# The Importance of Brand Origin in Fashion Markets


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## The Importance of Brand Origin in Fashion Markets


### Abstract

This study investigated whether the information on the country of origin of brands is important in the decision to purchase clothing.

The ability of respondents to identify the origins of brands was checked. This ability served to indicate the importance of such information. The factors that mattered most when deciding to buy a garment were then assessed, including country of origin of the brand. The information was gathered by means of a questionnaire. Ten Portuguese and fourteen foreign brands of casualwear and jeanswear were chosen. 342 people aged between 15 and 39 were surveyed, composing the target publics of these brands. This constituted a proportional quota sampling.

The ability of the respondents to name the country of origin of the brands selected and the influence of brand origin on the process of deciding to buy an item of clothing was assessed based on descriptive statistics and scores.

It was ascertained that the consumer's ability to name the origin of clothing brands is limited. It was found, too, that the brand origin mattered little to the decision to buy a garment. The study established that the most important factors for respondents were well-fitting, comfort and price. The brand is chosen for its quality/price ratio, for its design and aesthetics, for the models/sizes available and the trust it inspires.

The conclusions are related to a convenient sample and so they cannot be extrapolated to any other populations, product categories or brands.



**Keywords:** Fashion or Clothing Brands, Country-of-Origin, Brand Origin, Brand Origin Recognition Accuracy.


### Introduction

The study of consumer behaviour can be regarded as the study of a continuing process that involves choosing, buying and using goods, services or ideas that satisfy the needs and desires of consumers (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 2002; Solomon and Rabolt, 2004). Understanding consumer behaviour is one of the main concerns of marketing professionals today.

As a rule a product's intrinsic qualities (raw material, durability, colour, etc.) and extrinsic qualities (price, brand, country of origin, etc.) are very important to the decision to buy. In terms of clothing, some studies have been conducted to determine the qualities that are most valued by consumers.

The influence of an article's or brand's country of origin on the opinions, preferences and buying behaviour of consumers has been studied by a number of authors in the last few years (Jolibert and Peterson, 1995; Ahmed and d'Astous, 1999; Aaker, 2001; Zapata, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2008).

A lot of researchers have come to the conclusion that the effect of country of origin depends on the type or class of product under assessment. And it is even true that, in some product classes the brand origin has no impact at all on a consumer's preference of choice.

Liefeld (1993) says that consumers are amateur detectives in terms of identifying brand origins and they often use the names to infer the origin. This may indicate the low importance given to this information.

So the main purpose of this research is to see if the information relating to country of origin of brands matters when deciding to buy a garment.

**Literature Review**

For whatever reason almost all countries have a stereotyped image in the minds of consumers. These images are built up over the years through personal experience swapping experiences with other people, education, information gleaned from the media, travel, immigration or contact with immigrants, buying goods, business experience, and so forth (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002).

Although it is an extrinsic attribute, a country's image is so familiar that it is used almost unconsciously, along with other intrinsic attributes of the goods and/or services. A good national image is quite an advantage on the global market (Anholt, 2005:247).

A lot of brands strategically opt to be associated with a country or region that is most "convenient" for the product placement and conceal the real one (Muller, Mack and Broderick, 2001). The associations of this origin can lend credibility, generating solid personalities that suggest quality and a significant kind of distinction; they can be understood by consumers (Aaker, 2001). As Aaker (2001:94 and 95) says, "the association of a brand with a country or region suggests that the brand will offer better quality, because 'its' country or 'its' region of origin has a tradition of producing the best in that class of goods". Certain countries have become known as specialists in particular categories of products. So the choice of brands or brand names that suggest strong links with countries like that can reflect a deliberate decision to improve a product's image and convey a message based on what consumers believe about goods with that provenance (Keller, 1998).

Leclerc, Schmitt and Dubé (1994:263) called 'Foreign Branding' the "strategy of spelling or pronouncing a brand name in a foreign language", with this being one of the easiest and most affordable ways of getting consumers to see a brand as coming from another country. These authors showed that foreign branding can be a clue to the origin that is sought and an effective way of influencing consumers' perceptions and attitudes. Papacosta and Broderick (2002) suggest that the effect of the country of origin is better understood from the nationality conveyed through the name used in the foreign branding strategy than it is from the real country of origin, which may provide a competitive edge.

If brands use names that differ from their nationality it is because they see competitive advantages in doing so. In fact a great many studies on this topic have shown that concern with the country of origin of brands influence various aspects of consumer behaviour (Table 1).

Table 1 – Factors influenced by country of origin

| **Influenced by origin** | **Study authors** |
|---|---|
| The processing of advertising. | Moon and Jain, (2001 and 2002). |
| Purchasing decisions. | Schooler (1965); Baughn and Yaprak (1993); Liefeld (1993); Peterson and Jolibert (1995); Brunning (1997). |
| Perceived quality. | Han and Terpstra (1988); Eroglu and Machleit (1989); Khachaturian and Morganosky (1990); Tse and Gorn (1993); Bruning (1997); Iyer and Kalita (1997); Thakor and Katsanis (1997); Thakor and Katsanis (1997); Powers and Nooh (1999); Kaynak *et al.* (2000); Teas and Agarwal (2000). |
| Perceived image. | Gaedeke (1973); Roth and Romeo (1992); Matin and Eroglu (1993); Tse and Gorn (1993); Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994). |
| Distributors reputation. | Chão (1989). |
| Preference and intention to buy. | Dickerson (1982 and 1987); McLean, Roper and Smothers (1986); Ettenson, Wagner and Gaeth (1988); Shim, Morris and Morgan, (1989); Cordel (1992); Forney, Rabolt and Friend (1993); Roth (1995a and 1995b); Bhuian (1997); Knigth (1999); Knigth and Calantone (2000); Kim and Pysarchik (2000); Danesshvary *et al.* (2001). |
| Price and perception of product value. | Ahmed and d'Astou (1993); Soto and Méndez (2002). |
| Assessment of product qualities. | Leonidou et al. (1999); Kim and Pysarchik (2000). |
| Perception of risk in purchase. | Tan and Leong (1999). |

**Source:** Azevedo (2003); Ahmed and d'Astous (2004); Duarte (2005).

The effects caused by country of origin depend on the class of product assessed, and it may have no effect on consumer preference or choice. Heslop, Liefeld and Wall (1987) suggest that the effect of country of origin may be greater in that it increases complexity and the risk associated with the product and reduces frequency of buying. "In general, when consumers feel they have less power to evaluate a product, they tend to rely more on the extrinsic qualities of the product, like brand and country of origin" (Zapata, 2002:142).

Clothing item can take many forms. It may be a basic T-shirt, an item from the latest fashion trend, a luxury item like an exclusive designer piece. Prices also vary widely, as does frequency of purchase and consumer engagement. Clothing is a highly visible product that has considerable social and self-expression significance. So it is extremely complicated to assess, learn about and understand the behaviour involved in buying clothes. It could be a routine purchase or a problem whose solution is complex.

The discussion about the magnitude of the effect of the country of origin does not seem to be over, particularly when there is other intrinsic and extrinsic information about the product available. The magnitude of the country-of-origin effect can thus be moderated by the information factors listed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Factors moderating the magnitude of the country-of-origin effect of products

| **Moderating factor** | | **Study authors** |
|---|---|---|
| **The Brand** | A famous brand can offset potential negative effects derived from the image of the country of origin. Country of origin is no longer important for leading global brands. Os consumidores que estão familiarizados com uma marca podem ignorar o país de origem ou outras informações sobre os atributos do produto. | Bucks, 1985; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Cordell, 1992; Witt and Rao, 1992; Tse and Gorn, 1993; Leclerc *et al.,* 1994; Schaefer, 1997. |
| **The price** | Negative effects from less favourable images of countries can be offset by cutting the prices of goods that could conquer consumer resistance. | Ettenson *et al.,* 1988. |
| **Consumer Ethnocentrism** | The fact that consumers are to some extent ethnocentric may be relevant to preference and buying intention in relation to products from foreign countries. | Baumgartner and Jolibert, 1977; Shimp and Sharma 1987; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Schweiger *et al.*, 1995; Guilhoto, 2001; Azevedo, 2003. |
| **Cultural stereotypes and personal opinions** | Perceptions of a country of origin are generally influenced by social norms, ideologies, beliefs, friendly or conflictual relations between countries, economic development and similarities between cultures. A country's level of development has considerable influence, too, with less-developed countries regarded with greater reserve by consumers. When consumers generally have a positive image of the country they tend to view its products in the same light. | Gronhaug and Heide, 1992; Janda and Rao, 1997; Bar Tal, 1997; Ayrosa, 2000; Bandyopadhyay, Yelkur, DaCosta and Coelho, 2001; Balabanis, Mueller and Melewar, 2002. |
| **Consumer characteristics** | Education, age, gender, occupation, nationality are among the socio-economic factors may influence consumer behaviour vis-à-vis the country of origin of products. Women, older people, those with less schooling and those who are more conservative in outlook are more likely to develop an aversion to foreign goods. | Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Johansson, Douglas and Nonaka, 1985; Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Han, 1988; Wall, Heslop and Hofstra, 1988; Hulland, 1999; Daneshvary and Schwer, 2001; Balabanis Mueller and Melewar, 2002. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Familiarity with the product or class of products** | The country-of-origin effect matters less when consumers become familiar with a product.<br>But some authors say exactly the opposite: consumers who know a product better are more likely to use country of origin as an important factor in its assessment. | Althuijzen and Vroegh, 1999; Zapata and Martinez, 2002; Beverland, 2002.<br><br>Heimbach, Johansson, MacLachlan, 1989. |
| **Degree of engagement with the product** | For products with which there is less engagement, only a short time is spent on gathering information, and so the consumer tends to rely on extrinsic information, like country of origin. | Schaefer, 1997. |
| **Mastery of language of country of origin** | Mastery of the language of the country of origin of products is related to the ability to obtain information on the country and therefore on the perceptions and stereotypes created. | Balabanis, Mueller and Melewar, 2002. |
| **Type of product** | As mentioned, product type influences the magnitude of the country-of-origin effect: on products with which there is less engagement the effect tends to be greater.<br>But some countries have become famous for producing and marketing certain types of product.<br>The information on the country of origin is usually efficient when there is a clear link between the product type and the country of origin. | Han and Terpstra, 1988; Roth and Romeo, 1992; Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993; Papadopoulos, 1993; Agrawal and Kamakara, 1999. |
| **Motivation and NFC – need for cognition** | Learning about a product requires effort and motivation on the consumer’s part. The country-of-origin effect can be greater in people who are not disposed to assess the product, and who use origin and other extrinsic characteristics of the product as a determining shortcut to perception and attitude. | Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Hong and Wyer, 1989; Han, 1989; Wall, Liefeld and Heslop, 1991; Zang, 1997. |
| **Number of clues as to intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of a product** | The more clues consumers have about a product the less effective each individual clue is, including country of origin. So the country-of-origin effect can decline but it does not disappear. | Chao and Rajendran, 1993. |
| **Technical assistance** | After-sales convenience and technical assistance services can be good reasons for preferring national products. | Parameswaran and Yapark, 1987; Han, 1989. |
| Other moderating factors are: guarantee (Schooler *et al.,* 1987; Thorelli *et al.,* 1989), consumption visibility (Piron, 2000), experience of use and number of competitors (Zang, 1997), consumer aspirations (Wet, Pothas and Wet, 2001) and technological complexity (Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Wall, Liefeld and Heslop, 1991). | | |

Source: Zapata (2002), Azevedo (2003) and Giraldi (2005).

Although many studies related to country of origin have been published and an equally large number of topics addressed, little attention has so far been paid to whether consumers can or cannot identify the origin of brands (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2008). Taking the brand’s origin as being the country where the parent company is located, and not where the goods are made, assembled or finished (information usually carried on the label inside the garment, with the phrase ‘made in’).

Samiee, Shimp and Sharma (2005) developed BORA (Brand Origin Recognition Accuracy) and applied it to a sample of American consumers. They concluded that the ability to locate brand origins is definitely limited, calling into question the importance of knowledge about the country of origin for consumers to decide on a purchase (Samiee, Shimp and Sharma, 2005; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2008).

Azevedo and Farhangmehr (2003:28) studied new brand construction strategies in the clothing category in the Portuguese market. They also looked at the influence of country of origin on defining brand preference for 14 to 25-year olds. They concluded that "the study participants did not set great store by information on country of origin. Brand origin was in last place in terms of relative importance as a buying decision factor."

Heslop (1993), in a multinational study involving 2200 consumers, found that the country of origin was one of the product characteristics that counted for least in terms of importance for product perception.

Yet, when asked directly about the country-of-origin effect on buying decisions, consumers tend to rationalise their reply and reduce its impact (Johansson, 1993). Hugstad and Durr (1986) note that 70% of respondees under the age of 35 are not concerned about the origin of products. Hester and Yuen (1987) reported that only 1 out of a cohort of 1458 Canadian and US consumers mentioned country of origin as a reason for buying trousers and shirts and 32% said they were not interested in whether or not a garment was made in their country.

If the country of origin of a brand has little influence on the process of deciding to buy a garment, what are the qualities or factors that actually matter most in this decision?

Some studies have been conducted to determine the qualities that are most valued by consumers. In 1994 *Time* magazine (in Azevedo, 2003) conducted a survey on the factors crucial to buying clothes as far as under 25s were concerned, rated on a scale of 1-10. The results were: style (8.29); quality of the material (8.21); colour (7.81); cut (7.59); price (7.02), season of the year (5.59); partner's influence (4.63); name reputation (3.80); country of origin (3.41); loyalty to the designer (3.14), and advertising (2.85).

Kurt Salmon Associates/ FTGrup (2005) found that the importance of various qualities in the decision to buy an item of clothing varied between men and women, and the ranking is shown in Table 3.

A study undertaken to help understand the current consumption of non-food items on the global market concluded that cost is the main factor influencing the decision to buy for the Portuguese. Brands came second but they were sometimes overtaken by special offers/promotions. There was found to be considerable loyalty to the store generally used. Consumption logic is based on the desire for social differentiation. In future brands will be of particular interest to consumers who hope to find in them a technology based on simplicity, plus ecological concerns, design and low prices (APED METRIS/GFK, 2003).

Table 3 – Ranking of qualities of clothing items in buying decision

| Men | | Women | | Children (mothers) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practicality/comfort | 5 | Design/fashion | 5 | Practicality/comfort | 5 |
| Design/fashion | 4 | Cost | 4 | Brand | 4 |
| Quality | 4 | Quality | 3 | Design/fashion | 4 |
| Brand | 3 | Brand | 3 | Cost | 3 |
| Cost | 3 | Practicality/comfort | 3 | Quality | 3 |
| Fabric/material | 2 | Fabric/material | 2 | Fabric/material | 2 |

Source: Kurt Salmon Associates/ FTGrup (2005).

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The study on clothing carried out by the *International Wool Textile Organisation* (*IWTO*) and Kurt Salmon Associates (KSA) on consumers from the 10 biggest world economies found differences between the behaviour of men and women when the importance of a series of factors on the buying decision was analysed (Jornal Têxtil, 2005). For men, practicality is more important than fashion. Women put fashion in first place, while practicality comes a lowly fourth. Women, especially teenagers, often sacrifice comfort for fashion. The composition of the garment is the least relevant factor (except for children's wear). At the time of purchase consumers are more interested in the washing instructions than the material of the garment.

## Research Methodology

First, the brands to be studied had to be chosen. The first step was to survey the clothing brands available on the Portuguese market. The sources of information used were the media in general, clothing and fashion magazines and the Internet. At least three of the four criteria below had to be fulfilled for a brand to be chosen:

- intended for young and adult consumers;
- offering garments for men and women;
- national visibility, in terms of advertising and number of sales outlets;
- casualwear and/or jeanswear.

The choice of these criteria was backed up by the literature review. According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004), young people are the most engaged with fashion, and Paço (2000) says that leaders of fashion tend to be younger people. But there is a tendency to prolong a youthful appearance indefinitely.

The choice of casualwear and jeanswear was made on the basis of the increased consumption of these types of apparel in the last decade, especially in developed countries, while more formal garments have fallen out of favour (*Jornal Téxtil*, 2005).

These considerations led to 10 Portuguese and 14 foreign brands being chosen (7 Spanish, 3 American, 1 English, 1 French, 1 Italian, 1 Swedish), giving a total of 24 brands.

A questionnaire was deemed an appropriate tool for collecting the data used in this study, because questionnaires can measure what people know (information or knowledge), what they like (values and preferences) and what they think (attitudes and beliefs), and it has the additional advantage of being anonymous (Tuckman, 2000).

Analysis of the ability of the respondents to identify the country of origin of the brands selected was based on descriptive statistics like frequency tables, percentages and score calculation. Once the total of responses was calculated, this new variable was crossed with the demographic variables and one-way analysis of variance was performed (ANOVA). It was intended to find any significant differences between the means obtained for the several categories of demographic variables that explain the variability of correct responses obtained.

An analysis based on descriptive statistics was undertaken to analyse the brand origin's ability to influence the buying decision.

Cross tabulations were done to see if the demographic characteristics of the respondents are related to the degree of influence that the brand origin may have on the decision to buy an item of clothing. Person's $\chi^2$ was used to determine the significance of the relations, and Cramer's V coefficient of association was used to determine the degree of relation.

The sample had to correspond to the target publics of the brands chosen for the empirical study. The method chosen was quota/judgment sampling. The final composition of the sample is shown in Table 4.

The questionnaires were sent out and received between January and February 2008. Of the 588 questionnaires returned 342 were considered valid for the study purposes.

Table 4 – Sample characterisation

| Age | Totals by gender and age | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | |
| 15-19 | 29 | 27 | 56 |
| 20-24 | 34 | 32 | 66 |
| 25-29 | 42 | 39 | 81 |
| 30-34 | 32 | 39 | 71 |
| 35-39 | 33 | 35 | 68 |
| Total | 170 | 172 | 342 |

The collected data were then analysed and interpreted. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, version 14) was used.

**Presentation and Discussion of the Results**

Table 5 shows the correct origin of the brands and the three answers most often given by the responders for each brand. The 'Don't know' answer is also marked.

The correct answer and the answer given most often corresponded in 14 of the 24 brands, which are: Levi's, Zara, Pull & Bear, Benetton, Bershka, Mango, Quiksilver and Gant; and the Portuguese ones: Salsa, Quebramar, Lanidor, Sacoor Brothers, Macmoda and Modalfa.

The right answers per brand varied between 86.3% for the Spanish brand, Zara, and 4.4% for the Spanish brand, Lois.

The brands least recognised by the responders are the Portuguese Lion of Porches (9.4%), the French Chevignon (8.5%) and the Portuguese Cheyenne (7.9%), with relatively low percentages. This indicates that the brands selected for the empirical study are known to the great majority of the respondents.

The option "Don't know the origin" (DKO) appears at least once for all brands, and in quite high percentages for some.

Table 5 – Origins most often given by respondents for each brand

| | Correct Origin | Answers most often given by the respondents | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Levi's | American | American (83.0%) | DKO (10.8%) | English (4.4%) | DKB (0.0) |
| Zara | Spanish | Spanish (86.3%) | DKO (5.6%) | Portuguese (2.3%) | DKB 0.0) |
| Salsa | Portuguese | Portuguese (39.2%) | DKO (25.7%) | Spanish (24.9%) | DKB (0.9) |
| Decénio | Portuguese | DKO (40.5%) | Portuguese (31.9%) | Italian (11.7%) | DKB (7.0) |
| Tiffosi | Portuguese | Italian (31.6%) | DKO (31.0%) | Portuguese (20.8%) | DKB (6.1) |
| Pull & Bear | Spanish | Spanish (45.6%) | DKO (27.8%) | English (11.1%) | DKB (2.0) |
| Quebramar | Portuguese | Portuguese (67.3%) | DKO (21.9%) | Spanish (3.2%) | DKB (1.8) |
| Chevignon | French | DKO (33.9%) | French (33.6%) | American (13.5%) | DKB (8.5) |
| Lanidor | Portuguese | Portuguese (47.1%) | DKO (28.1%) | Spanish (7.6%) | DKB (2.9) |
| Benetton | Italian | Italian (43.3%) | DKO (24.3%) | English (10.8%) | DKB (0.9) |
| Sacoor Brothers | Portuguese | Portuguese (41.5%) | DKO (25.4%) | English (14.0%) | DKB (2.6) |
| Macmoda | Portuguese | Portuguese (59.1%) | DKO (25.4%) | Spanish (5.6%) | DKB (2.6) |
| Bershka | Spanish | Spanish (50.9%) | DKO (27.2%) | Swedish (9.6%) | DKB (2.0) |
| H&M | Swedish | DKO (32.5%) | Swedish (17.0%) | Portuguese (10.8%) | DKB (5.3) |
| Massimo Dutti | Spanish | Italian (41.8%) | Spanish (26.3%) | DKO (21.1%) | DKB (1.2) |
| Modalfa | Portuguese | Portuguese (74.3%) | DKO (15.5%) | DKB (4.4%) | DKB (4.4) |
| Stradivarius | Spanish | DKO (39.2%) | Spanish (33.3%) | Italian (10.8%) | DKB (4.1) |
| Mango | Spanish | Spanish (60.2%) | DKO (25.4%) | Portuguese (5.8%) | DKB (1.5) |
| Cheyenne | Portuguese | DKO (41.5%) | American (14.9%) | French (13.7%) | DKB (7.9) |
| Quiksilver | American | American (44.2%) | DKO (37.1%) | English (7.6%) | DKB (6.7) |
| Gant | American | American (40.9%) | DKO (32.2%) | English (10.8%) | DKB (4.1) |
| Pepe Jeans | English | DKO (33.6%) | English (27.8%) | American (22.8%) | DKB (5.0) |
| Lion of Porches | Portuguese | DKO (31.6%) | English (25.1%) | Portuguese (16.7%) | DKB (9.4) |
| Lois | Spanish | American (38.9%) | DKO (34.2%) | French (7.6%) | DKB (4.1) |

DKO: Don't know the origin; DKB: Don't know the brand

Note: Although Gant was bought out by a Swedish group in 1999 the brand retained its American casual line. The American origin was kept in this study since this is the essential culture of the brand.

In order to determine the ability to name brand origins, the number of correct answers given by each respondent was scored.

This established that only 1 respondent failed to identify any brand origin and 4 (1.2%) managed to name 22 of the 24. No respondent identified all the brand origins correctly. By calculating the weighted average it was found that each respondent identified the origin of 10.06 of the 24 brands correctly, which is less than half.

It is interesting to see that for some brands the percentage of right answers is lower than the percentage of “don’t knows”, which in turn is lower than the percentage of wrong answers. This suggests that the respondents are convinced that they know the real origin of the brand, whereas in fact they do not. This is true for the Portuguese’s Tiffosi, Cheyenne and Lion of Porches; the Swedish H&M; the Spanish’s Massimo Dutti and Lois and the English Pepe Jeans (Table 6).

Table 6 – Comparison of frequencies and percentages: right, wrong and don't know for each brand

| | Right (%) | Wrong (%) | Don't know (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Levi's | 83.0 | 6.1 | 10.8 |
| Zara | 86.3 | 8.2 | 5.6 |
| Salsa | 39.2 | 35.1 | 25.7 |
| Decénio | 31.9 | 27.8 | 40.4 |
| Tiffosi | 20.8 | 48.2 | 31.0 |
| Pull & Bear | 45.6 | 26.6 | 27.8 |
| Quebramar | 67.3 | 10.8 | 21.9 |
| Chevignon | 33.6 | 32.5 | 33.9 |
| Lanidor | 47.1 | 24.9 | 28.1 |
| Benetton | 43.3 | 32.5 | 24.3 |
| Sacoor Brothers | 41.5 | 33.0 | 25.4 |
| Macmoda | 59.1 | 15.5 | 25.4 |
| Bershka | 50.9 | 21.9 | 27.2 |
| H&M | 17.0 | 50.6 | 32.5 |
| Massimo Dutti | 26.3 | 52.6 | 21.1 |
| Modalfa | 74.3 | 10.2 | 15.5 |
| Stradivarius | 33.3 | 27.5 | 39.2 |
| Mango | 60.2 | 14.3 | 25.4 |
| Cheyenne | 11.1 | 47.4 | 41.5 |
| Quiksilver | 44.2 | 18.7 | 37.1 |
| Gant | 40.9 | 26.9 | 32.2 |
| Pepe Jeans | 27.8 | 38.6 | 33.6 |
| Lion of Porches | 16.7 | 51.8 | 31.6 |
| Lois | 4.4 | 61.4 | 34.2 |
| Average answers per brand | 41.9 | 30.1 | 28.0 |

For other brands the option "Don't know" appears as the highest percentage, which suggests that the respondents really could not link the brand to any particular origin: Portugal's Decénio, Spain's Stradivarius and France's Chevignon – though in the last case the differences between the three options are only slight.

The value of the right answers should be corrected using Abbott's formula (1) (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994:341; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2008) because a percentage of the answers are guesses, and the respondent did not know, and knew that he/she did not know. This behaviour is different from that of a respondent who specifies an origin, convinced that it is the right one, regardless of whether it is or not.

$$Rc = R - [W / (K - 1)]$$

Rc – no. of right answers with correction

R – no. of right answers

W – no. of wrong answers

K – no. of possible alternative answers

After correction only 35.44% of the answers should be considered right and arising from the respondents' knowledge. This is undoubtedly a modest figure, but higher than that found by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2008) who obtained 22.2% right answers after correction.

To learn more about the ability of the respondents to correctly identify the origin of the brands several cross tabulations were made with the "Right answer" variable and the demographic variables used in this study. After analysing the frequencies, the averages were calculated for each demographic group. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out (Table 7) to find if there were any significant differences in the averages obtained for the categories resulting from the demographic variables.

Analysis of the figures in Table 7 shows that the averages for the categories given by the variables age, gender and education of the respondents have significant differences. It was found that the capacity to correctly identify the origin of the brands increases up to the 30-34 age bracket (average 11.45) and declines thereafter. Women (10.72) give more right answers than men (9.39). The ability to correctly identify the origin of the brands increases with level of education. The eta and eta squared values show that education is the variable that best explains the variability of the dependent variable. The income variable is the only one with a significance greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that this variable does not help to explain the variability of the dependent variable; there were no significant differences between the averages of the various categories.

Table 7 – One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and eta coefficient of comparison of the averages of the dependent variable "Right answer" and the independent demographic variables

| | F | Significance | Eta | Eta squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 4.923 | 0.001 | 0.235 | 0.055 |
| Gender | 6.26 | 0.013 | 0.134 | 0.018 |
| Education | 6.046 | 0.000 | 0.337 | 0.113 |
| Income | 0.584 | 0.674 | 0.087 | 0.008 |

Respondents were asked to asses the probability of 12 characteristics, one of which was being of Portuguese origin, affecting the choice of a particular brand. The results of the descriptive analysis for this question are given in Table 8.

Table 8 – Brand characteristics that influence the buying choice

| **The probability of the reasons below influencing your choice of a particular brand** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
|---|---|---|
| The quality/price ratio offered | 4.37 | 0.720 |
| Design and aesthetics | 4.21 | 0.841 |
| The models and sizes usually suit me nicely | 3.84 | 1.016 |
| The confidence it inspires | 3.75 | 0.958 |
| The range of innovative, modern products offered | 3.40 | 1.009 |
| It helps me express my personality and lifestyle | 3.27 | 1.138 |
| The brand image and message conveyed | 3.00 | 1.086 |
| **Country of brand origin** | **2.93** | **1.092** |
| Ethical, ecological and social role that it plays in society | 2.76 | 1.071 |
| Suggestion or influence of friends and/or relations | 2.59 | 1.139 |
| Social projection I achieve with it | 2.42 | 1.069 |
| Type of advertising it uses | 2.18 | 1.087 |
| It sponsors my favourite sportsperson, team or artist | 1.83 | 1.035 |

Note: Respondents were asked to reply according to a 5 point Likert scale: 1-highly unlikely; 2-not very likely; 3-indifferent; 4-likely, and 5-highly likely.

Calculating Pearson's $\chi^2$ test and Cramer's V coefficient for crossing the brand origin variable with the several demographic variables of interest in the study, we obtained the results shown in Table 9, below:

Table 9 – Pearson's $\chi^2$ and Cramer's V coefficient between the Portuguese brand origin/Demographic variables

| | Portuguese brand origin/Age | | | Portuguese brand origin/Gender | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Degrees of freedom | Significance (bilateral) | Value | Degrees of freedom | Significance (bilateral) |
| Pearson's $\chi^2$ test | 22.358[(a)] | 16 | 0.132 | 0.356[(a)] | 4 | 0.986 |
| Cramer's V | 0.128 | - | 0.132 | 0.032 | - | 0.986 |
| Valid examples (N) | 341 | | | 341 | | |

| | Portuguese brand origin/Education | | | Portuguese brand origin/Income | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Degrees of freedom | Significance (bilateral) | Value | Degrees of freedom | Significance (bilateral) |
| Pearson's $\chi^2$ test | 50.119[(a)] | 28 | 0.006 | 17.195[(a)] | 16 | 0.373 |
| Cramer's V | 0,193 | - | 0,006 | 0.118 | - | 0.373 |
| Valid examples (N) | 334 | | | 310 | | |

(a) Some frequencies have values below 5, so the results should be viewed with some reservation.

The results in the above table show that the Brand origin variable is only related to the Education level of the respondents (significance - 0.006). But it is a weak relation, since the value of Cramer's V coefficient is only 0.193.

From the options listed below the respondents chose the one that best represented their opinion (Table 10).

Table 10 – Respondents' opinions on origin of clothing brands

| **Give your opinion on the origin of clothing brands** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) I prefer foreign brands. | 17 | 5,0 |
| 2) I'm very loyal to certain foreign brands, but I sometimes buy Portuguese ones. | 32 | 9.4 |
| 3) I make a point of buying Portuguese brands, even if they're a bit more expensive, because I can help the Portuguese economy this way. | 6 | 1.8 |
| 4) If the product is equivalent in every way, I prefer Portuguese brands. | 76 | 22.2 |
| **5) I'm not bothered about the origin. If I like it, I buy it, without worrying whether the brand is Portuguese or not.** | **181** | **52.9** |
| 6) I'd like to buy Portuguese brands, but foreign ones have a better range in terms of fashion and lower prices. | 30 | 8.8 |
| Total | 342 | 100.0 |

Respondents were asked to indicate the most important of the items listed on Table 11, in order to understand which qualities of clothing items most influence buying decisions.

Table 11 – Probability of product characteristics influencing the decision to buy a garment

| **The probability of the characteristics listed below influencing the decision to buy a clothing item** | **Mean** | **Standard Deviation** |
|---|---|---|
| How looks and sits on the body | 4.63 | 0.662 |
| Comfort | 4.39 | 0.730 |
| Cost | 4.31 | 0.773 |
| Quality | 4.24 | 0.703 |
| Colour | 4.11 | 0.818 |
| Practicality | 3.98 | 0.854 |
| Durability | 3.88 | 0.864 |
| Style | 3.83 | 0.951 |
| Goes with the other items in your wardrobe | 3.81 | 1.016 |
| Type of fabric/material | 3.57 | 1.004 |
| Easy to maintain (type of cleaning, washing, etc.) | 3.44 | 1.051 |
| Being in fashion | 3.08 | 1.065 |
| **Brand** | **2.97** | **1.073** |

Note: Respondents were asked to reply according to a 5 point Likert scale: 1-highly unlikely; 2-not very likely; 3-indifferent; 4-likely, and 5-highly likely.

The descriptive statistics were also analysed to help us find which characteristics of the garment most influence the buying decision, i.e. means and standard deviations, in relation to age group and gender. The results are given in the tables 12 and 13.

Table 12 – Characteristics having most influence on buying decision per respondent age group

| | Age | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 |
| $1^{st}$ place | Well-fitting | Well-fitting | Well-fitting | Well-fitting | Well-fitting |
| $2^{nd}$ place | Comfort | Cost | Comfort | Comfort | Comfort |
| $3^{rd}$ place | Colour | Quality | Cost | Cost | Cost |
| $4^{th}$ place | Quality | Comfort | Quality/Colour | Quality | Quality |
| $5^{th}$ place | Cost | Colour | Practicality | Colour | Practicality |
| Last place | Easy to maintain | Brand | Brand | Being in fashion | Brand |

Table 13 – Characteristics having most influence on buying decision per respondent gender

| | Gender | |
|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male |
| $1^{st}$ place | Well-fitting | Well-fitting |
| $2^{nd}$ place | Comfort | Comfort |
| $3^{rd}$ place | Cost | Cost |
| $4^{th}$ place | Quality | Quality |
| $5^{th}$ place | Colour | Colour |
| Last place | Brand | Brand |

## Conclusions

There is no point in studying the effect of the country of origin of brands without ascertaining if consumers can correctly name their origin. This would be to depart from a false presupposition, i.e. that the country of origin could have a powerful effect. But if consumers do not know the country of origin then exploiting and using this effect could have dubious (or even contradictory) results compared with those expected, from the brand image point of view.

The results obtained confirmed that, after correction, only 35.44% of the answers correctly identified the origin of the brands chosen, which may be regarded as a modest figure.

It is interesting to see that for some brands the respondents are sure they know the real origin of the brand, but in fact they do not. For other brands the “Don’t know” option scored highest, suggesting that the respondents really could not link the brand to any particular origin.

So it is concluded that, in agreement with Samiee, Shimp and Sharma (2005) and Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2008), the ability to locate brand origins is definitely limited, calling into question the importance of knowledge about the country of origin for consumers in their decision to buy an item of clothing.

In order to consolidate this conclusion there was a question about the influence of the brand’s country of origin on the decision to buy a garment. The aim was to find out if consumers really care about knowing where a brand comes from and if this characteristic influences the decision to buy that brand.

The results show that a high percentage of respondents choose either indifference or improbability of the origin affecting their choosing a brand. Most respondents (52.9%), regardless of age, gender or education level, do not care about the origin and say that as long as they like it, they’ll buy it, no matter where it comes from.

The quality/price ratio, design and aesthetics, models/sizes of the clothes and the confidence they inspire are (in this order) the factors that most influence the choice of brand.

The other product characteristics were analysed to find out which are the most important and can actually influence the buying decision. It was thus ascertained that the way an item looks and sits on the body was, unanimously, the characteristic of choice that had the most influence on the decision to buy an item of clothing. Comfort and price are the characteristics next likeliest to affect the decision.

Men and women seem to agree in terms of the chief characteristics that influence their clothes buying choices, with how the item looks and sits on the body being top of the list, followed by comfort, cost, quality and colour.

**Study Limitations**

It is worth stressing that the conclusions from this study should be analysed bearing in mind the limitations imposed by the selection of variables and by the methodology used.

One obvious methodological limitation is related to the fact that the sample is a purposive sample. The conclusions cannot, therefore, be extrapolated to the whole population of Portugal, or to any other population, even with age limits of 15 and 39.

The choice of a clearly defined product can itself be regarded as a limitation, and so the conclusions presented here once again should not be extrapolated to other product categories, even textiles such as children’s wear or household textiles.

The group of brands chosen may influence and cause bias in the results in relation to the ability of the respondents to correctly identify the origin of the brands. Had other brands been chosen, the results may have been different. In terms of the number, including more brands could have made completing the questionnaire too time-consuming and deterred people from taking part; fewer brands could have led to an analysis that was not really conclusive. The number chosen seemed reasonable in practical terms and is greater than that used by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2008), who used 13 brands of microwave ovens, but smaller than that used by Samiee, Shimp and Sharma (2005), who used 84 brands and 10 product categories.

**Scope for Future Research**

Some lines for future research have already been noted in the preceding point. But given the lack of studies in Portugal on the effect of country of origin and ability of consumers to correctly identify the origin of brands, this study could be extended to cover:

- other product classes, such as footwear, agri-foods, wines and others where there is a fair number of brands that can be studied;
- other age groups, like children or older consumers; or larger and more representative samples, so as to confirm or reject the findings presented here.

Another interesting research line would be to examine the image of a country and see how this image influences the image of brands and their products in the eyes of consumers from other countries. According to the literature reviewed, perceptions of a country of origin are generally influenced by the process of socialisation, social norms, ideologies, beliefs, friendly or conflictual relations between countries, economic development and similarities between cultures. A country's level of development has considerable influence, too, with less-developed countries regarded with greater reserve by consumers. When consumers generally have a positive image of the country they tend to view its products in the same light (Bandyopadhyay, DaCosta, Coelho and Yelkur, 2001).

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