

Perceived competences of the country of origin and perceived quality of products in Cameroon: Case of cars and jeans trousers

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ABSTRACT: This study aims at assessing the effect of the perceived competence of a country of origin on the perceived quality of cars and jeans trousers in the urban areas of Cameroon. Investigations have been carried out on the field and data have been collected from a sample of 784 consumers, surveyed via the Internet and supplemented by a questionnaire «paper pencil» in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé. The structural equation models to latent variables has been used in this research. The main results clearly show a positive effect of the perceived competence of a given country of origin on the perceived quality of the products by Cameroonian consumers living or coming from urban areas. The effect of a given country of manufacture is also proven to be more significant than that of the country of design. We further noticed an increase of the effect of the country of design on the perceived quality of products when the technological complexity of the products increases. Conversely, a decrease of the effect of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the products is recorded when the technological complexity of a product increases. The moderating effect of the technological complexity of a given product is therefore proven.

KEYWORDS: Country of origin, overall image, perceived competence, perceived quality, technological complexity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of the country of origin on the evaluation of the products is subject to debates and opposes two current of thoughts: the first current states that, the country of origin is a significant attribute on the assessment of products ((Ahmed and d'Astous, 2015); Chamhuri and Batt, 2015)). It argues that with education, the media and tourism, there is a growing exposure of consumers to foreign countries and their various products. It also states that, with the globalization, the products are now sold to a larger scale. The second current says that, the country of origin is not a significant attribute on the evaluation of products (Usinier, 2002; Hong and Wyer, 1989). It claims that with the globalization, the brands are more and more multinational and they change owners on several occasions. They go even further and wonder if the consumer still has some means to know the origin of the products that are being consumed.

Hence, this study seeks the thread of *Ariane* that might rally the two current of thoughts, by examining some situations under which the country of origin is proven to be a significant attribute or not. Thus, the question of knowing what is the effect of the perceived competence of the country of origin on the perceived quality of products?

The main objective of this research is to determine respectively for the country of design and the country of manufacture, the extent to which the overall image of a country that designs/manufactures a product prevail in the evaluation of products with low or high technological complexity by consumers in Cameroon, a central African country. Therefore, we consider in our study two categories of products varying at the level of their technological complexity: cars and jeans trousers. To realize this research, data were collected in an environment where consumers are more and more exposed to both the imported products and the hybrids one.

To achieve our research objective, we will, in a first section, analyze the conceptual framework and present the research hypotheses. Then, in the second, we will illustrate the methodology adopted. Finally, in the third section, we will present the results of this study and finish by a discussion of the results

2 DECOMPOSITION OF THE CONCEPT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The current context of globalization of markets is characterized by the phenomenon of fragmentation of the productive system (Tsapi *et al.*, 2009). This leads to a break-up of the country of origin into country of design, country of manufacture, country supplier of components, country of assembly, country of the mark and countries of shareholders (Pharr, 2005); what renders complex, the work on the country of origin.

Facing the complexity of the work on the effect of "country of origin", a consolidation has led to the simplified decomposition of the concept in a hand, countries of design or design, and, on the other hand, country of assembly or manufacturing countries (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1996; Chao, 1998; Insch and McBride, 1998; Ahmed and d'Astous, 2015, Mfokeu, 2016; Mfokeu and Wamba 2017).

In this study, we are essentially interested in products that have a country of design different from their country of manufacture; they are called hybrid products (Chao, 1993; Ettenson and Gaeth, 1991) or bi-national products (Hamzaoui and Merunka, 2006). In addition, the consumer is facing an infinite number of products often coming from the same country or similar products from several different countries. Thus a need of groupings in order to simplify the mechanism of evaluation.

3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE THEORY OF THE COGNITIVE CATEGORIZATION IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

This research is using the theory of cognitive categorization in order to better identify the mode of influence of the concept of country of origin on the perceived quality of the products. This theory states that, the knowledge of individuals are organized in their long term memory in the form of cognitive categories. A Cognitive category exists as soon as two objects or separate events are treated in a manner equivalent to (Rosch, 1973; Mervis and Rosch, 1981). The Categorization is a comparison between a stimulus and a set of categorical knowledge pre-existing and already organized in memory (Cohen and Basu, 1987). The function of the cognitive categories is to reduce the complexity of the environment and the structure in a limited number of terms presets and effective (Ladwein, 1995). On the basis of the theory of the cognitive categorization, the effect of the country of origin will be identified in this study through the perceived competence of the country that designs or manufactures a category of product.

According to this approach, the country of origin is considered as a category cognitive consisting of elements that are different products designed and/or manufactured in this country (Odou and Nicholson, 1998). These studies have highlighted the existence of cognitive categories "country of origin" distinct and according to which consumers organize the information concerning the categories of products designed and/or manufactured in this country, as well as the characteristics that they are associated with. Moreover, the categories of products are not randomly assigned to countries. For instance, Germany is associated with the household appliances and automobiles, Japan with the electronic equipment, etc. The consumer has therefore tend to categorize the imported products of a specific country and at the time of the evaluation of this product, this category will be retrieved using the attribute 'country of origin'.

Our research hypotheses are inspired from an analysis of the existing literature, particularly on the role of the national origin as a variable involved in the evaluation of the quality of the product (see Kishnakumar, 1974; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Cattin *et al.*, 1982; Heslop *et al.*, 1988; Chao, 1993; Liefeld, 1993; Peterson and Jolibert, 1995). The prestige of the country corresponds to an evaluative dimension which is clearly important for consumers. It is therefore expected that, the perceived value of a product can be higher when the country of origin of that product is evaluated positively. Similarly, it is reasonable to think that, the assessment of the products will be affected by the perceived competence of the country of origin. The previous discussion thus leads us to formulate these research hypotheses:

Main hypothesis: the perceived competence of the country of origin has a positive effect on the perceived quality of the products in Cameroon. Taking into account the decomposition of the concept of the country of origin into country of design and country of manufacture, we can formulate the following as our secondary hypotheses:

H1: the perceived competence of a country of design has a positive effect on the perceived quality of its products.

H2: the perceived competence of a country of manufacture has a positive effect on the perceived quality of its products.

4 TITLE PERCEIVED COMPETENCE OF THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY OF THE PRODUCTS

Various studies have found that, the magnitude of the effect of a country of origin is moderate by various variables related to the product, such as familiarity with the product (Insch and McBride, 2004), the degree of involvement with the product (Ahmed et al., 1994; Lee, et al., 2005), or the degree of technological complexity (Insch and McBride, 2004; Hamzaoui- Essoussi, 2010). The influence of the country of origin on the perceived quality are all the more that the product is technologically complex.

The technological sophistication of a product increases the risk and calls for more mistrust (Okechuku, 1994; Cheron and Propeck, 1997). The consumer may then find refuge in a country synonymous with quality for some specific products (Germany for the automobile for example). The national origin of a product is a variable that is extrinsic and very important, and that the buyers use when they consider the quality of a product technologically complex (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1996). If some studies have not been able to prove the existence of such effects on consumers, as the study conducted by Ettenson, *et al.*, (1988), it is because researchers have not been focusing on products presenting a strong technological complexity (Okechuku, 1994). Moreover, we believe that, it is because these studies are carried out in the developed countries where the consumers are generally supposed to be aware of the quality standards of the products which are on their markets.

Therefore, it is necessary to determine to what extent the degree of technological complexity of a product affects and influences positively or negatively the country of origin. More specifically, it is to determine the effect of the perceived competence of the country of design and manufacture on the perceived quality of a product.

Recent studies have attempted to compare the relative importance of the country of assembly and of the country of design in the evaluation of products (Insch and McBride, 2004), and to understand how this importance varies according to the degree of technological complexity of the product (Ahmed et al., 2002; Ahmed and d'Astous, 2007). When the product is technologically more complex or involving, the country of origin is more important for the consumers (Heslop, et al., 1987). For the products highly involving as automobile and others, consumers are looking almost four times more the information "country of origin" compare to products much less involving as the T-shirts for exemple (Hugstad and Durr, 1986). The level of technological complexity that raises the evaluation of a product is a variable that seems important to us in the framework of this study.

The review of the literature thus allows us to propose the following assumptions related to the perceived competence of the country of origin as a function of the degree of technological complexity of the product category:

H3: The effect of the perceived competence of the country of design on the perceived quality of the product increases with the rise of the technological complexity of the category of product.

H4: The effect of the perceived competence of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the product increases with the rise of the technological complexity of the category of product.

We can summarize the diverse relations to test in the following model:

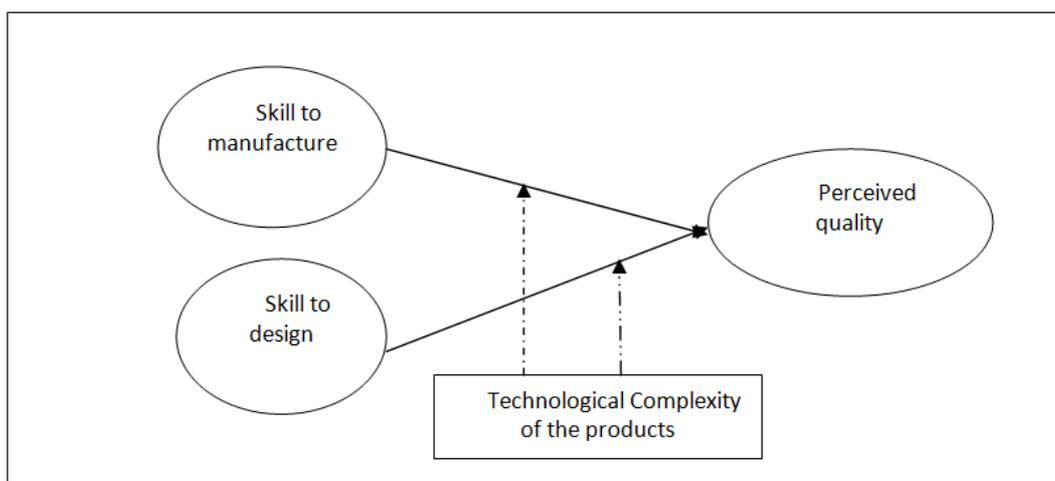


Fig. 1. Model of the effect of the perceived competence of the country origin on the perceived quality

Fig. 1 shows the Model of the effect of the perceived competence of the country origin on the perceived quality.

5 METHODOLOGY

An exploratory qualitative study was conducted among consumers to select the categories of products, as well as their countries of design and manufacture, which were necessary for the implementation of the experimental design needed for this research. This is the first exploratory study that has enabled us to select the products and countries that will be subsequently submitted to a quantitative study.

The study has focused on two categories of products: the cars and the pants jeans, corresponding to two different levels of financial risk, involvement and technological complexity. Six countries were selected on the basis of their different levels of economic development and perceived capacity to design and manufacture the product categories selected. The countries selected are: France, Nigeria, China, Japan, the United States and Italy. These countries are part of the main economic partners of the Cameroon and the products selected in this study are for most of them from these countries. Table 1 presents the design of the study.

Table 1. Design of the study

Products	Country of design	Country of manufacture	Sample
Cars	Japan	France	405
		China	405
	France	Germany	405
		Nigeria	405
Jeans trousers	USA	Italy	379
		Nigeria	379
	Italy	France	379
		China	379

Our hypotheses have been tested on a sample of 784 consumers through an Internet survey, supplemented by another "face to face" questionnaire. We opted for a not probabilistic method of sampling. This choice is justified by the fact that there is no nominative list and exhaustive list of people who consume the products studied in this research.

The method used is the quotas method, and the criteria are age and sex, given their relevance proven in the review of our literature, on similar research and also due to the availability of information. Out of the 784 people who responded satisfactorily to this survey, 32.4% have an age which varies between 18 and 24 years. 33% have an age which varies between 25 and 34 years. 23.5% have an age which varies between 35 and 44 years. 11.1% have 45 years and more. 56% of respondents are men and 44% are women.

The dependent variable is the perceived quality, the independent variables are the perceived competence of the country of design and the perceived competence of the country of manufacture. These variables are measured with a battery of items through a Likert scale to 7 points ranging from "not at all in agreement" to "totally agree".

The hypotheses of the countries and products have been preceded by a measure of the familiarity of the respondents with the categories of products studied using the same Likert scale to 7 points (ranging from "not at all agree" to "strongly agree"). To be admitted to pursue the questionnaire on cars or the pants jeans, the degree of familiarity required should correspond to one of the following modalities: "Rather agree", " Agree" or " Totally agree".

The test of our hypotheses is done by the estimation of a model of structural equations.

With regards to the inquiry that is done "Face to face", the collection of data on the ground has been followed by the operation of data entry. This operation has helped transform the information on paper into data, easily accessible for our analysis. It should be mentioned that, we have used CSPRO version 5 because it presents the interface for entering identical items to the questionnaire, and the procedures of control are fairly treated.

It should be noted that, the data collected from our Internet survey have been merged with those of the second inquiry to have a harmonized database. Thus, the analysis of the data is done in two steps:

- First step: Descriptive Statistics

The first step has been to present a few descriptive statistics highlighting that of the diverse variables of the model from the statistical software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 21). Subsequently, the test of comparison of the averages has allowed us to compare the average scores of different indicators. Factorial analyzes confirmatory (AFC) which followed have helped to build the latent variables for each of the dimensions associated with statements.

- Second step: econometric analysis

The econometric analysis thanks to a model of structural equations has allowed for a better understanding of the different correlations between the variables as well as their significances. The macros programmed from the software XLSTAT have enabled the testing of the conceptual model of base.

6 RESULTS

6.1 EVALUATION OF THE PERCEIVED COMPETENCE OF COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

We will analyze here the assessment of the perceived competence of the country of design and of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the products. Table 2 presents the evaluation of the perceived competence of the country of design.

Table 2. Evaluation of the perceived competence of countries to design (mean and standard deviation)

<i>products</i>	<i>Country of design</i>	<i>Competence to design</i>	
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>standard deviation</i>
Jeans trousers	Italy	5,21	1,35
	USA	5,99	1,18
Cars	France	5,20	1,47
	Japan	6,09	1,25

The results of our research show that, according to the Cameroonian consumers in urban areas, the USA have a better perceived competence than Italy for the design of jeans trousers. Japan has a better perceived competence than France for the car designs. As for the perceived competence to manufacture the products, tendency may be different from the perceived competence to design. The table 3 presents the evaluation of the perceived competence of the country of manufacture.

Table 3. Evaluation of the perceived competence of the countries to manufacture (mean and standard deviation)

<i>Products</i>	<i>Country of manufacture</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Jeans trousers	Italy	5,31	1,30
	China	5,05	1,72
	France	4,93	1,50
	Nigeria	3,77	1,53
Cars	Germany	6,23	1,26
	China	5,63	1,34
	France	5,27	1,36
	Nigeria	3,52	1,55

Concerning pants Jeans, Italy has the best ability perceived to manufacture, with an average of 5.31. It is followed in decreasing order by China, France and Nigeria, which has an average of 3.77.

Concerning cars, Germany has the best ability perceived to manufacture this category of product, with an average of 6.23. It is followed in decreasing order by China, France and Nigeria, which all have an average of 3.52.

6.2 EVALUATION OF THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF THE PRODUCTS

The variable of arrival in our study is the perceived quality of the products. The assessment of this variable depending on the country of design and manufacturing for the four combinations, respectively for the cars and the pants jeans, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Evaluation of the perceived quality of products according to the country of design and manufacturing.

Product	Country of design	Country of manufacture	Mean	Standard deviation
Cars	France	Nigeria	4,15	1.28
		Germany	5,82	1.18
	Japan	France	5,42	1.14
		China	5,26	1.11
Jeans trousers	Italy	France	5,37	0,98
		China	4,94	1,14
	USA	Italy	5,7	1,07
		Nigeria	4,2	1,26

For more comparisons, we can note that, the perceived quality of cars designed in France varies according to the country of manufacture, in Nigeria or France; the cars which are manufactured in France are better noted than those manufactured in Nigeria. For the Japanese cars, those which are manufactured in France have a perceived quality better than those which are manufactured in China. The perceived quality of jeans trousers designed in Italy and manufactured in France is better than the ones designed in Italy and manufactured in China. Finally, the pants jeans designed in the USA and manufactured in Nigeria are less well perceived than those designed in the USA and manufactured in Italy.

In conclusion, for a same country of design, the products manufactured in the old industrialized countries (France or Italy) are judged to be of better qualities than those manufactured in countries such as China or Nigeria.

6.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE PERCEIVED COMPETENCE ON THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF THE PRODUCTS

The test of relations between the input variables and the variable of arrival has been achieved by the estimate of a structural model reproducing the relations assumed between the constructed latent. The test is done by considering the perceived competence of the country of origin as the input variable, and the perceived quality as a variable of arrival. We took into consideration the perceived competence of the country of design and the perceived competence of the country of manufacture. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Test the effect of the perceived competence of the country of origin to manufacture or design on the perceived quality of products

Regression equation					
Regression equation: Y2 (Products_quality)					
Y2= 2,203 +0,388competence_manufacture + 0,176competence_design					
(p= 0,000; R ² = 0,315 R ² adjusted= 0,315)					
	Value	Standard error	T	Pr > t	f ²
Constant	2,203	0,067	32,888	0,000	
competence_manufacture	0,388	0,008	46,168	0,000	0,340
competence_design	0,176	0,010	16,785	0,000	0,045

It appears in the light of this table that the coefficients associated with the perceived competence of the country of design and the perceived competence of the country of manufacture are positive and significantly different from zero.

The perceived competence of the country of design has a positive effect on the perceived quality of the products. Our hypothesis H1 is thus validated and confirmed here. The perceived competence of the country of manufacture has a positive

effect on the perceived quality of the products. The hypothesis H2 is also validated and confirmed by the same way of research. The summary of the structural equation model is presented in fig. 2.

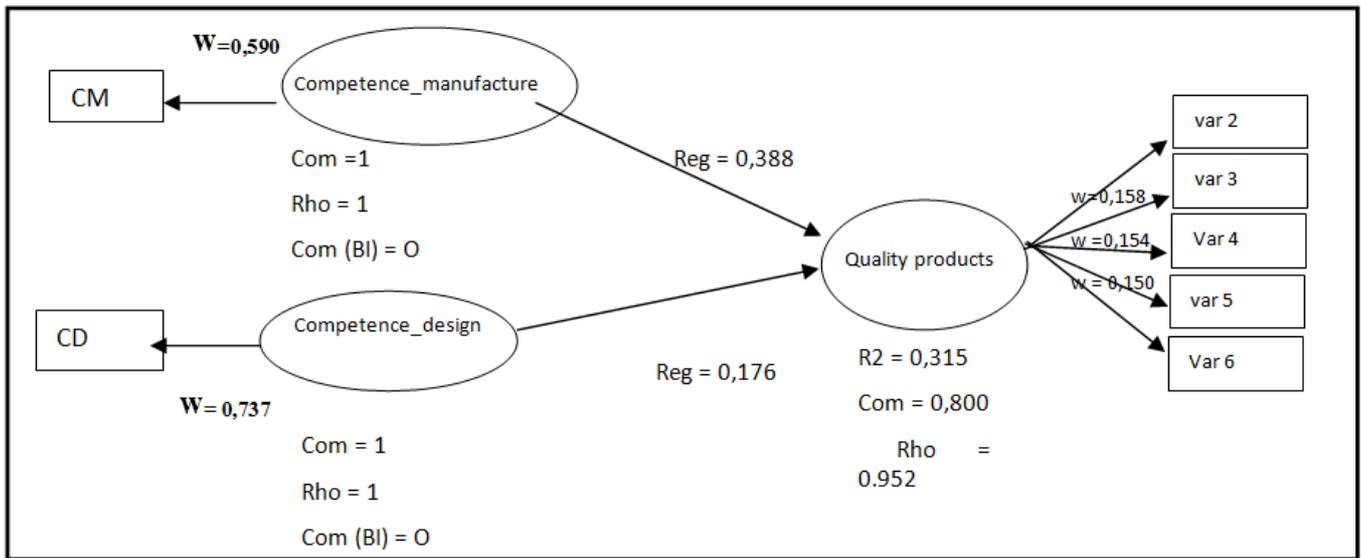


Fig. 2. The model of the of the structural equation model

Fig. 2 shows the Model of the of the structural equation model.

The perceived quality is a function of the perceived capacity of the country to design and the perceived capacity of the country of manufacture. Its regression equation can be written in the following manner: $y_2 = b_1 \alpha_1 + b_2 \alpha_2$

$$y_2 = 2534,0388 \text{ability_manufacture} + 0,176 \text{ability_design}$$

where Y2 is the perceived quality.

The results obtained allow us to make the following observation: the country of manufacture has a greater effect on the perceived quality than the country of design. The results show that, for Cars, the perceived competence of the country of manufacture has a more important influence than that of the country of design. Similarly, the influence of the country of manufacture, through the perceived competence to manufacture, is more important than the influence of the country of design for the jeans trousers. Consumers thus seem to give more importance to the country of manufacture and the country of Design for all categories of products studied. Concerning the test of the effect of the perceived competence of the country in design/manufacture on the perceived quality of the products and variation of the technological complexity of the products (H3 and H4). We proceeded by testing these two hypotheses, making a comparison on one hand between the regression equation of the perceived quality of jeans trousers (produced with low technological complexity) and on the other hand, the regression equation of the perceived quality of cars (produced with high technological complexity). Table 6 shows the test the influence of the perceived competence of the countries in the design and manufacture on the perceived quality of the products in relationship with the technological complexity.

Table 6. Testing the influence of perceived competence of the design country and manufacture country on the perceived quality of the products in relationship with the technological complexity

Products of low technological complexity	Regression equation: Y (products_quality) Y2a= 1,243 + 0,086competence_design + 0,255competence_manufacture+a (p= 0,000; R ² = 0,343 R ² ajusted= 0,344)					
		Value	Standard error	T	Pr > t	f ²
	Constant	1,243	0,119	10,436	0,000	
	competence_design	0,086	0,017	5,021	0,000	0,008
competence_manufacture	0,255	0,014	18,384	0,000	0,112	
Products of high Technological Complexity	Regression equation: Y (produits_quality) Y2b= 0,946 + 0,143competence_design + 0,252 competence_manufacture+b (p= 0,000; R ² = 0,411 R ² ajusted= 0,410)					
		Value	Standard error	T	Pr > t	f ²
	Constant	0,946	0,109	8,698	0,000	
	competence_design	0,143	0,015	9,804	0,000	0,030
competence_manufacture	0,252	0,013	19,165	0,000	0,114	

In this table a comparison of our regression coefficients shows an increase in the value of the coefficients relative to the effect of the perceived competence of the country of design when switching from low technological complexity products to high technological complexity products. Whereas under the same conditions, a reduction in the coefficients relative to the country of manufacture is observed. The hypothesis H3 is confirmed while the hypothesis H4 is reversed, thus rejected and not confirmed here.

This study also demonstrates that, the effect of the perceived competence of the country of design on the perceived quality of the product increases with the increase in the technological complexity of the category of product, whereas the effect of the perceived competence of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the product decreases with the increase of the technological complexity of the category of product. We recall in the table 7 below the results obtained during the various tests:

Table 7. Summary of the results of the test of the assumptions.

	HYPOTHESES	RESULTS OF TESTS
H1	The perceived competence of the country of design has a positive effect on the perceived quality of the product	CONFIRMED
H2	The perceived competence of the country of manufacture has a positive effect on the perceived quality of the product	CONFIRMED
H3	The effect of the perceived competence of the country of design on the perceived quality of the product increases with the increase in the technological complexity of the category of product.	CONFIRMED
H4	The effect of the perceived competence of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the product increases with the increase in the technological complexity of the category of product.	NOT CONFIRMED

7 DISCUSSION

First of all, this study shows that the perceived competence of the country of design or manufacture has a positive effect on the perceived quality of products (hypotheses H1 and H2). It has been remarked that, developed countries have a better perceived competence than the least developed countries for the two products studied in the course of this research which are cars and jeans trousers. Consumers thus assess the products from developed countries more favorably, in comparison to those from less developed countries. The products from the developed countries are perceived as less risky than those

coming from the developing countries. The results of our study are going in the same line as the one of most of the studies conducted in developing countries. (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Cordell, 1992). The meta-analysis of Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) had confirmed this trend.

In developing countries, the population tends to strongly admire of the western countries' life-style, especially the young ones, who are often open to the novelty, to the ongoing modern trends. According to Batra *et al.* (2000), this admiration for the life-style of developed countries has a significant effect on the preference of products coming from these countries. Moreover, consumers with a high susceptibility to the influence prescriptive (consumers sensitive to the social self-image) also have a great admiration for the life-styles of developed countries because the products from these developed countries allow them to purchase a presumed higher social status. This preference has been explained, according to some authors by the search of a higher social status through the consumption of products and foreign brands Western, synonymous for the consumer to luxury, modernity and sophistication (GER *et al.*, 1993). The choice of the products of the developed countries would also, according to Venkatech and Swamy (1994), allow the consumers from emerging countries to feel that they are not excluded from the international community of consumption.

In addition, the explanation according to the theory of the categorization is that, the consumer tends to categorize the imported products of a specific country and at the time of the evaluation of this product, this category will be retrieved using the attribute Country of origin. According to this approach, the country of origin is considered as a category cognitive consisting of elements that are the different products designed and/or manufactured in this country (Odou and Nicholson, 1998). These studies have highlighted the existence of cognitive categories "country of origin" distinct and according to which consumers organize the information concerning the categories of products designed and/or manufactured in this country, as well as the characteristics that they are associated with. More so, the categories of products are not randomly assigned to the countries they are allocated on the basis of the perceived competence; for example, Germany is associated with the household appliances and automobiles, Japan at the electronic equipment, etc.

The difference in effect between the countries of design and manufacture could be explained in the following manner: consumers are probably giving more importance to the stage of manufacture of a product compared to the design (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010). In effect, the manufacture is based on more objective criteria, more tangible whereas the design takes into account more subjective criteria, more intangible.

This result joins that of the study conducted by Insch and McBride (2004), emphasizing greater importance given by consumers of emerging markets to the country of manufacture and the country of design

For Another type of products (TV Sets), Chao (1998) had shown that the country of design did not affect only one aspect of the product, namely the quality of the design, while the country of manufacture (assembly) played on the perception of the overall quality of a product. Ahmed *et al.* (1997) have found the same result with Canadian consumers: in effect, according to them, the country of manufacture (assembly) had more impact on the assessments of the shoes and the cars than that of the country of design.

This result also goes in the same way as the study of Kaissouni (2014) who discovered that, in terms of quality, the consumer has more confidence in the products of originating from Europe, including the countries of Western Europe and some other countries in the rest of the world. The study of Kaissouni (2014) has focused on the agricultural equipment in Morocco as example base.

On another hand, this study shows that the effect of the perceived competence of the country of design on the perceived quality of the product increases with the increase in the technological complexity of the category of product, whereas the effect of the perceived competence of the country of manufacture on the perceived quality of the product decreases with the increase of the technological complexity of the category of product. (Hypotheses H3 and H4).

This result can be explained by the fact that, the consumer generally does not perceive the technological products as being typical to a particular country. It is therefore the country of manufacture that will play an important role in their decision. This result joined those of Hamzaoui - Essoussi (2010) who has done a study in Tunisia and found that, consumers consider the functions of the design and manufacture of differently, according to the degree of technical complexity of products. Ahmed and d'Astous (2015) have also shown in their study that, the technological complexity of the products moderates the effects of the country of origin in a comparative study conducted between Canada and Taiwan. Mfokeu (2016), Mfokeu and Wamba (2017) have also have the same result in their study conducted in Cameroon.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this article was to assess the effect of the perceived competence of country of origin on the perceived quality of cars et jeans trousers in the urban areas in Cameroon. Using the structural model equations with latent variables, an estimate was made on a sample of 784 consumers surveyed online via the Internet and by a face to face questionnaire named " paper - pencil", conducted in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé in Cameroon. The main results have shown a positive effect of the perceived competence of the country on the perceived quality of the products by the consumer of Cameroon in the urban environment. The effect of the country of manufacture is more significant than that of the country of design.

On one hand, the perceived competence of the country of origin is defined at a global level, which has allowed us to distinguish the perceived competence of the country of design and the perceived competence of the country of manufacture, and to study their respective influence on the perceived quality of the product according to its degree of technological complexity. This is a contribution to research on the influence of the country of origin at the level of the definition and understanding of the mode of operation of this influence through the two component of the country of origin, taking account of the degree of complexity of the products and the market studied. Our study has demonstrated that, the role of the country of origin in the evaluation of products is a complex subject of study. Even if the country of origin is an important attribute, its influence on the process of assessment seems to depend on the type of product considered. In addition, the context of the research is the Cameroon, different from the usual contexts of western countries research on the effect of the country of origin. This enables to compare and contrast the results.

On the other hand, the results of this work may present an interest on the Managerial plan, suggesting to the manufacturers and importers to think in terms of perception to the quality of their products by the consumer in Cameroon. More so, they will be able to make better decisions about the national origin that they want the consumer to associate with their products.

The flexibility of a company in relation to the countries of design and the country of manufacture is relatively important. When the country of design or manufacture has a positive perceived competence, the company will be able to:

- propose a Name or brand reflecting the country of design or manufacture of the product;
- put an emphasis on the attributes of the product influenced by the positive image of the country of design or manufacture of a given product;
- put forward the information concerning the country of design or manufacture of a product in its communication efforts (advertising, promotion, etc.).

If a country of design or manufacture has a negatively perceived competence (at least for the product in question), it will be necessary to counteract this image. In this purpose, it is possible for the company to:

- reduce the information related to the product's country of design or manufacture in the purpose of minimize the size and visibility;
- locate the production or at least the Assembling alone or through joint-ventures, in the consumers' favorite country, by affixing later on the label of the said country of manufacture on the product;
- choose a brand name attached to a country with a positive overall image or a perceived competence, even if it means ignoring everything on its genuine national identity.

This study presents several limitations related first of all to the factor of taking into consideration the country of design and also the one of manufacture, without providing further clear informative clues to the respondents.

It would be appropriate to take into account other products, to conduct this study with population of other developing countries in a cross-country study, in order to identify possibilities to generalize the effects presented and discovered in the course of this research, or to rather highlight the specificity of our results on the developing countries' markets.

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