Basic Emotions and Country Stereotypes Triggered by Country of Origin Cues: An Interaction of Fear and Sadness

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Abstract: Drawing on the Appraisal Tendency Framework and the Stereotype Content Model This paper investigates how basic emotions and country stereotypes triggered by country-of-origin (COO) cues impact brand attitudes. We argue that basic emotions are automatically triggered by COO cues influencing brand attitudes directly and in interaction with the stereotype dimensions of warmth and competence. We found that happiness and disgust had a direct effect on brand attitude whereas fear and sadness had a significant interaction with stereotypes. Sadness and fear had an opposite effect despite sharing a negative valence. By using an implicit method based on facial recognition, we assess basic emotions in a non-intrusive way without relying on self-reporting. Our findings extend COO theory by examining underlying mechanisms of specific basic emotions on consumer attitudes and the interaction effect of emotions and stereotypes. Managerially, our study provides inputs for the use of emotional elements in marketing and positioning strategies.

Keywords: Basic-Emotions, Country-of-Origin, Country-Stereotypes

Track: International Marketing & Marketing in Emerging Countries

1. Introduction

Research on emotions has notably increased in the last decades providing solid evidence of their influence on consumer decisions and most recently entering the realms of international marketing (Lerner, et al 2015). In light of the developments termed an "international trade war" (BBC, 2018), additional tariffs are imposed on imported goods rendering the "made in" label a determining factor in consumer purchase decisions. Nevertheless and despite this surge in attention, little is still known about the influence of specific basic emotions on individuals' purchasing decisions with regards to choosing between identical products coming from different countries (Chen et al, 2014). Indeed, as emotions towards countries influence product evaluations (Chen et al, 2014), understanding the role of basic emotions in relation to the country-of-origin (COO) is an important yet under-researched area, and such investigation can provide important insights into underlying mechanisms of COO effects.

Although marketing studies have empirically shown that the affective dimension of country-of-origin (COO) plays a crucial role in consumers' product evaluations (Maher & Carter, 2011), specific basic emotions have barely been examined in COO studies. The phenomenon of COO effect is related to the impact of perceptions about the origin of a product or a brand on consumer responses, in which a detailed investigation of basic emotions still constitutes a research gap (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2011). Relevant studies have highlighted the role of emotions in COO, specifically admiration and contempt, as mediators in the relationship between country stereotypes and brand outcomes (Maher & Carter, 2011). These emotions can be considered secondary emotions, which arise from cognitive evaluations and therefore possibly measured by explicit measures through questionnaires (Lazarus, 1991). However, recent studies in psychology indicate that basic emotions, understood as emotions with bodily universal expressions not necessarily arisen from cognitive appraisals (Ekman, 1992), can be automatically activated leading them to influence decision-making without an individual's awareness (Lerner et al, 2015). This automatic activation of basic emotions cannot be measured by traditional explicit methods as they assess cognitive evaluations of emotions and not emotions *per se*. Thus, the investigation of the influence basic emotions triggered by COO cues requires both a theoretical framework that explains emotions before cognitive evaluations and implicit methods that assess emotions without relying on self-report.

Drawing on the Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF, Lerner & Keltner, 2000) the automatic influence of specific basic emotions on COO effects can be explained in terms of the appraisal tendency associated with each emotion. Defined as "goal-directed processes through which emotions exert effects on judgment and choice until the emotion-eliciting problem is resolved" (Lerner & Keltner, 2000 p.477), appraisal tendencies work as a parameter linked to a specific emotion that can influence cognitive and motivational processes. Thus, appraisal tendencies can furthermore also vary according to a specific COO cue and be triggered in the presence of it. In this sense, automatically activated basic emotions by COO cues can have a direct influence on consumer decisions and behaviour independently of cognitive mediation.

Furthermore, COO studies have shown that stereotypes can also be automatically triggered by COO cues influencing product evaluations (Liu & Johnson, 2005; Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013a). Defined as "individuals' cognitive associations and expectations about any societal (i.e. national) group" (Chattalas et al, 2007 P.55), stereotypes influence consumer evaluations (Diamantopoulos et al., 2017). The theoretical framework widely used to conceptualize and operationalize stereotypes is the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) from the field of psychology (Fiske et al., 2002). The SCM assesses that social groups can be described along the two dimensions of warmth (beliefs about how friendly or good-natured a particular country is perceived) and competence (beliefs with regard to the country's capabilities and efficiency) (Fiske et al., 2002). Studies reveal that the mere presence of a COO cue activates country stereotypes automatically (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013) and consequently, transferring country-level beliefs to products and brands (Diamantopoulos, et al., 2017). To the best of our knowledge, although strong evidence already supports the impact of stereotypes triggered by COO cues, the study of the relationship between automatically activated basic emotions and country stereotypes remain scarce.

Literature indicates that both basic emotions and stereotypes can be automatically triggered by COO cues and consequently influence consumer evaluations, however there is still a gap with respect to identifying how these two constructs interact. Basic emotions and stereotypes have a different purpose; the former as an immediate response to address an event quickly (Frijda, 1987), the latter as a cognitive process for heuristic and simple processing strategies (Bodenhausen et al., 1994). Thus, both emotions and stereotypes generate a distinct type of cognitive processes impacting perceptions differently. Furthermore, as emotions can influence

on-going cognitive evaluations (Han, et al., 2007), they might also impact stereotypes, which suggest a moderating effect of basic emotions on country stereotypes.

Hence, the purpose of this paper shall be an investigation into the influence of automatically activated basic emotions and country stereotypes triggered by COO cues on brand attitudes. Drawing from the ATF and the SCM, we examine the impact of both automatically activated emotions and country stereotypes triggered by COO cues on consumers' brand attitude by examining specific emotions and the appraisal tendencies associated with them. We employ an implicit method based on a facial recognition system to capture basic emotions, which does not rely on self-reports and allows for reliable measures of basic emotions in a non-intrusive way. Our findings contribute to international marketing literature by identifying underlying mechanisms of COO effects with regards to specific emotions and insightful managerial inputs for marketing communication and positioning strategies.

2. The Influence of Automatically Activated Basic Emotions and Country Stereotypes Triggered by Country of Origin Cues on Brand Attitudes

Emotional responses in the form of basic emotions can exert an influence on cognitive evaluations and behaviour without the mediation of cognition (Han, et al., 2007). Emotions involve a complex series of experiential, cognitive, behavioural and expressive reactions to address an event quickly (Lerner et al., 2015). In order to understand how these emotional responses vary, it is commonly used to categorize emotions in their most elemental level as basic emotions. The term "basic" refers to underlying biological substrates identifiable across cultures, which enable individuals to deal quickly with encountered situations (Frijda, 1986). Drawing from the ATF, basic emotions might interrupt on-going cognitive processes redirecting attention and judgment, consequently influencing behaviour (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Each basic emotion can be associated to an appraisal tendency in order to establish parameters for estimating the effect of each emotion. Basic emotions might differ on each individual but they can be to certain degree categorized and predicted, which accounts for the effects of each emotion upon judgment and decision-making (Han, et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2015).

Stereotypes can also be automatically activated influencing individuals' attitudes in a different way than emotions. As stereotypes are a cognitive strategy for heuristic processing and

learning, the automatic activation for cognitive evaluation involves a recall of information stored in memory for immediate processing (Bodenhausen, et al., 1994). This differentiated effect of cognition and affect on COO evaluations has already been investigated by previous studies (Wang et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2014). Wang et al., (2012) suggested a decomposing COO effect, in which the cognitive and affective COO components have a distinct impact on evaluations, the former through product image, and the latter direct, independent of product image. Chen et al, (2014) demonstrated that country related affect is distinct from country related product associations influencing evaluations both independently of, and in interaction with cognitive associations. Moreover, marketing literature revealed that the mere presence of a COO cue activates country stereotypes influencing product evaluations even in the absence of intention (Liu & Johnson, 2005; Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013a). Thus, both emotions and stereotypes can be automatically activated but as their cognitive process differ, they might also have a differentiated type of influence on evaluations and behaviour.

Basic emotional responses can occur unconsciously and automatically (Lazarus, 1991) and consumers may be unaware of their influence, for which an implicit type of measurement is required. Explicit measurement of emotions (i.e., items on questionnaires) cannot assess the entire scope of emotions' effects because these methods capture appraisals consciously reported after a personal evaluation (Bagozzi, et al., 1999). Therefore, we have selected an implicit method for assessing emotions based on FACS (Facial Action Coding System), which measures facial expressions and translate them into scales of basic emotions (Ekman, 1992). Emotional responses can be translated into several scales of basic emotions ranging from six to twenty emotions, which can vary depending on the purpose of the study (Ekman,

Emotion	Valence	Appraisal Tendency
Happiness	Positive	Positive or pleasant states ranging from contentment to intense joy Certainty-associated emotion. High attention. Associated with human control. Anticipated expending little effort
Surprise	Positive/ Negative	Result of an unexpected event that can have any valence; Uncertainty –associated emotion. High attention. Uncontrolled situation, caused by other people. Anticipated expending little effort
Puzzlement	Positive/ Negative	State of being confused or unclear about an unexpected event. Uncertainty -associated emotion. Low attention. Uncontrolled situation, caused by other people. Anticipated expending little effort
Disgust	Negative	Revulsion to something considered offensive, distasteful, or unpleasant. Certainty-associated emotion. Extremely unpleasant. Other's responsibility/control. High attention. Uncontrolled situation,
Fear	Negative	Being too close to a potentially contaminating object. Uncertainty –associated emotion. Unpleasant state demanding extreme amounts of effort. High attention. Other's responsibility/control
Sadness	Negative	Loss and misfortune of an undesirable outcome by situational factors beyond anyone's control. Uncertainty –associated emotion. Extremely unpleasant. High-anticipated effort. Situational control. Low attention

Table 1 Basic Emotions Analysed

1992). Consistent with prior research, we have selected a six emotions scale: surprise, puzzlement, sadness, disgust, fear and happiness (Ekman & Rosenber, 2005). These six emotions have physiological properties that facilitate their implicit measurement via facial recognition systems and have shown ninety percent congruence with direct measurement of the face (Crowdemotion, 2018). Table 1 shows a description of the appraisal tendency and valence of each basic emotion examined in our studies.

The discussion above sets the framework of our research (see Figure 1). We argue that both emotional responses- in the form of basic emotions, and country stereotypes are automatically activated by COO cues influencing brand attitude distinctively.

Moreover, consistent with previous literature (Chen et al., 2014) when a country elicits affect, attitudes and evaluations of products are also influenced by stereotypical associations. Thus, we expect an interacting effect of basic emotions and country stereotypes on brand attitude. We argue that both cognitive and affective processes influence brand attitude simultaneously and that when an emotion is elicited, the interaction between the stereotype dimension will be significant and explained by the appraisal tendency associated with each emotion (Lerner and Keltner, 2000). Specifically, we expect that happiness, as a high-certainty emotion tend to reduce the depth of cognitive processing to encourage heuristic thinking (Tiedens & Linton 2001), will moderate the relationship between country stereotypes and brand attitude in a positive direction. In contrast, fear is associated with low certainty and low sense of control generating a tendency to see greater risk in events (Lerner et al., 2015). Thus, we expect that the lower the stereotype dimensions (low certainty), the stronger the effect of fear on brand attitude. Moreover, disgust, a high-certainty emotion, has shown to increase heuristic processing by increasing reliance on the use of stereotypes, and reducing attention to argument quality (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). Therefore, we expect that the higher the levels of stereotypes, the stronger the effect of disgust on brand attitude. On the contrary, sadness has shown to trigger more

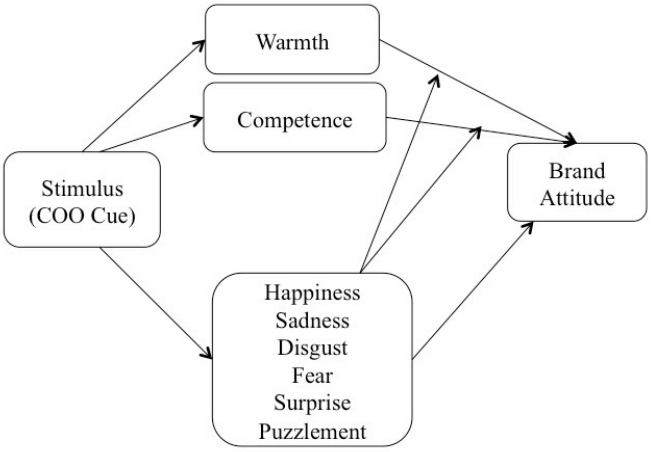

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

systematic thought reducing reliance on stereotypes (Bodenhausen et al., 1994). Thus, we predict that sadness will moderate the relationship between country stereotypes and brand attitude in a negative direction. Surprise and puzzlement are associated with appraisal tendencies to see favourable events as unpredictable with low certainty. Therefore they are less likely to influence consumer brand attitudes.

3. Empirical Study

3.1 Research design

One hundred and seventy three Austrian consumers (52% Male M_{age} = 41.24, SD = 16.67) were recruited for a web-based experiment in a between-subjects, conducted by a professional marketing research agency. Basic emotions were implicitly assessed through the facial recognition software Crowdemotion, which captures micro-facial expressions recorded using a webcam (Crowdemotion, 2018). Crowdemotion software interprets emotional responses according to the following classification of basic emotions: surprise, puzzlement, sadness, disgust, fear and happiness (Ekman & Rosenberg, 2005). The system is based on a dynamic appearance descriptor for automatic facial expression recognition called LGBP-TOP, which has been empirically proven to increase the overall level of recognition accuracy, measuring emotions in a scale from 0 to 1 (Almaev & Valstar, 2013). Participants were asked to allow for a facial recognition process with manipulation checks to know the correct understanding of the study. A thirty seconds commercial of fictitious brand of chocolate was shown to the participants. Three different conditions (Made in the Netherlands, Made in Spain and control group- with no country) were tested. Both countries are among the top ten biggest producers of chocolate in Europe and any of them shows signs of product typicality based on pretests. Participants provided ratings on seven-point scales for brand attitude (with measurement scale by Steenkamp et al., 2003). Product involvement was used as control variable. All scales employed had high reliability (all $\alpha s > .93$).

3.2 Analysis and Results

The automatic activation of basic emotions by COO cues was examined in an ANOVA test showing a significant difference in the groups for the emotions of happiness, surprise and fear (Happiness, $F(2, 123) = 2.407$ $p<.01$; Surprise $F(2, 123) = 3.712$ $p<.05$; Fear $F(2, 123) = 3.460$ $p<.001$). The direct influence of emotions was tested with multiple regressions in each group showing significant results for happiness and disgust in the group of Netherlands (Happiness, $R^2= .49$, $F(6, 41) = -2.019$, $p < .05$; Disgust, $R^2= .49$, $F(6, 41) = 2.081$, $p < .05$),

and disgust for the group of Spain (R^2= .21, F(2, 108) = -1.749, p < .01). To test the hypothesis that emotions moderate the relationship between country stereotypes and brand attitude, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. First, each basic emotion was included together with each stereotype dimension of warmth and competence. Then the interaction term, previously centred, was added to the regression model. The relationship between warmth and brand attitude was significant in the presence of fear (R^2= .21, F(2, 108) = 2.272, p < .01), which had a stronger effect with the interaction term between fear and warmth (R^2= .32, F(2, 107) = - 2.630, p < .001). Similarly, the relationship between competence and brand attitude was significant in the presence of fear (R^2= .18, F(2, 109) = 1.873, p < .01), which also was intensified with the interaction term between fear and competence (R^2= .26, F(2, 108) = - 1.957, p < .01). Moreover, in the presence of sadness the relationship between competence and brand attitude was significant and positive (R^2= .26, F(2, 109) = 3.880, p < .001), and the interaction term between sadness and competence explained a higher proportion of the variance (R^2= .30, F(2, 108) = 2.186, p < .01). In this case, the valence remained positive.

4. Discussion and Implications

In this paper we argued that automatically activated basic emotions triggered by COO cues influence brand attitudes by having a direct impact and in interaction with country stereotypes. Consistent with literature highlighting the importance of emotions in COO effects (Maher & Carter, 2011; Maheswaran & Chen, 2006), we have empirically shown that basic emotions have a distinct effect than cognitive evaluations and therefore, they need to be considered accordingly. Our results support that the mere presence of a COO cues triggers different emotional responses impacting cognitive evaluations such as brand attitudes also in interaction with stereotypes. Specifically, our results show a stronger interaction effect of two negative basic emotions, namely, fear and sadness. In the case of fear, results supported our hypothesis that the lower the levels of warmth and competence, the stronger the effect of fear on brand attitude. In the case of sadness, however, we predicted that sadness would moderate the relationship between country stereotypes and brand attitude in a negative direction and in the case of warmth, the interaction was positive. Consistent with Maheswaran and Chen (2006), although fear and sadness share a negative valence, they had a different influence on COO evaluations, which they explained in terms of the appraisal tendency of agency attribution.

These findings provide interesting managerial implications with regards to the use of country of origin cues in the area of marketing communications. Both stereotype dimensions of warmth and competence can be mitigated with the adequate use of emotional inputs. Emotions are a strong tool to influence perceptions and evaluations, which might be relevant for countries or products with negative stereotypical associations. Instead of considering only stereotypes, managers should consider emotional inputs to compensate a negative effect of a negative stereotype or a negative product evaluation. Our study is subject to a number of limitations for future research. First, we investigated only a single brand category and one dependent measure of attitudinal nature not considering outcome variables related to behaviour. Second, our study did not consider emotions triggered by country stereotypes. The relationships between basic and secondary emotions should be addressed in future studies in line with the relationship between the appraisal tendencies associated with them.

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