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Management

# THE IMPACT OF JORDAN'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMAGE ON THE MENTAL IMAGE CARRIED BY CLOTHING CUSTOMERS

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## Abstract

The study aimed at examining the impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers. The used descriptive and analytical approach in which a questionnaire was used to collect the needed data from the sample of the study. A convenience sample consisted of 400 employees. The data were analyzed through using SPSS. The study found that Jordanian consumers had positive attitudes towards it as a country of origin. Country of origin image has an impact on the mental image carried by clothing customers. The study also found that there is a statistical difference in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to Educational level only. Moreover the study found that there are no statistical differences in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to (Gender and age). The study recommended that Jordanian institutions must set a comprehensive strategy for raising the quality of their products. That is because quality has a major impact upon enhancing the image of the country of origin and upon the way its products are evaluated. In addition national institutions must be more concerned with conducting more research and improvements in order to raise their levels of innovation and technological developments in clothing sector.

*Keywords:* Country of Origin; Country of Origin Image; Mental Image.

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## 1. Introduction

Applying free trade agreements for exchanging goods and services between countries is considered one of the main principles of globalization. Such trade is one of the things that many trade global organizations and economic blocs – such as the European Economic Community - have been seeking to apply. Through such trade, markets would become open to one another in one way or another. Thus, that shall lead to increase the intensity of competitiveness within the global markets, hence, local companies will be aiming to preserve their market shares as they are in the light of this new competition which many parties are taking part in. This competition is based on standards for evaluation, such as: trademarks, quality, the product's country of origin, and the country that manufactured the product. However, it should be noted that not all the standards adopted for evaluating product are objective. This was consistent with the results of many studies that investigated the impact of these variables upon consumers' evaluations for products. For instance, Ian, and Gerard (2000) conducted a study in this concern; their study indicated that the products that were manufactured in countries that are less developed are not perceived as being in the same quality level of the ones that were manufactured in the more developed countries. Thus, we can conclude that there is an actual impact for the product's country of origin whether positive or negative. This subject has been attracting the attention of many people. New variables were administered into the current study, such as: the variable of consumers' attitudes towards the product's country of origin and products with their purchasing power in relation to buying these products. The problem of investigating the impact of the product's country of origin and the country that has manufactured it upon consumers' evaluations has been attracting great attention by researchers. Such attention increased opening the local markets to one another, so that they would become part of the global market. This problem received more significance with seeing many big companies moving their manufacturing processes and factories to other countries that are still developing. Such movement usually occurs due to having lower production costs in those countries because their laborers earn lower wages and these wages are considered less than the wages of those working in the product's country of origin. Nike Co. and BMW Co. are considered prominent examples of such a case. These two companies have established factories that support their manufacturing process in China. Another example is Peugeot Co. which has obtained a license for manufacturing its products in Turkey and Iran. Thus, consumers' perceptions for its products and their qualities have changed. That has not been getting adequate attention by owners of companies and trademarks (Hauble, 1996). However, many studies have proven that there is an actual impact for the product's country of origin upon consumers' evaluations on it whether such impact was direct or indirect (Schooler, 1965 & 1971; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Johansson, Douglas & Nonaka, 1985; Okechuku, 1994; Hauble, 1996; Chao, 2005; Hui & Zhou,2003).

As mentioned earlier, many previous studies have indicated that developed countries are usually characterized with having positive perceptions and evaluations by consumers for their products (Bilkey & Nes, 1982). Thus, some researchers believe that the "country of origin" is considered as one of the main obstacles that may be faced when entering new markets due to consumers favoring certain imported products. Therefore, this makes it hard and challenging to launch a national manufacturing processes.Based on the aforementioned information, previous studies, and the changes that have been witnessed by local and international markets, it can be noticed that the product's country of origin has an impact upon evaluating it. This phenomenon can be

generalized. However, it requires conducting more research especially in developing countries. That is because there is a gap in the literature that investigates this concept in such countries also because such countries have been greatly influenced by this concept during the current period of time. That is because some big companies moved their manufacturing processes and factories to them; in addition, foreign products have been noticeably administered into their markets. Hence, it is necessary to investigate the impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

It can be noticed that many global companies have entered the Jordanian market recently due to the significance of this market and the stability of political situations in many countries. Such companies have entered this market through opening factories or branches that represent them in it (i.e. in Jordan). For instance, there are many global clothes agencies that have been opened recently in Jordan. Such factories have branches in many big countries, such as: Turkey, France, Britain, and China. Each country of origin usually has a stereotypical image within the minds of consumers, this stereotypical image made about the country of origin can be attributed to many criterions, such as the extent of its technological and economic developments, the characteristics of its people in relation to how serious and professional in the manufacturing of products they are and their ability to produce a product of high quality. There are many countries of origin that have an excellent stereotypical image within the consumers' minds along with their products, such as Germany and Japan. Hence, the current study aims at identifying the impact of the stereotypical image that customers have about Jordan as a country of origin upon the stereotypical image that they have about the clothes which Jordan acquires.

## 3. The Significance of the Study

The significance of the current study is considered significant on the scientific and practical levels, which are illustrated below:

### 1) The scientific significance
The current study shall participate in filling a gap in the literature made in the field of marketing and investigating consumers' behaviors. This study aims at showing that such institutions must avoid using a holistic approach in the way they deal with their imported products, but they should deal with each imported product separately from the rest and in accordance with the consumers' attitudes towards it.

### 2) Practical significance
The practical significance of the current study can be represented through benefitting the following categories:

- **The producers:** The current study shall provide producers with deeper understanding for the consumer's behavior and his / her evaluations for national products. Thus, that can help producers in identifying their points of strengths and weaknesses from the consumers' points of view.
- **The importers and distributors of foreign products:** The results of the current study will help importers and distributors of foreign products in understanding consumers' behaviors. It shall assist them in identifying how customers' attitudes toward the country

of origin can affect their evolutions for the products or trademarks of that country. That can assist those importers and distributors in forming their marketing strategies.

## The Concept of the "Country of Origin"

The definition of the concept "country of origin" is still considered controversial from the marketing researchers' points of view. For instance, some researchers believe that this concept refers to the country in which the product was manufactured in. However, other researchers believe that this concept refers to the country in which the product was designed in(Fischer, et al,2012) . On the other hand, other researchers believe that this concept is a multinational concept. ( Lin ,chun ,006 )define it as the country that conducts manufacturing or assembling the product.The perceived image of the country of origin refers to the consumer's perceptions for the quality of product in accordance with the country that has produced it. The studies that are related to the perceived image of the country of origin concern three levels: The first is the level of the country (i.e. its total level): the studies that were conducted in this field believe that consumers form general perceptions about all the products due to their country of origin. Such perceptions vary from one country to another in accordance with economic growth, cultural, social, and political climates of each country ( Bannister & Saunders, 1978, P. 562). In this concern, studies are divided into two categories. The first one includes the studies that believe the perceived image of the country of origin is a general perception which is formed by consumers about all the products of a certain country. This perception is formed based on the country's reputation or its perceived image to evaluate the product's quality (Jayson et al., 2006, p. 285).As for the second category, it includes the studies that believe the perceived image of the country of origin is a complex concept that consists of three elements. These elements are: the descriptive beliefs, referential beliefs and the beliefs that are based on information. Descriptive beliefs refer to the beliefs that it is based on the consumer's experience in using the product. As for the beliefs that are based on information, they refer to the beliefs that the consumer forms based on the information he obtained from external resources such as friends, advertisements, etc… As for the descriptive beliefs, they refer to the beliefs that that the consumer infers though his / her previous experiences (Erickson, et al 1984; Martin &  Eroglu, 1993).The most important characteristic that characterizes the studies concerned with the country's level is that it does not take into their consideration the product's type, brand or its relationship with the consumer's perception for the product's quality. In fact, such studies emphasize the element of stereotyping. For instance, the consumer perceives the quality of the products manufactured in developed countries as being products of high quality. However, he perceives the quality of the those manufactured in developing countries as being products of lower quality. Of course, this orientation is considered inaccurate to be adopted by the consumer in forming an accurate perception for the country of origin.

## The Concept of the Perceived Image

The perceived image refers to the perceived images constructed about the brand, product or trademark within the minds of the consuming customers, who are targeted within an appropriate market sector (Al-A'laq, 2008).In addition, the perceived image can be defined simply as a cognitive unit, which one uses to establish his own perceptions about the real world. Such image is initially constructed through establishing a group of features about a certain object. Then, these

features are organized and saved in the long term memory in a way that reflects reality as much as possible. These features become later a tool used by the individual to identify the same object in case he /she came in contact with it again. As for the mental image constructed in a person, it is usually constructed about an event. For example, the mind organizes the information in its own way and saves them in the long term memory till they are needed again (Almasri, 2001, P. 21).

The perceived image refers to a relative cognitive psychological process which has cultural origins. This process is based on the individual's direct and indirect selective cognitions for the characteristics and features of a certain subject (company, institution, individual, group, community or system). This process also refers to constructing positive or negative emotional attitude towards this subject and also to the resulting behavioral orientations within the framework of a certain society. These orientations, attitudes and perceptions may have a fixed or changeable form. They may be also accurate or inaccurate (Ajwa, 2002, p.5)

The displacement decision for constructing the perceived image is characterized with having a strategic nature. That doesn't apply only on the institutions concerned with providing commodities or services. Such nature aims at developing or identifying other elements of the displacing marketing strategy, such as: the pricing decisions, promotion instruments or elements and the distribution outlet along with the decisions made about the commodities in form and content (E'bedat, 2006, p. 78).

It is clear that the displacement process is not an easy task. That is because it requires a deep understanding for markets and their sectors, objectives, the company's resources and competition. In addition, this process is highly linked with the targeted markets and the consuming categories. For instance, if the company succeeds in constructing a wonderful perfect perceived image for its products within the consumers' minds, then that shall participate in increasing the size of its sales and market share, also in achieving positive results on the overall level.

## Elements of the Perceived Image

The perceived image consists of three overlapping elements, which are the following: (Aldmour and A'yesh, 2005)
1) The cognitive element: Suleiman (2000, p.127) has defined the cognitive element of the perceived image as being an evaluation of the well-known features of the product or understanding the product mentally. In other words, the cognitive element of the perceived image is a group of beliefs constructed about the thing that leads to establishing an accepted perceived image. External stimuli plays a major significant role in constructing the perceived image. Some would say that the perceived image within the mind of certain person may be more accurate than its counterpart that is constructed within another's mind. That applies in case the former depended on real information when constructing his perceived image. Such real information may include the ones he/she acquired previously.

Anyway, the perceived image is usually based – to a certain extent - on cognitive facts instead of reality. The process of constructing the perceived image is considered significant in creating situational awareness.

2) The influential element: the element that influences the perceived image is connected with the stimuli in relation to the way one evaluates the subject that is going under the evaluating process. In addition, motives identify and set the things we desire to get something from and that in turn affects the process of evaluating the thing

3) The behavioral element (desire): the desire element of the perceived image is similar to behavior, because it is a procedure. For instance, after dealing with the external and internal stimuli of the product, the decision whether to purchase or not shall be made. This procedure (the desire element) is directly linked with other elements which depend on the perceived image constructed through the cognitive element that is evaluated later through the influential element. In the end, all the elements constitute the purchasing process. The perceived image of the product or trade mark represents the consumer's personal evaluation for the benefits, advantages and merits which he believes that he shall get as a result of using the relevant product or trade mark. The studies conducted in this field indicated that consumers actually carry within their minds certain images (perceptions) for certain trademarks (Suleiman, 2000, p.127).

## Pillars of the Perceived Image

The perceived image is based on a group of general or specific characteristics and features about the product. It includes characteristics which are usually materialistic and related to the product. It also includes benefits that are usually linked directly with the product, such as safety, strength, and promotion. The perceived image aims at providing the product with care to market it in accordance with the set plan and manufacturing procedures. The perceived image is significant in constructing positive sensory perceptions towards the product and the elements used in manufacturing it. It is significant due to providing the product with support, and making the product comparable with other completive products in terms of price, quality and environmental conditions (Suwaidan, 2009, p. ).

## Characteristics of the Perceived Image

There are some principles and bases which can be acknowledged and adopted by the ones concerned with developing the perceived image and in accordance with the following (Al-Ta'i 2001, p. 308 –306) :

1) The perceived image for large entities changes slowly. The larger the entity is, the slower the change would be.

2) There should be a long term focus on the mandatory attempts conducted to sway individuals through providing them with information that can change the perceived images they have constructed about something.

3) The smaller the entity is in comparison to the overall system, the smaller the probability would be of developing an independent perceived image

4) 4)In order to have an effective change in the perceived image, such change should be based on the overall current perceived image

### 4. Aim of the Study

Based on the argument above, and launching from the fact that there have been many studies which took into perspective the influence of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by customers; the current research study aims at examining the impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.

### 5. Hypotheses of the Study

According to the previous debate, the current study seeks to answer the following question:
Is there an impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers?

According to the previously set question and variables of the study, the hypotheses of the study will appear as the following:
1) There is a statistical impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.
2) There is a statistical difference in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to (Gender , Educational level, and Age)

### 6. Method

The current study depended on descriptive and analytical  approach in which a questionnaire will be used to collect the needed data from the sample of the study.

**Data Collection Methods**

1) Primary source: It is represented in the study's questionnaire, which was designed and distributed to the participants of the study. These participants have been selected from the study's population.
2) Secondary sources: They are represented in books, references, and previous studies which have dealt with the study's subject and were used by the researchers.

**Population and Sample**

The study's population included all Jordanian customers in Amman.

The researchers chose a convenience sample, which consisted from 400 employees. 385 questionnaire forms were retrieved and that represents 96.25% of the distributed questionnaire forms.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity was carried out by a panel of experts in marketing, their suggestions regarding instrument and amendments were taken in consideration.

A Cronbach Alpha test was used to ascertain instrument reliability. The value was = 0.947 for the questionnaire, which is good because it is more than 0.60 (Malhotra, 2004).

## 7. Discussion and Analysis

The following segment presented the analysis of the primary data which were gathered by the researcher from the sample of the study. There also appeared the reliability test, hypotheses testing, analysis of the questionnaire paragraph.

**Demographic Variables**

Frequency and percentages were computed for the sample's characteristics.

Table 1: Sample's Distribution According to Demographic Information

| Category | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 161 | 41.8 |
| Female | 224 | 58.2 |
| Total | 385 | 100.0 |
| **Education** | | |
| High school | 40 | 10.4 |
| Diploma | 42 | 10.9 |
| Bachelor | 188 | 48.8 |
| High studies | 115 | 29.9 |
| Total | 385 | 100.0 |
| **Age** | | |
| <25 | 171 | 44.4 |
| 25-35 | 120 | 31.2 |
| 36-45 | 51 | 13.2 |
| More than 45 | 43 | 11.2 |
| Total | 385 | 100.0 |
| **types of clothes you prefer to buy** | | |
| local | 109 | 28.3 |
| Foreign | 276 | 71.7 |
| Total | 385 | 100.0 |

The table (1) above indicates shows the demographic variable analysis of the sample which participated in the study. The analysis showed that 41.8% of the sample was males while 58.2% of the sample was females. As for the educational level, the highest percentage of the sample education was people with Bachelor degree with a percentage of 48.8%.

As for the age of the sample, 44.4% of the sample was people with less than 25 years old.
Also it is found that 71.7% of the sample prefers to buy foreign clothes.

**Analysis of the Questionnaire Paragraphs**

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the questions

| No. | Paragraph | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Country of origin** | | |
| Q1 | Jordan is characterized by good reputation in terms of quality of its products | 3.1974 | 1.34532 |
| Q2 | Jordan enjoys a good reputation in the international market | 3.0909 | 1.27252 |
| Q3 | Jordan is characterized by high cost prices | 3.1273 | 1.51620 |
| Q4 | Jordan is characterized by technological development | 3.1351 | 1.26345 |
| Q5 | Jordan is characterized by trust | 3.2182 | 1.37090 |
| Q6 | Jordan is characterized by the universality of its markets | 3.2468 | 1.31057 |
| Q7 | Characterized Jordan are attractive investment | 3.2104 | 1.40679 |
| Q8 | Jordan is characterized by good investment structure | 3.3740 | 1.35029 |
| | Grand mean | 3.2000 | 1.05227 |
| | **Mental Image** | | |
| Q9 | Featuring local clothing made easily modify clothing sizes easily | 3.2338 | 1.31593 |
| Q10 | The colors of clothes homemade most versatile of foreign clothing | 3.3039 | 1.31443 |
| Q11 | The colors of clothes homemade more attractive than foreign clothing | 3.3065 | 1.26227 |
| Q12 | Speak positively about the local clothing in front of my friends and acquaintances | 3.2701 | 1.32672 |
| Q13 | Do not look for foreign clothing as long as the alternative it is locally | 3.2753 | 1.19549 |
| Q14 | I do not feel frustrated when dealing with the local clothing | 3.3091 | 1.20136 |
| Q15 | I feel that the local clothing of better quality | 3.3013 | 1.13772 |
| Q16 | I feel good about the local prices of clothing | 3.3403 | 1.19942 |
| Q17 | I have composed a good impression when you wear local clothing | 3.2130 | 1.18644 |
| Q18 | Keep pace with local-made clothes Fashion World | 3.1429 | 1.25119 |
| | **Grand mean** | 3.2696 | .95133 |

Examining the above table, it can be seen that there is a positive attitude from participants towards the above questions. This appeared through the mean of the paragraphs which scored higher than 3.00 referring to the paragraph as a good indicator.

## Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses of the study will be as follows:

*There is a statistical impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.*

Table 3: Analysis of the first hypothesis

**Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .774[a] | .599 | 0.6 | .60287 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), country

**ANOVA[b]**

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    Regression | 208.334 | 1 | 208.334 | 573.213 | .000[a] |
| Residual | 139.201 | 383 | .363 | | |
| Total | 347.534 | 384 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), country

b. Dependent Variable: image

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1    (Constant) | 1.030 | .098 | | 10.456 | .000 |
| country | .700 | .029 | .774 | 23.942 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: image

Simple Regression is used to test the above hypothesis. It is found that R (0.774) is the correlation of the country of origin image and the mental image. Also it is found that R Square (0.599), which is the explained variance, is actually the square of the multiple R (0.774)2. What the results mean is that (59.9%) of the variance (R-Square) in the mental image variable has been significantly explained by the country of origin image variable.

The ANOVA table shows that the F value of (573.213) is significant at (0.05) level. Thus, there is an impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.

***There is a statistical difference in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to (Gender , Educational level, and Age)***

Table 4: Analysis of the second  hypothesis Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable image

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 222.606$^a$ | 35 | 6.360 | 17.768 | .000 |
| Intercept | 199.813 | 1 | 199.813 | 558.199 | .000 |
| gender | .863 | 1 | .863 | 2.410 | .121 |
| edlevel | 1.473 | 1 | 1.473 | 4.115 | .043 |
| age | .631 | 1 | .631 | 1.764 | .185 |
| country | 206.789 | 32 | 6.462 | 18.053 | .000 |
| Error | 124.928 | 349 | .358 | | |
| Total | 4463.320 | 385 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 347.534 | 384 | | | |

a. R Squared = .641 (Adjusted R Squared = .604)

Three way ANOVA was used to test above hypothesis and it was found that calculated value of (F) of (educational level )is   significant at (0.05) which means that there is a statistical difference in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to Educational level only .whereas there is no statistical differences in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to (Gender and age).

## 8.  Results

**Following results were found**
1) In relation to Jordanian consumers' attitudes towards the country of origin of clothing  products, Jordanian consumers had positive attitudes towards it as a country of origin
2) There is an impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers.
3) There is a statistical difference in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to Educational level only.
4) There are no statistical differences in impact of Jordan's country of origin image on the mental image carried by clothing customers due to (Gender and age).

## 9. Conclusion

The global market has been witnessing great expansion and markets have started opening to one another and that involves all the countries of the world without any exception. In addition, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has set general principles that seek to liberalize foreign trade. Due to such factors, competition has been increasing between global institutions. However; such intuitions have been concerned with surviving in such a competition and increasing their market shares or preserving the rates of such shares as they are. Hence, such companies rushed into moving their manufacturing processes from the source country (i.e. the trademark's country of origin) to other countries. The latter countries are characterized with having investment facilities and laborers who earn low wages. These facilities and laborers participate in attracting such institutions to encourage them to move their manufacturing processes to them to become their countries of origin. In this context, the Jordanian market has started opening to the global market. For instance, the former market has been allowing global trademarks and products to enter. Hence, that led to intensifying the competition that has been (and will be) experienced by Jordanian institutions due to such openness.

That's why there is an interest in predicting the behavior of Jordanian customers towards local and foreign trademarks and products. That is usually done through examining their attitudes towards the country of origin and examining the impact of such attitudes towards their evaluations for the products manufactured in that country of origin. That is done in order to have a good understanding for the customers' way of thinking (Image) in order to form marketing strategies that can affect their behaviors and serve the goals of foreign and local institutions.

Based on the aforementioned results, the researchers have proposed several recommendations that may help national institutions and importers. The researcher believed that through these recommendations, these importers and institutions can benefit from the positive impacts of Jordanian consumers' attitudes towards the country of origin. Thus, that can allow these institutions and importers to increase their marketing activities in order to raise their abilities to compete. That is done to guarantee their survival, especially after the Jordanian market has become opened to the global market. The researchers have proposed the following recommendations:

1) Consumers' attitudes towards the country of origin of the product and trademark are considered the key standard adopted by the Jordanian consumer in evaluating the product that is technically complicated and intellectually dominant. Hence, national institutions that produce such types of products should take this factor into their consideration when designing their marketing mix along with their various policies.
2) Jordanian institutions must set a comprehensive strategy for raising the quality of their products. That is because quality has a major impact upon enhancing the image of the country of origin and upon the way its products are evaluated.
3) National institutions must be more concerned with conducting more research and improvements in order to raise their levels of innovation and technological developments in clothing sector. That shall lead to enhancing consumers' attitudes towards Jordan as a country of origin for all products due to keeping up with all the developments occurring in the fields of industry in all over the world.

4) Due to the impact of Jordanian consumers' demographic characteristics upon their attitudes towards the country of origin, Jordanian institutions must take educational level into consideration when designing the communication and marketing mixes that suit each

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