Yemeni Consumers' Perception and Attitude Towards Asian Made Products

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INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization of trade, a stream of research has emerged from the notion of country-of-origin (COO).It is the information which can influence consumers' product perceptions (Nebezahl et al., 2003). COO is the most researched international aspect of consumer behaviour (Tan and Farley, 1987; Heslop *et al*., 1998). Despite the plethora of studies conducted on the subject, there has been a lack of knowledge on the perceptions of Arab consumers on foreign products. One of the most widely studied areas of international marketing has been the impact of COO on the consumer's perception of products from both developing and developed nations (Samiee, 1994; Peterson and Jolibert, 1995). More than 400 academic (peer-reviewed) articles have been published over 40 years, with a great deal of diversity of consumers surveyed (Usunier, 2006). COO research has concentrated on the examination of consumer product perceptions and/or attitudes towards products made in different countries based on a variety of intrinsic or extrinsic cues.

Consumers in various countries have different perspectives regarding the evaluation of products. Some consumers lay special emphasis on the quality of the products and they only trust those brands which they consider to be of good quality. Also, there are some customers who are extremely concerned about the prices of the products. At the same time, some might be attracted to the advertisements, warranty or promotion. However, all the above issues are not clearly identified in terms of empirical validation and are subject to further study. Many researchers have studied the developing and developed countries' purchasing behaviour; but it is rare to see empirical studies carried out in less developed regions of developing countries (Hamin and Elliott, 2006). Al-Sulaiti and Baker (1998) reported that majority of the studies in the fields of COO have been conducted in Western cultures. Researchers called for more research in non-Western cultures, especially in less developed nations. The wide period of literature review done by Dinniel (2004) reported that there is a distinctly prejudiced approach taken to studying the COO phenomenon, with a limited range of countries studied as COO cues. Most of COO researches have been done in few countries represented as countries-of-survey. Overall, there are 583 hypothetical countries-of-origin; many countries were considered several times, whereas, some of them were considered in only one research study (Usunier, 2006).

The aim of this study is to explore how COO influences product evaluation of consumers in Yemen, considered as a less developed country, and to measure the perception and attitude of Yemeni consumers towards home appliances products (HAPs) made in five Asian countries (Japan, China, Malaysia, Korea and Taiwan). The objectives addressed in this study are accompanied by the research questions, which are as follows:

Objective 1: To figure out the overall assessment of Yemeni consumers towards Asian made products, as well as to evaluate their image according to the development level.

Objective 2: To identify Yemeni consumers' evaluations, attitudes and purchase intentions towards products made in the five selected countries (Japan, China, Malaysia, Korea and Taiwan).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (COO)

Over the last four decades or so, the rapid growth in international trade and the development of global markets has been accompanied by a significant increase in interest towards the nature of competitiveness. Among the many factors that are believed to have an impact on international competitiveness, the country-of-origin (COO) effect has attracted growing attention. Contemporary researchers and marketers have tried to extensively study the COO effect. COO has been studied by examining a single cue to multiple cues, hybrid products and it is represented as a stereotype of their country and products (Chao, 1998), but the effects are still poorly understood (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999).

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COO EFFECTS

According to the literature, different researchers have studied the effect of COO from different perspectives.Okechuku (1994) suggested that COO effects appear to be product specific, while other researchers found that the effects of COO on product evaluations vary with technical complexity of products (Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Samiee, 1994) like the degree of availability, familiarity, and perceived serviceability of foreign versus domestic (Han, 1990; Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987), the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness of purchasing foreign-made products, i.e., the degree of "consumer ethnocentrism" (Han, 1990; Shimp and Sharma, 1987), and the perceived level of economic development of the source country (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Okechuku, 1994). Product evaluations also vary with the degree of similarity between the home country's economic, cultural and political systems to the foreign country (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Crawford and Lamb 1981), preference for products made in some countries more than others (Cattin et al., 1982; Papadopoulos et al., 1987), products made in different countries and the level of economic development of those countries (Lumpkin et al., 1985). COO effects were found to vary across different product categories (d'Astous et. al., 1993), the product life cycles (Niss, 1996), and meta-analysis of COO effects (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Morello (1984) found that the significant COO effect does exist and affects consumers' purchase behaviour.

COO AND PRODUCT EVALUATION

Much of the research carried out has emphasised the country effect on product evaluation or product image. Such approach is useful for companies and organizations that want to know how their products are perceived. It can, however, be argued that it lacks practical relevance to managers who want their products to be sold since it fails to address how COO actually affects consumer purchase behaviour (Johansson, 1993).The results of Verlegh and Steenkamp's (1999) study indicated that COO effect is major for perceived quality, and minor for purchase intention, with attitude judgements falling in between.

Johansson et al., (1985) concluded that the COO effects may be less significant than has generally been believed, and they may occur predominantly in relation to evaluation of specific attributes rather than overall evaluations. Accordingly, their findings supported the hypothesis that the COO is used as a surrogate variable to evaluate a product when respondents have limited knowledge about that product. Once the consumers evaluate products from a country, they may use different aspects such as personal background and attitudes towards the country. Studies have demonstrated different results regarding impact of consumer's age, income and other demographic factors that have an impact on consumers´ evaluations of products (either foreign or domestic -Lawrence *et al*., 1992; Sharma, *et al*.,, 1995; Han ,1990).

An explanation could be that the design of the studies varies which has led to different results. Although several studies have examined country-of origin effects on product evaluations (Han and Terpstra, 1988; Maheswaran 1994), very little systematic theory-based research has examined the factors that influence country-of origin evaluations (Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Zeynep and Durairaj, 2000). Zeynep and Durairaj (2000) found out that COO evaluations are more likely to be favourable when consumers focus on the COO and when the information is dispersed across several of the country's products. Furthermore, when consumers focused on the attribute information, COO information was not highly accessible and was less likely to be related to the new information. Lee and Miller (1992) examined personal computers and wall clocks and found that both price and warranty had greater impact than COO. The impact of warranty was greater for personal computers, indicating that when the product is more complex, higher priced, or is at a greater risk, a warranty becomes more important.

Han (1989) examined the role of country image in consumer evaluation of two products. The results suggested that country image can be used by consumers in product evaluations in either one or in both ways: 1- As a halo construct (country image used to consider products that consumers know little about); 2- Or, as a summary construct (as consumers become familiar with a country's products, country image may become a construct that summarises consumers' beliefs towards product attributes and directly affects their attitudes towards the brand). In another study, Leonidou et al (1999) examined the Bulgarian consumers' perceptions of products made in five Asia-Pacific countries. They found that Bulgarian consumers rate products from developed countries more favourably. Sohail (2004 and 2005) conducted two studies on Malaysian consumers to evaluate products made in China and Germany. Results showed that Malaysian consumers rated products made in China highly for their competitive pricing and

German products are rated highly for their quality.

PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Quality perception studies have concentrated on the effect of extrinsic cues and have neglected the study of intrinsic cues. Intrinsic cues, in essence, refer to objective or actual quality variables. Olson and Jacoby (1972) stated that intrinsic cues have a more powerful effect upon quality judgements than extrinsic cues. This is because the consumers look at both types of cues, especially when it comes to less-frequently purchased, high-risk and high involvement products. Published quality ratings like the ones in consumer reports have been used in research studies to operationalize objective quality measures. The product's attributes were found to have significant effects on consumers' evaluation of products and purchasing intention [Nagashima (1977), Han and Terpstra (1988), Heslop and Papadopoulos (1993)]. Bilkey and Nes (1982) mentioned that consumers do make use of a product's country-of-origin when judging the quality of a product. Erickson, et al., (1984) found that consumers differentially evaluate equivalent aspects of automobiles as a function of whether the automobile was manufactured in Japan, Germany or United States. Rothe and Romeo (1992) examined how consumers perceive products emanating from a particular country and they found that consumers are more likely to purchase products from countries which were evaluated highly on products' dimensions.

In the COO effects research field, researchers have linked the other marketing variables to the effect of country of origin (COO). Some consumers may have price perceptions that have more inherent product meaning. In particular, in many categories, consumers may infer the quality of a product on the basis of its price. Yi, *et al*., (2004) concluded that the price is very important which can be described with three points: **First**, COO effect was very important in a multiple attribute scenario, which indicated that consumers raised their willingness to buy the imported products according to the degree of the development of the producing country. **Second**, even though consumers always considered made in label as a very important factor, they still took price as another influential factor into account before making purchasing decisions. The consumers would increase their willingness to buy the products from a less developed country if the price of its product decreased, while the prices of the imported products from developed countries remain the same. And **third**, the price elastic of the durable goods from less developed countries was lower than non-durable goods from the same country.

Yi, et al., (2004) also pointed out that when the price of a product decreases, consumers will demonstrate their preferences to buy the product even if they have a bias against the product's country of origin. In contrast, Heslop, et al. (1987) found that a good brand image and pricing strategy cannot improve a negative country of origin. One should, however, be aware that people, whose opinion about a country is negative, may just as well choose to buy products from that specific country as they find themselves in a real purchase situation due to the impact of other and more important cues such as price.

ARABIC CONSUMERS AND COO EFFECTS

The total population of all Arabic countries is 339 million, and according to the World Economic Outlook Database report (2008) by International Monetary Fund, the gross domestic product (GDP) of all the Arabian countries reached $ 2,340,427 in the year 2007. Only a few studies have investigated the effect of COO on Arabian consumers' attitudes. The first study was done by Yavas and Secil (1984) and they found that Saudi consumers do not have any strong negative biases against the made-in UK label. Equally important, though, is the fact that the made-in UK label does not enjoy a strong positive image either. Yavas and Alpay (1986) examined the Bahraini and Saudi Arabian consumers' attitudes towards products made in several countries and the results revealed that consumers of both countries ranked the Japan made-in label the highest, while the Taiwan made-in label was ranked the lowest. Badri et al., (1995) examined the COO stereotyping by businesspeople in the Gulf States of the Middle East which include six countries. The main result of this study is that the COO stereotyping was present in those Gulf States, with evidence that Japan, USA and Germany clearly emerged as most favoured countries of origin. Bhuian (1997) found that Saudi consumers have the most positive attitudinal response to products and marketing practices of the US and Japan. Al-Suliti and Baker (1997) did their research on the service sector which investigated Qatari consumers' perceptions and selections of domestic vs. foreign airline services. The effect of COO on the intention was found. Aboulnasr (2007) investigates the enduring involvement with products in consumers' evaluation of foreign made products and the result revealed that consumers who were highly involved with the product category used attribute information to form their

evaluation, while less involved consumers relied more on the COO cue to form their product quality evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected by using questionnaires. The questionnaires have the advantage of obtaining data more efficiently in terms of research time, energy and costs. Given that the final sample of this study consists of non-English speakers (Yemeni Households), translation and back-translation of the instrument was done. The questionnaire was carefully translated into Arabic to ensure that the meaning was consistent with that of the original text. The resulting translation was validated through marketing professionals and a pre-test survey. The questionnaire was administrated personally using face-to-face method and drop and pick up method according to respondents' situation, in order to improve the response rate. As Sekaran (2003) has stated, personally administrated questionnaires can establish rapport and motivate respondents whilst at the same time, clarify any doubts instantaneously. The research survey was carried out in 2007 and took four months (from April to July) due to the wide geographical distance from one city to another. Researchers themselves as well as trained students from Yemeni universities and salespeople distributed the questionnaire copies to the householders and carried out the interviews across six urban cities in Yemen namely; Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Ibb, Al-Hudaydah, and Hadhramout. One thousand and ninety five copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the household sample unit. Six hundred and twenty five (625) answered questionnaires were usable from the 747 that were returned by the respondents. The data were subsequently edited and all the responses from each household were keyed into the computer software SPSS 15 Windows version.

MEASURES

- ***Countries' Economic Levels***: In order to measure the awareness of Yemeni consumers about their image regarding the countries of study in terms of the economic development, the respondents were given three economic development levels which were: developed country, developing country, and least developed country, and then they were asked to evaluate the economic levels of the five countries (Malaysia, Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan) according to their opinion and beliefs by checking a box in front of each country's name.
- ***COO Evaluations****:* COO is a component of product stereotypes that consumers perceive-it encompasses both products and the origin (home country) of products. Three items "positive, favourable, and good" developed by Zeynep and Durairaj (2000) were adapted to measure the consumers' general evaluation of home appliance products made in the five selected Asian countries. The five-point Likert scale rating from extremely disagree (1) to extremely agree (5).
- ***Perception of Product Attributes***: Eight items with five-point Likert scales were used in this study to measure the consumers' perceptions of product attributes towards home appliances products made in the five selected Asian countries. The eight questionnaire statements were adapted from Nagashima (1977), Han and Terpstra (1988), Heslop and Papadopoulos (1993). Those statements were used by other researchers in area of COO such as Weber and Crocker (1983), Zeynep and Durairaj (2000), and Chéron and Propeck (1997). The statements are: (*a*) *great designs*, (*b*) *innovative*, (*c*) *fashionable*, (*d*) *low consumption of electricity* (*e*) *good performance*, (*f*) *easy to operate*, (*g*) *durable*, (*h*) *Reasonable price*.
- ***Purchasing Intention***: Six questionnaire statements are used to figure out the purchase intention of the Yemeni consumers from five selected Asian countries of origin. The statements have been developed for these studies by using the scale items by Kelien et al. (1998), Martin and Stewart (2001) and Yi, et al, (2004). The respondents were asked to express their purchasing intention behaviour whether they agree or not with each of the statements on a five-point scale, 1 refers to "extremely disagree" to 5 refers to "extremely agree." The statements are: (a) *consider purchasing*, (b) *will purchase*, (c) *will never hesitate to purchase*, (d) will *definitely purchase*, (e) *proud of owning*, and (f) *glad to recommend it to others.*

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Content validity test has been conducted to ensure that the measure includes sufficient coverage of the investigated questions (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Meanwhile, the face validity has been done to validate the items of research questionnaire and to ensure that the items were consistent with previous theory based questionnaire design. Since this

study was applied for the first time in the Yemeni market, a pre-test was conducted to ensure the research validity and seek for more validation for research questionnaire. The factorial validity was also conducted to enhance the validation of the measurements. It is noted to mention that the factor analysis Kaiser-Meyer -Olkin (KMO) measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were conducted to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. High values for variables of COO evaluation, consumers' attitudes, product's attributes and purchase intention were .0774, 0.873, 0.906 and 0.904 respectively for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy which indicates that the proportion of variance in the variables are caused by underlying factors, thus allowing for the application of factor analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Factor Analysis for Factorial validity

	Component		
	1	2	3
COO evaluation			
The evaluation of HAPs made-in--------- is good in general	.957		
The evaluation of HAPs made-in--------- is positive in general	.957		
The evaluation of HAPs made-in--------- is favourable in general	.947		
Eigenvalue	2.73		
% of variance	91.0		
Consumers' Attitudes			
I think HAPs made in ------ are of high quality	.952		
I think the category of HAPs made in ------ is favourable	.957		
I believe that the HAPs made in ------ offers benefits to the consumers.	.936		
I like HAPs made in ------ very much.	.935		
Eigenvalue	3.574		
% of variance	89.3		
Product Attributes			
Home appliance Products made-in----- are of very good design	.859		
Home appliance Products made-in-----are innovative.	.882		
Home appliance Products made-in----- are fashionable.	.822		
Home appliance Products made-in---- consume less electricity	.600		
Home appliance Products made-in----- have very good performance.	.894		
Home appliance Products made-in-----are easy to operate.	.577		
Home appliance Products made-in-----are durable.	.871		
Prices of the home appliance products made-in----are reasonable.	.619		
Eigenvalue	4.82		
% of variance	60.3		
Consumers' Purchase Intention			
I will consider purchasing from….	.913		
I will purchase Home Appliances Products made in …….	.928		
I will never hesitate to buy home appliances products made in……..	.924		
I would definitely purchase home appliances products made in …….	.931		
I am proud to have my own home appliances products made in…….	.921		
I will be glad to recommend others to purchase products made in …	.919		
Eigenvalue	5.109		
% of variance	85.15		

This is supported by the Bartlett's test of Sphericity value of 0.00 that is less than 0.05, thus proving that the analysis is significant. For the overall variables, the KMO score .888 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity shows to be significant with value less than 0.05, which means that the sample is adequate and the data is suitable for the factor analysis. The result of factor analysis test shows the proportion of variance accounted for in each item. Since all of the values obtained are more than 0.4, the extraction communalities using principal component analysis for this solution are acceptable. COO evaluation and consumers' attitude were loaded on one factor and all loadings were greater than 0.40.

The five-Likert scale was used with minimum =1 to maximum = 5 and the sample size is N= 625. The set of three COO evaluation (COO) statements had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .95, the set of four consumer attitude statements had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96, the set of six purchasing intention (PI) statements had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .97. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the set of product attributes (PA) was .90. The average of Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.89 and reached the minimum value of .70, as suggested by Nunnally (1978). Therefore, all reliability results obtained for the stated research measures are consistent with the previous finding of Cronbach's alpha coefficient value in marketing and COO studies.

FINDINGS

The breakdown of the respondents' demographic characteristics is shown in Table 2. It was found out that almost 69% of the respondents were male that are equivalent to 431 out of 625 respondents. Another 31% of the respondents were female. The majority of the female respondents ranged from 34 years of age and younger, and constitute of 81% of the total of female respondents. Eighty five percent of respondents were 44 years of age or younger, while 15% of the respondents were over 44 years old. The majority of the sample may be classified as middle income, with 62% of the respondents reporting monthly household income ranging from USD201 to USD500. Less than 23% reported income of USD200 and less, while 15% reported household income greater than USD500 monthly. Most of the respondents who have good income are degree holders. Seventy four percent (74%) of the respondents indicated that they had completed college, and 15% of the sample had completed the secondary school. Almost 62% of the household respondents were living in their own house and the rest of respondents were staying in rented accommodation. A large part of the respondents (86%) were married and almost 60.5% of the married respondents were living in their own house and 39.5% were staying in rented accommodation. The majority of the household respondents were working with the private sector (40%), followed by 24% working as official workers at government sector, while only 18.5% were employed with the education sector. The middle and high income are rated as the respondents who are working with the private sector.

Table 2: Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Residential	Own House	385	61.60	**Family Income**	< 100	8	1.28
	Rent House	240	38.40	**Per month (Unit: USD)**	101-200	134	21.44
Gender	Male	431	68.96		201-300	200	32.00
	Female	194	31.04		301-400	107	17.12
Marital status	Single	70	11.20		401-500	82	13.12
	Married	540	86.40		501-700	48	7.68
	Divorcee	12	1.92		701-1000	28	4.48
	Widowed	3	0.48		>1000	18	2.88
Age	Less than 25 years old	154	24.64	**Occupation**	Official	150	24.00
	25-34 years old	250	40.00		Education Sector	116	18.56
	35-44 years old	128	20.48		Private Sector	252	40.32
	45-54years old	63	10.08		Industrial Sector	17	2.72
	≥ 55 years old	30	4.80		Service Sector	15	2.40
Education	Read and write only	21	3.36		Students	40	6.40
	Elementary school	13	2.08		Unemployed	5	0.80
	Secondary school	96	15.36		Retired	7	1.12
	Vocational school	10	1.60		Other	23	3.68
	College/University	464	74.24				
	Graduate school	21	3.36				

As shown in Table 3, most of the respondents (88%) tend to evaluate Japan as a developed country. Malaysia is considered as a developing country by 66% respondents and as a developed country by 25.4% respondents. Korea and China were regarded as developing countries by 56.6% and 55.4% respondents, but they are considered as developed countries by 32.2% respondents for Korea and 37.8% respondents vouching for China as a developed country. The majority of respondents (54.7%) considered Taiwan as a less developed country and 40% of them said it is a developing country.

Table 3: Consumer Evaluation of COO In Terms of Development

	Malaysia		China		Taiwan		Japan		Korea	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Developed country	159	25.4	236	37.8	33	5.3	550	88.0	201	32.2
Developing country	414	66.2	346	55.4	250	40.0	75	12.0	354	56.6
Less developed country	52	8.3	43	6.9	342	54.7	0	0	70	11.2

The result of means and standard deviation as shown in Table 4 indicated that, for the COO evaluation, respondents tend to perceive higher levels of agreement on the measurement items of Japanese HAPs with a mean score of 4.7 followed by Malaysia with a mean score of 3.51. Then, Korea ranked third with a scored mean of 3.34 on a 5 point scale range, with 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. The respondents tend to perceive lower level of agreement on the measurement items of HAPs made in China and Taiwan with scored means of 2.96 and 1.9 consecutively. These results seem to indicate that the respondents have a positive evaluation on HAPs made in Japan, Malaysia, and Korea and a negative evaluation on HAPs made in China and Taiwan. The low standard deviation was found in the evaluation of Japan as COO which indicates that there is a great uniformity in the respondents' responses.

In contrast, the high standard deviation was found in the evaluation of China in the three items, which indicates that there are a lot of variations in the respondents' answer.

Table 4: Consumers' Evaluation Countries as COO

	Malaysia (1)		China (2)		Taiwan (3)		Japan (4)		Korea (5)		*F-ratio*	*Tukey's Rank*
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Good feeling	3.56	0.92	2.95	0.99	1.90	0.92	4.69	0.65	3.35	0.97	791.861***	3,2,5,1,4
Positive Image	3.47	0.96	2.95	1.01	1.94	0.93	4.71	0.64	3.39	0.97	744.841***	3,2,5 1,4
Favourable as COO	3.50	0.97	2.97	1.07	1.87	0.92	4.70	0.67	3.28	0.94	752.549***	3,2,5,1,4
Overall average	3.51	0.87	2.96	0.92	1.90	0.84	4.70	0.56	3.34	0.88	926.49***	3,2,5.1,4

Note: the mean scores are based on a five-point-scale ranging from 1= minimum to 5=maximum; *F*-ratios are the result of one-way ANOVA test; where *, **, and ***represent statistical significance at 0.10, 0.05, 0.01 respectively

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test Yemeni respondents' evaluation of the selected five countries of origin. Table 5 shows the results of ANOVA and Tukey F-ratio. It can be noted from the table that the analysis of variance test indicates a significant difference at the 0.01 level with general F (4, 3120) = 926.49 in responses for all three statements, both combined and individually. In general, with respect to country-of-origin, Japan received the highest rating from Yemeni consumers followed by Malaysia, and Korea, while China ranked fourth and Taiwan is ranked last among the selected five countries according to Tukeys' comparison method between groups.

Table 5 shows the distribution of means of respondents' perception of quality of HAPs made in five Asian countries based on a scale of 1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree. The respondents show a very strong agree for the product attributes made in Japan. However, they had a negative perception towards the quality of the products made in Taiwan, which scored average mean of 2.75. Japan scored the highest average mean of 4.21, the highest mean among the items for Japan is 4.84 as durable products and the lowest mean of 1.34 for the price value, which means that price of HAPs made in Japan is considered as expensive. The respondents showed neutral perception of the overall product attributes made in Korea, Malaysia and China with average mean scores of 3.50, 3.48 and 3.45 respectively.The average of the standard deviation was found to be low which indicated that there is a great uniformity in the respondents' answers regarding the perception of the product attributes made in the five countries. The standard deviation is high for Taiwanese product's attributes which means that there was a lot of variation in the respondents' answers. The high standard deviation also scored high for the statement of price of products made in Malaysia, Taiwan and Korea, and the statement of innovative product for China.

The result of One way ANOVA test for attributes perception of products made in the selected countries is displayed in the following Table 5, which indicated that all the eight statements in the table were statistically significant differences with p-value< .01 among the means value of Yemeni respondents' perception of product attributes' scores across the selected countries; Malaysia, China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. Using Tukeys' comparison method between groups, in the first seven statements, the respondents ranked Japanese HAPs first as high product attributes. However, in statement eight, which is related to price attribute, the respondents ranked Japan the last considering its products high price, while China scored first as having a reasonable product price, followed by Taiwan, Malaysia, and Korea ranked at the second, third and fourth place respectively.

As shown in the following Table 5, at the first five statements which related to the design, innovation, fashionable, and electricity consumption, Malaysia and Korea ranked second while China and Taiwan were ranked at fourth and fifth position respectively. For durability product in statement number 7, Japanese product attributes scored first while Taiwanese product attributes scored last and Chinese product attributes scored the fourth rank, which means that according to consumers, products made in Taiwan and China are not durable products. However, Yemeni respondents considered the HAPs products made in Malaysia and Korea as durable products which were ranked second and followed the Japanese products.

Table 5: Consumers' Perception of Product Attributes

	Malaysia (1)		China (2)		Taiwan (3)		Japan (4)		Korea (5)		*F-ratio*	*Tukey's Rank*
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Good design	3.60	0.86	3.42	0.95	2.58	1.04	4.77	0.49	3.66	0.87	512.19***	3,2,1,5,4
Innovative	3.40	0.90	3.28	1.05	2.32	0.94	4.75	0.49	3.52	0.89	610.20***	3,2,5,1,4
Fashionable	3.36	0.89	3.51	1.02	2.43	1.02	4.62	0.66	3.58	0.91	459.72***	3,2,1-5,4
Less electrical	3.51	0.80	3.56	0.94	3.05	0.98	4.13	0.92	3.62	0.89	110.93***	3,2,5,1,4
Performance	3.46	0.88	3.00	0.96	2.18	0.93	4.81	0.47	3.56	0.84	823.55***	3,2,1,5,4
Easy to operate	3.85	0.82	3.93	0.91	3.47	1.09	4.42	0.78	3.79	0.91	90.00***	3,5,1,2,4

Durable	3.37	0.87	2.73	1.05	2.05	0.90	4.84	0.47	3.51	0.91	904.05***	3,2,1,5,4
Price	3.20	1.02	4.19	0.95	3.93	0.98	1.34	0.67	2.70	0.99	883.62***	4,5,1,3,2
Overall average	3.48	0.58	3.45	0.57	2.75	0.62	4.21	.321	3.50	0.58	572.00***	3, 512,4

Note: the mean scores based on a five-point-scale ranging from 1= minimum to 5=maximum; F-ratios are the result of one-way ANOVA test; where *, **, and ***represent statistical significance at 0.10, 0.05, 0.01 respectively.

Table 6 shows the distribution of means of respondents' purchasing intention from the five Asian countries based on a scale of 1=very unlikely to 5= very likely to purchase. For the indicator of country of origin (which COO products consumers intend to purchase from), Japan scored the highest mean value with 4.49, while Taiwan got the lowest mean score of 2.03. At the same time, consumers' intention to purchase from Malaysia as COO with scored mean of 3.77 was followed by Korea (3.37), then China with only 2.97. The respondents considered Japan as a country of origin for future purchasing and they were willing to purchase Japanese products without any hesitation. Also, they felt proud to own Japanese home appliances and they gladly recommended other consumers to purchase Japanese, Malaysian and Korean products. The great uniformity in the answer of respondents was found in the purchasing intention from Japan, with the average of standard deviation of 0.59, while a variation in answers of respondents was found to be high in the intention to purchase from Malaysia, China and Korea.

As shown in Table 6, from the results of One-way ANOVA and Tukeys' method for comparison between groups of the construct of consumers' purchase intention from the five selected countries of origin, it can be noted from the table that the analysis of variance test indicates a significant difference at the 0.01 level with general F (4, 3120) = 796.26 in responses for all six statements, both combined and individually. In general, with respect to purchase intention from country of origin, Japan received a highest rating from Yemeni respondents followed by Malaysia (rated second); the third rating was given for Korea and was followed by China and Taiwan.

Table 6: Purchase Intention

	Malaysia (1)		China (2)		Taiwan (3)		Japan (4)		Korea (5)		*F-ratio*	*Tukey's Rank*
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Consideration	3.83	.97	3.10	.98	2.12	.98	4.48	.80	3.45	.95	549.95***	3,2,5,1,4
Willingness	3.80	.95	3.13	1.01	2.06	.96	4.47	.78	3.45	.92	563.65***	3,2,5,1,4
No hesitation	3.68	.99	2.96	1.01	2.04	.95	4.46	.80	3.38	.96	556.09***	3,2,5,1,4
Definitely	3.66	1.02	3.05	1.04	2.03	.95	4.44	.79	3.34	.99	526.27***	3,2,5,1,4
Proud	3.83	1.03	2.77	.98	1.93	.90	4.55	.78	3.27	.96	717.53***	3,2,5,1,4
Recommend	3.84	1.02	2.79	1.01	1.98	.91	4.52	.78	3.31	.99	666.14***	3,2,5,1,4
Overall average	3.77	.89	2.97	.86	2.03	.84	4.49	.59	3.37	.85	796.258***	3,2,5,1,4

Note: the mean scores are based on a five-point-scale ranging from 1= minimum to 5=maximum; F-ratios are the result of one-way ANOVA test; where *, **, and ***represent statistical significance at 0.10, 0.05, 0.01 respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Respondents consider Japan as a developed country and Taiwan as a less developed country. At the same time, Malaysia, Korea and China were considered by Yemeni consumers as developing countries. In general, the results of this study support the findings of previous scholars, such as Roth and Romeo (1992); Mohamad, et al. (2000); Crawford and Lamb (1981); and Wang and Lamb (1983), which emphasize whether the product image of a country is perceived to be highest or lowest, it depends on the countries' economic development levels. Baughn and Yaprak (1993) and Crawford and Lumpkin (1993) mentioned that the levels of economic development of a country seem to be the important cues that influence consumer's perception of product quality and purchasing behaviour.

Yemeni consumers evaluated Japan as a great country-of-origin of home appliances products and ranked it first followed by Malaysia and Korea, while China is ranked fourth and Taiwan was given the last rank. The finding was similar to a study conducted by Yavas and Alpay (1986) which found out that Saudi Arabian and Bahraini consumers evaluated Japan the highest, while Taiwan was ranked the lowest. However, Yemeni consumers tend to evaluate countries-of-origin according to their perceived level of economic development of the country. This finding of the study is consistent with the studies conducted by Wang and Lamb (1983), Han (1990) and Okechuku (1994) which stated that the consumers evaluate products according to the perceived level of economic development of the source country.

The result regarding the assessment of product attributes clearly shows the superiority of Japanese home appliances products, considering the products' design, innovation, style, energy efficiency, high performance, easy to operate and

durability. The only exception is the low rating given to price. On the other hand, Chinese product attributes scored the highest mean, which is cheapest price weighed against other countries' home appliances products. The scores of other attributes of Chinese products such as acceptable attributes and the means were in between 3 to 3.93, and the only weakest attribute was the durability of the product. This finding was consistent with the previous studies which found out that the consumers in less developed countries are more responsive to price changes for products made in less developed countries (Leonidas, *et al,* 1999; Yi *et al*., 2004). Malaysian and Korean product attributes were evaluated positively and rated moderately. The Yemenis show acceptance of product quality produced in both countries, but Malaysian products have more appropriate price characteristic than Korean products. This might give Malaysia a competitive advantage in Yemeni markets. The image problem for Taiwanese products has been found out in this research in which the average mean of product attributes was only 2.75. Only the price of products scored the highest in this evaluation. These results complement the results of a study conducted by Yavas and Alpay's (1986) which examined the Bahraini and Saudi Arabian consumers and they found that Japanese products are ranked the highest, while Taiwanese products were ranked the lowest. Product attribute perception may rely on the image of its country-of-origin (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993). The COO made-in label will influence the beliefs about the product and thus be reflected in the product's attributes scores (Erickson, Johansson, and Chao, 1984). Han and Terspstra (1988) found that Country-of-origin cue did affect consumers' perceptions of the product quality.

The results indicate that the consumers' general purchase intentions of Asian made products are more likely to be consistent with their perceptions and evaluations of countries-of-origin for the home appliances products category. The Yemeni consumers have more intention to purchase Japanese products due to their perfect and superior attributes, followed by Malaysian products (as the second preferable products' country-of-origins). Korean made products are at the third place, while Chinese and Taiwanese products got the fourth and the fifth purchase intention evaluation. It is very important to note that Yemeni consumers show their willingness to buy Chinese products with a high mean score of 3.13 as reported in the second statement. This might be caused by the low price offered by Chinese products and the Yemeni market is getting very price competitive. The Yemeni consumers show high price sensitivity. Yi, *et al.,* (2004) mentioned that consumers responded positively to price changes (low price) for products made in less or developing countries. The result is constant with previous study conducted by Papadopoulos *et al.* (1990) which verified that consumers in five countries of his study are more likely to purchase Japanese products rather than the similar products made by their home countries, and they conclude that Japanese products globally achieve high consumer preferences and purchasing intentions through competent and aggressive advertising. The effect of country-of-origin cue on purchase intention is also concluded by many scholars such as Morello (1984), Han, (1990) and Tse *et al* (1996). The effect on purchase intention will be less when the country-of-origin is considered as a less developed country (Yi, *et al.*, 2004). This finding contradicts with Wall and Heslop's study (1991) which showed that country-of-origin seems not to be important when it comes to evaluating purchase likelihood.

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