
THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECT OF QUIMICAL COMPANIES ON PURCHASE DECISION OF A BRAZILIAN RANCHER

CAROLLINE DE ANDRÉA PICOLLI

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing
Lins de Vasconcelos ave, 3111, 54B, São Paulo-SP.04112-012- Brazil
E-mail: carollpicolli@hotmail.com

EDUARDO EUGÊNIO SPERS

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing
Álvaro Alvim Street, 123, Vila Mariana, São Paulo-SP. 04018-010- Brazil
E-mail: edespers@espm.br

Abstract

The country of origin effect has many definitions in the literature and generally refers to the influence of information about the country of origin on attitudes and behavior in relation to a product or a brand. For Wang & Lamb (1983), Agbonifoh & Elimimian (1999) this effect may be considered an intangible barrier to new markets enters, as negative bias that consumers have regarding imported products. Within the context of the Brazilian cattle sector this research has as objective to get propositions about the influence in the country of origin of agricultural input company in the purchase decision of the Brazilian rancher. Within the agribusiness intended to focus this studies in the Brazilian cattle industry. This sector has been undergoing some major changes, especially in regard legislation and environmental enforcement, which today are stricter about deforestation to open new areas for pasture. In addition to this, it is estimated that there are more than 100 million hectares of degraded pastures in Brazil (EMBRAPA, 2011). Seeing this opportunity, new chemical companies, mostly American and Chinese, have been directed their efforts to launch products in this segment. Thus it's also defined up as specific objective set up propositions about the image of the herbicide to pasture and about the image of the suppliers input companies from China, USA and Brazil viewed by Brazilian ranchers. For such research the method used followed three steps. The first one was a structured personal interview by a script following the criterion of the method of image configuration. Then was applied a questionnaire with a scale based on bipolar adjectives. The third step was used the technique of conjoint analysis considering three levels of attributes identified as key in a herbicide: origin, price and technical assistance. Through analysis of data was possible to obtain five propositions: there are important differences and even opposite relations between the image that sets a national crop protection's company and international one; the importance of technical assistance and price in relation to country of origin on the decision purchase; image of products from China and U.S; and image of herbicide for pasture. It is expected that these results might have important contribution to the companies in their internationalization strategies and brand positioning.

Keywords: country of origin effect, decision process, agribusiness, purchase decision

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1. Introduction

The country of origin effect has many definitions in the literature and generally refers to the influence of information about the country of origin on attitudes and behavior in relation to a product or a brand. For Wang & Lamb (1983), Agbonifoh & Elimimian (1999), this effect may be considered an intangible barrier to new markets enter, as negative bias that consumers have regarding imported products. For Ahmed, Johnson, Ling, Fang and Hui (2002), consumers can perceive purchases of products manufactured in countries with less favorable images such as riskier. Furthermore, the authors indicate that studies have shown that perceived risk is inversely related to purchase intent and product evaluation. Within the context of the Brazilian cattle sector, this research has as objective to get propositions about the influence in the country of origin of agricultural input company in the purchase decision of the Brazilian rancher. The relevance of the proposed topic is justified primarily by the representativeness of the agribusiness sector in the Brazilian economy, which is responsible for the trade surplus and almost a quarter of share of the Brazilian GDP (MAPA, 2013). The livestock sector has been undergoing some major changes, especially in regard legislation and environmental enforcement, which today are stricter about deforestation to open new areas for pasture. In addition to this, it is estimated that there are more than 100 million hectares of degraded pastures in Brazil (EMBRAPA, 2011). This strengthens the farmers' need to invest in productivity of the pastures available through fertilization and efficient pest management. In this scenario, the herbicide is an important tool for recovering Brazilian pastures. Then seen this opportunity, new chemical companies, mostly American and Chinese, have been directed their efforts to launch products in this segment. Thus it's also defined up as specific objective set up propositions about the image of the herbicide to pasture and about the image of the suppliers input companies from China, USA and Brazil viewed by Brazilian ranchers. Other point of justification is related to theme's originality.

Although country of origin effect is a frequent topic of study, meanwhile was not found in the literature researches directed to this specific segment. Therefore, the relevance of this study is justified by the scarcity in the scientific literature that addresses the influence of the country of origin of herbicides for pasture in the decision to purchase Brazilian rancher.

2. Literature review

2.1 Hedonic approach: values and attributes

According to the hedonic model, goods are not immediate objects of your choice or utility. The products have associated with them a set of attributes directly relevant to the consumer. In this formulation, the utility function is derived from the set of attributes ($A_j = \Sigma a_i$) or features obtained by a series of products (Lancaster, 1971).

The consumer's decision is not influenced by the attribute directly, but by values or needs and then justify the choice of an attribute or another. In this approach, the relationship is between attribute, consequences and value. According to Peter and Olson (1999) the product attributes are the main stimulus that influences the consumer in his purchase making decision. And there are assessed in terms of values, beliefs or past experiences by the individual. The attributes are seen as properties or characteristics intrinsic to the product, measurable, observable and can be tangible or intangible (Espartel & Slongo, 1999; Lefkoff-

Hagius & Manson, 1990). Regarding difference between features and benefits Espartel and Slongo (1999, p.32) make the following distinction: “*While the physical attributes represent concrete, benefits are functions or utilities resulting from the possession or consumption. While information about attribute are integrated to the consumer preference formation, information about the benefits are evaluators of product performance.*”

Gutman (1982) states that people perceive benefits, while the products have attributes that can provide these benefits. According to Myers (1976) attitudes towards preference or the purchase decision are defined by a set of attributes. Thus, they are considered determinants if represent the product image, or a main reason for buying or even possessing higher average importance of a set of attributes. Each product is seen as a set of attributes with different capabilities to provide benefits and satisfy a need. For Porter (1992) the consumer will not pay for a value that does not realize it, no matter how real it is. The judgments that the client makes about the value of what is offered help in purchase decisions. These expectations are built on the experiences of previous purchases, in the opinion of others and the information that organizations provide. When purchasing an attribute consumers will evaluate (swaps or trade-offs), seeking to have the lowest level of loss and maximum possible compensation. Perceptions of value are situational and depend on the context on which occur the evaluation and judgment. This view may help explain the diversity of meanings of value over attributes (Zeithaml, 1988).

2.2 O efeito país-de-origem

The country-of-origin effect has received many definitions in the literature and, in general, refers to the influence of information about the country of origin in the attitudes and behavior towards a product or a brand. For Wang and Lamb (1983); Agbonifoh and Elimimian (1999), this effect may be considered an intangible barrier to enter new markets. And could be a negative bias those consumers about imported products. A negative image of origin's country has a negative affect on brands reducing consumer purchasing intentions. To Nagashima (1970) the country of origin image is the identification, reputation and stereotype that suppliers and consumers binding on products of a specific country. And these are created by variables such as representativeness, national characteristics, economic context, history and tradition. Bilkey (1993) defines country of origin image as consumer opinions about the relative quality of the goods and services produced in the country.

According to Giraldi (2007), during the more than thirty years of studies on the subject the focus of research on the country of origin has changed. Initially, it was important to observe or confirm the existence of the phenomenon and indicate which country could be considered a favorable country of origin. Recently, the focus of researchers has changed to understanding why the effect occurs, noting in which situations it is more prominent. As well as investigating the role that information on the country of origin performs in the formation of attitude and purchase decision (AYROSA, 2000). The first empirical test of the influence that the country of origin has on the acceptance and success of a product was driven by Schooler (1965). The author found significant differences in evaluations of products that had identical attributes except the country specified on the label as "made in".

2.3 Products Image Configuration Method (PICM)

Images are ideological constructions determined by history and society, being formed from experiences (Grohmann & Alvarenga; Venturini, 2007). Images are mental sensations such as impressions left in the brain by objects and people. So the steps of the past

are kept alive by these impressions, which also reinforce the sense of continuity in the environment and the individual and collective experiences.

The Image Products Configuration Method (MCI) allows the evaluation of the projected image of an organization or product to a certain audience (Schüller, 2004). The aim of this method is initially raise information to understand the problem researched through interviews and get related attributes of objects image analyzed. The data collection is through personal interviews with a structured script, following the criteria of PICM. Which consists of structured questions considering the dimensions of the image classified as rational, emotional, sensory and symbolic, and that are directly related to the image (Schüller, 2004; Hoppe et al., 2008). The questions seek to encourage the respondents reveal the various attributes that make your mental image in relation to a herbicide, agricultural input company from international country and national one.

2.4 Conjoint analysis method

In conjoint analysis hypothetical products are built by defining attributes with different levels which are important in the purchase decision of the consumer (GREEN; SRINIVASAN, 1978). These products are presented to the consumer to sort them by preference. The conjoint analysis define individual roles, which can be aggregated to homogeneous groups of consumers through cluster analysis. Moreover, it is possible to measure the consumer's indecision about the risks and benefits of certain attributes (Siqueira, 1995). Conjoint analysis breaks down the individual utility of a product in a particular combination of partial utilities defined by chosen attributes. Thus the choice of a product described as a set of features or attributes $a_k = (a_1, \dots, a_k)$, the "utility" for an individual is specified by a combination of rules and a set of W functional forms u_k (one for each characteristic). As $W = (w_1(a_1), \dots, w_k(a_k))$ where: W = utility for the product, w_k = partial utility on a specific attribute k , a_k = k specific attribute value. The premise of the method is that the consumer evaluates a product combining separate quantities of utility provided by attributes.

The researcher builds a set of hypothetical products matching attributes at various levels (Baker; Crosbie, 1993). A hypothetical product is defined by the combination of levels of attributes. The selection of product attributes and their levels affects both accuracy and relevance of results. From a practical perspective, it is necessary to limit the attributes considered for the study. Levels of selected attributes need to be reliable and meaningful to respondents. In other words, the level described to be as accurate as possible but not exceed the existing levels. For a full factorial design of three different attributes with three levels respectively, would require the construction of 27 hypothetical products, which would make the experiment impractical due to the difficulty of sorting by the consumer. Therefore, through an orthogonal matrix can reduce the number of hypothetical products, in which: "each level of factor is combined with each level of all other factors in an equal number of times or in a constant ratio" (Perceptual, 1993, p.1-2). These products are presented to consumers who are asked to sort according to your preference. Figure 1 illustrates some cards used to evaluate the importance of the attributes of the herbicide to the Brazilian ranchers.

Origin	Technical assistance	Price
U.S.A	Medium	High

Origin	Technical assistance	Price
Brazil	High	Low

Origin	Technical assistance	Price
Chine	Low	Medium

Figure1. Sample of cards used on conjoint analysis method
Source. Authors

2.5 Nagashima Scale

This study was based on the scale developed by Nagashima (1970), since it exploits a number of bipolar features that can be grouped in dimens that tend to express the consumer opinion. Working with a large number of evaluation criteria allows better interpret the assessments made by the respondents and to identify profiles consistent. Furthermore, analysis of Nagashima add aspects to product attributes that define the profile of the consumer and their sociodemographic characteristics, allowing to draw conclusion about product market segments. The simplicity of the scale Nagashima (1970) allows to analyze the perception of a consumer, according to several variables. And understanding the image that consumer makes for foreign products. The scales used by Nagashima and reproduced in this study are Likert scales of 7 points, from +3 to -3. According the author the public respondent should complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, but the responses should match your first impression. The scale measures is based on the semantic differential method proposed by Osgood et al. (1957). This method was used by Nagashima (1970, 1975) and Kamis & Nagashima (1995) in their studies of the influence of the country of origin on the perceived quality of products.

3. Methodology

In order to obtain results that meet this study objectives were used three different methods: Products Image Configuration Method (PICM), scale Nagashima and conjoint analysis. This is characterized as an ethnographic research because intend to study the values of the public (Hammersley, 2008).

The sample of this stage is formed by fifteen ranchers located in Brazil's states: RJ, SP, TO, MT, and PA. They raise cattle free on pasture. Their properties are medium to large with an average 2200 heads in an area of 3400 hectares of pasture. All of them use herbicides for weed control. The average age of respondents was 44 years. Eleven of the interviewers works on this area because is a family business activity. Other three began their activities in agriculture through the opportunity for professional growth and investment. All respondents were male.

The sample selection was intentional through the snowball method (Marshall, 1996). According to Marshall (1996), an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is that adequately responds to the research question. In practice, the required number of subjects generally becomes obvious as soon as the study progresses, when new categories or topics stop emerge from the data (data overrun). In this research data from fifteen ranchers proved consistent and repetitive. For this step the data were collected from two sources: personal interviews with a structured script basis on PICM criteria. At the same time a questionnaire was applied to the scale of Nagashima (1970) and conjoint analysis. The interviews were scheduled by phone two weeks in advance at the location indicated as appropriate for each farmer.

4. Resultados

4.1 Resultados sobre atributos de herbicidas para pastagem

This work aimed to characterize which attributes are part of herbicide image as well as agricultural input companies nationally and internationally (figure 2).

Image level	Attributes		
	Internacional Company	National Company	Pasture Herbicide
Central Image	Result, tradition	Without tradition, Less credible, cheaper	Efficient, danger, cost benefit, contamination,
First Periphery	Great technology, expensive, efficiency	Relationship, technical assistance, insecurity	Unknown, Poison, doubt, essential
Second Periphery	Trust, credibility, power	Less technology, payment	Difficulty, control,
Third Periphery	security	Less variety, smaller size	Capacity (farm)

Figure 2. Image configuration

Source. Authors

The attributes seem not to have a logic that is able to classify or differentiate what would be more central or more peripheral in a herbicide. In the second periphery concentrate more actions that can be taken by an organization. The results of the image configuration of a agricultural company from domestic and international market are arranged side by side in order to facilitate the comparative analysis.

4.2 Escala de Nagashima

Table 1 shows the averages for each country, according to bipolar adjectives scale. Thus, it is possible to identify the perceptions about countries of origin according to these criteria.

Table 1 - Nagashima scale results

Image and reputation	EUA	CHINA	BRAZIL
Variety of models (variety of sizes and designs - limited variety)	2,25	2,5	3,5
advertising (a lot of advertising – less propaganda)	2	3,5	3,25
Production (innovative - imitative)	1,25	3,75	4,75
Brands (well known - unknown)	2	5,75	3,5
Fidelity (much loyalty - low fidelity)	2,5	3,75	3
Colors (clever use - misuse)	1,75	3,75	3
Quality			
Product (reliable - unreliable)	2,75	4	4
Manufacturing (careful - careless)	2,5	5	3,75
Concern (appearance - performance)	3	4,75	3
Articles (Luxury - basic necessities)	2,5	6,5	3,5
Technology (Advanced - outdated)	1,5	2,5	3
Price			
Price (fair - excessive)	4,75	2	4
Price level (cheap - expensive)	6	2	4
Consumer profile			
Aimed at male - female	3,25	3,25	3,75
Aimed at young people - for the elderly	3,25	4	3,25
Classes aimed at purchasing power	2,25	5	4,75
Service			
Mass production - handmade	1,5	2	3
Distribution (worldwide - domestic)	1,25	1,25	3,75
Type of industry (heavy - light)	3	3,5	4,25
Product Type (exclusive - common)	2,75	5,5	4,5

Source. Authors.

The mean values of the responses are reproduced in the graphs of Figure 3, as the representation used in Nagashima studies (1970, 1977). In order to facilitate the analysis was highlighted the center line limiting the division of "poles".

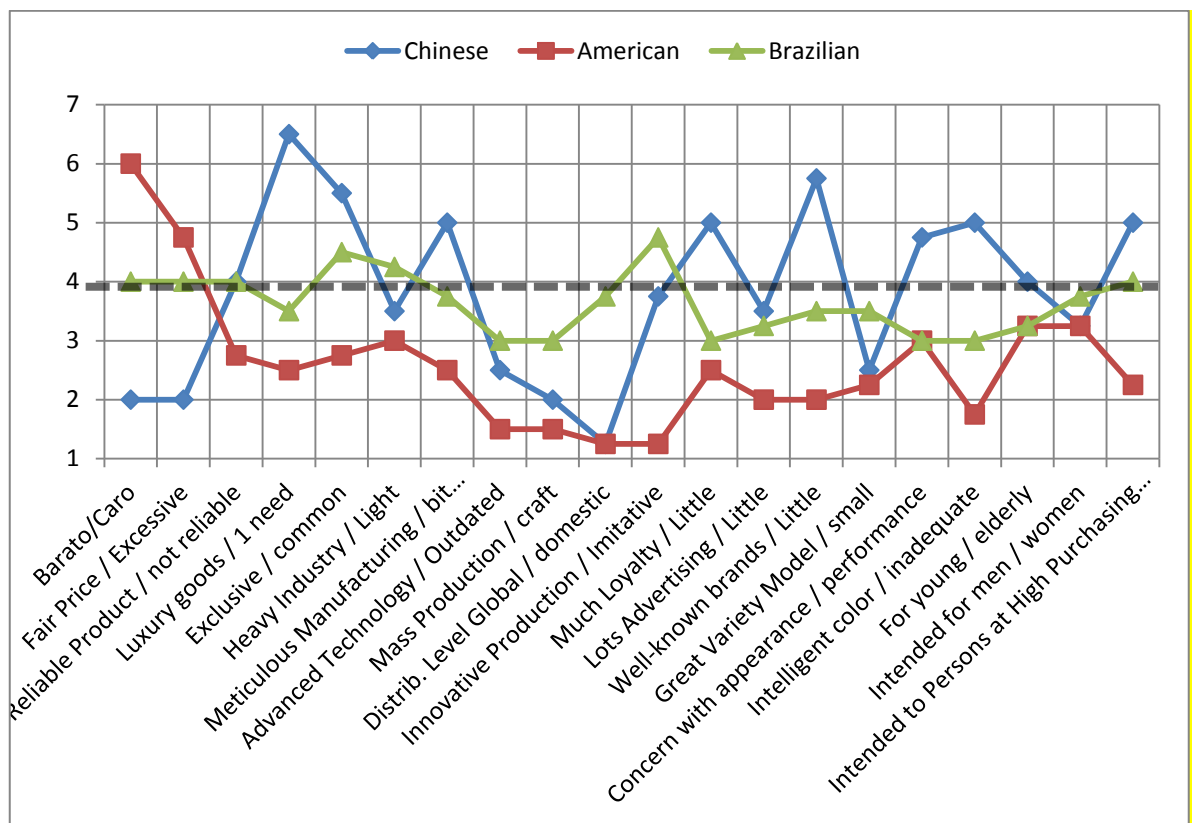


Figure 3. Graph of Nagashima scale results
Source: Authors

4.3 Conjoint Analysis

Based on subsidies provided by the image configuration results, and aligned with the objective of this work were defined controllable attributes of a herbicide for pasture as: price, technical assistance and country of origin of the product. Was presented to the interviewee nine cards, that each one represents a product with a different set of attributes (Table 2).

Table 2. Hypothetical products

Product	Origin	Technical Assistance	Price
1	China	Medium	Low
2	U.S.A	Medium	Medium
3	Brazil	High	Medium
4	China	Low	Medium
5	China	High	High
6	Brazil	Low	High
7	U.S.A	High	Low
8	Brazil	Medium	High
9	U.S.A	Low	High

Source: Authors

Therefore was asked to ordain the cards by purchasing preference which 1 as the first preferred option, and the last 9 purchase preference. The result of this analysis were the following preference orders respectively: technical assistance, price and country of origin (Table 3). The country of origin was most preferred by farmers United States, followed by Brazil and China.

Table 3. Average importance of the attributes

Attribute	Average
Country of origin	22,6%
Price	35,4%
Technical Assistance	42,0%

Source: Authors

5. Propositions

After data analysis was established five propositions related to: country of origin influence of herbicide on company's Brazilian rancher purchase decision; pasture herbicide image, image of agricultural input companies from China, USA and Brazil.

Proposition 1: The image of the herbicide is strongly related to concerns about environmental impact.

This proposition is justified if we observe the attributes related to the central image of the herbicide (figure 2). While the first attribute characterized as central image of a herbicide is efficiency, the second is danger, and the consequent are related to concerns about pollution and the environment. In the other words, the farmer recognizes the importance and need for a herbicide. Comparing the efficiency of the herbicide with other forms of weed control (physical removal, biologic control or fire), the chemical solution is proven to be more efficient.

In addition , the herbicide allows for economies of scale in the application, which provides a better "cost benefit" which attribute is also present in the configuration of the product image. This recognition of the herbicide as a need is also evident in the first periphery with the presence of the attribute "essential". Whereas the sample was held with farmers from medium to large, with at least 200 hectares of pasture the manual control would be impractical in large land extensions being the herbicide so extremely necessary.

The ignorance is also present in the herbicide image and reinforces insecurity about chemical applying, as can be noted in an excerpt from the interview: "I understand about cattle healthy. Plants, grazing and weed control are farmers stuffs". The attributes in the second periphery are related to the care and trouble handling this product. The herbicide application requires the use of specific equipment (tractors, pumps, and EPI). The herbicide is a chemical product and its handling and application is required specific expertise and knowledges.

Finally, in the third periphery, was assigned to herbicide the function to increase the capacity of the farm. Because the weed control through herbicide improves productivity pasture, impacting directly on cattle fattening and minimizing the cost of production. This is an important topic for the farmer as can be noted in the excerpt from the interview: "Today the farmers face major problems with the arroba's price, so a good costs management is vital to stay in the activity."

Proposition 2: There is disparity between national company image and an international one by Brazilian rancher perspective..

Through Products Image Configuration Method it was possible to observe significant differences between the image of the national companies (NC) and internationals (IC).

The central image of an international company - tradition and result - are oppositely related to the central image of the national company as attributes "no tradition" and "less credibility". During the interviews some ranchers justified this lack of credibility of national firms because of Brazil government and the political image. They concern about corruption, rigor of laws and inspections. Another opposite relationship is also established between the companies regarding the attribute "cheaper", present in the central image of the national and the attribute "expensive" in the first periphery of the international company. The international company is seen as large and technology, while the domestic company is seen as less technological and smaller size. However while the domestic business is characterized as smaller and less technology, it also brings the image of a company more accessible, which provides a closer relationship and technical assistance more present. And these are the key points to a herbicide since its image has attributes such as: ignorance, doubt and difficulty.

Proposition 3: The technical assistance and price are the most important attributes in the herbicide purchase decision of Brazilian rancher.

The results of the conjoint analysis show the preference of price and technical assistance. In other words, they are willing to pay more for this attribute. The country of origin was indicated attribute as less important in the purchase decision of the Brazilian rancher.

Proposition 4: Products from Chinese companies have negative image.

Analyzing the results of Nagashima scale in Figure 3, the group consists of products from China tends to the pole above the straight boundary, in other words, is a company with product imitation, little-known brands and low fidelity. Despite the Chinese products had been classified as advanced technology products, they are considered less reliable by having a less meticulous manufacturing.

In the conjoint analysis results Chinese products were classified with lower preference. Because the attributes ignorance and danger configure the image of the herbicide, confidence in the product is an essential attribute. Moreover, during the application of conjoint analysis method, all farmers had a common behavior, the first step was grouped the Chinese products and excluded them as can be excerpt from the interview: "These products from China I will put out, because they will be my last choice options. "

Proposition 5: There is a strong preference for products from U.S. companies.

The American origin product were classified in the opposite pole to the Chinese (below the boundary line). Thus these products have a more favorable image as meticulous manufacturing, more reliable product, and producing innovative and advanced technology.

The conjoint analysis results show a greater preference for products from the United States compared to the Brazilian and Chinese products. The product 9, for example, even with high prices and less technical assistance, it was the second in order of preference. When asked about the preference for American products, one respondent said: "*If it is an American product we know that business is good, right? I no longer know well herbicide, so I must get a good quality product and good technical assistance.* "

5. Discussion and Managerial recommendation

The proposition about the differences as national and international agricultural company image suggests important insights for companies operating in the sector. Herbicides Chinese have a negative image mainly about the attribute trust. Thus the communication campaign of these enterprises should strengthen this attribute. The price shown is an important attribute, but the farmer is willing to make a tradeoff if these companies provide a good technical assistance. The image herbicide is strongly related to concerns about environmental impact, so sector companies should have in their campaigns and training and qualification actions with the ranchers and their employees. We wish these results could contribute with companies' management helping better meet the needs and preferences of the market. For future studies it is suggested the application with a larger sample in order to statistically validate the propositions. It is also suggested the use of techniques such as the factorial that in a third step, could validate the grouping of attributes used in the image configuration method.

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