

Country of Origin Effect on Purchase Intention Towards Korean Skincare Products

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of country of origin on purchase intention towards Korean skincare products. Further, the study examines the mediating role of perceived quality and perceived price between the relationship of country of origin and purchase intention.

Research methodology: This study was gathered online survey from 140 people within Generation Z in West Java, Indonesia. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with a Partial Least Square (PLS) approach.

Results: This study found that country of origin and perceived price have no influence on purchase intention, while perceived quality has a significant influence on purchase intention. However, when perceived quality is included as a mediating variable, the influence of country of origin on purchase intention becomes significant.

Limitations: The study focused on specific skincare products and Generation Z demographics. Future research could explore a variety of products, markets, and generations to obtain more specific results.

Contribution: The study contributes insights into decision making for skincare market players, offering practical implications for marketers to optimize and increase consumer purchasing interest.

Keywords: Country of origin, Perceived quality, Perceived price, Purchase intention, Korean skincare products

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1. Introduction

The modern human lifestyle, which sets a high valuation on attractiveness and perfection, has elevated cosmetics to the status of a must-have commodity and ensured the industry's continued expansion (Amin & Yanti, 2021). The worldwide market for cosmetics and personal care products has expanded quickly so far and becoming one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving sectors globally (Lee et al., 2019). The cosmetic business is worth multiple billion dollars and produces a wide variety of products. According to Allied Market Research (2023), the global skin care market was valued at \$146.7 billion in 2021. In Indonesia, as indicated in Statista Research Department (2024), the skincare market revenue in Indonesia was valued at \$2.3 million in June 2023. Data from the Ministry of Industry reveals that the national cosmetic import value stood at \$637.33 million in 2021 and slightly decreased to \$626.03 million in 2022.

A minimum of 45 countries globally participate in the sale of cosmetic and skincare products within the Indonesian market. Among these, South Korea stands out as a significant contributor, with their skincare products being favored by 37% of Indonesian consumers (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2021). Survey by Markplus.inc (2019), 46% Indonesian women expressed a preference for Korean beauty products. Furthermore, the import value of skincare and cosmetic products from South Korea ranks second highest, totaling \$58.73 million (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2021).

The surge in demand for skincare products from South Korea can be attributed to the rapid global proliferation of South Korean culture, which has found widespread acceptance among the Indonesian population. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu," as explained by Saraswati et al., (2023). Skincare brands hailing from South Korea have made significant strides in Indonesia, paralleling the rise of the K-Beauty phenomenon in the global beauty industry. There is a prevailing perception that South Korean skincare products have a "high reputation" and are deemed "better" compared to other skincare products. South Korea's influence extends to various aspects, including local brands. Many local brands have collaborated with South Korean artists who serve as brand ambassadors, spanning across e-commerce, food, and beauty products (Alessandrina, 2022). However, according to data from Compas, (2022) the top 5 best-selling facial care brands on E-commerce platforms as of June 2022 were predominantly local brands and the remaining spots were filled by brands from China and France. The survey conducted by Populix (2022), indicate that the top leading brands in all three product categories are still predominantly occupied by local brands. Based on Google Trends (2022) there is a decline in the trend of Korean skincare in Indonesia which has an impact on consumer purchasing interest.

The country of origin image is a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions and serves as an intangible barrier to entering foreign markets (Merabet, 2020). There exists a relationship between the country of origin and consumer purchasing intent. Consumer decisions are based on the quality of a product, which is determined through the acquisition and integration of information about the product or service. Additionally, the country of origin serves as an indicator of its quality. Price is also a factor that influencing consumer purchase intention. According to studies on price fairness, a consumer's perception of price is influenced by a combination of the actual price and the perceived quality of the product. When a proposed price is perceived as relatively low, consumers tend to view it as fair, signifying a highly favourable perceived price (Chiang & Jang, 2007).

The increasingly fierce competition of course means that more and more innovations and developments are emerging from various skincare brands to enter the Indonesian market. So many local brands are also improving their quality to compete in this fierce competition. Even though there are generalizations that apply in society, where individuals tend to believe that skin care products from South Korea are "better" than products from other countries, in reality, in Indonesia itself, South Korean brands are still unable to compete. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether there is an influence of the country of origin on consumer purchase intent, mediated by perceived quality and perceived price, particularly for skincare products originating from South Korea.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Country of Origin (COO)

Consumers perceive the country-of-origin of brands as indicative of advanced, prestigious, and creative design. Consequently, the country-of-origin serves as an external link to brands, shaping consumers' favorable or unfavorable associations with product's brand originating from that specific country (Thi Hai Thuy & Hien Minh, 2020). It is also stated similar that the concept of COO holds paramount significance in the realm of marketing and consumer behaviour, intricately tied to the specific geographical location or nation from which a product or brand originates. This concept, as elucidated by Zeugner-Roth & Bartsch (2020) holds significant sway over consumer perceptions and preferences, exerting a notable influence on their purchasing decisions and effect pertains to the direct or implied consequences of the origin country's name on assessments of products, perceptions of risk, and intentions to make a purchase. According to Chow et al., (2024), manufacturers' COO signals can decrease information asymmetry among consumers, enhancing their perceptions of both price and quality. Consumers utilize COO as an external indicator to assess product quality, as well as to evaluate the monetary value of products, as noted by Qu et al. (2023). In recent studies country-of-origin image had no direct relationship with consumers' purchase intention because country of origin is not the only factor that affects consumer product evaluation (Darmawan et al., 2021; Kumar & Gautam, 2021). Therefore, to understand the relationship between country of origin and perceived quality, perceived price and purchase intention in the context of this research, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_{1a} : Country-of-origin (X) positively influences the perceived quality (M1) of products.

H_{1b} : Country-of-origin (X) positively influence perceived price (M2)

H_{1c} : Country of origin (X) positively influence purchase intention (Y)

2.2. Purchase intention

Purchase intention is the consumer's inclination or willingness to buy a specific product or service in the future, essentially representing a precursor to actual purchase behavior. purchase intentions are closely tied to consumers' attitudes and emotions, reflecting their expressed desire to acquire particular products or services (Thi Hai Thuy & Hien Minh, 2020). Purchase intention is a crucial component within the realm of consumer motivation and decision-making, particularly when it comes to choosing a specific product brand (Bhattacharya et al., 2023). The ultimate outcome of purchase behavior is the tangible act of making a purchase, and this behavior is significantly influenced by the pre-existing purchase intent. Purchase intention serves as a manifestation of the anticipation or blueprint for future behavior, representing the likelihood of translating beliefs into actual purchasing actions (Peña-García et al., 2020).

The classifications of purchase intention consist of unintended, partially intended, and fully intended purchases. Unintended purchases, often linked with impulse buying, entail spontaneous decisions in-store for a specific product category or brand. In partially planned purchases, consumers pre-determine a product category and criteria before finalizing decisions on specific brands during the in-store experience. These behaviors are impacted by factors like awareness and the strength of brand image. Purchase intention can be swayed by emotions and impulsive situations, where personal preferences contribute to the emotional aspect, and impulsive situations influence the intended purchase (Lee et al., 2019).

2.3. Perceived Quality

In the context of the input-process-output theory, we can designate the quality and price of a product as the 'inputs' that consumers receive, with perception serving as the pivotal 'process' through which consumers interpret and make sense of these inputs (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015) in Suhud et al., (2022). Perceived quality is a subjective sentiment shaped by consumers' knowledge and experiences. This subjective assessment is influenced by internal factors such as demographics, psychographics, cognitive processes, and emotional factors. Additionally, external factors like marketing efforts and social influence can also impact perceived quality, highlighting the intricate interplay of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements in shaping consumers' subjective perceptions of a product's quality (Suhud et al., 2022). Perceived quality precisely encapsulates the beliefs held by consumers regarding whether a product is considered to possess good quality. In essence, perceived quality captures consumers' beliefs regarding the overall goodness of a product's quality (Li et al., 2021).

The perceived quality of a product or service plays a crucial and instrumental role in shaping the decisions of consumers as they navigate through the process of making purchasing decisions (Wang et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2019) in Yang et al., (2023). A favourable perception of high quality indicates consumer preference for products, underscoring the importance of perceived quality for manufacturers in establishing a competitive edge (Akdeniz & Calantone, 2017). Several research studies have explored the influence of both price and quality on consumer purchasing behaviour. Brandão & da Costa, (2021), suggest that attributes of the product, specifically quality and variety, act as mediators in the relationship between the theory of planned behaviour and the intentions of consumer purchases. As per Alam (2020), the quality of a product plays a pivotal role in customer decisions, and the country of origin has a substantial impact on customer purchasing behaviour. It has been affirmed that product quality is a factor influencing this association. Therefore, to better understand the role of perceived quality, this research aims to investigate whether perceived quality has a mediating influence on country of origin. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

$H2$: Perceived quality (M1) positively influence purchase intention (Y)

$H3$: Perceived quality (M1) is a mediator variable in the relationship between Country-of-origin (X) and purchase intention (Y).

2.4. Perceived Price

The price of an item is the set selling value established by the seller and paid by the customer. This price is influenced by various factors. On the other hand, perceived price differs from the actual price. Perceived price refers to the price as perceived by consumers, shaped by their knowledge and experience. Perceived price can be conceptualized as the customer's relative assessment of the average price of a product or service in comparison to its competitors Suhud et al., (2022). It involves the subjective interpretation of the perceived value associated with the pricing of a particular offering, taking into account how it aligns with or deviates from the pricing landscape of competing alternatives (Pan et al., 2022). The actual price represents the monetary value paid for the product, while perceived price reflects the benefits customers associate with the product. Price perception is defined as the customer's viewpoint regarding the cost of goods or services they acquire (Cakici et al., 2019). In numerous research studies, it is evident that one perception variable can exert influence on another. A notable example is the influence of perceived price on perceived value. Therefore, to better understand the role of perceived price, this research aims to investigate whether perceived price has a mediating influence on country of origin. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4 : Perceived price (M2) positively influence purchase intention (Y)

H5 : Perceived price (M2) is a mediator variable in the relationship between Country-of-origin (X) and purchase intention (Y).

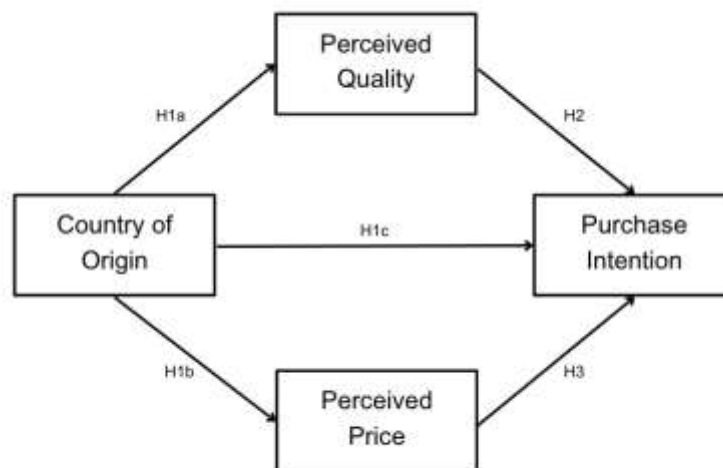


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

This study collected data via an online survey from individuals within Generation Z in West Java, born between 1997 and 2012. The author employed non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, to select participants. Non-probability sampling involves selecting a sample based on specific criteria, without ensuring equal representation from the entire population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Purposive sampling focuses on selecting participants from a specific group (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Self-administered surveys were distributed, resulting in 140 completed and valid five-point Likert scale responses from individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Generation Z) in West Java. All respondents were familiar with Korean skincare products. The collected data will be analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SMARTPLS 4.0 software. Furthermore, the author uses descriptive analysis and a verification approach is also used to test the correlation between variables from the questionnaire data. This study utilized 28 measurement items adapted from existing research.

Table 1. Operationalization of Variable

Construct name/source	Measurement
<i>Country of Origin - Roth & Romeo, (1992) in Pipoli de Azambuja et al., (2020)</i>	
COO1	The useful of new technology
COO2	Advanced technology utilized
COO3	Style likeliness level
COO4	Product variety level
COO5	Appearance level
COO6	Brand name reputation level
COO7	Korean celebrity reputation level
COO8	Product exclusivity level
COO9	Manufacturing quality level
<i>Perceived Quality – Garvin (1984) in Luczak et al., (2022)</i>	
PQ1	Product performance level to needs and expectations
PQ2	Product suitability level
PQ3	Uniqueness packaging level
PQ4	Variety of ingredients
PQ5	Ingredients safety level
PQ6	Level conformity of product with the catalogue
PQ7	Skincare texture consistency level
PQ8	Skincare product performance consistency level
PQ9	The level of durability
PQ10	Accuracy and completeness of information level
PQ11	Store display aesthetics level
PQ12	Products aesthetics level
<i>Perceived Price - Kim et al., (2012) in Pan et al., (2022)</i>	
PP1	Korean product are expensive
PP2	Using Korean products for save money
PP3	Getting better value
PP4	Korean product are cheap
<i>Purchase Intention - Hung et al., (2011) in Kukreti & Yadav (2023)</i>	
PI1	Consumer interest level on product
PI2	Consumer possibility level to buy product
PI3	Consumer desire level to buy product

4. Results and Discussion

The Table 2 shows the demographic details of the respondents of the study.

Table 2. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage of Total (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Women	132	94%
Men	8	6%
<i>Age</i>		
17	2	1%
18	19	14%
19	20	14%
20	9	6%
21	22	16%
22	17	12%
23	8	6%
24	4	3%
25	9	6%
26	7	5%
27	9	6%

28	14	10%
<i>Profession</i>		
Student	94	67%
Private employee	32	23%
Entrepreneur	10	7%
Government employee	4	3%
<i>Monthly Income</i>		
<Rp 1,000,000	52	37%
Rp 1,000,000 - Rp 3,000,000	57	41%
Rp 3,000,000 - Rp 6,000,000	29	21%
>Rp 6,000,000	2	1%
<i>Shopping Frequency for Skincare Products</i>		
< 2 per month	38	27%
2 – 4 per month	63	45%
> 4 per month	39	28%

The values in Table 3 below shows the results of the outer model measurement test which include the validity and reliability test.

Table 3. Measurement model results

Indicator	FL	α	CR	AVE
Country of Origin		0.836	0.872	0.656
COO1	0.743			
COO2	0.614			
COO3	0.639			
COO4	0.636			
COO5	0.671			
COO6	0.621			
COO7	0.677			
COO8	0.688			
COO9	0.621			
Purchase Intention		0.860	0.915	0.884
PI1	0.854			
PI2	0.897			
PI3	0.901			
Perceived Price		0.709	0.821	0.730
PP1	0.686			
PP2	0.754			
PP3	0.735			
PP4	0.745			
Perceived Quality		0.923	0.935	0.752
PQ1	0.816			
PQ2	0.678			
PQ3	0.626			
PQ4	0.707			
PQ5	0.728			
PQ6	0.816			
PQ7	0.815			
PQ8	0.773			
PQ9	0.786			
PQ10	0.747			
PQ11	0.783			

Source: Author's calculation using SMARTPLS 4.0

The validity test outcomes indicate that all loading factors were above 0.6, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score exceeded 0.5, affirming the validity of each variable's indicators in this study. Table 2 further illustrates the reliability test findings, demonstrating that all variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha (α) and composite reliability values above 0.7, thereby establishing the questionnaire's reliability in terms of internal consistency and ensuring consistently reliable results. The evaluation centers on analyzing structural path coefficients that represent relationships between variables and determining their statistical significance. Calculations involve using the bootstrapping method with 5000 subsamples and a significance level set at 0.05.

Table 4. Bootstrapping and hypothesis test result

	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H1a	COO -> PQ	0.545	0.115	4.728	0.000	Supported
H1b	COO -> PP	0.415	0.082	5.064	0.000	Supported
H1c	COO -> PI	-0.022	0.068	0.326	0.745	Unsupported
H2	PQ -> PI	0.873	0.070	12.552	0.000	Supported
H4	PP -> PI	0.006	0.052	0.106	0.916	Unsupported

Source: Processed data by SMARTPLS 4.0

Table 4 shows the results of path analysis of this study. The results shows country of origin aspects significantly positively influences the perceived quality of Korean skincare products ($\beta = 0.545$; STDEV= 0.115; T-statistics= 4.728, and P-values= 0.000), thus, hypothesis 1a is supported. Country of origin aspects significantly positively influences the perceived price of Korean skincare products ($\beta = 0.415$; STDEV= 0.082; T-statistics= 5.064, and P-values= 0.000), thus, hypothesis 1b is supported. Country of origin aspects does not influence the perceived price of Korean skincare products ($\beta = -0.022$; STDEV= 0.068; T-statistics= 0.326, and P-values= 0.745), thus, the hypothesis 1c is rejected. The hypothesis test also showed that the perceived quality aspects can influence significantly positively the purchase intention of Korean skincare products ($\beta = 0.873$; STDEV= 0.070; T-statistics= 12.552, and P-values= 0.000), thus, the hypothesis 2 is supported. While, perceived price aspects does not influence the purchase intention of Korean skincare products ($\beta = 0.006$; STDEV= 0.052; T-statistics= 0.106, and P-values= 0.916), thus, the hypothesis 3 (Ha) is rejected.

This study found that country of origin country of origin aspects positively influences the perceived quality and perceived price of Korean skincare products that can also be seen in Chow et al. (2023) that found Western COO has positive effect on the product perceived quality and perceived price in the China market. Meanwhile, country of origin aspects do not support the purchase intention of Korean skincare products which inconsistent with the research by Merabet (2020) which found that the country of origin can positively affect the purchase intention of Algerian electrical household appliance customers. This study also found that perceived quality aspects influence positively the purchase intention of Korean skincare products, which aligns with Suhud et al., (2022) found that the good perception of quality of an item it will be easy to consumer to have the intention to buy. On the other hand, perceived price does not influence the purchase intention of Korean skincare products. This insignificant influence of the perceived price on the purchase intention can also be seen in Suhud et al., (2022). They found that even though respondents positively perceived the price, it did not increase the customers' purchase intention because the participants seemed to sense that a smartphone with unique features was still an expensive product that might have an unreachable price.

Table 5. Specific indirect effect results

	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H3	COO -> PQ -> PI	0.479	0.098	4.874	0.000	Supported
H5	COO -> PP -> PI	0.003	0.023	0.098	0.922	Unsupported

Source: Processed data by SMARTPLS 4.0

This study focused to see the mediating effect of perceived quality and perceived price variable and the result is showed on table 4. The result shows that perceived quality can mediate the relationship between

country of origin and the purchase intention of Korean skincare products with the values of $\beta = 0.479$; STDEV= 0.098; T-statistics= 4.874, and P-values= 0.000 thus the hypothesis 3 is supported. The other result shows that perceived price cannot mediate the relationship between country of origin and the purchase intention of Korean skincare products with the values of $\beta = 0.003$; STDEV= 0.023; T-statistics= 0.098, and P-values= 0.922 thus the hypothesis 5 is rejected.

According to Zhao et al., (2010), there are five types of mediations. The type of mediation can be identified by examining the significance of the $a \times b$ path. In this study, it indicates that the mediation type for COO-PQ-PI is indirect only or full mediation. Conversely, the mediation type for COO-PP-PI is determined to be non-existent or no mediation. The results of this study is contradict with the research conducted by Merabet (2020), on Algerian electrical household appliance customers which found that perceived quality could not mediate the relationship between country of origin and purchase intention and found that the perceived price can mediate the relationship between the country of origin and the purchase intention.

5. Conclusion

The knowledge about the country of origin image of South Korea doesn't enough to influence the purchase intention for Korean skincare products because customers tend to consider other factors besides country of origin. Meanwhile, the high reputation of country of origin may improve the perceived quality and perceived price of the Korean skincare products which can be caused by products from certain countries creating a positive perception from consumers. Moreover, when perceived quality is included in the relationship model between country of origin and purchase intention. The mediation effect that is happening is full mediation. It happen because of customers tend to prioritize the perceive quality of product. Thus, the perception of product quality can support the influence of the country of origin on increasing purchase intention and when perceived price is included in the relationship model between country of origin and purchase intention. There is no mediation on this model. This might be happen because the respondents are Generation Z who think Korean Skincare products are expensive and tend to not buy it. So it cannot support the influence of country of origin on purchase intention.

Limitation and Future Research

The current study, like any research, has limitations that present opportunities for future exploration. First, this research focus on specific product, Korean skincare product, further research can explore other product or other specific market as the main object. Second, this study is confined to examining a particular generation, Generation Z. Future investigations could explore other generations to comprehend their responses to similar purchase intention behaviour. This broader inquiry would furnish companies and researchers with enhanced insights into how various generations react to purchase intentions, and whether the outcomes observed among Generation Z in West Java are applicable to other demographics or regions. Finally, this study focuses exclusively on customers in West Java. Future research could expand its scope to include other regions, allowing for an assessment of how different marketing strategies influence consumer behavior across diverse cultural and demographic contexts.

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