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**Examining Country of Origin Effect among Generation Z Consumers in  
Kazakhstan: A Study in the Home Appliance Industry**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between country of origin and product evaluation among Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan in the home appliance industry. The objectives of the study are defined and quantitative and qualitative designs of the study are used to collect data from convenience and snowball samples. A questionnaire was developed for consumers and the two-stage interview was conducted among HA shop assistants and customer respondents. Statistical analysis methods: Spearman's Rho correlation, percentage, and content analyses. The results indicated that the majority of respondents think that German and South Korean HA products are of higher quality than those from the other nations, while China and Russia's goods are associated with affordable prices and South Korean ones with innovative designs. These associations affect how customers rate similar products available on the market from various states. The article's conclusion outlines the limitations of the findings after a detailed result discussion. This research could help local and international businesses who operate in Kazakhstan to enhance their business strategies by providing a better knowledge of the impacts of COO on customer behavior.

## **Key Words**

Country-of-origin (COO) effect, Product Evaluation; Generation Z; Home Appliance (HA), Kazakhstan.

### **1. Introduction**

Until 1991, there was a shortage of goods (import, export) in Kazakhstan, which led to the fact that the supply of a wide range of consumer goods began to be limited (Ayagan, 2019). Based on Wellisz and Findlay (1986), at that time a large number of consumer goods were produced either in the USSR itself or in other countries with a communist regime, or they were bought on the black market. At the moment, Kazakh consumers have begun to encounter goods from various other countries, which can lead to the effect of the country of origin (COO). It is a phenomenon that information about the country of origin of goods has on the preferences and choices of the consumer.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the national impact on Kazakhstani consumers in order to study and understand the important elements in the decision-making process of consumers in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Generation Z clients were selected as the main demographic for this study.

As one of the most recently formed and most digitally connected generations, Generation Z consumers are an important demographic to consider for this research. They are distinguished by traits such as their reliance on technology, environmental consciousness, and desire for personalized products.

Understanding this demographic is becoming increasingly crucial for marketers, as they represent the future of the consumer market. Therefore, the country of origin of household appliances can considerably influence the decision-making process of Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan.

With the literature observed, most researchers analyzed the correlation between COO and product evaluation. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between Country of Origin (COO) and product evaluation of household appliances among Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan. By analyzing the preferences and attitudes of Generation Z consumers toward home appliances and the COO effect, this study will offer valuable insights into the generation's purchasing behavior. Home appliances are used often across the world's houses and are an essential component of customers' way of life. They make routine chores around the house, such as making dinner, maintaining the house, and doing the laundry, simpler and more effective to do. Moreover, Technodom, Mechta.kz, Alser.kz, and Evrika are among the top 50 private firms in Kazakhstan, according to Forbes Kazakhstan (2022). This indicates that the home appliance market in Kazakhstan has been seeing tremendous development over the last several years.

The study has a number of applications for the industry and other individuals who can benefit from it. First, retailers and manufacturers in the home appliance industry can gain from this investigation. Therefore, these individuals can use this information to create marketing plans that are effective in appealing to the needs and preferences of Kazakhstan's digital natives. By gaining a better understanding of the COO effect, they can adapt their branding and product positioning strategies to suit the needs of this key demographic. Second, the analysis can serve as a valuable resource for additional studies on the effect of COO on Kazakhstani younger consumers' purchasing behavior.

Moreover, the results of this investigation might offer a structure for further research on the impact of place of origin on other product categories and consumer demographics by analyzing the relationship between country of origin and product evaluation of home appliances. This research will provide them with important insights into the preferences and attitudes of Generation Z consumers regarding household appliances and the country of origin effect.

### **1.1. Research Question**

This study points to the following research question: What is the relationship between the country of origin and Generation Z's evaluation of household appliances in Kazakhstan?

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

This research will contribute to the understanding of the COO effect on consumer behavior among Generation Z in the home appliance industry by achieving these objectives:

1. To investigate the relationship between COO and product evaluation of home appliance products among Kazakhstani consumers of Generation Z.
2. To assess the significance of COO for Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Country-of-Origin Effect**

Han (1989) studied that the connection between a country and its goods is based on a halo effect, which indicates that consumers employ regional image in product evaluation. Therefore, when individuals have positive feelings about a country, they are more likely to positively evaluate its products and brands (White, 2012). However, according to Wegapitiya and Dissanayake's (2018) research, attitudes toward a country can alter over time depending on a variety of reasons. For instance, Japan had a low image quality in the 1950s and 1960s among U.S. customers but significantly improved it in the 1980s and later. Furthermore, Wegapitiya and Dissanayake's (2018) cited various research papers that found a favorable association between a product rating and the economic status of the source country. There are a few other influencing factors that include the

culture, history, and political orientation of the country which increase the appeal of employing the COO image on a worldwide scale (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010). For instance, Chinese customers' propensity to buy Japanese items is influenced by the two nation's economic and military rivalry (Klein et al.,1998). Some Chinese customers consider purchasing Japanese items to be treasonous. Additionally, as a result of the Japan-South Korea trade dispute, the wave of boycotts began in South Korea in 2019. Supporters in the campaign avoided purchasing Japanese goods and services, traveling to Japan, and seeing Japanese films (Park & Ryall, 2019).

Researchers have been intensively examining the impact of the Country-of-Origin effect since the 1960s in the field of international marketing. The majority concentrated on verifying the Country-of-Origin Effect's existence. They have demonstrated that customers' beliefs and attitudes regarding nations tend to impact the judgment of goods from those countries (Sharma, 2011). As a result, the COO's effect on the goods or services was considered a significant piece of data in the decision-making process. However, with the globalization of markets, the enthusiasm for investigating the Country-of-Origin effect began to decrease in the late 1980s. Jacob (2016) discussed that globalization has consequently resulted in the idea that COO effects are no longer present. The premise was that customers have grown accustomed to engaging with items from many nations. Furthermore, buyers were uninterested in or were unaware of many products' actual places of origin. This realization led to the conclusion that COO effects are no longer a serious concern in international marketing.

Nevertheless, Baker and Currie (1993) claimed that the Country-of-Origin effect, along with the Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, should be considered a fifth element of the Marketing Mix. Therefore, the question of how much effect the country of origin cue has on product assessments has yet to be resolved, the opinions appear to range greatly.

## **2.2 Product Evaluation**

A substantial amount of empirical research has emphasized the impacts of COO on product evaluation (Zbib, Ghaddar, Samarji & Wahbi, 2020; Sobolev & Nelson, 2019; Dursun et al., 2019). These studies stated that product assessment is directly connected with the COO effect as it influences the preference for goods of customers. According to Cateora (et al., 2019), and Bandyopadhyay and Banerjee (2002),

it was established that consumers are more likely to purchase goods from specific countries than the same goods from other countries. It demonstrates the relationship between the decision-making process and the perception of various nations. Additionally, that study illustrates the connection between a nation's reputation and its significance to potential clients.

As claimed by Ali and Kaynak (2010) consumer opinions of industrialized countries are more positive than those of less industrialized nations. For instance, it appears when choosing home appliance products from Japan or China. People tend to think that products from Japan have better quality, design, and life-cycle, even if it is not affordable for everyone.

Furthermore, there were additional studies on the topic of product evaluation that depicts the attitude of economically advanced nations toward the decision-making process. Okechuku and Onyemah (1999) found that the bulk of these customers frequently choose domestically produced goods first, then those from other developed nations, and lastly those from less developed nations. Customers favored Japan (38.4%) as the country of origin for major appliances above Germany (23.3%), the United States (20.9%), and France (15.1%), according to the research.

Additionally, there are conflicting data regarding the relationship between COO and product evaluation.

In accordance with the prevalence of the papers, the country-of-origin effect has a favorable impact on product category evaluation rather than brand assessment, and the COO effect is more beneficial for goods originating in more developed states than those originating in less developed ones.

Consumer ethnocentrism may lead to the amplification of specific qualities and characteristics of native items and the undervaluation of these qualities in foreign goods, as demonstrated by Sharma et al. (1995) and Rawwas and Rajendran (1996). Customers from industrialized nations, according to Wang and Chen (2004), are more likely to evaluate locally produced goods favorably than imported goods, whereas, in emerging markets, consumers evaluate both intrinsic and extrinsic cues to determine that imported goods are superior to locally produced goods.

Consequently, it can be said that certain associations between COO and product might exist. Despite their objectiveness and truthfulness, the perception of products from various countries by consumers and product country images related to them may have a significant role in the decision-making

process. It seems that these perceptions and narratives operate more with the abstract and emotional aspect, rather than with the actual aspect of COO and product evaluation.

### **2.3 Demographics**

Several researchers have looked into the COO effect among Generation Z from various demographic perspectives. For example, Giraldi and Ikeda' (2009) study about the relationship between age and COO has shown that young consumers have become more open and receptive to foreign products. However, Schooler (1971) and TQngberg (1972) found that older people rate foreign goods more highly than young people. It is important to note that Wang (1978) did not find such an effect. In addition, Schaefer (2010) exposed that the country of origin appears to have a more pronounced impact on elderly customers, possibly because they rely more heavily on general mental categories.

The findings of the study by Nagy (2017) demonstrated that most individuals from the late Generation Y and early Generation Z purchased their mobile phones from well-established and reputable brands. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the nation in which mobile phones are manufactured has a significant effect on the buying preferences of Generations Y and Z, considering factors such as technical specifications, pricing, aesthetics, brand reputation, operating system, and storage capability.

Insch and McBride (2004) considered age to be a determining factor. The results show that younger consumers in Mexico value the country of origin (COO) of a product more than older consumers. The effect of age observed in this study may reflect the historical context of Mexico's consumption patterns, moving from formal import substitution policies and closed economies to trade liberalization and greater exposure to imported products. There is a marked shift to this may be because younger Mexicans grew up in a more open and globalized economy with higher volumes of imports from different countries. Older generations experienced a time when Mexico pursued protectionist policies and restricted legal imports, but this may have influenced their view of their COO.

Studies by Schooler (1971), Dornoff (1974), and Wang (1978) have shown that more educated people tend to appreciate a foreign product more highly and pay more attention to COO when buying goods



than people with a lower level of education. Giraldi and Ikeda (2009) investigated that education can have an impact on the initial effect of the country. Nevertheless, Tonberg's (1972) research did not discover a connection between the level of education and COO.

The research on the COO effect's influence on purchasing behavior among different sexes has been conflicting. According to certain studies, women are more influenced by the COO effect than men. For example, Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) discovered that women were more likely to be influenced by the COO effect when purchasing apparel. Furthermore, Mamula and Paunovic (2022) discovered that younger women were the least ecologically conscientious group among Generation X and Generation Z groups. The research on the COO effect's influence on purchasing behavior among different sexes has been conflicting. According to certain studies, women are more influenced by the COO effect than men. For example, Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) discovered that women were more likely to be influenced by the COO effect when purchasing apparel. Furthermore, Mamula and Paunovic (2022) discovered that younger women were the least ecologically conscientious group among Generation X and Generation Z groups. Mamula and Paunovic conducted research on Generation Z students, namely primary, secondary, and university students in the Republic of Serbia and Republika Srpska. The number of people was 1338 students. This study found no statistically significant difference between males and females in COO exposure.

In summary, it is hypothesized that individuals belonging to Generation Z are greatly influenced by the COO effect when assessing products. Consequently, the impact of the country of origin might be closely linked to the age of the consumer. Additionally, previous studies have yielded mixed results on the influence of the nation of production on consumer behavior across genders. Some studies indicate that women are more susceptible to the COO effect, while others find no significant difference between genders.

Future research may explore the impact of other demographic factors such as age, location, income, and education on the COO effect among Generation Z consumers.

The literature review underscores the importance of understanding how the country of origin affects the decision-making process of Generation Z customers, particularly in the realm of home appliances. Prior investigations have indicated that consumers exhibit a tendency to favor products originating from specific nations, owing to the perceived reputation of these countries for delivering exceptional quality, innovative features, and reliable performance. As a result, the geographical origin of a product holds the potential to shape how consumers perceive and assess its merits, ultimately impacting their choices when making a purchase.

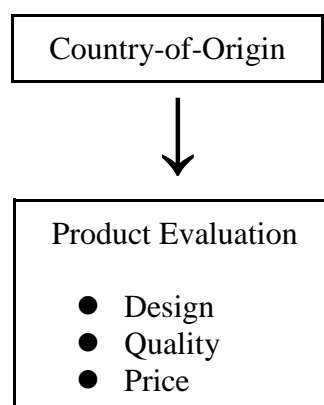
Therefore, the research study can offer important insights into the preferences and attitudes of Generation Z customers regarding home appliances and the country of origin effect by building on the current literature.

### 3. Variables and Model

The study model was drawn from the literature analysis previously discussed, which suggested that customers may assess products using both intrinsic and extrinsic signals (Figure 1). Olson and Jacobi (1972) determined that consumers use both internal (performance, design, flavor, fit, quality) and external (brand image, store, advertising, price, warranty) characteristics to evaluate a product, where the COO is viewed as an external indicator that may impact the assessment. Therefore, this research utilized country-of-origin and product evaluation as the variables, including design and quality as the internal and price as external components. For a more in-depth analysis, the consumer's income, education, and place of residence were added to the questionnaire based on the demographic parameters.

Figure 1

Research Model



### **3.1. Research Methodology**

A mix of quantitative and qualitative research approaches was chosen for this study. Two methods allowed the study to assess the significance of the COO and to investigate the relationship between the COO and product evaluation corresponding to the research objectives.

### **3.2. Quantitative Methodology**

The purpose was to collect 100-150 answers from Generation Z with different backgrounds in order to define the correlations between the country-of-origin effect and product evaluation. Moreover, a non-experimental method was taken for this research due to the samples not being created from scratch. In addition, this approach contributes to the preservation of objectivity in the study, which will give more accurate results.

To convey the link between Country of Origin and Product Evaluation, the structured close-ended questionnaire was separated into two sections that included closed-ended multiple-choice and 5-point Likert-scale relationship-based items. The first part of the system was designed to gather demographic information such as age, gender, location, income, and level of education. A variety of question types were included in the questionnaire's second portion. They focused on respondents' impressions of the country's image as well as the significance of country-of-origin (COO) in product evaluation (Yang, Ramsaran & Wibowo, 2017). The next set looked at how individual product qualities including COO, price, brand name, social popularity, promotional offers, and quality can have a moderating influence (Zbiba, Ghaddara, Samarjib & Wahbic, 2021) in which internal and external signals served as the basis for evaluating the items (Dursuna, Kabadayib, Ceylanc & Koksald, 2019). The countries included Russia, China, South Korea, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Sweden as the main HAs importers to Kazakhstan (Taybekuly, 2020). The Likert scale was chosen as the major data-collecting method because it provides a straightforward and standardized manner of evaluating attitudes and perceptions, allowing for quantitative data analysis. When compared to a binary response style, the adoption of a 5-point scale provided better sensitivity in determining the degree of agreement or disagreement with the claims.

In order to explore the relationship between COO and Product Evaluation, a combination of Spearman's rho correlation was employed to evaluate the associations between the variables. These approaches' insights enabled proper conclusions to be formed on the study topics. First, correlation coefficients were generated specifically to analyze the strength of the links between variables, allowing the discovery of positive or negative correlations and the degree to which they were connected. Furthermore, percentage analysis was used to examine the distribution of the survey answers. The proportion of participants who replied a specific way to a given question was determined using this method. This aided in identifying patterns or trends in the data and enabled the development of relevant conclusions.

### **3.3. Qualitative Methodology**

To provide a concentrated but flexible study of the link between the COO and the product assessment cues, semi-structured and structured interviews were utilized among the consumer and HA retail shop assistant respondents with Russian used as the main communication language. Baker and Edwards (2012) suggested recruiting at least a dozen interviewees to provide an appropriate sample. Thus, the method was divided into two stages with the purpose to interview 12 consumer respondents and 12 shop assistants. Conducting an interview among the retail members provided valuable insights into consumers' decision-making processes in the HA industry. As a result, finding consistency, deviations, and apparent biases in the data may be aided by contrasting the views of HA shop sellers and customer participants. Additionally, key questions from Yang, Ramaran, and Wibowo's (2017) study were modified to focus on the importance of the country-of-origin and HA product evaluation criteria during the decision-making process. Before the interviews began, all participants gave permission, and the required ethical considerations were addressed. For the aim of doing further content analysis, all of the recorded interviews were transcribed.

### **4. Data Collection**

This study's quantitative data collection took place in April 2023. The convenience and snowball samples consisted of Kazakhstani Generation Z citizens, where 175 respondents participated through recruiting on social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram. Furthermore,

participation was confidential and voluntary to save respondents' data, and the survey instrument was pilot-tested with ten undergraduate students to ensure its intelligibility and readability. The final questionnaire contained 14 items as a result. When the data were analyzed, 52% of respondents were male and 48% were female (Table 1). Predominantly, individuals were from Astana (53,1%), Ust'-Kamenogorsk (21,7%), and Almaty (17,7%) cities. The remaining part of respondents was from Karaganda (2,3%), and Shymkent (1,1%) and the percentage of other localities was 4.2%. Moreover, the survey included a question on education to research the correlation of the COO effect with the level of education. The majority of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (42,9%) and higher incomplete education (33,1%). In addition, other individuals have master's degrees (9,7%) and specialized secondary education (14,3%). Furthermore, most of the respondents have income between 151K and 300K (34,9%), others earn between 301K and 450K (19,4%) and there's a percentage of those whose income level is below 150K. Correspondingly, the remaining individuals' income level is between 451K and 600K (6,3%), above 601K (8%), and those who don't have income (13,7%).

Table 1

### Socio-demographic profile of the participants

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Place of residence</b>		
Almaty	51	17.7%
Astana	53	53.1%
Shymkent	2	1.1%
Karaganda	4	2.3%
Pavlodar	1	.0%
Semey	1	.0%
Ust'-Kamenogorsk	38	21.7%
Kyzylorda	1	.0%
Kostanay	1	.0%
Aktau	1	.0%
Kokshetau	1	.0%
Rural areas of Kazakhstan	1	.0%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	91	52%
Male	84	48%
<b>Levels of education</b>		
Secondary special education	25	14.3%
Incomplete higher education	38	33.1%

Bachelor's degree	15	42.9%
Master's degree	17	9.1%
<b>Income levels</b>		
Not earning yet	24	15.1%
Less than 150,000 tenge	51	17.1%
From 151,000 to 300,000 tenge	61	34.9%
From 301,000 to 450,000 tenge	54	19.4%
From 451,000 to 600,000 tenge	11	6.5%
Over 601,000 tenge	14	8%

The two-stage exploratory study was conducted among 13 customer respondents and 12 store employees employing qualitative research methodology in April and May 2023. They were recruited through the convenience and snowball sampling procedure participating via face-to-face, audio, and video call communication. The consumer respondents included 38% of females and 62% of males with an average age of 25 (range = 21-30). Participants had different geographical and demographic backgrounds however the majority of them were from big cities such as Astana and Almaty, remaining were from Ust-Kamenogorsk, Shchuchinsk, and rural areas of the North-Kazakhstan region. During the second stage, shop assistants had the qualifying requirement to have at least six months of experience in the store and were questioned during lunch breaks or on days off in Astana (Technodom, Sulpak, Mechta.kz). To preserve their privacy and interests, interview subjects are made anonymous.

## 5. Quantitative Findings and Analysis

JASP Statistics was used as the data analysis tool, and Spearman's rho correlation was employed to determine the link between variables. Thus, the results indicated that the significance of COO in the purchase of home appliances was perceived by the participants as neutral (mean score = 3.5) but almost half (53.2 %) believed or strongly believed that the country is important when buying home appliances, while 25.1% were neutral and 21.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed on this statement. As a result, there was no correlation based on gender, education, and income levels and COO importance. However, the findings (Table 2) showed a negative correlation between habitat and COO, indicating that when the density of the site decreases (i.e., in sparsely populated or rural areas); the COO decreases in importance. Then when respondents were asked to rate the significance of the country of origin along with internal and external cues such as price, quality, design, discounts and bonuses,

warranty availability, and stores the average value was 3.2 out of 5. There are negative correlations in gender and location variables with the COO. This means that as the gender of the survey respondents shifted from female to male then their opinions of the COO turned less favorable and for respondents who live in less populated areas, the COO is less significant for those who live in more inhabited ones.

Table 2

**Spearman’s Rho Correlation (The Questionnaire Data)**

		Spearman	
		r	p
Location	The importance of COO when purchasing HA	<b>-.153*</b>	<b>.043</b>
Location	The importance of COO when purchasing HA (along with the intrinsic and extrinsic cues)	<b>-.238**</b>	<b>.002</b>
Gender	Importance of COO when purchasing HA	-.029	.701
Gender	The importance of COO when purchasing HA (along with the intrinsic and extrinsic cues)	<b>-.158*</b>	<b>.036</b>

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

When respondents have been asked about the refusal of goods primarily based on the states of production, almost one-half (50.3%) answered that they had not declined, and another part (49.7%) responded that they have refused to purchase. Additionally, the answers indicated that the majority (66.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they could pay extra for home appliances made in a country well-known for producing the highest quality goods, while 11% disagreed or absolutely disagreed and 19.4% neither concurred nor disagreed. Spearman's Rho assessment revealed the following relationships between the variables where both the likelihood of goods rejection formulated on the COO and the willingness of spending more for products from a country known for the superior quality of goods were positively correlated with the significance of the COO for the individuals (Table 3). It further indicates that individuals who viewed the place of origin as an essential factor in their purchasing decisions were additionally more likely to refuse to purchase products based on their country of origin and more willing to pay a premium for products from countries associated with the high-quality.

Table 3

### Spearman's Rho Correlation (The Questionnaire Data)

		Spearman	
		r	p
Importance of COO when purchasing HA	Refusal to purchase HAs due to its COO	<b>.390***</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
	Willingness to pay more for goods from a country associated with high quality	<b>.315***</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
	Importance of affordable prices	-.148	.051
	Importance of design	<b>.164*</b>	<b>.030</b>
	Importance of quality	.120	.113
	Importance of discounts and bonuses	.052	.493
	Importance of store	<b>.305***</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

This study discovered a favorable relationship between the significance of the store and COO ( $r = 0.305$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which means that customers who position a great deal of importance on the country of origin are also more likely to place a high valuation on the store in which the product is purchased.

Further, individuals were given a list of states and instructed to select the ones they associated with budget home appliances. Notably, 85.7% of participants selected China (Table 4). This country was followed by Russia (52%), Uzbekistan (50%), Turkey (34.9%), South Korea (12%), Germany (6.7%), Sweden (4.6%), Italy (4%), and the United Kingdom (3.9%). Additionally, some of the participants highlighted more than one option, demonstrating that they may associate low-cost home appliances with multiple countries.

Table 4

#### Country associations with low-cost HAs

Country	Frequency	Percentage
Russia	91	52%
China	150	85.7%



South Korea	21	12%
Turkey	61	34.9%
Uzbekistan	88	50.3%
Germany	12	6.9%
Italy	7	4%
United Kingdom	6	3.4%
Sweden	8	4.6%

In terms of high-quality domestic appliances in Table 5, Germany was selected the most often (89.7%), followed by South Korea (62.3%), Sweden (53.1%), Italy (42.3%), the United Kingdom (42.3%), China (12.6%), Russia (10.9%), Turkey (10.3%), and Uzbekistan (1.1%). These findings suggest that participants evaluate German-made HAs to be of high quality.

Table 5

**Country associations with high-quality HAs**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Russia	19	10.9%
China	22	12.6%
South Korea	109	62.3%
Turkey	18	10.3%
Uzbekistan	2	1.1%
Germany	157	89.7%
Italy	74	42.3%
United Kingdom	74	42.3%
Sweden	93	53.1%

Regarding innovative design, respondents associated this cue with a variety of nations. From Table 6, the findings demonstrated that the most frequently chosen country was South Korea (74.9%). Further, the results were ordered by Germany (45.7%), Italy (33.7%), China (30.3%), Sweden (29.7%), the United Kingdom (25.7%), Turkey (3.4%), Russia (1.7%), and Uzbekistan (1.7%).

Table 6

**Country associations with an innovative and modern design of HAs**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Russia	3	1.7%

China	53	30.3%
South Korea	131	74.9%
Turkey	6	3.4%
Uzbekistan	3	1.7%
Germany	80	45.7%
Italy	59	33.7%
United Kingdom	45	25.7%
Sweden	52	29.7%

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These results indicate that participants might consider South Korean-made HAs to have an innovative design, German-made HAs to be of high quality, and Chinese-made HAs to be budget-friendly.

However, there is a negative correlation between the significance of the COO and the likelihood of associating China with inexpensive household appliances ( $r = -0.153$ ,  $p = 0.043$ ), indicating that as the meaning of the COO increases, the probability of associating China with affordable household products decreases. This may suggest that respondents who place a higher value on the COO are less likely to regard China as a source of low-cost goods. In addition, the study discovered an unfavorable relationship between the rate of rejection to purchase appliance items because of their country of origin and China's association with high-quality home appliances ( $r = -0.195$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that consumers may have a negative perception of China as a high-quality appliance manufacturer, resulting in a reluctance to purchase Chinese-made appliances. Moreover, there is a negative relationship between the level of unwillingness to buy products and China's association with modern appliance design ( $r = -0.233$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that consumers may not perceive China as a source of contemporary, cutting-edge household appliance designs.

### **5.1. Qualitative Findings and Analysis**

### Findings from an in-depth interview with the shop assistants

Key Constructs	Interview Questions	Findings	Quotes from Interviews
Importance of COO	Is country of origin an important reference for customers aged 18-30 when choosing home appliances?	7 out of 12 (58%) of informants agreed that the COO plays an important role in choosing home appliances among Generation Z consumers. The remaining half of the informants warn that for the generation Behind COO is not the main criterion when choosing home appliances.	<p>‘Many buyers are not impressed by the country of origin of China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh with its quality.’ (informant 1)</p> <p>‘For buyers, it is constantly a question of “What is the assembly of this product” and mostly it is asked over 30. That is, who knows little about technology. But from 18 to 30, they know that in principle they do not have so much influence. The main thing is that this product is not made in China, there, assembly, or Vietnam.’(informant 3)</p> <p>‘In this category of customers, the country of production does not particularly affect, since the generation is already more intelligently approaching the purchase of goods.’(informant 10)</p>
HA products evaluation criteria	What is important for customers aged 18-30 when buying home appliances besides the country-of-origin?	Generation Z consumers pay attention to the characteristics, functionality, advantages, quality and service life when choosing HA products.	<p>‘Product characteristics, product quality and service life.’(informant 1)</p> <p>‘The functionality is mainly for the younger generation - from 18 to 30. But over 30 is all. The main thing for them is that it works and there is no assembly of China, that's all.’(informant 3)</p> <p>‘Functionality, practicality and design are important.’(informant 12)</p>
Country Image	Are there any specific countries that are more popular among customers 18-30 years old in Kazakhstan?	10 out of 12 (82%) of informants said that European-made HA products, in particular, Germany, are popular	<p>‘Korean equipment is famous of course, but Chinese is also gaining popularity.’(informant 2)</p> <p>‘The most popular assembly was Russia and the country that produces this</p>

among Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan. It was also revealed that Korean-made products are in great demand. Russian-made HA products are also quite popular.

product. In principle, everything, these are the only countries that were popular when choosing a product, if, say, when choosing a TV, they are used to Samsung there, they are guided either by the assembly, how popular is Russia and Korea itself.’(informant 3)

‘In Kazakhstan, this is Germany.’(informant 4)

‘Italy, Germany, France, Sweden.’(informant 12)

## Country Image

Do you remember any examples of when customers 18-30 years old avoided home appliance products because of the country-of-origin?

Consumers are positive about the HA product produced in Germany and Korea. And ready to overpay for this quality. 50% of informants confirm that consumers have a negative attitude to the HA product produced in China. It was also found that among the younger generation can be positive. to speak about a product manufactured in Russia, starting from the build quality.

‘Recently, I sold a frying pan to WMF and there were two similar frying pans, one German-made, the other Chinese, the German one was more expensive by 20,000tenge and the customer took the German assembly, since the German assembly is better.’(informant 1)

‘Yes there have been cases often avoid China's products.’(informant 2)

‘I remember an elderly couple was looking for a refrigerator for themselves, I approached them, asked questions on all criteria, what kind of goods they needed. And I offered them one refrigerator, but it had a China assembly. Despite the fact that the product met all the criteria they listed, they did not like the product I offered, because there was a China assembly.’(informant 3)

‘A young couple came up to me and started looking for a TV. They wanted a TV assembly Korea from Samsung. I explained to them that we do not yet have such a product with such production, only Russia. I explained to them the advantages and why the Russian assembly is in no way inferior to Korea and was pleased with the nice conversation. They agreed to these conditions and the sale was successful.’(informant 3)

‘The negative reaction was caused by the country of origin Uzbekistan.’(informant 7)

Demographic Differences	Have you noticed any differences in buying behavior between younger and older customers when choosing home appliances?	The 100% result showed that the younger generation is more advanced, and for them the country of origin does not play a key role. The older generation is more susceptible to COO.	<p>‘Young buyers are usually more advanced in terms of technology and understand it, and the older ones need to explain the difference’(informant 1)</p> <p>‘Older generations are more capricious than the young ones.’(informant 3)</p> <p>‘Yes, there is some difference, because the younger generation looks at the features, functions. They pay less attention to the country of origin. And the older generation pays more attention to the country of origin.’(informant 4)</p> <p>‘Young people look more at design, and adults are interested in quality.’(informant 9)</p>
Demographic Differences	Do you think there are any specific home appliance products that are more popular among groups of 18-30 years in Kazakhstan?	The younger generation most often buy smartphones, laptops and smart home products.	<p>‘These are mainly smartphones and accessories for them.’(informant 1)</p> <p>‘There is the most popular product is a cell phone and a smart home system.’(informant 2)</p> <p>‘People who are from 18 to 25, up to 23 often take phones. We have statistics in CRM when selling, if we compare from 25 to 40, here they take home appliances.’(informant 3)</p>
Demographic Differences	How do you think the influence of country of origin varies across different generations of customers?	Half of the informants replied that there was no difference in the choice of a HA product based on it among people of different ages. The other side of the informants replied that the	<p>‘Older people pay more attention to the country of origin.’(informant 1)</p> <p>‘In principle, it does not affect so much, it affects a person. That is, everyone chooses in their own way, well, in principle, I did not notice such a difference [between generations].’(informant 2)</p>

younger generation is less susceptible to COO.

<p>Demographic Differences</p>	<p>Have you noticed a difference in the perception of the COO among 18-30-year-old women and men?</p>	<p>75% of informants confirm that there is a noticeable difference in the perception of the country of origin among women / men. It was found that women pay more attention to the country of production, and men mostly pay attention to the function, characteristics and other criteria of the HA product.</p>	<p>‘Noticeable, men usually don't care, the main thing is that it works, and women carefully select the goods for 2-3 hours.’(informant 1)</p> <p>‘Noticeable because men approach the choice of the product in more detail than women.’(informant 2)</p> <p>‘There is a difference between the choice of women and men. When a woman chooses household appliances, she focuses on the brand and the country of production. But men are also on the brand, but mostly they are interested in the function.’(informant 3)</p>
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The results of the interview showed that for Generation Z, when choosing a HA product, the country of origin is not the key criterion. Basically, they pay attention to the characteristics, function, service, and quality. On the contrary, the adult generation is more susceptible to this. Among the consumers of Generation Z in Kazakhstan, HA products made in Germany and Korea are in demand. In addition, consumers are ready to buy a HA product manufactured in Russia for a high-quality assembly. On the contrary, consumers mostly speak negatively about China's products. It was found that women pay more attention to the country of origin. On the contrary, for men, the country is not the key criterion.

**Findings from an in-depth interview with the Generation Z consumer respondents**

<b>Key constructs</b>	<b>Interview questions</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quotes from interviews</b>
COO Importance	Do you consider the country of origin as an important factor when choosing home appliances?	The following were the most often provided responses by informants: it matters (6/13 or 50%), doesn't matter (3/13 or 25%), and brand matters (2/13 or 15%).	'Nowadays the brand's reputation and the market's recommendations regarding different products are important.' 'I believe that Japanese technology is the most reliable and advanced' 'I look for the production to be European, either Taiwan or factory China.'
Influence of other features	Besides the country of origin, which factors do you consider necessary when choosing home appliances?	The majority of the respondents value quality (50%), others look for brand image and price (35%), remaining to assess the warranty (15%) and design (10%).	'Price-performance ratio is important' 'Materials from which the equipment is made matter. At the same time, I look at the design to combine the interior of the house.'
Country Image	Which countries do you prefer when choosing home appliances?	The top countries were Germany, Japan, and South Korea.	'Even as a child, I had the idea that in Germany the quality is at the highest level.' 'In Taiwan, relatively low prices for goods, and their performance is good.'
Country Image	Which countries do you associate with affordable, high-quality, and innovative design home appliances?	8 out of 13 informants chose China and Russia as the countries with affordable HA. 6 out of 13 respondents defined European countries as the producer of high-quality HA. 7 out of 13 informants characterized South Korea as a country with modern design.	'The choice of China as a country with low-end appliances is associated with high production in the country and with prejudices regarding the production of imitations of various brands.' 'Asian brands are more focused on functionality and practicality.'



COO Effect	Can you remember cases when you refused to buy home appliances because of the country in which they were produced?	<p>Overall, 5 out of 13 of the respondents faced a situation when they had to return goods from China and Belarus due to their being broken or having low quality.</p> <p>Most of the respondents (65%) perceived China and CIS countries in a negative way.</p> <p>As well as, European countries in a positive way (25%).</p>	<p>‘Everything that is done in general in the CIS there is no particular conviction in the quality. Moreover, they always have outdated designs.’</p> <p>‘Currently, I’m pleased with the market of Uzbekistan. They also began to produce equipment.’</p>
Purchase Intention	Would you pay more for the HA goods made in the country known for its high-quality products?	11 out of 13 informants do not mind overpaying for qualitative HA.	<p>‘I am ready to overpay 20% for products from Germany.’</p> <p>‘The needs will grow with age, so I’m ready to overpay for a product with high quality.’</p>

This data is based on the research of the results of the in-depth interview with consumers completed by 13 respondents in the Gen Z group study. Following a thorough review of the results, it was discovered that there was no difference between the scores achieved by males and females, who received 50% and 50%, respectively. Every survey respondent had a unique background and line of employment, including developers, attorneys, students, business owners, housewives, and unemployed individuals. This interview's analysis was carried out using the percentage technique to establish the relative frequency of patterns, trends, and correlations between the variables.

It has been determined to compare both the customer and counselor interviews using qualitative content analysis. The majority of retail shop advisors agreed that COO is important while purchasing HAs and that Generation Z customers steer clear of assembly made in Vietnam, China, and Bangladesh. Contrarily, 7 out of 13 (53.8%) consumer respondents stated that the COO is not relevant since they place more importance on the brand's reputation and image. It can therefore be claimed that it varies for each Generation Z consumer.

Moreover, counselors from stores who responded to the inquiry on additional desirable qualities of potential HA products highlighted that customers prioritize warranty, acceptable quality, design, and pricing. Additionally, the counselors' and Generation Z consumers' perspectives on this one are similar.

Almost every participant from the first group mentioned nations like Germany, Italy, France, and Sweden when defining the best countries to purchase HAs from. Generation Z consumers, on the other hand, share their viewpoint because they choose HAs from European countries as well.

Additionally, according to the store advisors, there have been instances where customers have declined to purchase HA because of COO and because the products came from China and CIS countries including Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. On the other hand, 7 out of 13 (53.8%) respondents from the second group haven't faced such situations. However, the remaining part coincides with the unsatisfactory quality of HA in those countries.

For consumers, the brand and manufacturing country are crucial factors. Consumers who believe that the country of origin is a guarantee of good quality are willing to pay more for it in 8 out of 13

(61.5%) cases. Additionally, according to 7 out of 12 (58.3%) assistants, Generation Z customers have a high purchase intention when it's about high-quality HAs.

Overall, Generation Z customers have both positive and unfavorable opinions on the HAs from particular countries based on their social, demographic backgrounds and personal experiences which could lead to the link between the COO and product evaluation cues.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research aimed to examine the country of origin effect among Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan and product evaluation of home appliance products. Through a comprehensive review of the literature, collection of data from a representative sample of Generation Z consumers as appliance store and consumer consultants, and analysis of the data, several conclusions were drawn.

Firstly, it was evident that the country of origin has a relationship with the Generation Z consumers' good assessments. The research revealed that customers have varying degrees of preferences for products originating from specific countries. Factors such as perceived product quality, price and design might play a crucial role in shaping these preferences. Additionally, the "Made in" country might lead to overpaying for the goods if the nation is associated with high-quality products.

Therefore, this finding highlights the need for companies to effectively communicate the origin of their products to this consumer segment and align it with their preferences and values.

Secondly, it's been noticed that purchasing behavior and attitude toward COO differ from gender to gender. Moreover, counselors claim that the majority of females are influenced by the COO Effect. Men generally pay attention to the function, qualities, and other factors of the HA product, whilst women tend to focus more on the country of origin. A statistic in Table 2 further supports the idea that different opinions on COO exist.

Thirdly, the COO effect may have stronger relationships in more populated areas. The results show a greater association between the significance of COO in an urban environment. Therefore, the stakeholders may be able to better adjust their plans to match the needs of Kazakhstani customers and take advantage of market possibilities if they are aware of the country-of-origin trend in these regions.

The findings of this study also imply that more research on COO aspects is needed. This is particularly intriguing since there is a lack of COO investigations in the Central Asian region, where this area of marketing research is still emerging which should be also considered in future research.

## **7. Limitations**

Although discoveries were made, it is important to be aware of the study's limitations. These restrictions might serve as recommendations for further study. First, to examine the association between COO and Product Evaluation among Generation Z customers in Kazakhstan, the investigation employed judgemental convenience and snowball samples where the primary issues are randomness and bias, neither of which can be monitored or controlled.

Second, results were restricted to individuals who spoke the Russian language. Thus, consumers who speak Kazakh as their first language were not taken into account. Consequently, to further understand the evaluation's findings among the Kazakh-speaking respondents, more studies will be required.

Third, the questionnaire and interview questions were adapted from English to Russian language. This could result in distortion of the intended message or misinterpretation and impact respondents' responses, resulting in skewed data and biased conclusions.

Fourth, lack of a cause-effect relationship between the variables. This limitation could not establish which variable is instigating the changes in the other. Although correlation analysis might indicate a statistical relationship between the factors, it cannot show that the connection is causal. Therefore, further research is required to demonstrate such links between variables.

Finally, a product may be a hybrid of many distinct nations' items in the increasingly intertwined world of global commerce. For instance, a vacuum cleaner that was created in China and manufactured in Russia may have various origins with the distinctive country of the brand or the place of assembly. This implies that the COO phenomenon may be far more intricate than the designs used in the majority of investigations. Therefore, to provide comprehensive implications, future studies should take this into account.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for marketers, businesses, and policymakers. Firstly, companies should invest in transparent and informative communication strategies to highlight the country of origin and its positive attributes to Generation Z consumers. Building a strong brand image and leveraging cultural associations can be effective in capturing the attention and loyalty of this consumer segment. Additionally, companies should consider conducting market research to identify the specific preferences and perceptions of Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan regarding different countries and product categories. This will help tailor marketing strategies and product offerings to better align with their expectations and desires. Also, companies should pay attention to the place of production itself, to countries that are associated with well-known quality, since people are willing to pay more for such equipment, in addition, design is also an important criterion. Moreover, policymakers can support companies by providing regulations and incentives that promote ethical and sustainable practices, as Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan have demonstrated a growing interest in these aspects. Aligning product origin with sustainability and social responsibility can enhance the appeal of products to this consumer segment.

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## **10. Appendix**

### **Research Questionnaire (English)**



1. How old are you? (The filter question)

- 17 and under
- 18-30
- 31 and over

2. Where do you live?

- Astana
- Almaty
- Shymkent
- Aktobe
- Karaganda
- Ust'-Kamenogorsk
- Aktau
- Pavlodar
- Rural area of the KZ
- Not from KZ
- Other

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- Secondary school certificate or less
- Some university education but without a degree
- A Bachelor's degree
- A postgraduate degree

5. In which range (tenge) does your total monthly income fall?

- Not earning yet
- Less than 150,000

- 151,000-300,000
  - 301,000-450,000
  - 451,000-600,000
  - Over 601,000
6. How important is the country of origin when deciding whether or not you will buy a home appliance product? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all important and 5 means extremely important.
7. Have you ever recommended home appliances based on their country of origin? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means definitely no and 5 definitely yes.
8. Have you ever refused to buy a home appliance product because of its country of origin?
- Yes
  - No
9. What is the probability that you will pay more for HA if they are made in a country known for its high-quality products? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means definitely no and 5 definitely yes.
10. How do you perceive those countries? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very negative and 5 very positive.
- Russia
  - China
  - South Korea
  - Turkey
  - Uzbekistan
  - Germany
  - Italy
  - The United Kingdom
  - Sweden
11. Which of the following countries do you associate with affordable household appliances?
- Russia

- China
- South Korea
- Turkey
- Uzbekistan
- Germany
- Italy
- UK
- Sweden

12. Which of the following countries do you associate with high-quality household appliances?

- Russia
- China
- South Korea
- Turkey
- Uzbekistan
- Germany
- Italy
- UK
- Sweden

13. Which of the following countries do you associate with innovative (modern) design household appliances?

- Russia
- China
- South Korea
- Turkey
- Uzbekistan
- Germany
- Italy
- UK

- Sweden

14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important are each of the following features to you while purchasing HA? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all important and 5 means extremely important.

- Affordable price
- Design
- Quality
- Country-of-origin
- Promotions, discounts and bonuses
- Store
- Warranty

### **Interview Transcripts**

1. [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XHdDRGKSuhpp35Ss-nx0vDpk4fKNXymT?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XHdDRGKSuhpp35Ss-nx0vDpk4fKNXymT?usp=share_link)
2. [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cRtDiYyjjosv7ANSzRWivv4x53FIhEV7?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cRtDiYyjjosv7ANSzRWivv4x53FIhEV7?usp=share_link)