



DOES COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE PRODUCT MATTER FOR INDIAN CONSUMERS ? A STUDY IN THE COSMETIC INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The cosmetics industry in India is one of the most competitive ones. Over the past two decades, the Indian cosmetics industry has experienced remarkable expansion. This study looks into how customers' thoughts and perceptions of French or Indian-made skincare and cosmetics items differ depending on the country of origin. Non-probability convenience sampling was utilized in this study. Data collection is done using the Google Form-created questionnaire. The survey was properly filled by 300 customers of cosmetic and skin care products in Delhi NCR. To test various hypotheses, one-way ANOVA, multinomial logistic regression, chi-square tests, and spearman's rank correlation were used. The research finds that Indian female consumers with different levels of involvement place varying amounts of significance on the country of origin. In the cases of India and France, country of origin information search and perception change seem to be correlated. The study provides marketing insights to French and Indian cosmetics and skincare businesses wishing to expand into the growing Indian market.

Keywords: Country of origin, India, France, Consumer perception, Cosmetics products

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Introduction

"There is no locality on the web, Every market is a global market" says American media scholar Ethan Zuckerman. Simply, now the world itself is a market. Globalisation brings this borderless world concept where the goods and services can flow through different nations. Now any products that produced in one country can be assembled, financed, marketed and sold in another country. Peoples from one country can avail the different varieties of products from different countries. The customer can choose the product with their on preference of country of origin. Country of origin have made an impact among the consumers in their purchase decisions. Positive country image may effect the consumer purchase decision positively and vice versa.

India is one of the fastest growing markets in the world mainly in the case of mobile phones, automobiles, travel and tourism, cosmetics and skin care products, laptops, etc. Indians are spending more on luxury items than ever before, especially high-end consumer durables

stated Ajay Khanna the former CEO of the Indian brand equity foundation. India is one of the key segments in the Asia-Pacific region of the global cosmetic market. Many cosmetics brands from different countries around the world are making an impact in the Indian cosmetic market. Many Indian companies have already made a great impact on the Indian consumers. The consumer's choice when considering the country of origin is mostly influenced by two aspects- the country image and the product category image (Imad et al.,2020). It's more of a question of familiarity, now that country of origin has become something of a branding technique. For example, we are all familiar with some high-quality brands of swiss watches, but consumers may trust swiss watches in general, even from unknown brands. Here, they had both a positive country image and the product category image as Switzerland is believed to be a developed country, and is known to be home to the best watchmakers in the world, hence projecting a positive product category image. This kind of



country image and the product category image match could be an advantage when introducing a new brand from a certain country.

Generally, Consumers might link Italy with high-class product design, Germany with automobiles, Japan with consumer electronics, and France with clothing and cosmetics (Liu et al.,2005). The general concept is that the highly developed nations rule the global markets, owing to various other factors along with the quality perceptions based on the positive country image. Also, the country stereotypes placed on developing nations create negative impacts in their markets, as consumers tend to base their judgments on these attributes, be they intentionally or unintentionally. However, sometimes the highly positive product category image could provide product-country matches even for underdeveloped countries. For example, customers view Afghanistan as an underdeveloped country, but they believe Afghani carpets to be of the greatest quality (Phau and Suntornnond 2006). The 'Made in' label was initially introduced as a warning sign against the export of war-damaged products from defeated countries. In fact, the practice of labeling the country of origin began with a law passed by England in 1887, forcing foreign companies to make the origins of their products clear, which was mainly to stigmatize imitation products from Germany. However, the quality of German products rose significantly by the late nineteenth century, making the 'Made in Germany' label a source of cachet. The psychological influence played here is that consumers often believe that the country of origin is marked for their benefit, as the companies are forced to do so by their country's laws. The reality in today's world, however, is that marking the country of origin has become something of a value similar to branding.

This study aims to investigate how the country of origin affects the attitudes and perceptions of Indian female consumers toward cosmetics and skincare items made in the home country

India and foreign country France. Indian cosmetics brands have a big market share in the cosmetic industry. Many new Indian cosmetics brands are coming to the market by watching the success of Indian brands like Lakme, Biotique, Mamaearth, etc. France has a high standard in producing quality cosmetics and skin care products and Customers in India see France as one of the world's developed countries. 1993

Country of origin

Since the entire world is one market, the product's country of origin has significant value. The value of the country of origin is extremely significant in today's interconnected market. The consumer is free to purchase products of any country. They can choose the products based on the country of origin they prefer. For example, if a customer wants to purchase a new mobile phone, he has many options available to him, including Chinese brands Realme, OPPO, and VIVO, Indian brands Jio, LYF, and Videocon, Japanese brands Sony and Panasonic, Samsung from South Korea, Nokia from Finland, and Apple from America, among others. Consumers' perceptions of a country can affect how they assess or form opinions about a product made there. According to Bilkey and Ness 1982, there are two different sorts of information cues that customers can use to evaluate products: intrinsic cues like taste, fit, and design, and extrinsic cues like price, warranty, and brand name. Country of origin is an extrinsic cue that affects how customers perceive quality, according to Olson and Jacob (1972).

Consumers from developed and developing nations used to draw product images differently in general and frequently based on their perceptions of the country and/or its level of development (Han, 1990; Sharma, 2011). The country of origin of the product may have a favorable or unfavorable impact on the customer's purchase decision. If a customer has a positive attitude about the country of origin, they might transfer that attitude to the product, which would enhance the product's reputation



(Walker and Dubitsky, 1994) and Negative perceptions about a nation have a negative impact on consumers' decisions to purchase goods made there (Han,1988, Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993). Over time, as infrastructure improves and marketing strategies advance, customers' perceptions and attitudes toward the brands produced in a country might also change (Chrysochoidis et al.,2007). Customers typically hold stereotypical opinions about various countries, and this appears to have an impact on how they view particular goods and brands from that country (Lotz and Hu, 2001). Consumers' perceptions of the qualities that in comparison to other countries are anticipated of products created in a particular nation (Bilkey, 1993; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994).

Several research have been done to examine how consumers are impacted by the country of origin.. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the customer's judgment of a product is influenced by the country of origin (Schooler 1965; Bilkey and Ness 1982; Peterson and Jolibert 1995; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos; 2004). All of the studies agree on one key factor: customers in emerging markets believe that brands and products from developed countries are of higher quality. They generally think that these brands are superior to domestic products (Kinra, 2006; Hu et al., 2008; Wang and Yang; 2008). According to research conducted in developed nations like Australia and the USA, country of origin has a substantial impact on customers' perceptions and beliefs concerning the products (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000). Four decades ago, research by Krishnakumar (1974) revealed that Indian students ranked British products higher than even their own, most likely due to their colonial links with Britain. Another research found that fewer than 50% of Indians look for "Indian Made" or country-of-origin labels. However, in terms of acceptance, international brands outperform Indian brands (Kinra, 2006).

Cosmetic Products

Cosmetic Products are materials that are used to enhance the physical appearance of humans. The liberalization in the 1990s along with the crowning of Indian women in beauty contests had increased the use of branded cosmetic products in India. According to the FDA USA definition, cosmetics are products "intended to 1994 be applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance without affecting the body's structure or functions." Nowadays a large community had become concerned about look, beauty, grooming, and personal care product options which as a result had increased the expansion of the markets for cosmetics and beauty items. According to Whittaker (2007), there are approximately 3,300 cosmetic companies related to cosmetic and skin care products in the USA alone and it is growing continuously. It is fascinating to note that seven mega businesses, L'oreal, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Estee Lauder Companies, Shiseido, and Coty, collectively hold more than 182 beauty companies globally and produce billions of dollars annually in revenue (Willett and Gould 2017).

Beauty products can be herbal or chemical which is used to enhance the look and odor of both men and women. According to Cheryl (2018) consumers have become more aware of herbal beauty products and had developed a trend of liking such products in recent years. Also, consumers are aware of the negative impact of harmful chemical beauty products. The impact on nature due to their purchase decisions is also a concern for some customers (Sahota, 2014). Due to the changing consumer behavior towards herbal products, companies have started concentrating on the development of the herbal cosmetics market (Philippe et al., 2012; Kerdudo et al.,2016). As per the report by Future Market Insights, 2019 it is estimated that the global natural cosmetic market will grow by 9.4% in the next five years. In an increased market of herbal beauty products, many companies have started making claims



like “natural”, “organic”, “Sustainable”, “Eco – friendly”, “herbal”, “green”, etc. about their products which creates confusion in the consumer while purchasing a product (Hsu et al., 2017).

In the present scenario, individuals are very sensitive about their looks and personality and as a result, the demand for high-quality brands has increased accordingly. The cosmetic industry is mainly categorized as “skincare”, “Haircare”, “Beauty Creams”, “Fragrances”, and “Toiletries”. It is again distinguished as Prestige and Mass production goods. Consumer behavior in purchasing brands depends upon the “brand quality”, “Labelling”, “Price”, and “Brand Ambassadors” of the brand. According to Pudaruth, Juwaheer, and Seewoo (2015) women have become more health and beauty conscious while purchasing beauty products due to information overload. Also, it can be seen that women consumers are more interested in green/ herbal products of famous brands. Advertisements and promotional activities also make a great impact on consumer purchase behavior. The strategy formulation of a company greatly depends upon the “attitudes”, “preferences”, “intentions” and “decisions” of the consumer’s behavior. This consumer behavior leans toward certain theoretical concepts like “Anthropology”, “Psychology”, “Sociology” and “Economics”. Different consumers prefer different needs. So the company should set its strategies accordingly which may attract consumers of different behavior. If a company has a good understanding of consumer behavior and attitude towards branded products, then the company is said to be in a successful stage. So, It can be said that such Successful brands live in the hearts and minds of consumers. Nowadays, brand consciousness is a new normal. Customers are running behind the best brands for trendy looks and styles. Also, customers are not price sensitive due to high income from better opportunities in the metro cities. 80% of the branded cosmetics are purchased by

women as they felt it comfortable and satisfying, they are buying it for themselves, their families, and for business too. In an era of economic growth and increased number cosmetic growth, for a cosmetic company, it is very important to understand consumer behavior and make new strategies accordingly 1995 to keep the number one status in the market.

Cosmetics Industry and Country of origin effect in India

In terms of producing the most revenues from the beauty and personal care business in 2021, India is ranked fourth globally (Statista research department, 2022). As a developing country emerging from already established beliefs and norms, and the society evolving into new values and refining the socioeconomic status in India implies the demand for cosmetic products has increased in the rural areas as well rather than being restricted to metropolitan urban centers of the country. According to a survey from Euromonitor International, India's luxury or premium beauty and personal category is approximately \$774 million in 2018 (DtNext, 2020). Also, the changing lifestyle caused by the large-scale development of manufacturing sectors shows a trend of men being equally interested in beauty products as women. By 2025, As a result of an increase in middle-class and rich consumers' disposable income, the market will reach approximately USD 20 billion (Crescendo Worldwide, 2021). According to the Ministry of Economy and Industry's report, 2018, International companies with a long record in India include MAC, Bobbi Brown, Revlon, Max Factor, Calvin Klein, Christian Dior, Estee Lauder, and Body Shop. The image perceptions regarding the country of origin are commonly accommodated into the minds of Indian customers as a kind of psychological factor, such that their instant decisions are unconsciously influenced by the country of origin. Young Indians today have access to international cosmetics brands and want best-in-class experiences by avoiding the barriers of the conventional distribution system (Amberg



and Fogarassy, 2019). Even though most Indians are biased toward products made in countries that have a reputation as developed. The country of origin is crucial info that plays a significant impact in the acceptance of the product (Samli, 1995). Therefore, how Indian consumers perceive foreign countries has a big impact on how well a product is accepted.

Among the most discussed areas in international economic relations is also the 'transfer of technology' to developing countries. This, along with the 'origin of the brand' gives the customer a notion that the products may be of good quality in essence. For example, we can see that it is a common marketing technique to mention that some electronic devices or gadgets made in one country are, though uses the design and technology of other country. The process of transferring technology allows both countries to benefit commercially, and paves collaborations between International companies. It is like cooking with someone else's recipe. Similarly, if a brand initially originated from a developed country, customers tend to trust all products from that brand even if the particular product of purchase was manufactured in a different country. Both the above-mentioned strategies are widely applied in producing the first copies of branded items. For example, Indian customers are huge fans of lower-priced first copies of Nike shoes even if the quality is compromised. The daily expansion of surplus and copy shoe stores in India indicates this. This brings us back to the argument that the country of origin has emanated from being a warning signal for customers to analyse product quality into something of a brand value to show off as a sign of prestige. However, there are other factors that may affect only a segment of the Indian market and can not be generalized like past negative experiences, or negative reputations about certain countries. This includes promoting products of Indian origin more in the market as a part of patriotism. The key players in the Indian cosmetic industry try a variety of

outlooks and materials. For example, natural and herbal beauty products have a huge demand in the Indian market nowadays and top Indian brands like Deyga and Himalayas are trusted among customers on that account. There are also other products like Lakmé from Unilever which is not just a popular Indian beauty brand but controls the cosmetic industry worldwide. 1996

Model and Hypothesis

Reviewing the previous research on the country of origin, it is evident that the country of origin has a big impact on consumer perceptions and attitudes. The aim of this research is to look into the attitudes and perceptions of Indian female customers toward cosmetic and skincare products from different countries of origin. Four categories are used to set the hypothesis.

- 1) Level of involvement
- 2) Country of origin information search
- 3) Country image perception
- 4) Moderators of Country of origin effect

Level of involvement

According to the Marketing Dictionary of Monash Business School, level of involvement is the "Degree of the intensity of interest that a buyer shows for a certain product in a certain purchase decision". In certain circumstances, the level of involvement could vary. It may be high involvement sometimes and low involvement other times. The degree of involvement may change depending on the people and the products. According to Liu, Johnson, and Johnson (2005), "The automatic country of origin effects reduce in high-involvement situations, where there is an incentive to be more accurate". Contrarily, the country of origin has a stronger impact on product evaluations when customers are in a low involvement situation because they are less motivated to evaluate the given information (Han 1989). According to Lin and Chen (2006) "with a different level of involvement, a



consumer would have different purchase behavior, such as a different information processing method, different attitudes, different level of information collection and purchase decision behavior”

Therefore, the following hypothesis proposed;

H1. Indian female cosmetics and skincare products consumers having different level of involvement possess different attitudes towards the level of importance of Country of origin.

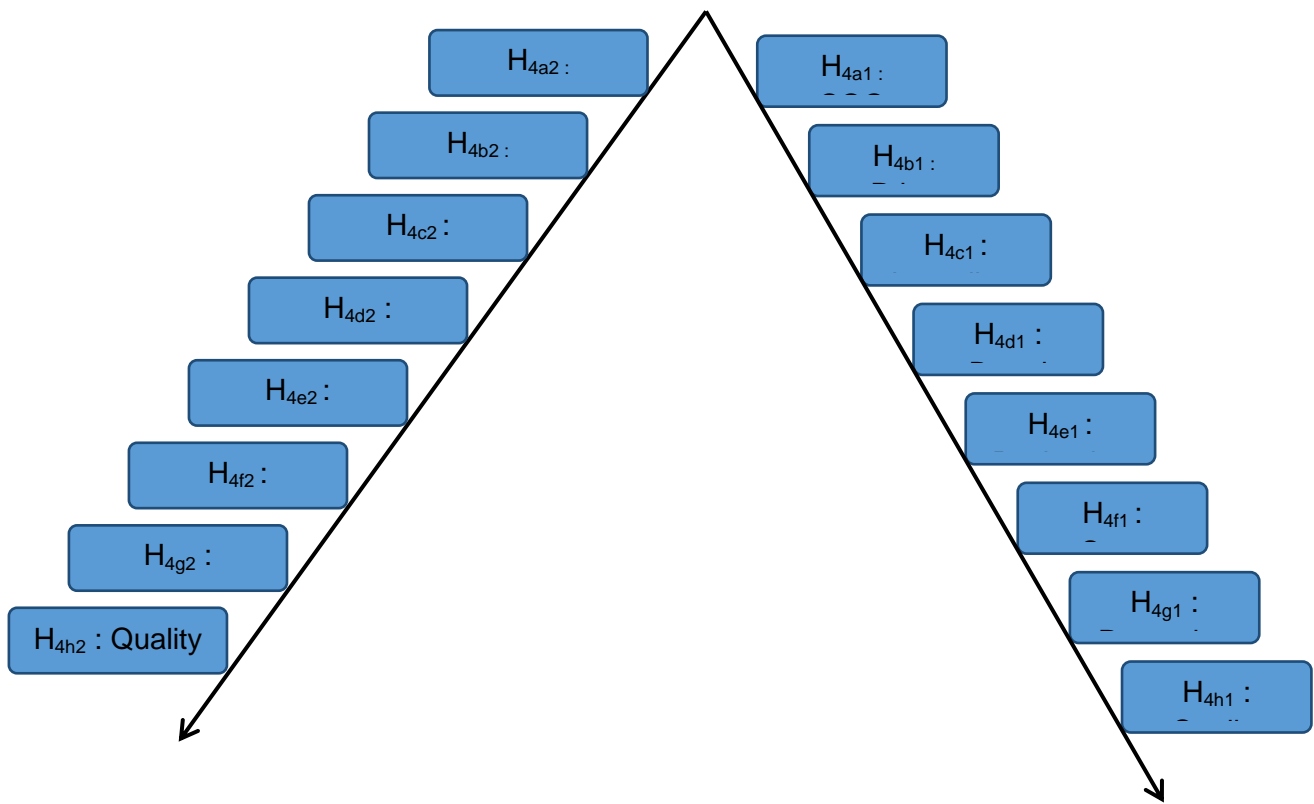
Country of origin information search

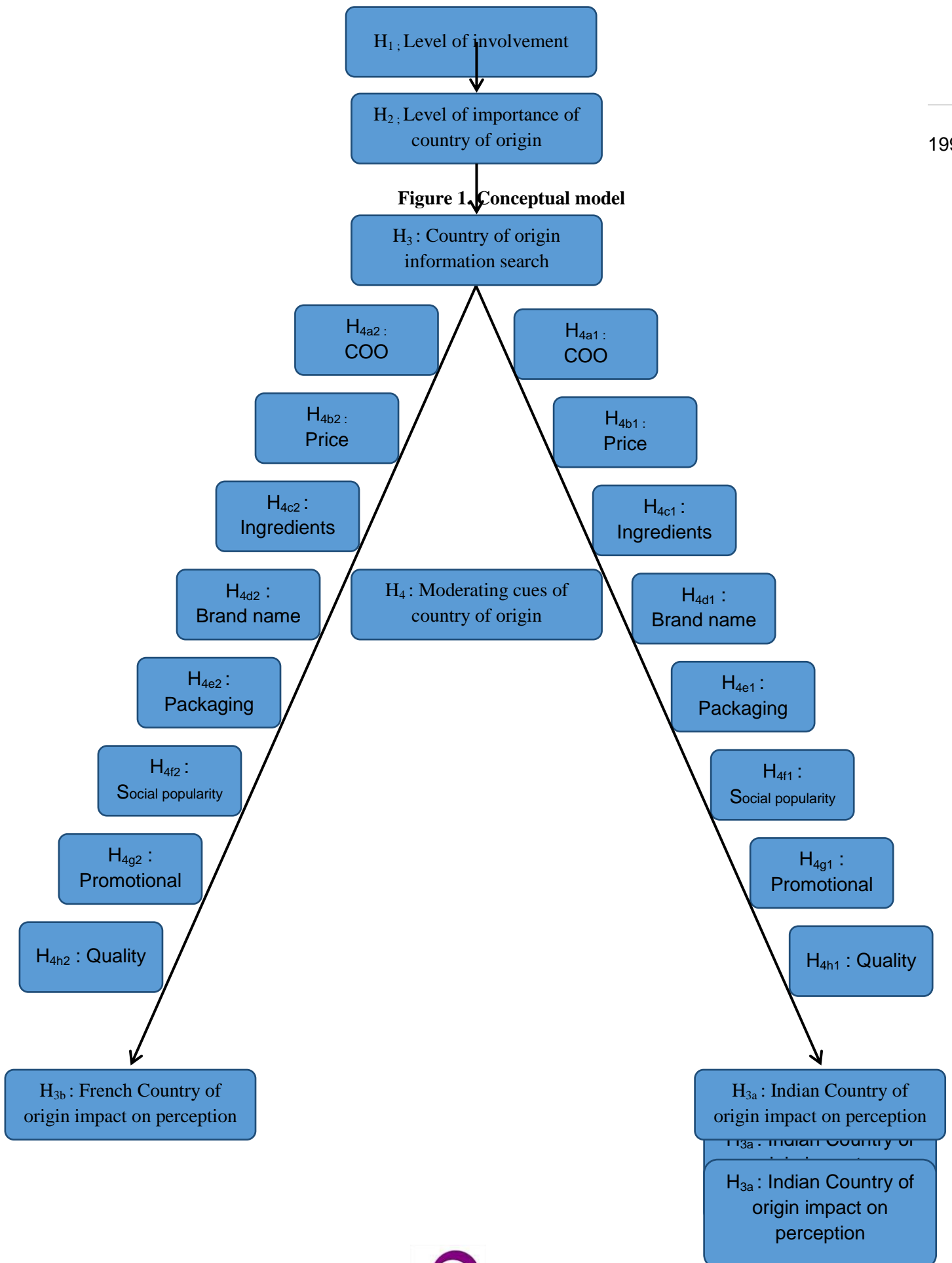
When a customer begins the process of purchasing a specific product. They will next begin to gather information about that specific product, such as its cost, quality, brand, features, and design. He will look up every piece of information about that specific product that is available. Before making a purchase, consumers will investigate the country of origin

of a product based on how important they believe the country of origin to be. In fact, the first factor influencing a consumer's buying choice is thought to be their intention to search for information (Lin and Chen 2006). When a customer recognizes his or her desire, the consumer processes the intention to search for information and starts looking for relevant details. As a result, when a buyer buys a product, their intention to search for information plays a significant role (Lin and Chen 2006).

Thus the research proposes the following hypothesis;

H2. Indian female cosmetics and skincare products consumer’s variation in the level of importance of country of origin is significantly associated with how frequently they search for the country of origin.





Country image perception

Review of the literature demonstrates clearly how the consumer's opinion of the country's image affects their decision to make a purchase. In addition, consumers have utilised the country of origin as the most important and fundamental factor in evaluating different products in a variety of situations, depending on their level of expertise (Maheswaran, 1994). Consumer perceptions may differ from country to country. Some countries might make customers think favourably, and vice versa. Consumers frequently have strong connections with a certain country when thinking about it, such as design for Italy, highly trained labour for Germany, cheaper for China, and fashion for France. As a result, when customers learn about the country of origin, they can instinctively trigger such intense country associations (Hamzaoui and Merunka 2006). When buyers don't know much about a product, they often use the country of origin to assume the product's quality, which allows for stereotyping (Kotler and Gertner 2002). The consumer's perception of the country is a key element in determining their buying decision.

Therefore, the research proposes the following hypothesis for both countries India and France;

H3a. Indian female consumer's change in perception of cosmetics and skincare products made in India is significantly dependent on their country of origin information search.

H3b. Indian female consumer's change in perception of cosmetics and skincare products made in France is significantly dependent on their country of origin information search.

1999

Moderators of country of origin effect

According to the directory of statistical analysis "A moderator variable is a third variable that affects the strength of the relationship between a dependent and independent variable". Numerous other factors may influence how buyers perceive a product's country of origin while looking for information about it in order to make a purchase. A product may be viewed as a "array of cues," as has been found when creating a model of the customer evaluation process (Munjaj 2014). Extrinsic cues refer to the non-physical components of the goods, such as the country of origin, price, brand name, or warranty whereas intrinsic cues refer to the object's physical attributes (Ulgado and Lee 1993). Considering the empirical findings from past studies, the influence of country of origin is reduced in studies that evaluate country of origin along with other cues than it is in studies that evaluate country of origin as the only cue (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999; Dinnie 2004). Thus, the research proposes the following hypothesis;

H4. Various cues (COO, price, ingredients, brand name, packaging, social popularity, promotional offers, and quality)



moderate the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India or France.

H4a. COO moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4a1) or France (H4a2).

H4b. Price moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4b1) or France (H4b2).

H4c. Ingredients moderate the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4c1) or France (H4c2)

H4d. Brand name moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4d1) or France (H4d2).

H4e. Packaging moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4e1) or France (H4e2).

H4f. Social popularity moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4f1) or France (H4f2).

H4g. Promotional offers moderate the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4g1) or France (H4g2).

H4h. Quality moderates the relationship between COO information search and the COO impact on consumers' perception of whether the product being made in India (H4h1) or France (H4h2).

The conceptual model of the study is shown in figure 1. The research aims to study Indian consumers' perception of the country of origin



effect. One of the fastest growing consumer-based industry cosmetic and skincare industry is chosen for the study. The study intends to investigate the level of involvement of Indian female consumers in cosmetic and skin care products and how that affects the importance of the country of origin in their purchasing decisions. It also looks if variations in the importance of the country of origin are significantly related to how frequently consumers search for the country of origin. The study will also examine whether the perception of Indian women who use cosmetics and skin care products may change after they realize whether the country of origin of the product is France or India. Furthermore, the moderating effect of many aspects are explored, including country of origin, price, quality, social popularity, packaging, ingredients, promotional offers, and brand name .

Methodology

Based on the previous literatures, it is clear that the country of origin matters to consumers. The product's country of origin may influence the consumer's preference for purchase. In this study, we examine the country of origin impact on Indian consumers of skincare and cosmetic items. Thus, we have created four hypotheses based on the level of involvement, the search for information about the country of origin, the country's image, and the moderators. The study is both exploratory and descriptive. It assesses the impact of the country of origin on cosmetics and skincare items in India's emerging market. A carefully thought-out research design was

used to test each of the four stated hypotheses. The questionnaire was created with 11 questions and three sections using the Likert scale and performance rating scale. The demographic profile of the customers is covered in the first section of the questionnaire, level of involvement and the search for information about the country of origin are covered in the second section, and perception of the country and moderators of the country of origin affect are covered in the third section.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique is used in this study to obtain data from respondents who purchase cosmetics and skincare items to assess the influence of countries of origin. According to Bell and Bryman (2018) "non-probability sampling is suitable for studies based on human nature involving fieldwork and it is the most commonly used sampling technique among researchers". Making use of an online data collection method, data was collected from a sample of 324 consumers. The data was collected from cosmetic and skincare consumers in the Delhi-NCR region. It is assumed that the number of users in the National Capital Region (NCR) and Delhi would be a demonstrative sample across India, over and any investigation done here will be applicable to the rest of states. The survey was conducted in English because the majority of Indian women cosmetics and skincare consumers are competent in this language. In figure 1, the conceptual model is shown. The goal of the study is to evaluate the validity of our conceptual model by gaining knowledge



about the attitudes and perceptions of Indian female customers regarding the country of origin related to cosmetic and skincare items. The methodology of the study is following previous research done in this area (Ahmed et al., 2010, 2012, and Imad et al., 2020).

Results and discussion

The first hypothesis looked at a potential relationship between the Indian female consumers' level of involvement and how important their country of origin is to their purchase of cosmetics and skincare items. This correlation was tested using a one-way ANOVA test. The result was shown in table 1. With a p-value less than 0.01, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, when purchasing cosmetics and skincare products, Indian female consumers with different levels of involvement have different perspectives on the significance of the country of origin. This study supports the findings of Imad, Reem, Ahmed, and Marwan (2020), who found that the country of origin effect is significantly influenced by the amount

of involvement of Lebanese female consumers. This result is in line with the research on the country of origin effect and level of involvement (Yang et al.,2016).

The second hypothesis examined whether 2002 variations in the country of origin's importance are significantly related to the number of times consumers search for the country of origin of cosmetics and skincare items. An analysis of multinomial logistic regression was performed to evaluate this hypothesis. The result was shown in table1. Using the result of a p-value less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the difference in the relevance of the country of origin as it relates to cosmetics and skincare items is significantly associated with how often consumers search for the country of origin information. This research confirms the findings of Imad, Reem, Ahmed, and Marwan (2020), who discovered that the frequency of customer searches for country of origin information is strongly associated with the level of importance of the country of origin effect.

Hypothesis	P-value	Inference
<i>H₁</i>	<i><0.01</i>	<i>Reject H_{1o}, Accept H_{1a}</i>
<i>H₂</i>	<i><0.01</i>	<i>Reject H_{2o}, Accept H_{2a}</i>
<i>H_{3a}</i>	<i>0.161</i>	<i>Reject H_{3aa}</i>
<i>H_{3b}</i>	<i>0.116</i>	<i>Reject H_{3ba}</i>

Table 1. Result of Hypotheses tests 1,2 and 3

The third hypothesis investigated that how the attitude of Indian women who purchase cosmetics and skincare items could change if they learn whether the country of origin of the product is France or India.

H3a looked at how the perceptions of Indian women who buy cosmetics and skincare items would change if they know that the products country of origin is India. The p-value obtained after performing a chi-square test (0.161 > 0.05)



supports the null hypothesis and rejects the alternative hypothesis. As a result, when Indian female consumers of cosmetics and skincare items found that the country of origin of the product is India, there was no meaningful difference in their perception of the product was observed.

H3b explored on how the opinion of Indian female consumers of skincare and cosmetics would change if they find that France is the country of origin of the items. The p-value obtained after performing a chi-square test ($0.116 > 0.05$) supports the null hypothesis and rejects the alternative hypothesis. As a result, when Indian female consumers of cosmetics and skincare items found that the country of origin of the product is France, there was no meaningful difference in their perception of the product was observed. The result of both hypothesis is shown in table 1.

The fourth hypothesis examined the potential moderation effect of various cues, including country of origin, packaging, social popularity, promotional offers, price, ingredients, brand name and quality, on the relationship between country of origin information search and the impact on consumers' perception of whether the product was developed in France or India. According to the conceptual model, 16 sub-hypotheses were developed. The Spearman's rank correlation test was used to examine the potential moderating effects of each of these 16 hypotheses. Table 2 shows the results of the 16 hypotheses' spearman's rank correlations.

Four of the eight cues, country of origin, price, ingredients, and quality, were found to significantly moderate the association between country of origin information search and the impact on customers' perception of the product when they found that it was developed in India. Price showed the highest moderating effect of the four significant cues ($r_s = 0.290$), followed by quality and ingredients, which had nearly similar spearman rank correlation coefficients ($r_s = 0.235$ for quality and $r_s = 0.220$ for ingredients) country of origin shows a negatively correlated moderation effect ($r_s = 0.241$). The moderating effect of the cues among Indian female cosmetic consumers was first examined in this paper. The present findings indicate the importance of moderating factors in the purchase of cosmetic and skincare items, including price, country of origin, ingredients, and product quality. The price and quality of cosmetic and skincare items tend to have a greater impact on Indian female consumers when they are making a purchase decision.

For France, only price and promotional offers showed a noticeable mediating effect on the association between country of origin information search and the country of origin impact on consumer perception once they found that the product was manufactured in France. Promotional offers showed the highest moderating effect of the significant cues ($r_s = 0.201$), followed by Price which had nearly similar spearman rank correlation coefficients as $r_s = 0.190$. For the moderating effect of the



price when consumers become aware that the product is from France, Our finding seems to be

in line with earlier research (Ahmed et al. 2004, Imad et al. 2020).

Moderating Cues	r_s	P-significance	Inference
Country of origin vs. India	-0.241	<0.05	Significant moderation effect
Country of origin vs. France	-0.048	0.621	Non-significant moderation effect
Price vs. India	0.292	<0.01	Significant moderation effect
Price vs. France	0.190	<0.05	Significant moderation effect
Ingredients vs. India	0.220	<0.05	Significant moderation effect
Ingredients vs. France	-0.038	0.695	Non-significant moderation effect
Brand name vs. India	-0.037	0.707	Non-significant moderation effect
Brand name vs. France	0.162	0.093	Non-significant moderation effect
Packaging vs. India	-0.172	0.075	Non-significant moderation effect
Packaging vs. France	-0.130	0.181	Non-significant moderation effect
Social popularity vs India	0.012	0.900	Non-significant moderation effect
Social Popularity vs France	0.022	0.818	Non-significant moderation effect
Promotion vs. India	-0.048	0.622	Non-significant moderation effect
Promotion vs. France	0.201	<0.05	Significant moderation effect
Quality vs. India	0.235	<0.05	Significant moderation effect
Quality vs. France	0.155	0.108	Non-significant moderation effect

Table 2. Result of Hypotheses test 4.

limitations and Directions for future Research

All of the studies have certain limitations. This particular Study was about Indian female consumer’s attitude and perceptions towards French and Indian cosmetics and skincare products. The data for the study is collected from Indian females living in the national capital Delhi. But in the view of Malhotra (2009), this may create some limitations on how well the result generalises to the entire population of the country The study could be done in more areas also including countries such as China, South Korea, Hongkong, Singapore Turkey or

UAE where the cosmetics products are available in larger markets and the consumers having different perceptions and behaviours. According to Hair, Bush and Ortinaur (2009). Online data collection techniques have produced moderate amounts of data, a small sample size and control, minimal environmental control, and a poor response rate. However, it has decreased interviewer bias, offers visual appeal and interaction, and allows for personalized and flexible questions. High speed in data collection along with minimal cost is also a benefit of online surveys. This research in future have a



scope to compare the country of origin effect of Indian products with other countries other than France like USA. More moderating variables can also be added. But the research opened a pathway for more research particularly based on the effect of country of origin on consumer behaviour. Future research on the topic is required to check the study's results on moderation, either in the same context or in different nations.

Conclusion The first study on "Country of origin" was published by Schooler in 1965, launching a fruitful field of study that is still relevant in the modern global economy. According to Bilkey and Ness 1982, there are two different sorts of information cues that customers can use to evaluate products: intrinsic cues like taste, design, and fit, and extrinsic cues like price, brand name, and warranties. Country of origin is an extrinsic cue that affects how customers perceive quality, according to Olson and Jacob (1972). What sets the country of origin apart from other external cues is its dynamic perceptual nature says Imad et al, (2020). Customers typically hold stereotypical opinions about various countries, and this appears to have an impact on how they view particular goods and brands from that country (Lotz and Hu, 2001). customers in emerging markets believe that brands and products from developed countries are of higher quality. They generally think that domestic goods are inferior to these brands. (Hu et al., 2008; Wang and Yang, 2008). Indian consumers' acceptance of foreign products is

clearly visible in this study. Consumer's perception towards products from France, a developed nation, and India, a developing nation is operationalized through four choices "more favorable", "no change in perception", "less favorable but will continue using the product", or "less favorable and will consider changing the brand". In the case of French products, 78% of respondents feel "more favorable" or "no change in perception," whereas, in the case of Indian items, it is just 65%. 35% of participants thought less favorably of Indian items. It supports the findings of Kinra's (2006) study, which found that foreign brands significantly beat Indian brands in terms of acceptance.

Moreover, depending on whether a product's country of origin is linked to a favorable or unfavorable stereotype, consumers' impressions can be affected by country of origin information search. This study clearly states that the difference in the relevance of the country of origin as it relates to cosmetics and skincare items is significantly associated with how often consumers search for the country of origin information. France as the fashion capital of the world is having favorable image among Indian consumers mind particularly when it comes to cosmetics and skincare items. Indian consumers' acceptance of the French cosmetics company L'Oréal is an evidence of this. When examining the relationship between country of origin information search and the impact on consumers' perceptions of whether the product was developed in France or India, researchers tested the moderation effect of various cues, including country of origin, packaging, social popularity, promotional offers, price, ingredients, brand name, and quality. As for Indian items, It was discovered that four of the eight cues—country of origin, price, ingredients,

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and quality were significantly moderate, and in the case of France, only price and promotional offers demonstrated a noticeable moderating effect.

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