ORIGINAL EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Knowledge structure in product- and brand origin–related research

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Abstract

Scholarly research regarding origins of products and brands is deep-rooted within international marketing, with an extraordinary following as evidenced by the large body of literature that is continuing to evolve. Our goal in this research is to examine this domain, generically referred to as the country-of-origin (CO) literature, and identify the most influential contributions and their corresponding topics that form the intellectual foundations of this knowledge domain. Using citation and co-citation analyses, we develop a spatial representation of the CO literature via multidimensional scaling with two concurrent goals of unfolding the literature's knowledge structure as the basis for proposing a conceptual framework and identifying new research directions in the field. Our database consists of 482 articles, extracted from the *Web of Science*, that contain 33,194 citations through 2019. We develop a managerially relevant conceptual approach based on the results of our co-citations–based CO knowledge structure to unfold new research directions and expand the boundaries of the CO literature in fruitful directions.

Keywords Country of origin · Brand origin · Co-citation analysis · Multidimensional scaling · Knowledge structure · CO

An important area within international marketing (IM) is origin-related topics, which have attracted significant research attention from IM scholars for over 50 years. Generically referred to as country-of-origin (CO), the field had its early start in the mid-1960s.[1] However, CO research did not gain momentum until the 1980s and has since grown into a substantial body of knowledge. Estimates of the number of published CO works vary

considerably; some have identified over 500 scholarly CO publications (Lu et al. 2016), whereas others have noted that the number surpasses 1000 articles (Heslop et al. 2008). With the growth of this research domain, a number of literature reviews and meta-analyses have sought to consolidate and provide periodic overviews of the extant body of knowledge (e.g., Bilkey and Nes 1982; Dinnie 2004; Lu et al. 2016; Samiee 1994). Additionally, several contributions have attempted to heighten the external validity as well as the scholarly and practical utility of CO research (Josiassen and Harzing 2008; Samiee 2011; Usunier 2006). Such literature reviews have been beneficial by identifying general topics, recognizing frequent contributors, and highlighting the reported findings (e.g., Al-Sulaiti and Baker 1998), whereas meta-analyses have summarized empirical results which, among others, include conflicting findings (Peterson and Jolibert 1995; Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). Nevertheless, reviews and meta-analyses hide the relative importance and influence of individual contributions and, thus, do not provide clear insights as to the field's principle intellectual structure and knowledge nodes' respective impact, both of which are essential in paving the way for undertaking conceptually meaningful future research.

Our goal in this study is to uncover the CO literature's foundations based on the pattern of citations and co-citations of highly influential works within the field. Citation analysis (including co-citation patterns) is considered the most

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[1] We define origin-related scholarly research as projects in which location plays a central role. Country of origin is the common term associated with this stream of research. The term was originally associated with country of manufacture (i.e., source country), however, as the literature matured, numerous derivative aspects of location such as country of assembly, country of design, country of brand (i.e., brand origin), and country image were also investigated. In all cases, CO is the common identifier (keyword) used in published works.

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objective and widely used method of assessing the literature's development and impact (Podsakoff et al. 2005; Tahai and Meyer 1999). Given the volume of CO research and scholars' ongoing enthusiasm in this area, the absence of prior effort to uncover the foundations of CO knowledge is surprising. A comprehensive understanding of CO's knowledge structure is fundamental to the literature's informed development and serves as a catalyst to uncovering theory-based and meaningful directions for research. Accordingly, our aim in this investigation is to identify the most impactful CO contributions (i.e., most highly cited contributions), unfold the knowledge structure of the CO literature, and examine in detail the citing research supporting each knowledge node as the basis for proposing a managerially relevant conceptual framework, which we use to selectively identify research opportunities as means of propelling future CO research in an organized manner.

All scholarly contributions to a field help advance the topic. To this end, review studies and meta-analyses synthesize, integrate, and offer summaries of bodies of knowledge, but by nature such studies tend to treat all contributions as equals. However, the impact of published works on the field can and do significantly vary. Although several metrics are available to assess contributions made by a given publication (e.g., surveys of researchers and opinion leaders in the field), the most objective and direct assessment of an article's contribution to a field is its accumulated citations over time (i.e., a cited article's impact on shaping a citing work), with those exhibiting higher incidents of being cited having higher impact on the field (Chabowski et al. 2013; Kuhn 1996; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004).

As with most fields of endeavor, research momentum in CO was initially slow, but eventually gathered a large and significant following, growing in breadth, depth, and sophistication in nearly six decades of CO research. As a result, the CO literature has evolved into a significant body of knowledge (Heslop et al. 2008; Lu et al. 2016). Despite the large volume of published works addressing various facets of the CO phenomenon, the pace of research in this area continues.

In this study, we identify and examine the intellectual foundations upon which this domain has evolved and unfold its knowledge structure. Given the importance of CO research to marketing scholars and its potential impact on businesses (both positive and negative), it is essential that CO knowledge to date be better understood in terms of its basic building blocks. Importantly, a more comprehensive understanding of the intellectual foundations of the CO literature will afford us the possibility of developing an objective, literature-based framework, with a focus on unexplored areas needing research attention that might benefit from new approaches. To our knowledge, no effort has been previously expended to provide a research framework based on the spatial configuration of CO's knowledge nodes to guide future research.

In conjunction with this overarching goal, our investigation answers the following methodologically inter-related questions. First, which specific sources of knowledge have been the most influential in the development of this research area across the hundreds of published academic articles on CO? Second, what is the spatial structure of the areas supporting CO knowledge? Third, what are the key areas of knowledge that support CO research; that is, which topical areas have been instrumental in building CO studies? Fourth, can a managerially relevant conceptual framework based on the CO literature's knowledge nodes help capture largely new and unexplored research topics to advance the field? We address these questions by examining co-citation patterns and developing a spatial configuration of CO's foundations of knowledge.

Origin-related research in international marketing

Studies of product (or service) origin are deep-rooted in the IM literature. Origin-related works are broadly defined as investigations that examine customer evaluation and potential choice behavior (e.g., purchase intention) related to offers influenced by or sourced from host countries or regions (e.g., country of design, country of manufacture). Over time, scholars have examined variations of "origin," for example, brand origin (BO) and country of assembly. The common thread linking such studies is how country association of an offering influences an outcome measure, typically buyer evaluation and choice (Samiee 1994). In all cases, CO is the common identifier associated with published works in the extant literature.[2]

Much of the scholarly effort during CO literature's formative years was aimed at establishing, in one form or another, the presence of CO bias in product evaluation and/or purchase intention. Research continued at a slow pace, with a limited number of new publications. For example, Bilkey and Nes's (1982) review of the literature and its critique of CO research initiatives through 1979 was based on 23 articles. For the most part, the relatively slow pace in CO research continued through the 1980s. However, CO-related publications

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[2] Common definitions associated with this literature include: CO (the source country for a product), country of manufacture (where a product is substantially manufactured), country of assembly (country in which components are assembled into a final product), country of design (nation in which a product is designed), BO (location of the headquarters of the firm owning a brand), CI and its variations including destination and place image (perceptions and beliefs held by customers regarding a nation or location). As would be expected in a large body of knowledge, there are minor variations in definitions across publications. For example, Lu et al. (2016) define CI as an alternative to CO encompassing general CI and CO of a product, as well as place and destination image. In contrast, Han (1989) and Bilkey and Nes (1982) define CI as "consumers' general perceptions of quality for products made in a given country," that is, CO.

increased substantially during the 1990s, with numerous studies published from a variety of perspectives in a wide range of academic journals.[3] Indications of these publication patterns are apparent from periodic CO review studies. For example, of the 118 empirical CO publications appearing in leading marketing and international business (IB) journals, only 10% were published prior to 1990 (Samiee and Leonidou 2013). In contrast, 46% and 43% were published during the 1990s and 2000s, respectively, a possible indication that CO research appears to have peaked (Samiee and Leonidou 2013) and broadly reflects the gradual CO publication growth rate over time (Al-Sulaiti and Baker 1998). The acceleration of CO publications since 1990 signals greater researcher recognition of CO's potential impact on choice behavior, and is also influenced by the growth in the number of academic researchers, along with the heightened importance associated with IM and IB education, increased attention to consumer behavior studies from international and global perspectives, as well as an increase in the number of scholarly journals.

As CO research took root, scholars recognized the importance of country image (CI) in instilling customers' country bias. The CI concept was thus gradually associated with CO-related research with the recognition that if product evaluations shift based on a product's origin, then countries themselves also convey an image analogous to brand image. Although the term "country image" had been used in both the IB and CO literatures, Bannister and Saunders (1978) were among the first to conceptually assert the issue and to empirically test it. Later, Jaffe and Nebenzahl (1984) developed questionnaire formats and scales for assessing CI. This line of inquiry was extended by Han (1989), who asserted the halo effect role of CI in product evaluations, further solidifying the role of CI as an antecedent of product/brand attitude and, hence, consumer evaluations. The CI literature, albeit focused on the country rather than a specific good or service, has become complementary to the CO literature and has been used in a range of CO studies. To facilitate this occurrence, over a decade following its first empirical use, a collection of CO-related research was published under the title of "Product-Country Images" (Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993). As a key concept in this literature, CI remains an important facet of some CO inquiries (e.g., Costa et al. 2016; Papadopoulos et al. 2017). An important development in this arena is the

impact of imported products and brands on shaping CI. More recent research also recognized a foreign product's influence on establishing CI, that is, the relationship is thought to be bidirectional. In other words, foreign brands collectively act as an antecedent for CI, as well (e.g., Anholt 2007; Magnusson et al. 2014; White 2012). Recent developments in this stream of research demonstrate global marketing strategy use of CI which, in turn, reinforces the platform of a nation's image (e.g., Suter et al. 2018).

One noteworthy and influential contribution adopted by CO researchers is the consumer ethnocentrism scale (CETSCALE) (Shimp and Sharma 1987), which adapted and operationalized the commonly used notion rooted in Sumner's (1907) contribution as means of distinguishing in-groups from out-groups. CETSCALE was initially intended to explain the tendency to favor domestic over foreign products or vice versa rather than as an alternative explanation to CO effects. Nevertheless, it remains a relevant independent measure and a standard staple in CO researchers' toolbox which has been validated across multiple cultures and countries and has served to expand the scope of origin-related studies since the early 1990s. CETSCALE and its variations have been integrated into the broader origin-related literature, with some researchers seeking to build on the original 17-item construct (Sharma 2015).

Finally, other researchers have questioned the veracity and relative influence of CO on customer choice in light of the globalization of markets, international sourcing practices of firms, as well as other critical issues such as CO labeling laws (or lack thereof) (Samiee et al. 2005; Thakor 1996). As a result, BO is used to represent the cognitive association of brands with a country each brand represents, such as Sony and Japan. BO is thus positioned as an alternative measure to CO. In contrast to CO, which is frequently defined as where a product is manufactured, BO represents the location of the headquarters of the firm initiating a brand. For example, Toyota would be considered Japanese, even though its components and assembled cars are sourced from many countries. In such global industries as the automotive industry, for example, a key manufacturer like Honda sources its final products from multiple nations, yet the brand is quintessentially associated with its home country of Japan. The volume of BO-related publications has seen steady growth, including some examining its applicability vis-à-vis CO (e.g., Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2008, 2011; Magnusson et al. 2011). As the BO concept has evolved, researchers have extended it to assess the liability of brand foreignness (e.g., Zhou et al. 2010).

Collectively, these evolving trends offer evidence of the significant breadth in published CO research, along with relatively widespread authorship with varied influences on the field, making the absence of a citations-based analysis all the more remarkable. Additionally, there are indications of greater sophistication in CO studies, for example, by borrowing or

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[3] Two domain-related patterns of CO studies are worth noting as they have a potential impact in the development of the field and the corresponding knowledge areas that have influenced projects. First, the vast majority of CO studies (about 80% of those appearing in leading journals) consist of single-country samples of informants, with the remainder focused on comparative and cross-cultural investigations (Samiee and Leonidou 2013). Second, in terms of regions referenced in these investigations, initially attention was largely turned to countries situated in North America and Europe (24% and 28%, respectively). However, Asian countries have been more frequently used during the 1990s and since 2000 (32%), which collectively makes Asia the most-studied region.

extending relevant theories from other fields, by leveraging established measurement scales, and through substantive shifts in the way researchers view product origin. This is in part evident by a distinction between CO and CI, and in a partial shifting of research focus to BO recall as alternative predictors of customer choice behavior. Therefore, the influence of numerous information sources, theoretical backings, methodological advances, and researcher influences have reshaped the CO literature.

Knowledge structure in disciplines

The approach adopted in this investigation follows that which is considered the norm in scientific inquiry (or normative theory), which maintains that citations in a given study represent the list of its influences and that citing articles gain support from past research for arguments advanced in their research and, by extension, give credit and added credibility to published works being cited (MacRoberts and MacRoberts 1989). The pursuit of these norms during the course of scientific inquiry rests on the assumption that citations in a given research topic are valid indicators of influences, with more frequently cited works having greater impact in shaping the field. In short, the structure of knowledge in a discipline is dependent on information sources accessed and used by researchers. The references of an article represent the fundamental influences of specific prior research on that study (Garfield 1979; Kuhn 1996). All information accessed and used in a given research article collectively represents the foundational knowledge sources chosen to accommodate the creation of a new contribution and, by extension, references used by all studies in a given area represent the knowledge structure of that discipline (Culnan et al. 1990; Smith 1981). When all works on a topic are considered, some are referenced with greater frequency and, hence, considered more influential in shaping the field. Thus, a publication is deemed influential only to the extent that it has been cited by others contributing to the topic.

Knowledge structures of disciplines are dynamic and shift with the ongoing introduction of newer publications. As the body of knowledge grows, new branches might develop and even evolve quasi-independently into new directions (Kuhn 1996). In the case of the CO literature, for example, it has led to investigations centering on CI and, subsequently BO, while researchers have applied (liability of) foreignness to investigate brand foreignness. Thus, the BO and brand foreignness sub-areas can be considered CO-based, yet they diverge from their CO predecessor. This demonstrates the dynamic nature of disciplines and their reliance on not only prior research, but the introduction of new ways, concepts, and approaches in research. Thus, the passage of time and the publication period

is considered to affect the structure of a given body of knowledge.

In this research, we aim to identify the most influential works and to develop a spatial representation of the CO knowledge structure based on the domain's references. Known as citation and co-citation analyses, they reveal the knowledge structure within a field of study. The approach has a long history across disciplines and has been used in a number of marketing- and business-related studies (e.g., Chabowski et al. 2013; Hoffman and Holbrook 1993; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004; Schildt et al. 2006).[4] Access to this representation, in turn, permits the charting of research directions that are generally difficult to identify through literature reviews and meta-analyses. Furthermore, as compared to literature reviews, citation and co-citation analyses are more objective and inclusive in many respects since researchers have no control over the referencing patterns of published works in a given area which may come from any source and time frame (e.g., Archambault and Gagné 2004). The researcher does have some initial control over which journals to survey; however, journal selection should follow a logical heuristic that represents the field under investigation. Such analyses enable spatial representations of the intellectual structures of the domain under investigation, thus affording researchers the opportunity to view the proximities of key knowledge nodes underlying the literature.

As a rule, in identifying and exploring the structure of a well-defined body of knowledge, the researcher is expected to include as many relevant peer-reviewed research outlets as possible (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). When a knowledge structure is based on a large number of works appearing in relevant journals, the coverage should be both relatively objective and comprehensive, with minimal intervention by the researcher. In contrast to ordinary literature reviews, this approach is relatively unbiased with regard to articles referenced in publications, works included, or coverage period. In addition, citation analyses do not truncate or exclude references used in a given body of knowledge, regardless of date or publication outlet. However, depending on the central premise of the project, certain categories may be a priori identified for systematic exclusion (e.g., methods-related references). Thus, the goal of such approaches is to be as inclusive as possible within the constraints of the research questions posed.

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[4] Though other approaches besides co-citation analysis have been proposed and deemed relevant in portraying knowledge structure (cf. citation proximity analysis), access to available data of sufficient scale to implement such methods in the IM literature makes the task impractical to accomplish (Gipp and Beel 2009; Liu and Chen 2011). Rather, this study, by maintaining its focus on the article as the level of investigation, uses established bibliometric principles to analyze the knowledge structure and retain the data most closely to traditional co-citation networks.

Method

The initial step to prepare for data collection in this investigation involved identifying appropriate keywords for extracting CO publications, thus requiring a detailed examination of the literature. The result of this extensive review was a comprehensive list of critical keywords focusing on important themes appearing in CO works to search the *Web of Science* (*WOS*) database.[5] Our resultant set of keywords encompassed many distinct terms used in the literature including: country of origin, brand origin, foreign product evaluation, foreign brand familiarity, foreign product animosity, and country bias.[6] As a part of the search process in the *WOS* database, four fields of an article are examined: publication title, abstract, keywords, and reference identifiers (Clarivate Analytics 2020). An article appearing in the *WOS* is included in our study's database if any identified keyword appears in any of these fields. Indirect research materials such as book reviews, editorials, and method-related publications were excluded from the analysis to allow for a clear view of the CO literature's core substance. In addition, meta-analyses and review articles were not included in this study as these general overviews of the literature tend to obscure key knowledge node sources and ultimately the emergence of specific research groups (Ho et al. 2017).

Given our goal for a comprehensive overview of the CO literature, we used Harzing's (2015) list of 29 marketing and IB journals.[7] This resulted in the identification of 482 articles in the *WOS* database, containing a total of 33,194 citations. The data for this study, consisting of the references used in all published articles extracted from the *WOS*, were coded prior to inclusion in the citation database. We then rank-ordered the data by citation frequency, which is a common practice in knowledge structure studies (e.g., Chabowski et al. 2013). Citation frequencies help identify the most influential works within the extracted articles that define the CO body of knowledge in this investigation. Our next task was to develop a relational database, which resulted in a co-citation matrix wherein CO articles were identified by their shared citations. The underlying principle in bibliometric research is that two (or more) published CO articles are convergent to the extent they share (cite) more published works. As such, articles sharing the same references have higher levels of foundational CO knowledge in common.

Following previous established bibliometric methods, we used multidimensional scaling (MDS) to analyze the data, providing the basis for a two-dimensional spatial configuration representing CO's knowledge structure (Burt 1983; McCain 1990). Although other analytical techniques including cluster analysis, factor analysis, and network analysis can also be used to generate knowledge structures, MDS is favored by researchers because it yields more meaningful and precise results (Chabowski et al. 2011, 2013; Hair et al. 1998; Tsai and Wu 2010; Wasserman and Faust 1994).[8] Hence, we used MDS to develop the spatial representation of CO's knowledge nodes. In addition, MDS is considered more rigorous in knowledge structure studies. As is typical in co-citation analyses, about 25 publications generally return a fair or good model (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). We used a stress value (or, goodness-of-fit measure) to determine the appropriate number of highly cited CO publications for developing the spatial configuration, with the goal of keeping the stress value at or below the recommended 0.10 threshold (Kruskal 1964; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). We systematically reduced the number of publications considered with the goal of meeting the stress value criterion. This objective was achieved with the inclusion of 25 publications for the CO co-citation data. Based on the reduced change of stress value across different dimension options, a two-dimensional solution (stress value = 0.09) was deemed most appropriate (Hair et al. 1998; Kruskal 1964).

In this research, we identify the relationship between two studies based on the commonality of sources referencing them. In essence, the higher the number of shared references, or co-citations, across two (or more) studies, the more similar their knowledge basis (Schneider and Borlund 2004). Frequent shared citations across publications demonstrate cohesion (i.e., exchange of information across publications) that

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[5] *WOS* is a comprehensive source with wide coverage and inclusiveness of the vast proportion of electronically available published works (over 26,352 journals) which enables researchers to access large amounts of data (Clarivate Analytics 2020). The *WOS* database is commonly used in a range of bibliometric studies in business (e.g., Cornelius et al. 2006; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004; Schildt et al. 2006).

[6] Exact syntax is available from the authors upon request.

[7] The marketing and IB journals with bibliometric data for this study were: *Advances in Consumer Research*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, *(Columbia) Journal of World Business*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Business Review*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Management*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Management International Review*, *Marketing Letters*, *Marketing Science*, and *Psychology & Marketing*.

[8] It should be noted that many other network-related approaches to examining knowledge structure provide an overwhelming level of data without sufficient analysis and relation to established theoretical bases. In fact, there are some bibliometrics researchers who claim a network analysis tool such as VOS is superior to MDS with very large datasets (van Eck et al. 2010). However, as MDS is acknowledged as better for smaller datasets such as the one for the present study (Zupic and Čater 2015), others are more pragmatic and state that different approaches are appropriate for specific circumstances (Hook 2017). In the end, the main driver of using MDS as employed in this study is that it provides a balance between data analysis and linkages to established research concepts. And, as one of the main purposes of this study is to conduct a detailed research-focused study, MDS was chosen as the most apt to complete the task.

constitute the foundation for forming knowledge groups (or cliques) which are internally consistent in an area of inquiry (Pieters et al. 1999). Thus, a co-citation indicates a relationship between two publications. As shared citations across two (or more) publications increase, their knowledge base begins to converge and, as such, represent more dense and relational research fronts (e.g., Price 1965). For instance, the more frequently two (or more) CO publications cite the same sources, the greater likelihood of a relationship (or shared knowledge) between the citing CO publications. Accordingly, groups represent research fronts that serve as the primary basis for a body of knowledge. In contrast, spatially disparate (independent) highly influential works are relatively less impactful as knowledge nodes.

We use standardized Euclidean distances to group cited publications to identify closely related relationships in the overall CO knowledge network established (McCain 1986; Scott 2000).[9] To attain interpretability and meaningful results, a distance of 0.30 or less was used to determine research groups in the spatial configuration for the CO literature (Hair et al. 1998; McCain 1986; Small 1999; Tsai and Wu 2010). Consequently, two publications form a research group when they meet the Euclidean distance criterion and research cliques of three or more publications are formed to note the specific research streams underlying the CO literature (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Since Euclidean distances are the primary determinants of groups and cliques (i.e., closely associated knowledge nodes), adjacent groups and cliques sharing an influential contribution constitute knowledge chains which, in turn, allow for a more detailed examination of the roots of the citing literature (Chabowski et al. 2018). To identify each research chain, the content of the cited publications in the MDS results as well as the citing documents from our database were used.[10] The examination of chains of cited articles and their corresponding citing works unfold the history and evolution of CO knowledge within each chain (Forsman 2005). Fine-grained details of the citing literature for each chain were gathered by carefully examining each study. Tables representing the fundamental contributions of each chain were formed and serve as the primary drivers of our analysis that will follow. This approach provides the basis for evaluating the CO literature's knowledge structure in greater detail.

Results

Using the citation data, we identified the most highly cited publications in the CO literature, which are listed in Web Appendix 1a.[11] Next, using the co-citation database, we developed the configuration of influential CO works in two-dimensional space, as shown in Web Appendix 2. The MDS representation produced a total of twelve research groups forming knowledge nodes in the CO literature. Further, there are three research chains: one that includes four groups (Groups 1–4), another that is comprised of three groups (Groups 6–8), and a final one including two groups (Groups 10 and 11). In this section, we evaluate each research chain based on the identified knowledge structure (cited works) as well as the CO publications which formed the knowledge structure (citing works). Taken together, this multi-level approach to knowledge structure analysis should provide deepened insight into the CO literature.

Research chain 1

The first research chain, comprised of Groups 1–4, has an emphasis on the product category as well as consumer evaluations and effects related to the CO phenomenon. In fact, it is supported by a research clique related to CI, product nationality complexity, and information processing (Group 3). This dual perspective of national image and product-related topics is pervasive in this chain as can be noted specifically in Groups 1 (image and product attributes in CO evaluations) and 4 (product category and CI matching) especially.

The theoretical basis for this research chain is varied. However, two approaches appear with relative frequency. The most prevalent of these theories relates to categorization. Whether synthesized with other perspectives (Fischer and Zeugner-Roth 2017; Lu et al. 2016) or used as a standalone viewpoint (Alden et al. 1993; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2011; Lee and Bae 1999), categorization theory provides a basis that emphasizes the importance of consumers classifying products in an informal or formal fashion. The second topic used focuses on the role of brands. In fact, with varied research related to the theme, emphasis was discovered related to brand alliances (Bluemelhuber et al. 2007), brand equity (Chen and Su 2012), and brand image (Hsieh et al. 2004). As a result, this shows the multi-faceted interaction between firms and consumers to render value to brands.

Two key topics from the articles which form Groups 1–4 emerge as important: consumer involvement and perception. In fact, the CO image of a product is considered more

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[9] Several other proximity metrics might be applied in this line of inquiry. However, these approaches are independent of our MDS results and their use would result in considerably different and unrelated conclusions. As a result, the standardized Euclidean distance measures are directly related to the co-citation data analyzed as pivotal to this study. Thus, we selected standardized Euclidean distances for grouping specific publications.

[10] Other network analysis–based approaches have been used in the literature to accomplish similar tasks. However, such tools do not provide for the exclusion of data deemed unnecessary to the study. As such, since our analysis does not include book reviews, editorial content, method-related articles, as well as other content not specific to the knowledge structure of the CO literature, these applications were deemed inappropriate.

[11] Web Appendix 1a, which runs through 2018, was the original basis for analysis in this study. However, as a result of the review process, data through 2019, appearing in Web Appendix 1b, for this part of the study was requested for comparison.

important in conditions of lower familiarity and involvement (Josiassen et al. 2008). So much so, that the effect seems to exist in lower involvement product categories in emerging markets similarly to high involvement products in developed economies (Ahmed et al. 2004). Additionally, the role of consumer perception is important in this area of research. Based on fundamental human values which vary worldwide (Balabanis et al. 2002), cognitive, affective, and conative influences are discussed as important in the CO literature (Laroche et al. 2005). Going further, perceptions can differ based on the level of consumer expertise (Chiou 2003), the positive or negative organizational identity of a company (Maher and Singhapakdi 2017; Moeller et al. 2013), or the country of manufacture, brand, and/or design (Chao 1998; Chen and Su 2012; Fetscherin and Toncar 2010). Ultimately, these lead to the critical perception of quality based on consumer experience gathered either directly from one's own experience or other, secondary sources that can have a lasting impact of the product's perceived performance (Agrawal and Kamakura 1999; Schuiling and Kapferer 2004). As documented in the literature, products originating from countries such as Japan or the United States sometimes benefit from a premium perception in the absence of local brands which tend to generate higher perceptions of trust and quality instead (Hu and Wang 2010; Leonidou et al. 1999; Schuiling and Kapferer 2004).

Research chain 2

The second research chain, consisting of Groups 6–8, is anchored in the familiar topic of animosity and BO (Group 7). More precisely, it is related, in part, to the notion of BO and cultural variation (Group 8). However, it is noteworthy that research related to animosity and ethnocentrism (Group 6) is very closely aligned based on the relational proximity of the two publications identified for this group (Klein et al. 1998; Shimp and Sharma 1987). This provides an indication that the notion of cultural orientation is an important element of this area of research.

The theories which appear in this chain are dominated by social identity theory. Based on the perspective that an individual's concept of self originates at least in part with perceiving oneself as a participant in a specific group, social identity theory is used alone (Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000; Shimp et al. 2004; Verlegh 2007) or in a synthesis of multiple theories to explain CO phenomena (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2016; Harmeling et al. 2015; Prince et al. 2016). In addition, social identity theory is applied most frequently with another theoretical perspective such as cognitive dissonance (Barbarossa et al. 2016), attribution theory (Choi et al. 2016), signaling theory (Fong et al. 2014), group conflict theory (Huang et al. 2010), affinity theory (Nes et al. 2014), attitude theory (Oberecker et al. 2008), sponsorship theory

(Petrovici et al. 2015), or attachment theory (Swaminathan et al. 2007). Taken together, this indicates the pervasiveness of social identification in research related to BO, animosity, and ethnocentrism.

Three generalized topics have been addressed in this research chain (Groups 6–8). One theme indicates the importance of the production country of specific brands. A distinction is made in this research chain between consumers from developed countries, who focus on BO and manufacturing country as relevant, and those from emerging economies, who emphasize CI and price as important (Eng et al. 2016). Moreover, the essence of the product has been posited as undergoing a transference process directly from the production location to the marketplace offering such that it is viewed as authentic (Newman and Dhar 2014). Another topic receiving attention in the CO literature relates to product type. In fact, the functions and symbols that such brands represent are critical and depend at times on the point of origin (Fang and Wang 2018; Zhou and Hui 2003). For instance, Asian emerging economies can view Asian brands as more functional in nature while Western brands tend to be perceived more with an emotional or psychological identity (Swoboda et al. 2012).

Social identity theory, which is largely focused on the relevance of consumer identity, is by far the most prominent topic in this research chain. Though national cultural orientation tends to have an influence on consumer character (Choi et al. 2016), issues such as animosity are less pervasive in business products than is the case for consumer goods (Edwards et al. 2007). In fact, home country bias and national identity typically become prevalent based on the consumer need for self-enhancement (Fischer and Zeugner-Roth 2017; Verlegh 2007). Furthermore, preferences for sub-national offerings over national and foreign products have been identified (Garcia-Gallego and Mera 2017). Still, the role of consumer identity is relevant to how the individual relates not only to the country and product under consideration, but also to one's social groups and experiences. For instance, such issues can be a significant factor in the ability to identify a brand's CO (Samiee et al. 2005).

Even more, xenocentricity is a concept that encapsulates the orientation of consumers toward foreign products (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2016; Prince et al. 2016). Such admiration for imports from nonlocal and economically developed countries appears to mitigate some aspects of consumer ethnocentrism (Batra et al. 2000; Brecić et al. 2013). In fact, consumers reminiscing for historically-connected markets tend to create positive responses for cultural products that are close in location—even when the opportunity for resentment is high (d'Astous et al. 2008; Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos 2017). However, while it is acknowledged in the literature that affinity has a greater impact than animosity (Asseraf and Shoham 2016), the role of consumer hostility is prominent in CO research. For instance, culturally similar

contexts still provide the opportunity to possess consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis and Siamagka 2017). As a heightened form of consumer disapproval, consumer acrimony could have its origins in war, economic, political, religious, or personal animosity (Ahmed et al. 2013; Nijssen and Douglas 2004; Riefler and Diamantopoulos 2007; Shoham et al. 2006). Such resentment can lead, in extreme cases, to consumer disidentification and consumer racism (Josiassen 2011; Ouellet 2007). As a result, a complete breakdown between consumer and brand occurs, thus creating conditions for upheaval and retribution.

Research chain 3

As it is not as extensive as the previous two, this final research chain (Groups 10–11) emphasizes CI and topics related to consumer-based perceptions. Specifically, this research chain is anchored by a focal study on CI (Laroche et al. 2005) and provides the basis for two related research groups that deal with CI, perceptions, and attitudes (Group 10) and CI and brand equity (Group 11), thus showing an importance of topics related to product type when dealing with consumer perceptions.

No single influential theory drives this research chain. However, two perspectives appear more frequently than others. Merging the approach consumers use to categorize marketplace offerings with long-held perceptual associations, categorization theory and associative network theory have been used together (Lopez et al. 2011). Equally noteworthy is that these perspectives have been applied with other theoretical traditions, as well. For instance, categorization theory has been introduced with the related research of classification and category learning theories (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2008). In addition, associative network theory was synthesized with concepts related to the halo effect (Lee et al. 2016). In all, both theories have been applied with similar conceptual approaches to strengthen their contributions.

As indicated in the overall topics for this research chain, two major themes are covered: branding and CI. Based on the notion that the three distinct brand levels are national, organizational, and product (Liu et al. 2018), awareness, product beliefs, and image perceptions are known to influence the brand image and equity of a particular country (Lee et al. 2016; Pappu and Quester 2010; Zeugner-Roth et al. 2008). A contributing factor to the development of a country's "brand" equity relates to the confidence and integrity that consumers and the marketing channel have in its regulations (Knight et al. 2007). Even though this may create situations in which consumers may find it difficult to correctly identify a brand's origin (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2008), it provides the opportunity for consumers to use status as the criterion for choice particularly from countries with premium brands (Godey et al. 2012; Kumar and Paul 2018).

Non–research chain knowledge groups

Beyond research chains, the CO literature's knowledge structure includes three isolated research groups. One group is focused on product bias and CI (Group 5). Another group emphasizes CI and consumer brand knowledge (Group 9). The third isolated research group relates to the topic of consumer evaluations and product origin (Group 12). Taken together, these three groups are on the periphery of CO's overall knowledge structure. Nevertheless, important insights can be drawn from them.

The theory influences of the three isolated groups reflect the nature of their position in the overall CO knowledge structure. For instance, research on product bias and CI (Group 5) leverage attitude and categorization theories (e.g., Reardon et al. 2017), thus indicating the potential consumer-focused disposition-related sentiments involved in CO research. Concerning research on CI and consumer brand knowledge (Group 9), the application of categorization, signaling, and associative network theories indicates the implicit organizational patterns made by consumers in their evaluation of products (e.g., Herz and Diamantopoulos 2013; Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos 2013). Then, with consumer evaluations and product origin (Group 12) research, the theoretical base most prevalent is information processing and integration due to the judgments that consumers must make based on product performance and origination attributes (e.g., Chu 2010).

Though there is a debate about whether product image has greater influence on CI or vice versa (e.g., Pappu et al. 2007), the focus in Group 5 is at times on differences between country of design and assembly (Dzever and Quester 1999). However, in addition to the CO of a product, the region of origin (e.g., van Ittersum et al. 2003) has become a topic to consider in the literature, as well. One topic of note in Group 9 relates to the differences between promotion- and prevention-focused customers as they relate to the country of design, production, and technology (Garrett et al. 2017). In fact, confidence in BO identification has been found to impact the relationship between perceived brand foreignness and brand value more positively for local brands than foreign ones (Zhou et al. 2010). In Group 12, it is acknowledged that a strong brand image can provide protection against negative CO effects (Jo et al. 2003), but we also found that this is not always the case (Chu 2010). This is based on the contextual nature of the functional and symbolic product attributes related to the country of design and the country of manufacture or assembly as they impact the overall brand image of the offering (Essoussi and Merunka 2007). Taken together, these issues indicate that, even though these three research groups are located far from the center of the CO's knowledge structure, the theories and themes discussed in Groups 5, 9, and 12 are still critical to the development of the domain. Based on the
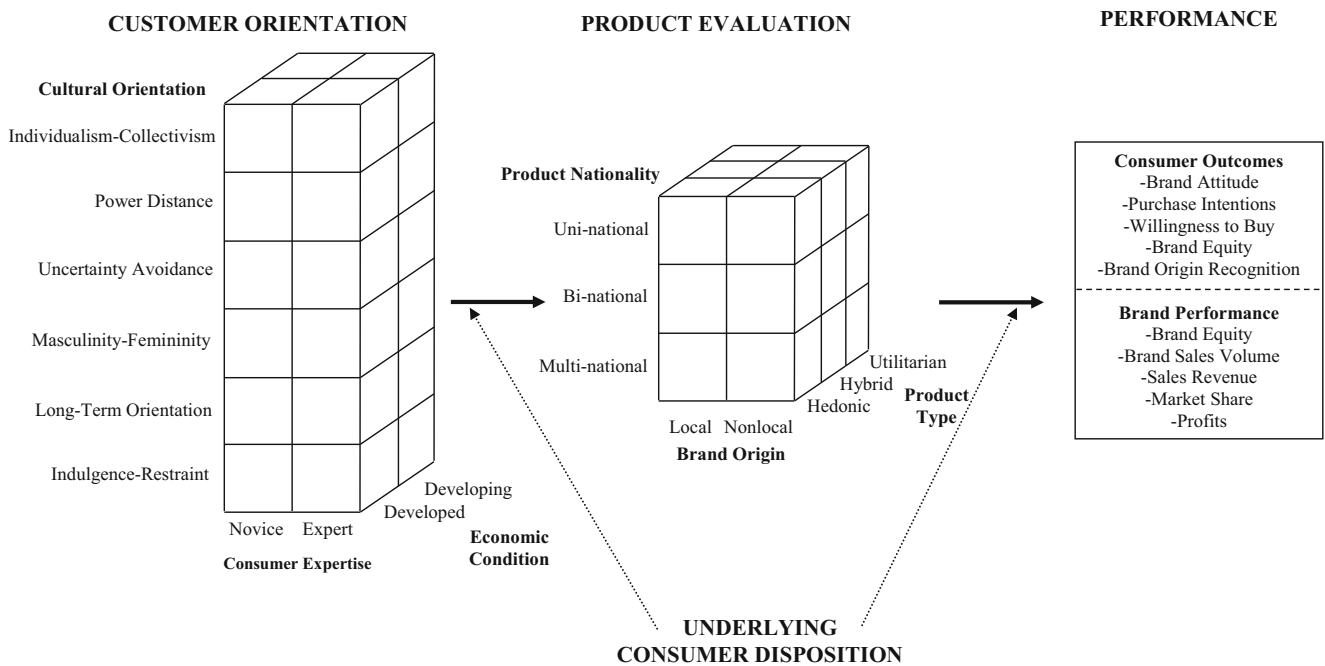
Fig. 1 Conceptual framework for ongoing CO research

presentation of these results, the next section presents a discussion of future opportunities in CO research.

Future research

As a starting point, we used the results to provide a holistic and integrative representation of CO's knowledge structure by developing and proposing a framework that unfolds new avenues for future CO research. We use the empirical results, yielding the influential knowledge nodes discussed above, as the building blocks of this framework. The resultant conceptualization is shown in Fig. 1. We carefully examined the contents of each top CO publication as well as the citing articles supporting the knowledge structure to propose particular aspects for the literature deemed critical to the advancement of the CO literature.[12] Overall, our detailed examination of the most cited studies uncovered eight topics that are critical to the domain's development: cultural orientation, consumer expertise, economic condition, product nationality, BO, product type, underlying consumer disposition, and outcomes.

An examination of the specific research groups and chains in the knowledge structure of the CO literature unveils a more distinct and detailed view of the present contributions and future research possibilities. As predicated by Kuhn (1996), relating our

approach to the development of the CO literature offers the opportunity to advance the frontiers of the domain and its underlying attributes. Based on the conceptual framework already outlined and the corresponding Web Appendices 3a–3f, we accomplish this by first presenting the components of the proposed research framework. Then, we relate the topics in the framework to two major themes which emerged as central to recent and future CO research: perceived CO and CI.

Research directions emerging from the conceptual framework

Although numerous research opportunities emerge from Fig. 1 and Table 1, our assessment of the extant literature leads to at least four important topics that future CO research must pursue to remain viable and continue to develop as a relevant research domain: (1) the interrelationship of the different customer orientation components; (2) the moderating influence of underlying consumer disposition on the relationship between customer orientation and product evaluation; (3) the interrelationship of the different product evaluation components; and (4) product- and brand-related outcomes. We conclude this by extensively examining and recording the key empirical articles which appeared in the sample as they relate to the conceptual framework as shown in Table 2. While it is obvious that there is a paucity of research in other areas of the CO literature, we focus on these four topics as we believe they are generally based on forward-looking synthesis and offer the best opportunities to expand the domain considerably. In line with each point already presented, below we explain some possible issues to consider.

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[12] It is worth noting that our proposed integrative framework incorporated recent concepts from the knowledge structure as mentioned in the Results section, regardless of whether they were a part of a research group or a research clique. Nevertheless, membership in groups and cliques demonstrate closer proximity of topics by virtue of researchers' joint reliance on these works as influential knowledge nodes.

Table 1 Sample future research questions for CO conceptual framework

	Perceived country of origin	Country image
Customer Orientation ➜ Product Evaluation	*Under what conditions does the misperception of brand origin take place?* • Which cultural values lend themselves most to brand origin misperception? • Are there situations where expert consumers misperceive brand origin? • Which economic traits lend themselves most to brand origin misperception? • With which type of product nationality does brand origin misperception occur most frequently? • Does a local or nonlocal brand origin lend itself to more brand origin misperception? • With which type of product does brand origin misperception occur most frequently?	*Under what conditions do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect take place?* • Which cultural values lend themselves most to (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect? • What conditions lead novice or expert consumers to (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect? • Which economic traits lend themselves most to (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect? • With which type of product nationality do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect occur most frequently? • Does a local or nonlocal brand origin lend itself to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect? • With which type of product do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect occur most frequently?
Customer Orientation ➜ (moderator: Underlying Consumer Disposition) ➜ Product Evaluation	*How do cognitive processes lead to the misperception of brand origin in product evaluation?* • How are cognitive processes different across cultural orientations so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation? • How are cognitive processes different between consumer expertise levels so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation? • How are cognitive processes different across economic conditions so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation? • How do cognitive processes differ across product nationality types so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation? • How do cognitive processes differ between local and nonlocal brand origin so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation? • How do cognitive processes differ across product types so they lead to brand origin misperception in product evaluation?	*How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism lead to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation?* • How is ethnocentrism/xenocentrism different across cultural orientations so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? • How is ethnocentrism/xenocentrism different between consumer expertise levels so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? • How is ethnocentrism/xenocentrism different across economic conditions so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? • How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ across product nationality types so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? • How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ between local and nonlocal brand origin so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? • How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ across product types so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation?
Product Evaluation ➜ Outcomes	*Under what conditions does the misperception of brand origin in product evaluation impact outcomes?* • Which product nationality configurations lend themselves most to brand origin misperception's impact on outcomes? • Are there situations where local/nonlocal brand origin misperception influences outcomes? • Which product type lends itself most to brand origin misperception's impact on outcomes? • On which type of consumer-based outcomes does brand origin misperception have the most impact? • On which type of strategy-based performance does brand origin misperception have the most impact?	*Under what conditions do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation impact outcomes?* • Which product nationality configurations lend themselves most to the influence of (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect on outcome? • Are there situations where local/nonlocal brand origin influence the relationship between (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect and outcomes? • Which product type lends itself most to the impact of (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect on outcomes? • How do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect differ across product evaluation configurations in their influence on consumer-based outcomes? • How do (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect differ across product evaluation configurations in their influence on strategy-based performance?

Table 1 (continued)

	Perceived country of origin	Country image
Product Evaluation ➔ (moderator: Underlying Consumer Disposition) ➔ Outcomes	*How do cognitive processes in brand origin misperception impact the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes?* • How are cognitive processes different across product nationality configurations so they lead to brand origin misperception's impact on outcomes in product evaluation? • How do cognitive processes influence the relationship between local/nonlocal brand origin misperception and outcomes in product evaluation? • How are cognitive processes different across product type in brand origin misperception's impact on outcomes in product evaluation? • How do cognitive processes differ across product evaluation configurations so they influence the relationship between brand origin misperception and consumer outcomes? • How do cognitive processes differ across product evaluation configurations so they influence the relationship between brand origin misperception and strategy-based performance?	*How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism lead to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in outcomes measurement?* • How is ethnocentrism/xenocentrism different across product nationality configurations so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes? • Are there situations where local/nonlocal brand origin interrelate with ethnocentrism/xenocentrism so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes? • How is ethnocentrism/xenocentrism different across product type so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes? • How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ across product evaluation configurations so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in the relationship between product evaluation and consumer-based outcomes? • How does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ across product evaluation configurations so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in the relationship between product evaluation and strategy-based performance?

First, in terms of the interrelationship of the different customer orientation components, some individualized examinations have been conducted concerned the specific aspects of cultural orientation (Choi et al. 2016), consumer expertise (Bloemer et al. 2009), and economic condition (Guo 2013; Sharma 2011) on their own. However, an integration of these distinct facets of customer orientation has not be pursued to a large degree. One approach could be to integrate the different components of customer orientation and examine their role on product evaluation in terms of a brand, product, or firm's positioning in marketing strategy (Samiee 2011). For instance, investigations should address the mix of cultural orientation, consumer expertise, and economic condition that would be best for a product nationality that is uni-, bi-, or multi-national. A similar research issue arises for a BO that is either local or nonlocal. Then, related to another recommended topic for future research, how does underlying consumer disposition impact these relationships as depicted in Fig. 1 (Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011)? For example, in which customer orientation cases does xenocentrism and xenophilia (e.g., Bartsch et al. 2016) accentuate the positioning of multi-national, nonlocal, hedonic products? Going further, research should explore the impact of animosity and ethnocentrism (e.g., Cleveland et al.

2009; Fong et al. 2014) on the relationship among the different components of customer orientation and product evaluation. To date, very little has been examined in this regard.

Next, the strategic importance of positioning in product evaluation (Samiee 2011) leads to another research issue, that is, the interrelationship of the different product evaluation components. Specifically, the topics of product nationality (e.g., Usunier 2011) and BO (e.g., Özsomer 2012; Winit et al. 2014) have been extensively studied on their own. However, integration of these topics along with the third topic of product evaluation, product type (e.g., Herz and Diamantopoulos 2013), has yet to be achieved. Therefore, we recommend future researchers consider the multifaceted nature of positioning as captured in product evaluation by examining how, for instance, a multi-national product nationality, nonlocal BO, and hedonic product type could influence customer-centric outcome measures such as brand value or brand purchase. Furthermore, multinational corporations and larger retail chains often source identically branded products from different countries, but no market-based outcome measure (brand- or enterprise-level) has been used to provide managerial insights as to the performance impact of multi-CO sourcing practices. An emphasis on corporate performance (e.g., brand or product market share, or other market-based measures) is particularly scarce in the CO literature and

represents a critical research void. The importance of research efforts aimed at incorporating product- and brand-level performance as outcomes of future CO investigations will speak to the field's strategically meaningful managerial impact (Samiee 1994).

Research directions based on recent influential publications

The proposed conceptual framework (Fig. 1) and the corresponding future research directions (Table 1) are firmly grounded in the aggregate body of CO knowledge from inception. A closer examination of more recent published works offers an opportunity to consider contemporary research topics in the CO literature. To accomplish this goal, we determined the most influential recent CO publications in our sample. Following precedent, we calculated the number of citations per year for CO articles published in the last ten years to determine their ongoing impact into the future (Burrell 2002, 2003; Chabowski et al. 2013). We examined the distribution of articles and leveraging previous studies using this approach, the top 19 articles for the decade were identified (see Web Appendix 4).[13]

Our careful examination of these 19 recent CO publications leads to two topics which emerge as distinct from those already established based on our conceptual framework: (1) perceived CO and (2) CI. A considerable number of studies examining CO assert the notion that consumers are not necessarily aware of the correct CO of a brand or product (Magnusson et al. 2011; Samiee 2011; Zhou et al. 2010). This leads to the importance of examining further the cognitive processes related to how and why a consumer denies usage of a product from a particular country (Herz and Diamantopoulos 2017).

By relating recent influential research topics to our conceptual framework and themes shown in Table 1, several fruitful research paths emerge. In terms of the relationship between customer orientation and product evaluation (Fig. 1), one theme connects with cultural values that lead to BO misperceptions. Going further and including the moderating influence of underlying consumer disposition on this relationship, how do cognitive processes differ across consumer expertise levels to lead to BO misperception? Additionally, in terms of product evaluation and performance relationship, future research can identify the type of managerially relevant performance measure which

is most impacted by BO misperception. Further, when combining the moderating role of underlying consumer disposition on the relationship, how do cognitive processes differ across product evaluation configurations such that they influence the relationship between BO misperception and brand-level performance? In short, as reflected in these research themes as well as those shown in Table 1, to meaningfully advance the CO literature, future research needs to connect perceived CO and BO misconceptions to firm-level outcomes.

The second theme stemming from our analysis of the recent influential CO articles concerns CI. This topic was covered directly in many of the recently impactful articles (Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012; Samiee 2010). Meanwhile, other articles examined the role of country stereotypes (Herz and Diamantopoulos 2013), CO and brand image (Diamantopoulos et al. 2011), and home country bias (Winit et al. 2014). These works lead to research questions concerning the relationship between customer orientation and product evaluation. Researchers could investigate the product type with which (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect occur most frequently (as indicated in Table 2). In examining the moderating role of underlying consumer disposition on the relationship displayed in Fig. 1, how does ethnocentrism/xenocentrism differ between local and nonlocal brand image so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in product evaluation? Then, in terms of the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes, research should aim to uncover how (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect differ across product evaluation configurations in their influence on product- and brand-based outcomes. Also, with the role of underlying consumer disposition influencing the relationship, other research might explore how ethnocentrism/ xenocentrism differ across product evaluation configurations so it leads to more (un)favorable country cognitions and country affect in the relationship between product evaluation and consumer outcomes. Table 1 serves as a useful repository of research opportunities going forward.

A research agenda based on the proposed conceptual framework may in fact help reduce or eliminate some of the contradictions and tensions within the CO literature, for example, as to the efficacy or the role of CO as diagnostic in customer evaluations and subsequent marketplace choice (e.g., Samiee 2011; Usunier 2006).[14] However, given the dynamic nature of scholarly inquiry, analyses of existing CO research cannot foretell the emergence of unique or novel ideas and approaches with potentially significant impact on CO research. Bibliometric approaches are, by definition,

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[13] Burrell (2002, 2003) demonstrates that works cited early after their publication will continue to be referenced (i.e., "success-breeds-success") and infrequently cited articles are unlikely to be among the discipline's thought leaders. Keeping with precedence, we thus examined citation frequencies and the distribution of CO publication during the past decade. Leveraging Chabowski et al. (2013), we determined a minimum average citation cut-off point of 1.75 per year for inclusion of influential recent CO works.

[14] A possible starting point for resolving tensions in the CO literature is to conduct a comprehensive review study of CO-related hypotheses examined, including links between studies' variables used. We acknowledge the recommendation of the associate editor and the contribution of an anonymous reviewer aimed at addressing this issue.

based on existing knowledge with a lag for incorporating new themes that gradually amass citations. Liefeld (2004), for example, notes the vast majority of consumers (about 94%) are unaware of the CO of products they buy immediately after purchase, a finding that is also reflected in generally low consumer BO recognition accuracy scores (e.g., Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2008; Samiee et al. 2005). This implies that shifts in the external environment of consumers and business, some of which can be radical in nature, may drive CO projects in directions that are not readily apparent in the conceptual framework. For example, major shifts in communications technologies have given rise to ecommerce, including cross-border purchases. Yet research at the intersection of CO and international ecommerce is nearly non-existent (see Ulgado 2002 for an exception). The Internet freely crosses virtually all national boundaries and an increasing number of international ecommerce firms, as well as many domestic ones, are vying for and winning international customers. Given the importance of the Internet in driving international sales, research examining whether and how ecommerce sites deal with CO or how it influences customer choice process and outcomes is needed.

Future research can also significantly benefit from designs in which customers' marketplace practices and behavior and CO influences are aligned. For some products, CO is reflected in the brand, for example, automobiles (e.g., Magnusson et al. 2011). Still, firms' marketing strategies may include reinforcing CO when it has a strong positive CI for the product category (e.g., Germany for cars). Overall, communications for a relatively minor group of brands leverage CO when it possesses positive country equity (CE), or otherwise "imply" a CO known for its positive CE for the product category. Repeated CO reinforcement in customer communications impacts customer views, however, the extent to which consumers use or weigh CO under organic purchase conditions has received little research attention. Therefore, in addition to the pursuit of the research recommendations advanced in this study, future research should consider CO as one of many attributes available to consumers under normal (typical) marketplace purchase conditions (e.g., Johansson et al. 1985). Given that consumers are largely predisposed by images they hold regarding countries, imaginative market-based research designs are essential in circumventing biased reactions largely triggered by the introduction of CO cues in experiments and surveys, with the goal of assessing consumer reaction in ecologically valid research settings, with market-based product- and brand-level performance as ultimate outcomes.

Table 2 Summary of key empirical citing articles in research groups

Conceptual framework (Fig. 1) Topic or relationship examined	Number of key articles
Cultural Orientation	1
Consumer Expertise	3
Economic Condition	2
Cultural Orientation-Consumer Expertise	0
Cultural Orientation-Economic Condition	0
Consumer Expertise-Economic Condition	1
Cultural Orientation-Consumer Expertise-Economic Condition	0
Customer Orientation → Product Evaluation	5
Customer Orientation → | Underlying Consumer Disposition | → Product Evaluation	4
Product Nationality	6
Brand Origin	21
Product Type	4
Product Nationality-Brand Origin	4
Product Nationality-Product Type	2
Brand Origin-Product Type	2
Product Nationality-Brand Origin-Product Type	1
Product Evaluation → Consumer Outcomes	28
Product Evaluation → | Underlying Consumer Disposition | → Consumer Outcomes	12
Consumer Outcomes	32
Brand Performance	5
Consumer Outcomes-Brand Performance	1

\| = a moderating influence from the Fig. 1 framework

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Finally, as would be expected in any discipline, contemporary CO research has significantly advanced in quality and rigor, with increasingly more complex designs and, as we noted earlier, by leveraging pertinent theories from other fields. Notwithstanding these advances, the proposed conceptual framework offers the basis for a comprehensive theorem that encompasses CO phenomena, and which can serve as a guide for future research. A frequent criticism of the CO literature (and the IM field in general) has been its insufficient focus on pertinent theory and theory development, that is, the lack of a "CO theory" (or theories) (e.g., Bilkey and Nes 1982; Peterson and Jolibert 1995; Samiee 1994). Our detailed framework offers an important step in this direction. An integrative approach to CO research may also assist in developing a better understanding of marketplace practices in an increasingly more complex and intertwined global business environment. As firms increasingly rationalize their global manufacturing and source supplies to their affiliates through exports, customers are more likely to face imported rather than domestic products, many of which would be of multiple origins. This further highlights the importance of extending research on products of uni-national, bi-national, and multi-national products (e.g., Han and Terpstra 1988) as proposed in our research framework. Advancing this issue further, in some nations such as the Netherlands, consumers have no local brand option for some products; that is, consumers' only option is to choose from among imported brands (Nijssen and Douglas 2004).

Additionally, as the acquisition of well-known brands among multinational corporations based in different countries has become increasingly common, the number of products associated with two or more countries will likely continue to increase. Volvo, the quintessentially Swedish car brand, is owned by Geely of China; Jaguar, the famed British car, is owned by Tata Group of India; and Bally, the purveyor of well-known Swiss shoes and fashion, was formerly owned by Texas Pacific Group for nine years before being sold to Labelux, a luxury brand firm based in Vienna and Milan (Cauchi and Cimilluca 2008). How do complex origin-related profiles for such brands with various associated CIs affect brand equity, customer attitudes, evaluations, and subsequent purchases? Should the purveyors of high equity brands such as these or other luxury brands be concerned about CO in formulating global marketing strategies? Such integrative approaches will add important new dimensions to the existing CO knowledge base.

Managerial insights

As the evidence provided in Table 2 and Web Appendices 3a–3f demonstrates, considerable CO research has been devoted to the following topics and relationships in Fig. 1: (1) the examination of BO (Dmitrovic et al. 2009; Siamagka and Balabanis 2015); (2) the general relationship between product evaluation and performance (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2011; Kumar and Paul 2018); (3) the moderating influence of underlying consumer disposition on the relationship between product evaluation and performance (Nijssen and Douglas 2004; Russell and Russell 2010); and (4) consumer-focused outcomes (Roth and Romeo 1992; Zeugner-Roth et al. 2008). Therefore, to make our managerial insights as relevant and current as possible, we juxtapose these four topics as well-researched themes in the domain with the two primary subjects identified among the most influential recent CO publications (perceived CO and CI) as a basis for this presentation. An overview of these topics is provided in Table 3.

Brand origin

The CO literature has extensively covered the impact of brands and products. However, studies examining countries of origin of brands (i.e., BO) have found that consumers often encounter difficulty in correctly identifying the country from which a brand originates—even for well-known brands (e.g., Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2008, 2011; Samiee et al. 2005). More recent BO research demonstrates that consumers are willing to take into account the correct BO if it is more favorable than the initial incorrect perceived origin (Mandler et al. 2017). Furthermore, consumer perceptions of a country can be so powerful such that they would influence the success of brand extensions (Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos 2013). Three managerial insights emerge from these results. First, *emphasize positive country associations of the brand* and de-emphasize or disregard BO when negative country associations exist. Second, *educate consumers* of the product's true BO when more favorable than the initial perceived BO. Finally, align brand extensions with positive country associations for success.

An additional issue to consider with BO is the relevance of CI. The findings of multi-nation studies indicate that retailers from one region (e.g., Asia) are locally viewed as functional while foreign retailers (e.g., Western) are seen as emotional (Swoboda et al. 2012). Another cross-national research revealed that Asian brands are viewed as rudimentary, while American ones were perceived as prestigious (Kumar and Paul 2018). In general, local brands tend to benefit more from foreign country appeals than foreign ones (Zhou et al. 2010). These findings may require several managerial actions. First, firms should determine whether their brands are viewed as functional or emotional in specific countries. Second, they should examine the perceived prestige of each brand based on its origin. Third, using perceived brand foreignness as an indicator, firms should assess the competitiveness of their local and international brands.

Product evaluation and consumer outcomes

Another topic to consider is the influence of product evaluation on consumer outcomes (Fig. 1), particularly as it relates to perceived CO. Brand equity is impacted by CO when consumers perceive substantive differences between countries (Pappu et al. 2006). An additional theme that relates product evaluation to attitudinal outcomes involves CI. For example, research has demonstrated that CI positively impacts purchase intentions (Wang and Yang 2008). Additionally, product category can play a role on the impact of CI for specific countries which, in turn, influences consumer willingness to buy (Roth and Romeo 1992). However, consumers' mindset (pleasure-seeking versus risk-averse) matters just as much as the CI (Garrett et al. 2017). For example, pleasure-seeking consumers will use country of design and manufacture in their assessments, whereas risk-averse consumers are more likely to use store image and country of technology and manufacture in their evaluations. This leads to three managerial implications for consideration across research involving both perceived CO and CI. First, firms should develop a deep understanding of perceived differences between countries just as consumers do in their assessments. Second, they can also use product category and country knowledge to influence willingness to buy. Finally, companies should assess consumer attention to their design, manufacturing, and technology by pleasure-seeking and risk-averse consumers.

Product evaluation, underlying consumer disposition, and brand performance

A third managerial issue which arose from our analysis relates to the moderating influence of underlying consumer disposition on the relationship between product evaluation and market-based product or brand outcomes. One area that this is relevant applies to the concept of perceived CO. Ethnocentrism has been found to influence the perceived quality of both domestic and foreign products (Chryssochoidis et al. 2007). Additionally, perceived brand nonlocalness can be greater in developing countries among admirers of developed nations' lifestyles (Batra et al. 2000). These findings offer at least two managerial implications, respectively: (1) keep track of countries and targeted consumer groups' ethnocentric tendencies as they may put foreign brands at a disadvantage, and (2) identify admirers of specific countries (and their brands) since they can be fervent supporters (cf. White 2012).

Table 3 Key managerial insights based on conceptual framework and recent influential research topics

	Perceived country of origin	Country image
Brand Origin	• Emphasize positive country associations of the brand; de-emphasize (or do not mention) if negative country associations exist • Educate consumers of the product's CO if more favorable than initial perceived CO • Align brand extensions with positive country associations for success	• Establish whether your brand is viewed as functional or emotional in specific regions • Examine the perceived prestige of your brand based on origin point • Determine how competitive your local/international brand is using perceived brand foreignness as an indicator
Product Evaluation → Consumer Outcomes	• Address perceived differences between countries as consumers are doing this in their assessments	• Use product category and country knowledge to impact willingness to buy • Evaluate the attention that promotion- and prevention-related consumers pay to the company's design, manufacturing, and technology operations
Product Evaluation → | Underlying Consumer Disposition | → Brand Performance	• Keep track of countries and consumers which are ethnocentric as they may put foreign brands at a disadvantage • Find admirers of specific country and economic contexts since they can be fervent supporters	• Address animosity toward the country of design or assembly by emphasizing positive features of the product or countries involved as it impacts brand performance • Concentrate on extremely negative consumers to minimize their influence on the larger market
Consumer Outcomes	• Be mindful of the product's country of manufacture as it can impact consumer perceptions of a brand's personality more than the home country of the brand • Pay attention in high involvement product categories as they are influenced by CO effects	• Use perceptions of a particular country and the subsequent country brand equity to affect product preferences

\| = a moderating influence from the Fig. 1 framework

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Another topic which has drawn attention in this area examines CI. It is widely acknowledged that consumer animosity toward specific countries tends to negatively impact willingness to buy (Ettenson and Klein 2005; Nijssen and Douglas 2004). In addition, judgments concerning the country of design/assembly are impacted by animosity (Ahmed and d'Astous 2008). Such consumer sentiments can be so strong against domestic or foreign brands from particular countries that ethnocentrism turns to prejudice, discrimination, or even repulsion (Dmitrovic et al. 2009; Josiassen 2011; Russell and Russell 2010). These findings lead to two managerial implications, respectively. First, firms should address animosity toward the country of design or assembly by emphasizing positive features of the product or countries involved as it impacts brand performance. Second, they may target extremely negative consumers and aim to minimize their influence on the larger market.

Consumer outcomes

Several consumer outcome–related implications can be drawn from perceived CO findings. Results related to perceived CO demonstrate that country of manufacture can influence consumer assessment of brand personality more than the home country of the brand (Fetscherin and Toncar 2010). Additionally, buyers for retail establishments have been shown to be impacted by CO for high involvement goods (Reardon et al. 2017). Further implications can be surmised from examining CO research related to CI. For example, CI perceptions drive, to a degree, country brand equity which, in turn, influences product preferences (Zeugner-Roth et al. 2008). Taken together, three managerial implications, respectively, seem evident by addressing perceived CO and CI. First, managers should be mindful of the product's country of manufacture as it can impact consumer perceptions of a brand's personality more than the home country of the brand. Second, firms should internally (purchasing agent's predispositions) and externally (consumer predispositions) pay close attention to managing high involvement products as they are influenced by CO effects. Finally, leverage country perceptions and country brand equity to affect product preferences.

Limitations

In contrast to meta-analyses, bibliometrics is inherently a more generalized method to analyze literature domains. For example, an evaluation of a research chain can lead to a broad understanding of its main theme. However, only after careful examination of the specific cited and citing works—as done in this study—can a more complete understanding emerge. Still, the ability to establish very specific relationships between framework variables resulting from co-citation analyses is limited. Instead, research typically provides a few key

examples of the possibilities, but ample other opportunities exist for researchers in the field to decide their investigative paths. As this generalized pattern of unfolding the knowledge structure of large bodies of works is idiosyncratic to all bibliometric studies, it can be viewed as a limitation.

Concluding thoughts

A common feature of CO publications is that of extending study outcomes to managerial recommendations. As shown in Fig. 1, typical CO outcome measures include purchase intentions, brand attitude, and brand equity, with corresponding managerial recommendations to use CO to either leverage positive outcomes (e.g., emphasize CO) or take steps to mitigate negative sentiments (e.g., deemphasize CO) in communications (e.g., Roth and Romeo 1992). The unit of analysis in CO investigations is frequently the individual/experimental subject, which makes it challenging to extend experiment- and survey-based findings to assess firm-related impact. Ultimately international firms' primary CO-related concern is their product and brand shares and financial performance, the importance of which has long been advocated in the CO literature (e.g., Samiee 1994). To this end, our conceptual framework includes market-based outcomes as means of reasserting their importance and extending the range of firm-level measures to enable future CO research to provide relevant and meaningful firm-level global marketing strategy recommendations (cf. Bolton 2004; Katsikeas et al. 2016).

In general, firm-based implications of CO outcomes in global and IM contexts have received insufficient research attention. Most contributions have focused on establishing effects attributed to experimental stimuli with relatively focused consumer-based recommendations that typically leverage the study's settings, some of which are challenging to implement.[15] Literature contradictions along with CO findings' poor alignment with marketplace surveys further exacerbate the development of effective CO-based marketing strategies. For example, the results of a consumer survey demonstrate the CO paradox: 70% of Americans consider buying U.S.-made products very or somewhat important, a clear indication of buyer preference for a specific CO (Aeppel 2017). However, 37% of those polled are unwilling to pay more for

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[15] For example, some CO studies have proposed that firms manage or even change country perceptions by reinforcing positive CO stereotypes or, in general, improve negative ones (e.g., Micevski et al. 2020; Knight and Calantone 2000). Analogous to product repositioning, changing an image or CO stereotype requires reinforcement over long periods, which is not a luxury most managers can afford, in addition to requiring a substantial communications budget. Other research recognizes that, on the one hand, bias is likely to vary from region to region while, on the other hand, proposing firms to take into account negative bias/animosity in selecting overseas suppliers, potentially leading to a chaotic supplier selection for firms operating in dozens of nations with varying CO biases (e.g., Klein et al. 1998).

American made goods; another 26% can tolerate a maximum of 5% price difference vis-à-vis imports. These findings are consistent with those reported by *Consumer Reports* (Vogt 2018). A clear implication of such survey results is for managers to take potential CO bias less seriously in some cases, which may be suboptimal in particular instances where CO should play a more prominent role in devising a firm's international marketing strategy (IMS). In fact, such marketplace realities can limit and even isolate the use of much of CO research findings as marketing strategy levers. Thus, imaginative CO studies that incorporate IMS components and leverage our proposed framework can fill important research voids at the intersection of CO and global marketing strategy, theory, and practice. Such themes accommodate meaningful research-based recommendations for IM managers as shown in Table 3.

The extent to which a firm's IMS should be adapted to individual markets to accommodate differing CO perceptions offers further unexplored research opportunities. Given the general lack of uniformity and differing viewpoints in the literature, both academics (e.g., Samiee 1994; Usunier 2006) and business press (e.g., Bulik 2007; Sapsford and Shirouzu 2006) have questioned how firms might take CO into account in formulating a global marketing strategy, especially with respect to a relatively standardized program. Such issues demonstrate the necessity to integrate CO considerations with IM planning issues in future projects for greater managerial relevance.

An important aspect of formulating an effective marketing strategy that needs greater scholarly attention in CO investigations is the provision that CO effects are very likely segmented (Samiee 1994); that is, where present, CO and CI bias or animosity is not uniform across a country or region. For example, a preference for domestic goods is slanted toward lower income groups, a fact long recognized by firms such as Walmart (Aeppel 2017), where a higher proportion of shoppers have lower incomes (Hanbury 2020). Not surprisingly, Walmart has periodically stressed that it is the purveyor of U.S.-made goods. Segmentation-based recommendations are evident in some CO research; Micevski et al. (2020), for example, proposed that marketers incorporate CO relevant consumer traits as segmentation variables. This issue is critical for globally oriented marketing strategies aimed at identification and cultivation of intermarket segments.

CO studies that incorporate customer orientation and underlying consumer disposition constructs, in addition to incorporating relevant cultural, lifestyle, and demographic measures as presented in our approach concerning future research directions will be helpful in developing CO-based market segmentation and corresponding marketing plans. Although lifestyle in combination with other measures accommodate market segmentation, they have yet to be explored in CO studies. To this end, our conceptual framework asserts the use of broader dimensions of antecedents used in CO studies, along with more meaningful managerial outcome measures, such as product or brand purchase. A better understanding and sharper focus on these considerations should lead to more relevant and managerially meaningful results.

Importantly, customer choice processes and corresponding marketing strategies are influenced by a range of dimensions of which CO is but one piece of information. The CO literature is generally cognizant of the multi-attribute nature of customers' purchase decisions, however, more work on examining a managerially useful set of measures that includes segmentation is needed. Overall, it is apparent that greater clarity and deeper understanding of where, when, whom, and how CO affects purchase outcomes and ways in which such information can be harnessed to assist marketing decision-making are essential in moving the field forward. Additionally, given the widespread belief regarding the impact of CO on consumers, its role in the market expansion or channel strategies of international firms is of managerial importance. Research in this arena has been scarce (e.g., Moon and Oh 2017; Niss 1996; Stallkamp et al. 2017), thus offering another avenue for managerially meaningful CO inquiry.

Considerable intellectual capital and scholarly activity have been devoted to the CO research stream since its inception over nearly six decades ago. Published works in this domain have in turn both enriched and significantly advanced the literature. As a body of knowledge, the CO field has earned academic respect and popularity, especially within IM. Research achievements and corresponding academic prominence of the CO literature heightens the importance of developing a deep understanding of the current knowledge structure for this domain to enable the advancement of the field in a more organized and orderly fashion. Despite these advances, insufficient attention has been paid to managerial and strategy-based performance outcomes. Our goal in this research was to provide a platform for advancing future CO research with an eye on new fruitful directions, including managerial relevance.

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