

# THE IMPACT OF SRI LANKAN BUY NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO THE ATTITUDE TOWARD COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Francke, A.P.K

*Government Analyst Department*

annfrancke@yahoo.com

Jayasinghe, J.A.S.C.

*Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing, University of Colombo*

sarathj@fmf.cmb.ac.lk

## Abstract

The effect that country of origin has on purchase behavior is an important issue for marketers and it is an increasingly discussed topic in the marketing literature. This research aimed to investigate whether there is an attitude change towards the country of origin among the Sri Lankan consumers because of 'Buy National Campaign' carried out in Sri Lanka. Other objectives of the research are to find out how far Sri Lankan consumers willing to buy domestic products and find out the awareness of the Logo used by this campaign among Sri Lankan consumers. A sample of 150 consumers was selected and a Likert scale was used to measure the constructs. According to the research findings consumers do not treat the country of origin as an only important factor when purchasing a product. They think country of origin of a product would reflect the technological sophistication of the product. The Buy National campaign in Sri Lanka is not strong enough to influence consumers to buy domestic products. Some consumers do not know even about such a campaign is in existence.

Keywords: Buy National Campaign, Country of Origin effect, Buy Sri Lankan Made campaign

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Buy National campaigns are seems to be effective in changing the attitude of country of origin, hence affecting the purchase behavior. There has been a proliferation of studies on product perceptions based on the country of origin. Most of these studies were conducted in western or developed countries. The country of origin of goods shall be defined as the country where the goods were manufactured wholly or subjected to sufficient processing in accordance with the criteria lay down by this customs code

or in accordance with the procedures define by the customs code.

Country of origin effect examines how consumers perceive product emanating from a particular country (Roth & Romeo, 1992). Globalization presents a considerable challenges and opportunities for international marketers. The relaxation of trade policies has provided consumers with more foreign product choices than ever before. Consequently their attitudes towards product originating from foreign countries have been of interest to international

businesses and consumer behavior researchers for decades (Wang & Chen, 2004).

Cues of country of origin information have generated much more researches. It is known that the people color their product evaluations and preferences by their image or stereo type of the country from which the product comes (Fox & Hunt, 1994) and attention has been given to marketing literature as to why COO influences purchase decisions.

Past studies that have measured the effectiveness of buy national campaigns on consumer product evaluation reported diverse results. Since the launch of the “Sri Lanka Buy National (Buy Sri Lankan Made) campaign” the buying of non domestic products continued to rise although consumer awareness of the campaign is high. Similar findings are evident for Buy National Campaigns in the USA and Canada. The present research evaluated the effectiveness of the Buy Sri Lankan Made campaign in consumer product evaluation and attitude toward country of origin effect. Specifically, Country of origin Information on electronic products including the special logo which attached to the product was used to assess the effect of the Buy Sri Lanka Made campaign. The study of country of origin information effect examines how consumers perceive products emanating from a particular country. This study it is examined how consumers use country of origin information when they make their purchasing decision in one particular industry called electronic devices industry in presence of Buy Sri Lankan Made campaign.

Marketers exporting to foreign countries face many obstacles in selling a new product (Clark, 1990; Etzel & Walker, 1974; Hong, 1989). Not

only can consumers hold negative stereotypes towards the country as a producer of a product, but foreign products also must contend with Buy National campaigns that encourage the ‘buy national message’. In doing so, Buy National campaigns attempt to reinforce positive home country of origin effect.

Past studies indicate that there is a tendency for consumers to evaluate their own country’s products more favorably than do foreigners (Banisters & Saunders 1978; kaynak & Cavusgil, 1983; Nagashima, 1970). Some consumers favored domestic products to reduce unemployment.

Sri Lankan Buy National campaign is a national program to promote local brands and to strengthen local entrepreneurs. Mawbima Lanka Foundation is the organization that carries out this national program. Mawbima Lanka Foundation is a “not for profit” Limited Liability Association registered under companies act no.22 of 1982. This program is launched in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Industrial Development and the Strategic Enterprise Management Agency (SEMA). That’s why we can call this campaign as a “National Campaign”. The Mawbima Lanka Foundation does so many things to promote local brands.

## **2. RESEARCH ISSUE AND OBJECTIVES**

The research problem of this study is to investigate whether there is an impact to the country of origin effect by the awareness of Sri Lankan buy national campaign in consumer product evaluation.

In this regards several research objectives were established.

To investigate whether the awareness of Sri Lankan Buy National campaign influence the Country of Origin effect in consumer product evaluations.

To measure the effect of Country of Origin information on consumer product evaluation.

To find out that how far Sri Lankan consumers are willing to buy domestic products.

To measure the awareness of the 'Soorya Singha' Logo among Sri Lankan consumers.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Country of Origin**

The study of country of origin (COO) effects examines how consumers perceive products emanating from a particular country. When the consumers make their purchasing decision, they use some cues like price, quality, country of origin, brand name etc. for evaluating their decisions. The consensus emerging from the research done by Hong and Wyer (1989) is that consumers use country of origin information to evaluate products.

The study of Country of Origin effect examines how consumers perceive product emanating from a particular country. Shimp and Sharma (1987) have shown that consumers may tend to have a relative preference to products from their own country or may tend to have a relative preference for or aversion to certain products that originate from certain countries.

#### **3.2 Country of Origin on Product Evaluation**

There is considerable evidence in the International Business and Marketing literature to suggest that "country-of-origin" information has strong effects on perception of product quality as well as on overall product. However, as noted by Bilkey and Nes (1982) and also see Johansson et al (1985), much of this evidence is based on single-cue studies, that is, on studies in which country of origin was the only informational cue available to respondents (White & Cundiff, 1979), for an exception.

Although useful, evidence for strong country-of-origin effects obtained in single-cue studies is limited in several ways. First, the strong effects revealed in these studies may partly be due to the fact that country of origin was the only available cue on which subjects could base their product evaluations. Like price, country of origin may produce much weaker effects in contexts where other cues (such as brand name) are also available for judging product quality (Olson, 1977). Consistent with this logic, Johansson (1985) found virtually no effects due to country image when subjects were also given brand-name information.

Recent research has shown that like brands, countries also have equity associated with them, termed "country-of-origin effects" that goes beyond product perceptions. In other words, consumers buy products not only because they perform well or are produced by a well known corporation, but also based on the country of origin. For example, "French Perfumes" or "Japanese Electronics" have enjoyed wide acceptance based on the country of origin. Past research has shown that positive (vs. negative) perceptions of a country result in more favorable evaluations of the products and services that originated in that country (Agrawal &

Maheswaran (2005); Maheswaran 1994). So a company competing in global markets today manufacturers products worldwide when the customer become aware of the country of origin, there is the possibility that the place of manufacture will affect on brand image.

Research has often contrasted consumer relations to products originating from countries differing in overall quality. There have been a number of empirical studies on issues such as the effects of country of origin on products' perceived quality and on consumers' propensity to use a product's "Made in" label. For example, Hong and Wyer (1989) manipulated country favorableness by the extent to which a country was noted for high or low quality products. The concept of country quality is really what makes the Country of Origin effect take place. While Country of Origin is only one cue consumers may use in evaluating brands, it typically affects the evaluation of product attributes (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Johansson et al 1985).

### **3.3 Buy National Campaigns.**

Marketers exporting to foreign countries face many obstacles in selling a new product (Clark, 1990; Etzel & Walker, 1974; Hong, 1986). Not only can consumers hold negative stereotypes towards the country as a producer of a product, but foreign products also must contend with buy national campaigns that encourage the 'buy national' message. In doing so, buy national campaigns attempt to reinforce positive home country of origin effects.

Past studies indicate that there is a tendency for consumers to evaluate their own country's products more favorably than do foreigners (Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Kaynak &

Cavusgil, 1983; Nagashima, 1970). In Papadopoulos and Heslop's (1991) survey of Canadian consumers, respondents favored domestic products mainly for non personal reasons, such as reducing unemployment. Many buy national campaigns seek to capitalize on this sentiment. In the US several leading retailers attributed sales increase of between 10-20% to involvement with the "Made in USA" campaign. (Sheehy, 1988)

Ettenson et al. (1988) used a conjoint method to evaluate the effect of a recent promotion designed to increase the impact of country of origin information on consumer decision making. This was, indirectly, one of the first studies to attempt to measure effect of Buy National Campaigns. Contrary to the findings of previous studies the authors found the 'Made in the USA' effect on purchase decisions was relatively small both before and after the campaign was launched.

In general, Buy National campaigns in Canada, Australia, USA and more recently New Zealand have had debatable success. In all countries after the campaigns were launched, the ratio of imports to exports continued to rise (Ettenson et al., 1991) although consumer awareness of the campaigns were high. These findings suggest that there is a definite gap between favorable attitudes and purchase behavior, which is an issue that needs to be addressed if sales of domestic products are to increase.

The tendency of consumers to be ethnocentric represents their beliefs about the appropriateness and moral legitimacy of purchasing foreign products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Ethnocentric consumers prefer domestic products, because they believe that products from their own country

are the best (Klein et al,1998). Moreover a concern for morality leads consumers to purchase domestic products even though the quality is poorer than that of imports. (Wall & Heslop, 1986) .The more importance a consumer places on whether or not a product is made in his /her home country , the higher his/her ethnocentric tendency (Huddleston et al.,2001).

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted for collecting data for this research. While filling the questionnaires, in-depth interviews were conducted with the respondents who were willing to give more insights. Some of them were morally support and some others were emotionally critical when they express their views.

A convenience sample of 150 customers were selected for this study and a questionnaire was developed including a five-point likert scale, anchored at one being strongly agree and five being strongly disagree to measure the consumers's attitudes.

#### 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

According to the table 1, almost equal number of men and women have participated in the research. As a percentage 50.7% male and 49.3% females include in the research.

**Table 1: Sample Profile-Gender Participation**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
male	76	50.7	50.7	50.7
female	74	49.3	49.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: pimary data)

**Table 2: Country of origin is not an important factor to make a purchasing decision**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
Disagree	35	23.3	23.3	32.7
neither agree nor disagree	35	23.3	23.3	56.0
agree	57	38.0	38.0	94.0
strongly agree	9	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: pimary data)

As depicted in the table 2, country of origin is not an important factor to make a purchasing decision for 44% of respondents. Main point here is that 23.3% respondents seems to be nutral on that point. It implies us that they are not bothered about that and they may have to think other more important factors when making such decisitons. However, 32.7% of the respondents seems to be concerned about this information.

**Table 3: Percentage of respondents who wish to purchase a product made in Sri Lanka**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
Disagree	34	22.7	22.7	34.7
Neither agree nor disagree	44	29.3	29.3	64.0
Agree	42	28.0	28.0	92.0
Strongly agree	12	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

According to the table 3, 36 % of respondents are willing to buy Sri Lankan made products while 34.7% do not necessarily like and 29.3% is not much concerned about this choice.

**Table 4: Country of origin is not a determination of a quality of the product**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	25	16.7	16.7	16.7
disagree	48	32.0	32.0	48.7
neither agree nor disagree	37	24.7	24.7	73.3
agree	35	23.3	23.3	96.7
strongly agree	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

The table 4 indicates that nearly 50% of the respondents believe that country of origin is a good indicator of the quality of a product.

**Table 5: Buy national campaign in the present economic situation**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	25	16.7	16.7	16.7
disagree	32	21.3	21.3	38.0
Neither agree nor disagree	26	17.3	17.3	55.3
agree	47	31.3	31.3	86.7
strongly agree	20	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

According to the table 5, people do not see any relationship between buy national campaign and economic situation. Percentage of the respondents who support this effort is approximately 45%.

**Table 6: Search for country of origin information about the product to help make a more informed decision when have a little experience with a product**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	12	8.0	8.0	8.0
disagree	43	28.7	28.7	36.7
neither agree nor disagree	37	24.7	24.7	61.3
agree	43	28.7	28.7	90.0
strongly agree	15	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

As depicted in table 6 when people have a little experience with a product approximately 39% of them search for country of origin information about the product to make a more informed decision.

**Table 7: Refuse to purchase a product without knowing its country of origin**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	18	12.0	12.0	12.0
disagree	44	29.3	29.3	41.3
neither agree nor disagree	47	31.3	31.3	72.7
agree	32	21.3	21.3	94.0
strongly agree	9	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

According to the table 7, 41.3% of respondents says that they are not refusing the product simply unknown country of origin information.

**Table 8: Influence made by Soorya Singha logo on product**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	25	16.7	16.7	16.7
disagree	49	32.7	32.7	49.3
neither agree nor disagree	45	30.0	30.0	79.3
agree	27	18.0	18.0	97.3
strongly agree	4	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

As depicted in table 8 almost 50% of respondents seems to be not influenced by the Soorya Singha logo. Further 30% of respondents do not have any idea partly because unawareness of this logo.

**Table 9: country of origin as a determination of technological sophistication of the product**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	22	14.7	14.7	14.7
disagree	34	22.7	22.7	37.3
neither agree nor disagree	34	22.7	22.7	60.0
agree	44	29.3	29.3	89.3
strongly agree	16	10.7	10.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

(Source: primary data)

According to the table 9, 40% of the respondents determine the technological sophistication of the product by country of origin information.

**5.1 Understanding customer diversity by Data Reduction**

To understand the customers diversity and

different attitudes toward country of origin as well as Sri Lanka and buy national campaign an exploratory factor analysis was employed to classify them all to similar categories in general. As depicted in table 4.10 three factors were identified and those three factors explain more than 57% variation.

**Table 10: Explanation of Variations**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.022	25.273	25.273	2.022	25.273	25.273	2.012	25.150	25.150
2	1.476	18.449	43.722	1.476	18.449	43.722	1.450	18.131	43.282
3	1.103	13.787	57.509	1.103	13.787	57.509	1.138	14.228	57.509
4	.889	11.116	68.626						
5	.857	10.709	79.335						
6	.662	8.281	87.616						
7	.544	6.803	94.419						
8	.446	5.581	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: primary data



**Table 11: Factor Analysis and Classification of Consumers  
Rotated Component Matrix (a)**

	Component		
	1	2	3
If I have a little experience with a product, I search for country of origin information about the product to help me make a more informed decision	.731	-.236	-.187
When purchasing a product, I believe country of origin will determine the technological sophistication of the product.	.724	-.252	.096
A product's country of origin does not determine the quality of the product	.628	.311	.151
Buy national campaign is a very good campaign in the present economic situation.	.596	.199	-.441
I want to buy a product which made in Sri Lanka	-.130	.802	-.159
Country of origin of a product is not a important factor to make a purchasing decision	-.019	.551	.068
If Soorya Singha logo is in a product I buy that product without seeking for the country of origin.	.431	.497	.388
I refuse to purchase a product without knowing its country of origin.	-.024	.018	.834

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: primary data

As depicted in table 11, according to the rotated component matrix following three factors were identified.

1. Tendency to search for country of origin.
2. Tendency to purchase own country products.
3. No consideration about any of these two factors.

### 5.2 Reliability analysis

Table 12: Reliability Statistics for the factors identified

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha
Tendency to search for country of origin	.852
Tendency to purchase own country products	.820
No consideration about any of these two factors	.912

Source: primary data

According to table 12 the reliability statistics for all three factors show the Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.7 indicating that the measurements are reliable.

### 5.3 Attitude towards country of origin and Sri Lankan Buy National Campaign

As shown in table 13 and 14 the attitude of country of origin has been analysed by using aggregate analysis after categorising the all items as positive and negative depending on the attitude. This shows that attitude of country of origin has not changed due to Sri Lankan buy national campaign and it is still positive.

According to the aggregate analysis the attitude toward buy national campaign is negative. But the profile analysis shows that people are positive toward the promotion of Sri Lankan products and they are ready to encourage this type of approach. Further, according to the comments made by respondents at the interviews this research reveals that, the Sooriya Singhe logo is not known by most of the people.

**Table13: Attitude towards country of origin**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total score
If I have a little experience with a product, I search for country of origin information about the product to help me to make a more comfortable decision	-24	-43	0	47	36	16
When purchasing a product, I believe country of origin will determine the technological sophistication of the product.	-42	-32	0	44	32	2
Country of origin of a product is not an important factor to make a purchasing decision	12	69	0	-54	-15	12
I refuse to purchase a product if no information is available about its country of origin.	-41	-49	0	37	23	-30
A product's country of origin does not determine the quality of the product	53	50	0	-36	-11	56
						56

(Source: primary data)

**Table 14: Attitude towards Buy National Campaign**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total score</b>
Buy national campaign is a very good campaign in the present economic situation.	-48	-26	0	47	40	13
I want to buy a product which made in Sri Lanka	-43	-34	0	42	24	-11
If Soorya Singha logo is in a product, I buy that product without seeking for the country of origin.	-56	-55	0	27	8	-76
						-74

(Source: primary data)

The young generation thinks that country of origin of a product is not an important factor to make a purchasing decision. But the older generation thinks that country of origin of a product is an important factor to make a purchasing decision.

They believe that a product's country of origin does determine the quality of the product.

Generally, consumers think that a Buy National Campaign for motivating consumers to purchase domestic products is good. But consumers are not satisfied with the present buy national campaign. Some consumers don't know even about a campaign called buy national campaign.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the findings of this research, it is important that product must carry the information of country of origin. Also country of origin can be used for promoting products by managers and executives.

In general, it is important for marketers to emphasize more on product dimensions such as the product quality, technological ability and

price in marketing their products depending on the nature of the Sri Lankan market.

Future researchers can concentrate on locally assembled vehicular market which is more popular among Sri Lankans at the moment to see how far the attitude been affected. And also future research can be carried out to find out how a successful buy national campaign can be developed based on consumer psychology.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

It is evident that consumers will tend to use country of origin information only to measure the quality, reliability and technological sophistication of the products. So far the Sri Lankan buy national campaign has not been strong enough to greatly influence consumers to prefer domestic products to imported products more frequently. The consumers will tend to buy Sri Lankan made products if the campaign is able to arouse their ethnocentric aspects and carry out the campaign based on nationalism. This can be magnified if they believe the economic development of the own country is in danger if they purchase imported products and neglect domestic products. But present economic and socio-cultural environment as well as extensive

knowledge generated through internet, social networks, sophisticated communication technology and globalization is more encouraging people towards entertaining the life through wider range of products and services in order to materialize the true meaning of the life.

To conclude that the researchers found that the consumers do not use country of origin information as the first cue in general, but they moderately agree that it is important for them to look for information when they make purchasing decisions. Attitude toward country of origin remain unchanged and people in Sri Lanka seems to be more open towards world trends rather than being restricted and reserved by narrow ethnocentric cues.

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