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TOPIC:

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMAGE: A META-ANALYTIC REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS
EFFECT ON CONSUMER BRAND EVALUATION**

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMAGE: A META-ANALYTIC REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS
EFFECT ON CONSUMER BRAND EVALUATION

BY

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Economics, University of International Studies—UNINT, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctoral Degree in Intercultural Relations and International Management (IRIM).

MAY 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the outcome of my own original research and that all cited third party's works have been appropriately acknowledged and referenced and that no part of the work has been submitted in support of an application for another qualification or degree of this nature in any other university or another institute of scientific inquiry and learning.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Stephen Oduro

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this doctoral thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the doctoral board or committee of the University of International Studies—UNINT.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Investigating how country-of-origin image (CoOI) influences consumer brand evaluations (CBE) has been a subject of scientific inquiry in the international marketing literature for over six decades. However, despite these considerable efforts of scholars to validate and link numerous methods to CoOI and consumers behavior, little is known about the extent to which CoOI impacts CBEs, partly due to mixed and contradictory findings and partly due to the absence of a meta-analytic review that provides a quantitative assessment of this focal relationship. Therefore, the purpose of this study was two-pronged (1) to determine the extent to which CoOI and its sub-dimensions exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE; and (2) to determine the contextual and methodological factors that account for between-study variance in this focal relationship

Methodology: A meta-analytic review approach was used to quantitatively examine 166 empirical articles encompassing 191 independent samples, 499563 observations, and 282 effect sizes for the timeframe between 1978-2020. Data were statistically analysed using subgroup analysis and meta-analysis (MARA) via the Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software package.

Findings: Results showed that CoOI positively and significantly influences CBE, with the extent of the effect being moderate ($r=.31$). Moreover, findings revealed that each dimension of CoOI, namely, general country image (GCI— $r=.31$), general product country image (GPCI— $r=.46$), specific product country image (SPCI— $r=.29$), and partitioned country image (PACI— $r=.32$) significantly influences CBE. However, the effect of GPCI was the largest, followed by PACI, GCI, and SPCI, in that order. Additionally, the aggregate impacts of these dimensions on the sub-dimensions of CBE—brand commitment (BC), brand-specific associations (BSA), and general brand impressions (GBI) showed that the effect on BC ($r=.37$) was the strongest, followed by BSA ($r=.34$), and GBI ($r=.32$). Finally, the moderator analysis revealed a significant between-study variance based on various methodological and contextual study characteristics. More specifically, findings demonstrated that brand source, product sector, economic region of brands and respondents, individualism, brand origin continents, and consumers' continent, cues, product category involvement, product status, sampling unit, number of countries studied, publication year, sampling technique, and sample size significantly account for between-study variance. However, product stimulus level, theory usage, and study design do not account for between-study variance.

Implications: Theoretically, by applying cue utilisation and irradiation theories, we contribute to international marketing and brand management literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of how CoOI influences CBE. Our special focus on CBE is theoretically relevant because it helps balance the literature with the earlier meta-analyses that focused on product evaluation, purchase decision, and buyer behaviour without recourse to CBE, thereby adding valuable insights to the ongoing scholarly debate about impact of the CoOI dimensions on CBE. Pragmatically, the study's findings provide managers and practitioners a more valid, "au fait," and reliable benchmark about the expected average effect or elasticity of the impact of CoOI on CBE in the midst of the contradictory findings presented in the literature. Firms are motivated to incorporate CoOI in their global promotional campaigns because there is a positive, significant relationship between CoOI and CBE.

Original value: No meta-analysis exists in this research stream that ever examined the CoOI—CBE relationship. Earlier efforts have considered other dependent variables like product evaluations, purchase decisions, and buyer behavior. To this end, our study provides the pioneering meta-analytic review on this focal relationship to clarify the field's anecdotal findings and balance the literature that has only seen quantitative reviews on product evaluation and purchase decision.

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DEDICATION

To my lovely Mum, Janet Birago

QUOTE OF THE STUDY

“Country-of-origin effect does not die with time. While there may be different degrees of development and manifestation of the elasticity and magnitude of the effect based on varying contexts and methods, the effect on average remains valid with each successive generation of consumers in both local and global markets.” Dr. Stephen Oduro.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on the research background, statement of the research gap, research purpose, research objectives, and research questions. Also, the significance of the study to research and practice and the organisation of the study are highlighted in this chapter. As a guide to the chapter, section 1.0 deals with the chapter overview providing a road map to the first chapter of the study. In section 1.1, the research background to the study is presented. Then, the research gap formulation, research purpose, research objectives, and research questions are discussed in sections 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5, respectively. Sections 1.6 and 1.7 present the research hypotheses and contributions/significance of the study, correspondingly. Finally, section 1.8 presents the organisation of the thesis. With this brief overview, the background to the study is in order.

1.1 Research Background

Research on consumer perceptions and national stereotypes of countries dates back to antiquity period in the 1930s (Klingberg, 1941; Child & Doob, 1943; Katz & Braly, 1933). However, in the early '60s, the country-of-origin concept (CoO, hereafter) fascinated the attention of marketing scholars. Notably, in 1962, Ernest Dichter hinted that the future managers of domestic and global products/brands must pay particular attention to the underlying differences and similarities among consumers in diverse parts of the globe (Dichter, 1962). Taking inspiration from Dichter's assertion, Robert Schooler empirically tested the existence of the CoO as a cue in consumer choice attitude and behavioural responses for the first time (Schooler, 1965).

Since then, there have been numerous attempts to better investigate and theorize the CoO effect in the international marketing literature (e.g., Lee, Chae & Lew, 2020; Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018; Hien et al., 2020). Recent literature reviews unveil that the number of publications on CoO related issues is more than 1000, with 405 of these articles being appearing in academic journals (Gurhan-Canli, Sarial-Abi & Hayran 2018; Usunier, 2006). This scholarly works demonstrates that a product or brand's country of origin can serve as catalyst of perceived product quality (Jain & Bariar, 2019) and influences perceived risk and purchase intention (Jin et al., 2019; Diamantopoulos, Herz & Koschate-Fischer, 2015; Lu et al., 2016).

Numerous published papers support the relevance of this notable effect. For instance, Danish products were removed from the shelves of many stores in the Middle East after a publication of a series of controversial cartoons imaging the Prophet Mohammed. This retrieval of products cost the companies in Denmark millions of Euros and raised fears of irreparable damage to trade ties (Fattah, 2006). In another example, American consumers are susceptible to the origin of the product or brand and eagerly look for products "made in the US" after numerous recalls and disasters of products produced in foreign countries (Martin, 2007). In this regard, Scott Piergrossi, creative director at Brand Institute Inc., vociferously notes, "Consumers are yearning now for reliable, high-quality goods. It needs to be once again communicated to the public that quality craftsmanship is associated

with the USA” (Vence, 2007, p. 12). Another frequently cited illustration concerns Japanese-made cars, where CoO effects changed from negative to positive during decades. Clearly, these perspectives postulate that perceptions of a given country are affected by a customer’s cognitive, affective, and conative responses to that country's people and products/brands.

The influence that consumers’ country-related images have on their purchase and product/brand attitude is the CoO effect. Previous investigations postulate that how consumers conceptualise (Laroche et al., 2005) and operationalize (d’Astous et al., 2007) country image phenomenon reveals whether or not consumers’ decision making is linked to their perception of CoO (Zeugner-Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2010). Akin to a chicken-and-egg effect (Andéhn & Dacosta, 2016; Walker & Dubitsky, 1994), the CoO comes from the experiences from the country to which the product appertains and sums up into the country image, which is the perception about the country held in consumers’ memory (Fan, 2019; Lee, Chae & Lew, 2020; Jun & Choi, 2007). The CoO image (CoOI, hereafter) involves the ‘stereotypical beliefs about specific country products, for its historical, socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics (Maheswaran, 1994). Literature suggests that consumers’ decision-making is induced by CoO image (Pelet, Massarini & Pauluzzo, 2018; Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999), such that if the customer has a positive attitude toward the CoO, such attitude may be transferred to the product or service’s CoO, which in turn, adds to the image of the product. It has been shown that consumers tend to associate a product or service from a particular brand to that brand’s CoO (Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018; Usunier, 2011).

Extant research has shown that CoO plays a fundamental role in the competitive market and consumer behaviour (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017; Smaoui, Kilani & Touzani, 2016; Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Agrawal and Kamakura (1999) underscored that because consumers still exhibit region or country-specific quality levels and perception differences, the CoOI effect will continue to exist and remain relevant to marketing strategies. This assertion makes the subject still significant and recalls both scholars and marketers to approach the concept with a newer, updated perspective. Thus, the significance of the CoOI effect is still a reality as consumers employ these cues in product differentiation (Abraham & Patro, 2014). Biswas and Chowdhury (2011) highlighted that CoOI research consists of three unique categories: a) research exploring the influence of country image on consumers’ purchases and product evaluation; b) studies examining consumers’ perceptions about different countries; and c) studies examining partitioned country images on consumers’ product/brand evaluations. Moreover, the extant literature demonstrates that consumers’ conative attitudes examined in association with the CoOI construct are product evaluation, brand evaluation, and purchase intention (Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009).

In this study, we examined and integrated studies encompassing all the CoOI themes/dimensions (i.e., General Country Image (GCI), General Product Country Image (GPCI), Specific Product Country Image (SPCI), and Partitioned Country Image (PACI) and their association with consumer brand evaluation. Thus, an earnest attempt is made to include all dimensions of the CoOI in a single study for the first time in this research stream, although we do not examine their conative effect (i.e., purchase intention). And this is not without reason. For example, Pereira, Hsu, and Kundu (2005, p.34) advocated that “any instrument that purports to measure CoOI must include items that address three facets: “general country attributes” (GCA), “general product attributes” (GPA), and “specific product attributes” (SPA). In addition to this, Chao (1993) and Biswas and Chowdhury (2011) called for the inclusion of “partitioned country image” (PACI) in the CoOI construct.

The first dimension that is the General Country Image (hereafter, GCI), according to Martin and Eroglu (1993, p. 193.), is the “complete set of descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs about that given country.” That is the total of people’s ideas, beliefs, and perceptions about a specific country (e.g., politics, industrialization, technology, culture, heritage, traditions). Nagashima (1970) defined the second dimension, General Product Country Image (hereafter, GPCI) as “the total of beliefs one has about the products of a given country” (p. 68) (e.g., design, sophistication, and manufacturing excellence, innovation). In contrast, Li et al. (1997) explained the third dimension, namely, Specific product Country Image (hereafter, SPCI), as the consumers’ ideas, beliefs, and perception about specific products made in a specific country (e.g., French automobiles). Finally, the fourth dimension, partitioned country image (hereafter, PACI), is a generic label for all the information of countries where the product was designed, assembled, manufactured, and where parts of the product were made. For example, PACI might include multiple factors like perceptions, inferences, and beliefs about countries that jointly make a product (Allman et al., 2016; Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018).

Extant research demonstrates an association between these dimensions of CoO and consumer brand evaluation (CBE, hereafter). Brand evaluation involves consumers’ overall evaluation of and attitude toward the brand (Zhou et al., 2010). Brand evaluation expresses the rational evaluative judgment of consumers towards a physical product or service, using both intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Laforet & Chen, 2012). Pappu et al. (2006) argued that consumers’ perception of quality and purchase decisions of prestigious global brands are affected by the brand name and the country of origin of the brand. Brands from the same country share images or associations, called country equity, creating intangible assets or liabilities in consumers’ minds (Kim & Chung, 1997).

For instance, Toyota and Suzuki brands could enjoy specific associations like workmanship or reliability because they originate from a common home country, Japan. Thus, it can be observed that consumers' macro and micro country images can affect their evaluation of brands from that nation. That is, for a given product category (e.g., automobiles) in a particular market (Italy), consumers' image of a country (e.g., US) and image of the products from that country can affect the consumers' evaluation of a brand (e.g., Ford) from that country. Therefore, CoOI can impact brand evaluation, defined as "consumers' overall attitude and emotional response to a brand," such as excitement, image, quality, trust, and desire (Hien et al., 2020; Rambocas & Ramsbhag, 2018).

Consumers evaluate brands using common attributes, various visible and invisible signs related to the brand as a product or person (Hein et al., 2020). However, earlier efforts have also revealed that consumers' brand images or perceptions alter dramatically when the brands are made in different countries and partitioned in other countries. For example, Han and Terpstra (1988) discovered that the brand image of Japanese automobiles suffered erosion when manufacturing was moved to South Korea. Similarly, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1996) found that Sony suffered brand image erosion when made in the USA, whereas GE's brand image improved when made in Japan. Consequently, the international marketing literature hints that a bidirectional relationship exists between CoOI and CBE.

In addition to this, research has shown that the CoOI effects may decrease or increase depending on certain contextual factors, which may account for the cause of the inconclusive results and theoretical inconsistencies in this research stream. For instance, research shows that the CoOI effects may depend on product category (Roth & Romeo, 1992), product dimensions (Leonidou et al., 1999), demographics (Maheswaran 1994), brand type (local or foreign brand) (Roth & Diamantopolos, 2009), product involvement (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007), and level of economic development (Iyer & Kalita, 1997). Other studies also suggest that the CoOI effect hinges on the number of cues presented in the choice situation (Insch & McBride, 2004). Zarantonello et al. (2013) has also demonstrated that economic, social, and technological development impact the values and symbolic beliefs of individuals toward brands. To this end, numerous scholars have called for a meta-analytic summary of the underlying reasons for the ambiguous results of the previous empirical findings (Lu et al., 2016; Pharr, 2005; Samiee, 2010). That is, a call for the assessment of the contextual factors that moderate the CoOI—CBE relationship.

Thus, it can be gleaned that the extensive research on the CoOI—CBE over the past few decades is scattered across scientific journals and disciplines and has yielded mixed, inconclusive, and inconsistent results regarding the nature and magnitude of the associations' effect. Furthermore, the associations' effect (i.e., CoOI and CBE) is influenced or moderated by varying contextual and

methodological factors, which may account for heterogeneities in effect sizes. Arising from these considerations, along with the maturity state of this field of inquiry, scholars have called for contemporary, timely, and up-to-date systematic reviews that integrate and synthesize the extant quantitative and qualitative results to stimulate the academic inquiry in this field (Lu et al., 2016; Josiassen & Karpen, 2007).

Responsively, and coupled with the literature evidence that no quantitative meta-analysis of extant literature concerning all the dimensions of the CoOI construct and CBE exists in this research stream, leaving researchers and practitioners with little guidance and clarification of the associations' effects and magnitude, this study attempts to offer a synthesis and summary of the field to help clarify the theoretical and methodological inconsistencies in this field of inquiry through a meta-analysis.

Meta-analysis is a “quantitative, formal, and epidemiological study design that is used to systematically assess and combine the results of previous multiple scientific studies to derive conclusions about that body of research” (Haidich, 2010, p.g. 12). That is, meta-analysis synthesizes data from multiple scholarly works to draw conclusions by creating single, uniform results. This technique reviews previous works systematically and structurally, aggregates the findings of the several studies, rendering it possible to quantify and summarize the disparities and commonalities recognised (Van-Vliet et al., 2016) and offering supplementary evidence that could not be apparent from an individual study (Stanley & Doucouliagos, 2012). In this study, the meta-analytic approach is adopted to examine the association between CoOI and CBE as well as the moderating factors that may account for between-study variance in the results. That said, the research lacuna or gap that motivated this study is in order.

1.2 Research Gap

A plethora of research has been considerably conducted vis-a-vis the effect of CoOI on consumer perceptions, preferences, and attitudinal responses since the mid-1960s, resulting in over 1000 publications (e.g., Samiee & Chabowski, 2021; Paternoga, Schwendel, & Aschemann-Witzel, 2017; Wu, Ju, & Doodoo, 2016; Samiee & Chabowski, 2012). The numerous conceptual and empirical studies have shown that COO impacts consumers in a number of ways, including store or product choice, perceived social status, perceived risk (e.g., Heslop et al., 2008; Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019; Gürhan-Canli, Sarial-Abi, & Hayran, 2018), perceived attitudinal ambivalence (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019) and so on.

Despite these considerable efforts of scholars to validate and link numerous methods to CoOI and consumers' attitudes, the body of research has been deplored by recent researchers for being sometimes contradictory, atheoretical, and lacking methodological and theoretical transparency (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019). For example, Liefeld (2004, p. 91) opined that CoO “is not a

relevant attribute for making choices between alternatives.” Agreeing with Liefied, Usunier (2006, p. 61) also pointed out that “COO effect is no longer a major issue for international marketing operations: multinational production, global branding, and the decline of origin labelling in WTO rules tend to blur the CoO issue and lessen its relevance.” Summarily, the point of these authors is that the CoOI construct is not a relevant extrinsic cue in consumer-decision making.

Over the years, numerous systematic reviews have been conducted to clarify these theoretical and methodological ambiguities of the phenomenon (e.g., Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Pharr, 2005). Also, Baughn and Yaprak (1993) reviewed the methodological concerns in CoOI and offered a synthesis of related research. More recently, Samiee and Chabowski (2021) and Lu et al. (2016) reviewed the theoretical and methodological issues of CoOI investigations. These studies have advanced our understanding of the phenomenon (e.g., antecedents, mechanism, effects). However, their methodological approach, as with the other previous reviews, was qualitative, not quantitative, thereby failing to offer us a clarification of the conflicting nature and magnitude of the effect of the CoOI construct on consumer behaviour and whether the CoOI constructs actually is a relevant cue in consumer decision making. Moreover, according to Hunter and Schmidt (2004), qualitative reviews and narratives do not account for sampling, stochastic, measurement, and external validity issues in studies and are mostly not amenable to quantifying the relationships.

First, this study identifies four research gaps that have contributed to the conceptual, methodological, and operational nature of the study constructs. The first significant gap is that the effect of CoOI on consumers' behavioural responses remains conflicting and inconsistent (Pharr, 2005). Some previous investigations underscore that consumers will respond favourably or positively towards brands produced in countries with favourable images. These studies postulate that good CoOI images positively relate to consumers' perception of quality for weak or unknown brands (Lee et al., 2014; Pelet, Massarini & Pauluzzo, 2018). However, other scholars indicate that the CoO on consumer behaviour is inflated and misleading, arguing that most of the consumers usually have insufficient or limited knowledge of countries and seldomly employ the CoOI cue in decisions (Balabanis & Diamantopolous, 2004; Hui & Zhou, 2002; Lin & Kao, 2004). Still, others observed that the CoOI might provoke negative consumer responses (Pappu et al., 2006; Chao, 2000). Thus, as pointed out by Rambocas and Ramsuhag (2018, p.23), “there is little consensus among academics on the magnitude and nature of these effects.” As a result, studies vis-a-vis CoOI effect and CBE have yielded inconclusive findings, manifesting positive associations (Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018; Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019), negative effects (e.g., Liu, 2012; Ar & Kara, 2014), and no significant associations (Bayraktar, 2015; Larofet & Chen, 2013; Jain & Bariar, 2019).

This ambiguous state of the literature has significant implications with regards to the legitimacy of CoOI research; however, the “criticism has not always been substantiated by quantifying the actual practices in the field” (Lu et al., 2016, p.271). These findings or assertions motivate our effort to extend the contemporary comprehension of the complexities of the CoOI construct through a meta-analysis. As Lu et al. (2016) rightfully and forcibly intimated, “It is by comparing and synthesizing estimates across multiple studies that a better description and understanding of the phenomena may be obtained” (Lu et al., 2016, p.g. 213). Therefore, using a methodology or technique that systematically and quantitatively reviews and synthesizes empirical findings on a specific concept is helpful and insightful. Thus, the above scholarly recommendations can be best achieved through a meta-analytic review, in which estimates across studies are collected, compared, synthesized, and summarized to understand the magnitude and nature of the effect of a phenomenon.

The second significant gap is that the existing meta-analyses had different dependent variables as their focus: product evaluations, purchase intention, or buyer behaviour. However, the extent to which CoOI influences CBE has remained open to research till now. Relatedly, the earlier meta-analyses have not captured the nature and magnitude of the effect of all the dimensions of the CoOI concept in a single study. The existing or previous meta-analytic reviews are limited in scope concerning the dimensions of the CoOI construct. More specifically, the previous quantitative reviews (e.g., Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Liefeld, 1993; Ness 1982; Samiee 1994) did not take into consideration in their analyses the potential joint and relative effect of the individual dimensions of the CoOI construct, namely GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI, to highlight the magnitude exerted by each dimension on consumer behaviour, and even to ascertain which dimension exerts the most significant stimulating effect on consumer behaviour. But numerous studies have highlighted the importance of decoupling the CoOI construct so as to offer proper measure and understanding of the CoOI effect (e.g., Roth & Diamantopolous, 2010; Samiee, 2011). In effect, the prevailing meta-analyses do not provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of CoO dimensions (i.e., GCI, GPCI, SPCI, PACI) on consumers' brand evaluation or perceptions.

In addressing this gap, this study captures all the three forms of CoOI studies: “(1) studies dealing with consumers’ perceptions about various countries (genera country image); (2) studies examining the impact of country image on consumers’ product/brand evaluations and purchases (product country image); and, (3) studies investigating partitioned COO on consumers’ product evaluations” (Roth & Diamantopolous, 2009, p. 2). Also, the even abovementioned meta-analytic reviews have been done for over thirty years, and they do not incorporate the current reality of the phenomenon in the last two decades to offer us timely and “au fait” (up-to-date) insights of the field

to clarify the apparent ambiguity of the phenomenon. Therefore, a more timely and up-to-date quantitative assessment and review of the domain is required to revitalize the interest of field experts.

The third research gap is that some researchers have demonstrated that the degree of the CoOI effect depends on several factors like product complexity, the number of cues, level of development of a country, product type, product category, etc., arguing that the strength of the effect on brand evaluations is more likely to differ from context to context (Pappu et al., 2006). For instance, Essoussi and Merunka (2007) discovered that consumer attitudes for publicly consumed goods are more probably to be influenced by the CoOI effect than necessities or privately consumed goods. Not only does this fact makes the examination of contextual factors plausible, but more importantly, the evidence that these contextual factors have generated varying results, which makes it difficult to ascertain with certainty which contextual factors actually influence the CoOI—CBE relationship. Take, for instance, the cues factor. While some studies assert that the CoOI effect is stronger in single-cue studies (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999), others disagree (e.g., Chao 1993). Thus, it is theoretically significant to examine the contextual and methodological factors that may account for the heterogeneities of results to offer a better elucidation of the field. This study, therefore, contributes to bridging that gap.

Fourth, empirical evidence is fragmented and scattered across disciplines, scientific journals, and geographical and cultural contexts. In this regard, it becomes daunting to ascertain the average effect or elasticity of the CoOI on consumer brand evaluation in the vast array of the extant literature. Therefore, it is theoretically and pragmatically prudent to synthesize and calibrate the dispersed literature findings to offer researchers and practitioners “amalgamated” and “one-stop” quantitative review of the CoO—CBE relationship that may not be available in a single study. The earlier systematic reviews that have gone before this study were significantly qualitative reviews (e.g., Lu et al., 2016; Baughn & Yaprak, 1993; Amine & Chao, 2005). Consequently, missing till today is a quantitative assessment of the field that incorporates current developments beyond previous quantitative reviews (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Samiee, 1994).

To address these gaps and help quell or overcome the limitations of qualitative reviews and narratives in this research stream, we employed a meta-analysis, an established and powerful technique to summarize empirical studies' results. As part of an evidence-based research approach, meta-analysis allows researchers to ascertain the strengths of direct associations and permits the discovery and detection of moderating effects. Accordingly, Rousseau et al. (2016, p. 491) postulated that “meta-analysis is intended to establish a way to tell what is true, as best we can tell.” That established, the following four sections articulate the research aim/purpose, research objectives, research questions, and the study's research hypotheses.

1.3. Research purpose

The primary purpose of the study is to propose a meta-analytic review of the extant literature on the CoOI— CBE relationships.

1.4. Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the extent to which CoOI and its sub-dimensions exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE.
2. Determine the contextual and methodological factors that account for between-study variance in the CoOI— CBE relationship.

1.5. Research Questions

Following the study's objectives, the undermentioned research questions are probed and examined:

1. To what extent does CoOI exert aggregate and relative influence on overall CBE?
2. To what extent does general country image (GCI) exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment)?
3. To what extent does general product country image (GPCI) exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment)?
4. To what extent does specific product country image (SPCI) exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment)?
5. To what extent does partitioned country-image (PACI) exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment)?
6. To what extent do contextual factors (i.e., individualism, product sector, economic region of products, economic region of respondents, brand origin continent, and respondents' continent) exert a moderating influence on the CoOI— CBE relationship?
7. To what extent do methodological factors (i.e., cues, brand source, brand type, stimulus product level, product category, product type, product category involvement, sampling unit, theory usage, study design, country inclusion, sample size, and sampling technique) exert moderating influence on the CoOI— CBE relationship?

1.6. Contributions/significance of the study

The relevance and contributions of the present study fall along three strands: academic, pragmatic, and policy. That said, the academic contributions of the study are in order.

1.6.1. Academic contributions

Theoretically, the study makes numerous contributions to the international marketing literature on CoOI image in many ways. First, on the theoretical front, we employ cue utilisation and irradiation theories as to the theoretical models to the relationship between CoOI and CBE and provide evidenced-based quantitative analysis as to whether this relationship exists amid the conflicting results and bewildering criticisms. As far as we know based on the literature review, a systematic analysis of the CoOI—CBE relationship is non-existent in this research stream. This way, following an evidence-based research approach, this study offers the first quantitative aggregate analysis of empirical results on the CoOI—CBE relationships. This is very essential, as the trending field of international marketing has to critically investigate the fundamental pillars on which it is based and premised on.

Therefore, the conceptual framework of the meta-analysis presented would help clarify how and why the CoOI phenomenon influences CBE and the nature and magnitude of the effect and relationship. As stated earlier, the actual or real effect of CoOI on consumer behaviour has been a subject of hot debate among scholars over the years, as evidenced in the mixed findings in the field and theoretical criticisms. Therefore, providing a quantitative evaluation and summary of empirical findings in the fragmented literature will help achieve some theoretical “consensus” among scholars regarding the “real” elasticity or effect of CoOI on CBE.

Second, the present study decouples or disentangles the CoOI construct into their respective dimensions (General Country Image, General Product Country Image, Specific Product Country Image, and Partitioned Country Image) to ascertain both their relative and joint effects on consumer brand evaluation. This is pioneering of its kind in a meta-analytic review in this research stream. The existing research has investigated these dimensions separately and individually, making it challenging, if not difficult, to understand their joint impact on consumer behaviour. By assessing the dimensions jointly, we offer scholars valuable insights about the relative effects of each dimension and interdependencies among them while ascertaining the dimension with the strongest elasticity or effect on consumer brand evaluation.

Third, the study provides a quantitative review of the fragmented literature in this research domain. And because the study offers a quantitative synthesis that reflects real-life situations or practices in this field of inquiry vis-à-vis consumer behaviour as well as how these practices and developments have evolved over time, we firmly believe that the study would be of substantial value to CoOI researchers, journal editors, and tutors whose curriculum embraces CoOI and brand

management. Our study offers academicians a “one-stop” quantitative review about the relationship between CoOI and CBE, which may not be forthcoming in a single study.

Fourth, the study also bluntly accounts for the impact of the CoOI dimensions under varying contextual and methodological conditions. Therefore, this meta-analytic review aims to give meaning and interpret the causes and sources of the heterogeneity of the findings (Borenstein et al., 2021) and look for the moderator variables to get more homogenous results (Rubio-Aparicio et al., 2020). Such clarification is important for theory development and improvement of management practices because of the conflicting and inconclusive results in the field. Furthermore, accounting for both contextual and methodological moderators will provide insights into the role of certain contextual and methodological factors and aspects that help account for between-study variance in the effect sizes.

Fifth, from a methodological perspective, this study advances the methodological rigor of CoOI research by using a meta-analytic review approach to analyse and compare the estimates from the different studies to offer a better description of the field since earlier efforts have relied mainly on a qualitative method of systematic review, with few exceptional cases of quantitative reviews (e.g., Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). This technique reviews previous works systematically and structurally, aggregates the findings of the several studies, renders it possible to quantify and summarize the disparities and commonalities recognised (Van-Vliet et al., 2016), and offers additional evidence that could not be apparent from an individual study (Stanley & Doucouliagos, 2012). Along the same lines, unlike previous quantitative reviews in this research stream that used only bi-variate correlational analysis, we employ both subgroup analysis and Meta-regression (MARA) to test the hypothesised relationships of the study. While the sub-group analysis helps us know the direction and effect of the relationships, the MARA enables us to ascertain the joint effect and interdependencies of the connections.

1.6.2. Practical/Managerial contributions

From a pragmatic viewpoint, this study has ample implications for international brand managers and practitioners. First and foremost, this study offers firms valid and reliable information about the overall average effect or elasticity of the impact of CoOI on consumer brand evaluation. This insight can help brand marketers know the average effect size they can expect from their CoOI advertising and promotion campaigns in both the local and international markets. Furthermore, understanding the valid and reliable average effect (elasticity) of the impact of CoOI on consumer brand evaluation can tremendously help marketing practitioners and international brand managers to ascertain the short, medium or long-term nature of the CoOI construct in terms of their global branding strategies.

Secondly, disentangling or decoupling the CoOI constructs into their respective individual dimensions and examining their relative and joint effects can enable firms to ascertain the true nature and magnitude of the effect of each dimension of CoOI, which can significantly guide them in their budget and resource allocation and strategic marketing orientations. In a similar vein, because the study investigates the relative effect of the CoOI dimensions on the individual elements of the brand equity model (e.g., perceived brand equity, brand awareness, brand association, brand image, brand loyalty, brand trust, etc.), it will help brand managers to know the relative impact of CoOI dimensions on the relative consumer brand equity dimensions, thereby helping them to ascertain the brand equity dimension that is most influenced by CoOI, which in turn, can assist them in designing and developing tailor-made marketing campaigns to elicit positive consumer responses vis-à-vis the brand equity dimensions.

Thirdly, companies with a global presence must understand how brands and country associations work and how they affect global consumers' acceptance of foreign products and services, leading to a study of CoOI. Since brand equity is a valuable strategic asset of firms and a significant stream of competitive advantage, brand managers would need to comprehend the linkage between CoOI, in particular PACI, and consumer brand evaluation before resolving on the decision to shift their production or design or assemble of products to other countries. Therefore, understanding the CoOI—CBE relationship would help firms in their marketing productivity, particularly vis-à-vis the choice of marketing strategies in a target country.

Fourthly, international brand managers must consider the CoOI effect when developing global sourcing and marketing strategies, notwithstanding a brand's reputation. In particular, brands with negative country image will require managers to design good marketing campaigns and programmes to alleviate or lessen the negative effect of unfavourable CoOI. By understanding the linkage between CoOI and consumer brand equity, international brand managers can know how best to protect and enhance the core essence of a brand with a better understanding of the issues of “quantification of a brand equity” and “identification of elements that could change consumer behaviour and cause changes in brand equity” (Aaker & Biel, 1993, p. 77). Therefore, this study will provide managerial support to business executives in designing and developing a pricing strategy (e.g., price differentiation, customer value-oriented pricing), market segmentation, and adjustment of the marketing mix based on consumers' behavioural and perceptual specificities in different countries.

Lastly, due to the global marketplace's complexity and uncertainty, understanding the relationship between country image and consumer-based brand equity can help firms that aim to exploit marketing expansion opportunities in the global marketplace to effectively and efficiently make their brands and products attractive in the new markets. To make a successful expansion

marketing strategy, international marketers need to understand how to appropriately resource their expenditure by understanding how the CoOI cue influences consumer brand evaluation. Therefore, the study's findings can help managers in their strategic decisions like country-site or location for installing the firm's production plants (operations), position strategies, and public export promotion programmes.

1.6.3. Policy contributions

Research has shown that CoOI is a relevant informational cue of interest not only to firms aiming to achieve competitive advantage in the international market but also to public policymakers with parallel interests and concerns (Papadopoulos, Ibrahim, De Nisco & Napolitano, 2018). Being so, and arising from the general recognition that country images are developed and championed at national levels, it is envisaged that the study's findings will offer valuable and tremendous insights to policymakers and governments in many ways. More specifically, the study is expected to provide some policy guidance and understanding to government officials and national decision-makers vis-à-vis such issues as country associations and stereotypes, country/nation branding strategies, investment promotion, and FDI initiatives, exports programmes, and strategic collaboration and partnership with local firms for a better-enhanced country image in the international market.

Firstly, the study's findings will succour policymakers to understand how country associations and stereotypes, directly and indirectly, influence consumers, international distributors, retailers, industrial buyers, and investors' perceptions about countries and their products or brands. This awareness or knowledge will help them not only to be better informed about their policies of investment promotion and advertising campaigns (discussed subsequently) but also about the action-oriented plans and initiatives to be taken to react in the best possible way to opportunities and threats in the world markets. For instance, if the perceived image of the target country is positive, national governments can capitalize on that to promote the national brands and products of the country accordingly. On the other hand, if consumers associate the target country with a negative image, which may influence their evaluative judgments as well as their propensity to buy brands/products from that country, this knowledge can help policymakers to take pre-emptive measures to lessen those negative perceived images of consumers through appropriate advertising and promotional campaigns. Therefore, understanding the relationship between CoOI and CBE can help policymakers to ensure that national reforms are not only made democratically and well-communicated to the general public, but also measures are taken to enhance positive facets in its image and to counter negative ones in both domestic and global marketplaces.

Secondly, and closely tied to the above point is the concept of country/nation branding, which basically involves the process of holistically creating, evaluating, changing, and managing a nation's

image in a broad array of facets (i.e., economic, political, and socio-cultural) to improve the image and reputation of the country at the global level (Fan, 2010; Beloso, 2010). Thus, arising from this study on the CoOI— and CBE is the relevance of country branding for policymakers and national decision-makers. The point is that countries today need to strategically position themselves in the increasingly intense competitive business environment in order to accelerate and stimulate export, attract tourists, enhance intentional credibility, and secure the trust of foreign investors (discussed subsequently).

Thirdly, this study is envisioned to provide valuable insights to stakeholders and policymakers in their investment promotions and foreign direct investment (FDI) initiatives. More specifically, this study will help policymakers to appreciate that “buyers” of a country’s product or brands do not merely end consumers but also industrial buyers, suppliers, and potential investors (Papadopoulos et al., 2018), who are also influenced by the perceived images of particular countries. Thus, by strategically and well-positioning itself as a favourable location for investment, a nation can be seen as a “product” to attract “buyers” of the product (i.e., investors), at least from a marketing perspective. This way, efforts to improve the positive aspects of the country’s image can help build the nation in a beneficial position as a competitor against other investments sites that investors may wish to invest in. This will call for initiatives and policies that improve the country’s image and ameliorate market openness, an issue that is vital for all government agencies (e.g., labour, economy, finance, and industry, etc.) who may wish to take advantage of their country’s strength to attract more FDI for their respective purposes. For instance, public policymakers can develop special promotional campaigns that focus on the specific positive country and product images like quality, innovation, reliability, safety, excellence, etc., through press releases, advertising spots in the media, and national exhibitions about the country’s manufacturers and exporters.

Lastly, since the CoOI evaluations by consumers in foreign markets are formulated at both country level and specific levels such as industry, product, and brand, the study will expose policymakers to the need for strategic collaboration and partnership with firms to create positive CoOI associations. For instance, the government can offer support services (e.g., training, consulting) to exporting companies to assist them in internationalizing and improving their management level. Along the same lines, public policymakers, parastatal institutions, and industry associations can adopt stringent measures to enhance the country image, such as by adopting minimum quality standards for indigenous companies that produce and sell abroad, which can be done by offering tax incentives and other provisional subsidies to help firms in their international marketing campaigns. The organisation of the entire thesis is presented next.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This thesis contains six chapters in all.

Chapter one: Introduction

In this first chapter, the study presents the background to the study and addresses the research gap and motivations, followed by an articulation of the research objectives and research questions. In addition, the chapter elucidates the study's significance and contributions from theoretical and pragmatic perspectives and culminates with the structure and organisation of the whole study.

Chapter two: Literature review.

This chapter reviews the theoretical background of the study, namely, the cues-utilisation and irradiation theories that underpin the study and highlights the theoretical, conceptual, and definitional reviews on CoOI and CBE. It further explains the historical perspective on CoOI, definitions, and conceptual specifications, dimensions of CoOI from consumer perspective, brand and brand evaluation, consumer brand equity, as well as the contextual and methodological moderators of the study.

Chapter three: Conceptual framework and empirical analysis

This chapter of the study looks at the empirical reviews on the nexus between CoOI dimensions and consumer brand evaluation by first presenting the meta-analytic conceptual framework of the study, followed by an articulation of the expected impact of the formulated relationships, which are aimed to answer the research questions of the study.

Chapter four: Research methodology

The fourth chapter begins with a review of the concept of meta-analysis regarding the characteristics and importance of carrying out a meta-analysis and then justifies this empirical, evidence-based approach adopted for this study. The chapter then outlines the research methods employed, data collection procedure, and data analysis techniques used for the study.

Chapter five: Results and Discussions

The fifth chapter presents the findings and discussion vis-à-vis the nexus between CoOI dimensions and consumer brand evaluation. Thus, the chapter first presents the results obtained from the research objectives and then discusses them with the extant literature on the CoOI— CBE association by comparing and contrasting them with the previous meta-analytic review. Finally, the results are presented using sub-group analysis and meta-analytic regression analysis (MARA).

Chapter six: Conclusions, implications, and recommendations

Chapter six, the final chapter of the study, will summarize and synthesize the whole thesis, outline the contributions to the knowledge and research models, illustrate the topology, and present the theoretical, managerial/practical, and policy implications of the study for pragmatic discourses.

Then the chapter culminates with suggestions of relevant avenues for future studies. Figure 1 presents a pictorial and graphical illustration of the organisation of the thesis.

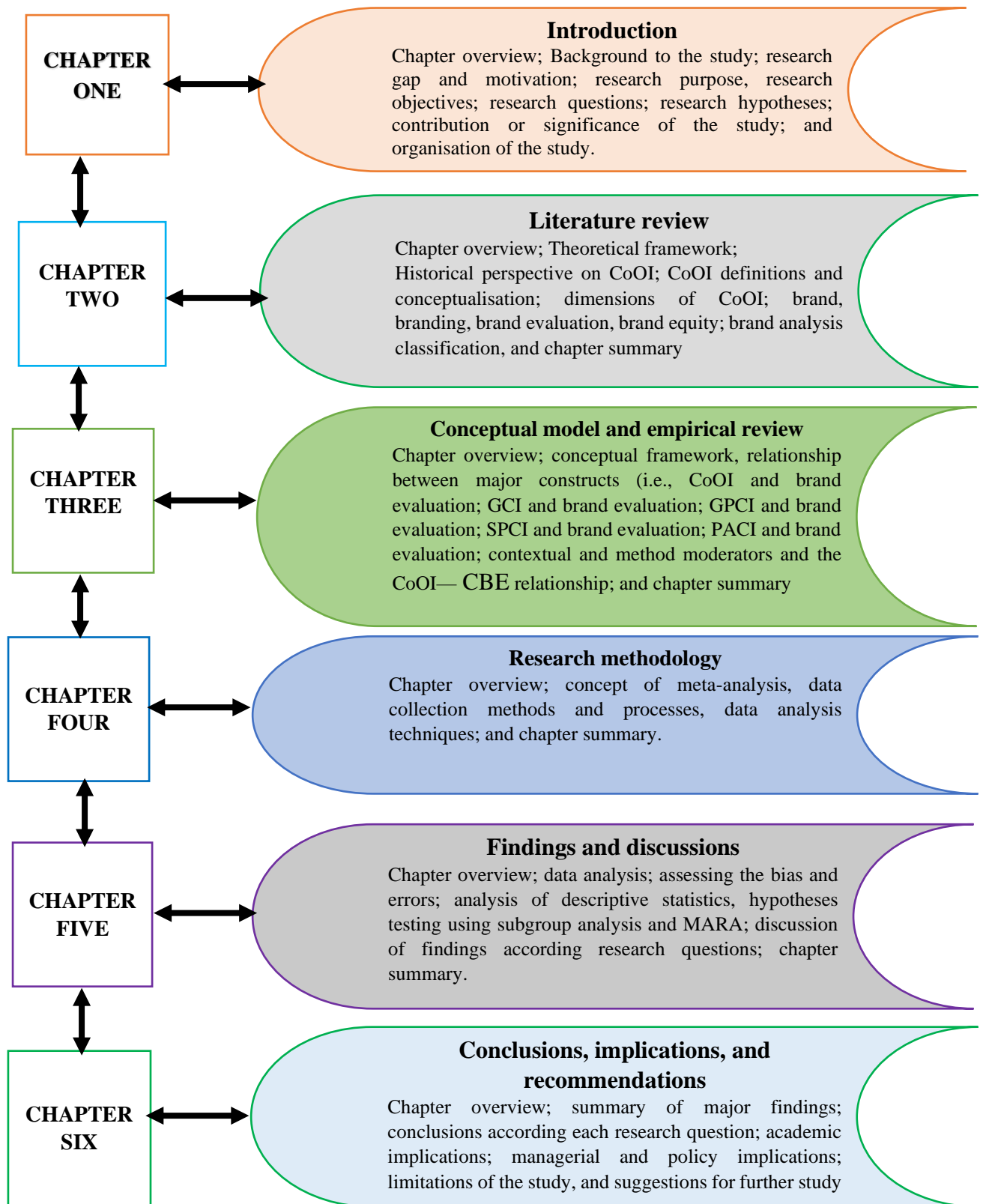


Figure 1: Thesis Structure

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Overview

Chapter two presents the literature review on CoOI and CBE from theoretical and conceptual perspectives. A chapter overview is presented in Section 2.0 that highlights the chapter's organisation to guide this chapter. In section 2.1, the theoretical framework vis-à-vis the cue categorization theory and irradiation theory, which underpin this study, is presented with adequate justification. A historical perspective on CoOI is presented in section 2.2. Section 2.3 provides an overview of CoO definitions and conceptual specifications, while section 2.4 presents the CoOI dimensions, with General country image (GCI), Product country image (PCI), and Partitioned country image (PACI) presented in Sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, respectively. Section 2.5 discusses the concept of brand and brand evaluation, while section 2.6 presents the brand equity model and CBE. Section 2.7 explains the brand analysis model and classification, whereas section 2.8 briefly reviews the CoOI and brand evaluation associations. The chapter culminates with a summary of the issues presented in this chapter in section 2.9. With this brief overview, the theoretical framework of the study is in order.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study draws principally on two theories for developing the hypothesised relationship: cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory.

2.1.1. Cue utilisation theory and Irradiation theory

Conceptualised by Olson and Jacoby (1972), the cue utilisation theory posits that consumers' inferences about product or brand characteristics are influenced by an array of cues, which are used to evaluate the quality of products and brands. The cue utilisation theory addresses the "interplay between brand globalness/localness and domestic/foreign brand origin," (Olson & Jacoby, 1972), where the branded products represent sets of cues. That is, consumers use cues to form perception and judgment of product quality and purchase decisions.

From the cue utilisation front, consumers assess a product based on information cues. These cues are grouped into two categories: intrinsic (e.g., taste, design, performance) and extrinsic (e.g., price, brand name, warranties) (Andersen & Chao, 2003). Extrinsic cues refer to product-related variables but extramural to the tangible product, such as price, color, packaging, brand name, and CoOI. Consumers use extrinsic cues in evaluating a brand because they can sometimes not detect its real intrinsic quality. One alternative that consumers can use for the evaluation of the quality of brands is inferences from extrinsic cues, or market signals like brand name, price, advertising, seller reputation (Chowdhury & Ahmed et al., 2009; Schmalensee 1978)

Extrinsic cue usage enables consumers to simplify decisions by reducing decision complexity and minimizing cognitive effort (Verlegh, Steenkamp & Meulenberg, 2005). On the other hand, intrinsic cues constitute attributes that are inherently embedded in the product that cannot be altered without modifying the product's physical characteristics, like ingredients. Research has shown that CoO can be considered an extrinsic cue that consumers employ to make inferences and judgments about the product or brand offered (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). Furthermore, it has been revealed that

all products or brands originating in overseas markets are subject to the CoOI effect. For example, Italian fashions brands with the “Made in Italy” cue are perceived as positive when judging the quality of products or brands.

According to Zeithaml (1988), consumers’ inclination to use extrinsic cues is high when intrinsic cues like performance, reliability, workmanship are unavailable or quality is difficult to judge, such that in circumstances of low brand familiarity, a brand’s country of origin becomes a more driver cue (Josiassen, Lukas & Whitwell, 2008). Hence, consumers presume attributes of the brand based on their stereotypical beliefs associated with the CoO and their experiences with other products from that particular country (Dagger & Racit, 2011). Accordingly, the cue utilisation theory explains that products consist of multiple cues that signal quality to consumers (Olson & Jacoby, 1972), who use these cues to evaluate product quality (Rao & Monroe, 1988). Thus, according to this theory, when consumers evaluate products, they do not look at cues in isolation but in combination such that different cues interact with each other to determine quality judgments (Coo, warranty, etc.).

Relatedly, the irradiation theory addresses the “subjective interlinkage of perceptions whereby the evaluation of specific property transfers to the evaluation of another property and influences the latter” (cited in Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011, p.g.4. from Florack et al., 2007, p.g. 347). Although originating in Gestalt psychology, the irradiation theory has been significantly applied in marketing research, particularly within the domains of advertising research (e.g., Schweiger & Schrattecker, 2001), consumer research (Kroeber-Riel & Weinberg, 2003), and country of origin (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011). The fundamental tenet of the irradiation theory is that consumers’ image about a specific country shapes their perceptions of the image of a brand or product coming from that particular country (Lebreuz, 1996). Thus, the person’s perception and evaluation of the country transfers to the evaluation of products and brands from that country.

According to Weiss-Richard (2003, p. 42), this is because the “identification of the origin of a product influences the perception of one or more other attributes of the product.” Thus, the length and breadth of the irradiation perspective is that CoO can act as a driver or determinant of CBE, such that a positive consumer perception can enhance the strength of brand equity dimensions (Thakor & Katsanis, 1997), while negative consumer perception of a particular brand may influence his or her perception about the country associated with the brand (Lampert & Jaffe, 1998).

Thus, we employ the cue utilisation theory to underpin that consumers use information cues like CoO when making decisions. Likewise, the irradiation theory highlights how consumers’ perception of that particular cue transfers to their evaluation of the brand or product. Therefore, these two theories offer a solid bedrock to understand the association between CoO and CBE under varying

contextual factors (brand type, source, familiarity, involvement) and methodological factors (e.g., sampling size, theoretic lens, study design, etc.).

2.2. Historical Perspective on CoOI

Studies about consumers' perceptions and national stereotypes can be traced back to antiquity period in the '30s (Katz & Braly, 1933; Child & Doob, 1943). During this period, studies centred on how stereotypical beliefs and cultural attitudes of people in a particular country affect their perception toward people from other countries (Klingberg, 1941). However, in 1962, Ernest Dichter predicted the potential linkage or connection between domestic and global brands and the fundamental differences and similarities among consumers in different parts of the globe (Dichter, 1962).

Drawing from Dichter's prediction, Robert Schooler empirically tested the significance of CoO for the first time in 1965, examining the linkage between CoO and attitudes and buying intention. A related theory was proposed by Schooler and Sanoo (1969), who examined global products and consumers perception by comparing national labelling versus regional, and indicating that consumers were biased against products from a less developed country, so firms should adopt "regional labelling rather than national labelling such as "Made in Latin America," "Made in Europe", and "Made in Africa." With the seminal work of Schooler (1965) and Schooler and Sanoo (1969) that proved that the CoO effect exists, there have been a plethora of researches on this theme, generating over 1000 articles published to date (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019).

The unprecedented rate at which marketing scholars embraced the CoO phenomenon led some pioneering scholars to describe it as "the most researched international aspect of consumer behaviour" (Tan & Farley (1987) and the "one of the most widely studied phenomena in all the international business, marketing, and consumer behaviour literatures" integrated (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995, p.g. 1). The decades of research scrutiny have demonstrated one unequivocal deduction: a brand or product's country of origin can affect consumers' evaluative judgment. However, over time, and with the advent of structural changes in the international and business models of global brands resulting from the growth of the World Trade Organisation, US membership of NAFTA, and the emergence of the Internet as the medium of commerce (Pharr, 2005), some researchers (e.g., (Samiee, Shimp, & Sharma 2005; Wang & Chen 2004; Thakor & Lavack 2003) began to criticize the legitimacy and salience of the CoO and consumers' real knowledge level of a products or brand's country of origin

Notwithstanding, most CoO researchers argue that consumers are likely to take into account CoO cues as a piece of salient information and, accordingly, use such information in their evaluative judgments of products and brands (Liu, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). In fact, Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) underscored that CoOI could be deemed an unconscious and automatic process, such that

consumers cannot be sure about the country associations they make, although consumers can be considered rational and cognitive decision-makers. Finally, it should be noted that besides the structural changes that have impacted the CoOI phenomenon, there has also been a significant development in the theorisation and operationalization of the CoOI construct. Until some years ago, the CoOI was conceived as a unidimensional phenomenon (Han, 1989). But since 1995, a substantial body of studies attempted to decompose the CoOI from a single measure to a multidimensional construct such as country-of-parts (COP), and country-of-assembly (COA), country-of-design (COD), and country-of-brand (COB) (Quester, Dzever, & Chetty 2001; Inch and McBride 2004; Thakor and Lavack 2003; Chao, 1993).

At first, the CoOI was prevalently used to highlight product quality in the case of information missing (Lusk et al., 2006), but it came to be used to differentiate from other similar products (Hsieh, Pan & Setiono, 2004). Moreover, prior research in the field mostly employed a single-cue approach; that is, they examined the association between CoOI and consumer product judgment and perceptions without empirical recourse to other variables that can impact the consumer decision-making process, which in turn, led to overestimation of the phenomenon (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013), and generating criticisms from field researchers and experts. But, along the line, thanks to the more sophisticated and refined methodological designs, scholars shifted to a multi-cue approach, where they examined the CoO effect in relative instead of absolute terms (Rosenbloom & Haefner, 2009). In the ensuing years, the existence of the CoO effect was investigated via diverse kinds of brands, products, product attributes, social and economic development, among others.

According to the literature, CoOI is considered an intangible asset that generates a competitive advantage for firms, besides its role of influencing consumers' evaluative judgments (Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009). Moreover, in recent years, thanks to the standardisation strategies of firms searching for cost-saving advantages and the dynamics of globalisation like growing competition from emerging economies, the CoO phenomenon has been considered as a vital strategy by firms seeking to exploit its expansion, outsourcing, and competitive strategies in the international markets (Rosenbloom & Haefner, 2009).

2.3. Country-of-Origin Image (CoOI): Definitions and conceptualisations

As mentioned before, the CoOI theory was first conceptualised by Schooler (1965) as the "Made In" concept. Since then, the conceptual definition of the phenomenon has progressed significantly. For example, Elliot and Cameron (1994, p.2) conceived it as "any influence, positive or negative that country of manufacture might have on the consumer choice and behaviour towards a product." Along the same lines, Johansson et al. (1985) viewed CoOI as the country where the company's headquarters makes and markets the brand/product. It is evident from these pioneering

definitions that the CoO concept was viewed from only the perspective of the firm's home country producing and marketing the brand or product.

However, as indicated earlier, recent trend by firms to search for cost-saving advantages in more cost-effective geographic locations through standardisation strategies has led to the conceptualisation of the phenomenon with more specialised terminologies like country-of-parts (Ulgado & Lee, 1993), country-of-assembly (Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996), country-of-design (Chao, 1998), and country-of-manufacture (Iyer & Kalita, 1997). Followingly, several researchers have described it as where products have been produced, developed, assembled, and designed (e.g., Lin & Chen, 2006).

Nevertheless, some researchers also explain the phenomenon as “stereotypes” (e.g., Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Hooley et al., 1988), others as “perceptions” (e.g., Han, 1989; Allred et al., 1999); still, others employ such terms as “associations” or “impressions” (e.g., Van-Ittersum et al., 2003), many others as “schemas” (e.g., Ger, 1991), and few others view it as “beliefs” or “attitudes” (Martin & Eroglu, 1993). Perceptions relate to the process of consumers’ selection, organisation, and interpretation of intrinsic (e.g., performance, taste) and extrinsic cues (e.g., price, CoO) (Solomon et al., 2006). Stereotypes are “stored beliefs about characteristics of a group of people” (Bar-Tal, 1997, p. 491). Schemas are “cognitive structures of organised prior knowledge, abstracted from experience with specific instances” (Fiske & Linville, 1980, p. 543). Lastly, attitudes are a “learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6).

Field experts such as Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) pinpointed that, of the four conceptual specifications, attitude “has the ability to explain favourable and unfavourable country evaluations” (p. 11). Literature notes that attitudes comprise not only cognitive facets but also affective (specific emotions or feelings) and conative (i.e., intended behaviour) aspects (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, it is noted that the attitude conceptualisation can help explain how nations are conceived in consumers’ mind (e.g., beliefs—schemas and stereotypes, and emotions towards a given country) and how this knowledge may affect their reactions towards that particular country (i.e., consumers’ country conations).

With respect to the CoO effect, Kabadayi and Lerman (2011, p. 104) explained it as the “extent to which the place of manufacture (as well as CoD, CoB, CoA, CoP, my emphasis) influences consumer evaluations and product-related decisions.” This effect can manifest in threefold: (1) simplifying the brand/product evaluation process; (2) serving as an independent cue in brand/product evaluation; and (3) signalling the brand/product quality. From the cue utilisation theoretical perspective, consumers use both intrinsic and extrinsic cues to evaluate products/brands. This

indicates that CoO is not just a cognitive cue that, for instance, provides brand/product quality signal to consumers, but is also an affective cue consisting of emotional and affect meanings since it relates to memories, pride, and identity of consumers (Bartra et al., 1999). Impliedly, scholars view the CoO concept from cognitive and affective perspectives (Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003).

On the cognitive perspective front, the CoO is theorised as consumers' beliefs of a country, comprising its technological advancement, industrialization, standard of living, and level of economic development. Therefore, the cognitive includes specific statement or “belief” that people express towards a brand’s benefits and attributes. Thus, the cognitive effect in the context of CoO represents self-expression, that is, a person’s desire to associate one’s self and product or brand images (Piron, 2000) or his or her desire to relate rationally toward a country based on his or her knowledge on their products and brand image.

On the other hand, the affective CoO effect highlights the consumers' emotional and feelings toward a particular country, including its people, culture, policies, and governments. That is, affective involves emotional, perceptual, motivational, affective, and integrated evaluative responses that consumers associate with brands or products (Hu & Wang, 2010). Scholars underscore that ironing out the differences between the CoO concept as a cognitive cue and as an affective cue is vital in that consumers can manifest different cognitive and affective responses toward the same country. For instance, while a consumer may admire the technological advancement of a particular country, he/she may dislike its foreign policies.

Besides the cognitive and affective conceptualisations, some researchers also view CoO as a normative cue, on the argument that consumers choice and decision to buy or not to buy a country’s brands or products can be deemed as their preference for or against the actions, practices or policies of a particular country (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Indeed, Smith (1993) opined that consumers could punish “antipathetic” countries by abstaining from buying their brands/products and reward “sympathetic” countries by buying their brands/products. It is against this background that Maheswaran, Chen, and He (2013, p.156) postulated that “comprehensive examination of country-of-origin effect must include associations that are based on both product performance-related and product-unrelated aspects.” Hence, the normative effect involves people's symbolic association to the CoO, like brand status and name.

Apart from the cognitive, affective, and conative perspectives, another crucial conceptualisation of the CoO concept is in regard to the “halo” and “summary” domains of the phenomenon (Han, 1989). According to the “halo” hypothesis perspective, the perception or image that consumers hold about a country forms the basis of their inferences about brand/product quality,

such that this perception can indirectly generate positive and negative attitudes toward their evaluative judgments (brand attitude, brand loyalty, product beliefs). The “halo” effect occurs when consumers are unfamiliar with products/brands from that particular country. Therefore, under the “halo” effect, consumers employ halo images of a country to infer quality and solicit inferential product or service beliefs when product-specific information is lacking.

Under the “summary” perspective, consumers develop abstractions or generalizations of the product/brand information into a country image, directly influencing their attitude toward a brand. Research shows that the “summary” effect occurs when consumers are familiar with products or brands from that particular country (Han, 1989). Thus, when consumers become more familiar with a country’s products or services, they summarize service or product information and form decisions directly. The extant literature reveals that these dimensions affect consumer behaviour in terms of product evaluation, brand evaluation, and purchase intention, willingness to pay more, and worth of mouth (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019).

The point is that, whatever the approach is taken, CoOI produces cognitive elaboration about physical brand/product attitudes that shape consumer attitude and purchase intention (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Cordell, 1992). Nai, Cheah, and Phau (2018) conclude that CoOI is still a crucial evaluation cue in today’s world of globalisation and that Consumers employ coOI in the alternative evaluation of products or services as a stereotyping process that permits the consumer to predict the probability of a product produced in a specific country as having certain characteristics. Generally, consumers will evaluate products or services more favourably if they have a positive CoOI.

With the complexity associated with the CoO concept, the scope of CoO research has been gradually shifted from examining the differences in preferences and brand/product evaluations from merely the perspective of the national origin of a brand/product (e.g., Ghana, Italy, Austria) to a more multifaced measure, precisely image of the nations in view. Thus, on one angle, the traditional CoO researches enable scholars to investigate and explore consumers comparative choices of brands and products from different countries; on the other hand, contemporary attention to the perceived images of the nations under consideration allow researchers to examine the “why” of the former case. That is why consumers prefer brands or products from one country over brands or products from another.

For instance, the innovative and workmanship superiority may account for the latter. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that scholars have given more emphasis to analyse the image of a country as a brand or product origin, known as CoOI (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). Thus, in this meta-analytic review, we refer to the CoO concept as the CoOI to incorporate all the studies that examine not just the CoO effect but the CoOI on CBE. CoOI is defined as a “consumer’s summary

evaluation of a country as an origin of products.” A brief discussion of the dimensions of the CoOI construct is in order.

2.4. Dimensions of the CoOI construct

After reviewing the existing literature, we noticed that the decomposition of the CoOI into sub-dimensions has gone through significant revolutions in terms of terminologies and theorisation across the years. For example, pioneering studies in the field decomposed the CoOI construct into two main categories: country image and product image connected with a specific country (Papadopoulos et al., 1990; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Samiee, 1994; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). Other scholars conceptualised the CoOI at two levels: macro country image and micro country image (Pappu et al., 2006). Yaprak and Parameswaran (1986) proposed that the CoOI consists of three primary constructs, namely, general country attributes (GCA), general product attributes (GPA), and special product attributes (SPA).

In a parallel thought, Hsieh (2004) pointed out that the CoOI could be viewed at three levels: (1) overall country image, (2) aggregate product country image, and (3) specific product country image. Shedding the same emphasis but from a different perspective, Josiassen et al. (2013) and Andéhn et al. (2016) conceptualise three levels of CoOI, namely basic-origin image (BOI) (country image), product-origin image (POI) or product-CI, and category-origin image (COI) or specific product CI. Noticeably, it can be seen that although the above scholars differ in emphasis and the ‘coining’ of the decompositions, they all converge to the same conclusion: CoOI can be conceptualised at three levels— (1) general country image, (2) general product country image, and (3) specific product country image.

However, as indicated before, with the growth of hybrid products that are manufactured in one country but assembled, designed, and sourced in another country, scholars have identified a fourth category of the CoOI, that is, partitioned country of origin image (Chao, 1998; Insh and McBride, 2004; Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009). This brings the decomposition of the CoOI into four main dimensions: (1) overall country image (GCI), (2) aggregate product image, (GPCI), (3) specific product country image (SPCI), and 4) partitioned country image (PACI). This study argues that all four levels exert a simultaneous and summative influence on consumers’ judgments of a specific brand’s equity. Thus, in this meta-analytic review, these four levels are examined simultaneously to determine both their joint and relative impact on CBE. The following section reviews each dimension vis-a-vis consumer behaviour.

2.4.1 Macro/General country image (GCI)

The concept of “image” has been investigated for decades in marketing, social psychology, and consumer behaviour. In simple terms, image means the total beliefs, attitudes, and impressions that a person has about an object, which can be a company, product, brand, place, or country. These beliefs and impressions can be true or false, right or wrong, real or imagined; images guide and shape behaviour (Barich & Kotler, 1991). GCI research examines how a country’s image influences consumers’ perception of and attitude towards the country, its people, and its marketplace offerings. The GCI, also known as the macro country image, consists of several elements: clothing, tunes, pieces of literature, specialties of the political system, national symbols, colors, typical buildings, objects, customs, historical heritage, and many more (Jenes, 2005).

Definitions abound on the GCI concept. Nagashima (1970, p.4), the first scholar to conceptualise the country image concept, defined it as “the image, reputation that consumer attached to a product of a specific country. That picture is often being influenced through the history, tradition, and background of that country.” Roth and Romeo (1992, p.3) viewed GCI as the “general perception that consumers form towards products based on their production and strengths and weakness of the country’s marketing.”

Similarly, Martin and Eroglu (1993) explained overall country image as the “sum of all, descriptive, informational and inferential beliefs that a person has toward a specific country.” Yaprak and Parameswaran (1986) also viewed the GCI as “consumer perceptions about country-of-origin influenced by their opinion about the country as a whole, its people, and its capacity to produce quality products.” These pioneering definitions see the GCI as a generic construct composed of generalized images including not merely the products of the country but also the extent of political, economic, political maturity, traditions and culture, historical relationships and events, and the rate of technological industrialization and virtuosity (Desborde, 1990).

The next group of definitions focuses on the image of countries in their function as origins of products. Li et al. (1997, p. 166) define the GCI as the “consumers' images of different countries and of products made in these countries.” Han (1990) also described it as the “consumers' general perception about the quality of brands or products produced in a particular country.” This definition connotes that country image and product image are two distinct (but related) concepts, and that country images affect products from that country. Concerning its direction, the GCI can be an internal image (self-image) and external image (mirror image), analogous to product image classification. Talking of that, the internal country image denotes ‘what citizens think about their own country,’ whereas the external country image regards ‘what others/foreigners think about our country/other countries’ (Jenes 2007, p.40.).

The GCI, like any other image types, is a multidimensional term. Researchers have examined numerous, sometimes overlapping dimensions, of the concept over the years. For example, Papadopoulos et al. (1990) discovered the following dimensions of GCI: industrial development, affect, industrial orientation, and closer ties. Beracs and Malota (2000) found cognitive evaluation, affective evaluation, and experience (knowledge about the country). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) identified people facets, economy, technology, landscape, environment, and politics, while Martin & Eroglu (1993) found politics, technology, and economy. According to Rezvani et al. (2012), the GCI dimensions are technological, cultural, economic parts of every country. Thus, we see that the dimensions overlap, yet consensus is seen on certain dimensions like politics, economy, technology, culture, people. The GCI held in the memory of the consumers may be based on the consumer's experiences, knowledge, preferences, and exposure towards a specific country (Pappu et al., 2007). These CoOI dimensions are displayed in Table 1 below.

Han (1989) explained country image impact on product or brand evaluation via summary and halo models, noting that country image perceptions impact overall evaluations indirectly through beliefs (halo effect) and directly (summary effects). On one angle, consumers employ halo images of a country to infer quality and solicit inferential product or service beliefs when a product or service-specific information is lacking. On the other angle, when consumers become more familiar with a country's products or services, they summarize service or product information and form decisions directly. The extant literature reveals how these dimensions affect consumer behaviour in terms of product evaluation, brand evaluation, and purchase intention, willingness to pay more, and worth of mouth (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019).

However, results are diverse and mixed, showing positive, negative, or non-significant relationships. Some empirical evidence shows that the image of a country might affect not only the evaluation of that country's products but also other important outcomes such as investments, visits, and ties with a country (e.g., Heslop et al., 2004). The research of Hamzaoui-Essoussi et al. (2011) demonstrates that the macro image of country-of-origin (GCI) positively affects the brand image. Diamantopoulos et al. (2011) also stated that the GCI affects the brand image, awareness, and purchase intention. Jin et al. (2006) also said that GCI has even a more positive impact on customers' brand evaluation than manufacturing country (COM).

Yet, some studies disagree, arguing that the GCI has no significant conative effects on consumers (Samiee, 2010; Pappu et al., 2007). For example, Bayraktar (2015) noted that the perceptions of a country's economic, political, cultural, and technological conditions (macro country image) might not directly relate to the perceived brand quality. Thus, in the wake of the prevailing

inconclusive results, it is important to synthesize and integrate data across multiple scholarly works to ascertain the true effect and nature of the GCI on consumer behaviour.

2.4.2. Product Country Image (PCI)

The CoO effects have been realized to exist for products in general (Diamantopoulos, Herz & Koschate-Fischer, 2015; Darling and Wood, 1990), for particular product categories (Cordell, 1992; Hong and Wyer, 1989; Roth and Romeo, 1992), and for specific brands (Pelet, Massarini & Pauluzzo, 2018; Chao, 1993; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Tse and Gorn, 1993; Witt, 1990). Furthermore, research indicates that products are not only general but category-specific, in the sense that consumers may not relate the same stereotypical beliefs with all the product categories from a given country. In light of this, scholars underscore that when investigating the effect of a product image, it is important to consider both the general country image and specific product country image. In fact, Han (1989) opined that the more specific the level of analysis of PCI, the greater the amount of available information, with more precise analysis, and the greater the likelihood of disparities in consumer brand and product evaluation. This way, this study follows the current thinking of the literature to divide the product country image (PCI) into its respective two main dimensions, namely, General Product Country Image (GCI) and Specific Product Country Image (SPCI). These dimensions are succinctly reviewed in the sections below.

2.4.2.1 General/Micro Product Country Image (GPCI)

Studies suggest that country image differs significantly, depending on the product category under consideration (Andéhn & Dacosta, 2016; Hsieh, Pan & Setiono, 2004). Consumers may have particular views about products or services from other countries, which can have an adverse/positive impact on the person's attitudes towards brands or services from those countries. Research shows that consumers sometimes associate some stereotypical attitudes and beliefs of product or brand attitudes with a particular country's image (Jain & Bariar, 2019). For instance, consumers may consider Italian products to be technologically advanced and German products to be reliable. This is called the General/aggregate product country image (GPCI).

Field experts have put forth several definitions to conceptualise the GPCI concept. Nagashima (1970, p. 68) viewed it as "the picture, the reputation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country." Narayana (1981, p. 32) postulated that "aggregate image for any particular country's product refers to the entire connotative field associated with that country's product offerings, as perceived by consumers." Han (1989, p. 222) described it as "Consumers' general perceptions of quality for products made in a given country." Roth and Romeo (1992, p. 480) labelled it as "the overall perception consumers' form of products from a particular

country, based on their prior perceptions of the country's production and marketing strengths and weaknesses.”

Yaprak and Parameswaran (1986) define the GPCI as the overall perception of products offered by a particular country. It is a complete cognitive “feel” related to a specific country’s products or perceived overall quality of the products or service from that specific country (Hsieh et al., 2004; Shimp, Samiee & Madden, 1993). Put differently, consumers' overall perception about general products of a particular country. Literature notes that GPCI has a vital role to play in the context of evaluating brands or products from developing economies, in the sense that country image influences consumers product evaluation (Laroche et al., 2005), product beliefs (Erickson, Johansson and Chao, 1984), and brand evaluation (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Pelet, Massarini & Pauluzzo, 2018; Jin et al., 2006).

Generally, products or brands from advanced countries command favourable attitudes of consumers compared to those from emerging economies. This trajectory is captured in the “hierarchy of biases” phenomenon, which highlights a positive relationship between economic development and product or brand evaluation (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017; Schooler, 1971). Furthermore, studies demonstrate that although GCI and PCI may influence each other, they mostly have a diverse effect on consumers' intention to purchase and product/brand evaluation (Wang et al., 2012). Therefore, we concur with the conventional thinking of the literature that the country and the products it offers are separate entities (Mort & Duncan 2003).

In measuring the GPCI phenomenon, scholars have used diverse dimensions. For example, Romeo and Roth (1982) identified workmanship, innovativeness, technological advancement, and design. Similarly, Papadopoulos et al. (2000) used product integrity, price, market essence, and buyer response. Verlegh (2001) identified hedonic and utilitarian beliefs. Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2007) used micro country image including prestige, innovation, and design. Relatedly, other scholars have employed such dimensions as excellent quality, workmanship, pride, care in production, advertising support, recognisable brand names, reliability of production, expensive, high status, innovation, prestige (Pappu et al., 2007).

Research has shown that the GPCI can influence consumers’ evaluation and purchase behaviour. For example, Pappu et al. (2007) found that micro country image (i.e., GPCI) significantly influences consumer-based equity toward a brand. On the other hand, a person’s country-related images about a particular country may not necessarily affect his or her evaluation of products/brands from that country. Thus, we see that indeed the GCI and GPCI are related but distinct concepts, exerting different effects on consumer behaviour.

2.4.2.2. Specific Product Country Image (SPCI).

Products may be general and category-specific because consumers may not attach the same stereotypical beliefs with all the product categories from a given country (Andéhn & Dacosta, 2016). For instance, many Japanese products are associated with a high general product image (GPCI); however, Japanese carpets are primarily related to low specific product country image. Similarly, while most Italian products (e.g., fashion, shoes, pasta) have a high general product-related image, its cars are mostly associated with a low category-related product image. Likewise, while a greater percentage of products from Columbia are perceived to acclaim a low general product image (GPCI), Columbian coffee is linked with a high specific-related product image.

Specific product country image (SPCI) is the consumers' overall perception of particular product categories from a particular country (Roth & Romeo, 1992). Thus, the SPCI measures consumers' perceptions about specific products from a particular country (e.g., automobiles, TV, etc.). Researchers measure this dimension of CoOI using mainly the same dimensions of overall product country image (GPCI), discussed above, but this time, at the product/brand category level (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Amonini et al., 1998; Heslop & Papadopoulos, 1993). The dimensions are shown in Table 1 below. It is noted that the perception of specific products from a particular country can significantly and positively influence consumers' evaluative judgments and quality perceptions (Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016).

Han (1989) used two models, halo and summary models, to highlight this connection. Under the halo model, when consumers are not familiar with a country's product or brands, the country's image can cause them to infer a brand's product attributes in a way that indirectly influences their attitudes and belief toward a specific brand. Concerning the summary model, consumers have become familiar with a nation's products and their features in a way that directly impacts their attitudes and beliefs about those specific brands and that country's image. Kotler and Gertner (2002) found that the image of a country can lend a positive reputation to a whole product category, like with French wines and perfumes, or even create a brand, such as "Cafe de Colombia." Thus, specific product country image can generate perceptions in consumers' mind vis-à-vis certain specific product categories (e.g., Italian shoes, French wines, New Zealand gala apples, Australian beef).

While a plethora of research has been carried out on the issue of CoO effects, it is still unclear and inconclusive how a country's image influences consumers' evaluation of specific brands and how weak or strong the effect is. Han and Terpstra (1988) found that country image affects consumers' evaluation of specific brands like TV and automobiles. Thus, we raise the contention that the consumers' evaluation and perceptions of specific brands may differ from their perception ratings about the overall products from a country.

2.4.3: Partitioned country image (PACI)

Given the growing pace of globalisation today, coupled with multinational companies offshoring and onshoring strategies in manufacturing and distributions, a significant dimension has been recognised in the domain of CoO known as partitioned country-of-origin (PACI). Today, more than ever, many companies utilize global alliances or operations to produce their products and parts of products in foreign nations, thereby realizing cost advantages due to cheaper parts and/or labour (Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018; Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009). In effect, consumers' perception of the CoO might alter dramatically because the product, while branded and marketed as being of one nationality, is manufactured and designed in another country. Therefore, because the single-country (CoO) effect no longer remains valid, scholars have called for a deeper dig into the individual component factors of consumer perceptions of quality (Allman et al., 2016; Han, 1989; Hong & Wyer, 1989).

Because an unfavourable CoOI can distort consumers' perceptions of quality within a given product category (Pappu et al., 2007; Cordell, 1992), firms must develop strategies to counter this unfavourability side of the CoO for those affected products or brands. For example, Tse and Lee (1993) suggested that the negative or unfavourability effect of CoO can be mitigated or weakened by decoupling or decoupling the CoO construct into "component origin" and "assembly origin" (Tse & Lee, 1993, p. 43). The authors further noted that when weighed against other product information cues like pricing, brand name, decomposition is deemed more cost-effective and efficient to the firm in that it circumvents other unwanted impacts like lowered quality perception generated by reducing price (Larofet & Chen, 2013; Jain & Bariar, 2019; Tse & Lee, 1993, p.44). Therefore, some scholars have viewed the decomposition of the CoO as a key strategy to weaken the negative effect of unfavourable country of origin.

Partitioned CoOI (PACI) is a generic label for all the information of countries where the product was designed, assembled, and where parts of the product were made (Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018; Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009). As a case in point, partitioned CoO might include multiple factors like perceptions, inferences, and beliefs about countries that jointly make a product; a person's knowledge of his or her prior behaviours concerning the countries; information about the countries' prior actions; and overall and specific evaluations of the countries and their perceived attributes (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017); Smaoui, Kilani & Touzani, 2016) Ahmed & d'Astros 1996). This phenomenon has given birth to the so-called hybrid products, i.e., goods coming from two or more countries that may not include the company headquarters.

Consequently, the CoO construct has been split up into many different taxonomies such as country of design (COD), country of parts (COP) and country of assembly (COA), country of brand

(COB), and country of manufacture (COM) (Pharr, 2005). Chao (1993), Han and Terpstra (1988), and Ahmed and d'Astros (1996) have demonstrated that the CoO effect may have two different dimensions: country of design (COD) and country of assembly (COA). Pharr (2005) and Insch and McBride (2004) opined that COB has to be considered together with another concept known as COA (Country of association), according to which the physical place where the product was manufactured, designed, or assembled loses its importance because what really matters is the CoO perception in consumers' mind.

In this regard, it can be stressed that research on COM, COA, COD, and COP focused on the effects of a product's nationality considered as a quality feature. That is, these dimensions investigate consumers' cognitive processes. Contrary, COB research focused more on CoO effect on the product as perceived in consumers' minds (i.e., affective processes (Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018; Insch & McBride, 2004). In terms of the effect of the dimensions on consumer behaviour, results have been mixed, showing neutral, positive, and negative effects. Some research (Liu, Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Ahmed et al., 2002) suggests that consumers use the PACI to evaluate products /brands, but others (e.g., Usunier, 2006) disagree. Through this meta-analysis, the mixed findings can be combined to produce a single report of the true effect of PACI on CBE. The CoOI dimensions and their operationalization are summed in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the various scholars have used to measure the respective dimensions of the CoOI.

Table 1: CoOI constructs and measuring scales

Variable	Description & operationalization	Representative Study
COO dimensions		
Macro (General country image)	People's general perception about a specific country, including; people facet, economy, politics, technology, landscape, and environment, climate, country personality, conflict, Labour, Vocation training, work culture (GCI)	Roth & Diamantopolous (2009) Martin & Eroglu (1993) Lala, Alred, Chakraborty, 2015
Micro (overall product country image) GPCI	Consumers perception about products of a particular country. Dimensions include Excellent quality, workmanship, Pride, Care in production, advertising support, Recognisable brand names, Reliability of Production, Expensive, High status, Innovation, Prestige (GPCI)	Pappu et al. (2007) (Roth & Romeo, 1992)
Micro (specific product country image) SPCI	Measures consumers perceptions about a specific products from a particular country e.g. Tv, automobiles). Measures mainly same dimensions of overall product country image (SPCI)	Han & Terpstra (1988) Amonini et al (1998) Heslop&Papadopoulos (1993)

Partitioned country image PACI	Decomposes the country of origin into country of manufacture (COM), country of design (COD), country of assembly (COA), country of brand (COB), and country of parts (COP)	Chao (1993, 2001) Ahmed et al (2007) Biswas & Chowdhury (2011)
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Source: Own elaboration

2.5 The concept of Brand and Brand evaluation

Littler (2006) and Millman (2012) described brand as a unique mark or label of a produced/manufactured product. Branding involves the process of assigning associations to products in order to add value to the product (Razak, Hidayat, Putra & Bahasoan, 2020; Simoes & Dibb, 2001). The concept is derived from the old Norse word ‘*Brandr*,’ which means ‘*to burn by fires*.’ The phenomenon first came from the Ancient Egyptians, who labelled their livestock with hot irons to articulate ownership and distinguish them from others, yet the process later spread broadly across the European terrain. Customarily, a branded product indicated to consumers the origin of the product and offered significant assurances about the place and techniques of production (de Mooji, 2010).

Over the years, brand has evolved as a firm’s commitment to the products or services it produces and sells, a differentiating element among analogous competing products, and the bridge that ties consumers and solicits their loyalty, trust, and goodwill (Mooji, 2010). In effect, branding of a product or service has developed as an indispensable component for a firm since it identifies and recognises a product, distinguishes it from competing products, and eventually proposes buying rationales to consumers (Wreden, 2002). According to Razak et al. (2020), a brand is part of the marketing mix, based on corporate identity, consumer approach that connects consumers and others, personal approach highlighting the brand as a human-like character, relational approach, revealing the brand as a unique relationship partner, brand as a community approach revealing the brand as a pivotal point of social interactions, and finally, brand based on cultural approach, showing the brand as part of a cultural fabric. Therefore, diverse industries ranging from hotel industry (Kam et al., 2013), to social media (Kim & Ko, 2012), to service-profit chains (Melewar & Alwi, 2015), and to the fashion industry embrace the concept to reap satisfaction, profitability, and loyalty.

Aaker (1991) explained brand as a distinctive name and/or symbol proposed to differentiate the goods or service of one producer from those of competitors. However, brand is also viewed as a strategic asset at a firm’s disposal that can offer enduring competitive advantages (Kapferer, 2008). Furthermore, Kapferer (2008, p.11) offered another definition of brand, in which a “*brand was conceptualised as a set of mental associations that added value to the product itself*” or brand equity.

Ngo et al. (2020) highlighted that consumers rate or evaluate brands using common characteristics, including numerous visible and invisible signs related to the brand as a product or as

a person. An evaluation implies “the imputation of some degree of goodness or badness to an entity” (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, p. 3). Brand evaluation is explained as “consumers' emotional response to a brand, such as excitement, trust, and desire” (Sirianni et al., 2013). Thus, brand evaluation is consumers’ overall evaluation of and attitude toward the brand (Zhou et al., 2010; Laforet & Chen, 2012; Ajzen & Fishbein 1977; Pappu et al., 2007).

According to Kim, Chun, and Ko (2017), brand evaluation cannot be measured by simple numerical indices since it consists of a detailed and diverse brand value assessment. Scholars (e.g., Burmann et al., 2009) have outlined varying approaches to determine brand value; nevertheless, much depends on “the attributes considered important for choice” (Nedungadi et al., 1990). In this regard, brand evaluation expresses the rational evaluative judgment of consumers towards a physical product or service, using both intrinsic and extrinsic cues. The perceived value is the basis for purchasing a brand’s product and for differentiating it from competitors. The decision to purchase certain brands comes from the value consumers feel, which is fundamental for a brand’s success (Zeithaml, 1988). Indicatively, the overall quality evaluation is subjective and abstract, and so perceived quality does not always match the actual product quality, which in turn forms the basis for comparing brands together, known as brand evaluation.

Brand evaluation indicates the value-adding process derived from consumers’ association with the brand name and some utility in connection with competing brands, as expected and perceived by consumers (Boo et al., 2009). Additionally, Pappu et al. (2006) proposed that analogous to the brand image concept, CoOI of a brand or product is an extrinsic cue that influences consumers' brand equity and perception, which emanates in consumers’ cognitive development and brand associations. As an example, Pappu et al. (2006) postulated that consumers might associate or attach countries like Spain and France with such intangible attributes as durability and reliability, which may impact a particular country's consumer brand equity.

Keller (1998) identified three instruments and objectives for building brand evaluation in the marketing domain— (1) choice of appropriate brand elements (logo, symbol, character, package, slogan, brand name); (2) development of marketing programs (price, product, promotion, and place); (3) leverage secondary association (country of origin, company image, events, endorser, competition). Keller emphasised that secondary associations like country of origin promote the atmosphere for creating a formidable, unique, favourable brand image and brand awareness that generates overall brand equity.

Partly, brand equity is theorised as a model that measures the effect of a brand's mental association (Keller and Aaker, 1992). Shortly put, brand equity is related to the value that is added via the promotion of brands/products or services, with idiosyncratic CoO and brand name, through

the products or brands, retailing, and to the end-user (Aaker & Biel, 1993). Consequently, it is hard to separate the concept of brand equity from the idea of brand evaluation, which is the overall value consumers associate with a brand (Kavaratzis et al., 2014; Keller, 1993). For this reason, Kim et al. (2003) opined that brand value, which is consumers' evaluation of a brand, is derived from consumer-based brand equity, which attaches the actions and words of consumers with their decision-making process, generally depending on the attributes or characteristics that are considered relevant in a brand (Keller, 1993).

Given this, it has been observed that brand evaluation considers diverse factors of a firm: its brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, perceived equity, and brand loyalty (Eng, Ozdemir & Michelson, 2016). This reasoning is well-summarized by Kavaratzis et al. (2014, p. 227) that "brand equity is deemed as the driving force of the market share growth and brand profitability, which is based on brand perceptions (consumer-oriented brand equity)". In short, brand evaluation is determined using brand equity dimensions. And so, to this concept, we turn next.

2.6 The Consumer Brand equity model and brand evaluation

The concept of brand equity has been variously defined and conceptualised in the extant literature. For example, Aaker (1991, p. 15) defined brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add to or detract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers." In a similar vein, Yoo and Donthu (2001) conceptualise brand equity as "the difference in the choice of consumers between a focal branded product and an unbranded product." According to Atilgan et al. (2015, p.115), this "difference" is "the utility difference in terms of a positive marketing outcome, which is created by a branded product compared to that of the generic version of the same product." Shedding a similar light, Keller (1993) defined brand equity as "the differential effect of brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand" (1993, p.2).

Brand equity, from a consumer perspective, is "the source of brand value added to a product or service in the marketplace," thereby serving as a significant approach of developing as well as maintaining the relationship of the consumers with the respective brands (Eng et al., 2016, p.5705). The American Marketing Association (AMA) conceptualised brand equity as the value of a brand derived from attitudes, behaviours, and opinions of consumers due to brand use. According to Sanyal and Banerjee (2008), brand equity refers to the brand or product's position in consumers' minds in the marketplace. The meaningfulness and well-established representation of the brand in consumers' minds create equity for the brand name. Elliot and Percy (2007) postulated that brand equity develops from consumers' awareness of the brand that sets associations in the memory of the consumer that goes beyond just "liking" the brand.

Previous studies demonstrate that brand equity enhances premium price options, perceived value, and perceived (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). Thus, brand equity is a multifaceted concept with varying conceptualisation in both academia and industry. In this context, Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) identified two main viewpoints about the phenomenon in an extensive systematic review— (1) firm-based equity and consumer-based front. The firm-based perspective represents the financial value that a brand generates for a company (Simon & Sullivan, 1993), while the consumer-based viewpoint highlights the response of consumers to a brand name, based on the consumer perception that fosters and determine the profitability and market share of the brand (Aaker, 1991; Pappu et al., 2006). This way, and for this study, attention will be given to only the consumer-based brand equity.

The first well-known theory on consumer-brand equity is the one proposed by Aaker (1991). Aaker defined the brand equity framework with five primary dimensions: brand association, brand loyalty, market behaviour, perceived quality, and brand awareness. These dimensions are measured and designed in regard to the perception of consumers and in the pursuit of enhancing the value of the brand (Aaker, 1992). Besides Aaker, another well-known theorist on consumer brand equity is Keller (1993), who conceptualises consumer brand equity as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of that brand” (1993, p.2).

In comparison with Aaker’s (1991) model, Keller’s conceptualisation addresses the influence of brand knowledge by underlining that “the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand as a result of their experience over time” (Keller, 2001, p.3). Based on this argument, Keller crafted another version of the brand equity model by emphasizing brand knowledge as the basis of brand equity and categorizing brand knowledge in two dimensions: brand image and brand awareness (Keller, 2008, p.48). Despite the seeming difference in the two models, scholars note that the two models are intersecting in the sense that Keller’s model introduces another dimension (i.e., brand image) that Aaker’s model left out (Atilgan et al., 2009, p. 117).

In addition to this, Lassar et al. (1995) divided brand assets into the perceived quality and perceived value. The varied components of determining brand equity comprised “differentiation, satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, leadership, popularity, perceived value, brand personality, organisational associations, brand awareness, market share, market price, and distribution coverage” (Eng et al.,2016, p.5705). Therefore, the value consumers associate with a brand is reflected in the dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, trust and brand loyalty’ (Laforet & Chen, 2012). Sharing a similar thought, Erdem and Swait (1998) identified brand credibility, which represents how effectively brand information is communicated and how

dependable and truthful the information is perceived—as one critical dimension of consumer brand equity.

Authors (Nguyen et al., 2013; Sung and Kim, 2010) also identified brand personality and trust as key dimensions of brand equity. Similarly, authors (Aaker, 2012; Bibby, 2011; Bouhleb et al., 2011) put forward another dimension known as brand personality. Dillon et al. (2001) synthesized the dimensions of brand equity into two main categories, namely, brand-specific associations & general brand impression. Moreover, Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) built upon Dillon et al.’s model by adding a third category known as brand commitment. Therefore, it is apparent that the brand equity model has witnessed diverse measuring constructs over the years. However, in this research stream, the most widely examined dimensions, which form the basis of the meta-analysis, include—perceived quality, brand association, brand attitude, brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness, brand trust, perceived value, and brand personality, and thus they become the study’s focus of examination. These dimensions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Consumer Brand equity constructs and dimensions

Authors & Years	Dimensions & operationalization
Aaker (1991)	Brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, & brand association
Keller (1993)	Brand knowledge (Brand awareness & brand image)
Lassar et al. (1995)	Perceived quality & perceived value
Eng et al. (2016)	Differentiation, satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality, leadership, popularity, perceived value, brand personality, organisational associations, brand awareness, market share, market price, and distribution coverage
Laforet & Chen (2012)	Perceived quality & brand trust
Erdem & Swait (1998)	Brand credibility
Nguyen et al. (2013)	
& Sung & Kim (2010)	Brand trust
Aaker (2012)	
& Bibby (2011)	Brand personality
Aaker (1996);	Brand strength; proprietary brand assets
Kamakura & Russell (1993)	perceived quality, brand intangible value
Park & Srinivasan (1994)	attribute-based brand equity, non- attribute-based brand equity
Shankar et al. (2008)	Offering value, relative brand importance
Lassar et al. (1995)	Performance, social image value, trustworthiness attachment
Yoo & Donthu (2001)	Brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality
Vazquez et al. (2002)	Product functional utility, symbolic product utility, brand name, functional utility, and symbolic utility
Netemeyer et al. (2004)	Perceived value, perceived quality, uniqueness, willingness to pay a premium
Pappu et al. (2006)	Brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality
Christodoulides et al. 2004	emotional connection, online experience, responsive service nature, trust, fulfilment
Buil et al. (2008)	Brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality, perceived value, brand personality, organisational associations
Blackston (1992)	Brand relationship (trust, customer satisfaction with the brand)
Sharp (1995)	company/brand awareness, brand image, relationship with customers/existing customer franchise

Berry (2000)	Brand awareness, brand meaning
Burmann et al. (2009)	Brand benefit clarity, perceived brand quality, brand benefit uniqueness, brand sympathy, brand trust
Dillon et al (2001)	Brand-specific associations & general brand impression
Lee, Knight & Kim, (2008)	Brand-specific associations (emotional value, perceived quality), general Brand impression (brand image, brand awareness) & brand commitment (brand loyalty).

Source: Own elaboration

Following Aaker, brand awareness is defined as “the ability of a potential buyer to recognise or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. A link between product class and brand is involved” (p. 61). The equity of a brand partly is evaluated by the awareness that it generates or evokes. The higher the level of awareness, the more dominant the brand will be (Yasin et al., 2007), and the higher the likelihood that the brand will be purchased (Nedungadi, 1990). Brand association is “anything linked to the memory of a brand” (Aaker, 1991, p. 109) and involves the degree to which a consumer can recognise a brand by its traits or characteristics like innovation, design, and eclectic. As an example, consumers may associate luxury brands with traits like exclusivity, status, and quality (Atwal & Williams, 2009), which result from brand positioning, brand quality, and price that the brand offers to consumers.

Accordingly, researchers (e.g., Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel, 2013; Keller, 1993) have viewed brand associations as a key determinant of brand usage and behavioural patronage. This way, consumers association with a brand may result from both its hedonic and utilitarian benefits, produced from perceptions of quality concerning the geographic origin, thereby leading to brand association (Aaker, 1991). In addition, research notes that consumers' brand association may also stem from cultural delineations like gender meaning (maleness or femaleness), country meaning (e.g., nationality, status meaning (social standing), multicultural meaning (ethnicity), age meaning (age group) and so forth. Thus, Ghodeswar (2008) put forward that brand associations are a stimulus by various sources employed to generate brand communication and awareness, which influences consumers' preferences, experiences, attitudes, and consequently loyalty toward a brand.

Perceived quality involves the “customer’s perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose relative to alternatives” Aaker (1991, p. 85). As per Aaker, perceived quality is not merely another brand association but rather an association that is raised to the status of a distinct dimension of brand equity. Some scholars also view it as “defined beliefs about a country’s industrialization and national quality standard” (Srikatanyoo & Gnoth, 2002). Brand loyalty, viewed as attitudinal and behavioural concept that involves “the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice”

(Yoo & Donthu, 2001, p. 3). According to So et al. (2013), brand loyalty has three main perspectives: composite, attitudinal, and behavioural brand loyalty.

Perceived value involves consumers' buying behaviour instead of their particular trust, interest, or attitude (Kwon et al., 2003). It consists of multidimensional factors such as consumers' responses to experience (Moliner et al., 2007). Perceive value dimension of consumer brand equity involves what consumers sacrifice or give up to get a product or brand (Zeithaml, 1988). It represents consumers' perception of how fair and reasonable the amount of money they pay in exchange for the functional quality of the product or brand.

Brand image involves “a set of perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in a consumer’s memory” (Hsieh and Lindridge, 2005, p.15). Thus, brand image highlights the set of beliefs and perceptions held in a consumer's mind about a focal brand (Bibby, 2009; Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). Authors (e.g., Keller, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 1998) have defined brand image as consisting of both symbolic and functional facets, in which brand image is, first, developed based on the idiosyncratic, intrinsic features of brand attributes (e.g., quality, design, price), and second, based on extrinsic features (e.g., atmosphere, reputation) that meet the higher-level needs of consumers. For example, Koubaa (2008) put forward three types of human beliefs that form brand image—descriptive (i.e., direct experience), informational (i.e., sources of influence like word of mouth, friends, ads), and inferential (i.e., formed from inferences based on past experience, correctly or incorrectly).

Brand trust, as one key dimension of brand equity, is defined as the “willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function” (Bouhleb et al. (2011, p. 212), which can mitigate risk and stimulate confidence in a consumer-based relationship (Elliott & Yannopoulou 2007). Thus, brand trust represents consumers' belief, behavioural intentions, and willingness toward a given brand. That is, the consumers' expectation that the brand delivers what it promises to offer. Scholars (e.g., Yoon, 2002; Song et al., 2012) indicated that brand trust could lead to brand commitment and loyalty, which can be generated via the exchanger communications and relationships among consumers (Keller, 2002). Thus, a brand is a trust mark for all operational and strategic activities that produce intangible trust, and at the same time, be a symbol of quality (Song et al., 2012; Keller, 1993). For instance, Rosenbloom and Haefner (2009) found in their study of CoOI effect on global trust that brands associated with the US were more trusted than Japan.

Brand attitude is consumers' overall like or dislike of a given product or brand. It is significant since it is what develops consumer behaviour (Keller, 1993). Research indicates that a positive brand attitude can influence brand loyalty and purchase intention (Liu et al., 2017; Esmailpour, 2015), while a negative brand attitude can lead to low-repeat purchase and disloyalty (Lee, Back & Kim,

2009). In addition, fan (2019) indicated that country of origin image could influence brand attitudes directly via omnidirectional effect.

As a dimension of consumer brand equity, brand personality is conceptualised as those human characteristics associated with a brand (Lin, 2010; Chung and Ahn, 2013; Aaker, 1997) as well as a set of human attributes or images that consumers associate with a focal brand (Keller, 1993). Brand personality is based on the philosophy that brands are inanimate objects, but consumers sometimes perceive brands as possessing human characteristics. Akin to human personality, brand personality represents a relatively lasting predisposition about a brand/product's image or trait features (Batra et al., 1993).

Aaker (1997) identified five dimensions of brand personality: excitement, sincerity, competence, ruggedness, and sophistication. Consumers sometimes demonstrate their real or actual identity by using a particular brand, and much akin to self-image (Keller, 1993). As an example, a person may buy a brand or product that appeals to him or her and reflects the sophisticated appearance of his or her self-image. Consumers may invest in a luxury brand simply because they want to achieve or express a specific identity, status, or self-image (Dillon, 2011; Jackson & Shaw, 2008; Keller, 1993). Research indicates that well-established brands with a high personality can build a brand identity. Accordingly, brand personality has been identified as a promotional instrument that enables firms to develop an overall image attractive to a given market segment.

Brand strength denotes the product of differentiation and relevance. According to Aaker (1996), a brand must possess both attributes to be strong in the market. Accordingly, the Young and Rubicam framework proposed the assumption that a brand is built sequentially and systematically along four main dimensions, namely, knowledge, esteem, relevance, and differentiation (Aaker, 1996). Furthermore, from the Interbrand method perspective, brand strength hinges on characteristics like stability, leadership, support, internationality, trend, and market (Keller & Moorthi, 2003). Therefore, the next section discusses our synthesis and re-grouping these dimensions in a uniform and straightforward model.

2.7 Brand analysis model and re-classification

Considering the diverse nature of the dimensions of consumer brand equity discussed above coupled with the nature of the present study, the present study took great inspiration from the works of Dillon et al. (2001) and Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) to classify the brand evaluation dimensions into three broad categories: (1) Brand-specific associations; (2) General brand impression; and (3) brand commitment. The study of Dillon et al. first proposed that CBE can be analysed using two main models, namely, *Brand-specific associations and General brand impression*. Brand-specific associations refer to “features, attributes, or benefits that consumers link to a brand and that

differentiate it from the competition” (Dillon et al., 2001, p. 417), while general brand impressions involve the “general impressions about the brand that are based on a more holistic view of the brand” (Dillon et al., 2001, p. 417). Elucidating the benefits of using the two model components to measure brand evaluation, the authors noted that the model helps in; (a) “determining the extent to which a brand has achieved superiority or ownership of specific benefit dimensions; (b) investigating the relative role of each component in shaping global brand attitudes, purchase intentions, or choice; and (b) providing insights into which attributes are strongly held by consumers even when the within-brand ratings are highly correlated” (Dillon et al. (2001, p. 417).

Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) adopted this model in their study but theoretically added a third item: brand commitment. The rationale for this additional variable is that Dillion et al.’s two-dimension model (i.e., brand-specific association and general brand impression) is associated with the consumers' cognitive component, thus ignoring consumer attitudinal and behavioural components. Therefore, the authors included a third component, that is, brand commitment, to address the attitudinal component of CBE. The authors described brand commitment describes “the extent to which a consumer is engaged in buying a specific brand or expressing behavioural intention toward the brand” (Lee, Knight & Kim, 2008, p.4). That is the extent to which consumers are committed to a given brand, which can influence his or her purchase intention and generate predictable profit streams and sales (Lee, Knight & Kim, 2008). Brand commitment is an attachment feeling resulting from a previous satisfactory interaction with a brand, which will drive the consumer to use the brand over time and withstand changes, creating an important and valuable relationship with it (Osuna-Ramírez, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas, 2017; Hsiao et al., 2015). Brand commitment is determined by the loyalty of consumers toward a particular brand in a product class. Under this category, Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) included brand loyalty and purchase intention.

For the brand-specific associations, taking inspiration from Dillion et al.’s model, Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) identified perceived quality and emotional value (hedonic). The authors defined emotional value as the benefit derived from the feelings or affective states (i.e., pleasure) that a product generates (Lee, Knight & Kim, 2008; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Following the original definition of Dillion et al. for brand-specific associations, we included other variables like perceived value, hedonic values, brand personality, brand affect, and brand parity (Kinra, 2006; Pappu et al., 2006) since these variables capture the benefits and characteristics that consumers associate to a brand. Likewise, for the general brand impression, drawing from Dillion et al.’s model, Lee, Knight, and Kim identified two main dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. But following the definition proposed by Dillion et al. (2001) vis-à-vis general brand impression, we propose this class to include other dimensions such as brand judgment, brand attitude, brand strength, brand ownership

since these dimensions address consumers' overall view and perception about a given brand (Herz & Diamantopolous, 2013).

Moreover, this study proposes to extend the brand commitment variables of CBE to include brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust, which are identified and considered very important. Therefore, our brand analysis classification involves the three brand evaluation models or components proposed by Dillon et al. (2001) and Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008): general brand impressions, brand-specific associations, and brand commitment. However, it should not be passed unnoticed that we identified and added additional variables or dimensions based on the proposed original descriptions and definitions of the three dimensions. Based on the dimensions employed to measure CBE in this field of inquiry, we proposed the consumer brand equity variables classification, shown in Table 3. This forms the basis of our classification in the methodology and analysis.

Table 3: Re-classification of Brand Equity Dimensions based on Dillion's and Lee et al.'s models.

Brand-specific associations	General brand impressions	Brand commitment
Perceived brand quality	Brand image	Brand loyalty
Perceived brand value	Brand awareness	Brand trust
Brand associations	Brand judgment	Brand preference
Emotional/hedonic value	Brand attitude	
Brand affect	Brand ownership	
Brand parity		
Brand personality		

Source: Own elaboration based on Dillons et al. (2001) and Lee, Knight & Kim (2008) models.

In the next section, we discuss the association between CoOI and consumer-based brand equity.

2.8 CoOI and CBE

Research underlines that brand evaluation is significantly related to the CoOI concept because it provides consumers with vital information in relation to the products of a firm or the brand as a whole. It has been underlined that CoOI may be used as one antecedent in CBE process, particularly when product information about that nation's products is limited to consumers' knowledge (Jain & Bariar, 2019; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Fan, 2019). Accordingly, it is evident that consumers evaluate brands using common attributes, various visible and invisible signs related to the brand as a product or person (Hein et al., 2020).

Earlier efforts have also revealed that consumers' brand images or perception alter dramatically when the brands are made in different countries, partitioned in different countries. For example, Han and Terpstra (1988) discovered that brand image of Japanese automobiles suffered

erosion when manufacturing was moved to South Korea. Similarly, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1996) found that Sony risked brand image erosion when manufactured in the US, whereas GE's brand image improved when made in Japan. Consequently, the international marketing literature hints at a bidirectional relationship between CoOI and CBE.

Pappu et al. (2006) and Lee and Schaninger (1996) argued that consumers' perception of quality and purchase decisions of prestigious global brands are affected by the brand name and the brand's country of origin. Brands from the same nation enjoy images or associations known as country equity, which can create intangible assets or liabilities in consumers' minds (Lee, Chae & Lew, 2019; Pelet, Massarini & Pauluzzo, 2018; Kim & Chung, 1997). According to the literature, CoO generates secondary associations for a brand and could potentially affect consumers' brand association (Aaker 1991; Keller, 1993). Pappu et al. (2007) and Paswan et al. (2003) have shown that macro and micro images of a country can affect consumer brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality.

Rambocas and Ramsabhag (2018) discovered that highly positive responses are obtained from the consumers towards a specific brand when they are disclosed to have been resourced from the best and most favourable countries. The authors further underscored that favourability could significantly change consumers' perceptions towards brands with poor quality and recognition. Moreover, previous research opines that consumers are inclined to be loyal towards a country, much as they are loyal to brands. Also, empirical evidence demonstrates that consumers may use the reputation of a given country to make reference or predict the quality of a brand or product since the product/brand quality as an intrinsic cue cannot be ascertained until the product until actual consumption of the product.

Research has shown that the multidimensional effect of CoOI affects product beliefs and attitudes for brands with diverse levels of equity (Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019; Hui & Zhou, 2003). Scholars (e.g., Fan, 2019; Lee, Chae & Lew, 2019; Thakor & Lavack, 2003) also disclosed that brand of origin is potentially significant in determining brand image. Therefore, following the literature, it can be seen that consumers' macro and micro country images can affect their evaluation of a brand from that country, although moderating factors can influence the associations' effect. Being so, this study aims to examine the association between CoOI and CBE through a meta-analysis. The study moderators are discussed in the next section.

2.6. Chapter summary

This chapter mainly focused on the theoretical, conceptual, and definitional specifications of the constructs under investigation. In particular, the chapter has reviewed the extant literature on the CoOI phenomenon, along with its respective dimensions (i.e., GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI). In

addition to this, the chapter has covered several areas vis-à-vis brand, branding, and CBE from the consumer-brand equity model perspective. The chapter has also highlighted the theoretical framework of the study, specifically the cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory, that underpin the study. While this chapter aimed to provide a literature review on CoOI and CBE in terms of how these concepts have been conceptualised in the literature, the next chapter provides an empirical review of how CoOI influences CBE, along with the moderating role of certain contextual and methodological factors that may account for between-study variance, followed by research hypotheses and finally, the conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.0. Chapter overview

This chapter presents an empirical review of the nexus between CoOI and CBEs, beginning with the meta-analytic conceptual framework of the study and then empirical analysis of the relationship between CoOI dimensions and CBE and the moderators of the study. To provide a guide to this chapter, an introduction is presented in Section 3.0 that highlights the chapter's organisation. Section 3.1 presents the study's conceptual framework, while section 3.2 provides an empirical review of the overall (aggregate) effect of CoOI on CBE, addressing the first research question of the study. An empirical review of the relationship between GCI and CBE is presented in section 3.3. The relationship between GPCI and CBE is presented in section 3.4. Section 3.5 presents the relationship between SPCI and CBE, while the relationship between PACI and CBE is presented in section 3.6. The contextual and methodological moderators with their expected effects are introduced in sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2, respectively. The chapter ends with a summary of the issues presented in this chapter, in section 3.9. With this succinct overview, the meta-analytic conceptual framework that guided the study is in order.

3.1 The meta-analytic conceptual framework

Figure 2 demonstrates the meta-analytic conceptual framework graphically that we examine in this study, based on the cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory. As stated before, the main purpose of this study is to propose a meta-analytic review on the CoOI—CBE associations. For this reason, the formulated relationships revealed in Figure 2, unlike single individual studies, examine the relationship between CoOI and CBE at both the aggregate and relative levels. The model thus aims to investigate the extent to which CoOI exerts an aggregative and relative effect on consumer behaviour and explore some of the contextual and method moderators that may account for between-study variance.

To begin, the directions of the arrows show the potential influence of each predictor (independent variables) on the criterion (dependent variables) and illustrate that there is an association relationship between CoOI dimensions (i.e., General Country Image (GCI), General Product Country Image (GPCI), Specific Product Country Image (SPCI), and Partitioned Country Image (PACI) and overall CBE and its sub-dimensions, namely, *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust). Thus, first, the conceptual model demonstrates that each of the dimensions of CoOI has an overall positive influence on CBE. Second, it is expected that each dimension will exert a relative, positive effect on the respective dimensions of the consumer brand equity (i.e., brand-specific association, general brand impression, and brand commitment).

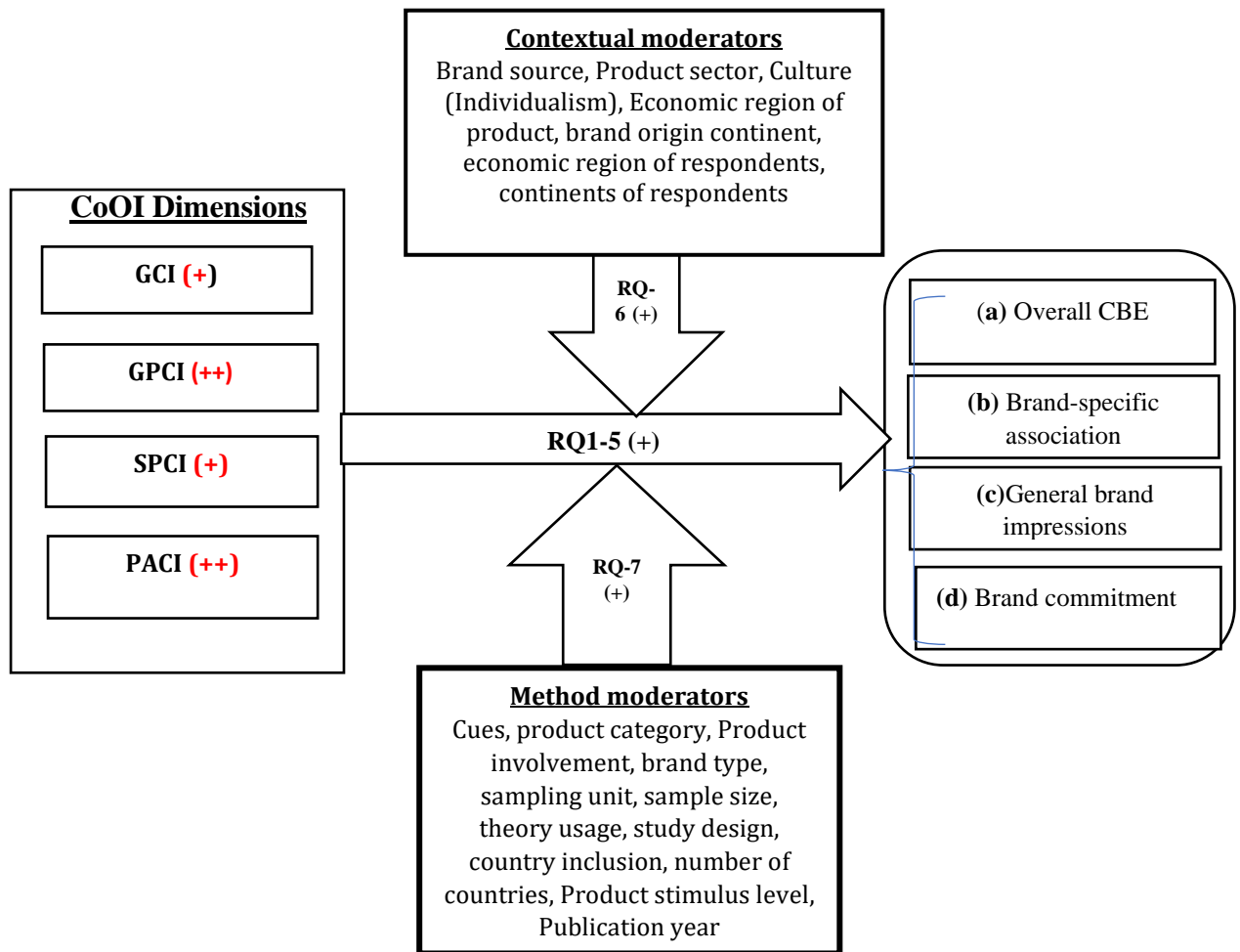


Figure 2: A meta-analytic model

Third, the study further argues that the CoOI—CBE relationship can be weak or strong depending on the level of specific contextual factors (i.e., individualism, product sector, economic region of products, economic region of respondents, brand origin continent, and respondents’ continent) and method factors (e.g., i.e., cues, brand source, brand type, stimulus product level, product category, product type, product category involvement, sampling unit, theory usage, study design, country inclusion, sample size, and sampling technique) that may exert a moderating effect in the direct relationship between CoOI and CBE. Finally, concerning the sign, we anticipate a positive impact of the dimensions on CBE, but we also envision divulgements in the magnitude of the strengths (weak, moderate, stronger). The following section presents the articulation of these hypothesised or expected relationships according to the extant literature.

3.2. Overall CoOI and CBE

Research notes that CBE is significantly associated with the CoOI in that it offers consumers vital information concerning the products or brands of a company. In this respect, it has been

discovered that CBE is related to different aspects of a firm, such as brand image, brand awareness, loyalty, and perceived quality (Eng et al., 2016). Moreover, according to the cue utilisation theory, consumers use intrinsic cues and extrinsic cues like CoOI to make product judgments. In this regard, CoOI has been considered an essential factor influencing consumer perception of brands (Samiee & Chabowski, 2021; Hulland, 1999).

Both Aker (1991) and Keller (1993) postulated that CoOI is a brand secondary association variable affecting a brand's equity. Along the same lines, Pappu et al. (2006, p. 699) stated that CoOI associations in consumers' minds could influence dimensions of consumer brand equity based on a specific country level. Liu and Li's (2006) study disclosed that CoOI is important in CBE at the early stages of consumer decision-making. Moreover, Liu, Johnso, and Johnson (2005) found that product country stereotypes occur automatically and contribute to brand judgment without consumers' intention or control.

Vis-à-vis the direct impact of CoOI on CBE, results are mixed. Whereas some studies (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Fan, 2019; Lee, Chae & Lew, 2019) show that CoOI stimulates a global evaluation of quality, specific product attributes, and performance and that CoOI influences brand image, particularly when consumers have little or no product/brand familiarity, others (e.g., Lin & Kao (2004)) found that the CoOI impact is relatively low for perceived quality and attitude. For example, Tea and Argarwal (2000) discovered that CoOI is significantly related to product and brand quality perceptions in the presence of extrinsic cues like brand name and price. Hui and Zhou (2012) revealed that CoOI directly impacts product or brand quality perceptions or evaluations. Using an experimental design in a multi-cue context regarding the effect of CoOI on product quality and purchase intention, Pecotich and Rosenthal (2001) found CoOI to influence consumers' perception of product quality significantly. Researchers (e.g., Kinra, 2006; Tam & Elliot, 2011) disclosed that CoOI influences perceived quality, observing that global brands are rated higher than the local brands and a general preference for international brands over local brands.

In a quantitative analysis through structural equation modelling, Cervino, Sánchez, and Cubillo (2005) discovered that CoOI evaluations affect brand equity dimensions like perceived value and brand success. Along the same lines, research has shown that CoOI can impact the various dimensions of consumer brand equity like brand image (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Pappu et al., 2007), perceived quality (Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999), brand associations (e.g., Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Using a structural equation modelling approach, precisely, single-group and multi-group analyses, Haub (1995) found that consumer attitudes towards new automobiles are influenced by CoOI, noting that the "Made in" informational cue impacts beliefs about automobile's attributes, thereby affecting consumer brand attitude. In addition, Lee, Lee, and

Lee (2018) used a mixed factorial design of 2x3x2 to explore the relationship between country image and post-brand alliance attitudes of consumers. Their results showed that high CoOI fit has a positive and significant effect on pre-and post-alliance brand attitudes of consumers.

Contrary to these findings, Lin and Kao (2004) found that CoOI impact on brand equity does not have a strong effect directly on a consumer product or brand perceptions, neither did authors find a direct effect of the CoOI evaluations on product perceptions. Similarly, Erikson et al. (1984) discovered that CoOI only affects specific product attributes but does not influence consumers' overall attitude toward the product/brand. Despite the mixed results, we follow the theoretical perspectives of the study, that is, the cue utilisation theory that consumers use informational cues to make inferences about product quality and purchase decision, and the irradiation theory that consumers subjective perceptions of a specific object transfers to the evaluation of another, thereby influencing the latter. Thus, we envisage that CoOI will exert overall (aggregate) positive and significant effect on CBE, that is, *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand judgment, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust).

3.3. GCI and CBE

As indicated earlier, Macro/GCI is the “sum of all, descriptive, informational and inferential beliefs that a person has toward a specific country.” Researchers (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Fan, 2019; Lee, Chae & Lew, 2019; Eroglu & Wachleit, 1988; Roth & Romeo, 1992; Tse and Gorn, 1993) opined that country images exert enormous influence on consumers' brand or product evaluation, and that positive country image can help international marketers and brand managers to launch new products and services quickly to seize acceptance and recognition in the global marketing place (Agarwal & Sikiri, 1996). Furthermore, Rambocas and Ramsabhag (2018) noted that extraordinarily high positive responses are obtained from consumers toward a given brand when disclosed as coming from a particular country.

Empirical literature indicates that this overall perception of belief toward a specific country can impact consumers' evaluative judgment. As a case in point, Hien et al. (2020) found that country image positively affects brand image and overall CBE, whereas Mandler, Won, and Kim (2017) found that consumers adjust their CBE only if the CoOI is perceived more favourably. Furthermore, using two fictitious soft drinks as a pretext to examine the effect of country image on brand attitude among US and Chinese consumers, Villar, Ai, and Segev (2012) observed that country image influences

consumer brand attitude. However, there were no differences between US and Chinese consumers' brand attitudes towards foreign products or brand names, except for perceived deception.

Le et al. (2013) adopted a structural equation modelling technique to examine the nexus between country image and perceived value and found that country image influence perceived value. Lee, Knight, and Kim (2008) revealed that CoOI impacts brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment. Yasin et al. (2007) postulated that a positive relationship exists between general country image and CBEs, noting that consumers view countries with a good image as technologically developed and brands from these countries are deemed reliable and of high quality.

Esmailpour and Abdolvand (2016) employed both structural equation modelling and hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the relationship between general country image (technology advancement) and brand attitude and loyalty and found that general country image significantly and positively influences brand attitude and brand loyalty. Jin et al. (2019) found that macro country image (GCI) positively influences product/brand quality perceptions and evaluation in the US and France sample but not in the China and Vietnam case. The authors further observed that the effect of micro country image was robust in all the four countries. Jung et al. (2014) found that country image influences brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Smaoui, Kilani, and Touzani (2016) found that CoOI is less important than brand status in developing countries, although they found that CoOI influences consumers' perception of drug quality and trust than on purchasing intention.

The literature also emphasizes that this considerable effect of country image exists not only in the context of products but also of service brands. For example, in a 2x2 factorial design, Ahmed et al. (2001) found that country image on cruise service was even stronger for quality perception and attitude than brand effect, concluding that strong CoOI compensates for weak brand effect. Similarly, Lee, Oh, and Hsu (2017) found that country image positively influences hotel brand image in China. Examining the impact of country image in higher education universities in Spain, Herrero-Crespo, Gutiérrez, and Garcia-Salmones (2016) also found that country image impacts the brand awareness and perceived quality of the universities, which in turn, affect brand loyalty.

Regarding the impact of country image on the respective dimensions of consumer brand equity, scholars (e.g., Fan, 2019; Lee, Chae & Lew, 2019; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019; Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016) found that country image influences brand attitude. Moreover, Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2008) and Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) found that country image influences brand recognition accuracy and brand ownership. Similarly, Pappu et al. (2007) found that macro/general country image, including economic, technological, and political conditions, positively and significantly influence brand associations, brand loyalty, and perceived

quality dimensions of consumer brand equity. Supportively, studies (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Koubaa, 2008; Scott & Keith, 2005) noted that general country image influences the brand image, particularly for brands manufactured in developed countries. Moreover, scholars (e.g., Lim et al., 1994; Pappu et al. (2006) examining the relative effect of GCI on the dimensions of consumer brand equity found that perceived quality is the variable that receives more weight.

Despite these positive and significant findings, Bayraktar (2015) postulated that the macro/general country image regarding consumers' perception of cultural, technological, economic, and political conditions might not significantly affect the perceived brand quality. Again, Liu (2012) found that general country image of China on CBE was negative for Chinese brands, revealing inadequate consumer-based brand equities for brands associated with China. Moreover, Zbib, Wooldridge, Ahmed, and Benlian (2010) found that country image has no significant effect on either overall product quality perception or attribute evaluations of products of Shampoos. Furthermore, Kim (2006) found that country image does not influence brand image.

It is evident from these reviews that the findings on the effect of country image on CBE are mixed and inclusive—showing positive, negative, and non-significant relationships. It is this research lacuna that this study aims to fill. Thus, it is important to meta-analyse the mixed results to ascertain the direction of the effect and the actual average effect exerted by GCI on CBE. Therefore, notwithstanding the inconclusive results, we follow the theoretical perspective of the irradiation theory and cue utilisation theory and anticipate that GCI has an (aggregate) positive, significant effect on overall CBE and a positive, significant influence on *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust).

3.4. GPCI and CBE

General product country image (GPCI), defined as consumers' overall perception of products of a given country, has been found to influence consumer attitudes. Authors (e.g., Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996; Paswan et al., 2003; Pappu et al., 2006) argued that a product's CoOI could cause consumers to develop loyalty toward the brands from that country, which may result in continuous purchase and brand preferences. Kim (1995) underscored that countries with positive product country image could generate brand popularity, which invariably may lead to consumer brand loyalty. The literature notes that micro country image (general product country image) positively and significantly influences consumer perceived brand quality (Pappu et al., 2006). Moreover, Diamantopoulos, Herz, and Koschate-Fischer (2015) found that general product country image with “made in Europe” ad may

act as a quality signal, but it may not elicit positive brand affective associations. In another study, Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos (2013) found that product country image can influence brand extension success with respect to quality evaluations and purchase intentions.

Herz and Diamantopoulos (2013) found that product country image influences consumers' cognitive and affective CBEs and brand-related behaviour. Again, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2007) found that both macro image and micro image influence consumer brand equity, but the authors were quick to underline that the relationship was product-specific and stronger for macro country image than micro country image. Along the same lines, Jin et al. (2019) revealed that micro country image (GPCI) positively influences product/brand quality perceptions and evaluation in USA, France, China, and Vietnam, indicating that the impact of micro country image was larger in all four countries compared to a macro country image. Leonidou, Palihawadana, and Talias (2006) found that general product country image (GPCI) was even greater than general country image (GCI) for China but not for the US. This means that while a country may not have a good GCI, it may have a good product country image.

Through an experimental study design, Magnusson et al. (2014) found that product-level beliefs can influence brand transgression in terms of brand recognition and recall. Iversen and Hem (2016) also found that distinct product origin associations influence the pre-brand image and spark the forward effect on brand attitudes toward extension and subsequent backward effect on the post-brand image of the brand. In a comparative study involving Seoul, New York, and Paris, Kim, Chun, and Ko (2017) discovered that product country image (fashion) can generate different CBEs. Similarly, Saydan (2013)'s study of durable household appliances in the UK found that product country image affects the CBE of consumers in various facets. Pucci et al. (2013) found that product image can influence brand image and brand preference. Pelet, Massarini, and Pauluzzo (2018) found that fashion product image can impact brand/product evaluation, which in turn, influences willingness to recommend and willingness to buy, also noting that ethnicity serves as a moderating factor.

In a multivariate analysis of variance, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2006) found that the effect of country of origin on consumer-brand equity varied based on the product-category associations. In an experimental study through a telephone survey in twelve countries and eight products, Cordell (1992) found that product country image influences brand/product preference, and that the preferences were more specific for industrialized countries than emerging economies. Dimofte, Johansson, and Bagozzi (2010) employed a structural equation modelling in a survey data analysis to examine the impact of product/country image on brand attitudes among three ethnic segments of U.S. consumers (i.e., Caucasian, African Americans, and Hispanics). They found that patterns differ across cultures, but globality and product image influence brand attitude of consumers.

In contrast, Larofet and Chen's (2013) comparative study of Chinese and British consumers found that product country image does not influence Chinese brand choice but influences brand reputation and brand trust in the British sample. In a similar vein, Jain and Bariar (2019) found that in the absence of mediators, product country image influences brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality, but the relationship becomes insignificant in the presence of mediators. Along the same lines, Ar and Kara (2014), using a mall-intercept survey method in Turkey, found that product country image has a significant negative effect on brand image, brand trust, and perceived quality of the global brands when consumers realize they were produced in China.

Notably, it can be seen from these reviews that general product country image (GPCI) influences consumers' evaluation of the brand. However, this effect has not been confirmed in all cases as there are also negative and non-significant relationships and contextual factors emerging to influence the focal relationship. Thus, following the theoretical perspective of the literature, it is imperative to aggregate these results to ascertain the true nature and magnitude of the general product country image on consumer evaluation since the individual disaggregate results seem not to offer an accurate picture of the focal relationship. Therefore, while the literature demonstrates mixed results, we draw on the theoretical perspective of the irradiation theory that product origin images can influence consumers' evaluative judgments. In effect, we envisage that GPCI will exert an (overall, aggregate) positive, significant impact on CBE and a (relative) positive, significant influence on *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust).

3.5. SPCI and CBE

The thinner theorisation of country/product image “deals with the referent image which consumers are assumed to conjure up when exposed to information about where a product was made, assembled, designed or conceived” (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993, p. 2). Because of this, Pecotich and Ward (2007, p.3-4) noted that country image “measurement, therefore, must be anchored to the referent product class and the basis for a critical comparison emanates from the existence of countries that may possess, for example, a poor overall image but nonetheless have a good reputation for the production of a particular class of products.”

Therefore, products are not only general but category-specific, in the sense that consumers may not relate the same stereotypical beliefs with all the product categories from a given country. For instance, Pappu et al. (2007) found that country image's image on consumer brand equity is product category-specific, indicating that “cars, as product category, are more sensitive to a country image

than televisions” (p. 2). Following this view, scholars have sought to examine the impact of specific product country image on CBE.

Ngan et al.’s (2020) study on two famous brands, Adidas and Nike, in the Vietnamese sportswear market, found that a brand’s country image has a significant and positive effect on effects on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty. Furthermore, through a split-half multi-group analysis, Andéhn and Dacosta (2016) found that brand/product origin image positively and significantly influences consumers' evaluation of brands and noted that category association moderates this effect. In a regression analysis conducted on brand equity dimensions, Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2007) discovered that brand’s/product origin image positively and significantly impact brand equity dimensions, namely, brand distinctiveness, brand loyalty, and brand awareness/associations. As well, Mody et al. (2017) observed that product country image constitutes the determinants of consumers' attitudinal and behavioural loyalty toward tourist operators.

Employing a multi-level modelling method, Zhou, Yang, and Hui (2010) found that product/brand country image affects consumers' evaluation of brand value and that brand’s country of origin is more robust for local brands than for foreign brands. Murtiasih, Sucherly, and Siringoringo (2013) found that product country image influences brand equity dimensions, namely, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand association, in descending order. Kim and Chao (2018) examined the impact of product country image on consumer-based brand equity for two global smartphone brands, namely Samsung and Huawei, in Colombia. In a structural equation modelling, they found that product country image was more robust for perceived quality for Chinese products than Korean brands.

Lee, Kumar, and Kim (2010), comparing the effect of US apparel brand and Indian apparel brand on brand equity, found that product country image influences attitudes toward American products on three dimensions of brand equity—brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations, while with respect to local apparel, these effects are found for only perceived quality. Employing a series of experiments with personal computers in a comparative analysis of experts and novice attitudes, Pecotich and Ward (2007) found that experts employ the product image as a summary construct to make inferences about physical quality, while adopted product origin image as a halo construct to make inference about quality.

Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos (2013) found that brand extension success is more affected by consumers’ perception of the country from which the focal brand comes rather than their perceptions by brand’s global reach and availability and that the product/brand’s country image influences their quality evaluations. In another study on brand equity, Magnusson, Westjohn, and Zdravkovic (2011) used hierarchical linear modelling to examine the effect of specific product

country image on CBEs and found that the former affects the latter in terms of brand attitudes and that the effect happens no matter the perceptions' objective accuracy.

Lee and Ganesh (1999) found that specific product country image positively and significantly influences consumer evaluation of bi-national brands and that the impact of specific product country image is even stronger than general country image. In a similar vein, using irradiation perspective, Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, and Palihawadana (2011) noted that specific product country image influences brand image. Thakor and Lavack (2003) support this claim, indicating that consumers' perception of a particular product from a given country can influence their image of a brand from that country. Pappu et al. (2006, 2007) noted that micro country image (product country image) affects brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, and perceived quality.

Despite these positive and significant empirical findings, some studies point to the contrary. For example, Listiana (2015) found that product's/brand's country of origin image may influence brand association but has no significant on perceived quality. As well, Picotich and Rosenthal (2001), in an experimental design of 4x2x2x2, found specific product country image to influence quality strongly, but no main effect was found for other dimensions of brand equity (e.g., awareness, loyalty, association). Besides the mixed findings, it can also be observed that most of the findings are contextually dependent (i.e., facilitated by moderating factors), which may not present the "latent" true nature of the average results of the impact of a specific product country image on consumer brand equity dimensions. Moreover, while the literature presents mixed results and contextual-dependent findings, we draw on the irradiation theory and cue utilisation theory that product's/brand's country image can influence CBE and brand-related behaviour. Accordingly, we expect that SPCI will exert an (overall, aggregate) positive, significant effect on CBE and a (relative) positive, significant influence on *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust).

3.6. PACI and CBE

Previous studies (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2001; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2004; Ulgado & Lee, 1993; Chao 2001; d'Astous & Ahmed, 1998; Thakor & Lavack, 2003) suggest that partitioned country image (PACI, hereafter) dimensions like country of brand (COB), country-of-assembly (COA), country of manufacture (COM), country-of-parts (COP), and country-of-design (COD) largely impact consumer perception of a brand and evaluative judgment as well as consumer brand equity (Batra et al., 2000; Azadi, Yousefi & Eydi, 2015). As a case in point, through an experimental study of automobiles, Fetscherin and Toncar (2009) found that COB and COM influence brand personality,

but COM of a car influences the perceived brand personality more than COB, concluding that Chinese car made in the US has a stronger brand personality than US car made in China.

Moradi and Zarei (2012) found that while COB exerts a direct and significant effect on brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand awareness or association, the effect does not exist for COM. However, Mostafa (2015) found that COM and COB both significantly and positively influence brand equity dimensions, namely, perceived brand quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand image. Using an experimental study design, Basfirinci (2013) discovered that when consumers are not presented with brand origin information, the perceived brand personality is significantly low compared to subjects provided with brand origin information, noting that product involvement moderates this relationship. This implies that COB significantly influences consumer brand personality. Meshreki, Ennew, and Mourad (2018), examining the impact of partitioned country of origin on industrial buyers comparatively in Canada and Egypt, disclosed that COM was a driver or determinant of perceived quality and CBE in both countries.

Allman et al. (2016) found that the impact of COM on brand image is contingent upon the kind of vertical line extension and that producing in a given country with a favourable country image does not always improve CBE. The authors noted that functional brands could enhance brand image through upward vertical line extension, but downward vertical line extension leads to no significant impact on COM and that prestige brands with downward vertical line extension leads to lower brand image regardless of COM. Additionally, Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2010) indicated that consumers' sensitivity to COM is higher than COD for complex and simple products and that COD only influences perceived quality for symbolic meaning brands or products.

Lee and Bringberg (1995) discovered that COM favourableness affects brand perception of consumers. Lee and Bae (1999) found that COB directly affects brand image and that COP was higher while COM was weaker on consumer evaluation of bi-national brands. Biswas, Chowdhury, and Kabir (2011) discovered that when COD is industrialized, perceived quality was higher; COA was significantly related to higher perceived quality when COD and COP are industrialized, while when COP was industrialized, perceived quality was higher if COD and COA are domestic companies. Hamzaoui Essoussi and Merunka (2007), however, found that consumers are more sensitive to COD for public products than private products and that COD influences brand image.

In another study, Hamzaoui and Merunka (2006) found that consumers from developing countries are more sensitive to COD for products with symbolic status meanings (e.g., cars) than for private goods (e.g., TV sets). Chen and Su (2011) found that a single-cue model generates more statistically significant COD and COM effects than a multi-cue model on industrial brand equity, noting that "These findings underscore the findings that the impacts of COM and COD on industrial

brand equity are jointly determined by study characteristics, research designs, and the nature of the dependent variable being investigated” (p., 2). Ho, Brodowsky and Lee, (2018) found that positive COM and COB image can influence consumers’ perceived value and brand preferences. Coskun and Burnaz (2016) noted that the importance consumers attach to COM is higher than COB when consumers evaluate brands, whereas Hulland (1999) showed that the COB effect was strong regardless of COB information.

The above reviews demonstrate that PACI influences consumer brand equity, yet some studies found no such support. For example, Ar and Kara (2014), using a mall-intercept survey method in Turkey, found that country of production has a significant negative effect on brand image, brand trust, and perceived quality of the global brands when consumers noticed that China was the COM. Li, Murray, and Scott (2000) found that while the COD effect on both functional and symbolic evaluations of a brand is significant, COA affects only functional quality evaluations but is not significant for symbolic quality evaluations. In addition, Thakor and Lavack (2003) found that 'county of components source' and 'country of manufacture' were not significantly related to quality evaluations in the presence of 'country of corporate ownership' (i.e., COB).

Moreover, some prior studies (e.g., Koubaa, 2008; Hui & Zhou, 2003) revealed that COM does not significantly affect the evaluation of branded products when information cues are congruent with COB. Moradi and Zarei (2012) found that while COB exerts a direct and significant effect on brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand awareness or association, COM does not. Employing a psychological mechanism to examine whether a decomposed country image into COP and COA influences consumer perceptions, Tse and Lee (1993) found that subjects do not seem to differ either in the psychological mechanism they use or in their confidence in evaluating a product which is "made in "a country versus a product which has its "components from" and "is assembled in" the same country, concluding that the effect of country image is weakened when it was decomposed.

Accordingly, two principal observations are worth noting in these findings: first, the results are not consistent vis-à-vis the effect of partitioned country image (PACI) on CBE. Second, the effects are significantly dependent on contextual factors like cues, level of development of the countries, product category, product type, brand strategy, and product involvement. The implication is that it will be difficult to ascertain the actual effect of PACI on consumer brand equity in the single and scattered individual studies. Against this crucial backdrop, this meta-analysis is carried out to determine the true nature and magnitude of PACI on CBE. That said, although the results are mixed, we follow the theoretical perspective of cue utilisation and irradiation theories to propose that PACI will exert an overall positive and significant effect on CBE and a relatively positive, significant influence on *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value,

brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust).

3.6 Study Moderators: contextual and methodological variables

Arthur, Bennett, and Huffcutt (2001, p.85) define a moderator variable in a meta-analytic review as "any variable that by its inclusion in the analysis accounts for, or helps explain, more variance than would otherwise be the case." To this end, this study explored and tested possible moderating factors (contextual and methodological) in the direct linkage between CoOI and CBE. This analysis improves the comprehension of the relations between CoOI and consumer behaviour, thus clarifying the theoretical inconsistencies in the field.

A number of studies in this research stream (e.g., Wang et al., 2012; Pharr, 2005; Lu et al., 2016) have underscored that the mixed findings and inconsistency in the research results of CoO could be attributed to the diverse contextual, operational definitions, and measurement constructs used in the studies. Based on the patterns of their findings, Peterson and Jolibert (1995) suggested that future studies on CoO pay more attention to 'potential moderators' to better circumscribe the effect of CoO evaluations amid various factors that may be typical in real-life purchasing circumstance.

Likewise, Chen and Su (2011, p.2) noted, "These findings underscore that the impacts of COM and COD on industrial brand equity are jointly determined by study characteristics, research designs, and the nature of the dependent variable being investigated" (p., 2). For instance, the same authors found that the single-cue model generates more statistically significant COD and COM effects than a multi-cue model on industrial brand equity. Balabanis and Diamantopolos (2004) discovered that product category is moderator factor. In addition, Piron (2000) identified product type as a potential moderator in the CoO and consumer perception and evaluative judgment relationship.

Lin and Kao (2004) discovered that the degree of the CoO effect on 'brand equity was moderated by various product-based factors like product familiarity, product complexity, and product importance. Inch and McBride (2004) identified product familiarity to significantly influence the salience of the CoO effect on product or CBE. Scholars (e.g., Lee, Yun, and Lee 2005; Ahmed et al. 2004; Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000; Lee, Yun & Lee 2005) found that consumer involvement (low or high) and type (enduring versus situational) moderate the effect of CoO on brand or product quality evaluations. Pharr (2005) explored some of the moderators in CoO research in a systematic literature review, grouping them into product-based and individual-based factors. The product-based factors include price, brand name, product type, product complexity, while the individual-based factors include involvement level, involvement type, product familiarity, product/brand importance,

or brand type. Other moderators include technical complexity (Insch & McBride 1999) and consumers' age and education level (Insch & McBride 2004).

Summarily, we present the moderating variables that were evaluated and tested in this study in Table 4. The contextual/theoretical factors consisted of the following elements: cues, brand type, brand source, stimulus product level, culture (individualism), product involvement, product category, product type, and economic region of the study. The methodological moderators include the following items: sampling unit, sample size, theory usage, brand origin (US & non-US), study design, sampling technique, sampling technique, number of countries, and nationality of the respondents. A succinct discussion of these moderators is in order.

Table 4: Contextual and Methodological Moderator variables of the meta-analysis

Variable	Description & Source	Levels
<i>Contextual Moderators</i>		
Brand source	Captures whether the evaluated brand was a local or global brand (Kinra, 2006)	1= Local 2 = <i>global</i>
Product sector	Defines whether the brand evaluated was an industrial or consumer products or a service (Aggrawal & McGill,2007; Troy et al. 2008)	1= Industrial, 2 = <i>service</i> 3= <i>consumer</i>
Individualism	Captures respondents' country as either a low or high individualistic culture (Pappu et al., 2007; Ahmed 2009).	1= <i>low</i> 2= <i>high</i>
Economic region of brands	Captures brands from MDCs compared to MDCs brands versus developing (products or brands from MDC compared with LDCs products) (Iyer & Kalita 1997)	1=MDCs, 2= <i>LDCs</i>
Brand origin	Captures whether the evaluated brand is of North America, Europe, Australasia, Africa, South American origin (Oduro et al, 2021)	1=North America 2=Europe 3=Australasia 4=others
Respondent's continent	Captures respondents of the studies as of North America, Europe, Australasia, Africa, South America origin (Oduro et al, 2021)	1=North America 2=Europe 3=Australasia 4=others
<i>Method moderators</i>		
Cues	Captures whether the brand was evaluated in a single cue (only CoO) or multiple cue context (e.g. CoO, price, warranty, brand name (Insch & McBride, 2004)	1= Single 2= <i>multiple</i>
Brand type	Captures whether the evaluated brand was real (actual) or fictitious (artificial) brands (DelVecchio, Henard & Freling (2006)	1= Real 2= <i>fictitious</i>
Stimulus product level	Captures the products or brands was a specific or general brands (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995)	1=Specific 2= <i>general</i>
Product involvement	Encapsulates whether the brand evaluated was a low involvement product (e.g. pen,	1= High 2= <i>low</i>

Product status	bread, or a high involvement product (e.g., computers, cars) (Ahmed et al (2001) Captures whether brands evaluated were high social status or social signalling value (e.g., cars, textiles/shoes/apparel) or low social status or social signalling value (e.g., computers, electronics etc) (Batra et al., 2000; Ahmed et al., 2009)	1= Low 2= <i>High</i>
Sampling unit	Encapsulates whether the sample was made up of students, real consumers or businesspeople (Beard, 2003; Lu et al., 2016)	1=Students 2= <i>real consumers</i> 3=Managers
Theory usage	Captures whether the study used theory or not (Lu et al., 2016)	1=theoretical 2= <i>atheoretical</i>
Study design	Captures the study design as either experiment or survey (Field & Hole 2003)	1=Experiment 2= <i>Survey</i>
Number of countries	Captures study as evaluating either brands from one country or more countries (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995)	1=One 2= <i>Two</i> 3= <i>More</i>
Sample size	Captures study sample size as either small or large (Gullardo-Vazquez et al. (2019)	1= <i>Small</i> 2=Large
Sampling technique	Encapsulates study as using either probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling method (Wang & Yang, 2008)	1= Probabilistic, 2= <i>non-probabilistic</i>
Country inclusion	Captures the studies as examining either countries including the respondents' country or excluding respondents' country (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995)	1 = Includes respondent's country 2 = Excludes respondent's country
Publication year	Captures study as either published before 2000, 2000-2010, or 2011-2020	1=Pre-2000 2=2000-2010 3=2011-2020

Source; Own Elaboration

3.6.1 Contextual moderators and the CoOI—CBE relationship

Brand source: We examined the moderating effect difference between global brands and local brands in terms of the brand source. Research demonstrates that consumers in economically less advanced countries tend to perceive domestic brands as inferior in quality compared to foreign or global brands (Cordell, 1992). For example, Kinra (2006) found that consumers of India perceived the technology, quality, status, and esteem of global or foreign apparel brands to be superior to, and higher than, local brands. Tam and Elliot (2011) conducted a cross-comparative study in Chinese cities (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Chongqing) and found that consumers generally prefer global brands to local brands. Zain and Yasin (1997) discovered that people in Eastern European countries view their local brands of shoes/shirts, TV, and automobiles as inferior to Western brands. Kumar et al. (2009) also found that global brands tend to receive positive and favourable ratings from consumers. Therefore, we propose that studies examining global brands, because of the reputation and international coverage, would produce stronger effect sizes than local brands.

Product sector: According to Aggrawal and McGill (2007) and Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, (2013), a brand or product can also be grouped into industrial good, consumer good, or service products/goods. Research has shown that consumers' evaluation may be biased toward certain products and industries like electronics and automobile where brand and quality perceptions are closely associated with the CoOI (Ahmed et al., 2001). Products are generally not perishable and can be standardised, and production is normally disconnected from consumption, while service is perishable, heterogenous, intangible, and demands simultaneous production and consumption. Thus, it is argued that consumers' perception of quality and evaluation of products may differ between goods, service, and even industrial products. Accordingly, because of the difference between products and services in terms of tangibility, we hope that this feature enhances the association with the experience that a brand can trigger (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer (2013). Studies (e.g., Lee, Oh, and Hsu, 2017; Herrero-Crespo, Gutiérrez & Garcia-Salmones, 2016) noted that CoOI significantly influences consumers' evaluation of services. Therefore, we propose that a service's simultaneous production and consumption feature can dramatically affect their evaluation, thus generating larger effect sizes than products (consumer and industrial).

Culture (Individualism/collectivism): Additionally, the culture of people has been found to influence country of origin evaluations. Being so, we tested the individualism/collective dimension of Hofstede's model of the respondent's country of origin to determine whether the CoO effect was stronger in individualistic cultures than collectivist cultures. We tested only the individual dimension of Hofstede's model (1) because it is the one that has been systematically and empirically connected to CoO evaluations (Gurhan-Canli and Mahaeswarana 2000), and (2) it is the one that has significant acceptable levels of reliability and uni-dimensionality (e.g., Rosenbusch, Brinckmann & Bausch, 2011; Spector et al., 2001). The individualistic-collectivistic continuum expresses the link between the individual and the collectivist in a given community. Apparent differences exist in the features of these two forms of culture. Whereas the individualistic cultures underscore independent freedom, pleasure, and greater levels of competition, collectivistic cultures emphasize interdependence, social hierarchies, family security cooperation, and lower levels of competition (Hofstede, 1980). Eastern and African cultures like Chinese, Korean, Nigerian, and Japanese share collectivistic beliefs and values markedly different from those of individualistic cultures such as the US, France, and the UK (Hofstede's insight, 2021). In light of this, we expect that the CoOI would be affected by the degree of differences in the cultural traits of these countries. For instance, it has been found that Caucasians, Americans, underscore social independence, whereas African-Americans, Hispanic, and Asians all underscore social orientation and interdependence (Huntington, 2004). In this research stream, Dimofte, Johansson, and Bagozzi (2010) found that consumers in the US, which is an individualistic

society, are less favourable toward global brands than the minority group of the Asians, African American, Hispanic, and Asian, who are more socially oriented toward the group. However, it has been found that individuals who are highly concerned about their status and hedonic values are found to take into consideration the CoO effect when evaluating foreign products (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972). Thus, we propose that studies conducted in the high individualistic cultures will produce smaller effect sizes than those conducted in the low individualistic cultures.

Economic region of brands: Finally, previous research has demonstrated that a positive correlation exists between the evaluation of domestic products and a country's level of economic development (Gaedeke, 1973; Toyne & Walters, 1989). Studies underline that economic, social, and technological development significantly affect the values and symbolic beliefs of individuals toward brands. This way, we argue it is crucial to examine these elements and their moderating impact on the link between CoOI and CBE. The level of economic development was tested in the relationship between CoOI and CBE, classified as High Developed Countries (HDC) and Low Developed Countries (LDC) (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Researchers (e.g., Nagashima, 1977; Acharya & Elliot, 2001) compared the effect of CoOI between more-developed and less-developed countries and found that the effects differ as brands and products from developed countries are highly evaluated than their counterparts in developing countries. Brands from MDC tend to receive more favourable evaluations from consumers than brands or products from LDC (Zarantonello et al., 2013). This same logic could be used to reflect the type of country moderating variable, classified as an industrialized and low industrialized country. Also, the hierarchy of bias theory highlights a positive association between the level of economic development of a country and specific brand/product evaluation (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017). Following, we argue that the level of development of the country of origin will positively and significantly moderate the relationship between CoOI and CBE.

Continents of respondents: Again, we evaluated the respondents' nationality, classifying them into respondents from less-economically developed countries and respondents from more-economically developed countries. Scholars underline that brand or product evaluation can vary depending on the nationality of consumers. As a case in point, Amine and Shin (2002) postulate that consumers tend to show favouritism toward brands or products according to the proximity and knowledge of the CoO, empirically showing that consumers' disposition to purchase a nonlocal brand or product varies depending on the nationality of the consumer. Following Oduro, Maccario and De Nisco's (2021) suggestion, we grouped the respondents into North America, Europe, Australasia, Africa, South America, and others.

Economic region of respondents: Research has also demonstrated that consumers in economically less developed countries tend to perceive domestic products as inferior in quality and

other performance dimensions when compared to foreign brands or products (Cordell, 1992). For instance, Kinra (2006) discovered that Indian consumers rate the quality of Indian apparel brands less favourably than global apparel brands. Therefore, concerning the moderating role of the nationality of the consumer on the nexus between CoOI and CBE, it can be underscored that when comparing products or brands with analogous features, differences in the perception of the image of the countries under consideration exert greater differences in the CBE in the case of consumers of countries of less economic development. Thus, we expect the country-of-origin effect to be stronger among consumers in less developed countries than in developed countries.

Brand/product origin continent: Research has shown that consumers strongly prefer brands from the Western world. More specifically, scholars found that products and brands from the US garner more favourable ratings than those from other countries like Japan and South Korea (Sin, Suk-ching, & Ho, 2000; Zhang, 1996). Therefore, we checked the methodological moderator of brand/product origin with this perspective in mind, classifying them into North America, Europe, Australasia, Africa, South America, and others. The motivation is to determine how the brands from the various continents receive an evaluation from global consumers. The current thinking of the existing research is that brands of US (i.e., North America) origin are highly rated compared to brands from other countries or continents, thereby generating stronger effect sizes. Therefore, following the empirical perspective of the literature, we envisage that products/brands of North American origin will generate larger effect sizes than products/brands from other continents like Europe, Australasia, South America, Africa, and others.

Based on the above reviews, we expect that the contextual factors including brand source (6a), individualism (6b), economic region of products (6c), economic region of respondents (6d), brand/product origin (6e), product sector (6f), and respondents' continent (6g) positively moderate the relationship between CoOI and CBE.

3.6.2 Methodological moderators and the CoOI—CBE relationship.

Research has shown that, besides the contextual factors that may account for between-study variance, the effect of CoOI is “jointly determined by study characteristics ...and research designs” of the study. Therefore, the methodological moderator analysis is essential to explain the between-study variance of the effect sizes estimations (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993). Therefore, below we review some of the methodological factors.

Cues: Past research suggests that the CoO effect hinges on the number of cues presented in the choice situation (Insch & McCbride, 2004), stressing that single cue-models may overestimate effect sizes since consumers have CoO cue as the only product cue for evaluation. In light of this view, it has been pinpointed that this may generate both validity and assessment problems with

respect to how much influence CoOI has in the presence of other information cues (Erickson et al., 1984). In contrast, in multi-frameworks, the CoOI effect may be weakened by other cues like brand name, price, warranty. For example, Chen and Su (2011) discovered that the single-cue framework generates more statistically significant COD and COM effects than a multi-cue model on industrial brand equity. Bilkey and Nes (1982) suggested that a single-cue framework yield a spurious (false) significant cue effect. Eroglu and Wachleit (1988) stressed that CoO is just one of the countless product cues that consumers can use to evaluate a product or brand quality and that it is the believed significance of this cue vis-à-vis other product cues that ascertain the effect of consumers' perception of quality. Accordingly, we agree with the conventional thinking of the literature and propose that the single-cue studies will produce a stronger effect size than multi-cue studies.

Stimulus product level: As indicated earlier, the nature of the product appears to play a vital role in shaping consumers' evaluation based on the CoOI information. According to Johansson (1993), the degree of moderation may also differ based on whether the evaluation is done for a specific product or general product. Accordingly, we followed previous meta-analyses' classification to classify the products into specific or general products ((Jolibert & Peterson et al., 1995). Extant research shows that stimulus product level can impact the effect size. We envisage that studies examining specific products will generate larger effect sizes than those examining general products, as consumers may tend to rate the products bluntly without much reflection. In fact, Johansson (1993) noted that the greater a consumers' preference for a specific product, the more likely it is for the consumer to use CoO information in his/her evaluation.

Product status: Literature notes that the CoO effects are dependent on product category (Roth & Romeo, 1992). Balabanis and Diamantopolos (2004) found that consumer preferences patterns vary based on the product category under consideration. In a parallel thought, Pappu et al. (2006, 2007) underscored that the level of perceived quality differs according to the product category. Along the same lines, Hamzaoui and Merunka (2006) found that consumers from developing countries are more sensitive to COD for products with symbolic status meanings (e.g., cars) than for private goods (e.g., TV sets). Due to the meta-analytic nature of the study, which makes the presentation of effects for every single product overly long and boredom, we used products category classification scheme suggested by Batra et al. (1997, 2000) and Hamzaoui and Merunka (2006), who classified products into high social status/symbolic meaning products (e.g., computers, cars, apparels, shoes) and low social status/symbolic meaning products or brands (e.g., household appliances, electronics), to categorize the products. Being so, we propose that studies dealing with high social status brands or products will yield greater effect sizes compared to low social status due to the elitism and hedonic value consumers associate with high social status brands (Vieira et al., 2018).

Brand type: We, moreover, tested the contextual moderating effect of the type of brand examined in the studies, grouping them into those that dealt with real brands and those that dealt with artificial or fictitious brands (DelVecchio, Henard, Freling, 2006). According to Leonidou, Palihawadana, and Talias (2006), the brand type has a tremendous moderating role in CoO evaluation, either positive or negative. Additionally, the authors stressed that, in contrast to artificial or fictitious brands, real (known) brands have benefited from particular equity generated by their reputation, popularity, and associated attitudes in consumers' minds, eventually providing more accurate information for evaluation. Thus, the authors concluded that actual brands could yield more accurate and to the point effects because of the availability of real, hands-on information about the brand. Based on this reasoning, we argue that studies using real brands may generate more accurate and reliable effect sizes than those using artificial or fictitious brands, leading to overestimating effect sizes (Schooler, 1971).

Product involvement: Zaichkowsky (1985) describes involvement as consumers' perceived importance of the focal object based on values, interests, and inherent needs. That is the relative strength of a person's cognitive structure to a particular object (Chen & Tsai, 2008). Research has shown that product involvement significantly influences consumer behaviour and attitudes (Quester & Smart, 1998), since it is related to relevance and consumers' value (Kwon & Chung, 2010). Zaichkowsky (1994) argued that increased product involvement could lead to a preference for a specific brand and increased information search. Researchers (e.g., Sanyal & Dattta, 2011; Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2009) indicated that product categories can also be divided into low and high involvement products. Past research (e.g., Josiassen et al., 2008; Verlegh et al., 2005; Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000) notes that when consumers evaluate low involvement products, CoO is a relevant part of their information for purchase. However, studies (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2002, 2004) have argued that high involvement products generate higher CoO effects. Supportively, Pappu et al. (2007) found that high involvement products (e.g., cars, computers) are much more sensitive to CoO effects than low involvement (e.g., soap). Accordingly, we propose that those studies examining low involvement brands will produce smaller effect sizes than those investigating high-involvement products because perceived quality is attached to high involvement products.

Sampling unit: Research notes that personality development factors may account for differences in real customers and student samples used in a study. Students, for instance, are deemed fragmentary with unstructured preferences (Carlson, 1971), whose usage may overestimate effect sizes and limit the validity of external results (De Nisco, 2010). Furthermore, Perterson (2001) study divulged that effect sizes in student samples contrast significantly with those obtained from real consumers (non-students), although the authors found no systematic pattern in the effect sizes.

Considering these arguments, we suggest that studies employing students can potentiate the effects of dual or two behaviours since this sampling unit (type of sample) is more homogenous (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006) compared to non-student samples like managers or real consumers (Fern & Moroe, 1996).

Sample size: Research suggests that sample size may account for a between-study variance on the focal relationship. Therefore, we grouped the samples into large and small samples (Gullardo-Vazquez et al., 2019), a distinction that is considered since the magnitude of an effect might differ based on the sample size of the study (Hedges & Olkin, 1985), and potentiation is more prevalent in small samples (Rosenthal, 1979). The samples were grouped into large and small samples, a distinction that is considered because the magnitude of an effect might differ based on the study's sample size (Hedges & Olkin, 1985), and potentiation is more prevalent in small samples (Rosenthal, 1979). Whereas some previous meta-analytic reviews argue that small samples may yield stronger effect sizes than large samples (Wang & Yang, 2008), some argue that large samples rather yield stronger correlations as the study is based on an accurate sample (Gullardo-Vazquez et al., 2019). Accordingly, we anticipate that larger sample sizes (>150) will produce larger effect sizes than small sample sizes (<150), a variant of the classification of Peterson and Jolibert (1995).

Study design: The choice of study design may embody a potential moderator variable. Therefore, we also evaluated the possible moderator by the study design, classifying them into survey or experiment. According to the literature, researchers using survey have little control over exogenous variables. This way, the effect sizes tend to exert less explanatory power than experimental studies (Fern & Moroe, 1996). On the other hand, a meticulous conceived experimental design allows the researcher to exercise significant control of sceneries and to assign subjects randomly from different groups of participants, which in turn yields minor variance error in the denominator of the correlations and generates larger effect sizes (Wang & Tang, 2008). As well, the elimination of potential confounds might generate more rigorous associations in an experimental study than a non-experimental one (Pan & Zinkkhan, 2006). Previous meta-analyses postulate that survey studies sometimes induce low response rates and suffer from self-reported data (Peterson, 2001). However, empirical findings are mixed (De Nisco, 2010; Fern & Moroe, 1996). Therefore, we employ a non-directional hypothesis and propose that studies using an experimental design will produce larger effect sizes than studies employing survey study design.

Sampling technique: We also observed the sampling technique of the studies. Here, samples were categorized as probabilistic and non-probabilistic. Probabilistic sampling studies used cluster sampling, simple random sampling, systematic sampling, or stratified sampling techniques to select respondents. In contrast, the non-probabilistic studies involve articles that employ sampling

techniques like convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, or voluntary response techniques to choose respondents. It has been found that probabilistic sampling minimises random errors of variance and, thus, inclines to yield stronger effect sizes (Fern & Moroe, 1996) than the non-probability sampling technique. Therefore, we expect probabilistic sampling technique studies to yield stronger effect sizes than non-probabilistic sampling technique studies.

Theory usage: Moreover, we tested the moderating effect of theory usage of the studies, grouping articles into atheoretical or theoretical (Lu et al., 2016). Theoretical studies use theories to drive hypotheses, models, and research questions, while atheoretical stories use the general framework of the independent variable without recourse to theory usage in hypothesis or scale development. We propose that studies without theories may overestimate the effect of the relationship between CoOI and CBE as these studies are not driven by theoretical models or not based on well-developed models. Following Lu et al. (2016) and Zorzini et al. (2015) indication that the usage of theory in a study reflects journal quality, we attempted to understand if this positive association between theory adoption and journal quality manifests in effect sizes of the examined relationships. Because studies based on well-grounded theories reflect real-life situations (e.g., Zorzini et al., 2015 Diamantopoulos, Herz & Koschate-Fischer, 2015), we envisage they will generate more accurate effect sizes than atheoretical studies.

Country inclusion: Moreover, it is argued that if the CoO of the brand or product is the same as the respondent's country, the effect size is stronger than if the products come from a country other than that of the respondent's (Jolibert & Perterson, 1995). Considering this argument, we envisage that if the countries of origin under consideration include respondents' country, the rating will be rationed and produce larger effect sizes than when the countries under consideration do not include the respondents' country.

Number of countries: Finally, we also evaluated the number of countries: one, two, or more. It is chronicled in the literature that if more than one country is involved or studied as brand or product origins, there was the likelihood for effect sizes to be larger than if one or two countries were involved (Jolibert & Peterson, 1995). Therefore, we envisage that the number of countries involved in the study may account for heterogeneity in the results.

Publication year: One of the heated debates about the relevance of the CoOI construct concerns the factor of time. While earlier researchers stress the importance of CoO in consumers' decisions as confirmed by the earlier meta-analyses (e.g., Jolibert & Perterson, 1995), later views debunked these findings (e.g., Liefeld (2004), noting that "COO effect is no longer a major issue for international marketing operations: multinational production, global branding, and the decline of origin labelling in WTO rules tend to blur the CoO issue and lessen its relevance" (Usunier, 2006).

At the same time, current studies confirm the importance of CoOI construct (e.g., Rambocas & Ramsabhag, 2018; Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019). Therefore, it is importance to examine how the year of publication influences CoOI evaluations to ascertain of time factor matters in CoO evaluations. To this end, we examined publication year, classifying it into Pre-2000, 2000-2010, and 2011-2021.

Following the above reviews, we envisage that the methodological factors (7a) brand type cues (7b), stimulus product level (7c), product signalling status (7d), product category involvement (7e), (sampling unit (7g), sample size (7h), study design (7i), sampling technique (7g), theory usage (7k), nationality of respondents (7l), country inclusion (7m), brand/product origin (7n), number of countries (7o), and publication year (7p) will positively moderate the relationship between CoOI and CBE.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has critically and significantly reviewed and analysed the empirical literature on the CoOI and CBE relationship from the cue utilisation and irradiation theories. The chapter has presented an empirical review of the relationship between CoOI and CBE, specifically between GCI and CBE, GPCI and CBE, SPCI and CBE, PACI and CBE. The literature review demonstrates that findings are inconclusive and inconsistent with respect to how CoOI influences CBE as most of the results are contextually and methodologically dependent. The lack of consistency in the results of the studies provides enough justification for the calls to explore the CoOI— CBE association through a meta-analysis. Therefore, based on the cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory, the study proposes a meta-analytic conceptual model to examine the possible contextual and methodological moderators that may account for between-study variance (i.e., heterogeneities) in the mixed findings. The next chapter presents the research methodology applied in testing the formulated hypotheses of the meta-analytic conceptual model discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0. Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the methodological issues applied in conducting the meta-analysis. More specifically, the chapter discusses the main methodological fronts in the study in terms of the concept of meta-analysis, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods. As a guide to this chapter, a chapter overview is presented in section 4.0 that highlights the chapter's organisation. In section 4.1, a review of the concept of meta-analysis is clearly articulated. Section 4.2 discusses the data collection process, the search process, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the data coding scheme. The analytic data techniques used are discussed in section 4.3, along with the statistical tools employed in answering the study's research questions. The chapter culminates with a summary of the issues presented in this chapter, in section 4.4. With this brief overview, a review of the concept of meta-analysis is in order.

4.1. Meta-analysis: Definitions, process, and relevance

4.1.1 *Definitions and characteristics*

Meta-analysis is a “quantitative, formal, and epidemiological study design that is used to systematically assess and combine the results of previous multiple scientific studies to derive conclusions about that body of research” (Haidich, 2010, p.g. 12). In simple words, meta-analysis synthesizes data from multiple scholarly works to draw conclusions by creating single, uniform results. As part of an evidence-based research approach, meta-analysis is an established and powerful technique to summarize the results of empirical studies systematically.

Meta-analytic review is a quantitative review method that enables a field to take stock of knowledge by (1) combining results across primary studies, (2) comparing results of studies in an attempt to identify crucial contextual and methodological factors that may account for heterogeneities in study results, and (3) generating and testing theoretical and conceptual assumptions through the use of data-analytic datasets (Kirca & Yaprak, 2010; Hedges & Cooper, 1994). Scholars in various fields of research like psychology, marketing, management, and others have attested to the accelerating and dramatic increase of meta-analysis to gather data and summarize them into generalizable knowledge (Kirca & Yaprak, 2010). Meta-analysis is an evidence-based research approach that adopts a comprehensive temporal and cross-country perspective (Rosenbusch et al., 2019; Mueller et al., 2013).

Moreover, unlike qualitative and narrative reviews, meta-analysis goes one step further to extend knowledge by quantitatively and systematically summarizing the results of primary studies. In addition to this, and as discussed subsequently, meta-analytic inventories can be used to test theory through path analysis of more comprehensive frameworks that have not been sufficiently explored in a given field of inquiry. Therefore, meta-analytic reviews complement the conventional qualitative and narrative inventories by offering an objective and rigorous synthesis of the extant literature findings in a given field of inquiry. Given these considerations, meta-analysis has been recognised as

helpful research and analytical technique to advance theory in international business and marketing (Kirca & Yaprak, 2010; Farley & Lehmann, 2001).

4.1.2: Meta-analysis process

According to Kirca and Yaprak (2010), meta-analysis typically involves a five-stage framework and common practices: (1) problem formulation stage, (2) Data collection stage, (3) Data evaluation stage, (4) Data analysis stage, and (5) Interpretation and discussion stage. The common practices associated with each of these stages are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Five-stage framework and common practices in Meta-analysis

Stages	Common practices
Problem formulation stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read key empirical and conceptual articles on the topic Identify important, common variables, study and measurement characteristics Identify contradictory findings Decide on the specific objective of the meta-analysis Develop a preliminary theoretical framework
Data collection stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct key-word searches of electronic databases Search for references of uncovered key studies Conduct manual searches of relevant publications Solicit studies from known authors Post requests for articles and working papers on academic list-servers Screen and eliminate studies according to “Elimination Criteria.”
Data evaluation stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the key common metric across studies (e.g., correlation coefficient) Identify important study characteristics Prepare a coding form for each study according to the “Coding Manual.” Code each study Prepare the database and check for potential errors
Data analysis stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct univariate analysis of mean effect sizes Search for moderators using bivariate analysis of effect sizes Search for moderators using multivariate analysis of effect sizes Construct and analyse the meta-analytical correlation matrix for theory testing
Interpretation and discussion stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report univariate and bivariate findings using tables and figures Provide a detailed research directions section based on findings

Source: Kirca and Yaprak (2010).

4.1.3 Importance of Meta-analysis over qualitative reviews

Qualitative reviews and narratives provide a field with state-of-the-art reviews on a broad array of ontological, methodological, and thematic domains (Cavusgil, Deligonul, & Yaprak, 2005). However, researchers (e.g., Rosenbusch, Brinckmann & Bausch, 2011; Hunter and Schmidt, 2004)

underline that unstructured qualitative narratives and reviews can involve measurement, external validity, stochastic and sampling issues, and usually do not allow for the quantification of the associations. In addition to this, qualitative and narrative inventories mostly incorporate several normative and cognitive biases of the researcher (Rauch & Frese, 2006). In an attempt to overcome these limitations, meta-analysis is a powerful and established method to synthesize results across studies. Some of the advantages of meta-analysis over qualitative reviews include;

- (1) it allows researchers to ascertain the strengths of direct relationships and permits the discovery of moderating effects (Rousseau et al., 2008, p. 491).
- (2) it is also the ‘best method to reach consensus’ (Combs et al., 2011, p. 194) when primary empirical results are by far inconclusive.
- (3) It permits scholars to generate ‘super samples’ or ‘a sample from many samples’ to determine the size, direction, and variance of conceptual associations—estimates scholars can have trust in since they synthesize information across several diverse studies (Jiang et al., 2012).
- (4) it allows scholars to go a step further from merely aggregating seemingly inconsistent results around single associations by helping researchers build new theories (Rauch et al., 2014).
- (5) it explores whether bodies of study conform to complicated systems of concurrent predictions (Bergh et al., 2016; Jak, 2015);
- (6) it evaluates the relative relevance of competing predictions (Karam et al., 2019),
- (7) it tests conceptual propositions that will not be possible to investigate in a single study (Combs et al., 2019; Carney et al., 2011), and
- (8) Overcomes sampling error by generating ‘super samples’ composed of effect size estimates from several pieces of research and employing weighted average to determine the population-level effect size (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015).

The next section discusses the data collection mechanisms employed in collecting the empirical articles for the meta-analysis.

4.2. Data collection

For this current study, secondary data were used as the primary source of information, specifically empirical journal articles on the relationship between CoOI and CBE. The data collection process involved a data search process, data selection process (i.e., inclusion and exclusion criteria), and data coding scheme. The data search process is addressed in the next section.

4.2.1 Data search process

The data search was carried out via the following databases: EBSCO; Elsevier Science Direct; Emerald; Google Scholar; JSTOR; Scopus; PROQUEST, and Taylor and Francis. The search was limited to only scholarly peer-reviewed, empirical, English language, full-text online articles published between 1978 and 2020. This time interval permits us to include all the relevant studies involving the development of the phenomenon from its early scholarly recognition to the contemporary time. To optimize the search within the databases, we identify the principal impetus for research on consumer behaviour toward CoOI. Data were collected from the data sources aforementioned using the following keywords or terms in the “document title,” or abstract,” or “subject terms” fields in the above databases: “*country (’s) image,*” *CI,* “*country (of) origin,*” “*countries of origin,*” “*CoOI,*” “*COO,*” “*country product image,*” “*product country image,*” “*PCI,*” “*Specific product image,*” “*partitioned country image,*” “*hybrid brands,*” “*brand evaluation,*” “*brand origin,*” “*brand perception,*” “*brand image,*” “*brand attitude,*” “*brand personality,*” “*brand awareness,*” “*brand association,*” “*brand trust,*” “*perceived quality,*” “*brand loyalty,*” and “*perceived value*” In addition, we examined the reference sections of those identified studies in search of additional empirical studies.

We also used the Boolean operators "AND," "OR," and "NOT" to search the independent variables and dependent variables simultaneously in the title, abstract, and search term fields in the databases to optimize our search reach. Finally, we conducted issue-by-issue searches of representative marketing journals in which articles addressing CoOI and CBE are most probable to be located, including *International Marketing Review, Journal of Global Marketing, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of International Marketing, Journal of International Consumer Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Brand Management, International Journal of Consumer, Psychology Marketing, Journal of Consumer Research.*

4.5.2 Data selection: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

The preliminary collection process identified 1317 articles satisfying one of the search criteria stated above. We included only scholarly peer-reviewed and empirical articles published in English to ensure quality standards, with full text online (so we checked for publication bias). Thus, our review excludes newspaper articles, book reviews, and dissertations, and thesis. The refinement returned 988 papers from 76 journals with citation impact. By applying our inclusion and exclusion criteria, we identified 207 articles that were not within the scope of analysis since they were qualitative and commentaries and 276 papers were further not included because they were not related to the CoOI and CBE. More specifically, they were associated with CoOI and product evaluation and purchase intention, which falls outside the scope of the present study. Furthermore, we identified and

eliminated 162 articles that were editorials in special issues, research notes, and systematic qualitative reviews, and 218 duplicates.

After these exclusions, 166 articles independent, peer-reviewed articles were recognised and analysed in this meta-analytic review. The screening was carried out based on the following four criteria: first, the studies must examine at least one pair of the CoOI constructs discussed earlier as the independent variable; second, the measurement items of the dependent variables accurately mirrored our model specification, namely CBE based on the consumer-brand equity model (CBBE); that is, *brand-specific associations* (i.e., perceived brand quality, brand parity, perceived value, brand association, brand personality, brand affect), *general brand impressions* (i.e., brand image, brand attitude, and brand awareness), *brand commitment* (i.e., brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust); third, the study provided an effect size or enough statistical information (i.e., correlation coefficient or its r-contrast specified earlier) of the associations investigated; and fourth, the examination must be independent, that is, does not present two different results from the same sample, in which case we selected the sample with detailed information. Our review and search process, adapted from Petticrew and Roberts (2006), Tranfield et al. (2003), and Sampaio and Mancini (2007), is shown in Figure 3.

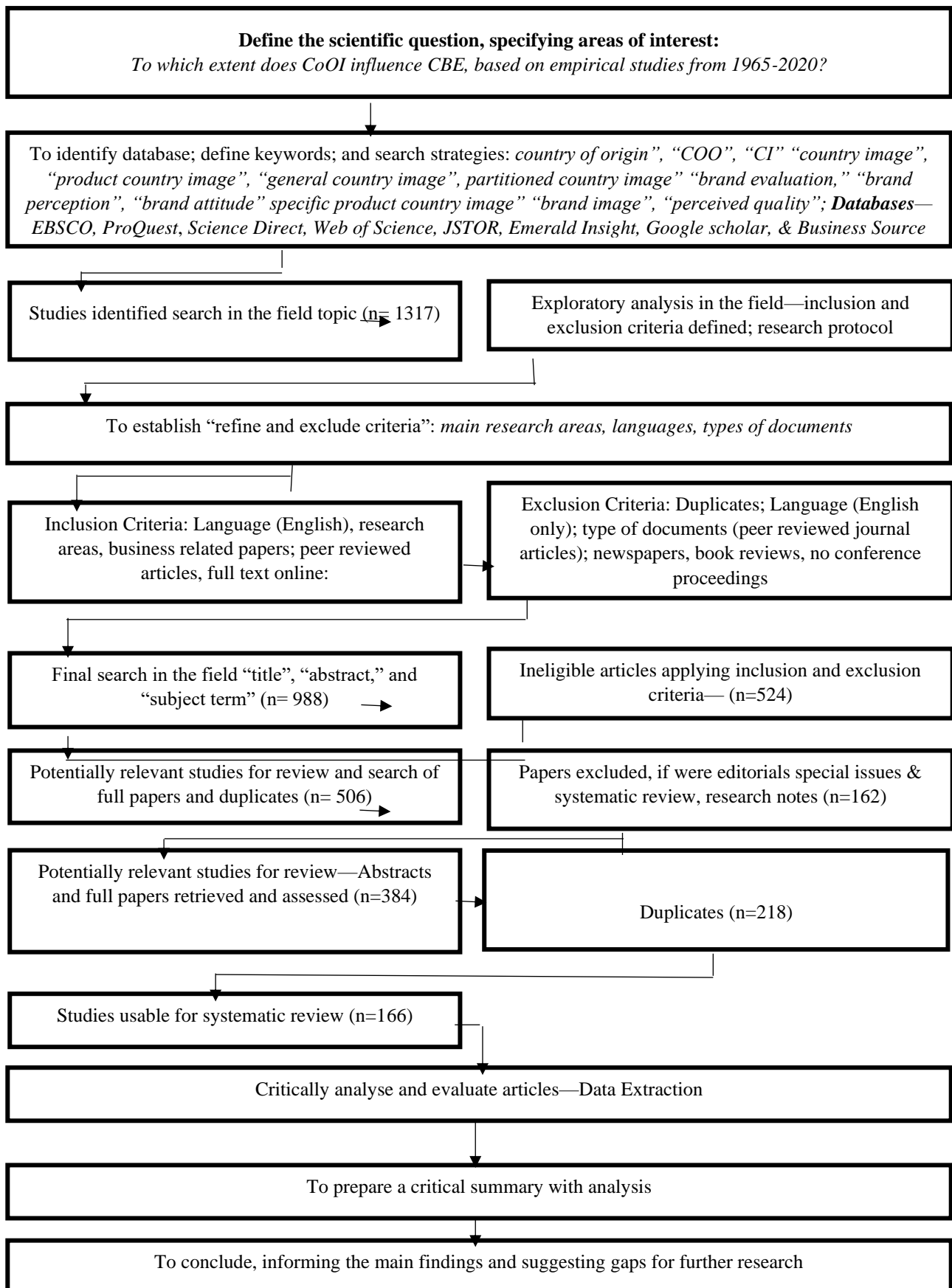


Fig. 3. Overview of the search process

The articles that met the inclusion criteria were recorded on an excel sheet and subsequently imported to the CMA software for analysis. The included articles encompassed a total N of 499,563 observations, 166 articles, 191 observations, and 282 effect sizes. These relevant studies were then coded based on publication characteristics (i.e., article identifier, authors, years, source journal) and on their conceptual features (i.e., CoOI dimensions (GCI, GPCI, SPCI, PACI, & CBE dimensions), contextual moderating characteristics (i.e., cues, brand type, brand source, stimulus product level, product category involvement, product category, product type, culture, country inclusion, and economic region), and methodological characteristics (i.e., sampling unit, sample size, theory usage, brand origin, study design, sampling technique, level of economic development, sampling technique, number of countries, nationality of the respondents, reliabilities of the two constructs (CoOI and CBE), and statistical correlation (effect sizes).

Analogous to the procedures in prior meta-analyses (e.g., Gullardo-Vazquez et al., 2019), two judges rated the content of the articles and coded them based on coding scheme shown in Table 2. In 92% of the cases, judges agreed. In situations where we did not reach consensus, a third judge was employed to examine the coding system. All the elements that failed to realize consensus were then analysed together in a last round of discussion. At this stage, we identified the constructs related to CoOI and CBE.

4.6 Data analysis and techniques

Since Glass' (1976) coined the concept of meta-analysis as a technique to quantitatively aggregate findings from previous research, many different methods have emerged. The most contemporary methods include; (1) qualitative meta-analysis (QMA), meta-analytic structural equation modelling (METASEM), and meta-analytic regression analysis (MARA) (Combs et al., 2019). The first method, QMA, aggregates qualitative findings or builds/uncovers new theoretical relationships; Case texts are coded and analysed as qualitative data inputs into theory testing and/or building (Hoon, 2013; Rauch et al., 2014). The method allows for powerful and/or novel insights grounded in large amounts of qualitative case descriptions written for different.

The second method, METASEM, predicts the size of key relationships among variables, including mediation; uses a correlation table wherein each cell is a meta-analytic result. Path analysis fitted to correlation table to test hypotheses (Bergh et al. (2016); Jak (2015)). Its advantage is that it allows for powerful simultaneous tests of multiple theoretical relationships, facilitating effect size comparisons. Moreover, it permits control variables. The final method, MARA, is employed to test boundary conditions regarding what factors moderate key relationships; uses raw effect sizes from primary studies as a dependent variable in weighted regression analysis. In this case, potential study-level moderators serve as independent variables (Gonzalez-Mulé & Aguinis, 2018); Lipsey and

Wilson (2001). Compared to subgroup analysis, it uses all information in continuous moderator variables. Can include multiple correlated control variables in moderation tests.

In this study, the MARA approach is employed as the study aims to explore the CoOI—CBE relationship while accounting for categorical moderating factors that may account for variation in the study findings. The various sections of the data analysis are discussed in the ensuing section, beginning with the effect sizes integration.

4.6.1 Integration of effect sizes

The effect sizes in a meta-analytic review can be combined, compared, and modelled using one of three methods: standard mean difference (d^{**}), correlation coefficient (r^{**}), and odd ratio. In this study, the data analysis considered the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), which highlights the effect sizes between a predictor and a criterion, and has been adopted in most meta-analyses (De Nisco, 2010; Gullardo-Vazquez et al., 2019; Lipsey & Wilson 2001). The rationale for the employment of the correlation coefficient as the effect-size metric includes the following reasons: (a) it is the generally used meta-analytic index in marketing studies (e.g., De Nisco, 2010; Roschka, Loureiro & Breitsohl, 2017); (b) it is easy to interpret; and (c) it allows for *r-contrast* to be computed in cases where no correlation coefficients are directly reported (Wang & Tang, 2008).

When a study does not indicate the correlation, the provided statistics, known as the *r*-variants (t-test, f-test, z-test, b-values, p-values, regression coefficients), were converted following common guidelines as suggested by Hedges and Olkin (1985) and Rosenthal and DiMatteo (2001). For instance, studies using regression coefficients and betas were converted using the formula: $r = .98\beta + .05\lambda$ with $\lambda = 1$ when $\beta > 0$ and $\lambda = 0$ when $\beta < 0$ (Peterson & Brown, 2005). When authors reported only p-values in absolute or in range manner, we applied the conversion procedure suggested by (Rosenthal & Di Matteo, 2001, p.72) to convert them to correlation coefficients. Concerning the studies that reported non-significant effects, the corresponding effect sizes were set equal to zero. We averaged the effect sizes to circumvent bias emanating from the overrepresentation of samples in the studies that reported more than one measure of correlation for the same association by evaluating various response measures (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004).

According to the Pearson correlation effect size metric, higher coefficient values suggest stronger effects of the independent variable (in this case, CoOI dimensions) on the dependent variable (i.e., CBE). Thus, the correlation coefficient is used in this study to combine, compare, and model the effect sizes of the CoO—CBE relationship to ascertain their true nature of effects and magnitude.

4.6.2. Meta-analytic procedures

There are two alternative ways of computing and testing the mean effect sizes: random and fixed effects (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). The fixed effects assume each study in the meta-analysis

used the same external validity elements (population, setting, task/stimulus) and the same (fixed) operationalizations of the design conditions (Borenstein et al., 2009). Said differently, they assume that the independent variable in each study is manipulated (fixed), so the independent variable in every study is identical. To this end, the articles in this meta-analytic review are assumed to be taken from a population of studies that have the same sample size, except for sampling error. So, the sampling error is inversely associated with the sample size, which is why the effects of each article are weighed by the inverse variance weight.

On the other hand, the random effects assume that the various primary studies in the meta-analysis employed diverse external validity elements (population, setting, task/stimulus) and operationalizations of the design factors (Borenstein et al., 2009). Thus, from the perspective of the random effects, studies in the meta-analysis are assumed to be drawn from a population of studies with different effect sizes for two reasons: sampling variability and “real” effect size differences between studies caused by the differences in operationalizations external validity elements. Therefore, the sampling error is inversely related to the sample size and directly related to the variability across the population of studies (Zubeltzu-Jaka, Erauskin-Tolosa, & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2018).

Being so, the sampling error is computed differently, including not only the variance within groups but also variance between groups. The random-effects models contain a component that captures between-study and within-study variance (Borenstein et al., 2007), thereby producing more conservative and more reliable estimates (Hedges & Vevea, 1998). Since this study collects and combines estimated effect sizes across multiple studies conducted under different contexts, methodology, model specifications, and time, the random effects are considered the appropriate approach to be employed because even “replications” do not use all the same external validity elements and operationalizations.

4.6.3. Bias and errors correction in meta-analysis

There are three main errors in any meta-analysis to be corrected and adjusted due to the variability across the multiple studies. These are measurement error, sampling error, and publication bias or error. The measurement error emerges due to the variability in the reliabilities of the constructs of the study. For adjusting these errors, researchers suggest that the “raw” effect sizes (correlation coefficients) are divided by the product of the square-root of the respective reliabilities of the two constructs (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004; Lipsey & Wilson 2001). Then, to adjust for the sampling error, the reliability-corrected effect sizes are transformed into Fisher's z-coefficients, weighted by an estimate of the inverse their variance (N-3) to approach a standard normal distribution, thereby giving more weight to more precise estimates. The publication bias is checked by using a funnel plot or by

calculating the fail-safe number for meaningful relationships. This index estimates the number of nonsignificant or unpublished studies necessary to refute the findings of this analysis (Rosenthal & Rubin 1991). Finally, we averaged the z coefficients and weighted them according to their variances, following a random-effects perspective, before reconverting the integrated results.

4.6.4. Moderator analysis in meta-analysis

The moderator analysis of the study was conducted using both subgroup analysis and meta-analytic regression analysis (MARA). Subgroup analysis groups primary studies based on the proposed moderators and the meta-analytic estimates for each group are computed and compared to check if the confidence intervals overlap (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). Subgroup analysis provides much more statistical power compared to MARA; however, Gonzalez-Mulé and Aguinis (2018) noted that subgroup analysis has two weaknesses; (1) it considers moderator in isolation, and (2) it forces the researcher to dichotomize continuous moderator factors such as year of publication. MARA overcomes these issues by simultaneously examining multiple moderators (Schmidt, 2017).

MARA employs effect-size estimates from empirical studies as the dependent variable in a weighted least square regression analysis (WLS), while study attributes are used as the independent variables. A significant regression coefficient in MARA indicates that a study attribute or feature alters the focal relationship; it either increases or decreases the effects identified in primary studies with that feature or attribute (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). However, Schmidt (2017) pinpointed that MARA has low statistical power according to the number of k effects relative to the number of independent variables. For this reason, Gonzalez-Mulé and Aguinis (2018) suggest that enough statistical is established or reported before using MARA. Subgroup analysis capitalizes on the statistical power obtained by aggregating effect sizes across several studies collectively grounded in a myriad of observations (Aguinis et al., 2011).

Therefore, Combs et al. (2019) recommend that a study includes both subgroup analysis and MARA to counteract the weaknesses in each moderator analysis technique. Followingly, and analogous to Rosenbusch et al. (2019), we combined both subgroup analysis and MARA in this study to test the contextual and methodological moderators. In addition to the points mentioned above, subgroup analysis helps us to interpret the magnitude and direction of effects in sub-groups while a MARA considers the interdependencies of the association between moderators and variables of interest, thereby allowing for the test of theory (Rosenbusch et al., 2019; Klier et al., 2017).

4.6.4 Statistical tool and analytic techniques

This study analyses the coded data using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) version 3.2, powerful statistical software for meta-analysis. The software combines the case of each information

with a wide array of computational options and sophisticated graphics. The software is user-friendly; it is easier to enter data with CMA; CMA automatically computes effect sizes once integrated “raw” effect sizes are entered. In addition, CMA creates customized, high-resolution forest plots for assessing publication bias, provides formulas of all computational inputs, allows for the evaluation of both categorical and continuous moderator variables, and reports results from both random and fixed models. The analysis reports the adjusted $r^{**}(ES)$, standard error, z-test, confidence interval, and p-value. Moreover, CMA tests and analyses the robustness via Q-test and I^2 statistics. Moreover, CMA checks the homogeneity correlations in the studies using the calculus: $\sum_{wi} ES^2 i - (\sum_{wi} ESi)^2 / \sum wi$, (where ES is the estimated effect size, w is the weight), procedures suggested by Hedges and Olkin (1985).

Finally, the Fail-safe is analysed to demonstrate the number of articles needed to refute the meta-analysis results. Furthermore, the software package was developed based on the methods suggested by Hedges and Olkin (2014). In their analysis of statistical software tools for conducting a meta-analysis, comprising four commercial programs (i.e., CMA, WEasyMA, MetaWin, and MetAnalysis) and two free programs (i.e., RevMan and MIX), Bax, Yu, Ikeda, and Moons (2007) found CMA to be more versatile, particularly in terms of options for analysis of the various type of data. For this reason, and in line with previous studies (e.g., Rosenbusch et al., 2019; Klier et al., 2017), CMA was deemed appropriate for analyzing the study data.

4.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an elucidated review of the methods and techniques of data collection and analysis employed in the study, together with adequate justifications. The concept of meta-analysis, along with its processes and importance, is lucidly outlined. The chapter moreover provided an elaborated discussion of the data collection or search process, research instrument (i.e., systematic literature review), and the methods employed to check the studies' bias and errors. The choice of statistical methods and the processes employed in the data analysis has been articulated with appropriate justification. The findings of the study based on the data analysis are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the detailed findings of the study. As a guide to the chapter, section 5.0 provides a brief synopsis of the main themes addressed in the chapter. Next, section 5.1 highlights the robustness checks of the analysis in terms of the missing data, detection and treatment of outliers, homogeneity and heterogeneity checks, and publication bias. Followingly, section 5.2 presents the study's main findings in relation to the study's objectives, that is, the effect of CoOI on CBE as well as the moderator analysis using subgroup analysis and MARA is presented in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, respectively. Then, a detailed discussion of the findings vis-a-vis the extant literature is provided in 5.3. With that being said, the robustness checks section is in order.

5.1 Robustness Checks

Before going into the detailed aspects of the results vis-à-vis the impact of CoOI on CBE, we conducted some robustness checks, and the first was to look out for outliers in the effect sizes. However, the distribution of the mean effect sizes did not demonstrate any outliers because none of the effect sizes are more than two standard errors below or above the effect size (Rosenbusch et al., 2019). Nevertheless, since large sample sizes can generate influential cases that may have a significant influence on findings, we also followed the suggestion by Huffcutt and Arthur (1995) and Geyskens and colleagues (2009) to compute the sample-adjusted meta-analytic deviancy (SAMD) statistics, which identified three potential outliers. But running the MARA without those studies did not change our results. Finally, we checked whether the findings held if we employed the number of study objects rather than the number of observations as the sample size. Here too, our results attested robust.

In addition, although we did a comprehensive systematic search to obtain literature for the study, which is helpful to minimise the influence of publication bias, the alleviation of the problem of publication bias may not be possible. To this end, we followed the suggestions of the literature to use statistical methods to address the issue of publication bias. More specifically, we employed funnel plot, *Fail safe N*, and trim and fill methods to examine publication bias. Publication bias is the concern that studies with significant outcomes or subgroups may be given precedent over non-significant ones (Chan et al., 2004) and are published more quickly than those with non-significant outcomes. Also, it means that research with positive, statistical results is published in very “prestigious places and cited more times, making it more visible and easier to find” (Cooper et al., 2019).

The funnel plot is considered a good exploratory tool for investigating publication bias for a visual summary of a meta-analytic dataset (Sterne, Becker, & Egger, 2005). It is essentially a scatter plot of a measure of study size against a measure of effect sizes. The premise of the funnel plot is that effect sizes should be evenly distributed (i.e., symmetric) around the underlying true effect size with more variability in the smaller samples than the larger samples due to the greater impact of sampling

error. However, as displayed in Fig. 3, we can notice that the effect sizes are symmetrically distributed around the underlying effect size and are widely spread on top of the funnel, indicating that error in publication bias is no issue of concern.

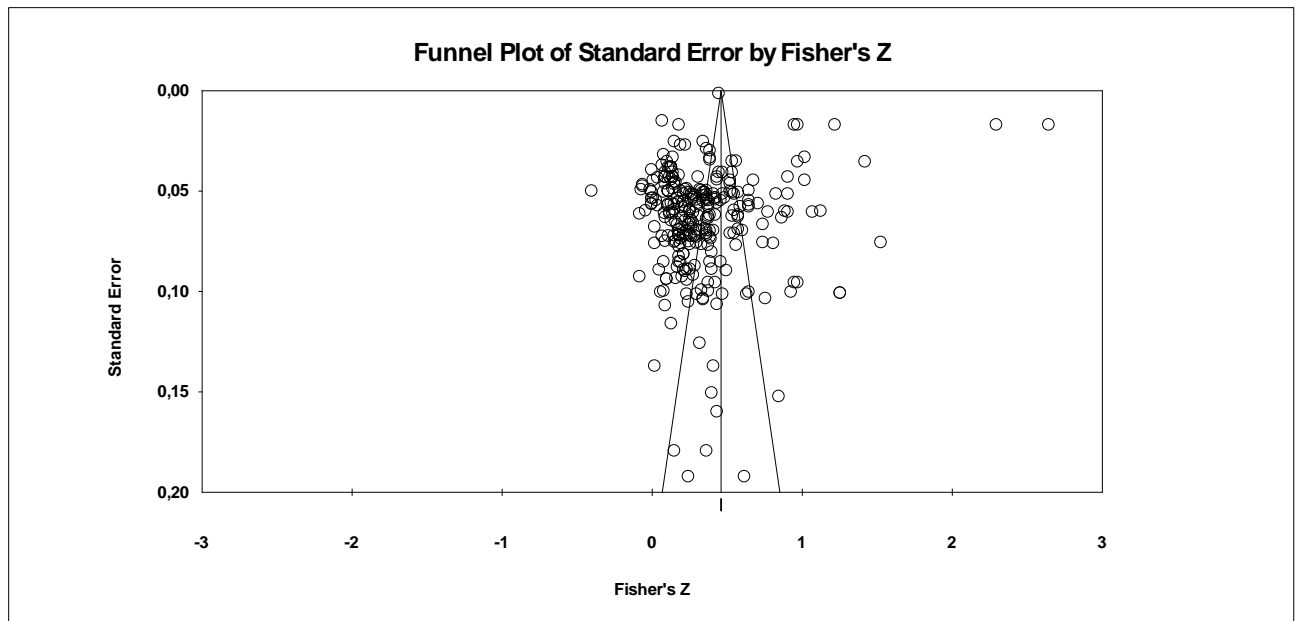


Fig. 4. Funnel plot of publication bias

Supportively, the Fail-safe N, which considers the question of how many new studies averaging a null result are required to bring the overall treatment effect to non-significance (Rosenthal, 1979), is 18471 overall. This exceeds the critical value of $5 \cdot K + 10$ ($5 \cdot 325 + 10$) = 1635, suggesting no significant bias across studies. Moreover, the Trim and Fill method, which is now the most popular method for adjusting for publication bias (Borenstein, 2005), supports this finding. This method uses an iterative process to obtain an estimate of the number of missing studies. The technique calculates how many studies would need to be trimmed off the right side of the funnel to leave a symmetric order. It assumes that the studies to the far left-hand side of the funnel are missing, and hence it is a one-sided procedure. The results below show that no study is missing. Thus, all the statistical methods prove that publication bias no issue in our data.

Duval and Tweedie's trim and fill

	Studies Trimmed	Fixed Effects			Random Effects			Q Value
		Point Estimate	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Point Estimate	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Observed values		0.42923	0.42696	0.43149	0.33575	0.28800	0.38184	40549.3949
Adjusted values	0	0.42923	0.42696	0.43149	0.33575	0.28800	0.38184	40549.3949

Fig. 5. Trim and fill publication bias

5.2 Findings and Analysis

5.2.1 Main effects: CoOI and CBE relationship

Table 6 provides the results about the overall or aggregate effect of CoOI on overall CBE and the relative effects of the dimensions of CoOI, namely, GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI on overall CBE. In addition to this, Table 6 shows the aggregate impact of the CoOI dimensions on the relative sub-dimensions of CBE, namely, brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment. Furthermore, Table 6 reveals the disaggregate or relative effect of the CoOI dimensions on brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment. To start, our results show that the average strength of the aggregate effect sizes is significantly moderate (medium) (.27–0.51), based on the criteria suggested by Cohen (1988), where an effect size of .20 is interpreted as small; .50 equates to a medium effect, and effect size larger than 0.80 is deemed as large effects. From Table 6, it can be observed that the overall impact of CoOI on overall CBE is positive and significant ($r = .31$; $CI = .27; .34$) since the confidence interval does not include zero. Although moderate (medium), this effect indicates that CoOI has a positive, significant impact on consumers' evaluation of global and local brands. The *Fail-safe N* discloses that 18,471 primary studies are required to render this finding non-significant.

Table 6: Effects of CoOI on overall and relative CBEs

	N	K	rz	-CI	+CI	Z	P	Q	I-S
<i>Aggregate effects</i>									
CoOI → overall CBE	499563	282	.31	.27	.34	15.74	.00	13003.14	98.27
<i>Overall effect by CoOI dimensions</i>									
GCI → overall CBE	22115	71	.31	.26	.35	12.04	.00	1009.07	93.06
GPCI → overall CBE	28138	50	.46	.35	.55	7.72	.00	5388.57	99.09
SPCI → overall CBE	385356	80	.29	.25	.33	13.10	.00	2218.88	99.66
PACI → overall CBE	34256	81	.32	.13	.49	3.24	.00	27662.66	99.71
<i>Overall effect by CBE dimensions</i>									
Brand-specific associations	56958	135	.34	.25	.42	7.15	.00	17704.94	99.24
General brand impressions	418786	95	.32	.27	.36	12.02	.00	4287.59	97.81
Brand commitment	23819	52	.37	.15	.55	3.22	.00	16746.54	99.70
<i>Disaggregate effects by CBE dimensions</i>									
GCI → Brand-specific associations	10522	31	.35	.26	.43	7.21	.00	745.07	95.97
GPCI → Brand-specific associations	11126	20	.51	.35	.64	5.54	.00	1990.05	99.09
SPCI → Brand-specific associations	17686	37	.28	.21	.34	7.82	.00	775.01	95.35
PACI → Brand-specific associations	17624	47	.29	.05	.49	2.38	.02	11834.90	99.61
GCI → General brand impressions	8011	25	.27	.21	.32	8.30	.00	191.32	87.46
GPCI → General brand impressions	9115	19	.43	.23	.60	3.99	.00	1945.67	99.07
SPCI → General brand impressions	392114	28	.29	.22	.35	8.23	.00	431.68	93.75
PACI → General brand impressions	9546	23	.30	.22	.37	7.31	.00	307.91	92.86
GCI → Brand commitment	3582	15	.29	.22	.35	7.84	.00	64.73	78.37

GPCI → Brand commitment	7897	11	.39	.14	.60	2.95	.00	1327.93	99.25
SPCI → Brand commitment	5254	15	.33	.23	.42	6.25	.00	210.85	93.36
PACI → Brand commitment	7086	11	.49	-.28	.88	1.28	.20	9935.81	92.86

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$: K (effect sizes); N (observations); rz (standardised correlations coefficient)

Source: Own elaboration (2021).

With respect to the aggregate impact of the sub-dimensions of CoOI, our results demonstrate that GCI ($r = .31$, $CI = .26; .35$), GPCI ($r = .46$, $CI = .35; .55$), SPCI ($r = .29$, $CI = .25; .33$), and PACI ($r = .32$, $CI = .13; .49$) are significantly and positively related to overall CBE. However, it should not be passed unnoticed that the average effect of GPCI is the largest, followed by PACI, GCI, and SPCI, in that sequence. Moreover, vis-à-vis the CBE dimensions, our findings show that the aggregate impact or magnitude of the CoOI on brand commitment ($r = .37$, $CI = .15; .55$) was larger when compared to brand-specific associations ($r = .34$, $CI = .25; .42$), and general brand impressions ($r = .32$, $CI = .27; .36$), in that order. Furthermore, concerning the relative effect of the CoOI dimensions on the sub-dimensions of CBE, GCI ($r = .35$, $CI = .26; .43$), GPCI ($r = .51$, $CI = .35; .64$), SPCI ($r = .28$, $CI = .21; .34$), and PACI ($r = .29$, $CI = .05; .49$) are positively and significantly related to brand-specific associations. However, it's worth noting that the impact of GPCI was the largest, followed by GCI, PACI, and SPCI, in that order.

Likewise, GCI ($r = .27$, $CI = .21; .32$), GPCI ($r = .43$, $CI = .23; .60$), SPCI ($r = .28$, $CI = .22; .35$), and PACI ($r = .30$, $CI = .22; .37$) have a significant, positive impact on general brand impressions, revealing that the impact of GPCI as the largest, followed by PACI, SPCI, and GCI, in order. Lastly, our findings show that while GCI ($r = .29$, $CI = .22; .35$), GPCI ($r = .39$, $CI = .14; .60$), and SPCI ($r = .33$, $CI = .23; .42$) have a significant and positive effect on brand commitment, PACI ($r = .49$, $CI = -.28; .88$) has no significant effect on brand commitment as the confidence intervals include zero. Lastly, the comparative effects of each dimension of CoOI on the CBE dimensions within groups must also be underscored. For instance, it can be noticed that the impact of GCI on brand-specific associations is stronger ($r = .35$) than its impact on brand commitment ($r = .29$) and general brand impressions ($r = .27$). For GPCI, its average impact on brand-specific associations ($r = .51$) was the strongest, followed by its average impact on general brand impressions ($r = .43$) and brand commitment ($r = .39$). Vis-à-vis SPCI, it strongly influences brand commitment ($r = .33$) more than general brand impressions ($r = .29$) and brand-specific associations ($r = .28$). Lastly, with respect to PACI, its strongest average effect is on general brand impressions ($r = .30$), followed by brand-specific associations ($r = .29$), while its average impact on brand commitment was not significant.

5.2.2: Study moderators

In addition to the main effects, it can be observed from Table 6 that the Q-statistic and Higgins I-squared statistics are very significant, indicating that there is a potential presence of between-study

variance (i.e., heterogeneities) across the primary studies. Thus, as a next step, we carried out a moderator analysis through subgroup analysis (QB) and Meta-regression (MARA) to identify the studies' methodologies and contextual characteristics accounting for the heterogeneities. Tables 7 and 8 show the subgroup analysis of the context and method moderators, respectively, while Table 9 shows the MARA. The only difference is that while the subgroup analysis shows the direction and magnitude of the effect sizes, the MARA allows for the investigation of the interdependencies between the variables of interest. In the regression analysis, the effect sizes function as the dependent variables, whereas moderators act as independent variables (Hedges & Olkin, 1985; Matos & Rossi, 2008). Theoretically, the regression coefficient of MARA underlines the change of the standardised correlation coefficient between the independent and dependent variables if the moderator increases or decreases by one unit (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001).

Table 7: Effects of contextual moderators on the overall CoOI—CBE relationship

	N	K	rz	-CI	+CI	Z	P	QB	p
Brand source								2.92	.034
Global brand	78967	190	.36	.27	.44	7.58	.00		
Local brand	8076	28	.30	.22	.38	6.86	.00		
Product sector								3.46	.33
Consumer goods	81896	172	.35	.26	.44	7.23	.00		
Industrial	876	6	.41	.22	.58	3.97	.00		
Service	5014	12	.27	.21	.33	8.11	.00		
Mixed	411777	92	.30	.25	.35	11.33	.00		
Economic region of products								6.79	.03
High Developing Economy	69410	154	.33	.22	.27	5.97	.00		
Low Developing Economy	12515	33	.31	.24	.45	7.64	.00		
Mixed	417638	95	.36	.31	.38	13.83	.00		
Brand origin continent								19.32	.00
Australasia	24114	78	.31	.25	.37	10.24	.00		
Europe	35610	59	.41	.21	.57	3.83	.00		
North America	10689	34	.22	.18	.26	9.94	.00		
Mixed	429150	111	.34	.30	.38	15.48	.00		
Individualism								12.83	.01
High	416775	114	.26	.22	.29	12.71	.00		
Low	61328	113	.39	.27	.50	6.03	.00		
Medium	12687	45	.29	.22	.36	8.06	.00		
Respondents Economic Region								8.89	.01
High Developing Economy	419591	129	.26	.22	.29	14.08	.00		
Low Developing Economy	66363	136	.38	.28	.48	6.65	.00		
Mixed	13508	17	.48	.29	.64	4.45	.00		
Respondents' continent								23.16	.00
Africa	6844	16	.44	.36	.50	10.54	.00		
Australasia	41692	113	.33	.29	.37	14.71	.00		
Europe	34340	61	.38	.17	.55	3.52	.00		
North America	401146	67	.24	.19	.28	9.55	.00		
Others	15541	25	.41	.25	.55	4.83	.00		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$: K (effect sizes); N (observations); rz (standardised correlations coefficient)

Source: Own elaboration (2021).

The first contextual moderator hypothesis examined is a brand source, grouped into a global brand and local brands and mixed. We envisaged that brand source would moderate the CoOI—CBE relationship, such that it is larger for global brands and weaker for local brands. The subgroup analysis demonstrates ($QB = 2.93, p = .03$) that consumers rate global brands more favourably and highly ($r = .36$) than local brands ($r = .30$). This finding is supported by the regression analysis ($B = 8.01, p = .02$) did find this moderating variable to be significant. Likewise, we predicted that the product sector of the studies moderates the CoOI—CBE association in such wise that it is higher in the studies conducted in the service sector than in the industrial and consumer goods. However, this is not supported by our data. On the contrary, the subgroup analysis revealed that the effect sizes in the industrial products ($r = .41$) are higher than those in the consumer goods ($r = .35$) and service goods ($r = .27$). Interestingly, while the subgroup analysis did not show significant ($QB = 3.46, p = .33$), the regression analysis found this moderator variable to be very significant ($B = .19, p = .006$). We provide our interpretation of this unanticipated result below.

Moreover, we envisaged that the economic region of brands or products (*High versus low developing economy*) moderates the direct relationship between CoOI and CBE, to such extent that it is stronger in the high developing economies than in low developing economies. As a result, the subgroup analysis shows a significant moderating effect ($QB = 6.79, p = .03$), confirming our assumption that the effect sizes for brands from high developing economic regions ($r = .33$) are stronger than the effect sizes of a brand from low developing economies ($r = .31$) as much as the regression analysis ($B = .12, p = .01$).

Furthermore, and related to the above moderator, is the moderating role of the brand origin continents, grouped into Australasia, Europe, North America, and mixed (*Africa, South America, and cross-region*). We expected that brands from North America and Europe would yield larger effect sizes than brands from Asia, Africa, and South America because of consumers' affection and familiarity with brands from these regions. Both the regression analysis ($B = .05, p = .012$) and the subgroup analysis ($QB = 19.32, p = .00$) supported our assumptions that brand origin continent moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE, to such a degree that the brands from Europe ($r = .41$) receive favourable ratings than brands from North America ($r = .22$), and Australasia ($r = .31$). However, we explain the small effect size of North American brands below. Additionally, our findings show that individualism (low, high, medium) moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE, to the extent that it is stronger in low individualistic cultures than in high and medium

individualistic cultures. Both the regression analysis ($B = .13, p = .005$) and the subgroup analysis ($QB = 12.83, p = .01$) supported our assumption that the effect of CoOI is stronger in countries with low individualism ($r = .39$) when compared to countries with high individualism ($r = .26$), and medium individualism ($r = .29$).

Likewise, we found that consumers from low developing economies ($r = .38$) consider CoOI more in their brand evaluations ($QB = 8.89, p = .01$) than their counterparts in high developing economies ($r = .26$). Again, the finding is confirmed by the regression analysis ($B = .12, p = .04$). As well, we also examined the moderating effect of the continents of the respondents on the CoOI—CBE relationship, grouping them into Africa, Europe, Australasia, South America, and North America. However, because the effect sizes in the South American continent were only two, they were integrated into the mixed category. Both the regression analysis ($B = -.24, p = .025$) and subgroup analysis ($QB = 23.16, p = .00$) revealed that respondents' continent significantly moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE, in such wise that it is higher among respondents from Africa ($r = .44$) than respondents from Europe ($r = .38$), Australasia ($r = .33$), and North America ($r = .24$).

Finally, we explored and tested some method moderators, specifically cues, brand type, product stimulus level, product category involvement, product signalling value or social status, sampling unit, theory usage, study design, number of countries, sampling technique, year of publication, and sampling size in the CoOI—CBE relationship. The findings are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Effects of method moderators on the overall CoOI—CBE relationship

	N	K	rz	-CI	+CI	Z	P	QB	p
Cues								3.95	.05
Multi cues	24813	80	.28	.24	.32	11.79	.00		
Single cues	474750	202	.36	.29	.41	10.74	.00		
Brand type								11.33	.00
Fictitious	2098	24	.19	.10	.27	4.21	.00		
Real brands	412020	252	.35	.30	.40	3.30	.00		
Mixed	936	6	.24	.10	.37	12.53	.00		
Product stimulus level								.15	.70
General	404280	63	.35	.29	.40	11.60	.00		
Specific	95283	219	.33	.25	.40	7.98	.00		
Product involvement								5.45	.07
High involvement	78195	172	.37	.28	.46	7.47	.00		
Low involvement	22008	55	.30	.24	.37	8.50	.00		
Mixed	399360	55	.25	.19	.30	8.42	.00		
Product signalling value/social status								4.07	.04
High-signalling status	82381	165	.38	.28	.46	7.53	.00		
Low-signalling status	417182	117	.27	.24	.31	14.37	.00		
Sampling unit								7.07	.03
Managers/professionals	2827	20	.37	.28	.43	8.72	.00		
Real consumers	481566	199	.36	.30	.41	10.94	.00		

Students	15170	63	.26	.21	.31	9.03	.00		
Theory usage								1.34	.25
Atheoretical	433413	112	.30	.26	.33	15.15	.00		
Theoretical	66150	170	.36	.26	.45	6.77	.00		
Study design								2.21	.14
Experiment	399817	65	.28	.23	.33	10.14	.00		
Survey	99746	217	.35	.27	.42	8.56	.00		
Number of countries								8.17	.02
One country	16782	51	.37	.31	.43	10.73	.00		
Three or more countries	469911	190	.34	.28	.40	9.69	.00		
Two countries	12870	41	.26	.21	.31	9.07	.00		
Sampling technique								5.33	.07
Non-probabilistic	440081	97	.37	.26	.46	6.50	.00		
Probabilistic	58958	183	.32	.28	.35	15.49	.00		
Mixed	524	2	.46	.34	.57	6.55	.00		
Year of publication								11.11	.00
2000-2010	34909	89	.32	.25	.38	8.98	.00		
2011-2020	452797	151	.37	.29	.44	8.99	.00		
Pre-2000	11857	42	.23	.19	.28	9.97	.00		
Sample size								6.02	.01
Large sample (>150)	478929	154	.29	.24	.34	10.33	.00		
Small sample (<150)	20634	128	.40	.33	.46	10.96	.00		

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$: K (effect sizes); N (observations); rz (standardised correlations coefficient)

Source: Own elaboration (2021).

First, our analysis reveals that cues, classified into multi-cues ($r=.28$) and single cues ($r=.38$) was a moderator that impacted the effect sizes of the reported associations according to the sub-group analysis ($QB = 3.95, p = .05$). However, the regression analysis did not support this finding ($B=.08, p=.24$). We provide our explanation of this finding below. Second, we distinguished between different brand types: real brands and fictitious brands. Both the subgroup analysis ($QB = 11.33, p = .00$) and the regression analysis ($B=.17, p=.07, sig at one-tailed$) show evidence for a moderator effect, in such a manner that real brands receive high ratings ($r=.35$) when compared to fictitious brands ($r=.19$).

Table 9: Meta-regression of moderators on the overall CoOI—CBE relationship

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>UCL</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r2</i>
Cues	.08	.06	-.04	.19	1.27	.204	.006
Brand source	.16	.02	.15	.27	8.00	.56	.036
Brand type	.18	.09	-.02	.37	1.79	.07*	.020
Product stimulus level	-.02	.08	-.18	.14	-.26	.79	.023
Product involvement	.15	.09	-.03	.33	1.67	.09*	.056
Product status	-.11	.07	-.24	.065	1.71	.08*	.043
Product sector	.19	.07	.06	.33	2.76	.01**	.043
Economic region of brands	.12	.01	.13	.14	12.0	.01**	.034
Sampling Unit	-.11	.12	-.34	-.13	-.90	.36	.004
Theory usage	.06	.06	-.05	.18	1.08	.27	.019
Study design	.07	.08	-.08	.22	.90	.36	.034
Number of countries	-.12	.09	-.32	.07	-1.25	.21	.009

Respondent's continent	-.24	.11	-.47	-.03	-2.23	.03**	.039
Economic region of respondents	.12	.07	.02	.25	1.99	.04**	.032
Individualism	.13	.07	-.02	.27	1.93	.05*	.034
Brand origin (continent)	-.35	.29	-.95	.23	-1.18	.23	.0045
Sampling technique	.06	.35	-.65	.74	.17	.86	.014
Year of publication	.07	.06	-.07	.19	.94	.35	.014
Sample size	.14	.06	.002	.28	1.94	.05*	.056

* $p \leq .1$; ** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .001$

Source: Own elaboration

Moreover, our analysis reveals that product stimulus level (general versus specific products) does not account for between-study variance in the effect sizes ($QB = .15$, $p = .70$), although the results demonstrate the general products ($r = .35$) are highly rated than specific products ($r = .33$) from a given country. The regression analysis shows the same result ($B = -.0024$, $p = .79$). However, we obtained confirmation for a moderator effect ($QB = 5.45$, $p = .07$, *significant at one-tailed*) for product category involvement, to the extent that high involvement products are given much consideration in CoOI evaluation ($r = .37$) when compared to low involvement products ($r = .30$). The regression analysis supports or confirms this result ($B = .15$, $p = .09$, *sig at one-tailed*).

Similarly, both our subgroup analysis ($QB = 4.07$, $p = .04$) and regression analysis ($B = -.11$, $p = .08$, *sig at one-tailed*) results show that product status, classified into high signalling value ($r = .38$) and low signalling value ($r = .27$), significantly and positively moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE. Furthermore, we tested the moderating effect of the sampling unit, classifying it into managers/professionals, real consumers, and students. Interestingly, while our sub-group analysis shows significance ($QB = 7.07$, $p = .03$), the regression analysis shows no significant relationship ($B = -.10$, $p = .36$). We provide an interpretation of these conflicting findings from the two analytic techniques below. Moreover, we obtained no confirmation for a moderator effect ($QB = 1.34$, $p = .25$) for theory usage, which was grouped into atheoretical ($r = .30$) and theoretical ($r = .36$). Furthermore, we tested whether the nexus between CoOI and CBE is moderated by study design, grouped into experiment and survey studies. Both the sub-group analysis ($QB = 2.21$, $p = .14$) and the regression analysis found no support for this moderating effect, although the within-group significance shows that the effect sizes in the survey studies ($r = .35$) are larger than the effect sizes in the experimental studies ($r = .28$).

Again, our subgroup analysis shows that the CoOI—CBE relationship is significantly moderated by the number of countries involved in the study ($QB = 8.17$, $p = .02$), in such wise that the relationship is stronger in studies involving one country ($r = .37$) than those in three or more countries ($r = .34$), and two countries ($r = .26$), in that order. However, the regression analysis did not confirm this finding ($B = -.12$, $p = .12$). Therefore, we provide an interpretation for this unanticipated result below. Moreover, the subgroup analysis ($QB = 5.33$; $p = .07$, *sig at one-tailed*) shows that the

relationship between CoOI and CBE is significantly moderated by sampling technique, such the relationship was stronger in studies using not probabilistic sampling technique ($r=.37$) than those using probabilistic sampling technique ($r=.32$). However, the regression analysis shows no support for the moderating effect of the sampling technique ($B=.06, p=.86$).

Furthermore, while the subgroup analysis divulges that the year of publication employed significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship ($QB = 11.11; p\text{-value} = .00$), such that the association is stronger in studies published in 2011-2020 ($r=.37$) than those published in 2000-2010 ($r=.32$), and pre-2000 ($r=.23$), the regression analysis ($B=.07, p=.35$) does not support this result. Below, we provide an explanation for these seemingly conflicting results. Finally, both our subgroup analysis ($QB = .05; p = .82$) and regression analysis ($B=.14, p=.05$) reveal that the relationship between CoOI and CBE is significantly moderated by sample size, such that it is larger in a small sample size ($r=.40$) than in large sample size ($r=.24$). In the next section, we discuss these findings vis-à-vis the extant literature.

5.3 Discussion

The phenomenon of CoOI has developed into a conventional field of academic inquiry since the mid-1960s. A large body of research has been significantly conducted regarding the effect of CoOI on consumer perceptions, preferences, and attitudinal responses (e.g., Samiee & Chabowski, 2021), producing over 1000 publications in the literature (Paternoga, Schwendel, & Aschemann-Witzel, 2017). Notwithstanding these considerable efforts of scholars to validate and link numerous methods to CoO and consumers attitudes, recent researchers have deplored this body of research for yielding contradictory findings, being atheoretical, and lacking methodological and theoretical transparency (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019; Lin & Chen, 2015). Within this context, Rambocas and Ramsuhag (2018, p.23) noted that “there is little consensus among academics on the magnitude and nature of these effects.” Although several systematic reviews have been conducted to contribute to the clarification of these theoretical and methodological ambiguities of the phenomenon (e.g., Lu et al., 2016), the methodological approaches have been enormously qualitative narratives, not quantitative, thereby failing to offer a thorough academic purification and clarification to the conflicting nature and magnitude of the effect of the CoOI construct on consumer behaviour, and whether the CoO constructs actually is a relevant cue in consumer decision making.

In effect, what is missing to date is a quantitative assessment of the primary studies on the CoOI to CBE relationship. The prevailing meta-analytic reviews have been done for over thirty years now, which do not incorporate the current reality of the phenomenon in the last two decades, thereby failing to offer us timely and “au fait” (up-to-date) insights of the field to clarify the apparent

ambiguity of the phenomenon. Moreover, the existing meta-analyses had different dependent variables as their focus: product evaluations, purchase intention, or buyer behaviour. However, the extent to which CoOI influences CBE has remained open to research till now. Therefore, a more timely and up-to-date quantitative assessment and review of the field is required to revitalize the interest of field experts vis-à-vis this dependent variable. In addition to this, although scholars in this field of inquiry in the field call for studies to examine the contextual and method moderators that may account for study-study variance in the focal relationships, these calls have not yet received answers to address the contextual and methodological factors sufficiently in the CoOI and CBE relationship (e.g., Asary & Hashim, 2017; Pappu et al., 2006).

Based on these considerations, we stress that the field has matured to a point where it appears appropriate and necessary to take stock of what we have learned over the last few decades with respect to its fundamental relationships and questions, to know where we are, and what we need to learn about the phenomenon as research in this stream evolves in the ensuing years. Thus, now is inarguably the appropriate time to consolidate and synthesize knowledge quantitatively vis-à-vis the CoOI—CBE association and its contextual and method moderators through a meta-analysis to clarify the anecdotal findings. This is the first meta-analysis to examine this focal relationship, the relationship between CoOI and CBE. Accordingly, this study advances the cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory on which the study was built and adds valuable insights and contributions to the ongoing scholarly debate about the aggregate and relative impact of the CoOI dimensions on CBE. Moreover, the study expands theorising on the magnitude or strength and direction of the CoOI and CBE association by addressing their context-dependence. That said, the finding of the aggregate effect of CoOI on overall CBE is in order.

5.3.1. Overall CoOI and CBE.

Overall, it was found that the average strength of CoOI was moderate ($r=.31$), which falls within the conventional magnitude range of small-medium effect of country of origin in other meta-analyses in the international marketing literature: quality/reliability perception ($r=.30$) and purchase intention ($r=.19$)—(Peterson & Jolibert, 1995), international marketing experiments ($r=.19$)—(Wang & Yang, 2008), product evaluations ($r=.39$)—(Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999), buyer behaviour ($r=.25$)—(De Nisco, 2006), experiment of the country of origin effects ($r=.42$)—(Liefeld, 1993). Thus, the findings of the present meta-analysis not only lend support to these previous meta-analyses but further demonstrate the effectiveness of the CoOI model as a driving force in influencing consumer behaviour—a vital issue for practitioners and policymakers concerning how to effectively

and efficiently invest in resources and capabilities for harnessing country image to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the international market.

Therefore, despite the heated criticisms that CoO “is not a relevant attribute for making choices between alternatives” (Liefeld (2004, p. 91) and that “COO effect is no longer a major issue for international marketing operations: multinational production, global branding, and the decline of origin labelling in WTO rules tend to blur the CoO issue and lessen its relevance” (Usunier, 2006, p. 61), our finding that CoOI positively and significantly influences CBE renders these views preposterous. Indeed, our result shows that the country-of-origin cue is a crucial extrinsic cue that consumers use in evaluating global and local brands, thereby potentially influencing their brand commitment, brand-specific associations, and general brand impression. This result confirms arguments of the cue utilisation theory, which underpins that consumers do not use only intrinsic cues (e.g., price) but also extrinsic cues like CoO to make product and brand judgments. Similarly, the results advance the irradiation theory, which underlines that the “evaluation of specific property transfers to the evaluation of another property and influences the latter” (Florack et al., 2007, p. 347). Thus, the evaluation of CoOI transfers to the evaluation of products and brands from that country.

Thus, these theories, upon which the present study was built, demonstrate that consumers use informational cues like CoOI in their decision making and that their image about a specific country shapes their perceptions of the image of a brand or product coming from that particular country. This result confirms the findings of recent studies (e.g., Jain & Bariar, 2019; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Palihawadana, 2011; Fan, 2019), that CoOI is one key determinant in consumers’ brand evaluation process, particularly when product information about that nation’s products is limited to consumers’ knowledge. Likewise, Scholars (e.g., Rambocas & Ramsuhag, 2018; Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019) noted that CoOI affects product beliefs and attitudes for brands with diverse levels of equity. Therefore, the following section discusses the overall relative effect of the CoOI dimensions on CBE.

5.3.2. The overall CoOI dimensions and overall CBE

Our findings demonstrate more nuances about the nature and magnitude of CoOI sub-dimensions on the various sub-dimensions of CBE. Firstly, the result showed that all the dimensions of CoOI (i.e., GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI) have a positive and significant aggregate influence on overall consumer brand (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment). However, it is worth remarking that the impact of general product country image (GPCI) on CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment) is the largest, followed by partitioned country image (PACI), general country image (GCI), with specific product country image (SPCI) showing the smallest magnitude of effect. Thus, GPCI, which

is “the overall perception consumers' form of products from a particular country, based on their prior perceptions of the country's production and marketing strengths and weaknesses,” is the most influential dimension of CoOI on consumers' evaluation of global and local brands.

Several factors may account for this finding. The first possible reason may be due to the nature of the dependent variable of the present study: CBE, which is well underscored in the thoughts of Peterson and Jolibert that “the impact of COO cues is jointly determined by....the nature of the dependent variable being investigated” (p.13). The implication is that when evaluating brands or products, consumers give more premium to the overall product image of that country, whether the country is known for producing quality products or not. Thus, if the country has a favourably or good product image overall, this may directly influence consumers' evaluation of specific products from that given country. Take, for instance, China. It has other unique and specific products of high quality. But the general perception of many international consumers is that Chinese products are of low quality and performance standards. In another instance, if the consumers consider Italian products to be technologically advanced or luxurious and German products to be reliable, this may largely influence his or her evaluative judgments of other specific products from that country. In line with the literature, Jin et al. (2019) found that micro country image (i.e., GPCI) was stronger than macro country image. Supportively, Leonidou, Palihawadana, and Talias (2006) found that general product country image (GPCI) was greater than general country image (GCI) for China but not for the US. In contrast, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2007) found that both macro image and micro image influence consumer brand equity, but the relationship was stronger for macro country image (GCI) than micro country image (GPCI).

Furthermore, our finding that PACI, which involves splitting up the general image into many different taxonomies such as country of design (COD), country of parts (COP) and country of assembly (COA), country of brand (COB), and country of manufacture (COM) (Pharr, 2005; Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018), is the second strongest CoOI dimensions supports the current thinking of the literature that decoupling CoOI into its sub-dimensions permits a complete and comprehensive understanding of CoOI effects (Insh & McBride, 2004), particularly for hybrid products. Therefore, when the country image construct is divided into their component factors (Allman et al., 2016), it allows for consumers' more accurate and reliable evaluation. This result seems to support the literature that the single CoOI construct effect may no longer remain valid due to the growing trend of hybrid products in the international market (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019; Biswas, Chowdhury & Kabir, 2011), which, while branded and marketed as being of one nationality, are manufactured, sourced and designed in another country. Consequently, our result confutes the argument of Verlegh and Steekamp (1999) that “the effect of country of origin does not change

substantially when a product is designed and manufactured in different countries” (p. 18). This disparity could be accounted for by the difference in time between the present study (2021) and their meta-analysis (1999). It is possible that at the time of their research, hybrid products were not common or that firms were not more adopting manufacturing internationalization strategies.

Another interesting finding that needs a brief explanation is the low average effect of SPCI on CBE. Note that its impact on CBE is positive and significant, but it is the smallest among the four dimensions. One possible reason for this interesting finding is the product-specific nature of country image measured by this dimension. Therefore, if the country has a good or favourable specific product image (i.e., Italian shoes, German cars), this may influence consumers’ evaluation of particular products. On the contrary, if the country has no favourable product country image, this may negatively impact consumers’ evaluation of brands from that country. Another possible reason for this finding is the economic origin context of specific products of countries. Literature shows that products or brands from advanced countries command favourable attitudes from consumers compared to those from emerging economies. Thus, if studies conducted in the less developed countries received lower ratings while those from the more advanced countries received higher ratings, there may be an offsetting effect, thereby creating a counteracting or spill-over effect. This may neutralize the strong impact of evaluating specific brands and products from a particular country, unlike the general product country image that may benefit from the halo effect. But it must be noted that if the impact in the advanced countries is higher enough, one still should expect a strong SPCI rating.

This argument is explained by the “hierarchy of biases” phenomenon, which highlights a positive association between a country’s level of economic development and specific brand/product evaluation from that country (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017). A third reason may be consumers’ brand/product familiarity with specific products from specific countries. This way, if a consumer is familiar, for instance, with German cars, he or she may rate studies involving German automobiles very positively. In contrast, if the consumer is not familiar with the specific products from that country, he or she may rate it less favourably. Again, this result may be influenced by the nature of the products, as shown in our analysis that general products are ranked higher than specific products. Moreover, the product category involvement may also influence, since consumers’ evaluations are sometimes product-specific. With respect to GCI (i.e., political, technological, and economic images), which emerges as the third strongest CoOI dimension in influencing CBEs, the finding is not surprising, because although the literature demonstrates that it may influence consumers’ evaluative judgments, its impacts are not that strong (e.g., Zbib, Wooldridge, Ahmed & Benlian, 2010).

Lastly, concerning the dimensions of CBE most influenced by the CoOI dimensions, brand commitment (i.e., brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand preference) received the highest rating, followed by brand-specific associations, and then general brand impression. Research has shown that a product's CoOI can cause consumers to develop loyalty toward the brands from that country, which may result in continuous purchase and brand preferences (e.g., Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996; Pappu et al., 2006; Smaoui, Kilani & Touzani, 2016; Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016)). Additionally, it can be observed that this strong effect is significantly driven by the two product country image dimensions (i.e., GPCI and SPCI), which supports the existing literature. Furthermore, brand-specific associations (i.e., perceived brand quality, perceived value, brand associations, etc.) emerged as the second variable that is significantly affected by CoOI.

Indeed, scholars underscore that consumers mostly employ the CoOI cue in brand and product evaluations, as observed in the number of effects amassed by this variable (Lee, Knight & Kim, 2008; Chae & Lew, 2019; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that brand-specific associations are the second variable largely influenced by the CoOI dimensions. As well, general brand impressions (i.e., brand attitude, brand awareness, brand image) received the least rating, which confirms the long-standing conclusion of the literature that CoOI does not necessarily or largely influence consumers' brand image or awareness or overall attitude toward the brand (Erikson et al., 1984). In the next section, we discuss the relative impacts of CoOI dimensions on the relative dimensions of the CBE examined in this study (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment).

5.3.3. Relative effect of CoOI dimensions on relative dimensions of CBE

Vis-à-vis the relative effects of the sub-dimensions of CoOI, first, our findings showed that GCI positively and significantly influences brand-specific associations, thereby confirming the literature that macro country image (GCI), including economic, technological, and political conditions, positively influences brand-specific associations elements like perceived brand quality perceptions (Yasin et al., 2007; Jin et al., 2019; Jung et al., 2013) and brand associations (Pappu et al., 2007). However, this result disagrees with the findings (e.g., Bayraktar, 2015; Liu, 2012) and Zbib, Wooldridge, Ahmed, and Benlian (2010), that consumers' perception about cultural, technological, economic, and political conditions may not exert a significant direct effect on perceived brand quality. Furthermore, the results revealed that GPCI positively influences brand-specific associations, thereby confirming the literature (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Herz & Koschate-Fischer, 2015; Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2007), that GPCI influences perceived brand quality, brand associations, perceived value, among others.

Along the same lines, our results demonstrated that SPCI positively and significantly influences brand-specific associations, which agrees with previous studies (e.g., Murtiasih, Sucherly & Siringoringo, 2013; Kim and Chao (2018), and disagree with studies (e.g., Listiana, 2015; Picotich & Rosenthal, 2001). Lastly, we found that PACI also positively and significantly influence brand-specific associations, which corroborates the literature (e.g., Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010; Moradi & Zarei, 2012; Meshreki, Ennew & Mourad, 2018), while at the same time disagreeing with the studies (e.g., Ar & Kara, 2014; Thakor & Lavack, 2003), who found that PACI has either a negative or no significant effect on perceived brand quality. Comparatively, it is worth remarking that the average relative effect of GPCI on brand-specific associations is the strongest, followed by GCI, PACI, with SPCI being the least, the reasons for which are already discussed in the preceding sections. Therefore, it can be underlined that the impact of GPCI on brand-specific associations is the strongest.

Concerning the relative effects of the CoOI dimensions on general brand impressions (i.e., brand image, brand awareness, brand attitude, etc.), the results revealed that GCI positively and significantly influences general brand impressions. According to the literature, overall country image positively influences general brand impression elements like brand image (e.g., Hien et al., 2020; Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016; Koubaa, 2008), brand attitude, and ownership (Halkias, Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2016), and brand judgment (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008; Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013). Similarly, findings show that GPCI and SPCI positively influence the elements of general brand impressions, which supports previous works (e.g., Magnusson et al., 2014; Pucci et al., 2013; Iversen & Hem, 2016; Pappu et al., 2006, 2007).

Finally, our result demonstrates that PACI positively and significantly influences general brand impressions, thereby corroborating the earlier researches that found a positive association between PACI and general brand impressions elements like brand image, brand awareness, and brand attitude (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2002; Biswas, Chowdhury & Kabir, 2011; Hamzaoui Essoussi & Merunka, 2007). Therefore, this finding disconfirms the studies (e.g., Kim, 2006; Ar & Kara, 2014; Tse & Lee, 1993; Koubaa, 2008; Hui & Zhou, 2003), which found that GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI negatively or do not influence general brand impressions, respectively. Here again, it should be noted that the impact of GPCI is the strongest, followed by PACI, SPCI, with GCI demonstrating the lowest magnitude of effect. Therefore, it can be highlighted that while GPCI strongly influences general brand impressions, GCI has a weak impact on general brand impressions.

Last but not least, about the relative effects of the CoOI dimensions on brand commitment (i.e., brand loyalty, brand trust, brand preference), our results got more interesting. Our finding demonstrated GCI positively and significantly influences brand commitment, thereby lending support to previous works (e.g., Herrero-Crespo, Gutiérrez & Garcia-Salmones, 2016; Smaoui, Kilani &

Touzani, 2016; Pappu et al., 2007), while disagreeing with the studies (e.g., Liu, 2012). Likewise, our findings revealed that GPCI and SPCI both positively and significantly influence brand commitment. In fact, the results show that these two dimensions are the main variables accounting for the greatest effect of CoOI on brand commitment.

This result confirms studies that product country image influences brand commitment elements like brand loyalty (i.e., Jain & Bariar, 2019; Ahmed & d'Astous, 1996; Mody et al., 2017; Paswan et al., 2003; Pappu et al., 2006) and brand trust (Larofet & Chen, 2013). At the same time, it should not be passed unnoticed that this result confutes the findings (e.g., Ar & Kara, 2014; Picotich & Rosenthal, 001), that product country image has a negative or no significant effect on brand trust or brand loyalty. Finally, and interestingly, our result shows that PACI has a positive, non-significant effect on brand commitment, a result which disagrees with the studies (e.g., Ho, Brodowsky & Lee, 2018), that PACI significantly influences brand loyalty, brand preference, and brand trust. However, this same finding supports the results of (e.g., Tse & Lee, 1993; Usunier, 2006; Koubaa, 2008; Hui & Zhou, 2003), that consumers may use the PACI to evaluate products /brands, but this may not influence their commitment to a specific brand from a particular country. This finding implies that, while PACI positively and significantly influences brand-specific associations and general brand impressions, it does not considerably influence brand commitment. It bears remembering also that while, on average, PACI do not influence consumers' brand trust or brand loyalty, studies show that some of its sub-dimensions like COB, COM, and COD influence consumers' perception (e.g., Moradi & Zarei, 2012; Hulland, 1999). Moreover, it is worth noting that the dimensions with the strongest effect on brand commitment are GPCI, followed by SPCI, and GCI. Therefore, while SPCI has the least magnitude of impact on overall brand evaluation, its impact brand commitment is the second strongest, which also appears to be its strongest effect across dimensions.

Having observed the between-group relative effects of the CoOI dimensions on brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment, it is also important to note the relative within-group impact because it has a lot of managerial and policy implications. For instance, it can be observed that the largest effect of GCI is on brand-specific associations, followed by brand commitment, with general brand impressions receiving the lowest impact by GCI. This means that GCI of a given country may strongly influence the perceived quality, brand associations, and brand trust, but its effects on brand awareness, brand image, brand ownership, and brand attitude are weak. With respect to GPCI, its strongest impact falls to brand-specific associations, followed by general brand impressions, and brand commitment, in that sequence. This implies that while consumers' overall perception about a country's product may strongly influence his or her perceptions about quality, brand awareness, brand image, this does not necessarily lead to a strong brand trust or brand

loyalty. Vis-à-vis SPCI, our results show that its strongest effect falls to brand commitment, indicating that consumers' perception of specific products from a particular product can lead to strong brand trust, loyalty, and preference. This was followed by general brand impressions, which again show that a person's specific perception of specific products from a particular country (e.g., German cars) can lead to strong brand awareness, brand image, and brand attitude, among others. Lastly, PACI more strongly influences general brand impressions than brand-specific associations and shows a non-significant effect on brand commitment. The implication is that the PACI (COM, COD, COP, COA) may influence perceived brand quality and brand image, but it may not necessarily influence brand trust and loyalty.

Thus, research questions (RQ1-5) are answered regarding the relative and aggregate effect of CoOI on CBE: overall CoOI, GCI, GPCI, SPCI, and PACI positively and significantly exert a moderate effect on CBE.

The next section discusses the moderator variables of the study that account for between-study variance in the focal relationship.

5.4. Study moderators

5.4.1. Contextual moderators

We made significant efforts to examine numerous contextual moderators in the CoOI—CBE relationship. First, our findings showed that brand source partially moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship, although the within-group significance revealed that global brands receive favourable ratings from consumers than local brands (Tam & Elliot, 2011; Kumar et al., 2009). As noted earlier, this does not always hold, particularly in the advanced world, where consumers mostly rate their local products or brands more favourably than global brands. Studies in this research stream also show that ethnocentrism, patriotism, and nationalism may even lead consumers to assign high ratings to their domestic products and lower ratings to foreign products (e.g., De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino & Napolitano, 2016). However, the findings of this study hold in developing countries, where it has been shown that, because consumers sometimes view local products as inferior to global brands, they evaluate global brands more favourably than local ones (e.g., Kinra, 2006). Research has also shown that such factors as xenocentrism and cosmopolitanism may account for these preferences and evaluative judgment (e.g., Diamantopoulos, Davydova & Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, 2019).

Second, our finding has demonstrated that product sector of the studies significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE association, such that the effect sizes in the industrial products are larger than those in the consumer goods and service goods. As indicated earlier, the subgroup analysis did not show significance, while the regression found significance. The possible reason for this apparent discrepancy is that the subgroup analysis mostly indicates only the direction and magnitude of the

effect but does not account for the interdependencies across groups. Hence, we can conclude that product sector accounts for between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE relationship, in line with the previous works (e.g., Aggrawal & McGill, 2007; Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). Moreover, the finding that industrial products receive the highest rating than consumer goods and service goods demonstrates the importance that managers/professionals give to the CoOI cue in their evaluations of brands. Earlier meta-analyses found that consumer goods receive a higher rating than industrial and service (De Nisco, 2006; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995, but our finding found no such support, although consumer goods emerged as the second variable that receives favourable ratings. It must be remarked that the rationale for these differences in result may be the nature of the dependent variables examined in those meta-analyses (e.g., product evaluations, purchase intention), compared to that of the present study, which is brand evaluation as well as the time frame of the studies and number of observations examined.

About the economic region of brands moderator, we envisaged that brands or products from the advanced countries would receive higher ratings than products or brands from developing countries. Our subgroup and regression analyses found support for this expectation. Thus, when consumers are asked to compare products from high developing countries with products from low developing countries, the country-of-origin effect sizes are larger in brands or products from the high developing countries. This result confirms previous meta-analysis (e.g., Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999) and other primary studies (e.g., Elliot & Acharya, 2001; Zarantonello et al., 2013) that brands and products from developed countries are highly evaluated than their counterparts in developing countries. Thus, this result supports the fundamental propositions of the “hierarchy of biases” theory, which highlights that a positive relationship exists between brand’s degree of economic development of a country and consumers’ specific brand/product evaluation (Mandler, Won & Kim, 2017; Hsiang-Ming & Ching-chi, 2011).

Relatedly, both our regression analysis and the subgroup analysis supported our assumptions that brand origin continent moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE. It was, however, found that the brands from Europe receive favourable ratings than brands from North America, Australasia, Africa, and South America. This is not surprising because most of the countries examined in the literature about Europe are vastly advanced countries, namely, the UK, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain, unlike Australasia, where most studies examine China products, which mostly do not receive favourable ratings. The same logic holds for brands from North America, predominantly the US, and a few cases involving Canada and Mexico. This may account for the weak effect observed in the US samples. Another reason is that we observed that most of the studies involving US brands are primarily done in comparison with Chinese products or European products as global brands,

rendering them cross-regional studies and making it difficult to examine them separately due to insufficient data, as most of the authors merely provided the path relationship effect. That notwithstanding, our finding does not support earlier views that US products garner more favourable ratings than those from other countries like Europe (Sin, Suk-ching, & Ho, 2000; Zhang, 1996).

Likewise, one moderator variable that has been significantly overlooked in previous meta-analyses in this research stream is culture. Therefore, we attempted to explore the role of culture in the relationship between CoOI and consumers' brand evaluation, precisely the individualism dimension of Hofstede's model. In line with our expectation, both our subgroup and regression analyses demonstrated that individualism (low, high, medium) significantly moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE. It should not be passed unnoticed that this is the first-time individualism is tested as a moderator in meta-analysis in this research stream. Interestingly, our result demonstrated that consumers from low individualistic cultures give greater consideration to the country of origin in their brand evaluations, followed by those in the medium individualistic cultures, with those in the high individualistic cultures scoring the lowest. One probable rationale for this result is that people in collectivist cultures tend to rely more on external information when making decisions, hence their tendency to use the CoOI as a surrogate and an extrinsic cue in their brand evaluation. On the contrary, high individualistic cultures underscore independent freedom, pleasure, and greater levels of competition, hence the less likely to depend on external sources of information like CoO in making a decision. Thus, the findings of this study confirm the study of Dimofte, Johansson, and Bagozzi (2010), who found that consumers in the US, which is an individualistic society, are less favourable toward global brands than the minority group of Asians, African American, Hispanic, and Asian. At the same time, the result disconfirms the finding of Anderson and Cunningham (1972), who found that individuals who are highly concerned about their status and hedonic values consider the CoO effect when evaluating foreign products.

Furthermore, we found that the economic region of respondents positively and significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE, such that consumers from low developing economies consider CoOI more favourably in their brand evaluations than their counterparts in high developing countries. This result parallels the current thinking of the literature that consumers in economically less developed countries have the disposition to perceive domestic products as lower in quality, linked with a higher risk of poor performance, and dissatisfaction when compared to foreign brands or products (Cordell, 1992; Kinra, 2006). For instance, it has been found that Indian consumers rate the quality of Indian apparel brands less favourably than global apparel brands (Kinra, 2006). The culture of the countries could also influence this result since most developing countries are collectivist cultures, which our earlier point on individualism was found to be highly significant.

Last but not least, both the regression and subgroup analyses revealed that respondents' continent significantly moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE. However, it is worth remarking that consumers in Africa rate country-origin more favourably than their counterparts in Europe, Australasia, and North America. From one angle, this finding could be driven by the earlier submission that consumers in developing countries rate their country of origin lowly than those in developed countries. On the other hand, the culture of the various region could account for this result. According to the literature, consumers tend to show favouritism toward brands or products according to the proximity and knowledge of the CoO (Amine & Shin, 2002). Therefore, consumers from a particular region, say Europe, may favourably products from Spain, France, or Germany because of familiarity and psychic distance.

Therefore, the research question six (RQ6) regarding the contextual factors that moderate the CoOI—CBE relationship is answered: brand source, product sector, economic region of brands and respondents, culture (individualism), brand origin continents, and consumers' continent are the contextual factors that account for between-study variance in the focal relationship.

In the following section, we elucidate the methodological moderators in the CoOI—CBE relationship.

5.4.2 Method moderators

We have also explored and examined numerous methodological issues in CoOI research. Our meta-analytic review demonstrates that methodology can substantially influence the effect sizes of the focal relationship. First, concerning the cues-related moderators, we found that the CoOI effect is significantly larger for single cues than for multi-cues. Our subgroup analysis showed that the observed difference is significant, indicating that cues are moderator that impacts the effect sizes of the focal relationship, although the regression analysis did not find support. Thus, we can conclude that cues partially moderate the CoOI—CBE relationship. This result is consistent with previous meta-analyses (e.g., Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Liefied, 1993; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999) and primary studies (e.g., Chen & Su, 2011; Inch & McBride, 2004), which found that cues account for study-study variance in country-of-origin effects, such that single cue-models yield larger effect sizes than multi-cues, since in single cues consumers have only CoO cue as the only product cue for evaluation. In contrast, in multi-frameworks, the CoO effect may be weakened by other cues like brand name, price, warranty.

Secondly, we examined the moderating role of brand type, distinguishing it into real and fictitious brands. In line with our expectation, both the subgroup analysis and the regression analysis showed that brand type accounts for between-study variance in the CoOI—brand evaluation

relationship. Not surprisingly, we found that the CoOI effect is significantly larger for real brands than for fictitious brands. This finding parallels the argument of Leonidou, Palihawadana, and Talias (2006), that brand type plays a tremendous moderating role in CoO evaluation, either positive or negative, and that, unlike artificial or fictitious brands, real (known) brands have benefited from certain equity generated by its reputation, image, associations, awareness, popularity, and associated attitudes in consumers' mind, eventually providing more accurate information for evaluation and judgments.

Thirdly, vis-à-vis the product stimulus level-related moderators, our findings revealed that CoOI effect was not significantly larger for general products than for specific products. However, the observed difference, as demonstrated by the regression analysis, is in the expected direction. Thus, product stimulus level does not account for between-study variance in the effect sizes. Thus, the outcome of this study confirms the meta-analysis findings of Peterson and Jolibert (1995), who observed no significant difference between general and specific products examined in country-of-origin studies.

Furthermore, in line with our expectation, we obtained confirmation for a moderator effect for product category involvement, such that the CoOI impact is significantly larger for high involvement products than for low involvement products, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Pappu et al., 2007; Ahmed et al., 2002, 2004). This result advances the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which notes that consumers go through either a peripheral or central route to persuasion, such that when consumers use a central route, they employ the required cognitive effort to evaluate available information, whereas they use a peripheral route when they base their evaluation on superficial or casual analysis, utilizing readily and salient reachable cues. In short, the ELM postulates that consumers will use a central route under high involvement situations and a peripheral under low involvement situations (Petty et al., 1983). Moreover, our aggregate result helps to clarify the anecdotal findings of the literature about the actual effect of high and low involvement products (e.g., Josiassen et al., 2008; Verlegh et al., 2005; Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000).

In addition to the product category involvement-related moderators, we also explored the moderating role of product status, classifying it into high and low social signalling value products. High social signalling value products are products that command respect and give social ostentation and elitism to consumers like automobiles, watches, phones, apparel, shoes. In contrast, the low social signalling value products include products that are very important but do not have a high social status like computers, consumer electronics like TV, and household appliances, etc. (Batra et al., 2000; Hamzaoui & Merunka, 2006). Consistent with our expectation, we discovered that product status plays a significant moderating role in the CoOI—brand evaluation relationship, such that the

effect is significantly larger for high signalling value products than for low social signalling products, thereby confirming the literature (e.g., Batra et al., 2000; Hamzaoui & Merunka, 2006).

Again, we predicted that studies sampling unit would positively and significantly moderate the CoOI— CBE relationship in such wise that student samples will yield larger effect sizes than studies using real consumers or managers/professional samples. This result is partially supported in the sense that while our sub-group analysis shows significance, the regression analysis shows no significant relationship. This seemingly conflicting result, as indicated earlier, is partly due to the analytic focus of these techniques, in that while subgroup analysis checks the direction and magnitude of the effect, the regression analysis examines the simultaneous joint effects and interdependencies, which may create some spill-over effect. Therefore, we can only argue that our assumption is partially supported. However, it must be noted that our result disagrees with the previous meta-analyses (e.g., Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999), who found no moderating effect for sampling unit. Additionally, it should not be passed unnoticed that the CoOI effect in managers/professional samples is significantly larger than those in real consumers and student samples, a finding which confutes the argument of the literature that studies employing student sample can potentiate the effects of dual or two behaviours since this sampling unit (type of sample) is more homogenous (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006) compared to non-student samples like managers or real consumers (Fern & Moroe, 1996). Indeed, this finding buttresses the age-old argument that industrial buyers are widely held as more ‘rational’ and better apprised than the average or normal consumer (Webster & Wind, 1972).

Moreover, we obtained no confirmation for a moderator effect for theory usage, which was grouped into atheoretical and theoretical studies, although the effects in theoretical studies were slightly larger than those in the atheoretical studies. Therefore, while we agree with Lu et al. (2016) and Zorzini et al. (2015) assertion that theory usage reflects journal quality, we cannot record that the effects in the theoretical studies are significantly larger than those in the atheoretical studies. Nevertheless, we should not overlook the reality that atheoretical studies may overestimate effect sizes. Therefore, delving deeper, we conducted an integration analysis of the effect sizes within the theoretical studies to uncover the frequently used theories and those yielding significant effect sizes. Interestingly, we found that the studies using categorization theory yield the largest effects, followed by cue utilisation theory, Consumer information processing theory, Attitude theory, Brand equity theory, Associative network theory, and Schema congruity theory in that sequence. This indicates that studies based on well-grounded theories may reflect real-life situations (e.g., Zorzini et al., 2015 Diamantopoulos, Herz & Koschate-Fischer, 2015) and will help researchers comprehend the underlying assumptions of the conceptual frameworks.

Also, we tested whether the nexus between CoOI and CBE is moderated by study design, which was grouped into experiment and survey studies. Somewhat surprisingly, both the subgroup analysis and the regression analysis found no support for this moderating effect. However, the within-group significance shows that the effect sizes in the survey studies are larger than the effect sizes in the experimental studies. Therefore, we cannot confirm previous studies that study design may account for study-study variance (e.g., Fern & Moroe, 1996; Wang & Tang, 2008; Peterson, 2001; De Nisco, 2006).

Moreover, we found that the CoOI—CBE relationship is significantly moderated by the number of countries involved in the study, in such wise that the relationship is stronger in studies involving one country, followed by those in three or more and then two countries. However, since the regression analysis did not confirm this finding for the reasons aforementioned, we can only argue that our assumption is partially supported. This finding likely may be that when only one country is examined, consumers do not have to share evaluations or ratings among countries, an effect known as the transfer-share effect. In contrast, when two or more countries are involved, which are mostly one from developed economies and one from less developed or one from a country consumers have affinity or animosity toward, consumers are forced to share the ‘pie’ among the countries. As a result, it can occur that both countries may never receive the same ratings. Empirically, our result disagrees with the previous meta-analysis findings (Peterson & Jolibert, 1999), who found no moderator effect for the number of countries studied.

Furthermore, our results demonstrated that the relationship between CoOI and CBE is significantly moderated by the sampling technique, such that the relationship was stronger in studies using non-probabilistic sampling technique than those using a probabilistic sampling technique. However, since our regression analysis showed no support for the moderating effect of the sampling technique, we only can argue that the moderating effect of sampling technique is partial. Contrary to the current thinking of the literature that probabilistic sampling minimises random errors of variance and, thus, inclines to yield stronger effect sizes (Fern & Moroe, 1996) than non-probability sampling technique, we found that non-probabilistic sampling was more influential than probabilistic sampling technique. One probable rationale for this finding is that most studies using this sampling method use convenience and purposive sampling techniques, allowing researchers to select only readily available and well-suited to the study’s purpose. Hence, since respondents are selected purposefully in non-probabilistic sampling studies, there is the likelihood of getting more accurate responses and higher ratings when compared to random selection, which may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

Again, one variable that has not received significant attention in recent meta-analyses is the year of publication. This is somewhat startling when we consider the criticisms in the recent studies

that CoOI is not a relevant information cue. Our subgroup analysis divulged that the year of publication significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship such that the association is stronger in studies published in 2011-2020 than those published in 2000-2010 and pre-2000. This result indicates that, despite the assertion by Usunier in 2006, that with the introduction of WTO rules, the “COO effect is no longer a major issue for international marketing operations: multinational production, global branding” since these “blur the CoO issue and lessen its relevance” (Usunier (2006, p.21), our result shows that consumers still give much attention to CoOI in their evaluative judgments. This is clearly seen in the larger effect sizes for both 2011-2020 and 2000-2010 periods when compared to those in pre-2000, indicating that the CoO effect does not die with time. Rather, it remains a vital extrinsic cue that consumers use in their brand evaluations. A similar result was observed in the meta-analysis of Peterson and Jolibert (1995), where it was found that country of origin effect in “after 1990” was significantly larger than those in “1980-1989” and “before 1989), with those also in 1980-1989 being greater than those “before 1989.” The implication is that the more time evolves into generations with different consumers, the more the CoOI becomes vital in consumers' evaluative judgment and product/brand perceptions.

Finally, our moderator analysis did find the support of a moderator effect for sample size, in such wise that the CoOI effect was significantly larger for a small sample size (<150) than for a large sample size (>150). This advances the thought of the literature (e.g., Hedges & Olkin, 1985) that the magnitude of an effect might differ based on the sample size of the study and that potentiation is more prevalent in small samples (Rosenthal, 1979). Therefore, our finding, while supporting the long-standing conclusion of Peterson and Jolibert (1995), who found this moderator effect to be significant, arguing that the sample size of a study may account for between-study variance, does not support their finding that large sample size yields large higher effect sizes than small samples. So, while sample size may be a surrogate for quality of study, in such wise that large sample size may indicate more design care and the likelihood of generating larger effect sizes (Peterson & Jolibert (1995), we argue that small sample size may possibly inflate effect sizes due high level of potentiation (Rosenthal, 1979).

Thus, the research question seven (RQ7) concerning the methodological factors that moderate the CoOI—CBE relationship is answered: cues, product category involvement, product status, sampling unit, number of countries studied, publication year, sampling technique, and sample size significantly account for between-study variance.

In the following section, we present a summary of the results discussed in this chapter.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has critically and significantly examined, analysed, and presented the study's findings regarding the CoOI—CBE relationship from the perspective of cue utilisation and irradiation theories. The chapter first presented the robustness checks of the model of the study pertaining to the publication bias and outliers in the effect sizes and found no methodological issues in the data. Next, the chapter presented the study's main findings and discussed the results vis-à-vis the extant literature. First, the chapter has revealed that CoOI positively and significantly influences CBE overall and that the aggregate effect is moderate or medium. Moreover, it has been shown in this chapter that all the sub-dimensions of CoOI (GCI, GPCI, SPCI, & PACI) positively and significantly influence brand evaluation; however, the effect of GPCI is the strongest. Second, about the aggregate impact of these dimensions on specific dimensions of brand evaluation, namely, brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment, results have revealed that brand commitment is the dependent variable most significantly influenced by the CoOI construct. Finally, the chapter has shown that these significant relationships are influenced by contextual and method moderators like brand type, individualism, economic region, and product category involvement. In the next chapter, which is chapter six and the final, we present the conclusions, implications, recommendations, and limitations emanating from the study and its findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the synopsis of the study, including the conclusions and summary of major findings, implications of the findings, both managerially and theoretically, and limitations of the study. As a guide to the chapter, section 6.0 serves as a blueprint highlighting the major issues covered in the chapter. Successively, section 6.1 addresses the major conclusions and summary of the study's findings presented in the previous chapter. Then, the implications of the results from theoretical, practical, and policy perspectives are discussed in considerable details in section 6.2 and its sub-sections. Next, we present the recommendations and suggestions for future studies in section 6.3. Finally, section 6.4 presents the limitations of the study. With all that being said, the conclusions and summary of the major findings section are in order.

6.1 Conclusions and summary of major findings

The objective of the study was two-pronged: (1) To determine the extent to which CoOI and its sub-dimensions exert aggregate and relative influence on CBE; and (2) to determine the contextual and methodological factors that account for between-study variance in this focal relationship. The analysis was based on 166 primary studies, including 191 independent samples, 499563 observations, and 282 effect sizes between 1978 and 2020. We employed both subgroup and meta-regression analytical techniques in analysing the collected data.

Concerning the objective one, that is, the aggregate and relative effects of CoOI on CBE, the following conclusions were arrived at:

- CoOI positively and significantly influences CBE, overall
- The strength of the average effect size or elasticity is 0.31 , which can be classified as a moderate (medium) effect, indicating that the CoOI impact is a substantial factor in CBE.
- Each of the sub-dimensions of the CoOI construct, namely general country image (GCI), general product country image (GPCI), specific product country image (SPCI), and partitioned country image (PACI), has a positive, significant effect on CBE.
- The average effect of GPCI on CBE is the largest, followed by PACI, and GCI, with SPCI emerging as the CoOI dimension with the lowest impact on CBE.
- Brand commitment (i.e., brand loyalty, brand trust, brand preference) is the CBE component most influenced by the CoOI components. Brand-specific associations followed this (e.g., perceived brand quality, emotional value, perceived value, brand

associations, brand personality, brand parity) emerged second while general brand impressions (e.g., brand image, brand attitude, brand awareness) appeared as the component of the CBE that least influenced by the CoOI construct.

- The within-group relative effects of the CoOI dimensions demonstrate that the impact of GCI on brand-specific associations was stronger than its impact on brand commitment and general brand impressions in that sequence.
- With respect to GPCI, its strongest impact falls to brand-specific associations, followed by general brand impressions and brand commitment, in that order.
- Vis-à-vis SPCI, its strongest effect belongs to brand commitment, and following that was general brand impressions and then brand-specific associations.
- Finally, PACI more strongly influences general brand impressions than brand-specific associations, with its effect on brand commitment being non-significant.

Vis-à-vis the second objective, that is, the contextual and method moderators that account for between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE relationship, the following conclusions are made. First, the analysis of the contextual factors revealed that:

- Brand source (*global versus local brands*) moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship, demonstrating that global brands receive more favourable ratings from consumers than local brands.
- Product sector (*consumer versus industrial versus service goods*) of the studies partially account for between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE association, such that the effect sizes in the industrial products are larger than those in the consumer goods and service goods, in that order
- Economic region of brands (*high developing versus low developing economies*) in CoOI researches has a marked influence on effect sizes, to the extent that brands from the advanced economies receive higher ratings than products or brands from developing countries.
- Brand origin continent (*Europe versus North America, Australasia, Africa, and South America*) significantly moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE, in such wise that brands from Europe receive favourable ratings than brands from North America, Australasia, Africa, and South America.
- CoOI effect sizes are appreciably influenced by the culture of the respondents (*high versus medium versus low individualism*), such that they are higher among consumers from low individualistic cultures than those from medium or high individualistic cultures, in that order.

- Economic region of respondents (*high developing versus low developing economies*) positively and significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship, such that it is higher among consumers from low developing than among their counterparts in high developing countries.
- Continents of respondents (*Europe versus Africa, North America, Australasia, and South America*) in CoOI studies have a distinguished influence on effect sizes, in such wise that consumers in Africa rate country-origin more favourably than their counterparts in Europe, Australasia, and North America.

Concerning the methodological factors, the following major findings were unearthed. Accordingly, the conclusions are that:

- Single-cue frameworks in CoOI researches yield larger effect sizes than multi-cue frameworks, indicating that cues partially account for between-study variance in the effect sizes.
- Brand type (*real versus fictitious brands*) significantly accounts for between-study variance in the CoOI—brand evaluation relationship, in such wise that it is stronger in studies using real brands than those using fictitious or artificial brands.
- CoOI effect sizes are not significantly impacted by the product stimulus level, whether general or specific products/brands.
- Studies involving high involvement products substantially produce larger effect sizes than do studies involving low involvement products, indicating that product category involvement appreciably moderates the relationship between CoOI and CBE.
- Product status (*high versus low signalling value products*) accounts for between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE relationship, such that it is higher for high signalling value products (e.g., automobiles) than for low signalling value products (e.g., electronics, household appliances).
- The use of managers/professional samples produces larger effect sizes than real consumers or student samples, revealing that the sampling unit in CoOI research partially influences effect sizes.
- Theory usage (*atheoretical versus theoretical*) in CoOI studies has no marked influence on effect sizes, although the within-group significance shows the effect of theoretical studies being slightly higher than atheoretical studies.
- CoOI effect sizes are not significantly influenced by the nature of the study design, whether an experimental or a survey design.

- Number of countries studied (*one versus two versus three or more*) appreciably accounts for between-study variances, such that the effects are higher in studies involving one country than in those involving two and three or more, in that order.
- The relationship between CoOI and CBE is partially moderated by the sampling technique (*probabilistic versus non-probabilistic*), in such wise that it is higher in non-probabilistic sampling studies than in probabilistic sampling technique studies.
- Year of publication (*pre-2000 versus 2000-2010 versus 2011-2020*) significantly moderates the CoOI—CBE relationship, such that the association is stronger in studies published in 2011-2020 than those published in 2000-2010 and pre-2000, in that sequence.
- Small sample size (<150) produces larger effect sizes than a large sample size (>150), implying that sample size account for between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE relationship. The following sections elucidate the implications of these conclusions.

6.2 Implications

The result that, on average, CoOI appreciably influences CBE is considerably important for both theory and practice. Accordingly, in the next sections, we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications emanating from the study's above major findings and conclusions, beginning with the theoretical implications.

6.2.1 Theoretical implications

There has been a plethora number of studies investigating the CoOI—CBE relationship in the last six decades. However, theoretically speaking, not much is known about the aggregate and relative effects of CoOI and its sub-dimensions on CBE in this research stream, besides the contradictory findings in the field. Earlier efforts have considered other dependent variables or outcomes like product evaluations, purchase decisions, and buyer behaviour; nevertheless, no meta-analysis has ever examined CBE (as this was not their objective) in this research stream. For this reason, we have sought to quantify the results of CoOI and CBE past research in a meta-analysis. In addition, the study explored and tested the effect of potential contextual and methodological moderators that may account for between-study variance in the direct relationship between CoOI and CBE. This considerable effort has so many theoretical implications for country-of-origin research, which we advance below.

First, by applying cue utilisation and irradiation theories, we contribute to international marketing and brand management literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of how CoOI influences CBE. Our special focus on CBE is theoretically relevant because it helps balance the literature with the earlier meta-analyses that focused on product evaluation, purchase decision, and

buyer behaviour without recourse to CBE. As well, our focus on the specific dimensions of CoOI (i.e., GCI, GPCI, SPCI & PACI) and relative dimensions of CBE (i.e., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment) adds theoretical value as it enables the investigations of the decoupled or disentangled components of the CoOI construct to ascertain both their relative and joint effects on CBE. By assessing the dimensions jointly, our study offers scholars valuable insights on the relative impact of each dimension and interdependencies among them while ascertaining the dimension with the strongest elasticity or effect on CBE. Being grounded on well-established theories of cue utilisation and irradiation, which propose how informational cues affect consumer behaviour and how the “evaluation of specific property transfers to the evaluation of another object and impacts the latter” (Florack et al., 2007, p. 347), our research allows for greater generalizability and comparability. This is essential because the trending field of international marketing has to critically investigate the fundamental pillars on which it is based and premised on.

In addition, we add to the literature by examining numerous contextual and methodological factors on the CoOI—CBE, thereby furthering our knowledge on the boundary spinning mechanisms that condition the heterogeneities in the findings across the primary studies. Therefore, the study expands theorising on the magnitude or strength and direction of the CoOI and CBE association by addressing their context-dependence. This is very important as it contributes to clarifying the theoretical and methodological ambiguities in the field. Methodologically, and unlike previous quantitative reviews in this research stream that used only bi-variate correlational analysis, we employ both subgroup analysis and Meta-analytic regression analysis (MARA) to test the hypothesised relationships of the study. Likewise, this study followed an evidence-based research approach to offer quantitative aggregate analysis of empirical results on the CoOI—CBE relationships.

As well, empirical findings supporting theory-based hypotheses enhance the robustness of traditional common knowledge. Yet, along the line, new ground is often broken by new findings that challenge conservative thinking. Contrary to the arguments that CoO “is not a relevant attribute for making choices between alternatives” (Liefeld (2004, p. 91) and that “COO effect is no longer a major issue for international marketing operations: multinational production, global branding, and the decline of origin labelling in WTO rules tend to blur the CoO issue and lessen its relevance” (Usunier, 2006, p.61), our meta-analysis, drawing from cue utilisation theory and irradiation theory, confutes and refutes these arguments, thereby advancing the conceptual tenets of the CoOI as a relevant information cue in CBE. Relatedly, the study contributes to theory by confuting the studies that found that CoOI either negatively influences consumer behaviour or has no significant effect on consumer evaluations. Accordingly, our findings that CoOI and its dimensions positively and significantly

influence CBE appear to challenge the findings that found no such effect since our study offers aggregate results.

Moreover, contrary to the general view and expectation of the literature that the SPCI image may exert greater influence on consumer brand or product evaluation than GPCI, our findings show that the GPCI is the most influential dimension of the CoOI construct. Our finding advances the “halo construct model,” which argues that CoOI permits a consumer to infer the quality of an unfamiliar foreign brand (Hans, 1989), and is supported by the accessibility-diagnostics theory, which indicates that “any factor that increases the accessibility of an input is also expected to increase the likelihood with which that input will be used for the judgment.” Supportively, the outcome of this study shows that consumers tend to use the overall product image of a given country that is promptly accessible to make judgement about the quality of specific products or brands from that country, particularly with unfamiliar brands. GPCI reflects accessible, “ready-to-use” information that can guide consumers in their intended action—diagnostics toward a brand from a given country (Hirschman, 1984) through functional values (i.e., price, quality values) and psychological values (emotional and social values).

Again, contrary to expectations and general thinking of the literature that CoOI image largely influences brand-specific associations (e.g., perceived quality, brand associations) than loyalty and trust and brand preferences, our findings indicate the CoOI construct strongly influences consumer brand commitment more than brand-specific associations and general impression. Theoretically, this result is well advanced by the brand resonance theory, which highlights how ‘in sync’ consumers feel they are with a brand in terms of behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, a sense of community (sense of belonging), and active engagement (Keller, 2009). Therefore, a country with strong national equity can lead to a greater commitment in the form of loyalty and willingness from consumers, who not only are willing to buy a brand from that country but also to pay a premium price, since studies show that willingness to pay or buy is not being driven by both CoOI and brand (Jung et al., 2014). Supportively, according to the reciprocal action theory, “actions taken by one party in an exchange relationship will be reciprocated in kind by the other party because each party would experience the feelings of guilt for violating the norm of reciprocity” (Li and Dant, 1997, p.g. 1). Thus, if international consumers perceive that a particular country is providing quality and reliable products and brands, valuable information, and trying to build a strong relationship with them through good products and brands, they will reciprocate such efforts by forming strong commitment and highly positive attitudes towards the country and showing positive behaviours for the brands or products for the country either through WOM, repeat purchase, willingness to pay more, among others. Likewise, the identity theory, which highlights how consumers associate with brands and products as special

self-expression and attachment with others, also parallels this result. That is, CoOI can make consumers become identified with a brand to the extent that they will always prefer to buy brands or products from another country.

Finally, our results about the regional and cultural contexts and their moderating influence in the CoOI—CBE are in accordance with the point of view of institutional-driven propositions and theories that institutional support systems, cultures, and learning systems can promote or affect CoOI. It was discovered that collective mechanisms such as emphasis on interdependence, social hierarchies, family security cooperation, and lower levels of competition seem to make the CoOI more efficient and effective for global brands operating in such collectivist cultures with low and medium individualism. From a theoretical perspective, these findings add to earlier theorising regarding cultural embeddedness and associative network theories in country-of-origin studies (e.g., Dimofte, Johansson & Bagozzi, 2010).

Overall, our findings support the cue utilisation theory, irradiation theory, halo construct model, brand resonance theory, accessibility-diagnostics model, and institutional theory as suitable theories and frameworks for studying the influences of CoOI on consumer CBE. That being established, the next section discusses the managerial implications of these theoretical contributions.

6.2.2 Managerial implications

Our findings are also significant for management practice. Firms, including both local and international companies, are motivated to incorporate and implement CoOI in their international marketing strategies and promotional campaigns because, as our results show, there is a positive, significant relationship between CoOI and CBE. Shortly put, CoOI is positively related to not only the overall CBE model but to its sub-dimensions of brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment. Accordingly, we advance the following practical suggestions for managers and brand managers.

First and foremost, the aggregate findings of the study provide managers and practitioners a more valid, “au fait,” and reliable benchmark about the average effect or elasticity of CoOI on CBE in the midst of the contradictory findings presented in the literature. In particular, our results have shown that the aggregate impact expected from CoOI advertising and promotional campaigns is **0.31** or within the range of **0.27—0.51**. This finding implies that the effect of CoOI is moderate or medium. For this reason, among others, marketers and international brand managers should not reckon or view CoOI as a short-term strategy that can yield immediate dividends or returns. Instead, the CoOI informational cue should be viewed as a medium-long term strategy since the correlation is not that strong to garner immediate customer response or returns. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that this

useful insight can guide practitioners in their budget, resource allocation, and strategic orientations because a meta-analytic effect within this range is considered very relevant for practical purposes.

Secondly, our disaggregate results also put forth several implications for managers. By disentangling or decoupling the CoOI constructs into their respective individual dimensions and examining their relative and joint effects, we afford managers the opportunity to ascertain the true nature and magnitude of the impact of each dimension of CoOI, which can significantly guide them in their budget and resource allocation and strategic marketing orientations. For instance, our finding that GPCI is the variable with the largest impact on CBE informs practitioners about its importance in influencing and shaping CBE. Since it is not the SPCI that most influences CBE, the implication is that firms must need to work collaboratively with national governments and industry players to ensure high-quality stands for products and brands produced in that specific country. The overall product image is a micro issue requiring government support and initiatives to develop and thrive, which informs firms of the need to work with national institutions and government officials through strategic collaborations and alliances.

Another finding of the study that demands managers' attention is the strong impact of PACI on CBE. This dimension of CoOI emerged as the second dimension of CoOI that largely influences CBE, particularly brand specification and general brand impression. However, its relative effects revealed several nuances that warrant attention. First, the substantial impact of this variable means that decomposing the CoOI into its sub-units like COB, COA, COD, COP, and COM can benefit firms since it has a tremendous impact on CBE. This implies that firms that aim to exploit marketing expansion opportunities in the global marketplace to effectively and efficiently make their brands and products attractive in the new markets can implement this dimension of CoOI in their global sourcing strategies.

In particular, because an unfavourable CoOI can distort consumers' perceptions of quality within a given product category, firms must use PACI to counter this unfavourability side of CoO for those affected products or brands. The negative or unfavourability effect of CoOI can be mitigated or weakened by decomposing or decoupling the CoOI construct into "component origin" and "assembly origin." Thus, for firms operating in countries with low product country image, which is likely to receive low consumer favourability, they need to shift part of their value chain activities to high industrialized or advanced countries to mitigate the negative image effect by highlighting these taxonomies in advertising and promotional campaigns, particularly in developing countries. For instance, a brand from a less favoured CoOI can focus its promotional or advertising campaigns on the uniqueness or exclusivity of the brand along with a decomposition of the "made in" brand or product cue into components like "designed in," "manufactured in," "assembled in" etc. Therefore,

the study's findings can help managers in their strategic decisions like country-site or location for installing the firm's production plants (operations), position strategies, and public export promotion programmes. However, this should not be implemented without taking into account that PACI does not strongly influence brand commitment (e.g., brand loyalty), but it nonetheless strongly influences brand-specific associations and general brand impressions, of which are great determiners and predictors of purchases.

Fourthly, and related to the above point, the study's finding on the relative effect of the CoO dimensions on the individual elements of the brand equity model (e.g., brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment) helps brand managers to know the relative impact of CoOI dimensions on the relative consumer brand equity dimensions, thereby helping them to ascertain the brand equity dimension that CoOI most influences. This, in turn, can assist them in designing and developing tailor-made marketing campaigns to elicit positive consumer responses vis-à-vis the brand equity dimensions. For instance, it has been shown that the impact of SPCI is stronger on brand commitment than on brand-specific associations, which indicates that while firms may be using PACI to counter negative product country image, they can use the SPCI to stimulate elements of brand commitment like brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand commitment. Put somehow succinctly, the varying comparative effects of CoOI on the relative dimensions of CBE—stronger at certain levels and weaker at others—implies that CoOI marketing campaigns should be tailored to the specific brand evaluation dimension intended to be stimulated by the advertising and promotional campaign in that particular period.

Moreover, since the findings reveal that the impact of CoOI on brand commitment (i.e., brand loyalty, brand trust, brand preference) is the strongest, firms that aim to enhance their brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand preference should emphasize the CoOI cue in their brand communication campaigns, particularly GPCI and SPCI of their countries. Indeed, the findings even demonstrated that the CoOI is particularly relevant in B2B contexts, largely used by industrial consumers.

Furthermore, we recommend that practitioners take into account the contextual factors examined in this study. Although CoOI serves a relevant extrinsic cue, its stimulating effect depends upon numerous contextual factors. For instance, global brands operating in low developing economic regions should prominently highlight and promote the CoOI since consumers in these regions tend to favor foreign products over local ones. However, this strategy may not hold in developed economic regions, where strong competing local brands exist. In such a context, it will be more advantageous to consider other behavioural issues like consumer patriotism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and xenocentrism and carefully promote the product. For instance, in a highly ethnocentric country, it is important to underemphasize CoOI and overemphasize brand image and other product features like

price and warranty. More specifically, it has been shown that consumers in Africa give more premium to CoOI in their brands and products evaluations, which provides a vital clue to firms operating in this continent of the world to highlight and promote their CoOI through labelling and advertising.

Again, our finding also reveals to international brand managers and practitioners the critical role of culture in CoOI promotional campaigns. The study results have demonstrated that consumers in low and medium-individualistic cultures pay more attention to CoOI than those in developed countries. This finding implies that firms operating in low individualistic cultures where consumer animosity and ethnocentrism are low, among others, should highlight and promote their CoOI through advertising and promotional campaigns. Awareness of cultural disparities will be essential for brand managers to understand marketing behaviour in the international market better. The point is that people in such cultures seem to rely more on external information in their decision-making process, which becomes more relevant when they are searching for something to buy. But the other side of the issue is that firms operating in low individualistic cultures stand to benefit substantially from their CoOI promotions, particularly for those with a good product image from the developed world. However, as underscored earlier, countries with low product images can benefit from CoOI by shifting part of their value chain activities like design, assembling, or manufacturing to highly industrialized countries with good product images.

Finally, the results show that product category involvement and product status significantly influence CBE has relevant information for brand managers. For instance, it was found that high product involvements like automobiles, refrigerators, television, etc. receive favourable CoOI ratings than low involvement products, indicating that global brands dealing in such products can substantially highlight the CoOI through logos, labelling, and advertising, but not without careful investigation of the consumer animosity, stereotypes, and ethnocentrism of the local markets where they operate. Supportively, Hamzaoui Essoussi and Merunka (2007, p.14) noted that “Companies that offer high-involvement, public products have better chances of success in emerging markets when their COD and COM have positive images and are recognised for their specific competencies.” Relatedly, results demonstrate that products with high social status or signalling value (e.g., cars, apparel, computers, shoes) are more greatly evaluated in connection with CoOI than low social status/symbolic meaning products or brands (e.g., household appliances, electronics). Accordingly, this result provides managerial support to brand managers in designing and developing appropriate pricing strategy (e.g., price differentiation, customer value-oriented pricing), market segmentation, and adjustment of the marketing mix based on the type of the product and level of consumer involvement to address the behavioural and perceptual specificities of consumers in different countries.

In conclusion, the study's findings help companies with a global presence understand how brands and country associations work and how they affect global consumers' acceptance of foreign products and services, which leads to a study of CoO. Since brand equity is a valuable strategic asset of firms and a significant stream of competitive advantage, brand managers need to comprehend the linkage between CoO, particularly partitioned CoOI and CBE. In the next section, we present the policy implications of the findings, as well.

6.2.3 Policy implications

Our results can also substantially benefit policymakers since they reveal that general product country image and PACI strongly influence CBE. Moreover, because country images are developed and championed at national levels, the outcomes of this study have valuable and tremendous insights for policymakers and governments.

First, the result that CoOI and its sub-dimensions significantly influence CBE bring to the forefront the role of national governments and policymakers in promoting country image. The finding informs policymakers and national governments that a positive and significant relationship exists between CoOI and CBE, a knowledge awareness that will help them not only to be better informed about their policies of investment promotion and advertising campaigns, discussed later, but also about the action-oriented plans and initiatives to be taken so as to react in the best possible way to opportunities and threats in the global markets. Knowing that a negative country image can negatively influence consumers' perception of brands, evaluative judgments, and their propensity to buy brands/products from that country can help policymakers take pre-emptive measures to lessen consumers' negative perceived images through appropriate advertising promotional campaigns. The opposite is true. If the perceived image of the target country is positive, national governments can capitalize on that to promote the national brands and products of the country accordingly. Therefore, findings of the present study about the significant relationship between CoOI country and CBE invite policymakers to ensure that national reforms are not only made democratically and well-communicated to the general public but also measures are taken to enhance positive facets in its image and to counter negative ones in both domestic and global marketplaces.

Secondly, the discovery that GPCI is the dimension of CoOI that largely influences consumers' evaluative judgments and propensity to buy foreign and local products has several policy implications. For instance, since consumers' overall perception and decisions about general products from a given country is even greater than their perception and judgment about specific products from that country, policymakers are required to adopt country branding strategies at both local and global levels to promote its national products and brands. This calls for a holistic creation, evaluation,

changing, and management of a nation's product image in a broad array of facets (i.e., technology, reliability, workmanship, etc.) to improve the country's image and reputation at a global level. General product country image is both a micro and industrial issue that needs significant government support to ensure high safety and quality standards in the production of goods in the country. One practical way to accomplish this is for the national governments and policymakers to employ regional and national imagery to promote the brands and products of its country through novel mechanisms to shaping and developing its nation as a brand. The government should not merely lend attention to just one strategic product from the country but seek to develop and improve the image of all the products that sell in the international market. This accomplished, the country will be strategically positioned in the increasingly intense competitive business environment to accelerate and stimulate export, attract tourists, enhance intentional credibility, and secure the trust of foreign investors.

Again, and related to the just mentioned point, the findings of the study call for strategic collaboration and partnership between government and national brands (producers, companies) in ensuring that quality products are produced in the country and marketed in the international market. The point is that shoddy goods will garner negative ratings from global consumers, which, in turn, can affect not only the product in that sector but the general product from that specific country. One possible and best way to accomplish this is to adopt stringent measures such as by adopting stringent, minimum quality and reliability standards for indigenous companies that produce and sell products abroad, which can be done by offering tax incentives and other provisional subsidies to help firms (SMEs) in their international marketing campaigns. Along the same line of thought, the government can provide support services (e.g., training, consulting) to exporting companies to assist them in internationalizing and improving their management level to produce and sell products that meet international standards and satisfy consumers' needs and interests profitably.

Another aspect of the study's findings that demands the attention of policymakers concerns the impact of PACI on CBE. Partitioned country image indicates that products from one country may be manufactured, designed, assembled, or sourced parts from different countries. This implies that cross-border and globalisation issues are involved in the CoOI issue that requires flexible trade policies with countries where national companies offshore some of their manufacturing and distribution activities. For multinational companies to successfully onshore and offshore their value chain activities, they need flexible cross-border and international trade and investment environment. Today, many companies utilize global alliances or operations to produce their products and parts of products in foreign nations, thereby realizing cost advantages due to cheaper parts and labour. For this reason, policymakers must ensure that trade rules, policies, and cross-border regulations are well-developed to provide a conducive environment for the free-flow of value chain activities between

firms and countries. Bureaucratic and stringent trade regimes may create bottlenecks in the production and distribution of global brands, which, in turn, can affect consumer choices of products and brands.

Finally, and related to the above point, the findings can guide stakeholders and policymakers in their investment promotions and foreign direct investment (FDI) initiatives. For instance, the study has highlighted that “buyers” of a country’s product or brands are merely end consumers but also industrial buyers, service providers, suppliers, and potential investors, who are also influenced by the perceived product and country images of particular countries. Thus, by strategically and well-positioning itself as a favourable location for investment through the implementation of flexible trade and investment policies, a nation can be seen as a “product” to attract “buyers” of the product (i.e., investors) at least from a marketing perspective. One practical way to accomplish this is by refocusing the nation branding campaigns on “strategic” general products of the country that sell in the international markets rather than merely focusing on two or three specific products in promotional campaigns. But, again, these national branding campaigns should not be merely directed to real consumers or end-users but to industrial buyers since findings indicate that they are also significantly influenced by the CoOI. Thus, nation branding campaigns should also find ground in B2B contexts. Hence, there is the need for a meticulous approach in targeting and segmentation in nation branding campaigns. This way, efforts to improve the positive aspects of the country’s image can help build the nation in an advantageous position as a competitor against other investments locations that investors may wish to invest in.

More specifically, this calls for initiatives and policies that improve the country’s image and ameliorate market openness. This issue is vital for all government agencies (e.g., labour, economy, finance, and industry, etc.) who may wish to take advantage of their country’s strength to attract more FDI for their respective purposes. This can be accomplished by developing special promotional campaigns that focus on the specific positive country and product images like quality, innovation, reliability, safety, excellence, etc., through press releases, advertising spots in the media, and national exhibitions about the country’s manufacturers and exporters. The implications of the findings are not limited to only practitioners and managers but also to future scholars. Accordingly, in the next section, we discuss suggestions for future researchers in this research stream.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

The value of any scientific study rests not only on its discovery of novel ideas and insights but also in its ability to unearth novel grounds and avenues for future researchers. Accordingly, we propose several interesting avenues not covered in our study for future researchers as this important research stream advances in the ensuing decades.

To begin with, since the CoOI effect depends significantly on the nature of the dependent variable being investigated, it may be valuable for future meta-analytic reviews to replicate the conceptual framework of the present study by examining other important dependent variables like purchase intention and willingness to pay more. This recommendation is well underscored in the thoughts of Peterson and Jolibert that “the impact of COO cues is jointly determined by....the nature of the dependent variable being investigated” (p.13). Thus, employing actual behaviour (e.g., purchase decision or willingness to pay more) would complement the CBE measures used in our meta-analysis. Furthermore, our meta-analytic framework has demonstrated the varying aggregate and relative effects of the CoOI sub-dimensions on the relative dimensions of CBE, namely brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment. The question that remains open to future research is: “Would these relative and aggregate effects hold for purchase intention or willingness to pay more or word of mouth (WOM) or recommendation?” Therefore, we strongly encourage future scholars in this field of inquiry to replicate our model in other contexts for generalizability and validation. Relatedly, we also call for future studies to replicate our model’s classification of CBE dimension into brand-specific associations, general brand impressions, and brand commitment in other primary studies to allow for generalizations.

Secondly, we made several efforts to include as many contextual and methodological moderators as possible to explain some of the discrepancies in findings in the field. Of course, the moderators examined in the study helps in explaining how the methods and context adopted in the primary studies influence the strength of the focal relationships. Nevertheless, this does not substitute for underlying causal effects. Put somewhat differently, we did not account for causal effects or mediating factors and antecedents as this was not the focus of the study. In effect, we suggest that future meta-analyses take steps in this direction to examine the causal relationship between CoOI and CBE by exploring such factors as ethnocentrism, xenocentrism, nationalism, patriotism, country stereotypes, so as to ascertain how they shape the CoOI—CBE. Methodologically, the use of advanced meta-analysis techniques like meta-analysis structural equation modelling (MASEM) will deepen our understanding of the main causal effects in the CoOI—CBE direct relationship.

Thirdly, it can be noticed that how PACI influences consumer brand commitment elements like brand preference, brand loyalty, and brand trust has not received significant attention in the literature. However, since the literature has long established that PACI influences brand-specific associations and general brand impressions, as is also confirmed by our quantitative aggregation, another fruitful or promising arena for research that would be interesting is how the partitioned variables like COM, COD, COA, COP affect brand trust and brand loyalty of international consumers with different cultural orientations (low versus high individualistic cultures). Research in this

direction will help clarify the cause of the non-significant effect of PACI on brand commitment revealed in this study.

Fourthly, researchers in this research stream have long overemphasized the critical role of the level of economic development in country-of-origin research, which understandably reveals the significance of competitive context. However, as our study has shown, it is high time that researchers pay meticulous attention to the role of culture. The relevance of culture cannot be overlooked in CoOI research. The findings of this study highlight that culture, specifically individualism, plays an important moderating role in the CoOI—CBE relationship, indicating that the level of economic development alone does not explain the differences in effect in country-of-origin research. Too often, CoOI comparative and cross-regional studies involving two or more countries merely consider the level of economic development of the focal countries, mostly one from a developed country and another from a developing economy, without recourse to the cultural landscape of those nations. Our finding calls for a new direction. The results show a significant difference between consumers from low individualistic cultures and those from highly individualistic cultures. For this reason, country-of-origin research of comparative nature involving two or more countries must not only consider behavioural issues like animosity or affinity of the countries toward the other or the level of economic development but also the individualism characteristic of those countries since consumers from low, medium and high individualism cultures differ significantly in their CoOI and brand evaluations. In the next decades, awareness of cultural disparities will be essential for managers and researchers to understand marketing behaviour better.

Furthermore, we observed that country-of-origin research comparing brands or products from high developed countries with brands or products from low developed countries introduces some biases that we call “comparison biases,” which goes a long way to affect effect sizes in the focal relationship. This comparison bias arises because consumers are mostly asked to rate one strong entity (strong brand or country with positive overall image) against one weak entity (weak brand, negative country image), which will likely garner good weight or ratings for the strong than for weak entity. Yes, literature notes that consumers from low developing countries rate brands or products from advanced countries more highly than their local ones. But how different will CoOI effect sizes be if researchers compare specific products/brands from advanced countries with products/brands from advanced countries and products/brands from low developed countries with brands from low developed economies? This suggestion parallels with Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, and Palihawadana (2011), who advocated that “Instead of contrasting a country with an overall positive image (like the USA) with a country with a less favourable image (like China) and an established brand (like Whirlpool) with a less well-known brand (like Haier), country-of-origin research should

examine the “impact of COO on the brand images of brands from the same country” (p.14). This is an area where we encourage future researchers to minimise the problem of “comparison bias” in effect sizes in country-of-origin research.

Moreover, it is surprising that while consumers in developing economies like Asia (China, Malaysia, Indonesia), Africa, and South America are mostly used as respondents in country-of-origin research, products/brands from these countries are scarcely examined in the country-of-origin research. All that to say, a plethora of the researches are conducted in the context of advanced Western countries, particularly Europe and the US (Usunier, 2006), with limited attention to developing economies. In this light, it may be valuable to design studies that allow for equal inclusion of products and brands from both economic regions. However, to allow for cross-regional and cross-cultural comparison validation and generalization of country-of-origin previous findings, these studies must incorporate brands from these developing regions. In particular, it may be insightful to conduct comparative studies among these countries to balance the literature on cross-regional comparisons between brands from developed and developing economic regions. For instance, it would be intriguing to examine how consumers rate brands from Africa with brands from Asian countries like China, Malaysia, and Indonesia somewhat between China and Europe or Africa and Europe, in which case results are even predictable.

In addition, our analysis of the methodological moderators justifies the views of the literature that this research stream lacks methodological and theoretical transparency and rigor (Kock, Josiassen & Assaf, 2019). Drawing from the findings that sample sizes and techniques are “ill” selected, leading to the overestimation and inflation of results in small sample sizes and non-probability sampling techniques, we believe the field needs a dramatic improvement in this area. More specifically, it would be theoretically and methodologically sound for future researchers to draw on a large sample size, that is, respondents greater than 150, and to use probability sampling methods that may generate accurate and reliable effect sizes since this technique offers an unbiased representation of the study population. Thus, there is the need for a careful, proper sample size selection and techniques in country-of-origin research. Relatedly, future studies should pay attention to theory usage, adopting more novel cultural-based theories, to enhance the theoretical spectrum of this research.

Moreover, our findings have shown that multinational firms appear to be moving away from a one-headquarter framework into ‘disaggregated and dispersed headquarter systems.’ These globalisation and alliance strategies have cons that may affect global brand reception and even knowledge transfer between multinational organisations. For this reason, we recommend that primary empirical studies examine how moving the location of manufacturing or design or assembly from a single headquarter to a dispersed headquarter system affects firms’ CoOI strategies and knowledge

transfer and integration process in CoOI. Qualitative research could help unearth some of the challenges that firms face in their decomposition of the CoOI, which can inform policymakers about the underlying difficulties that brands from their countries face and the appropriate measures to mitigate them.

Finally, future research should systematically consider the potential methodological factors like brand type, cues, number of countries, product sector, sampling unit, and sample size CoO research to comprehensively circumscribe the biases in effect sizes CoOI cue on consumer behaviour. The omission of these significant moderators from frameworks connecting CoOI to various outcomes may potentially lead to model misspecification with its accompanying negative ramifications that it brings such as lower variance explained and biased parameter estimates. For instance, our study has shown that real brands generate more reliable and accurate results than artificial or fictitious brands. Moreover, findings have shown that small sample size (<150) can induce potentiation in effect sizes; therefore, it may be more valuable to use large sample sizes (>150). In the light of these gaps, our study contributes to scientific inquiry by succoring practitioners and researchers to design novel in-depth and extensive research that will continue to advance the country-of-origin marketing literature. Accordingly, we hope our study offers a commencing point for future research endeavors along these lines.

6.4 Limitations of the study

One salient contribution of the present study is that its results and limitations provide guidance and exciting avenues to further research. Using meta-analysis to address the research questions is one of the key strengths of our study; however, it also has its own weaknesses or limitations common to all systematic literature reviews. One major aspect of our study that offers an interesting avenue for future research is that the moderators of the study explain only 28% of the CoOI—CBE (CBE) variability as indicated in the R-square values in the MARA. This suggests that our conceptualisation does not fully explain the between-study variance in the CoOI—CBE relationship. There could be other mechanisms at play than the main contextual and method moderators that we identified and investigated in this quantitative review, suggesting that our model needs to be adjusted and expanded in future research to include unexplored moderators like brand familiarity. The remaining unexplained variability provides an additional rationale for follow-up research. This suggestion is consistent with explanatory concepts in social science, where novel empirical knowledge about a concept may need expansions or adjustments in its conceptual delineation (Goertz, 2006).

A related limitation of the meta-analytic review is that the inclusion and incorporation of effect sizes are contingent upon their data availability in empirical studies. Since existing empirical research

on the CoOI—CBE is appreciably diverse, we managed to include several effect sizes and empirically test finer-grained frameworks than as contained in prior meta-analysis. Nevertheless, we could not investigate any questions for which effect sizes in the primary studies were not or insufficiently available. This problem is much related to the measurement of CoOI itself, which previous studies have often operationalized using different conceptual definitions. If anything, we encourage future researchers to employ more specific measures of CoOI, developed from the empirical mechanisms that have been examined. This will ensure conceptualisation consistency in this research stream.

Moreover, we did not include unpublished papers in our databases or papers published in languages other than English. Thus, the interpretation of the results of this study should take this limitation into account. Consequently, a further promising direction for further research is developing a more extensive database to include these papers while accounting for publication bias. Again, our results that the nexus between CoOI and CBE grows stronger with the evolution of time merits more future researches in this area. The finding implies that time-related effects must be carefully taken into consideration in country-of-origin research on the outcomes of firm initiatives and strategies and the interpretation of the country-of-origin effect.

Accordingly, future research could deepen our understanding by decoupling the complex global changes within the period of the primary studies involved in this study (1978-2020). Thus, we suggest that future research employ multi-level growth modelling or longitudinal methodologies to address the systematic patterns of CoOI—CBE changes over time (Lu et al., 2016). We strongly believe that addressing the aforementioned will go a long way in ameliorating our understanding of how, when, and why CoOI dimensions influence consumer behaviour and how companies should respond to the challenge. Notwithstanding these limitations, we agree with Hunter and Schmidt (2004) that only a few methods (if any) offer more reliable estimates of support for a given association than meta-analysis. Thus, our study adds significant insight to the ongoing scholarly research on CoOI and its impacts on CBE.

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