

THE IMPACT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ON EMIRATIS' PERCEPTION OF PRODUCTS: THE CASE OF THE EMIRATE OF DUBAI (UAE)

HUSSEIN ABDULLA EL-OMARI

omari@kfupm.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of country of origin on Emiratis' perception of products in the Emirate of Dubai. With this issue in mind, this study was carried out in the Burjuman Shopping Centre in Dubai. To guarantee an adequate response rate an Arabic version of the hand-delivered questionnaire method of data collection was employed. Due to the non-existence of an appropriate sampling frame of the Emirates, convenience-sampling procedures were implemented.

A total of 1003 questionnaires were distributed to all parts of the Burjuman Shopping Centre, and respondents returned the completed questionnaires to a specific person in Burjuman. Of the distributed questionnaires, 348 completed questionnaires were returned and were usable in the statistical analysis. The returned number of completed questionnaires gave the researcher a response rate of 35%.

The findings of this study indicated that the issue of perception of country of origin exists in the Emirate of Dubai and that this perception has a great influence on Emiratis' perception of product quality and value. Further, local and international businesses and marketers need to consider this issue when developing their marketing strategies.

I. BACKGROUND ON THE EMIRATE OF DUBAI

In Dubai the old and the new meet and embrace. Its souks (Souk is the Arabic word for market) are diverse and among the most important in the Middle-East, is the Dubai Trade centre. The other ouks are Sabkha, Murshid Bazaar, the gold bazaar and silver bazaar, Naif markets, Public markets, the incense and perfume market and the vegetable market at Al Hamriah.

The Emirate of Dubai has enormous economic projects like Port Rashid and Jebel Ali Port, Dry Docks and the Duty Free Zone. The Emirate of Dubai is linked with

the other Emirates by a modern network of roads and a creek separates the city into two portions. It is the creek which is regarded as the main source of prosperity and revenue for Dubai.

The language spoken in the Dubai is the national language of the United Arab Emirates, Arabic. English, however, is widely spoken and understood, especially in the business community. Other languages that are present and prevalent and are spoken in different expatriate communities include Urdu, Persian, Malaysian and Hindi.

The climate of Dubai is considered to be generally hot and humid throughout the



summer season. The temperature fluctuates between 35 and 45 degrees Celsius and the humidity between 60 and 100 percent. In the winter the weather is pleasant and the temperatures vary between 18 and 25 degrees Celsius, and the humidity is low. Accordingly, during the summer it is advisable to wear cotton clothes while in the winter light woollen clothes would be advisable.

Islam is the faith of the people of Dubai and all other Emirates. There are a vast number of mosques spread all over the Emirate. The religion of Islam is a faith of love and forgiveness. The authorities have allowed followers of other faiths to practice their religion in Dubai. Accordingly, there are three Christian churches; St. Joseph for the Roman Catholics, St. Andrews for the Protestants and St. George for the Orthodox.

The dirham is the official currency of the United Arab Emirates. One dirham is equal to 100 Fils. The other denominations are 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 dirham notes. 3.65 dirhams make one US dollar.

The telephone communication network in Dubai, and in the other Emirates is considered one of the most advanced networks in the world. "ETISALAT", offers the most advanced and instant services for telephone, internet, telex and facsimile communications. Dubai is linked through a direct telephone network with countries worldwide. It is easy to make any long-distance call either inside the city or on the highways through the many direct coin/card telephone sets installed in special booths.

Local and international marketers should consider this background as whoever

uses marketing, at whatever level and wherever in the world, the marketing environment in which they operate must be understood. There is an intimate relationship between the organisations (whether public, private, commercial or non-commercial, local and international) and ever changing environment. To be successful local and international marketers must understand the basic issues, especially the external uncontrollable ones, anticipate developments and respond to them. There is no denying that the marketing environment characteristics in any society are affected by environmental circumstances. Thus, marketing environment characteristics have an important role to play in the form and direction of any social, cultural, political and economic activities, especially in the consumer behavior field in particular and in marketing in general. Although Dubai's market has many local and international businesses, there is little relevant data about existing marketing systems, i.e., scarcity of market data and information concerning demand, consumption, opportunities and competition. It is expected that this brief background will help businesses to have some understanding of the social, cultural and economic factors of Dubai's market and their impact on the marketing environment.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Image of the manufacturing country on perceived quality has been extensively examined in the West. However, this subject has been neglected in developing countries. This study is an attempt to analyse the relationship between country of origin and product perception in the United Arab Emirates. In addition, this article examines,

in particular, Emiratis' general perception to the quality of imported products (i.e., Wearing Apparel) and the impact that the manufacturing country may have in this regard.

Despite the importance of consumers' general perception of the impact of the manufacturing country on the quality of products, the literature on this issue in developing countries in general and the UAE in particular, has been neglected. It is hoped that this study will contribute towards a better understanding of the importance of country of origin on products' perception and, to some extent, help in covering the gap in the literature. In addition, studies of consumer behavior in general on Dubai are non-existent. This type of study is particularly crucial to this Emirate as it yields such information that will make better utilization of resources. Through marketing research in general and consumer studies in particular, manufacturers would have better understanding of the required output of all citizens of Dubai's society. Thus, this study provides useful information on Dubai's society, to the government of this Emirate and to all dealers in the business sectors. This information should be of use to manufacturers, marketers, etc., in the planning of their marketing strategies to ensure greater efficiency in their use of resources and greater effectiveness. For example, quality of the product and the distribution and promotional efforts of these firms are directly related to consumer purchasing behavior, and so effective marketing decisions depend on valid information pertaining to their behavior.

Since this study is considered of an exploratory nature, relating to the impact

of country of origin on Emiratis' perception of products in Dubai (which has not been examined in either Arabic or English Languages) the findings could throw some light on this area of study and serve as a tentative basis for further research. In addition, its contribution to the literature cannot be underestimated.

As was a resident of the UAE, the researcher was able to detect that the consumption pattern in the Emirate of Dubai, and other Emirates of the UAE, is marked by great demand for various imported products and services. This is due to the belief that foreign products are superior to their local counterparts. Therefore, local factories utilize only part of their total capacity, and hence, local manufacturers need to gain a greater understanding than currently exists of their locally made products. Thus, there is an important need for this type of study. This study is also considered to be important to international manufacturers who export their products to the UAE market. Those exporters need to have some knowledge about Dubai's citizens and their buying behavior, in order to be able to compete effectively in this market.

III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature (e.g., Engel, Blackwell, Miniard, 1986; Haubl and Elrod, 1999; Forney, Pelton, Caton & Rabolt, 1999; Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp & Ramachander, 2000; Gurhan-Canli, & Maheswaran, 2000) has revealed that an image of a country can be perceived based on issues like reputation, picture, location and stereotypes that the business community holds of a particular country. Further, an

image is usually built based on many issues such as product popularity and a country's economic conditions, and political and cultural background. Social backgrounds and traditions are also considered.

Consumers' buying decisions are highly affected by country of origin. When people buy electronics and appliances they tend to consider first the country of origin. In fact, the image of the country of origin can affect the evaluation process of products through personal beliefs and expectations. Further, the image of the manufacturing country can affect the overall general perceptions of all products made in that particular country (eg., Hong, S.-T and Toner, 1989; Hong, S.-T, Wyer, 1989; Hong, S.-T, Wyer, 1990; Inch and Brad McBride, 1996).

It was also reported that business buyers' assessments of products are usually based on their intrinsic and extrinsic features (e.g., Kumar and Grisaffe, 2004). Intrinsic variables can include smell, taste, shape and performance. Extrinsic variables can include trade mark and image of the manufacturing country. In addition, extrinsic features are usually used in judging quality and value of the product, especially when no information is available to judge intrinsic value of the product. In other words, knowledge of the country can influence buyers' perception of products' quality and therefore influence the process of buying behavior, including the pre-purchase phase (Issanchou, 1996; Israel, 1997; Johansson, 1997; Juric and Worsley, 1998).

Image of the country of origin was also found to be more important in affecting quality assessment than other variables usually used in evaluating products, such as price

and brand name. Howard and Sheth's theory of buyer behavior (1969) were the first to introduce the notion of brand consideration into marketing. However, other research has indicated that "country of origin and brand name must be viewed as important elements in a consumer's decision making" (e.g., Israel, 1997; Juric and Worsley, 1998).

Factors like economic, technological and political reputations may influence the image of products, and therefore perception of the quality of the same brand name may be affected if the same brand name is manufactured in different countries. In addition, cultural factors, level of economic development, race, consumption habits and norms as well as social events and relationships can influence consumers' willingness to buy products and services (Maheswaran, 1994; Samiee, 1994; Kaynak and Erdener, 1998; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000).

Quality or product perception may not be based on objective elements or actual quality. It is a subjective assessment rather than an objective one which could be based on specific attributes of the product. Product or quality perception is a process that arises because people lack perfect information to build their own proper judgement. In quality perception, for example, consumers may not judge products based on the objective benefits of products, but rather they may rely on subjective benefits such as social and psychological (e.g., Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1986; Forney, Pelton, Caton & Rabolt, 1999; Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp & Ramachander, 2000).

Other studies (e.g., Heslop and Hofstra, 1988; Skaggs, Falk, Almonte and Cárdenas

1996; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Wall, Warden, Lai and Wu, 2002) reported that performance, reliability, durability, conformance, features, conformance, serviceability, and aesthetics are used in measuring quality perception. Reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance and tangible element are attributes that can be used in measuring perceived service quality. In addition, those dimensions are usually used in measuring the quality of packaged goods, industrial products and durables as well. Ease of product use, product performance, durability, functionality, serviceability and product prestige are elements that are to be used in measuring quality perception of durables.

The literature has shown a substantial number of research (e.g., Samiee, 1994; Kaynak and Erdener, 1998; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Warden, Lai and Wu, 2002) indicating a strong evidence on the effect of country of origin on the overall evaluation process of consumers' buying decisions. It was found that consumers prefer products from some countries over others. In addition, the country of origin was found to have a positive impact on the overall evaluations of consumer products. The influence of country of origin was also found to be important in industrial buying and/or in business-to-business transactions.

Further, other studies (e.g., Khalid I. Al-Sulaiti, Michael J. Baker 1998; Gary Inschand and J. McBride, 2004; Hamin, Greg Elliott, 2006; Leila Hamzaoui Essoussi, 2006) have reported that perception of the quality of "*product manufacturing*" is a consumer's ultimate judgment and that the superiority of a product's materials, parts and/or assembly are related to their manufacturing. Product manufacturing quality has two main

elements: The first is the assembly quality and the second is related to the quality of the materials of the component parts, and these reflect how well a product is assembled and the superiority of its "manufacturing". In addition, consumers' ethnocentrism has had its impact on Indonesian consumers' evaluations and preferences of products and for both tangible goods and intangible services. Country of design was also found to have a significant impact on product evaluations and perception. Other studies (e.g., Long-Yi Lin and Chun-Shuo Chen, 2006; Durdana Ozretic-Dosen; Vatroslav Skare; and Zoran Krupka, 2007; Renee Kim, 2008) have found that consumers structure their assessments of country of origin, brand and price cues in their evaluation process of a Croatian, Western and Eastern European food product. Further, the country origin cue was also found a key factor in understanding consumers' choice behaviour for food product that entails potential risk, which may suggest that consumers are using this information as a risk-reduction strategy. Moreover, the country-of-origin image, product knowledge and product involvement all have a significantly positive effect on consumer purchase decision; the country-of-origin image has a significantly positive effect on consumer purchase decisions under different product involvement; and product knowledge has significantly positive effect on consumer purchase decisions under different product involvement. However, in a study conducted by (John G Knight, David K Holdsworth, and Damien W Mather, 2007) on business marketing, the researchers have concluded that channel member perceptions of product-country image related to specific issues such as confidence and trust in integrity of production, certification and regulatory systems.

IV. MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Studies on Emiratis' attitudes towards the quality of products in general, and the impact that the country of origin may have on their perception of products are non-existent. As was seen in the literature review, almost all previous research has looked into the impact of country of origin on consumers' perception of products in the West. The findings revealed that the effects of the country of origin on western consumers are moderates, and vary with demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, education... etc).

The main objective of this study is to examine:

1. The impact of the country of origin on Emiratis' perception of the quality of foreign products (i.e., wearing apparel).
2. Emiratis' attitudes towards locally made versus imported wearing apparel.

The exploratory nature of this study on the Emirate of Dubai makes it of great importance for local and international businesses. This Emirate is an integral part of the UAE, which is an oil producing country, and all (local and international businesses) are doing their best to get a share of the market. To do so, local and international businesses have to develop successful marketing strategies, taking into account the social and cultural factors of Dubai. The nature of Dubai's social and cultural structures and its organization, are rooted in the values and traditions of Arab Muslim culture. People's buying behavior and perception of country of origin are heavily influenced

by the values, norms and expectations of Islam. Dubai's social structure involves strong kinship patterns and the clan is the basis of Dubai's tribal society. The extended family is the foundation of rural and urban society, and thus there is a strong sense of loyalty to the clan or family. Therefore, one can imagine the intensive social interaction that takes place in Dubai and its impact on Emiratis attitudes, behaviors and their perception of the country of origin. For example, when developing their marketing strategies, local and international marketers of wearing apparel, and probably other products, must work hard to create positive word-of-communication. In addition, those marketers should keep in their minds the quality of their products (i.e., the wearing apparel) and must emphasize it in their marketing strategies. The UAE market, including Dubai's, is considered by local and international businesses as a very competitive one.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY SAMPLING PROCEDURE & DATA COLLECTION

The target population for this study was Emiratis who do their shopping at **the Burjuman Shopping Centre** in Dubai and, therefore, a hand-delivered questionnaire method of data collection was employed. A questionnaire with open- and close-ended questions was used. The questionnaire covered two main issues: 1) The impact of the country of origin on Emiratis' perception of the quality of foreign products, and 2) Emiratis' attitudes towards the quality of locally-made versus imported products. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic

Language and then given to friends and colleagues for examination.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section was developed to elicit information on Emiratis' attitudes towards locally-made versus imported products. The second section sought information on the impact of the country of origin on Emiratis' perception of the quality of foreign products. In addition, most questions used in this study were borrowed/adapted from previous research (e.g., Heslop and Hofstra, 1988; Patterson, Pau, and Tai, Siu-Kwa, 1991; Skaggs, Falk, Almonte and Cárdenas 1996; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Wall, Warden, Lai and Wu, 2002).

Permission was sought from the managers of *the Burjuman Shopping Centre of Dubai* to administer the study questionnaire, and was granted in all sections of the centre. It was decided that a questionnaire would be more suitable for this kind of study as it has allowed the researcher to gather information from a relatively large population within the specified time limit. A period of three months was needed to complete the process of data collection. In addition, this procedure has provided respondents an excellent opportunity to answer the included questions at their own leisure.

Because of the lack of a complete and accurate sampling frame, and to include only Emiratis in the sample, convenience sampling procedure was adopted. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis of the results. A total of 1003 questionnaires were distributed to consumers in different sections of *the Burjuman Shopping Centre*.

Recipients were requested to return the completed questionnaires to a specific person in the shopping centre. Of all the distributed questionnaires, 348 completed questionnaires were returned and used in the study, giving a response rate of 35%.

To ensure validity and reliability, constructs used in previous research were adapted and used in this study. In addition, Cronbach Alpha analyses were carried out and the results were encouraging, Alpha value > .65

VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Emiratis are very proud of their souks, which are known for the availability of all consumer needs coming from different world sources. Emiratis are, therefore, satisfied with the multiple options opened before them to make a flexible purchase. Shopping for Emiratis became a real joy as they wander in the various trade centres and complexes. In Dubai markets, for example, you can find the latest products of international manufacturers who export electronics, cars, watches, jewellery, garments, furniture and so on, at very reasonable prices that beat those found in European or Asian markets. This can be related to the fact that most imported goods are exempted from customs charges.

Among the most famous markets and complexes in Dubai is the traditional old and new Central Market in which all kinds of electronics, watches, jewellery, garments and gifts are available. Other department stores like *the Burjuman Shopping Centre, The City Centre, Al Wafi Shopping Centre, Al Ghuraire Shopping Centre ...etc*, make the

Emirate a big shopping and trade centre.

However, Emiratis are in favour of foreign made products and always carry an optimistic view of the quality of most imported products. On the contrary, Emiratis carry a negative view of locally made products. The findings of this study suggest that imported products (i.e., wearing apparel) will have a good reputation in Dubai. To change Emiratis' view of locally made products, UAE manufacturers need to look into both the quality of their products and their productivity. Improving both (quality and productivity) will help in offering their products into Dubai markets and other UAE markets at competitive prices.

Table (1) shows that Emiratis carry a general view of UAE manufacturers and this view indicates that those manufacturers do not have the ability to manufacture high quality wearing apparel. In addition, the same table also shows that those manufacturers are only interested in making profit and this means that Emiratis attitudes are of negative ones. However, Emiratis believe that locally-made wearing apparel will improve in the near future. This belief may be related to the increasing levels of competition, changing in investment rules and regulation and the new overall business atmosphere that encourages the overall investment atmosphere.

Emiratis' positive attitudes towards foreign-made wearing apparel open up a window of great opportunity for international businesses, however, developing and creating strong images will be of great importance in taking good advantage of UAE markets.

The findings revealed in Table (2) show that

the country of origin has a strong impact on Emiratis' buying decision. 72.7% of surveyed respondents have indicated a strong overall influence of country of origin on their purchase decisions of wearing apparel.

This has significant implications for UAE manufacturers and importers. UAE manufacturers should learn that their product positioning and their direct competition are not to focus on cheaper products but rather on product quality.

To examine the overall influence of the country of origin on product's attributes, a Mann-Whitney Test was conducted and Table (3) shows the results. This test was carried out to examine if significant differences exist between *"those who have bought their wearing apparel because they were locally made and those who have bought imported ones"*. The findings suggest that, *except for prices of imported products*, significant differences at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels exist between the two groups regarding all attributes of imported wearing apparel. Emiratis have clearly indicated that the quality of product attributes of imported wearing apparel exceed those of locally made counterparts. This explains the positive attitudes that Emiratis hold of imported wearing apparel and, therefore, their preference for buying imported ones.

UAE manufacturers must look into the overall quality of the attributes of their wearing apparel. This is very important if they wish to compete effectively against imported products. Focusing, only, on cheaper products will not help in improving their competitive position and, hence, the

Table (1)
Emiratis' Attitudes towards Locally Made Wearing Apparel

| Statement | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Uncertain | | Quiet Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | | Mean Value |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| a. UAE Manufacturers of wearing apparel are interested in the quality of their products. | 17 | 4.89 | 21 | 6.03 | 31 | 8.91 | 79 | 22.70 | 200 | 57.47 | 1.782** |
| b-UAE manufacturers of wearing apparel are interested in making profit only. | 223 | 64.08 | 61 | 17.53 | 29 | 8.33 | 20 | 5.75 | 15 | 4.31 | 4.141* |
| c-Production related cost prevents UAE manufacturers from making high quality wearing apparel. | 12 | 3.44 | 9 | 2.59 | 31 | 8.91 | 103 | 29.60 | 193 | 55.46 | 1.690** |
| d-The quality of UAE made wearing apparel can not compete with Imported ones. | 209 | 0.06 | 99 | 8.45 | 18 | 5.17 | 9 | 2.59 | 13 | 3.73 | 4.437* |
| e-If the quality of local & imported wearing apparel are the same, I will buy the local ones if the prices are less. | 218 | 62.65 | 71 | 0.40 | 21 | 6.03 | 18 | 5.17 | 20 | 5.75 | 4.290* |
| f-The quality of UAE made wearing apparel has improved recently. | 153 | 3.97 | 91 | 26.15 | 41 | 1.78 | 40 | 11.49 | 23 | 6.61 | 3.894* |
| g -I believe that the quality of UAE made wearing apparel will improve in the near future. | 227 | 65.23 | 63 | 8.10 | 11 | 3.16 | 20 | 5.75 | 27 | 7.76 | 4.273* |
| h - In general, the quality of locally made wearing apparel is better than imported ones. | 23 | 6.61 | 21 | 6.03 | 13 | 3.73 | 21 | 6.03 | 270 | 77.60 | 1.580** |
| i-Buying UAE Wearing Apparel Provides the best value For your money | 17 | 4.89 | 23 | 6.61 | 18 | 5.17 | 17 | 4.89 | 273 | 78.44 | 1.546** |

St. agree= 5 Agree= 4 Uncertain= 3 Quiet disagree= 2 St. disagree= 1
n= number of valid observations 348 Cases 0 Missing Value

*The higher the mean value, the more likely Emiratis believe that UAE Manufacturers pay attention to the concerned attribute.

** The lower the mean value, the less likely Emiratis believe that UAE Manufacturers pay attention to the concerned attribute.

Table (2)
Overall Influence of Country of Origin on Emiratis' Buying Decisions of the Wearing Apparel

| Level | Country of Origin | | | |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|
| | Local | | Imported | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Overall influence of country of origin | 95 | 27.3 | 253 | 72.7 |

n= number of valid observations

348 Cases

0 Missing Value

Table (3)
Influence of Country of Origin by Products Attributes

| Attributes | Level of Influence | N | n | P-Value | Level of Significance |
|---|--------------------|-----|-----|---------|-----------------------|
| - UAE Manufacturers are interested in the quality of their products. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.000 | ** |
| - UAE Manufacturers are only interested in making profit. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.000 | ** |
| - Cost prevents UAE manufacturers making high quality wearing apparel. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.036 | * |
| - The quality of UAE made wearing apparel can not compete with imported ones. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.000 | ** |
| - I will buy the local ones if the prices are less than imported ones. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.452 | - |
| - The quality of UAE made wearing apparel has improved recently. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.032 | * |
| - I believe that the quality of UAE made wearing apparel will improve in the near future. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.027 | * |
| - In general, the quality of locally made wearing apparel is better than imported ones. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.028 | * |
| - Provides the best value for your money. | H | 348 | 253 | 0.021 | * |

n= number of valid observations = 348 Cases

0 Missing Value

** Significant difference at the 0.01 level

* Significant difference at the 0.05 level.

overall quality of the attributes of their wearing apparel has to be considered.

VII. CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study have indicated that Emiratis consider country of origin as an important factor in making their purchase decision. This means that Emiratis use the reputation of the country of origin to judge its products' quality, and especially when they do not have enough information to assess the quality of products. So, what does this mean? This could easily mean that local and international marketers have to do their utmost to boost the reputation of the country of origin which, in turn, will improve Emiratis' perception of the quality of their products. In addition, adopting intensified advertising campaigns will enhance their brands' recognition.

Improving the perception of country of origin will have a great impact on Emiratis' perception of products' quality and value and, therefore, marketers should always keep this in mind. Emiratis have maintained a relationship between perceived country of origin image and perceived product quality and value. This relationship means that the more enhanced the image of the country of origin, the better perception of product quality and value. Promotion as an important element of the marketing mix must be kept as an important weapon in the hands of all marketers to enhance the image of the country of origin in the UAE.

The findings of this study have clearly shown that the country of origin has great influence on Emiratis' purchase intention. Industrializing countries such as Hong Kong,

Malaysia, Taiwan, China, South Korea and Indonesia are places that have started to gain a good industrial and manufacturing reputation in the United Arab Emirates. Manufacturers and producers in western countries can benefit from this reputation by moving many of their industries to these countries bearing in mind that the cost of their products can be reduced and also their products will have good quality perception. This will help marketers to achieve two things, enhanced country perception, and economies of scale.

Marketers devote more resources to promote their products' countries of origin and this will be very significant in promoting and improving their products' quality perception. This will upgrade the perceived value of their products which, in turn, will increase their competitive power in the United Arab Emirates. Thus, one can conclude that if the perception of the country of origin is enhanced and appreciated, then its products' perception of qualities and values will be enhanced and appreciated.

It can safely be concluded that Emiratis use country of origin as an indicator of product quality when they do not have enough information for product evaluation. If local and international marketers want to establish high product-quality image, they have to emphasize their products' countries of origin. Thus, country of origin can be used as an effective tool for product positioning. Country of origin has a great impact on perceived quality and this will have direct impact on perceived value and perceived value induces the purchase in the United Arab Emirates.

VIII. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In using the results of this study, one must be cautious in interpreting the findings of this research and this caution is due to some limitations, which could be a guideline for future research. First, the low response rate, and restricting the study to Emiratis only, made it difficult to generalise the findings on all types of consumers in Dubai (i.e., locals and non locals). Second, the findings are Dubai specific and are unlikely to be transferable to all other Emirates. Future research should include other Emirates with a larger sample size. Third, research should look into the effect of "*country of origin*" on business performance. In fact the "*country of origin*" could be an excellent platform for future research as it may have an influence on factors like market

turbulences, technological turbulences, and degree of competition and hence business performance. Fourth, the study questionnaire included questions on attitudes of the country of origin and product quality perception, and data was collected on a scale of five points. Such questions have helped respondents to make clear cuts in their answers and, also, helped the researcher to collect the required data. However, this sort of questions may have limited respondents' options in expressing their opinions on these scales. Future research may use the set of questions and/or others with scales of more than five points and this can give respondents a wider range of options to express themselves. Finally, this study did not investigate the role of demographics in perception of country of origin, which is left for future research. Those limitations were made on precautional grounds and to give direction for future research.

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Short Bio of Hussein Abdulla El-Omari

Hussein Abdulla El-Omari is an Associate Professor at King Fahd University Of Petroleum & Minerals (AACSB). El-Omari received his Ph.D in Marketing from University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK.