

ATTITUDES OF LITHUANIAN CONSUMERS TOWARDS THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF WINE

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Abstract. *The purpose of the study was to evaluate the attitudes of Lithuanian consumers towards the country of origin (COO) of wine. The main factors that influence the effect of COO and the mechanism of its formation were identified. The effects of social stereotypes, described by a Stereotype Content Model, on consumers' attitudes are also analyzed, identifying the competence and warmth of the COO as important antecedents of consumers' attitudes. The region of the origin of wine (appellation, protected designation of origin – PDO) have been identified as another important place-of-origin cue determining the consumer's choice. A quantitative empirical research method – online survey – was used for the purpose of the study. The results have revealed that there are three types of wine consumers' involvement: cognitive involvement, emotional product involvement, and emotional situational involvement, and that the importance of wine's COO and region of origin (appellation, PDO) for consumers differs depending on the type and level of a consumer's involvement. The existence of a statistically significant correlation among consumers' attitude towards the COO of wine and the country's competence and warmth has been proven, together with a possible relation between the type of a consumer's involvement (cognitive, emotional situational or emotional product involvement) and the influence of COO competence and warmth on consumers' attitude towards a wine. The research has also revealed an important positive relationship among consumer identification with the COO of wine, evaluation of COO competence, and the warmth and consumer attitude towards the COO of wine.*

Key words: *country of origin of wine, consumers' attitude, consumers' involvement, stereotype content model*

Introduction

The country of origin (COO) of a product is one of the constructs that in recent decades have received considerable attention of the majority of marketing and consumer behaviour researchers (Pharr, 2005). The number of scientific publications on topics related to the COO already exceeds 1000, of which no less than 400 have been published in academic journals (Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009). The results of these investigations have been summarized in several meta-analyses (Bilkey, Nes, 1982; Peterson, Jolibert, 1995; Al-Sulaiti, Baker, 1998; Verlegh, Steenkamp, 1999; Phau, Prendergast, 2000; Papadopoulos Heslop, 2002;

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Pharr, 2005). However, the vast majority of these studies concern durable goods such as cars, television and electronic goods (Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009), while the research on the impact of the COO on consumer products and especially the choice of food or drink is lacking (Felzenstein, Dinnie, 2005). The majority of empirical studies that were aimed to assess the impact of the COO on wine evaluation and purchase were carried out either in wine-producing countries such as China, Australia, USA (Hu et al., 2008; Goodman, 2009; Guidry et al., 2009) or in a country famous for its long wine-consuming traditions, like the United Kingdom (Felzensztein, Dinnie, 2005). These studies have shown that the COO of wine is very important to consumers, and in some cases it is the most important criterion for selection of wine as compared with the other internal and external attributes of wine; however, they did not provide a complete answer to the question of how consumer attitudes are formed by the COO of wine, which criteria determine consumers' preference of one or another country, and it is this kind of research that would have significant practical benefits for wine importers, distributors, and marketing professionals.

Influence of the country of origin on consumer attitudes

Country of origin effect

The first studies on the impact of the COO of a product were conducted in the 1960s. They have revealed that consumers have a different attitude towards the same goods coming from different countries, and it is determined by their attitude towards a particular COO (Schooler, 1965; Reiersen, 1967; Nagashima, 1970, etc.). Integrated research using a multiattribute model has shown that the COO effect is a much more complex phenomenon than it was previously thought (Johansson et al., 1985) and that it depends on many factors such as consumer involvement (Ahmed et al., 2004; Aboulnasr, 2007), product category (Al-Sulaiti, Baker, 1998; Lampert, Jaffe, 1998), price (Jo, 2005), brand (Papadopoulos, Heslop, 2002) and others. Meanwhile, the COO itself is treated as a product or brand attribute, and its impact is measured in the context of other attributes (Johansson et al., 1985). Due to such a complexity of the construct of COO effect, it was very important to identify the factors that have an impact on the manifestation of the COO effect (Peterson, Jolibert Peterson, 1995), which depends upon the product itself (its complexity, category, purpose, and use) and the consumer (its familiarity with a product, involvement, values) (Pharr, 2005). Therefore, in order to see the emergence of the consumer's preference of the products of a certain category from a certain country, first of all one has to analyze the mechanism of consumer attitude formation.

Mechanism of consumer attitude formation

Consumer attitudes consist of an overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of a particular object (Ajzen, 2001; Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009), involving not only its

cognitive evaluation, but also the emotions and behavioural intentions regarding the object (Laroche et al., 2005). There are two main groups of theories which explain the interdependence of these elements: the hierarchy-of-effects model and the two-component view model (Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009). The hierarchy-of-effects models are based on the claim that consumer attitude is an affective relationship with an object, which reflects the favourability or unfavourability of the consumer with respect to the object, while two other components – cognitive and conative – act either as antecedents or consequences of the attitude. However, the hierarchy-of-effects models seem to be more adaptable to the analysis of attitude formation towards brands but not towards COO, because, according to the hierarchy-of-effects models, cognitive and affective evaluations are causally related; this means that a positive (negative) cognitive evaluation determines a positive (negative) affective evaluation and vice versa, but these models do not include cases when the cognitive and affective evaluation of a country goes in opposite directions, for example, when a consumer believes that goods manufactured in a particular country are of a very high quality, but for some reason feels animosity towards that country.

These shortcomings are avoided by the two-component view model, according to which the consumer's attitude is formed and behaviour determined by two components – cognitive and affective, which can vary and influence consumer behavior independently of one another (Ajzen, 2001).

A favorable attitude towards an object does not always result in a purchase decision. According to Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), behavior is determined by the individual's intentions which in turn are determined by attitudes toward the planned behaviour and subjective norms. The behaviour depends not only on the individual's motivation (intention), but also on his / her ability to carry out the act (perceived behavioural control), which in turn depends on the availability of resources (time, money, skills) and favourable circumstances.

The summary of these models makes up a model (Fig. 1) of the influence of COO on the purchase decision.

Consumer attitude towards a certain product is formed by a cognitive and affective evaluation of its attributes, which include COO, or by the consumer-perceived COO image. The cognitive and affective components forming the COO image can be interrelated and influence one another; however, they can also operate independently of each other. Personal and social norms of a consumer influence not his or her attitude towards the product, but also directly the intention to buy, i.e. consumer attitude towards a product might be positive, but (s)he can refuse to buy it because of some personal or social norms, and vice versa.

Influence of the stereotypes on consumer attitude formation

Since consumer attitudes towards a certain COO are formed by the image of that country, a question is how much that image depends on the consumer's own knowledge about that country and his/her feelings towards it, and how much the consumer is affected by the existing social stereotypes.

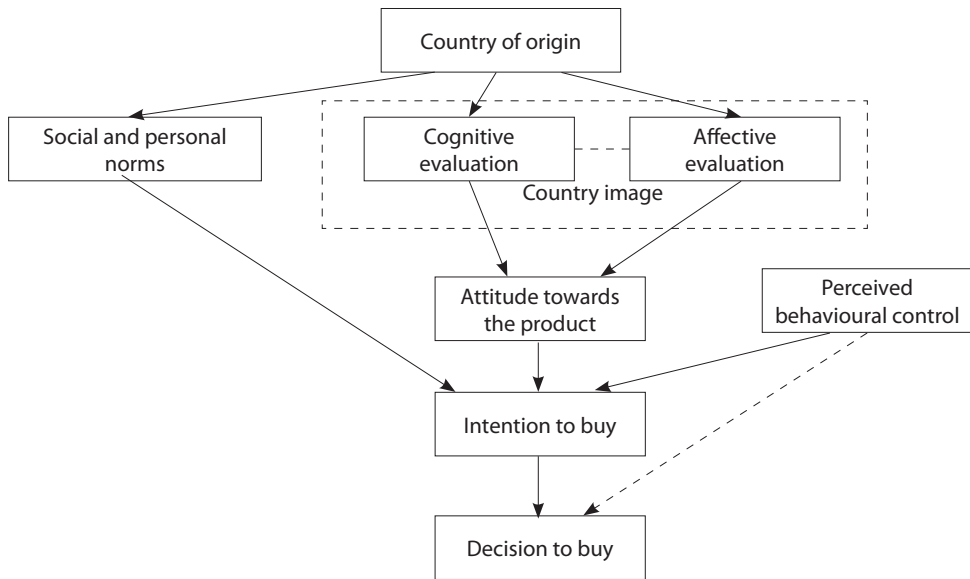


FIG. 1. Influence of the COO on consumer's decision to buy
(elaborated by authors, based on Ajzen, 1991; Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009)

According to the studies, the less knowledge consumers have about a certain product, the more they are inclined to rely on stereotypes (Maheswaran, 1994). Consumer stereotypes are formed by the cultural environment: consumers that share the same cultural values usually tend to assess products from a certain country in a similar way (Al-Sulaiti, Baker, 1998; Pharr, 2005). The COO image depends upon the category of the products; for example, consumers may value highly Japanese electronics, but their assessment of Japanese food may be much lower, or they may think that the fragrances having a French-sounding name in their brand are of a higher quality (Bilkey, Nes, 1982; Chattalas et al., 2008). Consequently, there are certain stereotypes concerning the suitability of a country for the production of a certain category of goods, and these stereotypes don't depend upon the level of economic, political or social development of the country.

Empirical studies conducted by a group of scientists in the USA, seven Western European and three Asian countries have shown that there are certain universal principles

equally valid in different cultures, which serve as a basis for social stereotypes (Cuddy et al., 2009). The basic principles of the formation of social stereotypes are summarized in the Stereotype Content Model according to which stereotypes are formed on the basis of two dimensions – perceived warmth (friendliness, good nature, sincerity) and competence (capability, reliability, skilfulness).

These studies have also shown that stereotypes based on the dimensions of warmth and competence affect the assessment not only of social groups, but also of countries. Respondents from seven EU countries while assessing 15 of the EU countries have confirmed the assumption that certain countries are stereotypically assessed as being of a very high competence, but cold (United Kingdom, Germany) or, vice versa, as very warm, but of a low competence (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain), while the largest group of countries was assessed averagely according to both dimensions (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden) (Cuddy et al., 2009).

Although empirical studies show that the assessment of countries as social groups is determined by stereotypes, there are almost no studies about the influence of stereotypes on the assessment of the COO of products. One of the first studies in this area has shown that when a COO is perceived as more competent, its product is considered to be more utilitarian, while the same good produced in a country valued higher according to the warmth dimension is considered by a consumer to be more hedonistic (Kramer et al., 2008).

Considering the relationship between the stereotype content model and the attitude formation model, the competence dimension of the stereotype content model correlates with the cognitive dimension of the attitude formation model, while the warmth dimension correlates with the affective element (Chattalas et al., 2008). Thus, in order to investigate the formation of consumer attitudes towards the COO of a wine, first of all it is necessary to determine whether the COO is an important attribute for wine consumers, and then to determine how much important for the consumer the cognitive and affective criteria of country selection are, in other words, how much the COO selection is influenced by its assessment according to the competence and warmth dimensions.

Formulation of hypotheses

The importance of the COO of wine for consumer choices

At the place of purchase, wine consumers have to choose from a wide range of alternatives; therefore, the selection process is not easy due to a huge variety: a standard store shelf usually offers not several dozen, as in other product categories, but several hundred brands (Atkin, Johnson, 2010), the cost of which may vary from a few to several thousand euros. There are numerous intrinsic attributes for the consumers to choose from: colour, grape variety, vintage year, alcohol content, sugar and acidity balance,

etc. As consumers cannot taste wine at the place of purchase and have no possibility to pre-judge its attributes, they often tend to base their decision on extrinsic attributes, especially the COO of wine and its price (Chaney, 2002). On the other hand, the COO of wine is often of a significant emotional and symbolic value for the customers (Balestrini, Gamble, 2006) and is closely related to the culture and traditions of its COO.

It could be supposed that high-involvement consumers should be less inclined to rely on the COO information and base their decision on intrinsic cues; however, empirical studies show the opposite – for the high-involvement consumers the place of origin of a wine (the country and particularly the region) is one of the most important selection criteria (Balestrini, Gamble, 2006, Guidry et al., 2009; Atkins, Johnson, 2010).

There may be several reasons for that. First of all, empirical studies suggest that flavour perception is quite a subjective thing, and it can be affected rather significantly by the information about the product, which is at the disposition of the person tasting the wine. According to Priilaid (2006), our brain is affected by the placebo effect and “tastes information about a product, not the product itself”; therefore, experiments show that even wine experts tasting red-coloured white wine describe it as red (Morrot et al., 2001) and rely more on the wine place of origin and price information than on its taste while rating the wine (Priilaid, 2006; Veale, 2008).

On the other hand, the long-term experience has shown that wines produced from grapes grown in different areas taste different. This has become a basis for the system of classification of wines according to the regions of origin, which has been evolving since the times of medieval Europe, first of all in France and Italy, thereby creating a system of controlled designation of origin or appellations (Orth et al., 2007). In order to harmonize these appellation systems, which often differ significantly among different countries, a single system of the protected designation of the origin of wine was created in the EU in 2006.

As the appellation system determines what particular grape varieties can be used in a particular appellation, the highest quality wine labels often refer to the region and the winery but do not mention the variety of grapes. Due to the complexity of restrictions applied to their manufacturing, these wines are usually more expensive. These rules do not apply to table wines; they can be produced by mixing must not only from different regions, but also from different countries. This means that a consumer wishing to select a quality wine is forced to have enough knowledge about the regions of wine origin (Balestrini, Gamble, 2006).

The New World countries, e.g., the North and South America and Australia, have not paid so much attention to the place of origin; therefore, wine producers wishing to get as good a taste as possible usually mixed the must of different grape varieties, applying different methods of taste improvement with no limitations. When an appellation system (similar to the European one) was introduced, the boundaries of the regions of origin were

often determined according to the geographical boundaries of the regions, regardless of climatic and soil differences; therefore, the producers of these wines much more often recur to brands for the positioning of these wines (McCutcheon, Bruwer, 2009).

Thus, the construct of the region of origin of wine can act in several ways: provide information about the taste and quality of a wine produced in a particular region (especially in case of European wines) or act as a meta-brand, allowing wine producers from a certain region to differentiate their wines from the wines of other regions, to create certain affective and symbolic associations for the consumers, as well as receive price premium (Thode, Maskulka, 1998).

Studies have shown that the properties of the soil where grapes are cultivated, climatic characteristics of a given area and wine-making methods traditionally used in the winemaking region influence the colour, taste, and aroma of the wine (Gómez-Míguez et al., 2007); therefore, it can be said that the place of origin of a wine can objectively influence its quality and that the physical properties of wine do change when its place of origin is changed. Therefore, we can conclude that the region of the wine origin acts as an intrinsic attribute, because the attributes whose variation changes the physical characteristics of a product and which are associated with the objectively and not subjectively perceived quality of goods, are attributed to the intrinsic product attributes (Balestrini, Gamble, 2006; Casas, Urbonavicius, 2007). As the EU's current protected designation of the origin system prohibits the use of certain non-traditional wine production methods that are widely used in the New World, it is clear that the taste and quality of wines produced from the same type of grapes but using different methods (traditional or modern ones) will be objectively different; therefore, in such cases the COO of a wine can also be tentatively attributed to the intrinsic attributes.

However, when the wine is produced by mixing grape juice cultivated in different regions or different vineyards, its taste becomes uniform, and it becomes almost impossible to determine the differences of taste by its COO only. In such cases, the wine COO acts as an extrinsic attribute.

Therefore, the region of the wine origin should be attributed to the intrinsic attributes of wine, while the COO of wine can act as intrinsic or extrinsic attribute. The formation of the mechanism of the consumer attitudes regarding the COO of wine is depicted in Fig. 2.

As the COO of wine can act both as an intrinsic and extrinsic attribute, we may assume that the importance of this attribute will vary depending on the consumer's involvement. However, this involvement can be of two types – cognitive and affective, so it is possible that in each case the effect of the place of origin is different.

To be able to properly assess the information about the place of origin of wine and to make conclusions about the quality and taste of wine on the basis of this information, the consumer needs a great deal of knowledge. Therefore, we can assume that the higher the

consumer's cognitive involvement, the more knowledge he or she will have about certain regions of wine origin and will be more inclined to use this information. It is also possible to expect that the available knowledge about the characteristics of wines from certain countries will enable to use this attribute when choosing a wine; therefore, it should also be important. In the case of affective involvement when a wine has an affective or symbolic value for the consumer, we think that the information about the COO should have more impact, because the emotions regarding a certain region would most likely be originated by knowledge about the region, which allows to distinguish it from other regions, so it is related to a higher cognitive involvement. Thus, it is possible to raise the following hypotheses:

- H1.** The higher the affective involvement of a wine consumer, the more important for him or her is the attribute of the COO of wine.
- H2.** The affective involvement of a wine consumer does not affect the importance of the region of wine origin (appellation, protected designation of origin).
- H3.** The higher the cognitive involvement of a wine consumer, the more important to him or her is the attribute of the COO of wine.
- H4.** The higher the cognitive involvement of a wine consumer, the more important to him or her is the attribute of the region of wine origin (appellation, protected designation of origin).

Influence of competence and warmth of the COO on wine choice

The perception of the value of a product and its benefits for the consumer can be twofold: functional (utilitarian) and affective (hedonistic). Wine is traditionally considered to be a luxury good selected by a consumer on an emotional basis, so the benefits sought by the consumer are more hedonistic than utilitarian ones (Verlegh, Steenkamp, 1999; Roth,

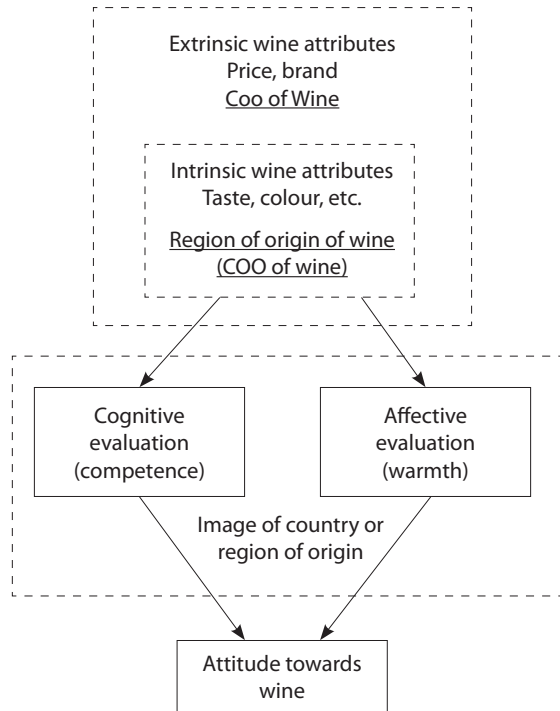


FIG. 2. Formation of consumer attitudes towards the COO of wine

(elaborated by authors based on Ajzen, 1991; Roth, Diamantopoulos, 2009)

Diamantopoulos, 2009). However, it is unlikely that wine consumed regularly for lunch or dinner provides its consumers with only hedonistic benefits, because usually the main requirement for such wine is its matching with food (Goodman, 2009). So, it can be concluded that the consumer may seek different benefits from the same good: in one case it will be more functional, while in the other more affective.

This assumption is supported by empirical research aimed to determine what properties a quality wine must have. Wine producers tend to define quality as compliance with certain technical specifications and possession of certain organoleptic characteristics, while for a consumer the quality indicators of wine may be the image, the label and design of a bottle, the intensity and balance of flavour (Verdú Jover et al., 2004), grape quality, production method, the complexity and interest of flavour, the pleasure of drinking (Charters, Petigrew, 2006; Petigrew Charters, 2007), i.e. wine is assessed in both cognitive and affective aspects. Usually, while assessing in the cognitive way, the consumer determines the utilitarian value of the good, while the affective assessment is related to the hedonistic benefits (Mano, Oliver, 1993). Thus, if a consumer seeks utilitarian benefits from a product, it can be said that his involvement is cognitive, and if he seeks hedonistic benefits, then his involvement is affective.

Researches of the stereotype content model related to the COO of a good have shown that consumers perceive the good produced in a country of a higher competence as having a higher utilitarian value, while a higher hedonistic value is related to a higher warmth of the COO (Kramer et al., 2008).

On this basis, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

- H5.** Increase in consumer cognitive involvement increases the influence of the competence of COO on the consumer attitude towards a wine.
- H6.** Increase in consumer affective involvement increases the influence of the warmth of the COO on the consumer attitudes towards a wine.

Influence of consumer identification with the COO of wine on one's attitudes

The stereotype content model indicates that individuals tend to value much more positively the group to which they belong. Results of the empirical research of the stereotypes among the countries demonstrate that respondents tend to value higher the country of their own residence (Cuddy et al., 2009), thus, the assessment is influenced by the identification with one's own country.

A similar effect is observed in the case of ethnocentricity: consumers generally tend to believe that their country produces goods of a higher quality, i.e. they assess their country relatively better. The more conservative and patriotic a consumer, the more ethnocentric he or she is; consumers in collectivist societies are more ethnocentric, too (Heslop et al., 2008). Thus, the stronger the feeling of belonging to a certain group, e.g.,

identification with one's own country, the more positively the consumer assesses goods produced in his own country.

Interestingly, consumers with a high ethnocentricity tend to value better the goods that come from a country that is culturally similar to their own (Watson, Wright, 2000). It has also been noted that some consumers are attracted to a certain country's culture, lifestyle traditions, and are willing to buy goods from that country, which means that they strive to better identify with this country, in other words, to become a member of the same group. Therefore, we can raise the following hypothesis:

- H7.** Consumers that identify themselves with a certain country generally tend to assess that country higher according to the warmth and competence dimensions as compared with other consumers.

It is possible that a country with which one identifies himself will get a higher assessment only according to one dimension; however, in any case it is expected that the overall assessment of the country will be higher.

On the other hand, if certain attitudes towards the COO of a wine are determined by the cognitive and affective evaluation of the country according to competence and warmth dimensions, then the higher assessment of the country will determine more positive attitudes towards the wine of that country. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be raised:

- H8.** Consumers that identify themselves with certain country have more positive attitudes towards the wines of that country.

Methods

Three countries – Spain, France and Germany – were chosen for the study. First of all, data of the Lithuanian Statistics Department show that during the past five years these countries have been among the top five countries exporting wine to Lithuania. Secondly, the research carried out by Cuddy et al. (2009) has shown that EU consumers assign these countries to different clusters according to the competence and warmth dimensions. Germany and Spain belong to opposite clusters: Germany is seen as a country of a very high competence, but a cold one, Spain is seen as very warm, but of a low competence, while France is seen as average in both dimensions; therefore, the choice of these countries raises the expectation that assessments of the Lithuanian consumers will be similar and enable to assess the influence of country competence and warmth on the consumer attitudes.

A quantitative empirical research method – online survey – was used. A sample was made up by the method of non-random convenience sampling. The online questionnaire was filled by 325 respondents (119 men and 206 women). Since it was decided to select only those respondents who buy and consume wine no less than once in every few months,

the filtering questions were employed, which helped to eliminate the respondents who only buy wine or consume it just a few times per year or less. Thus, 277 respondents were selected for the further research, including 101 men (36.5% of all respondents) and 176 women (63.5%). The majority of respondents (nearly 80%) were younger than 40 years; nearly 85% of respondents have higher education, and the same percentage of them live in cities. The survey data were processed and the results were analyzed using the SPSS statistical analysis software (version 17).

RESULTS

Since the majority of the constructs were measured by the scales consisting of 3–4 elements, first of all their internal reliability was tested by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability of scales used to measure a consumer's cognitive involvement, attitude towards COO of wine, the country's competence and warmth, and identification with a particular country proved to be rather high (from .778 to .933), while the reliability of the affective involvement scale was only .679; therefore, the influence of the scale elements on its reliability was tested, and the results have shown that two of the three elements are much more linked together than each of them with the third element; so, with the elimination of the third element, the scale reliability becomes high enough (.714). Because the phrasing of the first two statements is related to the emotions raised by wine as a product, while the third statement is related to the emotions that consumers associate with wine consumption situations, the affective involvement of the consumer was split into two constructs: affective product involvement and affective situational involvement. The hypotheses H1, H2 and H6 were redefined and split into two, respectively.

First of all, it was tested whether there is a correlation between the degree of consumer involvement and the extent to which the wine country and region of origin is significant for consumer decision. Hypotheses H1 and H2 were reformulated as follows:

- H1a.** The higher the affective product involvement of a wine consumer, the more important to him or her is the attribute of the COO of wine.
- H1b.** The higher the affective situational involvement of the wine consumer, the more important for him or her is the attribute of the COO of wine.
- H2a.** The affective product involvement of a wine consumer does not affect the importance of the attribute of the region of wine origin (appellation, protected designation of origin).
- H2b.** The affective situational involvement of a wine consumer does not affect the importance of the attribute of the region of wine origin (appellation, protected designation of origin).

First of all, it has been tested whether there is any correlation between the types of consumer involvement. For this reason, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

As it was found that all three types of involvement statistically correlated with each other ($p < .05$, $r_1 = .158$, $r_2 = .385$, $r_3 = .476$), the interrelation between particular involvement types and the importance of the country and region of origin for the consumer was measured calculating the partial correlation coefficients upon eliminating the influence of two other independent variables.

TABLE 1. Partial correlations between the importance of the attribute of the COO or region of origin and different consumer involvement types

	Cognitive involvement	Affective product involvement	Affective situational involvement
COO	-.008	.139	.155
p-value	.890	.021	.010
Region of origin	.217	.215	.053
p-value	.000	.000	.385

The results show that there is no statistically significant relationship between the importance of the COO and cognitive involvement and between the importance of the region of origin and situational involvement. In all other cases, the correlation is statistically significant. In assessing the importance of COO to the consumer, it seems that it even slightly decreases with the increase of cognitive involvement (although the change is not statistically significant), while with increase of the affective involvement, regardless of its type, the importance of the COO also increases. Meanwhile, the region of origin is more important in the case of a higher cognitive involvement and affective product involvement, but in the case of affective situational involvement the change is small and statistically insignificant. Thus, the hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2b and H4 were confirmed, while the hypotheses H2a and H3 were rejected.

On the other hand, it is important to find out whether the COO and region of origin of wine are relevant attributes for the consumers, because it may occur that the change is statistically significant, but the attribute itself is of low importance for the consumer, and his purchasing decision is determined by other attributes (for example, the price). For this reason, it is necessary to compare the averages of different wine attribute scores. The statistical analysis shows that the most important attributes for a wine consumer are price ($M = 5.33$) and the COO ($M = 5.31$), but no less important are wine colour ($M = 5.02$), grape variety ($M = 4.72$), and the region of origin ($M = 4.68$).

Are these attributes equally important in cases of both high and low involvement? This can be assessed by comparing the consumer groups of high and low involvement and applying the Student's *t* criterion of two independent samples. The respondents whose involvement is lower than the median (cognitive involvement 3.33, affective product involvement 4.50, affective situational involvement 6.00) were attributed to the low-involvement group, while the high-involvement group comprised respondents whose involvement was equal to or higher than the median.

The data analysis shows that for low-involvement (regardless of its type) respondents, the most important attribute is price, while for those of high involvement it is the COO (in the case of affective situational involvement, the importance of price and the COO to consumers differs only by a few hundredths; therefore, it can be concluded that both attributes are equally important). In the case of affective situational involvement, the consumer's decision, regardless of the level of involvement, is mostly affected by the same three attributes: the price of wine, the COO of wine, and colour. Meanwhile, the decision of consumers of high cognitive and high affective product involvement also takes into account the region of wine origin and the grape type, which are much less significant for low involvement consumers.

The most important attributes for consumers, depending on the type and level of their involvement, are shown in Table 2.

All these findings confirm and complement previous data: there is no statistically significant difference between the importance of the COO for the consumers of a high and low cognitive involvement, but both groups regard this attribute as rather important, while the region of origin is of little importance for the low-involvement consumers, but its importance increases in a statistically significant way in the case of a high cognitive and high affective product involvement.

TABLE 2. The most important attributes of wine in the function of the type and level of consumer involvement

	Low-involvement consumers (average value)	High-involvement consumers (average value)
Cognitive involvement	1. Price (5.51) 2. COO (5.12) 3. Colour of wine (5.08)	1. COO (5.50) 2. Type of grapes (5.25) 3. Region of origin (5.19) 4. Price (5.15) 5. Colour of wine (4.96)
Affective product involvement	1. Price (5.23) 2. COO (4.99) 3. Colour of wine (4.95)	1. COO (5.61) 2. Price (5.42) 3. Region of origin (5.19) 4. Colour of wine (5.08) 5. Type of grapes (5.04)
Affective situational involvement	1. COO (4.88) 2. Price (4.86) 3. Colour of wine (4.70)	1. Price (5.53) 2. COO (5.50) 3. Colour of wine (5.16)

Further, the hypotheses were tested regarding the influence of the consumer involvement on the correlation between the competence and warmth dimensions of the COO and consumer attitude towards a wine of that country. The H6 hypothesis was reformulated as follows:

H6a. An increase in consumer affective product involvement increases the influence of the warmth of the COO on the consumer attitude towards wine.

H6b. An increase in consumer affective situational involvement increases the influence of the warmth of the COO the consumer attitude towards wine.

First of all, consumer attitudes towards Spanish, French, and German wines, as well as the warmth and competence of these countries were assessed.

TABLE 3. Consumer attitude towards wine, evaluation of warmth and competence of the COO

	Spain	France	Germany
Consumer attitude towards wine			
Average	5.60	5.49	4.30
Median	6.00	5.75	4.25
Competence of the COO			
Average	4.57	5.12	5.55
Median	4.67	5.33	6.00
Warmth of the COO			
Average	5.45	4.72	4.06
Median	6.00	5.00	4.00

The data analysis shows that the respondents give the highest marks to Spanish wines and the lowest to German ones. As was expected, Germany is perceived as the country of the highest level of competence, but of the lowest warmth, while Spain is the highest in warmth but the lowest in competence. The wines, the competence and warmth of France received average ratings. Although the scores of the countries and their wines differ, all of them are rather high (higher than the average 4.00).

Further, we have tested whether there is a correlation between a country's competence, warmth, and the consumer's attitude towards the wine of this country, and if so, whether this relationship is statistically significant.

TABLE 4. Correlation between the competence and warmth of the COO and consumer attitude towards wine from that country

	Attitude towards Spanish wine	Attitude towards French wine	Attitude towards German wine
Competence of the COO			
Pearson's correlation coefficient	.520	.592	.325
<i>p</i> value	.000	.000	.000
Warmth of the COO			
Pearson's correlation coefficient	.547	.425	.441
<i>p</i> value	.000	.000	.000

The data have confirmed the assumption that there is a weak or moderate, statistically significant correlation (in all cases the significance level is $p < .001$) between the country's competence, warmth and consumer's attitude towards the wine from that country. The attitude towards Spanish and German wines correlates more with the warmth of a country, while in the French case, there is a stronger correlation between the attitude and the competence of the country. Then, it has been tested whether there is any difference in consumers' attitude towards the wine of a particular country, depending upon the type and level of their involvement. Respondents were divided into high and low involvement groups by the median (cognitive involvement 3.33, affective product involvement 4.50, and affective situational involvement 6.00), and the average values of their attitudes were calculated (Table 5).

TABLE 5. Attitude towards the COO in function of type and level of consumer involvement

	Attitude towards Spanish wine	Attitude towards French wine	Attitude towards German wine
Cognitive involvement			
High	5.61	5.53	4.61
Low	5.59	5.44	3.97
<i>p</i> value	.923	.584	.000
Affective product involvement			
High	5.86	5.75	4.56
Low	5.32	5.20	4.01
<i>p</i> value	.002	.001	.003
Affective situational involvement			
High	5.84	5.70	4.39
Low	5.05	5.00	4.09
<i>p</i> value	.000	.000	.134

A comparison of two independent samples using Student's *t* criterion has shown that, with an increase in the cognitive involvement, statistically significant changes occur in the consumer attitude regarding German wine, i.e. consumers with a higher cognitive involvement have a much more positive attitude towards the wine from the country of the highest competence. Changes in affective product involvement lead to a statistically significant change in consumer attitudes towards all the investigated wines. Meanwhile, together with an increase in the affective situational involvement, a statistically significant change occurs in consumer attitudes regarding wines from Spain and France (which are warmer countries), while the change in attitudes towards the German wines, which received the poorest rating according to the dimension of warmth, has no statistical significance, suggesting that when consumers' cognitive involvement increases, the COO competence has a greater impact on consumer attitudes; when the

affective situational involvement increases, a greater impact is made by the warmth of the COO, and when the affective product involvement increases, both dimensions may be important for consumer attitudes.

The next step is to examine changes in the correlation among the COO competence, warmth, and consumer attitude towards wine from this country, when consumer involvement changes. Since different types of consumer involvement correlate with each other, partial correlation coefficients were calculated separately for each type of involvement in order to eliminate the influence of the two other types of involvement, and the respondents were divided into two (high and low) involvement groups according to the median value (3.33 for the cognitive involvement, 4.50 for the affective product involvement, and 6.00 for the affective situational involvement).

The results are quite contradictory. First of all, in all cases the attitude towards the country demonstrates a statistically significant correlation with the consumer's perception of both the country's competence and warmth, and the calculated partial correlation values range from very weak to moderate (.178 to .688).

In the case of Germany, increase of the consumer involvement recorded a stronger correlation between the attitudes towards wine and the evaluation of the country, but at the same time there was an increase of the correlation coefficient between both the attitudes and competence of the country, as well as the attitudes and warmth of the country. Anyway, in all cases (both high and low involvement), consumer attitudes towards the German wine correlated more strongly with the warmth of the country rather than with its competence.

The French case is quite opposite: the consumer attitudes towards the wine of this country correlate much stronger with the country's competence than with its warmth, but almost in all cases when the consumer involvement increased, the correlation between the attitudes towards the French wine and the country's competence and warmth diminished. Only the increase in consumer cognitive involvement strengthened the correlation between the attitudes towards the French wine and the country's competence.

In the case of Spain, a co-linearity is observed between the two independent variables of the competence and warmth of the country, because their correlation in all cases is greater than 0.6 and stronger than the correlation of these factors with the attitudes towards the Spanish wine; for this reason, the calculation of the partial correlation coefficients may be less precise (Kédaitis, 2009, p. 140–145). A statistically significant relationship between the competence and warmth of the country is recorded in the case of two other countries – Germany and France, but it is weaker, suggesting that its influence on the results is not so strong. Analyzing the data regarding Spain, it is difficult to discern any significant trend, because in many cases correlations between the attitudes towards the Spanish wine and the coefficient of the country competence and the correlations between the attitudes and the coefficient of the country warmth differ in just a few hundredths.

After all, in case of the low involvement, the attitude towards the Spanish wine correlates more strongly with the country's competence, while in the case of high involvement – with its warmth.

Thus, hypotheses H5, H6a, and H6b were rejected: it has been confirmed that consumer attitudes towards the wine of a particular country correlate in a statistically significant way with the competence and warmth of the country's residents and the attitudes of consumers with a higher cognitive involvement changed in a statistically significant way in relation to the wine from the country of the highest competence, and the attitudes of consumers with a higher affective situational involvement changed in a statistically significant way towards wines from the countries that have higher scores in the warmth dimension; however, this is not enough for the hypotheses to be confirmed.

In order to check the last two hypotheses concerning the influence the consumer's identification with a country has on the assessment of the country's competence and warmth and the attitudes towards that country, consumers were divided into two groups depending on how (strongly or weakly) they identify themselves with a particular country. The hypotheses were tested for each country separately; consumers were divided into groups by a median which in the Spanish and French case is 5.00 and in the German case 4.50; Student's criterion for the independent samples was applied. The results have shown that in all cases the differences between the averages are statistically significant (p .000), and there is an obvious difference between the average values in terms of the absolute value.

TABLE 6. Correlation between the assessment of the country's competence and warmth and the identification of a consumer with the country

	Average of the score of consumers that strongly identify themselves with the country	Average of the score of consumers that weakly identify themselves with the country
Competence of Spanish people	5.19	3.85
Warmth of Spanish people	6.23	4.52
Competence of French people	5.70	4.36
Warmth of French people	5.51	3.69
Competence of German people	6.06	4.99
Warmth of German people	4.80	3.25

The results show that the consumers strongly identifying themselves with some country tend to assess the competence and warmth of its people much higher than other consumers, so the H7 hypothesis was confirmed.

TABLE 7. Correlation between the attitude towards the wine from a certain country and the identification of a consumer with this country

	Average of the score of consumers that strongly identify themselves with the country	Average of the score of consumers that weakly identify themselves with the country
Attitude towards Spanish wine	6.11	5.00
Attitude towards French wine	5.97	4.85
Attitude towards German wine	4.83	3.71

Thus, the strength of consumer identification with a COO of wine has a strong influence on his assessment of the wine from that country, so the H8 hypothesis was confirmed.

Managerial implications of the results

The results of the research show that wine consumers can be segmented according to their type of involvement (on the basis of empirical data analysis it is possible to identify cognitive, affective product and affective situational consumer involvement) and its level (high and low involvement). The research has also shown that consumer attitudes towards wine from a particular country correlate with the country's competence and warmth, and the type of consumer involvement may determine the dimension that has a stronger impact on consumer attitudes. According to the results, marketing communication can be customized to individual consumer segments.

Depending on the knowledge of wines and interest in them, consumers can be divided into the groups of high and low cognitive involvement. Although for both groups the COO of wine is an important criterion for wine selection, in case of a high cognitive involvement, the wine region of origin becomes very important; therefore, it may be assumed that a consumer, upon selecting the country (or countries) of his or her interest, chooses wine by its region of origin, i.e. the COO acts only as a higher-level information about the place of origin. So, the aim of marketing communication focused on a consumer of a high cognitive involvement should be to draw attention not to the COO, but to a particular region of origin, characteristic organoleptic qualities of wines from that region, high quality, manufacturing traditions or, on the contrary, modern wine-making techniques leading to a higher quality of wine, etc. Consumers of a high cognitive involvement tend to emphasize the utilitarian benefits of wine; therefore, consumers from this particular segment can become more interested in wines produced in the countries of a higher competence, but lower in warmth (for example, Germany) if their high quality is emphasized.

Affective product involvement can be considered intermediate between the cognitive and affective situational involvement, because it demonstrates an almost equal correlation

with both of these types of involvement. It is characteristic of the consumers of a high affective product involvement that to them the attributes of the COO and of the region of origin are statistically important; therefore, marketing communication focused on this type of high-involvement consumers should express and emphasize the affective value conferred to a wine by its country and region of origin. It is likely that this type of consumers would appreciate both the hedonistic and the utilitarian value of wine; therefore, the marketing message should combine both the cognitive and the affective content, with a stronger emphasis on emotions.

The correlation between the affective situational involvement and the cognitive involvement was the weakest; therefore, it can be assumed that consumers of this type of high-involvement have relatively little knowledge about wine. It seems that this type of high-involvement consumers in Lithuania prevails, because in this study almost 70% of the respondents rated their affective situational involvement very highly – by 6 or 7 points. For these consumers, the region of wine origin is not a very important attribute; most important to them is the COO of wine, which they tend to assess by its warmth; therefore, the marketing communication focused on this type of high-involvement consumers should highlight the warmth of people living in the COO of wine and associate positive emotions evoked by the wine from this country with particular situations of wine consumption: romantic dinner, friends, parties, family celebrations, highlight the joy of communication provided by wine, i.e. communicate emotions. This type of consumers may appreciate the symbolic meaning of the COO, its prestige.

From the practical point of view, it is also important that the research has shown the attitudes of the consumers who identify themselves with a particular COO to be much more positive towards the wine from that country; therefore, marketing actions can be directed to the consumer groups that identify themselves with a particular country, such as various language or cultural associations and organizations of that country, or it is possible to take advantage of the situations where the country's identity is manifested, such as cultural, sports events, etc. Moreover, we believe that the growing consumer identification with a particular COO may gradually turn into consumer loyalty to the country's wines, especially if the benefits of wines from other countries are not significantly higher.

Limitations of the research

Since the sample for the research was selected in a non-random way and the majority of respondents are younger than 40 years, with tertiary education, living in cities, the results cannot be applied to the whole population. Since the profile of the respondents approximately matches the empirically known portrait of a wine lover and connoisseur in Lithuania (usually it is a young or middle-aged, educated big city resident), the results may be useful as a preliminary assessment of the attitudes of the most active Lithuanian

wine consumers, while the recommendations of the research should only be applied with a specific focus on this consumer segment.

As the cognitive and affective aspects of assessing the COO of goods have already been quite widely investigated and their impact on consumer attitudes towards the goods has been demonstrated in previous studies, this research was limited only to the theoretical analysis of these aspects, while the empirical study was aimed to assess a less known topic – the influence of stereotypes about a particular COO (competence and warmth of a country as perceived by a consumer) on consumer attitude towards wine from that country.

Conclusions

The importance of the effect of the COO depends on factors related to the product (e.g., product type), consumer (e.g., consumer involvement) and the COO (such as its economic development). Thus, to assess the extent of the effect of the origin country, it is important to consider all these factors.

Consumer attitudes towards the COO are formed on the basis of the cognitive and affective assessment of the COO (country image); the normative assessment of the country affects the purchasing decision itself, but not consumer attitudes. Thus, if in a certain product category the COO is an important product attribute, the effect of COO ought to be assessed in the cognitive, affective, and normative aspects.

The image of the COO is closely related to the product category, i.e. a consumer may rate rather differently products of different categories manufactured in the same country. This effect is explained by the stereotype content model according to which a consumer rates each country by two dimensions: competence and warmth; a product manufactured in a country of a higher competence is perceived as offering a greater utilitarian value, while a product manufactured in a higher warmth country is understood as providing a more hedonistic value, which means that it is important to evaluate how important for a consumer are both the utilitarian and hedonistic values of a product in a particular category.

For wine consumers, the COO is a very important attribute, but it is important to take into account one more attribute related to the product origin, which is the region of wine origin (appellation or protected designation of origin).

The empirical study was aimed to assess the impact of consumer involvement on the effect of the COO and the region; on the basis of a theoretical analysis, two types of involvement – cognitive and affective – were distinguished. Meanwhile, the results of the empirical research have shown that there are three different types of wine consumer involvement: cognitive involvement, affective product involvement, and affective situational involvement. Further research is needed to determine whether these three different types of involvement are common to consumers of other products, when the

product itself or the situations of its consumption are able to trigger strong emotions.

The importance of the country and region of origin for the consumer decision depends upon the type and level of consumer involvement. For a consumer with a high cognitive involvement, the region of origin is more important than for a consumer with a low involvement, while with a change of the cognitive involvement level the importance of the COO does not change in a statistically significant way. The increasing affective product involvement increases the importance of both the country and the region of origin. The increasing affective situational involvement increases only the importance of the COO, while the importance of the region of origin shows no statistically important change. This means that marketing communication should be adapted to the type and level of consumer involvement.

Consumer attitudes towards the COO of wine correlate in a statistically significant way with the competence and warmth of the COO. Although the hypotheses were raised that an increase in consumer's cognitive involvement increases the impact of the competence of the COO on the consumer attitude towards wine and the increased affective involvement (either product or situational) increases the importance of the warmth of the COO, these hypotheses were not confirmed; however, it has been noted that in the case of a higher cognitive involvement, consumer attitude regarding wine from the country of the highest competence improves in a statistically significant way, while in the case of an increased affective situational involvement the attitudes towards wines from warmer countries increase in a statistically significant way. This means that consumers with a higher cognitive involvement assess the value of the higher competence of the country, while the consumers with a high affective situational involvement consider the perceived warmth of the COO of wine as very important. Thus, the marketing communication targeted to the consumers of a particular involvement type should focus on the qualities of the countries that are important for these consumer types.

The stereotype content model indicates that an individual tends to rate higher the group which he himself identifies with according to the dimensions of both competence and warmth. The ethnocentricity of consumers is also based on their identification with a particular group, i.e. with one's own country, and ethnocentric consumers tend to prefer products of their own country. On this basis, the hypothesis that the consumer's identification with a country influences the rating of the country and its wine has been confirmed. Thus, consumers who strongly identify themselves with any country may become a target segment of the country's wine market; it also creates preconditions for the formation of these consumers' loyalty to the wines of a particular country. On the other hand, this phenomenon requires more extensive research to highlight the factors that determine the consumer's identification with a particular country and how this effect manifests itself in different product categories.

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