



Brand and country-of-origin effect on consumers' decision to purchase luxury products[☆]

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to update the factors influencing consumer purchase of luxury goods and, more specifically, to consider the combined effect of brand and country of origin (CoO) on the purchasing decision. This article extends an exploratory phase constructed from qualitative data previously gathered on this topic. The study includes administering a questionnaire online in seven countries (China, France, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the USA) to a total sample of 1102 respondents. The richness of this research relates to the possibility of an intercultural analysis of the results from seven countries. These results concern the differences in the relative importance of components of the consumer decision-making process in respect of the purchase of luxury and non-luxury goods; the relative importance of CoO for consumers making purchasing decisions relating to luxury goods; and the variation in consumers' decision-making criteria depending on the maturity of the luxury market. This research allows the authors to confirm, develop, and generalize results previously obtained in the exploratory phase of their work. They are interesting in terms of management recommendations for a company that wishes to expand internationally in a geographic area covered by the study, since the research found significant differences. The results of the research contribute also to the theoretical controversy concerning the importance of CoO in the consumer decision-making process.

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1. Introduction and objectives

The effect of country of origin (CoO) on consumers' perceptions and purchasing intentions is a common theme in marketing research (Bloemer, Brijs, & Kasper, 2009; Usunier, 2006). This research aims to update the factors influencing consumer purchase of luxury goods. The study focuses on this sector as the internationalization of business is inseparable from its economic development in recent years. In this context, brands (especially Italian and French) conventionally use the argument of CoO in their international communication strategies.

Research in consumer behavior takes two theoretical directions to explain the consumption of luxury goods. Such research initially drew on the work of social psychology to focus almost exclusively on socially oriented motivations (Dittmar, 1994; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Theoretical explanations based on a personally oriented vision complement this trend (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Regardless of the perspective used, prior research in the field of luxury shows the particular importance that brands play as vectors of strategies that

consumers use in their decision-making processes (Dubois, Czellar, & Laurent, 2005; Kapferer, 1997, 1998; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004).

Following the difficulties experienced in 2008–2009 and despite forecasts in return-to-growth in 2010–2011 (for example, Bain et al., 2011), businesses need to make smart strategic choices in international marketing. This research is part of the managerial perspective of improving understanding of the cultural differences in perception and purchasing behavior relating to luxury brands.

The study focuses specifically on the configural effects of brand and CoO on the purchasing decisions of consumers. However, the study includes additional elements, such as design, price, and guarantee, which can influence the purchasing decisions of consumers. The choice of these variables depends on the definition of what a luxury brand is. Researchers generally agree about the lack of substantial definitions of luxury, that is to say, definitions based on general intrinsic characteristics of products and techniques employed, or on techno-economic characteristics of the industry (Bomsel, 1995). However, a certain consensus is emerging about the major characteristics that the consumer of luxury brands desires. The common denominators are beauty, rarity, quality, and price, and also an inspirational brand endorsing the product. In this context, brands compete on the basis of their ability to evoke exclusivity, brand identity, brand awareness, and perceived quality for the consumer (Phau & Prendergast, 2000).

This article complements an exploratory phase, conducted from qualitative data gathered previously on this subject (Aiello et al., 2009). The wealth of results relates to the intercultural nature of the analysis, based on a questionnaire administered in seven countries (China, France, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the USA), with a total sample of 1102 respondents.

After describing the conceptual framework and methodology for the study, this paper presents the results. The study firstly characterizes the specificities of the luxury market in terms of decision making, and secondly identifies important elements in this decision. At each stage, the methods chosen allow comparison of the results obtained in the different countries represented in the sample.

2. Literature review

The motivation to acquire luxury brands traditionally derives from the notion of conspicuous purchase. This idea tends still to be more or less the strategic foundation for the management of luxury brands (Corneo & Jeanne, 1997; Dittmar, 1994; O'Cass & Frost, 2002; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004). From this perspective, which has its origins in sociology and social psychology via the theory of impression management, consumers strongly orient their behavior towards the creation of a favorable social image that they can build through their purchases (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). They then use brands as vectors to implement two distinct consumption strategies. On one hand, brands are the visible symbols of consumer tastes (i.e., social salience); on the other hand, brands are icons representing certain social groups and thus helping consumers to strengthen their membership of these groups (i.e., social identification).

A number of researchers enrich the traditional vision of luxury consumption (Tsai, 2005; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). In this revised paradigm, two types of luxury consumption orientation (social and personal) exist in the management of luxury brands. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) were the first to show that personal orientation towards luxury brands was more important for some consumers than others. When these consumers choose a luxury brand, utilitarian, emotional, and symbolic dimensions usually underlie their personal orientation.

This research fits within this theoretical perspective, taking into account the particular role played by the brand in the consumer's decision-making process. However, if research traditionally recognizes the brand as a central driver of the consumer's decision, this study observes that companies also link brand to CoO to develop their international marketing strategies. This topic has not, as far as

the authors are aware, been the subject of specific research in the luxury sector.

Since Dichter's (1962) reference to the significance of the "made-in" dimension, research on CoO effects has become one of the major domains within the scientific literature on international marketing and consumer behavior (Bloemer et al., 2009; Usunier, 2006). In fact, large numbers of studies exist on consumers' beliefs and buying behavior with respect to the CoO of a product or service. However, CoO is also one of the most controversial research fields, and many studies reach opposite conclusions (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007; Pereira et al., 2005; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Some (e.g., Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; d'Astous & Ahmed, 1999; Laroche et al., 2002) conclude that CoO has a significant influence on the choice of a product or service, while others (e.g., Ettenson et al., 1988; Liefeld, 1993, 2004; Lim and Darley, 1997; Lim et al., 1994) conclude that the influence of CoO is very weak.

Despite the efforts of researchers to validate and relate the numerous approaches to CoO, recent reviews still deplore the lack of conceptual, methodological, and theoretical transparency (Bloemer et al., 2009; Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003; Usunier, 2006; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999).

2.1. Country-of-origin effect on consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviors

Previous researchers working on the effects of CoO take two complementary directions. On one hand, they consider the composition of product-country images (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009; Roth and Romeo, 1992; Usunier and Cestre, 2007). On the other hand, they have an interest in how consumers use CoO as an evaluation of product quality (Bloemer et al., 2009; Veale and Quester, 2009; Verlegh et al., 2005). This article is part of this second perspective, and examines the influence of CoO on perceptions and purchasing intentions of consumers in the field of luxury goods.

According to Bilkey and Nes (1982), one of the most popular approaches towards the use of CoO-cues is the cognitive approach, which sees a product as a cluster of cues. This approach usually distinguishes between product-intrinsic cues (such as taste, design, material, and performance) and product-extrinsic cues (such as price, brand name, store reputation, warranty, and CoO).

Research has shown that consumers generally rely more on intrinsic attributes when forming their opinions. However, in certain circumstances, consumers prefer extrinsic attributes, finding them more credible and reliable than their own assessment (Srinivasan et al., 2004). The use of extrinsic attributes can also relate to situational factors, especially when status or self-image affects the purchase of a product (Piron, 2000; Quester and Smart, 1998).

The CoO impacts consumer perceptions and behaviors through the image of the product's CoO. The image is the representation, reputation, or stereotype of a specific country, which consumers associate with the products (Nagashima, 1970, 1977). According to Roth and Romeo (1992), a country's image arises from a series of dimensions that qualify a nation in terms of its production profile. Such dimensions include innovative approach (superior, cutting-edge technology); design (style, elegance, balance); prestige (exclusiveness, status of the national brands); and workmanship (reliability, durability, quality of national manufacturers). Usunier (1993, 2006) provides a more comprehensive definition of the country image as a multidimensional construct influenced by cognitive components, affective components, and stereotypes. The strong associations between the country image and product quality in relation to product/brand evaluations (Kotler and Gertner, 2002) necessitate the identification of how global consumers perceive the redefined concept of CoO. They perceive the CoO as the country of design (CoD), and as the country of manufacture/assembly (CoM/A). The use of different products in different countries causes contradictory findings in

previous studies of the effect of the CoO on consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviors.

Two explanations exist for the conflicting results observed in previous research on the impact of CoO. On one hand, the use of different types of products from different sources may result in opposite conclusions on the effect of origin on consumers' perceptions and purchasing behaviors (Veale and Quester, 2009; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). On the other hand, previous work (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999; Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999) shows the impact of CoO on the process of consumer decision making to be relatively low in studies combining several factors. One of the most important criticisms of research concerning CoO is that the latter has a real impact on product evaluation in the (unrealistic) event of other information not varying. This research therefore includes, in addition to CoO, other variables involved in how consumers assess and choose luxury goods.

2.2. Brand functions and brand relational dimension

The current crisis is encouraging companies to look more deeply into the links between consumers and luxury brands. Consumers buy luxury products for two main reasons: for their own pleasure, and as a symbol of success. Kapferer (2009) bases the future of luxury brands on the search for balance between these two motivations, by geographical area. In addition, consumers often buy luxury products to give as gifts. Yet whatever the reason for the purchase, the brand remains the main vehicle for connecting with the consumer.

A brand may influence customers' perceptions and attitudes in several ways. Analysis of the dominant components of this influence is possible through the investigation of two complementary key issues: the functional dimension and the relational dimension. The *functional brand* derives from the commonly accepted view that the brand usually represents the memory of a firm, which encompasses all the investments, research activities, and process technologies or innovations that the firm carries out over time (Rego et al., 2009). Nevertheless, customers may use brands as a vehicle or mode of expression of attitudes, individualism, and needs (Keegan et al., 1992). According to Keller (2008), brands can simplify choices, be synonymous with a particular level of quality, reduce risk, and generate trust.

The development of the concept of brand equity results in a significant evolution of the brand concept itself. The model of brand equity proposed by Keller (1993) is dominant, providing the link between its two dimensions: brand awareness and image. A set of associations (Keller, 2008; Keller and Lehmann, 2006) characterizes the image of a brand in the consumer's mind. In this perspective, the brand's meaning derives from functional elements of performance or more abstract elements related to the imaginary (Keller, 1993, 2001). Brand performance links to its intrinsic properties and to how consumers perceive the fit between the brand and their functional needs (features, quality of product, services related to the brand, style and design, price). Brand meaning also involves extrinsic properties and how the brand meets the psychological or social needs of consumers (user profiles, situation, personality and values, heritage and experiences).

The examination of specific functions that the brand performs further illuminates the analysis of brand influence over consumers' perceptions, and purchasing decisions. Kapferer and Thoenig (1989), in addition to Lambin (1991), classify a series of utility functions attributable to the brand. These functions can be useful both for customers (placement, guarantee, personalization, practicality, pleasure functions), and for manufacturers (protection, positioning, capitalization). According to Keller (2008) the structure of the brand centers on three fundamental components: the identity component (signs of recognition); the perceptual component (cognitive associations and perceptions) (Peter and Olson, 1987); and the trust component (confirmation of expectations).

The *brand relational dimension*, meanwhile, derives from the continuation of work on brand equity and on the process of creating abstract associations, with current research aiming to consider the

brand as a symbolic entity with which the consumer maintains an interpersonal relationship (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998). Thus, some researchers extend and enrich work on possessions (Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1995; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988) to apply them to the brand.

From this perspective, consumers search for emotional elements, which sometimes have their anchor in socio-cultural trends towards which they feel a sense of belonging (Fournier, 1998). Customers search for emotional elements when they are tangible, and objective elements play a secondary role. Therefore, firms attempt to create a symbolic universe, surrounding their products as a way to reinforce consumers' brand loyalty.

2.3. The interaction between CoO and brand: effects on consumer behavior

Scholars also direct their attention towards the phenomenon of how brand and CoO interact, specifically in relation to individuals' perceptions and purchasing intentions (Haubl, 1996; Haubl and Elrod, 1999). These interactions may exist at different levels: assimilation of the two concepts, joint effects, or influence of CoO on the brand equity.

As noted earlier, the brand is a variable that works as a summary in formulating purchasing intentions (see also Erickson et al., 1984). Sometimes, brand names substitute CoO because of their association with specific countries (Bhaskaran and Sukumaran, 2007); in fact consumers often infer the CoO from the brand name (Terpstra and Han, 1988). According to Haubl (1996), purchasing intentions in relation to luxury products are likely to flow from both brand and CoO; customers consider both the brand's attributes and the place of manufacture or place of assembly in their purchasing decisions (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1996; Tse and Gorn, 1993). Many important brands with good reputations link to countries with high CoO images.

Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) both highlight that CoO could affect the brand equity by generating secondary associations for the brand, and even a foreign-sounding name is able to affect the brand equity (Leclerc et al., 1994). Positive brand images can reduce if the CoO or CoM/A has a negative image (Johansson and Nebenzahl, 1986), while a very strong brand could decrease the relevance of CoO (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993). This finding reveals that information on the manufacturer's country does not significantly affect the evaluation of branded products when this information is congruent with the brand origin. However, when the CoM/A has a weaker image than the country of the brand origin, this information produces a significant negative effect on product evaluation: an effect that tends to be more severe for low-equity than high-equity brands (Koubaa, 2008). Some researchers (Norjaya Mohd et al., 2007) investigate the relationships between CoO image and brand equity for electrical appliances; they discover that CoO has a significant impact on brand dimensions and specifically on brand loyalty.

Haubl and Elrod (1999) note that perceptions of a product are more favorable when brand and country of production are coherent. Some research likewise points out that the effect of the interaction between brand image and CoO image varies in direction and intensity depending on the perceptual consonance of these two aspects. Since this perceived place of origin is little short of a demographic variable and contributes to shaping the brand personality (Thakor and Kohli, 1996), brand and CoO must display intrinsic coherence.

Analysis of CoO and brand interactions is of particular importance for global brands, often represented by products with a different CoD and CoM/A. An important step therefore is to explore whether and to what extent customers consider the brand name as a completely autonomous factor, a factor exerting a certain influence, or even an estimator of the CoO. According to Pecotich and Ward (2007), a brand gradually takes on the function of a summarizing construct in the eyes of customers as they grow increasingly familiar with the brand. The greater the familiarity, the less the customer will consider other extrinsic information such as the price or CoO. Again, according to

Pecotich and Ward (2007), a familiar brand is actually able to increase the perception of the CoO with which consumers associate the brand, and even to neutralize the negative effect often linked to developing countries.

Finally, Pappu et al. (2005, 2007), stating CoO to be an important variable that can affect the equity of a brand, assert that marketing managers operating in an international context must identify the sources of brand equity, and understand the importance of incorporating CoO into their brand-equity measurement.

3. Research question, hypothesis, and method

Our research centers on understanding the factors that influence the decision to purchase luxury goods. Specifically, the study examines the relative influence of brand and CoO on the purchasing decision. This focus informs three hypotheses. The first important step is to specify the research context when attempting to identify luxury goods in a purchasing decision. The first hypothesis (H1) is therefore: differences occur in the relative importance of components of the consumer decision-making process in respect to the purchase of luxury and non-luxury goods. Since CoO is a variable used in the communication strategies of international companies, an interesting question is whether CoO is indeed a motivator of consumer choice. The second hypothesis (H2) is then: CoO is relatively important for consumers making purchasing decisions on luxury goods. Finally, this research intends to make specific recommendations for international marketing strategists, hence the third hypothesis (H3): consumers' decision-making criteria vary depending on the maturity of the luxury market, that is between countries where luxury is traditionally present (France, Italy, Japan, USA) and those where luxury is still a relative newcomer (China, India, Russia).

This research involves interviewing customers from the seven countries of the research team. The study includes a sample of around 150 people for each country (see Table 1A); the structure of the sample respects the age and gender distribution of the total population of the country. The sample comprises 50.7% women and 49.3% men, and the research team defines the following age categories: aged under 20 years, from 20 to 29, from 30 to 39, from 40 to 49, from 50 to 59, and 60 and over.

The results of the questionnaire, defined with the agreement of all the national research groups, were gathered via internet. The final questionnaire was in English, being the common working language for the research team.

Students from the different universities and business schools involved administered the questionnaire; their task was to find respondents in line with the age and gender quotas mentioned above and to help respondents fill in the questionnaire, explaining the questions or translating into the national language if needed. This assistance was fundamental, to avoid the limits of having only respondents fluent in English and familiar with the use of online surveys. The students' role was also to ensure that respondents chose brands belonging to the sphere of fashion. The questions asked respondents to express their opinions and evaluations on a five-point Likert scale, with the minimum value being 1 and the maximum value 5. Data collection

Table 1a
Geographical origins of the respondents.

Country	Respondents
China	170
France	157
India	166
Italy	142
Japan	149
Russia	152
USA	166
Total	1102

took place from June to October 2008, according to the availability of students in the different countries.

The age distribution of the total sample shows that the age category from 20 to 29 years contains the largest proportion of respondents, with the next two categories (30 to 39 years, and 40 to 49 years) showing similar percentages (see Table 1b).

4. Results and discussion

In examining the purchasing decisions of consumers, this study uses the following criteria: brand, CoO, CoD, CoM/A, price, warranty, design, and advertising. This section presents the results of the research, structured by hypothesis area.

4.1. Characterization of the specificities of the decision to purchase luxury goods (H1: differences occur in the relative importance of components of the consumer decision-making process in respect to the purchase of luxury and non-luxury goods)

The study attempts to characterize the specifics of the decision to purchase products from the luxury sector as opposed to non-luxury goods (see Table 2a).

Factors driving consumer choice are very different from one product category to another. The results in Table 2a indicate that the brand plays a more important role than CoO for both product categories. A more detailed examination of the findings reveals that the most important factor affecting customers' decision to purchase non-luxury goods is price ($\bar{x} = 4.07$), followed by design ($\bar{x} = 3.62$), guarantee ($\bar{x} = 3.37$), and brand ($\bar{x} = 3.11$). CoO appears only in sixth place ($\bar{x} = 2.99$), with CoM/A playing a slightly more important role ($\bar{x} = 3.03$).

Results for luxury goods show a marked disparity, with the most important element affecting consumers' purchasing decision being design ($\bar{x} = 4.33$), closely followed by brand ($\bar{x} = 4.26$). Guarantee is in third place ($\bar{x} = 3.99$), followed by price ($\bar{x} = 3.91$). CoO appears in fifth position only ($\bar{x} = 3.68$), with a very similar score for CoD and CoM/A. However, the two criteria of particular interest to this study – brand and CoO (shown in bold in Table 2a) – seem to matter more to consumers when purchasing luxury goods.

After observing the criteria for selecting luxury and non-luxury products in the two categories individually, the study uses a paired-samples t-test to compare these. This test compares the mean of two variables for one group, calculating the difference in values between the two variables for each observation and testing whether the mean differs from 0. As expected, the criteria that govern the choices of consumers differ significantly depending on whether the products are luxury ones, regardless of the country observed. Brand,

Table 1b
Age of the respondents.

Country	Mean	Standard deviation
China	39.8	12.8
France	47.9	17.2
India	34.5	11.8
Italy	40.4	12.4
Japan	41.1	14.3
Russia	38.7	13.0
USA	38.2	13.4
Total	40.0	14.1

Age	Distribution (total sample)
<20	0.5%
20–29	33.2%
30–39	22.4%
40–49	25.7%
50–59	8.9%
≥60	9.3%
Total	100.0%

Table 2a
Comparison of factors influencing the purchasing decision: luxury versus non-luxury goods.

Rank	Luxury goods		Non-luxury goods	
	Criterion	Mean	Criterion	Mean
1	Design	4.33	Price	4.07
2	Brand	4.26	Design	3.62
3	Guarantee	3.99	Guarantee	3.37
4	Price	3.91	Brand	3.11
5	CoO	3.68	CoM/A	3.03
6	CoM/A	3.59	CoO	2.99
7	CoD	3.56	Advertising	2.90
8	Advertising	3.28	CoD	2.80

CoD, design, and CoO seem to be the elements of choice that best characterize the world of luxury goods compared to that of non-luxury goods (see Table 2b).

Going on to clarify whether differences exist between countries, the study then looks at the differences between these criteria by each area of consumption, using a variance analysis (one-way ANOVA). This method allows the use of a univariate analysis of variance on a quantitative dependent variable by one factor (independent variable). The research uses analysis of variance to test the hypothesis of equality of means (see Table 2c).

The differences appear to be significant at the 5% level and for all gap variables. The Fisher’s F-test provides the opportunity to test the equality of two variances by the ratio of two variances and to verify that this ratio does not exceed a certain theoretical value. This test shows that the greatest differences exist for the variables of price, brand, and CoD.

The study goes on to determine those countries for which perceptions differ significantly, using Scheffe post-hoc tests. For the four variables that best characterize luxury (brand, CoD, design, and CoO), these tests show that the seven countries have significantly differentiated perceptions of luxury. Thus, Chinese consumers seem to have a clearer vision of a luxury product, forming their perception using all the criteria studied except design. In contrast, Indian consumers perceive the least difference between the two worlds of consumption, characterizing luxury goods almost exclusively from the price variable. The third developing country, Russia, appears in the average scores, showing levels of assessment of items very close to those of most developed countries. As for the developed countries, their evaluations are close to each other on all criteria. However, Italian consumers appear to attach little importance to the price, while Japanese consumers pay little regard to CoO, in their differentiated assessment of both categories of product.

To determine whether characteristic groups of countries exist, the study employs a classification tree procedure, which classifies cases into groups of countries. The research selects each gap variable as a dependent variable and each country as an independent variable, and uses Exhaustive CHAID (CHI-squared Automatic Interaction Detection) as the growing method. This method is a modification of

CHAID, and examines all possible splits for each predictor. The work focuses on whether the differentiations in the perceptions of the world of luxury were common to groups of developed and developing countries. The results are less clear-cut than expected, demonstrating the richness and complexity of multicultural studies and therefore the need to go beyond conventional wisdom.

An examination of brand (the first element of differentiation for luxury) and CoO (the fourth element) – on which this article focuses – reveals that the classification is into three stable groups with similar perceptions between China and Italy; France, Russia, and the USA; and Japan and India (see Fig. 1).

4.2. Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (H2: CoO is relatively important for consumers making purchasing decisions on luxury goods)

Having characterized what differentiates consumers’ purchasing decisions in the luxury market, this study now looks specifically at the criteria that govern these decisions (see Table 3a).

On average across all countries, the most valued criteria in the decision to purchase luxury products are design, brand, and guarantee, with the CoO of luxury goods appearing in fifth position only.

On the basis of this sample, the research uses a principal components factor analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation, in an attempt to identify underlying variables to explain the origin of correlations within all the observed variables. As a preliminary, tests assess the suitability of the data sample for factor analysis. To conduct a factor analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy must be greater than 0.5. This measure varies between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 being better; a value of 0.6 is a suggested minimum. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity tests the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix; the Bartlett’s test must be significant. For this analysis, the study verifies the two conditions (KMO = 0.762 and Bartlett test $\chi^2(28) = 2004, P < 0.001$) and also tests the internal reliability of this measure. Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.715$) shows good internal consistency of the measure. Tables 3b, 3c, and 3d present the decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods.

Three factors explain the 65.15% variance. The first factor (with an eigenvalue of 2353 and accounting for 29.42% of the variance) comprises the CoO, CoD, and CoM/A. This result is entirely consistent with the literature, since the factor includes the CoO with both internal components (CoD and CoM/A). The second factor (with an eigenvalue of 1652 and accounting for 20.65% of the variance) includes design, brand, and advertising, and brings together the components of brand equity. Advertising and design in this case are vectors of reputation and image. The third factor (with an eigenvalue of 1207 and accounting for 15.09% of the variance) includes the price and guarantee. These two items may relate to consumers’ motivation to reduce risk. The item guarantee directly measures – and the high price (standing for perceived quality) indirectly measures – this benefit for the consumer.

Table 2b
Comparison of factors influencing the purchasing decision (paired-samples t-test).

Pairs	Items (luxury versus non-luxury)	Paired differences							
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference		T	df.	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Brand	1.16	1.43	.044	1.08	1.25	26.47	1058	.000
Pair 2	CoO	.69	1.32	.041	.61	.77	16.80	1052	.000
Pair 3	CoD	.75	1.27	.039	.67	.82	18.97	1046	.000
Pair 4	CoM/A	.56	1.27	.039	.49	.64	14.33	1042	.000
Pair 5	Price	-.15	1.33	.041	-.23	-.07	-3.64	1061	.000
Pair 6	Guarantee	.63	1.34	.041	.55	.71	15.39	1055	.000
Pair 7	Design	.72	1.32	.040	.64	.80	17.79	1059	.000
Pair 8	Advertising	.36	1.40	.043	.28	.44	8.36	1056	.000

Table 2c
Comparison of factors influencing the purchasing decision (ANOVA).

		Sum of squares	df.	Mean square	F	Sig.
Gap brand	Between groups	91.87	6	15.31	7.77	.000
	Within groups	2072.87	1052	1.97		
	Total	2164.74	1058			
Gap CoO	Between groups	56.49	6	9.42	5.51	.000
	Within groups	1788.47	1046	1.71		
	Total	1844.95	1052			
Gap CoD	Between groups	58.98	6	9.83	6.27	.000
	Within groups	1629.94	1040	1.57		
	Total	1688.91	1046			
Gap CoM/A	Between groups	28.84	6	4.81	3.01	.006
	Within groups	1653.67	1036	1.60		
	Total	1682.51	1042			
Gap price	Between groups	84.05	6	14.01	8.21	.000
	Within groups	1800.45	1055	1.71		
	Total	1884.49	1061			
Gap guarantee	Between groups	63.53	6	10.59	6.11	.000
	Within groups	1817.91	1049	1.73		
	Total	1881.44	1055			
Gap design	Between groups	36.94	6	6.16	3.60	.002
	Within groups	1800.84	1053	1.71		
	Total	1837.78	1059			
Gap advertising	Between groups	63.47	6	10.58	5.55	.000
	Within groups	1999.91	1050	1.91		
	Total	2063.39	1056			

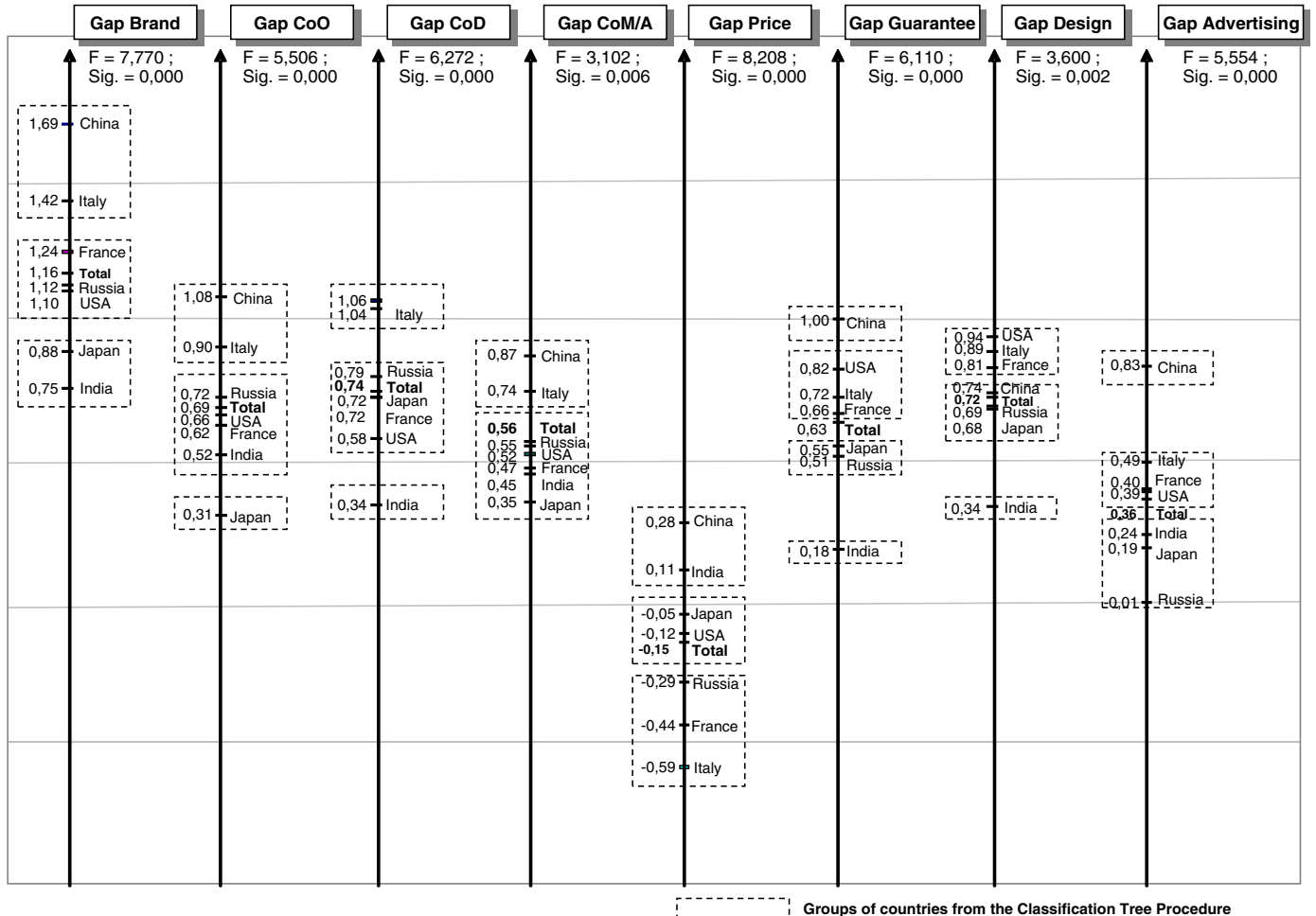


Fig. 1. Comparison of factors influencing the purchasing decision: luxury versus non-luxury goods (mean and classification tree procedure).

Table 3a
Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (descriptive statistics).

Country		Brand	CoO	CoD	CoM/A	Price	Guarantee	Design	Advertising
China	Mean	4.26	3.90	3.76	3.86	4.17	3.96	4.31	3.59
	N	152	156	157	155	157	156	157	156
	Std. dev.	.83	.92	.94	.97	.85	.96	.78	.98
France	Mean	4.44	3.46	3.25	3.31	3.60	4.03	4.10	3.18
	N	153	153	152	151	153	153	153	153
	Std. dev.	.78	1.27	1.26	1.20	1.17	1.08	1.04	1.23
India	Mean	4.08	3.49	3.46	3.53	3.91	3.74	4.04	3.73
	N	166	166	162	164	165	164	165	164
	Std. dev.	.87	1.06	1.08	1.08	.96	1.04	1.18	1.12
Italy	Mean	4.38	3.99	3.83	3.72	3.53	4.31	4.36	3.21
	N	141	141	141	141	141	141	141	141
	Std. dev.	1.08	1.19	1.16	1.16	1.26	.91	.99	1.34
Japan	Mean	3.97	3.68	3.64	3.78	4.32	3.99	4.41	3.18
	N	146	145	145	144	146	146	145	146
	Std. dev.	1.14	1.19	1.22	1.14	.86	1.14	.86	1.25
Russia	Mean	4.39	4.09	3.92	3.83	3.78	4.14	4.56	2.90
	N	152	152	151	151	152	152	151	151
	Std. dev.	.97	1.02	1.07	1.07	1.15	1.06	.77	1.34
USA	Mean	4.32	3.15	3.05	3.12	4.06	3.82	4.54	3.09
	N	158	151	152	149	158	158	158	158
	Std. dev.	1.03	1.33	1.32	1.30	1.15	1.35	.75	1.31
Total	Mean	4.26	3.68	3.56	3.59	3.91	3.99	4.33	3.28
	N	1068	1064	1060	1055	1072	1070	1070	1069
	Std. dev.	.97	1.18	1.19	1.16	1.09	1.09	.95	1.26

4.3. Comparison of decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods in different countries (H3: consumers' decision-making criteria vary depending on the maturity of the luxury market)

As for the gap analysis above, the study then performs a one-way analysis of variance and Scheffe post-hoc tests (see Table 3e).

For all variables, the seven countries show significant differences (F from 4.645 for guarantee to 12.908 for CoO for P<0.05). If the three main criteria for choosing a luxury product (design, brand, and guarantee) have universal value in all countries, CoO does not; on the contrary, major differences exist.

If the Scheffe post-hoc tests allow updating of significant differences between countries, classification trees fail to identify stable groups of countries. Instead, each choice variable requires separate analysis. However, some general trends emerge from the results. For the three main factors of choice (design, brand, and guarantee), India is in the final or penultimate position. China is also in the lower part of the group, although relatively close to the mean, while Russia, on the other hand, is in the upper range. Marked differences therefore exist between the three developing countries in the study regarding the criteria for purchasing luxury products.

Consumers in developed countries show greatly differentiated behaviors. Thus, Japanese consumers, who are rather average on six of eight criteria, differ in highly valuing price and attaching relatively less significance to brand than consumers from other countries. Consumers from the USA appear to pay great attention to design and very little to the various components of CoO. However, they value guarantees less than consumers in other countries. Italian consumers attach roughly the same level of importance to brand ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), design ($\bar{x} = 4.36$), and security ($\bar{x} = 4.31$). For this last variable, they are also ahead of other nations. For French consumers, brand takes a pre-eminent place but design is relatively unimportant and they rarely take into account CoO and its components (see Fig. 2).

Table 3b
Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (KMO and Bartlett's tests).

KMO measure of sampling adequacy		.76
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	2004.96
	df.	28
	Sig.	.000

5. Conclusions, limitations, and future research

The authors intuitively assumed significant differences to exist between homogenous groups of countries according to their level of maturity in the market for luxury goods. However, the situation appears to be more complex and therefore to require a finer distinction between countries. In particular, for countries in the sample where the luxury market is still developing (China, India, and Russia), and so which have a strategic goal to encourage the purchase of luxury goods, consumer behavior is strikingly different from one country to another.

Firstly, this research clearly distinguishes those elements that best characterize the luxury sector to consumers. In terms of managerial recommendations, this result is interesting for companies wishing to enter this market, showing them which strategic elements they should rely on to differentiate rapidly. The study identifies four main elements: brand, CoD, design, and CoO. However, refinement of these recommendations is necessary depending on the target location, since the value of the criteria differ significantly between the countries in the sample.

Secondly, the study examines the criteria governing the decision to purchase luxury goods. The criteria that companies should emphasize are design, brand, and guarantee. Here again, differences exist between countries. CoO, which does not generally form part of the elements valued by consumers of luxury goods, displays the largest difference

Table 3c
Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (total variance explained).

Factor	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation sums of squared loadings ^a		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	2.89	36.07	36.07	2.35	29.42	29.42
2	1.31	16.33	52.40	1.65	20.65	50.07
3	1.02	12.75	65.15	1.21	15.09	65.15
4	.85	10.57	75.73			
5	.67	8.41	84.14			
6	.61	7.66	91.80			
7	.34	4.29	96.09			
8	.31	3.91	100.00			

Extraction method: principal components analysis.

^a The values in this panel of the table represent the distribution of the variance after the Varimax rotation. Varimax rotation tries to maximize the variance of each factor, so the table redistributes the total amount of variance accounted for over the three extracted factors.

Table 3d
Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (rotated factor matrix^a).

	Factor		
	1	2	3
CoO	.87		
CoM/A	.86		
CoD	.84		
Design		.73	
Brand		.69	
Advertising		.61	
Price			.91
Guarantee			.54

Extraction method: principal components analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

^a The rotation converges in 5 iterations. This table contains the rotated factor loadings, which are the correlations between the variable and the factor. Because these are correlations, possible values range from -1 to $+1$. Using the option that tells SPSS not to print any of the correlations that are 0.5 or less makes the output easier to read by removing the clutter of low correlations (which are probably not meaningful anyway).

between countries. However, consumers in all countries widely recognize brand as a criterion of choice in the purchase of luxury goods.

From a managerial point of view, a more precise analysis of the results is interesting. The research forms two groups of countries according to the maturity level of the luxury market. The study analyzes the results of each developed country relative to the group mean, showing that for French consumers, the predominant elements in decision-making are brand, design, and guarantee. However, while brand and guarantee score above the mean for developed countries, design does not. CoO, whether considered overall or in its variations, plays a minor role, receiving a score below the mean for developed countries. Consumers from the USA are very close to the French in the relatively small weighting they give to CoO. Guarantee is also a less-valued criterion compared to the mean of developed countries. In contrast, the criteria of design, brand, and price receive rankings above the mean for developed countries. Italian consumers attach great importance to guarantee and brand. Of all developed countries studied, Italy considers CoO and its variations most, with a score well above the mean of other developed countries on these criteria.

Table 3e
Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (ANOVA).

		Sum of squares	df.	Mean square	F	Sig.
Brand	Between groups	27.89	6	4.65	5.03	.000
	Within groups	979.65	1061	923		
	Total	1007.54	1067			
CoO	Between groups	101.52	6	16.92	12.91	.000
	Within groups	1385.61	1057	1.31		
	Total	1487.13	1063			
CoD	Between groups	92.85	6	15.47	11.63	.000
	Within groups	1400.87	1053	1.33		
	Total	1493.72	1059			
CoM/A	Between groups	72.98	6	12.16	9.43	.000
	Within groups	1351.76	1048	1.29		
	Total	1424.74	1054			
Price	Between groups	75.11	6	12.52	11.00	.000
	Within groups	1211.83	1065	1.14		
	Total	1286.93	1071			
Guarantee	Between groups	32.93	6	5.49	4.65	.000
	Within groups	1256.03	1063	1.18		
	Total	1288.95	1069			
Design	Between groups	38.99	6	6.49	7.50	.000
	Within groups	920.53	1063	.87		
	Total	959.51	1069			
Advertising	Between groups	78.56	6	13.09	8.68	.000
	Within groups	1602.58	1062	1.51		
	Total	1681.14	1068			

In contrast, price appears to be less important as a decision criterion than in other developed countries. Finally, Japanese consumers attach particular importance to price in making purchasing decisions. They also take into account in a very significant way design and CoO, even if the results on these criteria are closer to the mean of developed countries. In contrast, the Japanese are the only consumers in developed countries to attach little importance to brand.

As for how specific developing countries compare to the group means, Chinese consumers attach particular importance to price but also to CoO and its variations. They are, however, only just in the group mean for design, brand, and guarantee. Consumers in Russia attach more specific significance to design and CoO dimensions than those in the other two countries in the group. In addition, evaluation of brand and guarantee is very close to that of developed countries. Finally, Indian consumers do not seem to have a very familiar image of luxury goods. They give scores below the group mean and the mean of the total sample for all factors except advertising. Even if brand and design factors generally score more highly than others, Indian consumers attach importance to the factor furthest removed from the product itself.

From the academic point of view, this research makes a contribution to previous studies concerning CoO and branding through a multicultural analysis that takes into account seven countries and more than 1000 customers. The results provide a number of responses to the controversy surrounding the importance of CoO in the decision-making process of consumers (Bloemer et al., 2009; Laroche et al., 2005; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003; Usunier, 2006). In the specific case of luxury goods, the study highlights that the impact of CoO is weaker than that of brand.

Some other interesting results emerge from the research, especially concerning the possibility of identifying potential country groups based on the analysis variables. The respondents seem to grasp fully the globalization of markets and – especially – of the value chain, from conception and design to the manufacture of a product.

Further research is necessary; of particular interest would be a comparison between the perceptions and purchasing decisions of consumers in each country during the introduction of luxury brands. Other avenues of future research could interest both researchers in the area of luxury brands and others wishing to learn more about

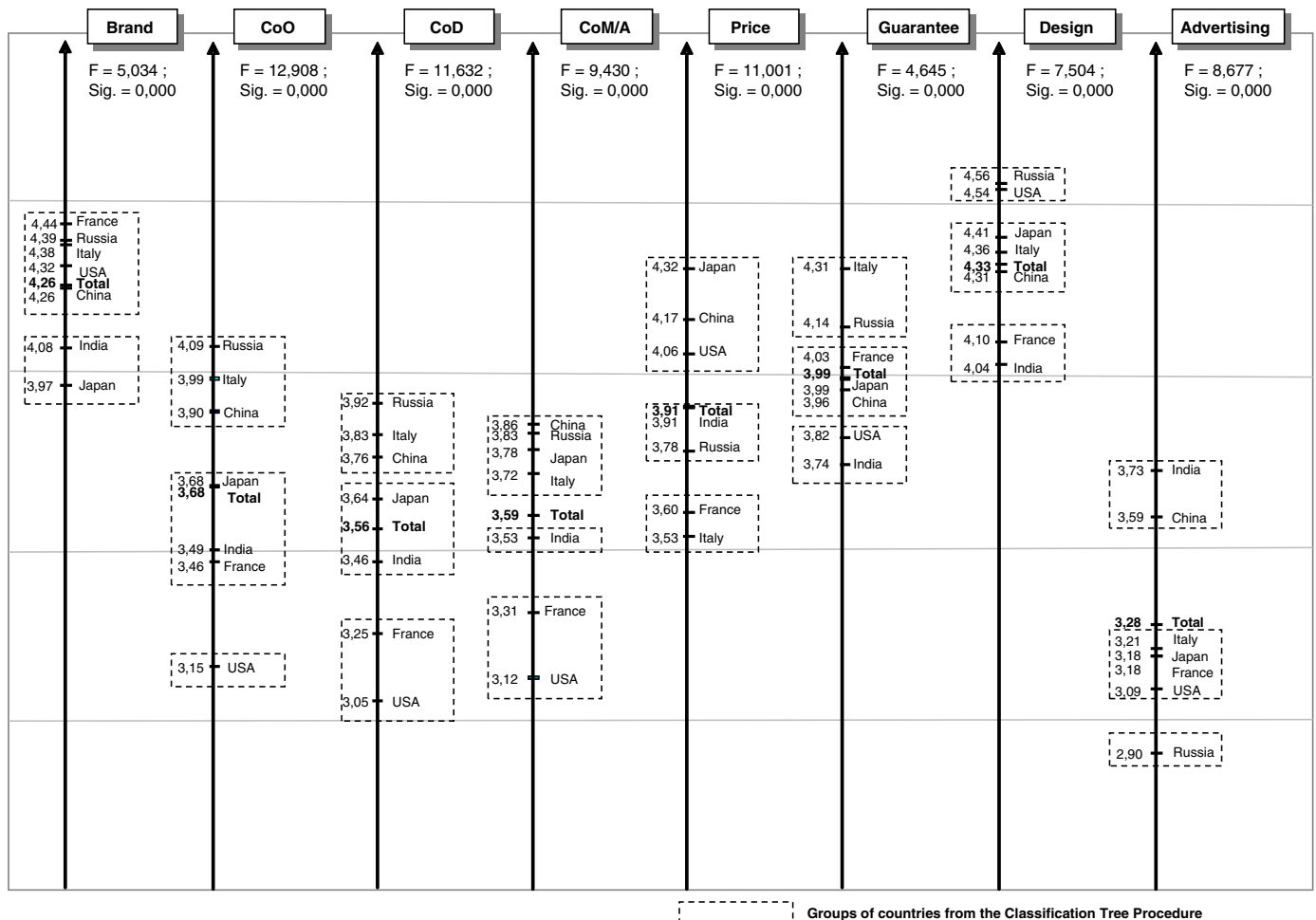


Fig. 2. Decision criteria for purchasing luxury goods (mean and classification tree procedure).

the perception of CoO in a multicultural context. Finally, while this research demonstrates the central role of brand, a complementary study could deepen the analysis of consumers' lasting emotional ties with luxury brands through the concept of brand attachment, using structural equation modeling.

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