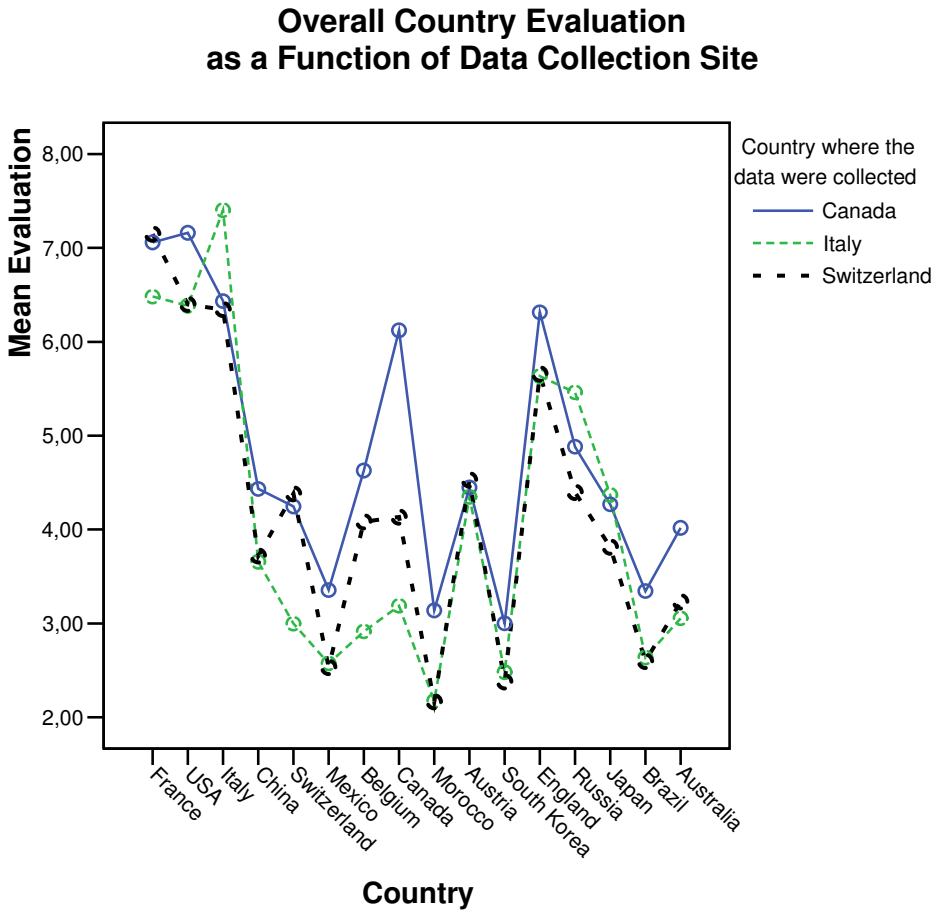

Figure 2. Product-Country Perceptions as a Function of Language-Based Art/Culture Products and Data Collection Site