



DIGITAL MARKETING

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MASTER THESIS

<i>ŠALIES IR PARDUOTUVĖS ĮVAIZDŽIO ĮTAKA ONLINE PARDUOTUVĖS PASIRINKIMUI UŽSIENIO ŠALYJE</i>	<i>IMPACT OF COUNTRY'S AND STORE'S IMAGE ON A SELECTION OF AN ONLINE STORE IN CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING</i>
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SUMMARY

IMPACT OF COUNTRY'S AND STORE'S IMAGE ON A SELECTION OF AN ONLINE STORE IN CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

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Master thesis consists of 108 pages, 19 tables, 3 figures and 124 references.

This thesis focused on examining and establishing the influence of a country's image and an online store's image on consumers' purchasing intentions in cross-border online shopping. The study centered around current e-commerce websites from China and South Korea that specialize in skincare products. It involved the analysis of four different websites (two each from China and South Korea) to assess how the image of a country and the perception of an online store affect a consumer's decision to buy from an international online retail.

In order to achieve the goal of the research, current study was based on The Theory of planned behavior model. To test hypotheses, the 2 x 2 factorial experimental design was conducted, and data was collected using 2 questionnaires. To conduct a statistical analysis of the responses Independent Samples T-Test and Pearson Correlation analyses were used in statistical software IBM SPSS. The research aimed to explore the theoretical aspects of store and country images, assess how perceived risks impact online store image and consumer willingness to purchase, examine the effect of ethnocentrism on online cross-border shopping, investigate the interplay between store and country images, develop conceptual models and hypotheses, and offer practical business insights and recommendations.

The research revealed several key outcomes, higher perceived risks were observed to negatively impact the image of both Korean and Chinese online stores. Less attractive websites were seen as riskier, leading to a decrease in likelihood of purchase. Interestingly, the study

found that ethnocentrism, despite its expected significant influence on cross-border online purchasing, did not show a substantial correlation with purchase intentions. The research also examined the direct effect of country image on online store image, confirming that a positive country image leads to a more positive perception of online stores. It was further established that a more positive country image correlates with lower perceived risks. Specifically, the study found that Chinese online stores are perceived as having higher risks compared to South Korean stores, while South Korean stores are perceived as more useful than Chinese. The research also confirmed a direct relationship between higher perceived usefulness and a stronger intention to purchase. Additionally, it was observed that as perceived risks increase, perceived usefulness decreases. However, the anticipated link between higher levels of ethnocentrism and increased perceived risks was not confirmed, diverging from some previous studies.

For businesses, particularly in the online skincare market in China and South Korea, this implies a strategic focus on enhancing online store image and addressing perceived risks by implementing robust privacy policies and secure payment methods. Additionally, businesses should manage ethnocentric perceptions by focusing on global consumer values such as quality, innovation, and customer experience, and utilize the positive aspects of their country's image in marketing. A crucial recommendation is to enhance the store's attractiveness and perceived usefulness, correlating with a stronger purchase intention. This includes building a reliable online presence with website security, accurate product descriptions, and transparent pricing. These steps are vital for attracting and retaining global consumers in the competitive online retail landscape for marketers.

SANTRAUKA

ŠALIES IR PARDUOTUVĖS ĮVAIZDŽIO ĮTAKA ONLINE PARDUOTUVĖS PASIRINKIMUI UŽSIENIO ŠALYJE

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Šis magistro baigiamasis darbas buvo sutelktas į šalies įvaizdžio ir internetinės parduotuvės įvaizdžio įtakos vartotojų pirkimo ketinimams tarptautinėje internetinėje prekyboje tyrimą ir nustatymą. Tyrimas koncentravosi į dabartines Kinijos ir Pietų Korėjos, specializuojančias odos priežiūros produktuose, elektroninės prekybos svetaines. Ji apėmė keturių skirtingų svetainių (po dvi iš Kinijos ir Pietų Korėjos) analizę, siekiant įvertinti, kaip šalies įvaizdis ir internetinės parduotuvės įvaizdis veikia vartotojo sprendimą pirkti iš tarptautinės internetinės parduotuvės.

Siekiant pasiekti tyrimo tikslą, buvo remiamasi planuoto elgesio teorijos modeliu. Hipotezių tikrinimui buvo atliktas 2 x 2 faktorinis eksperimentinis dizainas, o duomenys buvo renkami naudojant 2 anketas. Atsakymų statistinei analizei atlikti buvo naudojami Nepriklausomų Imčių T-testas ir Pearsono Koreliacijos analizės statistinėje programoje IBM SPSS. Tyrimo tikslas buvo išnagrinėti teorinius parduotuvės ir šalies įvaizdžio aspektus, įvertinti, kaip suvokiamos rizikos veikia internetinės parduotuvės įvaizdį ir vartotojų norą pirkti, ištirti etnocentrizmo įtaką tarptautinėje internetinėje prekyboje, tirti parduotuvės ir šalies įvaizdžio sąveiką, sukurti konceptualius modelius ir hipotezes bei pateikti praktinius verslo įžvalgas ir rekomendacijas.

Tyrimas atskleidė kelis svarbius rezultatus: pastebėta, kad didesnė suvokiama rizika neigiamai veikia tiek Korėjos, tiek Kinijos internetinių parduotuvių įvaizdį. Mažiau patrauklūs

tinklalapiai buvo laikomi rizikingesniais, dėl to mažėjo pirkimo tikimybė. Įdomu, kad nors etnocentrizmo, kaip tikėtinos reikšmingos įtakos tarptautinei internetinei pirkimui, nebuvo nustatyta ryški koreliacija su pirkimo ketinimais. Taip pat buvo tiriama tiesioginė šalies įvaizdžio įtaka internetinės parduotuvės įvaizdžiui, patvirtinanti, kad teigiamas šalies įvaizdis lemia teigiamą suvokimą apie internetines parduotuves. Taip pat buvo nustatyta, kad teigiamas šalies įvaizdis koreliuoja su mažesne suvokiama rizika. Nustatyta, kad Kinijos internetinės parduotuvės suvokiamos kaip turinčios didesnę riziką, palyginti su Pietų Korėjos parduotuvėmis, o Pietų Korėjos parduotuvės suvokiamos kaip naudingesnės nei Kinijos. Taip pat patvirtinta tiesioginė sąsaja tarp didesnės suvokiamos naudingumo ir stipresnio pirkimo ketinimo. Be to, pastebėta, kad didėjant suvokiamai rizikai, mažėja suvokiamas naudingumas. Tačiau tikėtinas ryšys tarp didesnio etnocentrizmo lygio ir didėjančios suvokiamos rizikos nebuvo patvirtintas, nukrypstant nuo kai kurių ankstesnių tyrimų.

Verslui, ypač internetinės odos priežiūros rinkoje Kinijoje ir Pietų Korėjoje, tai reiškia strateginę dėmesį internetinės parduotuvės įvaizdžiui gerinti ir spręsti suvokiamas rizikas, įgyvendinant tvirtas privatumo politikas ir saugius mokėjimo būdus. Be to, verslai turėtų valdyti etnocentrines suvokimo problemas, sutelkdami dėmesį į vertes, pvz., kokybę, inovacijas ir klientų patirtį, ir panaudoti savo šalies įvaizdžio teigiamus aspektus rinkodaroje. Svarbi rekomendacija yra parduotuvės patrauklumo ir suvokiamo naudingumo gerinimas, siekiant stipresnio pirkimo ketinimo. Tai apima patikimos internetinės parduotuvės sukūrimą su tinklalapio saugumu, tiksliais produkto aprašymais ir patraukliomis kainomis. Šie žingsniai yra būtini pritraukiant ir išlaikant vartotojus konkurencingoje tarptautinės internetinės prekybos rinkoje.

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INTRODUCTION

Topic relevance. Retail e-commerce sales were anticipated to surpass 5.7 trillion US dollars in 2022, and this number is likely to rise further in the future years (Statista, 2023). After COVID-19, e-commerce expanded, boosting borderless internet buying. Since 2022, internet international purchases have declined (Statista, 2023). Therefore, the cost of living problem, the majority plan to purchase domestically, according to the Statista studies in Europe, US, U.K. and China. The worldwide cross-border e-commerce sectors are confronted with issues such as a constrained supply chain, atypical market supply and demand, stalled cross-border logistics, and dwindling consumer power (Chen et. al, 2022). However, in 2022 consumer-to-business cross-border payments totaled 2.8 trillion U.S. dollars (Statista, 2023).

Despite limited research, directly linking a country's image influence on online store image, in previous studies authors concluded that customers often see a country's image in levels, where how they view the country's economic state, culture, and society (Ramkumar, 2019, Li et. Al, 2016). Furthermore, when individuals are familiar with products from a country, that country's image influences their views and perceptions (Lin and Chen, 2006). When evaluating a product, consumers tend to first consider factors such as price, brand, and other visible attributes, especially if they are not familiar with the product or its quality is not immediately apparent. In cases of imported goods, buyers often judge the product's quality based on their existing perceptions of the exporting country (Kan et al., 2014).

In previous studies authors analyzed different elements and relationships related to cross-border purchasing. Kim and Chung, 2016 research focuses on one of the factors that influence international online purchases, which is perceived risks. Maximizing perceived usefulness and minimizing risk are among the most important goals of the consumer. Perceived usefulness in this case reflect the motivating factors, while perceived risks represent the barriers that inhibit international online purchase intentions (Wagner et. al, 2016). Wagner's 2016 research offers fresh insights into the elements influencing the perceived usefulness of international online shopping. The findings indicate that a consumer's likelihood of engaging in cross-border online research and completing purchases is driven by the perceived usefulness they expect to gain from such activities.

Customers may think twice about relying on an abroad source because of language and cultural difficulties. Multiple studies (Heliyon, 2023; Kuncharin and Mohamed, 2014) have identified consumer ethnocentrism as a significant factor influencing the buying decisions of cross-border shoppers. This suggests that the willingness of consumers to purchase foreign-made goods is influenced by their ethnocentric attitudes (Heliyon, 2023). While it has been established that ethnocentrism negatively impacts intentions to buy in offline cross-border contexts (Kuncharin et al., 2013), some researchers argue that this effect is not mitigated in online settings due to the continued international nature of the transactions (Boef et al., 2013).

Although the image of the store is widely analyzed in various scientific works, in this context, little attention is paid to whether it is possible to determine its image when choosing a foreign online store. And if so, how does the image of the country influence the purchase in that online store. Therefore, this paper presents a **scientific problem**: How does the country of origin of an online store affect a consumer's attitude and intent to purchase from such online store?

The aim of the paper: To substantiate how the image of the country and the image of the online store influences consumer's intention to purchase in online cross-border shop.

The objectives of the paper:

1. Analyze theoretical background of store image and country image.
2. Examine whether perceived risks affect the online store image.
3. Analyze if ethnocentrism has an influence in consumers' online cross-border shopping.
4. Examine the relationship between store image and country image: does the country image have an influence on online store image.
5. Investigate whether perceived risks affect consumers' willingness to buy from cross-border online store.
6. Provide research conceptual models and research hypotheses.
7. Summarize and provide practical insights and recommendations for business.

Methods that are used:

- Narrative literature analysis
- Quantitative research

The structure of the paper. The master's thesis includes an introduction, three major sections, conclusions, and recommendations. The first section of the paper examines the definition of cross-border purchasing, the theoretical aspects of the store and the country's image, and the potential risks associated with online shopping in a foreign country. The second section of the paper selects and presents the empirical research methodology. In the third section, the intention to purchase from a foreign online store is analyzed from a Lithuanian perspective. The paper concludes with a discussion of conclusions and recommendations.

1. CONSUMERS WILLINGNESS PURCHASE IN CROSS-BORDER STORES AND ITS FACTORS

1.1. Consumers' willingness to purchase in cross-border online stores

Based on the findings of a number of investigations, the economic benefit of the product, the service offered by the salesperson, and the range of product options in the cross-border area are the primary motivations for shopping across international borders (Asplund et. al, 2005, Makkonen 2015, Cawley et. al, 2019). In line with the findings of Boonhai et. al, 2018, one of the factors that influences cross-border shoppers' inclinations to purchase outside of their geographic region is their willingness to choose from a more comprehensive range of goods. However, according to Huang and Chang 2019 one of the primary attractions of shopping at international internet retailers is the opportunity to take advantage of reduced prices, they also mention that some products are hard to find in certain countries, that is why some customers choose to purchase from foreign countries. This argument confirms another author, whose research shows that when there is a lack of products, or there is a restricted product variety available for particular items, and these goods may only be acquired at locations that are a significant distance from the customer's country, the customer will choose to shop cross-border. (Tomori, 2010). Also, Ramkumar et. al, 2016 explores Price Consciousness, Desire for unique consumer products, Trust in a foreign website, Frequency of domestic online shopping, as positive factors for cross-border shopping, although Ethnocentrism is a factor that has negative impact. To put it briefly, Customers are drawn to international shopping due to wider product ranges, lower prices, and the unavailability of certain items locally (Boonhai et al., 2018; Huang and Chang, 2019; Tomori, 2010). Positive factors include price consciousness, a desire for unique products, trust in foreign websites, and frequent domestic online shopping, while ethnocentrism can discourage cross-border shopping (Ramkumar et al., 2016).

Wagner et. al, 2016 in their study mention economic benefit of online cross-border shopping, as one of the main reasons that impact consumers to make a purchase online in a foreign store. Prices and benefits are two primary aspects that have an influence on how customers see the value of a product or service. A bigger proportion of advantages to disadvantages will result in a heightened desire to make purchases from overseas internet retailers (Huang and Chang, 2017). A foreign vendor might give customers who are hesitant to

buy from them immediate economic benefits such as discounts and free product samples in order to obtain their trust and loyalty (Wagner et. al, 2016).In, essence, the economic advantages underscored by Wagner et al. (2016) and the emphasis on the perceived value of products, as highlighted by Huang and Chang (2019), elucidate the pivotal role of pricing and benefits in shaping consumers' inclination towards cross-border online purchases, reinforced by vendors' strategies aimed at fostering trust and loyalty.

According to Surplice, (2020), the provision of excellent service to the customer is the component of a business transaction that is considered to be the most important. Customers have the option to go elsewhere if they do not get outstanding service. Although it may be costly for online stores to provide great customer care since they must constantly assess consumer feedback, update their site design, and keep tabs on their supply chains to meet demand (Cho and Sutton, 2021). The findings of Rehman et. al (2019) study are consistent with those of studies conducted by Zeithmal et al. (2002), which found that the success of a company operating in the e-commerce market depends not only on the availability of a website and competitive pricing, but also on the quality of the e-services offered by the company. It indicates that the service quality offered by online retailers is a source that promotes a desire to engage in online buying since it will improve the performance and effort expectations of online buyers.

Proposing a variety of products, respondents of Ladhari et. al, (2019) research named as one of the main factors as a highlight for an online store. The service variety of stores in the border area receives a higher favorable review from cross-border customers than it does from buyers who do not cross the border (Lau et. al, 2005). Cross-border shopping occurs when consumers in one nation decide to purchase goods from another country because of shortages or limited selection at stores in the nation they are from (Tomori, 2010).

In a manner similar to that of the quality of the e-services, it has been shown that customers who have a strong desire for uniqueness are more likely to have a positive attitude regarding purchasing online across international borders (Han and Kim, 2018). Also, their research shows that consumers' need for uniqueness is a key factor that influences consumers' purchasing in cross-border countries. This attitude represents the counter-conformity attained via the materialization of creative choice in the form of fresh, unusual, or original consumer items (Edgar et. al, 2020). Products that are hard to get by or unavailable in a specific country may be

widely distributed in another. Products that are really one of a kind have the power to shift customer tastes and set themselves apart from the competition (Huang et al., 2017).

To sum up, cross-border e-commerce has emerged as a new paradigm for international trade and a key driver of exports in recent years, thanks to advances in Internet technology and the ongoing spread of economic globalization (Chen et al., 2022). People who are interested in trying new things have the impression that purchasing online across international borders is a highly trendy form of shopping (Qin et al., 2019). It is important to mention that benefits, like the range of the product option, product uniqueness, exceptional products supply have a strong impact on consumers willingness to purchase in cross-border online shops, according to authors (Han and Kim, 2018, Asplund et al., 2005, Makkonen 2015, Cawley et al., 2019, Boonhai et al., 2018, Huang and Chang 2019).

1.2. Factors that influence online cross-border shopping

The significant increase in internet usage and digitization of society has resulted in a noteworthy shift in customer tastes and buying patterns (Han and Kim, 2018). Most notably, the quick growth in cross-national consumption patterns has been ascribed to the rapid expansion of the internet, which has given consumers additional power and more universal access. According to International Post Corporation, (2021) the majority of customers in both established and developing regions routinely purchase products and services online. Some online buying research discovered that online purchasing is common internationally, whether in-country or cross-border, and that cross-border online shopping is growing especially rapidly (Xiao et al., 2019).

When it comes to local online purchasing, some researches show that perceived ease of use, perceived risk, perceived usefulness, effect of website design, economic factor, availability of products, and customer satisfaction are factors that have an affect on online purchasing (Pandey et al., 2019, Adwan et.al, 2021). From an online cross-border perspective, the factors are quite similar, as in local online shopping, but adding more factors that are used in offline cross-border shopping research, such as perceived trust and value, language skills and more (Huang and Chang, 2017, Xu and McGehee, 2012).

Authors that have conducted research on the topic of international online purchase intentions give a variety of elements that affect these intentions. According to Huang and Chang,

(2017), one of the most important elements that influence cross-border shopping are consumer perceived trust and perceived value. According to Sharma et. al, (2015), familiarity with the foreign store influences the propensity to make cross-border online transactions. A customer's tendency to shop and purchase in a foreign country is influenced by their level of fluency in the retailer's language. In the instance of Chinese visitors to the United States, Xu and McGehee (2012) found that language barriers to buying exist due to difficulty in understanding and speaking English. Several studies have shown that the degree to which a person trusts a company online has a substantial impact on their willingness to make a purchase (Yoon, 2009). When talking about online purchases, associated costs might include things like shipping delays, shipping fees, international taxes, currency conversion fees, and guarantee/return policies (Kim et. al, 2004). Ma et. al, (2019) named Electronic Word of Mouth, Perceived Value, Website Design Quality, Trust, Perceived Risk, The Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Satisfaction and Continuance Intention, as influencing factors in cross-border shopping.

Studies have revealed that customers have varying levels of comprehension about various goods (Dursun et. al, 2011). As a result, established brands have been proven to have considerable benefits over new brands in terms of the processing and attitudes involved. The familiarity of the brand is taken into consideration in the examination of the effect of international internet shopping on customers' intentions to make a purchase (Diallo et. al, 2013). The research carried out by Xiao et. al, 2019 demonstrates that, in the context of international online buying, consumers' familiarity with brands may have an effect on the functional or emotional value of exterior signals.

Language proficiency has been investigated as a factor that influences purchase decisions made on the internet. There is a correlation between the level of linguistic proficiency possessed by an international merchant and the customer's intentions to make a purchase (Huang and Chang, 2017). However, more and more businesses are beginning to recognize the importance of this component, and as a result, they are beginning to provide translated versions of their websites in order to reduce the impact of a consumer's lack of language abilities and to stimulate purchases made by customers located in other countries. Nevertheless, Nantel and Glaser (2008) demonstrate that translation does not totally eradicate the negative impact that is caused by difficulty in the language of the online shop. The cost of communication between a foreign vendor and a customer does not have an effect on the consumer's perception of the value of the

transaction since consumers are more inclined to contemplate purchasing from a foreign website if it is written in a language that they already know how to read and write (Huang and Chang, 2017).

Several studies have shown that the degree to which a person trusts a website has a considerable impact on their likelihood to make a purchase. The consumer's attitude toward online purchasing as well as the consumer's desire to purchase online are both impacted by the consumer's level of confidence in the online environment. In the context of e-commerce, Kundu and Datta (2015) suggest that trust is one of the most important factors in determining the success of a transaction. According to Zhang (2020), the primary sources of early customer confidence in cross-border e-commerce platforms come from aspects such as the platform's reputation and the assurance that its structure provides. Consumers in the context of social e-commerce are said to gain trust via personal experience and suggestions from others, according to Jin Yin, (2020).

When it comes to the Internet, associated expenses include shipping times, shipping fees, taxes in the foreign country, exchange rates, assurances, and policies for returning products. In their study, Baruca and Zolfagharian (2012) say that the prices of the service have a bad effect on how people feel about it. In other words, how people feel about monetary or non-monetary costs changes how they feel about what a foreign store is selling. In fact, when the exchange rate is in the consumer's favor or when taxes in the country of the store are cheaper than in the country of the consumer, the costs involved with the offering make it seem better (Kim et. al, 2018). On the other hand, if taxes are higher in the country where the store is based and the exchange rate is bad, this has a negative effect on costs and shipping times (Agarwal et. al, 2013).

Consumers are more likely to be affected by e-WOM while making a purchase decision, according to research by Reham and Dina (2016). In the digital age, it's easy for people to check out the goods they want to buy, including e-commerce products. Most e-commerce sites have a review area where customers can write about their shopping experiences (Assifah et. al, 2021). So, people who want to buy a product for the first time can read about other people's experiences. When people shop online, e-WOM can make it easy for them to find out about the quality, price, and level of trust of a business. The more information a customer gets about a store, whether through e-WOM or some other way, the better they will feel about it (Assifah et. al, 2021).

When deciding between foreign and domestic sellers, consumers may think about the value they will get from shopping on a foreign website. This can affect whether or not they will shop across national lines. According to Huang and Chang's research from 2017, a rise in value also leads to an increase in the need to make a purchase. Because of this, they predict that customers who place a greater value on the ability to purchase across borders will be more likely to shop on a website based in another country.

Consumers' expectations of indirect uncertainty and direct damage from international merchants is measured by their perception of payment risk, or their awareness of possible monetary dangers Ma et. al, 2019. If customers don't have an in-depth grasp of the company and items, they are more likely to obtain an undesired package since online purchasing is controlled by the internet and its supporting payment technology and environment. There may be a far higher level of trust on the part of consumers than in conventional purchases. There is often a delay in shipping from international vendors, or the products just vanish after delivery (Ye, 2018). Customers' perceptions of risk are affected by a number of factors, including the platform's potential to expose private information, the accuracy of the product description, and the ease with which they may return or exchange an item (Ye, 2018, Ma et. al, 2019). To sum up, there are a lot of different factors that authors mention that influence online cross - border purchasing, although there are few most repetitive ones, such as perceived trust, perceived risk, and language skills (Huang and Chang, 2017, Ma et. al, 2019, Xu and McGehee (2012) .

Table 1

Factors that influence online cross-border shopping

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huang and Chang, 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived Trust • Perceived Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoon, 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dursun et. al, 2011 • Xu and McGehee, 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with the foreign store
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim et. al, 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ma et. al, 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic Word of Mouth • Perceived Value • Trust • Perceived Risk • The Uncertainty Avoidance Index • Satisfaction and Continuance Intention

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xu and McGehee (2012) • Huang and Chang, (2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills
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Table 1 continuation.

1.3. Shopper Ethnocentrism and Cosmopolitanism

Several researches (Heliyon, 2023, Kuncharin and Mohamed, 2014) have considered ethnocentrism as a factor affecting cross-border shoppers' purchases. In these analyses, the location of the point of purchase was prioritized above the country of origin of the product. These facts also are justified by Budiarti et. al 2022 study shows that ethnocentrism on the part of customers has a significant impact in the growth of interest among online consumers in the purchase of locally produced products. Thus, consumer ethnocentrism is an element in whether or not people are prepared to purchase things made in other countries (Heliyon, 2023). According to Nijssen et. al, 2009, those who are ethnocentric tend to think very highly of their own country. The difference is perhaps even more essential in the internet context, since a buyer may buy things created and manufactured in their own nation from a foreign merchant for a variety of reasons, including price or availability. Ethnocentrism, on the other side, assesses the perception that anything tied to a foreign economy - whether in design, manufacture, or sale - might be negative to the native economy (Shimp, 1987).

In addition, customers who have a greater degree of consumer ethnocentrism tend to have more positive opinions about domestically produced goods (Shimp et. al 1987, Budiarti et. al 2022). Consumer ethnocentrism places an emphasis on the ethical considerations involved in the purchase of goods created in other countries as well as the devotion that customers have to goods made in their own nation (Budiarti et. al 2022). While ethnocentrism has been shown to have a detrimental influence on offline cross-border buying intentions (Kuncharin et. al, 2013), other authors believe that the online environment does not eliminate this effect since the international character of the transaction persists (Boef et. al, 2013).

Meanwhile, cosmopolitan customers have an openness to the different cultures and are eager to try out products from such countries even though they are unfamiliar (Diamantopoulos et al., 2019). According to the findings of Zeugner-Roth et al. (2015), consumer cosmopolitanism has a favorable impact on the readiness of consumers to purchase a product made in a foreign country. In the same direction, Diamantopoulos (2016) discovered that the

cosmopolitanism of customers had a beneficial impact on the consumers' behavior about purchasing abroad. According to Zhang and Hanks (2018), consumers with strong cosmopolitanism who use internet information have a favorable outlook. As a result, Wagner et al. (2016) use Consumer Acculturation Theory (CAT) to explain the link between cosmopolitanism and cross-border online buying behaviors. CAT refers to how consumers acquire skills and information that impact consumer behavior in a foreign culture (Luedicke, 2011).

In conclusion, customers who are extremely ethnocentric are more likely to give the nation of origin of a product a larger weight in determining how they feel about the product's overall quality than customers who are not highly ethnocentric (Budiarti et. al 2022). In a similar vein, customers who are very ethnocentric are less inclined to make purchases internationally, and their disposition toward communications and goods from other countries is less favorable (Budiarti et. al 2022, Kuncharin et. al, 2013). Consumers who are cosmopolitan, however, most likely purchase products in cross-border shops (Zhang and Hanks, 2018, Diamantopoulos et al., 2019).

1.4. Consumers' trust in purchasing online cross-border store

It is generally agreed that trust is one of the most important factors in the success of online businesses (Cui et. Al, 2020, Yang and Lin, 2022, Rybak, 2018). Many distinct formulations of the concept of trust have been proposed. According to Wang and Emurian, (2005), who defined trust as "the belief that a party's word or promise is reliable and that a party will fulfill its obligations in an exchange relationship". Because the buyer has no physical contact with the vendor, may be situated at a significant distance away, and is unable to view, touch, or otherwise physically evaluate the object before purchasing it, trust is especially vital in online commerce. When transactions in e-commerce take place beyond national boundaries, the challenges raised here become much more pressing. Cui et. Al, (2020) discovered several characteristics that impact buyers' trust in the e-commerce environment. These factors include security, delivery, privacy, brand name, word-of-mouth, a positive online experience, and the quality of the information. Abdullah et. Al, (2019) in their research show that security and privacy attitudes, website design attitudes, customer satisfaction fulfilment, and perception of governmental factors are significant influence in consumer trust. The absence of these qualities

results in a lack of trust among online consumers, as well as the feeling that they are more vulnerable and exposed to higher danger Wang and Emurian, (2005). Consumers have a lower likelihood of engaging in international online purchasing when they perceive a higher level of risk and vulnerability associated with the transaction Hong, (2015).

In the context of online shopping, buyers may understand that products may not be exactly as stated Cui et. Al, (2020). However, they would not put up with the hassle of returning goods that aren't what they wanted or a service center that doesn't help them. The more customers' needs are taken care of, the more likely they are to buy again and again (Lau et. Al, 2005, Yang and Lin, 2022, Yung and Chang, 2019).

Many publications, like Bandyopadhyaya (2019), Ige (2004), talk about how important security is when shopping online. In particular, not many customers will take the time to read carefully about safety and privacy policies. So, most people don't know how different websites are when it comes to making sure they are safe Strzelecki and Rizun, (2020). But customers will still try to find reviews from other customers or other signs to figure out how reliable a payment service is. In Pei et. Al, (2016) research they concluded that the failure of a transaction is often caused by factors such as too complicated payment methods, inadequate security measures, and a lack of user-friendliness toward consumer payment methods.

Different websites have different return policies and processes. Some websites will only give a refund if the item is returned in good condition. Some websites say that you have to send pictures or write an email with all the details. Some websites offer free reverse delivery services, while others make users wait months to get their money back. So, consumer's trust increases when websites not only agree to take customer claims, but also pay attention to how quickly claims are settled.

When it comes to delivery sub-criteria, speed is the most important. Consumers are more concerned with how quickly they will get the anticipated items. Mode of delivery is ranked second and is weighted higher than mean value. When opposed to transshipment, consumers prefer to be provided direct delivery.

Service Manner, Claim Settlement, Service Efficiency, and Service Language are significant elements that customers consider while considering the customer service of foreign websites, according to Ganesh et. Al, (2010). According to Kraeuter, (2002) research, the software component's physical design components such as information design, navigation,

layout, and look are significant. In addition to the software component, the capabilities of the hardware should be evaluated to ensure that clients who visit the website can be loaded in a reasonable amount of time. In Choi and Lee, (2019) research, the interactive components of E-commerce apps have a high association with client loyalty and trust.

In conclusion, factors like security, delivery, privacy, brand name, word-of-mouth, a positive online experience, the quality of the information are important strategies for online cross-border business, for building up their consumers' trust. According to many research, consumer trust is an extremely important element of success in online business, in general, as well as in cross-border online trade (Cui et. Al, 2020, Yang and Lin, 2022, Rybak, 2018, Ganesh et. Al, 2010).

To sum up the whole first paragraph, the realm of cross-border e-commerce is a complex tapestry woven from numerous threads, each dictating consumer behaviors and choices. Through the collective insights of various investigations and studies, it's evident that several primary motivations propel shoppers across international borders. The economic benefit of products, service quality, and the range of available options emerge as central forces influencing cross-border shopping tendencies (Asplund et. al, 2005; Makkonen, 2015; Cawley et. al, 2019). Consumers are drawn to international shopping due to wider product ranges, lower prices, and the unavailability of certain items locally (Boonhai et al., 2018; Huang and Chang, 2019; Tomori, 2010). These factors align with desires for unique goods, price consciousness, and trust in foreign websites, while acknowledging the impact of ethnocentrism as a potential deterrent (Ramkumar et al., 2016). The surge in internet usage has expanded consumers' access to global markets, fostering cross-border shopping habits (International Post Corporation, 2021). Ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism are vital lenses through which consumer attitudes towards cross-border purchases are observed. Ethnocentric consumers prioritize the point of purchase over the country of origin, affecting their inclination to buy locally produced goods (Heliyon, 2023; Budiarti et. al, 2022). Amidst these complexities, trust emerges as a foundational pillar shaping online cross-border commerce. Factors such as security, delivery, privacy, and brand perception significantly influence consumers' trust in e-commerce platforms (Cui et. al, 2020; Abdullah et. al, 2019). A strong emphasis on service quality, website design, and efficient claim settlement processes further bolsters consumers' trust (Ganesh et. Al, 2010; Kraeuter, 2002; Choi and Lee, 2019). Ultimately, the landscape of cross-border e-commerce is intricately woven with

multifaceted factors. These range from economic benefits and consumer motivations to trust-building elements, shaping the evolving nature of global online retail. As technology continues to advance and global connectivity strengthens, understanding and adapting to these influencing factors remain paramount for shaping the future trajectory of cross-border e-commerce.

2. UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE SHOPPING: PERSPECTIVES ON STORE IMAGE AND COUNTRY IMAGE

2.1. Store image and its impact in online trade

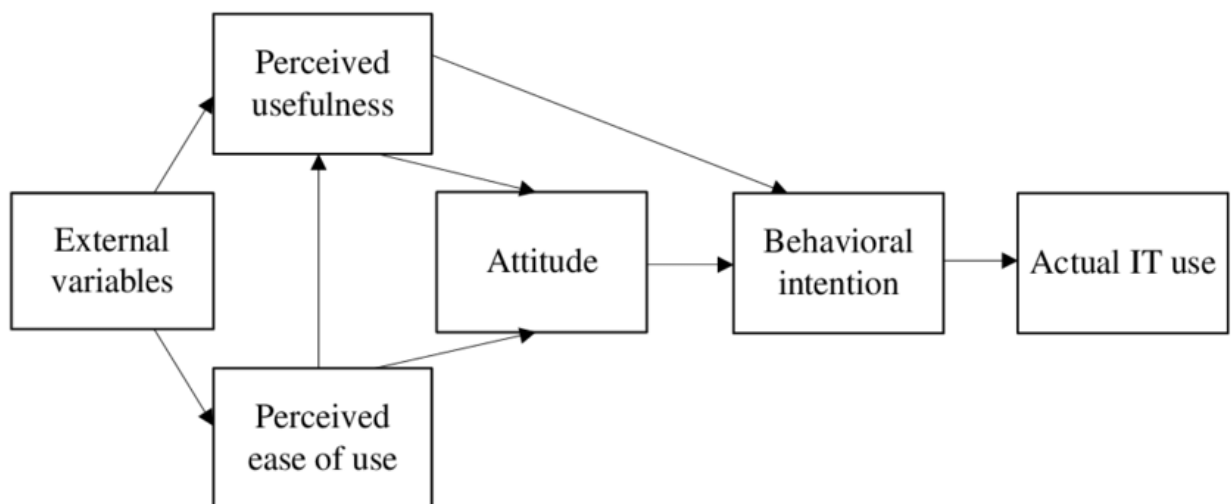
Retail studies often center on the concept of store image, and previous research has thoroughly explored the elements that make up store image as well as the ways in which these factors impact the buying choices of customers Verhagen et. al, (2003). Therefore, a store image is the manner in which the shop is characterized in a customer's mind Chang et.al, (2011). A consumer builds store image based on their subjective judgments of numerous aspects, both real and intangible. Characteristics such as product selection, pricing, display, and facility are examples of physical characteristics, while services, courtesy of the employees, shop environment, and convenience are examples of intangible qualities. According to research conducted by Verhagen et. al, (2003), customers evaluate the image of an online shop based on seven different factors or characteristics: utility, pleasure, simplicity of use, style, familiarity, trust, and settlement performance. These factors and characteristics combined make up the image of an online store. However, Cheng and Teng, (2013) research shows that trust in the online shop brand did not directly increase purchase intention. Despite this, the findings do not imply that the image of trust is insignificant (Cheng and Teng, 2013). Rather, they suggest that trust is still a key determinant on the image of utility.

According to the Simonian et. al, 2012 research, when it comes to the value customers see in the online buying environment, they will perceive two forms of value. The first is utilitarian value, which is an overall evaluation of functional advantages and trade-offs. Utilitarian value is connected to a consumer's view of whether a buying task is deliberate and efficient, as well as if a purchase meets the demands of the customer (Ryu et. al, 2010). The other is hedonic value, which is an overall evaluation of experiential advantages and sacrifices that focuses on the online shop's entertainment or emotional benefits (Ryu et. al, 2010). Nowadays, an online store must be able entertain its consumers as well as sell things, and for some customers, shopping is a sort of pleasure. As a result, the retailer must also consider the emotional value that consumers would get from purchasing by establishing a positive brand image, according to studies that were done by Ananda et. Al, (2021).

The words "simplicity motive" and "usefulness motive" come from Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) dimensions of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, respectively. According to TAM, elements including a technology's perceived utility and simplicity of use have a role in determining whether or not a user would embrace it. New technologies include, but are not limited to, mobile apps, smart phones, social media, and devices. The term "perceived ease of use" (EOU) is used to describe a user's expectation that a given system would need little to no effort on their side to master (Davis, 1989). In this context, simplicity motive refers to a user's expectation of how simple or complex it would be to complete a certain action (like making a purchase from their preferred online store) in comparison to other actions (like making a purchase from an alternative retail platform). According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness is "the degree to which individuals believe that the use of a system will result in improved performance in an organizational setting in which individuals' performances are reinforced by rewards, raises, and promotions." Therefore, the conviction that doing action will aid in reaching one's goal is the utility motivation. Perceived ease of use has a substantial impact on perceived usefulness, as stated by Davis (1989).

Figure 1

Authentic Technology Acceptance Model, Davis (1989)



To sum up, a customer creates a picture of the shop based on their own subjective evaluations of a variety of characteristics, both physical and intangible (Verhagen et. al, 2003).

Based on researches, customer trust in online store has a high influence for making a purchase (Verhagen et. al, 2003, Ryu et. al, 2010,Ryu et. al, 2010).

2.2. Online store image and perceived risk

Consumers are unable to physically check clothes goods while buying online, which raises the risk perceptions associated with online purchasing (Chung and Tseng, 2011). Customers cannot touch, feel, or try on things before making a purchase, which increases the likelihood that they will make a mistake. It is evident that customers often utilize product brand and store name as a substitute for product quality to decrease risks and simplify purchasing decisions, particularly when shopping online when many product qualities cannot be inspected directly (Chung and Tseng, 2011, Lkhaasuren et.al, 2018). Consumers are exposed to a higher level of transaction risk and a more complicated decision-making environment than they would be in the case of typical online shopping in the scenarios as a result of the unique context of cross-border commodities ordering, transaction payment, and logistics distribution, among other factors (Sreya et al., 2016). After paying attention to and conducting research on the factors that influence consumer trust in cross-border online shopping, some academics came to the conclusion that the impact of fake products, low efficiency of customs clearance, long time of international logistics, high risk of cross-border payment, and lack of after-sales protection are all factors that affect consumers' trust in cross-border online shopping platforms and businesses and restrict consumers' ability to make decisions regarding cross-border online shopping (Biswas et. Al, 2004, Bangun. and Handra, 2021). The customer's perception of E-commerce website security weaknesses will result in risk and a significant challenge to the development of the E-commerce website, according to Bangun and Handra, (2021).

From the financial side of view, consumers may alter their minds if they feel there is too much danger associated with the transaction. Massoud, (2013) argues that consumers who see online retailers as unsafe will be less likely to make purchases from them. Even though customers may be interested in purchasing a product due to the value it provides, they may ultimately decide against doing so due to the associated financial risk.

According to Alrawad et.al (2023) point of view, the product performance risk may be determined by the product quality, the function of the product, the problems that can occur with that product, and whether the product performance can satisfy expectations. Indeed, this risk

might arise among customers if the product does not live up to their expectations in some way. Therefore, product performance risk is defined in this research as the possibility that customers would believe that the performance of the product that they purchase online will not live up to their expectations due to product function and bad condition (Yu et.al, 2012).

According to Hsu and Luan (2017) statement, consumers worry about the possibility of wasting their time by making poor choices on the items or services they purchase. In addition, customers worry that returning a product they have bought would be a waste of time due to the length of the return period (Ahmedb et. Al, 2021). Therefore, time risk is defined in this research as the possibility that people will squander their valuable time as a result of the time it takes to seek for information, shop, and replace products that are defective (Ahmed et. Al, 2021).

Even in conventional shops and online businesses, customers place a high level of importance on after-sale services such as warranties, guarantees, the return of products that malfunction, and other similar services. When customers purchase online, they are concerned about after-sale risks such as the quality of customer support provided by online sellers. Therefore, in this research, the term "after-sale risk" refers to the possibility that customers would be concerned about risk problems with after-sale services throughout the process of purchasing online.

Consumers are concerned that their personal information may be utilized by online vendors without their knowledge, which is known as a privacy risk, according to Miyazaki et. Al, 2001, as was mentioned in the report. In addition, Tsai and Yeh, (2010) claimed that customers' concerns about online shops disclosing their personal information, which may include their phone number, email address, and other details, might be considered a privacy issue. According to the findings of Bhatti et. Al, (2019) research, the possibility that customers may feel violated owing to the usage of their personal information by online merchants without their consent and in inappropriate ways was described as the privacy risk.

In conclusion, consumers tend to avoid online buying because of the risk concerns, including the image of online websites, which might impact their intention to make a purchase, despite the fact that shopping online has many advantages Alrawad et.al (2023). As a consequence of this, online merchants and marketers have a need to investigate and identify areas of perceived risk in order to maintain competitive advantages in operations related to online purchasing.

2.3. Country image and its impact in purchasing goods online

The term "country image" refers to the vision, reputation, and stereotype that certain domestic goods conjure up in the minds of companies and customers Lee, (2020). These definitions are formed by national traits, the backdrop of the nation's economy and politics, as well as its history. Consumers' perceptions of a product's quality are influenced by a country's image via the construction of a broad range of ideas, attitudes, and favorites for that product Ramkumar, (2019). There is no objective standard to determine if an image is positive or negative. Nonetheless, based on the subjective differences, it is possible to split it into a particular image and the image of the nation as a whole Lee, (2020).

Koschate-Fischer et al. (2012) found that customers were influenced by their nation's image when making decisions regarding the price, quality, and safety of items from that country. According to research conducted by Hamzaoui and Merunka (2006), consumers are more likely to provide positive feedback to products that are manufactured or marketed in a developed country. As a result, customers have a hierarchical understanding of a country image, where the perceived economic, cultural, and social status of a country will impact the country's place in the hierarchy (Ramkumar, 2019). Variables such as representative goods, national features, economic and political backdrop, historical context, and cultural traditions all contribute to the formation of a nation's image (Li et. Al, 2016). When assessing a product, customers will look at the price, brand, and other exterior elements before considering the quality if they are unfamiliar with the product or cannot see the quality right away. Consumers will assume the quality of an imported product based on their preconceived notions about the exporting nation (Kan et. Al, 2014). The summary effect, or overall product information structure, is formed when customers have a positive association with the goods of a certain nation. When people have experience with a country's goods, the country's reputation has an effect on their opinions (Lin and Chen, 2006). As a consequence, the way a nation is seen affects how products are evaluated and how well they sell.

When customers are not acquainted with a foreign product, they will refer to the reputation of the nation and the stereotype of the product. This will decide the strength and weakness of the product's quality and is known as the halo effect. Bilkey and Nes (1982) came to this conclusion. If a nation has a strong reputation for one of its goods, then maybe other items produced there will also have a positive reputation; this will make it easier to sell other products.

Information has an effect on customer reaction, which is one of the external clues of nation image; it leads to eagerness to buy, also known as purchase intention. Product performance is the other external clue that stimulates customers.

To conclude, according to researches, the image of the country of origin has an effect on the consumer's motivation to make a purchase, which suggests that the country of origin plays an essential part in the process of making choices about which products to buy (Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012, Hamzaoui and Merunka 2006). Customers may also form their opinions and views of a brand depending on the country in which the brand was produced.

2.4. The theory of planned behaviour

Belief in the chance of the behavior's consequences (behavioral beliefs), belief in the normative expectations of others (normative beliefs), and belief in the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior (control beliefs) are the three types of considerations that guide human behavior according to the TPB Ajzen, (1991). Behavioral beliefs, when taken as a whole, generate an attitude toward the conduct (positive or negative), normative beliefs, when taken as a whole, provide a sense of social pressure or subjective norm, and control beliefs, when taken as a whole, generate a sense of behavioral control or self-efficacy (Cooke et. Al, 2013, Hegner et. Al, 2017). Perceived ability to regulate one's conduct moderates the impact of attitude and subjective norm on intention (McDermott et. Al, 2015). Generally speaking, one's desire to engage in a certain conduct should be stronger if they have a more positive attitude toward it, are part of a more socially acceptable group, and feel more in control of their environment (Cooke et. Al, 2013). Last but not least, if individuals have enough power over their actions, they should take advantage of opportunities to put their plans into action (Cooke et. Al, 2013, Hegner et. Al, 2017). Therefore, it is thought that intentions come before actions. Perceived behavioral control may be used as a stand-in for real control and a predictor of behavior to the degree that it is accurate.

When considering buying from a cross-border online store, individuals evaluate their attitude toward the purchase, which involves factors such as perceived product quality, trust in the online platform, and perceived value for money (Han and Kim, 2018). Subjective norms also play a significant role, as consumers might consider the opinions of friends, family, or online reviews in their home country regarding cross-border purchases (Pandey et. al, 2019, Adwan

et.al, 2021). Additionally, perceived behavioral control becomes crucial, encompassing factors like familiarity with the online shopping process, perceived ease of transaction, and concerns about delivery timelines and potential barriers like language or currency differences (Sauceda et. Al, 2015). Together, these elements contribute to shaping consumers' intentions to make cross-border purchases, highlighting the importance of addressing attitudes, social influences, and perceived control factors to encourage and facilitate such transactions in online cross-border stores.

In conclusion,TPB's emphasis on behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs resonates deeply in the decision-making processAjzen, (1991). Consumers' attitudes towards cross-border purchases, shaped by considerations of product quality, trust in the platform, and perceived value, intertwine with subjective norms rooted in social influences and perceived behavioral control factors such as transaction ease and logistical concerns(Pandey et. al, 2019, Adwan et.al, 2021, Sauceda et. Al, 2015). This comprehensive framework underscores that intentions to engage in cross-border purchases are influenced by multifaceted determinants, urging attention to attitudes, social pressures, and perceived control to effectively encourage and facilitate such transactions.

Summing up the whole paragraph, the landscape of online trade is shaped by multifaceted determinants, each influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions. Store image, constructed from subjective evaluations of physical and intangible aspects, plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions (Verhagen et. al, 2003). Despite the findings indicating that direct trust may not increase purchase intentions, it remains a crucial determinant influencing the utility aspect of an online shop's image (Cheng and Teng, 2013). This interplay between trust, utility, and multiple factors reflects the complexity of consumer decision-making in the online trade. Moreover, the concept of perceived risk in online purchases is found as a significant barrier influencing consumer intentions. Customers' inability to physically assess products and concerns about authenticity, security, and after-sales services contribute to heightened risk perceptions, impacting their willingness to make online purchases (Chung and Tseng, 2011; Biswas et. Al, 2004). Financial risks, product performance concerns, time-related risks, and privacy issues all factor into consumers' apprehensions, influencing their online shopping behavior (Massoud, 2013; Alrawad et.al, 2023; Hsu and Luan, 2017).Country image, on the other hand, significantly influences consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. Consumers rely on preconceived

notions about a country's products to evaluate quality and brand reputation, demonstrating the halo effect in their purchasing decisions (Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012). The image of the country of origin holds sway over consumer perceptions, impacting how products are evaluated and eventually purchased. Finally, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a comprehensive framework illuminating the decision-making process behind cross-border online purchases. Attitudes shaped by product quality, trust, and perceived value intertwine with subjective norms and perceived control factors, influencing consumer intentions to engage in cross-border transactions (Han and Kim, 2018; Saucedo et al., 2015). This emphasizes the need to address attitudes, social influences, and perceived control to facilitate and encourage cross-border online transactions effectively. In essence, the synthesis of these dimensions underscores the intricate nature of consumer behavior in online retail. Trust, perceived risk, country image, and the Theory of Planned Behavior collectively influence and shape consumer intentions, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding to navigate and enhance the online shopping experience (Verhagen et al., 2003, Adwan et al., 2021, Saucedo et al., 2015, Ajzen, 1991, Han and Kim, 2018).

3. IMPACT OF COUNTRY'S AND STORE'S IMAGE ON A SELECTION OF AN ONLINE STORE IN CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Purpose of the research, model, and hypotheses

This part of the written work presents the research methodology, which is based on the results of the literature review. The methodology section presents the study's overarching goals, its methodologies, the paper's problem, the study's theoretical framework, and its hypotheses.

The first part of this paper made use of a theoretical analytical approach. All relevant research articles, scientific publications, and other scholarly material were analyzed for this thesis. The Theory of planned behavior model is investigated in depth, theoretical information is amassed, and hypotheses are formed to inform the development of the research model. Methods of data collection are described in detail, as are the rationales for the questionnaire items and the sample size calculation, all of which are grounded in prior research. The second section of the thesis's methodology involves doing empirical research using the gathered data. SPSS Statistics is used to analyze the data, and then a variety of statistical analysis techniques are used to the data to either confirm or reject hypotheses. Data quality is evaluated, and socioeconomic information about the sample population is provided.

Problem of the research – How does the country of origin of an online store image affect a consumer's attitude and intent to purchase from such an online store.

Aim of the research – To testify how the image of the country and the image of the online store influences the purchase in an online skincare store.

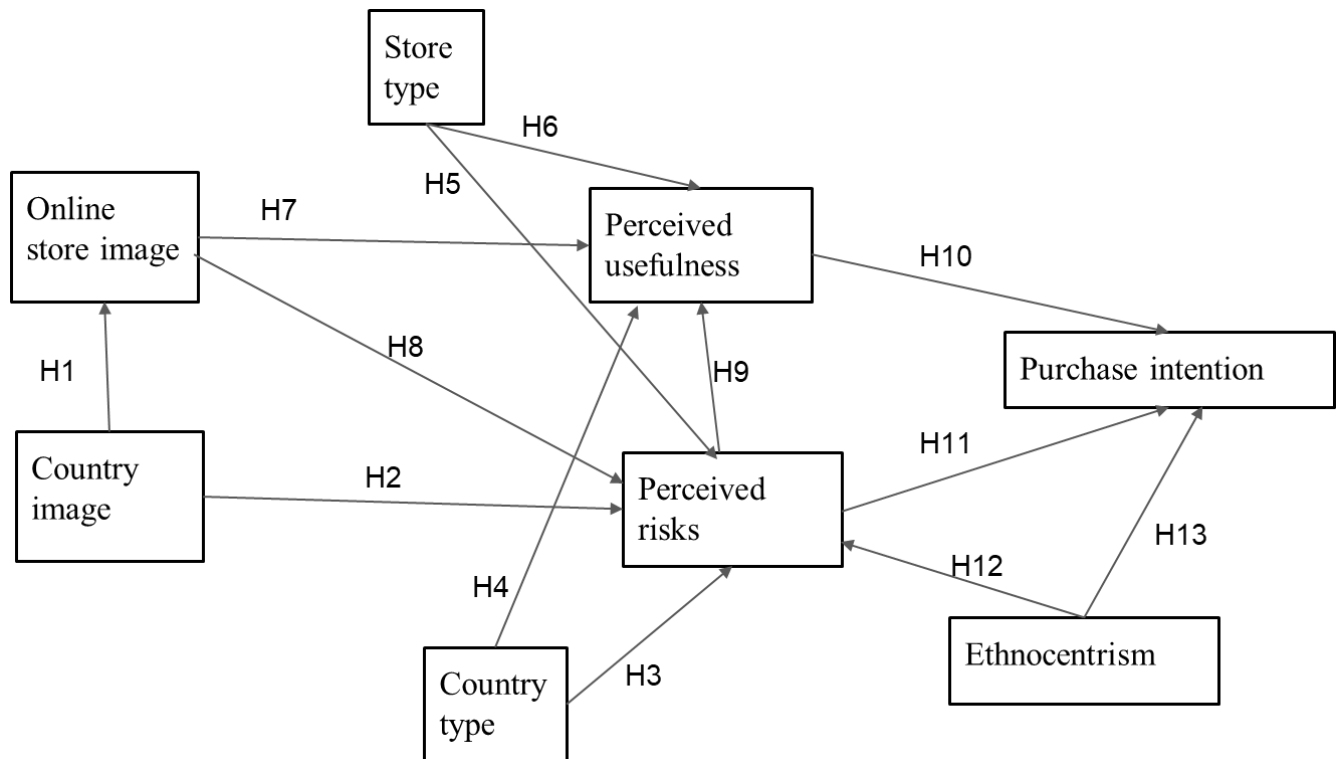
Research object – 2 chinese e-shops and 2 south korean e-shops of skincare.

Theoretical research model is based on the Theory of planned behavior model, which was elaborated by Ajzen (1991), extensively adopted by numerous researchers. Within this framework, the model incorporates two primary components: Online Store Image and Country Image, interlinked with Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Risks. Additionally, the model encompasses supplementary variables, notably Store Type (characterized by varying degrees of

“better” or “worse” image) and Country Type (specifically, China and South Korea). An independent variable, Ethnocentrism, is integral within this framework, establishing connections with these aforementioned elements. Collectively, these variables culminate in influencing Purchase Intention within the conceptual structure (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Research model



H1: *Country image has a significant positive influence on online store image.*

Drawing upon established theories in consumer behavior, this study hypothesizes a significant positive relationship between Country Image and Online Store Image. Consumer perception and stereotypes are known to intertwine with brand association, collectively influencing consumer behavior (Leischnig et. al, 2015). Researches have shown that consumers often associate certain countries with specific traits, values, or characteristics, forming preconceived notions about products associated with those origins (Listiana 2015, Leonidau et. al, 2019, Astaus et. al, 1999). These perceptions and stereotypes, when linked to a country's

image, extend their influence onto the image of an online store associated with products from that particular country (Yu et. al, 2013). Consequently, a favorable perception of a country due to its reputation, cultural attributes, or economic standing is anticipated to positively impact the image consumers hold of an online store featuring products originating from that country.

H2: *The more positive a country's image is, the lower perceived risks are.*

Several studies within the realms of social psychology and international relations support the hypothesis that a country's positive image correlates with lower perceived risks (Islam et. al, 2022, Arcos et. al, 2021). Researches have shown that favorable perceptions of a country, influenced by factors such as its cultural contributions, economic stability, and diplomatic standing, tend to reduce perceived risks associated with visiting or investing in that country (Li et. al, 2019, Chaulagain et. al, 2019). These positive perceptions often create a sense of trust and safety, impacting the way individuals evaluate potential risks (Chaulagain et. al, 2019). Additionally, research in consumer behavior and decision-making shows that when a country has a good reputation, it makes people feel more secure and less worried about any possible problems or dangers (Wai et. al, 2019). Therefore, empirical evidence aligns with the hypothesis, showcasing a direct link between a country's positive image and reduced perceived risks.

H3: *China exhibits a higher degree of perceived risks than South Korea.*

Global risk assessment reports often analyze geopolitical stability, economic indicators, healthcare systems, and social safety nets, indirectly reflecting perceptions of risk associated with different countries. Observing these factors reveals that China, due to its complex political landscape, occasional trade tensions, and regulatory uncertainties, might generate a higher perception of risk for investors and businesses compared to South Korea, known for its stable economy and robust technological advancements (Global risks report, 2023, Lee et. al, 2020, Jiang et. al, 2020). Additionally, analyzing international travel advisories, business investment patterns, or even media representations can offer indirect but informative insights into the varying perceptions of risk between China and South Korea (Han et. al, 2019, Dadabaev et. al, 2017, Colonnelli et. al, 2023, Stangarone, 2020). Although there might not be direct studies comparing them, looking at different signs like how safe people feel or travel warnings can give clues that suggest China might seem riskier than South Korea.

H4:*South Korea exhibits a higher degree of perceived usefulness than China.*

Market adoption rates of technological products, such as smartphones or consumer electronics, often showcase a preference for South Korean brands due to their perceived reliability and innovation, indirectly reflecting higher perceived usefulness (Na et. al, 2023, Park et. al, 2020). Furthermore, examining the global adoption rates and consumer reception of technological advancements, cultural exports, and innovative products originating from both South Korea and China could provide indications of how these creations are valued and embraced on a worldwide scale, even if direct comparative studies are limited (Lee et.al, 2009, Deng et. Al, 2010). Also, examining consumer preferences in cultural products like music, movies, or beauty products can hint at the perceived usefulness and desirability of South Korean offerings on a global scale (Lee et. Al, 2009). While specific studies might be limited, observing these trends and market behaviors provides suggestive evidence supporting the hypothesis that South Korea exhibits a higher degree of perceived usefulness compared to China.

H5:*China's e-shops possess a higher level of risks than South Korea's.*

Consumer reviews, and reports from cybersecurity firms and consumer protection agencies occasionally highlight challenges faced by users in China's diverse e-commerce landscape, including concerns about counterfeit goods, data privacy, and transaction security (Han, 2016). Conversely, although specific comparative studies might be scarce, South Korea's smaller yet more regulated e-commerce market suggests a more centralized approach to consumer protection and regulatory compliance, potentially indicating a comparatively lower level of inherent risks (Choi, 2020). While conclusive empirical studies directly comparing these risks might be lacking, qualitative observations and sporadic reports hint at potential differences in risk levels between China's and South Korea's e-commerce platforms (Han, 2016, Choi, 2020).

H6:*South Korea's e-shops possess a higher level of perceived usefulness than China's.*

User reviews often suggest that South Korea's e-shops are esteemed for their user-friendly interfaces, seamless navigation, and customer-centric features, contributing to a perceived higher level of usefulness among consumers (Hur et. al, 2017). Moreover, South Korean e-commerce entities have invested substantially in customer service, personalized

recommendations, and secure payment systems, further enhancing their perceived usefulness (Choi, 2020, Kim et. al, 2015). Conversely, while specific comparative studies might be scarce, sporadic consumer feedback and industry analyses indicate diverse user experiences within China's extensive e-commerce landscape, potentially impacting the perceived usefulness (Han, 2016). Although conclusive empirical studies directly contrasting the perceived usefulness of e-shops in both countries might be lacking, qualitative assessments and sporadic reviews hint at potential disparities, pointing towards South Korea's potential edge in perceived usefulness within its e-commerce platforms compared to those in China (Choi, 2020, Kim et. al, 2015, Han, 2016).

H7: *The more positive the image of an online store is, the more usefulness consumers perceive.*

Extensive research in consumer behavior and psychology consistently supports the hypothesis that a positive image of an online store correlates with higher perceived usefulness among consumers Konuk, (2018). Studies reveal that factors influencing the perceived image, such as website design, user interface, brand reputation, and customer reviews, significantly impact consumers' perceptions of usefulness (Chi, 2018, Konuk, 2018). Positive visual aesthetics, intuitive navigation, transparent information presentation, and trustworthy branding elements contribute to shaping a positive image of an online store Alrawad et.al (2023). Moreover, consumer trust and confidence in an online store are fostered by positive experiences, leading to a perceived usefulness linked to the store's image (Mahsa et. al, 2017). Evidence shows that consumers are more inclined to perceive an online store as useful and reliable if it maintains a positive image, reinforcing the direct relationship between image perception and perceived usefulness in the realm of online commerce (Mahsa et. al, 2017, Porral et. al, 2016).

H8: *As perceived risks increase, the image of an online store worsens.*

Studies in consumer psychology and behavior consistently affirm the hypothesis that as perceived risks associated with an online store increase, the overall image of the store worsens in the eyes of consumers (Erdil, 2015, Bonnin, 2020). Consumer perceptions are significantly influenced by various risk factors such as security concerns, product quality uncertainties, delivery reliability, and payment safety (Erdil, 2015, Bonnin, 2020). When consumers perceive higher risks, it negatively impacts their trust and confidence in the store, leading to a diminished

image perception Dat, (2020). Studies indicate that factors contributing to increased perceived risks, such as inadequate website security, ambiguous return policies, or negative reviews regarding past experiences, directly influence consumers' perceptions of the store's credibility and reliability (Biswas et. Al, 2004, Bangun and Handra, 2021). Consequently, as perceived risks escalate, consumers tend to form a more negative image of the online store, highlighting the pivotal link between risk perception and image deterioration within the realm of online commerce (Erdil, 2015, Dat, 2020, Bonnin, 2020).

H9: *As perceived risks increase, the perceived usefulness decreases.*

Studies examining consumer behavior consistently support the idea that when people see more risks associated with a product or service, they tend to think it's less useful (Iriani et. al, 2020, Tzavlopoulos et. al, 2019). These risks can include worries about quality, safety, or uncertainties during the buying process Biswas et. Al, (2004). Research shows that when individuals feel there are more risks linked to a product or service, they start doubting how well it works or how helpful it might be Tzavlopoulos et. al, (2019). Things like unclear information about the product, negative reviews, or concerns about its performance directly influence how consumers see its usefulness Abdullah, (2016). So, as people perceive more risks, they're likely to consider the product or service as less useful, showing how risk perception and perceived usefulness are linked in how people make decisions about what to buy (Iriani et. al, 2020, Tzavlopoulos et. al, 2019).

H10: *The bigger perceived usefulness, the stronger intention to purchase.*

Research in consumer behavior consistently validates the hypothesis that a higher perceived usefulness of a product or service correlates strongly with the intention to purchase Abdullah, (2016). Studies have shown that when consumers perceive a product or service as highly useful, they are more inclined to develop a stronger intention to buy it (Pandey et. al, 2019, Adwan et.al, 2021). When individuals perceive a high level of usefulness in a product or service, it positively influences their attitudes and behavioral intentions towards making a purchase Adwan et.al, (2021). Psychological models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) emphasize the significant role of perceived usefulness in shaping consumer purchase intentions (Davis, 1989, Ajzen 1991). Empirical

evidence consistently demonstrates that a stronger perception of usefulness directly impacts and amplifies the intention to purchase, underlining the strong relationship between perceived usefulness and buying intentions in consumer decision-making processes (Pandey et. al, 2019, Adwan et.al, 2021, Abdullah, 2016).

H11: *The bigger perceived risks, the lower intention to purchase.*

Research in how consumers behave strongly supports the idea that when people see more risks linked to a product or service, they're less likely to intend to buy it (Iriani et. al, 2020, Tzavlopoulos et. al, 2019). These risks cover worries about quality, reliability, safety, and uncertainties in the buying process Alrawad et.al (2023). Studies consistently show that as consumers perceive more risks related to a product or service, their willingness to purchase it decreases. The Theory of Planned Behavior highlights how these perceived risks reduce the intention to buy Ajzen, (1991). Scientific evidence consistently proves that as perceived risks go up, the intention to make a purchase goes down, highlighting the strong connection between risks and the willingness to buy in how consumers make decisions (Iriani et. al, 2020, Tzavlopoulos et. al, 2019, Alrawad et.al 2023).

H12: *The higher level of ethnocentrism, the higher perceived risk.*

Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency of individuals to favor their own cultural group over others Budiarti et. al (2022). Studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of ethnocentrism often perceive greater risks when interacting or dealing with individuals or products from cultures different from their own (Heliyon, 2023, Kuncharin et. al, 2013). This heightened perception of risk can stem from biases, stereotypes, or uncertainties associated with unfamiliar cultures, leading to a sense of discomfort or distrust Kuncharin et. al, (2013). Ethnocentric tendencies can influence how individuals perceive the reliability, safety, or quality of products or interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds, thereby increasing their perceived level of risk Budiarti et. al (2022). Therefore, empirical evidence consistently highlights a positive relationship between higher levels of ethnocentrism and increased perceived risk in social and consumer contexts.

H13: *The more ethnocentric consumers are, the less likely they are to intend to purchase.*

Studies indicate that individuals with stronger ethnocentric tendencies exhibit lower intentions to purchase goods or services from cultures different from their own (Heliyon, 2023, Kuncharin et. al, 2013). People often hesitate to buy from other cultures because they prefer their own and feel unsure or uneasy about unfamiliar products or brands(Heliyon, 2023, Kuncharin et. al, 2013, Budiarti et. al 2022). Ethnocentric consumers often perceive products from other cultures as less appealing or reliable, leading to reduced purchase intentions. The Theory of Planned Behavior and other psychological models highlight the impact of ethnocentrism on purchase intentions Ajzen, (1991). Empirical evidence consistently supports the notion that higher levels of ethnocentrism result in a decreased willingness to purchase products or services from cultures different from one's own.

3.2. Data collection methods and research instruments

Previous research on a country's image and online store's image on a selection of an online store shows that experimental designs and questionnaires (Ariff et al. 2014, Sharma 2014, Grah and Tominc 2015, Vijaranakorn et al. 2017) are usually applied as research methods. The questionnaire enables gathering opinions from respondents, getting essential research data, and analyzing this information. Factorial design is particularly valuable in questionnaire-based research due to its ability to efficiently test multiple variables simultaneously. Therefore, the research of this thesis is made of factorial experimental design, consisting of different chinese skincare websites and different korean skincare websites, and the questionnaire. The survey was initially crafted in English and later translated into Lithuanian. It was distributed online, primarily across social media platforms and public groups, offering respondents the opportunity to anonymously complete it at their convenience. This way, because it was anonymous, more people felt comfortable giving honest answers, making the information more trustworthy and reliable.

To examine how the origin of a country, the type of store, and the intent to purchase are interconnected, a 2x2 mixed factorial design was created, focusing on the country (China vs. South Korea) and the reliability of stores (less reliable vs. more reliable). This design involved selecting four existing online stores: two from South Korea and two from China, with each country having one less reliable and one more reliable store. These websites were available in Chinese and Korean, with options to translate into English. The research specifically focused on

skincare products to observe varying consumer behaviors influenced by the store's perceived reliability and the country of origin. Details of the websites used are provided in the accompanying table, and images of these websites as they were during the research period are available in Annex 8.

Table 2

Factorial design experiment framework

China	South Korea	
Xove https://www.xove.com/en/	OliveYoung https://global.oliveyoung.com/	More reliable website
TaoBao https://world.taobao.com/	Naver https://www.naver.com/	Less reliable website

6 variables of current research are presented in Table 2 in Annex, together with description of the construct questions, adapted measurement type and references to the original construct. The table presents various constructs used in a questionnaire, each developed by different researchers and comprising a specific number of statements.

Perceived Risks, with statements related to online shopping experiences, was developed by Ariff et al. (2014). This construct addresses concerns associated with online shopping, such as the reliability of receiving ordered products, the safety of credit card details, and the ease of canceling orders Ariff et al. (2014). It reflects the customer's apprehension about potential problems in online transactions. In this study, perceived risk is considered as an independent variable, the questionnaire items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) Ariff et al. (2014).

Moving further, Ethnocentrism focusing on preferences for domestic products and services, contains statements developed by Sharma (2014). This construct explores a preference for domestic products and services over foreign ones. It measures the degree to which individuals prioritize buying from their home country, reflecting a sense of national pride or economic patriotism Sharma (2014).

The next, Online Store Image construct, reflecting perceptions of a supermarket's service and value, was devised by Grah and Tominc (2015). Focusing on the perceived attributes of an online supermarket, this construct evaluates aspects like customer service quality, promotional

attractiveness, and the value for money offered by the store. All items in Grah and Tominc (2015) study were assessed using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Even though the construct was made specifically for store image, it was adapted to online store image.

Country Image, related to the perception of luxury brands from specific countries, was developed by Vijaranakorn et al. (2017). This construct assesses the perception of luxury brands based on their country of origin. It gauges the likelihood of purchasing luxury products from a specific country, indicating the influence of national reputation on consumer choices. This study used a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Since Vijaranakorn et al. (2017) research assessed the perception of luxury brands, the construct was adapted to current research topic.

Perceived Usefulness, comparing the value of a company's products and services to alternatives, was created by Yang and Peterson (2004). This construct compares the value of a company's products and services against its competitors. It reflects the consumer's assessment of whether a company offers better costs, fair charges, and more value compared to alternative options Yang and Peterson (2004).

Lastly, Intention to Purchase, indicating likelihood of buying from certain sellers, was developed by Wu et al. (2015). This construct measures the likelihood of purchasing products from a particular list of sellers. It gauges the consumer's willingness and probability of buying from these sellers in the near future.

Each construct was validated for both discriminant and convergent validities by researchers, ensuring their effectiveness in the questionnaire. The research participants evaluated the design of four web sites based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". However, the detailed constructs and specific questions were not accessible in the scientific literature, which made their practical application complicated. Each of these constructs was validated for both discriminant and convergent validities, ensuring their effectiveness and reliability in the context of the questionnaire.

3.3. Research sample size and structure

In this section of the methodology chapter, we delineate the sampling technique, sample size determination, and data collection method employed in this study. Initially, we define the target population without imposing specific demographic requirements such as gender or age. Respondents were selected through a nonprobability convenience sampling method, allowing for a more accessible approach to participant recruitment. Drawing from established best practices and insights derived from marketing research literature, a benchmark sample size of 333 participants was established, following a thorough review of reputable sources and empirical precedents outlined in a corresponding table.

Table 3

Research sample size table

No.	Author	Type of questionnaire	Sampling	Number of respondents
1.	Han et. al, 2018	Online survey	Nonprobability sampling	309
2.	Ma et. al, 2019	Not stated	Probability sampling	302
3.	Simonian et. al, 2012	Online survey	Probability sampling	73
4.	Alrawad et. al, 2023	Questionnaire	Nonprobability sampling	558
5.	Ananda et al., 2021	Online survey	Nonprobability sampling	175
6.	Biswas et. al, 2013	Online survey	Nonprobability sampling	113
7.	Budiarti et. al, 2022	Online survey	Probability sampling	236
8.	Choi et. al, 2019	Not stated	Nonprobability sampling	240
9.	Cui et. al, 2019	Online survey	Nonprobability sampling	699
Average:				300

Since current study conducts two questionnaires, the goal was to achieve about 150 respondents per each questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted in a form of an online survey, implemented on Google Forms software in 2 versions. Respondents were asked to pick

any survey containing one website, check out the given website and answer the questions. Time for checking out the website was not limited. After the website review, respondent was asked to fill in the questionnaire (Annex 2 and 3), consisting of 13 question blocks evaluating researched variables and 3 demographic questions.

4. IMPACT OF COUNTRY'S AND STORE'S IMAGE ON A SELECTION OF AN ONLINE STORE IN CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

4.1. Demographic characteristics and reliability of collected data

The period of the survey of current research – from 3rd of December 2023 till the 12th of December 2023. The total number of respondents was 333. After data filtering, 93,7% of respondents were women. Gender distribution across 2 questionnaires was kept similar. Exact percentages can be seen in Table 4 below. The biggest age category in both questionnaires were 25-30, as in the first survey it placed 68% of respondents, and in the second survey - 46%. When analyzing the distribution of the income of the respondents it was found that 59.5 % of the respondents have an average monthly income between 1001-1500 Eur. 20.7% of respondents have an average income between 1501-2000 Eur, and 13.2% of the respondents have an average income between 2001-2500 Eur. The least of respondents have an income between less than 1000eur (1.5%) and more than 2501 Eur (5.1%).

Table 4

Demographical data distribution by questionnaires

Questionnaire	TaoBao&OliveYoung	Naver&Xove
Respondents	173	160
Female	95%	91%
Age category	25-30	25-30

The questionnaire's reliability is confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha values, represented as a numeric range from 0 to 1. When the Cronbach's Alpha value falls between 0.6 and 0.95, it indicates that the test outcomes are adequate for additional analysis (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Specific reliability measures for individual components are detailed in Table 5. The Table evaluates the reliability of various constructs using Cronbach's Alpha. Perceived Risks have a high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.946. Ethnocentrism is also reliable, scoring 0.820. Country Image and Intention to Purchase are both highly consistent, with values of 0.929 and 0.927 respectively. Perceived Usefulness shows good reliability at 0.827. Finally, Online Store Image is evaluated as highly reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.934, reflecting strong internal consistency in the measures used for these constructs. These scores, all above 0.8, demonstrate

strong internal consistency, underscoring the questionnaire's effectiveness in accurately measuring these constructs.

Table 5

Constructs' reliability evaluation based on Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Risks	0.946
Ethnocentrism	0.820
Country Image	0.929
Intention to Purchase	0.927
Perceived Usefulness	0.827
Online store image	0.934

The assessment of construct reliability involved pooling the data from all questionnaires, and no constructs were excluded because each one attained acceptable scores.

4.2. Impact of a country's and store's image on a selection of an online store in cross-border shopping testing

Previous scientific studies have demonstrated that the perceptions of a country's image and store image can directly influence the intention to purchase from cross-border online shops. Additionally, there's an observed potential connection between ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Thus, this research aims to examine purchase intention concerning perceived usefulness and perceived risks, particularly in the context of various store and country profiles. However, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of country image and online store perception on purchases within an online skincare store.

Table 6

Country image influence on an online store image

		Country image	Online store image
Country image	Pearson Correlation	1	.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666

Online store image	Pearson Correlation	.236**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

Table 6 continuation.

Country image was expected to have a significant positive influence on online store image. Pearson coefficient illustrated in the Table 6 above showed positive correlation between these variables, but weak, where $R = 0.236$. **H1 is confirmed**, as the table shows those who give better feedback about their country have a better opinion about the store in that country. However, the correlation's weakness implies other factors, like customer service, security and privacy, product quality and variety might also significantly influence online store image perceptions Sreya et al., (2016). This finding underlines the importance of country image in shaping consumer attitudes towards online stores, though it's not the sole determining factor.

Table 7

Correlation between country image and perceived risk

		Country image	Perceived risks
Country image	Pearson Correlation	1	-.148**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Perceived risks	Pearson Correlation	-.148**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

Hypothesis **H2**, that the more positive a country's image is, the lower perceived risks are, **is confirmed**, Pearson coefficient illustrates weak correlation $R = -0.148$. A higher country image leads to a lower perceived risk. Although, this finding implies that while country image plays a role in influencing perceived risks, it is not the only factor. Other elements likely contribute to perceptions of risk in online shopping or consumer behavior, like customer reviews, website design, privacy policies and other Chung and Tseng, (2011).

Table 8*Independent samples test of China's perceived risk and South Korea's perceived risk*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perceived risks	Equal variances assumed	.131	.718	1.918	664	.0277	.12853	.06703	-.00308	.26014
	Equal variances not assumed			1.918	663.833	.0277	.12853	.06703	-.00309	.26014

The results show that Chinese platforms (Xove and Taobao) have higher mean scores for perceived risks than South Korean platforms (Naver and Olive). The analysis of data for this hypothesis was conducted utilizing an independent sample t-test to determine the statistical significance of the findings. The reason for that is because the current critical value exceeds the one-way critical value $1.918 > 1.6477$, so it can be said that the difference is statistically significant, $p=0.0277$. It is shown in Figure 2. Based on these results, the hypothesis that China exhibits a higher degree of perceived risks than South Korea **H3 is approved**. The data clearly supports this conclusion, demonstrating significant differences in perceived risks between the two countries. The major difference in perceived risks with Chinese platforms rating higher, shows that cultural or operational variables influence consumer trust and safety concerns. This could be due to the two nations' different laws and regulations, consumer protection standards, or market maturity levels. Understanding these differences is critical for businesses seeking to boost customer trust and customize their strategies to specific markets Wirtz et. Al (2010). This observation also emphasizes the significance of contextual factors in determining online purchasing experiences and perceptions across regions.

Figure 3

Graphical demonstration of H3

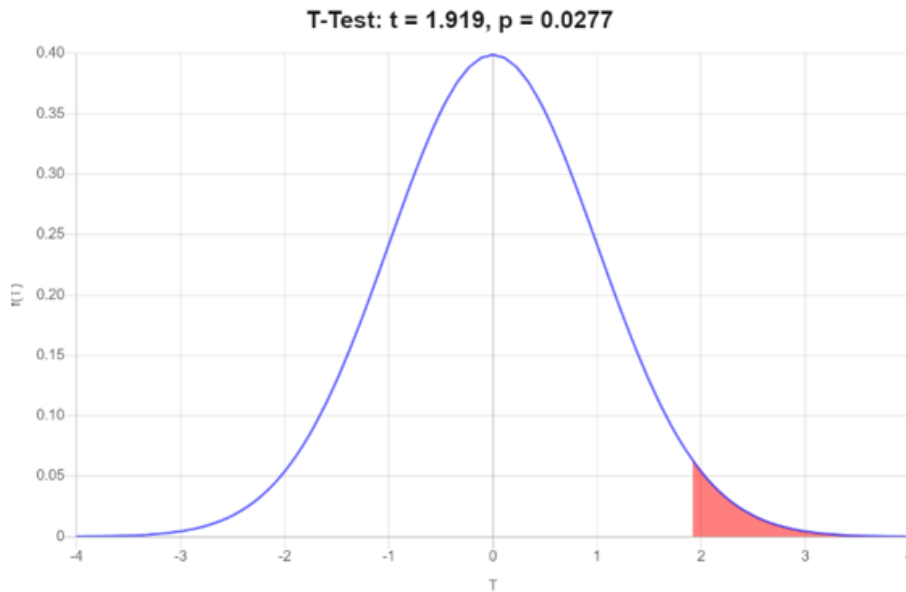


Table 9

T-test of China's perceived usefulness and South Korea's perceived usefulness

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perceived usefulness	Equal variances assumed	.125	.724	-4.925	664	.0001	-.22823	.04634	-.31922	-.13724
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.925	662.331	.0001	-.22823	.04634	-.31922	-.13724

The data for this hypothesis were examined through an independent sample t-test to ascertain the statistical relevance of the results. The mean of perceived usefulness for South

Korea is significantly higher, with $3.3971 > 3.1689$. The p-value for this hypothesis is $p=0.0001$, which is significant. The significant difference in perceived usefulness may be attributed to factors like user experience, technology adoption, customer service quality, or trust in online transactions. It shows that South Korea exhibits a higher degree of perceived usefulness than China, which leads to **improvement of H4**. It examines regional differences in consumer perceptions, which may be influenced by technology infrastructure, cultural attitudes toward online buying, or market maturity Thelen et. Al, (2006). Understanding these distinctions is critical for businesses wanting to maximize their online presence in various areas.

Table 10

Independed sample test of e-shops and perceived risk

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perceived risks	Equal variances assumed	.143	.706	12.888	664	.0001	.77477	.06011	.65674	.89281
	Equal variances not assumed			12.888	663.994	.0001	.77477	.06011	.65674	.89281

H5 is approved, because $p=0.0001$, which is a significant number and was calculated with an independent sample t-test. Less reliable stores have a significantly higher degree of perceived risks, $3.3868 > 2.6120$. It highlights a direct correlation between a store's reliability perception and the level of perceived risk by consumers. It suggests that reliability is a key factor influencing consumer trust and risk assessment in online shopping environments. This insight is important for online retailers to understand as it underscores the importance of building and maintaining a reliable and trustworthy image to lower perceived risks among consumers.

Table 11*Independed sample test of e-shops and perceived usefulness*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perceived usefulness	Equal variances assumed	11.673	.001	-13.466	664	.000	-.56306	.04181	-.64517	-.48096
	Equal variances not assumed			-13.466	643.631	.000	-.56306	.04181	-.64517	-.48095

As the group statistics show that more reliable e-shops have a higher level of perceived usefulness, with $3.5646 > 3.0015$. Independent sample t-test results show that p-value of this hypothesis is $0.0001 < 0.05$. **H6 is approved** and suggests that consumers find more value and utility in e-shops they deem trustworthy and reliable. These results could be influenced by various factors, like higher perceived usefulness in more reliable e-shops might stem from better customer service, more user-friendly interfaces, or a broader range of products Ma et. al, (2019). Furthermore, brand reputation and previous pleasant experiences may play a role in these beliefs Konuk, (2018). These findings imply that reliability and trust are important in determining consumer attitudes and choices in the online buying sector.

Table 12*Relationship between online store image and perceived usefulness*

		Perceived usefulness	Online store image
Perceived usefulness	Pearson Correlation	1	.408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Online store image	Pearson Correlation	.408**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

It was expected that the more positive the image of an online store is, the more usefulness consumers perceive. Pearson coefficient illustrated in the Table 12 above showed an average but

still positive correlation between these variables, where $R = 0.408$. **H7 is confirmed**, as a better image of the store is also likely to have a higher perceived usefulness. This moderate correlation implies that while store image is an important factor in perceived usefulness, other factors also play a role. A good store image likely enhances customer trust and satisfaction, which in turn increases the perception of usefulness, but it's not the main influencing factor.

Table 13

Relationship between online store image and perceived usefulness

		Perceived risks	Online store image
Perceived risks	Pearson Correlation	1	-.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Online store image	Pearson Correlation	-.359**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

As the perceived risks rise, there is an anticipated decline in the perception of the online store. The Pearson coefficient, as depicted in Table 13, demonstrates a weak correlation between these factors, specifically $R = -0.359$. This finding **confirms hypothesis H8**, suggesting that higher perceived risks tend to negatively impact the perception of the store. This weak correlation also implies that other factors might contribute to the store's image, but perceived risks are a significant aspect that influences consumer perceptions.

Table 14

Influence of perceived risks on perceived usefulness.

		Perceived risks	Perceived usefulness
Perceived risks	Pearson Correlation	1	-.347**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Perceived usefulness	Pearson Correlation	-.347**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Anticipatedly, with a rise in perceived risks, there is an expected decrease in perceived usefulness. The Pearson coefficient presented in Table 14 indicates a weak correlation between

these variables, specifically $R = -0.347$. This weak yet significant correlation highlights the importance of managing perceived risks to maintain or enhance the perceived usefulness of online stores in consumers' eyes. This outcome **supports hypothesis H9**, affirming that heightened perceived risks are inversely linked to perceived usefulness.

Table 15

Correlation between perceived usefulness and intention to purchase.

		Intention to purchase	Perceived usefulness
Intention to purchase	Pearson Correlation	1	.205**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Perceived usefulness	Pearson Correlation	.205**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

As the perceived usefulness increases, there is an expectation of a stronger inclination towards purchasing. Illustrated in Table 15, the Pearson coefficient demonstrates a weak correlation between these aspects, notably $R = 0.205$. This result **aligns with hypothesis H10**, suggesting that a higher perceived usefulness corresponds to a heightened intention to make a purchase. This highlights the need for online stores to enhance their utility perception, as it can positively impact purchasing decisions.

Table 16

Correlation between perceived risk and intention to purchase.

		Perceived risks	Intention to purchase
Perceived risks	Pearson Correlation	1	-.263**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	666	666
Intention to purchase	Pearson Correlation	-.263**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	666	666

As the perceived risks increase, there's an observed decrease in the intention to make a purchase. In Table 16, the Pearson coefficient shows a weak correlation between these factors,

specifically $R = -0.205$. This finding **supports hypothesis H11**, indicating that higher perceived risks correspond to a lower intention to purchase. The weak correlation suggests that while perceived risks are a significant factor in decision-making, other elements also influence the intention to purchase, such as product quality, price, and consumer trust Simonian et. Al (2012).

Table 17

Correlation between ethnocentrism and perceived risks.

		Perceived risks	Ethnocentrism
Perceived risks	Pearson Correlation	1	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.209
	N	666	666
Ethnocentrism	Pearson Correlation	-.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.209	
	N	666	666

The expectation was that a greater level of ethnocentrism would lead to increased perceived risk. However, Table 17 displays a weak correlation between these factors, with a Pearson coefficient of $R = -0.263$. This result **denies hypothesis H12**, suggesting that a higher level of ethnocentrism does not necessarily equate to higher perceived risk. The result suggests that ethnocentrism does not play a significant role in shaping perceptions of risk in the context studied, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing consumer perceptions in online shopping.

Table 18

Correlation between ethnocentrism and intention to purchase.

		Intention to purchase	Ethnocentrism
Intention to purchase	Pearson Correlation	1	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.435
	N	666	666
Ethnocentrism	Pearson Correlation	.030	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.435	
	N	666	666

The hypothesis was the more ethnocentric consumers are, the less likely they are to intend to purchase in cross-border e-shop. But there was no correlation between ethnocentrism

and intention to purchase variables, because of that **H13 is rejected**. The lack of correlation indicates that ethnocentric attitudes may not significantly impact consumers' purchasing intentions in the context of cross-border online shopping, suggesting that other factors are more influential in these purchasing decisions.

In table 19 below all hypotheses and approval or rejection based on statistical analysis results for hypotheses H1-H13 are presented.

Table 19

Hypotheses analysis results

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Country image has a significant positive influence on online store image.	Approved
H2: The more positive a country's image is, the lower perceived risks are.	Approved
H3: China exhibits a higher degree of perceived risks than South Korea.	Approved
H4: South Korea exhibits a higher degree of perceived usefulness than China.	Approved
H5: China's e-shops possess a higher level of risks than South Korea's. (T-test)	Approved
H6: South Korea's e-shops possess a higher level of perceived usefulness than China's.	Approved
H7: The more positive the image of an online store is, the more usefulness consumers perceive.	Approved
H8: As perceived risks increase, the image of an online store worsens.	Approved
H9: As perceived risks increase, the perceived usefulness decreases.	Approved
H10: The bigger perceived usefulness, the stronger intention to purchase.	Approved
H11: The bigger perceived risks, the lower intention to purchase.	Approved
H12: The higher level of ethnocentrism, the higher perceived risk.	Rejected
H13: The more ethnocentric consumers are, the less likely they are to intend to purchase.	Rejected

In conclusion, 13 hypotheses were statistically tested. 11 hypotheses were approved, while 2 hypotheses were rejected. The research findings provide nuanced insights into the dynamics of online shopping behavior.

The moderated positive correlation between country image and online store image resonates with prior studies (Leischnig et. al, 2015) suggesting that national stereotypes can shape consumer perceptions of products and services. Similarly, the observed negative correlation between country image and perceived risk aligns with literature on national reputation influencing trust in e-commerce (Li et. al, 2019, Chaulagain et. al, 2019). The differentiation in perceived risks and usefulness between Chinese and South Korean platforms highlights cultural and operational factors in consumer trust, supporting existing research on cross-cultural e-commerce behavior (Lee et. al, 2020, Jiang et. al, 2020). The study's focus on store reliability reiterates the crucial role of trust and reliability, as established in previous studies, in shaping consumer perceptions in online shopping (Na et. al, 2023, Park et. al, 2020). Additionally, the weak negative correlation between perceived risks and purchasing intentions underscores the impact of perceived risks on online purchasing behavior, a widely recognized factor in e-commerce studies (Iriani et. al, 2020, Tzavlopoulos et. al, 2019). Also, the negative correlation between ethnocentrism and perceived risks or purchasing intentions offers a contrasting perspective to some studies that emphasize the significant impact of ethnocentrism on online purchasing decisions (Heliyon, 2023, Kuncharin et. al, 2013).

These insights collectively contribute to the broader understanding of consumer behavior in the evolving landscape of international online shopping.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCHED FACTORS

This research delves into the relatively underexplored area of how the image of a country influences the perception and choice of foreign online stores, particularly focusing on the interplay between the image of the country and the image of the store itself. The scientific problem it addresses is understanding the impact of an online store's country of origin on consumer attitudes and their intent to purchase from that store. To achieve this, the paper sets out several specific objectives: analyzing the theoretical background, later examine methodological part of store and country images, examining the influence of perceived risks and ethnocentrism on consumer willingness to engage in cross-border online shopping, and exploring the relationship between store and country images. It also explored the potential connections between ethnocentrism, perceived usefulness, and perceived risks in shaping these intentions.

Previous studies have consistently shown that consumers often perceive a country's image in various dimensions, such as its economic status, cultural identity, and societal norms. These perceptions then significantly influence their views and attitudes towards products and stores originating from that country. The research specifically targets four online skincare stores as its subject: two from China and two from South Korea. This focus allows for a detailed investigation into how the country of origin – in this case, China, and South Korea – affects consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of online cross-border shopping in the skincare industry.

Higher perceived risks were found to negatively impact the image of Korean and Chinese online stores. Websites perceived as less attractive, appeared riskier, potentially leading to such outcome. This negative impact can lead to a decrease in consumer trust, reduced likelihood of purchase, and a general reluctance to engage with the online store in the future. These results support previous research findings. This leads to another finding which is supported both by current research and previous studies as well, that perceived risks has a direct negative impact on consumers' purchase intention. Hereafter, the ethnocentrism influence on consumers' intention to purchase in cross-border online store. Previous research suggests that ethnocentrism has a significant influence on consumers' purchasing cross-border online, however, results did not show any significant relation between these variables. Moving further, direct effect of

country image on online store image was measured. The results are supported by previous researches, as it also approves this statement.

Further, a positive country image leads to a more positive online store image, shows this research's results. Previous studies were more focused on goods that were manufactured in a specific country and this country's image, therefore, results might differ. Several studies showed that the more positive a country's image is, the lower perceived risks are, and again it is approved by this research as well. When it comes to country image, the hypothesis, that China exhibits a higher degree of perceived risks than South Korea, was approved, which shows other studies' results were similar. Also, previous studies measured that South Korea has a higher level of perceived usefulness, than China, which was proven in this case, as well. Independent sample analysis showed, that China's e-shops possess a higher level of risks, than South Korea and it was proved by other authors, as well, despite limited research in the literature. This leads to another proven hypothesis that South Korea's e-shops possess a higher level of perceived usefulness, than China's. Despite the fact that there was a lack of studies in literature, this research approves that the more positive the image of a country is, the more usefulness consumers perceive. Previous authors determined the direct relationship between bigger perceived usefulness and a stronger intention to purchase, which was proven in this study, too. Previous research shows that when individuals feel there are more risks linked to a product or service, they start doubting how well it works or how helpful it might be. The statement that as perceived risks increase, the perceived usefulness decreases, was approved. However, it was expected that the higher level of ethnocentrism leads to a higher perceived risk, but it was not confirmed, even though previous studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of ethnocentrism often perceive greater risks when interacting or dealing with individuals or products from cultures different from their own.

The research underscores that factors like perceived risks, perceived usefulness, and country image significantly influence cross-border online shopping. Additionally, it highlights that while ethnocentrism has less impact than previously thought, store reliability is crucial in shaping consumer perceptions and intentions. This analysis suggests that businesses should focus on enhancing their online store image, address perceived risks, and understand cultural differences to effectively attract and retain global consumers in the competitive landscape of online retail. Based on the key findings of this research, here are specific

recommendations for businesses in the realm of online retail, particularly those dealing with skincare products from China and South Korea. First of all, it is important to address perceived risks. Reduce perceived risks associated with online shopping by implementing robust privacy policies, secure payment methods, and reliable customer service. For example, offer easy-to-access customer support and clear, customer-friendly return policies. Secondly, manage ethnocentric perceptions, even though ethnocentrism was found to be less impactful, business can more focus on other global consumer values like quality, innovation, and customer experience. For instance, highlighting the unique aspects of products that appeal universally, irrespective of country of origin. Thirdly, country image can be leveraged. The positive aspects of a country's image can be utilized in marketing strategies. For instance, South Korean stores can highlight Korea's reputation for innovative skincare products, while Chinese stores can emphasize their rich heritage in natural and traditional beauty remedies. One of the most crucial recommendations would be enhance online store's attractiveness and usefulness, as the results showed that the bigger perceived usefulness, the stronger intention to purchase. It is important to focus on building a reliable and trustworthy online presence. This can be achieved by ensuring website security, providing accurate product descriptions, and transparent pricing. For example, security badges can be included on the website and detailed, honest descriptions of skincare products.

To sum up, the country of origin has a direct influence on an online cross-border store, and it affects consumers' intention to purchase from such an online skincare store. The study reveals that a positive country image enhances the image of online stores, while higher perceived risks negatively impact store image and purchasing intentions. Contrary to previous beliefs, ethnocentrism was found to have a less significant effect on these factors. Factors analyzed in the study assist marketers in prioritizing elements of perceived risks, ethnocentrism, and perceived usefulness in terms of their impact on online store image and purchase intentions.

Limitations and future research directions

This research has several limitations. First of, due to constraints in data gathering, the received questionnaires were extensive, potentially causing confusion among respondents due to the multitude and similarity of statements. To enhance future research, alternative perceived usefulness, perceived risks, and other tools that would have a smaller number of statements. Moreover, limitations in data collection, such as the exclusive focus on Lithuania, might introduce cultural influences like power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance, impacting the evaluation and responses. Additionally, the translation of the questionnaire from English to Lithuanian may have introduced complexities in concepts potentially leading to confusion and translation errors. Furthermore, the discrepancy between website languages (Chinese, Korean) and respondent origin (Lithuania) could have created a language barrier, potentially distorted their comprehension of the website content, and affected their perception of the offered product. Also, almost none of the respondents has ever bought any products from presented websites and there was chosen to do research about skincare products that are very specific and mostly only women were able to answer given questions. Future studies could explore different kinds of products that are less likely to be viewed differently by people. In this study, only four websites were chosen, without a preliminary pilot study. For future studies, it's recommended to evaluate a broader range of websites and to include a confirmatory pilot study for more robust results.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Table 2. Constructs of the questionnaire

Variable	Description	Measurement	References
Perceived risks	<p>I will get what I ordered through this site</p> <p>I will not receive malfunctioning merchandise from this site</p> <p>It is easy to judge the quality of merchandise over this site</p> <p>I can examine the product if I shop at this site .</p> <p>If I shop at this site, I can wait till the product arrives</p> <p>It is easy to cancel orders with this site</p> <p>I won't have problem in returning product if I shop at this site</p> <p>I feel that my credit-card details won't be compromised and misused if I shop at this site</p> <p>I will not get overcharged if I shop online as this site has my credit-card info.</p> <p>I feel my personal information given for transaction to this site will not compromise to third party.</p> <p>I will receive the product ordered through this site</p> <p>I prefer this site because of availability of reliable & well-equipped shipper.</p>	5-point Likert type scale	Ariff et. Al, 2014

	Products purchased at this site will be timely delivered		
Ethnocentrism	<p>1. For me, it's always the products from [Home Country] first, last and foremost.</p> <p>2. If I have a choice, I would prefer buying products and services from [Home Country].</p> <p>3. I prefer being served by service providers from [Home Country].</p> <p>4. As far as possible, I avoid buying products and services from foreign countries.</p> <p>5. I often refuse to buy a product or service because it is from a foreign country.</p> <p>6. I would much rather not buy a product or service, than buy one from a foreign country.</p> <p>7. It may cost me in the long run but I support products and services from [Home Country].</p> <p>8. I will never regret buying a product or service from [Home Country].</p>	7-point Likert type scale	Sharma, (2014)
Online store image	<p>Supermarket X provides excellent customer service.</p> <p>Supermarket X has attractive promotions in the store.</p> <p>Supermarket X offers an attractive loyalty program.</p> <p>Supermarket X has an</p>	7-point Likert type scale	Baker et. Al, 1994

	<p>extensive assortment.</p> <p>Supermarket X offers value for money.</p>		
Country image	<p>If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying the luxury brand that originated from this country.</p> <p>If I were shopping for a luxury brand, the likelihood I would purchase the luxury brand that originated from this country is high.</p> <p>My willingness to buy this luxury brand would be high if I were shopping for a luxury brand that originated from this country.</p> <p>The probability I would consider buying this luxury brand that originated from this country is high.</p>	6-point Likert type scale	Vijaranakorn et. Al, 2017
Perceived usefulness	<p>Compared to alternative companies, the company offers attractive product/service costs</p> <p>Compared to alternative companies, the company charges me fairly for similar products/services.</p> <p>Compared to alternative companies, the company provides more free services.</p> <p>Comparing what I pay to what I might get from other competitive companies, I think the company provided me with good value.</p> <p>Comparing what I pay to what I might get from</p>	7-point Likert type scale	Yang and Peterson, (2004)

	<p>other competitive companies, I think the company provides me with good value.</p>		
Intention to purchase	<p>The probability that I would consider buying this product from this list of sellers is high</p> <p>If I were to buy this product, I would consider buying it from this list of sellers</p> <p>My willingness to buy this product from this list of sellers is high</p> <p>It is likely that I will purchase this product from sellers in this list in the near future</p>	7-point Likert type scale	Wu et. Al, 2015

Annex 2 Questionnaire development (TaoBao and Olive Young)

Dear respondent,

I am a student of the digital marketing master's program at VU Business School and I am conducting an empirical study aimed at examining consumers' choices to purchase facial skincare products in China and South Korea.

By responding to this survey, you will contribute to the research for my master's thesis and help determine whether the country and store image influence the choice of an online store in a foreign country.

To maintain confidentiality, the survey is anonymous, and the results obtained will be used solely for academic purposes.

You will be presented with a two-part questionnaire regarding purchases from Chinese and South Korean online stores.

The survey should take about 10 minutes.

Thank you in advance for your responses!

"TaoBao" – an online store from China that offers a range of both new and used items: cosmetics, clothing, shoes, hats, accessories, home appliances, and various other consumer goods from China.

Visit this website: <https://world.taobao.com/>

If you were looking to purchase facial skincare products, evaluate the ease of use of the website, the range of products offered, delivery options, prices, and answer the questions below.

5. Have you ever purchased facial skincare products from "TaoBao"?

Yes

No

6. Imagine that you are planning to purchase facial skincare cosmetic products from the "TaoBao" website. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree".

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I evaluate my visit to the 'TaoBao' online store positively.					
I have a positive attitude towards browsing the 'TaoBao' website.					
I am very satisfied with the information I found on					

the 'TaoBao' website.					
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7. Below are statements describing the 'TaoBao' online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
"TaoBao“ offers excellent customer service					
TaoBao has attractive promotions/deals					
TaoBao has a wide range of product selection					
TaoBao offers a good price-to-quality ratio					

8. How do you rate the price level of the 'TaoBao' online store compared to other facial skincare online stores? Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
Compared to alternative companies, TaoBao offers attractive prices for its products					

Compared to alternative companies, TaoBao fairly charges me for similar products					
Compared to alternative companies, TaoBao provides more free benefits to the customer					
Comparing what I would pay at TaoBao with what I could get from other competing companies, I believe that TaoBao would provide me with good value					

9. Imagine you found an offer to buy facial skincare products at the "TaoBao" store. Provide your opinion about this online store by answering the statements below on a scale from 1 to 5. Mark one response per line.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I think I would receive all the products I order from					

TaoBao					
I believe I wouldn't receive unsuitable products from TaoBao					
It's not difficult to assess the quality of products on the TaoBao website					
It's easy to cancel an order on the TaoBao website					
I think I wouldn't have difficulty returning a product to TaoBao					
I believe that my credit card information will not be compromised or misused if I shop on the TaoBao website					
I think that my credit card will not be charged more than the order amount on the TaoBao website					

I believe that my provided information on the TaoBao website will not be shared with third parties					
I would choose to buy from the TaoBao website because I believe it is trustworthy					
I think that products purchased on the TaoBao website will be delivered on time					

10. Imagine that you found facial skincare products in this online store that perfectly match both the quality and price you seek. Below are statements describing your intention to make a purchase in an online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
The likelihood that I would consider buying facial skincare products from TaoBao is					

high					
If I were to buy a facial skincare product, I would consider the possibility of purchasing it from this online store					
I would like to buy a facial skincare product from this online store.					
It is likely that I will buy a facial skincare product from this online store in the near future					

11. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint regarding China, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
China is a wealthy country					
China is economically developed					
China has a high standard of living					

Products made in China are of high quality					
Products made in China are reliable					
Products made in China have a strong brand					
Products made in China have good design					

The e-commerce store 'Olive Young' is a health and beauty product retailer located in South Korea.

Visit this website: <https://global.oliveyoung.com/>

If you were looking to purchase facial skincare products, evaluate the ease of use of the website, the range of products offered, delivery options, prices, and answer the questions.

12. Have you ever purchased facial skincare products from 'Olive Young'?

Yes

No

13. Imagine that you are planning to purchase facial skincare cosmetic products from the 'Olive Young' website. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree".

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I evaluate					

my visit to the'Olive Young' online store positively.					
I have a positive attitude towards browsing the 'Olive Young' website.					
I am very satisfied with the information I found on the 'Olive Young' website.					

14. Below are statements describing the 'Olive Young' online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
'Olive Young' offers excellent customer service					
'Olive Young' has attractive promotions/deals					
'Olive Young' has a wide range of product selection					
'Olive Young' offers a good price-to-quality					

ratio					
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15. How do you rate the price level of the 'Olive Young' online store compared to other facial skincare online stores? Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
Compared to alternative companies, 'Olive Young' offers attractive prices for its products					
Compared to alternative companies, 'Olive Young' fairly charges me for similar products					
Compared to alternative companies, 'Olive Young' provides more free benefits to the customer					
Comparing what I would pay at 'Olive Young' with					

what I could get from other competing companies					
I believe that 'Olive Young would provide me with good value					

16. Imagine you found an offer to buy facial skincare products at the 'Olive Young store. Provide your opinion about this online store by answering the statements below on a scale from 1 to 5. Mark one response per line.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I think I would receive all the products I order from 'Olive Young					
I believe I wouldn't receive unsuitable products from 'Olive Young					
It's not difficult to assess the quality of products on the 'Olive Young website					
It's easy to cancel an order on the					

'Olive Young website					
I think I wouldn't have difficulty returning a product to 'Olive Young					
I believe that my credit card information will not be compromised or misused if I shop on the 'Olive Young website					
I think that my credit card will not be charged more than the order amount on the 'Olive Young website					
I believe that my provided information on the 'Olive Young website will not be shared with third parties					
I would choose to buy from the 'Olive Young website because I believe it is					

trustworthy					
I think that products purchased on the 'Olive Young website will be delivered on time					

17. Imagine that you found facial skincare products in this online store that perfectly match both the quality and price you seek. Below are statements describing your intention to make a purchase in an online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
The likelihood that I would consider buying facial skincare products from 'Olive Young is high					
If I were to buy a facial skincare product, I would consider the possibility of purchasing it from this online store					
I would like to buy a facial skincare					

product from this online store.					
It is likely that I will buy a facial skincare product from this online store in the near future					

18. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint regarding South Korea, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
South Korea is a wealthy country					
South Korea is economically developed					
South Korea has a high standard of living					
Products made in South Korea are of high quality					
Products made in South Korea are reliable					
Products made in South Korea have a strong					

brand					
Products made in South Korea have good design					

19. You are:

Man

Woman

20. Your age:

Under 24

25-30

31-35

36-45

From 45

21. Your salary:

Under 1000eur

1001-1500 eur

1501-2000eur

2001-2500 eur

From 2501 eur

Annex 3 Questionnaire development (Naver and Xove)

Dear respondent,

I am a student of the digital marketing master's program at VU Business School and I am conducting an empirical study aimed at examining consumers' choices to purchase facial skincare products in China and South Korea.

By responding to this survey, you will contribute to the research for my master's thesis and help determine whether the country and store image influence the choice of an online store in a foreign country.

To maintain confidentiality, the survey is anonymous, and the results obtained will be used solely for academic purposes.

You will be presented with a two-part questionnaire regarding purchases from Chinese and South Korean online stores.

The survey should take about 10 minutes.

Thank you in advance for your responses!

"Naver" is a South Korean e-commerce platform offering a wide range of products including cosmetics, clothing, shoes, hats, accessories, home appliances, and other consumer goods from South Korea. Visit the website at <https://shopping.naver.com/home>. If you were looking to purchase skincare products, evaluate the website's ease of use, product range, delivery options, prices, and answer the questions.

1. Have you ever purchased facial skincare products from "Naver"?

Yes

No

2. Imagine that you are planning to purchase facial skincare cosmetic products from the "Naver" website. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree".

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I evaluate my visit to the "Naver" online store positively.					
I have a positive attitude towards					

browsing the "Naver" website.					
I am very satisfied with the information I found on the "Naver" website.					

3. Below are statements describing the "Naver" online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
"Naver" offers excellent customer service					
"Naver" has attractive promotions/deals					
"Naver" has a wide range of product selection					
"Naver" offers a good price-to-quality ratio					

4. How do you rate the price level of the "Naver" online store compared to other facial skincare online stores? Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
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Compared to alternative companies, "Naver" offers attractive prices for its products					
Compared to alternative companies, "Naver" fairly charges me for similar products					
Compared to alternative companies, "Naver" provides more free benefits to the customer					
Comparing what I would pay at "Naver" with what I could get from other competing companies, I believe that "Naver" would provide me with good value					

5. Imagine you found an offer to buy facial skincare products at the "Naver"store.

Provide your opinion about this online store by answering the statements below on a scale from 1 to 5. Mark one response per line.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor	Agree	Completely
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			disagree		agree
I think I would receive all the products I order from "Naver"					
I believe I wouldn't receive unsuitable products from "Naver"					
It's not difficult to assess the quality of products on the "Naver" website					
It's easy to cancel an order on the "Naver" website					
I think I wouldn't have difficulty returning a product to "Naver"					
I believe that my credit card information will not be compromised or misused if I shop on the "Naver" website					

I think that my credit card will not be charged more than the order amount on the "Naver" website					
I believe that my provided information on the "Naver" website will not be shared with third parties					
I would choose to buy from the "Naver" website because I believe it is trustworthy					
I think that products purchased on the "Naver" website will be delivered on time					

6. Imagine that you found facial skincare products in this online store that perfectly match both the quality and price you seek. Below are statements describing your intention to make a purchase in an online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
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The likelihood that I would consider buying facial skincare products from "Naver" is high					
If I were to buy a facial skincare product, I would consider the possibility of purchasing it from this online store					
I would like to buy a facial skincare product from this online store.					
It is likely that I will buy a facial skincare product from this online store in the near future					

7. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint regarding South Korea, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
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South Korea is a wealthy country					
South Korea is economically developed					
South Korea has a high standard of living					
Products made in South Korea are of high quality					
Products made in South Korea are reliable					
Products made in South Korea have a strong brand					
Products made in South Korea have good design					

The e-commerce store "Xove" is a beauty product retailer in China. Visit this website:

<https://www.xove.com/en/all-collections/prestige-series.html>

If you were looking to purchase facial skincare products, evaluate the ease of use of the website, the range of products offered, delivery options, prices, and answer the questions.

8. Have you ever purchased facial skincare products from „Xove“?

Yes

No

9. Imagine that you are planning to purchase facial skincare cosmetic products from the „Xove“ website. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree".

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I evaluate my visit to the „Xove“ online store positively.					
I have a positive attitude towards browsing the „Xove“ website.					
I am very satisfied with the information I found on the „Xove“ website.					

10. Below are statements describing the „Xove“ online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
„Xove“ offers excellent customer service					
„Xove“ has attractive					

promotions/deals					
„Xove“ has a wide range of product selection					
„Xove“ offers a good price-to-quality ratio					

11. How do you rate the price level of the „Xove“ online store compared to other facial skincare online stores? Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – 'completely disagree', 5 – 'completely agree', and 3 – 'neither agree nor disagree'.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
Compared to alternative companies, „Xove“ offers attractive prices for its products					
Compared to alternative companies, „Xove“ fairly charges me for similar products					
Compared to alternative companies, „Xove“ provides more free benefits to the customer					
Comparing what I would pay at					

„Xove“ with what I could get from other competing companies					
I believe that „Xove“ would provide me with good value					

12. Imagine you found an offer to buy facial skincare products at the „Xove“ store.

Provide your opinion about this online store by answering the statements below on a scale from 1 to 5. Mark one response per line.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
I think I would receive all the products I order from „Xove“					
I believe I wouldn't receive unsuitable products from „Xove“					
It's not difficult to assess the quality of products on the „Xove“ website					
It's easy to cancel an order on the „Xove“ website					

I think I wouldn't have difficulty returning a product to „Xove“					
I believe that my credit card information will not be compromised or misused if I shop on the „Xove“ website					
I think that my credit card will not be charged more than the order amount on the „Xove“ website					
I believe that my provided information on the „Xove“ website will not be shared with third parties					
I would choose to buy from the „Xove“ website because I believe it is trustworthy					
I think that products					

purchased on the „Xove“ website will be delivered on time					
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13. Imagine that you found facial skincare products in this online store that perfectly match both the quality and price you seek. Below are statements describing your intention to make a purchase in an online store. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
The likelihood that I would consider buying facial skincare products from „Xove“ is high					
If I were to buy a facial skincare product, I would consider the possibility of purchasing it from this online store					
I would like to buy a facial skincare product from this online store.					
It is likely that I will					

buy a facial skincare product from this online store in the near future					
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14. Mark the response option that best represents your viewpoint regarding China, where 1 – "completely disagree", 5 – "completely agree", and 3 – "neither agree nor disagree"

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
China is a wealthy country					
China is economically developed					
China has a high standard of living					
Products made in China are of high quality					
Products made in China are reliable					
Products made in China have a strong brand					
Products made in China have good design					

15. You are:

Man

Woman

16. Your age:

Under 24

25-30

31-35

36-45

From 45

17. Your salary:

Under 1000eur

1001-1500 eur

1501-2000eur

2001-2500 eur

From 2501 eur

Annex 4. Table 8.1. *Group statistics of China's perceived risks and South Korea's perceived risks*

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived risks	China (Xove & Taobao)	333	3.0637	.85801	.04702
	South Korea (Naver & Olive)	333	2.9351	.87174	.04777

Annex 5. Table 9.1. *Group statistics of China's perceived usefulness and South Korea's perceived usefulness.*

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived usefulness	China (Xove & Taobao)	333	3.1689	.58275	.03193
	South Korea (Naver & Olive)	333	3.3971	.61278	.03358

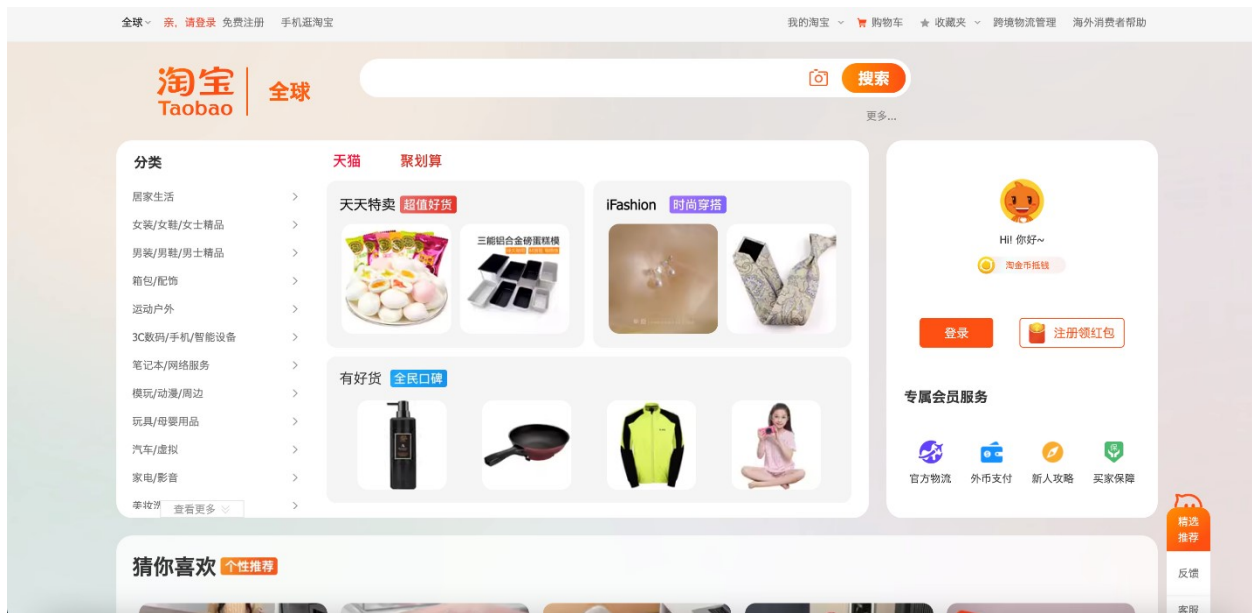
Annex 6. Table 10. 1. *Group statistics of e-shops and perceived risks*

	Shop reliability:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived risks	Less reliable: Naver & TaoBao	333	3.3868	.77681	.04257
	More reliable: Xove & Olive	333	2.6120	.77454	.04244

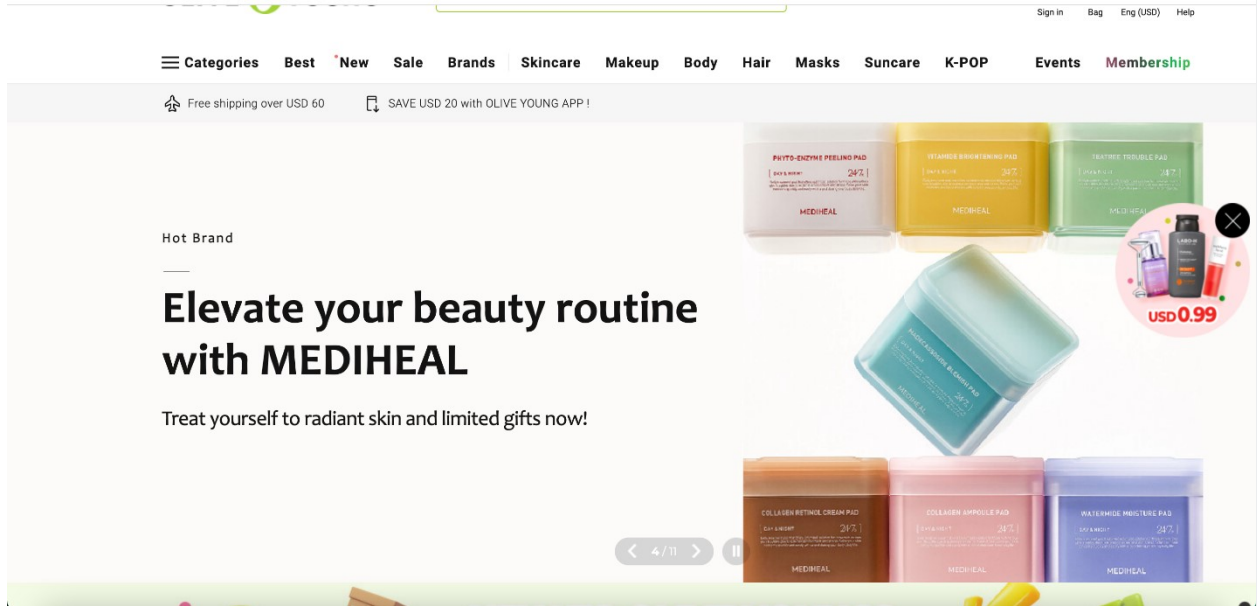
Annex 7. Table 11.1. *Group statistics of reliability of e-shops and perceived usefulness.*

	Shop reliability:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived usefulness	Less reliable: Naver & TaoBao	333	3.0015	.58558	.03209
	More reliable: Xove & Olive	333	3.5646	.48921	.02681

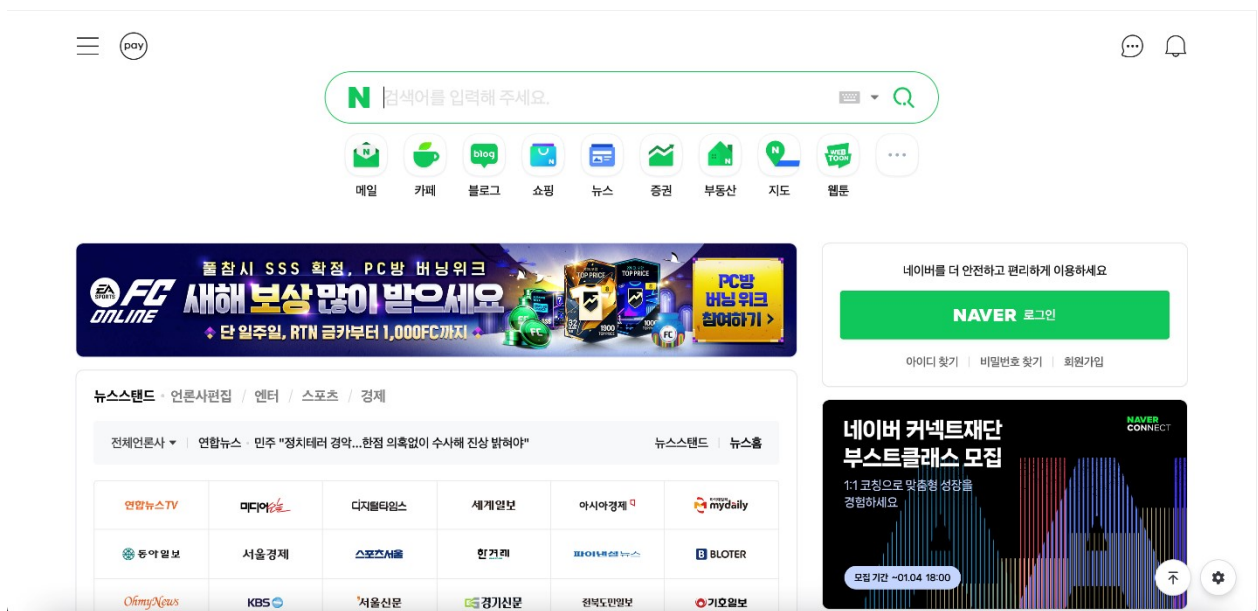
Annex 8. *TaoBao website* <https://world.taobao.com/>



Annex 9. *Olive Young website* <https://global.oliveyoung.com/>



Annex 10. Naver website <https://www.naver.com/>



Annex 11. Xove website <https://www.xove.com/en/>



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\$1,668.00

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