Consumer associations evoked by implicit and explicit country-of-origin cues

Research paper

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Abstract

Nowadays including the indication of the country-of-origin of a product is becoming a common practice for advertisers which can impact consumer evaluations. The country-of-origin can be indicated by using either a direct ('Made in') or indirect (foreign language) country-of-origin marker. This paper reports on a study which examined what associations are evoked by foreign language and 'Made in' cues, what are the differences between them and general associations with countries, and also how do the associations differ with regards to each country, namely France, Italy and Germany. The experiment included two different stimuli, indirect COO cue - a slogan, and a direct COO cue - a 'Made in' indication. 46 British citizens were asked to provide words or concepts that they would use as if they were working for an advertising agency and also general associations they have with the countries of interest. It was found that associations evoked by both foreign language use and 'Made in' indication do not differ significantly in their meaning, context and valence. Moreover, negative associations were provided only when the participants were asked to indicate their general associations with each country. Therefore, the image of the country alone is perceived differently from the image of the country in the product context. Finally, the most common categories of associations differed slightly for each country, meaning that different aspects were emphasized for different countries.

Theoretical background

Foreign language use in advertising

Due to the increase of the globalization phenomenon in today's world, foreign language (FL) use in advertising is growing into a common practice, examples of which can be found in any kind of media in different parts of the world. For instance, the German car manufacturer Audi used a slogan 'Vorsprung durch Technik' in billboard, print and television advertisements in the UK (Kelly-Holmes, 2005) and in Finland, the English language is commonly used in slogans in general (Pahta & Taavitsainen, 2004). This common method is called multilingual advertising and can be defined as "the appearance of a number of different languages or voices in a market-discourse situation" (Kelly-Holmes, 2005, p. 25).

Foreign language functions

Two functions of foreign language use in advertising were identified by Kelly-Holmes (2005): a referential function and a symbolic function. The former serves as a way of

communication with consumers and the latter creates associations in consumers' minds. Kelly-Holmes suggested that foreign languages used in advertising commonly have a symbolic function, which can be characterized as linguistic fetish. More precisely, "linguistic fetish relies on associations evoked in receivers of multilingual advertisements" (Hornikx, Van Meurs, & Starren, 2007, p. 205). Companies using foreign languages in advertising commonly aim to form a positive image regarding the product and to capture the consumers' attention.

Associations with languages

Different languages evoke different associations, therefore, companies can benefit by using a particular language to influence consumers' attitudes towards the product. For instance, in one study carried out in India, the participants associated the English language with professionalism, globalness and upper class, whereas the Hindi language was mostly associated with family, closeness and a sense of belonging (Krishna & Ahluwalia, 2008). In a study carried out in Ecuador, professionals from different advertising agencies were asked to associate the English language with specific predetermined concepts and the most frequent appeared to be internationality, technology, modern life and development (Alm, 2003). Additionally, the French language in advertising has become a symbol of femininity, fashion and beauty (Kelly-Holmes, 2000). Moreover, languages carry specific reputations. It is argued by linguists that languages are rated differently in terms of prestige (Ray, Ryder & Scott, 1991). This assertion was proven in an experiment by Lambert et al (1960), in which French and English speakers evaluated recordings of the same texts in French and in English languages in terms of good/bad and educated/uneducated. Evaluators of both nationalities rated the recording in English more favorably. Since the recordings were made by the same person in both languages and the recorded text was the same in both languages, the listeners could not have been influenced by the speaker's voice or by incomprehension of meaning.

Country of origin effect

The foreign language which is used in advertising is linked to the country-of-origin (COO), defined as "the country which a consumer associates with a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced" (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006, p. 29) and results in COO effect, meaning that characteristics or quality perceptions can be assigned by consumers to a product depending on the country of origin (Soto, Maborec & Friedmann, 2009). In advertisements, COOs of products/brands can be indicated explicitly

(e.g. 'made in France') or implicitly by using a slogan, heading or other written text in the foreign language. As there are two possible COO cues, it is essential and useful for advertisers and businesses to be familiar with how consumers perceive and respond to both of the cues in order to better appeal to their target consumers.

COO influence

The associations that arise in the consumers' minds are based on their experiences, knowledge, generalizations, and perceptions about that particular country and therefore act as an intermediary in consumer decision making process by influencing consumers' attitudes on the product's quality and reliability (Abraham & Patro, 2014). Various studies have shown that the country of origin of a product impacts consumer evaluations (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). As the country of origin is not a physical aspect of a product, it is considered as an extrinsic cue of the same importance as other extrinsic cues such as price. These cues aid consumers in the decision making process for the reason that intrinsic cues (e.g. quality) cannot be observed and measured before using a particular product (Abraham & Patro, 2014). For instance, the use of a German slogan, heading or a body copy in an advertisement would suggest that the product originates from Germany, and consequently would evoke certain associations, such as engineering quality or reliability (Kelly-Holmes, 2005). However, country of origin not only serves as a cognitive cue for product quality, but also carries affective meaning to the consumers, specifically symbolic and emotional connotations to the product, which can be formed while travelling or by indirect experiences through education or mass media (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Moreover, consumers can be influenced on the normative level, meaning that they can develop affinity or animosity towards a specific country based on that country's norms and values (Balabanis, Mueller & Melewar, 2002).

Stereotypes

One of the related aspects with associations with a specific country is the notion of stereotypes, defined as the predetermined opinions and beliefs regarding the features of a social group and assignment of these opinions to individuals who belong to that group (Liu, Volcic & Gallois, 2014). By means of technological advancements and socialization, individuals form "country-level categories or stereotypes which reflect their perceptions about the typical features each country possesses" (Diamantopoulos, Florack, Halkias & Palcu, 2017, p. 1024). When consumers are exposed to products from certain countries, they

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automatically are influenced by the stereotypes assigned to that particular country and therefore, their perceptions, associations and purchase intentions are influenced as well. These mental relations and perceptions can be explained by product ethnicity, which "refers to the stereotypical association of a generic product with a particular COO" (Usunier & Cestre, 2007, p. 36). As a result, these country-product matches evoke more positive product evaluations as well as purchase intentions (Roth & Romeo, 1992). For instance, France is associated with luxury goods, whereas products originating from Germany signal reliability (Usunier & Cestre, 2007).

COO and FL associations

Even though the COO effect is of great importance to businesses and marketers, very few studies have been carried out to provide empirical evidence on what individual associations are evoked by implicit (slogan) and explicit ("Made in") COO cues in advertising and to what extent these associations differ with general associations that the consumers have. Several studies looked into the associations in more detail and they will be discussed below as they are highly relevant and serve as a foundation for the present study.

Foreign language associations

The claim in the literature that foreign languages evoke specific associations was demonstrated in a study carried out by Hornikx, Van Meurs and Starren (2007). The participants were exposed to advertisements that included different foreign languages, namely French, German and Spanish, and were asked to write down the associations with that particular language used. From all the associations, the most frequent five for the three languages were as follows: French - 'beautiful', 'businesslike', 'simple', 'elegant' and 'boring', German - 'businesslike', 'reliable', 'boring', 'bare' and 'simple', and Spanish - 'beautiful', 'businesslike', 'modern', 'elegant' and 'boring'. Moreover, the evoked associations were grouped according to the valence (positive, neutral and negative). The researchers found that only half of the evoked associations were positive and negated the statements in the literature that foreign languages used in advertising evoke positive associations. The researchers explained that apart from other reasons as, for instance, historical reasons or negative images of countries, the choice of the product in the experiment might have influenced the valence of associations as well. The chosen product was an electronic mail receiver, which is not a typical product neither for France, Germany nor Spain. The researchers pointed out that the incongruence of the combination of language, country,

and product might result in neutral and negative associations. Even though the study looked at the content of associations, it was limited in that the ads included only one and the same product which is not congruent to any of the countries and also included foreign language only. Therefore, in the present study, the aim was to look at individual associations in a congruent product and country context including both, foreign languages and "Made in" cues. This choice was made to be able to compare associations evoked by indirect and direct COO cues, also to see whether there are differences in the valence of the associations.

COO associations

Herz & Diamantopoulos (2013) distinguished between rational and emotional country-specific associations. The former are associations that link a product or brand to a country based on beliefs about that particular country, including the country's aspects such as economy, politics, culture, etc. and citizen characteristics, such as labor, training, etc. The latter is based on positive or negative emotions towards that country. The authors applied the dual coding theory and stated that rational associations are processed by the verbal system, whereas emotional associations are processed by the non-verbal system. In order to examine this claim, the experiment was designed by means of a collage followed by an interview. In the first case, the participants were asked to make a collage representing associations with particular brands. They were able to use images and text from magazines, draw or write themselves. In the interviews, the participants were asked to describe a given brand, indicate associations and personal experiences with that brand, differentiate it from other brands and finally, mention the aspects that would influence their purchase decisions. It was found that rational associations included references to quality, ethics, product ethnicity and economic support, whereas emotional associations included expressions of feelings, memories and symbolic references. This study was the first one to distinguish and examine the rational and emotional country-specific associations. It was also found that sometimes consumers associate the brand to a different country than the true COO and consequently, assign that country's associations. As the aim of the current study was to gather associations with particular countries, the cues for the exact country of origin were provided.

Implicit and explicit COO cues

As it was stated previously, consumers evaluate products more positively when the product is congruent with the country of origin (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Hornikx and Van Meurs (2017, p. 62) explained that this occurs because "consumers have (implicitly)

assessed the connections between the product and the COO in their mental networks". The results of their study showed that when the product is unknown, consumers tend to associate the language with the country where it is commonly spoken, for instance, associate the German language with Germany. However, when the product is known, consumers relate the languages according to the product. For instance, the German language was associated with Germany when the advertisement included beer as a product, but when the product was skis, the German language was related to Austria. As a result, it can be stated that consumers' knowledge regarding COOs and common products influence their attitudes towards foreign languages and that the associations evoked by COO and foreign languages are similar. The latter was demonstrated in this study by comparison of associations evoked by ads with foreign languages and country of origin. However, one finding was that the ads that included the foreign language but not the COO were rated more favorably. The researchers explain it by claiming that "languages are evaluated in aesthetic terms" (p. 70), therefore, these aesthetic evaluations might have intervened the participants' opinions. This study is of great importance to the existing and future research. However, the study examined what the associations referred to (positive about product, negative about text, country mention, etc.) but did not look at the content of individual associations. In the present research, it was attempted to compare individual associations to gain a better understanding to what extent do associations evoked by foreign languages and "Made in" cues differ.

Research focus

In order to examine the associations more thoroughly, the stimuli in the experiment of the current study included specific countries with different products congruent to that specific country. Moreover, in the stimuli either a "Made in" cue (direct COO marker) or a slogan in a foreign language (indirect COO marker) was included and a question about general associations with each country. In sum, the aim was to look at the associations that are evoked by explicit COO cues ("Made in"), implicit COO cues (slogans) and general associations, also how do these associations differ regarding each of the country of interest. Finally, the research questions were formulated as follows:

RQ1: To what extent do associations evoked by COO and FL in the product context differ from associations with the country itself?

RQ2: To what extent do associations evoked by COO, FL and associations in general differ with regards to each country?

Methodology

Material

In the first part of the questionnaires, one stimulus included foreign language cues, the other included COO cues, in both of them the same countries with a congruent product to each of them were used, namely France, Italy, Germany and wine, pasta and a car, respectively. The product choice was based on the results of a study, where participants were asked to associate listed products with listed countries (Usunier & Cestre, 2007). More specifically, in the first stimulus, the respondents were exposed to three questions of this manner: 'Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a French/Italian/German company, is about to launch a new wine/pasta/car on the market. In the advertisement, the company wants to use a French/Italian/German slogan '(slogan in French/Italian/German)'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of'. The same slogan 'Enjoy every moment' will be presented in all three languages and translations into English will be provided. The slogans, translations of which into all languages were provided by native speakers of the corresponding languages, will be as follows: 'Apprécier chaque moment', 'Godere ogni momento', 'Genieße jeden moment', respectively. The second stimulus included questions of this manner: 'Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a French/Italian/German company, is about to launch a new wine/pasta/car on the market. In the advertisement, they intend to emphasize the country of origin by stating 'Made in France/Italy/Germany'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of'. Moreover, the respondents were asked to write down the general associations they have with each of the countries. The questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. After the pretest there were some changes made in the formulation of the questions as it appeared that the pretest participants did not understand exactly what they were asked to do.

Subjects

The participants of the research were 46 citizens of the UK, 65% of which were female. The participants were on average 29.48 (*SD*=9.58) years old most frequently holding a Bachelor's degree. 21 of the respondents were still students at the time of the experiment. 6 of the respondents failed to indicate their personal information such as gender, age and

education. There were no significant distribution differences in age ($X^2(22) = 32.77, p = .065$), gender ($X^2(1) = 0.301, p = .583$), education ($X^2(5) = 5.47, p = .363$), or whether the participant was a student or not ($X^2(1) = 0, p = .987$)within the two manipulations. From a 7 point Likert scale, the participants were on average 4.22 (*SD*=1.37) familiar with France, 3.76 (*SD*=1.64) with Italy and 3.61 (*SD*=1.48) with Germany. There were no differences in familiarity within the two manipulations ($X^2(6) = 4, p = .676$).

Design

The experiment was designed by a 2 (COO cue: indirect (slogan) and direct ("Made in") x 3 (country-product match: France-wine, Italy-pasta, Germany-car) and used both the between- and within-subjects designs. The participants were exposed to two different stimuli - one of the groups was exposed to stimulus including a slogan in a foreign language, the other was exposed to stimulus including a "Made in" indication. Finally, all the participants were additionally asked to write down general associations with each of the countries.

Instruments

The questionnaire included two different stimuli, one with an indirect COO cue (slogan in the foreign language) and the other stimulus with a direct COO cue ("Made in"). Both stimuli included three questions regarding three different countries. Moreover, a question regarding the general associations with each country was included in both versions of the questionnaires. The respondents were provided space to write down their associations below every question. The associations were distinguished as evoked by direct COO cue, evoked by indirect COO cue and general associations. Every single association was later coded. The participants were also asked to indicate their familiarity with each of the countries on a 7 point Likert scale (1 - Not familiar, 7 - Very familiar). Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate their age, gender, educational level and whether the participant is currently a student or not.

Procedure

The experiment of the current research included only online versions of questionnaires and was conducted on an individual basis. The participants were approached personally or via social media channels and email. No incentives were provided to the participants. On average, it took approximately 11 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. The aim of the experiment was

briefly disclosed in the questionnaire, also, the participants were encouraged to pose any questions by email.

Before discussing the results of the experiment, it is essential to introduce the categories into which all the associations were assigned. The categories were made up partially based on Aichner (2014) and partially determined after reviewing all the associations so that every single association would be assigned to a category. The categories are as follows:

1. Famous people
2. Landscapes, buildings, cities
3. Food, beverages, cuisine
4. Culture, values
5. Attributes, traits, qualities
6. Typical products, items
7. Personal experience (for general associations only)

Moreover, the associations were marked as corresponding or not to the following variables:

1. Product reference (reference to or association with the products used in the stimuli)
2. COO reference (reference to or association with the countries used in the stimuli)
3. COO language use (mention of the language or usage of words in the language of the country in the stimuli)

Finally, the associations were assessed according to their valence (positive, neutral, negative), which was based on Hornikx, Van Meurs and Starren (2007).

Every single association was coded by two coders. The interrater reliability for the variables 'Category', 'Product reference', 'COO reference', 'COO language use' and 'Valence' was good: $\kappa = .933, p < .001$; $\kappa = .969, p < .001$; $\kappa = .906, p < .001$; $\kappa = 1, p < .001$; $\kappa = .935, p < .001$, respectively.

Results

The aim of this study was to provide insight on what associations are evoked by the use of foreign language and the use of indications of country of origin, how do they differ with general associations with the countries of interest and how do the associations differ within each country.

Associations evoked by direct and indirect COO markers and general associations with countries

Categories

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between associations evoked by direct, indirect markers, general associations and categories of the associations $(X^2(12) = 293.65, p < .001)$. The results are presented below in Table 1. The most common associations under the 'Attributes, traits, qualities' category were evoked by the direct COO marker (64.4%) (examples: *authentic, homemade, trustworthy*) less by the indirect marker (52.3%) (examples: *elegance, unique, reliability*) and more less from the general associations (19.3%) (examples: *sophisticated, simplicity, strict*). The most associations for the 'Culture, values' category were provided for the foreign language cue (29.8%) (examples: *family, traditions, music*), less by general associations (19.6%) (examples: *Amélie, Shakespeare plays, beer culture*) and fewer by the 'Made in' indication (11.4%) (examples: *winemaking traditions, family, Goethe*). For the 'Food, beverages, cuisine' category relatively more general associations were produced (12.7%) (examples: *French pastries, espresso, sausages*) than evoked by the foreign language cue (8.4%) (examples: *wine, pasta, creamy sauce*) or by the 'Made in' indication (2.1%) (examples: *cheese, pesto, bratwurst*). There were relatively more associations under the 'Landscapes, buildings, cities' from general associations (17.6%) (examples: *Paris, Pisa tower, Berlin Wall*) than evoked by the foreign language cue (8.4%) (examples: *countryside, Tuscany, roads*). There were relatively more general associations under the 'Typical products, items' (9.2%) (examples: *fashion, mafia, Oktoberfest*) than evoked by direct (2.4%) (examples: *berets, Vespa, cars*) or indirect markers (1.1%) (examples: *cars*). Only general associations (8.1%) fell under the 'Personal experience' category (examples: *summer holidays, grumpy waiters, summer camps*). From all the general associations 2.2% fell under the category of 'Famous people' (examples: *Louis XIV, Galileo, Martin Luther*), whereas there were no associations under this category evoked by the foreign language cue.

Table 1.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations evoked by indirect (FL), direct (COO) markers and general associations (GA).

	FL	COO	GA	
Category	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total

Attributes, traits, qualities	149a (52.3%)	186b (64.4%)	124c (19.3%)	459 (37.7%)
Culture, values	85a (29.8%)	33b (11.4%)	126c (19.6%)	244 (20.1%)
Food, beverages, cuisine	24a (8.4%)	26a (2.1%)	154b (12.7%)	204 (16.8%)
Landscapes, buildings, cities	24a (8.4%)	36a,b (12.5%)	113b (17.6%)	173 (14.2%)
Typical products, items	3a (1.1%)	7a (2.4%)	59b (9.2%)	69 (5.7%)
Personal experience	0a (0.0%)	0a (0.0%)	52b (8.1%)	52 (4.3%)
Famous people	0a (0.0%)	1a,b (0.3%)	14b (2.2%)	15 (1.2%)
Total	285	289	642	1216

Product reference

There was no significant relation between associations evoked by direct, indirect markers and product reference ($X^2(1) = 3.07, p = .080$). The results are presented below in Table 2. Associations evoked by both foreign language and 'Made in' cues referred to the product equally (examples: *rich taste, handcrafted, top speed*), however, more associations did not refer to the product mentioned in each question.

Table 2.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations evoked by indirect (FL) and direct (COO) markers.
Note: General associations are not present here as none of them referred to the product.

	FL	COO	
Product reference	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	134a (47%)	157a (54.3%)	291 (23.9%)
No	151a (53%)	132a (45.7%)	925 (76.1%)

COO reference

There was no significant relation between the associations evoked by direct, indirect markers and COO reference ($X^2(1) = 1.57, p = .210$). The results are presented below in Table 3. The associations provided by the participants referred to the COO similarly

(examples: *French countryside, Italian experience, German quality*), but associations that did not refer to the COO were more frequent.

Table 3. Absolute and relative frequencies of associations evoked by indirect (FL) and direct (COO) markers.
Note: General associations are not present here as none of them referred to the COO.

	FL	COO	
COO reference	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	12a (4.2%)	19a (6.6%)	31 (2.5%)
No	273a (95.8%)	270a (93.4%)	1185 (97.5%)

COO language use

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the associations evoked by direct, indirect markers, general associations and COO language use ($X^2(2) = 14.07, p = .001$). The results are presented below in Table 4. There were relatively more words in the COO language used or the COO language mentioned in associations evoked by the direct COO marker (4.2%) than by general associations (1.2%) or indirect marker (0.4%) (examples: *bonjour, bellissimo, autobahn*).

Table 4. Absolute and relative frequencies of associations evoked by indirect (FL), direct (COO) markers and general associations (GA).

	FL	COO	GA	
COO language use	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	1a (0.4%)	12b (4.2%)	8a (1.2%)	21 (1.7%)
No	284a (99.6%)	277b (95.8%)	634a (98.8%)	1195 (98.3%)

Valence

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the associations evoked by direct, indirect markers, general associations and valence ($X^2(4) = 22.83, p < .001$). The results are presented below in Table 5. There were relatively more neutral associations provided by the direct COO marker (95.8%) than when the participants were asked about their general associations with a country (89.9%). Also, negative associations were present only within the general associations (3.4%) (examples: *poor English skills, bad drivers, war, rude*).

Table 5.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations evoked by indirect (FL), direct (COO) markers and general associations (GA).

	FL	COO	GA	
Valence	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Positive	19a (6.7%)	12a (4.2%)	43a (6.7%)	74 (6.1%)
Neutral	266a,b (93.3%)	277b (95.8%)	577a (89.9%)	1120 (92.1%)
Negative	0a (0.0%)	0a (0.0%)	22b (3.4%)	22 (1.8%)

Associations evoked by different COOs (France, Germany, Italy)

Categories

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the countries and categories of associations ($X^2(12) = 128.13, p < .001$). The results are presented below in Table 6. The participants provided relatively more associations with Germany (53.9%) (examples: *safety, experience, German engineering*) under the category 'Attributes, traits, qualities' than with France (32.2%) (examples: *sophisticated, unique, original*) and Italy (29.7%) (examples: *homemade, authentic, traditional*). Under the category 'Culture, values' there were relatively less associations with Germany (12.3%) (examples: *music, Bach, Albrecht Dürer, flag*) than with Italy (21.6%) (examples: *flag, family, traditions, Canaletto*) and France (24.9%) (examples: *flag, art, multiculturalism, postmodernism*). The most associations under the 'Food, beverages, cuisine' category were provided with Italy (24.2%) (examples: *espresso, pesto, pizza, gelato*), less with France (16.8%) (examples: *wine, pastries, coffee, baguette*) and fewer with Germany (8.1%) (examples: *beer, sausage, Black Forest cake, bockwurst*). More associations with 'Typical products, items' were provided for Germany (11.5%) (examples: *cars, Oktoberfest, car manufacturers, lederhosen*) than for France (32.2%) (examples: *berets, fashion, smokers, French New Wave*) and Italy (29.7%) (examples: *mafia, scooters, football, Vespa*). The participants associated Germany (1.4%) (examples: *summer camps, massive portions at restaurants, complicated ticket machines, adventures*) relatively less with 'Personal experience' than France (5.9%) (examples: *summer holidays, silent discos, pleasant French accent, attractive women*) and Italy (5%) (examples: *good weather, my ex-housemate, great flirting skills, bad driving habits*). The quantity of associations under the categories of 'Landscapes, buildings, cities' (examples: *Arc de Triomphe, Verona, mountains*) and 'Famous

people' (examples: *Louis XIV, Galileo, Angela Merkel*) did not differ significantly for each of the countries.

Table 6.　　　Absolute and relative frequencies of associations for different COOs - France, Italy and Germany.

	France	Italy	Germany	
Category	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Attributes, traits, qualities	142_a (32.2%)	124_a (29.7%)	193_b (53.9%)	459 (37.7%)
Culture, values	110_a (24.9%)	90_a (21.6%)	44_b (12.3%)	244 (20.1%)
Food, beverages, cuisine	74_a (16.8%)	101_b (24.2%)	29_c (8.1%)	204 (16.8%)
Landscapes, buildings, cities	71_a (16.1%)	63_a (15.1%)	39_a (10.9%)	173 (14.2%)
Typical products, items	14_a (3.2%)	14_a (3.4%)	41_b (11.5%)	69 (5.7%)
Personal experience	26_a (5.9%)	21_a (5%)	5_b (1.4%)	52 (4.3%)
Famous people	4_a (0.9%	4_a (1%)	7_a (2%)	15 (1.2%)
Total	441	417	358	1216

Product reference

　　A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the countries and product reference ($X^2(2) = 12.16, p = .002$). The results are presented below in Table 7. The associations provided for Germany (30.4%) (examples: *high quality, reliable, top acceleration, ergonomic*) referred to the product relatively more than associations provided for France (20.4%) (examples: *rich taste, fresh, organic, original*) or Italy (22.1%) (examples: *soft taste, wholegrain, traditional, authentic recipe*).

Table 7.　　　Absolute and relative frequencies of associations for different COOs - France, Italy and Germany.

	France	Italy	Germany	
Product reference	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	90_a (20.4%)	92_a (22.1%)	109_b (30.4%)	291 (23.9%)
No	351_a (79.6%)	325_a (77.9%)	249_b (69.6%)	925 (76.1%)

COO reference

There was no significant relation between the countries and COO reference ($X^2(2) =$ 1.07, $p = .590$). The results are presented below in Table 8. The associations provided for each country referred to that specific country similarly (examples: *high quality of French wine, Italian traditions, German quality*).

Table 8.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations for different COOs - France, Italy and Germany.

	France	Italy	Germany	
COO reference	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	11a (2.5%)	13a (3.1%)	7a (2%)	31 (2.5%)
No	430a (97.5%)	404a (96.9%)	351a (98%)	1185 (97.5%)

COO language use

There was no significant relation between the countries and COO language use ($X^2(2) = 0.03$, $p = .985$). The results are presented below in Table 9. The provided associations did not include many words in a particular COO language or did not mention it. Examples of foreign language use: *pain au chocolat, bellissimo, autobahn*.

Table 9.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations for different COOs - France, Italy and Germany.

	France	Italy	Germany	
COO language use	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Yes	8a (1.8%)	7a (1.7%)	6a (1.7%)	21 (1.7%)
No	433a (98.2%)	410a (98.3%)	352a (98.3%)	1195 (98.3%)

Valence

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the countries and valence ($X^2(4) = 14.9$, $p = .005$). The results are presented below in Table 10. There were relatively more neutral associations with France (93.9%) than with Germany (88.8%) and relatively more negative associations with Germany (3.9%) (examples: *rude, unfriendly, funny English accent, Hitler*) than with France (1.1%) (examples: *grumpy waiters, smelly*

toilets, rude people) or Italy (0.7%) (examples: *tacky billboards, bad driving skills, poor kissers*).

Table 10.   Absolute and relative frequencies of associations for different COOs - France, Italy and Germany.

	France	Italy	Germany	
Valence	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total
Positive	22_a (5%)	26_a (6.2%)	26_a (7.3%)	74 (6.1%)
Neutral	414_a (93.9%)	$388_{a,b}$ (93%)	318_b (88.8%)	1120 (92.1%)
Negative	5_a (1.1%)	3_a (0.7%)	14_b (3.9%)	22 (1.8%)

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine what associations are evoked by foreign language and country-of-origin cues, to what extent they differ from general associations with each country and how the associations provided for each country differ in between.

Associations evoked by direct and indirect COO markers and general associations with countries

Regarding the different categories, the most common category for the associations evoked by foreign language use and 'Made in' indication was 'Attributes, traits, qualities', whereas for general associations with countries, the most common, even though slightly different from 'Attributes, traits, qualities', was 'Culture, values'. Therefore, in the product context, the participants tended to emphasize the attributes of that product, but when they thought about the country itself, aspects of culture and values of the particular country were mentioned more often. Associations evoked by direct or indirect COO cues referred to the product and the country equally, therefore, foreign language or 'Made in' indication does not influence the focus on the country and product in the consumers' minds. With regards to the COO language use, the participants tended to use more words in a COO's language when exposed to the direct than to the indirect COO marker and when asked to provide general associations. Regarding valence, both COO cues did not evoke any negative associations, which were provided only for the general associations.

Associations evoked by different COOs (France, Germany, Italy)

Even though the most associations provided for each country fell under the category 'Attributes, traits, qualities', the participants tended to emphasize the traits and qualities more for Germany than for France or Italy. However, for France and Italy the participants provided more associations with culture and values than for Germany. The associations provided for Germany referred to the product more than associations provided for France or Italy, however, associations for all the countries referred to the COO similarly and included similar amount of words in the COO language. Moreover, more neutral associations were provided for France and Italy, whereas more negative associations were provided for Germany.

Discussion

Due to the fact that only several studies were conducted on associations evoked by COO cues and that the methods and purposes of the particular studies varied, it will be attempted to select the most relevant findings of the previous studies and compare with the results of the current research.

From the results of this current study it could be claimed that foreign language use and 'Made in' indication evoke relatively similar associations, meaning that associations evoked by direct and indirect COO cues refer to the country and the product similarly. There is no difference whether the consumers are exposed to a foreign language or a 'Made in' indication, they still think about that particular country and the product. This finding is partially in line with the one in a study carried out by Hornikx and Van Meurs (2017). In this study it was found that the associations evoked by direct and indirect COO cues are similar in, for instance, country or language mention. However, the latter does not comply with the finding in the current study that the COO language use or mention was more common within associations evoked by the direct COO cue. After all, this finding could support the claim, which was also supported by the findings in the study of Hornikx and Van Meurs (2017) that foreign language serves as an implicit cue for the COO. In the current study the participants, when exposed to a 'Made in' indication, included words or mentioned the foreign language in their associations, meaning that the country of origin and the language of that country is closely associated.

The close relation between the country and its language can be supported in a way by the finding in this study that the participants provided the most negative general associations with Germany, whereas in the study carried out by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Starren (2017) it

was found that the German language evoked a high percentage of negative associations, which can be due to various reasons, for instance, historical circumstances, familiarity with the country and its culture or simply stereotypes. However, it might have been a simple coincidence as the participants in the current study were British citizens whereas in the other study the participants were Dutch citizens. Also, familiarity did not have an influence in this study as there were no significant differences in valence of the associations controlling for familiarity with a particular country. Therefore, future research could investigate more thoroughly the relation between the country-of-origin and its language, also how citizens of different nations view other nations and how stereotypes influence the consumers' perceptions as the general associations with countries and associations in advertising differ.

In the current study, no negative associations were provided by either direct or indirect COO cues, negative associations only appeared when the participants were asked to indicate their general associations with the countries. The fact that there were no negative associations evoked by COO cues can be explained by the study carried out by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Starren (2017). The authors looked into associations evoked by foreign language use and found a quarter of all associations to be negative, which was explained by the country-product incongruence (the product used in the study was not congruent with any of the countries). Consequently, as in this current study the products used were congruent with every country no negative associations were evoked by both COO cues.

Moreover, the results of this current study showed that the frequencies of associations evoked by both COO cues do not differ with regards to positive or neutral associations, meaning that neither foreign language use nor ''Made in' indication does not evoke more positive associations. This finding is also partially in line with the findings of the study done by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Starren (2017), where only half of the associations evoked by foreign language was positive. Therefore, these two studies demonstrate that foreign language does not always evoke positive associations only. Also, the findings of this study add that neither of the two COO cues evoke more positive associations.

Regarding differences between associations provided for different countries, the results showed that the participants tended to emphasize attributes and qualities when thinking about Germany, whereas for France and Italy more associations were provided regarding culture and values of the countries. This finding might be explained by the notion of stereotypes. However, future studies should look into this more extensively, for instance,

compare whether a German car is more reliable than a French car, or is Italian coffee better than German coffee.

Furthermore, in this study the participants provided both rational and emotional general associations with countries, however they were more likely to provide rational associations. This finding could partly support the results in Herz & Diamantopoulos (2013) where the participants provided more rational associations through verbal communication, whereas emotional associations were more likely to be provided through non-verbal communication. Due to the fact that the methods of both experiments were completely different and this current experiment was conducted through verbal communication, future research could look into the differences between the two.

Finally, the results of the research show how British consumers perceive the countries of interest and products originating from these countries. Therefore, the results might serve as an insight on how to better appeal to British consumers. Moreover, it was shown that the associations evoked by both direct and indirect COO cues are fairly similar and that the country-of-origin and its language are closely associated.

The research was limited in that the both versions of the questionnaire included too many questions, therefore, it was simply too much for the respondents. Also, as the questionnaire was conducted only online, so the majority of potential participants did not finish the questionnaire or even closed it after seeing the questions. Therefore, it would be necessary to either administer more versions of the questionnaire and distribute the questions across the different versions or just include less questions, but then the study would not be as wide.

Moreover, the participants were British citizens only, therefore, future research should investigate other nations' citizens' associations with other countries, whether there are differences and whether there are differences in the evoked associations with regards to the two types of COO cues.

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Appendix

You are invited to participate in a research project which is being conducted by a student of Radboud University. The procedure involves filling out an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 minutes. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. The data collected will be made fully anonymous. The purpose of this study is to look at how consumers process advertisements. Should you want more information on the research project, please feel free to contact the student at l.daugirdaite@student.ru.nl

CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Choosing the "Agree" option below indicates that:

• You have read the above information

• You voluntarily agree to participate

• You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline your participation by choosing the "Disagree" option.

○ Agree

○ Disagree

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a French company, is about to launch a new wine on the market. In the advertisement, the company wants to use a French slogan 'Apprécier chaque moment'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

Translation of the slogan: 'Appreciate every moment'

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, an Italian company, is about to launch a new pasta on the market. In the advertisement, the company wants to use an Italian slogan 'Godere ogni momento'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

Translation of the slogan: 'Appreciate every moment'

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a German company, is about to launch a new car on the market. In the advertisement, the company wants to use a German slogan 'Genieße jeden moment'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

Translation of the slogan: 'Appreciate every moment'

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

(Questions for version 2)

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a French company, is about to launch a new wine on the market. In the advertisement, they intend to emphasize the country of origin by stating 'Made in France'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, an Italian company, is about to launch a new pasta on the market. In the advertisement, they intend to emphasize the country of origin by stating 'Made in Italy'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency. Your client, a German company, is about to launch a new car on the market. In the advertisement, they intend to emphasize the country of origin by stating 'Made in Germany'. What else would you include in the ad to promote the product? For instance, what words or aspects would you include in the ad? Write down as much as you can think of.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

(Questions for both versions)

What are your general associations with each of the countries? Please write down any associations that come to mind based on your personal knowledge, travel, media, etc.

France:

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

    4. _____

    5. _____

    6. _____

    7. _____

    8. _____

Italy:

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

    4. _____

    5. _____

    6. _____

    7. _____

    8. _____

Germany:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

To what extent are you familiar with each of the countries? Please indicate the level of familiarity based on your personal knowledge, travel, relatives, media, etc.

	1 - Not familiar	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Very familiar
France	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Italy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Germany	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your personal details below.

Gender:

○ Male

○ Female

○ Other

Age:

_____

Education:

○ Secondary education or less

○ Undergraduate level

○ Graduate level/Bachelor's degree

○ Postgraduate level/ Master's level

○ Doctoral degree/PhD

○ Other _____

Are you currently a student?

○ Yes

○ No