The Effects of Perceived Congruity Between Origin, Brand, and Product on the Purchase Intention of a Branded Product of Origin

Philippe Aurier, Montpellier University-School of Management
Fatiha Fort, ENSA Montpellier-MOISA Research Unit

We propose to analyse and compare the effects of attitude toward the product category, the brand, the geographical origin and the corresponding perceived congruity factors (product category x origin, brand x origin, product category x brand) on the evaluation (intention to purchase) of a branded product of origin. Measurement error will be taken into account by means of a multi-item measurement process and structural equation modeling.

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ABSTRACT

Attitude toward geographical origin is considered an influential factor of individual evaluations in the COO literature. However, a model controlling for the effects of attitude toward the product category, the brand, the geographical origin and the corresponding perceived congruity factors (product category x origin, brand x origin, product category x brand), demonstrates no effect of origin attitude on the purchase intention of a branded product of origin. In the case of congruity between brand, origin and the product category, a dominant effect of brand attitude is observed. This effect decreases in the case of incongruity, and perceived congruity factors are then included in the evaluation, alongside brand attitude. Our empirical application is replicated over two food product categories.

INTRODUCTION

Because of competition between international firms on the global market, many firms seek to reduce cost production by a relocation of their manufactures in less developed countries and by an enlargement of their procurement sources. However, in sectors like food, geographical origin is becoming a key factor in consumer purchase because of many crises shook, reinforced by regulation of Geographical Indication and TRIPS Agreement. Academic research on Country of Origin (COO) effects on consumers’ evaluation and behavior has increased steadily over the last two decades and, at the same time, reference to geographical origin has been used as a factor of differentiation and added value by a growing number of food manufacturers (national and regional brands) and retailers (private brands). Marketing literature has shown that geographical origin (GO) effects can rival the effects of price, brand equity and product attributes because it enhances attribute perception, perceived quality and it is supposed to transfer the branded product x origin rather than the GO itself. For instance, a brand what is actually due to the geographical origin and the corresponding perceived congruity terms. For instance, in a model explaining the purchase intention for Swiss Valdor raclette cheese, it is possible, without an effective control for the brand effect, to attribute to the attitude toward Switzerland what is actually due to the Valdor brand or to the perceived congruity between Switzerland and Valdor. It is also possible, without an effective control for the product category, to attribute to the Valdor brand what is actually due to the “raclette cheese” product category, or to a perceived congruity between “raclette cheese” and Valdor.

An interesting result emerging from this area of research concerns the role of the perceived congruity between the branded product and its geographical origin (Maheswaran 1994; Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000; Hübbl and Elrod 1999). Perceived congruity has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on consumer evaluation, and the extent of this effect might be greater than the effects of brand or origin. The element of prime importance in GO management could, then, be the perceived congruity between branded product x origin rather than the GO itself. For instance, a positive attitude toward a Swiss raclette cheese could be due less to the attitude toward the raclette cheese or toward its Swiss origin than to an interaction between Switzerland and raclette cheese, expressed through perceived congruity.

However, theoretical and methodological variations make any comparison of these effects difficult. Firstly, the concept of product (or brand) x origin congruity has been diversely considered, thereby making comparisons difficult. Sometimes it is implicitly considered, through a simple statistical interaction term between a product (or brand) indicator and an origin indicator (Han and Terpstra 1988; Cordell 1992), with the limitation that the theoretical content of this interaction term remains unclear, specifically in the perspective of information processing by consumers. In other research, this interaction is explicitly considered in terms of congruity, but diversely conceptualized and measured. For instance, in Hübbl and Elrod (1999), brand x origin congruity is an objective binary indicator corresponding to the fact that the product was manufactured (or not) in the country of the brand. Secondly, experimental designs are implemented using, alternatively, products (Roth and Romeo 1992), brands (Jo, Nakamoto, and Nelson 2003) or branded products (Etenson 1993; Cordell 1992; Hübbl and Elrod 1999) as the unit of evaluation by individuals. We might then suspect that, depending on the design of the research, confounds effects may exist between what is due to the brand, to the product, to the origin and to the corresponding congruity terms. For instance, in a model explaining the purchase intention for Swiss Valdor raclette cheese, it is possible, without an effective control for the brand effect, to attribute (at least partially) to the attitude toward Switzerland what is actually due to the Valdor brand or to the perceived congruity between Switzerland and Valdor. It is also possible, without an effective control for the product category, to attribute to the Valdor brand what is actually due to the “raclette cheese” product category, or to a perceived congruity between “raclette cheese” and Valdor.

Thirdly, most research on geographical origin uses statistical methods (Anova, Multiple regression, Conjoint analysis, Logit; Johansson, Douglas, and Nonaka 1985; Han and Terpstra 1988; Maheswaran 1994; Okechuku 1994; Hübbl and Elrod 1999; Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000), which do not allow to control for measurement error and its negative impacts on the estimation of coefficients and hypothesis testing, as underlined by Steenkamp and Baumgartner (2000).

In this perspective, we propose to analyze and compare the effects of attitude toward the product category, the brand, the geographical origin and the corresponding perceived congruity factors (product category x origin, brand x origin, product category x brand) on the evaluation (intention to purchase) of a branded product of origin, i.e. an alternative defined using three pieces of information: the product category, the brand and the geographical origin. Measurement error will be taken into account by means of a multi-item measurement process and structural equation modeling. Our empirical application involves two experiments in the domain of food consumption in France, identically replicated in the Tomme cheese and the Cassoulet canned meat product categories. Varying the origin, we manipulated both the perceived congruity between origin and product category (logical/illogical) and the perceived congruity between brand and product category (logical/illogical). Due to practical constraints, brand x origin perceived congruity was not manipulated (once origin x product and brand x product congruity is manipulated, there is no degree of freedom to manipulate brand x origin perceived congruity), but only controlled for.
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Several meta-analyses have attempted to synthesize the COO findings (Bilkey and Ness 1982; Peterson and Jolibert 1995; Samiee 1994; Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999) and show that, despite considerable research in the field, the origin effect is still not very well understood. There are divergences relating to the magnitude of this effect (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999); the nature of its influence (Chao 1993; Hong and Wyr 1998; Obermiller and Spangenberg 1989); the strength of the origin effect on brand, price and other extrinsic and intrinsic attributes (Ahmed and d’Astou 1993; Johansson et al. 1985, Okchuku 1994); and the dependant variables affected by origin (perceived quality, attitude and intention to purchase).

The COO literature is also characterized by results contingent to the product category (Ahmed and d’Astou 1993; Han 1989; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Roth and Romeo 1992) and to the consumers, due to ethnocentrism and stereotype effects (Agrawal and Kamakura 1999; Cordell 1992; Erickson, Johansson, and Chao 1984; Maheswaran 1994; Samiee 1994).

With the rise of global manufacturing strategies, the COO literature has focused on the effects of the brand name x origin interactions, and various effects have been characterized including the “conjunct effect” (Ahmed and d’Astou 1993; Cordell 1992; Han and Terpstra 1988; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Okchuku 1994), the “shielding effect” (Jo et al. 2003; Johansson and Nebenzahl 1986; Nebenzahl and Jaffe 1996) and the “congruity effect” (Häubl and Elrod 1999). The concept of perceived congruity is based on the cognitive consistency theory that suggests a link between consumers’ attitudes and the consistency between objects, persons, brands and individual beliefs (Siry 1982). Cognitive psychology considers that information about objects is stored in cognitive categories and that consumers’ evaluations depend on the effect associated with the category to which the object belongs (Medin and Smith 1984; Mervis and Rosh 1981). This assimilation process depends on the product category schema congruity (Sujan and Bettman 1989). Roth and Romeo (1992) showed that the perceived match between the product and the geographical origin plays an important role in purchasing behavior. If brands and product categories are conceptualized as cognitive categories in the consumer’s memory (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994), the perceived similarity or congruity (also called “perceived fit”) facilitates both the categorization process and the transfer of attitudes from these cognitive categories to the branded product. The role of the perceived fit in the success of brand extension has been underlined in a number of studies (Aaker and Keller 1990; Broniarczyk and Alba 1994).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Combining findings from COO and brand extension literature, we can propose that the evaluation of a branded product of origin is influenced by product category, geographical origin and brand attitudes, as well as by the perceived congruity terms between product category, origin and brand.

Effects of Attitude Toward Product, Brand and Origin

Figure 1 shows that brand, product and origin attitudes have positive effects on the evaluation of a branded product of origin. Purchase intention was chosen in this research as a good synthesis of individuals’ evaluations and also because it represents a good proxy for consumer behavior (Chandon, Morwitz, and Reinartz 2005). As such, it is frequently used in COO and brand research (Roth and Romeo 1992; Czellar 2003). We propose, then, the three following hypotheses (Figure 1):

H1a: Attitude toward the product has a direct positive influence on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

H1b: Attitude toward the brand has a direct positive influence on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

H1c: Attitude toward the origin has a direct positive influence on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

Effects of Perceived Congruity Between Product, Brand and Origin

Figure 1 shows that three congruity factors can influence the evaluation of a branded product of origin. The first, perceived congruity of origin x product category (H2a hypothesis), has traditionally been examined in the COO literature where authors have studied the impact of origin in conjunction with product categories, but without controlling for the brand. For instance, Han (1989) has studied the impact of Korea and USA national images in the car and TV categories. Maheswaran (1994), controlling for consumer expertise, has studied the impact of COO in the microcomputer (Germany vs. Thailand) and stereo system (Japan vs. South Korea) categories. We propose then:

H2a: The perceived congruity between origin and product category has a direct positive impact on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

The second, perceived congruity of origin x brand (H2b hypothesis) has also been examined in the COO literature, but without controlling for the product category (Keller 1993; Leclerc, Schmitt and Dubé 1994; Häubl and Elrod 1999). For instance, Häubl and Elrod studied the impact of the congruity between the brand name (4 brands) and the country of production (France, Germany, Slovenia) in the alpine skiing category. We propose then:

H2b: The perceived congruity between origin and brand has a direct positive impact on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

The third, perceived congruity of product category x brand (H2c hypothesis) has been extensively studied in the brand extension literature, but has not been included in the COO literature, at least as a controlled factor. This form of congruity, the so-called “perceived fit” between the original brand and the extension category, has proved to be a central factor in explaining the success of brand extensions (Aaker and Keller 1990; Czellar 2003). We propose then:

H2c: The perceived congruity between brand and product category has a direct positive impact on the purchase intention for the branded product of origin.

METHODOLOGY

Our experiment is applied to food consumption, a domain where product categories, brands and geographical origins play important roles in the strategy of firms. Consequently, individuals are used to evaluate alternatives representing combinations of these three components, thereby conferring a reasonable degree of realism on the task of the participants.

Because we studied French food products in France, geographical origin was studied at the regional level, as suggested by
Van Ittersum, Candel and Meulenberg (2003). Although origin is generally understood at the national level in the COO literature (Japan, United States, …), the cognitive category used by consumers to deal with origin can sometimes be more specific: a region or even a smaller area of “terroir”, depending on the product category being evaluated (Askegaard and Ger, 1998). This is typically the case in the food and beverage sectors, where the evaluation can be enhanced or discounted as a function of the region of origin. Although the French region of Savoie (eastern-France) has a positive impact on the evaluation of “Gruyère” or “Tomme” cheese categories, it can also demonstrate a null or even a negative impact on the category of “rosé” wines. Moreover, in a number of product categories, there are sometimes greater differences between regions in the same country than between regions in different countries. In the “Tomme” cheese category, there is a greater degree of similarity between Romandie (western Switzerland) and Savoie (eastern France) than between Savoie and the Pyrénées (south-west France), even though these three mountainous regions all manufacture “Tomme cheese”.

**Construct Measurement**

The variable used to explain the purchase intention of a branded product of origin was measured on a five-point Likert scale as the likelihood of purchasing the branded product of origin on the next shopping trip (Punj and Hillyer 2004; “If I need xxx, I will probably buy xxx”; “The next time I will need xxx, I will certainly buy xxx”).

To make measurement scale effects as constant as possible when testing hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c and to make comparisons easier, attitudes toward brand, product category and geographical origin were all measured using the same Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) 3-item scale (“I like”, “I appreciate”, “I’m favorable”, on a 5-point Likert scale). For the same reasons, when testing hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c hypotheses, perceived congruity (product x origin, brand x origin, product x brand) was measured using the same Aaker and Keller (1990) 3-item scale (“logical ↔ illogical”, “natural ↔ not natural”, “coherent ↔ not coherent”, on a 5-point differential semantic). Involvement and subjective expertise were also measured, to be used as controlled factors (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

The form started with judgment toward the category (involvement, expertise), then we successively measured product, geographical origin and brand attitudes, then perceived congruities and finally purchase intentions.

**Selection of Product Categories, Origins and Brands**

We implemented the same experiment across two food sectors, cheese and canned meat, which were selected as moderate vs. low involvement food categories on the basis of a pilot study carried out on a convenient sample of 193 French consumers. To make the evaluation more specific and concrete, we selected the product variety “Tomme” in the cheese sector and the product variety “Cassoulet” in the canned meat sector.

3Tomme is a variety of cheese manufactured in mountainous areas.
4Cassoulet is a typical meal composed of a meat and bean stew, sausage, duck cutlets and conserve of duck, produced in the region of Toulouse (south-west France).
TABLE 1
Psychometric properties (CFA*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>Shared variance</th>
<th>Root shared variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intention to purchase</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the product</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the origin</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin x product category perceived congruity</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand x origin perceived congruity</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand x product category perceived congruity</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product category involvement</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product category subjective expertise</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicators are those obtained in the worst estimation condition (experimental cell), with a RMSEA of 0.049

To manipulate the perceived congruity of geographical origin x product category (logical vs. illogical), two geographical origins were selected in each product category: “Savoie” (logical) and “Alsace” (illogical) for the Tomme cheese category; “Toulouse” (logical) and “Auvergne” (illogical) for the Cassoulet canned meat category.

In order to manipulate the brand x product category perceived congruity (logical vs. illogical), we had to select well-known, familiar and realistic choice alternatives. For each product category, a list of 20 national brands was presented to three agro-food experts who had to class them as congruent or not congruent with the category, or possibly “unknown”. On this basis, we selected the brands “Riches Monts” and “Bridel” in the Tomme product category and the brands “William Saurin” and “Fleury Michon” in the Cassoulet product category as logical vs. illogical respectively. As these national brands are not specifically associated with one of the selected origins, we maintain the independence of the origin and the brand factors, and this is also the reason why it was not possible to manipulate the brand x origin perceived congruity.

Experimental Design and Sample

Our experimental design, in each product category, is a 2 x 2 intra-subject full orthogonal design, where each participant had to evaluate 4 branded products of origin (one per experimental condition), for instance a Tomme cheese manufactured in Savoie (logical origin) by the brand Riches Monts (logical brand). This design was identically replicated over the two product categories, on similar samples comprising 360 individuals each. Working on two product categories was also a means of controlling, a posteriori, the average level of involvement, which is higher in France for cheese than for canned meat. To diversify the two samples (Tomme/Cassoulet), the forms were managed identically across three geographically-contrasting areas in France (North, Paris, South) because food and origin perception could vary as a function of this factor. For each stratum (a product category x geographic area of interview), the same quotas were imposed on age and gender. Forms were managed face to face using the data collector methodology (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Gwinner, Bremler, and Bitner 1998).

Construct Validity

For simplicity, measurement quality is presented after having pooled the two product categories (n=720) successively for each of the 8 experimental conditions. All scales demonstrate satisfying reliability: all Cronbach coefficients are greater than 0.8 and no item had to be deleted. Trait validity was established on the basis of EFA and then CFA, for each construct taken in isolation, then two by two, three by three and finally for all constructs taken together (Anderson, Gerbing, and Hunter 1987). CFA estimations were performed under Lisrel, using the maximum likelihood procedure because of its robustness for large sample sizes. The goodness-of-fit indices are satisfactory: RMSEA vary between 0.038 and 0.049 (associated χ² values are all greater than 0.76), AGFI vary between 0.91 and 0.93, SRMR between 0.025 and 0.028, NFI between 0.96 and 0.97 and CFI between 0.98 and 0.99.

All constructs exhibit a good degree of convergent validity: standardized factor loadings are highly significant, reliability coefficients range between 0.90 and 0.96, mean variance indicators (Fornell & Larker, 1981) are greater than 0.75, which can be considered as a satisfying result (Table 1). Finally, root mean square indicators are all greater than their corresponding inter-construct correlations, demonstrating a satisfying degree of discriminant validity.

Manipulation Checks

Table 2 shows that involvement is greater for Tomme cheese than for Cassoulet canned meat (p<0.0001): on average Tomme appears to be a category with moderate involvement (3.3/5), and Cassoulet a category demonstrating low involvement (2.2/5). In
both categories, the average perceived congruity between origin and product category decreases in the product x origin illogical condition (p<0.0001). Similarly, perceived congruity between brand and product category decreases in the brand x product illogical condition (p<0.0001). We can conclude, then, that our manipulations were effective. Moreover, in the two product categories, the two brands (logical/illogical), but also the two origins (logical/illogical) obtained similar levels of attitudes (no statistical differences).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Model Estimation and Hypotheses Testing

In order to validate our hypotheses, we tested the structural model representing the whole set of hypotheses developed in the theoretical section (Figure 1). This model explains the purchase intention of the branded product of origin, as a function of product category, brand and origin attitudes as well as the three perceived congruity factors (product x origin, brand x origin, product x brand). Age, gender, subjective expertise and involvement were also initially included in the model to control for their effects on purchase intention, but were later abandoned because they were not statistically significant. The model was successively estimated in the 2 x 4=8 experimental conditions (1 to 4 in the Tomme cheese category and 1’ to 4’ in the Cassoulet-Canned meat category; Table 3), using here the bootstrap estimation procedure (200 replications; n=360). On the basis of indicators of fit, the hypothesized model fits the data reasonably well, in all conditions (Appendix 1). Research hypotheses were then tested on the basis of the standardized direct coefficients (Table 3).

Attitude toward the product and attitude toward the origin have no significant direct effect on the purchase intention of a branded product of origin, in any of the 8 experimental conditions: H1a and H1c hypotheses must, then, be rejected.

Conversely, there is a significant (moderate to strong) effect of attitude toward the brand in all experimental conditions, meaning that H1b is strongly validated. In both product categories, this effect is greater when the brand is logical vs. illogical and/or when the origin is logical vs. illogical. Then, it is in the case of complete congruity (conditions 1 and 1’) that attitude toward the brand has its strongest effect. In these two conditions, it is the sole factor influencing purchase intention of the branded product of origin and the corresponding R² for purchase intention is at its maximum. Moreover, for every experimental condition, the impact of brand attitude is higher in the low involvement category (Cassoulet canned meat) than in the moderate involvement category (Tomme cheese), a result coherent with the literature on involvement (Petty, Umbassa, and Strathman 1991).

In both categories, the effect of origin x product category perceived congruity is significant only in the origin x product category illogical conditions. H2a hypothesis is only validated in the 3, 4 and 3’, 4’ conditions: when individuals have doubts about the origin x product congruity, they include this factor in their global evaluation.

In the moderate involvement category (Tomme cheese), brand x origin perceived congruity has a significant impact only when the origin is not logical with respect to the product category (conditions 3 and 4), where H2b is validated. In the low involvement category (Cassoulet canned meat), this effect is significant only when the brand is not logical with respect to the product category (conditions 2 and 4) where H2b is validated.

In the moderate involvement category, the effect of brand x product perceived congruity (the so-called “fit” in the brand extension literature) is significant only in the case of the illogical brand x product condition (conditions 2 and 4), where H2c is validated. This result conforms to the brand extension literature where, typically, a brand is extended to a new product category and individuals, having doubts about brand x product congruity, include the perceived brand x product congruity (the perceived fit) in their global evaluation. The same result is observed in the low involvement category, but limited to the logical origin (condition 2’), where H2c is validated.

Discussion

Over the 8 experimental conditions, brand attitude demonstrates an important and systematic effect on purchase intention. This impact increases in the low involvement category and when the experimental conditions are “logical”, and we can conclude that brand attitude plays a “default” role. When the brand and origin are perceived as congruent with the product category (conditions 1, 1’), brand attitude is the unique factor influencing the purchase intention in our model. In the case of low involvement, the explained variance reaches 64 %, which is the maximum over all experimental conditions.
At the same time, attitudes toward the product or toward the origin have no impact at all. This result contradicts the COO marketing literature, which observes significant effects (Erickson, Jacobson, and Johansson 1992; Ettenson 1993; Tse and Gorn 1993). It can, however, be explained by the fact that, contrary to previous research, we controlled for brand, product and origin attitudes and also for the three perceived congruity factors with, as a consequence, limited possibilities to confound the effect of attitude toward the origin with those due to product or brand attitude, or to the origin x brand or the product category x origin perceived congruity. The “direct” effect of origin attitude is then mechanically discounted. Peterson and Jolibert (1995), in their meta-analysis have also underlined the weakness of COO effects, at least partially attributed to method effects. This result is also coherent with Han and Terpstra (1988) who suggest that strong brands are less sensitive to COO effects.

As suggested by Thakor and Kohli (1996), we can also demonstrate that geographic origin has a greater potential impact through its perceived congruity with the brand or product category, than directly as a potential source of positive attitude, as proposed in earlier research on COO effects. However, these effects seem to work only in cases where individuals have doubts about the brand x origin or the product category x origin perceived congruity. The more the object under evaluation is a combination of congruent pieces of information concerning the product, brand and origin, the simpler the evaluation process (conditions 1, 1'), centered solely on the attitude toward brand. These results are coherent with Lee (1995), Chakravarti and Janiszewski (2003) who observed that, confronted by a new and dissonant alternative, individuals focus on the most salient attribute, the perceived congruity in our experiment. Moreover, we observe that the impact of perceived congruity increases in the case of a moderate involvement product category compared to a low involvement category. For the low involvement condition, the evaluation process is always dominated by brand attitude, whereas for the moderate involvement condition, this role can become minor compared to perceived congruity, in the case of illogical conditions (typically the # 3 and 4 conditions).

CONCLUSION

Although the brand literature has concentrated on the brand x product fit, we must conclude after this empirical study that a new line of research could focus more deeply on the perceived congruity between brand (or product category) and Geographic Origin.

However, our empirical investigation is limited to the food product area, and new systematic comparisons should be implemented in other sectors such as fashion, sport items, cars, electron-

### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin x product category congruity →</th>
<th>Tomme cheese Moderate involvement</th>
<th>Cassoulet canned meat Low involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logical origin</strong></td>
<td><strong>Illogical origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savoie</td>
<td>Alsace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont</td>
<td>Mont</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridel</td>
<td>Saurin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riches</td>
<td>William</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont</td>
<td>Fleury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riches</td>
<td>Saurin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridel</td>
<td>Michon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riches</td>
<td>Fleury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridel</td>
<td>Michon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand x product category congruity →</th>
<th>n1 Logical Riches Mont</th>
<th>n2 Logical Bridel</th>
<th>N3 Logical Riches Mont</th>
<th>n4 Logical Bridel</th>
<th>n1' Logical William Saurin</th>
<th>n2' Illogical Fleury Michon</th>
<th>n3' Logical William Saurin</th>
<th>n4' Illogical Fleury Michon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the product (H1a)</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the brand (H1b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward the origin (H1c)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin x product perceived congruity (H2a)</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand x origin perceived congruity (H2b)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand x product perceived congruity (H2c)</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² (purchase int., %)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only significant coefficients are presented (at the 1% risk level).
ics. Moreover, product category × GO congruity was a manipulated factor and it is possible that participants perceived the main intentions of the experiment, stimulating and overestimating the impact of product category × GO congruity.

Our empirical results help us to refine the use of GO in the management of a branded product with, of course, the limitations of the food product category. First of all, although GO represents a great potential in branded product evaluation, this is through its potential interactions with the brand (and product category) rather than in its own right. Then, referring to the attitude toward a well-evaluated GO is not sufficient to increase the branded product evaluation. It is the brand × origin perceived congruity that makes the effect positive in the evaluation and this congruity effect can be more important than the effect of the brand attitude itself. This result can still be reinforced by the moderating role of product × origin perceived congruity in the evaluation process. When it is low, the effect of attitude toward the brand decreases and brand × origin plays a genuinely dominant role in the evaluation of the branded product.

Therefore, our results open the door for strategies specifically designed for small or medium-sized firms, which do not have the financial means to develop a strong positive brand attitude. If geographical origin involves collective image and attitude strategies, our results show that these firms have interest to manage carefully their own brand × origin perceived congruity. We can also underline that strong international brands can bear on their attitude as a main factor of evaluation, but at the same time must pay attention to be perceived as congruent as possible with the product category and its associate geographical origin, if any. The lack of congruity can involve a risk that consumers use perceived congruity as a factor of evaluation, at the benefit of a local brand having a greater brand × origin perceived congruity.

REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1

Structural model estimation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand x product category congruity →</th>
<th>Tomme Cheese Moderate involvement</th>
<th>Cassoulet Canned meat Low involvement</th>
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