



**Advanced and emerging economies Generation Y's
perception towards country-of-origin**

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Emerging Markets</i>
Manuscript ID:	IJoEM-11-2012-0146.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Article
Keywords:	country of origin, emerging economies, advanced economies, fashion, generation y

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Review

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Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of country-of-origin held by Generation Y in advanced and emerging economies. This paper explores whether Generation Y consumers from advanced and emerging economies have different perceptions towards the country-of-origin of fashion products. Generation Y is also known as Gen Y, Millennials, Echo Boomers, Why Generation, Net Generation, Gen Wired, We Generation, DotNet, Ne(x)T Generation, Nexters, First Globals, iPod Generation and iYGeneration (William and Page, 1994). Generation Y are individuals born during 1977-1994 (Nayyar, 2001; Paul, 2001). There are approximately 1.38 billion Generation Y in the world (US Census Bureau, 2012). They are in the 19-36 age range in 2013.

Country-of-origin is commonly used by customers to predict the quality and performance of products (Cai *et al.*, 2004; Muchbalcher *et al.*, 1999; Olins, 2004; Khmel'nyts'ka and Swift, 2010). The majority of country-of-origin studies to date only involve customers from one or a small number of nationalities. Thus, they may not be adequate to explore whether customers in advanced and emerging economies hold different perceptions towards country-of-origin. This investigation was undertaken because cheaper production costs and a greater ability to outsource have led to more and more international companies deciding to manufacture their products in emerging economies (Gereffi and Memedovic, 2003).

One of the key industries that has been outsourcing their products in emerging economies is the fashion industry (Gereffi and Memedovic, 2003; Khan, 2003). This is because, even though the labour costs in the emerging economies are lower, the labour skills in producing

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3 fashion products are often comparable with the labour skills of advanced economies (Hines
4 and Bruce, 2007). Furthermore, as fashion is one of the key interests of Generation Y
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7 (William and Page, 2011; Van den Bergh et al., 2011; Gronbach, 2008), fashion products are
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10 deemed to be an appropriate context for this study.

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14 Most country-of-origin studies employ quantitative research because the purpose of these
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16 studies is to measure the effect of country-of-origin on customers' perceptions and behaviour.
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18 Nevertheless, because of its focus in measuring causal relationships, quantitative studies
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20 usually are not able to capture the reasons for customers' perceptions and behaviour towards
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22 country-of-origin. Therefore, this paper provides an alternative approach in country-of-origin
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24 studies by employing a qualitative research. By employing a qualitative approach, this paper
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26 will not only able to investigate what are Generation Y's perceptions and behaviour towards
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28 country-of-origin, from both advanced and emerging economies, but also to understand the
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30 reasons behind their perceptions towards country-of-origin. This paper is structured as
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32 follows: a literature review, research methods, research results and discussion with reference
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34 to relevant literature. The study is concluded by summarising the findings, highlighting
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36 research limitations and suggesting the managerial implications.
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43 **The definition of country-of-origin**

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45 Consumers are usually made aware of a product's country-of-origin by 'Made in' or
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47 'Manufactured in' labels (Bilkey and Nes, 1982). Although, there is no precise definition
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49 about country-of-origin (Sauer *et al.*, 1991), it can be understood as the image of a country in
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51 a consumer's mind which influences their evaluation of the products or brands that are
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53 produced by that country (Chapa *et al.*, 2006; Morello, 1993; Samiee, 1994; Shlomo and
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55 Jaffee, 1996). This understanding suggests that country-of-origin information can be used to
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3 reflect the origin of a brand as well the origin of a product. Nevertheless, nowadays many
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5 products are manufactured in countries other than where the corporate headquarters of the
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7 company or brand is located. As noted by Al-Sulaiti and Baker (1998), in the modern
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9 marketplace defining country-of-origin can create a complication. The growth of
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11 multinational companies and the evaluation of hybrid products which consists of components
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13 from different countries can blur the accuracy and the validity of the “Made in” label (Baker
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15 and Michie, Baughn and Yaprak, 1993; Chao, 1993; Yaprak and Baughm, 1991). The global
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17 clothing industry is an example where this phenomenon takes place.
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23 As an attempt to standardise the labelling system of product country-of-origin information,
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25 Revised Kyoto Convention (international convention on the simplification and harmonization
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27 of international customs procedures) stipulates that if a product has been produced or
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29 modified in two or more countries, the country-of-origin of the product will be the last
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31 country in which the product has been substantially processed (United Nations Statistic
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33 Division, 2007). For most goods, including clothing, country-of-origin information is usually
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35 portrayed by a “Made in label”. This rule has been adopted by countries that enforce country-
36
37 of-origin regulations. In many geographical areas, such as the USA, New Zealand,
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39 Australia, Japan, European Union, and South Africa it is a requirement that country-of-origin
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41 information on clothing products must be displayed in a position that can be seen clearly by
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43 the consumers when examining the item. According to the European Parliament without
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45 disclosing country-of-origin information, customers may be deceived regarding the true
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47 origin of the products and therefore may not be able to make an informed buying decision
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49 (European Parliament, 2011). Thus, it is suggested that as long as these regulations are
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51 enforced, country-of-origin still becomes an important field to research because it may
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53 influence the customers’ perception towards products or brands. In addition, academic
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3 scholars also note that the vast amount of country-of-origin studies in the past few decades
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5 are indications of the importance of the country images in international marketing strategy
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7 (Phau and Prendergast, 2000).
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11 If the clothing materials are sourced from and/or are processed in several countries, it is
12
13 impractical to list all of the locations that played a part in the construction of the product.
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15 Therefore, the “Made in” label which informs the customers about the last place where the
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17 clothes were substantially processed or manufactured is deemed adequate to allow customers
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19 to make informed buying decision. Based on this conceptualisation, in this study country-of-
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21 origin is defined as the last place where a product was manufactured or substantially
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23 modified which is usually informed by the “Made in” label. This premise is consistent with
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25 what has been suggested by Revised Kyoto Convention (United Nations Statistic Division,
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27 2007), Bannister and Saunders (1978), Chasin and Jaffe (1979), and Nagashima (1970,
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29 1977).
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36 **The influence of country-of-origin to product evaluation and purchasing decision**

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41 Studies exploring the country-of-origin issue indicate that the image of countries where
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43 products were manufactured is used by consumers as an external cue to evaluate products
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45 (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Johansson *et al.*, 1985). Country-of-origin can provide associations
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47 which may influence consumers' perceptions (Lee and Tai, 2009). It is used by consumers to
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49 predict the quality and performance of products (Abedniya & Zaeim, 2011; Bilkey, 1993; Cai
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51 *et al.*, 2004; Hamin and Eliot, 2006; Muchbalcher *et al.*, 1999; Olins, 2003) and to justify the
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53 rationality of their purchasing decision (Cai *et al.*, 2004; Khachaturian and Morganosky,
54
55 1990). When consumers are not familiar with the products of a country, country-of-origin
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3 information functions as a 'halo' that directly affects consumers' beliefs about the products
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5 and indirectly affects the overall evaluation of them through these beliefs (Johansson *et al.*,
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7 1985).
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11 Despite consumers' frequent and numerous remarks that a product's country-of-origin is not
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13 important (e.g. Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993; Hugstad & Durr, 1986) it is suggested that
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15 they will readily use country-of-origin as an important factor in quality especially for
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17 products such as cars, households appliances, computer technology, apparel and cosmetics
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19 (Vrontis *et al.*, 2006). Nevertheless, it is also suggested that even though country-of-origin
20
21 information is important in assessing fashion product quality, when it is used to evaluate
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23 purchasing likelihood, country-of-origin seems to be less important (Wall *et al.*, 1991; Lin &
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25 Sternquist, 1994).
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31 Studies suggest that consumers' perception towards country-of-origin (either positive or
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33 negative) is based on a stereotype held by consumers towards the country itself (Hamin and
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35 Eliot, 2006; Urbonivicius *et al.*, 2011). The image of the country can be generated from
36
37 consumers' experience of visiting the country, knowledge about the country, political beliefs,
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39 or ethnocentrism tendencies. Unfortunately, this stereotype is often not directly linked to the
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41 features of the product itself. For instance, issues such as human rights violence, child labour
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43 and low manufacturing costs, can blur the perception towards the features of the product
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45 (Muchbalcher *et al.*, 1999; Paswan and Sharma, 2004). Other studies show that consumers'
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47 perception towards country-of-origin is more likely to be a stereotype rather than an opinion
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49 about a specific feature of the product (Chattalas *et al.*, 2007; Martin and Eroglu, 1993).
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3 A stereotype which is commonly found among consumers, is that products made in advanced
4 economies such as USA, Germany, Japan, France, Korea and UK have better quality and are
5 more reliable than products made in emerging economies such as Indonesia, India,
6 Bangladesh, Turkey, Morocco and Vietnam (Anholt, 2006; Bilkey and Nes, 1993;
7 Papadopoulus, 1993). This is because advanced economies are usually well-known for
8 quality, design, innovation, dependability, originality, and management (Muchbalcher, 1999;
9 Usunier and Lee, 2005; van Gelder, 2003) whereas emerging economies are often associated
10 with negative images (Ahmed *et al.*, 1993; Muchbalcher, 1999). Furthermore, consumers
11 tend to believe that workers in advanced economies are more technologically sophisticated
12 than workers in emerging economies, so that they are seen as being more capable of making
13 high quality products (Li and Monroe, 1992).

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16 Findings of country-of-origin studies in the context of fashion products indicate that fashion
17 products made in advanced economies have better quality than fashion products made in
18 emerging economies (Schooler, 1971; Gaedeke, 1973; Kachaturian and Morganosky, 1990;
19 Patterson and Tai, 1991; Kaynak *et al.*, 2000). Ettenson *et al.*'s research (1998) concludes that
20 when considering fashion products, price and quality have a stronger effect on customers than
21 country-of-origin information.

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 **The influence of consumers' nationality on their perception of a product due to its** 48 **country-of-origin**

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54 There has been an assumption that products made in advanced economies are more credible
55 and appealing to consumers than products made in emerging economies (Anholt, 2006).
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3 However, cheaper production costs and greater access to outsourcing to emerging economies
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5 has made more and more international companies decide to manufacture their products in
6
7 these countries (Boulden, 2007; Gereffi and Memedovic, 2003).
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11 Consumers from different nationalities have different perceptions towards country-of-origin
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13 (Cattin *et al.*, 1982; Han, 1990). In consumers' mind country-of-origin images are influenced
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15 by the similarity between their country's background and the political background, cultural
16
17 climate, and belief systems of the product's country of origin (Han, 1990). Furthermore, most
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19 nations 'are historically developed wholes that usually share one dominant language, mass
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21 media, a national education system and national markets for products and services'(de Mooij,
22
23 2005, p.52), Thus, it can be suggested that people from the same nation tend to create similar
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25 behaviour. Based on the arguments above, this research will specifically explore the
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27 relationship between Generation Y's country of domicile (advanced and emerging
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29 economies) with their country-of-origin evaluations.
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36 The categorisation of advanced and emerging economies employed throughout this paper is
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38 based on the categorisation proposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2010). The
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40 IMF (2010) classifies emerging and developing economies into one category. According to
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42 Cavusgil *et al.* (2002), all of the emerging economies are developing, but the reverse is not
43
44 true, not all developing economies can be characterised as emerging economies. Emerging
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46 economies are those that '(a) have started an economic reform process aimed at alleviating
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48 problems for example, of poverty, poor infrastructure, and overpopulation, and (b) achieved a
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50 steady growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita' (Cavusgil *et al.* 2002, p.4).
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54 However, as the IMF does not make any differentiation between emerging and developing
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3 economies, in this paper, every country which is not categorised as an advanced economy by
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5 the IMF classification is categorised as an emerging economy.
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10 The classification of advanced and emerging economies may vary depending on the
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12 organisations which provide the research and the countries that are included in the
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14 classifications (e.g. FTSE, 2010; IMF, 2010). All of the countries included in this study are
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16 encompassed in the IMF's (2010) classification and therefore this categorisation is deemed to
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18 be the most appropriate to be employed in this research.
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23 The main criteria the IMF employs for classifying countries into advanced and emerging
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25 economies are '(1) per capita income level, (2) export diversification—so oil exporters that
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27 have high per capita GDP would not make the advanced classification because around 70%
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29 of their exports are oil, and (3) degree of integration into the global financial system' (IMF
30
31 2010). Nevertheless, these are not the only factors considered in deciding the classification of
32
33 countries. Instead of being based on strict criteria, such as economic, the classification has
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35 evolved over time with the purpose of facilitating analysis by providing a reasonably
36
37 meaningful organization of data. Reclassification may happen when something marks
38
39 changes or the case for change becomes overwhelming. For example, Malta joining the
40
41 European Union was deemed to be a significant change in its circumstances that led to it
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43 being reclassified from an emerging economy to an advanced economy (IMF, 2010).
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50 Most country-of-origin studies indicate that consumers from both advanced and emerging
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52 economies tend to stereotype products made in advanced economies as more reliable and
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54 favourable than products made in emerging economies (Cai *et al.*, 2004; Chao, 1998;
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56 Drozdenko and Jensen, 2009; Hahn *et al.*, 2006; Kaynak *et al.*, 2000; Knight, 1999;
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3 Pappadopoulos *et al.*, 1989). Furthermore, a number of studies conducted in advanced
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5 economies indicate that domestic products are preferred over imported products (Elliott and
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7 Cameron, 1994; Mulye *et al.*, 1997; Knight, 1999; Baumgartner and Jolibert, 1977).

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10 However, other studies indicate that in emerging economies foreign products are preferred
11
12 over domestic products (Saffu and Scott, 2009; Ettenson, 1993). Studies in the context of
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14 fashion products also indicate similar findings (Darling and Kraft, 1977; Niffenegger *et al.*,
15
16 2006; Olsen *et al.*, 1993; Kaynak *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, this study aims to investigate
17
18 further whether these findings also apply specifically to Generation Y.
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20 21 22 23 **Generation Y's perception towards country-of-origin**

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25 Each generation has unique expectations, experiences, generational history, lifestyles, values
26
27 and demographics that influence their buying behaviour (Williams and Page, 2011). A
28
29 generation is a product of current times and uniquely shaped by technologies, media, social
30
31 marker and events (Van den Bergh *et al.*, 2011). Thus, it can be argued that because each
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33 cohort travels through life together and experience similar events at a similar age, they can
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35 share a common social, political, historical and economic environment.
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41 Generation Y grew up in a time of immense and fast paced changed including virtually full
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43 employment opportunities for women, dual-income households as standard, wide array of
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45 family types seen as normal, significant respect for ethnic and cultural diversity including a
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47 heightened social awareness, and computers at home and in schools (Williams and Page,
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49 2011). Generation Y were born into a technological, electronic and wireless society with
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51 global boundaries becoming more transparent (Daniels, 2007; Lee and Tai, 2006).
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3 Generation Y's individuality and image centricity make brands and products customisation
4 very important (Daniels, 2007). Generation Y does not pay attention to quality and require
5 competitive pricing and may want to negotiate based on the competitors' advertised prices or
6 search results from the internet (Himmel, 2008). Generation Y demands the latest trends in
7 record time and gets bored easily (Yarrow and O'Donnell, 2009). Because of this
8 characteristic, affordable fast fashion retailers are popular among the Generation Y.
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18 Empirical studies that focus on how country-of-origin influences Generation Y are scarce. A
19 study that touches upon this issue indicates that Generation Y's awareness of country-of-
20 origin is higher than the awareness of the brand-origin because country-of-origin information
21 is usually attached to the products (Van den Bergh *et al.*, 2011). Generation Y also associates
22 the image of the country to the quality of the product categories. Country-of-origin appears to
23 play a more important role in their perception of quality in certain industries such as food,
24 health and beauty, technology (durables), cars and clothing (Van den Bergh *et al.*, 2011).
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36 Generation Y believes that they can create a better future (William and Page, 2011). They
37 want products and services that serve their functional needs as well as those that have a
38 purpose and meaning. They support brands who they perceive to be good to their employees,
39 good for the environment and are doing something positive for the future (Yarrow and
40 O'Donnell, 2009). Ethical issues such as labour mistreatments and animal abuses influence
41 this generation's perception towards country-of-origin (Van den Bergh *et al.*, 2011).
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50 Nevertheless, as unethical production and lower quality are often associated with products
51 made in emerging economies, there is a question as to whether generation Y in the emerging
52 countries will have similar concerns about this issues to those held by generation Y in
53 advanced economies.
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5 It is important to note most of the marketing studies related to the Generation Y have been
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7 undertaken in the Western World such as USA and Europe. Therefore, empirical research
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9 which focuses on the perception of Generation Y from both advanced and emerging
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11 economies towards country-of-origin can contribute to the development of marketing
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13 knowledge.
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21 **Research methods**

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23 As the nature of this research is exploratory, a qualitative research method was considered
24
25 appropriate (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). The strength of qualitative research is that the
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27 researchers can emphasize subtleties in participants' behaviours and responses. They can also
28
29 gain depth information from the participants and highlight the reasons for their actions or
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31 perspectives that cannot be achieved by a quantitative research method (Burns, 2000).
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36 MSN Messenger (chat room) and email interviews were employed in the primary research.
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38 There are two main reasons why chat rooms and email were considered as the most
39
40 appropriate mediums to be employed in this study: firstly, the participants live in different
41
42 countries; secondly, the participants are Generation Y who are familiar with the use of
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44 technology and chat rooms (Tapscott, 2009). It has been argued that computer-mediated
45
46 communication such as chat rooms and emails allowed the researcher to collect rich data
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48 from isolated, geographically dispersed, and/or stigmatized groups who are often overlooked
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50 or ignored (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006). Processing and analysing online interview data is
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52 generally quicker than offline interviews because online interviews can automatically
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54 generate transcripts (Gruber *et al.*, 2008).
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5 Email interviews are seen to be more complete as they tend to include more self-reflection by
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7 participants and are likely to be more candid (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006). This was also
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9 reflected in the current research. However, this approach is not able to foster interaction and
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11 feedback and to permit people to communicate with many kinds of cues facilitated by using
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13 multiple senses which are offered by telephone or face-to-face interviews (Panteli, 2002;
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15 Robert & Dennis, 2005; Gillam, 2005). This is because in email interviews the researcher
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17 will not be able to read facial expressions and body language, make eye contact, or hear the
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19 voice tones of participants. Thus, it is possible that some important visual or nonverbal cues
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21 that would be observed during face-to-face data collection will be missed by using email
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23 interviews (Selwyn and Robson, 1998). However, email interviews can reduce, or even
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25 eliminate, some of the common problems associated with telephone or face-to-face
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27 interviews, such as the interviewer or participants' effects that might result from visual or
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29 nonverbal cues or status difference between the two.
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36 In addition, email may safeguard against possible loss of face among some people when they
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38 describe potentially sensitive events, experiences, or personal characteristics (Kim et al.,
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40 2003). Therefore, in many cases email interviews facilitate greater disclosure of personal
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42 information, offering further benefits to both the researcher and participants (Bowker &
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44 Tuffin, 2004). The pilot interviews undertaken in this research partially addressed the
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46 potential weaknesses of this approach by strengthening the thoroughness of the questionnaire
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48 format as the feedback from the pilot studies was used to improve the questions. Two pilot
49
50 interview sessions were conducted for the purpose of this research:
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3 1. *Semi structured pilot interviews (using chat room)*
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5 The first session was conducted semi-structurally by using a chat room. During the semi-
6 structured pilot interviews, similar core questions were given to the participants and different
7 additional questions were given based on the participants' answers (Gillham, 2005). The aim
8 of the semi-structured pilot interviews was to explore the participants' opinions, develop the
9 questions based on the participants' answers for use in the actual interviews and explore other
10 possible theories that were missed in the literature review. These one-to-one interview
11 sessions involved six participants which took approximately 30 to 120 minutes to complete.
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23 2. *Structured pilot interviews (using emails)*
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25 The second pilot session was conducted by using email. The feedback during the semi-
26 structured pilot interviews was used to develop structured pilot interviews that were sent by
27 email to six participants. In structured interviews 'the exact wording and sequence of
28 questions are determined in advance. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions in
29 the same order. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format' (Patton 2002,
30 p.349). The aim of the structured pilot interviews was to estimate the time needed to answer
31 the questions, to check spelling, grammar and wording mistakes, and to consider possible
32 questions to be added or removed for the actual interview sections. The pilot email interviews
33 were sent to six participants. According to the participants, it took approximately 30 to 60
34 minutes to answer the questions. A similar time frame was also used by the participants in the
35 actual email interviews. There were 10 main questions asked to the participants. Some
36 questions had between two and four sub-questions. The feedback of the second pilot
37 interviews was used to develop the actual email interview questions.
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In order to create and test new interpretations that require information richness, qualitative research usually uses small samples but samples that are selected purposefully (Kuzel, 1999). Therefore, non-probability self-selection sampling was employed in this research. The participants in this research were generated from the author's social circle all of whom were (to varying degrees) personally known by the author before the interview and registered in the author's email address book. The main criteria used in generating the sample were the participants' year of birth and that they had been educated at the university level. By choosing the participants who were known to the author, the author could draw upon the advantages of interpersonal relationships, such as participants' trust, honesty and openness when answering questions (Blichfeldt and Helldbjerg, 2011), enhancing the quality of the interviews.

The participants were invited or asked personally to participate in the research. The samples were heterogeneous by nationality (Table 1). There were 21 nationalities involved in the research.

Table 1 Participants from advanced and emerging economies

Advanced economies		Emerging economies	
Japan (1)	Sweden (1)	Indonesian (8)	Brazil (2)
United Kingdom (8)	Italy (2)	Vietnam (1)	Czech Republic (1)
Germany (2)	Finland (2)	Malaysia (3)	Tanzania (2)
Netherlands (2)	Spain (2)	Thai (2)	Turkey (3)
Belgium (1)	United States (1)	China (5)	
France (3)	Canada (1)		
26 participants		27 participants	
Female: 14 Male: 12		Female: 15 Male: 12	

The participants were born between 1977 and 1994, had been in full time or part time employment and educated at the university. The occupations of the participants and their level of knowledge about the country-of-origin subject were heterogeneous. The assumption about the participants' knowledge of country-of-origin information was derived from whether

the participants were working or studying within the business or marketing field. In comparison to the number of participants who worked in the business or marketing field (22), the number of participants who worked or studied in the non-business or marketing field were higher (31). During the interview the subject of country-of-origin was represented by the “Made in” label, a phenomenon that all of the participants’ were familiar with. Therefore, their level of knowledge about the subject should not have been an obstacle when answering the interview questions. The composition of the participants’ occupations is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Participants' occupation

Occupation	Number of participants
Business/marketing related undergraduate and postgraduate students	13
Non-business/marketing related undergraduate and postgraduate students	10
Business/marketing related occupations: Business managers (2); PR executives (2); marketing executives (4); and accountant (1)	9
Non-business/marketing related occupations Engineers(5); linguists (2); chef (1); office clerks (3); graphic designers (2); hospitality workers (1); care workers (2); graphic designers (3); beauty therapist (1); real estate agent (1)	21
Total:	53

In order to identify a pattern and to create classifications for the answers, this research aimed at a minimum of 30 participants. To determine a sample size in a qualitative research study a theoretical saturation strategy is usually adopted. Theoretical saturation occurs when “no new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and the relationships among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 212). Therefore, in qualitative research the researcher would continue expanding the sample size until the data

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3 collection supplies no new information or pattern (Thomson, 2011). By employing this
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5 approach in this research, the process of undertaking interviews was stopped after patterns in
6
7 the answers were identified.
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11 In total there were 70 email interviews sent out which led to 53 interview responses that were
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13 valid including the pilot interviews. After the completed email interviews were received by
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15 the researcher, a follow up procedure was conducted. This was undertaken by asking the
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17 participants about their opinion of the interview questions, their difficulties when answering
18
19 them, the length of time they took in completing the full interview and to find out if there
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21 were any other questions that they would have been liked to ask about. Therefore, it is
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23 concluded even though the participants were generated from the author's social circle, the
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25 heterogeneity of the participants' occupation and nationality and the relatively large sample
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27 size adopted in this study ensured the reliability of the data.
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34 Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a method for
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36 identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
37
38 This study specifically employed theoretical thematic analysis where the themes were
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40 developed from the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area (Braun and Clark,
41
42 2006). The thematic analysis involved the process of creating and applying codes to the data.
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45 The main themes generated from the literature review were whether country-of-origin
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47 information would influence customers' product evaluation and purchasing decisions and the
48
49 factors were used by the customers' in evaluating country-of-origin information. New themes
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51 were found in the data that were not covered in the literature review, such as the impact of the
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53 consumers' nationality on their perception of a product due to its country-of-origin. When
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55 this occurred the new theme was used to revisit or develop the literature review. This iterative
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3 and reflexive process meant the analysis was not only theoretically sound but also reflected
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5 the researched phenomenon.
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10 The findings suggested that participants used different terms in expressing advanced and
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12 emerging economies. In one of the questions, “highly industrialised” and “newly
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14 industrialised” countries were used to refer to advanced and emerging economies. The
15
16 reason of this wording was because the IMF classification was adopted after the research was
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18 completed, after the initial data classification indicated that participants from advanced and
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20 emerging countries had different perceptions towards country-of-origin of internationally
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22 branded clothes. However, because of the research ethics, the direct quotes of the participants
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24 which contain any of these terms were not changed.
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28 29 30 **Results**

31 32 **Generation Y’s perceptions towards country-of-origin of fashion products**

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34 The participants from the advanced economies were asked to think about the “Made in” label
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36 information on international fashion brands for 30 seconds, and to write down any word that
37
38 came to their mind. The majority of the words written by these participants were related to
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40 ethical issues, such as cheap labour, poor wages, sweat shops, discrimination, differentiation,
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42 cheap work, child labour, working conditions, poverty, ethical, and exploitation. On the other
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44 hand, when participants from the emerging economies were asked a similar question, the
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46 majority of words they wrote related to issues of product quality, prestige and price. They
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48 used words, such as original, true, premium, status, invention, quality, design, style, purchase
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50 decision, value for money.
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3 All participants were then given a scenario where they had to choose between two similar T-
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5 shirts. Both had an identical brand name, style, colour and price but one was made in an
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7 country in the highly industrialised country (i.e. advanced economy) and one was made in a
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9 country in the newly industrialised country (i.e. emerging economy) category. Most of the
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11 participants from both categories said that they would prefer a T-shirt made in the highly
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13 industrialised countries (i.e. advanced economies). However, there were differences in the
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15 reasons for their preference. Most of the participants from the advanced economies said that
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17 they would choose the T-shirt made in the advanced economies because they are well known
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19 for better product quality as well as ethical trading:
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25 *“T-shirt made in highly industrialised country. I think the t-shirt is better quality and*
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27 *it’s more long lasting. I think that the materials are better and the producers are more*
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29 *professional. I think in highly industrialised countries producers have better*
30
31 *education than in less industrialised countries” (Pinja – Finnish).*
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36 *“Highly developed country I think because there is less chance that the clothes are*
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38 *made by children or by people who are paid too low” (Kim – Belgian).*
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43 In contrast, the majority of the participants from the emerging economies said that they
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45 would prefer the T-shirt made in advanced economies because they were well-known for
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47 better product quality:
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52 *I will go for the first option [advanced economy]. Because unfortunately, my perception*
53
54 *is being manipulated whether I like or not, so I think if the price of a t-shirt that’s being*
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56 *produced in France is the same as a t-shirt that’s being produced in China, I would*
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3 *think that the France one is a better value of money, because I know that for a fact, the*
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5 *labour costs more than it is in China” (Agnes – British).*
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9 **Generation Y’s perceptions towards fashion products made in their own country**

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11 The participants were then asked to imagine that they went to another country and wanted to
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13 buy a T-shirt from an international brand abroad but they found that the T-shirt was made in
14
15 their own country; almost all of the participants from advanced economies suggested that
16
17 they would buy the T-shirt. The reasons given were a sense of pride, a perception that the T-
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19 shirt would be of superior quality and that it would have been manufactured more carefully
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21 and ethically:
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27 *“I would buy the clothing. If I like the blouse then I would buy it. With the tag ‘made*
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29 *in the Netherlands’ I know almost for certain it is made with good quality and people*
30
31 *have not been exploited to make the blouse” (Stephanie – Dutch).*
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36 Some of the participants from the advanced economies said that they would be surprised to
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38 find clothes made in their countries abroad because they assumed that their countries do not
39
40 manufacture clothes anymore:
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45 *“Nothing apart from be very surprised.....very little is manufactured in the UK today,*
46
47 *especially clothing. Because I am used to the typical country of origin in terms of*
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49 *clothing manufacture” (Paul – British).*
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54 Participants from the emerging economies had mixed responses towards this question. More
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56 than half of the participants had a similar opinion to that of the participants from the
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3 advanced economies by saying that they would feel proud that a product from their country
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5 had been accepted overseas:
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10 *“If I like the product I would buy it straight away. Being from my country is a plus as*
11 *the apparel market is well developed. Because my country (Brazil) produces nice*
12 *clothes, with nice fit and cut, there are good and renamed designers and they use*
13 *Brazil’s diversity to create new products, with new materials” (Adriana – Brazillian).*
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20 However, some of the participants from the emerging economies suggested that they would
21
22 hesitate to buy the T-shirt. They claimed that they would only buy the T-shirt if the price was
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24 much cheaper or if they really liked the design. Some of them argued that they would not buy
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26 the T-shirt because there was a possibility that they could buy a similar T-shirt in their own
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28 country at a cheaper price.
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34 *“I will not buy. Because it will be more expensive to buy it in other country (export*
35 *and tax charges) rather than my own country. And since I am on a holiday, why would*
36 *I purchase something that is made from my own country – make no sense” (Liz –*
37 *Malaysian).*
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45 **Discussion**

46 **Generation Y from advanced and emerging economies perception towards country-of-** 47 **origin of fashion products** 48 49 50

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52 The literature review indicates that country-of-origin may affect the customers’ evaluation of
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54 products (e.g. Morello, 1984; Pappu, 2007) specifically fashion products. Country-of-origin
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56 is often used by consumers to predict the quality and performance of products (e.g. Hamin
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3 and Eliot, 2006; Olins, 2003) and to justify the rationality of their purchasing decision (e.g.
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5 Cai *et al.*, 2004; Khachaturian and Morganosky, 1990). Studies indicate that customers from
6
7 the same nation may have a similar stereotyping tendency (Cattin *et al.*, 1982; de Mooij,
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9 2005; Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000). This study which was conducted in the context of
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11 Generation Y from advanced and emerging economies also confirmed all of these findings.
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13 However, the division of Generation Y into advanced and emerging economies categories
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15 employed in this research indicated that there were differences on how country-of-origin had
16
17 been used by Generation Y in advanced and emerging economies in informing their
18
19 purchasing decision.
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25 Almost all of the Generation Y in this study stated that the preferred characteristic of the
26
27 countries which made their T-shirt were countries that made clothing with high quality; did
28
29 not exploit children and employees; gave legal protection to their workers and treated them
30
31 fairly; and gave their workers the chance to be educated properly. However, again, the
32
33 preferences related to ethical trading were more frequently mentioned by Generation Y from
34
35 advanced economies whereas preferences related to quality were more frequently mentioned
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37 by the Generation Y from emerging economies.
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43 The current findings of this research indicated that Generation Y from advanced economies
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45 and emerging economies had a different stereotyping tendency towards the country-of-origin
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47 of fashion products. When thinking about products made in emerging economies, the
48
49 majority of Generation Y from the advanced economies would not only stereotype the
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51 countries with low production quality but also on humanitarian and ethical trading issues.
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53 They would wonder whether the workers in the emerging economies were treated well and
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55 had good working conditions. The reason for their perception could be because they
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3 compared the working conditions of workers in emerging economies with the much better
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5 working conditions in their own country. They might also be affected by negative publicity in
6
7 the media regarding international fashion retailers who outsourced their products to emerging
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9 economies but did not give enough support to the local workers.
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14 In contrast, when consumers from emerging economies thought about the country-of-origin
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16 of fashion products with international brands, the majority would only mention that advanced
17
18 economies produced better quality clothing compared to emerging economies. Ethical trading
19
20 issues were seen to be less important. This could be because in their opinion the working
21
22 conditions of employees who manufactured the fashion products from their own country, an
23
24 emerging economy, was deemed to be acceptable. Van den Bergh et al. (2011) suggest that
25
26 when thinking about country-of-origin Generation Y will pay attention to ethical trading
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28 issues. However, this study indicated that ethical trading issues had more influence on
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30 Generation Y from the advanced economies.
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36 One suggestion that can explain this phenomenon is that their responses were based on a
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38 comparison between the background information of the country which manufactured the
39
40 products with the background of their own country. As was mentioned by Han (1990),
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42 country-of-origin perceptions might be affected by the customers' perceptions towards the
43
44 political and cultural situation and belief systems of the products origin in comparison to their
45
46 own country's background.
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52 **Generation Y from advanced and emerging economies perception towards country-of-**
53 **origin of fashion products made in their own country**
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3 Studies suggest that in advanced economies, domestic products are preferred whereas in
4
5 emerging economies imported products are preferred (Elliott and Cameron, 1994; Ettenson,
6
7 1993; Knight, 1999; Mulye *et al.*, 1997; Saffu and Scott, 2009). The current study which was
8
9 conducted in the context of Generation Y confirmed these findings. The current study
10
11 indicated that the majority of Generation Y from advanced economies felt proud if they found
12
13 international products made in their own country overseas and would not hesitate to buy the
14
15 products abroad.
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20 In contrast, even though the majority of participants from the emerging economies were
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22 proud to see the products made in their countries overseas, they still hesitated or even
23
24 declined to purchase these products overseas. Their behaviour could be related to their
25
26 personal experience in their own countries. As was mentioned by Urbonavicius *et al.* (2011)
27
28 personal experience with a particular country would influence a customers' perception about
29
30 the country as well as its products. Thus, participants from advanced economies would be
31
32 happy to buy the clothes made in their own countries abroad because they might assume that
33
34 the clothes would have better quality. In contrast, some participants from emerging
35
36 economies would hesitate to buy the clothes because they might perceive that the clothes
37
38 were made with lower production costs. Thus, they might assume that they should be able to
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40 buy similar or almost similar products in their own country.
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46 47 **Conclusion**

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49 This paper has identified that to some extent Generation Y, both in advanced and emerging
50
51 economies, have similar perceptions towards the country-of-origin of fashion products and to
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53 fashion products made in their own countries. The findings showed that Generation Y from
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55 both advanced and emerging economies perceived that fashion products made in emerging
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3 economies appeared to be less appealing than those made in advanced economies. However,
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5 the findings also indicated that Generation Y from advanced economies and emerging
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7 economies had different concerns regarding country-of-origin. When discussing country-of-
8
9 origin of fashion products, Generation Y from advanced economies would pay more attention
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11 to ethical issues whereas Generation Y from emerging economies would pay attention to
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13 quality and price.
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18 This research also found that Generation Y's perception that products made in advanced
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20 economies had better quality than products made in emerging economies affected their
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22 perception towards fashion products made in their own countries. Generation Y from
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24 advanced economies felt proud and did not hesitate to buy fashion products made in their
25
26 own countries abroad. In contrast, even though most of the Generation Y from emerging
27
28 economies felt proud to see fashion products made in their country abroad, some of them
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30 hesitated to buy as they felt that they might find similar clothes cheaper in their own country.
31
32 Therefore, it can be suggested that different perceptions between Generation Y from
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34 advanced and emerging economies towards country-of-origin is caused by their tendency of
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36 comparing the background information of the country which manufactured the fashion
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38 products with the background of their own country.
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45 **Limitations and future research**

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47 This study employed a qualitative approach and therefore the findings cannot be generalised
48
49 to Generation Y's behaviour in general. However, the study has identified many values and
50
51 indications that can be tested in larger and more specified samples. Therefore, the findings
52
53 can be used as the foundation for developing further quantitative research in the future. The
54
55 current paper did not take into account the degree of ethnocentrism of the participants as it
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3 would be difficult to measure participants' ethnocentrism tendency by using qualitative
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5 research. This study has presented valuable insights about the similarities and differences
6
7 between the perceptions of Generation Y from advanced and emerging countries towards
8
9 country-of-origin information. However, this study did not specifically correlate Generation
10
11 Ys' perceptions with their perceptions towards international fashion brands. Therefore, future
12
13 research that specifically investigates the correlation between Generation Y's perceptions
14
15 towards country-of-origin and international fashion brands is encouraged.
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20 21 **Managerial Implications**

22
23 It can be suggested that maintaining a similar product standard across the globe and making
24
25 sure that the products were sourced and manufactured ethically will help to make fashion
26
27 products made in emerging economies more appealing to Generation Y across the world. At
28
29 the same time, the fashion retailers must maintain the price competitiveness of the products.
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31 To attract Generation Y in advanced economies, retailers should emphasise ethical trading
32
33 issues. On the other hand, to attract Generation Y in emerging economies, retailers should
34
35 emphasise the high standard used in manufacturing the products even though they are
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37 manufactured in the emerging economies. However, as Generation Y is always attracted in
38
39 helping those in need, fashion retailers can attract Generation Y in both advanced and
40
41 emerging economies by showing their dedication and support to the local workers and
42
43 community. Practicing more ethical trading standards in emerging markets may result in
44
45 increased production costs. However, this practice is more likely to generate a long-term
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47 competitive advantage to a brand. For instance, it can enhance their image as being ethical
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49 and generate respect and recognition from the host countries. In addition, developing strong
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51 brand equity may also reduce the impact of country-of-origin information on Generation Y's
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53 evaluation of fashion products. The research also indicates that Generation Y in both
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3 advanced and emerging countries still prefer fashion products made in advanced economies.
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5 Therefore, a strategy of manufacturing fashion products in advanced economies may offer a
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7 competitive advantage and a unique selling point for the brand.
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For Peer Review

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