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Chinese Consumers' Evaluation of Domestic and Foreign Products: The Roles of Country of Origin and Product Usage Experience

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Chinese Consumers' Evaluation of Domestic and Foreign Products:

The Roles of Country of Origin and Product Usage Experience

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Although COO has been a topic of central interest in international marketing research, most work has focused on consumers in western countries. The concept of product usage experience, though often implied in COO research, has yet to be investigated more directly and explicitly. The goal of the study is to examine the relationships among COO perceptions, product usage experience and purchase intention among Chinese consumers. The study examined two kinds of product usage experiences (usage variety and frequency) pertaining to products (products in general and laptop computers in specific) made in two countries (America and China). Empirical data gathered from a survey were used to test two sets of research hypotheses pertaining to America and China respectively. The results supported the hypothesized interactions between COO ratings and product usage experiences in predicting purchase intention of American products among Chinese consumers. The interactions between COO ratings and usage experience in predicting purchase intention of Chinese products among Chinese consumers were partially supported.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The relationship between products' country of origin (COO) and consumers' evaluative

judgments and purchase intention has been one of the most frequently studied topics in

international business, consumer behavior and marketing communications in the past few

decades (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). The importance of COO is becoming increasingly apparent

in the age of globalization. Globalization of the world economy has brought about greater

openness in international trade, an integration of markets on a worldwide basis, and a movement

toward a borderless world, all of which have led to increases in global flows of goods and

services. As a result, consumers worldwide are buying and consuming an unprecedented number

of products originated from foreign countries. When buying home appliances, for example,

American consumers may choose among new foreign brands such as LG (Korea) and Haier

(China) as well as familiar domestic brands such as GE and Whirlpool. Likewise, Chinese

consumers now find American computer brands such as Apple and HP as well as domestic

brands such as Legend and Hasee readily available in large and small markets across the country.

Most COO research, however, has been conducted in western countries and only a

handful of studies examined the important topic in China – the largest consumer market in the

world with an estimated population of 1.3 billion (Chike & Zhang, 2012; Kwok, Uncles &

Huang, 2006). China has witnessed explosive GDP growth since economic reform began in 1978

(Chike & Zhang, 2012). It has attracted a large body of world manufacturing and became the

world's largest exporter in 2010. With a GDP of $10.9 trillion, it is now the second largest

economy in the world after the U.S. (CIA World Factbook, 2011). Thanks to their growing

income and purchasing power, Chinese consumers are becoming the most attractive targets of

foreign products and services. It is not uncommon, for example, for a Chinese consumer to drive

a Volkswagen to work, use Samsung computers in office and drink Starbuck's coffee during

breaks. Foreign brands have provided a greater diversity of choice, and many of them offer better

quality, more attractive appearance and variety of designs, though at generally higher prices than

domestic alternatives (Kinra, 2005). In recent years, the Chinese economic policy has also

shifted toward the expansion of domestic consumption which is likely to stimulate more

purchase and consumption of foreign products and services (Li, 1997; People's Review, 2003).

Nevertheless, how Chinese consumers evaluate and choose products and services originated

from foreign countries remains understudied and limited research has examined the potential

influence of country of origin on Chinese consumers' decision making processes (Chao, 1998;

Zhang, 1996).

 As Chinese consumers attain more opportunity and ability to purchase foreign products

and services, a related question is how the actual product usage experience affects their

evaluative judgments vis-à-vis pre-existing COO knowledge and perceptions. Theoretically COO

and product usage experience constitute two separate but related sources of information. The

extent to which they jointly affect consumer judgments of products of foreign origins remains a

largely unanswered research question.

The purpose of this thesis is thus to examine the relationships between two key

theoretical concepts, COO perceptions and product usage experience, among Chinese consumers.

Although COO has been a topic of central interest in international marketing research, most

work has focused on consumers in western countries. The concept of product usage experience,

though often implied in COO research, has yet to be investigated more directly and explicitly.

The focus of the study, therefore, is on the relationship among COO perceptions, product usage

experience and purchase intention among Chinese consumers.

In presenting the theoretical discussions and empirical data this thesis has been divided

into five chapters. Following this Introduction, chapter 2 reviews recent COO and product

experience literature which constitutes the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 presents

the research hypothesis derived from the theoretical framework. Chapter 4 details the research

methodology utilized in the collection of empirical data. Chapter 5 contains the descriptive and

inferential statistical analyses and results of hypotheses testing. Chapter 6 summarizes the results

of the study and discusses its theoretical and practical implications. Chapter 7 concludes the

thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Product Country of Origin

COO is generally referred to as the country where a given product is originally made and COO effect is concerned with how consumers perceive products originated from different countries (Wong , Garma, & Michael, 2007).

The influence of COO on consumers' attitude toward products and purchase intention has been studied for a long period of time（for reviews, see Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1998）. Farley (1987) went as far as to say that the potential impact of COO of a product is "the most researched international aspect of consumer behavior" (p. 540). Dichter (1962) was the first to argue that a product's COO may have a "tremendous in influence on the acceptance and success of products" (p. 116). Systematic research on COO effect really began with the publication of Schooler's (1965) seminal article in the Journal of Marketing Research titled "Product Bias in the Central American Common Market." The study found significant differences in the evaluation of products that were identical in all respects, except for the countries in which the products were originally made. Most of the early research on COO attempted to describe the COO effect under a variety of circumstances (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). Bilkey and Nes (1982) evaluated the results of twenty-five COO

studies and concluded that "all of the studies reviewed indicate that COO does indeed influence buyers' perceptions" (p.94).

Numerous subsequent studies have shown that COO can influence consumers' evaluative judgment of the product (e.g., Al-Aulati & Baker, 1998; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). That is, consumers tend to evaluate products more favorably when the products are originated from or made in countries that enjoy positive perceptions or image. COO effects also appeared to be highly robust; they were observed in studies that employed single-cue and multiple-cue product stimuli, student and consumer samples, case studies, surveys as well as experiments (Liefeld, 1993).

Many researchers have attempted to explain the psychological processes of COO effects through the summary construct and halo effect models (e.g., Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000; Han 1989; Johansson, Douglas, & Monika, 1985; Knight & Calantone 2000; Wong , Garma, & Michael, 2007). The summary construct model posits that COO serves to summarize product attribute information and thus provides consumers who are knowledgeable of the product class a cognitive shortcut to assessing product quality. Han (1989), for example, suggests that COO may be viewed as a stereotype that serves as a summary index of product quality, especially to consumers who are unfamiliar with the product category.

The halo effect model suggests that COO is used to make inferences about product attributes, especially when attribute information is lacking, or when the consumer is relatively

unfamiliar with the product class. Some researchers argue that COO affects product judgment by instigating deeper processing of product information. For example, the cognitive elaboration model (Hong & Wyer, 1989; 1990) predicts that COO can stimulate consumers' interest in the product and, consequently, leads to more extensive thoughts about product attribute information. Differences aside, the theoretical explanations proposed so far share the basic assumption that, so long as the COO information is available, consumers will view it as relevant product information and deliberately use it in their evaluation of products.

Empirically, COO effects have been found to influence consumers' evaluations of foreign products mostly on two aspects: perceptions of quality and perceptions of purchase value (Yeong，Mohamad，Ramayah & Omar，2007). The presence of COO effects was also shown in decision making and brand choice processes (Wong, Garma, & Michael, 2007). Canli and Maheswaran (2000) further suggest that COO can influence cognitive responses, beliefs about products and product evaluations. All these effects may exist because COO cues give information, which consumers then use to predict the likelihood that a product manufactured in a certain country meets certain quality standards or possess certain desirable features (Baker & Ballington, 2002). Moreover, it has been found that COO may increase the tendency for consumers to evaluate their own country's products more favorably than imported products (Kaynak & Cavusgil, 1983), as well as the tendency for products from emerging economies to be evaluated negatively (Cordell, 1992). There is also a positive correlation between COO

perceptions and the country's level of economic development (Wang & Lamb, 1983) -- Products from developed countries are generally perceived as superior to products from developing and underdeveloped countries (Yeong, et al. 2007). For example, products from countries such as USA, Germany, France or Japan are more favorably evaluated than products from countries like Nigeria, Egypt, Vietnam or China.

More recent studies extended previous research by showing that COO has symbolic and emotional meanings associated with perceptions of a country's overall image. Kim and Chung (1997) presented evidence showing that products from countries with favorable overall images are more readily accepted than brands from countries with less favorable images. Similarly, Fetscherin and Toncar (2010) found that when consumers are not familiar with a country's product, they would use the country's overall image as an evaluation criterion. Several studies have found COO effects to be product category-specific (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Pappu, 2007; Roth & Romeo, 1992). Pappu (2007), for example, showed that consumers held different beliefs across different product categories, and their product evaluations from a given country varied by product category.

It should be noted that COO and its potential impact on consumer behavior not only received great research attention from scholars, but also found broad practical applications in international marketing practice. It has become commonplace for products to highlight their COO in packaging, advertising, and other forms of marketing communications (Kinra, 2005).

Thus, Levis is "American" Jeans, Nikon is a "Japanese" camera, Pizza Hut sells "Italian" pizza,

Puligny-Montrachet is "French" wine and BWM is a "German" car. To a certain extent, a

positive COO not only enhances a brand's position in its category but also defines the product

category itself. Conversely, marketers often experience difficulties to explore international

markets when the products are associated with negative COO perceptions (Kinra, 2005).

  With economic globalization, the role of COO has become more prominent since

consumers are increasingly confronted with products from different countries. Globalization also

raises questions about the traditional definition of COO which assumes that the country where a

product is made is the same as the country where the product is branded (Prendergast, Tsang, &

Chan, 2010). In order to take advantage of lower labor and operation costs, more and more

companies have transferred their manufacturing or assembling locations overseas to developing

countries. A product could thus be designed, manufactured and marketed in different countries.

There is also a rising trend towards collaborating with foreign partner firms, establishing design

centers overseas, acquiring parts and components and assembling the finished product in

separate countries (Chao, 1998). What then is the COO of Boeing when its 787s are

manufactured in six different countries? What is the real COO of Apple when its iPods, iPhones

and iPads are designed in the U.S., contain parts from Taiwan and Korea, and assembled in

China?

Several researchers have argued for a decomposition of the COO construct into more specific components and tested the differential impact of the COO components on consumers' perception of product quality. The COO components include country of brand (COB) (Hulland, 2009), country of design (COD) (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2007), country of assembly (COA) (Brodowsky, 1998), and country of parts (COP) (Okechuku & Onyemah, 1999). In general, COB is the country that the brand originates and where the headquarters is located; COD can be defined as the country where the product was conceived, designed or engineered; COA refers to the country where the product is assembled or manufactured; and COP is the country where the parts/components are made.

Empirical studies have shown that the COB, the COD, the COA, and the COP can all have different effects on consumer product evaluation (Chao, 1993). There is also evidence that highly industrialized countries such as Japan, USA or Germany are being evaluated as superior in design capabilities compared with assembly or components/parts aspects, while newly industrialized countries such as Mexico, Indonesia and China are generally viewed as inferior across design, assembly and parts abilities (Wong, Garma, & Michael, 2007). This lends further support to the proposition that consumers can and do make a cognitive distinction on COO components in their product decision making process. As Johansson noted in 1989, the relevance of COO in product evaluation process might be tempered by the "hybridization" of products under globalization.

While the COO concept attains greater complexity, several researchers suggest that COB might be the most parsimonious, balanced and unifying approach to the study of COO effects (e.g., Han & Terpstra, 1988; Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010; Lee & Schaninger, 1996; Iyer & Kalita, 1997). Conceptualizing COO as part of the "branding" mix, Han and Terpstra (1988) reported that the brand attractiveness of Japanese cars suffered decline when production was transferred from Japan to less developed countries. Lee and Schaninger (1996) also noted that quality perception and purchase intention are likely influenced not only by the brand name but also by the country with which the brand is most closely associated. Similarly, Iyer and Kalita (1997) manipulated country of manufacturing (COM) to show that the manufacturing location has significant influence on consumer perceptions of brand quality. An Apple computer might thus be rated favorably because it is an American brand, despite the fact that it is assembled in China with parts from other countries. In light of the importance of "branding" in marketing, Phau and Prendergast (2000) argue that the traditional conception of COO is no longer appropriate, and country of brand (COB) is more accurate and relevant concept under the globalization trend.

The growing diversity in COO research is accompanied by an urgent need for more research in emerging economies like China. A few studies have investigated the impact of COO on Chinese consumers' purchase decisions. Overall, the results indicate that COO is an important consideration in Chinese consumers' choice of a wide range of product categories (Chike & He,

2012). Extending the concept of country animosity, Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) reported that COO negatively affected Chinese consumers' purchase of Japanese products due to Japan's invasion of China during World War II. Kwok (2006) found that Chinese respondents' actual behavior differed from their stated preference for Chinese over foreign grocery products. Hu (2008) showed that COO was the most important consideration in wine evaluation among Chinese respondents who exhibited strong preference of imported over domestic brands. Chaney and Gamble (2008) found that COO had an effect on Chinese respondents' rating of retail stores, with Shanghai (the largest city and financial center in China) respondents in favor of foreign- in Chinese consumers' evaluation of New Zealand milk powder and Paproski (2011) found owned stores more than Chinese-owned stores, while the reverse is true for Chengdu (the capital of Sichuan province in Southwest China) respondents. Luo (2011) showed that COO played a positive role that COO affected Chinese consumers' purchase decisions in 9 of the 12 product categories studied.

Product Usage Experience

Examining product usage experience necessitates answering a basic question first: What is an experience? According to Li, Daugherty and Biocca (2001), "an experience is more than simply the passive reception of external sensations or subjective mental interpretation of an event or situation; rather, experience is the product of an ongoing transaction that gains in quality, intensity, meaning, and value integrating both psychological and emotional conditions" (p. 4). In

the context of consumer behavior, an experience may be defined as "the sensation of interaction with a product, service, or event, through all of our senses, over time, and on both physical and cognitive levels" (Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2001, p. 1). Accordingly, product usage experience when there is physical contact with the product; i.e., when consumers buy, use and/or evaluate products (Hoch, 2002). occurs

Marketing research generally supports the distinction between first time buyers vs. repeat purchasers, and among nonusers, light, medium and heavy users, largely due to their different levels of product usage experience (Lehto，O'Leary, & Morrison，2004). There is ample evidence showing that product usage experience can moderate the relationship between purchase intention and actual behavior (Ozer, 2010). Specifically, consumers with prior product usage experience are likely to show greater consistency in their purchase intention and actual purchase behavior than consumers who lack prior usage experience. Product usage experience helps make initial opinions about a product more crystallized and accessible in consumers' minds and thus enables them to perform a subsequent purchase behavior more efficiently and effectively (Ozer, 2010; Schwarz & Bohner, 2001). Prior usage experience also provides consumers with relevant information about the outcomes of performing a behavior and hence allows them to use the information again when deciding to engage in that behavior (Schwarz & Bohner, 2001; Ozer, 2010). Consistent with cognitive theories, empirical research shows that the cognitions that consumers form when their behavioral intentions are measured remain stable overtime and are

reactivated when the actual behavior occurs. Since the intention to purchase and the subsequent

purchase behavior are based on similar cognitions, the consistency between behavioral intention

and actual behavior will be higher for consumers who have prior usage experience than those

without such experience (Ozer, 2010).

Consumer behavior research also indicates that the prior product experience is retained

in memory which may be activated and subsequently satisfy information needs at the point of

purchase. Biehal (1983), for instance, stipulates that "the more information in memory, the

greater the potential for internal search based on it, and conversely the less need there may be for

external information" (p. 11). Other researchers have argued that there is a negative relationship

between the number of prior purchase, which should be positively related to the amount of prior

information in memory, and the level of external information search (Jacoby, Chestnut, & Fisher,

1978; Kiel & Layton 1981; Moore & Lehmann 1980). Researchers also pointed out that, when

brand names are available, the need for external information search decreases. The reasoning is

that brand name acts as a cue for retrieving prior use experience stored in memory which reduces

the need for searching for externally available information (Biehal, 1983).

One distinction that should be made is how much a consumer knows about a product

versus how much a consumer thinks he/she knows. Thus the absolute amount of information in

memory may be less important as a determinant of search than the consumer's perception of how

knowledgeable he/she really is (Biehal, 1983). These perceptions may encompass both the

amount and variety of prior product use information and the extent to which the information is

perceived to be useful for the current situation. Thus a consumer may perform above average on

an objective test of product knowledge, yet still engage relatively heavily in search if s/he feels

ignorant. Similarly, even though the consumer may appear to know a great deal about the

product class, s/he may still engage in more external search and less internal search if memory

information is not perceived to be useful (Biehal, 1983). Also, perceptions of the utility of prior

use experience may be affected by both the length of time between purchases and the degree of

satisfaction with previous purchases (Bettman 1979). When consumers use products, they have

the opportunity to test hypotheses about how the products work and engage in active learning

rather than passive learning (Hamilton & Thompson，2007).

In conclusion, the processes and effects of product usage experience may be less

straightforward than some researchers suggest. In the next section, we will attempt to analyze the

relationship between prior product experience and COO perceptions. A major hypothesis derived

from the analysis is that prior product experience moderates the influence of COO perceptions on

purchase decisions.

COO & Product Usage Experience

Experience comes from the interactions between an individual and an object. The nature

of such interactions can differentiate two types of experience: direct experience and indirect

experience. According to Li et al. (2001), direct experience has a strong advantage over indirect

experience because, first and foremost, direct experience is self-generated, so it constitutes the most reliable and credible source of information. The consumer can also control the focus and pace of an inspection to adjust the way a product is experienced to maximize informational input. Further, direct interactions with a product often induce stronger affective responses in the consumer than indirect experience. The cognitive and affective richness of a direct product experience can further enable consumers to anticipate and predict future consumption experience of a product better than an indirect experience. Li et al. (2001) also suggest that direct product experience is critically important to belief confidence when examining experience goods (which is generally defined as a product or service whose product characteristics can only be ascertained through consumption). In contrast, indirect experience such as exposure to advertising or product description, is able to influence attitude for search goods (generally defined as a product or service with easily discernible features and characteristics before purchase) and reduce the effects of unfavorable trial (Li et al., 2001).

Product experience can therefore be direct when there is physical contact with the product or indirect when a product is presented or described externally (as in an advertisement) (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Kempf & Smith, 1998). Obviously, product usage experience is a direct experience involving physical product interactions that entail tangible and intrinsic product attribute information. The COO of a product, typically presented as "made in" labels, is an extrinsic product cue that conveys intangible and extrinsic product attribute information

(Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). As such, a COO cue is similar to brand name, packaging, or price in that none of these has a direct bearing on actual product performance (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995).

Since direct product experience involves more experiential and physical interactions with products than indirect experience, it tends to provide consumers with more credible information than indirect experience（Hamilton, Thompson, & Viana, 2007). For example, product trials tend to produce higher levels of product confidence than exposure to advertising messages. As a result, product trials have been shown to produce higher possibility of purchase and greater decision confidence than exposure to advertising (Hamilton et al., 2007).

Consumers sometimes rely on indirect experiences with products, such as exposure to advertising or eyeballing products on display, to make decisions about which products to purchase. For example, a consumer might look at displays at an Apple store or review product specifications online before purchasing a new Apple laptop computer. Yet, the consumer's long-term satisfaction with the laptop is more likely to be based on direct experience of actually using the laptop on a regular and frequent basis. Some research suggests that preferences formed based on indirect experiences can differ systematically from preferences formed based on direct experiences (Thompson, Hamilton, & Rust, 2005). Case in point: Before using a product, consumers might prefer products with many features and capabilities, but after using a product, consumers might prefer simpler products that are easier to use. Thus, consumers may be

selecting products based on indirect experiences in the beginning, but they would be more influenced by direct usage experiences later on. Direct product usage experience could thus shift product preferences from one end to the other. Moreover, an early study by Wu and Shaffer (1987) showed that attitudes originating from direct product experience were more predictive of later behavior than were attitudes based on indirect product experience. The study also demonstrated that direct product experience resulted in stronger, more accessible brand attitudes as well a stronger link between present and future purchase behavior.

Taken together, our analysis suggests that COO perceptions and product usage constitute indirect and direct product experience, respectively. More importantly, these experiences may become concurrently available to the consumer in a product purchase situation. Direct product usage experience, however, could play an important controlling and moderating role that limits the extent of COO influence on purchasing intention and behavior. That is, cognitive and affective perceptions or biases originating from COO may not be taken as facts but as hypotheses to be tested (Hoch & Deighton, 1989). Treating perceptions or biases associated with COO as a hypothesis rather than a fact should serve generally to lessen the likelihood that purchasing decisions would be taken solely on the basis of a product's COO. In general, then, it is expected that as product usage experience increases, the influence of COO perceptions should decline.

Chapter 3: Research Hypotheses

The analysis presented above suggests that COO perceptions and product usage experiences constitute two different sources of product related information. The extent to which these two sources of information work in concert with each other would therefore determine the outcome of product judgments. The present study examined three kinds of usage experiences (overall, variety and frequency of usage) pertaining to products (products in general and laptop computers in particular) made in two countries (America and China). Empirical data gathered from a survey were used to test two sets of research hypotheses pertaining to America and China respectively.

The first set of hypotheses relates to the interactions between COO perceptions and product usage experiences in predicting purchase intention of American-made products.

H1-a: American product perception and overall American product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting American product purchase intentions.

H1-b: American product perception and variety of American product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting American product purchase intention.

H1-b: American product perception and frequency of American product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting American product purchase intention.

H1-c: American laptop computer perception and variety of American laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of American laptop computers.

H1-e: American laptop computer perception and frequency of American laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of American laptop computers.

The second set of hypotheses deals with the interactions between COO perceptions and product usage experiences in predicting purchase intention of Chinese-made products.

H2-a: Chinese product perception and overall Chinese product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting Chinese product purchase intention.

H2-b: Chinese product perception and variety of Chinese product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting Chinese product purchase intention.

H2-c: Chinese product perception and frequency of Chinese product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting Chinese product purchase intention.

H2-d: Chinese laptop computer perception and variety of Chinese laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of Chinese laptop computers.

H2-e: Chinese laptop computer perception and frequency of Chinese laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of Chinese

laptop computers.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This section presents the research design and the methods for collecting data necessary for testing the hypotheses of the study.

Design

A survey was conducted during September and October, 2013 at a major university in Shandong Province, China. The use of a survey provided an inexpensive and efficient access to a large population. 51Poll, a popular online survey service in China (similar to SurveyMonkey in the U.S.), was used for data collection purposes.

Sample

The study's participants consisted of a 600 college students resided in the city of Zibo, China (the author's home city). Due to time and resource constraints, a convenience sample of college students was recruited via announcements issued by the university administration, faculty and staff, as well as students themselves. The students were assured that their participation was strictly voluntary, and that there was no penalty for refusal to participate. The distributions of participants' gender, education level and age (mean = 19.73) are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants' Gender

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cum %
Female	354	59.0	59.0	59.0
Male	246	41.0	41.0	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Distribution of Participants' Education Level

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cum %
Some high school or lass	2	.3	.3	.3
Some college	598	99.7	99.7	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Distribution of Participants' Age

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cum %
14.00	1	.2	.2	.2
17.00	2	.3	.3	.5
18.00	103	17.2	17.2	17.7
19.00	139	23.2	23.2	40.8
20.00	208	34.7	34.7	75.5
21.00	106	17.7	17.7	93.2
22.00	36	6.0	6.0	99.2
23.00	3	.5	.5	99.7
24.00	1	.2	.2	99.8
25.00	1	.2	.2	100.0
Total	600	100.0	100.0	

Instrumentation

A self-administered questionnaire was designed in English and translated into

Chinese (see Appendix). The questionnaire begins with an Informed Consent to Participate in

Research which ensures the privacy and confidentiality of response. The questionnaire contains

33 questions presented in six parts. It took an estimated 20 minutes to complete.

Part One: Country-of-Origin Perceptions

Several researchers have pointed out that COO perceptions can be viewed at two

different levels: perceptions of products made in a certain country in general and perceptions of a

specific class of product made in a certain country (e.g., Liu & Johnson, 2005). The unique status

of China as the world's factory, where many "foreign" (including American) brands are

manufactured/assembled (Fishman, 2005), makes it necessary to use country of brand (COB; e.g.,

American products/brands) in lieu of the traditional "made-in" COO labels (e.g., Made in

America). COO perceptions were thus measured by 5-point Likert scale (5=excellent; 1 = poor)

on which participants answered the following questions about their perceptions of (1) the

products of the country in general and (2) the laptop computer brands of the country.

1. How do you feel about American products?

2. How do you feel about Chinese products?

3. How do you feel about American brands of laptop computers?

4. How do you feel about Chinese brands of laptop computers?

Part Two: Overall Product Usage Experience

Overall product usage experience for each country was measured by a 5-point Likert

scale (5 = Very positive; 1 = Very negative) as follows:

1. Overall, how would you describe your experience of using American products?

2. Overall, how would you describe your experience of using Chinese products?

Part Three: Variety of Product Usage Experience

The variety of product usage experience was measured by 5-point Likert scales (5 = A lot; 1 = none) as follows:

1. How many kinds of American products have you used?

2. How many kinds of Chinese products have you used?

3. How many kinds of American brands of laptop computers have you used?

4. How many kinds of Chinese brands of laptop computers have you used?

Part Four: Frequency of Product Usage Experience (Frequency)

Product usage frequency was measured by 5-point Likert scales (5 =Always; 1 = never) as follows:

1. How often do you use American products?

2. How often do you use Chinese products?

3. How often do you use American brands of laptop computers?

4. How often do you use Chinese brands of laptop computers?

Part Five: Purchase Intention/Willingness to Buy

Modified from Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998), the following eight Likert-scaled (1: strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree) items were used to measure intention and willingness to buy American or Chinese products in general and laptop computer brands in specific.

1. I would feel uncomfortable if I bought an American (Chinese) product.

2. Whenever possible, I avoid buying American (Chinese) products.

3. Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in America (China).

4. I do not like the idea of owning American (Chinese) products.

5. I would feel uncomfortable if I bought an American (Chinese) brand of laptop computer.

6. Whenever possible, I avoid buying an American (Chinese) brand of laptop computer.

7. Whenever available, I would prefer to buy laptop computers made in America (China).

8. I do not like the idea of owning American (Chinese) laptop computers.

Part Six: The final part of the questionnaire contains three measures of sample demographics (age, gender, education Level).

Reliability tests were performed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the internal consistency of the multiple-item scales of the dependent measures: American product purchase intention, Chinese product purchase intention, American laptop computer purchase intention and Chinese laptop computer purchase intention. As shown in Table 4, the Cronbach's alphas for American product purchase intention, Chinese product purchase intention, American laptop

purchase intention and Chinese laptop purchase intention were 0.679, 0.806, 0.703, and 0.774, respectively, indicating acceptable levels of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4: Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
American Product Purchase Intention	.679	4
Chinese Product Purchase Intention	.806	4
American Laptop Purchase Intention	.703	4
Chinese Laptop Purchase Intention	.774	4

Chapter 5: Results

In this chapter, preliminary statistical analyses of the key variables in the study are

presented first, followed by hypothesis-testing results. The limit for statistical significance was

set at p=0.05. All analyses were performed by using SPSS 21.0.

Preliminary Analyses

Table 5 presents the means and standard deviations of the perceptions of American and

Chinese products and laptop computers, overall usage experience ratings of American and

Chinese product usage experience, American products and laptop computer usage variety and

frequency, purchase intentions of American and Chinese products, and purchase intentions of

American and Chinese laptop computers. A series of t-tests were performed to compare the

differences between the means pertaining to the two countries. Results showed that participants

had significantly more favorable perceptions of Chinese products than American products.

Understandably they reported higher Chinese product usage experience both in terms of variety

and frequency. They also used a greater variety of Chinese laptops and at a higher frequency

than American laptops. However, participants seemed to have a more favorable perception of

American (mean=3.74) than Chinese laptop computers (mean=3.65), although the difference was

only marginally significant (p=.065). Nevertheless, their purchase intentions of Chinese products

and laptop computers were significantly stronger than that of American products and laptop computers.

Table 5: Statistical Analyses of Key Variables

	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
American Product Perception	599	3.4290	.80626	-2.137	597	.033
Chinese Product Perception	599	3.5326	.91724			
American Laptop Perception	599	3.7379	.84585	1.847	598	.065
Chinese Laptop Perception	600	3.6517	.85139			
Am Product Overall Usage Experience	599	3.0868	.62217	-12.547	597	.000
Ch Product Overall Usage Experience	598	3.6455	.82349			
American Product Usage Variety	600	3.0167	.80049	-18.680	599	.000
Chinese Product Usage Variety	600	3.9517	.91144			
American Product Usage Frequency	600	2.6800	.78227	-24.469	599	.000
Chinese Product Usage Frequency	600	3.8833	.78150			
American Laptop Usage Variety	598	1.8311	.89848	-15.680	595	.000
Chinese Laptop Usage Variety	598	2.6187	.97117			
American Laptop Usage Frequency	597	2.3199	1.01655	-15.618	595	.000
Chinese Laptop Usage Frequency	599	3.3172	1.06301			
American Product Purchase Intention	595	3.0517	.57859	-12.487	589	.000
Chinese Product Purchase Intention	595	3.5681	.90511			
American Laptop Purchase Intention	588	3.1059	.62965	-7.906	573	.000
Chinese Laptop Purchase Intention	584	3.4024	.78778			

Table 6 shows the bivariate correlation coefficients between COO perceptions, product usage experiences and purchase intentions. Not surprisingly, American product perception and product usage experience were positively correlated with purchase intention of American products; and Chinese product perception and product usage experience were positively correlated with purchase intention of Chinese products. Interestingly, however, American (Chinese) product perception and product usage experience also showed negative correlations

with purchase intention of Chinese (American) products. In other words, the more favorable the

COO perception of American (Chinese) product was, the lower the intention of purchasing

Chinese (American) products would be. Likewise, the correlations showed that the greater the

variety or frequency of using American (Chinese) products, the lower the intention of purchasing

Chinese (American) products.

Table 6: American & Chinese Product Purchase Intention Correlations [a]

	APP	CPP	APE	CPE	APV	CPV	APF	CPF	API	CPI
APP	1									
CPP	-.007	1								
AOPE	.369**	-.062	1							
COPE	-.067	.512**	-.116**	1						
APV	.219**	-.098*	.222**	-.140**	1					
CPV	.042	.262**	-.087*	.326**	-.022	1				
APF	.128**	-.166**	.277**	-.249**	.462**	-.247**	1			
CPF	.016	.308**	-.034	.377**	-.082*	.536**	-.187**	1		
API	.215**	-.154**	.210**	-.311**	.124**	-.136**	.191**	-.132**	1	
CPI	-.052	.199**	-.160**	.178**	-.092*	.181**	-.128**	.198**	.141**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

[a.] APP: American product perception, CPP: Chinese product perception, AOPE: Overall American product usage experience, COPE: Overall Chinese product usage experience, APV: American product usage variety, CPV: Chinese product usage variety, APF: American product usage frequency, CPF: Chinese product usage frequency, API: American product purchase intention, CPI: Chinese product purchase intention.

Similar results were obtained when COO perceptions, laptop usage experiences and

purchase intentions were correlated (see Table 7). American (Chinese) laptop perception and

usage experience were positively correlated with purchase intention of American (Chinese)

laptops. And again, negative correlations were found between American (Chinese) laptop

perception, usage experience and purchase intention of Chinese laptops.

Table 7: American & Chinese Laptop purchase Intention Correlations [a]

	ALP	CLP	ALV	CLV	ALF	CLF	ALPI	CLPI
ALP	1							
CLP	.082[*]	1						
ALV	.032	-.216[**]	1					
CLV	-.093[*]	.199[**]	.135[**]	1				
ALF	.069	-.162[**]	.620[**]	.007	1			
CLF	-.070	.237[**]	-.104[*]	.560[**]	-.127[**]	1		
ALPI	.188[**]	-.139[**]	.136[**]	-.070	.147[**]	-.101[*]	1	
CLPI	-.035	.149[**]	-.136[**]	.101[*]	-.190[**]	.150[**]	.231[**]	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

[a.] ALP: American laptop perception, CLP: Chinese laptop perception, ALV: American laptop usage variety, CLV: Chinese laptop usage variety, ALF: American laptop usage frequency, CLF: Chinese laptop usage frequency, ALPI: American laptop purchase intention, CLPI: Chinese laptop purchase intention.

Hypotheses Testing

To test the research hypotheses, a series of multiple regressions were performed. In all regression mod

intention as the criterion (dependent) variable. Results pertaining to American products will be

presented first, followed by results pertaining to Chinese products.

H1-a states that that perception of American products and product usage experience would interact in t

product perception on purchase intention was enhanced by product usage experience, and vice

versa. H1-a was thus supported.

Table 8: Regression analysis (H1-a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.660	.281		9.451	.000
Am Product Perception	.024	.086	.034	.284	.777
Am Product Usage Experience	.006	.094	.007	.064	.949
Am Product Perception X Usage Experience	.041	.006	.265	6.674	.000

   a.   Dependent Variable: American Product Purchase Intention, R square = .265, p = .000

Table 9 shows that, in predicting American product purchase intention, the interaction between American product perception and variety of American product usage experience also reached significance (β = .406, t = 1.985, p = .048). Thus, hypothesis H1-b was supported.

Table 9: Regression analysis (H1-b)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.959	.310		9.544	.000
Am Product Perception	.030	.091	.042	.329	.742
Am Product Usage Variety	.137	.103	.190	1.333	.183
Am Product Perception X Usage Variety	.058	.029	.406	1.985	.048

a. Dependent Variable: American Product Purchase Intention, R square = .266, p = .000

In line with H1-c, regression results (Table 10) showed a significant interaction between American product perception and frequency of product usage experience (β = .266, t = 6.711, p = .000). Hypothesis H1-c was therefore supported.

Table 10: Regression analysis (H1-c)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.398	.314		7.646	.000
Am Product Perception	.095	.090	.132	1.048	.295
Am Product Usage Freq.	.065	.116	.088	.562	.574
Am Product Perception X Usage Frequency	.042	.006	.266	6.711	.000

a. Dependent Variable: American Product Purchase Intention, R square = .266, p = .000

Table 11 reports testing results of H1-d which states that American laptop computer perception and variety of American laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of American laptop computers. As hypothesized, the interaction was significant (β = .137, t = 3.042, p = .002). Thus, hypothesis H1-d was supported.

Table 11: Regression analysis (H1-d)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.300	.262		8.775	.000
Am Laptop Perception	.170	.068	.227	2.492	.013
Am Laptop Usage Variety	.153	.121	.219	1.262	.208
Am Laptop Perception X Usage Variety	.022	.007	.137	3.042	.002

a. Dependent Variable: American Laptop Purchase Intention, R square = .230, p = .000

H1-e states that there would be an interaction between American laptop computer ratings and Frequency of American laptop usage experience. Results of the regression analysis

showed that the interaction was significant (β = .149, t = 3.206, p = .001). Thus, hypothesis H1-e

was supported.

Table 12: Regression analysis (H1-e)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.276	.285		7.985	.000
Am Laptop Perception	.168	.074	.225	2.266	.024
Am Laptop Usage Freq.	.140	.111	.225	1.255	.210
Am Laptop Rating X Usage Frequency	.021	.006	.149	3.206	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Am Laptop Purchase Intention, R square = .234, p = .000

Regarding Chinese products, H2-a predicts the interaction between Chinese product

perception and usage experience. Results of the regression analysis (Table 13) showed that the

interaction was significant (β = .227, t = 5.674, p = .000). Thus, hypothesis H2-a was supported.

Similar to the results of American products, Chinese product usage experience enhanced the

predictive power of Chinese product perception on purchase intention, and vice versa.

Table 13: Regression analysis (H2-a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.543	.516		6.872	.000
Ch Product Perception	.123	.151	.125	.818	.414
Ch Product Usage Experience	.137	.144	.124	.950	.343
Ch Product Rating X Usage Experience	.037	.007	.227	5.674	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Chinese Product Purchase Intention, R square = .231, p = .000

H2-b states that Chinese product perception and variety of product usage experience will interact with each other in predicting Chinese product purchase intention. Results of regression analysis (Table 14) showed that the interaction non-significant (β = .298, t = 1.348, p = .178). Thus, hypothesis H2-b was not supported.

Table 14: Regression analysis (H2-b)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.113	.518		6.010	.000
Ch Product Perception	.036	.151	.037	.240	.810
Ch Product Usage Variety	.031	.131	.031	.238	.812
Ch Product Perception X Usage Variety	.050	.037	.298	1.348	.178

a. Dependent Variable: Chinese Product Purchase Intention, R square = .245, p = .000

H2-c states that there is an interaction between Chinese product perception and frequency of product usage experience. Results of the regression analysis (Table 15) indicated that the interaction was non-significant (β = .405, t =1.690, p = .092). Thus, hypothesis H2-c was not supported.

H2-d predicts that Chinese laptop computer perception and variety of Chinese laptop computer usage experience will interact with each other in predicting purchase intention of American laptop computers. Results presented in Table 16 showed that the interaction between was non-significant (β = .062, t = .288, p = .774). Thus, hypothesis H2-d was not supported. The only significant predictor of purchase intention, according to the regression model, was

perception of Chinese laptop computers (β = .148, t = 3.607, p = .000).

Table 15: Regression analysis (H2-c)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.276	.581		5.640	.000
Ch Product Perception	.129	.171	.131	.758	.449
Ch Product Usage Freq.	.065	.150	.056	.432	.666
Ch Produdct Perception X Usage Frequency	.072	.043	.405	1.690	.092

a. Dependent Variable: Chinese Product Purchase Intention, R square = .255, p = .000

Table 16: Regression analysis (H2-d)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.686	.395		6.802	.000
Ch Laptop Perception	.137	.038	.148	3.607	.000
Ch Laptop Usage Variety	.099	.139	.122	.712	.477
Ch Laptop Rating X Usage Variety	.010	.035	.062	.288	.774

a. Dependent Variable: Chinese Laptop Purchase Intention, R sauare = .165, p = .001

H2-e stated that there would be an interaction between Chinese laptop computer ratings and Frequency of Chinese laptop usage experience. Results of the regression analysis (Table 17) showed that the interaction was significant (β = .133, t = 2.204, p = .028). Thus, hypothesis H2-e was supported.

Table 17: Regression analysis (H2-e)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.742	.205		13.358	.000
Ch Laptop Perception	.031	.053	.033	.590	.555
Ch Laptop Usage Freq.	.080	.046	.078	1.728	.084
Ch Laptop Rating X Usage Frequency	.019	.009	.133	2.204	.028

a. Dependent Variable: Ch Laptop Purchase Intention, R square = .204, p = .000

Additional Analyses

The preliminary correlation analyses reported earlier showed that while COO perception and product usage experience were positively correlated with purchase intention of products from the same country, COO perception and usage experience of American products were negatively correlated with purchase intention of Chinese products, and vice versa. To further elucidate these interesting, albeit unexpected, negative relationships, two multiple regressions were performed with COO perceptions and product usage experience as predictor variables and purchase intention as the criterion variable. Results confirmed that, with regard to American products, purchase intention was negatively associated with the perception (β = -.091, t = -1.984, p = .048) and usage experience (β = -.154, t = -3.346, p = .001) of Chinese products. Favorable perception and positive experience of using Chinese products would thus lead to a decrease in purchase intention of American products.

Table 18: Regression analysis (American Product PI)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.046	.196		15.580	.000
American Product Perception	.125	.033	.159	3.744	.000
Chinese Product Perception	-.062	.031	-.091	-1.984	.048
Am Product Usage Experience	.090	.044	.088	2.071	.039
Ch Product Experience	-.118	.035	-.154	-3.346	.001

a. Dependent Variable: American Product Purchase Intention, R square = .310, p = .000

Purchase intention of Chinese products, on the other hand, showed a negative association with American product usage experience (β = -.180, t = -4.125, p = .000), but remained unassociated with perception of American products (β = .019, t = .434, p = .665). The intention to purchase Chinese products would therefore decrease as the experience of using American products becomes more positive.

Table 19: Regression analysis (Chinese Product PI)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.465	.250		13.833	.000
American product Perception	.019	.043	.019	.434	.665
Chinese product Perception	.085	.040	.098	2.098	.036
Am product Experience	-.230	.056	-.180	-4.125	.000
Ch product Experience	.077	.045	.081	1.712	.087

a. Dependent Variable: Chinese product purchase intention, R square = .244, p = .000

Chapter 6: Discussion

The current study generated several intriguing findings which warrant further discussion. First, the study is the first of its kind to investigate COO effects on purchase intention by considering the joint influence of COO perceptions and actual product usage experience. Second, the study demonstrated the importance of examining the potential influence of COO on purchase intentions of both foreign and domestic products. Third, the study was conducted in China, an increasingly important market for both Chinese and foreign marketers.

The study tested a series of hypotheses, all of which predicted that COO perception and product usage experience would interact in determining product purchase intention. The reasoning behind the hypotheses, as stated earlier, is that COO perception is an indirect product experience and product usage is a direct product experience. Since both experiences may become available to consumers in a product purchase situation, the extent to which these two experiences work in concert with or in opposition to each other would determine the final outcome of product judgments. Table 20 presents a summary of hypotheses testing results.

Table 20: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

H1-a	American product perception X Overall American product usage experience	Supported
H1-b	American product perception X Variety of American product usage experience	Supported
H1-c	American product perception X Frequency of American product usage experience	Supported
H1-d	American laptop perception X Variety of American laptop usage experience	Supported
H1-e	American laptop perception X Frequency of American laptop usage experience	Supported
H2-a	Chinese product perception X Overall Chinese product usage experience	Supported
H2-b	Chinese product perception X Variety of Chinese product usage experience	Not Supported
H2-c	Chinese product perception X Frequency of Chinese product usage experience	Not Supported
H2-d	Chinese laptop perception X Variety of Chinese laptop usage experience	Not Supported
H2-e	Chinese laptop perception X Frequency of Chinese laptop usage experience	Supported

The results of the study lend strong support to the first set of hypotheses pertaining to

American products. The perception of American products was moderated by the overall

impression as well as the variety and frequency of using American products. In predicting

purchase intention of American products, therefore, the moderately positive perception of

American products (Mean = 3.42 on a 5-point scale) was significantly enhanced by a positive

overall impression, a greater variety, and a higher frequency of American product usage.

Similarly, in predicting purchase intention of American laptop computers, the positive perception

of American laptop computers (Mean = 3.74 on a 5-point scale) was augmented by a greater

variety and a higher frequency of American laptop computer usage. Together, the findings strong

suggest that, as far as the participants of the study are concerned, American product perceptions

and product usage constituted two closely related yet distinct sources of information that jointly

determined the purchase intentions of American products in general and American laptop

computers in particular.

The results pertaining to Chinese products showed a mixed picture. The perception of

Chinese products, though significantly more positive than that of American products (Means =

3.53 vs. 3.43), was enhanced by a positive impression of Chinese product usage in general

(Mean = 3.65 on a 5-point scale), but not by an increase in either variety or frequency of Chinese

product usage. These results may be explained by a possible ceiling effect built into the product

usage experiences of the Chinese participants who enjoy maximum opportunities of using a wide

variety of Chinese products at a high frequency.

In terms of Chinese laptop computer purchase intention, the predictive power of a positive

Chinese laptop perception (Mean = 3.65 on a 5-point scale) was boosted by a higher frequency,

but not by a greater variety, of Chinese laptop usage. The results could be explained in part by a

possible floor effect: the participants' (college students) relatively low disposable income

prohibited or protracted their purchase and usage of a wide variety of laptop computers.

However, like their American counterpart, their frequent usage of laptop computers yields

perhaps the most reliable source of laptop experience which, according to results of the present study, worked quite harmoniously with their positive perceptions (Mean = 3.65 on a 5-point scale) of Chinese laptop computers.

The present study also revealed some additional, and equally intriguing, findings of the roles of COO perceptions and product usage experience in a country like China where both foreign and domestic products are readily available. As indicated earlier, both correlation and regression results indicated that the perceptions of Chinese products and usage experience were negatively associated with purchase intention of American products. The results may be attributed in part to consumer ethnocentrism (e.g., Brodowsky, 1998; Shimp & Sharma, 1987), patriotism and/or nationalism (e.g., Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, & Melewar, 2001), all of which suggest the existence of an inherent bias against products of foreign origins. The present study points to yet another possible explanation, however. Globalization of the world economy has made products from foreign countries readily available in China, which provided Chinese consumers an unprecedented opportunity to use the foreign products and compared them side-by-side with domestic products. And across a number of different product categories, Chinese consumers may arrive at the conclusion that Chinese products are just as good as, and in some cases better than, their foreign counterparts. Certain pre-existing and perhaps long-held COO perceptions (e.g., American products are superior to Chinese products) might thus be

moderated, if not modified, by actual foreign product usage experiences. The net result may be the strengthening of perceptions and purchasing intentions of Chinese products.

The theoretical implications of the present study are plenty. As pointed out earlier, much research on COO effects has focused on consumer reactions to products made in foreign countries (e.g., due to COO, French wines are better received than American wines) without considering the possible moderating effect of actual product usage experience (e.g, after trial use, consumers might prefer American over French wines). The present study illustrates the importance of treating COO perceptions and product usage experience as two distinct theoretical concepts as well as the need to examine them together in empirical research. Indeed, a common thread in the results was that COO product perceptions, or for that matter, country perceptions or images, did not exert their influence on purchase intentions in isolation from actual product usage experience. Conversely, research in international marketing that either treats COO perception as irrelevant to product judgments, or contrives it as merely a bias or stereotype which hinders optimal decision making, should begin to take COO effects more seriously as a meaningful and perhaps indispensable theoretical construct. Substantiated by empirical evidence, the present study argues that research on COO effects should, at the minimum, distinguish situations in which COO perception and product usage work in concert with or in opposition to each other. Furthermore, most of the previous COO studies were done within western countries; the present study calls for greater research attention on countries like China that are gaining

weight in an increasingly globalized economy where the survival and success depends on

performance in not only domestic but also foreign markets.

The practical implications of the present study are more straightforward. First and

foremost, international marketers must make every effort to ensure the consistency between a

positive or negative COO of the product or brand at the perceptual level and their actual

performance at the more direct and concrete usage level. Instead of relying so much on favorable

COOs (e.g., Made in America, Japan or Germany), marketers should be sensitive to the fact that

favorable COOs, when detected as being inconsistent with actual usage experience, may be

dismissed by consumers as empty promises or sheer arrogance which, in the worst case scenario,

may cause long-term and irrevocable damage to the perception of the brand, the company or

even the country. On other hand, products and brands traditionally associated with unfavorable

COO perceptions (e.g., Made in China, India or Nigeria) should not to take the negative COO

perceptions as an insurmountable barrier to market entry or eventual success. Rather, COO

perceptions should be viewed as a variable that is always subject to change as a result of the

actual performance of the products or brands at the actual usage level. The increasing economic

globalization therefore poses a challenge and opportunity to international marketers. The losers

in the global competition will most likely be those who stick to the past and unable to match

changing consumer expectations. The winners are likely those who can actually deliver what

they promise, regardless of all the perceptual odds against them. Extending the same line of

reasoning, another important practical implication is that the effects of COO perceptions may be stronger on products whose purchase are determined by intuition or impulse (e.g., toothpastes or chewing gums), but weaker on decisions that involve deliberate planning, information seeking and comparisons (e.g., cars and computers).

Research Limitations

Notwithstanding its contributions, the current study bears several limitations. First, the current study collected its correlational data through a survey which prohibited it from making causal inferences about the effects of COO and product usage on consumer judgments. Future research should therefore attempt to verify the findings of the present study in controlled settings like experiments. Future research should strive to overcome the study's limitations by, for instance, testing the hypotheses across countries that enjoy positive as well as negative COO perceptions, and among consumers with varying levels of product usage experiences. Alternative quantitative and qualitative research methods should also be employed to achieve greater reliability, validity and depth.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Experience confirms and challenges what's known. As a student pursuing her master's

degree in mass communication in America, the author is often bewildered by the fact that many

American consumers seem to hold an unfavorable view towards products made in developing

countries like China, yet continue to buy and use the products originated from the same countries

on a frequent and regular basis. How do they reconcile the inconsistency and resolve the conflict

between the COO perceptions they've held so firmly and for so long, and their actual product

usage experience which might suggest that the foreign products are just as good and perhaps, at

least in some cases, better than "home-made" products?

These initial questions prompted the author to raise some related and more personally

relevant questions: What about Chinese consumers? How do they deal with the 30-year young

free Chinese market that is now saturated with foreign products and brands? Would their

purchase decisions be based on the century-old view that western countries tend to make superior

products? Would they also factor in their actual experience of using the foreign products perhaps,

in most cases, for the first time in their lives? Are the foreign products and brands really as good

as they are perceived to be? And what would happen if the answer is no?

Attempts to address these issues culminated in the empirical study presented in this thesis. A thorough review of the marketing literature provided the author the needed impetus and theoretical basis for considering COO perceptions and product usage experience together. To a certain degree, the review also pointed to a major deficiency of much existing COO-related research which persistently argues for the unconditional influence of COO on product judgments.

The present study presents some initial evidence against the unconditional influence of COO and draws attention to the importance of product usage experience. More specifically, it confirms the well-established role of COO perceptions on one hand, and it upholds the moderating function of product usage experience on the other. The present study thus affirms that COO perceptions and product usage experience should be treated as two separate and related sources of product information which jointly influence product judgments in a purchasing context. Acknowledging the moderating role of product usage experience is important for both theoretical and pragmatic reasons. In a globalized world, marketers are strongly cautioned against the notion that "our products are made in ---, therefore their success is guaranteed around the world." A more effective and long-term success formula is to deliver what the COO means to the consumer and make sure there is a good and positive match between what's perceived and what's real.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Survey Questionnaire

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Please read this consent form carefully before you answer the questionnaire.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusal to participate.

The answers from this questionnaire will assist the researcher in completing a Master's thesis. You may terminate completion of this questionnaire at any time if you feel uncomfortable by the content of the questions. You may also refuse to answer any question(s) if you so choose. Furthermore, the information you contribute is private and confidential. Other than the researcher, no one else will have access to the completed questionnaire. In addition, to protect your confidentiality, you are not required to write your name on the survey. There are no known risks associated with this study, and there are no direct benefits to you for your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researcher, Yuze Gao, at (email address gaoyuze.g@gmail.com & phone 813-419-8027).

Again, thank you for your participation. Please turn to the next page to answer the questionnaire.

1. How do you think about American products?
   1. Very Poor   2. Poor   3. Average   4. Good   5. Very Good

2. How do you think about Chinese products?
   1. Very Poor   2. Poor   3. Average   4. Good   5. Very Good

3. How do you think about American brands of laptop computers?
   1. Very Poor   2. Poor   3. Average   4. Good   5. Very Good

4. How do you think about Chinese brands of laptop computers?
   1. Very Poor   2. Poor   3. Average   4. Good   5. Very Good

5. Overall, your experience with American products is:
   1. Very Negative   2. Negative   3.Neutral   4.Positive   5. Very Positive

6. Overall, your experience with Chinese products is :
   1. Very Negative   2. Negative   3.Neutral   4.Positive   5. Very Positive

7. How many kinds of American products have you used?
   1. None   2. A Few   3. Some   4. many   5. A lot

8. How many kinds of Chinese products have you used?
   1. None   2. A Few   3. Some   4. many   5. A lot

9. How many brands of American laptop computers have you used?
   1. None   2. A Few   3. Some   4. many   5. A lot

10. How many brands of Chinese laptop computers have you used?
    1. None   2. A Few   3. Some   4. many   5. A lot

11. How often do you use American products?
    1. Never   2. Rarely   3. Sometimes   4.Often   5. Always

12. How often do you use Chinese products?
    1. Never   2. Rarely   3. Sometimes   4.Often   5. Always

13. How often do you use American brands of laptop computers?
    1. Never   2. Rarely   3. Sometimes   4.Often   5. Always

14. How often do you use Chinese brands of laptop computers?
   1. Never   2. Rarely   3. Sometimes   4.Often   5. Always

15. I would feel uncomfortable if I bought an American product.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

16. Whenever possible, I avoid buying American products.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

17. Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in America.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

18. I do not like the idea of owning American products.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

19. I would feel uncomfortable if I bought an Chinese product.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

20. Whenever possible, I avoid buying Chinese products.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

21. Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in China.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

22. I do not like the idea of owning Chinese products.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

23. I would feel uncomfortable if I bought an American brand of laptop computer.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

24. Whenever possible, I avoid buying an American brand of laptop computer.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

25. Whenever available, I would prefer to buy laptop computers made in America.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

26. I do not like the idea of owning American laptop computers.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

27.I would feel uncomfortable if I bought a Chinese brand of laptop computer.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

28.Whenever possible, I avoid buying an Chinese brand of laptop computer.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

29.Whenever available, I would prefer to buy laptop computers made in China.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

30.I do not like the idea of owning Chinese laptop computers.
1. Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neutral   4. Agree   5. Strongly Agree

31. What is your age : _____

32. What is your gender: 1. Female   2. Male

33. What is your education level:
    1. Some high school or less
    2. High school diploma
    3. Some college
    4. Associate's degree
    5. Bachelor's degree
    6. Some graduate school
    7. Master's degree or equivalent
    8. Doctorate, law or medical degree or equivalent

问卷

参与研究的知情同意

回答问卷之前，请仔细阅读本同意书。

感谢您抽出时间来参与这项研究。您的参与是完全自愿的，拒绝参加是没有惩罚的。这份问卷的答案将有助于完成一个硕士论文。如果有让您觉得不舒服的内容和问题您可以在任何时间终止这份问卷，您也可以拒绝回答任何问题。此外，你贡献的信息将保密。除研究员以外，没有其他人有机会接触到此问卷。此外，为了保护您的隐私，您不需要在调查中写你的名字。本研究没有任何相关的风险，您的参与无利害关系。

如果您有任何问题或疑虑，请随时联系本文研究员，高瑜泽（电子邮件地址：gaoyuze.g@gmail.com 和电话号码 813-419-8027）。

再次感谢您的参与。请翻到下页回答问卷。

1. 你认为美国的产品：
      1. 非常不好   2. 不好   3. 一般   4. 好   5. 非常好

2. 你认为中国的产品：
      1. 非常不好   2. 不好   3. 一般   4. 好   5. 非常好

3. 你认为美国品牌的笔记本电脑：
      1. 非常不好   2. 不好   3. 一般   4. 好   5. 非常好

4. 你认为中国品牌的笔记本电脑：
      1. 非常不好   2. 不好   3. 一般   4. 好   5. 非常好

5. 总体来说，你对美国产品的感受是:
      1.非常消极   2. 消极   3.中立   4.积极   5. 非常积极

6. 总体来说，你对中国产品的感受是 :
      1.非常消极   2. 消极   3.中立   4.积极   5. 非常积极

7.你使用过多少种美国的产品？
      1. 没用过   2. 用过很少   3. 用过一些   4. 用过许多   5. 用过大量

8.你使用过多少种中国的产品？
      1. 没用过   2. 用过很少   3. 用过一些   4. 用过许多   5. 用过大量

9.你使用过多少种美国品牌的笔记本电脑？
      1. 没用过   2. 用过很少   3. 用过一些   4. 用过许多   5. 用过大量

10.你使用过多少种中国品牌的笔记本电脑？
      1. 没用过   2. 用过很少   3. 用过一些   4. 用过许多   5. 用过大量

11.你使用美国的产品的频率是：
      1. 从不用   2. 很少用   3. 有时用   4.经常用   5. 总是用

12.你使用中国的产品的频率是
      1. 从不用   2. 很少用   3. 有时用   4.经常用   5. 总是用

13.你使用美国品牌的笔记本电脑的频率是

      1. 从不用   2. 很少用   3. 有时用   4.经常用   5. 总是用

14. 你使用中国品牌的笔记本电脑的频率是

　　1. 从不用　2. 很少用　3. 有时用　4.经常用　5. 总是用

15. 如果我购买一个美国产品我会觉得不舒服。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

16. 无论何时，我都会避免购买美国产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

17. 无论何时，我都更喜欢美国制造的产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

18. 我不喜欢拥有美国产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

19. 如果我购买一个中国产品我会感觉不舒服。
　.
　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

20. 无论何时，我都会避免购买中国产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

21. 无论何时，我都更喜欢购买中国制造的产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

22. 我不喜欢拥有中国的产品。

　　1. 强烈不同意　2. 不同意　3. 中立　4. 同意　5. 强烈同意

23. 我如果购买一个美国品牌的笔记本电脑我将会感到不舒服。

1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

24. 无论何时，我都会避免购买一个美国品牌的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

25. 无论何时，我更喜欢购买美国制造的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

26. 我不喜欢拥有美国品牌的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

27. 如果购买一个中国品牌的笔记本电脑我会感到不舒服。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

28. 无论何时，我都会避免购买中国品牌的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

29. 无论何时，我都会更喜欢购买中国制造的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

30. 我不喜欢拥有中国品牌的笔记本电脑。

　　　1. 强烈不同意 2. 不同意 3. 中立 4. 同意 5. 强烈同意

31. 你的年龄：_____

32. 你的性别：1.女性 2. 男性

33. 你的教育背景：
    1.高中肄业　2.高中　3.大专　4.副学士
    5.本科　　　6.研究生肄业　　7.研究生或相等学历
    8.博士，法律或相等学历

Appendix B: Letter of IRB Approval

USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

11/13/2013

Yuze Gao Mass Communication 4214 Monticello Gardens Pl, Apt 301A Tampa, FL 33613

RE: **Exempt Certification**

IRB#: Pro00015045

Title: Chinese Consumers' Evaluation of Domestic and Foreign Products: The Roles of Country of Origin and Product Usage Experience

Study Approval Period: 11/13/2013 to 11/13/2018

Dear Mr. Gao:

On 11/13/2013, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets USF requirements and Federal Exemption criteria as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This approval includes a waiver of documentation of informed consent.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF IRB policies and procedures. Please note that changes to this protocol may disqualify it from exempt status. Please note that you are responsible for notifying the IRB prior to implementing any changes to the currently approved protocol.

The Institutional Review Board will maintain your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter or for three years after a Final Progress Report is received,

whichever is longer. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond five years, you will need to submit a new application at least 60 days prior to the end of your exemption approval period.

Should you complete this study prior to the end of the five-year period, you must submit a request to close the study.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board