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The preference gap: Ghanaian consumers' attitudes toward local and imported products

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This study was undertaken to examine empirically consumer attitudes towards local and imported products in a developing country market. A survey was conducted to elicit responses from a cross section of the Ghanaian community. The country of origin image in this study was measured following the Roth and Romeo approach. The results of this study suggest that country of origin is more important than price and other product attributes, the Ghanaian consumer holds the 'Made in Ghana' label in low regard relative to foreign labels, whilst superior quality and consumer taste are the 2 most important reasons for the Ghanaian consumers' preference for foreign products. Limitations of the study are presented and suggestions for future research on country of origin effect and the consumer in developing countries are also discussed.

Keywords: Country of origin, developing countries, consumer attitudes, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Increased travel and education as well as improvements in communications such as the global-spanning television networks and the internet have also contributed to a convergence of tastes and preferences in a number of product categories around the world. This has motivated consumers in developing countries to demand the same quality of goods available to their counterparts in developed countries (Saffu and Walker, 2006). With this increased globalization, it has become increasingly important to understand how consumers from different countries evaluate products of different origin.

Obviously, consumer perception toward countries, cultures and their products keeps on changing therefore the issue is still interesting and important to academics and practitioners in the fields of international marketing and consumer behaviour (Josiassen and Harzing, 2008). In addition, most studies have been conducted in large industrialized countries where a range of domestic alternatives or brands are available. The generalizability of findings to small developing countries, where there are no domestic brands or products in many product categories,

is somewhat questionable. Yet, there are relatively few studies that have systematically investigated this phenomenon in developing countries in sub-saharan Africa and very little is known about consumer behaviour in this part of the world.

To help address this research gap, this study is undertaken to examine empirically consumer attitudes towards local and imported products in the Ghanaian market. As one of the only 7 emerging sub-saharan economies with a liberalised economy (Appiah-Adu and Blankson, 1998), Ghana was chosen as the context for this study because of the possible disproportionate trade imbalances that may result from the influx of foreign goods. Besides, Ghanaians came into contact with westerners and their products as far back as 1471 and it would also be interesting to know how such interaction might have influence their product choice.

The purposes of this study are in three fold. First, the study seeks to examine how product's country of origin image affects consumer choice in a small country such as Ghana. Second, we attempt to look at consumers' perception of the 'Made in Ghana' label. Third, the study further seeks to examine the 'country image' in the Ghanaian consumer preference for products. In order to achieve the above purposes, the key research questions that guided this study are:

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- i) What is the relative importance of product attributes to the Ghanaian consumer?
- ii) What are product preferences for the Ghanaian consumer in terms of country of origin?
- iii) How does the country of origin or image' impact on Ghanaian consumer's likelihood to purchase a product?

Specifically, a study such as this will have implications for domestic manufacturers, foreign manufacturers, marketers, exporters and other channel intermediaries doing or wishing to do business in developing countries. On the general level, such an investigation has implications for developing country governments and policy makers who are trying to establish domestic manufacturing competency in the face of relentless competition from established foreign brands, and for academics interested in understanding consumer behaviour in developing economies. The study also contributes to the growing body of literature related to "country-of-origin" influence.

Given those purposes enumerated above, the remainder of this paper is structured as follows; first, review of previous research is conducted on preference for domestic products in some developed, developing and African countries. Second, the methodology employed in this study is explained. Third, the data collected is analysed. Fourth, the findings of the study are presented and the implications of the findings are also discussed. Lastly, conclusions are drawn and limitations with regard to the study and implications for future research within the scope of this field are also dealt with.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General overview of country of origin studies

It has been established that consumers differentiate products from different origins, a phenomenon that has become known by both marketing academics and practitioners as the country-of-origin (COO) effect (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Bhaskaran and Sukumaran, 2007). As one of the most extensively researched topics in international marketing and consumer behaviour, a lot of studies have been conducted to ascertain whether country of origin affects product evaluations in many countries (see meta-analysis of some of such studies in Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Bhaskaran and Sukumaran, 2007). However, the majority of these studies have focused on consumers in developed countries. These studies show that consumers in those countries tend to prefer products from developed countries to those from less developed countries (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Jaffe and Martinez, 1995). In particular, they tend to prefer products from their own countries first Canadian, German and Dutch respondents preferred TV sets or car radios made in their own country first and foremost, followed by brands made in other developed countries and lastly those made in South Korea and Mexico. Invariably, consumers tend to prefer domestic

products in countries where there is strong patriotism, national pride, or consumer ethnocentrism (Heslop and Papadopoulos, 1993).

Country of origin studies and developing countries

In economically underdeveloped countries, preference for domestic products tends to be weaker (Cordell, 1992). For instance, consumers in the former socialist countries of eastern and central Europe prefer western to domestic products (Ettenson, 1993; Papadopoulos et al., 1990). Ettenson (1993) established that price was relatively less important than country of origin in Russian, Polish and Hungarian consumer purchase intentions for TV sets. Klenosky, Benet and Chadraha (1996) reported that Czech consumers preferred German cars and TV sets, but not polish ones, to those made in the Czech Republic. Jaffe and Martinez (1995) found that Mexicans have a poor perception of domestic goods, rating American and Thailand household electronic products above Mexican-made brands. Upper-income earners in the same country have been identified to prefer foreign products (Almonte et al., 1995; Bailey and Gutierrez De Pineres, 1997). Jordan (1996) reported that there is a great demand for Western consumer goods among Indian consumers. In China, manufacturers pass off local products as Western in a practice referred to as 'mao-yang' (Gilley, 1996). Even the current rapid economic growth has done little to change this western preference of Chinese people (Zhou and Hui, 2003). Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Hyder (2000) found that Bangladeshi consumers overwhelmingly preferred western made products, though there were differences in their perceptions across product classes as well as degree of suitability of sourcing countries. Khan and Bamber (2007) also found out that the elite segment of Pakistanis perceive COO image as one of the distinct attributes when making a purchasing decision. A study has also reported that Mexicans have a strong taste for foreign products.

Country of origin studies and Africa

In Africa, attempts have been made to examine this concept of country of origin effect in various spheres. For instance, in a study conducted in Nigeria by Agbonifoh and Elimimian (1999) and Okechuku and Onyemah (1999), the results showed that products from the technologically more advanced countries were viewed more positively by nationals of developing countries, than those from the technologically less advanced countries. Ferguson et al. (2008) have studied the country-of-origin effects in service evaluation in 5 West African countries. They found that situational personal characteristics, such as motivation and ability to process information, may influence use of country-of-origin attributes in evaluating a service. Besides, individual characteristics, such as ethnocentrism and culture orientation, may influence COO

preference in service evaluation. Mitgwe and Chikweche (2008) and Saffu and Walker (2006) have also examined the impact of country-of-origin effects and consumer attitudes towards buy local campaign initiatives. Basically, the attitudes of consumers in these studies to the buy locally-made campaigns can be characterized as protectionist, nationalistic, and self-interest. In assessing the hiring preferences among organisations in one developing country, Carr et al. (2001) find that East Africans but not western expatriates tend to be less preferred than fellow Tanzanians. The preceding empirical evidence, though not exhaustive, suggests that consumers in developing economies view products from developed countries more favourably than products from their own country. Against this backdrop, this study was therefore designed to investigate the broad issues of the effects of country of origin image on consumers' perceptions of quality and of price and taste from the point of view of consumers in sub-Saharan African country.

To establish a theoretical foundation for a study like this, a number of researchers have proposed measures or devised scales for measuring the country of origin image construct (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994; Roth and Romeo, 1992; Nebenzahl, Jaffe and Lampert, 1997). Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) and Janda and Rao (1997) proposed multi-dimensional measures of country of origin image while Roth and Romeo developed a unidimensional measure based on the innovativeness, design, prestige and workmanship of a country's products. In this study, country of origin image was measured following the Roth and Romeo approach, except that 'innovativeness' and 'design' were replaced with 'technological advancement' and 'quality', terms that have also been used in other studies (Cattin, Jolibert and Lohnes 1982; Han and Terpstra, 1988). This is because 'innovativeness' and 'technological advancement' are comparable, but 'design' and 'quality' are not. The country-of-origin image is also defined in this study as how a product designed, manufactured, or branded in a developed country is perceived in a developing country.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on empirical research conducted with the aid of structured questionnaire. The survey elicited responses from a cross section of Ghanaians. The products selected for the study were rice, clothing and textile. These product categories were selected because, at Ghana's current level of economic development, they are at the top of every Ghanaian worker's budget list. More importantly, the decline in the domestic industry in these 2 categories of product categories is typical of what has happened to several other consumer goods categories since the re-opening of the Ghanaian market in the 1980s (Saffu and Walker, 2006). To study the importance of country of origin in consumer choice and the ranking of the 'Made in Ghana' label relative to selected foreign labels, conjoint analysis was used to develop product profiles which respondents evaluated in a survey.

As the most popular multi-attribute choice model in marketing (Wittink and Cattin, 1989) and a matured technique (Louviere, 1994), conjoint analysis is not new in country of origin studies

(Ettenson, Wagner and Gaeth, 1988; Akaah and Yaprak, 1993; Okechuku and Onyemah, 1999). Conjoint analysis assumes that consumer purchase decisions are not made on a single factor but are based on several factors, or attributes, which are "considered conjointly" (AMA, 2000). As we seek to measure how consumers' trade-off among product attributes in making purchase decisions (Oppewal and Vriens, 2000), conjoint analysis is an appropriate research technique for this study. In this study, our analysis is based on the premise that survey respondents evaluate the value or utility of the selected products by combining the separate amounts of utility provided by each attribute-quality, taste and price. This analysis is realistic for such a study because of its close approximation to the consumer decision process (Walley, Parsons and Bland, 2000).

Data collection procedure

This research was conducted at selected areas in Accra (the capital and largest city in Ghana). It is believed that a considerable number of individuals residing in Accra comprise the 'upper class' of Ghanaian society. Rural people were not included in the study as their lifestyles and low incomes put them outside the population that could reasonably expect to afford rice or clothing and textile. The study employed convenience and systematic random sampling approaches to select the respondents. These methods were deemed appropriate as the authors did not have accurate statistics on the populations and subsequent sample. Questionnaires were developed and administered to 100 respondents within a period of 2 months. Students of a senior marketing research class were further trained as research assistants to self-administer the questionnaires in the local language. The data collection sites were selected markets around Adenta, Madina, Atomic Junction areas, and some selected shops at Circle (the heart of Accra). These areas constitute part of the major business district of Accra. The participants were buyers found to be patronising these common market areas at the time. Regarding Adenta, Madina and Circle areas, the researchers purposively selected 10 shops who were dealing in products relevant to the study (that is rice and clothing). This was to enable the researcher access all the respondent at the time of the data collection exercise. To make the sample selection approximate probability sampling, every 3rd entrant to the open market/shopping complex was approached and inquire if he/she ever used made in Ghana goods, if he/she has, a questionnaire is administered on him/her immediately; if he/she is not a user, the researchers apologised for the delay and waited for the next entrant. Thus the researchers interviewed every 3rd consumer that entered the market on the days of the interview, with the understanding that they randomly enter the market and that the rate of entry is normally distributed. For the fashion shop subjects, the researcher visited any ten shops within the selected areas and interviewed at least one subject (a buyer or potential buyer) found around. At the Atomic Junction, however, 10 clusters were conveniently chosen and questionnaires administered to the buyers or any potential buyer of any three shops that are at least 10 shops apart in terms of distance. The information collected from this sample augmented the earlier ones.

The products - rice, clothing and textile were chosen because of their widespread availability, use and production in Ghana. Also, they are products that have many substitutes (both local and foreign) and therefore can easily be evaluated or compared by an average Ghanaian. Profile for each product was based on five attributes. For rice the attributes were the brand name (4 levels), country of origin (4 levels), retail price (3 levels), quality (2 levels) and taste (2 levels). For clothing and textile they were the brand name (4 levels), country of origin (4 levels), retail price (3 levels), picture quality (2 levels) and quality (2 levels). The brands used for the rice profiles were local and imported rice. They are very common in Ghana. The brands selected for clothing and textiles were imported and local products. The price levels used in each profile were selected so as to

Table 1. The relative importance of attributes to the Ghanaian consumer.

Product category	Attribute	Relative importance	Contrasts
Rice	Brand name (B)	0.276	C=B>P>T>Q
	Country-of Origin(C)	0.329	
	Price (P)	0.163	
	Quality (Q)	0.118	
	Taste (T)	0.114	
Clothing and Textile	Brand name (B)	0.324	C=B>P>T>Q
	Country-of Origin(C)	0.328	
	Price (P)	0.139	
	Quality (Q)	0.110	
	Taste (T)	0.099	

represent the prevailing category price range in the country at the time of data collection. Quality and taste data were collected in the form of ratings on a 0 (very bad) to 10 (very good) scale. The main effects orthogonal design comprising of 16 profiles for each product category was generated from the 4 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 2 full factorial using the orthogonal design program in SPSS for windows (Version 15.1). Respondents were required to rank the 16 options according to their preference.

The countries-of-origin used for the rice profiles included USA, Thailand, Taiwan and Ghana. Those used for clothing and textile profiles were Holland, England and Ghana. These foreign countries were particularly selected because Dutch and English firms have a long tradition of selling wax cloth and textiles in Ghana. Rice from Thailand, Taiwan and USA also compete with the Ghanaian rice production (Houlihan, 2005). Thus, to measure the relative influences of aspects of country of origin image on consumer preferences, respondents were asked to rate each country, on a scale from 1 (very low) to 9 (very high), with regard to (a) prestige, (b) quality and (c) technological advancement of its rice (or clothing). The likelihood of purchasing rice (or clothing and textile) made in each country and respondents' familiarity with rice (or clothing and textile) made in each country were also measured on a 5-point scale.

RESULTS

The data reveals that the respondents were well represented in terms of sex, age, education, employment and income levels. Out of the 100 respondents, 60% were female while only 40% were males. The uneven gender distribution reflects the predominance nature of female in trading activities in Ghana. 30% of the females were less than 25 years old, an indicative of youthfulness of the sample. Generally, the surveyed population was highly educated. Large proportion of the respondents (55%) had secondary school certificate, 27% had diploma or certificates while 18% had first degree or Higher National Diploma (HND). The majority of the respondents (43%) interviewed were unemployed, 34% were employed and 23% were self-employed.

As might be expected, the working population generally earns higher than non-working group. 57% of the respondents said they earn less than GH12, 000 (USD 1,200) a year. A further 34% said they earn between GH12, 000 (USD 1, 200) and GH24, 000 (USD 2,400) while few respondents earn more GH 24,000 (USD 2,400) a year.

In fact, as much as 57% of the respondents reported incomes below the country's poverty datum line which is currently pegged at about GH12,000 (USD 1, 200) for a family of 6.

The data also shows the results on the usage rate of rice and clothing and textile among users. The results indicated that respondents use more of imported rice and clothing and textile than locally produced rice and clothing and textile. 72% of the respondents use both local and imported rice and clothing and textile regularly, out of which 40% use more imported rice and clothing and textile. The usage rate has implications for respondents' attitude towards made-in Ghana goods.

Importance of product attributes to the Ghanaian consumer

Table 1 shows the relative importance of various attributes in the Ghanaian consumer preference in terms of ranking for rice and clothing and textile, as derived from conjoint analysis. The results show that country of origin (C) was the most important attribute in rice preferences. Contrasts using pair-wise t-tests show that it is significantly more important than brand name (B), price (P), quality (Q), and Taste (T) at $P < 0.01$. For clothing and textiles, country of origin is as important as brand name (that is, $C = B$, as shown in the contrasts), but significantly more important than price, taste and quality at $p < 0.01$. Again, price, quality, and taste are substantially less important than country of origin.

In comparison to a study by Saffu and Walker (2006) also using clothing and textile, country of origin appears to be more important to Ghanaian consumers, with a weight of 0.33, than it is to consumers in the developed countries of America (0.29), Canada (0.22) and Holland (0.18). Although the importance of country of origin to Americans is also quite high, it is so for a different reason. Americans are concerned about country of origin because they want to make sure it is a domestic brand (Bruskin Report, 1985; Roper Organization, 1985) while Ghanaians are concerned about country of origin because

Table 2. Ghanaian consumer's preferences.

Product category	Made in	Part-worth utility	Contrasts
Rice	USA (U)	1.345	U=T _i >T _w >G
	Thailand (T _i)	-1.309	
	Ghana (G)	-1.510	
	Taiwan (T _w)	-1.145	
Clothing and Textile	England (E)	0.299	H=E>G
	Holland (H)	0.139	
	Ghana (G)	-2.165	

they want to make sure it is foreign brand.

Ghanaian consumers' country of origin preferences

Table 2 shows the Ghanaian consumer country of origin preferences as derived from the analysis. For rice, part-worth utilities show that Ghanaian respondents like 'Made in USA' and 'Made in Thailand' labels most, followed by 'Made in Taiwan' and, lastly, 'Made in Ghana'. The contrasts show that the respondents like USA and Thailand labels about equally (that is, $U = T_i$, $P > 0.05$). Both countries are significantly preferred to Taiwan (T_w) and South Korea is significantly preferred to Ghana (G) at $P < 0.01$. It was somewhat surprising that respondents rated the Taiwan above the Ghanaian label for rice despite expressing significantly lower familiarity with Taiwan made rice (4.10 vs. 6.45, $P = 0.00$). From the part-worth utilities, the brand preference order was: Imported rice > local. Thus, while respondents like rice, they do not like Ghana as a country of origin.

For clothing and textile, imported ones are by far the most preferred choice. Holland and England are rated about the same (that is, $H = E$, $P > 0.05$). 'Made in Ghana' clothing and textile were by far the least preferred at $P < 0.01$. The results in Table 2 illustrates clearly that Ghanaian consumers have low regard for 'Made in Ghana' labels.

Importance of country image and likelihood of purchase

Table 3 shows the ratings of each country on the 4 aspects of country of origin image as well as likelihood to purchase by respondents who prefer foreign brands to local brands. The alpha quality coefficients of the four items for measuring country of origin image were 0.85 for USA, 0.85 for Thailand, 0.93 for Taiwan, and 0.66 for Ghana.

Table 3 further shows that respondents who prefer foreign rice are about equally likely to purchase USA or Thailand brands, followed by Taiwan brands. They are most likely to purchase clothing and textile made in Holland, followed by England brands. With respect to country of origin image, the foreign sources are rated significantly

higher than Ghana on all dimensions for rice as well as clothing and textile ($P = 0.00$, pair-wise t-tests). While USA and Thailand were rated about the same on all dimensions for rice, Holland was rated highest on all dimensions for clothing and textile.

To investigate the relative influences of different aspects of country of origin image in the Ghanaian consumer's preference for foreign-made products, a series of regression analyses was performed. The difference in the likelihood of purchasing a rice (or clothing and textile) from each foreign country versus a rice (or clothing and textile) made in Ghana was regressed against the differences in the ratings of the prestige, quality, and consumer of each foreign country versus Ghana. In other words, the study wishes to determine the relative influences of the perceived superiority of foreign manufacturers in prestige, quality, and taste of the Ghanaian consumer preference for foreign products.

DISCUSSIONS

The study examined Ghanaians' attitudes towards made in Ghana products and goods with foreign origin. The results of this study suggest that (a) country of origin is more important than price and other product attributes and at least as important as brand name, in the Ghanaian consumer choice, (b) the Ghanaian consumer holds the 'Made in Ghana' label in low regard relative to foreign labels and (c) superior quality and consumer taste are the two most important reasons for the Ghanaian consumer preference for foreign products.

The first two findings support the results reported by Jaffe and Martinez (1995) for Mexico, and Ettenson (1993) and Klenosky et al. (1996) in the case of the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Other literature shows that one of the things consumers highly considered when purchasing clothing is country-of-origin (Brown and Rice, 2005; Chen-Yu, Hong and Lee, 2001). Suwannaporn and Linnenmann (2008) also found that country of origin was frequently mentioned as an important criterion in buying rice in rice-eating countries and was the most distinctive of all buying criteria between the Asian, European and Australian consumers studied. In their study on Ghanaian workers, Fianu and Harrison-

Arthur (2007) reported that those who looked for labels (for information including manufacturer's/brand name, price and country of origin) while shopping for fabrics were 75%, whereas 83% looked for labels when selecting ready-made clothing to determine the quality. Although more than half of the respondents in this study reported incomes below the country's poverty datum line, however in the Ghanaian situation, 95% of Ghanaians buy second-hand clothes (Swiss Academy of Development, 1997). Since second-hand clothes are relatively cheaper than new ones, country-of-origin could be an issue other than price. On Ghanaian consumer's low regard for 'Made in Ghana' label vis-à-vis foreign ones, Ohene-Frempong (2004) has also observed that fewer and fewer Ghanaians dress traditionally these days and much of what they wear is imported from foreign non-African countries. The third result is new and appears to represent one of the early instances of relating specific aspects of country image to preference for foreign products. This is important because isolating the aspects of country of origin image that influence product choice gives a developing country some focus or priority in improving the image of domestic products. On the flipside, developing country consumers attitudinally prefer foreign brands not because of perceived quality but also as enhancement of social status (Batra et al., 2000; Zhou and Belk, 2004). For instance, in Ghana, clothing is what people gain status from (de Witte, (2001) therefore some Ghanaian women make it a point to show up in a new funeral cloth every Saturday. Although very expensive, De Witte (2001) added that the preferred choice is the Dutch wax which is deemed as the best, quality, and highly desirable cloth. It has also been reported that Ghanaian consumers are choosing foreign rice over Ghanaian rice because they perceive the former to be of better quality (Houlihan, 2005).

Implications of the study

For manufacturers, policy makers and government in developing countries, the present results suggest a difficult challenge in developing a vibrant manufacturing industry and changing the attitudes of its citizens toward domestic products. Instead of import restrictions, the government could encourage and subsidize efforts aimed at improving the quality of domestic products. Foreign competition can indeed be a catalyst in improving the quality of local goods, as has been the case in India (Jordan, 1996).

Where it is possible, developing countries' manufacturers should consider joint venture or licensing arrangements with well-known foreign manufacturers so that the finished product would have a foreign association. Since brand name is also important to the

Ghanaian consumer, association with a well-known foreign brand name may improve consumer evaluation of the product even though it is manufactured in a developing country (Jaffe and Martinez, 1995). Taiwan,

Singapore, South Korea, among other Asian countries, acquired credibility and technological transfer through such arrangements with companies in more developed countries (Darling and Wood, 1990). Once the physical product has been improved in terms of quality, price, and technological advancement, the 'psychological product' in terms of prestige and pride of ownership should follow. Because country of origin assessments are dynamic in nature (Darling and Wood, 1990), a developing country like Ghana's country of origin image at home and abroad should improve as the quality of its manufacture improves. Only then will Ghanaian-made products be able to stand up to foreign-made products in the Ghanaian market place and possibly in export markets. Concurrent with improving the quality of domestic goods, the Ghana Association of Industries could continue trying to promote the image of Ghanaian-made goods through consumer education, advertising, and trade shows. It could also continue to direct 'Buy Ghanaian' appeals to consumers concerned about the Ghanaian economy. However, the success of patriotic appeals requires similar quality or a price advantage relative to imports.

The implication of the findings in this study for foreigners doing business in Ghana, of course, is to capitalize on their country equity in appealing to the Ghanaian consumer (Shimp et al., 1993) in their marketing communications and product promotions. The USA rice marketer (such as Rice Master) could emphasize the quality and consumer taste of USA rice relative to local brands. For apparel, shoes and other goods where the country of manufacture is not readily obvious, the foreign marketer could prominently display the 'Made in' label. Besides, local companies can confuse consumers about the brand origins of their products by giving them exotic brand names or putting up advertisements with foreign characteristics so that they can benefit by being perceived to the foreign.

Limitations of the study and future research directions

The results more accurately reflect the perceptions of middle-class Ghanaian consumers who are more likely to be aware of the national origin of foreign products. Therefore, the results of this study should be tested further with other independent samples that represent the whole social class of the Ghanaian society. Besides, this type of study should be extended to other domestic products, to enhance their marketability as well as improve the export market of the country and reduce the over-reliance on imported products. The present study took place in Accra (the nation's capital city) alone; hence the scope of the respondents should be expanded to include other cities, towns and other sub-saharan countries for effective generalization of the findings. One issue also worth noting is that only two product categories and only five foreign countries were considered. Future studies could consider

additional product categories and additional countries since the relative influences of price, quality, prestige, and taste in consumer evaluations appear to vary by product category and by country. Another possible limitation is that including well-known brands (e.g. Dutch brand) in conjoint evaluation tasks may understate the full impact of other qualitative attributes, such as country of origin (Iyer and Kalita, 1997). However, it can also be argued that using only unknown or fictitious brands can overstate the impact of such attributes since, in the real world, consumers' choice sets often include well-known brands. Including them in conjoint evaluation tasks can only enhance external validity. Lastly, the country of origin (COO) concept is increasingly becoming blurred as products are designed, manufactured, and branded in more than one place. For instance, when a product is labelled as US, England or Holland, in nearly all cases the country of origin is China or India – only the brand is US, England or Holland. Therefore, the study could have been decomposed in country of design (COD) and country of manufacture (COM). Though respondents were not informed about this, this could not be considered a major drawback because no complex products were used in this study. Finally, in order to get more insights, it could have also been useful to discuss the findings of the survey with a focus group, which may deliver some qualitative interpretations from the consumers' perspective, for example, what is the understanding of a Ghanaian consumer when she/he talks about quality, taste, western label, western advertisement and western products.

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