The influence of country-of-origin on Irish consumers’ decision-making

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at the Dublin Business School

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Declaration

Declaration: I, Francesca Koense, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: [Signature] Date: August 20, 2015
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Francesca Koense, August 20, 2015.
Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine the Irish country-of-origin effect and its impact on Irish consumers’ decision-making when it comes to purchasing grocery products. There are many apposing theories on the topic, but research suggests the country-of-origin is an important cue to the decision-making process. The effectiveness and processing of the cue, however, depends on various other factors, such as: if it is set as part of multiple cues or a single cue, the time interval of presenting the information, product knowledge, country knowledge, level of ethnocentrism, demographic variables etc.

The outcome of this research paper is that when it comes to low-involvement purchasing decisions, taking the country-of-origin into account, Irish consumers tend to be more likely to purchase products with an Irish country-of-origin. Furthermore, research has shown that those respondents that are more likely to purchase the product with country-of-origin being Ireland, are also generally more willing to pay more for these products.

Limitations of this research paper include the fact that this research paper merely focuses on low-involvement purchasing decisions, specifically when it comes to purchasing grocery products. Another research limitation is that as this research paper focuses on the Irish market, it cannot be applied to generalize about other cultures and markets.

As a practical implication, marketing practitioners, wanting to validate the use of country-of-origin cue, can utilize this research, as the impact of voluntary logos facilitate in an increased likelihood to purchase the product amongst Irish consumers.

This paper is the first paper that looks into the country-of-origin of Ireland specifically, and its effectiveness related to the purchase of low-involvement products.

Keywords: Country-of-origin, Consumer decision-making process, Ethnocentrism, Irish consumers, Low-involvement purchasing decisions
Table of contents

Declaration .............................................................................................................................. II
Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. III
Abstract ............................................................................................................................... IV
Table of contents ................................................................................................................ V
List of figures ....................................................................................................................... VII
List of tables ........................................................................................................................ VII

1. Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 8
   1.1 Background .................................................................................................................... 8
   1.2 Research topic and personal interest ........................................................................... 10
   1.3 Research questions ..................................................................................................... 11

2. Literature review .............................................................................................................. 13
   2.1 Country-of-Origin ........................................................................................................ 14
       2.1.1 Definition of Country-of-Origin and Country-of-Origin effect ............................. 14
       2.1.2 Background of Country-of-Origin ......................................................................... 15
       2.1.3 Variables impacting Country-of-Origin effect ......................................................... 19
       2.1.4 Different cognitive Country-of-Origin effects ......................................................... 23
   2.2 Consumer decision-making ......................................................................................... 27
       2.2.1 Consumer decision-making process ...................................................................... 27
       2.2.2 The Elaboration Likelihood Model (or ELM-Model) ............................................. 30
   2.3 Ethnocentrism ............................................................................................................ 31
       2.3.1 Effect of ethnocentrism and COO .......................................................................... 31
       2.3.2 Buy Irish Campaign – Enhancing consumer ethnocentric views ......................... 32
       2.3.3 Consumer ethnocentrism in Ireland ..................................................................... 33

3. Research methodology and methods ............................................................................ 35
   3.1 Research methodology ............................................................................................... 35
       3.1.1 Research philosophy .......................................................................................... 36
       3.1.2 Research approach ............................................................................................. 37
       3.1.3 Research strategy ............................................................................................... 38
       3.1.4 Research choice ................................................................................................ 41
       3.1.5 Time horizon ..................................................................................................... 42
   3.2 Sampling ..................................................................................................................... 42
   3.3 Data collection ............................................................................................................ 43
   3.4 Data analysis ............................................................................................................... 44
   3.5 Ethics .......................................................................................................................... 45
       3.5.1 Ethics of research design ...................................................................................... 45
       3.5.2 Research ethics ................................................................................................... 45
   3.6 Limitations of methodology/methods ........................................................................ 46

4. Data analysis and findings .............................................................................................. 48
   4.1 Demographics ............................................................................................................. 49
       4.1.1 Age category ....................................................................................................... 49
       4.1.2 Gender ............................................................................................................... 50
       4.1.3 Occupation ......................................................................................................... 51
       4.1.4 Gross income per year ....................................................................................... 52
       4.1.5 Country of birth ................................................................................................. 53
4.2 Purchasing behaviour and COO ................................................................. 54
  4.2.1 Responsible for grocery shopping ....................................................... 54
  4.2.2 Search for COO cue .......................................................................... 55
  4.2.3 COO influencing factors ...................................................................... 56
  4.2.4 Statements regarding COO ................................................................. 57
  4.2.5 Buy Irish ............................................................................................ 58
  4.2.6 COO and likelihood to purchase ........................................................ 60
  4.2.7 COO and willingness to pay ............................................................... 61
  4.2.8 Patriotism .......................................................................................... 63
4.3 Summary of findings .............................................................................. 64
4.4 Interview with industry expert ............................................................... 65

5. Discussion ............................................................................................... 67
  5.1 In-depth analysis of the findings ............................................................. 67
    5.1.1 Active search for COO and logos .................................................... 67
    5.1.2 Gender and decision Maker ............................................................. 69
    5.1.3 Country of birth and “Buy Irish” ..................................................... 71
    5.1.4 Country of birth and patriotism ..................................................... 73
    5.1.5 Patriotism and “Buy Irish” .............................................................. 74
    5.1.6 Likelihood to purchase and willingness to pay ............................... 76
    5.1.7 Age category and “Buy Irish” .......................................................... 78
  5.2 Matching findings from primary and secondary research ................. 79
  5.3 Research questions answered .............................................................. 80
  5.4 Research limitations and scope for further research ....................... 81

6. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 83

Reflection ..................................................................................................... 85
  Introduction .................................................................................................. 85
  Learning style ............................................................................................... 85
  Master of Science in Marketing ................................................................. 86
  Reflection on the dissertation process ...................................................... 87

References .................................................................................................... 89

Appendices ................................................................................................... 94
  Appendix 1 – Time plan ............................................................................. 95
  Appendix 2 – Questionnaire – Hard-copy version ..................................... 96
  Appendix 3 – Questionnaire – Online version .......................................... 101
List of figures

Figure 1: Mind map generated by means of the literature review ...................................................... 13
Figure 2: Cognitive COO effects, figure adopted from Bloemer et al. (2009) ................................. 23
Figure 3: Consumer decision-making process adopted from Schiffman et al. (2010) ...................... 28
Figure 4: Saunders et al.'s (2009) research onion ............................................................................ 36
Figure 5: Process of deduction ........................................................................................................ 38
Figure 6: Age category respondents ............................................................................................... 49
Figure 7: Gender respondents ......................................................................................................... 50
Figure 8: Occupation respondents .................................................................................................. 51
Figure 9: Gross income per year of respondents ........................................................................... 52
Figure 10: Country of birth respondents ......................................................................................... 53
Figure 11: Responsible for grocery shopping ................................................................................... 54
Figure 12: Search for COO cue ....................................................................................................... 55
Figure 13: Influencing factors of COO cue ...................................................................................... 56
Figure 14: Statements and COO cue ............................................................................................... 57
Figure 15: Buy Irish ......................................................................................................................... 58
Figure 16: Reason for buying Irish .................................................................................................. 59
Figure 17: COO cue and likelihood to purchase ............................................................................. 60
Figure 18: Willingness to pay and favourable COO ...................................................................... 61
Figure 19: Willingness to pay and Irish COO .................................................................................. 61
Figure 20: Willingness to pay more for Irish products ................................................................... 62
Figure 21: Level of patriotism of respondents ................................................................................ 63
Figure 22: Cross analyses – Active search for COO vs. impact of COO logos on likelihood to purchase ................................................................................................................................................. 68
Figure 23: Cross analyses – Gender vs. responsible for grocery shopping ........................................ 70
Figure 24: Cross analyses – Country of birth vs. importance of buying Irish ................................. 72
Figure 25: Cross analyses – Patriotism vs. importance of buying Irish ............................................ 73
Figure 26: Cross analyses – Patriotism vs. importance of buying Irish ............................................ 75
Figure 27: Cross analyses – Likelihood to purchase vs. willingness to pay ..................................... 77
Figure 28: Cross analyses – Age Category vs. Buy Irish ................................................................. 78
Figure 29: Kolb's learning cycle ...................................................................................................... 85

List of tables

Table 1: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Active search for COO vs. impact of COO logos on likelihood to purchase ......................................................................................................................... 67
Table 2: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Gender vs. responsible for grocery shopping 69
Table 3: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Country of birth vs. importance of buying Irish ................................................................................................................................................. 71
Table 4: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Country of birth vs. patriotism ..................... 73
Table 5: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Patriotism vs. importance of buying Irish ..... 74
Table 6: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Likelihood to purchase vs. willingness to pay 76
Table 7: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Age Category vs. Buy Irish ......................... 78
1. Introduction

In this following chapter an introduction to the topic of this dissertation is presented. Furthermore the researcher’s personal interest in the topic will be examined and consequently research questions are formulated. As the title of this dissertation suggests, this dissertation will aim to research the Irish country-of-origin effect on domestic purchases (specifically grocery products) made by Irish consumers when it comes to making purchase decisions.

1.1 Background

The world we live in is becoming ever more globalized, and globalization exposes consumers to brands and products that were previously unknown to them. This in turn, has resulted in “a significant increase in choices available, providing the shopper with the benefits aligned with competition (Samiee, 1994)” (Parsons et al., 2012).

Ireland is also one of these countries participating in the global arena: with exports accounting of 9.3 Billion Euros, and imports of 4.7 Billion Euros, as per April 2015 (Central Statistics Office, Goods Export and Imports, 2015). Before the recent economic downturn, Ireland’s economic miracle was known as the “Celtic Tiger”, which transformed Ireland into one of the wealthiest countries in Europe mid 1990s (Pelan, 2012). The recent global financial crisis, which began in 2007/2008, had a negative effect on the economy of the European Union as a whole, but Ireland was one of the European countries, which was mainly hit hard by this economic recession.

During times of economic downturn, most countries take protectionist action, and this is also the case for EU Member States, as governments try to protect national economies to the loss of foreign goods and services. Governments try to stimulate domestic purchase of goods through their nationalistic views, and negative attitudes towards imported products. The Irish Government ran the first most famous “buy domestic” campaign within the EU, thirty years ago. Advertising material was created to influence consumers to purchase products that bared the “Guaranteed Irish” label. Now, almost thirty years later, during the times of the recent economic downturn, the campaign was regenerated (Hojnik, 2014). “Governments are spending large amounts of money to promote positive feelings toward their respective countries in hopes of facilitating trade and other business activities (World Travel and Tourism Council 2013)” (Chen et al., 2014).
The “buy domestic” campaigns focus on what is known as the country-of-origin (hereafter: COO). The COO can be described as “a country where a product is manufactured or where a food product comes from” (Dictionary of Business, 2006). Sometimes this is also referred to as ‘made in’. Other descriptions include ‘produced in’, ‘manufactured in’ or ‘assembled in’ and many more. The COO describes where products originate from and it encompasses agriculture, manufacturing and the production process.

COO or Country image can act as only one of several extrinsic cues that buyers use to perceive quality of products or services (Knight et al., 2007). COO can serve as product signal, and is part of a product’s extrinsic cues. These cues are product related but not part of the physical product, such as price, brand name, store reputation, warranty, or country-of-origin. A product’s intrinsic cues are cues such as taste, design, materials, performance etc. (Bloemer et al., 2009). In some cases a product’s COO is an important piece of information in the decision-making process, as it often serves as a signal of product or service quality. In certain product categories, such as food, extrinsic cues are of great importance in the process of consumer choice, especially in situations in which it is difficult to evaluate the product based on intrinsic attributes.

Nowadays many companies communicate their COO as it might contribute to the actual purchase. Companies hope to benefit from patriotism of domestic customers or from positive stereotypes that foreign customers have about products from the COO country. Some companies from a specific country “promote a product using the country-of-origin as an asset. Swiss watches, Scotch whisky, Columbian coffee, and Russian vodka are all examples where companies use the country’s name in promoting the product” (Fetscherin, 2010).

In 2009 a group of Irish brands came together and formed an association called: “Love Irish Food”. Their aim is to, first of all inform consumers in the Irish market, but also to endorse purchase of Irish products to Irish consumers. They have done several campaigns to stimulate the purchase of domestic products by Irish consumers. Research conducted by Love Irish Food and Ignite Research revealed that: “87% of Irish consumers try to Buy Irish with 74% of consumers also confirming that they make a deliberate effort to buy” (Love Irish Food, 2014).

With the raising number of Irish consumers wanting to support Irish businesses, there has been a shift where more people want to buy local (The Irish Times, 2012). Supermarket chains such as: Aldi, Lidl, Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Marks & Spencer, have noticed this shift, and are all working with
Irish growers to produce products. As consumers still want to save money, consumers are more frequently buying own store brands. For this reason the supermarkets from low cost Aldi and Lidl to Marks & Spencer and SuperValu have been working with Irish producers to produce own brand products. Many supermarkets focus on the relationships with Irish producers and use it as a selling point to shop at their store (RTÉ News, 2013). Binational stores, such as Aldi and Lidl, have their own symbols for Irish products, and use this as part of the product packaging to benefit from the positive associations that the COO cue can offer. A binational store brand is a brand that is produces locally but carries a foreign owned store’s band name (Parsons, 2012). Aldi Ireland, for example, sources over 50% of products from Irish suppliers (Aldi, 2015). Some supermarkets are taking it a step further, than simply providing COO labelling on product packaging. Tesco, for example, uses signs that indicate where it is sourcing its food products: “this crop is being grown for Tesco Ireland, committed to working with Irish growers”. The goal is to inform passers-by, who would have previously never realized the produce they see everyday, is produced by Tesco (The Irish Times, 2000).

1.2 Research topic and personal interest

The purpose of this dissertation is to research why brands and governments participate in “Buy Irish” campaigns, and if, and to what extent, Irish COO affects the purchase of domestic products. The topic of COO effect on consumer decision-making has been researched extensively, however in Irish context it has not been researched to this extent, hence the importance of this research. This research will focus on the Irish market and the Irish consumer when researching the COO effect on purchasing decisions. Also “the country-of-origin (COO) literature has focused predominantly on purchasing of high-involvement durable products” (Knight et al., 2007). The focus of this dissertation however will be in particular on purchase decisions for low-involvement products, such as fast moving consumer goods, e.g. food.

The interest around this topic aroused when the author noticed there is a strong emphasis placed on (voluntary) COO labelling when it comes to fast moving consumer goods in the Irish market. A lot of these products contain an extra label such as “Produced in Ireland” on the packaging. When comparing this to her home country, in the Netherlands, she found this emphasis on Irish produced products very strong. As pointed out before, the topic has been researched extensively, but not in regards to the Irish market. The topic of COO is of great importance to marketing managers, brands and even governments.
1.3 Research questions

Through researching the topic of interest in general, the following research question has been formulated “Does the Irish COO impact the purchase of domestic products (specifically those of low-involvement, e.g. grocery products) amongst Irish consumers?” This research question allows the exploration of different types of COO effects, the influence that COO has on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process, and it will, more specifically, look at Irish people and their level of patriotism (which can influence the impact of COO on purchasing decisions).

The research question will be answered through several sub-research questions, as outlined below:

(i) What are the different effects of COO? *
(ii) Through which stages of decision-making does a consumer go when it comes to making purchases? *
(iii) In which way does the COO effect differ amongst low- and high-involvement purchase decisions? *
(iv) Are Irish people ethnocentric and does this influence their purchasing behaviour?
(v) Are Irish people willing to pay more for domestically produced products?

*All questions answered by means of the literature review.

The above sub-research questions all address a different aspect of the research question and will ultimately, through secondary and primary research, all facilitate in answering the research question.
2. Literature review

The literature review adopted for this research paper consists of journals, books and publications of various market research- and market insight bodies. The literature review adopted for this dissertation covers the topics of: the COO, the consumer decision-making process and the Irish population and nationalism. The first theme, COO, will explore the concept in general, and the different variables that affect the influence of COO will also be explored. The concept of the ‘consumer decision-making process’ will be explored after. This will give a more in depth understanding of a consumer’s behaviour and the stages through which a consumer goes when making purchase decisions. As the research question is specifically aimed at Irish consumers, the third theme will be around Irish consumers, and topics such as nationalism will be dealt with in more depth.

Furthermore it should be noted that secondary research is done through the reliable resources of the Dublin Business School’s library, such as journals, books, articles etc. As for the journals, these are also mostly peer reviewed.
Figure 1: Mind map generated by means of the literature review
2.1 Country-of-Origin

2.1.1 Definition of Country-of-Origin and Country-of-Origin effect

As outlined before, there are many definitions on the topic of COO. Yong (1996) describes COO as: the country where a product is made. Other academics such as Johansson et al. (1985) describe COO as the country where the company has its headquarters. Thakor and Lavack (2003) use the definition of COO to describe the place of manufacture of the product or even the origin of product components itself.

Lee (2009) not only emphasizes on COO as merely the country that manufactures or assembles the product, but also recognizes the importance of the country of design. COO encompasses more than simply where the product originates. Deshpande (2010) uses the example of Apple, which positions its brand as “Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China”. This tactic allows Apple to focus on California, rather than on the biased emerging market, China. Zdravkovic (2013) implies that for Generation Y, the COO effect is not as strong as the origin of design effect.

Han (1989) defined COO as an extrinsic cue, which plays a major role in shaping the consumers’ decision process. Consumers use COO as a cue when making judgments about the product. This phenomenon is referred to as the country-of-origin (COO) effect (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993).

Overall, the term “COO effect” refers to a marketing phenomenon in which consumer (sub) consciously incorporates the COO cue as a criterion to evaluate a product, by forming an attitude towards the product in question (Bloemer et al., 2009).

Processing of the COO cue can be of different natures: cognitive, affective or conative/normative. Cognitive COO effects occur when the consumer makes rational use of the COO cue. Here the consumer uses the COO as information to make assumptions about the product’s quality attributes. Affective COO effects occur when the COO arouses an emotional reaction in the consumer. Last but not least, the conative/normative COO effect occurs when the COO cue results in specific consumer’s behavioural intentions towards a product, guided by moral reflections. Previous research has shown that the COO cue is mostly used evaluating foreign products on the basis of cognitive processing, and can be seen as the most important type of effect (Bloemer et al., 2009). The focus of this research paper will also be on the cognitive processing of the COO cue.
2.1.2 Background of Country-of-Origin

As the topic of COO has been researched extensively, there is contradictory literature regarding the influence of COO image on product judgment. The following section will explore these contradictory theories.

One of the oldest and most persistent concerns in international marketing is whether the origin of a product makes it more or less preferable to consumers (Koschat-Fischer et al., 2012). While findings about COO effects vary, there is a general acceptance that COO effects can be a of influence on consumer perceptions, depending on the type of goods, the actual COO, the level of nationalism prevalent in the home country, and, in some cases, the demographics of the consumer (Parsons et al., 2012). As revealed through extensive research done on the topic, marketers and consumer behaviour researchers generally accept that a product’s COO is an important cue in consumer decision-making (Piron, 2000).

Consumers use different cues to evaluate products. “Consumers are inclined to base their overall evaluation of the product on information cues possessing high predictive and confidence value (Cox, 1962; Heimbach et al., 1989; Johansson, 1989; Liefeld et al., 1996)” (Bloemer et al., 2009). A high predictive value is when a consumer believes the cue is indicative of a particular product characteristic of interest. As for the confidence value, as the name suggests, its about how confident a consumer is about his or her prior COO knowledge. The predictive and the confidence value are both important aspects in determining the ways in which the COO cue will be used, as they have an impact on consumer motivation and the ability to process the COO cue. The values in turn, are closely related to the extent in which the consumer’s prior COO knowledge has been developed. So-called hybrid products bring complexity to this dimension, as consumers find it difficult to relate product attribute information to a country’s product, with the specific product they are being confronted with (Bloemer et al, 2009).

COO has been utilized as a cue for product evaluation for many years, and the use of COO dates back to World War I. Defeated countries of the war, such as Germany, were forced to use a COO symbol on their products. Such action was taken by victory countries to harm exports from the defeated countries deliberately, by forming a negative product image (Rezvani et al., 2012).

Scholars first identified the concept of COO in the 1960s as: an extrinsic indication for evaluating products. Brand name and price are other examples of a product’s extrinsic cues. Research confirms
that a product's extrinsic cues, such as its COO, are less important than intrinsic cues, such as reliability and performance. This does not necessarily mean that the extrinsic cue not important at all: consumers indicated that they considered the product's COO to be either important for luxury products or somewhat important for necessities (Piron, 2000). Since Ernest Dichter (1962) referred to the significance of the “made-in” information cue, research on the so-called “COO-effects” has become one of the major domains within the literature on international marketing and consumer behaviour (Bloemer et al., 2009). Today, the topic of COO is still being studied, and COO has become a significant phenomenon in consumer behaviour studies (Rezvani, et al., 2012). Studies show that COO is one of the factors that most concern marketers in respect of its impact on consumer purchase intention (L. Y. Lin & Chen, 2006) and it is therefore one of the main issues considered in purchase behaviour and the international business literature (Ghazali et al, 2008). It is still unclear however if, how and to which extent the COO effect impacts consumer evaluations (Bloemer et al., 2009).

In literature regarding COO the focus has been predominantly on purchasing of high-involvement durable products (Knight et al., 2007). Holdershaw et al. (2013) look into the effects of COO for low-involvement products, and recognized the fact that consumers of food products regard COO as important, and that there are indications that food origin can influence purchase decisions independent of other cues (Skaggs et al., 1996; Loureiro & Umberger, 2005). The disinterest in COO and food products can be attributed to earlier beliefs that food items are a low involvement purchase (Pecher & Tregear, 2000). Lately there is a strong concern about the environment and the COO can indicate smaller carbon footprint relative to imported foods (Krissoff and Kuchler, 2007). Similarly, with respect to ethical and eco-friendly concerns, some countries have better images related to stricter laws and conditions than others (Koschate-Fischer et al 2012). All these concerns in fact make food purchase more high involvement.

Knight et al. (2007), states that product country image is believed to influence consumers’ confidence and trust in integrity or production, certification and regulatory systems of the supplier nation. COO can act, as an extrinsic cue, that infers product quality, can be positive or negative, which varies according to the knowledge, belief and experience an individual has with the food category. Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) also support his: a COO serves as an extrinsic informational cue for consumers’ perceptions and evaluation of a product. Overall, Holdershaw et al. (2013) found that COO can influence consumers’ purchase probabilities for fresh, unbranded food products, and even if the cost of COO labelling is passed onto consumers, this influence is still advantageous.
Kucher et al. (2010), explores mandatory COO labelling. Consumers can perceive mandatory COO labelling as an indication of food safety, quality or as a means of supporting local producers.

Also widely accepted by various different scholars is the fact that consumers make use of the COO cue more when other product information is missing or ambiguous. Apart from the well-informed opinion leaders who consider the COO cue to be a relevant indicator of product quality, these consumers use the COO cue less when additional information is presented. If consumers possess over sufficient prior knowledge about a country’s products, additional information about the product they are confronted with, will not necessarily be sought. Consumers turn to additional information when the COO cue is perceived as an irrelevant source of information (in the case of ambiguity) about a product’s quality characteristics (Bloemer et al., 2009). Rogers et al. (1994) found that the effect of the COO cue on product evaluations was strongest when price and quality cues disagreed.

Recent evidence shows that knowing a product’s COO is not necessarily a good or bad thing, but instead it has the effect of stimulating the consumer’s interest in the product. When the COO is known, one might think about the product more extensively and will evaluate it more carefully. Bloemer et al. (2009), describes the different cognitive COO effects, such as the: halo-effect, the summary construct-effect, the product attribute effect and the default heuristic effect. Cognitive COO effects occur when the consumer makes rational use of the COO cue.

In some cases COO labelling is mandatory. Currently COO labelling is mandatory by European Commission legislation, for certain products such as poultry, sheep, pig and goat meet, beef, fish, honey, olive oil, fresh fruit and vegetables. In other cases, it only becomes mandatory when the absence of it might mislead consumers as to the true origin of the product (Food and Drink Industry Ireland, 2013).

Through the literature review, it has become evident that the COO in some cases can be an important piece of information when making purchase decisions. It can serve as a signal of product quality. Some products are strongly associated with geographical areas, and can often benefit from the linkages made with these geographical areas. When this is the case, the COO can serve as a competitive advantage (Solomon, 2006). Consumers associate certain geographies with the best products: France wine, Italian sports cars, Swiss watches. Competing products that origin from other countries, in particular developing markets are perceived as less authentic. Even if quality is on par,
companies in developing markets still cannot command a fair price. In turn, if they charge a lower price, the product will be perceived as inferior, adding to the fact that the region does not make premium products. This is also known as the provenance paradox, which is becoming a challenge for marketing and branding (Deshpande, 2010).

Koschate-Fischer et al. (2012) looks at the price-related consequences of the COO. Research has shown that the COO positively impacts willingness to pay. However, Josaissen, Lukas, and Whitwell (2008), found that the COO effect diminishes in strength when purchase intentions, and not quality perceptions, serve as a dependent variable.

Overall, COO acts as a signal of product quality, may influence consumers’ perceptions of risk and value, and may affect the likelihood of purchase and can also affect the consumers’ willingness to pay. Where there is a positive COO, brands should stress COO as an asset for the particular product category. As a successful example: Tommy Hilfiger’s pervasive use of American symbols, such as a portion of the flag, in its communications. On the other hand brands should avoid giving consumers a COO cue when it is not the most positive (Piron, 2000).
2.1.3 Variables impacting County-of-Origin effect

Although country image matters, its effect on product judgment has to be examined in conjunction with variables such as the quality of information about the product and involvement with the product (Zdravkovic, 2013). These variables that are linked to customer purchase intention from the COO point of view (Rezvani, et al., 2012). There are many variables that impact the effect that COO has on consumer purchase intention. Even though many of these variables have been identified, there is still a wide scope for future research needed to determine the many factors that have not yet been identified as influencing factors.

Variables that have been identified as influencing the impact of COO cues, include the following:

- COO as single cue or multiple cue
- Product information time interval
- Product category
- Private or public consumption
- Product knowledge
- Country knowledge
- Consumer expertise
- Consumer involvement
- Consumer ethnocentrism

Each of the above outlined variables will be explained in turn.

**COO as single cue or multiple cue**

COO is one amongst many cues that can influence consumer purchase decisions. Schooler (1965) and Nagashima (1970) found that when COO is presented as a single cue for evaluating a product, the impact on product evaluations is more significant. On the contrary, when COO is one of many cues its effect on consumer attitudes weakens (Johansson et al., 1985; Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999). Negative information about the product has a stronger influence on product judgment than COO. When one is exposed to positive information about the product or lacks any product-related information, COO helps to mold consumer’s product judgment (Zdravkovic, 2013). When the COO cue is presented as part of multiple cues, it appears to be most effective when displayed as part of a formal list. When the COO cue is presented in a multiple cue setting attention should be given to a consumer’s motivation and ability to process additional product-related information (Bloemer et al., 2009).
Product information time interval

The time at which information is presented also impacts the effect that COO has on consumer purchase intentions. For two effects, dealt with in section 2.14 Different cognitive Country-of-Origin effects, the default heuristic and the product attribute effect, the factor of time interval is of great significance.

Product category

Roth and Romeo (1992) found that COO effects on product evaluation vary, depending on product type: the willingness to purchase a product from a particular country is high when the country image is also an important and positive characteristic for that specific product category. The COO might have a positive effect on one product category but could be of no value to another. Thus if a country is perceived of having a positive image, and this image is important to the specific product category, consumers are more willing to purchase a that product from a country. A powerful match between country and product means that a specific country specializes in that area (Rezvani et al., 2012). For example, the association with France is positive for hedonic products, such as perfume, but it was found to have a negative impact on the value of utilitarian products such as machinery (Laroch et al., 2005). It is important to note however, that it is possible for a product-country image to change over time, sometimes this can change rapidly, either by design or as a result of technological, social or political change (Knight et al., 2007).

Knowledge of a country’s products, however, is not a guarantee that this product-country knowledge is a relevant indicator of attributes from the specific product category being evaluated. The example coined by Bloemer et al. (2009) is: how useful or relevant is the expertise about automobiles from a certain country X for a consumer that has to evaluate diapers, shampoo or barbecue sausages coming from the same country? Therefore, if there is no existing product-country match, the COO cue will become irrelevant for the evaluation of the overall product quality of the product in question.

Private or public consumption

A product’s COO may have a different level of importance on a consumer’s purchasing decision, depending on the type of consumption, privately or publically, in correspondence with the product type. Products can be privately or publicly consumed. When a product is consumed publicly or privately, the influence and observance of reference groups may influence the COO effect to be minimized. It can be argued that public consumption affects the consumer’s association with, or ranking within society, and thus creates a higher level of social risk (Solomon, 1996). As Sirgy et al.
(1991) suggested: the COO is indirectly linked to a consumer’s image. In order for consumers to wish to be publicly seen with COO-rated products, the COO needs to be congruent with the consumer's personality or ego, and this also requires a positive country image (Piron, 2000).

**Product knowledge**

Product knowledge is another variable impacting the COO effect. Product knowledge can be divided in three main categories: 1. Subjective or perceived knowledge, 2. Objective knowledge, 3. Experience based knowledge. Lee (2009) suggests that consumers with a high level of objective knowledge are less likely to rely on country-of-origin cues for their purchase intention and product evaluations and are likely to search for other product cues rather than country-of-origin. However, people with a high level of subjective knowledge have a greater tendency to rely on country-of-origin for evaluating the quality of the product. If the level of product knowledge is high, bias is reduced. When people have little knowledge and information about products, they utilize the COO cue as an indirect proof of quality, for example: people do not know a special lawn mower from Germany but they know that Germany is a country with high quality products, so although they are not familiar with the brand, they evaluate it positively (Rezvani et al., 2012).

**Country knowledge**

The COO cue can act as a stimulus for a consumer to make use of prior COO knowledge. The more this COO prior knowledge is developed, the higher the predictive and confidence value the COO cues will have. It is assumed that the high predictive and confidence level in turn will result in higher motivation and ability to process the COO cue, and thus the COO cue is of more significance here as it is being centrally processed. In the contrary, when prior COO knowledge is developed to a moderate or limited degree, no relevant associations between the product and the COO and product quality will be made. Also, the lack of prior COO knowledge will also not provide consumer with confidence about the COO cue as an alternative source of information about the product’s attributes. When the latter is the case, consumers will be less motivated to take the COO cue into consideration, as risk of basing their evaluation exclusively on the COO cue it too high, and will make decisions based on peripheral processing. Additional information is used during the evaluation process in order to compensate for the COO cues lack of predictive and/or confidence value (Bloemer et al., 2009).

**Consumer expertise**

The COO effect has been found to fluctuate by consumers’ level of expertise with the product category (Eroglu and Machleit, 1989). Han (1989) for example found that when country’s product familiarity is low, national stereotypes operate as a halo, allowing consumers to evaluate any
unfamiliar product associated with that nation, which can be both negatively as positively, depending on the country image (Chattalas, 2008). The halo effect referred to here is explained in more depth in the next chapter.

**Consumer involvement**

When it comes to making purchasing decisions, a distinction can be made between low- and high-involvement purchase decisions. Ahmed and d’Astous (2003) define high involvement products as products that are more complex and expensive and require higher level of involvement, whereas low-involvement products are simpler and less expensive. The level of consumer involvement of products is very important to product evaluation. It can be said that the country image and the COO play a more significant role in the purchase decision when level of involvement is higher (Li and Wyer, 1994; Celsi and Olson, 1988; D’Astous and Ahmed, 1999; Lalwani et al., 2005; Tabassi et al., 2013). If the product is associated with higher levels of risk, and thus, consumer involvement is more extensive, consumers will search for additional information beyond COO, when evaluating these products (Zdravkovic, 2013). For low-involvement products, such as t-shirts, the role of COO becomes inconspicuous. When it comes to products such as wine, cosmetics and cigars, COO plays a more prominent role (Rezvani et al., 2012). On the contrary, Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000) argue that the COO effect is reduced under high-consumer involvement. This diversity in opinions can be explained by the fact that for a greater involvement in the purchase, consumers rely on extrinsic cues, such as the COO, only if they are relatively unfamiliar with the brand. If they are familiar with the brand, the willingness to purchase is not materially affected by COO, as they will pay less attention to these effects (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). On the contrary, Maheswaran (1994) argues that in low-involvement situations the reliance on COO is greater, due to frequent availability of this information, and consumers rely on this information, as they do not spend much time on low-involvement products, and COO can serve as heuristic shortcuts. It is important to note however, that high involvement products are not necessarily luxury products: some products categorized as necessities, say, appliances, may also be high involvement products (Piron, 2000).

**Consumer ethnocentrism/patriotism**

The level of ethnocentrism or patriotism that a consumer has, in view of their home country, might influence home country purchases (Tabassi et al, 2013). This topic is explored in more detail in section 2.3 *Ethnocentrism*, and more specifically in relation to the Irish consumer.
2.1.4 Different cognitive Country-of-Origin effects

The COO can portray four different cognitive effects, such as: the halo effect, the summary construct effect, the product attribute-effect and the default heuristic-effect. The different cognitive COO effects can be summarized by means of the figure below. The full arrows indicate a substantial impact on overall product evaluation, whereas the broken arrows signify limited impact on overall product evaluation.

**Figure 2: Cognitive COO effects, figure adopted from Bloemer et al. (2009).**

**Halo effect**

The country’s image serves as a ‘halo effect’ where it impacts a consumer’s belief about a product and therefore, its overall evaluation (Erickson et al., 1984; Johansson et al., 1985; Chao, 1984). According to the halo model, consumers use the overall perceptions they have about a country, even if they may know very little about this country, to make overall evaluations of products (Han, 1989). This is also known as national stereotyping: pre-existing national stereotypes serve as a halo from which consumers make inferences about all products associated with these stereotypes (Chattalas, 2008). In the case of the halo effect, the additional product information is either missing or ignored, and the COO cue does not have a significant impact on product evaluation.

Following the ELM Model, explained in the next chapter, the Halo effect of COO on the consumer’s final evaluative judgment of the product is only indirect and rather limited, and would be considered peripheral COO processing (Bloemer et al., 2009).
**Summary construct effect**

The COO may also act as a summary construct, directly affecting consumers’ attitudes towards the brand of a country instead of through product attribute ratings (Wright, 1975). The summary construct model interprets the impact of COO in terms of generalizing pre-existing perceptions about products made in a country to attributes of other products from the same country. Here additional product information is not taken into consideration as the COO cue acts as a summary of all other cues.

The summary construct effect can occur in two different ways: as the specific summary construct and as the general summary construct. In the case of the specific summary construct, those information cues that are additionally shown, do not function as evaluative determinants themselves. However they will function “as some kind of automatic selection devices which unconsciously predispose the consumer to use no more than specific parts or fragments of the (much more extensively) elaborated product-country knowledge network that is stored in his memory” (Bloemer et al., 2009). As for the general summary construct effect, this takes place in the single cue format, where the COO is the only information presented to the consumer and no additional information about the product is presented. Here, the consumer is not influenced by any additional information and will therefore utilize broader expertise about other product attributes as well.

In the case of the summary construct effect, using the ELM theory, it is believed that the impact of such an effect on product evaluation is direct and of substantial significance. Thus, this effect is an example of central COO processing (Bloemer et al., 2009).

**Default heuristic effect**

Introduced by Marai et al. (1998), the default heuristic effect can be defined as “a process where information about a product’s COO is processed together with additional information about the product, resulting in an interactive effect on the consumer’s product evaluation” (Bloemer et al., 2009). The occurrence of this effect brings two different mechanisms. First, the COO cue and the additional information about the product together impact the overall evaluation of the product, and at the same time, the COO cue and the additional information affect each other’s interpretation. As such, the COO cue facilitates in interpreting additional information about the product differently, which is consistent with a person’s product-country knowledge.
The default heuristic effect also knows two different types, namely: the specific default heuristic-effect and the general default heuristic effect. The specific default heuristic effect, a multi-cue setting, the moderately developed product-country expertise interacts more specifically with additional attribute information cues that are presented explicitly to the consumer. In the case of the general default heuristic effect there is only one single cue presented to the consumer, and no additional information is available.

The general summary construct and the general default heuristic may seem alike, but the effects are very different. In case of the general summary construct, consumers dispose of very detailed information about the particular product confronted with. Whereas in the case of the default heuristic effect, no detailed information and precise knowledge is available. Here the consumer has to fall back on knowledge of other products from the same country, as the consumer is only moderately familiar with the product in question.

Here put into ELM theory, each cue taken separately is expected to have limited influence on the consumer’s product evaluation. However, if these cues are taken together, and are processed simultaneously, then the cues can be of significance when it comes to product evaluation (Bloemer et al., 2009).

**Product attribute effect**

The product attribute effect was first identified in studies done by Hong and Wyer (1989, 1990). When the COO cue and other intrinsic attribute information is presented at the same time, the COO cue is perceived as simply another product attribute. However, if the COO cue is presented before any additional intrinsic attribute information, the COO cue has a greater influence on product evaluations, and also affects the interpretation of additional product information as well.

The main difference between the default heuristic and the product attribute effect, is that with the product attribute effect there is no interaction between additional product information and the COO cue, which is explained by the time interval between the presentation of the COO cue and additional product information.

In terms of the ELM model, the product attribute effect can be categorized as peripheral processing, as the impact of the COO effect on the evaluation of the product is insignificant.
To conclude, these cognitive COO effects do not occur all at once. In order to determine which effect will occur, the predictive and confidence value (which in turn is influenced by a consumer’s prior knowledge about a country’s products), the consumer’s motivation and ability to process information about the product (more specifically the COO cue), need to be known. Also, for situations where COO is processed together with additional product information, it is important to take the time interval of when the COO cue and when additional product-related information is presented, into account (Bloemer et al., 2009).
2.2 Consumer decision-making

2.2.1 Consumer decision-making process

A consumer is faced with a decision when he or she can choose from two or more alternatives. Consumers facing decisions go through different stages, which can be explained by means of the five stages of the decision-making process. When there is a choice, it means there is an opportunity for consumers to make a decision. Important to note is that when it comes to consumption and purchase-related decisions, the scope of the consumer decision-making process is more extensive than merely the selection of one brand from a number of brands. A consumer also needs to deal with type of payment (e.g. cash, card etc.), or type of channel (e.g. online, department store, local store etc.) etc., when it comes to making a purchase decision.

The extensive effort related to making a decision, depends on the type of products/services being purchased, but also on how well a consumer has established criteria for selection, how much the consumer knows about the brands being considered, and how narrow the set of brands is from which a consumer will need to make a choice. There are three levels of effort related to the consumer decision-making process: 1) extensive problem solving, 2) limited problem solving, and 3) routinized response behaviour (or habitual decision-making). The latter is a low-involvement decision-making. Extensive problem solving is high-involvement.

The models of consumers refer to four views of consumer decision-making refer to a general view as to how individuals behave as they do. The models of consumers consist of the following four views: 1) the economic view, 2) the passive view, 3) the cognitive view, and 4) the emotional view. In the economic view, the consumer is seen as one that only makes rational decisions, in a world of perfect competition. This view however is not very realistic, as it requires a consumer to have all information there is available to their disposal and this view also requires an extensive degree of involvement. As for the passive view, here a consumer is perceived as impulsive and irrational, submissive to the promotional efforts of marketers. This view fails to realize that the consumer in fact plays an equal, if not dominant role in many of the purchase decision he or she makes. Therefore this view is also unrealistic. The cognitive view portrays the consumer as one that seeks and evaluates information about the brands selected and information about the channels where the purchase might take place. The cognitive view takes into account that a consumer is unlikely to have all the information to their disposal, but that he or she has sufficient information to make a satisfactory decision. This view falls between the passive and the economic view. Last but not least there is also the emotional...
view, which views the consumer as an emotional being, that does little search for pre-purchase information etc., but which emphasizes more on current mood and feelings while making a purchase decision.

The model of consumer decision-making considers the cognitive consumer, as well as, to some degree, the emotional consumer. As consumers’ evaluations of foreign products are most frequently and substantially determined by cognitive processing of the COO cue, the consumer decision-making process by Schiffman et al. (2010), is a great model describing the stages through which a consumer goes when it comes to making a decision. There five steps to the decision-making model (Schiffman et al., 2010):

1) **Need recognition**

The first stage of the decision-making process is need (or problem) recognition. Here the consumer faces a problem, or perceives a need, that might be satisfied by purchasing or consuming a certain product. Here there are two types of consumers, either the actual state type consumer, who recognize a problem when a product is not performing satisfactory, or the desired state consumer, who has a desire for something new, which may trigger the decision process.

2) **Pre-purchase Search**

The second stage in the process component is pre-purchase search. In this stage the consumer looks for information that is required to make a choice. Here, if the consumer is made aware of, and depending on the involvement with the product purchase, the COO could affect the selection of alternatives.
3) Evaluation Of Alternatives
The third stage is the evaluation of alternatives. In this stage the consumer decides on one brand from the selected set of different brands. The consumer evaluates the alternatives from two different angles: the objective characteristics and the subjective characteristics, i.e. the value of the brand and its reputation. As outlined in theme one, some brands (and their COO) is viewed more favourable than others and could affect the brand perception and the purchase intention of the product.

4) Purchase Behaviour
The purchase behaviour stage involves the actual purchase.

5) Post-Purchase Evaluation
The post-purchase evaluation stage is an evaluation of the performance of the product in relation to the consumer’s initial expectations. As outlined in the literature review, a positive experience of a country’s product may provide a bias for future purchases of products of this specific country (summary construct effect).

An understanding of how consumers make decisions will allow for marketers to create tailored messages in order to influence the consumer during the consumer decision-making process. As the COO indeed has an impact on the purchase intention of products, marketers could use this cue as a marketing strategy for influence purchase decisions.
2.2.2 The Elaboration Likelihood Model (or ELM-Model)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (hereafter: ELM-Model) is a widely excepted model that describes the way “in which information processing is determined by a consumer’s motivation and ability to engage in cue processing” (Bloemer et al., 2009). The ELM-model suggests that cues can be processed in two different ways, through the: central and peripheral route. For those cues processed through the central route, it is assumed that the cue has a larger and more enduring impact on consumer’s evaluation of products. On the contrary, those cues processed via the peripheral route have a limited impact on product evaluation.

As outlined before, consumers determine the relevance of information cues based on two cue specific properties: the predictive and the confidence value of the cue. These in turn depend on the level of consumer’s development of knowledge about the cue. Another important determinant of how the COO cue is processed by consumers has to do with the time interval between the presentation of any additional information about the product and the COO.

The basic reasoning behind the ELM-model is that highly valuable cues make consumers feel more motivated and able to engage in cognitive processing, which means that central importance goes out to them when consumers are forming an overall evaluation of the product. Contrary to this, less valuable cues make consumers feel less motivated and able to cognitively process them. Consequently, such cues receive no more than peripheral importance during overall evaluation of the product.

Bloemer et al.’s (2009) COO-ELM model suggests that when consumers have extended and favourable opinions about a country’s products, it would be best to highlight the COO cue more, but only in the case of peripheral processing, otherwise the COO cue will be overshadowed by additional product-related information. On the other hand, if consumers have limited and unfavourable opinions about a country’s products, it would be suggested to camouflage the COO cue.
2.3 Ethnocentrism

In COO context, one of the most researched variables moderating its effectiveness is the level of ethnocentrism (Schrimp and Shrama, 1987). The concept of consumer ethnocentrism originated from the more general concept of ethnocentrism (Khan and Rizvi, 2008). The tendency to prefer products from one’s own culture, to those of other countries is called ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism has been viewed in terms of beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness and the morality of purchasing foreign made products. Consumers that are ethnocentric are more likely to purchase products from their own country, as they might tend to rate their own country’s products more favourable than those foreign, or as they might believe it might have a negative impact on the domestic economy if they purchase imported products otherwise.

2.3.1 Effect of ethnocentrism and COO

Even though Elliott et al. (2003) found that the majority of the population does not let the choice of the domestic product purchase be influenced by consumer ethnocentrism, Orth and Firbasova (2002) found that it was a strong and significant predictor of consumer product evaluations. For highly ethnocentric consumers, the COO cue has a relatively larger effect on product evaluations, on purchase intentions, and willingness to buy foreign products. The literature suggests that consumers high in ethnocentrism generally pay more attention to the COO cue, often perceiving the consumption of imported products as socially undesirable and unpatriotic (Chattalas et al., 2008). In the case of high level of patriotism, consumers tend to purchase only products of local origin. Demographic factors seem to influence ethnocentricity levels. Ethnocentricity differs among different population cohorts. According to Sharma, et al. (1995), females generally tend to possess a more positive country bias towards domestic products than males. On the contrary, Dornoff (1974) found gender to be an unimportant factor to this discussion. When it comes to age, young people tend to evaluate foreign products more favourably than older people (Smith, 1993). In terms of education Sharma, et al (1995) found people with a higher educational background tended to evaluate foreign products more favourable, compared to those with limited education (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998).

Understanding the role that consumer ethnocentrism can portray in influencing consumers, may provide useful decision framework for segmentation, design of communications and for target market selection within different markets, for firms operating globally (Khan and Rizvi, 2008). If consumer-purchasing decisions are influenced by consumer ethnocentrism, companies can take this into account when developing marketing strategies.
Ethnocentrism of a country can be measured using the CETSCALE as a measure. It should be employed with caution however, since the CETSCALE was originally developed for US purposes, it cannot be employed in just any country and should be tested for reliability and validity in other countries (Solomon et al., 2006).

Consumers can also illustrate unbiasedness when processing foreign experiences, this is known as the concept of cosmopolitanism (Zdravkovic, 2013). This type of consumer is also generally more open to other cultures.

All in all, a person’s level of cosmopolitanism contributes to the perception of equality when evaluating COO images, while a person’s level of ethnocentrism contributes to the perception of differences when evaluating COO images (Zdravkovic, 2013).

2.3.2 Buy Irish Campaign – Enhancing consumer ethnocentric views

As outlined before, consumer ethnocentrism has a negative effect on foreign product judgment and willingness to buy foreign products. At global and EU level, various different stakeholders tend to enhance consumer ethnocentrism and limit polycentric views. The underlying reason for doing so is to protect their respective workplaces, profits and national budgets. ‘Buy Domestic’ and ‘Buy Local’ campaigns, national quality labels on products etc., all aim to protect national economies against imported products and services. Especially in the food sector, these campaigns are used to encourage purchase of national products as compared to imported products.

In times of economic crisis governments use consumer ethnocentrism to influence consumer purchasing. In 1980 the Irish Government run a famous campaign to encourage all class of purchasers within Ireland to Buy Irish, rather than to purchase imported goods (Hojnik, 2012).

In the famous ‘Buy Irish’ case (Case 249/81), the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled, on the 24th of November 1982, that Ireland infringed article 30 of article 169 of the ECC Treaty. Even though the Irish government emphasized that the campaign did not have a restrictive effect on imports, since proportion of Irish goods to all goods sold on the Irish market fell from 49.2% in 1977 to 43.4% in 1980, this ruling proved that only a potential hindering of free movement of goods, with no actual impact, is enough to declare a Member State of failing to fulfil it obligation pursuant to article 30 of article 169 of the ECC Treaty (Eur-Lex, Access to European Union Law, 1982). Not all ‘Buy Domestic’ or ‘Buy Local’ campaigns are an infringement of European law. Some of these campaigns are in
accordance with European law: such as those organized by private entities or campaigns organized by the EU itself (Hojnik, 2012).

Further to protecting the national economy, there is also a widespread justification for the ‘Buy Domestic’ campaigns, from the environmental perspective. Domestic production has a smaller environmental footprint than those of products that are imported (which is a main cause of pollution. When Member States try to justify their barriers to free movement of goods, environmental protection is a widely used legitimate objective in the context of food production. However, it should be noted that environmental protection has not yet been justified for campaigns that increase consumer ethnocentrism.

The miles travelled for food to reach its final consumer, is termed ‘food miles’. Even though the importation of food increases choice, global warming concerns, food poisoning scandals associated with contaminated meat and deadly bacteria in vegetables, have caused many people to think about where their food comes from (Hojnik, 2012).

2.3.3 Consumer ethnocentrism in Ireland

In terms of the Irish consumers, as previously outlined, research conducted by Love Irish Food and Ignite Research showed that “87% of Irish consumers try to Buy Irish with 74% of consumers also confirming that they make a deliberate effort to buy” (Love Irish Food, 2014). These results would suggest that Irish people are ethnocentric, and would have a negative bias towards products from other countries other than their home country.

Most researchers agree with the fact that Irish nationalism was much stronger and more widespread in the 1950s as compared to today’s day and age. However Melesevic states, that as compared to the rest of the world, nationalism in Ireland is not “on the wane” (Melsevic, 2014).
2.4 Conclusion

The aim of the literature review was to have an understanding of some key concepts such as COO, consumer decision-making and ethnocentrism, specifically aimed at the Irish consumer. This literature review has allowed for discussion of supporting and opposing theories that could be explored further by means of primary research.

The topic of COO has been researched extensively, however not specifically with regards to the Irish consumer, and distinction between low- and high-involvement products regarding Irish consumption has also not been made. Therefore this research will provide new insights regarding the effects of COO on Irish consumer decision-making in regards to specifically low-involvement purchases.
3. **Research methodology and methods**

The following chapter will outline the research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and the data collection and sampling adopted for this dissertation. Last but not least, it will also cover the research ethics, research limitations and obstacles with carrying out the research.

3.1 **Research methodology**

In many cases ‘research method’ and ‘research methodology’ are used interchangeably. In some cases the term ‘methodology’ is used by itself. The term methodology refers to “the theory of how research should be undertaken” (Saunders et al., 2009). As for research methods, discussed at a later stage, this refers to the techniques and procedures that are used to obtain and to analyse data. This includes questionnaires, interviews and observations and both quantitative and qualitative analysing techniques.

Even though the focus for most people planning their research, is in relation to a question that needs to be answered or a problem that needs to be solved, and then go on to think about what data they need and the techniques they use to collect them, Saunders et al.’s (2009) research onion can be used to explain by which means the researcher has answered the research question. In coming to this central point the researcher will need to explain why choices are made, so others are aware of the fact that research has been taken seriously (Crotty, 1998). Choosing the appropriate research design will ensure that the marketing research project (or dissertation) is conducted in an effective and efficient way. In simple terms, the research design consists of details of the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve marketing research problems (Malhotra, 2006).

Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, the research design adopted, will be explained by means of Saunders et al.’s (2009) research onion. For every layer: philosophy, approach and strategy chosen, an explanation and justification is provided for the decision for following that specific design.
3.1.1 Research philosophy

The outer layer of the onion, which is the most important, determines the research philosophy approach one will take during the research carried out. Research philosophy is the “over-arching term that relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Saunders et al., 2009). A research philosophy can be thought of as the assumptions you make in which you view the world. Even though the research onion would suggest that a research question could only be answered through a particular philosophical domain, in practice this is rarely the case and a combination of philosophical domains will ultimately lead to answering your research question. As has been suggested over the recent years, it is more appropriate for the researcher undertaking a particular study to think of the philosophy adopted as a multidimensional set of continua rather than separate positions (Niglas, 2010).

For the purpose of this research, and taking the above-described suggestion into account, positivism and realism philosophies have been employed as research philosophies. As a novice researcher, positivism provides a clear quantitative approach to investigate a phenomenon. As a positivist researcher, one prefers to collect data about an observable reality and search for regularities and causal relationship in the data to create law-like generalizations. A positivist researcher, generally, is more likely to be structured in order to facilitate replication. With positivism comes the assumption...
that the researcher is value neutral, although claims made that the outcome is totally objective and unquestionably certain, are made rarely (Crotty, 1998). The findings of a positivist philosophy are tentative and qualified and data is obtained in a value-free way (Saunders et al., 2009). A major criticism of the positivist approach is that it does not provide the means to examine human beings and their behaviours in an in-depth way. Ayer (1969) questions the use of the positivist approach, because the ‘nature of men’ makes the establishment of laws and ability to generalize impossible. Humans are not ‘objects’ and are subject to many influences on behaviour, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes that positivists would reject as irrelevant. For this very reason, in terms of the research question, it is of importance that humans should not be seen as merely objects, and the behaviours, feelings, perceptions and attitudes should be taken into account.

Where the positivist view fails, the realist’s approach complements. A realist’s approach is more concerned with the social world in which we live. Realism comprises of two different views: the **direct realism** view and **critical realism** view. With the direct realist view comes the understanding of the world, which is relatively unchanging, and in business context operates at one level. Whereas the critical realist’s view, recognizes the importance of multi-level study: a critical realist’s position is “that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and cannot be understood independently of the social actors involved in the knowledge derivation process (Dobson, 2002)” (Saunders et al., 2009). For this very reason, in addition to the positivist view, a critical realist’s view is taken into account for the purpose of this research paper, as it recognizes the importance of the social world, which is constantly changing. More importantly, this view is more in line with the purpose of business and management research (Saunders et al., 2009).

Positivism and realism are both branches of epistemology that are similar and assume a scientific approach to the development of knowledge. The epistemology view acknowledges that the researcher is ware of objects to have a separate existence to that of the researcher, and for this reason data can be collected being less open to bias, and therefore more objective. Both philosophical views can therefore be employed together, and should for the purpose of this research paper, as positivism fails to cover the social aspects of business research, whereas realism does acknowledge these social aspects.

### 3.1.2 Research approach

Once the first layer of the onion is peeled of, the researcher will have to decide on a research approach. There are two approaches to choose from: the deductive and inductive approach. The research approach employed for the purpose of this dissertation is the **deductive** approach. Even
though labelling of deductive and inductive approach might be misleading, the deductive research approach owes more to positivism (Saunders et al., 2009). The deductive approach follows a linear, clear and logical sequence, which will suit a novice researcher better. The figure below lists the process of deduction:

![Diagram of the process of deduction](image)

**Figure 5: Process of deduction**

The purpose of the literature in the case of the deductive approach is that the literature facilitates in identifying theories and ideas that you will use to test data. Through the literature review a theoretical or conceptual framework is developed, which subsequently is used to test data. As the figure above suggests, this dissertation will start off with a review of the theory, developed from reading the academic literature. The research strategy is designed to test that theory (hypothesis) (Saunders et al., 2009).

As this type of research approach uses a highly structured methodology, it will facilitate in replication, which is an important issue that ensures reliability.

### 3.1.3 Research strategy

The last three layers of the research onion: the research strategy, research choice and time horizon, focus on the process of the research design. In general terms, here, the research question is turned into a research project (Saunders et al., 2009).

Due to the nature of this research, and following from the research philosophies and the research approach chosen, the most suitable research strategy is a quantitative methodology.
According to Bryman and Bell (2007), “a quantitative research strategy can be interpreted as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. The quantitative research design fits in well with the chosen research philosophy, as a quantitative research strategy is generally associated with positivism, but it may also be used within the realist philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009). Also since the deductive research approach has been applied to this research paper, a quantitative research design is the most appropriate research strategy to use here.

To a novice researcher a quantitative methodology can be beneficial as it limits the risk of biases. Due to the nature of this dissertation and the time constraint, a quantitative research strategy will allow for the researcher to gather substantial data, and to make certain assumptions and generalizations, as one can use the ‘sample’ to make generalizations for the ‘population’ (if the sample is representative). The quantitative methodology applied here, will be in the form of a survey strategy. The survey strategy is part of the dissertation’s primary research, in the form of questionnaire.

The survey techniques are “based upon the use of structured questionnaires given to a sample of a population” (Malhotra et al., 2006). The type of questions asked in these structured questionnaires, include questions about a respondents: behaviour, attitude, motivation, awareness, intentions and demographic and lifestyle characteristic. The way in which these questions are asked takes different forms such as: verbally, in writing or via a computer. These questions are structured by the degree of standardization imposed on the data collection process (Malhotra et al., 2006).

The survey strategy is usually associated with a deductive approach. Surveys using questionnaires are widely used as they allow data collection to be done in a standardized form, from a sizeable population in a highly economical way, which allow for comparisons to be made in an easier way. A survey strategy could also be used to facilitate in suggesting possible reasons for a particular relationship between variables. When sampling is used, a survey strategy also makes it possible to generate findings that are representative of the population as a whole, at a lower cost than collecting the data from the whole population (Saunders et al., 2009). As assumptions can be made for the population at large, using the survey strategy, the sample needs to be carefully selected in order to be representative for the whole population.
There are several advantages to employing a survey strategy, more specifically a questionnaire. The first, and most obvious reason is that it is simple to administer. Secondly, the data obtained is consistent, due to the fact that respondents are being limited to the alternatives they can choose from. Due to alternatives being stated, and respondents being limited to these, analysis and interpretation of the data is relatively simple, and easily comparable (Malhotra et al., 2006). Even though it may cost considerable amount of time to: design and pilot the survey, ensure the sample is representative, ensure a good response rate and analyse the responses, once data is collected the researcher is independent and progress cannot be delayed because of the dependency on others for information (Saunders et al., 2009). Some disadvantages associated with the survey strategy, and more specifically the questionnaire; include the fact that respondents might be unable or even unwilling to provide desired information, there may be a loss of validity for certain types of data such as beliefs and feelings, and wording of the questions might be perceived differently by respondents, causing them to give a response which might not match their actual answer. Even taking these disadvantages into account, the survey approach is the most common method of primary data collection in marketing research (Malhotra et al., 2006).

The questionnaire, as part of the survey strategy, employed for the purpose of this dissertation, was self-administered and was handed out to the sample both in hard-copy and online, after tested by a panel. The questionnaire was used in order to gather data in an efficient and time saving way. The questionnaire that was administered offline was by means of asking various Dublin Business School students and employees to respond. As this type of administering did not result in enough responses, the researcher also designed an online version of the questionnaire (identical to the hard-copy), which resulted in 53 more respondents, resulting in a total of 100 respondents to the questionnaire. Unfortunately 5 questionnaires were incomplete and for this reason were removed from the sample.

The questionnaire designed for the purpose of this dissertation can be viewed in Appendix 2 – Questionnaire – Hard-copy version and Appendix 3 – Questionnaire – Online version, as both a hard copy and an online version. As can be derived from the introduction and the questions asked, this research can be classified as ‘direct’, as the true purpose of the research was known by the respondents before they answered the questions to the questionnaire.

During the time of collection of responses at the Dublin Business School, it was noted, that an original question caused for limited complete responses. For this very reason, it was decided to
partially remove this question. Initially question 6 of the questionnaire included “please continue to question 19”, as the picture below illustrates:

![Image](image73x652 to 476x729.png)

This was later removed, to increase the number of completed questionnaires:

![Image](image73x553 to 451x625.png)

Since this question was an integral part of the research, it was decided to partially remove the answer option “no”.

The questionnaire consisted out of questions regarding the respondent’s demographic information, questions regarding the COO effect, and questions regarding the COO being Ireland. Furthermore one question also obtained information regarding the fact if the respondents considered themselves as being patriotic.

It should be noted that the design of the questions and the questionnaire was done by means of Malhotra et al. (2008).

Furthermore, an interview with an industry expert was conducted, to get a business perspective on the topic of COO. Findings from the interview are discussed in section 4.3 Interview with industry expert.

### 3.1.4 Research choice

The choices layer of Saunders et al.’s (2009) research onion is considered with a researchers choice to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques. Other authors, for example Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), use the term research design when referring to multiple methods.

For the purpose of this dissertation the **mono method** is applied, in which a single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedure is used. As there will be a single quantitative data collection technique, namely the questionnaire, the mono method is considered appropriate here.
3.1.5 Time horizon

Due to the time constraint for the nature of this research paper, a **cross-sectional** study has been chosen instead of a longitudinal one. A cross-sectional design is the most frequently used descriptive design in marketing research and involves the collection of information from a given sample of the populations only once (Malhotra, 2006). A cross-sectional study fits in well with a positivist philosophy and the survey strategy. Also, as the time to carry out the research paper is over a period of three months, it will only allow for a cross-sectional study to be done, as longitudinal design requires for a fixed sample(s) of the population to be measured repeatedly. In the case of a longitudinal design, the sample remains the same over time. The cross-sectional design will provide the researcher with a snapshot of a variable at a single point in time, whereas the longitudinal study will provide the researcher with a series of ‘pictures’, and will allow for the researcher to have an in-depth view of the situation and the changes that take place over time (Malhotra, 2006). Some limitations that the cross-sectional design brings include the fact that changes cannot be detected and a relatively large amount of data collection is needed.

Even though, the time horizon is independent to the research strategy or research choice chosen, cross-sectional studies often consist of the survey strategy, which is more in line with this specific research (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.2 Sampling

As the time horizon that was chosen was a cross-sectional design, only one sample of respondents is drawn from the target population, and information is obtained form this sample at only one point in time (Malhotra et al., 2006).

As outlined before, for the purpose of this research paper a survey strategy will be followed. As the research questions are regarding the Irish population, this population will also be targeted for the questionnaire. The Irish population as a whole consists of roughly 4.6 million people (Central Statistic Office, 2014). In relation to the research of this dissertation, when drawing a sample from the total population, the focus would be on people that make purchasing decisions. For this very reason, the sample would include people that are above the age of 18. Central Statistics Office Of Ireland shows that there are around 3.3 Million people in Ireland that are 18 or older. As women are responsible for 77 percent of all purchasing decisions made in grocery retailing, the sample will be predominately female. Ideally it should result in 80 percent of the respondents being female, and 20 percent of the respondents being male (Mintel, 2014).
As outlined before, the questionnaire was administered offline, but due to limited responses was also administered online. The tool utilized for administering online surveys was “Google Forms”. The questionnaire was handed during in two Dublin Business School classes, and additionally in the Dublin Business School library (employees). Furthermore, the online version of the questionnaire was spread across different channels, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, and e-mail and accounted for over 50 responses.

The sampling method adopted for the purpose of this research paper is non-probability sampling. Even though good practice is associated with random or probability sampling (Bryman and Bell, 2007), it is extremely difficult to obtain probability samples. Another reason for not employing either the random or the probability sample, apart from the time, cost and resources involved, might be that the sample is obtained more conveniently. With a non-probability sample comes that some units of the population are more likely to be selected for the questionnaire than others. More specifically convenience sampling was used here, which a type of non-probability sampling. A convenience sample is a sample that is available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Even though such sampling would more than likely result in good response rates and findings may prove to be interesting, one needs to be careful making generalization of the findings, as it is not completely representative of the whole population.

Through the use of snowball sampling, the response rate was increased by reaching a broader sample/audience. Snowball sampling is a form of convenience sampling, where the researchers initially contacts a small group of people, who are relevant to the research topic, are used to find contact with other people. For example, when utilizing (relevant) social contacts on Facebook and e-mail, respondents shared my message, and the questionnaire was shared with contacts, which would have not necessarily been reached in the first place.

Ideally sampling would be done through random or probability sampling, but as a novice researcher and student, this is quite difficult. For this reason non-probability sampling, more specifically convenience sampling was utilized, as it saves time and effort, and it is a simple method to use.

3.3 Data collection

As explained under research strategy, this research paper will follow a survey strategy, more specifically a self-administered questionnaire. With a self-administered questionnaire, respondents answer questions by completing the questionnaire themselves. A self-administered questionnaire refers to the over arching term. More specifically, the purpose of this research paper was to carry
out a self-administered questionnaire through offline and online channels. Channels that were utilized included the Dublin Business School, Facebook and e-mail. Some channels, such as Facebook and e-mail, have been utilized for research purposes before, for my Bachelor thesis, and have shown to be beneficial channels when it comes to data collection. The advantages of a self-administered questionnaire is that it is cheaper to administer, it saves time, no interviewer effects are present (as the researcher is not involved in the administering part itself), all questionnaires will be the same (no variability) and it is convenient for respondents as they can answer the questions in their own time, at their own convenience. Some disadvantages of this way of collecting data include the fact that I cannot provide assistance if people are having difficulty with answering the questionnaire. It is also difficult as one cannot elaborate on a question, and respondents might interpret questions differently. However taking the advantages and disadvantages into account, this way of collecting data will be most beneficial to this research paper as it will allow the researcher to collect, quantitative data, in a time efficient and costly method, and it will allow for generalized assumptions to be made compared to qualitative data.

In order to increase the response rate, and to show gratitude to the respondents of the questionnaire, an incentive was given to the respondents of the questionnaire. Three vouchers from either Eason’s or Boots (selected respondents preference) worth 15€ were raffled among all respondents of the questionnaire. A possibility was given to respondents to put down their e-mail address if they were willing to participate in the draw.

3.4 Data analysis

After data was collected from the chosen survey strategy, a quantitative data analysis method needed to be selected. The data analysis methods selected for this dissertation, included both the functions that Excel Microsoft offers and the SPSS software was used to analyse the findings of the questionnaire in more depth for performing cross analyses. More specifically, the SPSS software used was SPSS Statistics Desktop, version 23.0.0. The researcher had limited previous experience with the tool, but was made aware of the tool during her studies, as it is a great tool to analyse data as one can make correlations. However, as this tool requires understanding, an SPSS course was followed that was provided by the Dublin Business School. Furthermore, literature on the topic was examined before analysing the obtained data.
3.5 Ethics

3.5.1 Ethics of research design

Ethical issues should be addressed when designing research. Ethical decisions that occur during the research design stage are considered with the choice of the research topic. The research topic is governed by ethical considerations (Saunders et al., 2009). The topic of this research paper will most likely not pose any ethical difficulties, as the topic is not of sensitive nature. The research population is informed of the intention of the research and furthermore no personal information is disclosed (except for the e-mail address of respondents who would like to participate in the draw). For this reason, the researcher believes the research design adopted for this research paper complies with ethical standards.

3.5.2 Research ethics

An important part of research ethics is that the researcher will need to think about how it will gain access to data needed, and in which way the researcher will explain why the data is needed from the people collecting it from. The benefit of having to do a research project that does not require the researcher to write in co-operation with or for a company, is that it is relatively easy to obtain and collect data. As such, secondary data needed for the purpose of this research was mostly found through reliable sources from the Dublin Business School’s library. As for primary data, a sample was chosen and respondents made aware of the research topic before responding to the questionnaire.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing concern regarding the ethics of research practice. For this very reason it is important for the researcher to think carefully about how access is gained to undertake the research and about possible ethical concerns that could arise during the research project (Saunders et al., 2009).

As stated before, the nature of the topic of this dissertation does not pose potential sensitivity. This will improve social desirability, as respondents are likely to answer questions of the questionnaire because they feel to be acceptable in front of others. As for the concerns about the respondent’s identities, the researcher will not make these public. Furthermore initial perceptions about the researcher credibility and doubts about competence were addressed with in the introduction of the questionnaire (Malhotra et al., 2008).

Sensitive questions in a questionnaire, such as the respondent’s age, gender, educational background, or income, are considered highly sensitive. The success of a questionnaire handling
sensitive questions depends upon how well the purpose of these sensitive questions is introduced (Malhotra et al., 2008). In a draft of the questionnaire, before the first five ‘sensitive’ questions were asked, the following text was introduced: “The first questions are general questions about the demographics of the respondents. These questions are asked to determine how answers vary among people of different age groups, gender, occupation and income.” However, due to the fact that too much reading in a questionnaire might cause for incomplete questionnaires, this was later removed. Also taking into account that the questionnaire was anonymous, not specifically addressing these sensitive questions did not cause any issues, where respondents did not feel comfortable providing answers.

For the purpose of this research paper, all the information obtained through the use of the survey strategy (e.g. questionnaire), was only used for the purpose of constructing this dissertation. Respondents were informed of the nature of the research and confidentiality is guaranteed to all respondents. Data obtained was threatened taken privacy and confidentiality into account. Due to the fact that no personal information (except for the e-mail address) was submitted, all respondents remain anonymous. During the process of analysis, and after the analysis was finalized, responses to the questionnaires were stored securely and confidentially. After completion of the analysis, the references linking the questionnaire to the identity of the respondent were separated, and the questionnaires were later destroyed.

Furthermore it should be noted that the researcher has aimed to stay as unbiased as possible, and has not fabricated, falsified or misrepresented the research data. The purpose of this dissertation was to promote the truth and avoid error.

3.6 Limitations of methodology/methods

Some of the limitations faced during the course of this research, have been previously outlined as part of the quantitative methodology (questionnaire) used. As quantitative methodology allows for a researcher to collect a relatively large pool of data, in a short time period and in a cost efficient way, it also brings some limitations to this type of research. For example, responses to the questionnaire were limited to circa 100 responses, due to research time limitations. Also as outlined in section 3.2 Sampling, the responses to the questionnaire were obtained by means of non-probability sampling, as this was convenient to the researcher, which might have caused for a more biased sample, as not everyone from the population had the same probability of being selected. Therefore after primary research was done, it this was taken into account, and generalizations were made with caution. Another limitation of quantitative methodology is that there was no possibility to elaborate on the
answers to the questions given, which could result in more in-depth responses. Moreover, as people’s motivations were being researched in this dissertation, elements such as un-commitment, and misinterpretation of the questions, also altered the results of this research project.

All in all, even though there were numerous limitations, the quantitative methodology, more specifically the self-administered questionnaire, is the most suitable for a novice researcher. Furthermore research could be carried out in a short time period.
Apart from the chosen methodology, limitations of this research lie in the concept of COO being explored. As Watson and Wright (2000) stated, conducting COO studies has a different outcome for different countries and cultures. Therefore it makes it more difficult to make generalized assumptions. Again, this fact has been taken into account when it comes to making generalizations about the sample.
4. **Data analysis and findings**

The following chapter will present the findings from the primary research, more specifically, from the questionnaire. In this section, there is no in-depth discussion and conclusions are also not formed. This section will merely serve as a representation of the findings of each separate question of the questionnaire.

As stated before, 100 responses (n=100) were obtained through primary research by the means of a questionnaire. Unfortunately 5 responses could not be used, as questionnaires were incomplete. Therefore these have been removed from the sample, resulting in 95 responses (n=95) in total. Please note: the number of respondents might slightly differ amongst the questions as some questions contained the possibility to select multiple answers. There were also two questions, which were not filled out by all respondents. As these respondents did fill out all the other required questions, they were not removed from the sample.
4.1 Demographics
The first few questions of the questionnaire were asked in order to be able to sketch a profile of the respondents that participated in the questionnaire. The next few sections will address demographic variables such as: age, gender, occupation, gross income and country of birth. All the demographic questions as part of the questionnaire contained a sample of 95 respondents (n=95), except for the question regarding gross income, which resulted in 94 responses (n=94).

4.1.1 Age category
As can be derived from the figure below, the results to the age category question are not evenly spread. The largest group of the respondents is between the ages of 35-50, with 41 percent (for n=95).

\[\text{Figure 6: Age category respondents}\]
4.1.2 Gender

As can be derived from the figure below, the gender of the respondents was predominantly female with 61 percent, and males accounting for 39 percent (for n=95). As outlined in section 3.2 Sampling, females make 77 percent of the purchasing decisions in grocery retailing, and for this reason it is advantageous that the questionnaire was answered by predominantly females. In section 5. Discussion, this is analysed in more detail.

Figure 7: Gender respondents
4.1.3 Occupation

62 percent (for n=95) of the respondents to the questionnaire were (self-) employed. The other answer possibilities such as “student”, “unemployed” and “other” were under represented for this question. As for the answers given under the answer possibility “other”, these included: full time mother, pensioner, part-time worker, student /employed, etc.

![Occupation chart]

Figure 8: Occupation respondents
4.1.4 Gross income per year

The question regarding gross income per year, resulted in respondents predominantly having a gross income of “under €20,000” per year, accounting for 46 percent (for n=94) of the respondents. As can be derived from the figure below, the second and third largest groups refer to the second and third income group.

Figure 9: Gross income per year of respondents
4.1.5 Country of birth

For most of the respondents to the questionnaire their country of birth is Ireland, with 74 percent (for n=95). The 26 percent of the respondents for which Ireland was not their county of birth, consisted of people coming from various other countries. This is the result from collecting responses to the questionnaire at the Dublin Business School were there are also many International student with different birth countries.

![Country of birth diagram](image)

*Figure 10: Country of birth respondents*
4.2 Purchasing behaviour and COO

The next section of questions from the questionnaire consisted from questions regarding purchasing behaviour and questions more specifically aimed around purchasing behaviour and COO (more specifically Ireland as a COO). It should be noted, that for respondents were asked to keep grocery products in mind when responding to the questionnaire. Again, for most of the questions on the questionnaire, the sample contained 95 respondents (for n=95), if this is not the case, it will also be indicated.

4.2.1 Responsible for grocery shopping

The question “are you the main person doing grocery shopping in your household” resulted in the majority of the respondents being the main person, responsible for grocery shopping, with 73 percent (for n=95). It is important that this question was asked, due to the fact that this dissertation, researches the impact of Ireland as a COO when it comes to the purchase of domestic products (more specifically food products). If results were to be different, it might have resulted in difficulty making generalizations, as most respondents would not have been involved in the actual purchasing process, which is not the case here, as the respondents were also predominantly the main persons involved in grocery shopping.

![Main person doing grocery shopping](image)

**Figure 11: Responsible for grocery shopping**
4.2.2 Search for COO cue

As the below bar chart depicts, the majority of the people do not search for the COO cue before purchasing a product, accounting for 56 percent (for n=95) of the respondents. One third of the respondents do actively search for the country-of-origin before purchasing a product, and 9 percent of the respondents are not aware if they actively search for the COO before purchasing a product.

![Figure 12: Search for COO cue](image)

Do you actively search for the country of origin before purchasing a product?

- Yes: 35%
- Not sure: 9%
- No: 56%
4.2.3 COO influencing factors

The next question looks at the factors that influence purchasing intentions, when taking the COO into account. As this was a multiple choice answer possibility, 198 answers were recorded for 95 respondents (n=95). When taking the COO into account, the most important factor which influences the purchase intentions is “quality” of product, with 41 percent. A breakdown of all the factors and their corresponding importance are outlined in the figure below.

![Figure 13: Influencing factors of COO cue](image-url)

- Quality of product: 41%
- Experiences from yourself or peers: 20%
- Product safety standards: 16%
- Image of the country: 12%
- Product footprint (how far the product has traveled from A to Z): 11%
- Other: 1%
4.2.4 Statements regarding COO

The below two statements illustrate that respondents agree with the fact that COO serves as a cue for people to make more informed decisions (when knowledge is limited) and to determine product quality, with 47 and 42 percent (for n=95) respectfully. Both statements have similar responses percentage wise, per category. There is also a quite large percentage of respondents that are ignorant towards both statement (“do not agree, nor disagree”), with 26 and 36 percent (for n=95) respectfully.

![Diagram showing responses to COO statements](image)

*Figure 14: Statements and COO cue*
4.2.5 Buy Irish

Research conducted by Love Irish Food and Ignite Research showed that “87% of Irish consumers try to Buy Irish with 74% of consumers also confirming that they make a deliberate effort to buy” (Love Irish Food, 2014). The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire for this dissertation, find it important to “Buy Irish” when grocery shopping, with a cogent number of 69 percent (for n=95), which is a lower percentage than research conducted by Ignite Research, but which is still a convincing number.

![Pie chart showing 69% yes, 31% no for buying Irish when shopping.]

Figure 15: Buy Irish
The strongest motivation for people to “Buy Irish” is to support the Irish economy with 55 percent. This question was also a multiple choice answer possibility where 141 answers were recorded for 95 respondents (for n=95). Another important reason for respondents to purchase Irish is for the reason that domestic products are more environmentally friendly, as they have a smaller footprint, compared to those imported products.

**Figure 16: Reason for buying Irish**

The strongest motivation for people to “Buy Irish” is to support the Irish economy with 55 percent. This question was also a multiple choice answer possibility where 141 answers were recorded for 95 respondents (for n=95). Another important reason for respondents to purchase Irish is for the reason that domestic products are more environmentally friendly, as they have a smaller footprint, compared to those imported products.
4.2.6 COO and likelihood to purchase

The below bar chart illustrates the results to the three statements regarding COO and likelihood to purchase. As can be derived from the figure below, when the COO is Ireland, a large percentage of the respondents are much more, and little more likely to purchase the product, with 28 and 45 percent (for n=95) respectively. Together accounting for 73 percent. When the COO is not Ireland, the likelihood is not likely to change, with 64 percent. Some of the respondents, accounting for 24 percent, have even shown they are a “little less likely” to purchase the product if the COO is not Ireland. Logo’s indicating the Irish origin, generate motivation for people to purchase the products, with 25 percent of the respondents being “much more likely” and 43 percent of the respondents being “a little more likely” to purchase the products with the COO logo’s.

**Figure 17: COO cue and likelihood to purchase**
4.2.7 COO and willingness to pay

The next set of questions looks at the willingness to pay more for products taking COO into account as a variable. As can be derived from the first pie-graph below, 52 percent (for n=95) of the people were willing to pay more for a product with a favourable COO.

Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is more favorable?

![Pie chart showing 52% Yes, 48% No]

**Figure 18: Willingness to pay and favourable COO**

The same question was asked taking Ireland, specifically, as COO, which resulted in 51 percent (for n=94) of the respondents willing to pay more for a product when the COO is Ireland.

Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is Ireland?

![Pie chart showing 51% Yes, 49% No]

**Figure 19: Willingness to pay and Irish COO**
For those respondents that answered that they were willing to pay more for a product with an Irish COO (2 respondents replied, while answering “no” to the previous question), 46 percent (for n=48) of the respondents is willing to pay between 1-5% extra, and 40 percent is willing to pay between 6-10%. Some respondents provided “other” answers, such as: “do not know” and respondents that “would pay a lot more for Irish meat”.

![Figure 20: Willingness to pay more for Irish products](image-url)
4.2.8 Patriotism

The last topic of the questionnaire looked into the level of patriotism for each respondent. In general, 68 percent of the respondents (for n=95) would consider themselves to be patriotic. Section 5. Discussion, would go more into detail on this point as patriotism can have an impact on the processing of the COO cue.

Figure 21: Level of patriotism of respondents
4.3 Summary of findings

This section provides a recap of the findings, presented in bullet points below, without providing an in-depth analysis:

- 56 percent of the respondents do not actively search for the COO cue, when purchasing grocery products. 35 percent does actively search for this cue, and another 9 percent is “not sure” if they search for this cue.
- The most influential factor for the purchase intention, taking COO into account, is the quality of the product with 41 percent of a total of 198 answers recorded. Also important is the experience from yourself or peers with 20 percent.
- Primary research also found that respondents agree with the fact that COO serves as a cue for people to make more informed decisions (when knowledge is limited) and to determine product quality, with 52 and 48 percent respectfully.
- 69 percent of the respondents find it important to “Buy Irish” when grocery shopping.
- Reasons respondents provided most important when it comes to “buying Irish”, is to support the Irish economy, with 55 percent, and for the reason that domestic products have a smaller footprint, with 28 percent.
- 73 percent of the respondents are more likely to purchase products with COO being Ireland.
- When COO is not Ireland, 64 percent of the respondents pointed out there is no change in likelihood to purchase. For 27 percent however, likelihood to purchase the product was less likely.
- When it comes to willingness to pay, 52 percent of the respondents would be willing to pay more for a product with a favourable COO. This was 51 percent in the case of the COO being Ireland. Respondents that answered they would be willing to pay more for Ireland as a COO, are willing to spend 1-5% and 6-10% more on the product, with 46 and 40 percent respectfully.
- 68% of all respondents consider themselves to be “patriotic”.
4.4 Interview with industry expert

Apart from the survey strategy that was applied for the research of this dissertation, an interview was conducted with an industry expert, to gain perspective on the topic of COO from a business point of view. It was not necessarily part of the research strategy, but this interview was conducted to make sure all points were addressed and looked at in this dissertation. Mr O’Sullivan has been active in the retail industry for many years and worked together with retailers in terms of, space planning, category management, in-store promotion, merchandise services and sales and ordering. Mr O’Sullivan was a key contact for retailers and individual stores, and has also worked with the suppliers of these stores. Some interview questions were prepared, which can be found in Appendix 3 – Interview Questions.

From the interview it became evident that the supermarket retailers all actively participate in their communications (i.e. packaging strategy) to promote their Irish produce and origin. National supermarket retailers, such as Superquinn, now part of SuperValu, have always heavily promoted their Irishness. Recently the supermarket discounters, such as Aldi and Lidl, are also focussing their communications on the Irish COO. Reason for these supermarket as this allows them to compete in the market, as Irish people will now not merely think of them on them as being “non-Irish” anymore. Irish people are generally proud of their food heritage. Furthermore, economically it also makes sense for supermarkets to produce their products in Ireland, as distribution costs are much lower, and at the same time it allows for these companies to spread the message that they “support the Irish economy”.

As for the likelihood to purchase when Ireland is the COO, Mr O’Sullivan believes that Irish people do find it important to shop Irish, but ever since the economic downturn, cost is a much more influential factor for purchase decisions. He believes Irish people are more price than COO loyal. The Irish COO could improve chances of the likelihood to purchase, but it will not serve as the ultimate factor to purchase the products.

From the retailer’s perspective, there is not a real advantage to employing the COO. As most retailers are using this strategy, there is not a unique selling point to it any longer. However, if they do not participate it will not get unnoticed, and might impact sales negatively.

As the questionnaire, for the purpose of this research, did not look into other factors, such as price, when it comes to low-involvement purchases, some findings from the interview cannot be
compared. However, this interview was conducted for the sole purpose to have a business perspective, and to make sure no important elements were overlooked in this research.
5. Discussion

The following chapter will present a discussion of the findings from the previous section, with more extensive in-depth analyses, and will also aim to answer the research question. This section will also discuss the contribution to the literature and will examine limitations of the research, and present recommendations for further research.

5.1 In-depth analysis of the findings

The following section provides a more in-depth analysis of the findings presented in section 4. Data Analysis and Findings. For this in-depth analysis, the analyses functions from SPSS are utilized. These analyses were done by means of SPSS Statistics Desktop, version 23.0.0.

5.1.1 Active search for COO and logos

An interesting variable that could be looked at in more depth is the active search for the COO before purchasing a product, and the impact that country specific logos have on the likelihood to purchase. The results can be found in the table below:

Do you actively search for a products country-of-origin before purchasing a product? * What impact does seeing these logo s have on your likelihood to purchase? Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>What impact does seeing these logo s have on your likelihood to purchase?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lot less likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you actively search for a products country-of-origin before purchasing a product?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Active search for COO vs. impact of COO logos on likelihood to purchase
As absolute results do not provide a clear picture of the findings, the below bar chart has been created. The impact of the country specific logos on the likelihood to purchase is especially high for those people who are not aware if they are searching for the COO cue before purchasing a product, with 100 percent (for n=95) of the respondents more likely to purchase the product when being presented with Irish COO logos. This finding can support marketing practitioners in their decision to use COO logos on the packaging, as it makes people more aware of the COO, and in this case increases the likelihood to purchase.

**Figure 22: Cross analyses – Active search for COO vs. impact of COO logos on likelihood to purchase**
5.1.2 Gender and decision Maker

As stated before in section 3.2 Sampling, females make 77 percent of the purchasing decisions in grocery retailing. As was said in section 4.2.1. Responsible for grocery shopping, the fact that more respondents were female is advantageous to the primary research. However, in order to be sure of this statement (that 77 percent of the purchasing decisions in grocery retailing is predominantly female) is correct for this sample, a cross analysis has been made. Two variables, gender and responsibility of grocery shopping were plotted against each other, and the results can be viewed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Are you the main person doing grocery shopping in your household?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Gender vs. responsible for grocery shopping

The table above does not show a clear representation, as absolute values are used and more females than males have responded to the questionnaire. In order to illustrate a more representative picture, a bar chart using percentages is presented on the next page.
As can be derived from the bar chart below indeed more females than males are responsible for grocery shopping in their household, with a difference of 26 percent (for n=95): 57 percent of males are responsible for grocery shopping versus 83 percent of females. There is still a large number of the male population indicating they are responsible for grocery shopping in their household with 57 percent (for n=95). Ideally the results would have showed similar pictures, with males having opposite results as apposed to those from the female respondents.

![Bar chart showing gender vs. responsible for grocery shopping](image)

**Figure 23: Cross analyses – Gender vs. responsible for grocery shopping**
5.1.3 Country of birth and “Buy Irish”

Another question of the questionnaire that is interesting to analyse in more depth, is the relation between the country of birth and the importance for the respondents to “Buy Irish” when shopping (more specifically grocery shopping). The results can be found in absolute values in the table below:

Is Ireland your country of birth? * Is buying Irish important when you shop? Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Is buying Irish important when you shop?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Ireland your country of birth?</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Country of birth vs. importance of buying Irish

Again, the table with absolute values does not provide a clear representation. Therefore in order to provide a representation from these findings, relative figures should be utilized. A bar chart of the above findings is presented on the next page.
As the findings from the bar chart below suggest, when the country of birth of respondents is Ireland, they tend to place more importance to shop Irish, with 74 percent (for n=95). Focusing on the purchase of domestic products can be explained by ethnocentrism: when people tend to favour their own products, over those that are imported. When the country of birth is somewhere other than Ireland, respondents still place importance on buying Irish, however the percentage of the importance to Buy Irish is considerably less, with 52 percent (for n=95). This could perhaps be explained by recent environmental concerns, resulting in respondents purchasing products with smaller footprints. If this were to be the case, Irish products (domestic here), would have a smaller footprint than those of imported products, thus being more environmentally friendly.

Figure 24: Cross analyses – Country of birth vs. importance of buying Irish
5.1.4 Country of birth and patriotism

The last question of the questionnaire explored patriotism. Since the research conducted included respondents with a country of birth other than Ireland, it would be interesting to explore, of those people with country of birth Ireland, how many respondents consider themselves to be patriotic. The table below illustrates the finding to this above explained cross analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Would you consider yourself to be patriotic?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Ireland your country of birth?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Country of birth vs. patriotism

The findings in the below bar chart suggest that, of the respondents that were born in Ireland, 76 percent (for n=95) considers themselves to be patriotic. This is an important finding as results from the previous cross analysis revealed that respondents with Ireland as their country of birth, also find it important to purchase Irish products, with 74 percent. Furthermore these findings would indicate that Irish people are more patriotically oriented, as compared to respondents with other country of births.
5.1.5 Patriotism and “Buy Irish”

As the literature review has suggested, the level of ethnocentrism and patriotism, are also factors that influence the purchase of domestic products. For patriotic consumers, ethnocentric views are to be expected, for which the COO cue has a relatively larger effect on product evaluations, on purchase intentions, and willingness to purchase foreign products. The literature suggests that consumers high in ethnocentrism generally pay more attention to the COO cue, often perceiving the consumption of imported products as socially undesirable and unpatriotic (Chattalas et al., 2008). In order to evaluate this reasoning in more depth, a correlation is made with the two variables: patriotism and importance of buying Irish. The following table illustrates the findings from this correlation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you consider yourself to be patriotic?</th>
<th>Is buying Irish important when you shop?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider yourself to be patriotic?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Patriotism vs. importance of buying Irish

The bar chart on the next page, illustrates the findings from the above table using representative figures.
As the findings from the bar chart below suggest, respondents that consider themselves to be patriotic, tend to place greater importance on shopping “Irish”, with 78 percent (for n=95), as compared to respondents not considering themselves to be patriotic, with 47 percent. This would suggest that the level of patriotism, which enhances ethnocentric behaviour, influences people to purchase domestic product as apposed to purchasing imported products.

![Figure 26: Cross analyses – Patriotism vs. importance of buying Irish](image-url)
5.1.6 Likelihood to purchase and willingness to pay

Another interesting correlation can be made correlating the willingness to pay more for a product if the COO is Ireland, and the impact the Irish COO has on the likelihood to purchase. The following table illustrates the findings from this correlation:

If the product's country-of-origin is Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase? * Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country-of-origin is Ireland? Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country-of-origin is Ireland?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the product's country-of-origin is Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase?</td>
<td>Lot less likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little less likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change in likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little more likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Much more likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Likelihood to purchase vs. willingness to pay

The bar chart on the next page, illustrates the findings from the above table using representative figures.
As can be derived from the bar chart, when the COO is Ireland, and likelihood to purchase increases, so does the willingness to pay more for that Irish product. When the respondents is much more likely to purchase the product with the COO being Ireland, the respondent is also willing to pay more for that product with 78 percent (for n=95). Consequently, when the likelihood to purchase an Irish product is less likely, the respondents are also not willing to pay more for that specific product, with 100 percent. This suggests that if people are more likely to purchase Irish products, they are also willing to spend more on these specific products.

Figure 27: Cross analyses – Likelihood to purchase vs. willingness to pay
5.1.7 Age category and “Buy Irish”

In the literature review, it became evident that age is a determinant for an individual’s level of ethnocentrism, cosmopolitanism or patriotism. For this reason the correlation between the age category and “Buy Irish” is made, for which the findings are presented in the table below:

**Age category * Is buying Irish important when you shop? Cross tabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Is buying Irish important when you shop?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Results from the crosstabs function in SPSS – Age Category vs. Buy Irish

The bar chart below shows that the findings from the primary research do not differ from the findings in the secondary research. When it comes to age, young people tend to evaluate foreign products more favourably than older people (Smith, 1993). This would suggest that with age, Irish people increasingly favour, and would tend to buy “Irish” products. As the figure below indicates:

**Buying Irish and Age category**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of people buying Irish products by age category](image)

Figure 28: Cross analyses – Age Category vs. Buy Irish
5.2 Matching findings from primary and secondary research

While doing desktop research, and reading various publications on the topic of COO, it became apparent that the COO is an important cue to the decision-making process, but its effectiveness and processing of the cue, depends on various other factors. There is an extensive literature regarding the COO topic, and there are many various apposing theories regarding COO and its effectiveness. As outlined before, the Irish market has not been researched specifically and extensively in COO research, as has research regarding COO on low-involvement products, which is where this research comes in.

Findings from the primary research showed that a large part of the respondents does not actively search for the COO cue before purchasing grocery products (with 56 percent). An interesting finding, however, is that that the impact of the country specific logos, increase the likelihood to purchase when consumer are being presented with Irish COO logos. Especially respondents that are not aware of their COO search, become more likely to purchase the products (with 100 percent), when being presented with the COO logos.

The most influential factor on purchase intention, taking the COO into account, is the quality of the product (with 41 percent). Previous experiences from yourself or peers are also important reasons for respondents to take the COO of a product into account (with 20 percent). Furthermore, primary research has found that respondents agree with the fact that COO serves as a cue for people to make more informed decisions (when knowledge is limited) and to determine product quality, with 52 and 48 percent respectfully.

Primary research revealed that 69 percent of the respondents find it important to “Buy Irish” when they are doing their grocery shopping, and 73 percent of the respondents are more likely to purchase products with an Irish COO. Correlations found that the country of birth influences respondents to purchase Irish products. Respondents that were born in Ireland, were more likely to “Buy Irish” with a percentage of 74, compared to respondents born somewhere other than Ireland, being more likely to purchase Irish products with 52 percent. These findings would suggest that Irish people are more likely to purchase domestic products, as apposed to other people.

In the case of high level of patriotism, consumers tend to purchase only products of local origin. For highly ethnocentric consumers, the COO cue has a relatively larger effect on product evaluations, on purchase intentions, and willingness to buy foreign products. Findings from the questionnaire
revealed that people that consider themselves to be patriotic, place more importance to “Buy Irish” when they shop, with 78 percent, as opposed to 47 percent for the people who do not consider themselves to be patriotic. Most important reasons for respondents to “Buy Irish” is to support the Irish economy, with 55 percent, and for the reason that domestic products have a smaller footprint, i.e. being more environmentally friendly, with 28 percent. Looking at the Irish country of birth and patriotism more specifically: 76 percent of the respondents born in Ireland, considered themselves to be patriotic, compared to 48 percent of the respondents from other countries of birth.

52 percent of the respondents would be willing to pay more for a product with a favourable COO. In the case of this COO being Ireland, 51 percent would be willing to pay more. Respondents that answered they would be willing to pay more for Ireland as a COO, are willing to spend between 1-5% and 6-10% more on a product, with 46 and 40 percent respectfully. Consequently, findings from the correlations between the likelihood to purchase and the willingness to pay, found when the likelihood to purchase a product with an Irish COO increases, so does the willingness to pay more for this product.

Interestingly, looking at demographic factors, it was found that age is a determinant of the level of ethnocentrism. Young people tend to evaluate foreign products more favourably than older people (Smith, 1993). Primary research supports this finding, with each step in an increase in the age category, the percentage of respondents finding it important to “Buy Irish” increases as well.

5.3 Research questions answered

The aim of this research paper was to investigate the Irish COO effect on Irish consumer’s decision-making. The research question was formulated as follows: “Does the Irish COO impact the purchase of domestic products (specifically those of low-involvement, e.g. grocery products) amongst Irish consumers?”

The following sub-research questions were formed that will facilitate in the understanding of the concept of COO and in answering the research question:

(i) What are the different effects of COO? Section 2.1.4 Different cognitive Country-of-Origin effects

(ii) Through which stages of decision-making does a consumer go when it comes to making purchases? Section 2.2 Consumer Decision-Making

(iii) In which way does the COO effect differ amongst low- and high-involvement purchase decisions? Section 2.1.3 Consumer Involvement
(iv) Are Irish people ethnocentric and does this influence their purchasing behaviour?

Section 2.3 Ethnocentrism

(v) Are Irish people willing to pay more for domestically produced products?

The sub-research questions were partially answered by means of the literature review, in the sections outlined per question. Question (v) was primarily answered by means of the primary research: Irish people are willing to pay more for domestically produced products, if there is already a likelihood to purchase domestic produced products. With an increase in likelihood to purchase, comes an increase in the willingness to pay for these kind of products.

Now the next question is, “Does the Irish COO impact the purchase of domestic products (specifically those of low-involvement, e.g. grocery products) amongst Irish consumers?” In general there is an acceptance that COO effects can be a of influence on consumer perceptions, depending on the type of goods, the actual COO, the level of nationalism prevalent in the home country, and, in some cases, the demographics of the consumer (Parsons et al., 2012). Secondary and primary research indicated that Irish people, in general, place importance on the purchase of domestic products, for various reasons, but most importantly to support the Irish economy. Furthermore research has shown that likelihood to purchase products with an Irish COO cue is more, than those of products with a COO different than Ireland. COO logos can facilitate specifically in making people more aware of the Irish COO, and respondents indicated the likelihood to purchase is more likely, especially for those people who previously would have not searched for the COO cue, or who were not aware of there search. A large amount of the respondents with their country of birth being Ireland, considered themselves to be patriotic and find it important to “Buy Irish” when grocery shopping. It seems patriotism is of importance here, as people considering themselves to be patriotic have a significantly higher focus on “Buying Irish”, as compared to those who do not consider themselves to be patriotic.

5.4 Research limitations and scope for further research

This research offers an evaluative perspective on Irish consumer decision-making regarding low-involvement products, taking the Irish COO into account.

As a direct consequence of the chosen methodology, the research has encountered some limitations that need to be considered. Amongst other limitations, perhaps the most evident is the fact that, due to the time constraint, a sample of only 100 respondents was taken. Furthermore, due to the fact that it was a convenience sample, results might not be completely representative for the
population as a whole, and for this reason generalizations made in this research paper should be taken and interpreted with caution. Furthermore, due to the small sample, and spread of demographic cohorts, it also makes it difficult to make generalizations for demographic cohorts, taking demographic variables into account.

When researching human behaviour, one needs to be bare in mind that people have personalities, and have different beliefs and aspirations. For the purpose of this research the Irish population was researched, and so findings from this research paper are not necessarily applicable for other countries and cultures. All in all, amongst and within different cultures, individuals are existent, meaning the findings do not apply to each individual within that certain culture.

The chosen research strategy unfortunately does not offer the possibility for the respondents to provide in-depth answers, and so the researcher can only generate generalizations of those things being observed.

Furthermore, it should be noted, this research was done focusing on the low-involvement purchase decisions, more specifically those regarding grocery products. Therefore, as the scope of this research focuses on low-involvement products, findings will only be applicable to the low-involvement decision-making process.

There is a wide scope for further research regarding the topic of COO and the Irish market. Future research studies should however include a more representative sample of the Irish population. Due to the time constraint of this research, a convenience sample was used, which restricts the validity of the findings in this paper. Future research could investigate the difference between likelihood to purchase for low- and high-involvement product and could investigate the COO effect in terms of other cues as well. As this dissertation has focussed on COO only and not looked at other cues, there is scope for further research here.
6. Conclusion

This study was set out to explore the concept of COO and its effect on Irish consumer’s decision-making related to grocery products. The research sought to know if, how and to which extend the COO influenced purchase decisions of Irish consumers. The general theoretical literature on this subject, found there is a general acceptance amongst scholars, that COO effects can influence consumer perceptions, depending on various factors such as: product knowledge, country knowledge, level of nationalism prevalent in the home country etc. (Parsons et al., 2012). Marketers and consumer behaviour researchers generally accept that a product’s COO is important an important cue in consumer decision-making (Piron, 2000). Even though there is extensive literature around the concept of COO, literature in the context of the Irish market, and the Irish COO are inconclusive. Furthermore, literature regarding COO focuses predominantly on purchasing decisions involving high-involvement durable products (Knight et al., 2007), which is where this research comes in.

This dissertation sought out to answer the following research question: “Does the Irish COO impact the purchase of domestic products (specifically those of low-involvement, e.g. grocery products) amongst Irish consumers?” This study found that Irish people, in general, place importance on the purchase of domestic products. Amongst other reasons, the most important reason for purchasing domestic products is to support the Irish economy. Furthermore this research has shown that likelihood to purchase products with an Irish COO cue is more likely, as compared to those products with a different COO. It was also found that COO logos can facilitate specifically in making people more aware of the Irish COO. A large amount of the respondents with their country of birth being Ireland, considered themselves to be patriotic and find it important to “Buy Irish” when grocery shopping. All in all, these findings would suggest that an Irish COO impact the purchase of domestic products, as it influences the likelihood to purchase. This study has also found that purchase of domestic products, is linked to patriotism.

The opposing theories on the topic of COO should not be refuted, as previous research might include other cultures, different factors, or use different product categories to explain the COO effect on product evaluations. This study merely serves as an additionally study, specifically regarding the Irish COO and the Irish consumers, for low-involvement grocery products. As the concept of COO is complex, further extensive research needs to be done, for which this study can be taken as a starting point as it has uncovered some interesting findings.
In spite of the extensive literature available on the topic, and many opposing theories, this study found that the Irish COO influences consumer-decision making and impacts purchase intentions for Irish consumers.
Reflection

Introduction

When it comes to succeeding as a graduate student, there are a few key factors that facilitate this success: self-reflection, good communication and time management. Self-reflection that is specifically examined here, “may include examining one’s goals, motivations, family and professional commitments, research interests, and personal finances” (Lazaros et al., 2014).

Learning can be defined as “changes in knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes brought by experience and reflection upon that experience” (Brown et al., 1997). It is important that all that is learned is assessed. Brown and Knigth (1994) describe the importance of assessment as being at the heart of a student’s experience (Brown et al., 1997).

Learning style

Every individual has a different learning style. Kolb developed a learning cycle, that encompasses experiential theory, which is perhaps most relevant to student learning. The learning cycle, as outlined below, consists of four phases that can be matched to the corresponding learning styles: activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists. Kolb claims that each of the stages is essential, but that everyone varies in preference for each of them (Brown et al., 1997).

![Kolb's learning cycle](image)

Each of the corresponding learning styles, which were developed and adapted by Honey and Mumford (1983), are explained as follows:
- **Activist**: an activist learns from activities in the ‘here and now’ and would learn the least from those learning experiences that require a passive role.

- **Reflectors**: a reflector learns in such a way that it absorbs information and then goes on to reflect upon this information and experience, and reaches decisions in their own time.

- **Theorist**: the theorist prefers to utilize theoretical frameworks and integrate observations and experiences. They like to explore certain things in depth, and situations in which this is not possible are strongly disliked.

- **Pragmatist**: a pragmatist learns best when there is a practical relevance. They have a strong dislike for learning that seems unrelated, which has no immediate recognizable benefit or need.

The researcher believes to have a learning style of that of a “theorist”. The Master programme and the dissertation specifically, have allowed for the researcher to use theoretical frameworks and integrate observations and experiences while learning.

**Master of Science in Marketing**

After obtaining a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), the researcher felt insecure about her academic knowledge, and felt more academic learning was needed before entering the job market. This MSc in Marketing has facilitated in personal and academic growth.

Looking back at the MSc in Marketing programme, the researcher has learned to apply the academic learning to practical cases and many projects included non-fictive problems and companies. In order to be successful in the programme the researcher believed it was up to herself to make the most of the experience. As the researcher wanted to grow academically and personally, high level of commitment and involvement was taken. Now that the MSc programme has come to an end, the researcher feels more confident about entering the job market.

The programme has allowed the researcher to learn a lot about Marketing as a whole, and about Digital Media more specifically. Theory was applied to practical projects, which has allowed for better understanding and which has allowed for connections between theory and practice to be made. Presentations, projects and teamwork, have learned to deal with problem solving, time management, team discussions and presentation skills.

All in all, the programme was enjoyable and the researcher believes to have learned a lot. Knowledge was gained regarding Marketing and Digital Media, and on a personal level the researcher has grown. The researcher has learned: how to do research, how to be more critical
when it comes to reading, has improved her English language skills, and the researcher has also addressed weaknesses such as speaking in public. Group projects, have taught the researcher, to work through issues and that it is important for clear rules to be set. Furthermore, being a foreign and international student the researcher has gained more experience regarding other cultures and doing business in the international sphere.

**Reflection on the dissertation process**

The dissertation process has taken place over a period of 8 months time. Even though actual research on the topic started in the beginning of June (once the proposal was approved), the topic was first thought of in October 2014, when the researcher had to do a research proposal for her Research Methods class. The topic came forward out of personal interest, which has made the dissertation process more interesting for the researcher. The researcher also had an interest in consumer behaviour courses, which are strongly related to the topic of this dissertation.

Once the research proposal was approved, the dissertation process started. A supervisor (Mrs Duhy), was assigned, and the first meeting was setup to discuss the research proposal and the feedback received from the research methods lecturer (Mr Paul). Mrs Duhy showed interest in the topic, and provided the researcher with constructive feedback to get started on the dissertation.

During the dissertation process some verbal deadlines were set out by the supervisor, which made the researcher more actively involved and managed the time allocated to the dissertation more effectively. Furthermore, these deadlines allowed for the supervisor and the research to keep track of the progress made, and the supervisor was able to provide the researcher with more tailored feedback. During the whole dissertation process the supervisor was very approachable, and apart from the face-to-face meetings, the researcher was provided with continuous feedback and over e-mail.

As the researcher had previous experience with writing a dissertation for her BBA degree, it facilitated in a more efficient way of doing research, which was required in the narrow time frame (June – August).

The dissertation process, more specifically, has learned that time management is very important, and it is of great importance that deadlines are set. Furthermore the dissertation has allowed for the researcher to work on her research skills, by applying the taught part of her MSc, to an actual research project. Furthermore, researching has taught the researcher to read more critically.
Communication skills were also further improved, in the context of Business English, as the researcher is a non-native English speaker. Since academic literature involves a high level of business English, the researcher is now more familiar with these terms, and more confident in her understanding of these. Perhaps the most important learning from performing this research is to not give up!

In general the whole MSc programme has been a very demanding time for the researcher, but it has also been very rewarding in many ways, as learning outcomes and academic are extensive.
References

In alphabetical order:


• Bord Bia – Irish Food Board (2013) Retaining Loyalty to Irish Brands


Appendices
### Appendix 1 – Time plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Week number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission proposal</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback proposal</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting supervisor</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire development</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review dissertation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalizing dissertation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of dissertation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This survey has been prepared for the dissertation of Francesca Koense, an MSc Marketing student at the Dublin Business School. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about the country of origin and its effect on Irish consumer’s purchase decisions related to food purchases. Please take this into account.

To thank you for your participation three €15 gift vouchers from either Easons or Boots will be raffled. There will be a possibility to leave your e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire, by doing so you will be able to participate in the draw. The selected participants will be contacted by e-mail mid August 2015.

The questionnaire consists of 19 questions and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete.
Please select one answer only, unless indicated otherwise.

1. **Age category**
   - [ ] 18-24
   - [ ] 25-34
   - [ ] 35-50
   - [ ] 50+

2. **Gender**
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

3. **Occupation**
   - [ ] Student
   - [ ] Employed
   - [ ] Self-Employed
   - [ ] Unemployed
   - [ ] Other, please specify: __________________________

4. **What is your gross income per year?**
   - [ ] Under €20,000
   - [ ] €21,000 - €30,000
   - [ ] €31,000 - €40,000
   - [ ] €41,000 - €50,000
   - [ ] More than €50,000

5. **Is Ireland your country of birth?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No, please specify: __________________________

6. **Are you the main person doing grocery shopping in your household?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
7. Do you actively search for a product's country of origin before purchasing a product?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Not sure

8. Which factors would influence your purchase intentions when taking the country of origin into account? Select all that apply.
   - [ ] Experiences from yourself or peers
   - [ ] Quality of product
   - [ ] Products safety standards
   - [ ] Product footprint (how far the product has traveled from A to Z)
   - [ ] Image of the country

For the next two questions, please indicate to which degree you agree or disagree with the following statements:

9. The country of origin helps me determine product quality.
   - [ ] Strongly disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Do not agree, nor disagree
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Strongly agree

10. If I have little experience with a product, the country of origin information helps me make a more informed decision when purchasing a product.
    - [ ] Strongly disagree
    - [ ] Disagree
    - [ ] Do not agree, nor disagree
    - [ ] Agree
    - [ ] Strongly agree

11. Is buying Irish important when you shop?
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

12. For what reason would you decide to buy "Irish"? Select all that apply.
    - [ ] Because Irish products are of greater value compared to those of imported products
    - [ ] Because supporting the Irish economy is important to me
    - [ ] Because purchasing domestic products is more environmentally friendly (i.e. smaller footprint)
    - [ ] Because I feel guilt if I do not purchase Irish
    - [ ] Other, please specify: ____________________________
If the products country of origin is Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase?

- [ ] Lot less likely
- [ ] Little less likely
- [ ] No change in likelihood
- [ ] Little more likely
- [ ] Much more likely

What impact does seeing these logo’s have on your likelihood to purchase?

- [ ] Lot less likely
- [ ] Little less likely
- [ ] No change in likelihood
- [ ] Little more likely
- [ ] Much more likely

If the products country of origin is not Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase?

- [ ] Lot less likely
- [ ] Little less likely
- [ ] No change in likelihood
- [ ] Little more likely
- [ ] Much more likely

Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is more favorable?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is Ireland?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No. Please continue to question 19.

How much more would you be willing to pay for Irish products?

- [ ] 1 - 5%
- [ ] 6 - 10%
- [ ] 11 - 15%
- [ ] Other. Please specify: __________________________

Would you consider yourself to be patriotic?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
Thank you for completing the questionnaire, your participation is very important in the success of my research.

Please leave your e-mail address, if you would like to participate in the draw:

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or if you would like to know more about the research that is being conducted, please do not hesitate to contact me: FrancescaKoense@Gmail.com.

Kind regards,
Francesca Koense
Appendix 3 – Questionnaire – Online version

Questionnaire: country of origin effect on Irish consumers

This survey has been prepared for the dissertation of Francesca Koense, an MSc Marketing student at the Dublin Business School. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about the country of origin and its effect on Irish consumer’s purchase decisions related to food purchases. Please take this into account.

To thank you for your participation three €15 gift vouchers from either Easons or Boots will be raffled. There will be a possibility to leave your e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire, by doing so you will be able to participate in the draw. The selected participants will be contacted by e-mail mid August 2015.

The questionnaire consists of 19 questions and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. Please go to the next page to submit your answers when done.

* Required

1. Age category *
   - 18-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-50
   - 50+

2. Gender *
   - Male
   - Female

3. Occupation *
   - Student
   - Employed
   - Self-Employed
   - Unemployed
   - Other: [ ]

4. What is your gross income per year? *
   - Under €20,000
   - €21,000-€30,000
   - €31,000-€40,000
   - €41,000-€50,000
5. Is Ireland your country of birth? *
   - Yes
   - No

If you answered “no” to the previous question (5), please specify your country of birth below:

6. Are you the main person doing grocery shopping in your household? *
   - Yes
   - No

7. Do you actively search for a product’s country of origin before purchasing a product? *
   - Yes
   - No
   - Not sure

8. Which factors would influence your purchase intentions when taking the country of origin into account? *
   Select all that apply:
   - Experiences from yourself or peers
   - Quality of product
   - Products safety standards
   - Product footprint (how far the product has traveled from A to Z)
   - Image of the country

9. The country of origin helps me determine product quality. *
   For the next question, please indicate to which degree you agree or disagree with the following statements:
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. If I have little experience with the product, the country of origin information helps me make a more informed decision when purchasing a product. *
   For the next question, please indicate to which degree you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Is buying Irish important when you shop? *
   - Yes
   - No

12. For what reason would you decide to buy “Irish”? *
   Select all that apply.
Because Irish products are of greater value compared to those of imported products
Because supporting the Irish economy is important to me
Because purchasing domestic products is more environmentally friendly (i.e. smaller footprint)
Because I feel guilt if I do not purchase Irish
Other: 

13. If the products country of origin is Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase? *

1 2 3 4 5
Lot less likely ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Much more likely

14. What impact does seeing these logo's have on your likelihood to purchase? *

1 2 3 4 5
Lot less likely ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Much more likely

Logo's as part of question 14.

[Images of logos]

15. If the products country of origin is not Ireland, what impact does it have on your likelihood to purchase? *

1 2 3 4 5
Lot less likely ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Much more likely

16. Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is more favorable? *
○ Yes
○ No

17. Would you be willing to pay more for a product if the country of origin is Ireland? *
○ Yes
○ No, please continue to question 19.

18. How much more would you be willing to pay for Irish products?
○ 1-5%
○ 6-10%
○ 11-15%
○ Other:
19. Would you consider yourself to be patriotic? *
- Yes
- No

Thank you for completing the questionnaire, your participation is very important in the success of my research.

Please make sure to submit your answers below!

Please leave your e-mail address, if you would like participate in the draw:

[Input field for e-mail address]

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or if you would like to know more about the research that is being conducted, please do not hesitate to contact me: FrancescaKoense@gmail.com

Kind regards,
Francesca Koense

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

100%: You made it.
Appendix 4 – Industry expert interview

Dissertation on the country of origin effect on Irish consumer decision-making – specifically in the case of grocery shopping/food retailing

1. Tell me about yourself and your background in (food) retail.

2. Are you aware that some supermarkets/food brands, use the country of origin as part of their strategy, e.g. packaging?

3. For what reason do you believe supermarkets/brands do this, is it a strategy?

4. Are companies benefiting from displaying the Irish COO? More sales?

5. Do you believe the Irish COO has an advantage when it comes to food in the Irish market?

6. Do you believe it influences consumers while making purchase decisions?

7. What do you think consumers associate with the country of origin being Ireland?

8. Do you think focus on COO has changed ever since the financial crisis?

- Food sourcing / scandals / thrust