

Sustainable Organic Market Development with International Trade (SOMDwIT)

Survey instrument (WP3)

Deliverable 3.2.

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Introduction

The purpose of the WP3 is to investigate Denmark's *country equity* in the context of organic food at selected markets by means of a survey and a choice experiment. Although there are many studies of consumer preferences for country-of-origin on the one hand and organic food on the other, research on COO effects in the context of organic food is scarce (Thøgersen, Pedersen, Paternoga, Schwendel, & Aschemann-Witzel, 2016). More specifically, there is a lack of research on how consumers evaluate imported organic food products from different countries.

Theoretical framework

We base our study on Josiassen, Lukas, Whitwell and Assaf's (2013) origin-image model and the critique of previous attempts to provide a theoretical framework for origin-image effects. The higher-order model suggests that Denmark's country image (sometimes also referred to as country equity or the country-of-origin (COO)), consists of origin images on three different levels: A *basic-origin* image, a *product-origin* image and a *category-origin* image, together constituting the so-called "Halo model of origin images" (HMOI) (Josiassen et al., 2013). The three levels of country image are assumed to predict consumers' intentions to purchase products from a specific country in a hierarchical way, meaning that all COO effects are mediated through the most specific level, the *category-origin image*. This theoretical framework is applied in our study, and it is hypothesised that the three images influence (export market) consumers' perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards organic food products from Denmark.

Country image

Basic-origin image (BOI) is based on the central assumption that "the image attached to the country and/or the people enables consumers to make inferences about products from that origin" (Josiassen et al., 2013, p. 254). This conceptualization of BOI is similar to the earlier definition of country image by Nagashima (1970) as the sum of impressions and associations held by a country (Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016). Hence, we refer to this concept as country image (CI) in the following. According to Josiassen et al. (2013, p. 254), consumer perceptions about a product are "the result of use/no-use of the BOI and *not* the result of a specific category image that may be different from the BOI". Hence, in the basic-origin perspective, the origin image is conceptualised as a halo construct, where

consumers draw on information that are not relevant for a specific product or category-related assessment.

Product-origin image

The product-origin is the dominant focus in the academic literature on COO effects (Josiassen et al., 2013). Product-origin image (POI) effects “stem from the product-related capabilities/characteristics of the origin/people, or from images attached to the products in general, which original form a particular origin” (Josiassen et al., 2013, p. 254). Hence, ‘product’ refers to any product from an origin and not just one individual product.

Category-origin image

The category-origin (COI) perspective is the most recent of the three and still in an early stage of development (Josiassen et al. 2013). The delimitation of categories for which it can be assumed that consumers form a meaningful category-origin image (COI) “is determined by the degree to which the product within the group satisfy similar needs and share stereotypical images” (Josiassen et al., 2013, p. 255).

Within the limited stream of research on COO effects for organic food products, most studies have focused on preferences for domestic versus imported organic foods (Dransfield et al., 2005; Ortega, Hong, Wang, & Wu, 2016; Schjøll, 2016; Xie, Gao, Swisher, & Zhao, 2016). These studies confirm that a domestic country bias is also – maybe even especially – evident in the case of organic food products, however with Ortega et al.’s (2016) study as an exception. Consumers in Beijing, China, were asked to choose between beef originating in either China, the USA, or Australia, with either the Chinese “Green Food” label, the Chinese organic label or no such label. The study found that these consumers were willing to pay more for Australian than for domestic (Chinese), or US, beef (Ortega et al., 2016).

The COO effect and organic logos

The study of consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions with regard to imported organic food products can also be informed by research streams on consumer responses to eco-labelling (Thøgersen, Haugaard, & Olesen, 2010) and to specific organic logos (Thøgersen, Jørgensen, & Sandager, 2012), including how they differ between types of brands (Bauer, Heinrich, & Schäfer, 2013; Larceneux, Benoit-Moreau, & Renaudin, 2012). There is still only little research on the EU organic logo and on how the mandatory label works in practice (Janssen & Hamm, 2012a, 2012b),

but the research suggests that, after five years, the knowledge of the logo is spreading rather slowly among European consumers (Zander, Padel, & Zanolli, 2015). There is still no research on whether the mandatory EU logo weakens or strengthens individual European countries' country image for organic food at different markets. Also, it has not been researched systematically whether national organic logos can enhance country image.

Method

A comprehensive cross-national consumer survey in Denmark (for benchmarking purposes) and important export markets for organic food (Germany and France) as well as two emerging markets (China and Thailand) will be carried out. Besides background characteristics, it will cover issues such as organic food consumption, COO perceptions, Denmark's image regarding organic products, and organic labels. In a choice experiment integrated in the survey, we will experimentally study to what extent the COO is used as a cue for inferring positive characteristics of organic products and how much "made in Denmark" is valued by consumers when buying organic food. We will also investigate the influence of COO on the attitude towards imported organic food and possible contingencies for COO effects in the context of organic food.

The consumer survey and choice experiment will be conducted as an online survey with a representative sample of about 1000 adult respondents (18-65 years) in each country. The survey instrument will be translated from English to the local languages and pre-tested. The survey instrument will be uploaded to Organic Eprints, when the data collection has finished.

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