

Eyes Wide Shut? Understanding and Managing Consumers' Visual Processing of Country-of-Origin Cues

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Abstract

Marketing literature has been marked by several lively debates regarding the theoretical and practical relevance of the country of origin (COO) phenomenon. Over-reliance on self-reporting and heavy-handed research designs have been repeatedly criticized for failing to reveal the true COO influence. Drawing from visual attention and decision-making theories, we conduct three eye-tracking experiments that implicitly assess whether and how consumers attend to COO cues in inconspicuous exposure settings. Results show that consumers generally notice COO labels on product packages, but do so relatively late. COO effects on purchase intentions are conditional on the duration of attention, with dwell times on COO cues being, on average, sufficient to allow such influences. Importantly, whether and for how long COO labels are attended to can be motivated by differentially priming consumers' competence- (vs. warmth-) based judgment goals. Implications of these findings for international marketing research are discussed.