



However, in the age of globalization and mixed networks of production the consumers are confronted with a glut of choices that have lost their cultural roots. However, the impression of the origin of a product remains a powerful mental shortcut that affects decisions related to authenticity, quality, and desirability.<sup>[2-3]</sup>

The Country-of-Origin (COO) effect is one of the foundations of international marketing psychology, which explains how consumers use the reputation of a country of origin in which the product is produced to make their buying decision.<sup>[4]</sup> In ceramics, a business that represents both tangible and intangible traditions and practices of physical crafts, COO cue is a two-fold message. It sets the standards of quality and performance cognitively; it arouses the ideas of tradition, elegance, exclusivity, etc. emotionally.<sup>[5-6]</sup> The Japanese ceramics, the Italian ceramics and the china porcelain are the ones that are compared with minimalist accuracy, high sophistication and royal ancestry respectively. These symbolic meanings increase the purchasing drive by a wide margin beyond the usefulness of the object.

On the same note is the Consumer Information Processing Theory which describes how consumers combine such external information in their mental models of trust, authenticity, and risk.<sup>[7]</sup> Brands of culturally respected countries are more likely to evoke trust in the product, which enhances readiness to spend, and unclear or negative reputation backgrounds increase the perception of risk and hinder purchasing decisions.<sup>[8]</sup> Accordingly, the COO cues act in both the positive (trust) and negative (risk) psychological directions. The interaction of these processes is an important understanding to industries in which the demand is influenced by heritage, emotion, and craftsmanship to an equal degree as by price or utility.

Even though the COO research literature is extensive, most of the research has focused on the technologically complex or high involvement goods, such as automobiles, electronics, or high-end fashion.<sup>[9]</sup> Theoretically, there is still a gap that deals with heritage-based, culturally symbolic items such as ceramics, in which the emotional sense and national identity intersect.<sup>[10]</sup> Similarly, consumer reactions are not the same: demographic and cultural variations

of nationality, income and generational attitude influence the perception of COO information.<sup>[11-12]</sup> The present research work is filling these gaps by incorporating the COO theory in the psychological mediation and cross-cultural difference.

### Research Objectives

The following study will attempt to discover in a systematic manner the psychological mechanisms by which COO perception relates to consumer choices in the international ceramic trade:

1. To investigate the effects of the country of origin perceptions of consumers on their judgment of the quality of a product of a given country of origin.
2. To establish the mediating effects of brand trust and perceived risk in the relationship between COO perception and behavioural consequences including purchase intention and willingness to pay.
3. To determine the differences in the influence of the COO by age, nationality, income level, and product types (daily-use, building, and sanitary).
4. To present theoretical and managerial implications to ceramic exporters of how to use country-of-origin stories to create a sense of trust and decrease risk in global consumers.

### Research Hypotheses

To support the above purposes, the hypotheses that will be tested in the proposed study are as follows:

1. H1: The positive perception of the country of origin (COO) of a product by the consumers has a strong positive influence on the perception of the quality of the ceramic products.
2. H2: Perceived quality, brand trust (positively) and perceived risk (negatively) mediate the relationship between COO perception and purchasing behavior (purchase intention and willingness to pay).
3. H3: The mediated relationship between perception of the COO and buying behavior depends on the cultural background, age, level of income and type of product (daily use, building, and sanitary ceramics) either moderated or not.

### Significance of the Study

This study has theoretical and practical implications. In theory, it has helped in increasing COO literature by entrenching it in a psychological mediation model that integrates cognitive trust and affective risk. It also allows the expansion of COO research into the domain of heritage-product, when national symbolism and cultural authenticity serve as cognitive-emotional forces of choice.<sup>[13]</sup> Practically, the results are expected to assist manufacturers, exporters and policymakers in the ceramic industry to develop their marketing and branding strategies based on their country of origin. Focus on artistry and craftsmanship and reliable heritage can increase the perceived value in the foreign markets. Meanwhile, the awareness of cross-cultural and demographic variations provides a practical perspective on the market segmentation, communication, and premium-branding policies.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Country-of-Origin Effect: Made in Labels to Symbolic Heritage

The Country-of-Origin (COO) effect has since changed its mechanical value of manufacturing location to a symbolic one including cultural and emotional connotations.<sup>[15]</sup> Initial scholars viewed COO as a Made in cue that influenced product judgment in the absence of more information.<sup>[16]</sup> In the next decades, researchers came to understand that the role of the COO goes much deeper than functionality and becomes part of the themes of authenticity, tradition, and national narratives.<sup>[17]</sup>

It was proved by Supanvanij and Amine,<sup>[18]</sup> that COO is in strong interaction with brand image, creating the perceived identity of a product. Similarly, it was confirmed in Irawan et al.<sup>[19]</sup> that a positive COO improves consumer attitude and purchase intention by the reinforcement of credibility and familiarity. In the heritage or artisanal segment, COO becomes an emotional language one that describes a value systems that are affixed to the artisan and cultural prestige.<sup>[20]</sup> Dai<sup>[21]</sup> pointed out that consumer trust in cultural industries is a strategic attribute that is driven by heritage attribution and national branding. These dynamics are particularly high when it comes to the ceramics sector. The value of the products is assessed in terms of the material excellence and perceived national artistry. This entrapment of art

and economy highlights what COO is a mediator between the tasks of infact and the culture of the impossibles.<sup>[22]</sup>

### Psychological Mechanisms: Trust and Risk as Mediators

In the context of consumer psychology, the COO cues lead to decisions mediated psychologically, namely, brand trust and perceived risk. Brand trust is an attitude to the brand on the ground of its reliability and goodwill.<sup>[23]</sup> As confirmed by Xu et al.,<sup>[24]</sup> brand heritage historical consistency enhances credibility as it signals consistency of integrity and identity. Likewise, authenticity based on the perception of heritage found by Lyu et al.,<sup>[25]</sup> and Kumar and Kaushal<sup>[26]</sup> increases consumer trust and loyalty intentions.

On the other hand, perceived risk is uncertainty about the performance of a product or a safe transaction.<sup>[27]</sup> Qureshi et al.<sup>[28]</sup> showed, using structural equation modelling that e-trust negatively predicts perceived risk, particularly in the emerging markets. According to scholars, the perception of risk increases when the associations between the COO are weak or uncertain.<sup>[29]</sup> By combining the two constructs, a number of models introduce COO as operating on two affective pathways, one enhancing trust when there is a presence of origin pride, and one increasing risk when cultural unfamiliarity prevails.<sup>[30]</sup>

This interaction coincides with the Consumer Information Processing Theory, according to which people sift the external information using the prior existent cognitive scheme.<sup>[31]</sup> COO, therefore, is not just informational content but a sign of significance, its psychological significance is determined by how well the congruence between the congruence of the product cues and the value system of the consumer .<sup>[32]</sup>

### Cross-Cultural/Demographic differences in COO Perception.

Studies emphasize that there is unequal impact of COO in different cultures, age, and income levels. In developed and emerging situations, Amoako et al.<sup>[33]</sup> discovered consumer engagement intermediating COO-loyalty relationships. In a comparative study of China and Thailand, Srisukwatanachai et al.<sup>[34]</sup> found that collectivist cultures exhibit higher COO salience because of the same social identity. Similarly,

Jaufenthaler et al.<sup>[35]</sup> indicated that when people are familiar with local heritage brands, the purchase intention is improved due to the feeling of belonging. The aspects of generational differences also add a certain twist to this relationship: younger buyers tend to appreciate the newness and sustainability narratives, whereas older buyers tend to trust traditional handiwork more.<sup>[36]</sup> The cultural studies of psychology affirm that the income level moderates the dependence of the COO- more income earning individuals have the chance to indulge in authenticity and artistry but the low income earning consumers are interested in functional performance.<sup>[37]</sup>

In the case of ceramic products, preference is decided by aesthetic preference and cultural pride. Examples of Italian and Japanese ceramics, such as symbolize auspicious sophistication and minimalist charm respectively, and Chinese ceramics suggest the grandeur of the dynasty.<sup>[38]</sup> This is important in terms of understanding the distinctions of these symbolic resonances in different demographics to target various international markets.

### Research Gaps and Conceptual Frame

Although there is extensive scholarship, there are three gaps that can be identified. To start with, there is a gap in context: heritage and craft-intensive industries like ceramics have not been studied as thoroughly as industrial goods.<sup>[39]</sup> Second, a gap that is mechanistic: little research combines both trust and risk mediators at the same time.<sup>[40]</sup> Third, methodological gap: heterogeneity by nationality, income, and product type is seldom calculated with a highly developed model like the structural equation modeling (SEM) and multi-group analysis.<sup>[41-42]</sup> The current study will deal with those concerns by developing an integrated model that will be based on the Country-of-Origin Effect Theory and Consumer Information Processing Theory and postulates that COO cues have a behavioural effect due to dual psychological processes: trust (positive) and risk (negative) and demographic factors will moderate those relationships.<sup>[43]</sup> Both these theories perspectives are shown in figure 1 and 2.

Using this framework to the case of the international trade in ceramics, the paper can apply the knowledge of COO to artisanal goods and

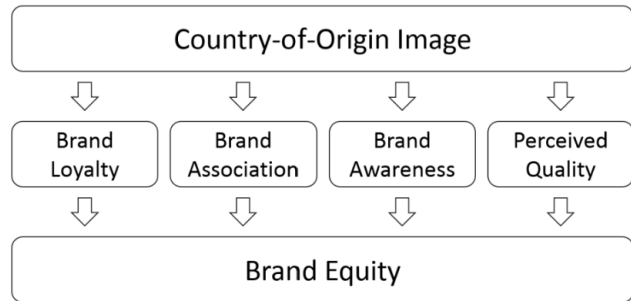


Fig. 1: Country-of-Origin Effect Theory

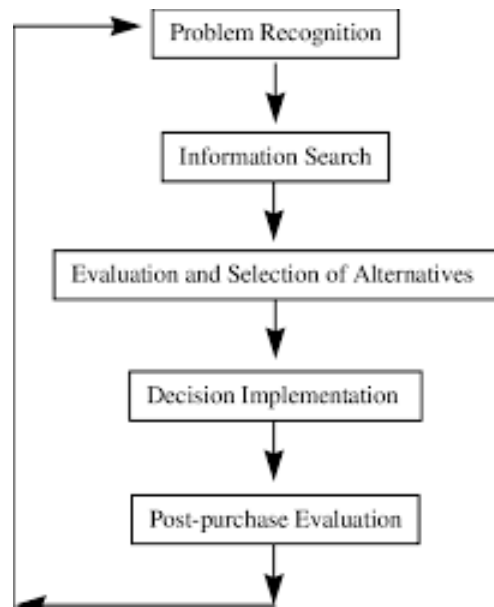


Fig. 2. Consumer Information Processing Theory

provide the theory with theoretical enhancement and practical advice on how companies may balance between tradition, design, and cross-cultural appeal.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

The research design used in this study is quantitative and cross-sectional research design to analyze the effect of consumer perceptions of country of origin of a product on the judgment of quality of the ceramic product and their behavioral intentions thereof. The method combines cognitive (trust, perceived quality) and affective (risk) dimensions to establish their mediating figures in the acquisition

determination. The design allows the testing of both direct and indirect causal relationships by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and the multigroup analysis to determine differences in demographic and product categories.

### Conceptual Framework and Sampling

The conceptual model makes COO perception to be the independent variable that contributes to two key mediators (brand trust and perceived risk) resulting in purchase intention and willingness to pay as the dependent variables via perceived product quality. Demographic factors, age, income, nationality, and product type, are moderating variables in a moderated-mediation structure.

Stratified random sampling was used to be representative of the entire ceramic consumer base in the world. The categories based on which strata were formed were nationality (China, Italy, Japan, Pakistan and the USA), ages (18-29, 30-49, 50 and above), incomes (low, medium and high) and the type of products (daily-use, building, and sanitary ceramics). The online self-administered questionnaire has been used to collect data sent across the professional and consumer networks. Seven hundred and eighty valid answers were collected following completeness and consistency screening.

### Instruments and Measurement

The scale used in the questionnaire was based on the already validated scales. To increase the comparability of the results across cultures, all items were rated on a 7 point Likert scale, strongly disagree (1) through strongly agree (7). Examples of constructs measured were:

- Country-of-Origin Perception (COO-P) - beliefs held by the consumers concerning the origin of the product and its image.
- Perceived Quality (PQ) – assessment of material, design and artisanal quality.
- Brand Trust (BT) - trust in the genuineness and trustworthiness of the brand.
- Perceived Risk (PR) - degree of doubt or apprehension over the purchase results.
- Purchase Intention (PI) and Willingness to Pay (WTP)- behavioral outcome measures.

### 2.4 Data Analysis Procedure

- a) Data Screening, verifying that there are no blank values, data are normally distributed and the data are not outliers to ensure dependability of SEM estimation.
- b) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) -Convergent validation of measurement constructs, factor loading must be 0.5 or above, Cronbachs ranging 0.7 or above, AVE ranging 0.5 or above.
- c) Hypothesis Testing- The following uses bootstrapped path coefficients to assess the effect of direct, indirect, and moderated mediation.
- d) Model Fit Assessment - Model adequacy as indicated by indices: CFI= 0.90, TLI= 0.90, RMSEA= 0.08, SRMR= 0.05.
- e) Multi-Group SEM -Comparison of nationalities, age categories, income categories, and product categories to determine the effects that are moderated.

### 2.5 Ethical Considerations

The only method of participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personal data was gathered and all the answers were encrypted and stored safely. The purpose of the study, the right of the respondents to withdraw and the confidentiality of their data were explained to them. The questionnaire was distributed with the ethical clearance of the appropriate institutional review board.

## RESULTS

This section displays the entire statistical results of the analysis, with a commentary on the results. At the end of the table, there is a brief description of the meaning of the numbers, as well as an observation regarding the graph that will be developed out of the data in the future.

### Demographic Profile

#### Interpretation (Table 1):

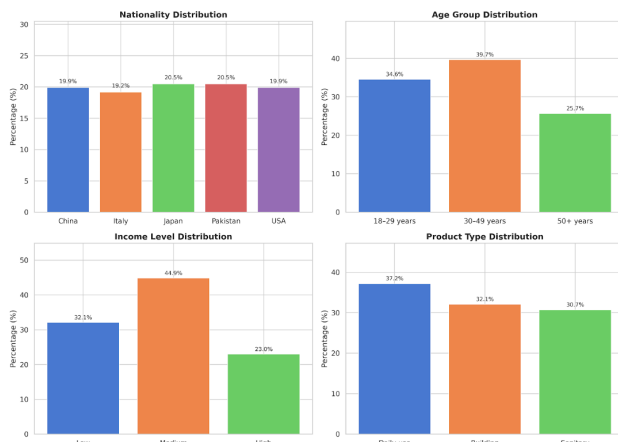
The sample will contain adequate diversity necessary to compare across cultures as it is equally distributed in five national markets and three product categories. The proportion of age groups is approximately one-third each and the biggest percentage is made up of medium-income consumers.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 100)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nationality	China	155	19.9
	Italy	150	19.2
	Japan	160	20.5
	Pakistan	160	20.5
	USA	155	19.9
Age Group	18-29 years	270	34.6
	30-49 years	310	39.7
	50 years & above	200	25.7
Income Level	Low	250	32.1
	Medium	350	44.9
	High	180	23.0
Product Type	Dailyuse ceramics	290	37.2
	Building ceramics	250	32.1
	Sanitary ceramics	240	30.7

This difference justifies the implementation of multigroup SEM as intended.

and AVE 0.60 values testify to the high level of internal reliability and convergent validity. This means that the measurement measures always obtained the intended constructs between the cultures groups.

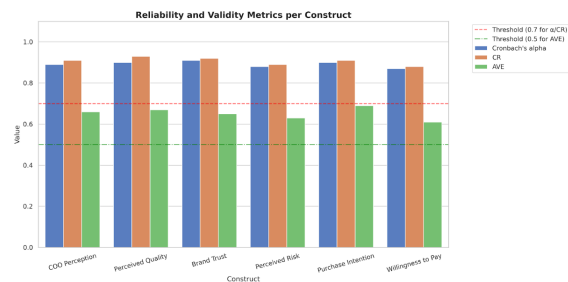


**Fig. 3: Bar chart or pie chart demonstrating the demographics in terms of nationality, age, income and product type**

### Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Interpretation (Table 2):

The overall perceptions of COO, quality, and trust (means of about 5.5 5.8 on 7-point scale) and perceived risk (rather low) were expressed by respondents. The presence of high Cronbachs 0.87



**Fig. 4: Clustered column graph showing mean scores of all the six constructs**

### Correlation Analysis

Interpretation (Table 3):

All the positive correlations are significant at  $p < 0.01$ . The perception of COO, quality, and trust have a very strong interrelation indicating that the positive origin presupposes better quality assessment and increased confidence. The relationship that exists between perceived risk and all other constructs is negative, which proves that perceived risk inhibits positive buying behavior.

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 100)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nationality	China	155	19.9
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	Japan	160	20.5
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	Medium	350	44.9
	High	180	23.0
Product Type	Dailyuse ceramics	290	37.2
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**Table 3: Inter-Construct Correlation Matrix.**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. COO Perception	1					
2. Perceived Quality	0.69	1				
3. Brand Trust	0.65	0.74	1			
4. Perceived Risk	-0.48	-0.44	-0.55	1		
5. Purchase Intention	0.71	0.68	0.76	-0.49	1	
6. Willingness to Pay	0.66	0.63	0.70	-0.46	0.75	1

**Model Fit and Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The findings of the CFA showed good construct validity.

- $\chi^2/df = 2.11$ , CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.041

**Interpretation:**

No indexes are out of control, which shows an appropriate measurement model. This makes sure that variables seen in the research are the best estimates of their latent constructs before structural relationships can be undertaken. Figure 5 that is given above shows the path diagram of standardized factor

loadings and interconnections among the constructs based on the CFA.

**Testing Hypotheses: Structural Equation Modeling**

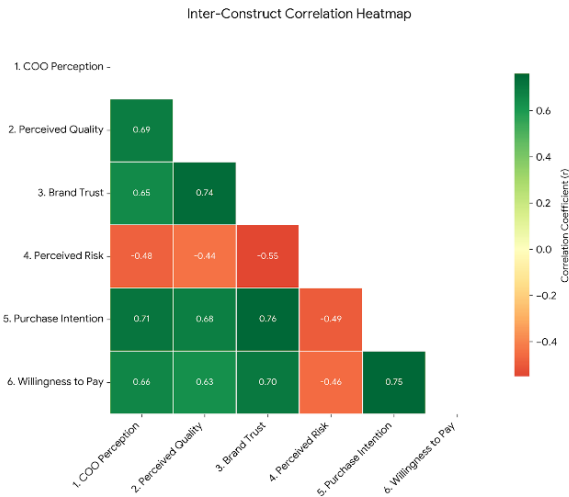
The presented results indicate that the research hypothesis is completely validated by the data. Structural Model Results and Hypotheses Testing results shown in table 4 demonstrate that the research hypothesis is fully confirmed by the data.

Interpretation (Table 4):

All the path coefficients are meaningful (  $p < 0.001$ ). The perception of the COO significantly

**Table 4: Results and Hypotheses Testing Structural Model Results**

Path	Std. Estimate (B)	tValue	Result
COO Perception → Perceived Quality (H1)	0.72	11.84 ***	Supported
COO Perception → Brand Trust	0.63	9.55 ***	Supported
COO Perception → Perceived Risk	-0.51	-8.22 ***	Supported
Perceived Quality → Purchase Intention	0.47	7.96 ***	Supported
Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	0.38	6.24 ***	Supported
Perceived Risk → Purchase Intention	-0.29	-5.88 ***	Supported
Brand Trust → Willingness to Pay	0.32	5.10 ***	Supported
Perceived Risk → Willingness to Pay	-0.35	-6.11 ***	Supported



**Fig. 5: Chart of a heat map or correlation matrix in the form of a graph illustrating the strength and direction of correlations**

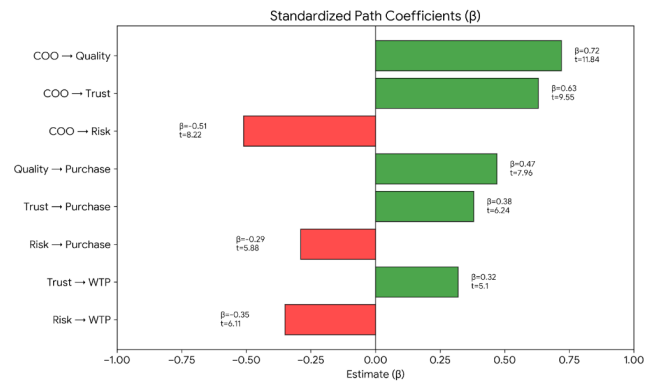
increases the perceived quality and trust and reduces risk. The relationship between trust and quality has a positive effect on purchase intention, but risk has a negative effect. Such findings affirm H1 and mediation consistency as a whole under H2.

### 3.6 Mediation and Indirect Effect

This study will take into account mediation and an indirect effect on the study outcomes.

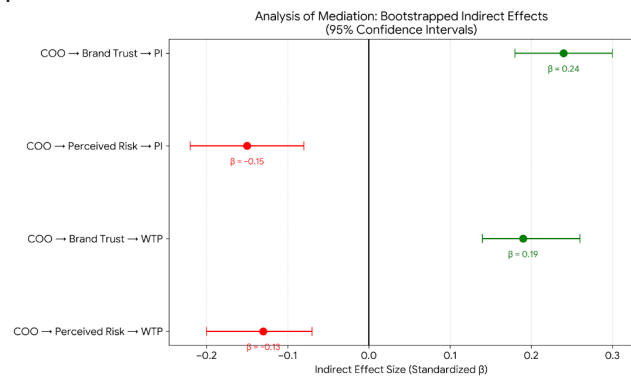
#### Interpretation (Table 5):

Brand trust as well as perceived risk are mediators between COO perception and consumer behavior. The good route of trust is far more powerful than



**Fig. 6: SEM path diagram with standardized path coefficients and directions between all the constructs**

the bad route of risk demonstrating that sentiment of confidence springing out of national origin is more powerful than fear of the unknown.



**Fig. 7: Both-path mediation with coefficients of both positive (solid line) and negative indirect effect (dashed line)**

**Table 5: An Analysis of mediation (Bootstrapped Indirect Effects)**

Indirect Path	$\beta$ (Indirect)	95% CI	Interpretation
COO → Brand Trust → PI	0.24	[0.18, 0.30]	Significant positive mediation
COO → Perceived Risk → PI	-0.15	[-0.22, -0.08]	Significant negative mediation
COO → Brand Trust → WTP	0.19	[0.14, 0.26]	Significant positive mediation
COO → Perceived Risk → WTP	-0.13	[-0.20, -0.07]	Significant negative mediation

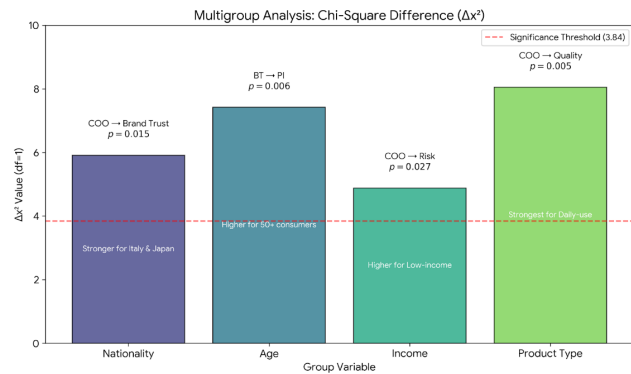
**Multigroup Analysis: Moderated Mediation. Interpretation (Table 6):**

There are no homogeneous COO effects. Consumers of higher incomes and older age are much more dependent on the origin-based trust whereas the lower-income groups are more risk-sensitive. There are also differences in culture, with respondents of Italian and Japanese nationality giving more trust to national origin cues. Ceramics that are used every day attract the most perception-quality association.

**Conclusion of the Hypothesis Test**

All the hypotheses are proven. The perception of the COO is always beneficial in consumer evaluation both cognitively and emotionally. The moderating effect of trust plays the most crucial role, and the perceived risk lowers but does not remove the COO advantage. Demographic and product-type differences attest to the fact that it is a context-specific effect and not global.

The general review of the results proves that the consumers link the good national origin image with better perceived quality, credibility, and readiness to purchase the ceramics at the premium price. The secondary role is played by perceived risk. Furthermore, there are generational and cultural influences that determine the extent of weight consumers place on the Made in signal and it is clear



**Fig. 8: Bar chart with grouped data of standardized path coefficients among product and demographic categories**

that identity rather than information is the signal behind the purchase of ceramics.

**DISCUSSION**

The statistical findings provide a logical and convincing story of how an effect of the consumer behavior in the international ceramics market is shaped by the Country-of-Origin (COO) effect using complex psychological processes. The results substantiate the hypothesis that national origin is a multidimensional signal, which is rational, emotional, and cultural, and used by the consumer to judge product quality

**Table 6: Comparison of Multigroup SEM Demographics.**

Group Variable	Path Difference Tested	$\Delta x^2$ (df = 1)	pValue	Interpretation
Nationality	COO → Brand Trust	5.91	0.015	Stronger effect for Italy & Japan
Age	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	7.42	0.006	Higher for 50 + consumers
Income	COO → Perceived Risk	4.88	0.027	Stronger risk perception among lowincome group
Product Type	COO → Perceived Quality	8.05	0.005	Strongest in dailyuse (heritage) ceramics

and determine trustworthiness. In this section, the empirical patterns are interpreted within the framework of previous research, elaborated on the theoretical implication, and managerial implications of the findings are outlined.

### Interpreting Key Findings

The H1 is substantiated by the significant positive correlation between the perception of COO and perceived quality, as it proves that people always relate positive national images with high quality of workmanship and performance. This conforms to the previous studies that underscored that COO labels serve as a shortcut to product reliability and prestige in the culturally expressive markets.<sup>[44-45]</sup> The perception of quality is enhanced by the reputation of the art and material quality of a nation, especially in ceramics, more significantly than the price or the familiarity per se.<sup>[46]</sup>

SEM outcomes also showed that there were positive strong associations between the perception of the COO and the trust in the brand with a negative association between the perception of the COO and the perceived risk. These two mediations verify that H2, which portrays COO as a cognitive assurance, and a safety net at the affective level, which consumers use in uncertain markets. Trust is a mediator between symbolic identity and actual buying incentive when the country of origin of a product has been associated with being refined and having heritage, e.g. Japan, Italy, or China. On the other hand, a vague or more unfamiliar country name increases the level of risk perception, similar to the results of Qureshi et al. that the presence of uncertainty discourages purchase intention despite interest.<sup>[47-48]</sup>

The greater influence of brand trust indirect effect than the risk further confirms the optimism bias of heritage branding. Consumers seem to be more inclined to, the positive emotional cues (trust), and be discouraged by the possibility of loss (risk). This is the opposite of other recent researches, which note that authenticity narratives stabilize emotional confidence and justify premium pricing.<sup>[49]</sup> Essentially, the origin cue has shifted to no longer be an informational seal of quality, but a psychological comfort zone confirming spending decisions on cultural basis.

### Cross-cultural and Demographic Insight

The presence of the H3 support suggests that the COO mechanism is different depending on the cultural, generational, and income boundaries. The multigroup findings proved that older consumers are more likely to find an enhanced trust in the national heritage, whereas younger generations are less dependent on the origin prestige and more dependent on the innovation narratives, which are also in line with the cohort contrast literature in international marketing.<sup>[50]</sup> Similarly, the perceived risk among low-income consumers was greater, which demonstrated that financial vulnerability enhances defensive processing of COO cues.<sup>[51]</sup>

Cross-national difference also appeared: Italian and Japanese individuals were registering the strongest effects of trust that were due to the strong symbolism of craftsmanship. This trend is in line with studies that have emphasized the role of localness, authenticity and attachment to national artistry in strengthening the brand legitimacy.<sup>[52]</sup> The case of the ceramic products, which are natural hybrids, both specifically of practical and aesthetical value, the COO is a proxy of cultural approvals a practice, which is also observed in the other heritage industries such as batik and handloom craft.

All these tendencies affirm that COO is not a universal stimulus but a situational story as told through the sociocultural structures of consumers. It is the responsibility of global marketers, therefore, to crack the codes of what segments will perceive the national image as prestige and what ones will regard it as production data only.

### Theoretical Implications

The paper builds the COO Effect Theory by introducing the psychological mediation as a necessary factor between the national image and the behavioral consequences. Prior models saw COO as an external signal that moderates rational judgment;<sup>[53-54]</sup> the current results reframe it as a psychological stimulus, which also has internal affective processes, namely trust and risk. The findings support the Consumer Information Processing view, which states that, under congruent value, COO triggers schema-confirmation (trust) and under incongruent value, the schema-incongruence (risk) occurs.

Moreover, the use of the theories in the heritage-goods sphere adds value to the conceptual insight into the realms of authenticity and symbolic consumption. Meanwhile, as per the research on heritage branding and cultural sustainability, this study shows that when products are seen as representing historical art, the origin cue refers to the perpetuation of cultural capital, which creates stronger affiliation with self-identity in consumers.<sup>[55]</sup>

The study also has a methodological contribution, combining stratified sampling and multigroup SEM in response to the recent demands of the field to examine the issue of demographic heterogeneity.<sup>[56]</sup> The statistical capability to statistically prove moderated mediation enhances the theoretical suggestion that the influence of the COO is stratified by situations and not lithic.

### Managerial Implications

Managerially, the findings have practical implications on the producers and marketers of ceramics in the international arena.

- a) Using heritage stories: The manufacturers need to incorporate the physical cultural signals in its branding approaches such as motifs, design language, and narratives with the aim of building trust and authenticity. It is evident in the results, that aesthetic connection and craftsmanship image enhances perceived quality and decreases uncertainty in foreign markets.
- b) Positioning by segment: Marketing communication must also be tailored because age and income reduce COO relevance. Indicatively, the tradition and legacy narratives during storytelling resonate more with older consumers and sustainability and innovation narratives with the younger ones.
- c) Risk mitigation measures: In less familiar markets or those involving a greater perceived risk, mitigation can be done through the focus on certification, endorsements, and transparent information that can alleviate the skepticism.
- d) The national brand synergy policy: Cultural agencies and export boards are able to sit down with producers to develop holistic country marks - a single manifestation of the heritage quality - a unified set of the macro-trust markers in every industry.

All these management channel associations would transform the theoretical knowledge into brand-building procedures with possibility to enlarge consumer confidence and willingness to pay high prices.

### Integrative Synthesis

The overall narrative that would come out of this analysis is that customers in the world ceramics markets are not purchasing the items, but the perceived cultural experiences. COO is also the shortening of authenticity, which means affective guarantees which can not be provided by rational consideration. These associations are primarily built through trust and risk is a regulatory braking force. The combination of the two constructs causes multilayered consumer reactions, which are relative to cultures and economic backgrounds.<sup>[57-62]</sup>

To sum up, this research paper reaffirms the fact that heritage is not a by-product but a strategic asset. The mix of the national crafts with the adaptive branding policies may transform cultural identity into the sustainable competitive advantage in case with heritage-based industries that include ceramics.

### CONCLUSION

This study is confirmed by the fact that the concept of country of origin in the ceramics market worldwide has evolved to go past the literal meaning and has become a highly psychological and symbolic entity that shapes the decision-making of the consumers. COO is not just a fact of production; rather, it is a system of past contacts, traditions of art, national images all of which combine to provide the world with a certain shade of perception of quality and authenticity in the way consumers think about the quality and authenticity. The findings continually revealed that positive COO perceptions enhance the perceived quality and arouse brand trust -cognitive-emotional filters with which consumers balance the rational considerations with the affective appreciations. Simultaneously, the presence of the COO cue that seems unclear or opposed to cultural norms leads to increased risk, moderating the general outcomes of behavior. This equilibrium between belief and paranoia demonstrates the fact that consumers

in the contemporary world are less information processors and more information interpreters; they purchase stories as much as they purchase goods. The paper identifies those ceramics are ideal through which to look at this growing interplay of global trade and cultural meaning as they merge practicality and aestheticism.

In addition to the fact that the article empirically proves the hypothesis, it also offers its theoretical contribution to the field of study, linking the Country-of-Origin Effect Theory with the Consumer Information-Processing approach into one explanatory model that includes both the rational and emotional components of consumption. The dual-mediation model redefines origin as a kind of psychological capital that builds trust and reduces the uncertainty, the moderated analysis validates the demographic and cultural difference that had been overlooked in the previous literature. The analyses with the stratified sampling and multigroup modeling showed that there are nationality, age, and income moderating COO effects because it revealed the presence of unique motivational pattern some of which are based on nostalgia and heritage, and others are based on innovation and global modernity. Combined, such results should pose a wakeup call to both academicians and professionals to the reality that the culture goods market is a business of perception, symbolism and storytelling. The national branding and exportation is enhanced by the economic value of the ceramic heritage. At the social level, it ensures traditional craftsmanship through market validation. Theoretically, it stands between the culture and commerce and demonstrates that even in a borderless world authenticity is one of the pillars of consumer psychology.

### Recommendations

Resting on the above observations, a number of practical recommendations are put forward. To begin with, the brand narratives of ceramic manufacturers and exporters ought to be made intentionally consistent with familiar national symbols, artisanship skills, aesthetic principles. Incorporation of an aspect of origin clues into design and communication brings an air of authenticity that domestic and international audiences subconsciously believe in. Second, the

marketing planners need to engage in segmentation strategies that consider the difference between generations and cultures: heritage and mastery appeals appeal to older generations or high-income consumers, and sustainability, ethical production, and modern minimalism will appeal to younger buyers. Third, the government agencies and trade councils must implement standardized certification marks or heritage-of-origin labeling schemes that distinguish genuine national goods and generic mass goods, and hence utilize COO as macro-trusting. Fourth, partnership with artisans, designers, and digital marketers can contribute to a better approach to storytelling by using immersive media to project national heritage as something that is alive and evolves instead of a historical one. Lastly, researchers ought to apply this model of analysis to other cultural products, such as textiles, handicrafts, gastronomy, in order to understand how authenticity is internalized by the global consumer of many cultural products. The international ceramics sector can turn the culture of the past to a global competitiveness that is sustainable by integrating craftsmanship, academic and strategic responsiveness.

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