Basic and Secondary Emotions in Country of Origin Effects: When Happiness Backfires

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Abstract

This paper investigates the influence of basic emotions triggered by country-of-origin (COO) cues and secondary emotions generated by stereotypes on consumer brand attitudes. Using an implicit method based on facial recognition, we show that automatically triggered happiness moderates the effect of admiration on brand attitude. Drawing from the Stereotype Content Model and the Appraisal Tendency Framework, we propose a dual parallel processing to explain the role of these emotions in COO effects, in which they have a distinctive, yet intertwined, impact. Our findings extend international marketing literature by specifying how and why different types of emotions can influence brand attitudes.

Keywords: Country-of-origin, Appraisal-Tendency-Framework, Emotions.

1. Introduction

Automatic emotional responses to marketing communication have empirically been proven to play an important role for brands, since the emotional reactions of consumers can drive their behaviour in a predictable manner (Wedel & Pieters , 2014). Understood as "organized psychophysiological reactions to news about on-going relationships with the environment" (Lazarus, 1994 p. 38), emotions can be seen as important predictors of consumer evaluations and behavior, and their influence can indeed be unconscious (Lerner et al., 2015). The rise of new technologies have made the assessment of automatic emotional responses possible on a much larger scale, which has revealed relevant empirical findings, which have yet to be explained by academic research (Wedel & Pieters , 2014). Recent studies applied this type of technologies in Country-of-Origin (COO) research, showing that a COO cue – commonly in the form of a "made in" label - can in fact trigger emotional responses and influence consumer brand evaluations (Gómez-Díaz, 2019). It was also shown how basic emotions and country stereotypes interact having a distinct effect on consumer outcomes. These findings have opened up a new research gap about how these automatic emotional responses to COO cues are related to stereotype-driven emotions. In this way, the aim of this paper is to examine the role of automatically activated basic emotions and secondary emotions generated by country stereotypes once a COO cue is perceived. This investigation will provide relevant insights for managers and theorists alike on the effects of different types of emotions on consumer evaluations, which generates inputs for more accurate marketing communication messages using a COO association.

Relevant literature has revealed that stereotypes are automatically activated in the presence of a COO cue (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Liu & Johnson, 2005). Stereotypes understood, "a socially shared set of beliefs about traits that are characteristic of members of a social category" (Greenwald and Banaji 1995, p. 14), generate country-related emotions, which act as mediators in the relationship between country stereotypes and consumer brand outcomes (Maher & Carter, 2011; Halkias, et al., 2019). The Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al. 2002) is the most used theoretical framework to explain the effects on stereotypes in COO effects. The SCM describes social groups into two dimensions, namely competence (beliefs with regard to the country's capabilities and efficiency) and warmth (beliefs about how friendly or good-natured a particular country is perceived) (Fiske et al. 2002). Extending the findings of the SCM, the "Behaviours from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes" (BIAS) framework (Cuddy et al., 2007) proposes that there are four emotions as a result of stereotyping, namely admiration- elicited by upward assimilative social comparisons with both high competence and warmth; pity, generated by downward assimilative comparisons of low competence and high warmth; contempt, elicited by downward contrast comparisons with both low competence and warmth; and envy, generated by upward contrastive comparisons of high competence and low warmth (Cuddy et al., 2007). Empirical evidence showed that these emotions work as mediators of stereotypes and consumer brand outcomes; particularly, admiration and contempt lead to favourable and unfavourable behavioural tendencies respectively (Maher & Carter, 2011), whilst the influence of pity and envy depends on the configuration of the stereotype (Halkias et al., 2019).

Although the BIAS map might explain the influence of emotions triggered by stereotypes, it tells only half of the story. The BIAS map is based on cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), which understands emotions as a result of a conscious cognitive evaluation, specifically a stereotype, in which emotions are assessed through explicit methods based on self-reporting. Previous research has shown that a COO cue can also

trigger basic emotions automatically, which can be assessed via implicit methods such as facial recognition. These results showed that indeed basic emotions influence consumer outcomes whilst moderating the effect of country stereotypes (Gómez-Díaz, 2019). As stereotypes generate secondary emotions, understood as emotions arising from conscious cognitive appraisals (Lazarus, 1994), it is important to consider that the type of emotions a country stereotype generates is different from the one that is automatically activated by the presence of COO cue. Basic emotions work as a tool for immediate action/inaction preserving wellbeing; secondary emotions involve a cognitive process based on an ability to evaluate preferences over outcomes and expectations (Damasio, 1999; Ekman, 1992). Furthermore, the information processing of basic emotions can occur automatically in the absence of conscious deliberation influencing decisions, e.g. automatic immediate preference (Zajonc, 1980), whilst the information processing of secondary emotions depends on the type of evaluation, which in case of in-group and out-group judgment differs considerably and mostly depends on situational and socio-cultural aspects (Leyens et al., 2001).

Drawing from the Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF; Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Han, et al., 2007), the influence of automatically activated emotions and stereotype-driven emotions can be explained through a dual path of information processing that is simultaneously activated when a COO is perceived and a consumer needs to make a decision. In this dual path, emotional responses in the form of discrete basic emotions can exert an influence, which can also be unconscious and therefore difficult to assess with traditional explicit methods (Han, et al., 2007). Furthermore, each emotion is linked to a specific appraisal tendency - a process directed to a goal from which the emotion starts (Lerner & Keltner, 2000), allowing its influence to some extend be predictable (Lerner, et al., 2015). Following Lerner et al., 2015, the influence of emotions depends on their intensity and appraisal "emotions have motivational properties that depend on both an emotion's intensity and its qualitative character" p. 805.

Drawing from the SCM and the ATF, this study focuses on arguing how different types of emotions are generated after an exposure to a COO cue having distinctive, yet interrelated effects on consumer brand evaluations. The central argument of this paper will show how emotional and cognitive responses to COO cues follow a parallel and dual processing, in which basic and secondary emotions impact brand attitudes differently. These findings are theoretically relevant as they widen our understanding of discrete emotions in COO effects, in particular those automatically activated, which remain neglected. The implications offer relevant insights from a managerial perspective, as they provide a specific perspective on the use of emotional or rational inputs in marketing communications.

2. Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Emotions Triggered by Country of Origin Cues and Country Stereotypes: A Parallel Processing

The mere exposure to a COO cue simultaneously activates automatic cognitive evaluations in the form of country stereotypes (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013) and also automatic emotional responses influencing consumer brand evaluations (Gómez-Díaz, 2019). This automatic activation can be explained as a parallel processing, in which both emotions and cognition have an independent yet interrelated influence on consumer

decisions and behaviour (Lerner et al., 2015). This means that when a person faces a COO cue and makes a decision, there are two paths exerting an influence. On one hand, a cognitive path, in which automatic stereotypical country evaluations are activated and associated to brands in response of the need to make a judgment (Diamantopoulos, et al., 2017; Kolbl, et al., 2019) e.g. choosing a German brand because the product is associated with the positive stereotype of competence commonly attributed to Germany; and on the other hand, an affective path, in which non-controllable emotional responses to events can influence a consumer decision as a response of the need/desire to keep its well being e.g. buying a Swiss chocolate because of the happiness a person can associate the product with (Achar et al., 2016); Although the cognitive path has received higher attention than the affective one in a COO context (Heslop et al., 2004; Zeugner-Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2010), several studies have revealed that the affective path, in which emotions can have a direct influence, can be equally or even more relevant in a consumer decision-making moment (Achar et al., 2016; Lerner et al., 2015).

2.2. The Interaction Between Basic Emotions Triggered by COO Cues and Secondary Emotions Generated by Country Stereotypes

Although basic and secondary emotions are different, they might interact as a result of sharing core appraisals and action tendencies. The core appraisal relates to the core meaning associated with an emotion (e.g. experiencing loss associated with sadness) (Lazarus, 1991) and action tendencies with expressive or instrumental behavior linked to an emotion (Frijda, 1987). For instance, happiness, a basic emotion associated with a pleasant joyful state coming from pleasurable sensory information within a hedonic dimension, is associated with heuristic thinking and active behaviour (Ekman & Rosenberg 2005). Indeed, happy people are more likely to produce simplistic response strategies relying more on stereotypes (Bodenhausen , et al. , 1994; Onu, et al., 2016). Moreover, admiration results from a positive evaluation of both warmth and competence leading to favourable attitudinal and behavioural tendencies (Cuddy et al., 2007). Thus, it is to be expected that happiness will moderate the effect of admiration on brand attitude.

A moderating effect can also be expected of anger - negative unpleasant state of annoyance and displeasure -with contempt, as anger can be considered as an approach-oriented emotion inducing heuristic processing (Berkowitz, 2012). Indeed, COO studies have shown that anger influences product evaluation as participants rely on COO related thoughts in anger vs. sad condition (Maherswaran & Chen, 2006). In a similar manner, disgust - revulsion to something considered distasteful or unpleasant- can be expected to moderate the effect of envy, as disgust is considered as a high-certainty emotion, increasing heuristic processing (Tiedens & Linton, 2001). However, the moderating effects of anger and fear are to be expected in specific contexts, such as consumer animosity in which these negative emotions are commonly triggered (Harmeling, et al., 2015). Furthermore, as sadness - loss and misfortune of an undesirable outcome – shares the core appraisal of pity, and thus might moderate its effect.

The discussion above sets the conceptual framework of our research (see Figure 1). We argue that both emotional responses- in the form of basic emotions, and country stereotypes are automatically triggered by COO cues influencing brand attitude in a dual-processing path. We further hypothesize a moderating effect of basic emotions on the effect of secondary emotions on brand attitude, which would depend on the appraisal and action tendencies as well as on the intensity of each emotion. As shown by previous literature (Gómez-Díaz, 2019), a moderating effect of basic emotions on the link between stereotypes and secondary emotions is also to be expected. Specifically, we hypothesize happiness to moderate the effect of admiration on brand attitude. Considering the specific context of the present research, in which any negative country-induced feeling of anger, sadness and disgust are controlled, we are not expecting moderating results of these emotions as they must be empirically manipulated. Based on previous empirical findings (Maher & Carter, 2011; Halkias, et al., 2019), we specifically expect that admiration and contempt will mediate the effect of country stereotypes on brand attitude.

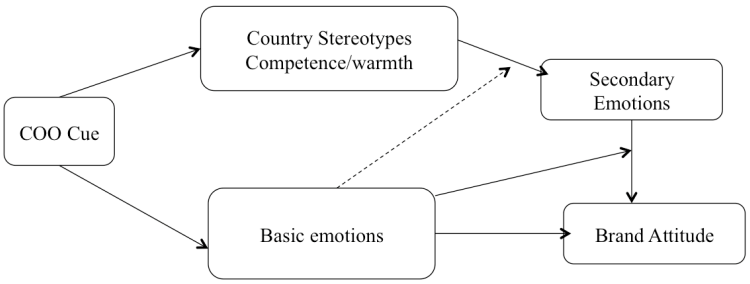

Fig. 1 Conceptual model for COO effects on basic emotions and country stereotypes mediated by country-related emotions

3. Empirical Study

3.1 Research design

Three hundred and eleven 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. Three different conditions were tested (Made in the Netherlands, Made in Spain and control group- with no country) in two different product categories chocolate and headphones controlling for hedonic and utilitarian factors using fictitious brands. Netherlands and Spain were selected as stimulus they were expected to have opposite dimensions in stereotype dimensions (higher warm in Spain and higher competence in Netherlands) based on pretests. Basic emotions were implicitly assessed through the facial recognition software Crowdemotion, which captures micro-facial expressions recorded using a webcam (Crowdemotion, 2019). It interprets emotional responses according to the following classification of basic emotions: surprise, anger, sadness, disgust, fear and happiness (Ekman & Rosenberg, 2005). The system uses LGBP-TOP, a dynamic appearance descriptor for automatic facial expression recognition, measuring the certainty of presence of emotions on a scale from 0 to 1 (Grewe, et al., 2007; Almaev & Valstar, 2013). The values should be < 0.3 to consider a certainty of presence of emotions (Witchel et al., 2018). Participants watched a thirty seconds video ad, in which a COO cue was introduced on the second twelfth. We assessed country stereotypes by asking respondents to indicate their beliefs about how most people perceive the specific country according to dimensions of warmth (friendly, good-natured, kind, warm) and competence (capable, efficient, intelligent, competent) consistent with previous studies (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Maher & Carter, 2011). 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 αs > .93).

4. Analysis and Results

We assessed emotional responses by examining the levels of emotions when respondents perceived a COO cue. Six intervals were created using the first timestamps - a specific value generated at the time when a facial expression is detected -equivalent to 30 seconds. The intervals were created with the highest values of each interval. In the first two intervals there was no COO exposure while in the third interval the COO cue was introduced and thus, selected as the value for hypotheses testing. Significant differences were detected in the headphones category for anger (Non exposure M = 0.78 SD= 0.20; Exposure M = 0.76; SD= 0.15 t (118) = 2.13, p <0.01); and surprise (Non exposure M = 0.78 SD= 0.79; Exposure M = 0.73; t (119) = 2.56, p <0.05). In the chocolate category groups were significantly different for sadness (Non exposure M = 0.81 SD= 0.15; Exposure M = 0.75 SD = .14; t (119) = 3.49, p = 0.000) fear (Non exposure M = 0.80 SD= 0.12; Exposure M = 0.84; t (119) = -1.85, p <0.05). The stereotype levels showed higher competence in the group of Netherlands (Competence Netherlands M = 4.90 SD= 1.27; Spain M = 4.37; t (219) = 3.047, p <0.001) and higher warmth in the group of Spain with no significant differences (Warmth Spain M = 5.17 SD= 1.10; Netherlands M = 4.98; t (221) = -1.152, p = .251).

The moderated mediating relationships specified in Figure 1 were tested using the model 15 PROCESS macro v3.0 (bootstrapping with 5000 resamples), showing significant results for the moderation of happiness on the indirect effect of competence on brand attitude (Modmed index = -.283, 95% BCI: - 4680, -.009). The interactions terms ($\beta_{COMP\times HAP}$ = .450, p = .025) and ($\beta_{ADM\times HAP}$ = -.624, p = .004) were both significant indicating that the direct effects of competence on admiration and admiration on brand attitude were moderated by happiness. However, the direction of the interaction was opposite, the former positive and the later negative. As Figure 2 shows, at high levels of happiness, a higher degree of competence leads to high brand attitude, whilst at high levels of happiness, the levels of brand attitude remains relatively constant despite the levels of admiration, as Figure 3 illustrates.

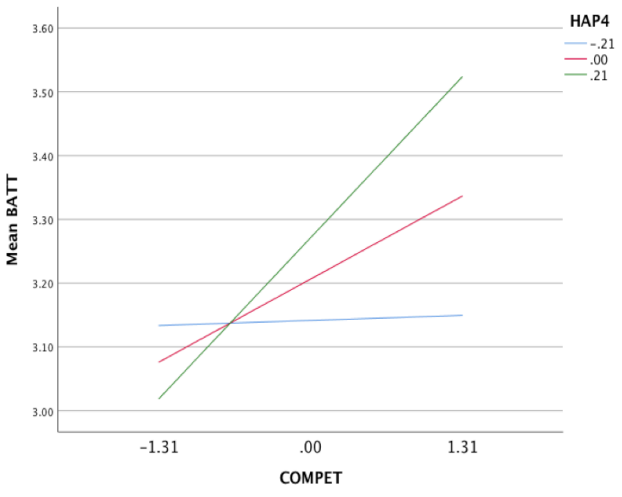

Figure 2. Moderating Effect of Happiness on Competence - BATT

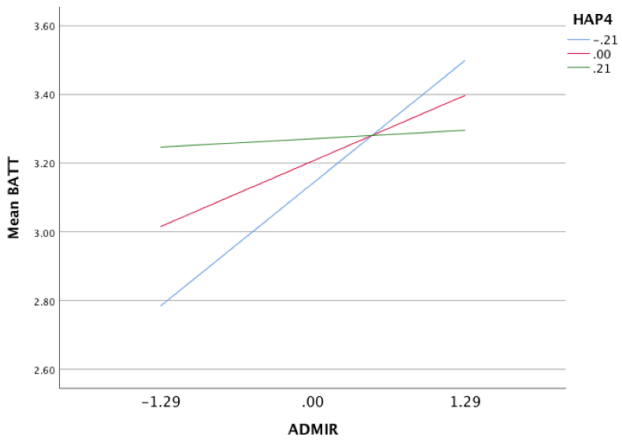

Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Happiness on Admiration- BATT

Although the moderation of happiness on the indirect effect of warmth on brand attitude was not significant (Modmed index = (-.140, 95% BCI.3540, -.0301), the interaction terms ($\beta_{ADM\times HAP}$ = .382, p = .053) and ($\beta_{WARM\times HAP}$ = -.208, p = .000) showed significant results in a similar way than with competence. As Figure 4 illustrates, at high levels of happiness, a higher degree of warmth leads to high brand attitude. Moreover, as Figure 5 illustrates, at low levels of happiness, a higher degree of admiration leads to higher brand attitude.

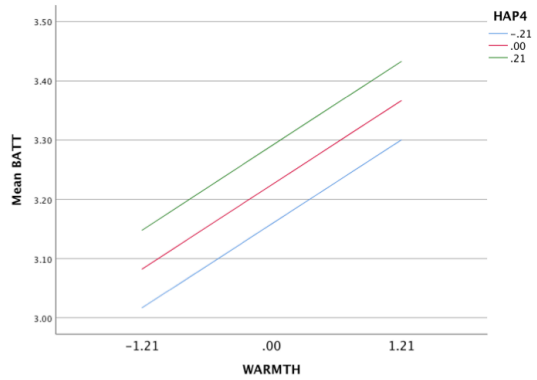

Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Happiness on Warmth- BATT

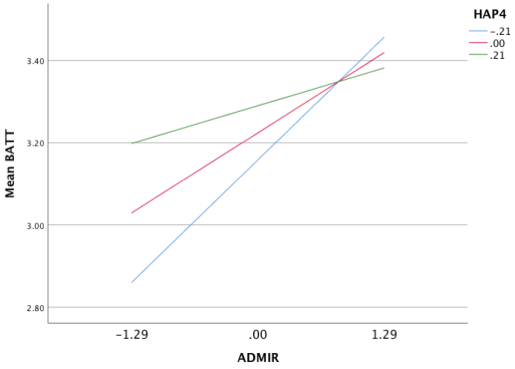

Figure 5. Moderating Effect of Happiness on Admiration- BATT

5. Discussion and Implications

This study integrates COO research with social psychology (SCM and BIAS map) and cognitive psychology theories (ATF) to investigate the role of basic emotions and secondary emotions in COO effects. We propose a conceptual framework based on a dual parallel processing, in which basic emotions and country stereotypes are automatically triggered by COO cues influencing brand attitude directly and through secondary emotions respectively. By applying an implicit method to assess facial expressions of emotions, our findings revealed that happiness moderates the mediation of admiration in the relationship between stereotype dimensions and brand attitude. Interestingly, the direction of the moderating effect was opposite, with stereotypes was positive and with admiration was negative.

These are important findings not only because they provide evidence of the dual parallel processing, but also because they show that the effects of basic and secondary emotions are indeed different. Happiness has shown to play an important role in stereotyping as people might rely more on heuristic thinking when they feel happy (Bodenhausen, et al., 1994). However, as our findings showed, the influence of happiness depends on its intensity since at low levels, admiration plays a more important role. This also means at high levels of happiness, the effect of admiration will decrease reducing the effect of the stereotype. This is particularly important with regards to the use of COO cues for marketing communication strategies as too high happiness might backfire reducing the intended effect of the stereotype-driven association. These findings also have an important theoretical

implications for COO research with regards to specifying the conditions under which country stereotypes have a different effect as pointed out by previous literature (Maher & Carter, 2011).

Understanding the distinction between the cognitive and affective components of country image is crucial when researchers want to draw conclusions about COO effects. We found that it is important to consider not only the distinction between the two components, via a dual processing path, but also that the two processes are interrelated. Far from being antagonistic paths, emotional and cognitive processes are deeply intertwined. A feeling can change a thought and a thought can change a feeling. Our findings suggest that the influence of basic emotions triggered by COO cues and secondary emotions triggered by country stereotypes will depend on the type of emotion as well as on its levels of intensity.

Our findings support the importance of examining discrete emotions and their effects on cognitive processes and decision making. Using a discrete approach to examine emotions enables theorists and managers to understand the specific appraisal and action tendencies associated with each emotion and identify possible predictable outcomes (Keltner & Horberg, 2015). Neglected by the big majority of previous COO studies, basic emotions might add important insights for managers as well as explanatory power for theories. In our study, automatically activated happiness, an action-tendency emotion, moderated the effect of stereotypes and secondary emotions in different ways. It might also be that other action-tendency emotions, such as anger or fear, might have a similar effect. The role of affect in stereotyping have focused mainly on negative emotions (Bodenhausen, et al., 1994), however, positive emotions might have an even stronger influence that can change a negative effect. Therefore, managers should consider an analysis of the situational context in order to predict a possible of influence of basic emotions. Moreover, happiness can have an important effect on consumer evaluations, but when it is not connected to the brand or it is too highly aroused, it might not have the desired effect as it can backfire and the communication efforts could be in vain. It is important to consider that basic emotions work as a tool for action to respond to specific threats and opportunities in the environment (Han, et al., 2007). Within a COO context, this means that basic emotions can work as a tool for managers to leverage their marketing stimuli by fueling the effect of a positive stereotype, but also they can be seen as a threat in the way that they can reduce the effect that stereotypes trigger, like it is the case with admiration.

Our study also has several limitations with regards to the empirical setting that can be considered for future studies. First, different countries with alternative configuration of warmth and competence should be considered in order to control for high/low levels, which will reveal more specific aspects of the interaction between the affective and the cognitive path. Second, further research should investigate different outcome measures that are more related to consumer behaviour in order to identify the extent to which the interaction between basic and secondary emotions influences actual behavioural outcomes. Finally, it would be relevant to investigate negative emotions controlling for contextual characteristics such as consumer animosity. This would provide relevant inputs with regards to emotions associated with action tendencies, such as anger and fear, as these emotions have shown an important role in influencing the impact of stereotyping as much as happiness.

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