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**Effects of Country – of - Origin on Customer’s Buying Intention: A case
study of the Vietnamese market**

Master’s Thesis in
International Business

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ABSTRACT

Due to globalization, customers are now dealing with a variety of choices of goods and services and in such situations, the country of origin (COO) has become a useful tool which supports consumers in making wise buying decisions. Previous studies have also shown a consensus on the significant relevance between the country image and consumers purchase intention. However, due to several existing limitations and recommendations for further studies on the subject, it is relevant to understand how consumers in emerging economies perceiving the COO image as well as to which extent their perception of the country image influence purchase intention in more details. The present paper examines the perception of Vietnamese consumers towards the COO as well as their consumer ethnocentrism level, to understand the effect of those two factors on consumer purchase intention, which in turn, giving a better insight for enterprises into the role of the COO cue and helping them in building an efficient strategic plan for their business operation in Vietnam. Results are based on the analysis of quantitative data collected from 143 Vietnamese respondents focusing on food and beverages products imported from three countries: Thailand, Japan, and the USA. Findings suggest that country of origin has a statistical connection with buying intention for foreign products. However, demographic factors found no relevance to the country of origin, and though ethnocentrism exists amongst Vietnamese consumers, it just influences consumers' purchase intention to some extent.

KEYWORDS: Country of Origin Effects, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Consumers' Purchase Intention, Food and Beverage industry, Vietnamese market.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to introduce the topic of the research. First, the research background is presented by underlining research gaps. The second part is followed by the research question and objectives of this study. Then, key concepts are defined according to the literature. Finally, it is the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Background of the study

Globalization has created our today world. Its dramatic increase has broken down barriers to international trade, which in turn, offering firms an easier access to the advanced technologies, capital, and markets as well as strengthen the global presence of them. Similarly, the increased globalization also offers consumers opportunities to experience a huge variety of brands, both domestic and foreign ones. In such situations, product cues such as origin image, price, etc.; have been used extensively for consumers' product evaluation process and then their purchase decisions (Aziz et al., 2014). There is a consensus in the literature that consumers' shopping experience can be affected significantly by the origin of products (Wall and Heslop, 1986; Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Cumberland et al., 2010; Bandyopadhyay et al, 2014). Consumers tend to form their own stereotype for the country where products are from, which stimulate their perception of locally-made and foreign-made brands (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2014). The context of the country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism have called the attention of researchers in the academic field for many years. Country of origin, as an extrinsic cue, highlights the importance of country image put on customers' perception of the products. And consumer ethnocentrism described in case consumers show a bias towards domestic-made products without reasons. Hence, this study aims to investigate these two concepts and explore their impacts on consumers' purchase intention.

The Country-of-origin refers to an area or territory that is responsible for creating and manufacturing a product or service and identified by the term "made in" (Nagashima,

1970). Aaker (1996) mentioned that the usage of the COO labels has been started in ancient Greece. At that time, it was common to stamp products with labels that indicate the country-of-origin. Nowadays, COO labels are officially required in many countries (e.g. European countries or the US). Country-of-origin has become a useful tool which enables companies to differentiate their products or services from competitor's offerings due to an original image of the product that it creates in the mind of customers (Gjoka, 2011).

This COO phenomenon seems to be more obvious in the context of emerging markets where foreign brands especially brands originate from Western receive more favorable than their local competitors. Some markets even show a negative attitude towards local products of all kinds since they are perceived as low quality. In Vietnam, there is a term namely 'sinh ngoai' which normally used to describe consumers' preference for foreign products. Thus, this paper focuses on two concepts (COO image and consumer ethnocentrism) in Vietnamese market - a new emerging market in Southeast Asia. In addition, it is undeniable that there is in need of more studies with various backgrounds (e.g. different cultures, level of economic development, etc.) being conducted. This limitation is supported by the fact that only very few studies about COO have been conducted in Southeast Asia, especially in Vietnam – one of the most attractive markets to be explored by foreign enterprises in recent years. An interesting research of Nguyen et al., (2008) that investigate consumer ethnocentrism and country image for products made in Vietnam, indicating the positive correlation among these two concepts. Yet, the academic paper aims at both constructs still very scarce.

Another gap is the lack of researches related to low - involvement products compared to high-involvement products. However, COO also plays an important role in low involvement products, especially in the food and beverage industry where customers tend to connect different brands to the country where the products stem from (Roth and Romeo, 1992). Therefore, it is necessary to study deeper the role of COO concept on customer's purchasing behavior towards the products that they buy on a daily basis. Moreover, in term of the market for food and beverage products, Vietnam can be a very attractive destination

which has seen a rapid growth in consumer demand for not only domestic but also foreign products. According to the data of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the annual rate for food and beverage consumption is estimated to 15% of GDP and Vietnam is predicted to be one of three top Asian nations reaching the fastest growth rate by the year of 2020 (VOV, 2018). Indeed, since opening to international trade, in the last few years, Vietnam has welcomed numerous foreign brands investing in the country. Also, the increase in the middle class of Vietnam has also made the country a market that is truly worth investing. Besides the physical operation of the international food and beverage brands, it is common to see food and beverages are sold via carry-on sellers who buy products overseas, then bring into Vietnam via carry-on luggage to resell them and gain great profit from this retail sale. On the other hand, local brands are in their attempts to maintain their share in the market which overshadowed by foreign competitors. Hence, it is necessary to understand the differences in the attitudes of Vietnamese consumers between domestic and foreign brands, which may be affected by COO image and consumer ethnocentrism.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives

The purpose of the thesis is to describe and measure the effects of country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism on Vietnamese customers' buying behavior of food and beverages. In order to do so, it will be essential to evaluate consumer's perception about the country of origin as well as analyze the way COO used by customers for their purchase intention. Furthermore, the social factor - ethnocentrism will be studied in relation to COO and consumer's buying intention. The aim of this analysis is not only to evaluate the effect of country of origin on customer's purchase intention but also to increase the importance of social factors which may to some extent affect customer's behavior.

Based on the issues mentioned above, this study focuses on the question:

“How does the country-of-origin influence consumers’ purchase intention for foreign products?”

In order to provide a concrete direction for the research project, research objectives need to be set. These objectives will support the researcher to clearly answer the research question. Moreover, these objectives can also assist readers to easily understand the subject of the study. Then, the objectives of this analysis can be divided into the following *theoretical objectives*:

- To review the existing literature related to COO concepts and to analyze its influence on customers' buying behavior
- To explore and analyze ethnocentrism effect and to what extent it affects customers' buying intention
- To develop a theoretical framework for evaluating the effects of COO and consumer ethnocentrism on customer's buying behavior

And *empirical objectives*:

- To examine the roles of consumer demographic in determining the level of the country of origin in Vietnam
- To examine the influence of COO on purchase intention
- To examine the influence of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention

1.3 Key Concepts of the research

This part offers a clear overview of the key concepts of the study, namely (i) Country of Origin (ii) Ethnocentrism.

Country of origin

As the project is primarily concentrating on developing a theoretical framework for understanding the COO effects, the concept of country of origin and its related concepts must be discussed thoroughly. Generally, country of origin can be understood as the place where the products manufactured, and it is identified by the label "made in". Customers can use this COO information for their purchase decision and it also may act as a cue for consumers to evaluate product quality (Parkvithee and Miranda, 2012.). Cai et al., (2004) in their study mention COO as an important tool not only for customers but also for global producers and marketers. Specifically, it might assist international marketers to affect customer's valuation of the product brand. COO also has been proven to have varied levels of effects on different types of products (Nagashima, 1990, 1977; Roth and Romeo, 1992). For example, US customers considered automobile or pharmaceutical products originate from foreign countries to be good compared to local products, while they perceived imported technological products negatively (Nagashima, 1977).

According to Laroche et al., (2005), the COO information is provided to customers through different ways from various sources (e.g. education, travel, social media) and processing the COO information is a process that requires customers keep up-to-date continuously in order to make wise purchasing decisions. In literature, the COO information can be processed in different ways based on different models. For example, the Halo approach suggests that when consumers have no knowledge about the product quality of a certain country, they still have their own idea about that country's products or services and use it for product evaluation process (Han, 1989). On the contrary, following summary construct model, the image of a country is accumulated from the previous buying experiences of

customers (Han, 1989). Therefore, in this approach, COO has a direct impact on consumers' attitude to the brand.

Ethnocentrism

Shimp and Sharma (1987: 280) have defined ethnocentrism in their study as "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing locally-made products instead of foreign-made products". This is one of the most important psychographic elements which have an effect on the perception of customers on COO (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1997; Bruning, 1997; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2000). The more customers pay attention to ethnocentrism, the higher the consideration of consumers to COO (Samiee et al., 2005). More specifically, Bannister and Saunders (1978) indicate that generally, customers tend to be more favored to their own country's products than foreign products. However, in some countries, especially developing countries, foreign products receive customers' positive responses compared to local products due to the belief of customers about a good quality of the products originating from foreign countries. The solutions for foreign companies to compete in international markets where customers have a strong feeling of ethnocentrism are suggested by some researchers. For example, to encourage customers to purchase foreign products, the price for imported goods should be lower than local ones (Watson & Wright, 2000). In another instance, foreign companies can associate with domestic companies to localize their brand image (Han & Terpstra, 1988).

1.4 Dissertation Structure

The structure of this study is presented as follow:

The first chapter of the research paper will be the introduction part, which describes the background of the study as well as the research question and objectives of the study. Moreover, the structure of the study is presented in addition to the key concepts of the dissertation.

The second chapter analyzes the existing theories related to the COO concept and its construction. Firstly, COO definitions and previous researches about COO is shortly reviewed. Next, the theory regarding dimensions and conceptualization approaches of the country of origin is discussed, followed by the processing of COO information. The chapter ends describing the effects of the country of origin and consumer buying intention, followed by the conceptualization of consumers' demographics.

The third chapter starts discussing the concept of consumer ethnocentrism and theories concerning the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism, COO effects, and consumers' purchase intention for foreign products. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is presented at the end of this chapter

Chapter Four focuses on describing the business environment in the context of Vietnam as well as the Vietnamese consumption behavior and Chapter Five is dedicated to the methodology utilized in this paper. It will start with the methodological approaches, followed by the process of selecting product category and countries of interest in the study. Moreover, the data collection technique and the sample will be discussed in detail, followed by research method applied. The chapter ends with the procedures to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

The next chapter is the most important part of the thesis. The data will be analyzed, and the evaluation will be given based on the analysis. Moreover, the theoretical framework that was built will be associated with the actual findings.

The final part of the paper will include a summary of the findings in the previous chapter, followed by the implications and the suggestions for future research within this field of research.

2. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

2.1. The Country of Origin (COO) definition

For more than a hundred years, the concept of country of origin has been used and become one of the most favorite concepts of scientists in their research works for the social sciences. In a paper from 1995, the authors addressed a comparison of attitudes of residents in different countries about the same label (Badri et al., 1995). Similarly, another study of Nagashima (1970) mentions a significant difference in perceptions of Japanese and American towards products produced in foreign countries. The COO concept (or "made in" label) was initially used by producers for the purpose of telling the customers the origin of their products. This concept is especially important for producers who have their products distributed in various countries (Cai et al. 2004) and considered as an identification strategy which has a significant influence on customer decision making (Piron, 2000). In particular, the COO concept concerns the country's image in the perception of the consumers. Through consideration of this image, consumers identify which products they would like to buy.

COO concept was defined in different ways from study to study. Specifically, these definitions can be considered to be different or the same and are interchangeable depending on the subject matter and researcher. For example, according to Nagashima (1970: 68), "made in" label could be "the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country" and the assessment normally based on, for example, notable products, national characteristics and/or culture, history and politics.

A further contribution to the literature was made by Bilkey and Nes (1982: 90), they defined the term COO concept as "Consumers' general perceptions about the quality of products made in a given country".

In the meantime, Roth and Romeo (1992) have criticized the views of the researchers as Bilkey and Nes (1982) or Han (1989) concerning the country of origin definition. They developed research to study this concept and according to their paper, a definition for the country of origin term should be more detailed 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” (Roth & Romeo, 1992: 478).

In addition, Papadopoulos (1993) argued that the country of origin of products may involve "multiple places" as the fact that a product may be manufactured in one place but has its brand origin in another. Finally, Liefeld (2004: 86), in his paper, gave a simple and concrete definition for the term country of origin as “the place in the world where a product is manufactured is the country of origin”.

Though there are various ways of expression of the concept of country of origin, these definitions or any other definition will be determined and adopted based on the aim of each research. In this project, the term country of origin refers to the area or territory that is responsible for creating and manufacturing a product or service, which is generally home country of the producers of the product and the beliefs and impressions the consumers towards the product coming from their beliefs and impressions towards this place. As a result, the country image and the country of origin will be similar and interchangeable in the study.

2.2. Understanding the concept

The label "made in", which represents the origin of the product, serves as an information cue or in other words, an extrinsic cue given to the consumer. Similar to other product extrinsic cues (e.g. brand name, price), the country image is a part of the total image of the product (Eroglu and Machleit, 1989). Previous studies have indicated that typically, consumers have a tendency to regard products that are produced in a particular country with

a consistent attitude, either positive or negative (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Cai et al. 2004). Keller et al., (2011) found that the nature and degree of the country of origin impact for different products can vary based on consumer prior knowledge or post-purchase experiences with the products as well as the demographic characteristics of respondents or the number of cues that are available for consumers.

Research has shown that the COO image serves as a "halo" or "summary" effect (Han, 1989). In detail, one considers the country image as a halo for product assessment and the other views it as a summary of perception. The difference between Halo and Summary constructs then lies within the familiarity of the customers to the product category that they are going to buy. In particular, the halo construct does not require customers the prior knowledge about the product since they can use directly country image to detect the product quality, while the summary construct requires consumers previous experiences with the similar product type from the same country and the belief that the product that they want to buy has the same quality with this product kind due to their shared origin (Han, 1989.).

Moreover, due to internationalization, there is a boom in global sourcing meaning that firms now can source their goods or product beyond their country and consequently, more "hybrid" goods generated together with different concepts of origin such as the brand origin, country of design (COD) and country of manufacture (COM) (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2014). Thus, it appears to make the situation more confused and complicated for both consumers and researchers in using and evaluating the COO concept. However, according to previous studies of AlRajhi (2008) and Futurebrand (2015), the country of origin concept now has been considered as a driver which creates the most significant influence on the consumers buying decision after "quality" compared to others such as price or style. The reasons behind this result are that firstly, today, consumers are able to freely access information as well as contribute and share their own knowledge of all aspects of products, brands, and enterprises. Also, a variety of socio-economic scandals concerning, for instance, poor working conditions in sweatshops or environmental pollution of several

well-known brands have raised desire among customers to have more knowledge about the products they bought including the company profile, the place of production, etc., (Futurebrand, 2015). As a result, "made in" label has become more and more important and brought greater impact on consumers. In other words, where and how a product is produced play a vital role in consumers' buying decision because it implies main considerations (e.g. quality, safety, social and environmental standards) which stimulating the consumers' buying behavior. In detail, analyzing "made in" phrase, it can be said that "Made" represents the intangible manufacturing facet of products such as techniques involved, legal certification as well as safety ethics and standards, whereas "In" indicates the provenance of products (e.g. place of production or source of ingredients) and it is defined as tangible facet. Thus, according to the authors, "made in" label contributes to delivering crucial information as well as associating both intangible and tangible elements of products to consumers, which in turn, affects their preference towards these products (Futurebrand, 2015.) In the food sector, the role of "made in" is even more important. If the label provides wrong information about the provenance of food products, it will mislead consumers and even cause serious consequences when products do not ensure quality standards. For this reason, it is clear that the origin label matters more now since it represents the quality and even more.

Consequently, the origin label is considered as an asset that needs to be efficiently explored by companies to achieve a competitive advantage. In particular, the growing competition in the market has made pressure for companies to make a wise decision for more efficient investment. Thus, the COO-related issues are the ones that need to be taken into consideration carefully by companies to leverage opportunities that the label can bring to them. For instance, in the domestic market, the origin brings local companies opportunities to call consumers' attention towards their products, especially consumers with a high level of patriotism. On the other hand, for foreign companies operating in the domestic market, the country of origin offers them chances to create differentiation to compete more effectively amongst a variety of competitors.

2.3. Conceptualization approaches to the country of origin

The COO concept has been developed in a variety of theories: begin simple but become more complex over the years with multiple dimensions and various approaches to conceptualization. According to Martin and Eroglu (1993), to measure accurately the COO effect, it is necessary to understand clearly the COO construct, in particular, their conceptualization approaches.

2.3.1. Product Characteristic Approach

One of the most famous scales has been used widely for COO effect studies until now is the twenty-item scale - a multidimensional scale of Nagashima (1970). This way, the dimensions used to measure the COO effect referred basically to the characteristics of the product itself rather than the country ones. In other words, though the main purpose is measuring the country effect, Nagashima's approach actually concerns more the products of a specific country (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2008). Following Nagashima's (1970) approach, many researchers have adopted the similar conceptualizations in evaluating the COO effect. The main limitation of Nagashima's (1970) approach is that obviously, the perceptions of the consumer toward different product categories of a particular country would not be the same, and thus if they used to measure COO effect, it may result in the different images for the same country and more importantly, different effects for the same COO.

Laroche et al (2005) examine the approach in a broader view. They emphasized the importance of the multi-dimensionality of the country of origin (e.g. cognitive, affective and conative dimensions) when evaluating the construct. According to the authors, some of the previous researches on COO image focused on each one of the dimension separately rather than testing the complete model. For instance, several studies tested the affective/conative measures rather than cognitive ones. Also, they called the attention to the

necessity of following the other approach in assessing the COO effects. In particular, most of the country image studies assessed through product-only methods, consequently, cognitive factors became the key elements in product evaluations. Instead, by measuring the country images through country characteristics, the potentially vital role of the effect of some certain countries towards product evaluations has been stressed.

2.3.2. Country Characteristic Approach

The idea that researchers may use another approach in measuring the effect of the country image, was firstly presented by (Papadopoulos et al. 1988). As follows, a new scale was developed for assessing the country image effect. Through a literature review, the authors found related dimensions for the concept of country of origin, which were not considered in the previous literature. After that, it was successfully tested in various studies (Li, Fu, and Murray, 1997; Laroche et al., 2005; Carter, Jr., 2009).

Specifically, the new scale aims to test three aspects of country-specific items: country beliefs, people affect and desired interactions (Papadopoulos, et al., 1988). In term of country belief dimension, the scale pays attention to the opinion of consumers for the development of the country that they are interested in term of technological, educational, and economic ones. The next dimension is people affect including three items that encourage the consumers' affective responses to the people of the target country who are characterized as "likeliness, trustworthiness, and hardworking". Finally, in the dimension of the desired interaction, the scale represents the way that respondents think about the development in the close economic relationship between their own country and the country of interest.

Baker and Ballington (2002) argued that the product though has no particular connection with the COO, there may still be an influence either positive or negative towards the country and people of this country. Papadopoulos et al. (1989) found tentative evidence

about a correlation between two constructs: product images and country images. However, they also indicated that the direction of causality amongst these two factors seems not clear as had been considered in the past. Specifically, it is undeniable that gaining a good country reputation is a very desirable aim for each country due to the main advantage of a positive country reputation is the favorable perception about the products come from that country. And for that, a large amount of money spent by governments to develop strategies for their country reputation. For example, Japan succeeds in building an excellent image for both the products and the country itself over the world and this good reputation is a big advantage that makes Japanese product more competitive in the global market. On the other hand, some countries, instead of spending their resource to raise their country images, putting their effort into creating a positive image for some particular products because they believe that this might also result in a positive perception for other products of the country. For instance, Germany has a good reputation for high-quality cars (e.g. well-known brands (e.g. BMW) which in turn affects positively consumer evaluations towards all automobile products of Germany. Under such circumstances, it can be argued that country images might affect, and/or be affected by product images.

Cai et al. (2004) review suggested the need for increased tourism promotion and media activities, which according to groups of authors, will lead to a better access of customers to the country of origin of the product and the product itself. As a result, bringing a greater acceptance towards the product and the relevant country image. In addition, research findings also revealed that the diffusion of products beyond national borders carries a significant positive effect on consumer awareness of foreign products.

Recently, customers have been increasingly seeking means which enable them to simplify the information exchange in their buying decision, as products and the market become more and more complex (Diamantopoulos et al., 2011). In particular, customers take advantage of some specific product cues such as the country image to support their decision process. And according to Haque et al. (2015), even though there is a growth in the presence of additional product cues, COO information still carries significant influence on customers'

product evaluations. In addition, previous studies showed a relationship between customers' positive attitudes towards a country's products and the level of their awareness of that country (Roth and Romeo, 1992; Pappu et al. 2007). In other words, the fit between a product and its country may affect evaluations of customers for the product.

In general, the scale chosen to evaluate the COO concept in this study will be related to the country related and multi-dimensional measures.

2.4. Effects of Country of Origin on consumers' purchase intention

It is necessary to understand the impact of both extrinsic and intrinsic cues on customer perception. And among all, which is acknowledged as one of the most important cues influencing consumers' purchase intention, is country of origin.

Similar to price, product brand, or any other extrinsic cues, the country image has no direct effect on product performance, but it can be managed by firms without changing products. The impact of COO as a cue in the product evaluation process of customers was probably first highlighted in the study of Schooler (1965). The author, when performing the research about COO effect, found that customers can give different evaluations towards products based on their' country of origin. Then, more than thirty years later, Bandyopadhyay (2001) published a research evaluating in more details the effect of COO. He argued that customers, who have a favorable attitude towards a certain country, usually hold a positive attitude towards products originating from that country as well. In detail, they may have a positive attitude regarding brand names, quality and value of these products. Further researches on the impact of country of origin, some authors such as Paswan and Sharma (2004) suggested that positive perceptions of customers towards a country make favorable contributions to brands from that country. Brands, for this reason, might be influenced by the country image they originate from. The familiarity of consumers with a country's product is also a vital factor contributing to their evaluation of other branded products of that country (Pappu et al., 2007). Furthermore, the loyalty of clients for brands from a

country may be affected by whether consumers are satisfied with that country's products. In another research, Baker and Ballington (2002) indicated that during the buying decision process, country of origin is an element considered by not only individuals but also organizations. Consequently, COO or "made in" label has been more and more important for producers as it is an important feature which makes products from certain countries more attractive in the eyes of the clients.

It can be said that country of origin is a cue for the product evaluation process of consumers or in other words, a tool which enables companies to differentiate their products or services from competitor's offerings. Over the past few decades, a wide variety of journals has been developed addressing the importance of COO labels on product evaluations of customers (Chao, 2005; Gjoka, 2011; Saunders, 2010). For example, Webb and Po (2000) argued the reasons COO play a vital role in consumers' evaluation of different products. The first reason might be because of the tendency of simplifying information process which leads customers to use country of origin as a quality indicator. Also, due to the globalization, customers nowadays have been facing a variety type of goods and products and within similar products, a greater use of country of origin supports customers in their buying decision. Moreover, international companies with their global marketing strategy have contributed to increasing the customer's knowledge of foreign products and services which makes the COO concept more familiar with customers.

Typically, consumers have a tendency to depend on COO image when they have little or almost no prior knowledge about the products. Baker and Ballington (2002) found that a large proportion of consumers were interested into considering COO cue before their buying decision. He reported in his research the data of the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Science and Resources. Follow this, after surveying both firms and consumers in May 1999, they found that almost 80% of the surveyed customers made use of country image before making purchases. Many researchers suggested that after having knowledge about the country of origin, the perception of consumers towards products or services can change, either positively or negatively. For instance, according to Phau and Suntornond

(2006), Afghan rugs has become more and more competitive in the world market and they got high valuations from global consumers. This reason for this outcome was from not only the product itself but also the favorable origin image of Afghanistan for handicraft products.

Studies on the relationship between country of origin and consumer's behavior have shown that generally, consumers utilize COO information to infer the product quality made in a certain country because they cannot find out its true quality prior to buying and experience the product (Keller et al, 2008). Furthermore, Han (2001) argued that consumers may detect the quality of a product type from a particular country through their perceived quality of other product types from that region. And, the stereotype of consumers about product quality based on their knowledge about the country of origin (either positive or negative) will lead to a positive or negative attitude towards the products, which in turn, affect the buying intention of consumers.

Some authors such as Bandyopadhyay (2001) claimed that researchers should be cautious in generalizing the results of COO impact across all kinds of products because the COO effect might be not similar for different product categories. Moreover, according to Amine et al. (2005), researchers may have difficulties to measure accurately the COO effect as the impact of country of origin is not absolute for a given area and territory. The reason may also come from the fact that in some cases, country of origin involves more than one country. For example, in the case of hybrid products (e.g. cars), the engine could be manufactured in one place while other parts in another place (Chao, 2001).

Ahmed et al. (2004) studies suggested that the existence of the country of origin, which in turn affects customers' evaluation of low-involvement products. In the same perspective, Ozretic-Dosen et al.'s (2007) reported a seemingly positive relationship between country of origin and low-involvement product evaluations. Their study observed that country of origin provides young Croatian consumer greater choices as it attaches them to a wide variety of products in the consumption process of low-involvement food products such as

chocolate. Indeed, the importance of COO towards the low-involvement product seems undeniable. Ahmed & d'Astous (1999) conducted a cross-national survey in two countries (China and Canada) which indicated that when evaluating the low-involvement products, customers pay more attention to COO factor than brand names. Nevertheless, in another research, Phau and Prendergast (2000) reported that in case a product comes from a country with a negative COO image, a well-known brand name can compensate for that negative cue. For that, it can be argued that studies conducted on different products or market types might bring about different results. In general, it is hard to generalize findings due to several conflicts amongst existing researches, so a need for further researches is obvious (Haque et al. 2015).

Based on the literature review concerning the influence of the COO on consumers' buying intention and following the country-based approach, it is hypothesized that:

H1: The more positively consumer perceive the COO, the higher their purchase intention

2.5. Demographic Characteristics of Country of Origin

The influence of demographic characteristics on the use of COO when evaluating the products has been widely found in the literature (Dickerson, 1987; Samiee et al., 2005). The literature on COO has indicated that besides the role in determining customers' needs, consumer demographics, like age, gender, income, and occupation play a vital role in the perceptions of consumers about branded products as well as their country image (Wang and Heitmeyer, 2006).

2.5.1. Age

The first demographic factor that influences consumers' perceptions about COO and product assessment is customers' age. Previous literature has reported that there is a difference in the extent of consumers' COO perception for different age groups. In other words, consumers' age has an influence on the use of country of origin as cues for product evaluation. Koschate-Fischer et al. (2012) state that young consumers show more favorably towards the products coming from developing countries (e.g. East Asian countries like Vietnam, Thailand, etc.) whereas old people are found to be generally more bias towards products from developed countries due to their belief in high-quality standards of those developed countries. In the same perspective, Beaudoin et al. (1998) in their study found that young managers in the fashion industry pay more attention to imported apparel than domestic products. This view can be explained by the fact that young people have a tendency to be more globally-minded compared to older people. They have more chances for exposure to different communities, which in turn, gives them more knowledge about those communities' goods as well as creates more positive attitudes towards those products. Furthermore, young consumers are also considered less ethnocentric than older people. Nevertheless, in several studies, old people have shown their positive preference towards foreign products (Bannister and Saunders, 1978). In short, the age factor in this study would be expected to relate to product evaluation and manufacturing country of products. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2a: Older people will be more negative in the way they perceive the country of origin than younger people.

2.5.2. Education

The second factor that affects consumers' perception about the COO and product evaluations is educational level. According to Koschate-Fischer et al. (2012), due to the

development of internet, social media, travel as well as higher education, people today are becoming more aware of the products available beyond their national border. Similar to consumer age, educational level is also confirmed to influence the consumers' COO perception. There is more support for the positive correlation between educational level and country image (Schooler, 1971; Wang, 1978). Studies including Badri et al. (1995) and Wang and Heitmeyer (2006) found that respondents with higher education level exhibit more favorable towards foreign as well as less consumer ethnocentrism. For example, Wang and Heitmeyer (2006) found that high educated Taiwanese consumers gave higher ratings to the US made apparel than locally-made products. However, Tongberg's (1972) study did not support this argument. Hence, it has been recommended that great attention is paid to the impact of educational level in consumer's COO perception. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2b: Consumers with higher education be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower education.

2.5.3. Income

Another demographic factor that has an influence on consumers' perception towards COO is income. Finding from the study Basu and Chau (1998) suggested the role of income in changing customers' demand for imported high-quality goods. Similarly, the results from Niss (1996) revealed that people with higher income, in general, tend to show high-level of acceptance towards foreign products compared to the ones with lower income. A survey of Kaynak and Kara (2001) in two CIS states supported that in general, lower-class consumers pay more attention to the physical features of a product (both intrinsic and extrinsic cues), whereas higher-class consumers place more importance on additional values of the products. Again, in this study, it is possible to assume that the consumers' income is relevant to their evaluations of the products as well as producers of these products. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2c: Consumers with higher income will be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower income.

2.5.4. Gender

The final cue that has an impact on customers' perception of products is gender. According to the study of Mittal and Tsiros (1995), females and males are different concerning their way of processing product choice. In the same perspective, Samiee et al., 2005 found that males and females have different considerations among the characteristics that they consider essential for evaluation products. For instance, women are more prone to be biased against nonverbal stimuli. Furthermore, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) suggest that females are more different in their ways of forming judgments than males.

Interestingly, the attempts in associating consumers' gender with the way they respond to COO cues of the researchers in the past often produced mixed results (Thakor and Pacheco, 1997). In particular, the findings have revealed that the responses of males and females may be different because of different countries, product categories or attributes being selected for the research. The authors also found that males require both brand name and COO cue to their product choice, whereas females are able to process them separately. In short, it could be argued that gender has a significant influence not only consumer perception but also their attitudes toward the products and services. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2d: Females are more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than males.

3. CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM

3.1. Consumer Ethnocentrism, Country of Origin and Consumers' Purchase Intention

It is clear that the purchase intention of consumers is not mainly related to a product's brand, its origin or its quality. Besides, psychographics elements such as consumer ethnocentrism might significantly affect the product evaluation process. Specifically, the attitudes of consumers concerning a certain product will result in the decision whether or not to buy this product. However, consumers' attitude depends on the feeling of them after a product evaluation and ethnocentrism refers to product evaluation. Consumer ethnocentrism was defined as, "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products" (Shimp and Sharma, 1987: 280). In general, consumer ethnocentrism concerning views of consumers in one country towards products and services from another country. More specifically, ethnocentrism represents consumers' biases towards locally produced products and against the foreign-made products. Although in some literature, consumer ethnocentrism is argued as part of COO studies, both concepts (COO and CE) are not similar (Sharma et al., 1995). While the country of origin related to the bias attitude of consumers for a given country, consumer ethnocentrism refers to the bias for domestic brands and the tendency of not buying foreign brands due to ethical reasoning.

According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), ethnocentric consumers consider buying imports as inappropriate and unpatriotic, which leads to job losses and in turn, negatively affect the domestic economy. For example, although domestic brand clothing may be perceived as of low quality compared to international brands, ethnocentric consumers in Vietnam would still choose to buy local products due to their belief that foreign product purchases would hurt domestic clothing industry. On the other hand, to non-ethnocentric consumers, the product's merit is somehow more important than its origin (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). As follows, foreign products tend to be consumed more by non-ethnocentric consumers. It is

especially right in developing countries where following the study of Papadopoulos and Heslop (2000), consumers in these countries have a tendency to rate their home products lower and then to acknowledge products from advanced countries as having premium goods. Thus, it can be said that consumers' choices within the ethnocentric view are based on the emotional and moral considerations, and product attributes such as quality, price, etc., in this case, seem less important.

There is a consensus in the literature that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant influence on consumers' perception towards foreign products compared to domestic products (Shankarmahesh, 2006, Cumberland et al., 2010; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2014). In particular, the studies with regard to consumer ethnocentrism have revealed that consumers have a tendency to evaluate products from their own countries more favorably than products from other countries. For instance, Darling and Kraft (1977) in their study stated that Finnish usually places domestic products in first place irrespective of the fact that the price is comparatively higher than goods from other countries. Similarly, in the case of low involvement products, according to Chrysochoidis et al., (2007), consumer ethnocentrism influences the belief and quality perceptions of imported food products evaluated and investigated such as beer, ham, and cheese. The main reasons that might result in the more preference of consumers to local products than foreign ones mentioned in the study of Balestrini et al. (2003). According to the authors, domestic products tend to get more favorite in nations where, for instance, foreign products threaten the growth of the domestic economy, consumers are not familiar with foreign brands, or consumers have a strong sense of national pride.

Since domestic and foreign-made types of products under consideration in this paper are available and competing in the Vietnamese market, consumer ethnocentrism is studied and included in the research analytical model.

Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis is made:

H3: Buying intention for imported branded food and beverages is negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism

3.2. Conceptual Framework

The literature review is composed of consumer ethnocentrism, the demographic factors, COO image, and purchase intention. The conceptual framework, which guides their following hypotheses, is proposed in Figure 1.

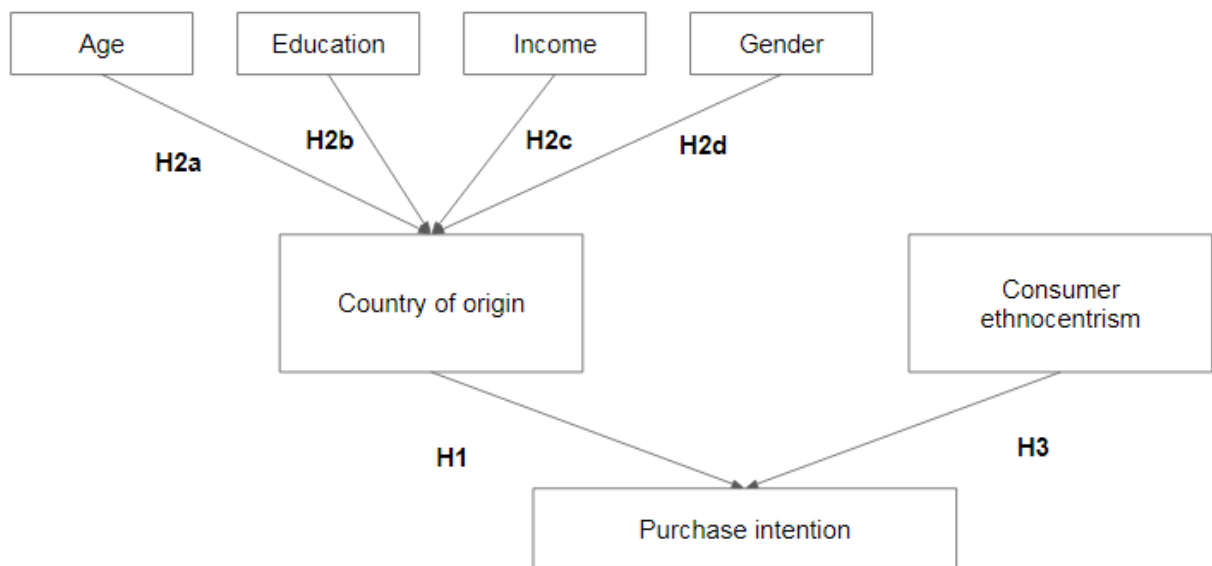


Figure 1 - Conceptual framework

H1: The more positively consumers perceive the COO, the higher their purchase intention

H2a: Older people will be more negative in the way they perceive the country of origin than younger people.

H2b: Consumers with higher education be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower education.

H2c: Consumers with higher income will be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower income.

H2d: Females are more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than males.

H3: Buying intention for foreign products is negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism

4. VIETNAMESE MARKET SUMMARY

4.1. Vietnam and Internationalization

Vietnam is an emerging economy in Southeast Asia, populated with nearly 93 million residents in 2018. Most of the economic activities taken place in two largest cosmopolitan cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. While Hanoi is the major political, cultural and social capital, Ho Chi Minh, which located in Southern Vietnam, is the biggest commercial center of the country. After decades in an attempt to fight against foreign invasion, first France and then America, Vietnam now is completely independent. Wars may end, but its consequences still exist. The new Vietnamese government had to face with various challenges and worked in its best efforts to recover the economy after the war as well as to strengthen its economic integration. The efforts were further promoted by the government through the launch of a new economic reform namely "Doi Moi" in 1986 in order to reset its economy and to create a socialist-oriented market economy (leading to a dramatic improvement in the country's economic performance and the standard of living). After Doi Moi, the government made a great effort to reinforce its foreign affairs policy. Follow which, the country is more open to foreign affairs relations stimulated by export orientation (Dutta, 1995).

According to Athukorala (2004), the degree of internationalization of the country has increased significantly since 1994 due to the normalization in relations with the United States. In particular, the American government canceled the trade embargo that it put on Vietnam and the result was a bilateral trade agreement made among two countries in 2001. In addition, in 1995, Vietnam officially became the membership in the Associations of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and three years after was the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). Consequently, a large amount of foreign invest flowed to the country to expand the economic opportunities.

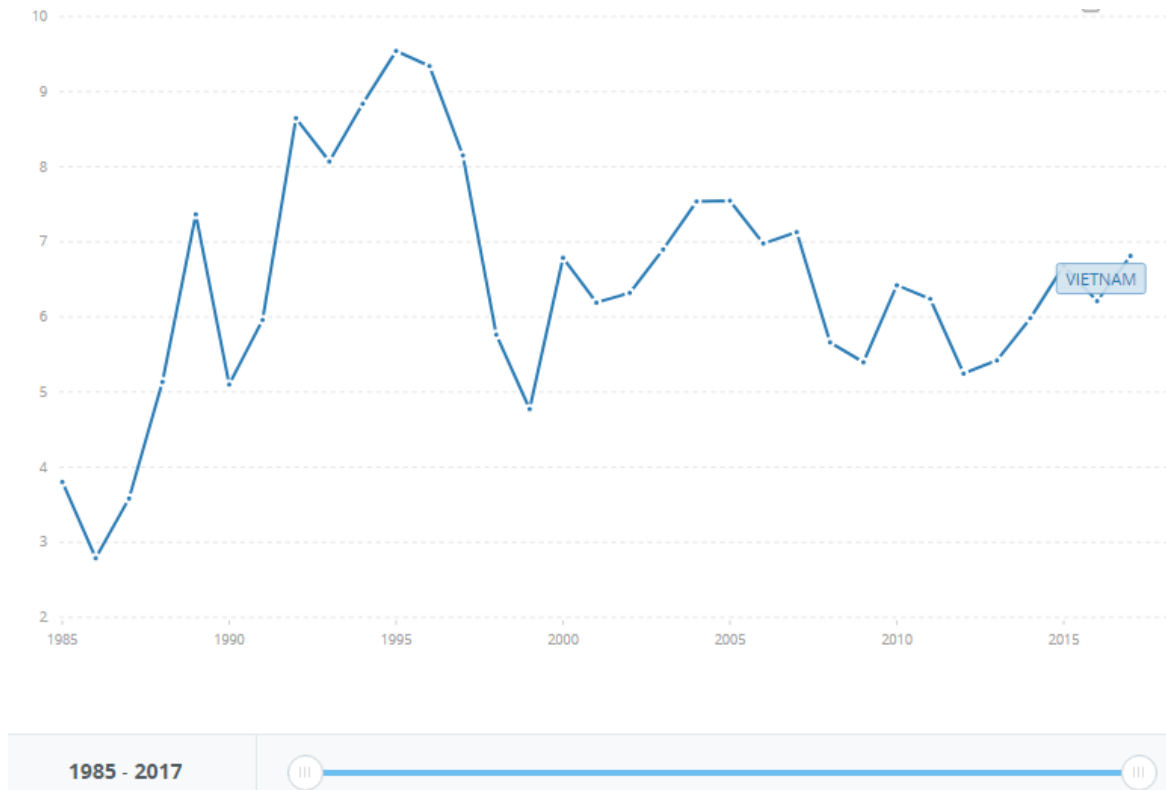


Figure 2 - Vietnam's GDP Growth (Annual %). *Source: The World Bank Data (2017)*

The development of the market economy with a focus on the private sector has become one of the most important factors contributing to Vietnam's dramatic economic growth. Starting as one of the poorest countries, Vietnam has successfully transformed to become a lower middle-income country. Following the data of World Bank (2017), Vietnam's GDP growth rate was over 8 percent per year within 10 years from 1990 to 2000 and has reached nearly 7% per year since then (Figure 2). The GDP growth rate of Vietnam in 2017 still remains 6.8% in spite of the downturn trend of the world economy. As a result, there is an increase in the number of Vietnamese middle class with the average income per month approximately 700 USD. Those persons are considered as the main force of consumption in society. By 2020, it is expected that it will be doubled in the number of Vietnam's middle class, and this growth rate is among the best by comparison to other Southeast Asian countries (ANT Consulting, 2017.).

In general, due to international trade openness together with the strategic location in Southeast Asia and the boom of the middle class, Vietnam has become an attractive destination for foreign brands, especially in the food industry.

4.2. The Consumption Behavior of Vietnamese Consumers

This paper focuses mainly on the context of Vietnamese consumption on the basis of strong economic growth and the increase in the middle class of Vietnam. For this reason, it is important to have a better insight into the Vietnamese consumption behavior in the globalization era.

The middle-class population has shown an active role in the new consumption culture of Vietnam. Consumers now have a variety of choices for food and beverages products, both domestic and foreign brands. Moreover, urban Vietnamese consumers have greater demand for food and beverages, from healthy to even fast foods, making the food and drinks segment more attractive for not only domestic investors but also foreign ones (VOV, 2018). According to the Food and Foodstuff Association of Ho Chi Minh city, customers are willing to pay more for their meals, estimated that the food and beverage consumption especially food and non-alcoholics accounted for 20.5% of the total expenditure of the modern household (British Business Group Vietnam, 2018). In addition, the values and behaviors of consumers in Vietnam have changed considerably in recent years. Nguyen and Smith (2012) have found the important influence of status orientation on consumers' buying intention for foreign-made products. Customers are becoming more interested in purchasing foreign brands, especially brands from Western countries. The reason for this is that consumers have a tendency to associate those foreign brands with symbolic meanings rather than the economic efficiency or functional utility of products (Pham and Richards, 2015).

Also, today, Vietnamese consumers are more aware of the importance of health. The term "health" covers not only about physical health but also represents food safety, nutrition,

etc., especially where there is an increase in the level of dirt food scandals (Nguyen et al., 2017). For example, food-related diseases as a result of eating unsafe food are attracting a lot of attention of Vietnamese consumers. Thus, customers are getting more knowledgeable about what is actually in the foods that they eat every day. They prefer more healthy and clean products. All of this might create favorable conditions for foreign and imported goods as they are normally considered as high-quality in consumers' mind (Kantar Worldpanel, 2017.). And although foreign food products are more expensive compared to local products, price now is no longer the central concern of consumers due to the increasing of middle-class consumers with higher average income. Instead of focusing primarily on the price factor, middle-class customers have turned their concerns into value orientation (Speece, 2002).

In general, country image and consumer ethnocentrism may play a vital role in the purchase intention of Vietnamese consumers. It is important to evaluate whether consumers place a great concern for the COO information when it comes to their buying intention or whether consumer ethnocentrism is related to consumer preference towards foreign products. Hence, this thesis will focus on assessing the importance of the aforementioned concepts in the context of the Vietnam consumption market.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Methodological Approaches

As mentioned before, the objective of this thesis is to analyze the effect of COO on food and beverage purchase intention of Vietnamese customers. Therefore, the research approach will be based on a deductive perspective. According to Saunders et al., (2003), a deductive approach refers to the developing of a hypothesis from theory, testing it by data. And if causal relationships among variables are identified by a case, it might be true in many other cases. A deductive approach will be the most suitable for this paper. In particular, the thesis will consider previous studies and then, explore the main concepts, the relationship among them as well as its effects on customers' buying behavior. Finally, both theoretical parts of the paper will be combined into a theoretical framework, which would contribute to support to find the answer to the research question.

According to Crowther and Lancaster (2008), in general, the quantitative (positivist) methodology is associated with the deductive approach. Since the study is based on a deductive perspective, the quantitative approach will be used in this study. Moreover, as the quantitative method focuses on quantifiable observations that result in statistical analysis, this research method is considered to be more appropriate to test hypotheses (Bryman, 2004). In other words, quantitative research is built for the purpose of demonstrating the existing of constant relationships among events as well as measuring the degree of the relationship between different hypotheses (Easterby-Smith et al. 2002). And the fact that the thesis aims at identifying factors that affecting Vietnamese consumers' purchase intention and this requires testing hypotheses and determining the relationships between various variables such as country of origin, consumer ethnocentrism, demographic characteristics, and consumers' buying intention, hence, the quantitative approach in this paper is important to assist and make it more suitable for evaluating the different concepts and scales which has been built based on previous literature.

5.2. Product and Foreign Country Selection

One of the most important decisions for any paper concerning COO impact is the process of selecting the products and the countries to be studied. First, the research focuses on food and beverage products because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it can be listed within the low-involvement categories, therefore, encourages COO perception and ethnocentric tendencies in the process of making buying decision of consumers. However, there is a lack of COO literature in this sector. Similarly, based on the previous analysis of the Vietnamese market, there has been an increase in demand for food and beverages in recent years in Vietnam, making the food and drinks segment more attractive. According to the Food and Foodstuff Association of Ho Chi Minh city, customers are willing to pay more for their meals, estimated that the food consumption accounted for 20.5% of the total expenditure of the modern household (British Business Group Vietnam, 2018). Also, today, an increase in the number of dirt food scandals leads to a large number of cases of food-related diseases (Nguyen et al., 2017). This raises consumers' awareness of food safety and food quality. They now prefer more healthy and clean products. Thus, foreign brands which are generally considered to be high-quality might have a great impact on the consumers' buying intention. In addition, the appearance of good reputation domestic providers besides famous foreign ones makes the market more competitive. Thus, if consumer ethnocentrism is available and its impact is great in Vietnam, it may be a significant challenge for foreign companies. Under such circumstances, the research of COO information and consumer ethnocentrism in the food industry in Vietnam is essential because the outcomes of the paper may provide for foreign enterprises, especially enterprises in the food industry a better insight in order to make a right decision for the market.

Furthermore, the selection of countries for this paper, in particular, three countries (Thailand, Japan, and the United States), is based on the following criteria. First, the research shows its wide geographical distribution by selecting the different countries in different continents. In addition, these chosen countries are already trading with Vietnam and are among the leading import countries in the food and beverage sector. For instance, a

wide range of consumer goods, especially food and beverage products are offered by famous Japanese and Thai chain of convenience stores in the Vietnamese market like Aeon, 7 Eleven, TokyoLife, Big C, and Metro, mostly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city. For American products, famous producers such as Mondelez, Starbuck, Abbott nutrition, etc., have entered the market for a long time; and supermarkets also distributed various agriculture food products like meat and fruit from the US. Consequently, Vietnamese consumers have at least basic knowledge about the products as well as the countries mentioned.

Also, the countries include the less-developed to highly developed countries as well as the countries with similar or dissimilar culture, however, from Vietnamese consumers' perspective, they are all perceived as high COO images. Thus, contributing to support the testing of the country of origin impact here. In detail, Vietnamese people regard the image of Japan with high quality and worth paying. Similarly, though the image of Thailand though consumers are not associated with high-quality as Japanese products, Vietnamese consumers still consider it to be trustable (VOV, 2016). Thus, with a lower price and similar or even better quality, it attracts the attention of Vietnamese people. According to the president of the Hanoi Supermarket Association, Vietnamese consumers are now looking for the "made in Thailand" label when buying consumer goods, especially in the food sector (VOV, 2016). In term of the American image, although there is no concrete information on the Vietnamese perception about American products, based on the previous review on Vietnamese consumption behavior and attitudes with foreign products, especially products from Western countries as well as an increasing interest of people in Vietnam into the American lifestyle in recent years, it is assumed that Vietnamese people prefer brands coming from the US.

5.3. Questionnaire Development

5.3.1. Survey Construct Development

In this paper, the scales selected to measure the variables of interest developed from previous studies. There are three primary constructs to test the proposed relationships among hypotheses: country of origin image, consumer ethnocentrism, and purchase intention. It was proposed that country of origin image varies with demographic characteristics (age, gender, level of education, and income level) (H2) and positively correlates with purchase intention for foreign-made products (H1). On the other hand, consumer ethnocentrism was hypothesized to have a negative correlation with purchase intention (H3).

5.3.1.1 Country of origin

The thesis used a 9-item to measure the respondent's country image toward three countries: Thailand, Japan, and the United States to examine the interrelationship between the country of origin and other variables of interest (purchase intention and demographic characteristics). As mentioned in the previous part, these three countries were chosen because they show a strong country of origin image from the perspective of Vietnamese consumers. This country of origin scale was created from previous research of Papadopoulos et al., (1988) and well applied by many researchers (Li et al., 1997; Laroche et al., 2005 and Carter, Jr., 2009). More importantly, the scale was chosen because the country of origin perception through this scale will be evaluated based on both country-specific as well as multi-dimensional measures, which other scales seem to be failed in the purpose of reaching this criterion (Carter, Jr., 2009). The scale aims to test three dimensions of country-specific items: country beliefs, people affect and desired interactions (See Appendix A). More specifically, in term of country belief dimension, the scale pays attention to the opinion of consumers for the development of the country that they are

interested in term of technological, educational, and economic ones. The next dimension is people affect including three items that encourage the consumers' affective responses to the people of the target country who are characterized as kind, truthfulness, and hardworking. Finally, in the dimension of the desired interaction, the scale represents the way that respondents think about the development in the close economic relationship between their own country and the country of interest. Moreover, the scale will be tested on the 5-point Likert scale including Strongly disagree (1) and Strongly agree (5), and the respondents asked to choose the option that best defines the extent to which they agree with the statements.

5.3.1.2 Consumer ethnocentrism

In this thesis, a four-item, 5-point, Likert-type scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree was applied with reference to Vietnam to test the relationship between two variables: consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention with foreign product. The items are listed in Appendix B. The scaled was first built in the study of Shimp and Sharma (1987) namely "Buy American-made product". It has been validated by several researchers (Olsen et al., 1993; Al-Rajhi, 2008). The construct focuses on the consumers' tendency towards their willingness to buy domestic products. In other words, the scale emphasizes the efforts that people attempt to buy local products and that their extra efforts will show a stronger degree of ethnocentrism. More importantly, the fact the scale just has 4 items, which is more suitable than other scales like CETSCALE with 17 items. It is no obvious that a long questionnaire is not proper in Vietnam. People are not willing to spend too much time completing a survey.

5.3.1.3 Purchase Intention

The four-item scale created from the previous research of Baker and Churchill (1977) was applied in this study to measure the buying intention for foreign products refers to the Vietnam market and the food and beverage sector. The items in the construct emphasize on

the respondents' attitudes with reference to the purchase of a foreign product. Similar to the COO and consumer ethnocentrism scales, imported foods and beverages were selected from three countries: Thailand, Japan, the United States. The scale used the 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the option that illustrates their degree of agreement with items and it was described in more details in Appendix C.

5.3.2. The Study Population

According to Hussey and Hussey (1997), the study population is defined as a group of people which is under consideration. In this paper, the respondents are Vietnamese consumers, both female and male and the age range will be characterized into 4 groups: 18 - 29, 30 -45, 46 - 54 and over 54 years old who lives in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city. People in these two biggest cities in Vietnam are believed to be willing to spend more money on imported food products and have some familiarity with imported brands from those target countries, thus, they are more appropriate to be selected as target respondents for the research. In term of the age range, the main reason why choosing the age range from 18 years old and over is, in Vietnam, people at the age of 18 are going to start their independence life, thus, it is assumed that people from this age will have their own income and consequently, involving more in the buying process. However, the fact that consumers at the age over 45 are scarcely using the internet, therefore, it is very challenging for the researcher to access this group ages. This is one of the limitations predicted for the paper.

5.3.2.1 Sample selection

There are two types of sampling technique used referred to the quantitative approach (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). They are probability sampling and non -probability sampling. As follows, while the probability sampling gives every object in the population an equal chance to be selected, the non-probability sampling is applied when the target population is

chosen on the basis of availability as it seems very difficult to cover all groups of the population in the sampling frame.

In this thesis, the non-probability sampling is selected because the population of interest is extremely large and therefore, the researcher used convenience sampling instead of choosing from the entire population. In detail, Facebook was used as a tool to select samples for the survey. The invitations to participate in a survey via web-based platform were sent to members of several Facebook groups and pages during an eight-day period. The selected participants are Vietnamese people residing in two regions: Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. After eight days, there were 143 responses recorded. Given the structure of the area in term of demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, education level), it can be said that the sample size of this paper is comparable, and hence, it can be described as a good proxy for further research.

5.3.2.2 Survey process

The draft survey was sent out to do the pre-test with two Vietnamese Ph.D. students in Helsinki, Finland. After that, the author discussed with them in person and they gave some useful advice for the author in order to adjust items in the research to create a more concrete and understandable version of the survey. The questionnaire was first constructed in English, then translated into Vietnamese due to the respondents of interest are the Vietnamese. It will help respondents easy to understand and therefore, they can get the right message that the author attempts to delivery to them. Finally, back-translation to English was applied in order to ensure the survey validity.

The survey was sent to the respondents via Facebook. The shared invitation comprised the objective of the study and a survey link. Moreover, to enhance the reliability of the results, the participants were asked for the willingness to be part of the survey. Next, respondents would answer the questions on the Google survey site. The author also designed the layout of the survey in order to make it more attracting in respondents' eyes. After eight days from

October 15th, 2018 until October 23rd, 2018, the Google survey databased recorded the responses from 143 participants.

The survey was divided into four sections. As follows:

Part I: Questions about the demographics of the target respondents: gender, age, income, and education level

Part II: Questions about general attitude towards three countries of interest

Part III: Questions to evaluate the degree of consumer ethnocentrism

Part IV: Questions about consumers' buying intention towards imported food and beverages of each country.

Two types of question format used which include multiple choices (section I) and 5-point Likert scales (section II, III, IV). Appendix D will illustrate the survey layout in more details.

5.4 Method of Data Analysis

This part aims at explaining the statistical methods that are used to analyze the data. IBM SPSS Statistics was utilized to describe the data analysis. The process is as follows. First, the author coded the data collected from the questionnaires into SPSS Statistics. Each item was assigned with a code name. Next, factor analysis (KMO value) and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) processed in order to ensure the adequacy and reliability of the constructed instrument. After the process of checking the variables completed, the statistical analyses were executed. Specifically, the multiple regression was measured to test the positive expected effect of country of origin image on the purchase intention (H1) as well as the negatively expected effect of consumer ethnocentrism on the purchase

intention for foreign products (H3). Moreover, the one-way ANOVA was used to measure means and statistical significance for the purpose of the hypothesis H2.

In this research, it is worth noting the level of reliability of the measurement instrument. In particular, to test the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire, the reliability analysis was processed using Cronbach's Alpha method. The value of Cronbach's alpha varies from 0 to 1 and the higher the value the greater the internal consistency (more reliable) among the items of the scale. According to Nunnally (1979), the Cronbach's alpha value should be over 0.7 to ensure the reliability of the scale items. Since the Cronbach's alpha values of all the scales in this paper were over 0.7, the constructed instrument seems to be reliable for use. A detailed analysis of the Alpha value of all scales has been illustrated in Chapter VI.

5.4.1. Mean

The mean is the sum of all values within a variable in the series divided by the sample size. It is a kind of measure of central tendency and although there are many measures of central tendency in statistical analysis, the mean is probably the most common and most frequently applied measure (David and Sutton, 2004). In this paper, the mean statistic was used to summarize the important features of categories on the measurement scales and to enable data to be compared. Specifically, it was applied to illustrate some of the demographic factors of the respondents as the first step in order to identify how they affect the respondents' perception about the image of three countries of interest (Thailand, Japan, and the United States).

5.4.2. Frequencies and Percentages

The frequency distribution is an overview of all possible values for an item in the measurement scale, along with a summary of the times those values occur and percentage of observation of each value (David and Sutton, 2004). In this paper, frequencies, and percentages were applied with the socioeconomic characteristics of the target respondents, such as age, level of education, income, and gender, in order to identify how different groups of respondents vary in their perception towards different countries of origin.

5.4.3. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression is a most used statistical tool to test the linear relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. More specifically, the model used to evaluate three aspects of relationships among variables. First, the regression analysis examines whether there is a link between variables by applying a test of independence. The second aspect is to determine the strong degree of the relationships among variables. Last but not least, multiple regression contributes to finding a mathematical expression that allows researchers to figure out the score of one dependent variable from their understanding about the score of the other independent variables. In this study, multiple regression used to test the two hypotheses (H1 and H3). As follows, the consumers' purchase intention is a dependent variable, country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism are treated as independent variables. The multiple regression model can be written as:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_nX_n$$

Where:

Y = the dependent variable

a = regression constant

b₁, b₂, ..., b_n= the regression coefficients (Beta value) of the independent variables.

X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n = the independent variables

5.4.4. One-way ANOVA

The one-way ANOVA is a statistical analysis, which aims to compare and explore the evidence of any difference between means of two or more unrelated groups. In this paper, the tool was selected to detect the relationship between country of origin and the demographic factors (age, gender, education level, and income). In other words, the data were subjected to one-way ANOVA test to examine the differences in perception of respondents concerning the country image with reference to demographic variables. Before conducting the test, the collected data need to meet some assumptions. First, the dependent variable - country of origin should be measured on a continuous scale. As mentioned above, the 9-item scale was conducted on a Likert Scale, so it was considered as an ordinal variable, which might fail the assumption of the test. However, since the test compares the mean values of groups of variables and the mean of the country of origin calculated using the SPSS Statistics, consequently, is treated as a continuous variable. Moreover, the populations should follow the normal distribution. Third, if the results of ANOVA were significant ($p < 0.05$), a post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni method was conducted to explore which group with a certain characteristic varies from the other groups of the population. The results from the ANOVA test will be described in the next chapter when testing the hypothesis H2.

5.5. Validity and Reliability of the study

According to Saunders et al., (2007), validity and reliability issues determine a research quality. In this paper, both primary and secondary data used to enhance the overall quality of the research. As follows, it was able to acquire different viewpoints with reference to the

topic of the paper, getting a variety of sources and therefore, providing a more reliable context of analysis.

Validity is defined by Malhotra and Birks (2007: 159) as "the extent to which a measurement represents characteristics that exist in the phenomenon under investigation". Validity can be determined through a pilot test, which helps to figure out and eliminate the problems before distributing a questionnaire. Validity also can be enhanced by using well-established scales from previous research. In this study, the survey used the scales that have been well presented and tested in previous research. For example, the COO construct is examined using a 9-item scale developed by Papadopoulos et al. (1988) which applying country-specific as well as multi-dimensional. Another example, purchase intention is measured using a 4-item scale developed by Baker and Churchill (1977). Moreover, the survey was pilot-tested to ensure the validity of the content. In addition, the questionnaire was altered when translated to Vietnamese in order to assess a variety of respondents in Vietnam due to the significant differences among two languages. In this case, the content was carefully worded and translated to ensure a clear understanding of the questions in the questionnaire by target respondents. Hence, the results obtained from Vietnamese consumers are assumed to be as more accurate and reliable as possible.

Following Malhotra & Birks (2007: 313), reliability is the degree of consistency of a scale. A test will be reliable when it brings the same repeated answers in the same conditions. During the processing of the survey, to reduce the error of the participant, respondents who took part in the survey were asked for their willingness to be part of the research, so only participants were ready and motivated to share their ideas answered the questionnaire. The participants also were informed about their anonymity regarding their answer in the survey since they were not required to mention their name or other related contacts, it is expected that this will help to avoid participants' bias. Also, to reduce the participants' error, the measurement scales selected considering on the basis of not only their relevance with the construct in the literature session but also the length of the survey. A long questionnaire

would not be proper since people are not willing to spend too much time completing a survey.

On the other hand, besides all possible attempts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of the paper, it is also necessary to keep in mind some limitations while applying the findings. First, this paper has been conducted by using non-probability sampling, specifically the sampling area is restricted to two cities (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh), which means the findings of this paper might not be generalizable to other cities due to the fact that Vietnam is relatively large in term of size and populations, so the results may vary among different regions. Also, this study performs research on the food and beverage sector only. Further studies about the impact of the country image in other areas should be conducted. Another limitation is that it is quite a challenge to reach target participants at the age over 65. Specifically, none of the answers was recorded by the respondents from the age of 65. This can be explained as this age range is not active in using the internet.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of statistical analyses of the data based on the data collected from the questionnaires. The chapter is structured in four sections. In the beginning, the sample characteristics have been discussed giving an overview on respondents' main characteristics, followed by assessing and analyzing the scales used in the paper. Finally, the hypothesis will be tested, and the results of the study are discussed.

6.1. Sample Characteristics

For the purpose of the paper, which is to test the attitude of consumers towards foreign food and beverages in Vietnam, there are two criteria which respondents need to meet in order to release meaningful results. First, the participants must be Vietnamese citizens from the age of 18. They also need to reside in two cities Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh city. Second, the respondents must be aware of imported food brands, especially from Thailand, Japan, and the United States.

The sample size (N) of the research which is recorded in the database that fulfilling the aforementioned criteria is 143 responses, with 28.7% of them are male (41) and about two-thirds (71.3%) are female (102). The respondents are primarily aged from 18 to 29 (about half - 54,5%, 78 responses) whereas others are between ages 30 to 45 (53 responses, 37.1%) and 45 to 54 (12 responses, 8.4%). None of the participants was recorded belong to the age group of 55 and over. The number of respondents in each age group ensures the participation of different age groups of populations to some extent. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the absence of the age group from over 55 is a limitation of this study. It might reduce the significance of the findings. The reason for the absence of the participation of this age group is attributed to the tendency of internet usage of this age group. In Vietnam, the internet is primarily used by young people (Vietnam NetCitizens

Report, 2011), therefore, it was impossible to reach old people when it was conducted through the internet.

In terms of education level, the findings show that the participants have a high level of education. Of 143 respondents, 91 people (63.6%) are having a university/college education and 50 people (35%) are having the postgraduate education. Two respondents (1.4%) is recorded to have a high school education and none of them is below high school. Although the thesis tries to analyze the difference in the level of education, the results of the survey have shown an unequal distribution among levels of education of the respondents, with a significant skewness towards higher educated people. Consequently, it might distort the significance of the correlation between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism. As for income level, 32.9 % of the respondents have a middle-class level of income (15 million VND or more per month) while 11.2% of respondents (16 responses) have a very low income of less than 5 million VND (\$214). Specifically, 44 people (30.8%) earn between 5 million and 10 million VND (\$428) on a monthly basis. In addition, 25.2% of the participants (32 responses) have their monthly income between 10 million to 15 million VND (\$641). A proportion of 10.5% (15 responses) is recorded to have had their income between VND 15 million and 20 million (\$857). The rest of the respondents (32 responses, 22.4%) have their income of VND 20 million and more. As aforementioned in the previous chapter concerning Vietnamese consumer behavior, the middle class has shown a significant increase in society, the recorded number of higher income people in this paper might explain for this trend.

In general, the sample consists of relatively young Vietnamese female consumers with a high level of education and different income levels. For details, the summary of the characteristics of the sample with reference to demographic factors (age, gender, level of education, and income) is shown in Table 1: Demographic profile overview.

Table 1 - Demographic profile overview (N=143)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	98	68.5
	Male	45	31.5
Age	18 - 29	78	54.5
	30 - 45	53	37.1
	45 - 54	12	8.4
	Over 54	0	0
Education level	Below high school	0	0
	High school	2	1.4
	University/College	91	63.6
	Postgraduate	50	35.0
Income (VND)	Below 5 million	16	11.2
	From 5 to 10 million	44	30.8
	From 10 to 15 million	36	25.2
	From 15 to 20 million	15	10.5
	Over 20 million	32	22.4

6.2. Scales Analysis

6.2.1. Country of Origin Image

For studying the impact of country of origin image on consumer purchase intention, a 9-item scale given by Papadopoulos et al., (1988) has been used by the author in order to keep in view other variables such as purchase intention, demographics. The responses for each item in the scale have been recorded on a 5-point scale from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree.

The factor analysis for COO construct of all three countries (Thailand, Japan, the USA) was applied to all 9 items for three aspects: country beliefs, people affect and desired interaction. The results have shown KMO values of .778, .873, .860 for three countries Thailand, Japan, the USA respectively, which are considered as "Middling" and acceptable for factor analysis. The items consisted of the analysis have a factor loading of more than 0.50 and thus, all items can be retained for further analysis. However, the loading of items is not consistent in the three countries, leading to a test for reliability using Cronbach's alpha.

The country of origin scale which includes 9 items, has a very high Cronbach's alpha reliability which is .850 for Thailand, .932 for Japan, .919 for the USA (Table 2). Deleting any of the items of the scale would not enhance the scale reliability. In addition, the corrected item-total correlation has checked and none of the items has shown the value less than 0.3; thus, confirming again the scale reliability.

Also, the descriptive statistics, which indicate the mean values concerning the opinion of respondents towards three target countries (Thailand, Japan, and the United States), are shown in Table 2. As shown in the table, Japan with the highest mean ($\mu = 4.11$), indicating the highest country of origin image.

Table 2 - Country of Origin Scale analysis

	No of items	Thailand			Japan			USA		
		Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
COO scale	9	3.50	.67	.850	4.11	.94	.934	3.92	.87	.919

Table 3 - Demonstrates the descriptive analysis of the Country of Origin, including the Mean and Standard Deviation of each item in the Scale towards three countries.

	Thailand		Japan		USA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I feel country X is economically developed	3.25	1.06	4.35	1.26	4.38	1.28
I feel country X has a high level of education	3.05	.94	4.23	1.23	3.89	1.22
I feel country X is technologically advanced	3.08	1.01	4.29	1.28	4.40	1.28
People from country X are trustworthy	3.35	.89	3.92	1.14	3.28	.89
People from country X are hardworking	3.51	.92	4.08	1.12	3.31	1.02

People from country X are likable	3.69	1.06	3.60	1.03	3.40	1.03
We should have closer ties with country X	3.91	1.05	4.15	1.09	4.20	1.07
Country X is an ideal country	3.78	1.00	4.10	1.15	4.13	1.09
Would welcome more investment from country X	3.86	1.01	4.24	1.09	4.14	1.14

Regarding the country image of Thailand, the mean scores have ranged from 3.05 to 3.91 on a 5-point Likert scale. It has also been observed that the sixth item "We should have closer ties with Thailand" has recorded the highest mean score of 3.91 while the second item "I feel Thailand has a high level of education" got the minimum score of 3.03. Next, in term of Japan, the mean scores have varied from 3.60 to 4.35. The statement "I feel Japan is economically developed" received the highest rating among respondents, which the value of 4.35. Meanwhile, the statement "People from Japan are likable" has recorded the lowest value of 3.60. Finally, the results of the USA have shown that the mean values have ranged from 3.28 to 4.40. The statement "I feel country the USA is technologically advanced" got the highest score of 4.40 while the statement "People from the USA are trustworthy" got the lowest rating, with the score of 3.28.

6.2.2. Consumer Ethnocentrism

A 4-item scale given by Shimp and Sharma (1987) has been used in order to measure the consumer ethnocentrism variable. Similar to the country image, each item in the scale have been tested on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 - Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree.

The factor analysis for consumer ethnocentrism was applied and the KMO value is .687. The result is described as "mediocre" and comparatively low for factor analysis. Three out of four items analyzed have a factor loading of more than 0.50 except for one item

"Foreign-made products are generally of higher quality than Vietnamese products", thus, the factor analysis reduced four item of consumer ethnocentrism to three items. However, in this study considering that the scale has only four items, it would still be retained to test with Cronbach's alpha value.

For the reliability analysis, the ethnocentrism scale has a medium Cronbach's alpha value of .703, which is acceptable. If we deleted the item "Foreign-made products are generally of higher quality than Vietnamese products", the reliability would be improved to .742 (Table 4). The corrected item-total correlation has checked and none of the items has shown the value less than 0.3 except for this item of .291. As a result, this item has been deleted.

Table 4 - Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale analysis

	No of items			
		Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
Consumer ethnocentrism scale	3	3.72	.83	.742

Table 5 - Means and Standard Deviations of Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale

	Mean	SD
I personally favor buying Vietnamese foods and beverages rather than foreign ones.	3.97	.95
Generally, I prefer purchasing Vietnamese products (any products, not just foods and beverage) over foreign	3.17	1.08

products.		
It is important that I purchase Vietnamese products so that jobs are not lost to foreign countries.	4.00	1.03

6.2.3. Purchase Intention

The factor analysis for purchase intention scale was applied and the KMO values were .790, .822, .819 for three countries Thailand, Japan, the USA respectively, which are considered as "Middling" and acceptable for factor analysis. The items consisted of the analysis have a factor loading of more than 0.50 and thus, all items can be retained for further analysis. Also, the loading of items is consistent in the three countries.

For reliability analysis, the purchase intention scale which includes 4 items, has a very high Cronbach's alpha reliability which is .810 for Thailand, .886 for Japan, .823 for the USA (Table 6). Deleting any of the items of the scale would not enhance the scale reliability. In addition, the corrected item-total correlation has checked and none of the items has shown the value less than 0.3; thus, confirming again the scale reliability.

In addition, the descriptive statistics, which indicate the mean values concerning the respondents' intention towards three countries of interest, are shown in Table 6. As shown in the table, Japan with the highest mean ($\mu = 3.72$), indicating the highest purchase intention.

Table 6 - Purchase Intention Scale Analysis

	No of items	Thailand			Japan			USA		
		Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)	Mean	SD	Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
Purchase Intention scale	4	3.00	.65	.810	3.72	.72	.886	3.63	.71	.823

Table 7 - Demonstrates the descriptive analysis of Consumers' Buying Intention, including the Mean and Standard Deviation of each item in the scale towards three countries.

	Thailand		Japan		USA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Would you like to try food and beverage products of country X	3.15	.83	3.78	.80	3.77	.78
Would you like to buy food and beverage products of country X	2.92	.82	3.84	.68	3.78	.69
Would you actively seek out food and beverage products of country X in a store in order to purchase it	2.83	.81	3.45	1.00	3.36	.95
I would recommend food and beverage products of country X	3.10	.79	3.83	.82	3.64	.82

6.3 Hypothesis Testing

6.3.1. The Country of Origin and Demographics

Tables below (Table 8, 9, 10, and 11) have shown the division of the total variation in the perceptions of Vietnamese consumers towards the country of origin image of the three countries of interest (Thailand, Japan, and the USA) of food and beverage products into two sections; the first section due to the differences among the groups of participants with reference to demographic characteristics (Between Group Variation) and the second one caused by the differences among the members of each group regarding these demographic factors and others.

The hypothesis H2 is tested using the one-way ANOVA test. The results are shown below in terms of each demographic variable.

Age:

It is hypothesized that **“Older people will be more negative in the way they perceive the country of origin than younger people.”** (H2a)

Table 8 shows that the group of respondents from 30 to 45 received a higher mean score than the other groups. However, the significance values for ANOVA test are .432, .280, and .408, which are greater than 0.05 in all three cases. Thus, the results indicate that the perceptions of respondents about the country image of three countries (Thailand, Japan, and the USA) are not significantly connected to the respondents' age. In other words, there is not a statistically significant difference between different age groups, hence, the hypothesis H2a is not supported in all three cases.

The significance of the findings may be reduced by the fact that there is an unequal distribution of the respondents' age groups. Most of the respondents are young people

belong two age groups: 18-29 and 30-45. There are only 12 respondents from 46 to 54 and none of the respondents is 66 years old or more.

Table 8 - Country of Origin in term of Age (ANOVA)

Country of origin (COO)	Age			Total	F	Sig.
	18-29 (N=78)	30 - 45 (N=53)	45 - 54 (N=12)			
Thailand	3.48	3.57	3.31	3.50	.84	.432
Japan	4.01	4.27	4.02	4.11	1.28	.280
USA	3.84	4.04	3.83	3.92	.90	.408

Education level:

It is hypothesized that **“Consumers with higher education be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower education.”** (H2b)

Table 9 indicates that the significance values for ANOVA test are .770, .564, and .935, which are greater than 0.05 in all three cases. There is not a statistically significant difference, meaning that the country image of three countries is not significantly connected to the education level of respondents. Thus, the hypothesis H2b is not supported in all three cases.

Table 9 - Country of Origin in term of Education level (ANOVA)

Country of origin (COO)	Education level			Total	F	Sig.
	High school (N=2)	University/college (N=91)	Postgraduate (N=50)			
Thailand	3.12	3.51	3.49	3.50	.26	.770

Japan	4.00	4.17	3.99	4.11	.58	.564
USA	3.78	3.93	3.89	3.92	.07	.935

Income:

It is hypothesized that " **Consumers with higher income will be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower income.**" (H2c)

According to Table 10, the significance values for ANOVA test are .206, .266, and .262, which are greater than 0.05 in all three cases. Thus, there is not a statistically significant difference between the mean country of origin scores of different income levels of respondents. In sum, the hypothesis H2c is not supported in all three cases.

Table 10 - Country of Origin in term of Income (ANOVA)

Country of origin (COO)	Education level					Total	F	Sig.
	Less than 5 million (N=16)	5 - 10 million (N=44)	10 - 15 million (N=36)	15 - 20 million (N=15)	More than 20 million (N=32)			
Thailand	3.35	3.59	3.63	3.21	3.45	3.50	1.50	.206
Japan	4.22	4.19	4.12	3.59	4.16	4.11	1.32	.266
USA	3.82	4.04	3.99	3.47	3.92	3.92	1.329	.262

Gender:

It is hypothesized that "**Females are more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than males.**" (H2d).

Table 11 shows that the mean score of the country of origin perceptions among male respondent is higher than among their female counterparts in the case of Japan and the

USA. On the other hand, women show more preferences towards the country image of Thailand than man. However, the significance values for ANOVA test are .621, .462, and .201, which are greater than 0.05 in all three cases. Thus, the results lead to the point that the perceptions of respondents about the country image of three countries (Thailand, Japan, and the USA) are not significantly connected to the respondents' gender. Then, the hypothesis H2d is not supported in all three cases.

Table 11 - Country of Origin in term of Gender (ANOVA)

Country of origin (COO)	Gender		Total	F	Sig.
	Female (N = 98)	Male (N = 45)			
Thailand	3.48	3.54	3.50	.25	.621
Japan	4.07	4.19	4.11	.54	.462
USA	3.85	4.05	3.92	1.65	.201

In general, all selected demographic characteristics were found not to have a significant effect on Vietnamese respondents' perception of the country image of three target countries. Although the mean scores for each group of each characteristic are varied, the degrees of differences were not substantial against each other. The findings seem to conflict with previous literature that highlighting the importance of socioeconomic factors on the consumers' perception for COO image (Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Sharma et al., 1995; Basu and Chau, 1998). This can be caused by a lack of equal distribution between the groups of these factors, as aforementioned. The relatively large proportion for young female respondents with high education level could be the main factor that could not produce meaningful findings. In term of income, it was unable to explain why the level of significance was reported not to be as expected in describing the country of origin.

6.3.2. The Effects of Country of Origin and Consumer Ethnocentrism on the Consumers' Buying Intention

According to Table 12, the linear regression analysis used to describe the impact of the consumers' perceptions about the country of origin of products and their ethnocentrism on their purchase intention has explained 10.1%, 60.8%, and 58.8% of the total variability of the consumers' purchase intention in the case of Thailand, Japan, and the USA respectively. The highest adjusted R square is recorded in the case of Japan, whereas the lowest is in the case of Thailand and it is statistically significant in all three of the countries (F is significant at < 0.001).

The consumers' perceptions about the country of origin of food and beverages have a statistically significant effect on their buying intention of food and beverages in all three countries (t-values for the country of origin of all case are significant against 0.001 level of significance), and its regression coefficient is positive. In detail, the regression coefficient values (β) concerning the country of origin are reported of .324, .776, and .753 in the case of Thailand, Japan, and the USA respectively. This highlights that the hypothesis H1 "The more positively consumers perceive the COO, the higher their purchase intention" is supported in the cases of Thailand, Japan, and the USA. However, when it comes to the consumer ethnocentrism, the results from table 12 has indicated that the consumers' ethnocentrism has a statistically significant effect on their buying intention only in the cases of the USA (t is significant at < 0.05). As expected, this effect is negative in the case of the USA ($\beta = -.102$). In the case of Thailand and Japan, ethnocentrism did not have a connection to purchase intention. Thus, the hypothesis H3 "Buying intention for foreign products is negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism" is supported only in the case of the USA.

In general, when it comes to the country of origin, the results in all three cases are consistent with previous studies which have highlighted the importance of the impact of consumers' perceptions about the country of origin of products on their buying intention of

these products (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2000; Cai et al. 2004). On the other hand, concerning consumer ethnocentrism, it seems to not have a significant influence on Vietnamese purchase intention, especially towards imported food and beverages.

Table 12 - The effect of COO and Ethnocentrism on the Consumers' Purchase Intention
(Linear regression)

	Thailand			Japan			USA		
	β value	Std. Coff. β	Sig.	β value	Std. Coff. β	Sig.	β value	Std. Coff. β	Sig.
Country of origin	.315	.324	.000	.594	.776	.000	.612	.753	.000
Ethnocentrism	-.057	-.072	.366	-.058	-.068	.202	-.102	-.120	.028
	Adjusted R2= .101 F= 8.975 (P= .000)			Adjusted R2= .608 F= 111.12 (P= .000)			Adjusted R2= .588 F= 102.39 (P= .000)		

6.4. Discussion and analysis

In this part, further discussion will be provided with reference to the study's hypotheses as well as its findings.

In detail, demographic factors were found not to have a statistically significant influence on consumers' perceptions about the country of origin. In other words, the factors: age, gender, education level, and income did not have a considerable connection to the country of origin. These findings were not in line with the previous studies which arguing that the perception of consumers about the COO depends on their demographics (Lawrence et al. 1992; Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Wall and Heslop, 1986); however, they were found to be consistent with some other literature. For example, Ahmed et al. (2004) and Vida and Damjan (2001) found that males and females did not vary in their perception of the COO. Similarly,

Schooler (1971) and Tongberg (1972) confirmed that there was no significant relationship between income and the country of origin perception.

It is not easy to explain why demographics did not connect with the level of customers' perception about the COO in Vietnam. In detail, Vietnam used to have battles with two of the three target countries (Japan and the USA). However, the results were recorded for those two countries indicating that they got a very high rating among respondents. In fact, most of the participants in the research are young people aged 18-45 (91.6% in total). Besides, more than four decades after the last day of all the wars in Vietnam, most Vietnamese people are now too young to know about wars. In addition, as mentioned above in the literature part, Vietnam has become more globalized since the "Doi Moi" policy was adopted. Hence, Vietnamese people have more opportunities to access people, cultures, and information about the countries outside Vietnam. As a result, they tend to show a positive attitude towards foreign countries, especially Western countries. The scores recorded for the COO image of three countries explained this trend to some extent. Specifically, the mean scores in the case of Japan and the USA are relatively high compared to ones in the case of Thailand.

Also, one possible reason is that considering the theoretical approach, the demographic characteristics might not be a key component that affecting the country image in the context of Vietnam. Besides demographics, COO is also affected by social-psychological or emotional factors (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1988; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). However, in this paper, the author focused mainly on demographic elements to study COO and ignored other elements due to a lot of evidence of the significant influence of demographics on the varied level of the country of origin. Given the insignificant connection between demographics and COO image, it might be argued that there might be other factors that better illustrate COO in Vietnam than demographics. According to Nguyen and Smith, (2012), people in Vietnam have been more open to absorbing as well as adapting the new cultures to their traditional values. Hence, the social-psychological factors could more reasonable in explaining the country of origin.

One more thing should be mentioned in explaining the insignificant difference between the country of origin and demographic factors. That is the survey distribution. In fact, the samples were selected mainly in two cities (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh) and from a large group of people who are internationalized somewhat. In particular, living in urbanized cities, people are more keen on foreign products in the local market. Thus, they had at least basic knowledge about the products as well as the countries mentioned. Consequently, their perception of these countries might not be really varied as expected. Furthermore, the questionnaires were processed through a web-page platform, thus, they were not favored by respondents who do not actively use the internet. With 143 responses, more data should have been collected to enhance the research reliability.

Regarding the hypothesis H1, the results have revealed that the country image has a statistically significant impact on consumer purchase intention. The findings are in line with the previous implication of scientists such as Papadopoulos and Heslop, (2000); Cai et al. (2004); Bandyopadhyay et al. (2014). In particular, Japan got the highest country image and at the same time, the highest purchase intention amongst respondents, while Thailand was the country with the lowest score related to the country of origin and similarly, purchase intention recorded for food products from this country was lowest compared to the other countries.

Finally, ethnocentrism was found to significantly influence on respondents' purchase intention only in the case of the USA and as expected, it was negative. Thus, the hypothesis that "Buying intention for foreign products is negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism" (H3) is supported in only one case, that of the USA, in this study. This finding implicates that the consumer ethnocentrism is affected the Vietnamese consumers' behavior to some extent and it is consistent with the research in the past which mentioned that the bias of consumers towards local products will lead to a low buying intention for foreign products (Nagashima, 1977; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004). However, it conflicts with findings from the previous studies of Nguyen et al. (2008) in the Vietnam

context. They indicated that consumers tend to buy products based on product attributes such as quality, trend, price, etc. and the fact that whether or not the products are locally-made or foreign-made do not play a vital role in consumers' buying decision. This statement was consistent with the findings in the cases of Thailand and Japan. The differences in the results among the three cases may be attributed to the complex nature of elements affecting the purchase decision of Vietnamese consumers with regard to foreign products in general and food products in particular.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the main findings of the study will be outlined and associated with the study's empirical objectives. Moreover, the paper will present the implications as well as suggestions for further research.

7.1 Findings and Objectives of the thesis

The main objectives of this paper are to examine the effects of the country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention for foreign products of consumers and how demographics affect consumers' perceptions of the country image.

Specifically, the first objective of this paper was to discover the connection between demographics and the COO perceptions of consumers. In this research, it is believed that there is no significant connection between demographics (age, gender, income, and education level) and level of consumers' perception towards the country image. The reasons for this result might be attributed to the complex nature of Vietnamese society due to the high degree of internationalization and more importantly, the disproportionate distribution of the objects, which have been concretely explained in the previous chapter. Thus, the hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d were not supported in this study.

The second objective of this thesis was to discover the impacts of the country image on Vietnamese consumers' buying intention of food and beverages. The findings pointed out a significantly positive relationship between the consumers' perception level of the country of origin and consumers' purchase intention. Thus, the hypothesis H1 was supported in this paper.

Finally, regarding the third objective of the research, the regression analysis has revealed that as expected, the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism level and consumer

purchase intention is negative, however, it was statistically significant in only one case of the US. Thus, the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on consumer buying intention varied for different target countries and as a result, the hypothesis H3 was partially supported.

Table 13 - Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Findings
H1: The more positively consumers perceive the COO, the higher their purchase intention	Supported in all countries
H2a: Older people will be more negative in the way they perceive the country of origin than younger people.	Not supported in all countries
H2b: Consumers with higher education be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower education.	Not supported in all countries
H2c: Consumers with higher income will be more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than consumers with lower income.	Not supported in all countries
H2d: Females are more positive in the way they perceive the country of origin than males.	Not supported in all countries
H3: Buying intention for foreign products is negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism	Partially supported in the USA

7.2 Research Implications

Given a comparatively small size of the research, the findings just lay a foundation for more concrete further study rather than draw definite conclusions regarding the construct. Nevertheless, the following theoretical and managerial implications can still be given based on the findings.

7.2.1. Theoretical Implications

Firstly, the thesis has used the existing scales that were developed and well applied in various cultures; then adapted them to food and beverage sector in the Vietnamese context, which will contribute to assisting researchers in using these scales in similar contexts for further research. Specifically, in this paper, the scales were tested and proved to be reliable; hence, they may be applied in the Vietnamese setting for other sectors besides the food sector.

Secondly, even though many studies were done to examine the impacts of Country of Origin image and Consumer Ethnocentrism on consumers' purchase intention, mostly focusing on the context of developed countries. Schooler (1965) highlighted the importance of exploring the role of factors which affected consumer preference towards foreign products in order to help marketers to get insight into consumers' perception and to come up with marketing strategies for more effective sales. Moreover, the world nowadays has been increasingly flat, many emerging markets act as big players in Global Trade (e.g. China, Brazil, Southeast Asian countries etc.). Thus, it is necessary to study the country of origin and ethnocentrism from the viewpoint of emerging nations. Likewise, in Vietnam, very little research has been conducted to evaluate the impact of both the COO and ethnocentrism on consumers' purchase intention in the food industry, a field that has attracted significant attention and investments from international businesses. As a result,

this thesis will contribute to enriching the marketing literature, and considered as a good proxy for further research in the subject.

7.2.2. Managerial Implications

Firstly, the findings suggest that the consumers' perception level of the country of origin has a significant influence on their purchase intention for foreign products. This might be a good sign for policymakers of the international companies that have a plan to enter the Vietnamese potential retail market because they can take advantage of the country of origin as an information cue to stimulate consumers' purchase intention. It is even more important as foreign firms now have to face fierce competition with not only local producers but also other foreign firms coming from other countries. For this reason, international marketers should pay attention to the perception level of Vietnamese consumers towards their country image in order to have a good preparation for their operation here. For example, a positive country image should be included in the product promotional campaigns since this image will bring a positive effect on the market share of the company. Furthermore, as consumer ethnocentrism tendency is present in Vietnam and it was proven to have an influence on Vietnamese consumer purchase intention to some extent, international marketers should make sure that the marketing strategies of their company do not consist of the country-related sensitive factors. In other words, their promotional campaigns should not trigger consumers' patriotic and nationalistic views due to the fact that they might cause serious issues for the organization.

On the other hand, in this study, amongst three cases, ethnocentrism was found to influence consumers' buying intention for US-based products. Hence, local producers might only benefit from consumer ethnocentrism to some extent. In detail, local producers have been gradually losing market share to the foreign competitors in recent years; therefore, if local companies can take advantage of the presence of ethnocentrism amongst Vietnamese consumers to attract them to buy domestic products, it may help these Vietnamese

enterprises to regain their lost market share. Moreover, the campaigns which contribute to raising the awareness of Vietnamese consumers in using Vietnamese products such as “Vietnamese use made-in-Vietnam goods” campaign should be promoted by not only brands in food and beverage sectors but also other sectors to improve the domestic market.

7.3. Suggestions for further studies

The previous findings and implications call special attention to undertake further research on the subject. As follows,

Firstly, this paper has been conducted in the context of Vietnam, where the criteria which affect the decision process of consumers might differ from those of other countries. In addition, in Vietnam, there are also differences in the preferences of people residing in different regions of the country. Thus, in order to enhance the reliability of the thesis findings, it is necessary to replicate the paper in various demographic settings and geographic areas. Next, the main focus of the paper is on food and beverage products of Thailand, Japan, and the USA in the Vietnamese market. Thus, the findings were found about the impact of COO image on consumers' intention towards products of these three countries in the paper might just apply to the food and beverage sector only. There is in need of expanding the scope of the research to other countries as well as a variety of product category. Obviously, the more the countries, product categories, and scales used for the research on the subject, the better the researcher understand COO effects, which in turn, helping to make more useful conclusions with regard to consumers' attitudes about foreign-made goods. Thirdly, the demographics were found not to be significantly connected to consumers' perceptions of the country image, therefore, it is suggested that a more comprehensive research of the country of origin concerning not only socioeconomic characteristics but also other aspects for a better insight into Vietnamese consumer behavior. Finally, there are other factors (e.g. animosity, status orientation) besides the COO and ethnocentrism that affecting consumers' purchase intention towards foreign

products (Nguyen and Smith, 2012; (Carter, Jr., 2009). Hence, it would be helpful, for instance, to consider these factors mentioned above when studying the consumption behavior of Vietnamese consumers in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Country of Origin (Adapted from Papadopoulos, Marshall and Heslop, 1988)

Country Beliefs:

1. Economically developed
2. High level of education
3. Technologically advanced

People Affect:

4. Trustworthy
5. Hardworking
6. Likable

Desired Interaction:

7. We should have closer ties with _____ (foreign country)
8. Ideal country
9. Would welcome more investment from _____ (foreign country)

Appendix B. Consumer Ethnocentrism (Adapted from Shimp et al., 1987)

I personally favor buying Vietnamese foods and beverages rather than foreign ones.

Generally, I prefer purchasing Vietnamese products (any products, not just foods and beverage) over foreign products.

Foreign-made products are generally of higher quality than Vietnamese products.

It is important that I purchase Saudi-made products so that jobs are not lost to foreign countries.

Appendix C. Purchase intention (Adapted from Baker and Churchill, 1977)

Would you like to try food and beverage products of _____ (foreign country)

Would you like to buy food and beverage products of _____ (foreign country)

Would you actively seek out food and beverage products of _____ (foreign country) in a store in order to purchase it

I would recommend food and beverage products of _____ (foreign country)

Appendix D. Survey outline

Questionnaire on Country of origin & Consumers' purchase intention
(English version)

Dear Participant,

I am a student from Vaasa University, School of Marketing and Communication, Finland. I am conducting research for my Master Thesis on the impacts of Country of Origin on Purchase Intention. I would appreciate it if you could spend a few minutes completing this survey. I assure you that the data you provide will be confidential and solely collected for academic purposes. Finally, the survey results will be reported only in aggregate form.

I.

A. Please tell me some background information about yourself.

- What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

- What is your age?

1. 18-22 years old
2. 23-35 years old
3. 36-55 years old
3. 55 years and over

- What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Below high school
2. High school
3. College/ University degree
4. Postgraduate degree

- What is your monthly income level?

1. Less than 5 million VND
2. 5 million - 10 million VND
3. 10 million - 15 million VND
4. 15 million - 20 million VND
5. 20 million and over VND

Now consider the food and beverage products that coming from these following countries:

Thailand, Japan, and the United States.

II. Please indicate the most appropriate number (from 1 to 5, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3=neither, 4=somewhat agree and 5=strongly agree) that best reflects the extent to which you agree with the statements for each country.

B. I feel that Thailand, Japan, and the United States:

	Thailand	Australia	USA
Economically developed			
High level of education			
Technologically advanced			

C. People from Thailand, Japan, and the United States:

	Thailand	Australia	USA
Trustworthy.			
Hardworking			
Likable			

D. Desired Interaction with Thailand, Japan, and the United States:

	Thailand	Australia	USA
We should have closer ties			
Ideal country			
Would welcome more investment			

III. Please indicate the most appropriate option that best reflects the extent to which you agree with the statements.

E.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agreed	Strongly agree
I personally favor buying Vietnamese foods and beverages rather than foreign ones.					
Generally, I prefer purchasing Vietnamese products (any products, not just foods and beverage) over foreign products.					
Foreign-made products are generally of higher quality than Vietnamese products.					
It is important that I purchase Vietnamese products so that jobs are not lost to foreign countries.					

F. Please indicate the most appropriate number (from 1 to 5, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3=neither, 4=somewhat agree and 5=strongly agree) that best reflects the extent to which you agree with the statements for each country.

	Thailand	Japan	The United States
Would you like to try food and beverage			

products of this country			
Would you like to buy food and beverage products of this country			
Would you actively seek out food and beverage products of this country in a store in order to purchase it			
I would recommend food and beverage products of this country			